

What Works SC clearinghouse

ENGAGING CREATIVE MINDS

Summary

The mission of Engaging Creative Minds is to inspire the creative and innovative potential of all students to achieve academically and become imaginative, adaptable, and productive adults resulting in stronger communities and an increasingly competitive South Carolina workforce. Short Summary: Engaging Creative Minds enables teachers to engage students more effectively in their classroom curriculum through arts integration. Not just a one-time experience, our staff meets with teachers to design programming around each classrooms' unique educational goals. Teaching artists then provide arts integration professional development through experiences such as, working with the teachers to educate students about the Cold War by writing a play on the period, design anatomically correct insect puppets using the science text book, or study how the culture of an area being discussed in social studies contributed to the musical styles of the region, like Spoleto's production of "Porgy and Bess." These Engaged Learning Experiences (ELEs) also provide an opportunity for greater social development through collaborative projects and activities.

Engaging Creative Minds fulfills our mission by ensuring sustainability and high-impact programming. Because of our integrated professional development, teachers are able to incorporate techniques used in ELEs into future educational plans. This provides an opportunity to increase program impact exponentially. Furthermore, Engaging Creative Minds seeks funding from varied sources to ensure sustainability. A diverse portfolio of grantors and individual donors subsidizes our school-based programs with school budgets accounting for only 11% of our organizational budget. Beginning in 2017 all proceeds from the Charleston Marathon will benefit Engaging Creative Minds, expanding our ability to reach more students in need from our waitlist of 22 schools. To provide in-depth arts integration to all students, Engaging Creative Minds programming runs year round and includes in-school activities, professional development, and summer programming. In the 2015-2016 school year the organization served 5,320 students from 214 classrooms in 20 schools with in-school ELE's. Our teaching artists are provided with ongoing training and come from a wide variety of artistic backgrounds. Because we combine each artist's specific talent with each classroom's educational goals, no two programs are ever the same.

Through these ELEs, and other professional development programs with Kennedy Center Partnership members, Engaging Creative Minds provided professional development to 399 teachers and principals in 2015-2016. Additionally, our summer STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts and Math) Institute, which is done in collaboration with College of Charleston and The Citadel, serves 100 students per week for 3-6 weeks. ECM's summer camps provide on-site arts integration training for artists and teachers, with each camp providing scholarships to 30 at-risk students. The Summer STEAM Institute helps prevent summer learning loss and closes the opportunity gap, which has been proven to close the achievement gap. Starting in 2016 we will have an additional STEAM camp serving Clarendon County School District.

Demographics

- *Target Settings:* Urban, rural, suburban
- *Target Groups Served:* The target student population we serve is diverse, with 2% identifying as Asian, 41% as Black, 9% as Hispanic, and 47% as White. Additionally, 7% are English Language Learners and 9% are Students with Disabilities.
- *Districts Served:* Charleston, Berkeley, Clarendon, Dorchester (2016)

Research and Evaluation

What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative? Describe the evidence that shows the program or initiative is relevant and effective.

For 25 years, Big Thought, a Dallas non-profit, has provided creative learning programs that help kids imagine possibilities, excel academically, and contribute to their communities. Knowing their achievements, Charleston County School District (CCSD) Superintendent and the College of Charleston's Arts Management Program invited Big Thought's CEO, Gigi Antoni, to speak to community leaders, artists and arts organizations, and educators in May 2011 about Big Thought's work. Inspired by Big Thought's success, the Superintendent, Charleston Mayor Joe Riley, and others wondered if a similar approach could work in the Charleston region. Leaders from CCSD, College of Charleston, Cities of Charleston and North Charleston, Charleston Regional Alliance for the Arts, Youth Endowment for the Arts, and Crystal-Barkley Corporation formed a Task Force to convene a community planning process to determine if and how the cities, schools, and cultural resources could collectively serve area youth more equitably and with higher impact in the classroom. Berkeley County and Dorchester 2 School District Superintendents were invited to participate on the Task Force. Guided by Gigi Antoni, Big Thought's CEO, the Task Force interviewed key leaders and engaged focus groups of 80+ leaders from arts, business, education, and community sectors in the planning process.

This community process confirmed a clear consensus around the belief that access to and learning through the arts and culture are important drivers of student success, but local issues stand in the way. The task force identified that a structured, coordinated way of collaboratively addressing these issues in the tri-county area is needed. The Charleston County Schools District, the three local city governments, the College of Charleston and other partners provided funding commitments and services to support the new initiative and BoeingSC agreed to become the Founding Corporate Partner. Thus, Engaging Creative Minds was incorporated in 2012 and is now a 501c3 organization.

Evaluation: In addition to in-house assessment, an external evaluator Dr. Janet Rose provides annual reports on engagement and academic impact. Dr. Rose uses classroom observation, teacher surveys, principal surveys, and partner surveys to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. This data explores student behavior, quality of instruction, access to community arts and cultural organizations, program success, as well as program challenges.

Recent assessments found that student engagement during programming increased by 65%, that 60% of students gained skills, techniques, and knowledge, and that 55% were more social, verbal, and collaborative. Over 90% of teachers believed that Engaging Creative Minds programs had a positive effect on student engagement. Nearly all (99%) of teachers who participated believed the programs had a positive effect on students' academic achievement, and over 95% of the teachers agreed that arts integration was effective for teaching standards-based instruction as well as differentiated instruction. Finally, compared with schools that did not participate in Engaging Creative Minds programming, participating schools made significant gains in ELA and Writing achievement on PASS.

Resources

- *Annual Cost:* \$945,832
- *Funding Sources:* Arts Etc., Youth Endowment for the Arts, South Carolina Arts Commission, The Citadel, College of Charleston, Charleston County School District, The Spoleto Festival, individual donors, various corporate and foundation grant partners, including Clemson University Foundation, Intertech, KITE Foundation, State Ports Authority Grants, Target, Boeing, and WalMart.
- *Staffing Needs:* Engaging Creative Minds would like to provide additional professional development opportunities to the schools we partner with based on the Boston After School and Beyond: Power Skills for Student Success model. We feel that Engaging Creative Minds is an ideal organization to serve as a pilot for these techniques in SC.
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* N/A
- *Partner Organizations:* Partnering organizations include, The Charleston County School District, College of Charleston, Youth Endowment for the Arts, SC Arts Commission, BoeingSC, and the Cities of Charleston, North Charleston, and Mt. Pleasant. Berkeley County School District and Dorchester School District 2 are beginning their partnerships with ECM this fall. Specifically, six schools in Berkeley County participating and two schools in Dorchester 2 received a USDOE \$1.8 million STAR to STEAM grant to support Eagles Nest Elementary and River Oaks Middle in their arts integration efforts and professional development. This year was the planning year. In the fall of 2016 the program will begin its implementation into these two schools. ECM's role is to support the efforts by providing sample lessons and professional development workshops for principals, artists and teachers.

Contact Information

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Photos from 2015-2016 ECM Engaging Learning Experiences

