

The Vermont Creative Schools Initiative 1st and 2nd Year Evaluation Report Overview

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The Vermont Creative Schools Initiative (VCSI) is a collaboration of classroom teachers and teaching artists set on improving student learning and engagement. Participants across Vermont incorporated artistry and creativity into the academic curriculum. The chief aim is to ignite students' passions and creativity.

"It has changed the way I think about what I am asking students to do. I have shifted from trying to be creative in my own approach to now to ask them to be more creative in their approach." -Teacher, 2016

During the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, 59 teachers from 15 schools partnered alongside 6 teaching artists to serve approximately 1,100 PreK-12 students across Vermont. Teachers participated in three intensive professional development opportunities throughout the entire school year. Students, teachers and teaching artists worked towards a final performance or exhibition, many of which were included in a community-wide musical performance featuring world renowned artists Evelyn Glennie, John Jorgenson and the Vermont Festival Orchestra.

"The integration of arts, education, and community brought a full circle connection for inspiration, interest, and learning what it takes to make wishes come true!" - Parent, 2017

Across the two years, the Creative Schools Initiative saw great success: All teachers that were involved with the CSI were able to deeply integrate the arts with the core content of their class and these highly engaged learning experiences occurred across the state of Vermont.

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Elementary school projects that integrated music, puppetry, choreography, and the visual arts into core academic units on Sounds and Waves, The Vermont Civil War Experience, Human and Weather Interactions, Early Vermont Cultures, Vermont Natural and Economic Resources, Environmental Responsibility, and Children Empowerment and Voice.

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Middle school projects that integrated choreography, dramatic play, puppetry, music, and the theater arts into core academic units on Innovation and Scientific Discovery, Personal Learning and Identity Development, Place-Based Learning, and the American Revolution.

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High school projects that integrated music, dramatic play and the visual arts into core academic units on The Immune Defense System, Community Change and Civic Engagement, Individual Responsibility and Representation, and a multi-disciplinary study of The Role of Walls in Human Lives.



“We know that integrating the Arts allows so much more creative thinking and critical problem-solving than typical academic coursework. It gives equitable entry points for all learners at a variety of points along the achievement continuum.” - Administrator, 2016

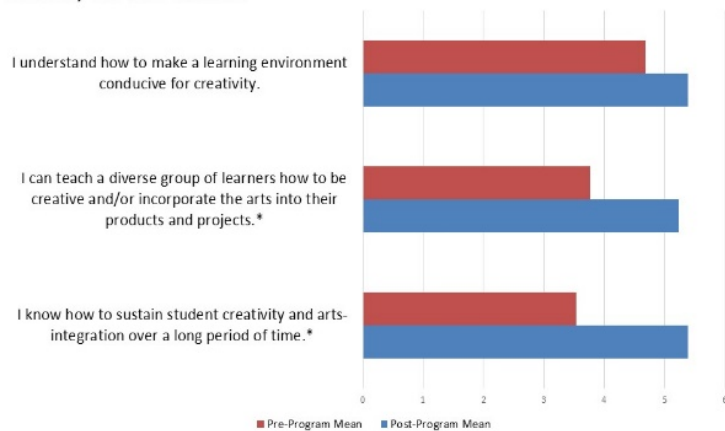
The VCSI Year 1 and 2 Evaluations included the review of 63 teacher lessons and units, 7 teacher and teaching artist activity logs, 16 student focus groups, a total of 40 hours of direct classroom observations, and post-program surveys for 37 teachers, 10 administrators, 178 parents, and 673 students. Semi-structured interviews occurred with all participating teachers and teaching artists.

“I loved this program just the way it was. By acting it out and memorizing all those lines, it really appears that the kids learned this content and timeline of events inside and out. This type of learning ‘sticks’ in their memory because they learned it, wrote about it, and lived it. This is the ‘doing’ generation of learners and this type of active learning leads to deeper, more memorable learning.” - Parent, 2016

All teachers involved with the VCSI deeply integrated the arts, creativity and Vermont’s Transferrable Skills within the core content of their classes. Through interviews and questionnaires, participating teachers overwhelmingly recognized that their students were more engaged, more joyful about their academic work, and, in many cases, had powerful learning experiences that they may not have had otherwise. Participating teachers recognized that throughout this program they grew to understand the nature of artistry and creativity with greater confidence. Teachers recognized that they developed as educators from being involved with the CSI as the graphs below show.

Focus group discussions with students and survey responses from administrators and parents show overwhelming support outlining areas of excellence and future steps for greater student engagement, achievement, and personal growth. These results, as well as the full evaluation of the Creative Schools Initiative, will be available on the Community Engagement Lab website in February, 2018.

Change in Teachers’ Perceptions about their General Capacity to Integrate Artistry and Creativity into their Practices



For more information on the *Vermont Creative Schools Evaluation Blueprint* and *Vermont Creative Schools Initiative Year 1 and Year 2 Evaluation Reports* contact John T. Stroup at jstroup@champlain.edu.