

A Tale of Two Cities Executive Summary

A Tale of Two Cities (T2C) was a collaboration of *Global Writes (GW)*, *DreamYard (DY)* and *Performing Arts Workshop (The Workshop)*, along with five schools in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD): Visitacion Valley Middle School, San Francisco Community School, Martin Luther King School, Denman Middle School, and Marina Middle School¹; a school in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS): Chalmers Elementary School; and three schools in the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE): MS 145, MS 313 and PS/MS 315. *T2C* built on the *GW* program model (evidenced by previous AEMDD-funded programs – *Poetry Express* and *Honoring Student Voices*) by providing opportunities for at-risk middle school students to write, collaborate and share their original poetry and performances with one another. The project served two significant educational needs: 1) higher student achievement in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics; and 2) increased access to quality instruction in theatre and performance. The project combined literacy and mathematics instruction, theatre performance, and technology, and used a rigorous, scientifically-based research design in order to determine the impact of participation on student academic achievement. *Metis Associates* conducted the evaluation of the project.

T2C had four overarching goals aligned with the following areas of activity: classroom-based interventions with students integrating the arts with literacy and mathematics; ongoing professional development for teachers, administrators and teaching artists; and use of collaborative technologies to extend individual and school contact and sustain personal and community benefits. The project's four overarching goals included: 1) To create and implement a standards-based arts education model that is integrated with the core curriculum across three treatment sites; 2) To increase comfort among teachers in leading literacy and mathematics instruction that integrates the performing arts and collaborative technologies with the core curriculum; 3) To increase the number of students participating in arts model programs that impact their academic achievement and deepen their appreciation for the arts; and 4) To evolve the *GW* model by expanding and sustaining the *GW* community.

In Year 1, the project planning year, a partnership agreement was reached with the Workshop. Following that, participation agreements were secured with the six treatment and control schools located in San Francisco. Three of the six schools were randomly assigned to the treatment group and the remaining schools were assigned to the control group.² Plans were developed for the installation of technology and implementation of professional development for teachers. *GW* worked with treatment teachers and teaching artists from *The Workshop* to prepare them for the development and implementation of the program.

The project served teachers and students over the course of three implementation years. In Year 2 (2011-12), trained teaching artists from *The Workshop* worked with 6th grade students and

¹ Initially, an additional school was selected to be a treatment school for the project. In the early fall of 2011, the principal for informed GW staff that the school would no longer be able to participate as it had been selected for "Turn Around".

² Two of the three schools that comprise the control group dropped from the study and are not included in the analyses.

teachers in literacy classes in collaborative writing and performance residencies for thirty weeks. The project followed those students to 7th grade in Year 3 (2012-13) and 8th grade in Year 4 (2013-2014), also introducing a new cohort of 6th and 7th grade students as the program progressed. In addition, mathematics teachers in each treatment school were asked to try lesson activities created by **GW** that aligned poetry with their mathematics curriculum.

- Year 2 of the project (2011-12) served a total of 882 6th grade students (325 in treatment schools and 557 in comparison schools), eight classroom teachers, and three school principals.
- Year 3 of the project (2012-13) served a total of 556 6th grade students (324 in treatment schools and 232 in the comparison school) and 618 7th grade students (343 in treatment schools and 275 in the comparison school), 11 classroom teachers, and three school principals.
- Year 4 of the project (2013-14) served a total of 658 6th grade students, 393 7th grade students, and 452 8th grade students (712 in treatment schools and 791 in comparison schools), 13 classroom teachers, and three school principals.

Throughout the project, experienced schools from the Bronx, which have participated in previous **GW** projects, served as mentors to the participating San Francisco schools. Mentor relationships were established at the classroom level (student to student), at the instructional level (teacher to teacher, and teaching artist to teaching artist) and at the leadership level (principal to principal), and followed through each year of implementation.

T2C had three successful implementation years during which a number of key aspects of the program were carried out:

- Equipment for all treatment schools was installed and training on its use was conducted for participating teachers and teaching artists, as well as entire school faculties (to increase institutionalization).
- Teaching artists from **DY** and **The Workshop** engaged in planning and professional development sessions to guide the implementation of the project.
- Treatment schools in the SFUSD implemented the **GW** model within all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classes.
- Mentor schools in NYC worked with their respective teaching artist in San Francisco and engaged in sharing activities with San Francisco treatment schools.
- An online collaborative space for teachers and teaching artists in treatment and mentor schools was created and implemented via Ning, a customizable social networking platform.
- A student Ning was created in 2013 and student poems were posted for peer-to-peer sharing among students from the Bronx, Chicago, and San Francisco.
- Evaluation instruments were implemented with both treatment and control schools in San Francisco.
- **The Workshop** and **GW** presented the **T2C** project at the AEP conference in Washington, D.C. in April 2013. Additionally, **GW** and **Metis** co-wrote an article for the *Journal of Learning Through the Arts*, set for publication in 2014.

Overall, the **T2C** met many of its implementation goals, including creating and implementing a standards-based arts education model integrated with core curriculum in literacy and mathematics, increasing the number of students participating in arts model programs, and

evolving the *GW* model. Some key highlights of the results of the project are presented below.

- Analyses of data from baseline to the end of the project revealed that two of the three administrators (67%) reported an increase in their use of videoconferencing, one (33%) reported an increase in their use of online collaboration, one (33%) reported an increase in their comfort with videoconferencing tools, and one (33%) reported an increase in their comfort with online collaboration tools.
- Analyses of pre- and post-survey responses of participating grade 8 teachers in fall 2013 and spring 2014 revealed that, at post-survey, all six responding ELA teachers reported being comfortable when using an interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates poetry and performance with literacy instruction; however, only one of the six responding ELA teachers (17%) reported an *increase* from pre to post in their comfort level when using an interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates poetry and performance with literacy instruction. However, all three responding math teachers (100%) indicated an increase from pre to post in their comfort level with providing mathematics instruction that integrates poetry concepts.
- Analyses of treatment and control student responses on a locally developed survey were conducted from baseline (pre) to the end of the project (post).³
 - An analysis of the grade 8 cohort of student results (baseline-fall 2011 to spring 2014) revealed that the mean composite scores of items measuring student motivation towards literacy work and student motivation towards learning (i.e., task involvement, effort, competition, and social concern) declined for both the treatment and control groups.
 - An analysis of the grade 7 cohort of student results (baseline-fall 2012 to spring 2014) indicated that treatment students made greater gains than control students in the area of effort, a difference that was found to be statistically significant and educationally meaningful. In all other areas (i.e., literacy work, task involvement, competition, and social concern), the mean composite scores declined for both the treatment and control groups from baseline to post-survey; however, the control group demonstrated significantly greater decreases in the area of literacy work over time when compared to the treatment group.
 - An analysis of the grade 6 cohort of student results (baseline-fall 2013 to spring 2014) revealed that treatment students made slight gains in the areas of competition and social concern, although these gains were not found to be statistically significant compared to the control group. In all other areas, the mean composite scores declined for the treatment group from baseline to post-survey, and this decrease was found to be statistically significant and educationally meaningful in the area of literacy work when compared to the control group.
- Student ELA and mathematics achievement were not measured in Year 4 of the project, as students in the treatment schools did not take the California State ELA and math assessments during the 2013-14 school year.

There have been several learnings that have occurred as a result of this project, including the fact that having a local arts partner on the ground in a new city is paramount to the success of such a venture. The arts partners serve as guides to the ins and outs of a school and district requirements as well as helping to develop relationships with principals and teachers in each school. In

³ Two of the three schools that comprise the control group dropped from the study and are not included in the analyses.

addition, having buy-in from administration is an essential element to the everyday successful implementation of such an intensive project. It was also clear that ongoing communication with schools and principals sets the stage for the urgency of project requirements, including evaluation and data collection.