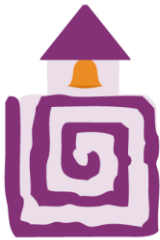


Success Story: Digital DELLTA – Linking Learning and the Arts



2020 Action Agenda for Advancing the Arts in Education – Priority Area 3: Transform the Teaching and Learning Environment

"ArtsConnection's core goal is to educate students who work and think like artists; and, help them discover their voice through the art-making processes. Collaborative digital portfolios makes their learning visible to themselves and their peers, and helps them analyze what and how they are learning in the arts." – Carol Morgan, Deputy Director for Education, ArtsConnection



Photo courtesy of ArtsConnection.

Arts Education Partnership (AEP) partner organizations work to promote high-quality arts learning opportunities that align with college, career and citizenship readiness goals. Studies consistently show the benefits of arts integration for English Language Learners (ELLs), including theater and dance [improving results](#) on standardized tests, visual arts [increasing communication skills](#), or arts-based curriculums [providing significant](#) cognitive advantages.

Since 1979, [ArtsConnection](#) has provided innovative arts programming to millions of students in the New York City public school system—enhancing children's intellectual, personal and social growth, while also developing award-winning educational models. During the 2005-06 school year, ArtsConnection launched its [Developing English Language Literacy Through the Arts](#) (DELLTA) program with grant funds from the U.S. Department of Education. The program's goal is to engage students in learning to work and think like artists, improve second language acquisition, and build academic mindsets to create a foundation that supports college and career readiness for ELLs.

Digital DELLTA (established in 2014) addresses key aspects of academic outcomes for middle school ELLs: rigorous curricula aligned with the National Core Arts Standards in Dance and Theater and New York's Next Generation Learning Standards, and using technical resources as a tool for learning. Collaborative digital portfolios help make learning in the arts visible and provide a formative assessment model to help students describe and assess their work in the arts. Digital DELLTA also includes effective professional development that is sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded and classroom focused. Teams of English as a new language (ENL) and arts and humanities teachers, along with dance and theater teaching artists, plan, deliver and assess interdisciplinary instruction that includes formative assessment strategies and language supports to address the needs of ELLs.

After more than 10 years of data collection, an independent research and evaluation team confirmed that DELLTA programs effectively support English language acquisition. Students develop language skills in an engaging, authentic context that they care about, and that provides opportunities for self-expression and ownership of learning.

Current Location: New York City, N.Y.

Population Served: ELL students in sixth through eighth grades

Conditions for Success:

The partnership between school-based educators and artist/educators plays a key role in the program's success. ArtsConnection provides 30 hours of professional development per year for each educator and artist in the three-year program that builds professional learning communities in and across schools. The results include a sustainable program built on a shared knowledge base and increased capacity of the arts organization's staff to facilitate on-going professional development. It also elevates the understanding and teaching practice of teaching artists to deliver a rigorous and authentic arts education experience for students. School-based educators are essential partners and learn arts-based skills and strategies to more effectively meet the needs of their middle-school ELLs.

ArtsConnection's research projects include a strong element of practitioner research and focus on an inquiry question. This practice not only builds organizational capacity, but also the capacity of teachers and artists, as the knowledge and skills built by practitioners who work with students carry that learning with them in their work with other students. Over the past 12 years, this iterative process has included 28 ArtsConnection staff members, 40 artists and 324 school-based teachers—in turn, serving more than 10,000 students. Additionally, an independent research and evaluation team led by Dr. Rob Horowitz has conducted more than 10 years of data collection on the DELLTA elementary and middle school programs. Methods included observations, interviews, student assessment and surveys. An observational assessment strategy, the Classroom Assessment of Learning and Teaching, was developed for the project.

Questions to Consider:

- How can community arts organizations partner with schools and districts to strengthen their capacity to provide increased access to arts education?
- Who are the most important allies to cultivate when doing the work and how do you sustain engagement and collaboration?
- How will you build evaluation and research into program design?
- How will you measure success?

Learn More:

Video: [Digital DELLTA](#)

Video: [DELLTA Digital Communities of Practice](#)

[Classroom Assessment of Learning and Teaching \(CALT\)](#)

[AEP 2020 Action Agenda for Advancing the Arts in Education](#)

[ArtsEdSearch](#) studies on the effectiveness of arts education in supporting ELLs.

About AEP Success Stories

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP), a center within Education Commission of the States, is guided by [The Arts Leading the Way to Student Success: A 2020 Action Agenda for Advancing the Arts in Education](#). To achieve its goal to expand access to high-quality arts learning opportunities for all students, AEP gathers detailed information on Success Stories with the potential to be replicated in communities across the country. AEP will use this information to promote and disseminate these stories through online resources, publications and media platforms.

Updated: Oct. 24, 2017.