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# The Creative Learning Initiative Moves AISD Toward Creative Campus Goals
Impact Highlights of the 2015–2016 School Year

## Introduction

The Creative Learning Initiative (CLI) is a citywide collaboration between MINDPOP, the City of Austin, Austin Independent School District (AISD), and more than 50 arts and cultural organizations dedicated to equitable access to creative learning and the arts for all students in AISD. CLI serves 2,403 teachers and 31,413 students at 44 campuses in four vertical teams. In 2015–2016, the majority of CLI campuses (80%) were Title I schools. CLI had a positive impact on the district, teachers, and students. Teachers reported positive experiences with the program activities and positive changes in students' engagement, behavior, and achievement. Students had increased access to arts opportunities, and findings indicated positive student outcomes, including academic performance, social emotional learning (SEL) skills, attendance, and engagement.

### AISD is approximately halfway to its 2022–2023 goal of 100% creative campuses, exceeding expectations for 2015–2016.

Findings from 2015–2016 indicated that 57% of AISD schools that submitted data met creative campus criteria and were classified as either arts rich or arts involved (Figure 1). This number of creative campuses exceeds the expectation for 2015–2016 to reach the goal that all campuses are arts involved or arts rich by 2022–2023. Also, CLI campuses were 10 times more likely to be arts rich than were non-CLI campuses.

**Figure 1.**
**More than half of AISD schools that submitted data were creative campuses.**
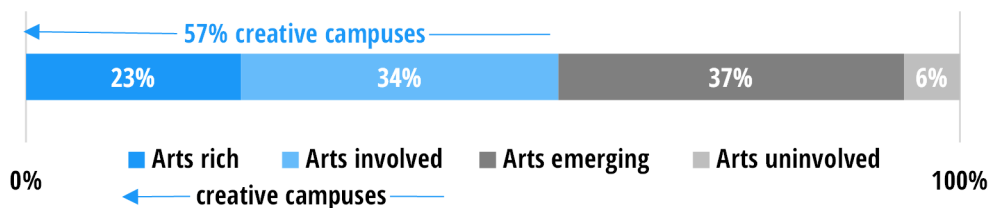


*Source.* **2015–2016 AISD Elementary/Secondary Creative Campus Rubric**
*Note.* **One hundred AISD principals submitted arts inventories for their campuses. Among the schools included, 77 were elementary schools, 14 were middle schools, and 9 were high schools.**
**Creative campus scores are determined by evaluating progress on nine elements, including access to sequential fine arts in multiple art forms (music, dance, visual arts, theater, and digital media), facilities to accommodate arts programming, arts and creative campus leadership, school communication to instill the value of creative learning in families, access to arts learning after school, community building through the arts, arts partnerships to enrich students' arts experiences, creative teaching across the curriculum, and professional development activities in creative teaching.**

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## AISD students had greater access to fine arts instruction at CLI schools than at non-CLI schools.

With almost all elementary students receiving at least 45 minutes of music and visual arts instruction every 3 days, CLI supported access to additional art forms, such as theater, dance, and media arts. Driven by this goal, CLI arts specialists provided weekly instruction in dance and theater for one semester at a time. These classes were usually provided to 2nd grade students, but sometimes principals requested classes for different grade levels. The district data suggest that AISD elementary students continued to have limited access to theater, dance, and media arts, although they were more likely to experience them at CLI campuses than at non-CLI campuses (Figure 2). At the secondary level, the percentage of AISD students enrolled in fine arts classes increased from 2011–2012 to 2015–2016 (Figure 3).

**Figure 2.**

**Students at CLI elementary campuses had greater access to theater, dance, and media arts than did students at non-CLI elementary campuses during the school day.**
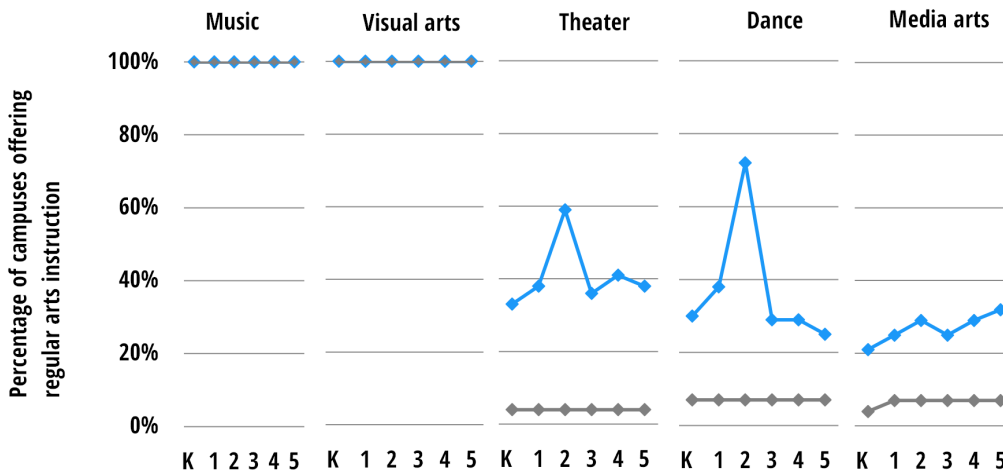


*Source.* 2015–2016 Elementary School Arts Inventory
*Note.* Thirty CLI campuses and 47 non-CLI campuses were included for analysis.

**Figure 3.**

**The percentage of students enrolled in fine arts classes increased the most for the high school 2015-–2016 CLI cohort, while non-CLI cohort remained stable, and middle school arts enrollments increased regardless of CLI status.**
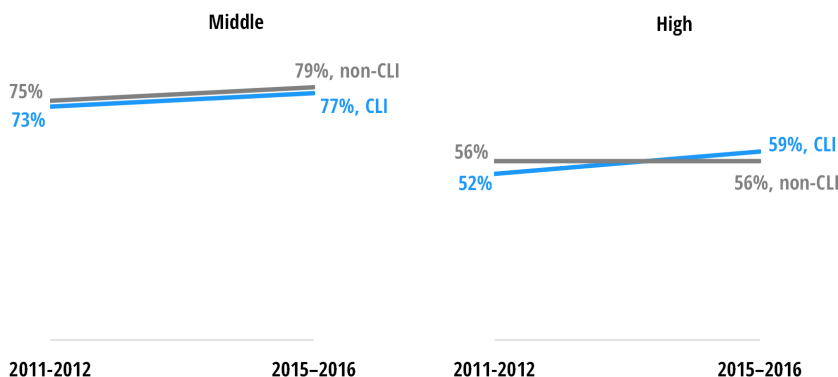


*Source.* AISD Student Class Enrollment Record 2011–2012 and 2015–2016
*Note.* CLI campuses include those in the CLI cohort for 2015–2016.

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## The CLI Program Goals

CLI provides a comprehensive model that increases creative learning moments for students through ongoing professional development activities, as well as increases access to arts instruction and community arts programming. The CLI aims to achieve four broad goals:

- Create arts-rich schools for all students

- Create a community network that supports and sustains the arts-rich life of every child

- Develop leaders and systems that support and sustain quality creative learning for the development of the whole child

- Demonstrate measurable impacts on students, families, and community

The complete annual evaluation report, as well as campus profile reports, are available here:

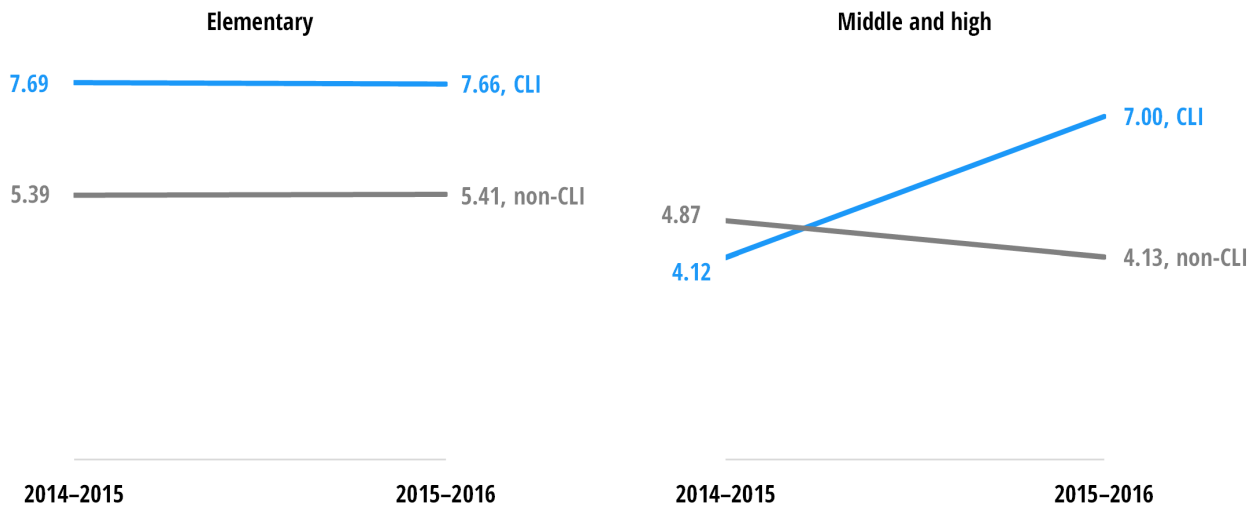https://www.austinisd.org/dre/search/CLI

## CLI elementary campuses had more community arts partners than did non-CLI elementary campuses.

CLI campuses established or maintained partnerships with significantly more arts partners than did non-CLI campuses. Community arts partners provided valuable educational resources for schools by offering a wide range of opportunities for students, including field trip experiences, performances on campuses, workshops, and multi-visit residencies. The partnerships were distributed across art forms and most grade levels. Between 2014–2015 and 2015–2016, the average number of arts partners per AISD campus increased from 5.53 to 5.94. This was entirely due to increases in arts partnerships at the CLI campuses at the secondary level (Figure 4). CLI elementary campuses built more partnerships at each grade level and in each art form than did non-CLI campuses, although the distributions between grade levels and between art forms were uneven (Figures 5 and 6).

**Figure 4.**
**Between 2014–2015 and 2015–2016, the average number of school-time arts partners nearly doubled at CLI secondary campuses, declined at non-CLI secondary campuses, and remained stable at all elementary campuses.**



Elementary

7.69 — 7.66, CLI
5.39 — 5.41, non-CLI

2014–2015 — 2015–2016

Middle and high

7.00, CLI
4.87
4.12 — 4.13, non-CLI

2014–2015 — 2015–2016

*Source.* Elementary/Secondary School Arts Inventory 2014–2015 and 2015–2016

**Figure 5.**
Across all elementary campuses, the average number of arts partners exceeded the goal (two or more arts partners) in grades 3 through 5. In the lower grades, CLI campuses exceeded the program goal and non-CLI campuses were close to meeting the goal.
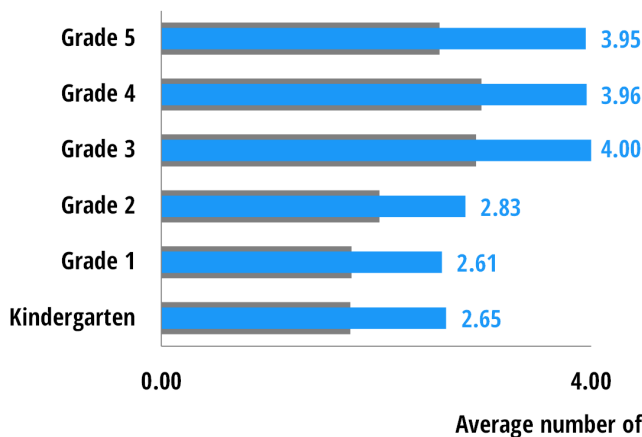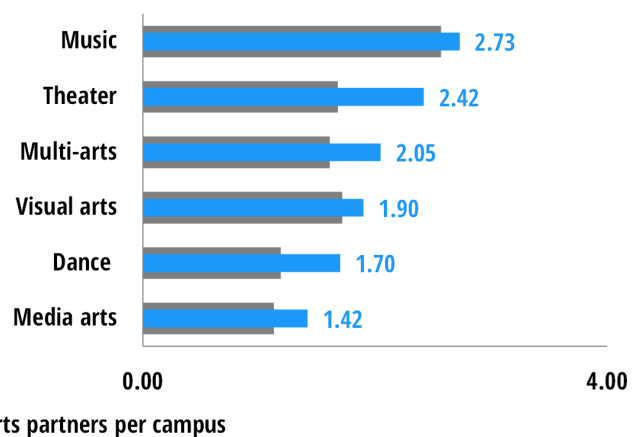


| | |
|---|---|
| Grade 5 | 3.95 |
| Grade 4 | 3.96 |
| Grade 3 | 4.00 |
| Grade 2 | 2.83 |
| Grade 1 | 2.61 |
| Kindergarten | 2.65 |

0.00 — 4.00

**Figure 6.**
The average number of school-time arts partners in each art form was greater at CLI campuses than that at non-CLI campuses.



| | |
|---|---|
| Music | 2.73 |
| Theater | 2.42 |
| Multi-arts | 2.05 |
| Visual arts | 1.90 |
| Dance | 1.70 |
| Media arts | 1.42 |

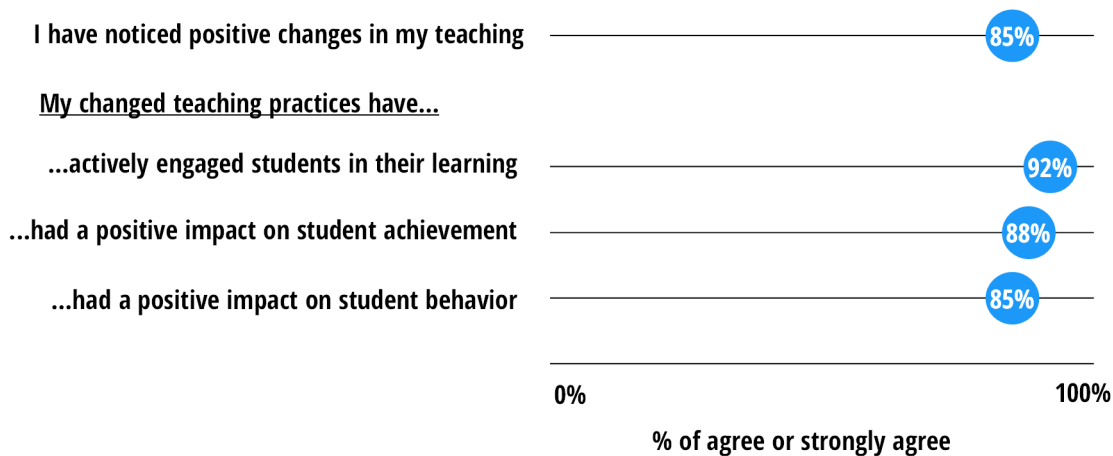0.00 — 4.00

Average number of arts partners per campus

*Source.* 2015–2016 Elementary/Secondary School Arts Inventory

## CLI improved teachers' practice and benefited students' learning.

The overwhelming majority of CLI educators perceived professional development activities (e.g., creative teaching workshops, coaching support) as effective for both increasing their conceptual understanding of creative teaching strategies and increasing their instructional skills in implementing those strategies. Most CLI educators reported that this hands-on approach was conducive to improving students' learning (Figure 7). Teachers who had CLI coaching support used creative teaching strategies more frequently than did those who did not have coaching support.

**Figure 7.**

**The vast majority of 568 participants reported that the CLI workshops resulted in positive changes in both their teaching practices and students' performance.**

I have noticed positive changes in my teaching — **85%**

My changed teaching practices have...

...actively engaged students in their learning — **92%**

...had a positive impact on student achievement — **88%**

...had a positive impact on student behavior — **85%**

0%                                                      100%

**% of agree or strongly agree**

*Source.* 2015–2016 Creative Learning Initiative November Workshop and Follow-up Implementation Survey

## Student engagement and attendance rates were greater at creative campuses than at non-creative campuses.

**Figure 8.**

**At CLI campuses, the mean campus-level student engagement score was greater as the creative campus level was higher.**
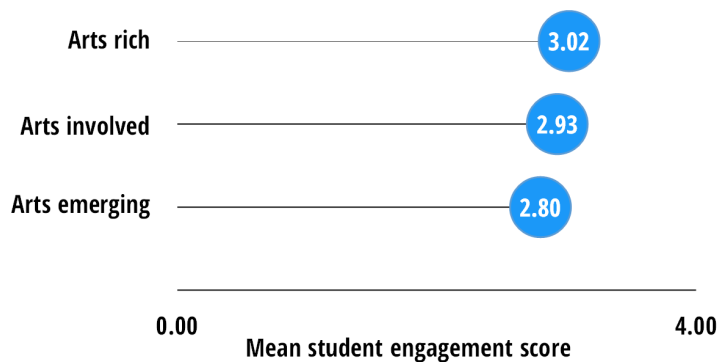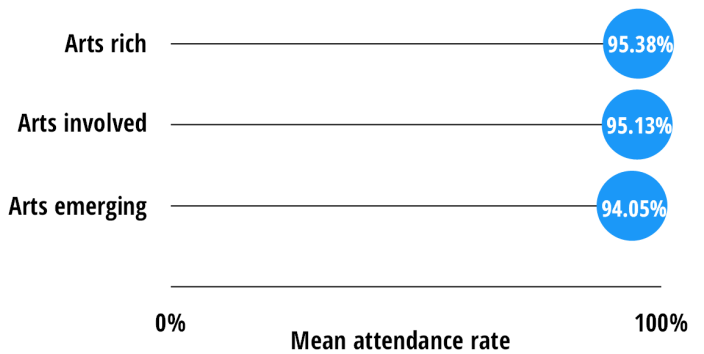
Arts rich — **3.02**

Arts involved — **2.93**

Arts emerging — **2.80**

0.00                                    4.00

**Mean student engagement score**

**Figure 9.**

**At CLI campuses, the campus average attendance rate was greater as the creative campus level was higher.**

Arts rich — **95.38%**

Arts involved — **95.13%**

Arts emerging — **94.05%**

0%                                      100%

**Mean attendance rate**

*Source.* 2015–2016 AISD Elementary/Secondary Creative Campus Rubric, Student Engagement subscale of AISD Student Climate Survey 2015–2016, AISD Student Attendance records 2015–2016

## Students passed the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading, advanced reading, and advanced math standards at a higher rate when their teachers were more competent in implementing creative teaching than when their teachers were less competent in implementing creative teaching.

**Figure 10.**

**Students were more likely to meet the STAAR passing standard in reading and meet the advanced passing standard in both reading and math when their teachers' implementation competency level was high than when their teachers' implementation competency level was low.**
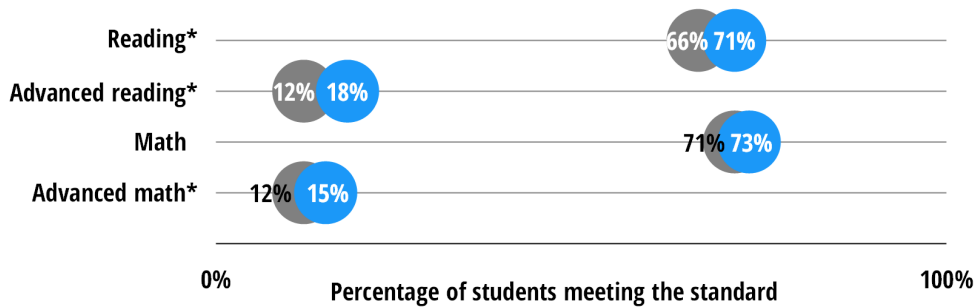


**Source.** 2015–2016 Creative Learning Initiative Coach Observation of Teacher Implementation Survey, AISD Student STAAR records 2015–2016
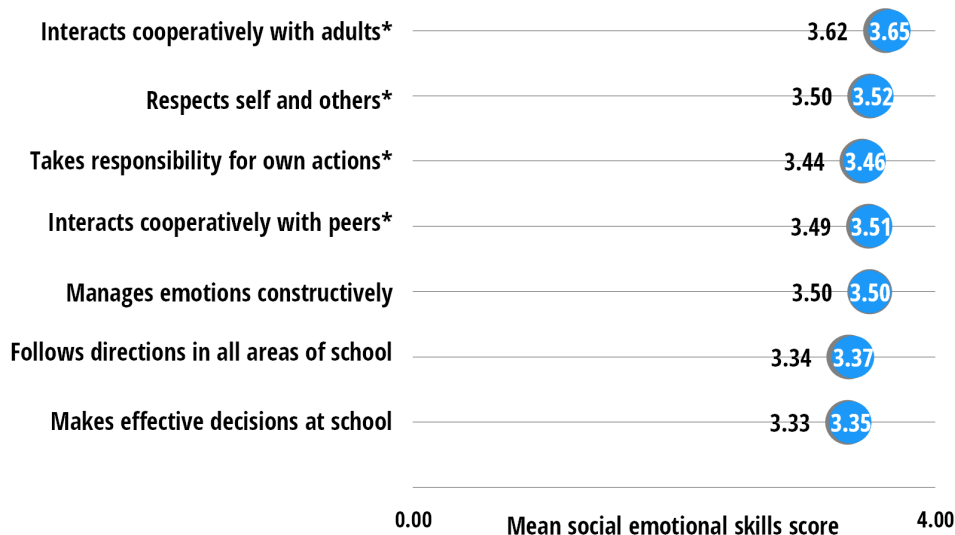**Note.** Teachers' implementation competency level was divided into high and low at the median point.
* Students' STAAR passing status was significantly positively related to teachers' implementation competency in creative teaching.

## Students had better SEL outcomes when their teachers were more competent in implementing creative teaching than when their teachers were less competent in implementing creative teaching.

**Figure 11.**

**Students had greater SEL skills (respect for self and others, interaction with others, and responsibility for their own actions) when their teachers' implementation competency level was high than when their teachers' implementation competency level was low.**



**Source.** 2015–2016 Creative Learning Initiative Coach Observation of Teacher Implementation Survey, Emotional Awareness of Self and Others subscale from 2015–2016 AISD Elementary Student Personal Development Skills Report Card
**Note.** Teachers' implementation competency level was divided into high and low at the median point. Response options ranged from 1 = rarely to 4 = consistently.
* Social emotional skills score was significantly positively related to teachers' implementation competency in creative teaching.

## Findings*:

- AISD is approximately halfway to its goal of 100% creative campuses.

- **Students at CLI campuses had more access to the arts than did students at non-CLI campuses.** This is reflected in school-time instruction and through access to arts partnerships. However, students at the secondary schools continued to have less access to arts opportunities through arts partnerships than did students at the elementary schools. CLI Title I campuses built multiple arts partners in more grade levels than did non-CLI Title I campuses.

- **Eighty-five percent of CLI teachers reported positive changes in their teaching practices that resulted in positive student outcomes.** Teachers reported positive experiences with professional development activities and increased skills. The vast majority of teachers reported the changes in their teaching practice helped them actively engage students (92%), positively affect students' achievement (88%), and positively affect students' behavior (85%).

- **Student engagement and attendance rates were better at campuses with better creative campus scores than at campuses with low creative campus scores.** The creative campus scores at CLI campuses were significantly positively correlated with the student engagement scale of the Climate Survey and student attendance rates.

- **Students had better academic and SEL outcomes when their teachers were more competent in implementing creative teaching than when their teachers were less competent in implementing creative teaching.** Students whose teachers were highly competent in creative teaching were more likely to meet the STAAR passing standard in reading, and more likely to meet the advanced passing standard in reading and math than were students whose teachers were less competent in implementing creative teaching. They also had better SEL skills (e.g., respect for self and others, interaction with adults and peers, and responsibility for their own actions).

## Recommendations:

- **More support for increasing the use of creative teaching strategies**. Teachers' competency in using creative teaching strategies continued to be a predictor of student attendance and academic achievement. Therefore, we recommend the program provide more opportunities for teachers to increase their proficiency and use of creative teaching strategies through more professional development activities and coaching support, as well as increased expectations for use of these strategies.

- **More support for arts partnerships**. Elementary campuses developed more arts partners in grades 3 through 5 than in lower grade levels, therefore, additional support may be needed to develop partnerships in lower grade levels. At the secondary level, partnerships were particularly challenged in every art form, except music and theater. We recommend additional support for equitable access across school levels.

- **Increased access to fine arts instruction.** Elementary schools across the district continued to face limited access to regular and sustained theater, dance, and media arts instruction. We recommend that the program focus on providing more avenues for students to receive instruction in these art forms.

\* The complete annual evaluation report is available at https://www.austinisd.org/dre/search/CLI