



Vermont Creative Schools Initiative
2015-16 Evaluation Report
YEAR 1

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August, 2016

Funding for this evaluation and report
was provided by



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Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide an evaluation of the Year 1 Creative Schools Initiative (VCSI) of the Community Engagement Lab (CEL) that offers insight into the impact and efficacy of community-school collaborations focused on design, artistry, and creativity.

Educators currently face an unprecedented era of change and accountability for the education of all students. Teachers face the responsibility for engaging students in their own education and also for preparing them for their social, economic, and civic lives. Being creative and maintaining the discipline to enact an innovative vision are crucial skills for success. With policies that encourage proficiency, personalization, and transferrable skills, this era of change represents countless opportunities to redefine what goes on in classrooms across the State of Vermont. In order to capitalize on this opportunity and facilitate change, educators must develop their capacity to take risks, tolerate ambiguity, reflect on old and new learnings to create meaning, and proceed in ways that promote their students' creative energies. Moreover, their schools, especially their school administrators, need to provide the supports and resources for encouraging and developing these capacities.

The Vermont Creative Schools Initiative offers teachers job-embedded professional development to support this kind of learning. The goals for the first year of the Vermont Creative Schools Initiative as identified by the Community Engagement Lab include: 1) to implement the full Vermont Creative Schools Initiative including all professional development activities for teachers, 2) to develop an evaluation design, and 3) to monitor, assess, and disseminate findings from the Year 1 season for program improvement, funding partner reporting requirements, and public use. All these goals have been met. The research team created an evaluation system for the program and conducted multiple observations, focus group interviews, and post-program surveys in order to determine participant perceptions about the impact of the VCSI on teacher practice, student learning, and community engagement.

No attempt has been made to make comparisons of any kind either within schools or among them. This evaluation reports general findings and recommendations in the hope that the information will inform decision making about current and future professional development activities as well as move the assessment process further on the research continuum toward rigorous evaluation (Vermont Agency of Education, 2011, pg. 30-31). To that end, the research team presents the following findings and recommendations. Each finding is accompanied by a corresponding recommendation.

Finding #1: The VCSI was implemented across all school sites and among all teacher teams. All teacher teams participating in the initial summer intensive implemented deeply integrated arts and core content learning experiences, resulting in major community-wide and school-wide performances and exhibitions. Moreover, these initial teacher teams grew at every site to incorporate additional teachers in the VCSI. Some teaching artists expressed difficulty with this expansion, given the additional workload.

Recommendation #1: The Community Engagement Lab should recognize that the VCSI is a powerful professional learning experience that other teachers will want to participate in and

should open up lines of communication early with other teachers and set criteria for the interactions between these newly engaged teachers and the artists. Supports for additional team meetings may be necessary as well as additional resources for those teachers who have not participated in the sponsored planning intensives.

Finding #2: The VCSI was implemented across the state of Vermont tapping into schools and school districts across the state at all levels of the K-12 system. This cross-level collaboration and collaboration among teachers from various school districts lead to increased networks among teachers and allowed for powerful multi-school performances and exhibits. One of the stated goals of the VCSI is to bring learning opportunities to students for whom resources and availability of arts and creative work are not readily available. The VCSI schools, however, represented a group of school with small yet higher levels of socioeconomic status as a whole.

Recommendation #2: The Community Engagement Lab should continue to recruit schools in rural and urban areas that serve high concentrations of minority and low socioeconomic status students. As school districts must support teachers using professional development monies for this project, some financial support may be necessary to increase the number of schools with high levels of students in poverty.

Finding #3: The VCSI's emphasis on a final performance and exhibition represents an enormous opportunity for community and parent engagement that most schools struggle to create. The final performances made for deep student engagement and excitement, as well as powerful moments of academic and personal learning. All teachers recognized the value of the final projects, but a number of teachers struggled with the ambiguity of the end goal, felt that the performance piece required an unsustainable amount of additional work on their parts, and felt that the process of learning was overshadowed by the end performance.

Recommendation #3: The Community Engagement Lab should support teachers with concrete steps that support the development of their school and team-based project within the wider goals of the community-based performances. Moreover, logistical support for managing art exhibits, transportation of students and teachers, as well as more clearly defined roles for the preparation of the performance are necessary. The Community Engagement Lab should make clearer the relationship between the learning outcomes of the school academic work and student learning that occurs during the final performances and exhibits.

Finding #4: Teachers reported that the VCSI was a powerful and engaging professional development experience that resulted in heightened awareness, understanding, and integration of artistry and creativity directly in their planning, teaching, and assessment. The VCSI offered teachers powerful opportunities to collaborate in ways that they were not able to do in the past with both outside artists and their teacher teams. Finally, teachers saw the VCSI as a success for their students in terms of their engagement and learning especially as it relates to the kinds of competencies embedded in the Vermont Transferrable Skills. Teachers reported increased levels of confidence in implementing large, complex, and integrated cross-content curriculum, but worried about the sustainability of this kind of teaching strategy due to the additional time requirements for this kind of collaborative endeavor and lack of administrative support.

Recommendation #4: The Community Engagement Lab should continue to support the collaborative meeting and planning time of teachers, especially engaging school administrators to develop opportunities to support the work of the teachers in the projects. Moreover, the Community Engagement Lab should encourage teachers to reflect upon this experience with a longer view of professional learning. Nearly all teachers expressed levels of behavioral and attitudinal change - nearly all with perceived increases in their capacity to teach students to be creative. As the VCSI is an intervention that stretches the capacity of teacher participants, the Community Engagement Lab should encourage teachers to reflect upon the intensity of the work, the ambiguity of the process, and that integration of arts and creativity need not be punctuated with major exhibitions and performances.

Finding #5: Near universal support for this kind of learning experience was voiced by students across all VCSI sites. In all focus groups and nearly all student post-program reflections, students stated that the learning experiences respected them as individuals in ways that their schools do not often do on a regular basis. In all focus groups, nearly all students responded that they felt validated in their creative work. Their perception of school changed so that they felt proud of their school and thankful to their teachers for providing them with this learning opportunity, and moreover they perceived their own growth in the competencies embedded in the Vermont Transferrable Skills, especially in the skills of creative problem solving, integrative thinking, and communication.

Recommendation #5: The Community Engagement Lab should continue to support teachers' personalization of VCSI learning processes for students as well as allow for differentiation of performance tasks and products to create greater opportunities for personalization. Most teachers echoed the students' perceptions of their learning and suggested that these results were equitable across all students', especially unengaged students. However, the Community Engagement Lab should continue to focus its professional development supports and processes to support teachers as they make equitable choices for engaging all students, especially students with disabilities, disengaged students, and students with few support resources at home. In other words, making transparency and equity should become more prominent priorities within the professional development process.

Finding #6: Parents of participating students provided powerful commentary on the way that their children became engaged in the VCSI. They reported students' high levels of satisfaction with their learning experiences, high levels of both artistic and creative learning as well as content based learning, and they responded with high levels of support for teachers and administrators who integrate creativity into their teaching on a regular basis. Teachers and administrators recognized the VCSI as a way to interact with parents in ways that they do not get to do on a regular basis. Beyond parents, community support for the project remained scattered with some pockets of outside engagement.

Recommendation #6: The Community Engagement Lab should support teachers as they engage parents, providing guidance and resources for letters home about the process and goals of the project, invitations to participate to parents and community members within the process of the VCSI residency and pre-residency work, and clear expectations for final performances and exhibits about how those performances and exhibits support student learning.

Finding #7: The VCSI evaluation engaged nearly all stakeholders in the project. Artist feedback was limited as well as direct evidence of teacher understanding and embedding of the Vermont Transferrable Skills into their planning, curriculum, and assessment. Moreover, the VCSI evaluation was able to highlight multiple sources of indirect measures such as student, teacher, and administrator perceptions, but did not collect direct evidence for many areas including evidence of teacher capacity for equitable teaching and learning, teacher assessment capacities for creative learning, and specific insights from teachers about the nature of personalization, competency-based education, and Vermont Transferrable Skills.

Recommendation #7: The Community Engagement Lab with the VCSI evaluation team should address more clearly issues of transparency and assessment in creative and artistic teaching and learning and more directly collect evidence of teachers addressing the Vermont Transferrable Skills, especially through activity logs. Finally, the evaluation in year 2 should seek greater input from teaching artists.

Finding #8: Across all participants in the evaluation, the strength of the teaching artists as teachers, creators, and models of arts integration and community building emerged as a consistent theme. Universally, the teaching artists participating in this project were perceived to be highly invested in the work that teachers and students were doing. Individually and as a group, they modeled integrative thinking and creative work for students, explaining and engaging the insights of their disciplines while finding unique paths for cross-curriculum integration, student engagement, and deep experiential learning opportunities. All stakeholders valued the opportunity to work closely with a world-class musician such as Evelyn Glennie.

Recommendation #8: Build upon the strength of the teaching artists to magnify their teaching, leadership, and innovative ideas. Earlier in the process, make clear among stakeholders the role of the teaching artists, the boundaries to their work, and support the participation of the high impact artists' work with community members, teachers, and students. Build among the teaching artists repertoires for co-teaching as well as co-planning curriculum, instruction, and on-going assessment.

Program Overview

The Vermont Creative Schools Initiative in Year 1 served approximately 555 K-12 students, 28 teachers, and 6 teaching artists in Washington County (Montpelier School District), Addison County (Addison Northwest Supervisory Union), and Caledonia County (Caledonia Central Supervisory Union and St. Johnsbury School District). Teaching artists and teachers from 7 schools designed and developed original projects resulting in performances and exhibitions across the state of Vermont. Within these schools, the Vermont Creative Schools Initiative built school and community partnerships that infused creative projects into the core curriculum. A three part professional development process was implemented that involved K-12 teachers partnering with teaching artists to a) design creative projects, b) receive professional development during summer and fall intensives, and c) participate in artist residencies that culminated in public events for the exhibition of student learning.

Evaluation Methodology

The Year 1 evaluation of the VCSI used a multi-method design that included quantitative, qualitative, and survey data collection and analysis to study the implementation of the projects. A full discussion of the evaluation overview, conceptual framework, and methodology is available in the Vermont Creative Schools Evaluation Blueprint (2015).

Data Collection

Here we present a brief overview of the evaluation and data collection activities. The Year 1 evaluation included teacher and artist activity logs, interviews, focus groups, surveys, video analysis, and analysis of student work.

Activity Logs and Teacher Plans: Teachers Activity Logs ($n = 3$), Artists Activity Logs ($n = 2$), Reviewed Lesson Plans ($n = 36$), Reviewed Unit Plans ($n = 8$). All participating teachers and artists were asked to record their activities each week in an online form that addressed the types of planning, instruction, and learning activities that emerged from their collaborations. The logs were initiated in January and ended in May. Teachers and artists recorded (audio, video, and photo) student performances and teacher-led and/or artist-led activities throughout the residencies. Those files were submitted through private sharing websites and incorporated into teacher or artist activity logs as evidence. All teacher teams and each individual teacher were required to complete two lesson plans for their integrated units and to develop a complete unit plan in collaboration with their artist partners. As part of the evaluation, all 36 lesson plans and all eight unit plans were reviewed and analyzed for patterns, themes, and shared practices.

Interviews and Focus Groups: Students (8 events; $n = 75$). The evaluation team completed the focus group interviews with a group of students at the completion of the artist residency periods. All focus group interviews occurred one or two weeks following the final performance or exhibition. Focus group interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 48 minutes for a total of 293 minutes of student perceptions. The researchers completed focus group interviews at all sites and for all curriculum units. During the focus group interviews, the researcher used semi-structured interview questions with students, and also audio recorded and transcribed the interviews that were ultimately coded into themes and patterns.

Direct Field Observations: Visits ($n = 9$). The evaluator completed the observations with a research assistant at multiple points during the artist residency periods. Three observations occurred early in the artist residencies during the first or second co-taught lessons. Five other observations occurred during later lessons such as dress rehearsals. Observations ranged from 75 to 240 minutes with an average observation time of 195 minutes for a total of 1560 hours of direct observations. The researchers visited all sites and observed the implementation and co-teaching of all curriculum units. During the observations, the researcher used semi-structured interview questions with artists, teachers, and students and recorded field notes that were coded into themes, practices, and patterns.

Post-Program Surveys including Open-Ended Questions: Teachers ($n = 19$), Administrators ($n = 7$), Parents ($n = 95$), and Students ($n = 443$). All VCSI participating teachers were asked to complete a pre-program and post-program survey. Eleven teachers completed both a pre-

program survey at the outset of the summer intensive and a post-survey after their final performance and the student focus group in which researchers were able to match teacher data between the two questionnaires. An additional nine teachers completed a post-program survey in which teachers were asked about their knowledge and practice of arts standards, instruction, and assessment, as well as their perceived efficacy to integrate the arts into their curriculum. The post-program survey also queried teachers' satisfaction with the professional development program. The survey included both closed- and open-ended items.

All participating school administrators were asked to complete a post-program survey. All seven school administrators completed post-program surveys about their understanding of the impact of the program on students, teachers, and their schools' climate. The post-program survey also queried administrators' satisfaction with the professional development program. The survey included both closed- and open-ended items.

All parents/guardians of students participating in VCSI programming were asked to complete a post-program survey. Ninety-five parents with representation from all elementary and middle level sites completed post-program surveys about their understanding of the impact of the program on their children's academic learning and capacities for creative problem solving. No high school parents were surveyed for this report. The survey included both closed- and open-ended items.

All participating students were asked to complete a final short answer set of reflection questions about their understanding of the impact of the program, their artistic and creative learning, and their perception about the ways that this program changed their understanding of their own learning and school in general. Over 400 final reflections/post-program surveys were received from students across all sites and all grade levels.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all the quantitative items on the post-program surveys. Graphs and tables were prepared to illustrate the combined results for all items. To analyze the qualitative data, a multi-step process was carried out in stages outlined in Vermont Creative Schools Evaluation Blueprint (2015). All data in this evaluation are reported at the aggregate level (i.e., parents, administrators, teachers, students, etc.).

Results

For the purposes of presentation, results are provided from the various measures (i.e., teacher surveys, classroom observations, focus groups, lesson analysis) followed by the results from the students, parents, and administrators.

Implementation

The VCSI was implemented in seven schools across the state of Vermont elementary, middle, and secondary schools. The four elementary education projects included one project that spanned all students in a single school from 2nd grade through 4th grade ($n = 82$), another for all 3rd graders in a single school ($n = 74$), another for all 4th graders in a single school ($n = 80$), and finally one for all 5th and 6th graders in a single school ($n = 14$). The two middle school projects

included one that spanned all students in the school in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades ($n = 65$) and another project that included all 5th graders in the school ($n = 81$). Two simultaneous projects occurred at the same high school. One project included all Biology students in the 10th and 11th grades ($n = 60$) as well as some support from ninth grade orchestra members ($n = 5$). The second project in the same high school included all 10th and 11th grade students in the school through English and Social Studies classes ($n = 154$). In total, the Creative Schools Initiative engaged 555 students across the state of Vermont.

Demographically, these schools represent three school districts with a mix of urban ($n = 4$) and rural ($n = 3$) schools. According to the most recent Vermont Agency of Education data (2016a), the number of students eligible to receive free and reduced price lunches, a proxy measure for the percentage of students living in poverty, ranged from 21% to 67% for an average of 34% across the schools. For all Vermont schools, the school population average for students eligible for free and reduced lunches is 43% so the VCSI represented a somewhat wealthier subsection of students. According to the most recent Vermont Agency of Education data (2016b), the VCSI was implemented in schools with an average of 9% non-white population ranging from 4%-15%. These numbers correspond with the state average of 9% non-white student population. Similarly, the VCSI schools averaged a 3% English Language Learner population, slightly higher than the overall state population of 2%.

The VCSI directly engaged twenty-eight teachers over the course of the academic year. Three distinct professional development opportunities were implemented for teachers, and at each stage the number of teachers participating in VCSI-related projects expanded.

The first series of professional development activities occurred in the summer intensive in which teams of classroom teachers worked closely with teaching artists and professionals in the field of art integration. Eighteen teachers and one school principal attended the summer intensive. The main components of the week-long intensive included the development of the teachers' understanding of creativity and personal art history by working with experts in this field, artists from across the State of Vermont, as well as interactive sessions with world-renowned percussionist, Evelyn Glennie (<https://www.evelyn.co.uk>). In addition, each team of teachers and their partner teaching artist developed a unit plan that integrated the arts and at least one non-art content area. These units aligned with state and national standards including the Common Core State Standards, the National Standards for the Arts, and Vermont's Grade Expectations.

Then, these eighteen teachers plus two additional classroom teachers reconvened for a two-day November planning retreat in which participants responded to and revised additional drafts of the integrated curriculum units as well as planned and presented multiple lessons that would occur within each unit. Within a month of this November planning retreat, teacher teams and teaching artists presented complete drafts of unit plans to VCSI faculty for final responses and revisions. All arts-integrated unit plans and lessons developed by teachers were assessed by the VCSI faculty in early January as having met curriculum design standards for cross-curriculum integration, selected appropriate state and national standards, and aligned assessments with curriculum goals and instructional activities.

The final piece of the professional development program included the direct planning for and the implementation of the eight curriculum units at the seven schools during artist residencies. These

artist residencies and co-teaching experiences had a mean duration of 6 full co-teaching days, not including days in which final performances or exhibits were performed, for a total of 50 co-teaching residency days (Minimum = 5 days, Maximum = 7 days). As the final projects came to a close, a total of twenty-eight teachers directly implemented a VCSI-developed curriculum unit (22 classroom teachers, 6 art or music educators).

Each teacher team selected a primary art focus as part of their professional development project. The distribution of the various art forms across all eight VCSI projects in Year 1 were Dance ($n = 1$), Drama/Theater Arts ($n = 2$), Music ($n = 2$), and Visual Arts ($n = 3$). All art projects resulted in original works that teachers, students, and teaching artists discovered, developed, designed, and implemented. At all stages of the process, emphasis was placed on students creating their own musical, dance, visual, or dramatic expressions for public presentation. A brief description of each completed project follows:

- An elementary school music project focused on the exploration of light and sound that integrated physical science, mathematics, and engineering with music and visual arts, resulting in a school-wide performance.
- An elementary school dance project focused on the multiple perspectives and contexts of the Civil War, especially through the investigation of local participants that integrated history, the social studies, and narrative writing with choreography and music, resulting in multiple school-wide performances as well as inclusion within a community-wide musical performance featuring Evelyn Glennie and the Vermont Festival Orchestra.
- An elementary school visual arts project focused on exploring nature, especially the impact and human response to weather that integrated science, geography, and economics with visual arts and poetry, resulting in a school-wide display as well as inclusion within a community-wide musical performance featuring Evelyn Glennie and the Vermont Festival Orchestra.
- An elementary school visual arts project focused on long history of visual arts with Vermont communities, especially the Abenaki community in the Montpelier region that integrated science, geography, economics, and history with visual arts and narrative writing, resulting in a school-wide and community-wide exhibitions.
- A middle school drama/theater arts project focused on the concept of innovation and change that integrated the physical sciences with music, dance, and dramatic play, resulting in multiple school-wide performances as well as inclusion within a community-wide musical performance featuring Evelyn Glennie and the Vermont Festival Orchestra.
- A middle school drama/theater arts project focused on the causes and consequences of the American Revolution that integrated history and the social studies with music, dramatic play, and visual arts, resulting in multiple school-wide and community performances.
- A high school music project focused on the dramatic responses of the immune defense system within the human body that integrated music and cellular biology, resulting in multiple school-wide performances as well as inclusion within a community-wide musical performance featuring Evelyn Glennie and the Vermont Festival Orchestra.
- A high school visual arts project focused on the role of walls, both figurative and literal, in the lives of human beings throughout the world that integrated world history, poetry, and narrative reading and writing with visual arts and creative writing, resulting in

multiple school-wide exhibitions as well as inclusion within a community-wide musical performance featuring Evelyn Glennie and the Vermont Festival Orchestra.

Impact

Teacher Pre-Program Practices, Perceptions and Goals. The teachers varied in terms of their background and experience. In the pre-program survey, eight of the teachers reported having previously taught 15 years or more; all others reported teaching between 5 and 15 years except for one teacher who was a first year teacher. All teachers held a credential in their field and level of teaching including the art and music specialists who held credentials in their specializations. With the exception of the arts and music specialists, only two teachers reported having any experience providing arts instruction in their classrooms; ten teachers shared that they had no experience. Most educators, excepting the arts and music specialists, reported that they had never collaborated with an artist. In sum, the teachers completing the pre-program survey represented a relatively experienced group of teachers who had not often engaged in collaborative arts/creativity-based instruction with artists or fellow teachers and they also had limited in-class experience delivering such instruction.

Further evidence suggests that the teachers beginning the VCSI perceived that their schools and districts did not emphasize the kinds of collaborative, side-by-side teaching that this professional development program requires. In the pre-program survey ($n = 18$), teachers on average disagreed, often strongly, (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) with statements about the nature of collaboration and arts education at their schools such as:

- “Classroom teachers are actively involved in arts lessons at my school.” ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.74$)
- “Our school sets clear expectations about side-by-side teaching.” ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 1.03$)
- “Arts specialists have adequate time to plan for side-by-side lessons with core academic subject teachers.” ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 0.99$)
- “Teachers have adequate time to plan for side-by-side lessons.” ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.59$)
- “Teachers remain with arts specialists during classes.” ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 2.10$)
- “Arts specialists and teachers plan lessons collaboratively in my school.” ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.83$)
- “Our school supports planning for arts integration.” ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.40$)

These results suggest that not only did the teachers have limited experience integrating creativity and the arts and working collaboratively with arts instructors, but they also perceived limited opportunities for these kinds of teaching practices within their schools.

Regarding collaboration, qualitative responses on the pre-program survey suggested that when collaboration does occur that it usually takes place within team or grade level partners, but rarely includes artists or arts educators. One teacher stated in response to the question [*Please describe 1 or 2 of your previous opportunities to collaborate on planning and teaching lessons with other teachers and/or artists?*],

“I have not worked directly with the art teacher in planning a specific lesson. We have shared ideas in the hall, but that has really been the extent of it. She has invited artists in to work with our students, but I would say I have been more of a ‘helper’ in these situations. I do collaborate with the other math teacher and math coach on planning more practical and real world math lessons and now to better meet student academic need.”(Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

Many teachers talked about working with visiting artists, but their connections and collaborative work with those teachers was often limited to follow-up lessons based on what the artists planned for the schools. A representative comment from another teacher claimed that,

“I have opportunities to plan with my team of regular education teachers but I have not had recent opportunities to plan with artists. Artists have come into school to give demonstrations and have worked with our students but to co-plan and then help deliver the instruction was solely the artist’s job. I participate and then do follow up activities and instruction based on what the artist taught.”
(Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

Regarding arts integration and cross-curriculum integration, teachers largely suggested that they do not integrate across the curriculum at all. When asked about integration in their schools [*What does successful cross-curriculum integration (among core subject areas or among core subject areas and the arts) look like in your school? Examples.*], seven teachers made comments like, “I’m not really sure because there is little to none of it happening” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey), “Unfortunately I don’t see a lot of it going on” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey), and “We want more” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey).

However, the teachers participating in this project did have a distinctly positive image about the importance of creativity for learning, as well as the value of collaborating across disciplines and within teacher teams to broaden community goals. In the pre-program survey, teachers agreed (often strongly), (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) with statements about the importance of creativity:

- “Student artistic and creative work is essential to strong civic engagement in our community.” ($M = 5.33, SD = 1.18$)
- “Student artistic work and creative work encourages a sense of community among students and community members.” ($M = 5.44, SD = 1.36$)
- “Student artistic work and creative work can improve authentic community issues.” ($M = 5.67, SD = 1.05$)
- “Student artistic work and creative work enhances the reputation of our community.” ($M = 6.00, SD = 0.93$)
- “Integrating the arts and creativity into the core academic is important for developing school and community relationships.” ($M = 6.06, SD = 1.00$)

Teachers echoed these values in their qualitative responses. When asked about integration in their schools [*In what ways, can teacher-artist collaborations impact the school in which those collaborations take place?*], two teachers wrote,

“This is a rich and exciting opportunity to truly work with professional artists in an authentic and powerful way. I am excited to offer more hands-on experiences that are important and meaningful. I also see this as a way to build community within the school and beyond. I see this approach as a way- maybe the way- to reach kids who are just not engaged.” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

“I have never been a part of a teacher-artist collaboration before, but imagine that it can be a transformative event in for the school as far as community involvement, integrating new teaching methods, and boosting student involvement/ creative learning outcomes.” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

Other teachers responding to the question [*In what ways, can teacher-artist collaborations impact the local, national, and/or international communities in which the collaborations take place?*], wrote,

“These collaborations help bring the community into our schools and this is great. Community members feel connected to the school and the children. Businesses might see a way to sponsor additional opportunities. Students feel connected to others at a time in their lives when they need it most. These connections foster social, emotional, and economic growth! Everybody wins.” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

“I think that people globally are moved by students in the arts and whether a project occurs at the local, national, or international level if it is effective and produces transformative outcomes people are excited. This can lead to more community involvement with the school and/or project, and greater opportunities students to continue learning through the arts.” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

Regarding student learning, the teachers generally stated that they often taught in ways that promoted the Vermont Transferrable Skills standards and believed that the VCSI could support greater equity and engagement for generating these kinds of learning opportunities for students. In the pre-program survey, teachers reported generally high frequency levels (1=Never, 2 = 1-2 times per Semester, 3 = 1-2 times per Month, 4 = Weekly) with statements about how often they implemented lessons that addressed the following skills/content during the previous school year:

- “Informed and integrative thinking (i.e. apply knowledge from various disciplines and contexts to real life situations).” ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.89$)
- “Responsible and involved citizenship (i.e. participate in and contribute to the enhancement of community life).” ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.89$)
- “Creative and practical problem solving (i.e. observe and evaluate situations in order to define problems).” ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.87$)
- “Self-direction (i.e. identify, manage, and assess new opportunities related to learning goals).” ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.63$)
- “Clear and effective communications (i.e. demonstrate organized and purposeful communication).” ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.81$)

Despite these frequency levels, teachers stated goals which involved using this professional development opportunity to encourage more opportunities for students to demonstrate these

kinds of skills. When asked about their goals for student learning [*Why do you think that creativity and artistry is a critical aspect for student learning?*], one teacher wrote,

“It is very well known that creation is one of the highest forms of learning (Bloom’s new taxonomy, etc.), and I believe students truly learn, integrate and retain information best when they do it through their own learning styles. Creativity and artistry gives many students a means with which to express themselves that is not possible for them in a ‘typical’ classroom setting. It engages students in ways that a run of the mill lesson plan just cannot!” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

Others talked equity issues, such as one teacher who stated,

“Not every child learns the same way. Creativity and artistry can be carried over into other aspects of one’s life just as what a child learns from a team sport or individual sport. The lessons on the court or field can be transferred to other facets of your life- just as with the arts.” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

Other teachers echoed the language of the Vermont Transferrable Skills directly by commenting how the VCSI offered opportunities for students to integrate and make connections that “Opens the mind to connections that don’t exist when subjects are taught in isolation” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey). Further elaborating on the ways that they envisioned the Transferrable Skills, two teachers noted ways that arts integration can support student self-direction, communication, and problem-solving.

“We are all inner artists and performers- even in we have repressed that fact. Often artistry/ creativity is the strongest lens a student has to view the world. Other times it is a new pathway to the growth whether a student views themselves as an artist or a performer, they benefit from creativity and artistry. It helps them to problem solve, design, build, and execute. They trouble shoot these skills are critical in so many real-world applications from engineers to carpenters to business professionals.” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

“Creativity and artistry are the ways that we use to create and express ourselves. Creativity is the spark while artistry is the flame. Students have strengths that have a myriad of ways to be unleashed. Using their creativity allows them freedom and control of their learning, building excitement about their discoveries.” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

At the outset of the VCSI, this relatively experienced group of teachers revealed that they had limited experience integrating the arts and creative learning directly into their teaching practice, especially with artists and even arts specialists within their own schools. They suggested great optimism about the value of arts integration for student learning and their capacity to develop the frequency of their transferrable skills teaching into equitable and individualized learning opportunities for their students. When asked directly about their goals for the program, teachers responded to the question [*What do you think your participation in the VCSI will help you accomplish?*], eight teachers made clear that a personal and professional goal was to generate new ideas and inspirations for themselves and their students, and to lead opportunities for collaborative teacher professional work throughout their schools. One teacher stated,

“This is a game changer. First, I realize that I can grow and become a better, more creative teacher. Secondly, I can do a better job getting students up and moving. I think my transactions and variety of projects will grow and improve. In addition, I think I have personally gained confidence which will allow me to go places- even into movement- to enrich the classroom experience.” (Teacher, Teacher Pre-Program Survey)

Teacher Post-Program Results. The data collected in the post program survey suggest that teachers’ capacity and motivation to develop interdisciplinary links between different areas of learning did in fact occur, as well as collaboration and focus on personalized learning and the Vermont Transferrable Skills.

One area of clear impact was that this group of teachers suggested that they clearly came to understand the nature of artistic and creative work in their teaching and by their students. If teachers are able to integrate artistry and creativity into their teaching, then they must understand the disciplines that they are trying to integrate. The teachers’ perceptions of their own preparation for teaching of artistic work increased from pre-program to post-program work. Comparing pre-program responses to post-program responses only for those eleven teachers with whom matches could be made revealed that the teachers, on average, increased their confidence in their own understanding (1 = Not at all Confident, 2 = Unconfident, 3 = Somewhat unconfident, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Confident, 6 = Confident, 7 = A great deal of confidence).

Table 1: Means on teachers’ perceptions of artistry and creativity.

Measure	Pre-Program (N = 11) Mean (SD)	Post-Program (N = 11) Mean (SD)
Artistic perception (i.e. ability to understand and communicate about key visual arts, musical concepts, etc.)	2.40 (2.011)	3.60 (1.647)
Creative expression (i.e. creating works of art)	3.10 (2.079)	3.70 (1.767)
Art history (i.e. understanding of social/historical context of art)	2.50 (1.900)	3.20 (1.989)
Artistic analysis (i.e. analyzing and making judgments about works of art)	3.00 (1.944)	3.40 (1.838)

Teachers echoed this growth in confidence about their understanding of arts and creativity in their qualitative responses. When asked about how participation in the VCSI impacted them [*How has your participation in the VCSI affected your knowledge of and attitudes toward integrating the arts into your classroom? Into non-arts curriculum and activities?*], all but four responses indicated an increased appreciation of, and understanding about, how to integrate the arts into their classrooms. One teacher wrote, “VCSI has given me more ‘tools’ for the ‘toolbox.’ In other words, seeing the work of other artists and teams allows me to explore more of what is transferable to my class” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey). Another teacher responded,

“I am continuously intrigued by arts integration to the point where I am seriously contemplating an advanced degree in arts integration. I have found so many connections across my entire teaching day. It makes learning more accessible to all students while being fun and fostering creativity all at the same time.”

(Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

“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, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

In conversations with teachers during observations, multiple teachers discussed how working with the teaching artist and planning for the integration of arts changed the way that they see their disciplines and content areas. One teacher stated to her students, “I need you to know that I credit our teaching artist with helping me see science in a new light” (Teacher, Researcher Observation Notes). Another teacher, echoing the impact that the VCSI had on her arts integration, stated,

“My participation in the VCSI has encouraged me to further integrate the arts with non-arts curriculum and activities. It made clear that this works best when students are meaningfully included and engaged personally and when the content can be integrated with purpose.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

In a short response, another teacher simply stated, “I am more confident and less fearful!” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

Regarding arts integration, some teachers voiced their struggle to sustain the kind of efforts needed to fully integrate the arts and for longer periods of time. Some teachers wrote,

“I’ve always believed integrating the arts is necessary and have always been a proponent. It’s just really hard to do with all the pressures of what ‘needs’ to get done in a given year.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

“I learned that the constraints of being a classroom teacher made them less inclined to think in terms of art expression and approaching subjects more creatively.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

“I’m a big fan of integrating the arts, but the process needs to be more sustainable than this. My experience showed me that this is a huge endeavor and while I’m a proponent of the learning, I’m not in favor of the unpaid time required.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

Each of the teachers’ comments recognize the difficulty in time and energy to integrate the arts into their core classroom curriculum. One teacher, however, suggested that arts integration, like that of the VCSI, should also recognize that too much focus on the end product takes away from the goal of deeply integrating arts into the everyday process of teacher planning and classroom teaching:

“I’m discouraged, clearly. I believe in arts-integration deeply. If I could teach my content area with an art teacher in the room every single day, I would do it. We learned this summer that arts can’t be an ‘add-on’—and I was extremely excited about that concept. But I felt that this was that. I wanted to get this right. I don’t want CEL to stop this work—but I want this to be the starting point that highlights what needs to get better. I KNOW THAT ARTS ARE THE

ANSWER! I want help learning how to make arts part of the process—not just a showpiece at the end.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

Another area of clear impact was that this group of teachers suggested that they clearly valued the types of collaboration and co-teaching that the VCSI afforded them. When asked a basic question about the impact of the VCSI [*What factors—activities, relationships, resources, etc.—do you believe provided the BEST supports to prepare you to teach effectively with your partner teaching artist and with your colleagues? Help us understand why those factors were beneficial.*], eight teachers suggested that the most valuable aspect of the VCSI was the opportunity to meet, plan, and collaboratively work. One teacher wrote,

“This has been huge. Working with other teachers was gratifying and I felt actually closer to them than I had before. A band developed that made me feel connected to something larger than myself. More creative professional development was appreciated.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

“The collaborative teaching aspect of the VCSI was a little daunting initially, but I feel very grateful to have shared this tremendous experience with my colleagues. I think the collaboration within our school was one of the most important and meaningful results of the project.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

A final area of convergence was around the impact of teachers’ capacity to engage students in their own learning and to provide opportunities for students’ development of transferrable skills. The teachers participating in this project did have a distinctly positive response to the impact that the program had on their students’ learning and engagement. In the post-program survey, teachers agreed (often strongly), (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) with statements about the impact of the VCSI on their students’ personal learning, especially toward aspects of the Vermont Transferrable Skills:

- “As a result of the VCSI, my students demonstrated high levels of engagement in creative tasks.” ($M = 5.95$, $SD = 0.97$)
- “As a result of the VCSI, my students gained the confidence needed to present themselves or perform within a group creative project.” ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.42$)
- “As a result of the VCSI, my students increased their arts content knowledge and skills.” ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.43$)
- “As a result of the VCSI, my students increased their critical thinking and problem solving skills.” ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.20$)
- “As a result of the VCSI, my students showed excitement for learning in other curricular areas.” ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.37$)

Student engagement was a key impact of the VCSI, according to teachers. When asked about perceived changes in their students [*In what ways do you believe your students’ behavior and/or attitudes towards school were influenced as a result of their participation in the VCSI this year?*], all teachers made some comment in the post-program survey that their students were deeply engaged in their own learning during the VCSI curriculum implementation. Some ways that the teachers perceived their students were engaged showed that they believed that their students took ownership and self-direction of their own work. One teacher wrote, “They were

excited!” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey). Elaborating upon this general engagement, other teachers wrote,

“I believe that students' attitudes towards school were positively influenced by their participation in the VCSI this year. They were creatively engaged in personally meaningful work. They were also engaged as members of a group of artists working towards a shared goal—the culminating show.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

“The students loved the choice they had in creating art as well as the cross-curricular aspect of their learning.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

“Many students grew to own their learning, developed confidence and great awareness and skill with theatre arts alongside the science, art and music they were learning in their classrooms. Many students moved from being students to being performing artists and experts.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

“Students thoroughly loved the break in the schedule and a chance to think differently across multiple areas. I think they really liked our theme, which was deep. I saw more concentration, less distraction, and virtually no cell phones for days. I saw most students deeply engaged—very few begged for a break or left. They used their time well for large blocks of time without intervention.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

“They had the sense of participating in something large, something unpredictable in an exciting way, something collaborative and BIG.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

“They really felt ownership over the content as well as the music. They are the experts.” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey)

But was the impact of these practices a reality for all students, especially students who are often unengaged in the school? Most teachers agreed that the kind of learning experience that the VCSI encouraged did engage all students. In the post-program survey, teachers agreed (often strongly), (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) with a statement about the impact of the VCSI on hard to reach students:

- “As a result of the VCSI, students who often struggle or are disengaged in school were engaged and learned a great deal.” ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.17$)

Echoing these responses, a number of teachers specifically noted that this kind of learning experience provided greater access and thus engagement for their least engaged students. One teacher wrote, “Students who often struggle to express themselves and/or struggle academically were able to help compose and perform in front of their peers. All students felt successful!” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey). Another wrote, “This is a powerful and effective strategy for hooking ALL students” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey). Still another talked about how this kind of arts integration can be equitable for all students. She wrote, “I am continuously intrigued by arts integration to the point where I am seriously contemplating an advanced degree in arts integration. I have found so many connections across my entire teaching day. It makes learning more accessible to all students while being fun and fostering creativity all at the same time” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey).

However, more should be said about this aspect. Many of the schools gave students choices about whether to participate or not. Most teachers reported that all students opted to participate. In two separate conversations with teachers in different projects, this issue of equity emerged. In these interviews, the researcher asked which students opted out and which students participated. In both interviews, the teachers suggested that it was the same students who are only minimally engaged in school and thus the project may have served to exacerbate inequitable learning outcomes. Another teacher commented, “Some students were very engaged by the process. Other students struggled with the change in schedule and ambiguity. They expressed dismay that their teachers did not have an ‘exact’ plan” (Teacher, Teacher Post-Program Survey). Finally, teachers made specific recommendations for future VCSI programs. At least six teachers requested more planning time for unit and lesson plan work both by VCSI faculty and administrators in the summer intensives. A number of teachers discussed the dilemma of this kind of program with ongoing teacher work. In short, they struggled with the press to make concrete plans and the desire to explore, discover, and innovate. One teacher discussed this dilemma as a constant check on their capacity to take chances with curriculum. That is, often an idea for a learning experience would emerge, but a common response was that this wasn’t what should be covered or this skill is taught in another grade or class. Embedded in this discussion was the desire to have more time with artists.

Additional recommendations were specific to VCSI administrators and their desire to see the process plan simplified and communication streamlined across the 7 month process. Although the teachers clearly referenced that figuring things out on their own was the learning that mattered most to them as professionals, a few items caused additional stress. One of which is that the VCSI places significant emphasis on final performances for the purpose of presenting student work to parents and engaging the community directly into K-12 education. However, a number of teachers talked about the difficulty of weaving their own projects and student work into this final performance. Some teachers discussed what they thought was too much of an emphasis on the final product rather than student learning and connections within classroom work.

In a few separate recommendations, teachers talked about the difficulty of time, suggesting that their work may have been equal to more than three credit hours of professional development. Another teacher suggested that they needed support in advocating and communicating their needs for support from fellow colleagues and especially administrators. One teacher asked specifically, “What does it look like when an administrator is engaged in a project like this?” (Teacher, Teacher Interview). Lastly, teachers talked about the difficulty of securing resources and not knowing ahead of time some out-of-pocket expenses that the projects would require for completion.

Administrator Post-Program Results

Administrators were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of the Creative Schools Initiative. Across the seven sites, administrators reported positive responses to the kinds of work teachers were engaged in to develop curriculum, and noted that arts were more valued in their schools because of the projects teachers, artists, and students were engaged in. Additionally, the administrators universally suggested that their goals for integrating arts into their curriculum improved.

In the post-program survey, administrators showed near universal positive agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) with statements about the impact of the VCSI:

- “My experience has increased my willingness to host more Creative Schools Initiative projects.” ($M = 6.43, SD = 0.98$)
- “Working with our teaching artist enabled the members of our school to see an even greater value in teaching the arts.” ($M = 6.29, SD = 1.25$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative increased teachers’/administrators’ appreciation of the arts.” ($M = 6.29, SD = 0.76$)
- “This experience has increased my willingness to include more arts within our schools’ curriculum.” ($M = 6.29, SD = 0.95$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative has enhanced our school’s commitment to the arts.” ($M = 6.14, SD = 1.07$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative heightened my awareness of the benefits of arts education.” ($M = 6.14, SD = 1.21$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative taught me the value of collaboration with a teaching artist.” ($M = 6.00, SD = 1.29$)

The results indicated that the administrators valued the model of bringing artists into long-term residencies with teachers and students. These experiences brought greater awareness of the value of arts education across the curriculum, with many administrators indicating their willingness to include more arts education within the wider curriculum. These comments were echoed in qualitative responses from administrators. When asked about their understanding of the arts given what they observed in the VCSI [*Given what you’ve learned through the VCSI, how would you characterize the value of integrating the arts, creativity, and design thinking in the core curriculum?*], the administrators made some comments on the value of arts education and integrating creativity further into their schools. One administrator wrote, “I believe the value is always recognized however making the commitment to this type of project ensures it happens” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey). Another administrator made the case for arts education in terms of equitable learning opportunities. She wrote,

“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, Administrator Post-Program Survey)

Finally, two other administrators discussed the value of arts and creative thinking in schools as positive, feasible, and transformative curricular change. They wrote,

“One of the many positives that came out of this project for us was that our teachers were talking about how they wish such work could be a more regular component of the curriculum. They saw it as both doable and highly beneficial.” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey)

“As the principal, I was excited to see a value placed on integrating arts into all areas of the curriculum in the new Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS). The VELS encourage process, inquiry, and project-based learning. The VCSI gave teachers the opportunity to think about both teaching and learning

differently. I hope they integrate the practice in all areas of their curriculum.”
(Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey)

Administrators suggested additional areas of strength with the VCSI. They perceived that the participating teachers, and indeed to some extent other teachers in the school, have developed their practice in positive ways. More than just valuing arts integration, they observed actual practical changes that will transfer into other areas of the curriculum. In the post-program survey, administrators showed near universal positive agreement with statements about the impact of the VCSI on teacher practices in their schools, especially noting ways of addressing the Vermont Transferrable Skills:

- “Because of the Creative Schools Initiative, our teachers better understand how to collaborate across the curriculum.” ($M = 5.86$, $SD = 1.21$)
- “Participating teachers acquired new techniques to use in the classroom.” ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 2.56$)
- “Because of the Creative Schools Initiative, teachers at my school can create lesson plans that integrate the arts into the core curriculum.” ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.90$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative has enabled us to reach ‘difficult to teach’ students.” ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.25$)
- “Because of the Creative Schools Initiative, our teachers better understand how to support students Vermont Transferrable Skills.” ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.35$)

These results indicate that administrators see teachers developing practical skills for future use. Again, these comments were echoed in qualitative responses from administrators. When asked about their teachers’ professional learning [*Help us understand what the Creative Schools Initiative contributed (or did not contribute) to the area of Teacher collaboration and professional development*], the administrators made positive comments that this kind of job-embedded professional learning featured many positive attributes, especially those related to collaborative participation. One administrator wrote, “Teachers reported the experience as the best professional development they have had! Having dedicated time away from school improved their ability to develop intentional and meaningful curriculum” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey). Another administrator noted that the teachers shared their learning across the school, leading to greater collective impact for student engagement and learning. He wrote, “Our team collaborated beautifully on this project, and they shared their learning with colleagues” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey). Two others noted the active learning and coherence among a team of teachers to accomplish a shared goal. One wrote, “There was enthusiasm around the collaborative process and unifying the team” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey), while another put it this way,

“Once we could see the possibilities of putting collective talents to work towards a common goal, teachers found new ways to stretch from their own comfort zones. There was shared faith that it would all connect, and it did!”
(Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey)

Regarding standards, the administrators praised the work of the teachers to engage directly the Vermont Transferrable Skills, noting above high levels of agreement in the quantitative results. Administrators commented further on the Vermont Transferrable Skills as an important impact of the VCSI program. When asked about their work engaging the Vermont Transferrable Skills

[*Help us understand what the Creative Schools Initiative contributed (or did not contribute) to the area of Vermont Transferrable Skills (Clear and effective communication, self-direction, creative and practical problem-solving, responsible and involved citizenship, and informed and integrative thinking)*], the administrators commented on this positive outcome. One wrote, “The project puts these vital skills at the center of learning rather than as an after-thought” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey). Another noted, “All of these transferrable skills were evident within the performance” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey). The VCSI even spurred one administrator to think about future ways to continue to address these skills across the curriculum and across the schools. She wrote, “We need more work around these concepts. They are not yet part of our everyday jargon” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey).

However, one area of growth for future VCSI sites and in teacher development is to ensure that the practices are equitable across the full spectrum of students, as well as taking more closely into account Vermont arts standards. Administrators did not agree (they did not disagree either) quantitatively that equity and arts standards were taken into account when planning lessons. The issue of equity is one that emerged in the responses from the teachers as well. However, given a review of the teacher and artist planned units, the arts standards were present in all mutually planned units that teachers and artists collaboratively created. Some disconnect with Administrators emerged as they collectively responded without agreement to the following statements,

- “Because of the Creative Schools Initiative, teachers at my school other than art-focused teachers take state arts standards into account when planning a lesson.” ($M = 4.71, SD = 1.80$)
- “Because of the Creative Schools Initiative, teachers at my school can teach state arts standards to a diverse group of learners (including ELLs).” ($M = 4.29, SD = 1.89$)

Another area of strength noted by the school principals, however, was that the VCSI supported their school’s work to connect with their community in powerful ways. Quantitatively, the administrators agreed that the VCSI helped their school become better connected to the community:

- “Because of the Creative Schools Initiative, our schools became better connected to the community within which it exists.” ($M = 5.71, SD = 1.25$)

Qualitatively, the administrators discussed this in terms of growing networks and opportunities to engage organizations in the community and parents of children in their schools. When asked about the impact of the VCSI on school-community relations [*Help us understand what the Creative Schools Initiative contributed (or did not contribute) to the area of School-Community engagement*], the administrators made positive comments about the impact of the program. One administrator wrote, “Working with our local historical association provided many personalized and authentic ways for students to see their town through a new lens. And the town celebrated our students’ quality performance” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey). Others simply wrote, “bringing the community into schools via the arts is a brilliant idea” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey) and “fantastic school and community event!” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey) and “parents loved it as well” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey). Finally, one administrator noted that their

community does not often have world-famous musicians of the caliber of Evelyn Glennie come to their town, much less work directly with their children. This administrator stated, “The community enjoyed and they were grateful to have a world famous musician work with our children” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey).

As part of this community engagement, the administrators universally praised the work of the teaching artists. They acknowledged the professionalism of these individuals. When asked directly to comment on the work these artists, administrators gave universal praise:

Table 2: Percentage of school administrators commenting on artist professionalism ($n = 7$)

Measure	Yes	No	Unknown
The artist followed school district policies and procedures.	100%	0%	0%
The artist was punctual.	100%	0%	0%
The artist was well prepared for each session.	100%	0%	0%
The artist was an effective role model.	100%	0%	0%
The artist was available at times other than the workshops.	86%	0%	14%
The artist was involved with the faculty.	100%	0%	0%

The final area of strength noted by the school principals was that the VCSI directly impacted their schools’ students in positive ways. Quantitatively, the administrators agreed that the VCSI was highly beneficial to their students’ academic achievement, their engagement and appreciation of school and their own learning, and their collaboration skills and community engagement. The administrators showed near universal positive agreement (1= No Benefit, 2 = Very Little Benefit, 3 = Moderately Beneficial, 4 = Highly Beneficial) with statements about the impact of the VCSI on students’ academic achievement and skill development:

- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative has had a positive impact on students’ creative thinking skills.” ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.41$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative helped students develop the ability to work together cooperatively.” ($M = 3.71, SD = 0.49$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative has had a positive impact on students’ academic achievement.” ($M = 3.60, SD = 0.55$)

When asked about the impact of the VCSI on student learning and engagement [*Help us understand what the Creative Schools Initiative contributed (or did not contribute) to the area of Student learning and engagement in school*], one administrator responded, “Students reported increased investment in their learning due to the process-oriented nature of the project. They were able to work collaboratively with peers and create deep connections with the unit” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey). Another administrator noted that this academic learning occurred across the entire student body. She wrote, “From the practice sessions and performance, every student was engaged and learned the content” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey).

Further, the administrators reported that the VCSI increased student efficacy, their academic engagement, and enthusiasm for school, especially hard to reach students who are often not engaged in their academic learning. Quantitatively, they observed,

- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative helped students feel better about themselves.” ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.00$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative increased students’ enthusiasm for school.” ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.55$)
- “The students enjoyed working with the teaching artist.” ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.41$)

The administrators reinforced these quantitative responses with comments such as, “By all accounts, the projects was one of the highlights of the year for the kids” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey), and “The project reached some students that have low engagement otherwise, and almost all of the students involved spoke positively about their experience” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey).

Finally, the administrators noted that the VCSI gave students an opportunity to explore their own learning, to develop a greater appreciation for artistic work and to work on skills that will allow them to transfer that learning to other fields and projects. The administrators showed near universal positive agreement (1= No Benefit, 2 = Very Little Benefit, 3 = Moderately Beneficial, 4 = Highly Beneficial) with statements such as:

- “The Creative Schools Initiative allowed students to discover new talents.” ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.38$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative allowed students to acquire a greater appreciation of the arts.” ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.41$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative gave students skills that they will be able to transfer to other projects.” ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.53$)

Again, the administrators reinforced these quantitative results with comments about the impact that the VCSI had on students willingness to try new things and to discover new avenues of interest. One administrator wrote, “Students originally hesitant to participate became committed to a high quality product that they were proud to share in our local performance” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey). Another administrator stated, “Students were eager and excited to try something new!” (Administrator, Administrator Post-Program Survey).

Parents Post-Program Results

Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of the Creative Schools Initiative. Across the six elementary and middle level sites (parents at the high school were not surveyed directly), parents reported positive responses to the academic achievement and skills that their children learned, but they clearly highlighted that this program impacted their children’s self-efficacy, engagement in school, and enthusiasm for learning. Among all of these responses, only one parent at one school reported any negative reaction to the impact of the VCSI and this parent, in particular, voiced frustration at older students being required to work with younger students in a particular project that the parent suggested encouraged resentment. Keeping in mind this single response, nearly all parents made positive comments about the impact of the program on their children, with most parents making suggestions that this kind of program be

replicated and offering sincere thanks to the teachers and artists who made the program possible for the children.

One area of strength noted by parents was that the VCSI directly impacted their children's skill development. The parents showed positive agreement (1= No Benefit, 2 = Very Little Benefit, 3 = Moderately Beneficial, 4 = Highly Beneficial) with statements about the impact of the VCSI on their children's academic skill development:

- "Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative has had a positive impact on students' creative thinking skills." ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.87$)
- "Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative helped students develop the ability to work together cooperatively." ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.95$)

When asked about the impact of the VCSI in general and what their child learned during the project [*Question #1: Please help us understand what the most successful or rewarding experiences that you and your child encountered during this teaching artist residency. Question #2: Please describe the things (academic content, skills, feelings about school, etc.) that you and your child learned by participating in this teaching artist residency.*], parents responded with specific ways that their child used creative skills,

"The project she did brought out her love for family, let her express creativity, allowed her to expand her skill set, and brought her pride and self-satisfaction when she completed the piece. Very worthwhile." (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

"My daughter loved learning new art techniques and was interested in how she could tell stories through different media." (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

"All the new art skills she was taught brought a new level to her imagination." (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

"Our daughter gave us updates constantly about the progress of the project—composing music, writing lyrics and scripts, performing it all together." (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

"We found that the creativity needed for the performance was very rewarding. The whole program was very rewarding." (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

"My child learned that the school can be a place where honest creative and artistic endeavors and abstract emotional expression can flourish." (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

"It was so energizing to see the kids get excited about music, and this was an amazing opportunity to see what the kids can do when they have a teacher who approaches music as an opportunity for creativity rather than rote learning." (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

"My daughter reports she now thinks more creatively. My daughter felt proud about her achievements." (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

In terms of working cooperatively, multiple parents responded with specific examples of teamwork and group learning such as,

"(My child learned) methods for group work. Application to persistence/work and reward. Increased self-confidence, zest for creative arts." (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“(My child learned) just the sense of belonging to a group and having fun.”
(Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

Further, the parents reported that the VCSI increased student efficacy, their academic engagement and enthusiasm for school. Quantitatively, they agreed (1= No Benefit, 2 = Very Little Benefit, 3 = Moderately Beneficial, 4 = Highly Beneficial) with statements about academic learning such as,

- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative increased students’ enthusiasm for school.” ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.92$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative helped students feel better about themselves.” ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.98$)

The parents reinforced these quantitative responses with comments that highlighted the positive changes that they observed in their children as a result of their participation in the VCSI,

“My daughter came home from school, not being able to contain her joy and experiences with the program.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“I was amazed at how much she talked about the program and especially the teacher. It made a big impression on her in a very positive way.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“Without a doubt, it created honest enthusiasm for something truly artistic. It was so good.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“The performances were beneficial to self-esteem and working cooperatively with others.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“First the enthusiasm our son had for all of it! The whole project carried great importance to him. The collaborative writing, the songs, rehearsals and performance. For us it was a pleasure to watch our son through it all and then the whole project as a performance blew us away. Thank you so much—we still can't stop humming and singing the songs.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“Built his confidence. The whole family enjoyed the music/singing/prep for the play. His excitement was infectious.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“Her enthusiasm for school sky-rocketed. Learning history through singing and acting changed the way she thinks about history. Every evening at dinner, she talked on and on about the music and theater—AND about the historical events and people.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“My son was much more excited about going to school during the residency.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“He really enjoyed these lessons and looked forward to them. He was engaged and wanted to share with us, which he doesn't always do!” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“My son's attitude was awesome about this project and it improved his overall attitude about school.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

Finally, parents noted that the VCSI gave students an opportunity to explore their own learning, to develop a greater appreciation for artistic work and to work on skills that will allow them to transfer that learning to other fields and projects. Quantitatively, they agreed (1= No Benefit, 2 = Very Little Benefit, 3 = Moderately Beneficial, 4 = Highly Beneficial) with statements about their children’s appreciation for the arts and their creativity such as,

- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative allowed students to acquire a greater appreciation of the arts.” ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.81$)
- “The Creative Schools Initiative allowed students to discover new talents.” ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.90$)
- “Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative gave students skills that they will be able to transfer to other projects.” ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.92$)

Again, the parents reinforced these quantitative results with comments about the impact that the VCSI had on their children’s willingness to try new things and to discover new avenues of interest. One parent wrote, “My son learned a lot of content information about history. He was more excited to go to school with this active learning” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey). Other parents echoed how their children’s learning and the way the teachers and artists integrated cross-curricular content resulted in greater learning within the disciplines. “Our daughter has always liked school and she is very artistic. This experience combined academics and art for her in a natural way which was an extremely positive experience for her” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey). Other comments that echoed these responses included,

“More programs like this! What a great thing to get children to think outside of the box of specific disciplines – to get them to experience art overlapping with math, history and science together, etc. My son was so excited to attend Evelyn Glennie's concert after he did the program – and he has not been a concert kid! It ignited a spark in my son that I have not yet seen – an excitement to learn that I hope he can keep experiencing!” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“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, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“Please encourage all classroom teachers to provide multiple ways for students to engage cross-curricularly to integrate arts into the classroom!” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“It showed her how to apply science to everyday things, that team work is fun, and some teachers love to teach music.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“Excited to work with friends – share experiences at dinner – increased vocabulary, understanding of using tools to create objects – applied the musical experiments/experiences to her Math (struggle for her). Happy experience – reduced her anxiety about school! Could demonstrate linguistically what she experienced/learned.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“(My child learned) new experiences, new materials, new way of thinking. Seeing my child develop her own ecologically relevant thoughts and feelings, not just the jargon mom and dad spout.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

“This was an outstanding ways for kids to learn. We were impressed and pleased with how much our son learned! This was a great way to build kids' confidence in public speaking. I was delighted to see my son's performance and so impressed by all the kids. Definitely taught the kids about music, performance, and writing.” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey)

A couple of areas emerged from the parents that the VCSI should consider for future initiatives. First, the quantitative results for one of the survey questions suggest limited impact on the way that parents saw this initiative as a way to impact and improve their children's academic achievement. Parents responded to one question (1= No Benefit, 2 = Very Little Benefit, 3 = Moderately Beneficial, 4 = Highly Beneficial) that they saw very little to only moderate benefit for direct academic achievement,

“Participation in the Creative Schools Initiative has had a positive impact on students’ academic achievement.” ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.01$)

Further, some parents wished to learn more from teachers, artists, and administrators about the process of the program and offer ways for parents to become more integrated beyond the final performances. Many teams did include parents, and in the comments parents talked about how they learned a great deal about art, history, civics, and other subject areas. One parent stated,

“A lot of the content was interesting and new to both myself and my daughter. I was able to spend time with the artist discussing her work and found her to be informative and engaging. The final evening with exhibit had a great turn out and again showed that our school is a great school!” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey).

Incorporating parents across all of the sites in ways that encourage parent-school interactions for student learning may prove useful. As one parent wrote, “Involve parents more somehow so we can see (in a series of opportunities) how it is helping” (Parent, Parent Post-Program Survey).

Student Post-Program Results

Students that participated in post-program focus groups were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of the Creative Schools Initiative. Across the seven sites and eight curriculum units, students reported positive responses on their self-efficacy, engagement in school, and enthusiasm for learning. They also suggested that they experienced strong academic learning by integrating creative skills, artistic mediums, and their content knowledge. Students made specific comments about the way that this program impacted the development of the Vermont Transferrable skills. Finally, the students commented that this program encouraged them to be creative, supported their confidence to take chances in their artist work, and encouraged their own identification as artists. A look at the post-program surveys and final reflections showed that more than 95% of all students responded in positive ways to their experience in the VCSI. What follows is a discussion of the responses from students across all of the focus groups.

In each focus group, the authors asked students respond to a question [*What did you learn about being creative or being an artist during this project?*]. The students responded in ways that talked about both how they came to appreciate the arts more and how they began to see themselves as artists. They suggested developing the confidence to perform and to take chances and risks. The collaboration among students inspired a sense of community with the schools. The act of creating something together resonated with a number of students across the sites. The also recognized that being an artist means being collaborative and getting feedback on your work and thinking about ways of making improvements on the work that you've created.

Interviewer: What do you think about being an artist and being a creator?

Student: I think that the whole program itself helped a lot of people show their creative side more because some of them are really good artists and are really creative but didn't show it so the whole program itself kind of brought it out.

Interviewer: What was it about the program that allowed people to do that do you think?

Student: You could have fun and no one was going to judge you because sometimes a lot of people are scared that people are going to judge them...

(Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Other responses within this focus group and other groups suggests strong growth in students' awareness of their own capacities as artists and creators. Some examples include:

Student: It kind of as she said pushed us out of our comfort zone and made us more comfortable in another zone.

Interviewer: What was it like to get comfortable?

Student: Well I remember when I was about to go onstage I was like "Oh my gosh, I can't do this," and then I got on there and I started thinking "Oh it's not that bad."

Interviewer: What do you think helped you be able to make that change?

Student: It felt really good, because I was so scared the whole time because I was in the last act so I was nervous the whole time and I couldn't really enjoy it or anything but then I got up there and I was like "oh this is actually great." (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Interviewer: What changed?

Student: Just being part of the ensemble wasn't a giant act. It was just a small little... (interruption)

Interviewer: Hi! Join us!

Student: It was just a small little part then it just pushed me out of my comfort zone just a little but I got used to it. So then next time if we have it again I'll have maybe a bigger job. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Interviewer: Anybody else want to add anything about what you thought about your school after this?

Student: Well, as I was saying before, I thought we were very fortunate to get the chance to work on this project that brought a lot of people out of their shell.

Really it was a great experience and I would do it again in a heartbeat. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Interviewer: Anybody else? Has it changed for you? Where you thought of yourself a little bit differently about being an artist or being a musician.

Student: the only- before we did our piece, when we performed it in front of the school and parents and people that knew- and relatives of kids parents, before that when we were composing the piece, he's like, I felt like the famous composer Mozart. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #2)

Student 1: I liked when we were performing in front of everybody.

Interviewer: Tell us a little bit more about that, why was that your favorite part.

Student 1: Because I loved showing our creation...

Interviewer: Yes

Student 1: Um to everyone else.

Interviewer: Let's just talk a little bit about that before we keep going around, let's talk about the performance and what it felt like to get up there and perform something, perform your learning in front of other people, yeah.

Student 2: I felt good because I felt that were part of something that we did all together and then we could show people what we did.

Interviewer: Oh cool, why did you like that?

Student 2: Um, it was really fun for one thing, we worked for a while...like maybe a week or two, and then we got to show everybody what we had been working on.

Interviewer: Did you talk to your friends about working together on school projects.

Student 2: Yeah

Interviewer: Did anybody else talk about what it was like to work with friends on school projects? Yeah, go ahead.

Student 3: Um I felt like I was a part of something and since it took a really long time to make it, to do what we were doing and I felt good to actually perform it. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #2)

Interviewer: Go ahead, yeah.

Student: We just learned the song, I was really excited about that. And I play piano, so I went to my piano lesson and my piano lesson was at night, so I took the piece, because he wrote it up for us, and I took it to my piano lesson and she helped me learn it on the piano. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #2)

Interviewer: Go on, keep on going. What does that feel like? What did you do to be creative?

Student 1: You know, I feel more confident doing these kinds of things, cause to actually take on the fact that I can do a play in front of a lot of people, that kind of made me, after the play I felt like I could do more stuff. Cause I usually don't like to act or like sing or talk... anything in front of people, a lot of people, so now I'm better at that.

Interviewer: Cool, what does that make you think about you being creative, you being an artist yourself?

Student 1: Well, I think it's a new kind of creativity, because you know, we're making our own everything, and we're just making it ourselves, and that's not something, I don't think anyone of us normally really have an opportunity to do. So, I think we all had a chance to weave our own creativity into this one big production, and we got to perform it like twice in front of an audience.

Interviewer: Wow, that's great. Anybody else want to talk about that, about what it felt like to be creative during this?

Student 2: I thought it was really fun to be like able to perform and in front of so many people that really didn't know much about it. So, yeah, I think that was really cool.

Interviewer: So what did that make you think about being creative, about being an artist?

Student 2: I really liked being the person in charge, creating everything, and instead of being told what to do, which is what usually happens.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Student 2: Because now, like it's usually just us following directions, but like when we got the chance to create our own set, create our own all of everything, it was really fun and nice, because we were in charge and we got to do our own creativity, and everybody was incorporated, and nobody was left out.

Interviewer: Cool. That's great.

Student 1: I think it was really great that 80 kids, that we all put this together, like and everyone helped. I thought that was pretty amazing, because I've done some performances before, but it's usually run by adults, it was already written out, and it was much less than 80 people doing it. So, the fact that we were all able to work together and do this was pretty amazing. And I thought it was kind of almost a trust builder between our grade, now we know that we can do these big sort of things together. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #6)

Interviewer: I have another question. You were all talking about making things and solving problems and doing things together and being creative. Your teaching artist came, and she's an artist, so I wanted to know, what it felt like to think of yourself as being an artist. Does anyone think of themselves as being an artist or being really creative?

Student: Um because I liked being creative because it feels like you are making something for something. Like if you're making a picture for your mom or your dad, it will be they will like it because it's part of your family. Or if you make it for your grandma or grandpa.

Interviewer: Were you able to do that in this project?

Student: Yeah, we will be able to make stuff for the art gallery. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #4)

Interviewer: So you liked getting feedback from it. Anybody else want to talk about this one more time? Something that you learned?

Student: I learned, like what she said about feedback, that others feedback can help you. If you listen closely, like some groups feedback about having anchors, gave me an idea of an elevator because people can't get up and like with an anchor you still go up but the anchor is still on the ground.

Interviewer: Wow these are such wonderful things that you have all learned. You have one more?

Student: If you listen to the people that are telling you stuff about your house, they can be telling you improvements you can make. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #4)

Interviewer: Good, anybody else want to talk about what they think of themselves being a creative person, an artist, a map maker?

Student: When you make a mistake, it's not really a mistake, you can turn it into something even better than before you made the mistake. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #5)

Interviewer: What did you learn by doing this about being creative?

Student: Well there's that saying that a picture is equal to a thousand words, and I never really truly understood that until this project. Like your piece does not have to have words on it to convey a message that is inspirational to others.

Interviewer: That's pretty lovely. How did you learn that, how did you come to understand that a picture truly is more than a thousand words?

Student: I'm not really sure. I mean there's a couple of my pieces that have words on it, but it represents something it was a single word and not a sentence. I guess it was just a trial and error thing. I guess there was no way for me to just say oh I'm not going to have words in my piece, it was just something that kind of, you just did along the way.

Interviewer: What about that part about the, that you, you know you seemed to learn a little bit more - that art was about a message or about a feeling?

Student: Yeah. Actually, this project also taught me that when I look at other people's works to try to find their message in that, instead of just saying well what is the artist trying to mean, maybe that is the meaning that I'm supposed to find the message and it's different for everyone. And it just made me think of all the possibilities that one thing could represent, and my mind exploded with all the things that I learned from this and just the realization that there's more to life than just what we are shown.

Interviewer: So you discovered that...

Student: Everyone has creativity in them. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #7)

Students understood the cross-curriculum content learning and deeper engagement with core curriculum content in ways that they had not previously done. They integrated and synthesized across content areas which allowed students to gain insights into their core curriculum areas that previously would not have been possible.

Student: I liked it because it gave us a different perspective and we looked at these innovators in a different way like pretending to be them. So instead of just researching what other people thought about them and what other people think. We got to read like a biography about them or basically we got to learn more about them. And I think that we went deeper this time.

Interviewer: Why was it this time that you went deeper or what does that mean?

Student: Because usually when we do a project we're just writing a little piece about it. This time we had a monologue written and stuff. I was the governor so I just had a speech that I had to say. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Again, responses within this focus group and other groups suggest that students recognized that they were integrating knowledge and skills across content areas and that these connections made for rich learning experiences. Some examples include:

Interviewer: What was different about this?

Student: Well this one was big and larger scale and we got to do it in front of the whole school and everything. And it took a lot more time and planning. At first, our teaching artist just came in like once every month and then she started coming in more often during the time that we were actually getting everything together. So I think that at the beginning when she just started coming in for most of the classes we just played games and got the feeling of acting and learned about acting. Then we transferred that new knowledge to our actual performance and play. Also because it was an act or a performance or play or whatever you want to call it, not only did we get information about the characters, like actual hard information, we also got to feel some of the emotions and characteristics and stuff of the characters more than you normally would with a normal report. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Student 1: I think a lot of people in other places think that you're not really learning if you're just doing plays and stuff, but I think you learn more because you're not only learning what you would usually learn about the people and what they did. You're also learning about how they felt.

Student 2: Their emotions.

Interviewer: You're learning more? Can you say just a little bit more about learning more as opposed to...

Student 1: Because usually you're just writing a paper about what they did and who they were. But you know how they felt and what they were fighting for.

Student 2: Putting yourself in their shoes. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Interviewer: I'm going to follow-up on that. What was it like to know that how you said you weren't doing schoolwork, but you were doing schoolwork. What's it like to know that these two different of images of school [co-exist].

Student 1: I don't know, but like at school we're actually sitting down and working. Like when we were practicing, we actually got to - it was a much more fun way to learn... because we got to act out stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Student 1: Yeah, we sort of learned how to act and how to - like with the Revolutionary War in the same part.

Interviewer: Wait, what are you saying there?

Student 1: So, we learned acting and the Revolutionary War at the same time.

Interviewer: At the same time?

Student 2: And I think that, that may have helped other people, like learn better, or help them understand more, to act it out. When we first started the unit, kind of before we started the play, didn't know how the order of history went, but when we started the play, that gave me a much better visual of it.

Student 1: Yeah, since we did the play, I think it's like going to be- that we're going to remember it a lot more. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #6)

Interviewer: Okay, so here's the first question. If it's okay, I'd love for you to think back, to all of the things you did across the project. Think back, think back and let's just get it out on the table. What were your favorite things? Don't answer just yet, think back: what were some of your favorite things that happened during the time, all the way leading up to putting on this project, to the first time your teacher introduced it to you? Alright, why don't you get us started?

Student: One thing that I thought was really, really fun was learning things we knew about history and now what we know is crazy, like I wouldn't know that—I now can figure out when other events were. And all those things that I probably wouldn't think about if—if I just didn't know anything about history, and now I like reading about it. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #6)

Student 1: Oh, well this song writing had a lot that you had to say 'do you want to put that verse in right here?' It would make it like - cause if you put it in - we kind of did it in a sequence order. You know cause with history there's stuff building up to it, but there was a lot of other stuff to think about - so like if there's this verse that we want to put in, we might want to put it in the end, and if we put it in the beginning, it won't make sense. So you had to balance that.

Interviewer: There was a lot of that kind of thinking?

Student 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Student 1: Sort of like she said, it was really nice to incorporate visual arts, like singing and dancing, acting, art for the set, like into our normal learning, because we've never really done a play like this, so it's mostly just like what the teachers tell us what to do. And it's really fun to just act it out, like to see: Oh! This might be something I might want to do as a profession when I get older.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Student 1: This sort of adds on to her. It's adding something new to learning, it's not just sitting around writing boring essays and other stuff. It actually involves you in different ways. It doesn't just teach you the history, it teaches you arts and things that may be important later on in life.

Interviewer: Good.

Student 1: One thing with the songs was when you do a musical you almost never forget the songs in that musical, and the songs are about history, so the things in that I will probably never forget. Also, when you write a script, you don't really - it gets the learning that you just learn from books and stuff, and textbooks, to like a whole other level. You're actually learning how to write yourself.

Student 2: As she mentioned, it's more fun and interesting than a history lesson. So, we just read a textbook and take notes. For this, we did some reading, and also watched some videos about it. And then we all incorporated that, and then read some more - started reading a history book, and it was much more fun than just sitting there and not doing anything, and it makes me think that if the high school

did this, it'd be much more fun. I've been looking at high school like that's the textbook years, but if they do this...

Student 1: They do do that.

Student 2: I mean like, what they do, if they do what we did, like learning about the stuff: a time period, a big event, and then making a play about it, it'd be much more interesting. And I think this would be good for all the people in years to come, like the younger students too.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Student 1: Well, the thing is we always, we learn about something and have a unit. We either have a pretest before and learn about the unit or an end test of something like that, normally, but during this, we wouldn't really do that, and it was like essays been-there-done-that, and something that—like we've done that before and need to do that again, until after this, because one huge unit, with the play in the center and on the outskirts of it there were the pretests and the end tests, but it was more like—it was more about the center stuff than the outskirt tests and stuff.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Student 1: We learned a lot about writing dialogue, cause I never—when I write stories, cause I really like to write, I never knew that much about writing dialogue and how we can develop what the characters point of view is. So writing the script really helped us learning about those historic people while writing the script.
(Student Post-Program Focus Group #6)

Interviewer: You like to be able to design things.

Student: and look at your town from a different perspective.

Interviewer: Why did you like that thinking about your town?

Student: Because you don't necessarily see your town from above and you don't know how many people are around you and you get a different perspective and you are like WOW there's a lot of people here. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #5)

Student 1: My favorite part was painting.

Interviewer: Okay cool.

Student 1: I liked the fact that we could do whatever we wanted, like we could choose the lines to use to describe the feelings, and we could choose the colors we wanted to. Like we had this blank sheet of paper and we were the ones choosing how to fill it in. And that was awesome because you could do an off-colored, or some people even left the page blank, and maybe it was laziness or maybe that actually meant something, and I just loved that process.

Interviewer: Okay, so the painting part for you. What about you?

Student 2: For me, I saw it as an opportunity to find out what I could do because I never took an art class in school so when I saw the finished product I was actually really impressed with myself and I felt like I found another part of me that I didn't know existed before.

Interviewer: So you're thinking about the whole, your favorite part when I asked you that question, is just sort of thinking about yourself and the whole.

Student 2: Yeah like how it inspired me to find my true self I guess. It really did help me just to expand my mind about what I was able to do and how world issues does affect me as well. It was the whole, I just liked all of it. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #7)

Interviewer: Cool. Why did you like that?

Student: I don't know, because it was something unexpected. Because I've heard so many times people talking about... walls and how those were a bad thing, but I've never actually thought of them as a good thing. So I was just kind of like mind blown because it was something new.

Interviewer: So, that's the kind of learning or that's the kind of school that you like?

Student: Mhm.

Interviewer: What has happened in the school that allowed you to have your mind blown?

Student: The presentations, the talking about the walls, the whole painting process, the fact that they make us think about a problem that was like a big problem for us, and people talked about global warming, I talked about sexism and how that it's kind of like a war between women and men, and sometimes it's not like a man decides to be sexist against women but it's something that's been there before and is cultural. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #7)

Interviewer: Remember, this is called the Creative Schools Initiative. So, I'm asking you to think of yourselves as artist, as a creator, and how this project has helped you learn to do that?

Student: I guess just doing this project, I guess in terms of thinking about other things in music, it helps you to think a little bit more about the things you do, in a way that, you might take something from this project, like how you evolve the music that the science class made into a piece, and you might think about transforming other aspects of your school, of your learning, like thinking more abstractly about math, or social studies. Just thinking about more creative aspects of those kinds of subjects.

Interviewer: Is there something you've thought about like that, in social studies or math? Something that has happened since when you were like "oh" you can think about this in the same way that I thought about the science project?

Student: Not specifically, not, but I think it's really important to think about those things while you're learning, even if it doesn't relate directly, but to just try and add that aspect to your learning. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #8)

Students felt like they were able to demonstrate their own self-direction and that the curriculum was personalized in a way that validated their interests, their passions and their goals for learning.

Interviewer: Yeah go ahead.

Student: Well I liked it because, well one of the reasons. I think that it was student based a lot, like the kids got to plan, or the kids at least felt like they were planning a bunch of it. Kind of like the adding and taking away stuff. That was a

lot of what the kids thought that should be, whatever way it was. Also with the acting thing, I like to think of it like we all have those people inside of us, it just takes specific things to bring them out. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

They made specific suggestions about how this program impacted their view of school. They came to understand the work that their teachers did for this program to occur and for an artist to come their school. In many cases, students felt that they became the teachers which demonstrates their self-efficacy and value for their own work.

Interviewer: Oh cool. Yeah go ahead back there.

Student: I think that we're really lucky to be able to do stuff like this and teachers always tell us that sometimes we take it for granted, but others schools don't get to do this stuff and they don't get to have as much fun like they might have the same programs but we do but we work on it more than they do. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Further examples of student self-direction and self-efficacy include:

Interviewer: What about the contribution that you all were able to make to your community?

Student 1: I think that the community liked it because they pay tax dollars to our school and I think it was good for them to see what we're actually doing at school so they're not just wasting money.

Interviewer: How are you sure this isn't a waste of money?

Student 1: Because it was fun.

Student 2: Because it shows that we've been doing something useful with those tax dollars, not just wasting them.

Student 3: Because you got like a full thing. You didn't just get like maybe one or two people talking, you got a lot of the middle school team and you got the full band, and there were even lights and things. And then you could see even more the next day. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Interviewer: Ok, so, what did doing this project, with the artist and your teachers and with each other, and that performance, how did that change or how does that make you feel about your school?

Student 1: It makes me feel like our school is special and unique because not many schools get the opportunity to have someone that good at music or that special come to their school. So, I felt like that our school was a very lucky one, to have an artist come who was such a good musician.

Student 2: I felt like our school has done a lot of fun things for us and this is really fun like even though not all the kids were able to do it, I feel like all the kids got to be a part of it because like we had a concert and they got to see it so I felt like it was, everybody got to be a part of it.

Interviewer: What did it make you feel about your school?

Student 2: I think our school was very, I think it was a good idea on their part, because in school sometimes you don't do as much stuff...like all school work, but this was something, it was a break from school work but we still learned something.

Interviewer: Could you say what you were going to say?

Student 3: I was actually going to say it the same exact way as she was.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Student 3: I felt good because the people liked it and when the artist left from our school like our school...

Interviewer: Yeah, that's great.

Student: I felt like school was my home.

Interviewer: You felt like school was your home?

Student 3: It made me feel like our school was like the... the unique school because not only did we have an arts resident every year I've been here, but they are so good. Made me feel like this school is the special school. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #2)

Interviewer: What about, yeah keep going, when you watch the teachers, what was it about the teachers working together that you really liked?

Student 1: It's kind of unusual like he said, because usually she's teaching us but she doesn't know as much about music as our artist. So it's kind of funny watching her get taught.

Interviewer: Yeah ok?

Student 1: I feel so special because seeing our teacher work with someone else outside of the school that goes to... that goes all over the world.

Student 2: He's been all over the world?

Student 1: Seeing him come to our school, I felt special and there was funny seeing our teacher be taught, because she usually teaches us and she never well we never see her usually get taught.

Interviewer: Yeah you usually don't see teachers learn.

Student 1: They learn what we think and know, about what we know.

Student 2: We are teaching the teacher yay.

Student 1: It's school for both of us.

Student 2: I feel that we were really lucky because our teachers had to actually do one of the courses to get the artist to come here and like he said he's been over the world, so I felt really lucky that the teachers did something for us and our artist came to work with us. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #2)

Interviewer: Why did you like that?

Student 1: Because we got to do a play, and act while teaching them (referring to their teachers), so it wasn't like we were doing it directly.

Student 2: Yeah, I felt like we were being in charge. We never get to do anything by ourselves, or be in charge.

Interviewer: What was it like to be in charge?

Student 2: I think definitely counting down to the play, because at first the teachers had to teach us everything, but I think after that we sort of took control of it. And they stepped back, which was really nice, because we almost never get to do that.

Student 1: Yeah, I mean when we were writing our script, everybody- we went into small groups and then we wrote a script together and then [indecipherable],

but that was still all our ideas, and I think that it turned out really well. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #6)

Interviewer: How did this change the way you look at your school and your teachers, your classmates?

Student 1: I think it was really nice to see our teachers actually take a step away from us. They were still kind of controlling us, it's new for them too. They're probably just as used to giving us directions as we are to following them. And I think finally, once we were done with all the learning and reading, and more learning, they were just ready to say, "Hey, this is you guys."

Interviewer: What did it make you think about your school, having done that?

Student 1: Like we can accomplish a lot more.

Interviewer: Yeah, what about you two over here? What do you think about your school now, and your teachers?

Student 2: I think I respect my teachers more, after they just let us do it, and I don't know. I feel like everything is just more together. Now I know I can count on them for us to take over, and not just them forcing us to do things.

Interviewer: What did you think about school and learning in school, and ways that you might have changed what you thought about school before, and now what you think about school today, having done that?

Student 1: Well, I thought it was a fun experience instead of just sitting in a classroom and just learning about having to write papers on it. It was better to learn about it and then get to perform.

Interviewer: Why was it better?

Student 1: Because, I like acting, not acting, but just like hands on stuff, not just sitting around and that was fun.

Student 2: Adding on to hers, I can't always focus and think if it's every day, someone giving an instruction, and then go practice it and submitting it. I can't always focus with that, like after a full year of it, like last year we didn't really do that. It's like, okay, I can kind of get what we're doing and I get that it's good to do that, but for me, most of my learning comes from stuff that is hands on, and how you have to make it your own, and I just really liked that and the experiments are really cool. You either do it this way, and do it right, or you mess up and you try it again. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #6)

Interviewer: Good, and you wanted to say something too. Go ahead.

Student: So going back to what she said, like you're wanting to go to school and work on the play, because since we were working on that, it motivated – I think it motivated a couple kids in our class to, who actually want to go to school, to work, to literally work on the play, because it was so much fun. Especially when we got to go and practice on the stage, that made me want to keep waking up.

Interviewer: Awesome, yeah, go ahead.

Student: It was also just really—it brought you together with other people, so it's not like just you doing this part. You actually want to work together to do something.

Interviewer: So you felt like—do you think that this helped you guys all be a team or part of a bigger community?

Students: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah? How so?

Student: It felt really good that you just don't—it's like you all worked together and it's not—it's like you're all one person working on one thing. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #6)

Finally, students also directly addressed specific Vermont Transferrable Skills including communication, responsible citizenship, creative problem solving, and self-direction,

Interviewer: So what does it make you feel about your school and your teachers that you were able to do that this time?

Student: I feel like it's going to be helping us along our whole lives and being able to speak in front of the public. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Interviewer: Which of those things (VT Transferrable Skills) do you think that you really changed personally as a result of this project? Yeah, go ahead.

Student 1: I would say communication.

Interviewer: How so?

Student 1: I feel like I'm always sort of, like I participate but I never really get into it. So I always sort of, if I have to, I communicate with the teachers, like "this is my work here" whatever. But then, in this one we really communicated with each other and I really got a chance to actually get inspired and get involved.

Student 2: Well, I think, actually, it is two words. Responsible citizenship. Because this project really brought us closer together with our community. And I think reputation. Our school's reputation is really good. At this point in time with all the things that we've done, we go to Stewardship Day and stuff like that and green up day. We not only make our school better I think we make our community better too. And when we do projects like the performance thing that we did, the play, and then we did the performance thing in our school, and then students from all grades the participated in the performance in a school in another community, I think that it also extended a hand to the other schools. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Interviewer: I'd love to hear from everybody about this (VT Transferrable Skills).

Student 1: I think problem solving.

Interviewer: Yeah tell me a little bit about it. How did you get better with this project about problem solving?

Student 1: Especially when we were working on our dance, there were a lot of problems like with the song and what we were supposed to do and stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah go ahead.

Student 2: I think self-direction because it really helped us kind of guide ourselves to what we really liked. I like to dance but I didn't know I liked to choreograph and I really liked helping people with their costumes. And it kind of helps...you're directing yourself to almost what you like more.

Interviewer: Nice. Thank you.

Student 3: Self-direction because I felt like we were the drivers of this project. We directed this play basically. We had the help of our teacher and the artist, yeah, but I felt like they left most of the weight on our shoulders to give us the experience.

Interviewer: Yeah so you feel like you've improved in that area? Yeah go ahead.

Student 4: I would say self-direction. I keep wanting to say destruction.

Interviewer: Yeah, no not self-destruction.

Student 4: Direction. Self-direction. Because I agree with her that we just kind of got to learn more about ourselves and what we liked. I've always wanted to be an actor but I don't like speaking in front of large audiences so I think being in the ensemble just gave me a chance to know what I like.

Interviewer: Oh you'd like to jump in too? Yeah.

Student 5: Communication. Really I just felt like I could make a difference. A change, you know? Well actually Jane Goodall said, "You can make a difference, but you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make." I felt like this was a great difference in our community. Pushing people and showing people and just being ourselves. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #1)

Interviewer: Which one of those: communicate, problem-solving, self-direction, community membership, which one of those were you really like, "Oh, I did that, I changed?"

Student 1: I sort of think problem-solving, because there was so many problems that came up and we had truly no idea how to do it, but we just came up with a way and everything worked out in the end.

Interviewer: Okay, you just came up with a way. How did you just come up with a way?

Student 1: There was so many people thinking about problems and usually when a teacher says think about this, most people are thinking about something else, but we were all thinking together, that's why we got so good at problem-solving.

Interviewer: So what did this tell you about being a problem-solver in the future?

Student 1: I think it's pretty good, like it's going to help us.

Interviewer: What are you going to do in the future when you're faced with a problem?

Student 1: Well, just solve it as best you can.

Interviewer: What else? You don't just have to talk about problem-solving, there's those other words.

Student 2: Well, for me I think community was, I know that even kids that weren't part or friends or knew us personally, they came, and also older adults came too, and actually that's what really surprised me. I thought that it would just be the parents and the siblings of the kids in the play, but I know Ms. _____ went. _____, I'm pretty sure she went, and just other people from the community, and I thought that was really cool, that we were able to teach people who we didn't even really know that well and that kind of they noticed us in a way, in a community that we never really had a chance to be a part of before.

Interviewer: That's nice. Any others, of those? Yeah, go ahead.

Student 3: I agree with her, like the community, the young students came to our dress rehearsal and sent us cards afterwards and it was really nice to see people younger than us learning. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #6)

Interviewer: Sounds good, what about you?

Student: Well, problem-solving was also mine because we were missing a costume, so we had to really adjust. We rushed around looking for it and... But eventually we couldn't find it, so we had to continue on without it.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Student: I also thought problem-solving was a big part of it.

Interviewer: Why was it a big part of it for you?

Student: Because there were a lot of parts where either our props weren't ready in time, so we really had to hurry up and problem-solve it, make it less complicated in some parts. We had this tree and we were going to tie it to a big stand, but we couldn't put it on the right way, because it wouldn't work. So we ended up having to do it in a different way, so we had to problem-solve with that, and another thing was that it, the doll in the play, the character's doll wouldn't hang on a tree, so we had to have someone stand behind the tree. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #6)

Interviewer: What do you think?

Student: Communication. The way, like the whole process of thinking how to communicate what you wanted to say about like a certain problem or about like something biological on a sheet of paper. Like thinking of like how can I show someone what I mean. So like thinking about how to draw, what colors to use, that was something that I really liked. Also, the problem solving. Was it...that said that the future generations they should ask what problem do you want to solve instead of asking them what job they want to do. Because that was like something I thought when you said problem solving.

Interviewer: That's cool. Thank you. Last word. What do you think?

Student: Well, I guess, again communication. That was a big part I think because we all learned that the communication part of it was we could speak to people who didn't speak our language through the art and I thought that was really powerful. Like the guest artist came in and showed us a bunch of pictures from around the world on walls. So I thought that that was really powerful, like I could see what the artist meant, but it was in a different language. And I thought that was really powerful, like being about to connect with people who live so far away from me and we have nothing in common but yet this universal idea is of, it just amazes me, I can't even comprehend the amazement I got out of it. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #7)

Interviewer: That's pretty good. What about you guys?

Student: I think communication. I feel like the project allowed me to, helped me be able to... I have trouble... Usually I'm kind of a quiet person and not as assertive as other people. And I'd say it gave me an opportunity to communicate more with the other classmates, and professional musicians, and kind of be able to

say what I think. Also with when we were in the classroom in the science class, they had what they wanted it to sound like and we kind of had to go around and be leaders almost, and talk to them. We had to ask them what they wanted it to sound like, because it didn't seem like they were readily explaining everything, so I kind of had to move them along and really ask for what they wanted.

Interviewer: How'd that feel?

Student: I think it was a good experience, it gave me a good opportunity.

Interviewer: So if I understand, you went into that class and tried to help them see and understand what they were doing? And that was an opportunity you hadn't had before?

Student: Yeah, I'd say.

Interviewer: Or not that often? That sounds great. What were you helping them figure out?

Student: A lot of the stuff they had was tapping on the table or their hands or whatever, and I was trying to help them transfer that into something we could do with our instruments. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #8)

Interviewer: How'd you do it? How'd you guys solve that problem?

Student: Creativity.

Interviewer: Like how?

Student: I mean, there was a lot of, cause there was a lot of walking around the science lab. We had our instruments, so there was a lot of, "How does this sound?" And then we'd play something and does that sound like- we'd talk to the other students. Does that sound how, like the music sound you were trying to convey or how can we change it? And so then they'd say, "No, it needs to be more sharp or more aggressive or sort of more airy." And then we had to keep playing and figure out. So it was a little bit of trial-and-error. Actually a lot of trial-and error. (Student Post-Program Focus Group #8)

Conclusions

Overall, the results from the evaluation suggest that the Creative Schools Initiative has been primarily a positive experience for nearly all participants. Teachers found the professional development to be a powerful learning experience that built upon their desire to collaborate with their colleagues and artists. Teachers developed their capacity to integrate artistic work and creativity into their classroom teaching in ways that they had not been able to do in the past.

Administrators welcomed this program into their schools and found it to be valuable for student learning and community building. Administrators overwhelmingly found the artists to be professional and major contributors to what they viewed as powerful learning experiences for students.

Parents of elementary and middle level students were appreciative of the kinds of experiences that their children were afforded in this program. They reported important positive changes in their students' enthusiasm for school and their personal development and growth as artists and creators.

Finally, students saw the program as a unique opportunity afforded to them by their schools and teachers. They were appreciative of their schools and teachers for working to provide this program for them. They developed their confidence as creators by recognizing the iterative process of collaborative work with fellow students. They viewed the VCSI as a way to make a meaningful impact as young people on the life of their schools and communities. They particularly saw ways that the VCSI offered them opportunities to integrate and synthesize their learning in core academic classes like science, math, and social studies by using artistry and creativity as levers for engaged and deep understanding of big ideas and content.

Finally, all participants made clear that the VCSI resulted in the kinds of knowledge and skills embedded in the Vermont Transferrable Skills, especially the students' capacity to communicate clearly, to integrate and synthesize across disciplines, to creatively problem-solve, to become more self-directed and ultimately to grow as responsible citizens.

These major results lead to a series of key findings. First, the VCSI was, indeed, implemented across all school sites and among all teacher teams. Investments made by teachers and schools for this professional development program resulted in robust collaborative, job-embedded professional development experiences and deeply engaging learning experiences at all sites. Major community-wide and school-wide performances and exhibitions were developed and implemented that incorporated all participating schools. Moreover, the initial teacher teams grew at every site to incorporate additional teachers in the VCSI. Additionally, one of the stated goals of the VCSI is to bring learning opportunities to students for whom resources and availability of arts and creative work are not readily available. Although the VCSI schools represented a group of schools with a small degree of higher levels of socioeconomic status as a whole, the program was implemented at multiple levels and across multiple communities across the state of Vermont. These findings suggest that the VCSI did follow through on its effort to implement a collective impact strategy to advance teaching and learning through sustainable capacity building within and across multiple organizations, as well as on the level of the individual practitioner (Kania & Kramer, 2011). The intervention built stakeholders and momentum across multiple planning intensives, multiple artist residencies, and the cumulative statewide exhibitions and performances incorporating whole communities into the educational experiences.

Second, the VCSI's final performances made for deep student engagement and excitement, as well as powerful moments of academic and personal learning for students who gained confidence and school pride at the conclusion of these events. All teachers recognized the value of the final projects, but a number of teachers struggled with the ambiguity of the end goal, felt that the performance piece required an unsustainable amount of additional work on their parts, and felt that the process of learning was overshadowed by the end performance. However, the performance was a key feature in building community-school relationships and the parents of the students, especially the elementary and middle level students, found these opportunities invaluable to engaging with their children's learning. The VCSI developed and promoted portfolio showings, public performances, and other exhibitions to create venues that drew people together, building trust between parents and teachers. Parents, administrators, and students all recognized these moments as a source of pride for residents in a community, especially students who often feel ignored from public proceedings. Moreover, teachers' social networks increased

by collaborating with community organizations and other teachers in the area. These results and others suggest that the VCSI increased most teachers' capacities to establish ties and learn how to work, consult, and coordinate with other organizations in the community (Guetzkow, 2002, pgs. 6-7).

Third, teachers reported that the VCSI was a powerful and engaging professional development experience that resulted in heightened awareness, understanding, and integration of artistry and creativity directly in their planning, teaching, and assessment. Effective professional development will lead to improved teacher knowledge and practice, which will in turn improve student engagement and learning outcomes (Yoon, Duncan, Lee et al., 2007). When done well, professional development does work. The VCSI offered teachers opportunities to collaborate in ways that they were not able to do in the past with both outside artists and their teacher teams. Teachers saw the VCSI as a success for their students in terms of their engagement and learning, especially as it relates to the kinds of competencies embedded in the Vermont Transferrable Skills. Teachers reported increased levels of confidence in implementing large, complex, and integrated cross-content curriculum, but worried about the sustainability of this kind of teaching strategy due to the additional time requirements for this kind of collaborative endeavor and lack of administrative support. These indirect measures, in addition to examination of student work and student and parent responses, suggest high levels of student engagement and powerful learning outcomes that should result in further learning.

Following the review of Garet, Porter, Desimone, et al. (2001) of high-quality professional development, the VCSI is an effective form of professional development. Garet, Porter, Desimone, et al. (2001) suggest that effective professionals should focus on content that will engage students. As the program incorporated unit planning and direct changes to practice, the focus of the VCSI remained firmly on the cross-curriculum content. The few teachers who voiced concerns about the program voiced problems with the VCSI's emphasis on end performances and preparation directly for those performances, as opposed to deep student learning of academic content. The authors also suggest that active learning rather than passive learning by teachers should be a key feature. Teachers reported sustained collaborative problem solving across the program. In fact, where teachers reported frustrated, they overwhelmingly became frustrated because too much active problem solving occurred and they expected and hoped that future iterations will simplify processes and communication which is a fair response from busy teachers who must juggle difficult tasks on a daily basis. That said, additional effective aspects of professional development according to Garet and his colleagues are that the program of teacher learning should cohere with school and student objectives. As the program was directly related to teacher developed curriculum for students, the VCSI showed a high level of coherence. That is, instead of top-down professional learning, the strategies and practices emerged from the teachers themselves working closely with professional artists. Finally, Garet and his colleagues suggest that duration is a key feature of good professional development programs. The teachers desired more time to work and plan with teaching artists but the duration of the program as an eight month sustained endeavor places at the high end of long-term teacher professional development. Thus, teachers and administrators, despite frustrations and some exhaustion, found the program deeply valuable to their professional learning.

In regards to professional development, the VCSI is a job-embedded program that directly impacts teacher work in local contexts. Prior research on successful job-embedded professional development include sustained collaboration, opportunities to learn within the work schedule, and facilitator skills (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan et al., 2010). All results pointed to deep and sustained collaborative work by teachers among themselves and with the community artist and much of this collaboration emerged within the work schedule and daily practices of teachers. Teachers used in-school meeting times, but clearly requested more opportunities in the future from their administrators, to collaboratively plan with their work schedules. Finally, the artists as facilitators of cross-content learning were near universally praised for their capacities to make connections between the creative process of their artistic domain and the core curriculum within which that integration occurred. All of these results suggest that the VCSI is an effective job-embedded professional development opportunity.

Fourth, near universal support for this kind of learning experience was voiced by students across all VCSI sites. VCSI supported teachers to create learning opportunities for students to “integrate knowledge and modes of thinking from two or more disciplines in order to create products, solve problems, and offer explanations of the world around them” (Boix Mansilla, Miller, and Gardner, 2000, pg. 18). In all focus groups and nearly all student post-program reflections, students stated that the learning experiences respected them as individuals in ways that their schools do not often do on a regular basis.

Moreover, in all focus groups, nearly all students responded that they felt validated in their creative work. Their perception of school changed so that they felt proud of their school and thankful to their teachers for providing them this learning opportunity, and moreover they perceived their own growth in the competencies embedded in the Vermont Transferrable Skills, especially in the skills of creative problem solving, integrative thinking, and communication. Parents of participating students echoed these student results by providing powerful commentary on the way that their children became engaged in the VCSI. They reported students’ high levels of satisfaction with their learning experiences, high levels of both artistic and creative learning as well as content based learning, and they responded with high levels of support for teachers and administrators who integrate creativity into their teaching on a regular basis.

Previous research (Rabkin and Redmond, 2004) described by Ludwig and her colleagues (2014, pg. 3) suggests six key features of good arts integration education. Based on results from all stakeholders, the teacher-artist team linked an art form and an academic discipline in deep ways. The teachers’ pre- and post-program results indicate that they became more fluent in the artistic disciplines. The content of the curriculum included material related in meaningful and direct ways to students’ experiences. Indeed, students reported in focus group interviews that the VCSI experience afforded them the opportunity to direct their own learning and find their passions and unknown interests. Additionally, a review of the units and lesson plans in addition to direct participant observations showed that teachers incorporated basic skills and vocabulary of the content areas and disciplines, as well as higher-order skills such problem-solving, communication, and integration. All of the units culminated with an artistic product that demonstrated student learning of content and skills and contributed to the public culture of school community. These results suggest that VCSI did, in fact, incorporate the key features of effect arts integration education.

Fifth, across all participants in the evaluation, the strength of the teaching artists as teachers, creators, and models of arts integration and community building emerged as a consistent theme. Universally, the teaching artists participating in this project were perceived to be highly invested in the work that teachers and students were doing. Individually and as a group, they modeled integrative thinking and creative work for students, explaining and engaging the insights of their disciplines while finding unique paths for cross-curriculum integration, student engagement, and deep experiential learning opportunities. All stakeholders valued the opportunity work closely with a world-class musician such as Evelyn Glennie. These results of these experiences with artists and the work that teachers did collaborating and integrating artistry and creativity into student learning experiences resulted in increased appreciation for the arts by students and increased capacities to do the kinds of competencies that are necessary for creative work including autonomy, flexibility, a preference for complexity, openness to experience, sensitivity, playfulness, tolerance of ambiguity, risk-taking and risk-tolerance, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, wide interests and curiosity (Villalba, 2009). Moreover, students exhibited and perceived a keen development of “creative confidence,” especially the ability to stick with a challenge through completion (Mwalimu, 2014, pg. 10). Thus, the creative schools initiative resulted in the development of many students’ creative competencies.

Finally, the VCSI evaluation engaged nearly all stakeholders in the project. Artist feedback was limited as well as direct evidence of teacher understanding and embedding of the Vermont Transferrable Skills into their planning, curriculum and assessment. Moreover, the VCSI evaluation was able to highlight multiple sources of indirect measures such as student, teacher, and administrator perceptions, but did not collect direct evidence for many areas including evidence of teacher capacity for equitable teaching and learning, teacher assessment capacities for creative learning, and specific insights from teachers about the nature of personalization, competency-based education, and Vermont Transferrable Skills. Future iterations of the evaluation should build upon the strength of the teaching artists to magnify the work that they do and make clear among stakeholders the role of the evaluation as a formative tool for teacher development as well as a summative response to the learning across schools.

Ultimately, this initiative has taken an important first step toward infusing schools across the state of Vermont with resources to support students’ engagement and achievement, especially those in low-income areas who often lack resources and instruction needed for creative work (Catterall, 2009). As the State of Vermont moves towards more personalized learning and a greater emphasis on competency-based educational outcomes, schools and teachers are going to require professional development and resources to provide students with opportunities to discover, design, and create signature work that will support the Vermont Transferrable Skills. The opportunity in the development of the VCSI is to create what Booth (2013, pg. 27) calls the “artful school” where administrators and teachers “Create not only lifelong learners, but also lifelong *yearners* who can creatively transform almost any assignment, any job, any life circumstance into something of greater value.”

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