

# **Creativity Academy Evaluation 2013-14**

**Report by Sheila McGuire, Head of School and Teacher Programs, Minneapolis Institute of Arts**

## **Introduction**

With the assistance of Audience Focus, MIA staff conducted an evaluation of our Creativity Academy multiple visit program. We created outcomes and indicators for success, and collected and scored student performance data. We are using this data to refine the Creativity Academy program for the 2014-15 school year.

## **Evaluation Question**

To what degree did the student performance across four lessons show growth and change across the following program outcomes:

### **1 Elaboration**

Students will increase their ability to apply ideas and concepts discussed in the group to their own writing and art making. Specifically, they will be able to include personal details in their writing assignments, and show an understanding of the indicated formal properties (color, space, etc.) in their artwork.

### **2 Synthesis**

Students will increase their ability to include and communicate details from their writing into their artworks and, alternatively, include details from their artworks in their writing.

## **Methodology**

The methodology for assessing the degree to which Creativity Academy addressed program outcomes included a student performance assessment and an online teacher survey. The assessment protocol and scoring rubric (Appendix A) were developed collaboratively by the MIA educator and Audience Focus evaluator. The teacher survey (Appendix B) was developed by the MIA educator.

All students in both schools were included in the evaluation sample (approximately 160 students total).

MIA staff and volunteers used documentation kept throughout the course of the program to score student performance. MIA staff photographed the student artwork and creative writing for all four lessons. When possible, the artworks were photographed side by side with the

writing. The documentation for each lesson was saved as jpegs in files by lesson number and teacher name.

## Student Growth Across Lessons and Dimensions

### Results of student performance scoring across lessons and dimensions

	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
Writing Comprehension <sup>1</sup>	93	65	88	86
Writing Application – CONTENT <sup>2</sup> <i>(based on 3-point scale)</i>	<b>1.79</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>1.54</b>	<b>1.25</b>
Creating Application - FORMAL PROPERTIES <i>(based on 2-point scale)</i>	<b>1.50</b>	n/a	<b>1.25</b>	<b>1.55</b>
Creating Application – CONTENT <i>(based on 2-point scale)</i>	<b>0.81</b>	n/a	<b>1.26</b>	<b>1.71</b>
Creating/Writing - SYNTHESIS <i>(based on 3-point scale)</i>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.79</b>	<b>1.35</b>	<b>1.64</b>

<sup>1</sup>The numbers for writing comprehension indicate the average correct score for all students. Highest possible score was 100.

<sup>2</sup>The numbers for all the following measures are averages or mean calculations of all students' scores

The scores for both schools on all lessons showed very little difference between the students in both schools.

Although the Writing Application – Content scores show a statistically insignificant drop in average score (based on a three-point scale) from the first lesson to the last, it seems useful to keep in mind that the writing assignments became increasingly complex. Even though in lesson 3 the students returned to the diamante poem structure they used in lesson 1, the activity required them to think about the poem in terms of a story narrative--what happened before a

storm and what happened after it. The final writing activity, a haiku based on the ceramic animal the student created, required a higher level of complex and creative thinking. The structure of the haiku and the instruction that the final line be a “twist” of some sort challenged students to think quite differently than in the diamante poems and the lesson 2 reflection writing.

If we determined moving forward that seeing a strong increase in writing ability is important, we would need to rethink and redesign the writing assignments to be more alike so that they reinforce specific writing skills. Because writing is being done throughout the school year, we are more inclined to keep the writing assignments varied and aligned with the desired outcomes for the art making activities. We will refine the writing assignments and instruction to eliminate some of the challenges we noticed throughout the first year pilot.

Seeing growth in the areas of elaboration and synthesis is more important to the goals of the study, as we designed the lessons to support fourth graders in their ability to make connections between the group discussions and writing, and their own creations, and to creatively connect their own creative writing and artworks.

The data strongly suggest that students increased their art-making ability in these areas – elaboration (content) and synthesis. The steady increase in creating/content scores demonstrates that students are increasingly better able to incorporate specified content into their artwork by the last lesson. The synthesis scores show a pattern of increased ability to create something new based on making connections between the discussion and their own lives, and especially between the writing and visual artworks. The jump in the synthesis score for lesson 2 most likely relates to the nature of the writing assignment, which was a reflection piece rather than a poem. The synthesis scores for the lessons in which writing activities followed art making are in both instances higher. This suggests that students had greater success when asked to write about their visual artworks than when asked to base their artworks on their writing.

We also experimented with scoring the works on a holistic scale to see if there was any change in students’ ability to not only synthesize ideas, but also to create writing and art that corresponded to each other in particularly expressive ways. These scores are based on gut reactions to the expressive qualities of the works rather than on specific criteria built into the lessons. Overall, these scores were even higher than the synthesis scores. This might point up the challenges of measuring those ineffable qualities of creativity. These scores were not significantly different across lessons.

## **Teacher Responses**

The Teacher survey was sent to all seven teachers using Survey Monkey. 5 of 7 teachers responded to the survey questions.

The first question asked teachers to what degree they felt Creativity Academy achieved its goal of helping students master the skill of synthesis? Using a 4-point scale from Not at all helpful to very helpful, 3 teachers felt it was helpful, and 2, very helpful.

When asked to comment, one teacher suggested, "Having examples of what a child may draw would be helpful for some. The kids have little to no background on creating new products."

Additional questions unrelated to the stated outcomes were asked to help MIA staff learn more about teachers' perceptions of the program.

In response to the second question, "If you could change one thing about the Creativity Academy program, what would it be?" the teachers' responses were varied. While one teacher expressed that she would make no changes, three suggested things they would add: more trained teachers or aides (because she appreciated the CA teachers' experience with students), an additional trip to the museum for a teacher led tour during the school day, and more time for students to practice art skills like how to sketch, how to use oil pastels, how to paint etc. and then time to apply them to a final project. All of these responses suggest the teachers valued the program and wanted additional support for student success.

One teacher expressed concern over the fact that students did not get to take home the noisemakers they made at the museum. MIA staff had envisioned reassembling the class "sound suits" on mannequins for the exhibition, an idea which ultimately was not realizable.

When asked, What they would like to see more of in the Creativity Academy program, the teachers responded with some very practical ideas, ranging from introducing the students to more well known artists (Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Warhol) first, and introducing the unfamiliar artists later; providing materials and ideas for teachers to use prior to the visits so that students were ready to do a final project; and exposing students to another art medium. One teacher responded, "Just more Creativity Academy!" Again, they were thinking about ways to increase their students' likelihood of success.

Additional comments were positive and demonstrated how much the teachers valued the program. These included:

"Thank you for what you do. It is fun and good for children to be creative and use critical thinking."

"We loved your program!!!"

“Great experience for our students.”

“I loved everything about our partnership and look forward to next year.”

### **Next steps**

For the 2014-15 school year, we will refine all of the lessons based on our experiences and observations in the classroom and at the museum, as well as on what we learned from this study. We will fine-tune the Creativity Academy lessons to more clearly express what it is we are asking students to do. By redesigning some of the writing activities we can help students to be even more successful in making connections between the class discussions and writing activities and their own writing and creating (artmaking), and in relating their own creative projects to each other.

In order to encourage students to think reflectively and critically about their artworks we are adding a metacognitive piece as a follow up to each visit. We will ask teachers to have students write responses to two reflection questions about their artworks following each visit. We anticipate that reflecting on their artworks will encourage students to think more about what did and didn't work and inspire them to think more critically about subsequent assignments. For example, in lesson 1 we will ask students to think about what their portrait drawings show other people about themselves and their family, and ask them what they would do differently if they could make another portrait.

In conclusion, it is encouraging to see that students improved in their ability to apply skills of elaboration and synthesis. This suggests that Creativity Academy is making a difference in the ways the fourth graders are able to elaborate upon experiences and synthesize skills and knowledge. The teachers' observations that the goal of synthesis was achieved by their students supports the findings in the evaluation of the students works.

We anticipate that with some redesigning of the lessons including clearer presentation of our expectations for each assignment that we will see even more growth in the areas of elaboration and synthesis. By adding the reflection writing following each visit, we anticipate the students will begin to think more about the assignments and how they approached them.

## Appendix A

### MIA Creativity Academy Protocol for Scoring

#### Student Name

#### School

- Battle Creek Elementary
- St. Paul Music Academy

#### Teacher

- Dunsmore
- Gores
- Luciano
- Cain
- Christopherson
  
- Filipek Johnson
- Van Kampen

#### Scorer Name

- Amanda
  
- Justina
- Tatiana
- Marilyn
- Sheila

#### LESSON 1

Writing Comprehension - ACCURACY (% correct) - Lesson 1

Writing Application - CONTENT Lesson 1

0      1      2      3

Creating/Writing - SYNTHESIS Lesson 1

0      1      2      3

Creating Application - FORMAL PROPERTIES. Lesson 1

0      1      2

Creating Application - CONTENT. Lesson 1

0      1      2

Holistic score-Lesson 1

0 1 2 3 4

**LESSON 2**

Writing Comprehension - ACCURACY (% correct) Lesson 2

Writing Application - CONTENT. Lesson 2

0 1 2 3

Creating/Writing - SYNTHESIS Lesson 2

0 1 2 3

Holistic score. Lesson 2

0 1 2 3 4

**LESSON 3**

Writing Comprehension - ACCURACY (% correct) Lesson 3

Writing Application - CONTENT. Lesson 3

0 1 2 3

Creating/Writing - SYNTHESIS - Lesson 3

0 1 2 3

Creating Application - FORMAL PROPERTIES - Lesson 3

0 1 2

Creating Application - CONTENT - Lesson 3

0 1 2

Holistic score. Lesson 3

0 1 2 3 4

**LESSON 4**

Writing Comprehension - ACCURACY (% correct) Lesson 4

Writing Application - CONTENT - Lesson 4

0 1 2 3

Creating Application - FORMAL PROPERTIES - Lesson 4

0 1 2

Creating Application - CONTENT - Lesson 4

0 1 2

Creating/Writing - SYNTHESIS -- Lesson 4

0 1 2 3

Holistic score. Lesson 4

0 1 2 3 4

## Appendix B

### Creative Academy Teacher Survey

1. Creativity Academy aimed to encourage your students to put together parts (discussion of MIA artwork, creative writing, and artmaking) to create unique artworks and poems.

To what degree did the program help your students master the skill of synthesis?

- Not at all helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Helpful
- Very helpful

Comments?

2. If you could change one thing about the Creativity Academy program, what would it be?

3. What would you like to see more of in the Creativity Academy program?

4. Additional comments (optional)