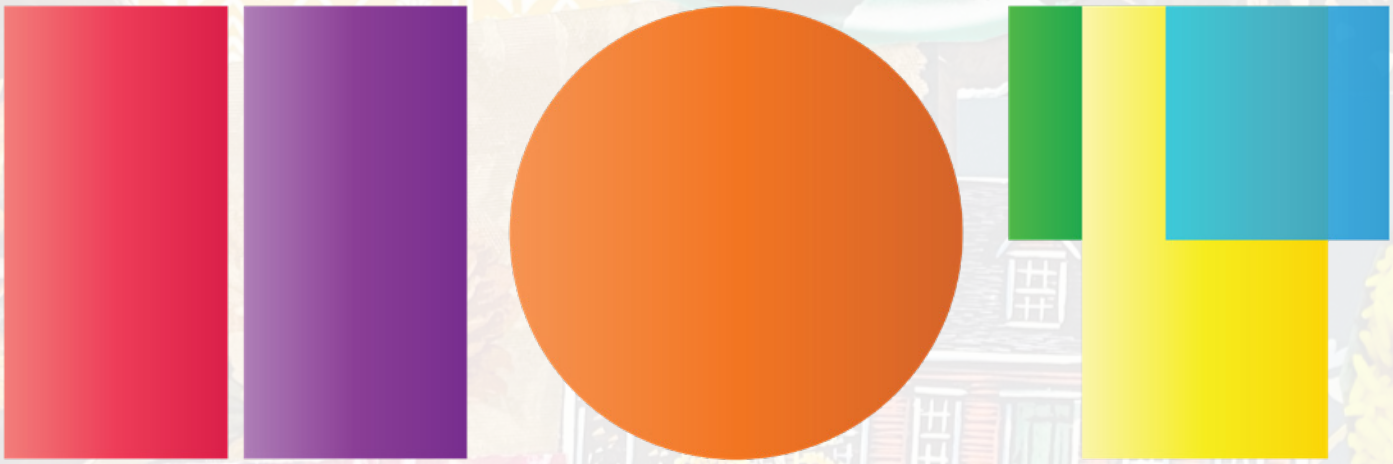

HIGHER ORDER THINKING SCHOOLS™

Developmental Evaluation Report

January 2023

Arts for Learning Connecticut

Affiliated with the national Young Audiences Arts for Learning network

Gene Diaz
Senior Research Partner
PERG Learning

PERG LEARNING

Higher Order Thinking Schools, a program of Arts for Learning Connecticut
Developmental Evaluation
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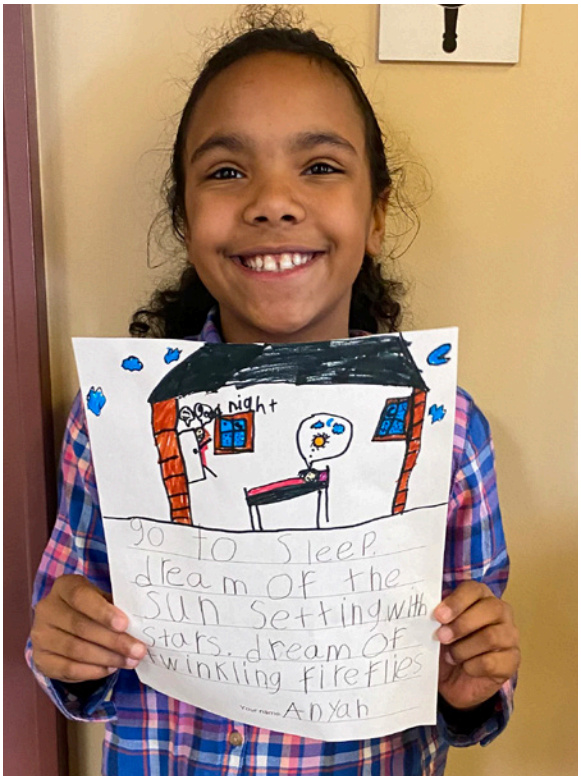
Executive Summary

Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Schools is a school-wide arts in education program of Arts for Learning Connecticut (AFLCT), originally developed by the Connecticut Office of the Arts. HOT Schools has been implemented at a number of schools across the state since its relaunch in 2020, utilizing a variety of arts learning strategies—including School-Wide Performances, Arts Workshops, Arts Integrated Residencies, and Professional Development—to improve student engagement, enrich school culture, and expand teacher practice.



PERG-Learning was contracted through Senior Research Partner Gene Diaz in Spring 2021 to lead a developmental evaluation of HOT Schools. This evaluation included the development, implementation, and review of numerous research tools and protocols—including surveys, observations, and interviews with key stakeholders. Ultimately, this project was meant both to investigate the impact of the program as it was being implemented, and to support the organization in developing its ability to measure impact and use qualitative and quantitative insights for quality assurance and continuous programmatic improvement.

This review of extensive data confirms that the three main goals of HOT Schools—to improve student engagement, enrich school culture, and expand teacher practice—have been met in the 2021-22 academic year across the HOT Schools cohort. Moreover, it is clear that the core programmatic elements have been implemented with fidelity and creative vigor, and that HOT Schools effectively supported Social and Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Teaching for the students, Teaching Artists, and educators who participated in the program.

Key recommendations for future development of HOT Schools include: continue to focus on the needs of each partner school; ensure AFLCT staff has sufficient capacity for maintaining the vigorous and time-intensive research and evaluation protocol; continue to engage outside evaluators periodically; develop partnerships with other statewide and regional leaders in education and arts learning; secure multi-year funding from a diversity of sources; and consider a flexible programming model.

The full report includes detailed data in the form of survey results and analysis as well as quotes from diverse stakeholders. It also offers a thorough discussion of the program and its methodology, its leadership and organizational context, its impact through the lens of the three goals, and its strengths and challenges. Also included is a close look at the professional development of Teaching Artists that HOT Schools provides.

Introduction

Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Schools was created by and originally operated in Connecticut for more than two decades through the Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA) in the state's Department of Economic and Community Development. In 2020 the program transitioned to AFLCT with the support of a 3-year partnership grant from COA. At the time of this report the re-launched HOT Schools is into its third academic year (2022-23), which is the first year in the program's current iteration that public schools in the US are no longer functioning under significant pandemic protocols.

The HOT Schools program offered in each partner school consists of four arts in education components that are tailored to meet specific needs and objectives articulated by school leadership at the beginning of the academic year. In keeping with the original vision for HOT Schools at COA, these components make up what is considered a continuum of practice, that is, they provide arts access, arts connections, and arts integration.

- **School-Wide Performances** (SWiPs) by local and regional artists and arts and culture groups for students, faculty and staff. These performances are aligned with a theme determined to be significant for each partner school.
- **Arts Integrated Residencies** (AIRs), in which 2 Teaching Artists collaboratively teach with classroom teachers twice-weekly over a period of five weeks, for a total of 10 days. Teachers and Teaching Artists work together to design and implement classes for students that integrate ideas and/or concepts between and among arts and curricular content disciplines, effectively advancing knowledge and/or skills in arts disciplines while concurrently advancing knowledge and/or skills in content areas and disciplines. Classroom teachers participating in the residency attend two 2-hour residency planning sessions and one 1-hour debrief session with the Teaching Artist(s) and the HOT Schools Director.
- **Arts Workshops** (AWs), in which Teaching Artists offer one day in-class engagements that engage students in creative processes and the creation of student artistic work in the context of content area learning.
- **Professional Development** (PD) for teachers and Teaching Artists. Each Professional Development is a 3-hour training designed and conducted by academically prepared professionals who are knowledgeable in arts integration and/or other relevant fields, and/or professional Teaching Artists with multiple years of experience. During the academic year 21-22 all teachers and Teaching Artists attended Professional Development trainings on Culturally Responsive Teaching and on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills and knowledge, as well as the applications of Multiple Intelligence Theory originated by Harvard professor Howard Gardner.

In addition to the program elements outlined above, each school agrees to participate in overall planning of the program with the school leadership and a support team that includes a non-arts and arts teacher. Schools also receive an invitation for faculty to attend the HOT Schools Summer Gathering—a full-day participatory event during which the accomplishments of the year are celebrated, stories are shared, and teachers and school leaders engage in a plenary Professional Development and Art Workshops led by HOT Schools Teaching Artists.

Methods

PERG-Learning was contracted through Senior Research Partner Gene Diaz in Spring 2021 to lead a developmental evaluation of HOT Schools in its new iteration as a program offered by Arts for Learning Connecticut. AFLCT is the Connecticut affiliate of the national non-profit organization *Young Audiences Arts for Learning*, formerly *Young Audiences*. PERG-Learning worked in collaboration with the HOT Schools Director (Christopher Eaves) and the AFLCT Executive Director (John-Michael Parker), and beginning in summer 2022, with the new HOT Schools Program Manager (Kim Thibodeau), reviewing HOT Schools' evaluation approaches and discussing program goals, structure, and organization. Additionally, PERG-Learning conducted a summative evaluation of the HOT Schools program during academic year (AY) 2021-2022. Over the past 18 months we have evolved into a research and evaluation team (R&E team) that works collaboratively to review, collect, organize, manage and analyze data about all components of the HOT Schools program to shape both formative and summative program research and evaluation.

PERG-Learning takes a utilization-focused approach to evaluation, keeping in mind the importance of feedback for continuous program improvement while maintaining program quality. This report describes the evaluation and research processes, analysis, and discussion of the HOT Schools program's foundational frameworks, and includes recommendations for future improvements.

The research and review processes began concurrently with the design and revision of data collection methods for the summative evaluation of the HOT Schools program components, which gave Dr. Diaz the opportunity to become familiar with the organization and staff, as well as the frameworks, processes and tools that HOT Schools was using for both formative and summative evaluation.

These collaborative research and review processes included:

- Review of existing HOT Schools evaluation materials, interviews, and reports.
- Review and revision of existing HOT Schools stated goals and outcomes, including research questions that addressed specific elements of each of the three goals.
- Mapping these goals into a logic model.
- Developing a teacher and student end-of-year survey for the summative evaluation (including drafting and reviewing a successful IRB proposal for one of the participating school districts).
- Review, and subsequent revision, of:
  - The assessment processes, forms and tools used by Teaching Artists and classroom teachers to design and plan Arts Integrated Residencies.
  - Surveys completed by teachers, Teaching Artists and students following each Arts Integrated Residency and Arts Workshop.
  - Surveys completed by Teaching Artists and teachers following Professional Development.
- Design and implementation of:
  - Focus group interviews with teachers and Teaching Artists.
  - Survey of, and interviews with, school leaders.
  - Focus group interview with the AFLCT Executive Director and the HOT Schools Director.
  - Observation and informal interviews at the HOT Schools Summer Gathering.
- Organization, management, and analysis of the above.

HOT Schools has highly refined and comprehensive evaluation processes that have been developed by the HOT Schools Director, Christopher Eaves, over several years. Guiding our review of HOT Schools' processes and research tools were these questions: How can the current evaluation system be streamlined so that it can be integrated into the team's workflow in a manageable and meaningful way? What are the specific goals and research questions that data should address? What are the most effective ways to collect and analyze these data to yield useful, actionable information? How can these same data inform current and potential HOT Schools school leaders, grant funders and arts education policy and practice?

In addition to the development and refinement of the evaluation instruments and processes noted above, the team organized and analyzed survey data from the year 21-22. We created a comprehensive spreadsheet with all of the students', teachers', school leaders', and Teaching Artists' responses along with a text outline of the instruments and selected responses. Distinguishing between responses that could be aggregated and quantified and the open-ended qualitative narrative responses, we determined available performance measures (metrics) and excerpted relevant quotes in order to draw conclusions and take-aways from them, many of which have found their way into this report.

Our R&E team leadership was dispersed and shifted according to the subject of each meeting we held (always via Zoom, given our remote locations). Guided by an 18-month work plan that was modified over the course of our collaboration when needed, each of us led discussions related to our areas of expertise. Since Christopher, a theatre artist and arts educator, played a critical role in previous iterations of HOT Schools as a Teaching Artist, a Professional Development facilitator, and lead administrator, his knowledge of the program was the most comprehensive and in-depth and his insights were often deferred to by other members of the team. John-Michael, with experience as a musician in addition to non-profit program implementation and administration, brought organizational and data management skills along with his fundraising and grant-writing perspective to the table. Kim Thibodeau, while joining later in this collaboration, also brought previous experience with HOT Schools as a Teaching Artist and administrator, providing new perspectives and prompting new questions. And Gene, a former Teaching Artist, brought her experiences as a former board member of the Massachusetts affiliate of Young Audiences Arts for Learning and her expansive research and evaluation experience. This unique blend of overlapping experiences and areas of expertise contributed to the lively discussions, learning opportunities, and mutual respect that the team enjoyed.

During the many meetings held by the team we reviewed, revised, and created research instruments—primarily surveys—to better align with the outcome goals of HOT Schools, and to address the need for continuous program improvement. As we discussed the wording, organization, presentation, and analysis of these tools together we tightened our focus and broadened our understanding of what it meant to achieve the three goals. The complexity of this task included recognizing that these goals overlap, e.g., a rich school culture was necessary for student engagement (and vice versa!), and that language and words hold different meanings in different contexts. The struggles to make sense of, and derive meaning from, research data reflected the nature of much research into arts learning programs. Experiences in the arts require reflection on the *quality* of the experiences from the perspectives of the participants, and this is what we did.

HOT Schools 2021-2022

In alignment with AFLCT's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and in order to ensure a focus on the students and communities facing the greatest challenges, schools must enroll at least the statewide average of students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (42.5% in AY 2021-22) or students who are Black, Indigenous,

or People of Color (50% in AY 2021-22)[1] in order to be eligible to join the HOT Schools cohort and implement the program at their school. School selection was ultimately decided between the HOT Schools Director and AFLCT Executive Director in consideration of a number of criteria including previous participation with HOT Schools or other arts learning programs, demonstrated commitment to arts learning and the program's stated outcomes, school leadership commitment and capacity, and available budget. While there was no financial commitment from the schools for AY 2021-22, schools had to commit to the following to take part in the program:

- Host the complete set of programming before the end of the school year, including Professional Development which requires the release of teachers and staff and provision of substitute fees, as necessary.
- Identify a key staff member as the HOT Schools Site Coordinator, to serve as a liaison between the school and HOT Schools. Liaison responsibilities include communications, scheduling, full participation in PD, assessments, and reporting. The liaison attends quarterly peer meetings with other HOT Schools Site Coordinators.
- Invite a small set of staff to form a HOT Schools Leadership team—to include non-arts and arts teachers—and provide time for the team to meet regularly.
- Principal and key staff members attend quarterly peer meetings with members of other partner schools.
- Work with HOT Schools staff to set and track progress on school/district goals as aligned with HOT Schools goals.
- Provide relevant student and teacher data—to be determined collaboratively—to assess the above, likely including: attendance, academic performance, behavior, SEL progress, teacher practice.
- Allow HOT Schools to document activities via photography and videography and share school documentation with AFLCT—to be determined collaboratively with appropriate releases.
- Provide basic supplies to support activities.

During the school year 2021-22 there were 5 schools in the HOT Schools cohort serving students K-12:

Ashford School K-8 (Ashford Public Schools)
381 students, 50 teachers

Church Street Elementary K-6 (Hamden Public Schools)
256 students, 31 teachers

F. J. Kingsbury Elementary K-5 (Waterbury Public Schools)
458 students, 35 teachers

Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy K-8 (New Haven Public Schools)
389 students, 50 teachers

Warren Harding High 9-12 (Bridgeport Public Schools)
1,224 students, 83 teachers

Each school was offered 2 School-Wide Performances, 5 Arts Workshops, 2 Arts Integrated Residencies, and 3 Professional Development trainings for teachers. Teaching Artists were also provided with 3 Professional Development trainings. Thus, HOT Schools provided a total of 10 School-Wide Performances, 25 Arts Workshops, 10 Arts Integrated Residencies and 18 Professional Development trainings in 2021-22.

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1 https://edsight.ct.gov

HOT Schools Leadership

HOT Schools is led by Christopher Eaves, who worked with the program for 20+ years during its time with Connecticut Office of the Arts. He ensures the successful design, implementation, and evaluation of the HOT Schools program by managing dedicated staff members and ensuring the successful work of any independent contractors engaged in support of the program. Christopher is also a highly-skilled Teaching Artist with more than 10,000 hours in the classroom; this background informs his leadership of the program, including in particular the Professional Development he offers directly—and arranges through other facilitators—for Teaching Artists. He intentionally shapes HOT Schools as "TA centric," creating a program in which Teaching Artists are respected, nourished and provided opportunities to improve their teaching practices and their careers. Since the Teaching Artists work as independent contractors (as opposed to employees), Christopher inspires and motivates them by holding high expectations for the quality of their work in HOT Schools, facilitating thorough processes for program design and implementation, and providing them with on-going Professional Development opportunities to grow in their professions.

HOT Schools context within Arts for Learning Connecticut

The mission of Arts for Learning Connecticut is *to inspire young people and expand their learning through the arts.* Founded over 40 years ago as an affiliate of Young Audiences, AFLCT has remained a leading provider of arts in education programs in CT, serving over 100,000 PK-12 students in over 60% of CT towns annually. The organization works primarily in schools—also in other civic institutions—offering performances, workshops, residencies, and professional development. The work spans the creative spectrum—from spoken word and contemporary visual art to classical Kathak dance and improvisational theatre. AFLCT's diverse roster of 85+ TAs (with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality) is reflective of the students they serve, half of whom are people of color, and half of whom qualify for Free or Reduced Price Lunch.

In an effort to deepen educational impact for students and support the professional practice of TAs and teachers, AFLCT partnered with the CT Office of the Arts in 2019 to adopt the nationally-recognized HOT Schools, with its history of 25 years of successful practice. The transition of HOT Schools arose from a shared commitment to closing the opportunity and achievement gaps and using the arts to support school improvement, especially within BIPOC, rural, and socioeconomically-challenged communities.

In addition to HOT Schools, AFLCT maintains robust and expansive fee-for-service and responsive arts learning programs. Representing roughly 25% of total organizational annual expenses in Fiscal Year 2022, HOT Schools is a central—and growing—element of AFLCT's programmatic, mission-aligned efforts. Indeed the momentum and enthusiasm generated by the program's transition to AFLCT, even (and especially) during the time of COVID-19, underscores the critical role of this "flagship" program in the organization's future and strategic development. One particularly exciting aspect of this momentum included the welcoming of a number of Teaching Artists onto the Arts for Learning Connecticut roster who had previously been affiliated with HOT Schools and the CT Office of the Arts; as such, many of these veteran TAs remain critical providers of HOT Schools programming and enjoy expanded opportunities for impacting young people and educators outside of the HOT Schools cohort.

Growing pains associated with the re-launch of HOT Schools at AFLCT include confusion about affiliations and program operations among teachers and school staff as well as Teaching Artists. These challenges are mitigated primarily through the strength of the partnership between the HOT Schools Director and the AFLCT Executive Director.

Findings

Meeting the goals of the program

The HOT Schools program has articulated three overall outcome goals that reflect the values of the program origins and its continued belief in the value of the arts in education. These goals are to:

1. Improve student engagement
2. Enrich school culture
3. Expand teacher practice

To understand the theory of change that these goals represent, the R&E team collaborated on creating a logic model that organizes the component parts of the program and includes the stakeholders who participate. See Appendix A.

Understanding how HOT Schools meets each of the three outcome goals for the program helps demonstrate the impact of the arts learning activities that take place in partner schools. Evidence that HOT Schools was meeting these goals was discovered within the existing survey instruments created by HOT Schools that assess the impact of each program component listed below:

- Arts Integrated Residencies (AIRs): Surveys of teachers, students, and Teaching Artists
- Arts Workshops (AWs): Surveys of teachers
- Professional Development (PD): Surveys of teachers and Teaching Artists

In addition, we created 3 new surveys to assess the overall program impact on the school at the end of the year. These surveys were distributed to the school leaders, teachers, and students in grade 5 and above whether or not they participated in Arts Workshops or Arts Integrated Residencies. The teacher Professional Development included all teachers, and the School-Wide Performances were available to all teachers, staff and students. Formal and informal interviews with teachers, Teaching Artists, and school leaders also generated informative data as did observations of students and teachers in Professional Development training and during the HOT Schools Summer Gathering.

In the following sections, we will explore each goal in further detail, and reference specific qualitative and quantitative measures of this impact.

Goal 1: Improve Student Engagement

Objectives:

- Students actively participate in their learning
- Students develop and demonstrate Social and Emotional Learning skills of self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills
- Students express themselves creatively and in ways that are culturally relevant to them

Students who show up for school, who actively participate in learning activities, who focus attention on their individual and collaborative participation, and who relate and communicate with others respectfully and effectively can be said to be engaged in learning. The three objectives listed above allowed us to inquire about what determines the impact these arts learning activities have on student engagement, such as showing up prepared to learn, actively engaging in planned learning activities, demonstrating SEL skills, and expressing themselves creatively and artistically.

One measure of student engagement is reflected in that 95% of all students in the 5 partner schools engaged with some component of HOT Schools programming for at least 3 hours over the course of the year.

What students say about *improving student engagement...*

A majority of students were sure that their experience in their Arts Integrated Residencies (AIRs) was a positive one for them, and that they would remember what they had learned during that time. Since these residencies were designed collaboratively by teachers and Teaching Artists to integrate the arts with curricular content learning, we wanted to know if including the arts improved their understanding of the content. Almost 70% of students indicated that they were at least somewhat sure of this with many indicating that they were extremely sure.

Percentage of responses of "**somewhat sure" and "extremely sure**" on a 5-point Likert scale including: *not at all sure, slightly sure, somewhat sure, quite sure, extremely sure*. n = 203

How sure are you that you will remember what you learned during the arts residency next year?	**62%**
Do you feel that this arts residency was a positive experience?	**78%**
Do you feel that this arts residency has helped you to better understand the non-arts content?	**69%**

Students' survey responses also provided evidence that a majority of them in the school noticed improvement in learning new things, in completing projects and assignments, and in their abilities to work well with others. When students were asked on a survey at the end of the school year to indicate their level of improvement in learning following their participation in HOT Schools programming, the majority indicated that they noticed some degree of improvement.

Percentage of responses of **"very much" and "a lot"** on a 5-point Likert scale including: *not at all, not a lot, neutral, very much, a lot*. n = 228

My interest in learning new things.	**61%**
My ability to complete projects and assignments.	**62%**
My ability to work well with others.	**65%**

Looking into the students' open-ended responses on the survey following their experiences in the Arts Integrated Residencies we can see why the majority were sure that the AIR was a positive experience. They learned to love learning! Several students noted that they *"learned new things,"* and that they liked this aspect of the program, *"It's very fun learning new stuff,"* and, *"Finding new things to fit together is fun."* Some learned about themselves as well, including how to learn, *"I can learn stuff if I put my mind to it,"* and that they developed more confidence. One student wrote that what they liked was:

> *"...that I got to work on something that was amazing and that actually made me feel comfortable to share new things with people....I was actually into it because I never trust anyone and I think now...that this subject made me want to be more confident in myself...sharing new things."* —Student, AIR survey

Several students noted that in the AIR they were able to get to know their friends better when they were asked to include their own background in the projects. Learning about their friends was both *"cool"* and *"exciting"* for students. One student shared, *"I just find it cool because we just get to talk more about our backgrounds, and it lets me know a lot more about my friends."* Students noted that when they learned about different cultures, frequently they were learning about their friends as well as about themselves. One student wrote what they had learned about their family's heritage through the AIR, and then during a unit on immigration as well.

> *"I've actually learned about where I came from...since we started our immigration unit, like actual school, that was fun too...there's a lot of stuff that I didn't know about me and everything. It's cool to take all of that knowledge and put it down on paper. It's fun."* —Student, AIR survey

In addition to gaining confidence in their learning and in their ability to learn, students noted that they felt they could be more honest with themselves. One student wrote that while writing poems and creating a collage they felt that:

> *"It's making me be able to be more free with myself and be just more honest with my own self. I just like how I'd be able to be more creative. It's like out of the normal zone of what they teach inside of normal school."* —Student, interview

Students noted that they were able to express themselves creatively in poems as they were learning about writing, and in visual arts making collages as they were learning about history and culture. One student wrote that they were also learning creativity. Another wrote, *"We could be a lot more creative with it. I really like it that way."*

When comparing their learning in the Arts Integrated Residency with their learning without the arts, students noticed that during regular school *"everybody has to do the same thing, the same way....you follow it, you do it."* Yet, while working with Teaching Artists they teach each other as well, *"so, it's more of a learning opportunity for not only us, but everybody else."* In one of the music AIRs a student noticed that others invited him to join, *"I like that when they were singing, they asked us to join in."* This collaborative approach to learning is reinforced when students are encouraged to share the materials and ideas for the creative projects they develop within the residencies.

"With the collage, everybody is just helping each other. We'll ask, " What do you need?" We might have this; we might have that. We just pass it all around, you need this. You need that. It's kind of a thing like that." —Student, AIR survey

On the school-wide survey at the end of the year all students provided answers whether they participated in a residency or not. The final question on the survey was an open response opportunity, "I'd also like to say…". A few student responses to this question:

"Thanks to the teachers that believed in me."

"Good job on making me proud of this school and keeping me feeling safe."

"I like how you can make something that has a story behind it."

"That it was nice knowing the teachers that came here and did fun things with us."

"I'd like to say the experience was great."

What teachers say about *improving student engagement…*

Teachers who know their students well are the best people to ask about changes in their experiences in the classroom as a whole, and about specific students who might demonstrate a change in their engagement with learning during or following the different components of the HOT Schools program. At the end of the year a majority of teachers responded that they agreed with statements saying that their students were actively engaged in learning during HOT Schools programming; that their students gained new knowledge about arts practices and about the curricular contents through arts learning. Teachers also indicated that they agreed that HOT Schools programming improved their students' SEL skills.

Percentage of responses of **"agree" and "strongly agree"** on a 5-point Likert scale including: *strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree.* n = 90

My students were actively engaged in learning during their HOT Schools programming.	**78%**
My students gained knowledge of arts practices through their experience with HOT Schools programming.	**69%**
My students gained knowledge of curricular content through their experience with HOT Schools programming.	**64%**
HOT Schools programming improves my students' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills.	**70%**

When offered the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions on what they noticed about their students in the AIRs, Arts Workshops, and during School-Wide Performances, teachers mentioned similar aspects of students' experiences as the students themselves. Teachers noticed that students were actively engaged in various aspects of learning, about the content, themselves, and others around them. One teacher wrote that, *"The students were engaged in learning, explored ways to express themselves appropriately…students learned about respect for self, others, and space."* Another teacher noted that students gained a deeper understanding of the values of their own cultures as well as those of their peers:

> *"Students created poems, raps, artwork, and dances. They expressed who they were and what their family values and cultures are. They were able to ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of their classmates and peers."* —Teacher, end of year survey

Teachers also noted that students worked together collaboratively and creatively as they learned new ways to communicate and express themselves. One teacher wrote that, *"Students were engaged and active participants whose individuality was expressed through teamwork and creativity."* Another noted that *"Students seem to be more engaged because they produced something personal or had input into a collaborative product (like a song)."*

As research shows (Diaz & McKenna, 2017), students who usually struggle with learning curricular content find that having additional ways or modalities of communicating and expressing their knowledge allows them to engage with the content more fully. The added benefit of collaborating with their classmates on projects led to student engagement that sometimes surprised even their teachers. One teacher wrote about her own surprise, *"Oh my gosh, you need to teach here everyday. Because you were able to bring things out of my students that I have not seen."* And another said that her expectations were exceeded, yet another surprise:

> *"Students were discussing, connecting, and creating art and math! My expectation was exceeded for my freshman class. They are a low-functioning blended class, half of whom have IEPs. Both artists were patient and understanding as they gently steered the group to complete activities."* —Teacher, AIR survey

When all students are included in a new and unfamiliar hands-on activity unknown student strengths sometimes emerge. Teachers noted that the hands-on aspect of creating art allowed students to express themselves creatively, and *"everyone got to participate."* One teacher pointed out that the methods of the Teaching Artists, *"Re-focus students on their strengths and accomplishments rather than their problems…students see their own growth."* While not all students in a HOT School participate in Arts Workshops and Arts Integrated Residencies (the most hands-on and high-dose programmatic elements), some of those who do share their experiences with friends. As one teacher noticed, her students are looking forward to this coming year with eager anticipation:

> *"Well, this is the second year we have done this program. And I think students have heard about it and they are looking forward to what's coming next. Not just in 6th grade, which is what I teach, but in all grade levels…"* —Teacher, end of year survey

> *"I know also that last year, our sixth graders did a residency and I think it was a really big hit with them. It didn't just change that one day for them. It changed a whole month or six weeks towards the end of the school year that they really wanted to come to school."* —Teacher, focus group interview

During the HOT Schools Summer Gathering there were opportunities for Dr. Diaz to informally interview several teachers during the lunch break. One of the teachers interviewed told the story of her 4th grade student who was a selective mute—that is, severe anxiety prevented her from speaking during class in front of her teacher and classmates. During an Arts Integrated Residency she and her classmates were asked to generate a story upon which to base a play, a story about their lives. They were then asked to share their stories in a small group of classmates. In this small group with the opportunity to tell her own story about something that was meaningful for her, this young girl began to speak out loud for the first time in her class. She subsequently spoke for the rest of the residency and following the AIR she continued to speak in the class. At least one little girl's life was changed because of the arts learning opportunity offered by HOT Schools.

Clearly, teachers noticed that HOT Schools arts programming promoted new ways to engage students in learning. Next, we review the perspective of Teaching Artists on students' engagement during the Arts Integrated Residencies.

What Teaching Artists say about *improving student engagement*...

Teaching Artists responded to surveys at the end of the Arts Integrated Residencies, and several Teaching Artists were interviewed during the year in an online focus group. In both the surveys and the interviews Teaching Artists told stories about how students developed ways to engage with and through the different arts activities to learn and practice SEL skills and to engage with their own cultural identities in new ways.

> *"Everyone talked about and learned about character traits and naming the skills and talents and gifts that their ancestors brought with them from somewhere else, that they may have no concept of, but they do indeed actually have knowledge of. And in every single case, they were able to come away with an acknowledgement that these traits that were brought to me, I bring to bear on the future."* —Teaching Artist, AIR survey

Describing how Teaching Artists create a safe space for students to take risks and to become vulnerable, two Teaching Artists described situations in which students were invited to engage with learning and creating in ways they hadn't experienced before:

> *"...when you're doing something creative, a lot of times there's safe room for failure. And with some kids that will be frustrating ... it's not like I'm sitting here feeling like I can't read, I can't do math... it's lower stakes for a lot of kids, so it's a safe space to try and fail and be frustrated and try again, and then bring home something beautiful anyway."* —Teaching Artist, focus group interview

> *"...so you're creating an atmosphere that they feel safe to speak and become vulnerable with how they feel about themselves. Absolutely."* —Teaching Artist, focus group interview

These various perspectives on the engagement of students in HOT Schools partner schools provide a comprehensive view into how and why students' participation in learning can be impacted by the inclusion of arts programming within these schools. Students become excited about seeing artistic performances, and they learn more about themselves and their classmates and how they can learn both with and from them. They are surprised with stories about their own families' cultures they didn't know. And they feel safe to explore, take risks, and engage in learning in new and more confident ways.

Goal 2: Enrich School Culture

Objectives:

- A strong community that joins together for common experiences and encourages self-expression
- A shared sense of identity that fosters belonging for all members of the school community—including students, faculty, and families
- Activities that encourage student voice, choice, participation, and responsibility

School culture consists of the values and beliefs that are shared by members of a school community. These values and beliefs, frequently expanded through the introduction of innovative and creative ways of teaching and learning about the many cultures that make up the world around us, form the core of the efforts that transform schools in the HOT Schools program. Indeed, HOT Schools programming consists of opportunities and specific activities to do just this. With Teaching Artists from various cultures and ethnicities who engage in arts activities from around the globe included among the members of the school community, all members of the school community, including parents, can feel included. HOT Schools' underlying philosophy of offering culturally responsive teaching activities contributes to a rich array of values and a wider set of beliefs leading to a more inclusive community.

We will also briefly reference a related concept, "school climate", which is somewhat different from school culture but often used in a similar context. Though HOT Schools does not formally reference this concept, this discussion is intended to properly situate HOT Schools in the broader field. School climate reflects the ways that the members of the school community perceive their own personal experiences within the community. How do they feel about the school? How does the school make them feel? Do they feel connected, heard, able to express themselves? If a school culture doesn't reflect their own culture of origin or home culture, or school values do not honor their family values, then their perceptions about their experiences in or at the school can reflect a sense of discomfort or lack a sense of belonging. An inclusive school culture and a respectful school climate both have a positive impact on all members of the school community. HOT Schools efforts to enrich school culture—and, relatedly, school climate—emphasize inclusive practices that promote mutual respect, honor differences, and encourage self-expression.

What students say about *enriching school culture...*

Students responded to surveys after the AIR residencies and at the end of the year. The responses below from post-residency surveys indicate that some students developed a greater sense of connection to others in their community through the AIR. Learning about other cultures, and in some instances learning about their own cultures, allowed them to interact with those who hold different cultural beliefs and different perspectives than their own.

"I learned a little about peace, kindness, and self-love, and how to help other people and how to feel in someone else's shoes."

"I learned that I have to be responsible for the whole community."

"I learned about other peoples' cultures and about what they like."

"I learned how to interact with other people and other kinds of perspectives."

The structure of the AIRs also gave students additional opportunities to work together in groups and learn about themselves and each other. Having Teaching Artists in the classroom made them feel special, connecting them to the school in ways that created a sense of safety for them.

"I liked how we worked in groups and strongly worked together."

"It was nice knowing the teachers that came here and did fun things with us."

What teachers say about *enriching school culture...*

Learning and skills development in both Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Responsive Teaching have a strong impact on school culture as defined above. HOT Schools Professional Development for teachers during 2021-22 focused on these two areas in response to the expressed needs of the schools they serve.

A majority of teachers surveyed agreed that the following elements of school culture improved as a result of HOT Schools programming:

- a sense of belonging in the classroom
- student agency
- students' ability to work well with fellow students
- students' willingness to take part in class activities
- students' confidence in presenting their work to others

The format and activities in the Arts Integrated Residencies and the Arts Workshops offered opportunities for students to develop and improve their SEL skills. One teacher noted in an interview that an AIR focused on poetry allowed students to voice thoughts and feelings that had not previously found an outlet:

"...with high school kids in a district where there have been things like gun violence, and there have been really hard situations that these kids have lived through and...his (the Teaching Artist's) poetry

> *acknowledges the pain of these situations, but also looks for the hope and the opportunity that life continues to offer…I certainly think all the kids in the workshop benefited socially, emotionally just from experiencing his performance…it certainly made us think about social emotional issues and fostered conversations that are tough to have."* —Teacher, focus group interview

When students and teachers saw themselves represented in the arts activities in any of the HOT Schools programming, they felt a sense of inclusion in the community. And when they saw their classmates' cultural values reflected in their arts activities, their learning expanded. One teacher reflected that:

> *"Every aspect of the residency addressed diversity and how that diversity can strengthen a community. Every discussion, activity, and project was designed to express individual thoughts and ideas about the students' community and how those ideas come together to create a tapestry."* —Teacher, AIR survey

The Teaching Artists' presence also allowed students and teachers to see their school community in a new light, perhaps one that was more special due to the arts. One teacher reflected on this in a survey, *"…having special guests helps to build a greater school community and allow students more opportunities for positive role models."*

The hands-on arts activities in workshops and residencies allowed students to work in groups in which they practiced SEL skills of listening to others and acknowledging other's perspectives.

> *"I thought the times where students pulled their individual poems and created a skit out of them was a great experience. Students had the opportunity to work with others in groups. They learned how to disagree respectfully and compromise on different parts of their story."* —Teacher, AIR survey

What Teaching Artists say about ***enriching school culture…***

Teaching Artists frequently called specific attention to their cultural origins and values as they worked with students through activities that required creative self-expression. This aspect of their practice, or their intention, required students and teachers to relate to them through a recognition of difference when it existed, and to value this difference.

> *"…so usually what I do is at the beginning I tell them who I am, where I'm from. I had to share my personal story of all the different places I've lived and why I chose to teach because I'm not only teaching the dance, I'm also sharing my culture with you. And then I do a mini listening party where I usually look at the demographic of the students…and then during the listening party I pick artists who are African artists, but they're influenced by say, for example, Celia Cruz…then I ask them, 'What did you hear?'"* —Teaching Artist, focus group interview

A sense of identity begins to take clearer shape when Teaching Artists make connections to students and teachers and foster new connections between teachers and their students. One Teaching Artist described how this connection comes through the subject matter that is at the core of their efforts. These new connections contribute to the sense of shared values that make up a rich school culture.

> *"I think making it personal and helping them to understand how to identify with the subject matter is also a really great way, not just the teachers, but also the students, especially…the teachers also commented specifically how much that impacted them, because they got to see a side of their students that they don't typically see through the residency."* —Teaching Artist, focus group interview

Sharing a sense of community by creating something together that requires teamwork also enriches both school culture and climate. As students engaged with a new creative effort they were allowed to fail, an important aspect of the risk taking that leads to artistic creation. And together they learned to build confidence in themselves, and in each other.

> *"…what we did was also about community building…the fact that the students had to work on a particular dance that they've never even seen before, but try and learn it and then perform, it required some kind of a teamwork and community building, but it also gave them the platform to be able to express themselves and to fail. To feel confident about who they are as human beings, and work together as colleagues."* —Teaching Artist, focus group interview

Students who experience something strikingly new together develop a new sense of belonging because of their unique shared experience. They met Teaching Artists from other cultures and places and also those whose creative efforts were unknown to them. Teaching Artists built relationships with students and teachers by sharing their authentic artist-selves.

> *"I even say to the kids, I know you're looking at this white lady, I do it because I want them to know who I am. But I have this breadth of experience enough to say to them it's okay, I want you to be you…I showed the kids my work this year and it's really a wild diversion from the earlier work that I had ever made. So, I think showing them and sharing with them…is really a way to get the kids engaged and go, wow, that's amazing. There's that person in the world that they never knew about."* —Teaching Artist, focus group interview

The many ways that the Teaching Artists created connections and established relationships with and among the members of the school community generally stemmed from, and reflected, their authenticity, a characteristic demanded of all creative artists as they search for meaning through their art. They frequently shared aspects of themselves that were not apparent to students, and by doing so prompted reactions that were unexpected and deeply meaningful.

> *"One of the things that I shared with them very early on was the fact that I was biracial…there were three particular students who were also biracial and immediately it gave them permission to say, oh my God, I'm biracial too. And two of them came right out and said it…One of them pulled me to the side and quietly said, "I'm biracial too"—but you could tell it was something she didn't want everybody to know."* —Teaching Artist, focus group interview

What school leaders say about *enriching school culture…*

The school leaders responded to various questions on a survey at the end of the year that indicated that students' sense of belonging in the school improved. This sense of belonging can be seen in the context of other changes in students' actions observed by the school leaders: that they were better able to make meaningful choices; that their ability to work well with fellow students improved; that students were more willing to take part in class activities; and that students' confidence in presenting their work to others improved.

> *"Every child was able to produce an original piece and all were celebrated for their thoughts, effort, and creative expression, which made for a sense of pride and accomplishment."* —School leader, end of year survey

One school leader noticed that HOT Schools programming brings positivity and excitement to their school, given their observations that teachers and students look forward to the HOT Schools programs. This leader also noted that many students in their school were able to make personal connections to the Teaching Artists with whom they worked.

> *"Programs have added a sense of positivity and excitement to our school year. Students and teachers look forward to these programs. Many students have made personal connections to the art and artists they have encountered."* —School leader, end of year survey

Several school leaders who made specific requests of HOT Schools staff to address needs in their school found that Teaching Artists were able to address these needs and make beneficial changes in school relationships.

> *"The artists that we worked with were able to take our suggestion of focusing on improving respectful student behavior and design wonderful, cohesive lessons that achieved the goal."*—School leader, end of year survey

One school leader commented on the preparation of the Teaching Artists that allowed them to not only bring such high quality artistic abilities but to understand how to build close relationships with teachers and students.

> *"..the level of the artists that HOT Schools offers...that's a piece that I'm really curious...what tools you put in their toolbox that allows them to be able to come into a school and...to really articulate criteria...of a high level of artistry and creative ability...but also relationships."* —School leader, interview

A general spirit of gratitude was noted in many school leaders during interviews, both formal and informal, and in their survey responses.

> *"Thank you so much to AFLCT staff and each of the Teaching Artists for their continued dedication to improve and enrich the lives of students and teachers. This program is absolutely exceptional. We greatly appreciate all of the work that goes into making this program run so well!"* —School leader, end of year survey

School culture at participating schools has been enriched by HOT Schools programming. Students, staff and teachers have found new ways to connect with their colleagues, classmates and with each other through artistic engagement and expression. Teaching Artists have brought their authentic artist-selves to their efforts in building relationships, instilling confidence, and providing clarity about differences and identities, similarities and selves. By sharing common, interactive and collaborative artistic experiences that include risk taking, failure and substantial pride and joy, the members of the schools' communities acknowledge together the value of the arts in learning.

Goal 3: Expand Teacher Practice

Objectives:

- Teachers gain new skills and strategies to better engage and teach their students, with a specific focus on Culturally Responsive Teaching, Multiple Intelligences Theory, and Social Emotional Learning
- Teachers develop leadership through which they encourage and support the growth of their peers
- Teachers understand and practice the alignment, connection, and intersection of arts and non-arts standards

Learning is an integral part of teaching. In fact, many teachers become teachers because of their own love of learning. Learning through Professional Development activities is also a required component of all teacher credentials. Teachers in HOT Schools expand their practice through Professional Development training, but also through collaboration with Teaching Artists in their classrooms. When co-creating arts integrated activities for the AIRs in collaboration with Teaching Artists they integrate, align, and connect arts standards with their content standards. As they engage in arts integrated activities with students in Arts Workshops and Arts Integrated Residencies they expand their practice and with this experience often take on leadership roles in their schools for arts integrated activities. They become advocates for the arts.

Three Professional Development trainings were offered for the entire faculty at each school—and, separately, for the HOT Schools Teaching Artists—during the school year 21-22. These trainings focused on areas of need for the schools as well as areas of current special interest in education in general, specifically: students' Social Emotional Learning (SEL), teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Multiple Intelligences theory. Each

3-hour training included theory and practice in the respective areas, as well as follow-up applications and commitments in schools and classrooms.

In the academic year 2021-2022 three accomplished facilitators, Dr. Patty Bode, Christopher Eaves, and Marilyn Liberatore, led a total of 3 trainings for Teaching Artists and 15 trainings for teachers at Ashford School, Church Street Elementary, Kingsbury Elementary, Harding High School and Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy. The topics of Professional Development were ***Multiple Intelligences Theory*** (Eaves), ***Culturally Responsive Teaching*** (Bode) and ***Social Emotional Learning*** (Liberatore). For more on the facilitators see Appendix B.

The trainings in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) offered teachers strategies and practices that could contribute to improvement of students' social-emotional skills and competencies through arts integrated experiences. They also included information about the importance of engaging with students in ways that model SEL skills, and that the students themselves could practice in their classrooms and communities. Teachers modeled and practiced SEL skills with students and were then better prepared to practice them in the greater community. These skills, as noted above, include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL)[2]. Teachers who enhanced their teaching practice with arts-based SEL strategies and activities increased students' engagement with learning, one of the primary goals of HOT Schools.

The trainings in Culturally Responsive Teaching also engaged teachers in arts-based activities that offered both strategies and new knowledge about how teachers might enhance their own practice. In recognition of the rich cultural, racial, and ethnic climate in today's schools in the US, educators need to expand their knowledge, practices, and curricular content to respect and include all students and to acknowledge their unique cultural values and practices. Public schools in this country are more diverse today than ever before, with significant numbers of African, Asian, Latino and Native American students, and this recognition demands new knowledge and skills for all educators. Yet, culturally responsive teachers need to be continually learning as they are teaching. As their students become more diverse, teachers need to consider the context of their schools and classrooms as they recognize ethnically, racially, culturally and socially diverse students' needs. (Gay, 2018)

To deepen the rationale for Culturally Responsive Teaching, teachers worked in small groups to investigate the complexity of identities that we all bring to our schools and evaluate ways the arts can affirm and build on students' multiple affiliation and identities to strengthen academic achievement. Examples and stories from arts-infused culturally responsive curriculum that has been enacted in public schools were woven throughout the session in brief videos and slides for teachers to witness "real life" engagement in culturally responsive classrooms. Strategies and new knowledge about the specific needs of diverse students and how to make learning more accessible for them enrich pedagogical practice but also allow teachers to enrich their schools' culture, another of HOT Schools primary goals.

As an established Teaching Artist and former HOT Schools Associate Director of Professional Development, Christopher Eaves brings years of experience to Professional Development training, including his Multiple Intelligences—Multiple Solutions, an introduction and overview of Multiple Intelligences Theory and how it informs teaching and learning. It is a tour of art history and teaching pedagogy designed to ignite critical thinking and inquiry among participants. Multiple Intelligences—Multiple Solutions featured an array of group games and artful activities designed to become a meaningful part of classroom practice. The training provided a creative space and time to come together and "think about how we think!"

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2 https://casel.org

Teachers responded to surveys following each of the Professional Development trainings, and the data from several relevant questions is aggregated below across all 15 trainings with three different facilitators.

Percentage of responses of **"agree" and "strongly agree"** on a 5-point Likert scale including: *does not apply, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree.* n = 462

Was this Professional Development helpful in gaining new understanding and/or ideas?	**74%**
Have you learned new skills or techniques that you can apply in your classroom and/or school?	**75%**
The content and ideas raised by this Professional Development were relevant to my needs and/or the needs of my students and/or school.	**76%**
This presentation was organized, and the quality was high.	**82%**

From teachers' responses to this survey about what they were learning, if they were gaining new understanding and ideas, and the relevance and organization of the content, we can see that the Professional Development offered by HOT Schools expanded their professional practice. Teachers responded that the well-organized HOT Schools Professional Development trainings increased their knowledge and added new skills and techniques to their practice that were relevant to their own and/or their students' needs.

What teachers say (and do) about *expanding teacher practice...*

In various surveys (following AIRs, AWs, and at the end of year) a majority of teachers responded positively to different questions or statements about what they had learned or how their teaching practices had been enriched through HOT Schools offerings in their schools. In the surveys following the Arts Workshops or the Professional Development, a large majority agreed that they had learned new skills and techniques that they can apply in their classrooms and schools. In the end of year surveys 60% said they had used new pedagogical strategies as a result of HOT Schools programming.

Teacher Survey after Arts Workshops

Percentage of responses of **"agree" and "strongly agree"** on a 5-point Likert scale including: *does not apply, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree.* n = 25

Was this Arts Workshop helpful in gaining new understanding and/or ideas?	**97%**
Have you learned new skills or techniques that you can apply in your classroom and/or school?	**92%**

Teacher end-of-year Survey

Percentage of responses of **"agree" and "strongly agree"** on a 5-point Likert scale including: *strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree.* n = 90

My teaching practice has been enriched through HOT Schools programming.	**61%**
I have used new pedagogical strategies in my teaching as a result of my experience with HOT Schools programming.	**60%**

Across the surveys and in interviews teachers provided specific examples of the kinds of activities and strategies that they discovered and either planned to use or had used in their classrooms.

> *"I have seen my students become more freely collaborative and supportive of each other as this program has progressed. I would like to bring some of the activities to my beginning-of-year repertoire in order to develop a stronger sense of community right from the very beginning. Things like our chart about a positive community and the collaborative poems and group activities went a long way to starting the students thinking about their communities and how they contribute and benefit to it."* —Teacher, AIR survey

Several teachers spoke about how they had been inspired to enrich their classrooms with content related artworks.

> *"We've been decorating the back of my classroom like a living notebook. So, the Blackboard looked like lined paper, then on that periodically…we've been adding to them to create this…living notebook…it's definitely pushed me to just expand where and when I find the possibility… get some sort of art in there."* —Teacher, AIR survey

Arts integration that brought together artistic learning with content learning took place in one science classroom when a teacher used watercolors to make an interactive map of a watershed that students could explore and increase their understanding of the value of a healthy watershed.

> *"I'm using arc GIS mapping software with students. That's where we're adding different layers of the path. And one of the layers we did was watercolor to see that we could make an interactive map of our watershed that people could explore…so it was this very interdisciplinary project where art wasn't just a component of it. It was more…the way to increase others' understanding."* —Teacher, focus group interview

Another teacher explained how a culminating art project completed by students as they reflected on a book meant an addition to the usual end of unit activities. This seemed to be prompted by the teacher's new recognition of the importance of artistic expression in furthering students' understanding, and represents possible growth for even greater impact in the future.

> *"I found that when I involve some art...kind of self-reflecting on their book, which we haven't done before. I don't know if...it came at the end of the project or end of the unit. So, it's not like it was woven in, but a little more art than we would have done in the classroom for that particular unit. So, I think maybe it's more on my mind."* —Teacher, focus group interview

What Teaching Artists say about *expanding teacher practice...*

Teaching artists were aware of their responsibility in the Arts Integrated Residencies to engage with the teachers through collaborative projects. They noticed when teachers were active in the project that the students followed their lead.

> *"They were fully engaged throughout the residency and that showed in the attitude of their students."* —Teaching Artist AIR Survey

Teachers often would make note of specific activities brought to the classrooms by the Teaching Artists in the Arts Workshops and Arts Integrated Residencies that they planned to use in their classrooms going forward. Many teachers were enthusiastic and even excited about these opportunities to learn and apply new pedagogical strategies after they observed the impact on students' engagement in their classrooms.

> *"We focus on community with that, but the teachers actually are there participating with me doing those theatre icebreakers and doing some basic improv.... I had both teachers say these are wonderful techniques and exercises. I absolutely can utilize these into my regular curriculum throughout the whole year.* —Teaching Artist, focus group interview

What school leaders say about *expanding teacher practice...*

School leaders recognize the work that the teachers describe above in bringing more arts into their classroom activities. They also notice when teachers plan instructional units and decide which arts resources and activities might be appropriate. More creative teachers leads to more creative students.

> *"Many teachers are incorporating a more arts-based approach to their daily instruction when appropriate. Teachers are more creative while planning their instruction and choosing resources."* —School leader, end of year survey

Whether they learn these new creative strategies working with or observing Teaching Artists or engaging in unique pedagogical lessons through a Professional Development training, teachers' everyday practices have been noticeably impacted by HOT Schools programming according to one school leader:

> *"I've seen HOT Schools impact teacher performance and instruction in ways that really speak to their creativity and ways in which they feel that they can incorporate the arts into their everyday practice. We've had wonderful professional development through HOT Schools."* —School leader, interview

Teachers have expanded their teaching practice through HOT Schools programming to include pedagogical strategies they have learned from Teaching Artists and from experts in Professional Development trainings. Many teachers who engaged with Teaching Artists in workshops and residencies have explored integrating creative arts activities into their teaching practice following the workshops and residencies. In the following section we will see additional evidence of how Teaching Artists, too, expanded their teaching practice through the Professional Development.

Professional Development of Teaching Artists

In order to achieve the program goals of improving student engagement, enriching school culture, and expanding teacher practice, HOT Schools Teaching Artists themselves continue to expand their professional practice through growth and development of classroom teaching strategies, theories of learning, and similar Professional Development training as those provided to HOT Schools teachers. The HOT Schools Director, Christopher Eaves, who facilitates the Professional Development training in Multiple Intelligences Theory, plays the role of both coach and mentor to this group of highly qualified creative professionals. He meets with them before Arts Integrated Residencies to discuss planning and design, and after to reflect on any insights gained through learning activities that took place in the classrooms. They don't just discuss student learning but teacher and Teaching Artist learning as well. He encourages them to learn from teachers, learn with teachers and students, and continue to develop and grow throughout their HOT Schools experiences. Through in-school observations of the Teaching Artists he discovers new ideas for Professional Development trainings and provides an opportunity to reflect from another perspective on their work. This continual honing of skills and building of knowledge in the cohort of Teaching Artists is a unique and essential component of the HOT Schools model in that it builds organizational capacity and assures quality in programming.

The Professional Development trainings detailed above under *Goal 3: Expand Teacher Practice* were also facilitated for this group of Teaching Artists. They were modified to address the different needs, preparation, and experiences of the Teaching Artists. However, the multiple foci on student SEL skills and knowledge, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Multiple Intelligences Theory required the facilitators to build upon core concepts equally in both groups.

Teaching Artists also responded to surveys following each of the Professional Development trainings and the data from several questions about learning and growth is aggregated below across all 3 trainings.

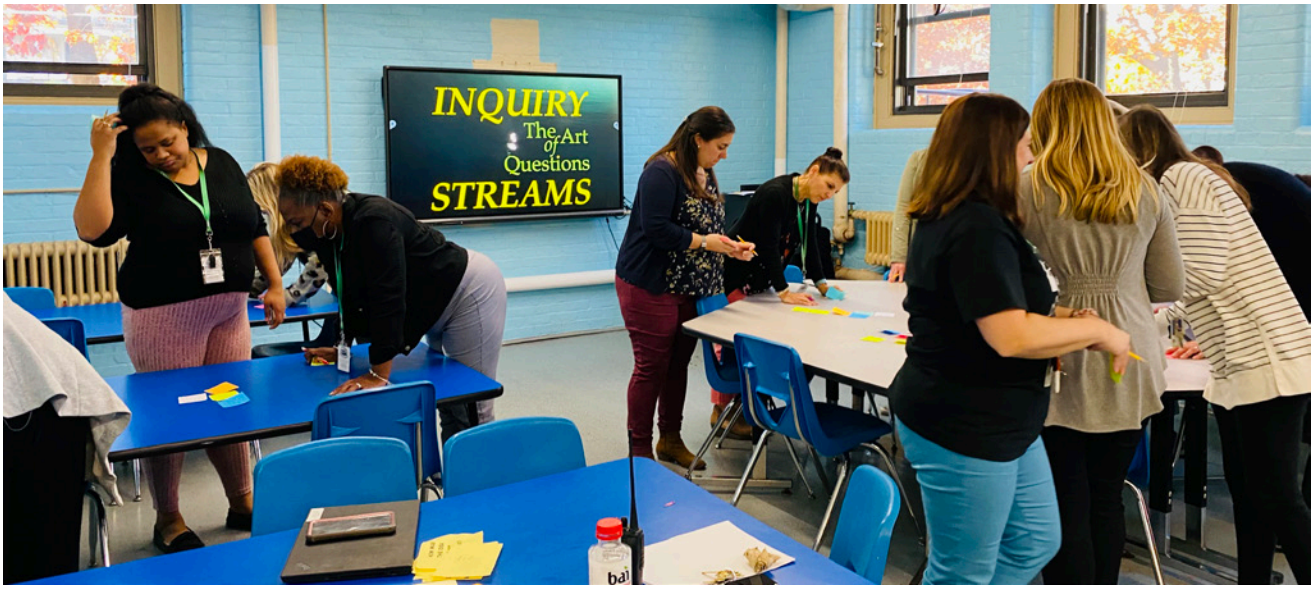
Percentage of responses of **"agree" and "strongly agree"** on a 5-point Likert scale including: *does not apply, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree.* n = 36

Was this Professional Development helpful in gaining new understanding and/or ideas?	**92%**
Have you learned new skills or techniques that will strengthen your Teaching Artistry?	**90%**
The content and ideas raised by this Professional Development were relevant to my needs and to the needs of the teachers and students with whom I work.	**94%**
This presentation was organized, and the quality was high.	**90%**

As with teachers, from the Teaching Artists responses to this survey about what they were learning, if they were gaining new understanding and ideas, and the relevance of the content, we can see that the Professional Development training offered by HOT Schools expanded their professional practice. Teaching Artists also recognized that the well-organized HOT Schools Professional Development training increased their knowledge and added new skills and techniques to their practice that were relevant to their own specific needs. This on-going contribution towards Teaching Artists' growth and development adds an educational dimension to the HOT Schools program that most likely contributes to the trust and respect exhibited between Teaching Artists and teachers and between Teaching Artists and students that few arts learning initiatives have explored. Artistic creation requires taking risks and moving into what is yet unknown. Taking risks requires trust.

"The more uncertain the world becomes; the more vital HOT Schools is. This program gives students a chance to truly be themselves, to feel good about who they are, to feel competent and confident about something, to make deep connections with others, and to shine."

–Erin Guerrera, HOT Schools Site Coordinator, Church Street Elementary



Strengths, Challenges, and Recommendations

Strengths

- **Organization –** The organizational structure and functional practices of AFLCT (and concerning the HOT Schools staff, in particular) are well designed, with a high degree of collaboration and clear channels of communication across the team.
- **Qualified staff –** HOT Schools staff bring years of experience in the fields of arts education, arts integration, and Teaching Artistry.
- **Network connections –** AFLCT is connected to a national network of YA affiliates that share select resources and create a substantial learning community. In addition, AFLCT remains in close contact with COA, the developer of HOT Schools; indeed, the Strategic Partnership Grant that supported the initial transition is continuing into its third year, providing significant funding and stability to this work
- **School-focused approach –** In recognition of the different school demographics the program offers schools the opportunity to guide the focus of the arts learning components.
- **Excellence in Teaching Artistry –** Through a process of careful selection of Teaching Artists and their continual Professional Development, HOT Schools provides excellence in Teaching Artistry.

Challenges

- **Pandemic fallout –** The results of the pandemic isolation and lack of digital resources for many students exacerbated the achievement gap in learning. Students need more mental health interventions as well as increased academic support. Both might be met through arts learning programming focused on emerging needs.
- **School curricular demands –** Schools have many demands and often have little time to devote to collaborating with outside programs.
- **Sustainability –** HOT Schools programming is currently funded through "soft money" raised by AFLCT. A sustainable program would need more permanent funding raised by the schools and/or through state and federal educational resources.

Recommendations

- **Continue to focus on the needs of each partner school** with individualized planning and programming that meets the needs of each school and creates stronger support by school leaders.
- **Ensure AFLCT has sufficient staff capacity** for maintaining the vigorous and time-intensive research and evaluation protocol that has been designed in order to effectively support continuous quality improvement.
- **Continue to engage outside evaluators periodically** to provide unbiased feedback in the form of summative evaluations—especially after significant program growth and development—and to advise on the ongoing implementation of the research and evaluation protocol.
- **Develop partnerships with other statewide and regional leaders in education and arts learning** and engage critical stakeholders (e.g. the CT State Department of Education) in the collective impact work of strengthening the HOT Schools model and expanding its reach. Consider advocating for policy change or other efforts to ensure arts learning is systemic and sustainable.
- **Secure multi-year funding from a diversity of sources**; in addition to expanding contributed revenue through grants and charitable contributions, develop a stream of earned revenue from schools, districts, state, and/or federal educational sources. Secure a multi-year grant from the US Department of Education in order to further implement and study this model in further depth.
- **Consider a flexible programming model** in which key school criteria allow for unique models of HOT Schools programming, i.e., different numbers of the key HOT Schools components. Note that the most interactive and sustained hands-on arts experiences greatly benefit the students and teachers as they practice arts integration across the curriculum.

Discussion

As noted in the introduction, this developmental evaluation was a collaborative effort undertaken by a team of professionals with careers and experiences that imply biases towards valuing the arts in education. Prior to this research we have all had opportunities to observe and participate in the arts in some form or another, and to experience the impact that arts in schools can have on students, teachers, and school communities. Regardless of the findings of this research we would continue with our commitments, our beliefs, and our knowledge that the arts bring richness to schools, meaningful experiences to students, and joy to teachers' lives. Thus, discovering a deeper understanding of the ways that this happens even with the restrictions and resulting damaging effects of a pandemic on all of us—but most powerfully on students and schools—drives us to an even stronger commitment to providing access to the arts to all students.

We have seen evidence that students in partner schools noticed improvement in learning new things, in completing projects and assignments, and in their abilities to work well with others. As students developed a greater sense of connection to others in their community, learning about other cultures, and in some instances learning more about their own cultures, they expanded their relationships with those who hold different cultural beliefs and different perspectives than their own. Teachers noticed that their students were actively engaged in learning during HOT Schools programming; that their students gained new knowledge about arts practices and about the curricular content through arts learning; and, importantly, HOT Schools programming improved their students' SEL skills. Based on these outcomes, one recommendation above suggests making these opportunities available to more students, while another calls for holding a long-term vision of sustainable fully integrated arts learning for all students.

In 2019 a group of researchers at *Ingenuity* in collaboration with the University of Chicago Consortium published a theory of change for why learning in the arts leads to increases in SEL skills for students. While those of us who have been in the classroom as teachers or Teaching Artists see *when* this happens, their research attempts to clarify exactly *why* it happens. They suggest that artistic practices by their very nature instill SEL skills,

> "...we argue that each art practice has a social-emotional component. The social-emotional component is the relational, meaning-making, and self-management aspect of the art process, class, or experience that can be shaped by both action experiences (encountering, tinkering, choosing, practicing, and contributing) and opportunities for reflection (describing, evaluating, connecting, envisioning, and integrating). The social-emotional component is a distinctive characteristic of the art practice that provides opportunities for students to develop and exercise particular social-emotional competencies while engaging in that art practice." (Farrington, et.al., 2019, p.15)

Each art practice has its own component of Social Emotional Learning, and thus the inclusion of multiple modalities of artistic practice is key to spanning the whole spectrum of these components. Which is exactly what takes place with HOT Schools, with many of the Teaching Artists being multi-modal themselves.

Teachers noted that having Teaching Artists in the classroom made students feel special, connecting them to the school in ways that created a sense of safety for them. Ellen Dissanayake, an anthropologist who traveled

the globe in the 1980s in her quest to understand what art was for, discovered that it was for "making special." (Dissanayake, 1988) These HOT Schools students picked up on a unique characteristic of the arts, and it seems to indicate why their sense of belonging in the school improved with HOT Schools programming. This sense of belonging can be seen in the context of other changes in students' actions observed by the school leaders: that they were better able to make meaningful choices; that their ability to work well with fellow students improved; that students were more willing to take part in class activities; and that students' confidence in presenting their work to others improved. Following two years of relative isolation during the pandemic these outcomes seem extraordinary.

We have also seen the evidence that school culture and climate have been enriched by HOT Schools programming. Students, staff, and teachers connect with their colleagues, classmates and with each other through artistic engagement and expression. A school leader read their students' poems to their whole school; Teaching Artists have built new relationships that instill greater confidence in students; teachers have provided clarity about differences and identities. Through interactive and collaborative artistic experiences, the members of the schools' communities acknowledge the value of the arts in learning.

HOT Schools has created what Halverson (2021) calls a "learning ecology," by bringing in the arts and the artists from outside the school who "co-create dynamic and meaningful arts experiences for young people." (p. 127). (Perhaps a partner school can be considered an arts-learning ecology.) In this ecology, teachers have expanded their teaching practice to include pedagogical strategies they have learned from Teaching Artists and from experts in Professional Development. Many teachers who engaged with Teaching Artists in workshops and residencies began exploring integrating arts activities into their teaching practice following the workshops and residencies. They see the value of making schools less about test scores as measures of success and more about embracing students' "assets rather than focus on their deficits." (Halverson, p. 129)

Teaching Artistry

At the core of the work of HOT Schools we find the Teaching Artists. While there is no one definitive list of criteria about who they are or exactly what they do, Eric Booth, Teaching Artist, author, and founding editor of the *Teaching Artist Journal*, offers this working definition: "*A teaching artist is a practicing artist who develops the complementary skills, curiosities and habits of mind of an educator, who can effectively engage a wide range of participants in learning experiences in, through, and about the arts.*" [3] The field in which they hold the rank of professional is that of teaching artistry. Clearly these two words, teaching and artistry, typically belong to different disciplines that utilize different discourses and assessment practices. Teaching Artists represent a kind of hybrid, or a "kind of alloy" according to Booth, and they are "stronger for freedom from the limitations of either" the field of the arts or of education.

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3 https://ericbooth.net/the-history-of-teaching-artistry-revised-2020

Teaching Artistry came into being when art education lost funding or was dropped from the curriculum in response to "back to basics" educational thinking. From the early years when many artists considered teaching as a side gig to the current cohort where many Teaching Artists are multidisciplinary artists who make up a new genre of professionals that Booth suggests is "creating a whole new level of investing their artist-selves", these Teaching Artists live on a common ground that brings together art and learning in schools and communities. HOT Schools Teaching Artists appear to be of this new genre.

Teaching Artists today work with schools and cultural arts non-profit organizations such as AFLCT to integrate the arts into teaching and learning in an effort to achieve broad goals that span the curricular, human developmental, artistic, and social emotional. The work of HOT Schools Teaching Artists specifically addresses this span of goals, helping students access curricular content, develop new personal skills and artistic knowledge while addressing students' own sense of self and identity within their school and community. Through authentic expression of their artist-selves they build relationships of trust with teachers and students thereby enhancing student learning and enriching the culture of the school.

In an *ArtCore*[4] developmental evaluation the researchers discovered that the focus for any new arts program seeking school-wide change must begin with a shared understanding of why the arts matter in learning rather than how bringing the arts to schools must be done. They found that with this focus on doing, arts-based school change can move from programmatic to systemic, growing into a "symbiotic landscape of creative possibility." (Rajan & O'Neal, 2017) Schools participating in the HOT Schools program demonstrate that shared understanding of the benefits of the arts in learning for students, for teachers, and for their whole community. Creative possibilities await!

4 https://artcorelearning.org

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Appendix A. Logic Model for HOT Schools

RESOURCES/ INPUTS

AFLCT

Resources
- Funding
- Staff
- Teaching Artist (TA) roster
- Partnership with COA
- AFL/YA national network

Constraints
- Staff capacity
- TA capacity and abilities

Partner Schools

Resources
- Students, teachers, staff
- School facilities
- Scheduling time for participants
- Access to student data
- Commitment to arts in education

Constraints
- PD time/teachers
- Lack of resources
- Many program options

ACTIVITIES

AFLCT
- Plan and schedule with partner schools' staff and teachers and Teaching Artists
- Identify and recruit PD providers
- Provide PD for Teaching Artists

Partner Schools

HOT Schools Leadership Team
- Design alignment of HOT Schools programming with school goals & objectives

HOT Schools Site Coordinator
- Coordinates/facilitates with AFLCT staff

Arts Integrated Residencies
- Extended in-class arts learning experiences designed and facilitated by teachers and Teaching Artists

Professional Development for Teachers
- Training in pedagogical practices of the HOT Schools program: SEL, Culturally Responsive Teaching, MI Theory through arts in education

School-Wide Performances
- School-Wide cultural arts Performances

Arts Workshops
- In-class artist-led Arts Workshops that facilitate the practice of student self-expression

OUTPUTS

Arts Integrated Residencies
- Teachers and TAs collaborate on planning arts integrated lessons
- Teachers integrate the arts into their teaching practice.
- Students engage with arts-integrated curricular content

Professional Development for Teachers
- Teachers explore arts integration strategies that expand their teaching and learning practice

School-Wide Performances
- Students, teachers, staff experience School-Wide Performances together

Arts Workshops
- TAs coordinate with teachers and implement Arts Workshops
- Teachers experience new artform
- Students practice new artform

OUTCOMES

Arts Integrated Residencies
- Teachers learn to integrate the arts into their teaching practice
- Students learn arts, curricular content, strengthen SEL skills and cultural awareness

Professional Development for Teachers
- Teachers expand knowledge and practice of arts in education, SEL, Culturally Responsive Teaching, MI Theory

School-Wide Performances
- Students, teachers, staff increase knowledge and appreciation of the arts, and cultures; develop a sense of belonging and connection to one another and the whole school community

Arts Workshops
- Students and teachers learn about artform; students increase confidence in learning & creating

IMPACT

In HOT Schools partner schools:
- The HOT Schools program **enriches** culture
- The HOT Shools program **improves** student engagement
- The HOT Schools program **expands** teacher practices

Appendix B. HOT Schools Professional Development facilitators

Patty Bode's experiences in teaching and leadership include 20 years in PK-12 public schools as an art teacher, curriculum leader and school principal, and higher education settings for over 10 years as a teacher educator. Her goal to equip educators to prepare students to be full participants in a multicultural anti-racist democracy defines her work. Her publications include a 2018 book with co-author, Sonia Nieto, the 7th edition of *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education,* used by teacher education programs nationally and internationally. She is the Coordinator of Art Education at Southern Connecticut State University.

Marilyn Liberatore served as Principal of Columbus Magnet School in Norwalk, CT for ten years during which time Columbus Magnet was a Higher Order Thinking (HOT) school and part of the Higher Order Thinking Schools network. During this time Marilyn became a Norwalk district trainer of "Tribes"—a process to establish a positive culture for learning and human development. This process is based on a synthesis of studies on children's development, cooperative learning, cognition, systems theory, multiple intelligences theory, human resilience and the skills needed for the 21st century. It is with this experience she shares strategies for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) through the HOT Schools Approach. After retiring as principal of Columbus, Marilyn became an Executive Coach for CAS (Connecticut Association of Schools) where she worked with teachers and administrators around the state to improve student learning. She became a HOT Schools Coach supporting participating schools with the implementation of HOT Schools strategies. In both of these capacities she worked with elementary, middle, and high schools in urban and suburban areas.

Christopher Eaves formerly served as the Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Schools' Associate Director for Professional Development within of the Connecticut Office of the Arts. He was named AFLCT's Director of HOT Schools in 2021. As a playwright, designer, director, actor and producer he's created over fifteen original theatrical works and has performed throughout the world. Christopher has provided arts residencies, professional development and keynote addresses for arts and educational institutions throughout the United States. He's based in NYC and also serves as the artistic director of eavesdrop®. Christopher is a member of the Arts in Education Roundtable (NYCAiER), the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), the Monacan Indian Nation and the U.S. Department of State Speakers Bureau.

Appendix C. Focus group protocols

HOT Schools 2002–2021 Teachers' Perspectives

1. What prompted you to participate in the HOT Schools Arts Workshop or the Arts Integrated Residency? What motivates your connections and interactions with the arts?

2. Talk about your communications and interactions with HOT Schools staff and the Teaching Artist(s) you worked with, including design, planning and program delivery.

3. Describe which components of the workshop/residency addressed HOT Schools long term goals:

    a. Enriching the school culture or climate, e.g., creates a sense of community, connection, belonging.
    b. Expanding teacher practice, e.g., increases their knowledge of the arts, practice of arts integration, etc.
    c. Increasing student engagement, e.g., increase attendance, participation, curiosity, etc.

4. Which activities of the workshop/residency did you see increasing students' social emotional learning (SEL) skills, e.g., self-awareness and self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, etc.?

5. What strategies of the workshop/residency addressed the cultural diversity of your students?

6. Describe the strengths and challenges you faced this year as a teacher working with HOT Schools.

7. What else would you like to say?

HOT Schools 2020–2021 Teaching Artists' Perspectives

1. As a Teaching Artist what guides your connections and interactions with teachers? With students?

2. Talk about your communications and interactions with HOT Schools staff and teachers including planning and program delivery.

3. Describe which elements of your work in a school might address HOT Schools overall goals:

    a. Enriching the school culture or climate, e.g., creates a sense of community, connection, belonging.
    b. Expanding teacher practice, e.g., increases their knowledge of the arts, practice of arts integration, etc.
    c. Increasing student engagement, e.g., increasing attendance, participation, curiosity, etc..

4. Which elements of your work do you see increasing students' social emotional learning (SEL) skills, e.g., self management and awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, etc.

5. What strategies do you use to address the cultural diversity of HOT Schools students?

6. Describe the strengths and challenges you faced this year as a Teaching Artist with HOT Schools.

7. What else would you like to say?

HOT Schools Leadership Focus Group*
June 27, 2022
Heritage Hotel

1. Please describe how and why your school decided to become a HOT school?

2. What were your expectations as a HOT school for this year?

3. In what ways were these expectations achieved – or not?

4. In what area(s) of the school have you most noted the impact of the HOT Schools programming? (Students, teachers, school climate, relationships, etc.) Please offer an example.

5. Which component(s) of the HOT Schools Program seem to have the most impact on the school? (Arts Workshops, Arts Integrated Residencies, School-Wide Performances, and Teacher Professional Development). Please describe this impact.

6. Please describe any changes in teachers' actions or practices that you might attribute to HOT School programming. (e.g., school/colleague relationships, teaching practices, etc.)

7. Please describe any changes in students that you might attribute to HOT Schools programming. (e.g., interactions, more arts in the classroom, new pedagogical strategies, etc.)

8. In what ways could the HOT Schools program be improved at your school next year?

9. In what ways could your school better support the implementation of HOT Schools next year?

10. How would you describe the HOT Schools program to a colleague unfamiliar with it?

Thank you for your contribution to this HOT Schools Focus Group.

*Only one school leader attended this interview. Others chose to respond in writing.

HOT Schools Staff Interview Protocol
August 2022

1. First, what terms do you use to describe HOT Schools/AFLCT? A component of an organization? A program within an organization? A partnership? Teaching and learning intervention? Other?

2. Please describe your current role(s) and responsibilities within AFLCT and HOT Schools…the "hats you wear."

3. How does the current organizational structure, and your work within it, differ from your initial expectations?

4. What aspect(s) of the current organizational structure have you found most advantageous? Least resonant?

5. Please talk about the most significant accomplishment(s) since your collaboration began.

6. What has been the most challenging aspect(s) of the AFLCT/HOT Schools program this past year? Please talk about how these challenge(s) were addressed.

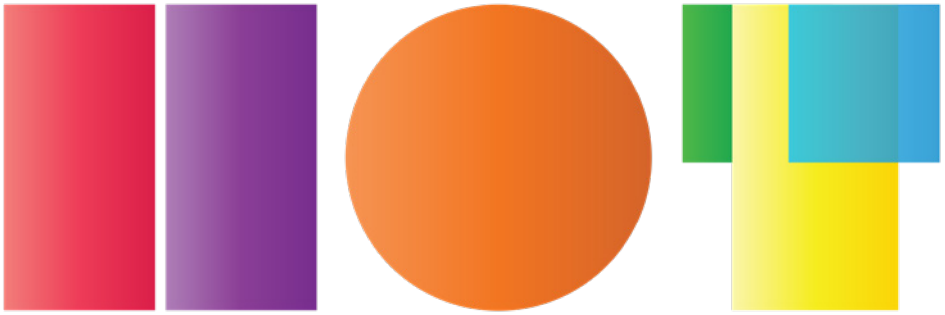
7. What new knowledge or specific skills have you developed since you started working together? What do you look forward to developing?

8. How do you envision AFLCT and HOT Schools evolving into the future?

9. What changes would have to take place in order to achieve this vision?

10. Please share your favorite memory from this past year.

11. Is there anything else you would like to say?



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