



Arts Education Collective Impact Planning

Summative Evaluation - Participant Perspectives
May 2020

Introduction

This report summarizes findings from an evaluation of a four-month collaborative planning process in which educators from schools and arts and community organizations shared ideas for increasing the quantity, diversity, and connectivity of arts learning opportunities in the Pittsburgh region.

About the planning process

From late summer through fall of 2019, AEC convened a series of meetings exploring the creation of a Pittsburgh-area version of artlook Map—an online platform developed by Ingenuity to map arts education opportunities and to facilitate partnerships between schools, arts organizations, and teaching artists.

Thirty educators representing a dozen school systems and arts and community organizations contributed to the planning process. Participants shared their perspectives about a range of topics, including broad strategies required to support arts education, facilitators and barriers to forming arts partnerships, and the artlook Map platform itself.

Guided by feedback from the planning group, AEC is currently facilitating collective impact initiatives across five areas to support arts learning: advocacy, artlook Map, collaborative relationships, funding, and professional learning.

Planning partners

Arts and community organizations

- 1Hood Media
- Assemble
- Bricolage Production Company
- Carnegie Museum of Art
- Center of Life
- Pittsburgh Festival Opera
- The Learning Instigator
- The Legacy Arts Project

School systems

- Hampton Township SD
- Propel Schools
- South Fayette Township SD
- Sto-Rox SD

About the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to inform future collaborative efforts among the planning partners and to document outcomes to report to project funders. Evaluation questions explore participants' reactions to the process, key learnings, and impact on practice.



Reflection questions At the end of each planning session, AEC staff facilitated a group discussion in which participants shared reactions about what worked, what was challenging, and what needed to be attended to in future meetings.



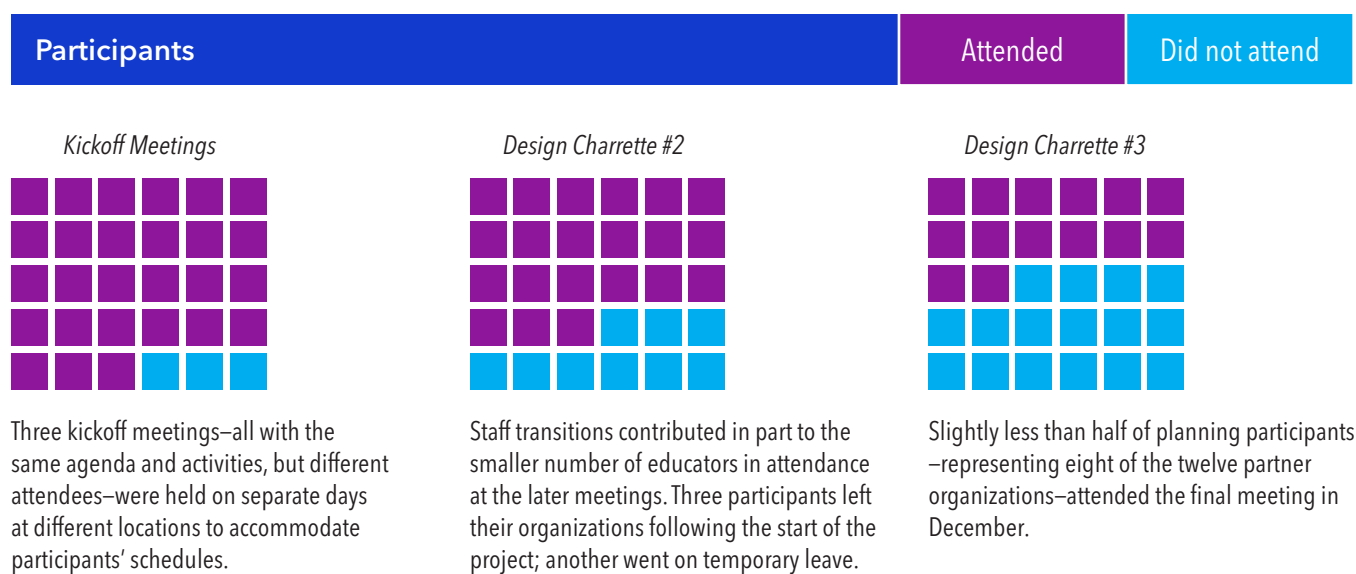
Online survey A brief online survey was distributed by email to all planning participants following the final session. Representatives from nine of the twelve partner organizations responded to the survey.



Financial reports In recognition of their contributions to the planning process, each partner organization was awarded a stipend to support arts education at their institution. Partners were required to report how they planned to allocate the funds as part of the award process.

Meeting attendance

The number of participants attending group planning meetings steadily decreased from the initial set of kickoff sessions in late summer through the final gathering in December. Representatives from each of the twelve partner organizations, however, participated in at least two of the group meetings as well as a one-on-one data collection interview with AEC staff.



Time and capacity

A few participants noted challenges with attending and fully engaging in some sessions due to conflicts with other professional responsibilities. Other comments, which may refer to implementing artlook Map and collective impact actions in general, suggest concerns about the personal and organizational capacity that may be needed to sustain such projects long term.

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- Separate this from a clerical day if it's possible to get the day off from school. I'd rather be thinking about just this than this on top of clerical work or six hours of teacher time. (*Kickoff*)
- "Avoiding December (this is a crazy time for musicians)." (*Survey*)
- "Time is always a resource that feels strained." (*Survey*)

What were challenges or concerns today?

- How do we cultivate the whole self in our work? (*Design #2*)
- Continue the conversation we started about sustainability. (*Design #2*)

What new idea did you take away from the planning process?

- "Lots of new ideas, just not enough time to do them all." (*Survey*)

Reaction to process overall

In feedback offered during meetings and in answer to the follow-up survey, participants responded favorably to the overall planning process. Looking ahead, representatives from several of the partner organizations have committed to further serving as advisors on collective impact working groups.

Positive reactions

While participants offered some suggestions for improving specific aspects of future meetings—such as communicating instructions for particular activities or scheduling breaks—responses to the overall process were positive. Comments shared by participants who attended the final session or who responded to the follow-up survey suggest they found the process productive and useful overall.

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- "I think that the process was very well thought through and executed. Now it is up to the parties involved to move forward with an action plan." (Survey)
- "It was spot on." (Survey)

What struck you about participating in this process?

- It was exciting to come from the first meeting where it's all of the things and then see how artlook could solve some of these things in specific ways—not everything, but ways to make us more connected. (Design #3)
- The process was nebulous at first, but now I start to see the possibilities. The process has been interesting. (Design #3)

Challenges

Responses also indicate participants experienced challenges along the way with the complexity and ambiguity of particular aspects of the planning process. A few educators, for example, noted difficulties with brainstorming solutions to address certain barriers to facilitating arts partnerships—such as staff turnover and capacity constraints among schools and arts organizations. Participants sometimes expressed appreciation for or interest in receiving information that clarifies elements of the process.

What were challenges or concerns today?

- The unknown when we got here. (Kickoff)
- We're problem solvers, so it's difficult when we don't have answers. (Design #3)
- Challenging to think about a solution or another way to look at it. (Design #3)

What worked today?

- Ingenuity's presentation was a helpful length and thoroughness. (Design #2)
- Explaining the whole artlook Map process. (Design #2)

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- "I think having a visual timeline of where we are in the process will help keep things in perspective." (Survey)

Future updates and participation

At the last session, a few participants expressed interest in continuing on with the project. AEC staff conducted follow-up meetings and invited planning partners to serve on working groups; as of May 2020, eight partners have agreed to participate with more confirmations pending.

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- Would like an update soon. What's next? In three months, check in. (Design #3)
- Would like to see meetings continue in some format in the future. (Design #3)

Reaction to elements facilitating connections among participants

Participants often commented on elements of the planning meetings that contributed to building awareness of arts learning opportunities and forming collaborative relationships among planning partners, including meeting locations, chances for interaction, and participant identities.

Meeting locations

The five planning meetings were each held at different locations: Center of Life, Hampton Township SD, South Fayette Township SD, Sto-Rox SD, and The Legacy Arts Project. Some participants responded positively to the opportunity to engage in different arts learning environments, including the chance to be around students. Participants also commented about amenities offered by the facilities in support of the group's work.

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- Place is important. *(Kickoff)*

What worked today?

- Meeting in different spaces helps to connect and ground our work in history and context. *(Design #2)*
- Being in the art classroom to understand the settings. Having the kids say "hi" was so great. *(Kickoff)*
- We were invited to have lunch in the art room if we chose. *(Design #3)*
- The space worked today. *(Design #2)*
- We had more chairs and tables than we needed. We were able to spread out, change spaces. *(Kickoff)*

Chances for interaction

Several educators who participated in the process said they felt the group was given sufficient time and space to share with one another and engage in meaningful dialogue.

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- Built-in time for banter. *(Kickoff)*

What worked today?

- It was more conversation than reading. *(Kickoff)*
- We had uninterrupted time to share. *(Kickoff)*
- Large and small group time. *(Kickoff)*
- There were tasks to complete on our own time, break time, and conversations. *(Design #3)*

What struck you about participating in this process?

- There was space to have conversation, unpacking, and understanding what people think. *(Design #3)*
- It was interesting to hear about schedules, students, what the day looks like—amazing to hear how different things are. I became friends with another teacher. We had space to do that. *(Design #3)*

What was different about this process?

- The level of transparency and information sharing has been helpful. There was a safe space for talking and working together. *(Design #3)*

Reaction to elements facilitating connections among participants

Participants offered both positive and negative assessments of the range of perspectives represented. They appreciated interacting with educators from a variety of schools and arts organizations, but advocated for greater inclusion in terms of race and other identities.

Participant identities

A few participants pointed to opportunities to engage with educators representing different schools and arts and community organizations as an important part of their experience. Representation at the planning meetings was an ongoing area of concern for participants, who expressed interest in including a broader range of voices—including students, persons of color, and additional schools and arts organizations.

What was different about this process?

- I usually just talk to other teachers. I loved to hear from the organization side. Good to come together as a community to say this is how we all win. *(Design #3)*

What worked today?

- I appreciated who was in the room. I felt able to start unpacking disconnects I've been having—being able to sit down with teachers and leadership and see that everyone is passionate, that there are artists in the space. Things are easier when you know who you need to know. *(Kickoff)*
- Meeting people who aren't just educators, but community partners. *(Kickoff)*

What were challenges or concerns today?

- Who's not here—people from the list who weren't able to come, students, and others. *(Design #2)*
- Making sure we're representing as many different populations as possible. *(Design #3)*
- We could have been more intentional about bringing race into the conversation. *(Design #3)*

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- "More persons of color in the talky-talky sessions." *(Survey)*
- "Broadening the pool of schools and art partners for greater collaboration." *(Survey)*

Kickoff meeting structure

Due to scheduling challenges, partner organizations were invited to attend one of three kickoff meetings—each with the same agenda and activities—at the beginning of the planning process. A handful of participants attended each of the first and second kickoff meetings, while more than fifteen took part in the third. Reactions to this arrangement were mixed. While some participants said they felt the smaller meetings provided more opportunities for interaction, others expressed a preference for all partners to meet together in a single session.

What worked today?

- A smaller group made it easier to get into the discussion. *(Kickoff)*
- I liked the small group environment. *(Kickoff)*

What were challenges or concerns today?

- I'm eager to learn more about what one another are doing. Adding more to the mix may make that harder. *(Kickoff)*

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- "Rather than do separate sessions for the first meeting, it is always good to have everyone together for all meetings as much as possible." *(Survey)*

Key learning and impact on practice

New connections and collaborations were top-of-mind for many participants when asked to reflect on what they learned from the process and its impact on their practice.

Connections, collaborations, and partnerships

When asked what new idea they took away from the process that has been most valuable to their work, more than half of survey respondents referred to connections, collaborations, or partnerships. A few responses specifically mentioned artlook Map as a tool for facilitating these types of arts partnerships in the future. It should be noted, however, one survey respondent expressed reservations about how the platform might place arts organizations and the teaching artists whom they employ in competition with one another.

The survey also asked respondents to identify the most significant change they or their organization experienced as a result of participating in the process. Three out of every four answers focused on developing ties with other educators and organizations who took part in the process—from feeling a greater sense of connection to establishing active partnerships.

What new idea did you take away from the planning process?

- "The connections made." (Survey)
- "I'm thinking about ways to bridge artists with opportunities to teach and learn." (Survey)
- "I was impacted by the idea that in order to make what is happening in my classroom more real and pertinent to my students, I need to help them to make real-life connections with organizations outside of my classroom...." (Survey)
- "We have learned that there are programs/artists willing to come here without cost to the district." (Survey)
- "Seeing how startups and nonprofits can enter into mutually beneficial partnerships was eye opening and may be a worthwhile pursuit for the organization." (Survey)
- "Building partnership and using the art map to keep our connections strong." (Survey)
- "The idea of using a database to connect organizations and schools is crucial. It's often difficult to connect with schools unless you have a relationship with someone. This will even the playing field and make it easier to make those necessary connections." (Survey)

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- "Keeping in mind that these large-scale solutions, like providing a platform for school districts to better access agencies, can create the externality of staff being hired away from the agency." (Survey)

What was the most significant impact of the planning process on you or your organization?

- "Better understanding and stronger connections with the group." (Survey)
- "A deeper, personal connection to local educators." (Survey)
- "I got to meet new people that I hope to collaborate with in the future." (Survey)
- "More opportunities to collaborate." (Survey)
- "We are more connected and have more entry points to begin new conversations about sharing our offerings with more students and teachers." (Survey)
- "We have ties with artists/organizations that are planning to come into the district for the first time in years." (Survey)
- "We have established some partnerships with outside organizations that would not have occurred if we didn't engage in this work." (Survey)

Key learning and impact on practice

When asked what new idea they took away from the planning process and its most significant impact on their work, several survey respondents mentioned building greater awareness of arts learning opportunities offered by other organizations or thinking about how to enhance their own programs to facilitate partnerships.

Awareness of offerings

A small number of participants noted how the planning process helped them develop a broader understanding of the variety of arts learning opportunities available for students in the region. When asked about issues that we should pay attention to in future work, one survey respondent suggested finding ways for educators to experience a sample of selected arts programs firsthand.

What worked today?

- Having an opportunity to learn about one another and our work. *(Kickoff)*

What new idea did you take away from the planning process?

- "I was impressed by the diversity of offerings in Western Pennsylvania and just how little I know about arts organizations in the city." *(Survey)*

What was the most significant impact of the planning process on you or your organization?

- "Better understanding of the opportunities we can reach out to in the city." *(Survey)*
- "Just a realization that there are partnerships available and ready to assist our students in expanding their experiences in all areas of the arts." *(Survey)*
- "More awareness of available partnerships and the needs and priorities of other arts organizations." *(Survey)*

What do we need to pay attention to in the future?

- "Perhaps experiencing some of the activities available to us." *(Survey)*

Changes to programming and communications

A few responses suggest participants' engagement with the planning process offered a chance to reflect on how to improve their organization's programming, as well as how they communicate about those programs with potential partners.

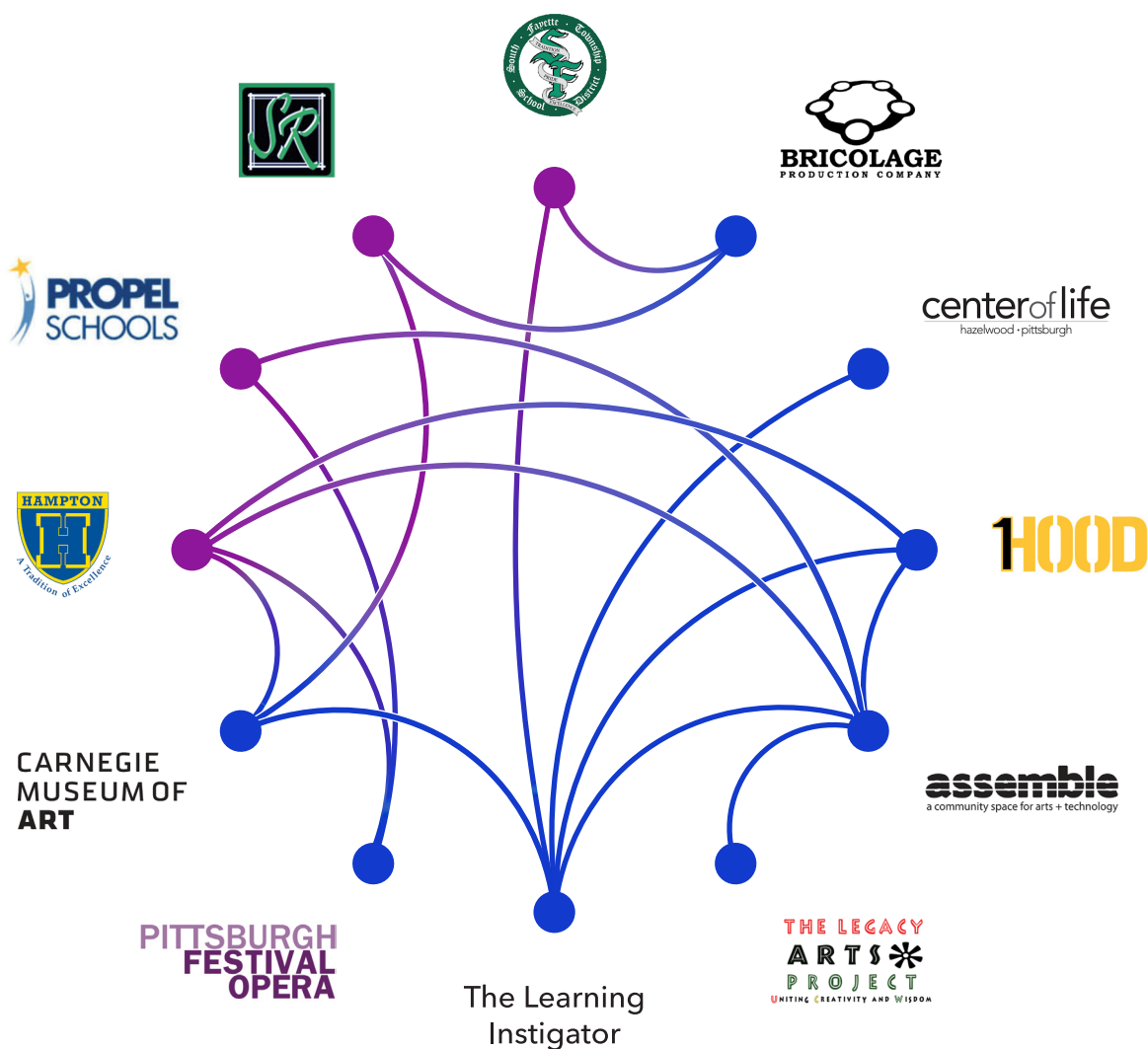
What new idea did you take away from the planning process?

- "It was great to hear more from the schools' perspective. It will be informing us how we present our information to schools to make it easier for them to choose the best enrichment providers." *(Survey)*
- "Analyzing the value and impact of our current offerings and how we could enhance our programming." *(Survey)*
- "Just re-thinking differently about how I share my skills and talents with folx in this region." *(Survey)*

Key learning and impact on practice

The survey asked participants to name which of the other planning partners, if any, they are collaborating with or considering collaborating with during the 2019-2020 school year. Respondents listed sixteen planned or potential partnerships. Ten were between schools and arts and community organizations; the remainder among arts and community organizations.

Planned or potential collaborations among planning partners during current school year

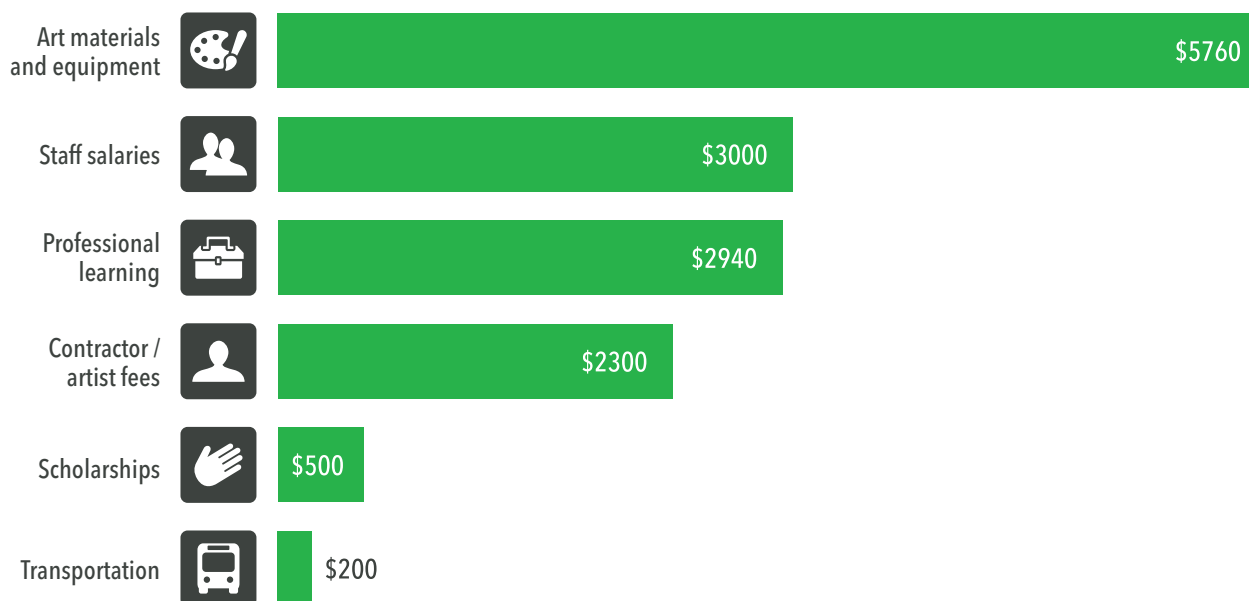


The survey was conducted in January 2020, prior to cancellation of scheduled events due to the health crisis. Respondents were not asked to differentiate whether a partnership occurred, was in process, scheduled, or under discussion. It is unknown how many of these partnership have been implemented given the challenges of the present environment.

Key learning and impact on practice

In recognition of their contributions to the planning process, each partner organization was awarded a stipend to support arts education at their institution. Of the eight organizations that submitted documentation of their planned expenditures as of May 2020, more than half reported they expected to spend at least a portion of their award on art materials or equipment.

Projected award spending



When asked to identify the most significant change they or their organization experienced as a result of participating in the planning process, one survey respondent wrote about the impact of the financial award: "We are utilizing the stipend to purchase equipment that we'll be able to use for upcoming programming."



Planning participants

ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

1Hood Media

- Taliya Allen
- Farooq Al-Said
- Jasiri X

Assemble

- Nina Marie Barbuto

Bricolage

- Sam Turich

Carnegie Museum of Art

- Hattie Lehman

Center of Life

- Neil Martin

Pittsburgh Festival Opera

- Anqwenique Kinsel

The Learning Instigator

- Michelle King

The Legacy Arts Project

- Ariel Barlow
- Erin Perry

SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Hampton Township SD

- Kate Powell
- Jacquelyn Removcik
- Laurie Tocci

Propel Schools

- Zach Dow
- Robin Doyle
- Lauren Hinish
- Alice Lee

South Fayette Township SD

- Stephanie DeLuca
- Chris Elek
- Jeffrey Evancho
- Dana Faloosk
- Emily Giovannucci
- Kevin Maurer
- Aaron Skrbin
- Jeanne Tupper

Sto-Rox SD

- Julie Baroni
- Frank Dalmás
- Danielle Livingston
- Andrea Spangler