



ARTS EDUCATION  
COLLABORATIVE

## Community of Learners for Arts Education: Fundamentals (2016–2017)

Summative Evaluation Report – Overview  
July 2018



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## INTRODUCTION

This overview report highlights key findings from an evaluation of the **Community of Learners for Arts Education: Fundamentals** class that met during the 2016–2017 school year. A full report with detailed analysis of findings is available in a separate document.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

### **Community of Learners for Arts Education: Fundamentals**

(CLAE Fundamentals) is a year-long professional learning opportunity facilitated by AEC to support skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for quality arts education leadership in schools. The program consists of four one-day sessions scheduled over a school year.

Through reading and discussion of research, participants consider the benefits of arts education, characteristics shared by quality arts programs, and actions that schools and school districts can take to support arts education for all students. During each session, teaching artists lead a dance, music, theatre, or visual arts experience, which is followed by group discussions about the skills practiced during the arts experiences. Additionally, all participants develop and implement action plans in support of arts education in their school or district.

Fourteen administrators and teachers in the 2016 cohort—which was the seventh CLAE Fundamentals class overall—successfully completed the program. In the previous six classes, a total of 53 participants completed all program requirements.



## ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation is to improve the program's effectiveness in facilitating learning, inform future applications to qualify as a state-approved program for continuing education, inform the design of additional programs for school and district administrators, and document outcomes to advance the field and garner support.

Participants were asked to respond to the same set of evaluation questions both **BEFORE** the program on the application form and **AFTER** the program at the final class session. Questions explored participants' comfort performing selected functions in support of arts education and their knowledge of student outcomes facilitated through the arts, the attributes of quality arts instruction, and strategies to support arts education.

Only participants who responded to the evaluation questions both **BEFORE** and **AFTER** the program are included in this analysis.

## OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

EVALUATION QUESTION	KEY FINDINGS
To what extent do participants feel more comfortable performing certain responsibilities of their positions as they relate to arts education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Analysis of participants' responses before and after the program shows that most of the 2016 cohort felt more comfortable <b>advocating for quality arts learning</b> after the program than before.</li><li>▪ In contrast, less than half reported feeling greater comfort in <b>guiding school staff to apply research in arts education to classroom practice</b> and <b>evaluating written arts curriculum</b>.</li><li>▪ By the end of the program, all participants in the 2016 cohort reported feeling comfortable <b>guiding school staff to apply research in arts education to classroom practice, advocating for arts learning, and communicating the value of the arts</b>. The proportion of participants who reported feeling <b>comfortable articulating skills fostered in the arts</b> jumped dramatically.</li></ul>
In what ways does participants' understanding of the types of student outcomes facilitated through participation in the arts change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ On average, members of the 2016 cohort referred to approximately the same number of student outcomes facilitated through the arts in their writings both before and after the program—which is consistent with previous classes.</li><li>▪ <b>Academic achievement in other subjects and cross-curricular connections</b> were most frequently mentioned student outcomes both before and after the program.</li><li>▪ Almost three-quarters of the 2016 cohort referred to at least one new category of student outcomes facilitated through the arts after the program compared to before.</li><li>▪ <b>Thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills</b> became top-of-mind for about one-third of the 2016 cohort following the program, the largest increase between before and after.</li></ul>
In what ways does participants' understanding of the key attributes of quality arts instruction change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Responses from members of the 2016 cohort showed no difference in the average number of categories of attributes of quality arts instruction mentioned before and after the program.</li><li>▪ While about two-thirds of participants in the 2016 cohort referred to one or more attributes of quality arts education that they had not mentioned in their responses before the program, in most cases it was just a single category more. On average, they referred to significantly fewer new attributes of quality arts instruction following the program than previous classes.</li><li>▪ <b>Empowering students to make creative decisions within the artistic process and actively engaging students in learning</b> became top-of-mind as attributes of quality arts instruction for about one-third of the 2016 cohort following their participation in the program.</li></ul>
In what ways does participants' understanding of strategies used by schools and school districts to support quality arts education change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Like their counterparts in previous classes, participants in the 2016 cohort averaged significantly fewer categories of strategies to support arts education in their responses after the program compared to before.</li><li>▪ Half of the 2016 cohort referred to at least one new strategy to support arts education after the program than before. In all but one case it was just a single category more.</li><li>▪ <b>Facilitating connections between the arts and other subjects</b> was most top-of-mind among strategies to support arts education. About two-thirds of participants referred to an aspect of arts integration before and after the program—which was also true of previous cohorts.</li></ul>
To what extent do participants and others in their school systems participate in additional professional learning with AEC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ With the exception of a few administrators, participation in the 2016 cohort represents the only recent engagement with AEC programs to date for most members of the class.</li><li>▪ A member of the 2016 cohort is one of only two CLAE Fundamentals participants ever who graduated and then returned to complete the program again as part of another class. These participants attended in teams with different members of their school systems each time.</li></ul>

## LOOKING FORWARD

AEC is accredited by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to offer Act 45 Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership continuing education credits to CLAE Fundamentals participants through the fall of 2020. While major revisions to the program are prohibited under the current accreditation agreement, smaller changes can be enacted to improve the program prior to the next application cycle in 2020.

### KEY ACTION STEPS



#### **In response to the findings in this report, AEC staff plan to:**

- discuss and come to consensus around AEC's organizational priorities and values regarding student outcomes facilitated through arts education, attributes of quality arts instruction, and strategies to support arts education in schools and school districts
- review the extent to which the curriculum provides participants with opportunities to explore different types of student outcomes facilitated through arts education, attributes of quality arts instruction, and strategies to support arts education and make adjustments to the program as needed
- work to maintain relationships with graduates of the program and periodically invite them to share stories about how they continue to work to support arts education in their school system, which AEC will communicate among its constituents
- incorporate additional details about CLAE implementation and include findings about participant satisfaction in future reports to help provide a more comprehensive picture of all program inputs, outputs, and outcomes