

A mathematics, science and art project from Jackson Elementary, a Right Brain School

The Right Brain Initiative Evaluation Report: 2011 – 2012

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Executive Summary

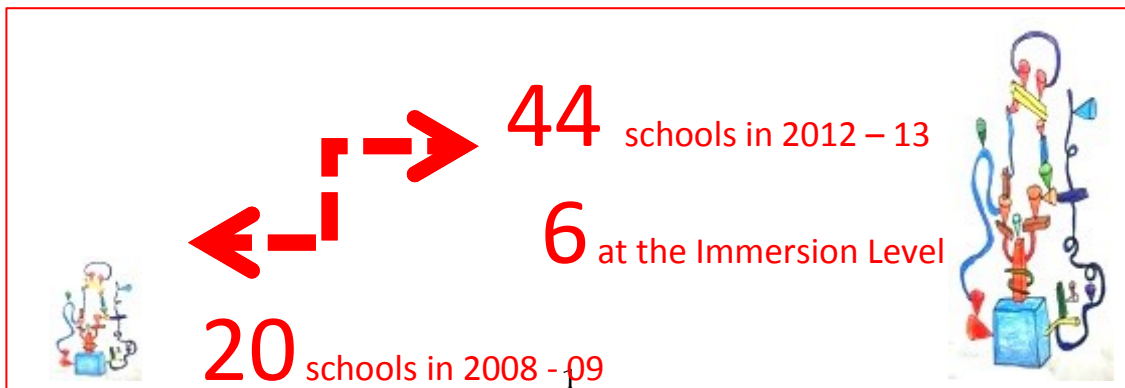
The Right Brain Initiative (the Initiative) is a tri-county initiative designed to use the arts and arts-integrated learning to ensure that children throughout the Portland, OR region have the opportunity to develop their imaginative thinking. The Initiative is a partnership of the Regional Arts & Cultural Council, participating school systems (Gresham-Barlow, Hillsboro, North Clackamas, Oregon Trail, and Portland Public Schools) and the arts community, supported by local governments, foundations, corporations, and individual donors. Through the initiative, regional artists share arts-integrated learning strategies with classroom teachers and arts specialists who expand those strategies into enriched approaches to teaching and learning. Both sets of educators build their skills through an intensive set of professional learning experiences throughout the year and in a summer institute. A team of arts integration coaches supports the work in the schools through planning and reflection activities designed to deepen the quality of the work. Individual schools move through levels of increasing engagement, beginning at the invitational level and leading to the immersion level where the entire school is involved in using the arts to promote engaged and imaginative learning.

Four Years of Accomplishment: The Results

The Right Brain Initiative, together with its school and community partners, has much to be proud of:

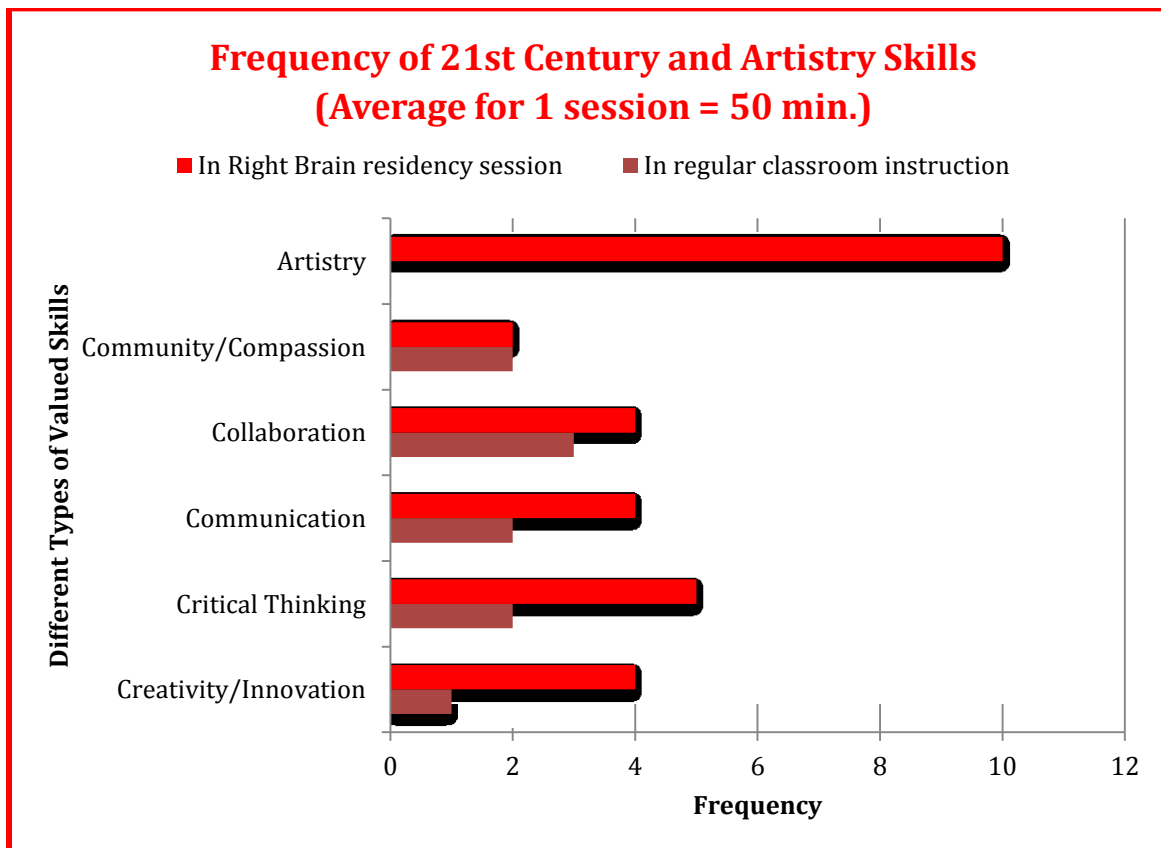
A growing and sustained community of schools invested in arts-integrated learning: As it enters its fifth year, the number of Right Brain schools has grown from 20 to 44 overall – even though districts have undergone major budget cuts. Only one school has dropped out, despite rising levels of accountability for core academic measures and severe budget cuts. In addition, as of 2012, 6 of the initial schools have committed to operating at the *immersion level*, where arts integration and arts-based instructional strategies are being implemented across the school throughout the year. In short, the number of participating schools has more than doubled, with all but one school persisting from its first enrollment to the present.

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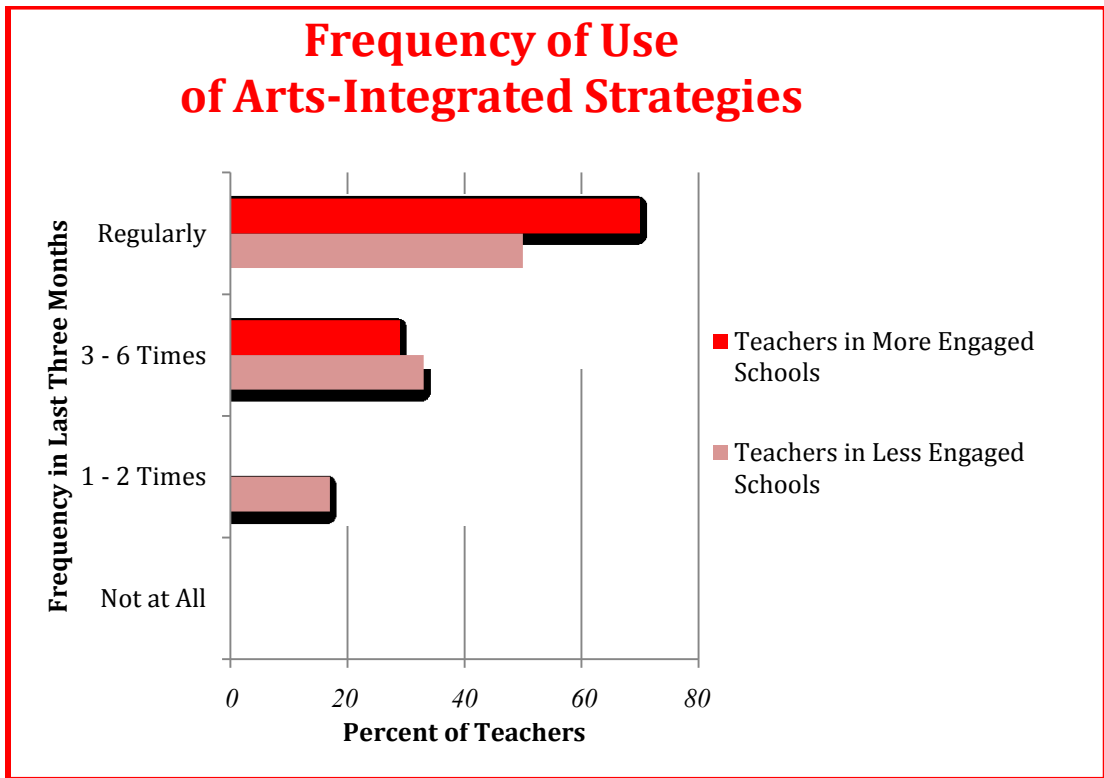
A measurable effect on instruction: When teachers and teaching artists collaborate in the delivery of Right Brain residencies, students engage in using 21st century skills (e.g., creative and critical thinking, collaboration, etc.) nearly twice as often compared to ongoing classroom instruction. In addition, during residencies, children learn to think and act like artists (e.g., using materials and techniques carefully and in new ways, expressing their personal ideas and experiences, developing a unique style, etc.) throughout the sessions – strategies that are largely missing in academic instruction.

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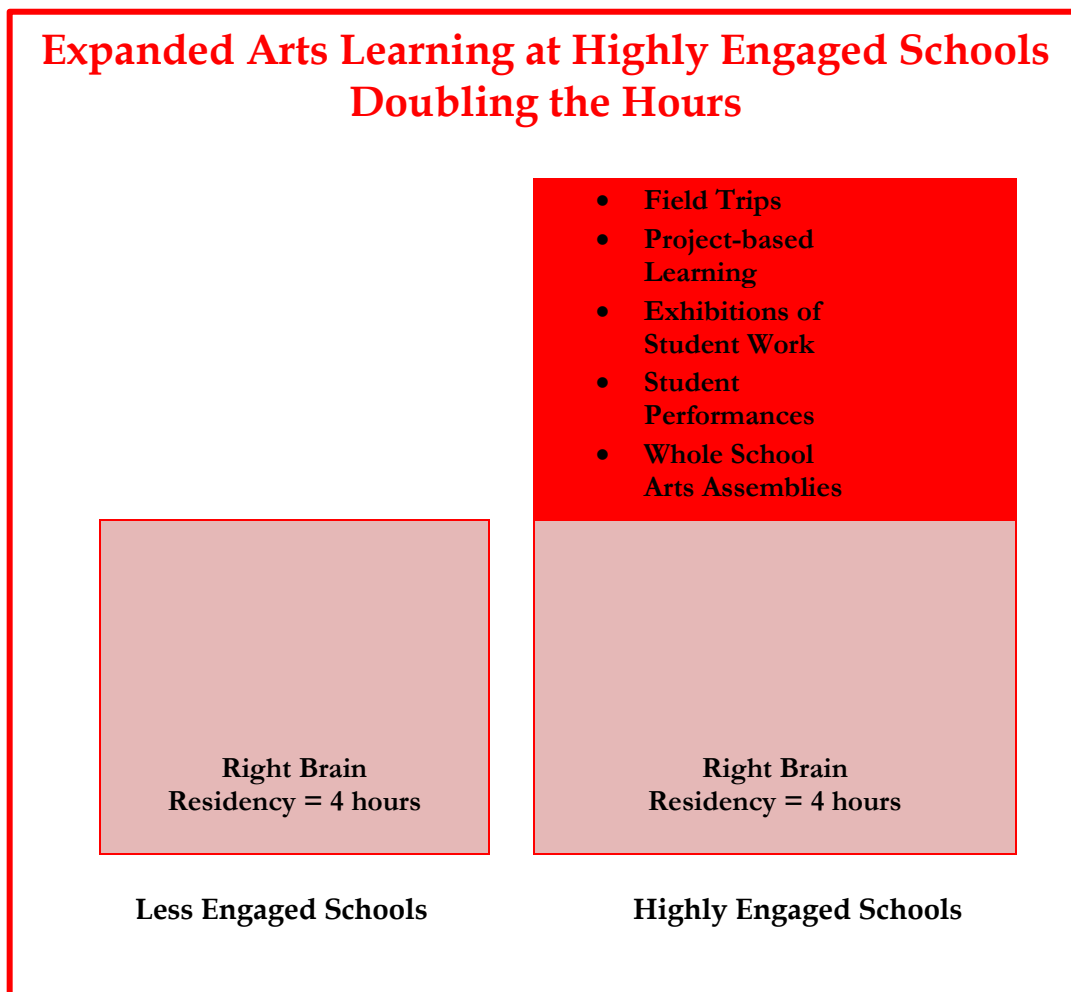
It is equally significant that even outside of residencies, participating teachers report using Right Brain strategies in their classrooms. When asked about the recent three months, nearly three quarters of participating teachers in more engaged schools (i.e., those with a multi-year history where whole faculties have embraced the Initiative) report using Right Brain strategies regularly to enliven their ongoing classroom instruction. Even in schools that are in the earlier phases of involvement, nearly half of teachers report using these strategies regularly.

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Multiplying the return on investment: At schools that are more engaged in the Initiative, teachers and principals have developed strategies that add as much as 4 or more hours of arts and arts-integrated instruction per grade level per year – using their own building-level resources. Thus, these sites are matching the Initiative hour for hour. In these schools, teachers and principals have generated time and funding for field trips, project-based learning that integrates the arts, exhibitions of student work, student performances, and whole school arts assemblies. The result, from a student’s perspective, is double the amount of arts and arts-integrated learning.

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The Future: In 2012 - 13

In 2012-13, The Right Brain Initiative is undertaking several initiatives:

- **Intensive work on the design and quality of school residencies:** This work will involve arts integration coaches as well as principals and members of arts teams in observing and scoring the design and implementation of residencies with the goal of deepening the work and its impact on instruction and learning.
- **Increased professional development:** The addition of a third year in the professional development sequence will train teachers, principals and artists in the use of formative assessment practices and how to combine them with documentation to tell the story of the impact of arts teaching on students' learning and lives. The entire sequence is being expanded to support the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments.
- **Alignment with other education efforts:** Right Brain's arts integration approach will be positioned to support two local and/or national education initiatives: King School in Portland as one of the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities' Turnaround Arts schools; and Hillsboro's Quatama Elementary as one of the initial sites participating in the Portland Metro STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) Partnership where they will focus on STEAM (adding an 'A' for arts).
- **Expanded evaluation:** We will continue to look at all of the outcomes outlined on the previous pages: the growth and health of the Right Brain network, the effects on instruction, and the return on investment at the building level. In addition, with 6 buildings engaged in the Initiative at the whole school level, we are now in a position to work with participating districts to look at whether participation in The Right Brain Initiative is correlated with measurable effects for students and for schools, including:
 - For students: Levels of achievement on Oregon state measures, attendance, and engagement in learning in and out of school time.
 - For schools: Measures of school climate

The Long-term Future

This is an important moment for the region. The state is confronting its long history of under-funding public education. Oregon has joined the national consortium of states that will use the rigorous new Common Core State Standards to raise expectations for young people's learning. Voters in the city of Portland passed Measure 26 - 146 and established the groundbreaking Arts Education and Access Fund that will ensure that every K-5 elementary school student in Portland has access to certified instruction in the arts every week.

The Portland-Metropolitan region will continue to thrive *to the extent that* schools and communities make major investments in a next generation of young people who can continue the innovations that fuel the civic and economic life of communities: clean technology, computer electronics and software, athletic and outdoor gear, and advanced manufacturing.

Even as there is a national drive to raise academic standards, a well-rounded education must continue to include opportunities to create as well as to consume knowledge. The Right Brain Initiative - if vigorously pursued - can help schools to enrich their current curriculum in core academics with 21st century and artistry skills - creating an educational experience that engages and challenges both the left and the right sides of the brain.

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What Young Brains Can Do on Right Brain
OR
What a Region Can Do Fueled by Those Brains