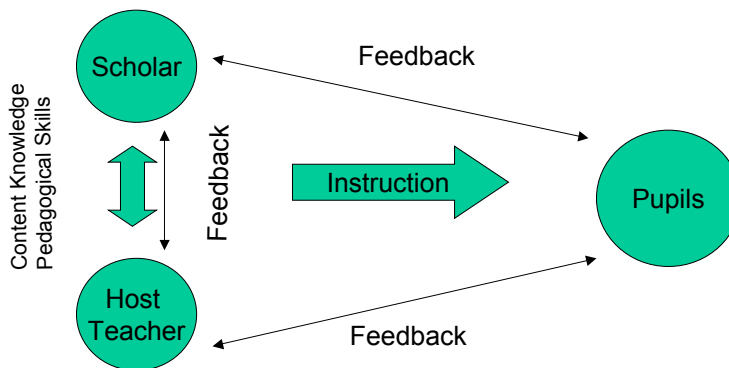


Building Capacity for Our Future: Emerging Findings from Research on ArtsBridge Teachers¹

Set against a backdrop of federal and state policies that emphasize the arts as a fundamental component of the core curriculum, new arts requirements for attaining teaching credentials and entrance into public universities, coupled with educational reform initiatives that call for a greater degree of local control and research-based best practices in teaching, the importance of high quality professional support cannot be understated. Recent research undertaken by the Center for Arts Research in Education (CARE) examines emerging findings from teachers participating in ArtsBridge and receiving support from university scholars and faculty members. As designed, the ArtsBridge classroom-based professional development model is highly dependent upon communication and feedback between university arts scholars, faculty members, host teachers, and pupils. These feedback loops guide scholars and teachers as they engage in an exchange of content knowledge, and pedagogical and other skills designed to meet the specific needs of pupils in real time. The model is depicted in the figure below:

The ArtsBridge Model of Professional Support for Teachers



To examine the effects of the ArtsBridge model of classroom-based professional development on participating teachers' senses of efficacy and satisfaction, the authors employed a triangulated research strategy designed to enhance the reliability, validity, and replicability of the study. This follows from similar studies of arts education partnerships that use multiple research phases, multiple methods, multiple observers, and multiple data sources (for example, see Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles, 1999). The research design emerged from the authors' previous works and experiences with educational renewal and employed three tools: (1) a survey questionnaire that included scaled-response and open-ended items; (2) interviews with selected host teachers; (3) field observations of the ArtsBridge model in practice; (4) teachers' evaluations of scholars that solicited comments about the program's impacts.

¹ Abstracted from Beck, J., and Appel, M., (2002). Impacts of Classroom-Based Professional Development on Teachers' Senses of Efficacy and Satisfaction: Examining the ArtsBridge Model Manuscript submitted for publication, and available for review from the authors upon request.

In the aggregate, our exploratory research surfaced six important themes directly related to the classroom-based professional development provided by ArtsBridge and host teachers' senses of efficacy and satisfaction. These thematic findings follow:

- **ArtsBridge host teachers demonstrated increased content knowledge and comfort with arts curricula.** Host teachers participating in our research across the University of California system reported an increase in disciplinary knowledge in the arts and/or arts-related technologies, and a higher level of comfort delivering art instruction to their pupils. For example, to Question 8 on the survey, *Have you gained disciplinary knowledge of Art or Technology as a result of ArtsBridge?*, 83 percent of the teachers responded affirmatively. To Question 9 on the survey, *Do you feel comfortable presenting art instruction that you would not have felt comfortable presenting before your ArtsBridge project?* 75 percent of the teachers responded affirmatively. Within the context of interviews and evaluations, host teachers suggested these were findings that could be attributed directly to participation in ArtsBridge and their intensive work with scholars.
- **Support provided by ArtsBridge provided teachers with unique new opportunities to collaborate with other professionals, resulting in reciprocal and mutually reinforcing learning.** In coded responses to open-ended items on the survey questionnaire and scholar evaluations, over 80 percent of host teachers described their professional relationships with ArtsBridge scholars as collaborative, mutually beneficial, highly valued, and as helping to create a more relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
- **Collaboration with ArtsBridge scholars helped host teachers integrate the arts into other areas of the curriculum, and other areas of the curriculum into the arts.** Throughout the course of their ArtsBridge experiences, a number of host teachers reported working with scholars to integrate skills, developed through arts learning and instruction, into other subject areas. Data emerging from surveys, interviews, and observations suggest that this practice is prevalent across ArtsBridge programs.
- **ArtsBridge afforded opportunities for teachers to explore new ways of working with pupils and to view them in “a different light.”** In part due to being exposed to the many sides of their pupils and their work with ArtsBridge scholars, many host teachers reported that they would seek out innovative and highly individualized instructional strategies for their future work, including offering additional hands-on and creative activities.
- **Teachers appreciated the highly personalized classroom-based professional development provided in the context of ArtsBridge.** Data from surveys of ArtsBridge suggest that with few exceptions, host teachers appreciated the level of professional support provided by their scholars. Out of 116 teachers surveyed, 105 (over 90 percent) expressed high levels of satisfaction with ArtsBridge and working with ArtsBridge scholars on projects tailored to the needs of their pupils.
- **Support provided by ArtsBridge had differential impacts on primary and secondary teachers.** At the primary level, ArtsBridge provided classroom teachers with a regimen of basic skills in a given arts discipline, that when combined with specific pedagogies, enhanced the teacher's proficiency greatly. At the secondary level, ArtsBridge scholars provided teachers with highly specialized activities and feedback that scaffolded upon their experiences and training as professional arts educators.

Arguably, in light of these emerging findings, there is much more research on ArtsBridge to be done. What we do know about the ArtsBridge model, however, is that it is resilient, teacher friendly, and ultimately responsive to environmental changes, both internal and external. Because its scholars, faculty, host schools, and most importantly teachers, must be highly vested in the success of the K-12 students the project serves, ArtsBridge has proven to be consistently viable and invigorating. Most importantly, ArtsBridge proves that by employing practices known to be sound, professional development partnerships between schools and postsecondary institutions can go a long way toward building high morale among teachers charged with delivering instruction that includes the arts, across the educational continuum.

ArtsBridge Research Notes contain brief summaries of the impact of the ArtsBridge program on participants: university students, faculty, K-12 schoolchildren, and teachers. For others in the series, or for additional information, see our website: www.arts.uci.edu/ucartsbridge/