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Reach for the Stars: Restructuring Schooling for Emergent Bilinguals with a Whole-Child, Arts-Infused Curricular Approach

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V. Section II: Weaving Community: Learning with Each Other

Reach for the Stars: Restructuring Schooling for Emergent Bilinguals with a Whole-Child, Arts-Infused Curricular Approach

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Abstract

This qualitative case study describes a two-year, multi-pronged university-urban school district partnership in Massachusetts sponsored by former Governor Deval Patrick's Gateways Cities agenda to support an innovative middle school summer enrichment academy for emergent bilingual (EB) learners. The partnership between Boston University and Malden Public Schools aimed at improving EB student success through a whole-child, inclusive, community-arts-infused, content-based curriculum with field trips, guest speakers, conversation classes with bilingual university graduate students, and performing arts, fitness and wellness workshops; a comprehensive teacher training/coaching model; and parent education and community engagement experiences. This chapter examines the impact of the whole-child, community-arts-infused curriculum on middle school EB student learning. Results from interviews, pre-and post-assessments, and observations indicate that the curricular approach boosted learner confidence and engagement; enhanced linguistic and socioemotional development and promoted intercultural awareness and positive cultural identity for attending EBs.

Keywords: emergent bilinguals, whole-child curriculum, arts-infused curriculum, integrated skills, content-based curriculum, Gateways Cities, English language learners enrichment academy

Thanks to my supportive teachers and classmates, the Brazilian graduate student, the inspirational bilingual guest speakers, and the many activities like Reader's Theater, the poetry slam workshop, exercise classes, and working with real teaching artists in the afternoon, I have become less afraid to speak in English, even if it is not perfect. The academy made learning English and subject matter fun and I never felt judged. I feel stronger than ever about my ability to succeed in any English presentation, I just need to persevere. To myself in the characters in the novel means that I must believe to achieve. I didn't always feel this way about my learning until this summer. Learning is fun here because it is not stressful.

—Tiago, a 7th grade Brazilian immigrant student in the enrichment academy



Introduction

Educating the whole-child (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011) and infusing arts in education are hallmarks of any high performing K-12 teaching and learning environment in the US. Unfortunately, the most troubling finding in recent studies (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012) is the “equity gap” between the availability of whole-child and arts-integrated instruction for students in more affluent schools compared to those in high-poverty schools; economically-disadvantaged and EB students simply do not have the same access to the diverse learning experiences – especially to the arts – that affluent students and their native English-speaking peers do. It is worth rethinking how we structure teaching and learning experiences for EB students since research (Durlak et al., 2011; Latta & Chan, 2010) clearly states the benefits of whole-child, arts-infused approaches to learning for Emergent Bilingual learners. To address whole-child and arts education disparities in middle level schools, this chapter explores evidence that infusing arts and a whole-child approach to development—one that takes into account the unique socioemotional, intercultural, language and learning needs of students—had a positive impact on EBs’ language and learning outcomes.

My paternal and maternal grandparents immigrated from Portugal and French-speaking Canada to a gateway city in Rhode Island and worked tirelessly their entire lives in mills and factories in order to give their children and their grandchildren a taste of the American dream. Never would they have imagined that their granddaughter would find her way into Harvard where as a Master’s student in Education, I was inspired to give back to the cities that gave birth to my family’s dreams by pursuing a career in TESOL and Bilingual Education. In 2013, while

simultaneously serving as a Lecturer at Boston University and completing my Doctoral studies in Language Teacher Education, I first heard about Governor Deval Patrick Gateways Cities Agenda for English Learners. I felt strongly that this was a unique opportunity to give back so I authored and was awarded the state grant to support a two-year partnership between Boston University School of Education and Malden Public School District to create and implement the Reach for the Starts Academy for middle school English Learners. In my conceptualization of the programmatic and curricular design, as someone who could identify with the needs of learners in these gateway cities, I sought out to create an engaging and meaningful program that included academics and socio-emotional, intercultural, artistic, and athletic experiences for newcomers, refugees, and emerging bilinguals who typically are not offered such a chance. I hoped to create an academy that offered what Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) define as an *inclusive education experience*: “providing each student the right to an authentic sense of belonging to a school classroom community where difference is expected and valued” (p. 649). My hope was to create an elite academic learning experience for those who would typically not be given the opportunity for experiential, rigorous learning experiences.

The Summer Enrichment Academies were part of the Gateway Cities initiative, launched by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education (EOE) in 2013 and 2014 under former governor Deval Patrick. The Gateway Cities, such as Lowell, Fall River, Lawrence, and Malden, were once thriving industrial centers in New England with factories but due to economic declines and a new knowledge-based economy, face economic disparity and unrealized potential; the limited resources impact the educational and career opportunities available to students in these cities (<https://massinc.org/our-work/policy-center/gateway-cities/>). To address the growing needs of these communities, the EOE implemented the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Gateway Cities Education Agenda in 2013 with the goal:

to close the persistent achievement gaps that disproportionately affect children living in poverty, students of color, students who are English language learners and students with disabilities, many of whom are heavily concentrated in the Commonwealth's twenty-six Gateway Cities.

After an initial conversation with former Malden Superintendent Dave DeRuosi and Assistant Superintendent Kelly Chase, I recognized them as visionary educational administrators bold enough to think outside of the box. The grant allowed us to partner—a university and urban public school district- and to “rethink school structures” and “instructional techniques” during the summers of 2013 and 2014 respectively. These elements are key in education models that are not only inclusive, but that also wish to emphasize equity in education. Due to the flexible structure of the grant program, we were able to envision and create a middle school summer learning experience for EB students with a safe space where their unique experiences as newcomers and/or immigrants were valued. As there is no denying the plethora of linguistic, socioeconomic, psychological, and cultural challenges faced by middle school EB students in Malden, we knew we had to educate the whole-child. In my educational model, I had proposed

the inclusion of non-cognitive skills (e.g. habits of mind), art education, physical education, interdisciplinary and integrated learning, role model educators with whom they could identify and trust, and intercultural education. Dave, Kelly, and I also recognized and celebrated the rich funds of knowledge and experiences that these students offer to the school and community and wanted to provide a learning experience that tapped into and elevated this social and cultural capital. We knew that designing a partnership between a university and urban school district with such lofty ideas was no small task and that we may encounter challenges in the process, but the benefits outweighed the threats and risks. So, we pursued the unique opportunity to forge a partnership, funded by Governor Deval Patrick, and dared to call upon the social and academic capital of the university, community, and local practitioners. We intentionally designed a multipronged approach to serving the needs and tapping into the rich funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) of middle school EBs in the district.

A Portraiture of the Emergent Bilingual Population in Malden

The Malden Public School District presently serves a vibrantly diverse multi-lingual, multi-ethnic student population in an urban educational context. It is indeed a cultural microcosm of our national macrocosm, with students representing numerous cultural backgrounds. School report student-level demographic data indicates that the number of EBs in the district has steadily increased over the past ten years. Presently, over 45% of students' report speaking a language other than English at home, reflecting the rich linguistic and cultural diversity found in a large urban city. Approximately 19% of students are classified as EBs. Among current EBs in Malden, 22 home languages are represented. Of the 1,098 EBs in the district, students speak Spanish (6.5%), Chinese (9.8%), Portuguese (6.2%), French/Haitian Creole(6.6%), Vietnamese (3.9%), and other languages including Albanian, Arabic, Amharic, CapeVerdean, Hindi, Gujarati, Khmer, Luganda, Nepali, Filipino, Pushtu, Russian, Somali, Thai, Tibetan, Tamil and Urdu. Of the student population, 18.8% are considered beginning and intermediate level EBs (<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>).

The majority of EBs in Malden live at or below the poverty line, with most receiving free or reduced lunch. According to the DESE's website, 49.9% of the student population receive free lunch and 9.4% receive reduced lunch. Overall, 60% of the student population in the district is considered low income. Most EBs in the district are first-generation immigrants. Many of these students have had Limited or Interrupted Formal Schooling Education (SLIFE), due to circumstances such as war, migration, civil unrest, or other factors, and some are not literate in their home language. A large number of EBs come from single parent households. Of all current EBs at the middle school level (the target population for this proposal), 13.4% are in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classrooms and 47.6% are English learners. In addition to the stresses of acculturation into a new society, many students face very serious life challenges. Some EBs in Malden immigrated post-Earthquake in Haiti and lost family members; others faced issues of homelessness and hunger; some have left war torn countries and refugee camps; many older EBs are expected to contribute to childcare for younger siblings so parents can work; and although

some gains have been made in the district over the years in terms of addressing the needs of EBs, retention and enrollment is still a major area of concern. For instance, the DESE adjusted four-year Graduation Rate Cohort Report shows 14.3% of EBs dropped out of school in 2013. Closing the opportunity gap for EBs and providing opportunities for tailored and accelerated learning continues to be a priority for the district. As indicated in our demographic data, the City of Malden has a burgeoning number of EBs who struggle academically and consistently perform low on statewide and school assessments. The wide range of EB backgrounds and experiences necessitate specialized instructional interventions and enrichment programs targeted to meet their unique language, literacy, and learning needs.

For a number of reasons, EBs in Malden struggle to balance the rigorous demands associated with simultaneously acquiring English and mastering content in various disciplines. In addition to these enormous cognitive demands, other factors such as receiving limited funding per pupil compared to higher income districts and the challenges of integrating into a new culture, pose as obstacles that contribute to the persistent academic achievement gap that disproportionately affects EBs in Malden. Unfortunately, information on this culturally vibrant population is all too often presented from a deficit-based perspective. For example, according to the DESE District analysis website (<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/analysis/state.aspx>), data from the 2014 MCAS results on the DESE website show that the achievement gap continues to disproportionately affect EBs in Malden, perhaps due to its biased nature. Of the students requiring English as a Second Language (ESL) services as well as those who exited the ESL program in the district, 63% failed or needed improvement in English language arts; 59% failed or needed improvement in math; 74% failed or needed improvement in science.

We intentionally designed a curriculum that would allow these students (and their teachers) to view themselves from an asset-based perspective. Despite the obstacles facing EBs in Malden, we instead saw their dreams and goals of attending college and pursuing exciting careers; we saw the rich social and cultural capital that they offer the community. In essence, operating from a strengths perspective, we saw their potential and desires and dreamed of designing a program that would enable them to reach for the stars in spite of any challenges they face.

The Whole-child, Arts-Infused Curricular Approach

Based on the principles of transformative pedagogy (Cummins, 2000, 2009), the whole-child (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004) arts-infused curriculum aimed to *empower* and *engage* students through dialogic learning experiences, creative and critical reflection activities, and experiential learning opportunities. The content-based (Brinton, 2003; Brinton, Snow & Wesche 1989; Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Snow, 2001), integrated skills curriculum emphasized the development of language, literacy, and critical thinking skills across content areas, enabling students to expand both their linguistic *and* academic knowledge. The overarching theme of the 2013 and 2014 five-week summer enrichment academies was *Reach*

for the Stars: Pathways for Building a Bright Future and all curricular materials, guest lectures, field trips, and experiences built on that theme. Lessons tapped into students' prior knowledge and included explicit language, literacy, habits of mind, and intercultural competence objectives. Instructors roles would not be the sage on the stage, but rather the guides on the side who would model, coach, monitor, and assess students in a variety of relevant and meaningful activities aimed to develop their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in English while broadening and deepening their knowledge of and curiosity about topics in social studies, English language arts, math, science, health/wellness, and the arts. In addition to providing authentic, relevant language learning experiences, the curricular combination of guest lectures, field trips, and college visits aimed to help students make real world content connections and promote college and career-readiness.

Rooted in Understanding by Design (UBD) framework (Wiggins and McTigh, 2005) and informed by World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) (<https://www.wida.us/>) and the Common Core standards (<http://www.corestandards.org/>), the program entailed an outcomes-based learning model. Each week students learned explicit language, content, and non-cognitive objectives.

The daily schedule included:

- a) a content-based, integrated skills *language education* class aimed at accelerating students' English language skills and content knowledge. These courses are co-taught by BU faculty and Malden teachers.
- b) a *literacy education* class that targeted the development of students' literacy skills and prepared/debriefed students for guest lectures and field trips. These courses are co-taught by BU faculty and Malden teachers.
- c) a *lunch conversation* class that targeted the development of students' social language co-taught by BU TESOL graduate students.
- d) a *performance workshop* taught by three young teaching artists from Boston Arts Academy.

On Tuesdays, well-known guest speakers such as Pras Michel (Haitian-American hip-hop artist and entrepreneur); Moise Fokou (Cameroonian born NFL player); Ishmael Beah (Sierra Leonian author and human rights activist); Linda Nathan (Executive Director of the Center for Arts and Scholarship) and many more presented and facilitated student discussions. On Thursdays, students attended physical education classes. Fridays were field trip days where EB students were able to build on content learned in core classes. They visited the JFK museum (<https://www.jfklibrary.org/>), the Museum of Fine Arts (<http://www.mfa.org/>), Boston Improv (<http://www.improvboston.com/>), and many other cultural and artistic sites.

An overview of the academy, which was filmed by Haily Ho of MATV, Malden's local television station, can be found at

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJvXxIVbAAs&feature=em-upload_owner#action=share)



Figure 1: NFL Player talks about empathy 1



Figure 2: Hip Hop Icon Pras Michel of *the Fugees* inspires the students

Habits of Mind

Given the myriad learning and life challenges faced by middle school EBs in Malden, coupled with the rigorous demands of schooling in a second language and new culture, we infused habits of mind (Costa & Kallick, 2008): perseverance, empathy and listening to others, imagination, precision, and learning continuously into the curriculum as the overarching weekly objectives and brought these themes alive through the arts and literacy based activities. Each of the academy's five-week units of study featured a specific habit of mind as the central, organizing theme; the five habits of mind were selected collaboratively among teachers and university consultants as the most fitting for our overarching goals. From there, all of the weekly readings, guest speakers, learning activities and experiences, and field trips built on that theme, and students were asked to draw connections between the materials as well as to their personal lives in order to increase their understanding of these dispositions. For example, students read about perseverance, heard from Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier turned author, about how that habit of mind brought him from war-torn Sierra Leone to the United States, where he perseveres every day; and eventually the students demonstrated their own perseverance by telling their unique stories and performing on stage.

Arts-Infused Curriculum and Engagement

It is well documented in the literature that EBs can benefit immensely from a rich arts-integrated educational experience, presenting unique opportunities to develop their language, literacy, and writing skills-in a low stress environment- by interacting with different forms of art and media such as drama, film, visual and graphic arts, music, and dance (Latta & Chan, 2010). Inequities in arts education are blatantly obvious in the United States educational system. According to a Los Angeles County Art Commission (2001) study, wealthy and high-achieving students are more likely to receive arts education than low-performing and economically-disadvantaged students. Sadly, arts education is virtually nonexistent for EBs and low socioeconomic status students as extra time is dedicated to double literacy and math development. As Woodworth (2007) mentions, "Disadvantaged and at-risk youth are often barred from school arts programs in favor of remedial instruction in reading and math" (p. 138). This imbalance is further evident in middle level schools where substantive arts learning is contingent upon the availability of funding and experienced personnel.

We purposefully attended to enhancing learning through the arts both in language and literacy classes as well as by including afternoon theater, dance, and music classes that were also content-based and tied to the overarching weekly themes. The academy began with a kickoff performance by Linda Nathan, former Headmaster of Boston Arts Academy (BAA) and Executive Director of the Center for Artistry and Scholarship, as well as BAA alumni corps teaching artists from the Center for the Arts in Boston and internationally acclaimed hip-hop artist, Delie Red X who: (a) helped students to start to interpret the academy theme and habits of mind, (b) served as a model of the type of artistic performance that students would be expected

to do for their final capstone performance of learning, (c) taught the afternoon dance, theater, poetry slam or chorus classes with content-based connections, and (d) coordinated the final performance of learning.

Arts-infused learning was a critical aspect of the innovative curriculum that was designed to empower participants to fluently and confidently express who they were, what their goals are, and what they learned. Some activities included theatrical and dance performances of short stories; making visual collages of learning; writing and reciting “I Am From” poems and other poems connecting their sociocultural lives to the Habit of Mind themes, and ongoing opportunities to demonstrate their learning through the arts in the morning language and literacy blocks (e.g., role plays, visual interpretation of readings, storytelling using smart pens and creating short movies as formative assessments of learning). Students were encouraged to include cultural artistic knowledge throughout the curriculum: one young student, Maria, who immigrated from the Dominican Republic (DR), taught the entire afternoon dance class the history and art of the music genre *bachata*. This idea was born when the teacher invited students to think about cultural connections related to Native American artistic expression, a part of the language block lesson about Native American History of Perseverance. Maria then shared with the dance class how *bachata* is a cultural connection in the DR, she then taught the dance to her peers, and co-choreographed the final performance with the teacher. For one of our field trips, the students went to Boston Improv Asylum to receive professional performance training from real actors that boosted their expressive skills and self-confidence. Students in the academy were asked to demonstrate their learning through artistic ways in formative and summative assessments. For example, teachers incorporated a reader's theater performance of *We Beat the Streets* (2007) and excerpts and interpretations from other literature and texts; a summative “I Am From” poetry slam performance; multimedia learning portfolios were displayed across the room for parents and teachers to see how much they learned, including an interpretation of the elements through a Native American rain dance, Jazz dance, a collage of poetry and pictures, a “Still I Rise” theatrical interpretation, and improvisational theater and “If the World Were a Village” performance.

The entire final performance of learning, including dance, musical, theatrical, and poetry performances and interviews with teachers and EB scholars aired on Malden’s local television station, MATV, at <http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T01001&video=209058>.

The level of student attendance throughout the academy was very high, a signal of engagement in a non-mandatory program. Of the students who participated in the academy, 92% had perfect attendance for the five-week program. Perhaps this was because of how the program, the teachers, and the learning mediums made them feel engaged and motivated to learn, as well as welcome and validated.

Qualitative data collection suggested positive gains for students in the area of engagement. Nguyen, a 12 year old Vietnamese immigrant learner, was one such case:

Throughout the school year, Nguyen. was a passive student in my class. However, during the academy, her level of participation and active learning notably increased. She always demonstrated consistent effort on improving her academic discussion and presentation skills. At the beginning of the Academy, she was shy and hid behind the podium when asked to speak. She did not want to be called upon during class discussions. But around the second week, something changed. She suddenly spoke up more in whole and small group discussions and expressed an eagerness to participate in classes. It was like night and day in terms of her participation. At the end of the Academy, she had learned to project her voice, enhance her speeches with personal anecdotes, and add meaningful comments to class discussions. As a writer, Nguyen. learned to pay greater attention to subject-verb agreement. She also provided more details and descriptive adjectives in her writing at the end of the Academy than she did at the beginning. N.'s social skills also improved as she made new friends.

This marked increase in Nguyen's engagement in both her writing and speaking tasks and interpersonal relations could very well be attributed to the meaningful, arts-based, who child curriculum. Another student, Kim, a 13 year old Korean immigrant learner, was one of many who displayed an increase in participation. Results from interviews indicate:

Kim's goals for herself at the beginning of the summer were: "I want to get a more good grade at reading writing, science, social student and all of the subject in school." Kim demonstrated marked improvement in confidence to communicate orally and in writing. At the beginning of the Academy Kim. was quiet and lacked self-assurance in class discussions and writing. During the Academy she began to volunteer in both small and whole group class discussions. In small group discussions her teacher's reflected that she "emerged as a leader." Her teacher's noted that "Kim [was] more confident in self correcting and taking risks in her writing" at the end of the Academy.

Seeing the trajectory of Kim's change from a passive to actively learner in activities affirmed to her teachers that the curricular design specifically met the unique needs of EBs. One of her teachers who worked with her all year stated:

It was like an overnight change in her learning behavior. She always seemed so disengaged throughout the school year, but in this summer experience, she really seemed to not increase her participation, but also her joy for learning. She thrived in all of the arts-based activities and I was amazed to see her level of participation in the final performance of learning.

It is well known in the field of education that without engagement in meaningful activities, learning usually cannot occur. A major successful outcome of the program was the high level of sustained student engagement throughout the program which, as evidenced in the interviews and questionnaire results, can directly be attributed to the art-infused curriculum. The following figures show students actively immersed in arts-infused activities including the poetry

slam and workshops; guest speeches with famous artists; theater classes, and dance interpretations of content literacy.

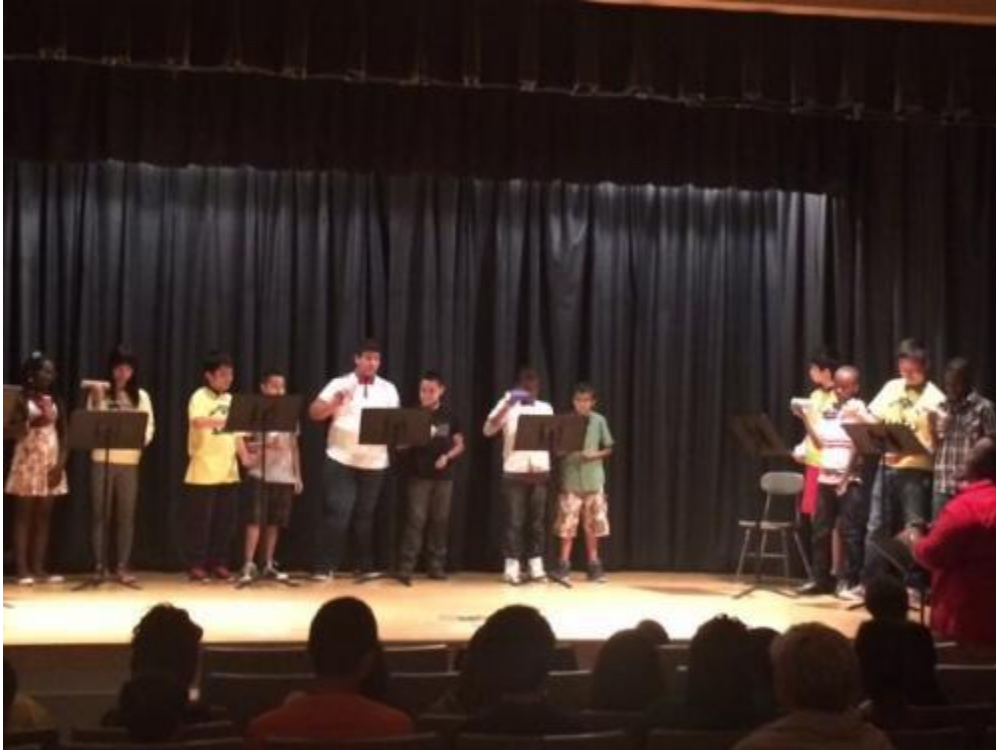


Figure 3: Student Poetry Slam: Final Performance



Figure 4: Hip-Hop Artist Delie Red X helps students compose poetry



Figure 5: Reader's Theater workshops with Boston Arts Academy Teaching Artist



Figure 6: Dance performance of literacy expert with Boston area Teaching Artist



Figure 7: Kickoff theatrical performance introducing the theme habits of mind to students



Figure 8: Governor Deval Patrick, Mayor Christenson, and Dr Amy Cournoyer Gooden listen to student's "I am From" Poems



Figure 9: Linking literacy to the arts via Native American rain dance performance

Role Models and Confidence Building

When students see their lived experiences and communities reflected positively in the curriculum, it strengthens student engagement and increases the relevance of academic learning (Cammarota & Romero, 2014). We designed a curriculum that purposefully allowed EBs to see themselves in a positive light. Given the adversity that many of the learners in the academy face, we wanted to include inspirational guest speakers, teachers, and authors with whom they could identify with to share their stories about overcoming the odds and navigating their way to success. We chose texts that also reflected positive EB role models. In Malden, the majority of teachers who work with the EB population are White females who struggle to connect with and relate to the sociocultural worlds of EBs. To ensure that students had a variety of cultural role models, we also hired performing arts teachers of Haitian, Barbadian, and Jamaican descent, as well as BU international graduate students from China and Brazil, so that students felt they had individuals with whom they shared similar backgrounds, identifying characteristics, upbringings, languages, and experiences. The academy also featured an inspirational line-up of guest speakers with immigrant backgrounds who could connect to the habits of mind themes. The guests included Moise Fokou, a Cameroonian-born National Football League Titans linebacker; Mayor James Diossa of Central Falls, Rhode Island's youngest and first Latino mayor; and Pras Michel of The Fugees, a Haitian American hip-hop icon, activist, and entrepreneur. Key community partners who supported the academy included performing artists, entrepreneurs, museum curators, personal trainers, librarians, political leaders, family liasons, and leaders from local area field trips. These include:

- **Center for the Arts in Boston (Dr. Linda Nathan and Boston Arts Academy Alumni Corps Teaching Artist members):** presented a kickoff performance on the theme of *Habits of Mind* and the Teaching Artist members taught the performance workshop
- **Larz Auto Museum:** Field Trip to Larz Auto Museum to study empathy and entrepreneurship and empathy and the environment
- **Body & Soul Personal Training:** guest lecture on physical fitness and wellness as it pertains to navigating one's way to success. The company taught kids how to exercise at home, middle eastern dance, and boot camp training. The themes connected to habits of mind (e.g. *empathy* to your own body is key to success)
- **John F. Kennedy (JFK) Library:** Field Trip to JFK Library to study perseverance in politics and society
- **Local Community Translators:** Two parents were hired as translators for other Haitian and Chinese parents during the parent education events
- **Museum of Fine Arts:** Field Trip to explore themes of *creating and imagining* across the curriculum
- **Boston Improv Asylum:** Field Trip to in preparation for final performance as well as to explore themes of *creating and imagining*
- **Boston University:** Campus visit to BU. Welcome by BU Admissions Officers and Thurman Center Director, University tour by official BU tour guides, including the MLK collection library.
- **Noble Society:** Brooklyn-based reggae/hip-hop band member, Delie Red X, delivered workshops on writing and delivering lyrics in preparation for the student poetry slam during the final performance
- **MATV:** the local Malden televisions stations worked with our students and teachers to create an online video summary of our program
- **Holistic Roots Wellness:** Guest lecture on yoga and mindful meditation. Tips on creating vision board

In a post-academy questionnaire, 99 % of students reported an increase in their self-confidence. Data from interviews and questionnaires indicate an increase in confidence for participating students, many of which link this increase to the positive influence that role models.

In an interview, Sun, a shy student whose family immigrated from a rural town in northern China, reported her perceived increase in confidence (for the purpose of this chapter, some grammar is edited in student quotations):

During the school year, I never speak up in class. I always let another student who speaks English to share our ideas with the whole group. I guess it is because I do not want anyone to make fun of my poor English. I am afraid they will think I am not smart. In this academy my teachers have helped me to speak up many times in class but told us it is to help us and we all compliment and edit each other's presentations. I have learned so much and feel like everyone is learning so it is ok to make mistakes. The theater games and role play are fun and help me to relax. I enjoyed learning with the graduate Chinese students in the afternoon. They showed me that anything is possible.

This remark indicates that the use of arts with role model teachers who focused on the socioemotional environment promoted the lowering of Sun's affective filter and led to her increased sense of a safe, non-judgemental space where making mistakes was viewed as a natural part of learning. In an interview with Sun's teacher, Maryanne, she reported an observable increase in Sun's confidence level both verbally and non-verbally:

I don't know what it is about this experience, but I have witnessed a change in Sun's sense of self or comfortability. I know this may sound strange or insignificant, but during the school year, Sun always walked around school with her head down and when I greeted her, she barely said a word and kept her eyes looking downward. She had one good Chinese friend that she clung to. I worried about her. She never raised her hand during class and teachers had expressed concerns. It is like night and day here. When I first saw her quite verbal was during afternoon dance class. She was paired with a Brazilian girl and they became friendly. She also made another two Chinese friends. They seemed quite talkative. Then, one day, during the first week of the Academy, during the role plays in the morning literacy workshop, she got up with her group and presented. The other students in the group praised her and applauded because they knew she was nervous and never presented. My co-teacher actually brought her for a special teacher's room lunch to celebrate her brave step. After that moment, she was more active in class than ever before. Her participation in the final performance of learning was another example of her increased confidence. I know that she benefited greatly from working with the Chinese graduate students from the university.

Again, the teacher's report indicated that arts classes, role models, and role play activities in a nurturing environment enabled Sun to have more confidence in the learning environment whereas in the traditional learning environment she did not exhibit such confidence and

participation. During the school year, Sun came across as shy and passive while in the academy she was a social and active learner.

In the opening vignette, another student, Tiago, noted that what he mostly took away from the experience was a bolstered sense of confidence:

Thanks to my supportive teachers and classmates, the Brazilian graduate student, the inspirational bilingual guest speakers, and the many activities like Reader's Theater, the poetry slam workshop, exercise classes, and working with real teaching artists in the afternoon, I have become less afraid to speak in English, even if it is not perfect. The academy made learning English and subject matter fun and I never felt judged. I feel stronger than ever about my ability to succeed in any English presentation, I just need to persevere. To myself in the characters in the novel means that I must believe to achieve. I didn't always feel this way about my learning until this summer. Learning is fun here because it is not stressful.

Tiago's comment speaks to the positive impact that the whole-child, arts-infused curriculum had on his overall sense of confidence as a learner. In addition, it sheds light on the fact that role model instructors who were once emerging bilinguals like him, served as positive role models and inspired an increase in his self-confidence. Unlike traditional learning settings during the school year where he is afraid of being judged by his peers and teachers, the curricular design in the academy coupled with positive bilingual instructional role models and guest speakers, seemed to have liberated him intellectually and linguistically via the promotion of a safe and fun learning environment.

Overall, the use of the role models with whom the students could identify coupled with the arts-infused, whole child curriculum, served to enhance many of the learners' confidence in their abilities and sense of selves.



Figure 10: Student rehearse “If the World Were a Village of 100 People” in front of city and government officials

Integrated Curriculum and Language Development

An integrated curriculum purposefully draws together knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values from within or across subject areas to develop a more powerful understanding of key ideas. In one integrated unit, for example, students were asked to examine and compare the examples of perseverance they learned about during the week which included a guest lecture by Ishmael Beah, author of *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* and UN Ambassador; readings from the works of Maya Angelou and Sandra Cisneros; and a field trip to the aquarium to explore the habit of mind in sea life.



Figure 11: Author and Human Rights Activist Ishmael Beah reads excerpts of his book

In one lesson plan within this unit, for example, students read the poem “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou. In addition to learning the English language arts content objectives of similes, metaphors, and figurative language, and the social studies objectives of civil rights history, they simultaneously reached language objectives such as learning WIDA Tier 2 academic vocabulary (words: adversity, challenge, perseverance, success) as well as the rhythms and word stress patterns in spoken English (<https://www.wida.us/>). The socio-emotional objectives for this lesson were self-awareness and self-expression. Weaving creative thinking and the arts into this lesson, students were asked to write and recite their own poems about resilience or identity, and they were invited to then work with internationally acclaimed Hip-hop/reggae artist Delie Red X on the refinement, recitation, and rehearsal of their poems, which they presented at a poetry slam in the final performance for teachers, parents, and community members.

In terms of intercultural objectives, students were able to practice their critical thinking skills while examining issues of racism and sexism in the U.S. and in their own countries, discussing all of the cross-cultural norms and values represented in the room – Vietnamese,

Ethiopian, Haitian, Brazilian, and Syrian. In the afternoon dance class, the arts teacher helped students put together a step-dance choreography to the poem that they also performed at the final celebration of learning. Although challenging to create, we believed that such an integrated curriculum would lead to more profound and effective learning outcomes for EB students.

The featured curriculum for Malden's GELL Academy language education block was the BU/Malden Language Education Curriculum, a compilation of narrative and informational texts with accompanying lessons plans and assessments, edited by a co-authored team of EB curriculum specialists, including myself, who were also the BU instructional lead teachers in collaboration with Malden teachers. The curriculum, which was considered a working document, as teachers and instructional leaders assessed the specific language and learning needs of participants, targets language development across the 4 domains, critical thinking, and an in-depth understanding of Habits of Mind. The texts, which include themes that allow for an integrated curriculum across content areas, includes stories of adolescents who overcome extraordinary obstacles and go on to become successful leaders.

Teaching and learning strategies:

- Content, Language, Socioemotional, and Intercultural Objectives:
- Expressing ideas through art:
- Critical Reading Strategies:
- Process Writing:
- Fishbowl Discussions; Public Speaking:
- Group Roles:
- Roundtable Discussion:
- Academic Debates: Create Your Own Dictionary:
- Multi-modal Learning Stations
- Character analyses
- Making predictions and drawing inferences: Connecting text to self, to other texts, and to community and world:
- Reader's Theater and role plays
- Student choice
- Comprehension games:
- Vocabulary development:
- Technology use
- Brief and Debrief Field Trips/Guest Speakers:

The integrated curriculum which infused explicit language and literacy goals had a very positive impact on students' language growth. Academy students showed overall improvement in English language and literacy gains. Of the 46 students who had pre and post test scores on the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT)—an assessment that uses a scale of six proficiency

levels to measure EB learners' overall reading, writing, and speaking skills—34 improved one point and 11 earned the same score. For a student to improve one whole proficiency level in such a short period reflects the intensive learning that took place in the program. In addition, student data from the portfolios and grading rubrics from in-class assignments revealed considerable gains in vocabulary and fluency for 89 percent of participating students. These results suggest that the 25 day Academy did promote language and literacy gains for most participants.

Of the participating students, 95% reported an increase in their ability to express themselves in English writing and speaking. The data from interviews with teachers and students suggest that students increased their expressive skills in the academy.

Katrina, a newcomer student who only arrived three months prior to the start of the academy and who had very little knowledge of English notably grew in her expressive skills. Her classroom teachers reported a notable increase in her expressive skills:

Because we develop receptive language more quickly than expressive language, students like Katrina often understand more than we realize but are not able to express their learning. The art project options that required less language production gave Katrina an opportunity to express what she knows.

The increase in these students' expressive English skills was probably due to the fact that the curricular design targeted specific language and literacy goals in an integrated curriculum that provided emerging bilinguals with a chance to be successful and demonstrate learning through visual media projects -- drawing, video, photography, collage, and more.

Ying, an outgoing 12 year old from a Chinese speaking family who owns a restaurant in town, was another students who demonstrated gains in expressive skills:

At the beginning of the Academy, Ying struggled to express her ideas in academic conversations, due to weaknesses in fluency, vocabulary and pronunciation. During the Academy Ying overcame her frustration and worked hard to develop her writing, public speaking, vocabulary, and grammar. She demonstrated improvement in organization and grammatical accuracy on classroom writing assignments. Her public speaking skills improved in the following ways: greater confidence and enthusiasm; organization of ideas; emphasis on key words; and use of more sophisticated vocabulary. She was able to express herself with clarity in both written and spoken English.

Experiences like visiting the Boston Improv Asylum and receiving acting training from professionals, theater and music classes taught by bilingual instructors, and attention to habits of mind such as precision and perseverance could very well have contributed to Ying's increase in expressive English skills.

In sum, the curricular weave of explicit language and literacy objectives in an integrated curriculum that allowed for authentic language learning opportunities led to significant gains in the language development of learners who attended the program. During the school year,

learning is not integrated and there are few opportunities for authentic language learning opportunities. However, teachers noted that they were inspired to carry this lesson design framework into the school year to promote student learning.

Socio-emotional learning: Building successful character

Social-emotional learning is the process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors (Zins et al., 2004). It doesn't matter how excellent language and content instruction is – if the social and emotional needs of learners are not met, success in the classroom is difficult to achieve. According to a recent study, students engaged in in school-based social and emotional learning attained higher grades and scored 11 percentile points higher on academic achievement tests than peers who did not engage in such learning (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2008). Feeling safe and emotionally supported at school translates into higher academic achievement, increased student well-being, and greater engagement, according to numerous studies. Children who do not feel safe cannot concentrate on their studies, do not connect with their classmates, or do not go to school at all.

To equip students for challenges of cultural transitions and prejudice, self-awareness was taught through opportunities to learn about examples of strong and courageous peer models with great ethnic pride. They were given opportunities to celebrate and appreciate their own and each other's differences. Some EBs face tremendous extracurricular stress, including adjustment, missing family members, financial concerns, and other issues. The curriculum provided them with opportunities to learn about how to deal with anger and problem solving skills. Given these extracurricular demands and the added cognitive and linguistic demands faced by the learners in this academy, self-management—such as setting and achieving goals—was included as an objective in this area.

Malden is a highly diverse setting. Learning how to solve problems and work with others, especially those from vastly different backgrounds, is paramount to learning success – and was included in the curricular weave. Some of the life obstacles faced by some of the Malden middle EBs were overwhelming – such as losing family members due to manmade or natural disaster, or not seeing parents or loved ones because of transnational migration of some family members and not others. The power of positive thinking was included as an additional socio-emotional learning objective. Participants were able to focus on the development of these social-emotional skills with role model guest speakers and teachers with whom they could identify with as sources of inspiration and tangible examples of personal success. Each lesson included explicit socioemotional objectives such as social responsibility and the well-being of self and others; problem-solving and conflict resolution; the ability to label, express, interpret and respond to basic and complex emotions in oneself and others; and creating supportive learning

environments. Students were able to artistically demonstrate this knowledge via role play, collages, and songwriting.

In the following lesson excerpt from a lesson on an article about the Galapagos Islands, students were able to learn how to mediate differences of opinion respectfully, a socioemotional objective, by assuming the roles of scientists who negotiate their differences of opinion. The language objectives were to orally express differences of opinion respectfully with the use of sentence starters as a scaffold. Art was infused in the lesson by allowing students to demonstrate their learning via the creation of a photo album and/or newspaper articles.

Intercultural Awareness and Competence Development and Positive Cultural Identity

Intercultural and Socioemotional Connections

Being a global citizen means learning how to work well with others even when ideas or beliefs are different. To be a successful scientist, a person must possess the quality of persistence. This means that in order to learn and solve problems, you may need to: ask for help; change your ideas if they aren't working; and consider how you can work with others to get things done. Persistent people don't quit when things get difficult...they negotiate.

Task(s): Find and perform a brief role play that involves people negotiating to get things done. If you choose to write your own role play, be sure to include a conflict and a resolution (ex: two students have to work together on a project but their ideas are very different). Try to use some of the following language that people sometimes use when negotiating:

“I think....”

“I understand what you're saying, but....”

“Can I make a suggestion?”

“Something else we could do is....”

“Why don't we try to use both our ideas....”

WRITING

You learned that many tourists visit the Galapagos Islands every year. Do you think this is good for the Islands or not? Think about the pros and cons of **tourism** on the Galapagos Islands. Write a short opinion statement. Be sure to give reasons to support your opinion..You may choose instead to represent your ideas on a **mind map**.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

A good internet source is www.oneworldclassrooms.org, where you will find E-travel logs for the Galapagos Islands. Here you can learn much more about the culture and daily lives of people living on the Galapagos Islands, including kids your age.

Activity Ideas:

- Create a **photo album** (print or digital) of things that interest you about the islands (be sure to consider including things about the daily lives of people there, such as foods, jobs and recreation, pets, etc.). Label your selections with short labels or bits of text...like a photo album.
- Find something of interest and write a **newspaper or magazine-style article** about it. Be sure to use language and form that is appropriate for reporting. Some ideas for a story focus might be: how the islands were formed from the volcano; how one island is different from another; what people who live

Researchers in the fields of second-language teacher education and multicultural education recognize the critical role that intercultural learning plays in facilitating language development and academic success for linguistically and culturally diverse students (Banks & Banks 2010; Kramsch 2004; Nieto 2002; Nieto & Bode, 2012). Intercultural learning objectives were woven into the curriculum and explicitly taught to help equip our learners with the awareness and competence they need for current and future cross-cultural success. The content and activities were designed to provide students with an understanding of identity and how it shapes us all; an awareness of how stereotyping, prejudice, and ethnocentrism stifles us all; and a critical review of diverse learning and communication styles, and implications for learning.

The curriculum offered an opening to discussions aimed at developing students' understanding of norms and expectations for participation in U.S. classrooms while validating their prior learning experiences. The uniquely diverse learner context allowed students to learn from each other's rich cultural histories and perspectives, offering deeper learning opportunities on topics such as the perseverance of characters in the novel *We Beat the Streets* or the empathy of leaders such as JFK, or the imagination of artists and writers like Van Gogh or Maya Angelou through the mediums of interpretive dance, reader's theater, and deep discussion of their reflections of learning.

There were many opportunities in the academy for students to express their cultural funds of knowledge and make content connections. Of the students attending the academy, 90% reported in a questionnaire an increase in intercultural awareness and 95% perceived an increase in positive culture identity. In fact, when Governor Deval Patrick visited the academy, he stated what most impressed him, "was not only the rigorous curriculum, but the fact that they were learning how to get along with each other coming from many different backgrounds and experiences." Numerous reports support this finding. In an interview, Tiago, a Brazilian immigrant who was not only struggling with the emotional challenges of being separated from his mother, but also with peer relations during the school year stated:

As immigrants, we often feel pressured to assimilate. Whether it's food, clothing, music, or language, kids sometimes get the message that their family's traditions are something to be ashamed of. In this academy, we were able to celebrate our cultural traditions which made me feel so proud of who I am and learn a lot about other kids' backgrounds.

Intercultural learning objectives were specifically woven into daily lesson plans and students were encouraged to celebrate and share their cultural traditions and backgrounds in classes and in the final performance of learning. This design honored and valued the cultural funds of knowledge that each student brought to the academy.

In an interview with Hoang, a Vietnamese-speaking 14 year old student who initially only socialized with his fellow Vietnamese-speaking peers, he noted an increase in his intercultural awareness:

In the academy, teachers valued and encouraged us to share students' backgrounds, and gave us opportunities to share about our family's culture through arts-based projects. I learned that we have a lot more in common at our core but we express those values and beliefs differently. As a Vietnamese student, it was a lot of fun to learn about Brazilian, Haitian, El Salvadorian, and Ethiopian leaders and cultural and art forms.

One teacher reflected on the intercultural awareness gains he had observed from the beginning to the end of the academy:

The students throughout the year always seem to sit in culture groups. You'd have the Asians who stick together and then the Hispanic students over here and finally the Haitians at another table. The beginning of the academy was no different. But, due to the high level of interactive and engaging tasks, and the accepting environment and intercultural objectives, something changed. During the last three weeks of the academy, you started to see kids of all different ethnic groups willingly mixing together during lunch and class periods. It was one of the most impressive areas of growth witnessed.

Throughout the academy, students were asked to make cultural connections to the content. For instance, if they read poetry, they were asked to bring in similarly inspirational poetry from their cultures and translate for others. If they learned about scientific and social issues, they were invited to share what they knew about these same issues in their native cultures. When they took music and dance classes, they were allowed the opportunity to share and celebrate dance and musical traditions from their own backgrounds. This not only led to validation of their backgrounds and positive cultural identity, but it also promoted intercultural awareness and sensitivity among a diverse group of students.

Professional Development/Coaching

Strengthening teaching for EBs is a critical factor for closing the achievement gap. The program provided ongoing professional development/coaching aimed at training Malden SEI and content teachers in effective strategies for addressing the whole-child needs of EBs across content areas, establishing a strong foundation of knowledge upon which to base practice in the enrichment academy and beyond. The first phase of the project included a blended professional development seminar with both online modules and a mandatory three-day professional orientation for academy instructors. This professional development was designed to enhance teachers' understanding of foundational concepts in secondary EB learning and teaching, such as how to infuse arts in the curriculum, design intercultural objectives, and infuse socio-emotional learning into the experience. In addition, teachers were provided with continued training on the WIDA standards (<https://www.wida.us/>) and creating language objectives that were tailored to their students' English language development levels, and reviewed strategies to deliver high quality instruction. The BAA Teaching Artists provided content area teachers with weekly training and daily coaching on infusing arts into the content area learning.

Positive learning outcomes were mentioned by all instructors during focus groups discussions. Mary, a White, female veteran English language arts teacher in the district remarked:

I learned so much from the BAA Teaching Artists about how relatively easy it is for teachers and inspiring for students when art is incorporated in the learning experience. I had always wanted to refresh my lessons with artistic techniques and I was very fortunate to learn from these young teaching artists. I also felt like I was able to discuss with these instructors and the international graduate students how my position of privilege should be checked on a daily basis. I am now more sensitive about integrating students' cultural experiences and knowledge into the lesson.

John, a White, male second year math teacher at the school expressed how the professional training inspired him to rethink his teaching approach:

When I signed up to teach in this academy, I was initially skeptical. I just wanted a script and did not want to work so hard in summer school. After the professional development and coaching activities, and the opportunity to co-plan with peers and experts in the field, my mindset has changed. I guess this is because I see how much students benefited from and enjoyed the experience. I now see that integrating the arts, culture, language, habits of mind, and socioemotional objectives is possible with a little creativity and effort. I plan to incorporate these strategies into the school year.

The outcomes from focus groups with teachers indicated that the ongoing training and professional development within a collegial atmosphere provided everyone with tools to enhance their ability to meet the needs of EBs in the academy. Each instructor, whether teaching artist, content area teacher, or international graduate student, was able to learn from and teach something valuable to others. This intentional co-construction of knowledge enhanced the quality of instructional delivery and curricular design in the arts-infused, whole-child curricular model.

Parent Education

The summer enrichment academy program director and teachers hosted a bilingual orientation for parents/guardians that provided them with training on how to promote academic success for their children in U.S. schools. Translators were available in the languages represented in the district. Weekly informational sessions were held throughout the academy to help parents acquire skills and knowledge necessary to participate in their children's educational process. Topics included: navigating the U.S. school system, tips for promoting their child's academic progress, school resources, parent-teacher conferences, standardized testing, the college application process, and information on the benefits of reading at home. Parents were informed about the intentional design of the arts-infused, whole-child approach to the curriculum and were asked to participate in daily tasks and attend field trips and lectures. In

fact, parents actively participated in the final capstone performance for the academy. Some of the parents prepared food, others helped the students to rehearse, and two parents even helped the Teaching Artists to coordinate the performance. The performance brought families together and created a vibrant multicultural community. One parent noted in an interview:

This performance experience is probably the first time since we moved here that my husband and I and child feel great pride in sharing our cultural heritage” (personal communication with parent, August 9, 2014).

By integrating the arts and embracing a whole-child approach to the curriculum into daily instructional activities, observation notes, interviews with students, and the pre-and post assessments indicate that students in the program developed their confidence, engagement, language development, and expressive skills in English while learning more deeply about their own and other cultures.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the impact of a whole-child, arts-integrated curriculum on middle school EB learning in the 2013 and 2014 *Reach for the Stars Academy*. The analysis from interviews, pre and post assessments, and observations indicate that for the majority of participating students, the structure of the curriculum resulted in positive learning outcomes in the areas of confidence, expressive ability, language gains, socioemotional learning, positive cultural identity and intercultural awareness for this group of students. The results from this study indicate the transformative impact the whole-child, arts-infused curriculum had on middle school EBs who attended the academy. The outcomes point to the promising potential for transformative education that such a curricular model could offer EBs should it be infused into their everyday learning experiences. Obviously, this was a state grant that provided helpful funding resources and the academy was not bound by rigid testing constraints. Despite these advantages, designing programs where teachers consider the needs of the whole child, integrate the arts, capitalize on community resources, and celebrate the strengths of multilingual, multicultural communities simply requires the will, creativity, vision, and commitment of teachers and educational administrators.

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