Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program: Year 4 Implementation Evaluation 2011-2012
Findings Brief

This document provides a brief update of the Year 4 evaluation of the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program (BTSALP) conducted by the Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah.

What is the model?

The BTSALP model includes four primary areas of focus, as illustrated in Figure 1.

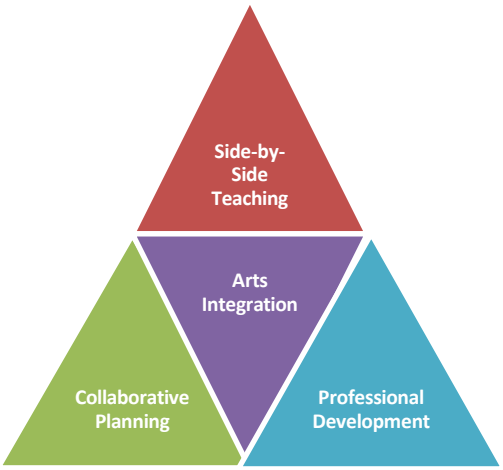

Figure 1. BTSALP Model Program Components

- **Integration of Arts** into core subject areas is a strategy for improving the social, emotional, academic, and arts education of students in elementary schools.
- **Collaborative Planning** time occurs as arts specialists and classroom teachers work together to design lessons that intentionally integrate the art core standards with other core subject matter.
- **Side-by-Side Teaching** occurs when the arts specialists and classroom teachers blend their expertise to conduct lessons together to improve students' engagement and mastery of subject matter.
- **Professional Development** is designed to provide mentoring and on-site visits in which Professional Development Partners (PDPs) observe classrooms and offer feedback about lessons, provide additional resources, and attend planning meetings.

Whom does it serve?

Fifty-seven schools participated in the BTSALP in Year 4. These schools represented 22 districts (including charter schools), including 23 Title 1 schools across the state. The BTSALP served **32,450** students (kindergarten through sixth-grade) in Year 4, by providing arts integrated lessons that sought to increase exposure to the Utah Core Standards through participation in four art forms. The art forms were represented by specialists in **drama (18%)**, **dance (13%)**, **music (21%)**, and **visual arts (50%)**.

How was it evaluated?

The purpose of the multi-year evaluation was to:

(1) *Document the implementation of the statewide initiative to determine if schools are implementing the program as intended*

(2) *Identify key school outcomes*

The BTSALP evaluation was a longitudinal, mixed method study that included systematic analysis of surveys, activity logs, and student achievement data. The 2011-12 academic year was the fourth year of BTSALP implementation and evaluation. The full technical report is available upon request.

How was the BTSALP model implemented in Year 4?

Now in its fourth year of implementation, the BTSALP is becoming more established in the schools and consistent patterns of implementation practices and outcomes have developed. Some implementation highlights for the four components of the BTSALP model are described below.

Arts integration:

- Specialists reported an average of 3.3 arts integrated lessons per month across all grades and subject areas.
- The percentage of teachers and administrators reporting opportunities for students to learn other core subject areas (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) through the arts "almost always" has increased steadily each year.

Side-by-side teaching:

- Specialists reported that classroom teachers were actively involved with side-by-side teaching "almost always" 54% of the time and "often" 27% of the time.
- Schools in their fourth year of implementation found greater teacher buy-in and increased consistency for side-by-side teaching.

Collaborative planning:

- Arts specialists reported an average of 6.5 hours per month of collaborative planning with classroom teachers, an increase of 1.5 hours per month from the first year of the program to the fourth year.
- The quality of collaborative planning was improved when schools took a strategic approach to setting aside times for collaboration and when leaders provided clear organizational structures and expectations.

Professional development:

- The primary focus of professional development provided by PDPs was the integration of the art forms to teach other core academic subjects.
- 65% of PDPs reported that their work was directly related to supporting arts integration with core academic subjects, which aligned with the finding that the quality of arts integration with the new Utah Core Standards was a program-wide focus of improvement.

> *"[BTSALP] has provided students with a new way of learning. It has helped our students see that there is more than one way to solve a problem or look at a situation." (school administrator)*

What were the benefits?

Overall, stakeholders reported that the program outcomes in Year 4 were largely consistent with those from previous years. The following were noted as benefits:

- Teachers, specialists, and principals suggested that arts integration and the BTSALP model promoted student learning of Core content and skills.
- Teachers and administrators cited the benefits of arts integration for academic learning by explaining that it provided multiple modalities of learning, additional opportunities for reinforcing concepts, and increased retention and recall of academic knowledge.
- There were also observations of:
    - student confidence and self-esteem,
    - openness to trying new things,
    - student engagement,
    - enthusiasm for learning, and
    - exposure to opportunities that might not otherwise be available outside of school.
- Positive effects of informances and performances included opportunities to share learning and student success with parents; and the corresponding motivation and energy of these effects on teachers, parents, and students.

> *"I have seen an increase in my students' ability to work together cooperatively. I believe there has been an increase in their ability to express themselves and accept their own mistakes as well as the mistakes of others. They are more likely to stretch themselves outside the boundaries of their comfort zones..." (teacher)*

A statistical analysis that compared the performance of students in BTSALP schools to a comparable group of students who were enrolled in non-BTSALP schools found that:

- Students who attended BTSALP schools over the previous four years scored significantly higher on language arts CRTs than their non-BTSALP counterparts.
- There was a small but not statistically significant difference in student achievement scores for math between students who attended BTSALP and comparable non-BTSALP schools.

A statistical analysis that looked for relationships between student achievement and how fully BTSALP schools implemented program components found that:

- For language arts and math there was a small, but not significant, benefit in BTSALP schools that more fully implemented the BTSALP model over BTSALP schools that less fully implemented program components.
- For science there was a statistically significant benefit in BTSALP schools that more fully implemented the BTSALP model over BTSALP schools that less fully implemented program components.

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