

THE MADDUX SCHOOL, ROCKVILLE, MD

# The Maddux School's Integrated Arts Program

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Full Report on 2016-17 Program Evaluation

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## **PART 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of the 2016-17 Maddux Integrated Arts Program. The research team sought to answer the following research questions:

- How did the Maddux Integrated Arts Program positively impact students, especially in terms of social and emotional learning?
- What were the key factors that contributed to the program's success?

Data were gathered for 16 focus students (four from each classroom), and using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data (i.e., pre- and post-tests, classroom observations, and interviews with key stakeholders), we were able to identify a number of positive outcomes.

### **Quantitative Measures**

Using a *behavioral checklist* of 13 prosocial behaviors, we found that average scores across students increased significantly for 12 out of 13 behaviors. The most dramatic growth was in following multi-step directions independently, recognizing own strengths and challenges, and identifying artists and genres, but significant growth was also noted for engaging in challenging/unfamiliar activities, initiating interactions with peers, using age-appropriate language to convey ideas, using language that demonstrates perspective taking, demonstrating intellectual curiosity, appropriately advocating for help, persevering in completing challenging tasks, and using problem solving strategies. Further, standardized *tests of executive function* (BRIEF) and *social skills* (SRS) indicated significant growth over time across students.

### **Classroom Observations**

Observations indicated that students developed a combination of intrapersonal skills (e.g., flexibility, self-advocacy, self-awareness), and interpersonal skills (e.g., perspective taking, cooperation, empathy, and creation of arts community) over the course of the year. Two key reasons for this appeared to be the natural affinity between the arts and social and emotional learning (SEL), and teaching practices that promoted SEL (e.g., cooperative projects, assuming the artist's perspective, talking about feelings).

### **Staff and Parent Interviews**

Interviews with key stakeholders resulted in the following major themes: Perceived student outcomes included improved perspective-taking, flexibility, concern for others, executive functioning, self-esteem, self-advocacy, arts appreciation, and creative expression. Perceived reasons for these positive outcomes included a low student/teacher ratio, sufficient planning and program time, an experienced staff, the ability to differentiate instruction, the high value placed on the SEL component of the program, and teacher buy-in.

### **Overview**

Overall, findings from this program evaluation suggests that the 2016-17 Maddux Integrated Arts Program resulted in numerous positive outcomes for participating students, primarily in terms of SEL, but also in terms of arts appreciation and creative expression. Although we cannot attribute outcomes solely to the Integrated Arts Program (since the The Maddux School provides SEL instruction in other contexts as well), both classroom observations and interview data indicated

strong ties between the Integrated Arts Program and perceived improvements in student performance.

## PART 2: METHODOLOGY

### Research Questions

The research team sought to answer the following research questions:

- How did the Maddux Integrated Arts Program positively impact students, especially in terms of social and emotional learning (SEL)?
- What were the key factors that contributed to the program's success?

### Program Description

The Maddux School's Integrated Arts Program is a key part of the Maddux curriculum. Weekly social studies and SEL units from January through April provide a jumping-off point for an integrated approach to learning that involves regular opportunities for students to find out about the work of famous artists and artworks, and make museum-worthy creations of their own. Opportunities for cultivating SEL skills (e.g., social interaction skills, emotional awareness, perspective taking, cooperation, flexibility, self-advocacy and self-esteem), are embedded throughout each lesson. Students' work is showcased at the annual Art Fest in May, the culminating event of the school year. Art Fest provides a rich opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned about art, as well as to practice being confident presenters and thoughtful audience members.

### Participants

Participants in the 2016-17 evaluation of the Maddux Integrated Arts Program included students, staff, and parents.

- *Focus Students* – In order to track student progress over the course of the year, 16 Maddux students were randomly selected (four from each classroom) to serve as “focus students.” Classroom staff completed baseline and end-of-year evaluations of each focus student's behavior.
- *Staff* – Thirteen staff participated in the study. Eight classroom teachers evaluated focus students' behaviors at baseline and end-of-year. All eight participated in end-of-year phone interviews, as did five additional related service providers (e.g., speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and art teacher).
- *Parents* – End-of-year phone interviews were conducted with parents of 14 out of 16 focus students. The remaining two sets of parents either did not respond or were unable to schedule an interview time.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The research team, which comprised the Program Evaluator (Eve Müller), GWU Research Assistant (Lauren Hunter Naples), The Maddux School Director (Andrea Mullins), Learning and Curriculum Specialist (Brenna Haffner), and Social Learning Coordinator (Lynn Cannon), designed a mixed methods study and selected and/or designed appropriate instrumentation for evaluating program outcomes over the course of the 2016-17 year. Data collection included the following:

- *SEL Behavioral Checklist* – A 13-item behavioral checklist was developed to assess change over time in focus students’ social and emotional learning behaviors (e.g., flexibility, social initiation, cooperation, following directions). Items were aligned with program goals, and classroom teachers were asked to assess students’ performance on each item using a 4-point scale, where 0=never, 1=rarely, 2=sometimes, and 3=often. Scores were analyzed using Excel. Differences were found to be significant at the 0.05 level. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen’s *d*.
- *BRIEF and SRS* – In order to assess focus students’ growth over time, classroom teachers completed the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF) and Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS-2) at baseline and again at end-of-year. Scores were analyzed using Excel. Differences were found to be significant at the 0.05 level. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen’s *d*.
- *Classroom Observations* – Integrated Arts Program Instructional periods were observed more than 15 times throughout the year, and case notes were kept for each observation detailing the art activity and how social and emotional learning was embedded into instruction. Each of the four classrooms was observed multiple times. Thematic analysis of case notes enabled us to identify key themes.
- *Staff Interviews* – Classroom teachers participated in 15-item end-of-year phone interviews, each lasting approximately 45-60 minutes, and other instructional staff (i.e., related service providers and the art teacher) participated in an 11-item end-of-year phone interview. Interviews focused specifically on perceived outcomes of the Integrated Arts Program, and reasons for the program’s effectiveness. Questions were all open-ended. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts enabled us to identify key themes (i.e., those mentioned by 3+ staff).
- *Parent Interviews* – Parents participated in a 9-item interview, each lasting approximately 15-20 minutes. Interviews focused specifically on perceived outcomes of the Integrated Arts Program, and included a combination of Likert-type and open-ended questions. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts enabled us to identify key themes.

## **PART 3: FINDINGS**

### **SEL Behavioral Checklist**

Based on a comparison of average scores across participants, it appears that focus students made statistically significant progress in 12 out of 13 areas (see Tables 1 & 3). The most dramatic growth (i.e., more than 1.0 points out of a possible 3.0 points) was in following multi-step directions independently, recognizing own strengths and challenges, and identifying artists and genres. Moderate growth was noted (i.e., growth of 0.5 or more out of a possible 3.0 points) in engaging in challenging/unfamiliar activities, initiating interactions with peers, using age-appropriate language to convey ideas, using language that demonstrates perspective taking, demonstrating intellectual curiosity, appropriately advocating for help, persevering in completing challenging tasks, and using problem solving strategies. The one area in which no significant growth was noted was in working cooperatively with peers.

## BRIEF and SRS

Based on a comparison of average scores across participants, it appears that focus students made modest but statistically significant progress in terms of executive function (as measured by the BRIEF) and social skills (as measured by the SRS) (see Tables 2, 4, & 5). The lower the scores on each of these assessments, the better, and focus students' scores on the BRIEF decreased by 25 points on average (out of a possible 246), and scores on the SRS decreased 14.69 points (out of a possible 180).

## Classroom Observations

Analysis of classroom observation notes suggested that positive SEL outcomes for students included the following:

- **Intrapersonal skills** – These included improved flexibility, self-advocacy, self-awareness (e.g., understanding of own emotions and thoughts), and problem solving.
- **Interpersonal skills** – These included perspective taking, cooperation, empathy/encouragement of others, and creation of arts community/relationships among creators.

Analysis of classroom observation notes suggested the following *reasons* for these outcomes:

- **Natural affinity between arts and SEL** – Art projects developed by staff offered numerous opportunities for collaboration/cooperation, practicing perspective taking, discussing feelings (student's own and others'), and cultivating self-confidence. Art projects also allowed for multiple modes of accessing content.
- **Teaching practices that promote SEL** – Teachers *continually* used the following types of instructional strategies to promote SEL: thematizing their own errors and mistakes, modeling prosocial interactions, infusing social learning throughout lessons (e.g., reinforcing positive behaviors, teaching turn-taking, scaffolding collaborative projects that required social interactions with peers), and cultivating a mindful and supportive classroom culture.

## Staff Interviews

Analysis of the 13 staff interview transcripts revealed a number of key themes summarized below.

Integrating Arts and SEL: When asked what the main purpose of offering an integrated arts program was, staff stressed the **natural affinity between arts and social and emotional learning**. Typical comments included:

- *"I think it gives them a pride in their own work. These kids have struggled in other settings, and they come without the best self-esteem. They're not only learning social skills to develop self-esteem, but how to better self-advocate, how to be more emotionally expressive, and they also get to experience that through the arts. It gives them a way of creating something that allows them to be completely individual."*

Table 1 – Perceived Changes Over Time in Participants’ Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Behaviors

	<u>Baseline</u>		<u>End-of-year</u>		<u>Difference</u>		<i>t</i> stat	Effect size
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
<i>Demonstrates flexibility and compliance</i>	1.56	(0.73)	2.25	(0.69)	0.69	(0.60)	4.57***	0.88
<i>Engages in challenging/unfamiliar activities</i>	2.00	(0.82)	2.56	(0.73)	0.56	(0.81)	2.76**	1.09
<i>Initiates interactions w. peers</i>	2.25	(0.86)	2.81	(0.40)	0.56	(0.96)	2.33*	1.49
<i>Works cooperatively w. peers</i>	1.81	(0.54)	2.00	(0.63)	0.19	(0.66)	1.15	1.15
<i>Follows multi-step directions independently</i>	1.50	(0.73)	2.56	(0.90)	1.06	(0.57)	7.41***	0.73
<i>Uses age-appropriate language to convey ideas</i>	2.06	(1.01)	2.81	(0.40)	0.75	(0.77)	3.87***	1.05
<i>Uses language that demonstrates perspective-taking</i>	1.63	(0.62)	2.25	(0.77)	0.63	(0.62)	3.48***	1.06
<i>Demonstrates intellectual curiosity</i>	2.13	(0.62)	2.63	(0.71)	0.50	(0.52)	3.87**	0.80
<i>Recognizes own strengths and challenges</i>	1.25	(1.06)	2.31	(0.87)	1.06	(1.00)	4.26***	1.06
<i>Appropriately advocates for help</i>	1.81	(0.54)	2.50	(0.63)	0.69	(0.70)	3.91***	1.23
<i>Perseveres in completing challenging tasks</i>	1.38	(0.72)	2.19	(0.91)	0.81	(0.91)	3.57**	1.15
<i>Uses problem solving strategies</i>	1.38	(0.72)	2.13	(0.81)	0.75	(0.77)	3.87***	1.05
<i>Identifies artists and genres</i>	0.94	(0.93)	2.81	(0.40)	1.88	(0.89)	8.48***	1.28

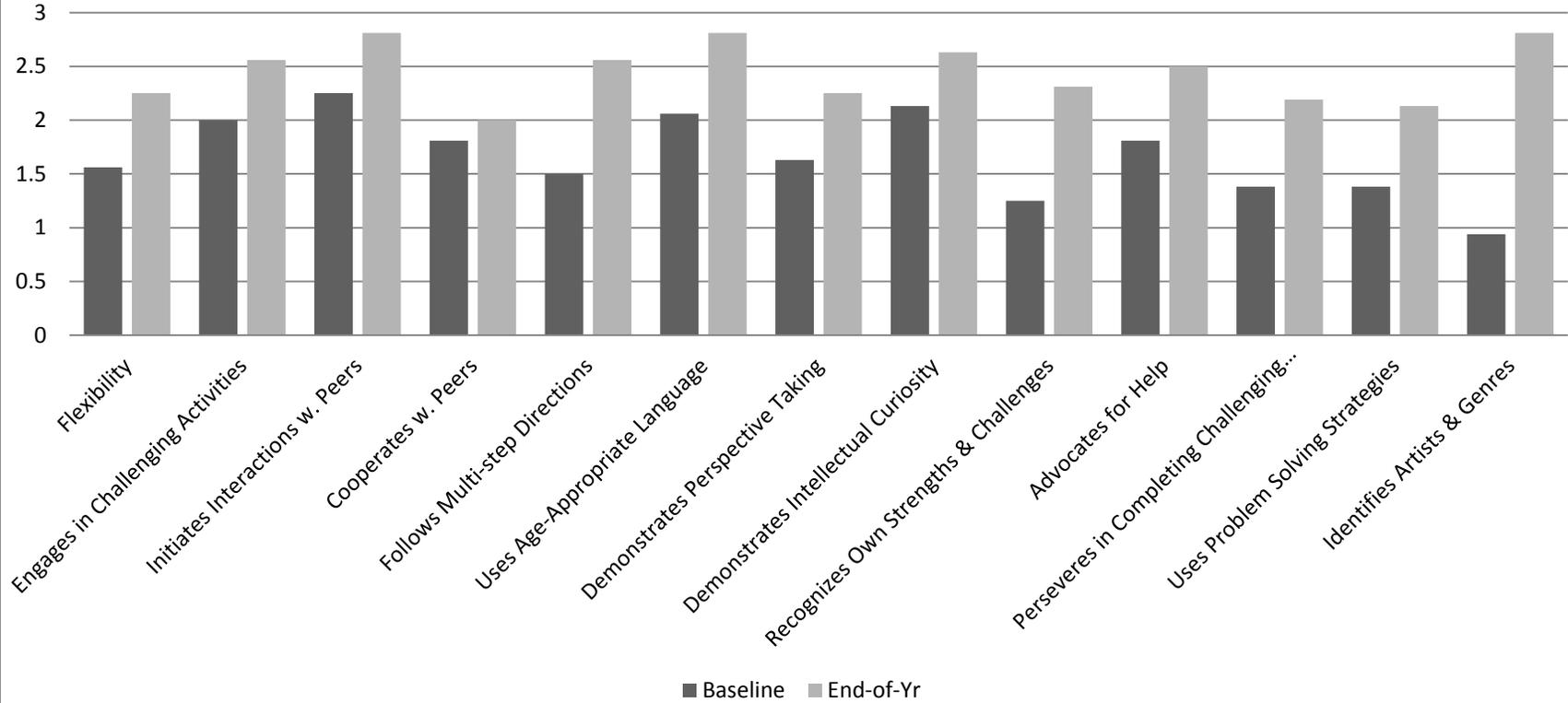
\**p*<.05, \*\**p*<.01, \*\*\**p*<.001  
 Effect size of >.5 = medium and >.8 = large

Table 2 – Changes in Participants’ BRIEF and SRS Scores Over Time

	<u>Baseline scores</u>		<u>End-of-year scores</u>		<u>Difference</u>		<i>t</i> stat	Effect size
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
<i>BRIEF</i>	167.56	(26.25)	142.56	(35.75)	-25.00	(26.83)	3.72***	0.88
<i>SRS</i>	62.94	(19.32)	48.25	(22.74)	-14.69	(14.60)	4.02***	0.73

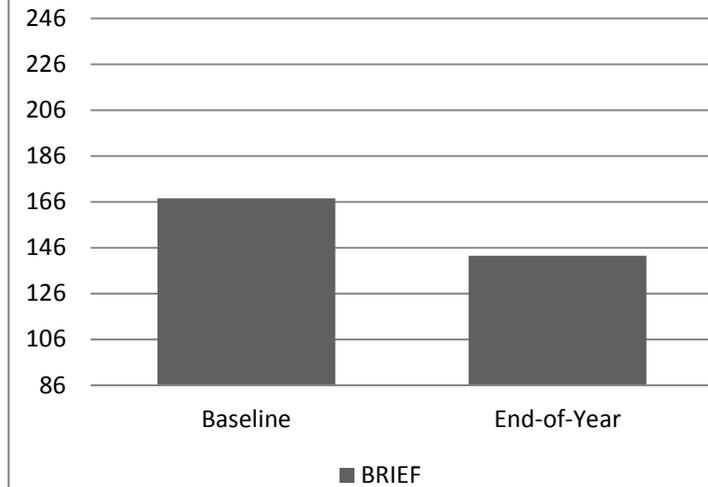
\*\*\**p*<.001  
 Effect size of >.5 = medium and >.8 = large

**Table 3 - Changes in Students' SEL Behaviors Over Time**



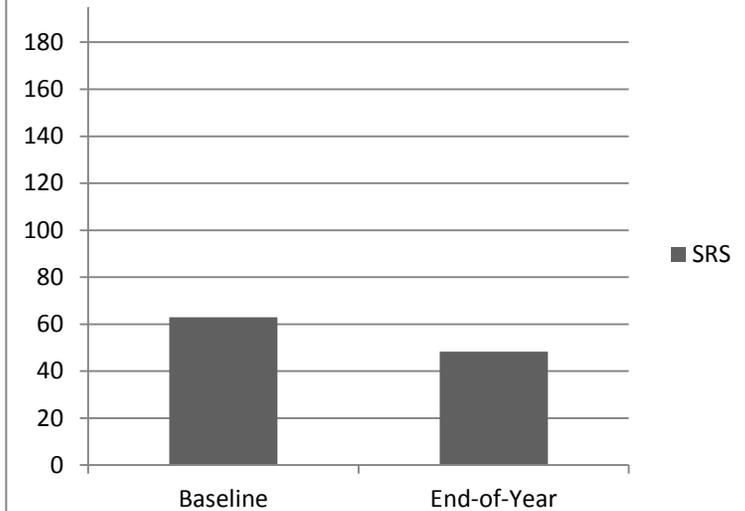
\*Note: Higher scores on the Behavioral Checklist indicate higher skill levels.

**Table 4 - Students' BRIEF Scores Over Time**



\*Note: Lower scores on the BRIEF indicate higher skill levels.

**Table 5 - Students' SRS Scores Over Time**



\*Note: Lower scores on the SRS indicate higher skill levels.

- *“The main purpose is to provide natural opportunities for social learning through art ... the arts program provides natural opportunities for prosocial behaviors like negotiating, making a request, sharing, cooperating, and complimenting.”*

Staff also stressed the importance of an integrated arts program offering **multiple access points to the curriculum**. Typical comments included:

- *“For our kids especially ... it’s great to be able to learn in different modalities. To touch or feel something, to see, to not just get a lecture about it ... and then to create something real related to the topic, this brings it all together. A different way to experiences ... it gives them a new way of experiencing old lessons.”*
- *“Our students all learn differently from one another, and it’s a great way to engage them, get them interested. It’s creative, hands on. It’s a way to get them to interact with each other and their teachers that may be a little more social.”*

Finally, several staff noted that making art offered an important means of **emotion regulation**. Typical comments included:

- *“It’s a calming thing for them, and when they’re calm, and doing something they enjoy, maybe they’re more open to the kind of social challenges we can provide for them.”*

**Student Outcomes:** When asked to identify how the program positively impacted students, instructors described how they nurtured students’ growth in the following social and emotional learning domains:

- **Perspective-taking** – Instructors stressed how the program encouraged students to take the artists’ perspectives, as well as to examine differences between their own perspectives and those of their peers. They also talked about how physical perspective taking and cognitive perspective taking both play roles in the making of art. Typical comments included:
  - *“I think maybe because we had them become the artists, whoever we were working on. We asked them to step out of their own shoes and think about what the artists were thinking about or feeling.”*
  - *“It’s natural with any kind of art that you are going to talk about feelings. A lot of kids here need work on what feelings are ... They don’t necessarily have a good understanding of this: #1 – What does this make you feel, and #2 – What do you think the artist was thinking when they made this piece? And then getting into perspective taking, theory of mind, understanding that someone might have different feelings from me, and I can try and put myself into their place and think from their perspective.”*
  - *“For some projects, [perspective taking] was explicitly taught – when we looked at some of the artists who take different perspectives in a visual way: looking at their cultures, what’s important in different parts of the world .... And I guess it’s two-fold. When kids are creating their own art ... we thought about how ... different students’ perspectives vary, and how their products would vary.”*
- **Flexibility** – Instructors noted many ways in which the program nurtured flexibility, including handling mistakes or unexpected outcomes, waiting for your turn, accepting changes in plan, learning new and different ways of doing things, and engaging in open-ended work. Typical comments included:
  - *“I think [flexibility] works in a dual way. In one way, in a very planned way, we nurture flexibility, talking about how artists make mistakes and it’s okay, just like we do. You*

*can start over or begin again. But also, unexpected things happen when we make art. There are in the moment opportunities for being flexible, and for us to model and show them."*

- *"They learned that in art there's not really a right or wrong, and it's okay if they thought they were making one thing and it turned into something different, if it changed in the middle of the project."*
  - *"For younger kids, having flexibility is the outcome of the process. They tried things that didn't work and had to go to Plan B, which is part of their vocabulary, the notion of having a back-up plan."*
  - *"We're also asking them to do things that aren't closed ended. They're open ended, where there's more than one answer. It's not like a math problem. You have to think about it differently to work like that."*
- **Concern for others/social interaction** – Instructors described various ways they encouraged students to express concern for others and/or engineered opportunities for pro-social interactions through sharing of materials and collaborative projects. Typical comments included:
    - *"This was definitely something we worked on: Let your friend know, 'Hey! Your picture looks good!' We'd take turns holding up art, and having everyone give one compliment or ask a question: 'I like the way you did X,' 'I like the color you used!' 'It looks like X.' We'd get them talking about and appreciating others' work, not just their own."*
    - *"It might be as simple as sharing materials and resources when creating art. Sometimes there's only a certain amount of paper or paints, and students would have to wait and share."*
    - *"There are a few projects every year that are done collaboratively, which require them ... to look at what other students had done ... they had to be aware of what other students were doing."*
  - **Executive function** – All instructors interviewed described arts projects offering opportunities to develop skills in completing multi-step projects. Other ways in which executive function skills were nurtured included opportunities for planning and problem solving. Typical comments included:
    - *"Executive function is definitely an area that the art program really does nurture. There are many step by step directions, scaffolding, figuring out the best way for each student to do this, and when they come up with a problem, helping them problem solve."*
    - *"Art is really important for [building EF] because most of the other work we do doesn't take so long, have so many steps, take so many days. Most of our art projects took several days and a lot more steps ... there was a lot more to break down and remember. [They] needed that more for art than anything else."*
    - *"They'd be planning how to take a good picture: What do they need to get thoughts and feelings across? What do they want [their subjects] to be doing in the picture? We had a chart they'd fill out. Do you want your subjects standing front-ways or sideways, from the shoulder up or whole body? It was good for them to see lots of steps going into just this one picture."*
    - *"[The arts program] gives us a chance to live out loud: 'If I walk and spill paint, I won't get upset, but model how to problem solve. It gives us real life opportunities to model and teach in the moment."*

- *“They are problem solving as soon as they put paint to paper, whenever they’re making choices. I usually tell people when talking about the advantages of art – you learn flexibility and problem solving, you can’t really make art without those things.”*
- **Self-esteem** – Almost all instructors noted that the program had improved students’ self-esteem/self-confidence, and that participation in the Art Fest had given students a sense of pride in their accomplishments. Typical comments included:
  - *“More than anything, I watched their self-confidence build, which was very nice. If they were self-conscious while doing art, but the time they were showing it on the wall, it allowed them to step back and say, ‘Wow! I really did a great job on this!’ Seeing their confidence, sharing with their friends from other classes and parents, it was really amazing. I think a lot of programs underestimate what kids can do, but this is really the opposite. The arts program shows what they really can do. It pushes their limits, because they don’t really have any.”*
  - *“I think a lot of them struggle with generalized anxiety, and a couple of them are pretty significantly impacted .... All of the kids now, you don’t hear them saying, ‘I can’t draw,’ ‘I’m a terrible drawer,’ ‘I can’t paint or cut that,’ even though they in a lot of ways struggle with these things, they have a more confident, positive attitude.”*
  - *“I definitely think from a self-confidence standpoint, sometimes they’d struggle when doing a project or about to do a project. They’d worry it wouldn’t look good, but when they started to see projects going up on the wall, they were very excited and proud to show their art to each other and to their parents.”*
  - *“I think the self-confidence is huge. They are so proud not just of their art projects, but of what they learned about the artists. It was amazing. How excited they were to tell people who came in the room which artists inspired their work. It was incredible to see their growth in their ability to communicate that. And that’s for all levels.”*
- **Self-advocacy** – Several instructors noted that students became better self-advocates by the end of the program. Typical comments included:
  - *“Self-advocacy we dealt with a lot. When it was their turn, learning to ask for help was huge. If they needed help or to ask for more materials, or if they were not happy with the way they did something, we’d tell them, ‘It’s okay, you can change it.’”*
  - *“The program also supported self-advocacy to request materials and assistance.”*
  - *“We had some students who used to shut down more if they needed help or didn’t know exactly what to do, and I think we tried to encourage them to ask, and to emphasize that with art, if it doesn’t match your friend’s exactly, that’s okay. It’s okay to have your own view and process for an art project.”*

Other outcomes related to development of students’ arts appreciation and creative expression:

- **Arts appreciation** – Instructors reported that students learned a lot about the artists and the different media and genres within which they worked. Typical comments included:
  - *“The fact that they were pointing out something that looks like Seurat, or scribbling and saying, ‘This looks like Pollack!’ that they did talk to each other about the artists and when given the opportunity, would grab art books during free reading time and crowd around them together or ask a teacher to read it to them. It developed a shared interest, and gave them a starting point of focus and interest to talk about together.”*
  - *“We definitely have a lot of arts appreciation going on, and had a lot of stories shared by parents .... A lot of parents bring them to art museums, because they’re definitely*

*interested, and their appreciation is a lot higher. They will ask ... if art is by a certain artist."*

- *"I think the way they are teaching [art] is making kids remember what they are teaching. So much name recognition, they remember what the artist did, and some pre-K kids could even pick out art in a museum by the artist, which is incredible!"*
- **Creative expression** – Instructors reported that students were able to expand their creative repertoire in terms of materials and techniques. Typical comments included:
  - *"Using water colors, charcoal, getting dirty, getting messy, trying new things they perceive as really hard, moving from 'I can't draw people,' to being able to break it down ... and to 'Look what I just made!'"*
  - *"If you just look around our room, one thing is you always get them to try new things and take on really, really difficult tasks and see how well they actually do it and gain experience from it."*

Finally, staff agreed that the integrated arts program resulted in a strong sense of community.

- **Community** – Instructors described how a sense of creative community was built both within and across classrooms. Typical comments included:
  - *"[The program] creates a creativity conversation about how to make things better, do things differently: 'Hey, how did you do that?' It definitely opens up more conversations between classrooms and teachers. Within classrooms it creates such a sense of pride. Kids were just beaming. This is something they all share and have in common."*
  - *"There's the community of each class specifically each having their walls covered in the work they've created as a class with their teachers and peers, something they can really be proud of and know they've created collectively as a group. And when the school has a festival at the end of the semester, it really gave them a sense of, 'This is Maddux. This is what we do here, and look at all these people coming to see it!' It's a school-wide effort to do it, and when they go from class to class to see one another's art, I definitely think it fosters a sense of community."*
  - *"It's fun to go into other classrooms and see what they've been working on. Gives kids a sense of what they have in common with kids in other classes, and even if they don't have the same interests, this is something they can share with each other. And I think staff is genuinely happy to see what is going on in other classes."*

Reasons for Outcomes: Instructors identified a number of key factors they believed contributed to the success of the integrated arts program. These included the following:

- **Low student/teacher ratio** – Almost all instructors mentioned the importance of small class sizes and a low student/teacher ratio. Typical comments include:
  - *"For the social pieces, you need faculty around who can step in and coach in someone's ear: 'Why don't you ask so and so about this?' Give them those scripts to say. If you had one teacher in the class, that would not happen. We would just be trying to get work done and to survive. It's extremely important to have faculty who can facilitate social growth while implementing the program. Logistically, this would not be possible without this high of a faculty ratio."*
  - *"We were lucky enough to have two teachers and two therapists in the room as a co-teaching model to break into small groups for the artwork, which was really helpful."*

- **Planning and program time** – Several instructors mentioned the need for adequate planning and implementation time. Typical comments included:
  - *“Planning time is essential to prepare for each artist, art activity, and tie it into a social concept.”*
  - *“You definitely need time to do this kind of stuff. We’re so lucky because we have time, but when I taught ... in public schools, it was very rare when we could do this type of thing. You need time.”*
  
- **Capable, well-prepared staff** – Several instructors mentioned that having a competent, experienced team of instructors was key to the success of the program. Typical comments included:
  - *“I think there’s a lot of experience involved with it .... I’ve learned a lot along the way about how to make it effective.”*
  - *“I think the school’s been working on all these projects and figuring out what artist they want to do and how to make it happen. It takes a lot of work over many years to get where they are, and they’re really getting comfortable with it. I think faculty are extremely comfortable, and it’s kind of like second nature at this point.”*
  - *“Staff needs to be trained in a social thinking type of curriculum. We were provided with ample amounts of social skills training and support from our administration and social learning coordinator.”*
  
- **Use of differentiation** – Several instructors mentioned the importance of being able to differentiate in order to ensure full participation of students with varied learning needs. Typical comments included:
  - *“We try and present in so many ways.”*
  - *“Teachers have to be able to differentiate, because even after you break down a project, you have to know your students, who can follow one or two step directions, who you need to be next to, and how to differentiate even further.”*
  
- **High value placed on social and emotional learning component** – The majority of instructors mentioned the centrality of social and emotional learning within the program, and the fact that social learning concepts are reinforced throughout the school day – not just during arts instruction. Typical comments included:
  - *“I think because it’s integrated – not just art one time a week – [teachers] are thinking about it every day, and relating what kids are learning back to the art .... this gives them something concrete to go back to with more abstract social learning concepts.”*
  - *“I think [it works] because we are teaching [social learning] explicitly ... in some curricula, things are embedded, hidden beneath the surface, but this program is more explicit and direct, which is what the kids need.”*
  - *“It’s very comprehensive. It’s something we work on all year long. You know social learning piece is so woven into our everyday world here, and we’re thinking about how the expression of art can be used, it’s not like it’s taught in one 30 minute class and then it’s over. It’s really woven throughout the day and throughout of as part of the culture.”*
  - *“Students quickly pick up on the social language like ‘flexibility,’ ‘cooperation’ and ‘problem solving.’ The program is also effective because it is integrated throughout the day by all the staff.”*
  
- **Teacher buy-in** – Finally, almost everyone stressed the importance of teacher buy-in and passion for the program. Typical comments included:

- *"I believe in having all teachers on board. You have to have teachers into it. The nice thing was that all the teachers were super passionate about the art projects, and teaching kids about the artists they were going to be inspired by."*
- *"Definitely buy-in. Teachers have to want to learn more about different projects and artists, they have to want to expand their minds."*
- *"The number one ingredient is staff support and buy-in to the program."*
- *"Teacher buy-in is very, very important. I have done a lot of research into arts integration and different kinds of integration. It's definitely something I'm passionate about, and one of the biggest obstacles is teachers often don't think they have the skills to do it."*

## Parent Interviews

Analysis of the 14 parent interview transcripts revealed a number of key themes summarized below.

**Student Outcomes:** When asked to identify how the program positively impacted students, parents described growth in terms of the following social and emotional learning domains:

- **Self-esteem** – The majority of parents reported that the program had positively impacted their children's self-esteem. Typical comments included:
  - *"The quality of his work and when he was showing it to us and talking about the history of it, and kind of everything surrounding not just the physical product ... but also everything that went into the process, choosing and deciding, being an active participant in his own destiny, in his final product ... was very confidence-building."*
  - *"He sometimes struggles with confidence and when he sees something from an artist he studied, he knows something about that and he shares it, and I think it makes him feel good about himself. It's something he didn't learn from me. It's a conversation piece that he can be like, 'Oh, this is Georgia O'Keefe,' and it's something we can talk about."*
  - *Overall, the increased confidence in her artistic abilities spilled over into other areas as well. She was never really confident in all areas of the arts, and after seeing what she was capable of doing in artistic form, I think she gained confidence in other areas .... It definitely impacted her confidence, self-esteem, and her willingness to try new things."*
- **Engagement** – Approximately half of parents noted improvements in engagement as a result of participating in the integrated arts program. Typical comments included:
  - *"One of the things that he had struggled with is kind of his focus on stuff, and I think because he was so engaged in a lot of these art projects, it enabled his brain to access a different piece of itself. And because he was so able to stay engaged, because he was interested in the topic, it allowed him to delve kind of deeper into that area without getting distracted."*
  - *"I would say it definitely increased his engagement. I think that he, because of the lessons that were taught through art, he learned about it differently, He is a kid who loves facts – black and white thinking – so it gave him a way to understand arts in a more objective fashion."*
  - *"He was truly engaged in the subjects, and I think that helped his attention."*

- **Arts appreciation/creative expression**– In response to the program, almost all parents noted the emergence of arts appreciation and/or the development of creative expression in their children. Typical comments included:
  - *“I think it’s been a building process because over the years, some of the different artists he has studied he’s been really interested in. Like Picasso a few years ago, we went out and got a book of different Picasso-type projects you could do at home for kids. Last year he was into this one sculptor, and this year he was interested in an artist of Indian origin. I definitely felt like it’s been a building process. He was interested in art anyway, but this opened the door to something.”*
  - *“He has always been confident about academics and learning, but he has loved the art unit and remembers everything! At the beginning of the year, he could not draw with much detail and only used the color green. He now makes colorful, detailed pieces and he feels so proud!”*
  - *Fine motor is not his favorite thing, so art is not his most favorite thing to do. But now he is sitting home and coloring, and when he does see a picture of something he studied in class, he tells me all about it! He is more in tune with what arts is, and when he finds something that he recognizes from class when we’re out, he points it out.”*
  - *“He is talking much more about certain pictures he brings home. He was predisposed to art, and he has definitely progressed in talking about art we have at home and his own projects that he brings home – ‘This is a Van Gogh.’ He is much more interested in art than his brother was at his age.”*
  
- **Sharing at home** – All parents noted that their children were able to generalize what they learned during the program, by sharing about it when they got home. Typical comments included:
  - *“I heard about each artist they studied, almost every day. I love how they seamlessly intertwined geography, history, and even some math into the arts program. They applied certain artists’ styles to projects pertaining to state flags, state flowers, historical landmarks, and the many facets of Washington, DC .... Every time we drove through, my daughter was super excited to point out each building, its name, it’s significance, and which of her friends was assigned that particular building for their pointillism paintings, and she so eloquently and confidently described them.”*
  - *“He was particularly interested in how young Van Gogh died. That spurred many discussions about age and life span.”*
  - *“He shared the names of books and authors, and the names of artists and key artwork. He would describe different techniques artists used, such as pointillism. He even would try the techniques on his own painting at home.”*
  - *“He really became a knowledgeable person on the subject of art and he was able to express that in other areas outside of school. On a recent trip to the National Gallery of Art, he was very excited because he knew the names and work of several artists exhibited there. He went to the information desk and asked specifically about the names of artists: Oldenburg, Kandinsky, Monet – and where to find their artwork. The docent was very shocked and impressed with his knowledge of art at such a young age.”*
  
- **Collaboration** – Several parents commented on their children’s improved collaboration skills related to their participation in the integrated arts program. Typical comments included:
  - *“Regarding the collaboration piece ... he would talk about when he would do projects with the kids, and how [friend #1] chose this, and [friend #2] chose that, so I think*

*there was kind of an awareness of what other people were doing and gathering while he was making his own choices.”*

- *“I would definitely say he has improved collaboration, because there were portions where they would work together in class.”*
- *“She has play dates with another student and they go off and do art together – that’s their thing.”*
- *“When he is doing creative arts-type things – coloring, painting, even building LEGOs freeform, he is very interested in collaboration. On creative activities, he is always inviting me, my husband, and his brother to collaborate.”*

**Reasons for Outcomes:** When asked to describe the reasons for these positive outcomes, parents identified a number of key factors they believed contributed to the success of the integrated arts program. These included the following two themes:

- **Quality of staff** – Several parents mentioned the high quality of staff as a reason for positive student outcomes. Typical comments included:
  - *“The overall approach, execution, attention to detail, and ability to individualize the materials and assignments, all earn an ‘A++’ in my mind!”*
  - *“Quality of staff, resources, the way they understand the way children there learn. There is a unique application of teaching that you don’t often see at other schools. I do think it was very effective.”*
  - *“It was very effective. I think the arts program sets the backdrop for learning in a positive, creative, and expressive format. The teachers were skilled and extremely effective. I love everything about it!”*
- **Multiple modes of learning** – Many parents mentioned the importance of engaging their children through non-traditional modes of learning. Typical comments included:
  - *“I think it has been so effective, because I think the program really tapped into ways to access his brain that I think traditional methods have a more difficult time doing, just because of his learning differences.”*
  - *“I think the idea to express yourself in different media is something he has incorporated and has been huge for him. He’s always trying to create a book about something, a project about something, and the amount of exposure he’s had to different creators has, I’m sure, enhanced his motivation for that.”*
  - *“I can’t say for all kids at Maddux, but [my child] is a sensitive kid and if you vary approaches to teaching, they’re going to absorb more. If you drill them in the more traditional way, they’ll be intimidated or they’ll get bored. I think it’s very effective the way it’s being taught.”*
- **Presentation skills** – A few parents remarked on how pleased they were with their children’s newfound abilities to present their work and to speak publicly and confidently. Typical comments included:
  - *“I loved hearing him present, be confident, and speak in public. I think that’s a gift he’ll have forever.”*
  - *“I love how prepared the students were for the festival. It made them comfortable and able to explain their process and work.”*
  - *“It was cool to see all of the kids be confident and speak. There was one little girl who never talked before and she was able to speak, and we literally heard her voice because she wasn’t able to do that before. It was really cool.”*

ArtFest: Parents were also asked to reflect on their overall impressions of ArtFest, and were overwhelming enthusiastic about this component of the program. Typical comments included:

- *“They were both the only times that we were invited into his classroom with him, and they were very powerful moments for us to participate ... with this school. I wished for many more opportunities, as these were deep moments of bonding for me, my husband, and son.”*
- *“I think it’s a great way for us to see what they are doing in the classroom. He was very enthusiastic to show us around and share with us not just what he worked on, but what the class and his friends worked on, and talked about that process. It was wonderful. It’s just a moment when they are so proud of all they’ve accomplished, so it’s a particularly nice time to go into the classroom.”*
- *“It was an extremely proud moment as a parent. You see the amount of pride the kids have and I really appreciated what the teachers did. The kids had so much pride, and they obviously pumped them up to be ready for it. He was just extremely proud dragging us around the classroom to show us things.”*
- *“I was blown away by both experiences. First, my daughter suffers from some fairly significant social anxiety. Performance anxiety is often unbearable for her. Both of these events, however, included performances in front of all the parents. Not only did she perform without hesitation, nerves, or anxiety about it, but she did so with ease and confidence, and ... she was even a leader for the performance/singing/presentation part. Also, the information the teachers sent home ahead of time, to better prepare the parents’ expectations and set the tone for questions we could ask our children, to give us some background on the information we would be learning, was both extremely helpful and impressive.”*
- *“Both events were superbly organized and showed a clear path of skill development and increasing depth. He was so proud and we were blown away by the detail in his work! The questions really helped him guide us and he felt empowered.”*

## **PART 4: CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Findings from this study indicate that students’ skills increased significantly over the course of the year. Although other factors likely contributed to the increased BRIEF and SRS scores (e.g., other components of the Maddux curriculum that positively impacted social and emotional learning [SEL]), staff and parent interviewees were unanimous in their enthusiasm for the Maddux Integrated Arts Program, and in drawing strong causal links between the program and students’ improved SEL skills, as well as their arts appreciation and creative engagement.

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