District 75, New York City Department of Education

EASE

Everyday Arts for Special Education

WHAT IMPACT DOES EASE HAVE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION (SPED) STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR?

Project Overview

THE PROBLEM: What Challenge Did the Program Try to Address?

District 75 is New York City's special education (SPED) district. Sixty percent of students in District 75 were assessed on New York State alternate academic achievement standards. Student disabilities in the district include autism spectrum disorders, cognitive disabilities, emotional disturbance, severe learning disabilities, and physical and cognitive handicaps. The program was designed to improve reading and math scores for students with learning disabilities, as well as to improve their social-emotional development.

THE PROJECT: What Strategies Did the Program Employ?

The Everyday Arts for Special Education (EASE)[1] program was funded through an i3 development grant from 2010-2015. EASE trained teachers in differentiated arts-based strategies designed to meet the goals of each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) across multiple arts (music, dance, visual arts, and theater). The District worked with elementary grade students who fell into four categories of disabilities: autism spectrum, intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbance, and multiple disabilities. EASE teachers learned multiple strategies to work on IEP goals, especially in the areas of communication, socialization, and related academic areas. These strategies were developed through many years of experience by teaching artists working in the district on other SPED projects and were codified prior to the start of the program by a

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[1] District 75, NYC Department of Education received an i3 development grant supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation program through Grant Number U396C100275. Development grants provide funding to support the development or testing of novel or substantially more effective practices that address widely shared education challenges. All i3 grantees are required to conduct rigorous evaluations of their projects. The quality of evidence required to demonstrate a project's effectiveness depends on a project's level of scale or grant type.

curriculum developer/program designer. The study used a cluster (site) quasi-experimental design. Schools were invited to apply for the study by participating in a survey.

THE EASE MODEL

- **Professional Development (PD) workshops.** Teachers and administrators participated in full-day workshops with teaching artists. Workshops provided time for action and reflection.

- **Collaborative Classroom Modeling.** Teaching artists would support classroom teachers with implementation of curricula learned in the PD workshops, using differentiated instruction across age and ability levels.

- **On-Site Professional Development.** Ongoing PD was available to participating teachers in the form of 45-minute sessions focused on differentiation and documentation of best practices.

- **Classroom Instruction.** Teachers worked to address students' IEP goals through EASE instructional activities.

Summary of Results

DID EASE IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

EASE participants demonstrated improved reading achievement and social/emotional learning (SEL) compared to comparison students. No impact was found for math achievement.

- **READING ACHIEVEMENT.** Participants in the EASE program demonstrated improved reading skills as measured by the state alternative achievement test, but there was no significant difference between their improvement and that of their comparison peers.

- **MATH ACHIEVEMENT.** No effects were found on math achievement as measured by the state alternative achievement test.

- **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORS.** EASE participants demonstrated improved SEL learning compared to non-EASE students at a statistically significant rate.

Student Performance on Reading, Math, and Social-Emotional Learning Measures‡: EASE versus Non-EASE Students
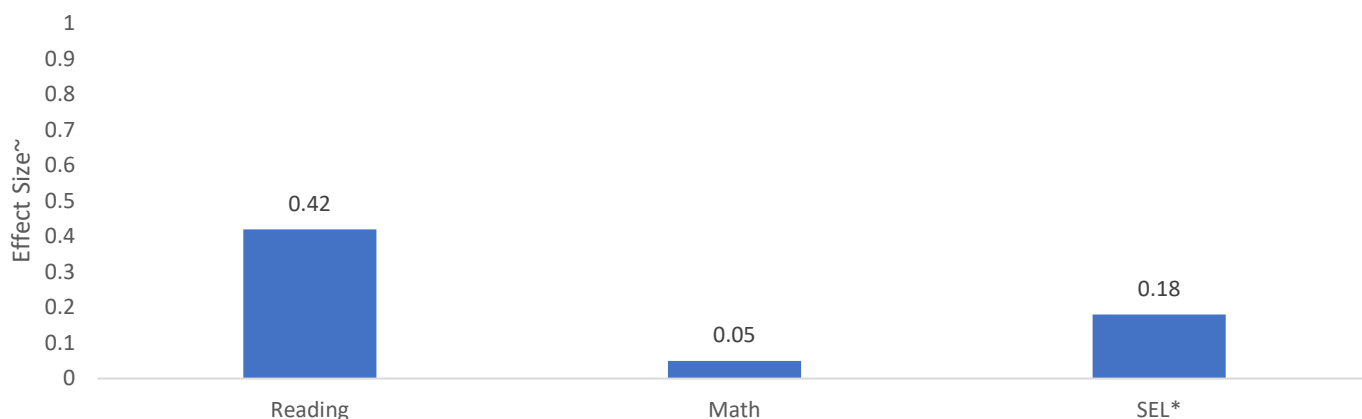
‡Students were assessed in Reading and Math using the New York State Alternative Assessment (NYSAA). SEL skills were measured using the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI).
~Education researchers generally interpret effect sizes as follows: 0.2 = small, 0.5 = medium, and 0.8 = large. If the impact does not have an effect size of 0.2 or greater, it is not meaningful, even if it is statistically significant.[2]
*Results are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Please see Appendices B and C for information about the evaluation's design and the quality of the evidence, respectively.

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[2] Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. Psychological Bulletin, 112, 155-159.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The program also completed various student assessments on an ongoing basis throughout the intervention. These assessments provided additional takeaways to consider.

- **IEP GOALS.** An IEP goal was identified for each EASE student that would be addressed through the program. Teachers indicated throughout the year the degree of improvement toward that goal. Criteria to determine progress was determined by the teachers, who had the best knowledge of the students' disabilities.

- **ENGAGING ACTIVITIES.** Program staff posit that the improvement in reading and SEL outcomes could be due to the level of engagement required of the EASE activities, which were interactive, and involved communication and creative and kinesthetic expression.

- **COMMUNICATION AND SOCIALIZATION SKILLS.** EASE students were rated on a three-point scale on these indicators: communication skills, socialization skills, following directions, time on task, self-esteem, engagement, and arts proficiency. Ratings were submitted weekly along with qualitative examples to support the rating. Analysis on these domains demonstrated gains in all areas. Examples included sharing materials, positive interactions with peers and teachers, eye contact, focus on a task, and expressing ideas, among others.

For More Information

Evaluation Reports

[Final Evaluation Report (2016) (PDF)](#) (ArtsResearch, December 2016)[3]

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[3] The information and data for this report was collected from the most recent report as of 02/10/2020: [District, 75, New York City Department of Education Everyday Arts for Special Education Impact Evaluation](#) from ArtsResearch (2016).
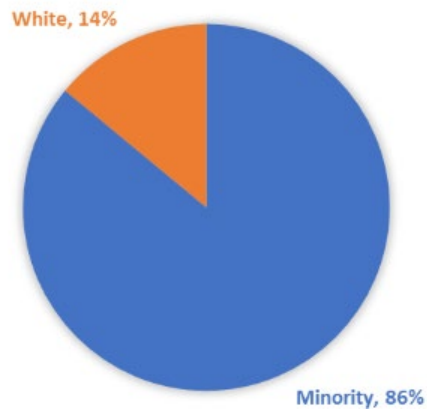
Appendix A: Students Served by the Project[4]

GRADE(S)

PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

GENDER	RACE/ETHNICITY	COMMUNITY
Not Reported	White, 14% Minority, 86%	Rural, 0% Urban, 100%
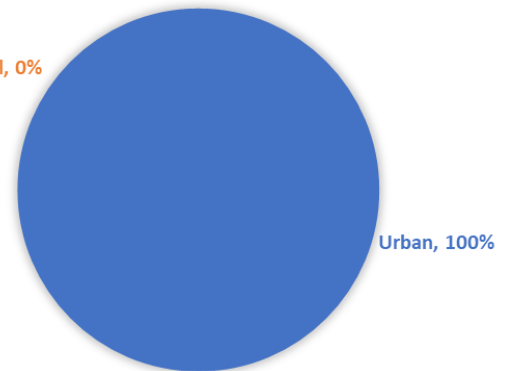
HIGH-NEED STUDENTS[i]

Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	English Learner	Students with Disabilities
71%	15%	Not Reported/Not Applicable

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[4]These data reflect the entire student population served by the intervention, not just the evaluation sample used in the impact study.

Appendix B: Impact Evaluation Methodology[5]

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Design:	Quasi-Experimental Design
Approach:	▪ The study used a cluster (site) quasi-experimental design. Schools were invited to apply for the study by participating in a survey. Program groups were selected from the 37 sites selected to participate; comparison groups were from the same 10 schools but in sites where there was no participation in EASE. The program sample for academic achievement was 4th grade students after two years of exposure; for the SEL outcomes, the sample was 2nd-4th grade students after two years. Two cohorts of students were included in the analyses (2011-12 and 2012-13 for academic outcomes and 2012-13 and 2013-14 for SEL outcomes). Students were only included if they had a pre-test score to use as a baseline.
Study Length:	Four years – 2011-2014

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Study Setting:	Thirty-seven sites in 10 District 75 schools
Final Sample Sizes:	▪ *Reading and Math Intervention:* 83 students, SEL Intervention: 190 students ▪ *Reading and Math Comparison:* 74 students, SEL Intervention: 569 students
District-Wide Characteristics:	▪ 86% minority, 15% English Learners, 71% eligible for Title I support, 60% assessed on New York State Alternative Assessment (NYSAA)
Data Sources:	▪ Reading and Math assessment data ▪ Student Assessment tool
Key Measures:	▪ NYSAA ▪ Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI)

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[5] These data reflect only the evaluation sample in the impact study, not the entire population served.

Appendix C: Quality of the Evidence

Although an evaluation may not have been reviewed by the time of publication for this summary, it is possible that the study will be reviewed at a later date. Please visit the websites found in the footnotes on this page to check for updates.

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW[6]

STUDY	RATING
The Investing in Innovation Fund: Summary of 67 Evaluations (Abt Associates, 2018)	Unofficially meets WWC Standards with Reservations

EVIDENCE FOR ESSA REVIEW[7]

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 02/10/2020	N/A

NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS REVIEW[8]

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 02/10/2020	N/A

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[6] https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW
[7] https://www.evidenceforessa.org/
[8] https://intensiveintervention.org/

The **Investing in Innovation Fund (i3)**, *established under section 14007 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is a Federal discretionary grant program at the U.S. Department of Education within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). i3 grants help schools and local education agencies work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community to develop and expand innovative practices that improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and/or increase college enrollment and completion rates for high-need students.*

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[i] "High-need student" refers to a student at risk of academic failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, attend high-minority schools, are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, in foster care, have been incarcerated, have disabilities, or who are English learners. For more information see: Applications for New Awards; Investing in Innovation Fund-Development Grants, 81 FR 24070 (April 25, 2016).