

# Creative Learning Initiative: Implementation Executive Summary, 2018–2019

## Program Description

The Creative Learning Initiative (CLI) is a community-wide effort to bring creative learning and the arts to each and every student in Austin. Led by MINDPOP, the City of Austin, and the Austin Independent School District (AISD), CLI supports systematic and sustainable programs that integrate creativity, the arts, and Creative Teaching strategies with classroom teaching, campus programming, and campus improvement. CLI has provided 63 campuses with the ongoing support to design and implement comprehensive campus plans to become more arts rich. At the campus level, the three pillars of the program are to (a) increase students' access to sequential fine arts instruction, (b) increase community arts programming during and out of the school day, and (c) foster classroom learning with Creative Teaching across the curriculum. During the first 3 years of program implementation, foundational campuses receive a robust set of support interventions (e.g., professional development opportunities, follow-up coaching, and supplemental arts instruction in drama and dance), then graduate to a sustaining campus status that assumes greater campus independence and less reliance on support services. In 2018–2019, the program continued to achieve milestones toward program implementation in these four areas: districtwide arts richness, sequential fine arts, community arts partnerships, and Creative Teaching.

### District-wide Arts Richness

**1. CLI continues to serve proportionally more economically disadvantaged and at-risk students:** CLI has historically served high-needs schools to address inequities in access to the arts. In 2018–2019, CLI served a higher percentage of students who attended Title I schools, were economically disadvantaged, and were labeled as at risk, when compared with district proportions (Figure 1).

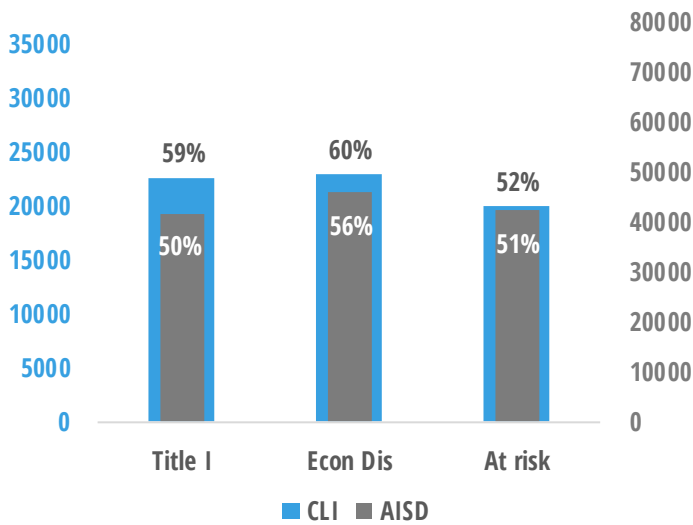
**2. CLI support is critical to arts richness at Title I schools:** For the third year in a row, CLI has been shown to support the equitable distribution of Creative Campuses between its Title I and non-Title I campuses (Figure 2). This achievement is important because research shows that access to the arts is especially advantageous to low-income students, and yet it is often those exact populations who lack equitable access to the arts. However, we have found that arts richness declines after 6 years in CLI.

**Recommendation 1:** Because we found that implementation declines after 6 years, we recommend that sustaining campuses have planned reinforcements beginning in year 6, to keep levels of arts richness high.



Figure 1.

**CLI served proportionally more economically disadvantaged students than the district.**

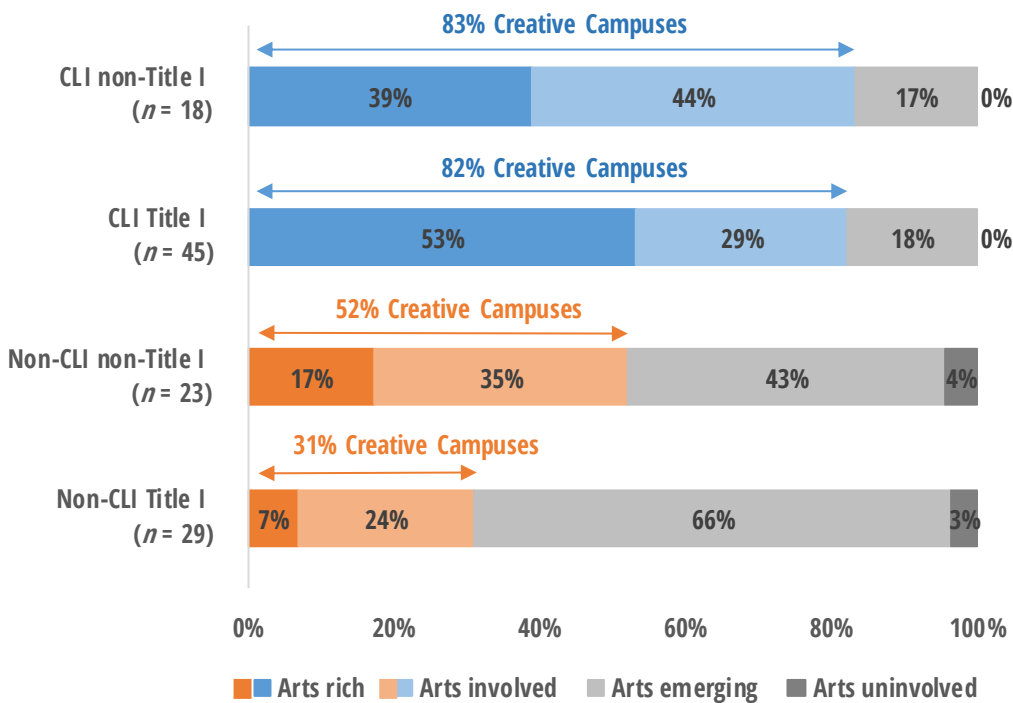


Source. 2018–2019 AISD student records

Note. The scale on the right is the number of students served by CLI, the scale on the left is the number of students in the district.

Figure 2.

**In 2018–2019, Title I schools were almost three times as likely to meet the Creative Campus standard when they were a part of the CLI Program.**



Source. 2018–2019 AISD Arts Inventory (n = 115) and course enrollment data from 2018–2019



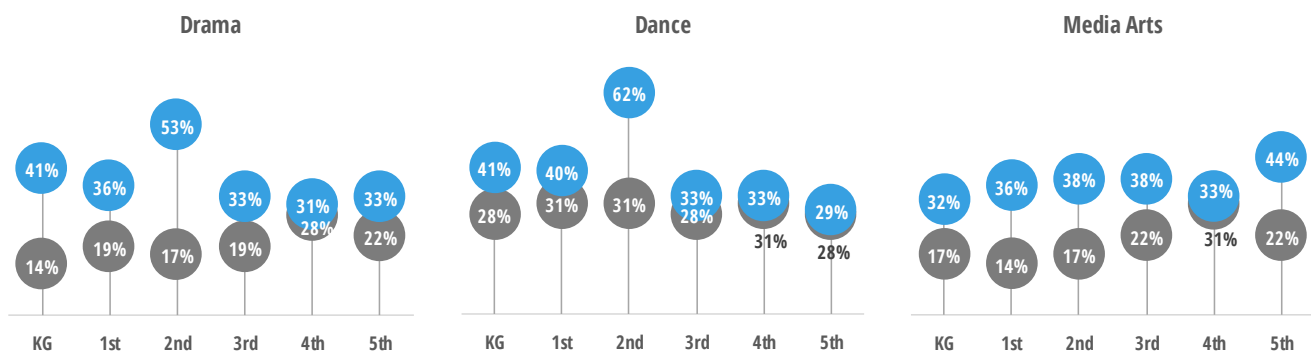
## Sequential Fine Arts

**1. CLI schools had greater student access to sequential fine arts instruction at the elementary level than did non-CLI schools:** At every grade level, elementary students at CLI schools had more regular opportunities to study dance, drama, and media arts than did students at non-CLI schools (Figure 3). Some of this difference in exposure can be explained by the direct work of the CLI dance and drama specialists who come to each school for one semester and usually work with the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class. However, access to dance, drama, and media arts in CLI schools remains higher than in non-CLI schools across all grade levels, persisting even in those grade levels not visited by the dance and drama specialists.

**Recommendation 2: We recommend formal sharing of best practices from the elementary school leaders who have found creative ways to offer dance, drama, and media arts learning objectives with leaders who have not yet found ways to make it work in their schools.**

Figure 3.

Students had more regular opportunities to take drama, dance, and media arts at CLI schools than at non-CLI schools.



Source. 2018–2019 AISD Arts Inventory ( $n = 81$ )

Note. The figure represents the percentage of schools in each group (CLI, non-CLI) with regular offerings in these art forms, with six classes or more. For a more complete picture of the different frequencies of exposure, see the Creative Campus Profiles (2018–2019). KG = kindergarten.

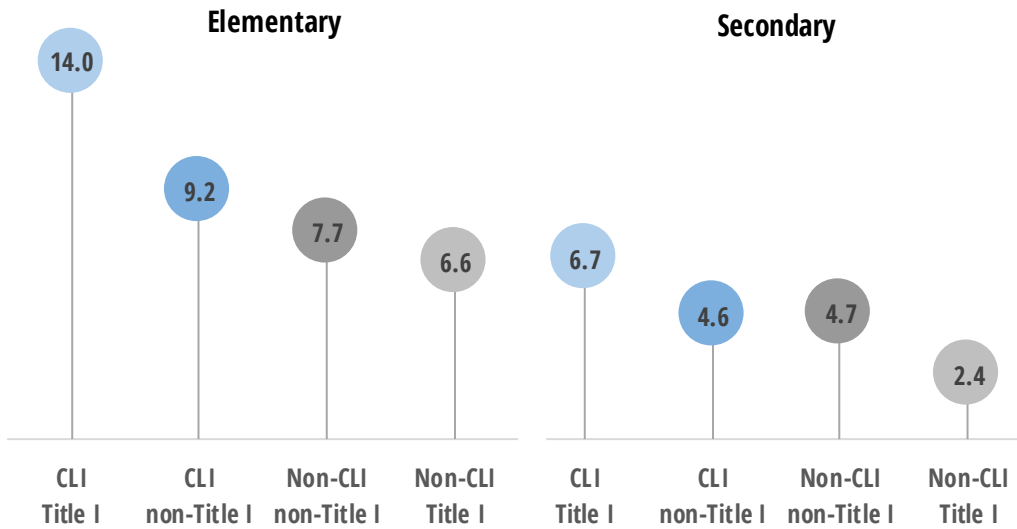
## Community Arts Partnerships

**1. CLI schools had greater student exposure to community arts partners at Title I schools than did non-CLI schools:** The exposure students at CLI Title I schools had to community arts partners was twice as great as the exposure at all other schools (Figure 4). Across all elementary schools, the average exposure rate was 10.2 hours per student. At the secondary level, the average exposure rate was 4.9 hours per student. At both the elementary and secondary levels, Title I schools that received support from CLI reported higher average student arts partner exposure rates than did non-CLI Title I schools, and surprisingly, they even reported higher average student arts partner exposure rates than did non-Title I schools that are supported by CLI.

**Recommendation 3: We recommend continued support to develop secondary arts partnerships.**

Figure 4.

In 2018–2019, the students’ average annual hours of exposure to community arts partners at both elementary and secondary levels was highest for students at CLI Title I schools.



Source. 2018–2019 AISD Arts Inventory

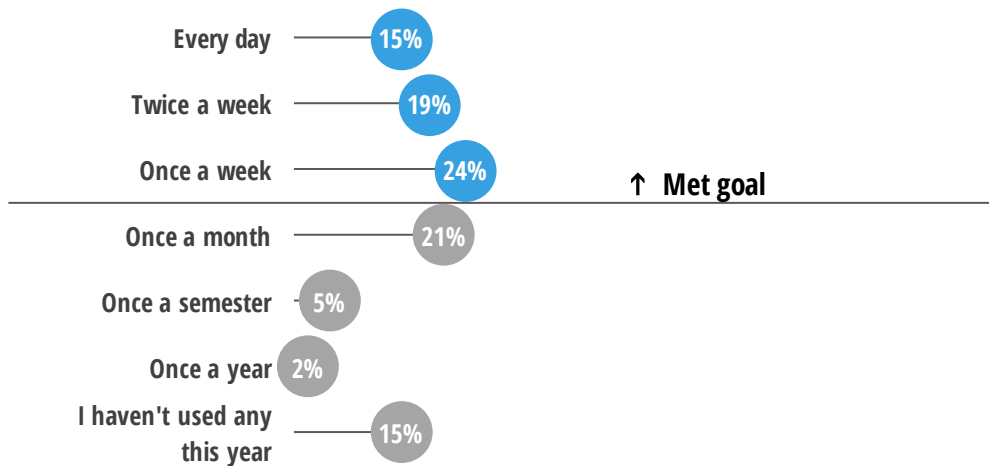
Note. (n = 115) Exposure rate is defined as the number of hours per year that students are exposed to art partners.

### Creative Teaching

**1. Most teachers reported they used Creative Teaching frequently and that it engaged students and improved their instruction:** Fifty-eight percent of teachers reported using Creative Teaching strategies at least once a week or more in their classrooms (Figure 5). The vast majority of teachers reported that using Creative Teaching engaged their students (94%); importantly, more than half also indicated that it improved their instructional practice (56%) and fostered content retention (51%).

Figure 5.

Fifty-eight percent of teachers reported they used Creative Teaching strategies once a week or more.



Source. CLI Workshop Survey

Note. (n = 1,044)



**2. Teacher’s perceptions of Creative Teaching utility and coach quality remained high, despite multiple coaching implementation challenges:** The slight decreases in positive perceptions of utility and coach quality were not unexpected due to the reduction in coaching support provided in 2018–2019. Specifically, in 2018–2019 only 34% of foundational teachers received coaching services, whereas in 2017–2018, coaching services were received by 60% of foundational teachers. Much of this can be explained by the factors that had an impact on the availability of CLI coaches, one of which was the district’s redesign of the academic department and campus support structures through instructional coaching. New professional development demands on coach time, and time spent designing the new systems of support for the district, necessitated that coaches spend less time doing direct coaching on campus. Despite challenges faced in implementation, teachers’ perceptions of the program remained very positive.

**Recommendation 4:** We recommend the development of supports to increase the frequency of Creative Teaching use.

Overall, CLI implementation in 2018–2019 was comparable to prior years, with more robust implementation at the elementary level than at the secondary level. At the elementary level, the district goal for arts partnerships was far exceeded in all grade levels. Additionally, teachers continued to have positive perceptions of Creative Teaching strategies and its impact on students (e.g., engaging students). However, programmatic challenges were faced as well. For example, secondary schools continued to have more challenges implementing Creative Teaching than did elementary schools and establishing arts partnerships that integrate with core academics. The full report summarizes the implementation of the components of CLI during 2018–2019 and provides recommendations. For the full report see, [https://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dre-surveys/18.39\\_Creative\\_Learning\\_Initiative\\_Implementation\\_Summary\\_2018-2019.pdf](https://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dre-surveys/18.39_Creative_Learning_Initiative_Implementation_Summary_2018-2019.pdf).



## AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Melissa Andrews, M.A., M.Ed., Mishan Jensen, Ph.D., & Cinda Christian, Ph.D.

## Department of Research and Evaluation



4000 S IH 35 Frontage Road | Austin, TX 78704  
512.414.1724 | fax: 512.414.1707  
[www.austinisd.org/dre](http://www.austinisd.org/dre) | Twitter: @AISD\_DRE

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