

Two-Year Art Mentoring Impact Study

Introduction

This report summarizes data collected during a two-year (2004-06) impact study that examined Venice Arts' Art Mentoring programs; it does not include data from other programs, such as our Documentary Programs or school-day projects, which are evaluated separately. Key findings from this study show that:

- » 100% of youth report learning new art skills
- » 92% are satisfied with the youth-mentor relationship
- » 71% show a strong sense of community
- » 76% of youth show strong self-efficacy

Data affirm that the fundamental principles and practices of our Art Mentoring model align with substantive field research data that shows the significant impact of arts learning¹ and mentoring² on youth development across a range of dimensions including creative, emotional, social, academic, and vocational³. It also echoes findings indicating that quality arts instruction and mentoring can enhance youths' motivation and self-efficacy (their belief in their ability to positively affect their environment); build positive relationships with their mentors and improve social relationships with others; and contribute to a sense of community and a more positive overall outlook on life.

Our Methods

We used a survey instrument comprised of qualitative questions developed by Venice Arts' staff, as well as quantitative items from three research-validated scales: "Perceived Self-efficacy Scale for Children," "Sense of Community in the Classroom," and the "Youth Mentoring Survey." The survey was administered as in-person interviews by staff and volunteer researchers; interviews assured the involvement of younger children in evaluation and increased the overall richness of our data. In our survey, we looked at, among other things:

- (1) whether individual workshops were meeting our baseline learning objectives;
- (2) if participation in our programs affected youths' perception of themselves as artists or creative people;
- (3) the impact of the art mentoring relationship;
- (4) whether our programs contributed to youths' self-efficacy; and,
- (5) whether or not youth involved at Venice Arts developed a sense of community belonging.

Data analyses were conducted by our Assistant Director at the time, Alexa Adamo, a social science researcher. Using grounded theory, qualitative data was coded and then summarized along with quantitative data.

Our Sample

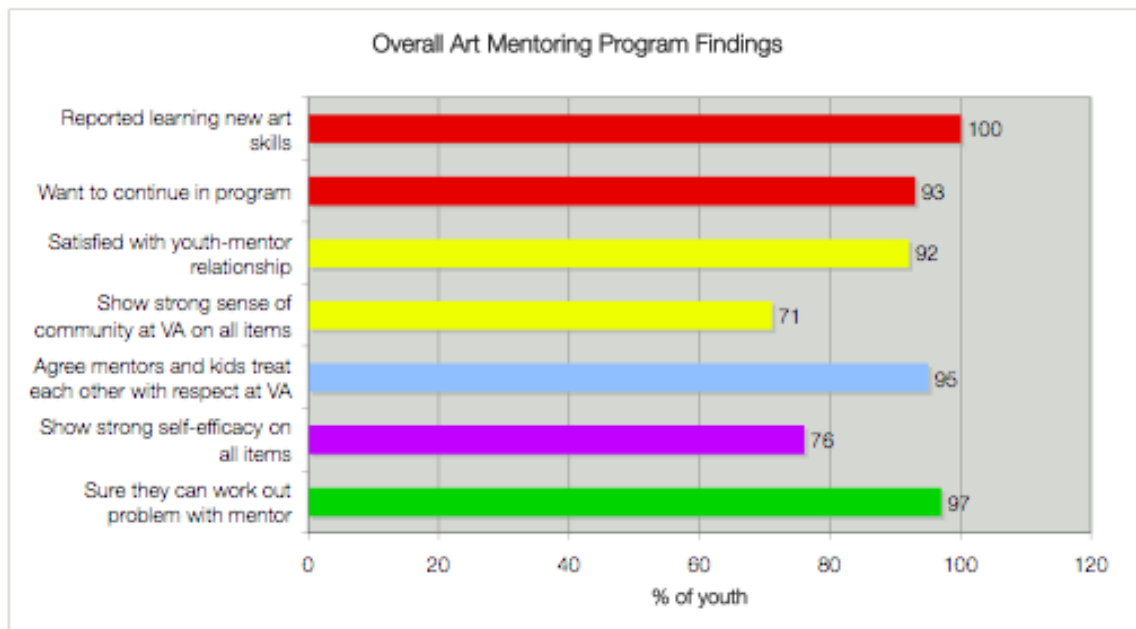
We surveyed a sample of 200 youth (69% of participants in our Art Mentoring program) working with artists at an average ratio of 1 artist to 2.3 youth. Of the 200 youth

interviewed, 15% reported on their experience in art discovery, 40% in photography, 19% in media arts, and 25% in digital arts. Sample demographics mirror the VA population as a whole, although there was a higher representation of females and youth from mixed and "other" ethnicities in the sample. Specifically, 59% were Latino, 17% were mixed/other ethnicities, 12% Caucasian, and 12% were African American. Youth ranged in age from 6 to 18, with the majority of youth between the ages of 8.3 and 13.9 years. 61% were female and 39% were male (in the overall population, only 55% are female).

Findings

The broad, qualitative goals of the Arts Mentoring program in 2004–2006 were to: (1) develop youths' creative and expressive capacities and artistic and technical skills, (2) develop significant, positive relationships between youth and adult role models/mentors, and (3) increase youths' self-efficacy and sense of community. Overall findings are displayed in Table A, followed by highlights about each construct examined.

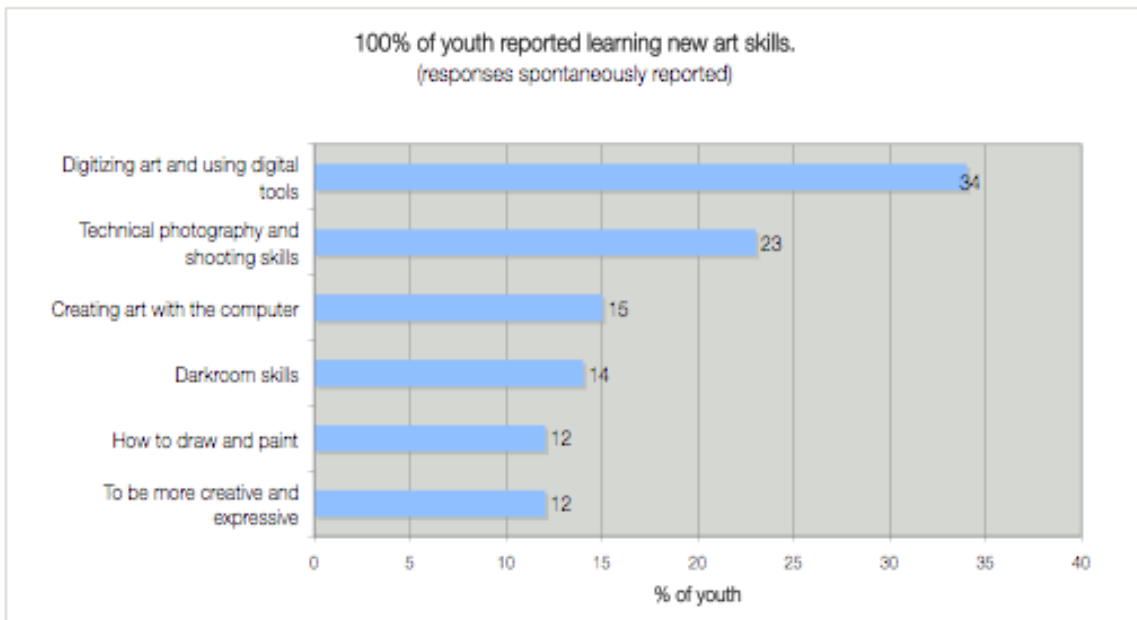
Table A. Overall Program Findings



1. Youths' creative/expressive capacities and art skills.

One hundred percent of youth reported learning new art skills (see Table B).

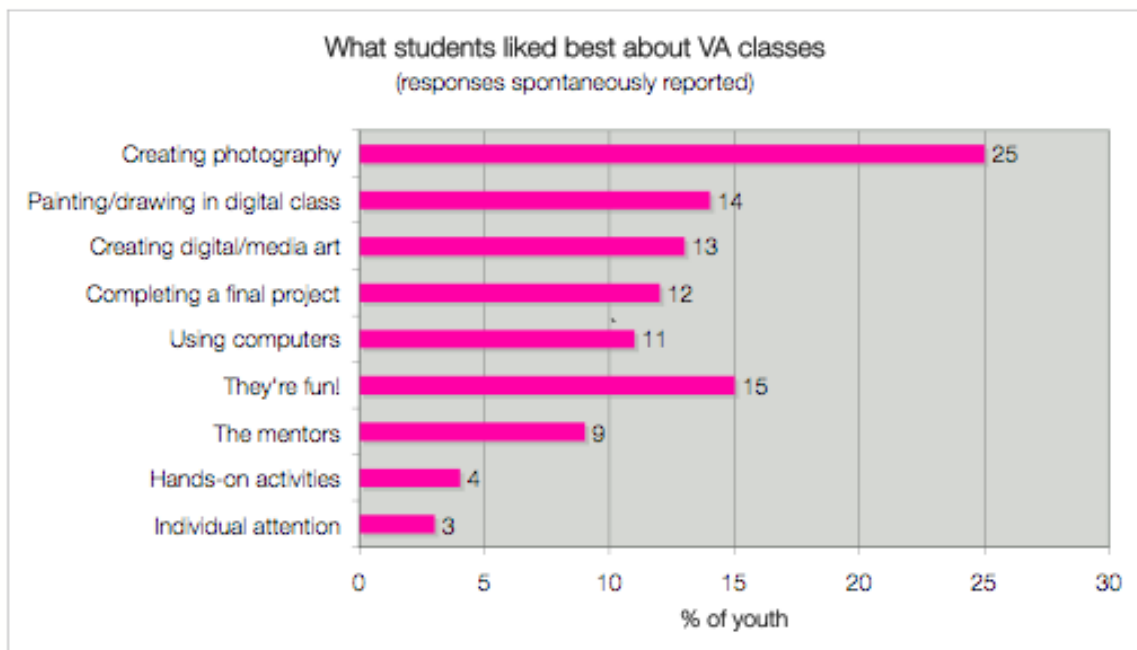
Table B. Youth Art Skills



Additionally, 65% learned something about how they can work in the arts when they are older, 82% stated that their learning helped them in other parts of their life including relationships with friends (76%), school (48%), family (43%), and other ways (39%). 52% learned about people whose lives are different than theirs.

When describing what they liked best about their class, youth said: (see Table C.; categories not mutually exclusive, totaling more than 100%):

Table C. What Students Liked Best



Additionally, 93% would like to participate in another Art Mentoring workshop in the future.

2. The Mentoring Relationship.

Data indicate that the Arts Mentoring program fostered significant positive relationships between youth and adult role models/mentors. Utilizing Jucovy's (2002) Youth Mentoring Survey,⁴ we examined three qualities of the mentoring relationship: youths' emotional engagement, satisfaction, and perception of the relationship as youth-centered. Overall results, plus examples, for each quality are provided in the tables below (Tables D1- D3).

Table D1. Satisfaction with the Mentoring Relationship



Table D2. Youths' Emotional Engagement in the Relationship

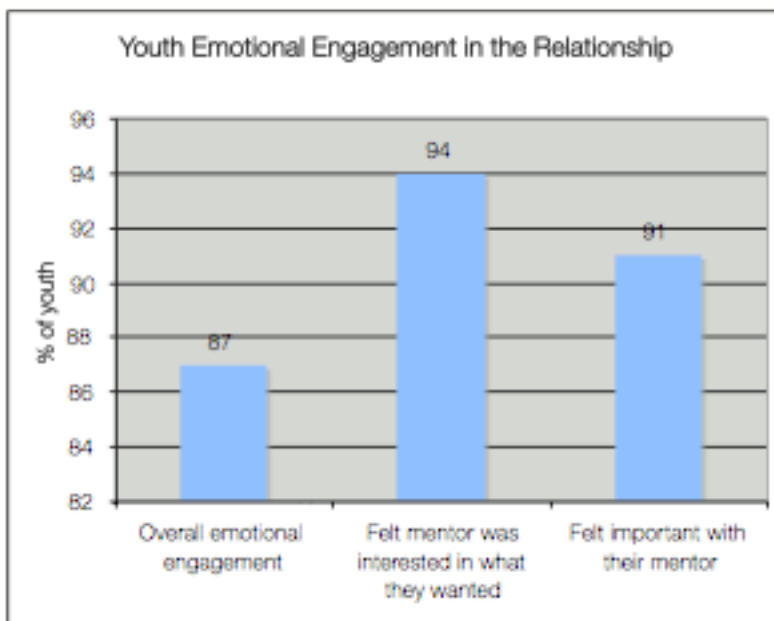
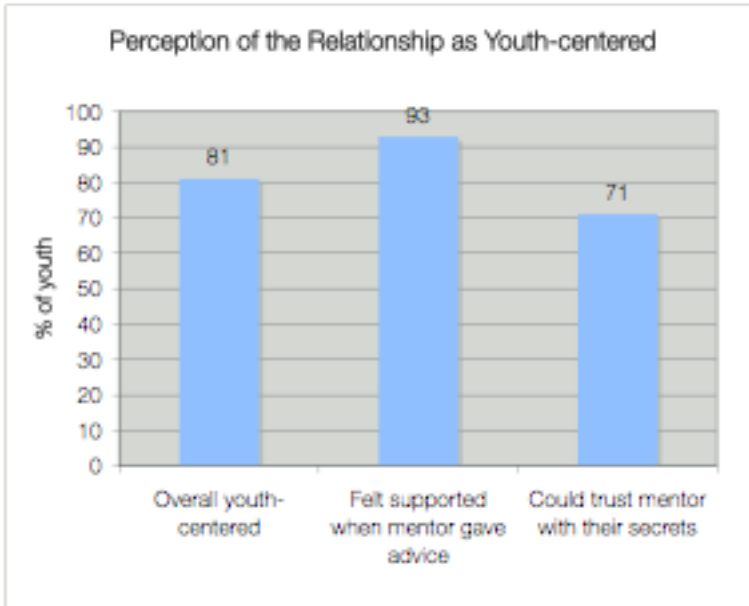


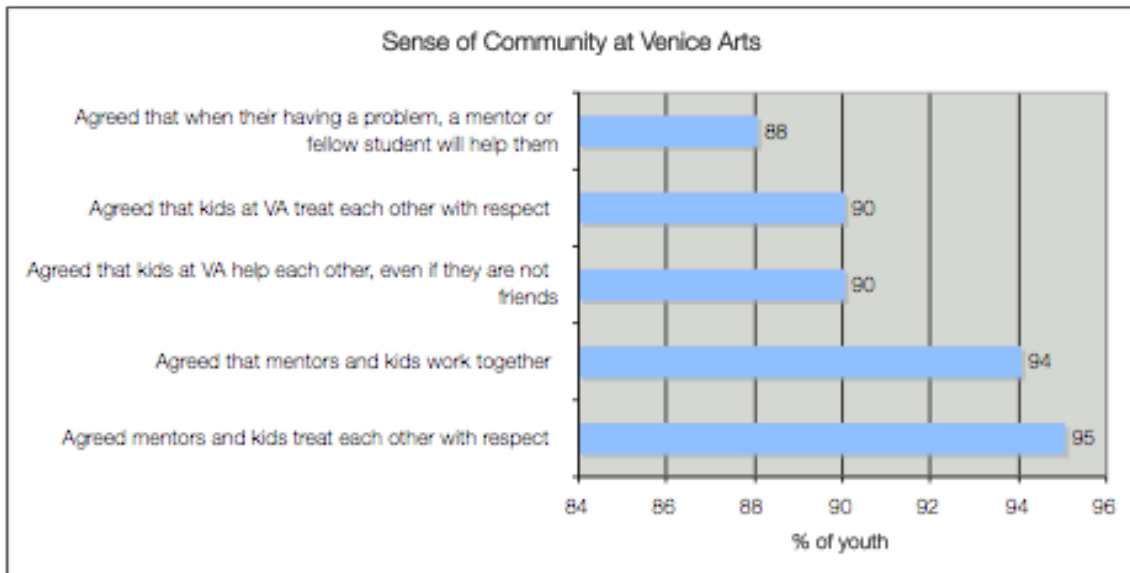
Table D3. Perception of the Relationship as Youth-Centered



3. Sense of Community

We utilized items from the Sense of Community Scale⁵ to measure the degree to which youth feel Venice Arts as a whole is a supportive, welcoming and safe environment. Data indicate that the majority of participating youth experience a strong sense of community at Venice Arts. Over 70% of youth responded positively on *every* item. Detail on a sample of items is below (Table E).

Table E. Youths' Sense of Community at Venice Arts



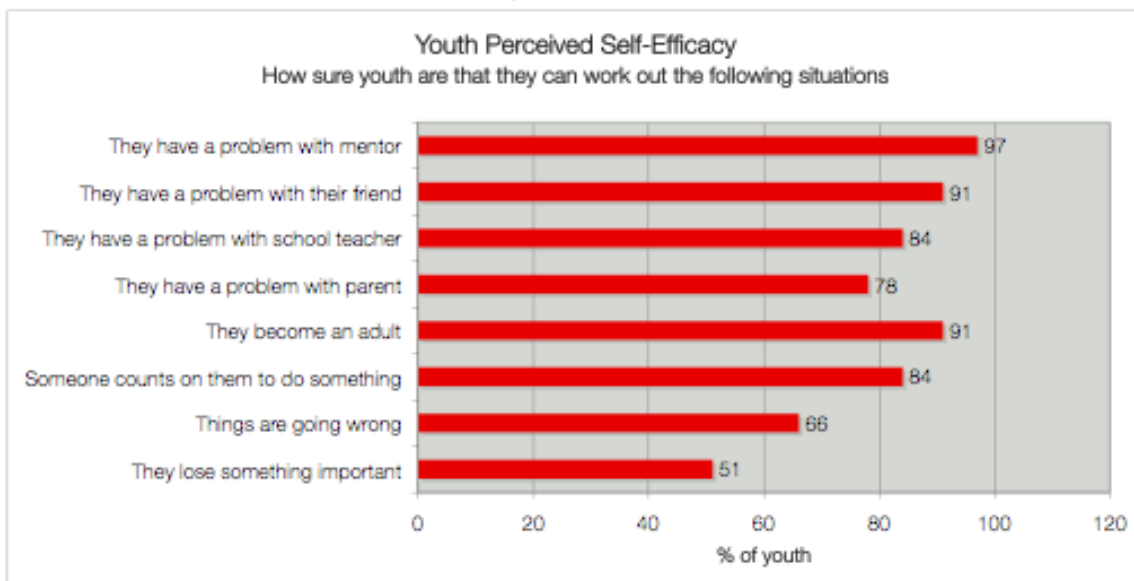
At this stage in the evaluation of the sense of community construct, we cannot ascertain if

participation in Venice Arts increased youths' sense of community. However, when analyzing the data by length of time in program, youth in the program for a year or more showed a significantly higher sense of community than those who had participated less than a year; particularly in regards to the lowest scoring item, "Venice Arts is like a family." Overall, 71% of youth agreed with this statement, but a total of 80% of continuing participants responded positively, as opposed to 61% of youth who participated less than a year. Our goal is to increase youth retention, and as we do so, we expect to see an increase in youths' sense of community.

4. Youths' Self-Efficacy

Items to measure self-efficacy were taken from the Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale for Children⁶ to assess how sure participating youth are that new experiences, difficult situations, and problems with other people will work out positively for them. Data indicates student self-efficacy at Venice Arts is generally high (average overall score of 76% are confident that they can handle every proposed situation), particularly in regards to their relationship with their mentor, the highest scoring item. See table below for greater detail on a sample of items.

Table F. Youth's Perceived Self-Efficacy



The item indicating youth feel most strongly about their ability to work out a problem with their mentor (97% of youth, including 61% who were very sure and 36% who were sure) reflects the positive impact the Art Mentoring program is making on participants. However, we cannot assert that youths' overall self-efficacy is correlated to their participation in Venice Arts programs without longer-term evaluation.

Future Directions

Our findings confirm that our strategic goal to provide greater depth, rather than breath, of programs is making a significant, positive impact on participating youth. Based on the findings from this study, we have developed a quantitative sub-survey to give us stronger data on youths' creative/expressive capacities and artistic and technical skills. We have also refined our evaluation instrument to more closely align it with a new curricula guide that we created to improve our artist-mentor training protocol and to clarify, by workshop, our program's learning objectives.

¹ Edmund B. Fiske, ed. (1999). [Champions of change: The Impact of the Arts On Learning](#). Washington, D.C.: President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

² Jekielek, S., et al. (2002, Feb). [Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development. Child Trends Research Brief](#). Washington, D.C.

³ YouthARTS Development Project (1996). U.S. Department of Justice, National Endowment for the Arts, and Americans for the Arts.

⁴ Health Development Agency (2000). [Art for Health: A review of good practice in community-based arts projects and initiative which impact health and well-being](#). London, UK.

⁵ Roberts, W., Hom, A., & Battistich, V. (1995, Apr). [Assessing students' and teachers' sense of the school as a caring community](#). Presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 388 675)

⁶ Cowen, E., Work, W., Hightower, A., Wymann, P., Parker, G., & Lotyczewski, B. (1991). Toward the development of a measure of perceived self-efficacy in children. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 20 (2), 169-178.