

ARTS-IN-CORRECTIONS: County Jails Project



California Lawyers for the Arts
in collaboration with Dr. Larry Brewster of the
**University of San Francisco, the William James Association, Fresno Arts
Council, Community Works West, Jail Guitar Doors and
Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission**

January 17, 2017

Introduction

California Lawyers for the Arts became involved in advocacy to restore California's stellar Arts-in-Corrections programs in 2011, just as the US Supreme Court was requiring the state to reduce severe overcrowding in the state's prisons. In addition to having the nation's largest state prison population, California also claimed one of the highest recidivism rates in the country at nearly 70%. We worked actively with Dr. Larry Brewster of the University of San Francisco and the William James Association to conduct a collaborative demonstration project in several state prisons that involved pre and post surveys of the students. Based on the evidence we gathered at that time, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) was persuaded to provide the California Arts Council with a \$2.5 million contract in 2014 for a two-year pilot project providing arts programs in up to 19 state prisons.

Our current project, which was funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Quentin Hancock Fund and the Wallace A. Gerbode Foundation, brings a new level of awareness and appreciation for the value of similarly effective arts programming in county jails. The goal of this phase of the project was to measure the behavioral and attitudinal changes experienced by the participants and the impact on their lives through surveys administered at the end of sequential art classes.

In collaboration with art organizations in Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Fresno and Sacramento Counties, we evaluated the results of the 12 to 18-week art classes attended by a total of 64 men. At the end of each program, the participants completed surveys that were designed by Dr. Larry Brewster of the University of San Francisco School of Public Administration. The art classes were held in Santa Cruz Main Jail, San Francisco County Jail - San Bruno Complex, MCJ Twin Towers Correctional Facility in Los Angeles, Fresno County Jail and Sacramento County Jail - Rio Cosumnes Correctional Center.

The residents engaged in the arts reported a number of attitudinal and behavioral changes that can improve their lives. In addition to helping the inmates and their institutions, these benefits can extend to their families, their communities, and the society to which they return. Artists engaged in this work benefit from having socially meaningful work that connects them to larger public policy issues.

A number of key individuals and organizations played vital roles in implementing this project by recruiting and selecting artists, scheduling programs with staff at the venues and facilitating the completion of the surveys. These essential administrative services were provided by Lilia Chavez of the Fresno Arts Council, Laurie Brooks of the William James Association (WJA), Amie Dowling of the University of San Francisco (USF) and Community Works West (CWW), Wayne Kramer and Margaret Kramer of Jail Guitar Doors (JGD) and Shelly Willis and Erika Kraft of the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission (SMAC).

The Fresno Arts Council recruited an experienced teacher, Steve Ono, to teach a beginning guitar course in the Fresno County Jail, coordinating with jail staff to secure instruments and to schedule the 18-week program. The William James Association brought teaching artist T.S. Anand into the Santa Cruz Main Jail to teach an 18-week, mixed-media collage program. The JGD teaching artist, Jason Heath, taught a 12-week, music and songwriting course in Los Angeles' largest jail, Twin Towers Correctional Facility. In coordination with the USF and CWW, Amie Dowling taught a 12-week theater and movement program twice a week in the San Francisco County Jail - San Bruno Complex that included USF students collaborating with the residents to create an original performance piece. While the "outside" students received college credit from USF, the "inside" students who enrolled in the Five Keys Charter School could receive credit towards their high school diplomas. The scripted, choreographed performances were documented in a series of short videos by the Bay Area Video Coalition. Finally, after facilitating a required agreement with the County Board of Supervisors, SMAC collaborated with co-teachers Kim Scott and Andy Cunningham, who taught a 12-week drawing course at the Sacramento County Jail.

As principal researcher, Dr. Larry Brewster analyzed the results of the survey instruments. A Professor and Director of Public Administration at USF, Dr. Brewster has been evaluating arts programming in correctional institutions for decades. His seminal analysis of the efficacy of arts-in-corrections programs in 1983 showed the cost savings of reduced disciplinary incidents. His research assistant, Anisa Siddiqui, assisted with data entry and generation of the graphs and charts. The cover art was provided by a participant of T.S. Anand's mixed-media collage program at the Santa Cruz Main Jail.

Weston Dombrowski, CLA Program Development Coordinator, coordinated the project and produced this report.

Participant Feedback and Demographics

Beginning in the fall of 2015, participants in the art programs at the five county jails in Fresno, Los Angeles, Santa Cruz, San Francisco and Sacramento Counties completed surveys that provided feedback about their experiences so that we could evaluate the overall outcomes and effectiveness of their engagement with art.

Out of the total of 64 men who participated in these programs, nearly a quarter (24%) of the participants were 31-35 years of age, with 18% between 18 and 25 and 18% between 26 and 30 years of age (Table 13).

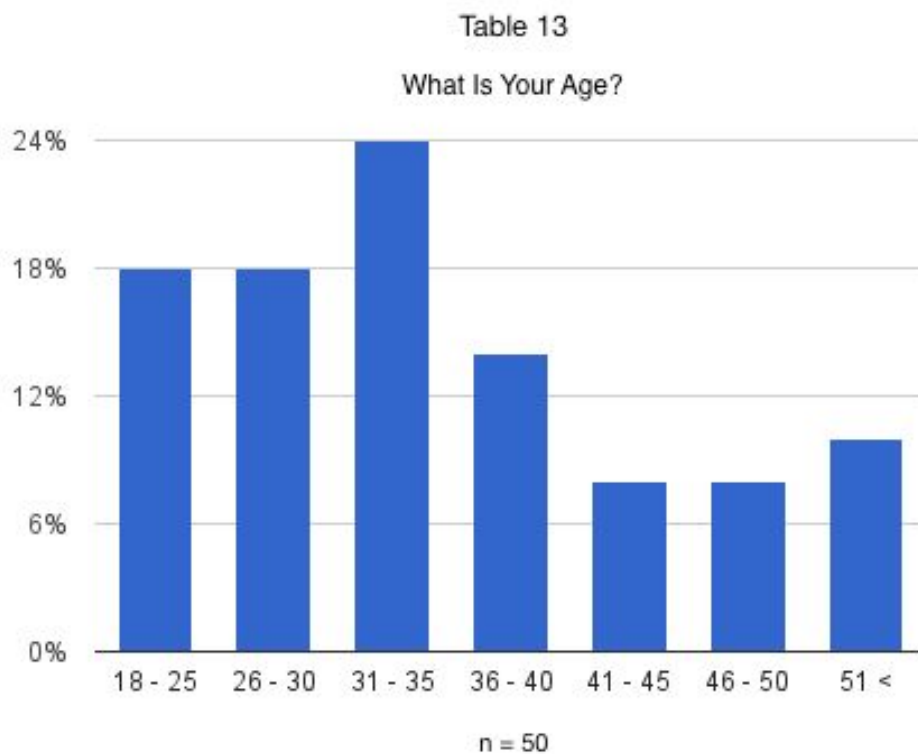


Table 14 shows that 27% of the participants had some or no high school, while 12% were college graduates, and another 32% had some college. Table 15 shows nearly a third (31%) of all participants

identified as Hispanic/Latin American, 22% were Caucasian, 21% were African American and 14% self-identified as “mixed race.” More than a third of the participants (40%) had been incarcerated six months to a year, with 29% having served between one and five years and another 27% less than six months (Table 16).

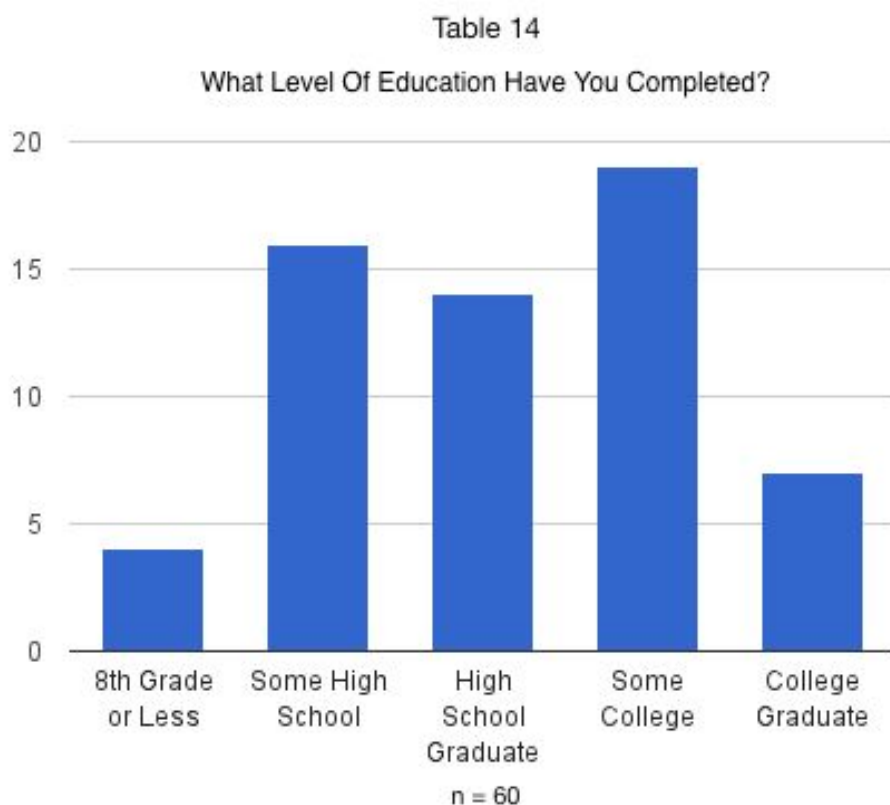


Table 15
What Ethnicity Are You?

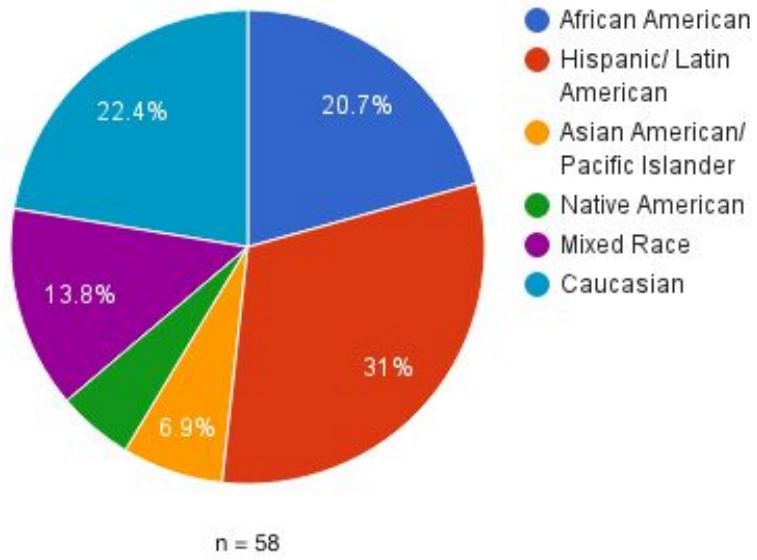
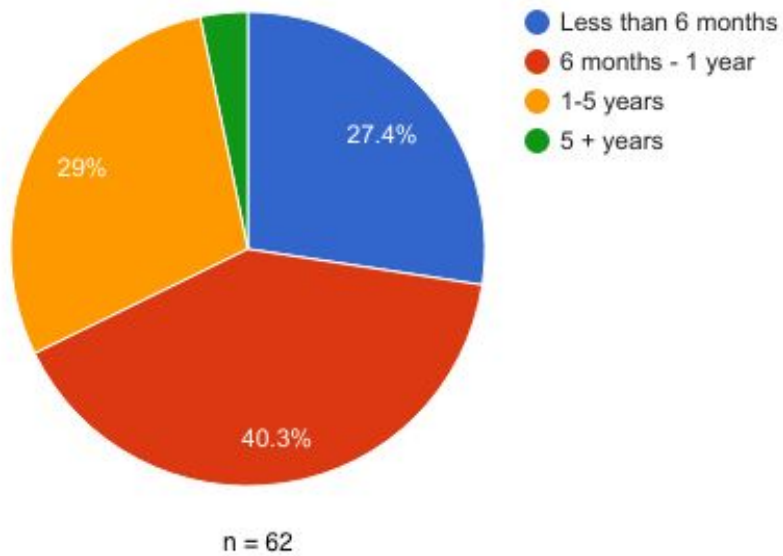


Table 16
How Long Have You Been Incarcerated?



Every participant agreed that their art instructors treated them with respect (92% strongly agreed, 8% agreed.) (Table 3). Every participant also strongly agreed (84%) or agreed (16%) that they looked forward to their art classes more than any other activity offered to them in jail (Table 2). Significantly, 98% felt better about themselves as a result of the program (Table 1), while 90% of the participants said that the program provided a safe environment to explore their creativity (Table 4). Just over two-thirds (68%) strongly agreed the art program enabled them to communicate better with others (Table 5).

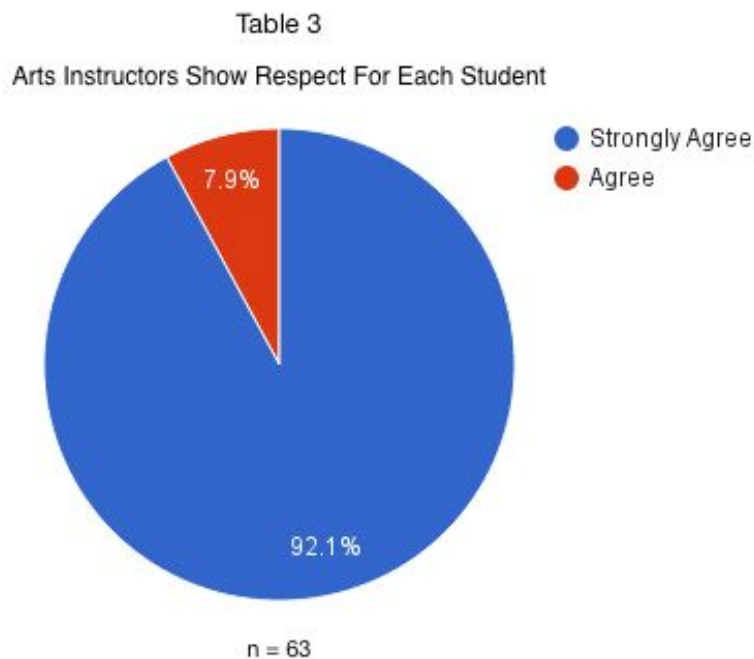


Table 2

I Look Forward To Art Classes More Than Any Other Activity

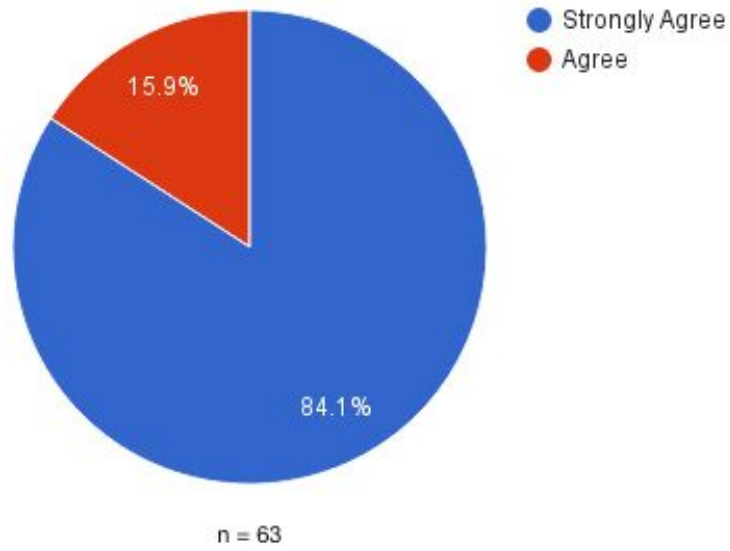


Table 1

I Feel Better About Myself

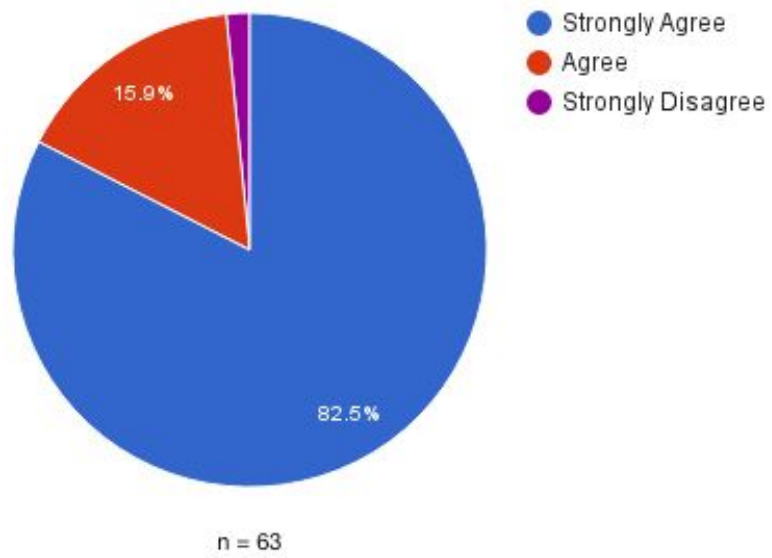


Table 4

The Arts Program Provides A Safe Environment For Me To Explore My Creativity

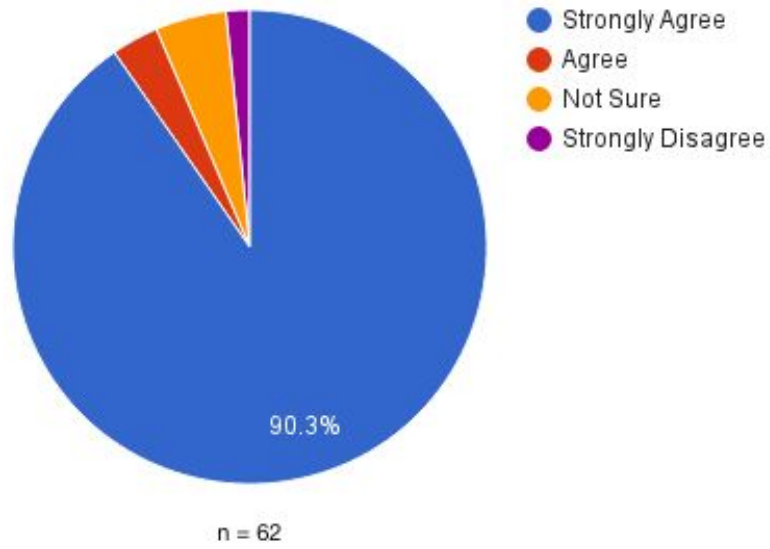
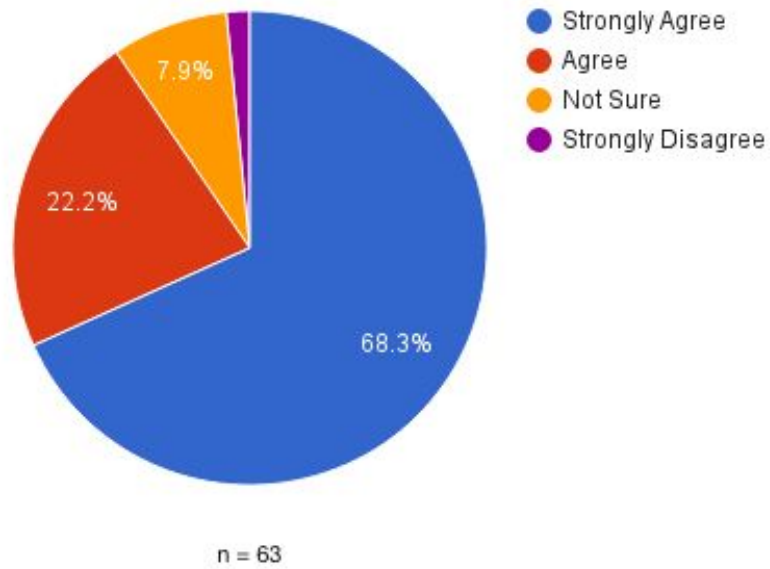


Table 5

I Am Better Able To Communicate With Others



Ninety-five percent reported that they felt less stress and frustration while working on their art (Table 6). Nearly as many participants (92%) reported they were better able to express their emotions (Table 7), and equally important, 92% reported less racial tension in their classroom than elsewhere in the jail (Table 10). A large number of participants (84%) found that the men “interacted differently” inside the art program than elsewhere in the facility (Table 9).

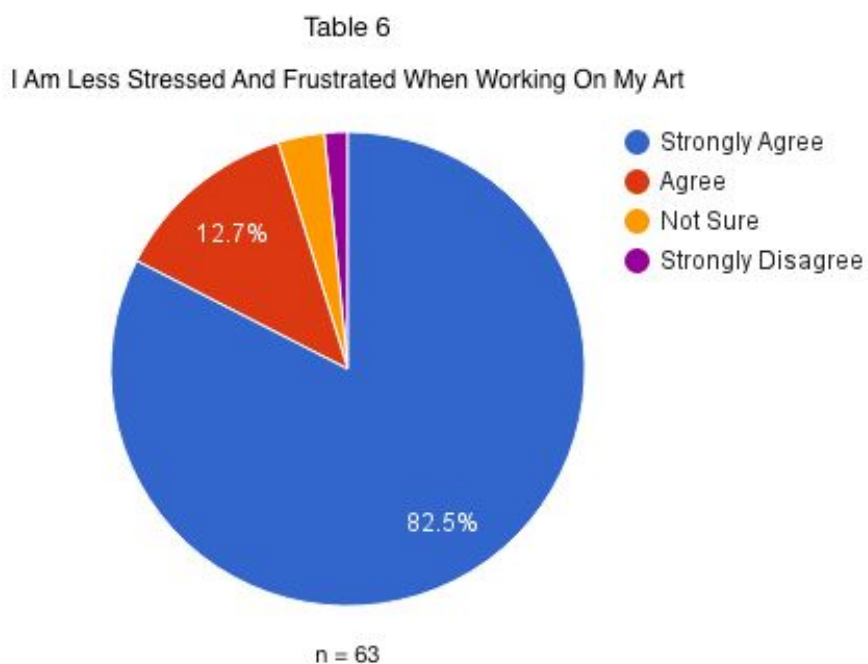


Table 7

I Am Better Able To Express My Emotions

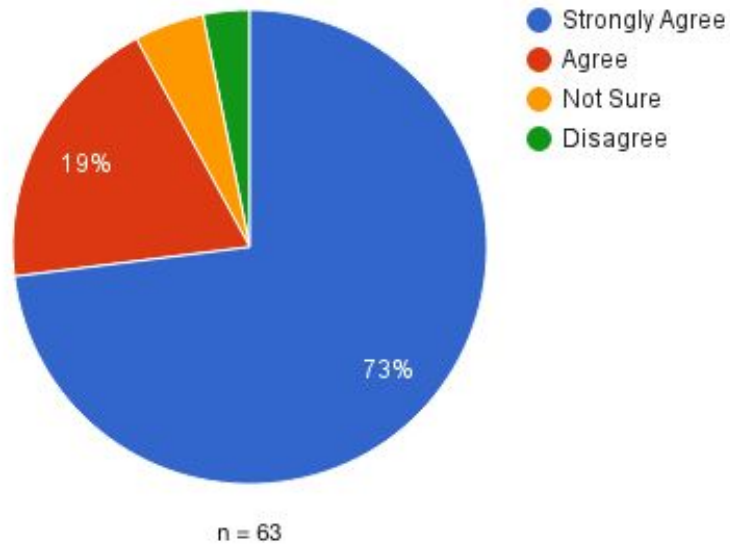


Table 10

There Is Less Racial Tension In The Arts Program Than Elsewhere

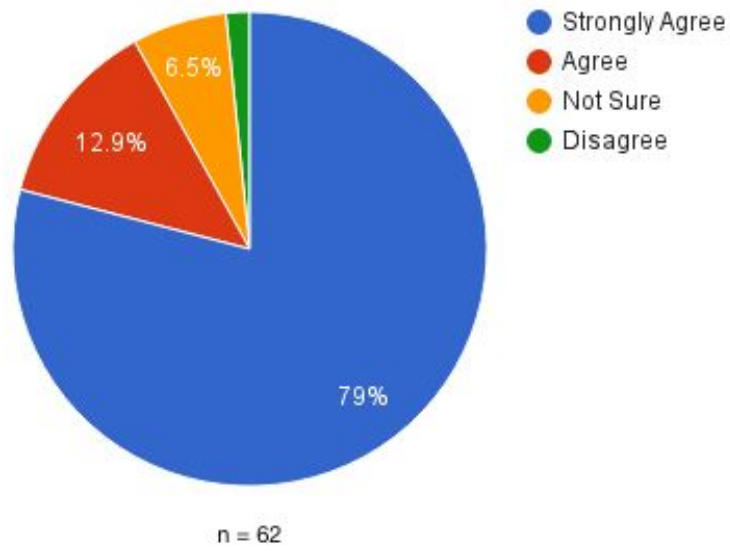
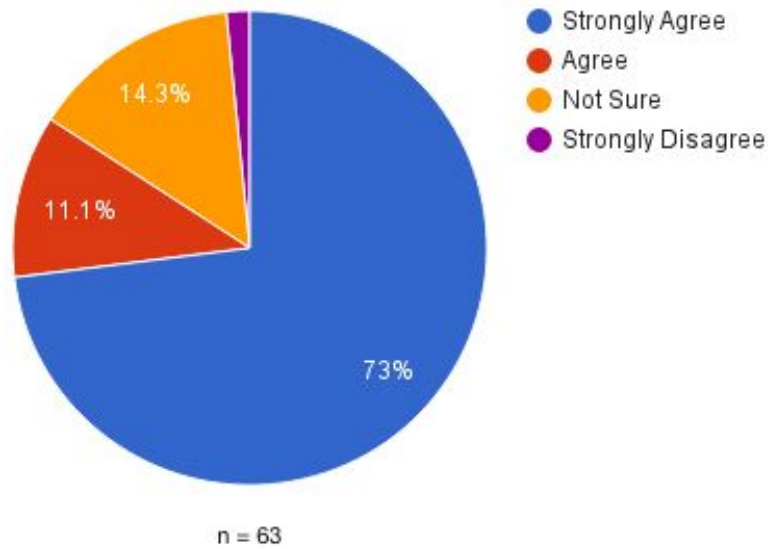


Table 9

Men Interact Differently Inside The Arts Program Than Elsewhere



The responses to the surveys also demonstrate that these programs help to change inmate behavior and attitudes toward one another and jail staff, with 92% reporting that they enjoyed better relationships with other inmates since their involvement in the art program (Table 11) and 81% reporting that they enjoyed a better relationship with jail staff (Table 12). Finally, 92% reported that they tried “things in the art program that I never expected” (Table 8). In other words, the program enabled most of the men to explore their artistic and creative potential, which can in turn, promote intellectual flexibility and enhanced problem-solving skills as well as greater confidence and self-esteem.

Table 11

I Enjoy Better Relationships With Other Inmates Since My Involvement In The Arts Program

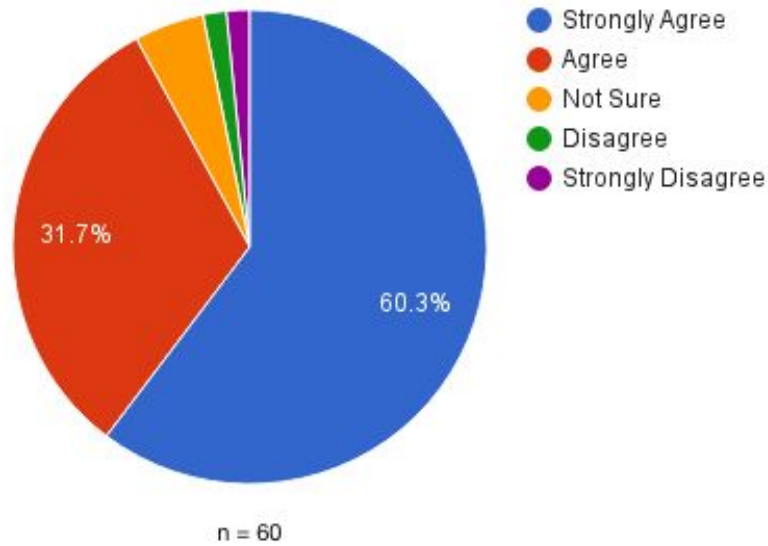


Table 12

I enjoy better relationships with jail staff since my involvement in the arts program

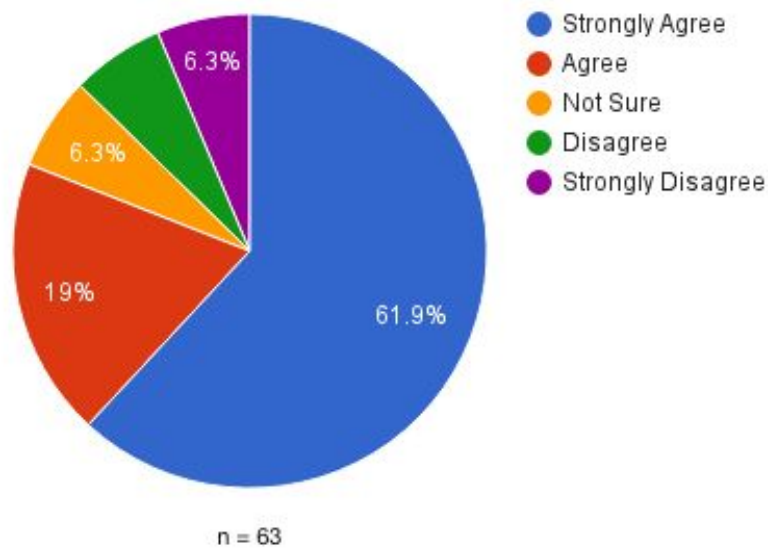
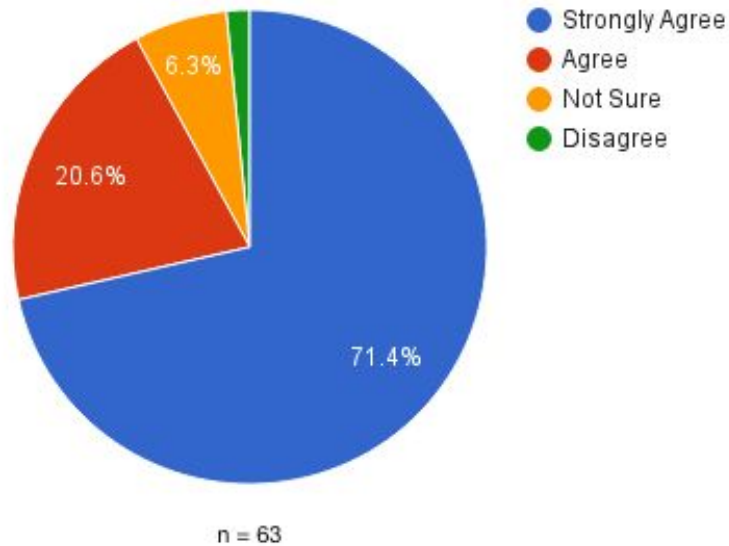


Table 8

I Have Tried Things In The Arts Program That I Never Expected



Conclusions

The overwhelming majority of the participants showed through their responses that the art programs they engaged in could be potentially life changing as they learned to feel better about themselves and others. They felt respected by their teachers, and they were able to express their emotions and communicate better with others. In the art classes, they experienced a safer, less racially charged environment. Their engagement with making art reduced the tension and frustration often associated with their life experiences, including incarceration.

Asked, "How do you feel when you are in the art space?" one participant responded, "I am free to be myself and not intimidated." When asked, "What changes have you made in your life as a result of the arts program?" another respondent wrote that he was "more positive and confident,"

Andy Cunningham, one of the teaching artists at the Sacramento County Jail shared these notes about his experience:

“All in all there was a certain sort of calm in the room that was both a space for artistic investigation and internal solace. Many of the students came into the class not knowing each other, hackles up and quiet, but left the class, having crossed barriers of culture and society. It was amazing to see what an art class with limited facilities and supplies can generate in both a physical form like drawing and the non physical form such as communication and bonds across the prison yard with inmates and deputies.”

Art programs like these invite participants to explore and express their creativity, while enjoying feelings of social inclusion, rather exclusion. These programs, like so many other arts programs inside prison walls, take offenders down a path that leads to a new, and positive sense of greater humanity.

Appendix A provides a comprehensive list of all of the teaching artists, collaborating organizations and venues involved in this project. Appendix B is a copy of the evaluation surveys that were completed by the students. Appendix C, “In Their Own Words,” is a compilation of subjective comments that were written in response to open ended questions on the survey.

For more information, please contact:

Alma Robinson,
Executive Director
California Lawyers for the Arts
alma.robinson@calawyersforthearts.org
(415) 775-7200 x 112

or

Clara Kamunde,
Program Development Coordinator
California Lawyers for the Arts
clara.kamunde@calawyersforthearts.org
(415) 775-7200 x 101

Appendix A

Organizations / Venues

William James Association
Santa Cruz Main Jail
259 Water Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Teaching Artist:	T. S. Anand
Type of Arts Program:	Visual Arts - Mixed-media Collage
Start Date:	12/16/15
Total # of Classes:	18
Total # of Weeks:	18
Classes per week:	1
End Date:	3/30/16
Total # of Participants:	9

Fresno Arts Council
Fresno County Jail
1225 M St.
Fresno, CA 93721

Teaching Artist:	Steve Ono
Type of Arts Program:	Beginning Guitar
Start Date:	3/29/16
Total # of classes:	18
Total # of weeks:	18
Classes per week:	1
End Date:	7/26/16
Total # of Participants:	7

Community Works West
SF County Jail #5 - San Bruno Complex
1 Moreland Dr.
San Bruno, CA 94066

Teaching Artist:	Amie Dowling
Type of Arts Program:	Theater/Movement
Start Date:	9/11/15
Total # of classes:	24
Total # of Weeks:	12
Classes per week:	2
End Date:	12/4/15
Total # of Participants:	12

Jail Guitar Doors
MCJ/Twin Towers Correctional Facility
450 Bauchet St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Teaching Artist:	Jason Heath
Type of Arts Program:	Music/Songwriting
Start Date:	3/30/16
Total # of classes:	12
Total # of Weeks:	12
Classes per week:	1
End Date:	6/1/16
Total # of Participants:	31

Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission
Sacramento County Jail - Rio Cosumnes Correctional Center
12500 Bruceville Road
Elk Grove, CA 95757

Teaching Artists:	Andy Cunningham and Kim Scott
Type of Arts Program:	Drawing
Start Date:	9/6/16
Total # of classes:	12
Total # of Weeks:	12
Classes per week:	1
End Date:	11/29/16
Total # of Participants:	5

Appendix B

Arts in Corrections – Participant Survey

Thank you for participating in this program evaluation. Your feedback is very important to us. Your answers are confidential and will help us to improve the program. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Thank you.

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about the Arts Program and its impact on your life.

1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree

(Please circle the appropriate number)

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I feel better about myself..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I look forward to art classes more than any other activity..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Arts instructors show respect for each student..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The arts program provides a safe environment for me to explore
my creativity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I am better able to communicate with others..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I am less stressed and frustrated when working on my art..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I am better able to express my emotions..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I have tried things in the arts program that I never expected..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Men interact differently inside the arts program than elsewhere
in the facility..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. There is less racial tension in the arts program than elsewhere
in the facility..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I enjoy better relationships with other inmates since my
involvement in the arts program..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I enjoy better relationships with jail staff since my
involvement in the arts program..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. What is your age? _____ | | | | | |

14. What level of education have you completed?

- a. 8th Grade or less
- b. Some High School
- c. High School graduate
- d. Some College
- e. College Graduate

15. How long have you been incarcerated?

- a. less than 6 months
- b. 6 months - 1 year
- c. 1-5 years
- d. 5+ years

16. You are: (you may circle more than one)

- a. African American
- b. Hispanic/Latin American
- c. Asian American/Pacific Islander
- d. Caucasian
- e. Native American
- f. Middle Eastern American

17. How many disciplinary actions did you receive during the six months before you enrolled in the arts program? _____

18. How many disciplinary actions have you received since enrolling in the arts program? _____

19. How would you describe your interactions with others during class. In what ways are they similar or different to other interactions in the facility?

20. Who or what influenced your decision to participate in the arts program?

21. How do you feel when you are in the art space (e.g., class, art studio)? How is it similar or different from other physical spaces in the facility?

22. What change(s) have you made in your life as a result of the arts program?

23. What, if anything, would you change about the arts program?

Thank you!

Appendix C

In Their Own Words

The following comments were written by arts program participants in response to several open-ended questions on the survey that was administered during the first phase of the county jail demonstration project from November, 2015 to November, 2016.

How do you feel when you are in the art space? How is it different or similar to other physical spaces in the facility?

*There is a sense of peace in art class.
Free to be myself and not intimidated
Happy, relaxed, no tension or judgment
Good respected and cared for
Free free and more creative to express ideas*

How would you describe your interactions with others during class. In what ways are they similar or different to other interactions in the facility?

*We are not very social, but we have connected through this class.
I gave positive input and helped others with their art and encourage them.
I interact with inmates I would not normally talk to.
Collaboration, compromise, healthy communication
Special unity that isn't found anywhere else in the jail
Everyone is more open because art is a universal language that everyone shares.
Get to know them on a more personal level*

What changes have you made in your life as a result of the arts program?

*Patience and to look at things differently
Treating people with respect
Interested in making art again
Try new things
Realistic goals
Learned people skills and interaction
Believing in myself
More kind and God fearing
More positive and confident
More prone to teamwork and write actively
Learning more advanced practices
Write music in my free time
I want to go to school
How to handle stress
I try to find more peace amongst those who have the same passion.*

What, if anything, would you change about the arts program?

Snacks/Food (2 respondents)

More classes/hours (16)

Nothing or n/a (24)

Practice time between the week with the guitar and drums

More instruments (3)

Not sure (4)

More artist ideas, maybe a group project

More activities, this is a change to learn new talents and give us motivation for a better life

Nothing at all, just let us keep the guitars

More funding