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Columbus Museum of Art Project Pivot Retrospective Evaluation Study 2013-2014

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INTRODUCTION

Project Pivot is a four-year, experimental partnership between the Columbus Museum of Art (CMA) and the Central Ohio high school, Arts and College Preparatory Academy (ACPA). Working at the intersection of formal and informal learning environments, the program brings together high school teachers and CMA teaching artists to develop a collaborative, emergent curriculum for high school students. Students, teachers, and teaching artists work together to develop ideas, conduct research, and translate their creative thinking to experiential, interactive, and socially-driven performance art. During their four years at ACPA, approximately 60 high school students from the graduating class of 2014 participated in *Project Pivot*; many of these students participated for more than one year.

The Pivot Model

Project Pivot was conceptualized as an experimental model for art museum-school partnerships, an alternative to more traditional museum-school models that tend to consist of single or multi-visit, theme-based, docent-led tours. *Pivot* veered from the traditional art museum-school model in several ways:

- *Pivot* was co-created by CMA staff and ACPA teachers, and to some degree by *Pivot* students themselves;
- *Pivot* followed one cohort of incoming freshman for their entire 4 years at ACPA, with students allowed to opt in or out of the program at the start of each year;
- The learning approach gradually shifted from a teacher-led model (during the first year) to a student-driven model (third and fourth years) to accommodate the natural growth in confidence and sense of ownership among *Pivot* students;
- *Pivot* constantly evolved in an effort to align with the students' interests and progression;
- *Pivot* focused on building essential questions and engaging in inquiry rather than following strict, standards-aligned themes;

- After the pilot year, *Pivot* focused on project-based, collaborative activities that ended in culminating projects/events;
- The locus of learning extended beyond the art museum, with students working on *Pivot* at ACPA, the Columbus Metropolitan Library, and, in later years, at local and regional art spaces (including artists' studios, museums, music stores, and so on);
- *Pivot* featured a blend of studio-art and academic research; studio art extended beyond visual art to include music, video, dance, fashion, and design;
- Student outcomes shifted from the more traditional critical-thinking and problem-solving focus to outcomes that more closely align with Positive Youth Development frameworks, emphasizing competence, connection, confidence, character, and caring.

Evaluation Focus

Evaluation reports document the nature of the *Project Pivot* and its impacts during each of its 4 years. Formative evaluation in the early years showed that students valued the open-ended structure of the program, and the choice and control it afforded them over their learning, as well as the social aspects of the program, both interactions with other students as well as adults outside of their school (Butler & Luke, 2011; Mony, Luke & Gillette, 2010). Summative evaluation in the later years revealed mixed results relative to student impacts. Comparisons between *Pivot* and non-*Pivot* students suggested no differences in terms of social skills, confidence, caring, thinking skills, and perceptions of/interest in art (Ancelet, 2013; Youngs & Luke, 2012). Yet, *Pivot* students consistently reported that they felt the project made a difference in these areas, and that it afforded them valuable learning opportunities in a way that their schooling did not.

This report summarizes data from a retrospective study of *Project Pivot*, documenting perceptions and cumulative impacts of the program on participating students, school staff, and museum staff.

METHODS

Whereas previous evaluation studies employed comparative designs – comparing *Pivot* students pre-project and post-project, and comparing *Pivot* students with non-*Pivot* students – this study took a different approach, seeking not to compare but rather to deeply understand *Pivot* students' perceptions of their project experience and the impacts they ascribe to that experience. Data were collected from a cross-section of students, as well as ACPA staff and CMA staff.

To collect data from students, two complementary methods were used: 1) focus groups; and 2) written questionnaires. Six focus groups were conducted, homogenous by the number of years students had spent in *Project Pivot*; three focus groups with students who had participated in *Pivot* for 1 year; and another three focus groups with students who had participated for 2 years, 3 years, and 4 years respectively. Focus groups were facilitated by Jessica Luke and Jeanine Ancelet, and were held onsite at ACPA on May 8th, 2014. Questions were focused on students'

perceptions of *Pivot* and their experiences within the program (see Appendix A). As part of the focus group discussions, and in order to collect individual data from students, written questionnaires were administered, asking a series of rating questions to assess *Pivot*'s potential impacts (see Appendix B).

To collect data from ACPA and CMA staff, one focus group discussion was held with each group respectively, asking about their perceptions of the program overall and its impact on their professional practices (see Appendix C). Focus group discussions were facilitated by Jessica Luke via telephone, using a conference call line; the ACPA staff discussion was conducted on June 16th, 2014, while the CMA staff discussion was conducted on June 18th, 2014.

SAMPLE

A total of 31 students across multiple project years participated in this study: 10 students were in *Project Pivot* for one year only; 11 students were in *Pivot* for 2 years; 6 students were in *Pivot* for 3 years; and 4 students were in *Pivot* for 4 years.

A total of 4 ACPA staff participated in the study, including 3 teachers and 1 administrator. A total of 5 CMA staff participated in the study, 2 of whom were involved in *Pivot* during its first 2 years and have since moved on from the CMA, and 3 of whom have been involved in *Pivot* during its last 2 years and still work at the CMA.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

1) Student Perceptions and Impacts

The following section answers questions related to students' perceptions of *Project Pivot* and, more specifically, how they believe they were impacted by the program.

a) Students' Perceptions of *Pivot*

Students were asked three questions during the focus group conversation to assess their perceptions of the nature of *Project Pivot*. The first question was "How would you describe *Project Pivot* to someone who didn't know anything about it? What is it exactly?" Responses suggested three key themes that were pervasive across all six focus groups:

- *Pivot* is about exploring the "weird" and/or creative: "*Pivot* is *Pivot*. If you can't be awkward, then you can't be there. We force our weirdness onto people. We all come from ACPA, we're all strange in our ways."
- *Pivot* is about being a part of the community: "I would describe it as an opportunity for young artists to come together and come up with problem-solving, artistic/creative ways to create art for people outside the community and into broader spectrums so

they can see art portrayed in a different way. Artists come together and learn about togetherness and leadership, and in return we get to give that back to people with the projects we have at the end of the experience.”

- *Pivot* is social: “[*Pivot*] is like a big social family thing. Everyone’s getting all social and stuff. When you first start, you’re all from the same school but you’re with people you don’t normally talk to and you build deep relationships with them, people you wouldn’t normally talk to but have friendships with now.”

Additional descriptions were put forth but to a lesser extent (in three of the six focus groups):

- *Pivot* is ever changing: “It’s hard to describe. It’s living and breathing and adapts to the ideas of the people who are participating in it. It changes constantly. The experiences are different but the outcome is the same.”
- *Pivot* emphasizes planning, organization, and leadership skills: “I really like the leadership aspect of it. I learned a lot of leadership qualities. We did a lot of social things when we had to be a leader and come outside of our box.”
- *Pivot* leverages artistic talent and skills: “It was a way to harness your artistic talents and interact with the community and use them in a new light. Play with art, play with the definition of art.”

Secondly, students were asked what the absolute best part of *Pivot* was for them, and why. Two central themes were raised in all five groups that responded to this question (one group was not asked this question due to time constraints):

- Field trips/excursions: “The out-of-state trips – Indiana, Detroit. They are really cool experiences. In Detroit, we went to a museum and checked out the crazy art, and went around the city, and heard from local artists about things that happened there.”
- Projects/shows: “My second year when we did the “Out on a Limb” event. There’s not really a way to describe it. I remember planning it and being nervous. ‘It might not work out!’ There were so many bizarre ideas, it never seemed like it was going to work. But we all tried, we felt uneasy, but the day of the event it came together. It turned out to be something I didn’t expect. People came from all over the community. We didn’t share it just with ourselves. What mattered was sharing those bizarre experiences with others.”

Three of the five groups mentioned relationships as their favorite part of *Pivot*: “The relationships that you build with people. You wouldn’t be able to see them [otherwise]. Being in the project with them and being able to do something so big. Your relationships change because of the amount of time that you spend with people.” One group referred to visiting artists: “...the visiting artists that we brought through the weeks, to hear the experiences of other artists who’ve made it their job, their living. It was interesting to hear their stories, see

what they do, how they do it, the problems they've solved, and the things they're still working out. If we ever wanted to make art the thing for the rest of our lives, we've heard problems and solutions to help us."

Finally, students were asked "If you had to isolate just one key aspect or philosophy of *Project Pivot* that sets it apart from your regular classes at ACPA, what would that one aspect or philosophy be?" Three key themes emerged across the majority of focus group discussions:

- Freedom, choice, and control: "For me, when you're at school, they do give you the option, if you're doing a project even in academic classes, to do what you want to do. But you still have to stick to a standard or rule. In *Pivot*, there isn't really a rule, you can do what you want. It gives you freedom to think and be creative, then it gives you help in the school environment, it gives you the creativity to find a new way to fit better."
- Trust: "The teachers at school and the teachers at *Pivot* (are different). Teachers still have power over you; they have authority. It's still very....but Chris, Cat and Maddie, they were more like friends and family than teachers. They still taught us everything. We connected with them every Wednesday for this whole...that just amazes me how we can trust them more than teachers who we spend more time with."
- Being out in the community: "The amount we went out into the community made it different. When you're in the classroom, you're in the class, but schools may not have the funds to take you out in the community. We went to the museum every other Wednesday. It was a way more hands-on experience...for a lot of people, it was their only outlet for those sorts of things."

One group had trouble answering this question, commenting, "It's hard to take those apart. It's [*Pivot's*] not separated from the school."

Findings from these three questions assessing students' perceptions of *Pivot* confirm findings from earlier evaluation studies. Asking similar questions, Ancelet (2013) found that what students most value about *Pivot* is the autonomy, creativity, and trust it engenders, as well as the opportunity to get out into their community. In addition, in the 2013 study, students felt *Pivot* afforded them opportunities for enhanced self-confidence, as well as enhanced understandings of art and of themselves as artists.

b) *Pivot's* Impacts on Students

Students were asked to reflect on the impacts of *Project Pivot* in two different ways. First, they were asked an open-ended question: "Do you think participating in *Project Pivot* has shaped who you are as a person? If yes, how? If not, why not?" All six focus groups responded positively to this question, with initial reactions such as "Oh my god, yes!" and "Honestly, this is going to sound pageanty, but *Pivot* changed my life a lot, more than I thought it would." Responses clustered around four key themes:

- Social benefits – All six groups referred to enhanced social skills, leadership skills, and/or relationships that resulted from *Pivot*; comments included: “Chiefly, [Pivot shaped] the way I would work with others in a group setting. It was pretty dramatic. It was two years ago, and we had a large school project. Before that, I didn’t have a positive experience working with students towards a large goal. It was usually a negative experience. But in *Pivot*, you came up with an original idea and followed up. It helped shape what I plan out and when to let others take the lead;” and “Going to *Pivot*, none of my friends were in that, so I didn’t have that comfort zone to go back to. I learned to interact with people, to have fun with other people. It’s kind of sad because when I stopped being in *Pivot*, it kept progressing, and I was doing other things. I really wish I would have been involved in *Pivot* longer. Now, as a senior, I’ve closed off quite a bit, and I don’t like that. I think if I was in *Pivot*, it wouldn’t be as bad as it is. You’re forced to interact with people you wouldn’t usually.”
- Self-awareness – Five of the six groups identified confidence, and a general awareness of their own strengths, as a benefit of *Pivot*: “Confidence and the idea that I can learn to do that myself and possibly teach others. Like with the logistics (of project management). I had an idea about the money and how to organize, but I didn’t know what to do. In *Pivot*, I gained confidence. I made that order and shipped it off to people and that is because I asked questions and got the confidence to say ‘I don’t know what I’m doing, but I can ask and find out;’” and “It also helped me to learn about myself. I would go up to Cat, Chris, and Jen, and say ‘I have this idea. What do you think?’ They would say, ‘Well, what do *you* think?’ Every year I became more confident about my own ideas. This year, I barely asked about anything. All I needed was materials, and they gave me the confidence in previous years to do this.”
- Perceptions of art – Students in four of the six focus groups talked about ways in which *Pivot* broadened their understandings of/ideas about art: “[Pivot] made me want to explore more of my artistic side. Before, I wasn’t interested in art and so this made me want to explore different art and artists;” “[Pivot] broadened my perspective of art. Especially if an artist paints something related to a social issue. I pay more attention to the details now;” and “I know that *Pivot* the last two years helped me become more open to new ideas and new things. When it comes to art, I kind of shy away from when people say it’s ‘art.’ Usually it’s visual art and artists. When we got visiting artists that did other things, that mentors considered art, it was liberating and exciting that things could be considered art...”
- Volunteering/community engagement – Students in three of the six focus groups felt that *Pivot* inspired them to help people in their community: “I got to know my classmates, see that we could be a part of something so great and do it for the community. That made me feel amazing. Without *Pivot*, I would probably still be in my room watching Netflix all the time instead of helping people.”

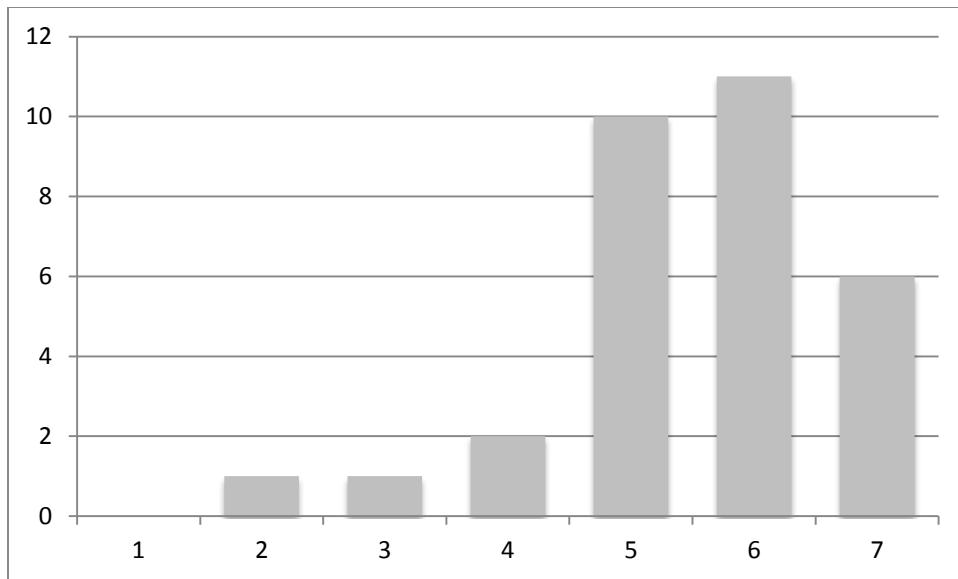
Second, students were presented with a series of statements articulating possible impacts that *Pivot* might have had on them, and were asked to rate each statement on a scale from 1-7, where 1 was not at all and 7 was completely. These statements were developed based on a) earlier summative evaluation results which pointed to these areas as ones where significant differences between *Pivot* and non-*Pivot* students might exist; and b) literature on positive youth development, in particular the Six C's framework (Lerner et al., 2005) which puts forth six theoretical constructs that describe the ways in which programs such as *Pivot* can make a difference for youth (competence, confidence, connection, caring and compassion, character, and contribution).

Interestingly, the themes that emerged from the open-ended question to students about how *Pivot* impacted them are closely aligned with the seven dimensions that students were then asked to rate. This confirms the validity of the outcome-based statements, and triangulates results from two different lines of inquiry. What follows is data from each of the seven rating statements, both the distribution of students' ratings as well as their explanations for they rated themselves the way they did. Ratings were consistent across focus groups, suggesting that students' perceptions of *Pivot*'s impacts were not influenced by the number of years they spent in the program.

i) The way you think about and/or approach collaboration/group work

This statement was intended to assess *Pivot*'s impact on students' social skills, and the connections they forged with peers. Figure 1 shows the distribution of students' ratings for this statement. Twenty-seven of 31 students (87%) rated it 5 or higher on a 7-point scale, suggesting that the majority of students felt that *Pivot* influenced their approach to collaboration and group work.

Figure 1: Students' ratings of *Pivot*'s impact on "the way you think about or approach collaboration and group work;" 1=not at all and 7=completely (N=31)



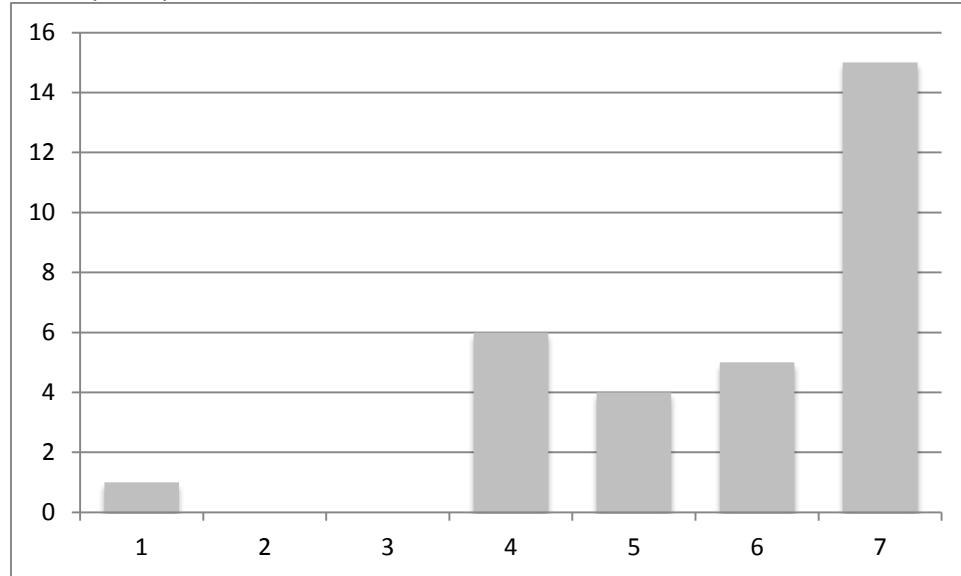
Analysis of students' open-ended comments indicated that the program's group structure afforded them opportunities to work with students they would not have otherwise, and expected them to collaborate and negotiate such that they learned how to work in groups productively:

- “...people scare me most of the time. I’m not a social person. I don’t like talking out loud and having to participate in groups. I like being quiet, by myself. *Pivot* pushed me to change, and stop being like that. I’m still an introvert, but I’m more outspoken about my ideas. In group work, like *Out on a Limb*, we were all in different groups with different responsibilities, we met and then we had to tell Jen and Chris about our ideas. You worked in small groups, you had to collaborate in bigger groups. This year was definitely a challenge. It pushed my group work and collaboration skills.”
- “Most of *Pivot* is group work. I hated working in groups before. I thought it was better to work by myself, just me doing stuff. Now, I’m more excited to work in groups. You can share your ideas, get a better product out of working with more people. That wouldn’t have happened with group work in ACPA. You’re all working on an assignment you have in class, and the general feeling is that it’s boring. Everyone is like, ‘Just get this done.’ No one is into it. But in *Pivot*, you’re excited because it’s stuff you really want to do.”

ii) Your feelings about art and/or artists

This statement was designed to measure *Pivot*'s impact on students' perceptions of art. Figure 2 shows the distribution of their ratings from 1-7. Most important to note is that 24 of 31 students (77%) rated this statement 5 or higher, suggesting that three quarters of participants felt that *Pivot* did in fact influence their feelings about art and/or artists.

Figure 2: Students' ratings of *Pivot*'s impact on "your feelings about art and/or artists;" 1=not at all and 7=completely (N=31)



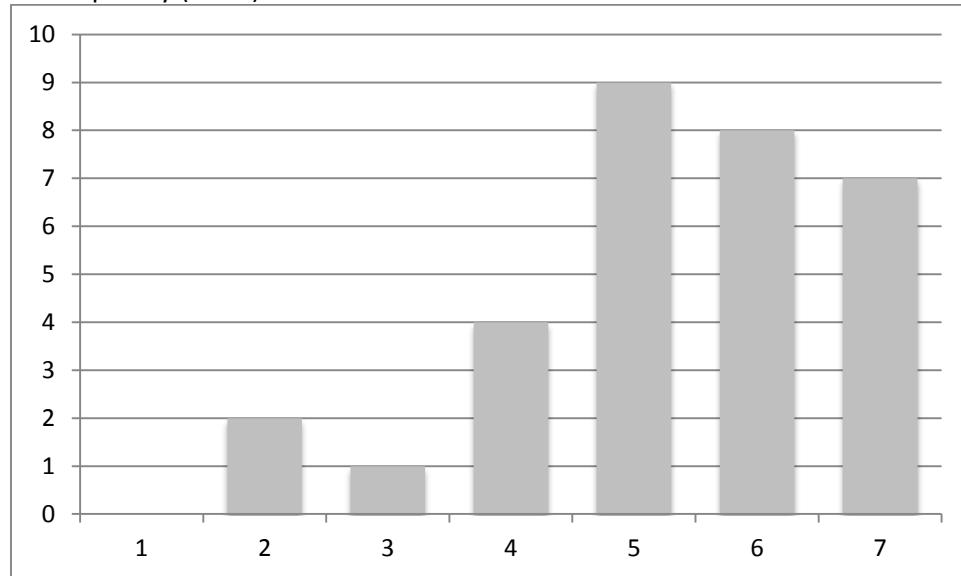
Analysis of students' open-ended comments indicated that for many, *Pivot* broadened their perspective(s) of art, exposing them to a wider range of artistic media and helping them to better understand the artistic process:

- "With the visiting artists, it would change the way I saw and felt about their art when they told us how they came about that idea, the labor, the process of making it come to life. Even if I didn't like it, I could appreciate it. Before [*Pivot*], I would have said that doesn't make any sense. It gave me a chance to open up more."
- "[*Pivot*] changed my idea of what art is and isn't. Before, it had to be a museum setting. Boring, but being in *Pivot* changed my idea of art in general and what it could be. You normally don't think that actions are artistic, but what we did fit in the art category."
- "When I think artist, it's a visual person, painting, that's what comes to mind stereotypically. But since doing *Pivot*, I've learned there's theater, film, choir, percussion, and those are all art forms. And installation artists who build their thing and put it in their place. Art isn't just a canvas with paint on the wall. It can be anything. I can solder all these chairs together, and I made an art piece. *Pivot* goes further, there's art in a lot of different aspects of everything you do, more to art than just the traditional notion of art. That's what *Pivot* teaches you."

iii) Your perception of yourself as an artist

This statement was also designed to tap students' perceptions of art, but more as it relates to their own interests and/or identity. Figure 3 shows the distribution of students' ratings for this statement. Twenty-four of 31 students (77%) rated it 5 or higher on a 7-point scale, suggesting that students feel *Pivot* strongly impacted their perception of themselves as an artist. This is an interesting finding, given that these students already attend an arts-based charter school.

Figure 3: Students' ratings of *Pivot*'s impact on "your perception of yourself as an artist;" 1=not at all and 7=completely (N=31)



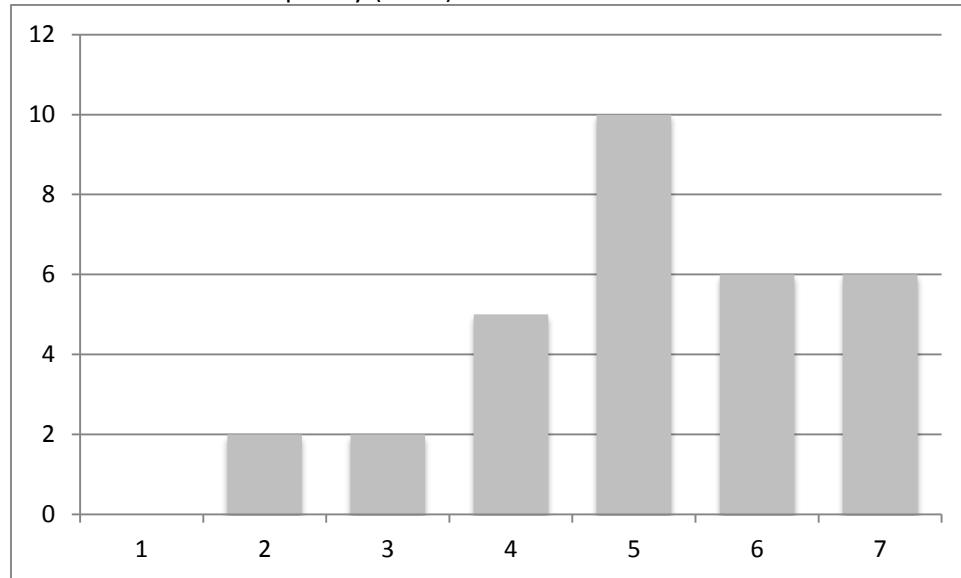
Analysis of students' comments when asked to explain their ratings show that *Pivot* afforded them opportunities to better understand their own art interests and strengths, and exposed them to more types of art than they saw at ACPA:

- "I've always viewed myself as an actor/actress, but now I know I'm really good at 3-D art. I picked up my act of selling. I'm not that bad at drawing. I'm good at painting. I experimented with these things in *Pivot*."
- "I feel like more of an artist now, not just because I draw, but because we did interactive art, we did different types of art. I stuck to the visual before, but now I know there's dancing, music, these beautiful types of art. Without *Pivot*, I have to find a way to keep art in my life."
- "I figured out what art I really like. I like art that interacts with people, anything that goes out into the public. That's the art I want to do. It's really cool, and *Pivot* influenced me to get into that and search more things about it."

iv) *Your perception of your role within the community*

This statement was intended to measure the impacts of *Pivot* on students' civic contributions and/or volunteering within their community. Figure 4 shows the distribution of students' ratings, indicating that 24 of 31 students (77%) rated this statement 5 or higher on a 7-point scale.

Figure 4: Students' ratings of *Pivot*'s impact on "your perception of your role within the community"
1=not at all and 7=completely (N=31)



Analysis of students' open-ended comments suggested that for many of them, *Pivot* shifted their mindset about volunteering, helping them to see that they could in fact make a difference within their community:

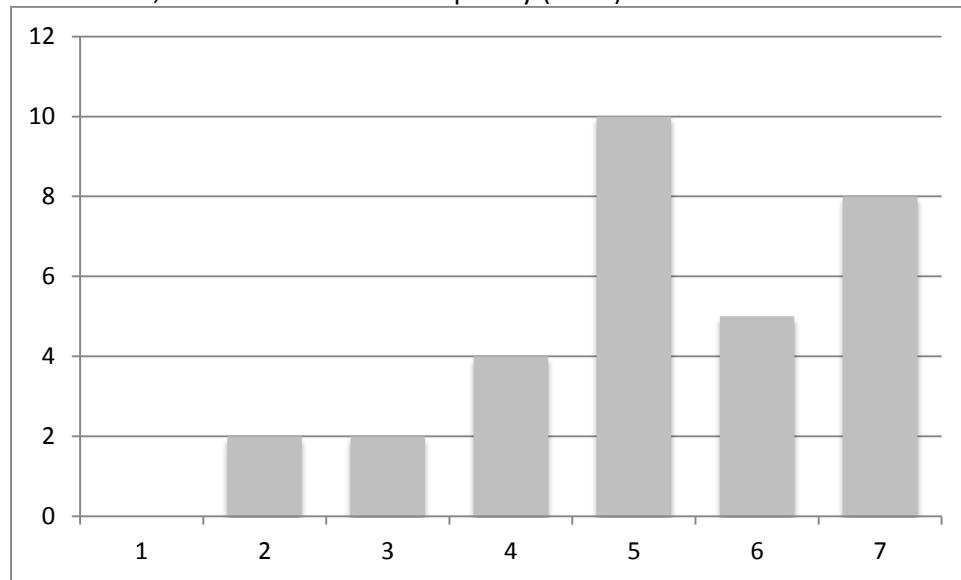
- "Being in *Pivot* gave us the opportunity to work with community and I figured out that I'm great at that and I got a job now doing that. I work at the Far East Pride Center and I work with the community to set up events for people."
- "I didn't think I would ever have an influence on the community. For *Out on a Limb*, I was in logistics, but they told me at the end that I'd thank them. I had to help plan and advertise the entire event, so if it failed, no one would show up. I was so scared. When I got there, it filled up for the whole 2 hours. And Jen came up to me and said, 'See?' I didn't expect for me to have such an impact on getting people to come. To this day, out of everything I've done, people tell me about *Out on a Limb*. At that point, I started to believe in myself, that I have the power to get people to join in. You get to be open with people, and get them excited. It was really liberating."
- "I think it [*Pivot*] made me more...I could be involved with the community. I always viewed volunteers as a godly population. 'I don't know how you do it. They're awesome.' It opened up the volunteer world to me. It made me realize that everyone

can be a volunteer, you don't have to be in a special society to volunteer. It made it more accessible."

v) *Your awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses*

This statement assessed the impact of *Pivot* on students' self-awareness, and in particular their self-confidence and self-efficacy. Figure 5 shows the distribution of students' ratings for this statement. Specifically, 23 of 31 students (74%) rated it 5 or higher, suggesting again that the large majority felt that *Pivot* positively impacted them in this regard.

Figure 5: Students' ratings of *Pivot*'s impact on "your awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses;" 1=not at all and 7=completely (N=31)



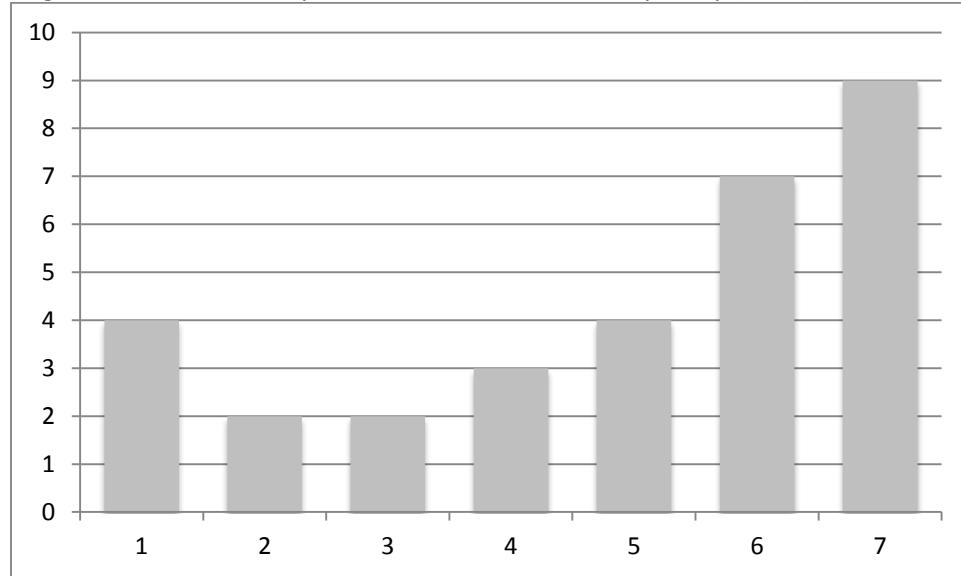
Analysis of students' explanations of their ratings revealed that for many, the choice and control over their own learning afforded them opportunities to try new things and learn about themselves in the process:

- "In *Pivot*, you pretty much try everything. You can do whatever you want, you can be whoever you want. You can pick who you want to be that week. We always try a new thing, so you find out what you're good at and what you're not good at."
- "For me and my [*Pivot*] group, I tried a lot of things I wasn't really good at. I tried making props, I tried sewing, I just hurt myself a lot. I found out I'm really got a hot gluing things. I found out I'm good at creative writing. It was awesome, it was self-discovery for me."

vi) Your tolerance of or empathy towards other people who might be different from you

This statement was designed to tap the impact of *Pivot* on students' caring and compassion. Figure 6 shows the distribution of students' ratings. Twenty of 31 students (65%) rated this statement 5 or higher on 7-point scale. Although this result is slightly lower than the previous statements it still indicates that two-thirds of students felt *Pivot* positively influenced them in this way.

Figure 6: Students' ratings of *Pivot*'s impact on "your tolerance of or empathy towards other people who might be different from you;" 1=not at all and 7=completely (N=31)



Analysis of open-ended comments suggested that the group structure of *Pivot*, and the fact that students were often put in groups with others they did not know and likely would not have socialized with, may have contributed to enhanced tolerance and empathy; in addition, students' exposure to artists may also have helped in this regard:

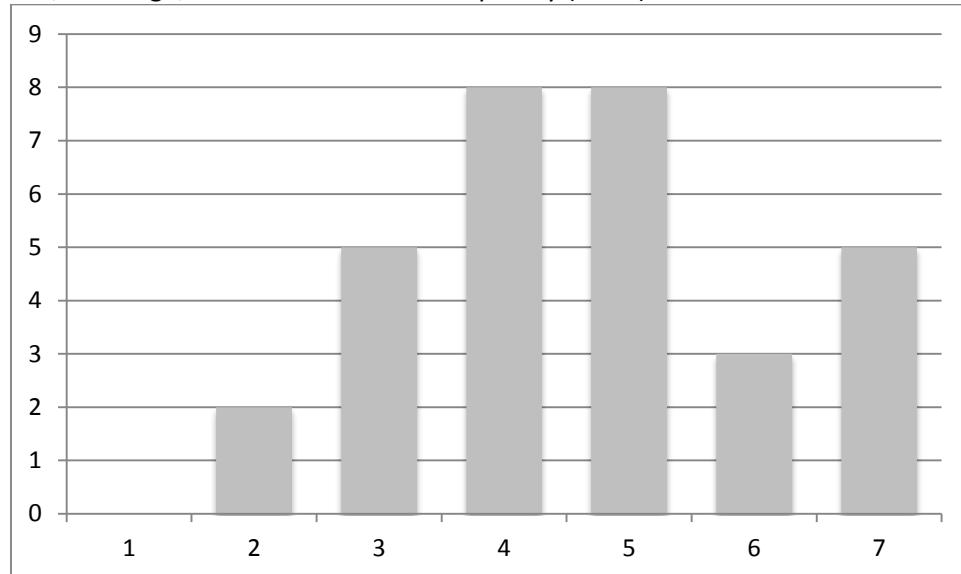
- "My time in *Pivot* came during a massive change in the social landscape of my life. I went from a K-9 school and knew all the same people and then on top of that I'd never met a gay person, there were only 2 black people...I'd never experienced diversity. *Pivot* helped me with that transition in my mindset. Even after making friends in ACPA, *Pivot* put me in a group with people who I never would have been friends with. It made me get to know them for the purposes of the goal. It was interesting in that it introduced me to a new group of people who I am still friends with today, and I'm a lot more comfortable branching out to people who I'm not so familiar with."
- "I really learned that everyone has a really unique personality and even if they're different from you, they're still a person. *Pivot* helped me discover that because at my old school, if you were different, you were shunned. In *Pivot*, you really got to know each other."

- “I’ve never been an intolerant person. I was raised to accept everybody, but I would acknowledge their difference, and I would focus on that. They would be some creature that’s amazing, but *Pivot* made it more normal. And I think that’s better than idealizing people who are different from you. You can interact with them like your mom. It exposes you to so many different people. When artists came in, it made me realize they were people I could interact with. It made it less intimidating to be around people who are really different. Now, people are people. They don’t have to be some exhibit.”

vii) The way you think about and/or approach a new risk/challenge

This statement was designed to measure *Pivot*’s impact on students’ problem-solving abilities, in particular as they relate to new information and/or situations. Figure 7 shows the distribution of students’ scaled responses. Most important to note here is that 16 of 31 students (52%) rated this statement 5 or higher, suggesting that while half of them felt *Pivot* influenced their problem-solving skills, the other half felt *Pivot* was less impactful in this area. The fact that not all students rated this statement highly also reinforces the reliability of the statements overall; in other words, students did not just tell researchers what they thought they wanted to hear.

Figure 7: Students’ ratings of *Pivot*’s impact on “the way you think about and/or approach a new risk/challenge;” 1=not at all and 7=完全 (N=31)



Students’ open-ended comments included the following:

- “I definitely do my research now. Before we actually came up with any ideas, we spent a lot of time doing research, like three weeks, researching whatever we wanted to do. Normally, I wouldn’t do research before, but now I like to know the back story. I like to literally have a grasp on it.”

- “When I failed [in *Pivot*], it’s ok, but in school, it’s a letter grade, and you can’t get into college.”

2) Staff Perceptions and Impacts

The following section answers questions related to ACPA teachers’ and CMA staffs’ perceptions of *Project Pivot* and, more specifically, how they believe they were impacted by the program.

a) ACPA Teachers’ and CMA Staff’s Perceptions of *Pivot*

As with student focus groups, teachers and museum staff were asked two questions to assess their perceptions of *Project Pivot*. The first question was “How would you describe *Pivot* to someone who didn’t know anything about it? What is it exactly?” Two themes emerged in focus groups with ACPA teachers and CMA staff:

- Collaboration – Both groups described *Pivot* as a collaborative effort. For ACPA teachers, the collaboration was focused on “whether or not you can teach creativity, and what does a good partnership look like between the two organizations.” For CMA staff, the collaborative emphasis was on “trying to find a true way to work with the school, using the strengths of what the museum can be as a resource for schools and for teens.”
- Creativity – Both groups also described *Pivot* as a project intended to enhance students’ creativity and/or critical thinking skills. One teacher said, “It’s not using traditional instruction methods or traditional instruction environments to create and foster critical thinking, creativity, and how we interact with art in our world.” A CMA staff member said, “...it entails fostering creativity but kind of using creativity or a possibility space to create consciousness, idea-driven, passionate people and even if they don’t turn out to be artists, or to ever make art again, they can cooperate with each other, think, and argue nicely with each other.”

Second, teachers and museum staff were asked “If you had to isolate just one key aspect or philosophy of *Pivot* that sets it apart from other programs you do, what would that be?” Again, two key themes emerged across the groups:

- Time/length of the program – Both groups emphasized the uniqueness of *Pivot*’s multi-year structure. In the words of one ACPA staff member, “it’s planned and implemented over the course of several years. Usually we do one-off things through the year, guest-type things. With *Pivot*, we’re all in the same boat.” A CMA staff person commented, “Time – it’s the most luxurious program. The amount we spent on a weekly basis, an entire day, and we get to see all the rhythms of that day, that’s the single most different piece of *Pivot*.” Another CMA staff member commented on the relationships that form as a result: “You can form a solid relationship with a teacher or student if you get the chance to see them every once in a while, and you click. But to open people to different possibilities and have conversation and mixing of ideas with people who are different

from you, you need that time and hours of being just stuck in a room with people to build a relationship with them that can last.”

- Student ownership – Both groups referred to *Pivot*’s open-ended nature, and the fact that students control so much of their own learning. One teacher said, “An even greater level of student ownership. ACPA teachers want to encourage student ownership, and allow them to be more creative, but...[it’s challenging]. Deeper student ownership over elements of education that not all teachers can give. For example, I have a preset curriculum by the College Board. But in *Pivot*, there’s more freedom to give students ownership.” A CMA staff person said, “It allows for open-endedness where we try to guide people, our students, through and really follow their ideas as they emerge.”

b) *Pivot*’s Impacts on ACPA Teachers and CMA Staff

To understand how *Pivot* has impacted ACPA teachers and CMA staff, both stakeholder groups were asked the following questions: “Do you think participating in *Project Pivot* has shaped who you are as a [museum/classroom] educator? If yes, how? If not, why not?” and “How do you think [ACPA/CMA], as an institution, has benefited from its partnership on *Project Pivot*?” Data from these two questions were analyzed in aggregate, and results suggested three key themes:

- Enhanced teaching practices – Both groups of staff felt that participating in *Pivot* had positive impacts on their professional practice. An ACPA teacher commented, “As an educator in the classroom, it adds to my tools and resources or what I feel comfortable doing. I think it’s hard as an educator turning the reigns over. Watching museum educators do that gives me a new perspective, I feel more comfortable doing it. It makes me a more balanced individual.” A CMA staff member said, “One of the biggest impacts on me personally was teaching me how to be a better collaborator, and how to facilitate effective collaboration – handing out roles, and when it was important to step back, listen, and let a project fail if it needs to. That changed my practice as an artist, and led me in a different professional direction. Now, I’m in a field that is much more collaborative than the fine arts are. And I’m finding that in theater, it’s more about sacrificing the personal to focus on the whole. *Pivot* brought me around to think that way.” Another CMA staff member reflected, “As a teacher, I think that I had to shift my role from thinking it was my responsibility to be the person who knew a lot about things and would lecture on them. I think I learned through *Pivot* that a lot of good teaching can take place through questioning and silence too. When you deny kids the answers to the questions they ask you, you open them up to the ability to seek and find for themselves a little more and to kind of be there along the way as a guide post or to help with little clues or hints can be a good way of teaching, rather than just write informing.”
- Shifted expectations for institutional practice, and for how they work with other organizations – Both groups also felt that *Pivot* had a positive impact on the ways in which they thought about their institution’s role, and on the ways in which their

institution approached other collaborative projects. An ACPA teacher said, “I think it makes me look for stronger community partnerships. It sets the bar for what a lasting community partnership is. ‘Why can’t you work with us more in putting something together?’ I definitely approach community partnerships differently.” Another ACPA teacher echoed, “We had a partnership with [another local cultural institution]. The way we approached it on our end, it was influenced by the work we were seeing in *Pivot*. *Pivot* was a model, it affects how we work with other organizations. We want dialogue back and forth. When we approach other organizations, there’s an idea of ‘How can this relationship support our population?’ It’s helped us to look for those deeper relationships.” A CMA staff member commented, “Being asked to dream big and take some risks and experiment...it’s changed how I think about the possibility of museum education and what it can be. It caused me to dream big, to imagine what could happen if we could try anything, and what we could do if we wanted to take some risks.” Another CMA staff member said, “It makes me think about what’s possible in our field, and pushes us to think about what true impact we can have. Coming from docent education, where we have 50 minutes with kids, it makes me question if we should do that work.”

- Extended organizational missions – Finally, both ACPA teachers and CMA staff indicated that *Pivot* played an important role in furthering their respective organizational missions. An ACPA teacher said, “I’m not sure if [*Pivot*] has changed ACPA as much as it’s supported the mission to reach the community. We’ve reached a new level of support in the greater Columbus community.” Another ACPA teacher explained further, “They [the students] made the museum their home. They traveled downtown...without *Pivot*...art at our school is rich, but being able to have access to the galleries, even at the library, for them to see that art doesn’t end once they ACPA.” A CMA staff member said, “What *Pivot* did with the final shows in the community was to say ‘This is a program we do out of CMA, and it’s tied to our ideas about creativity. It gave us a hook, it made us visibly more relevant and exciting.’” Another CMA staff member explained, “*Pivot* helped bring social and immersive art practices into the conversation at CMA when I was there. I saw a rise in interest in social practice artists. That’s a definite impact that *Pivot* helped to have on the CMA.”

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to deeply understand participants’ experiences within *Pivot* – both students and staff – and the impacts they ascribed to those experiences. Results from the study not only speak to these impacts, but also point to core elements of the project model that participants felt contributed most to those impacts.

Project Impacts

Two different lines of inquiry measured the impacts of *Pivot* on students – open-ended focus group questions, and closed-ended rating statements. Results from both data sets indicated a cluster of four dominant project impacts, most of which parallel the literature on positive youth development resulting from community-based programs (Lerner et al., 2005):

- *Self-awareness/self-efficacy* – Students clearly indicated that *Pivot* helped them to better understand themselves, in particular their own strengths and weaknesses.
- *Social benefits* (skills and relationships) – Students felt strongly that *Pivot* afforded them much-needed collaboration skills, and provided them opportunities to get to know students they would not have otherwise.
- *Perceptions of art, and of themselves as artists* – Students suggested that *Pivot* expanded their views of art (in particular introducing them to social art), and allowed them to experiment with different media and art forms, which in turn deepened their own artistic identity.
- *Community engagement/volunteering* – Students greatly valued the platform *Pivot* provided them for getting out into their community. Not only did they appreciate the chance to engage others in their art, but many were inspired to take up volunteering in other venues.

ACPA teachers and CMA staff also felt that *Pivot* was impactful for them, at an individual level as well as an organizational level. For individuals, the project enhanced teaching practices. For organizations, the project raised the bar in terms of what to expect from a partnership or collaborative effort. In addition, staff articulated clear benefits of *Pivot* in terms of fulfilling their institutional missions.

Project Model

As students and staff articulated the ways in which *Pivot* made a difference in their lives, researchers repeatedly asked them what it was about the project that made such a difference. This ascribed causality provides insight into the core components of the *Pivot* model, specifically three main components that participants feel contribute to the project's impacts:

- Student-driven – Students and staff pointed to the value of giving youth choice and control over their own learning, and greatly valued the freedom and trust afforded them within *Project Pivot*.
- Relationship-focused – Students emphasized the importance of the group structure within *Pivot*. They appreciated the chance to work with students they might not have otherwise, and needing to negotiate the resulting social dynamic. They also appreciated

the opportunity to meet and work with adult mentors who were different from their teachers.

- Community-oriented – Participants clearly valued the fact that *Pivot* happened not within the confines of a classroom, but rather in the museum and out in the community. For students, this seemed to provide authentic, real-life experiences which they perceived would have greater application for them in the future.

Less clear is the importance of time within the project model. Staff referred to perceived benefits of the multiple years of the project, yet there were no differences in impacts between students who participated one year as opposed to three or four years.

APPENDIX A: Student Focus Group Guide

QUESTION GUIDE

1. How would you describe *Project Pivot* to someone who didn't know anything about it? What is it exactly?
2. Thinking back on your *Project Pivot* experience, what was the absolute best part of the program for you? Why?
3. What is one thing you really didn't like about *Project Pivot*? Why?
4. If you had to isolate just ONE key aspect or philosophy of *Project Pivot* that sets it apart from your regular classes at ACPA, what would that one aspect or philosophy be?
5. Do you think participating in *Project Pivot* has shaped who you are as a person? If yes, how? If not, why not?
6. I'm going to read you some statements about possible impacts that *Project Pivot* might have had on you. For each statement, I want you to use the scale on the paper in front of you to rate it from 1-7, where 1 is not at all and 7 is completely. After you rate each statement, we'll talk about it and I'll ask you for an example. Okay?

How much do you think your participation in *Project Pivot* influenced...

- a. ...the way you think about, and/or approach, collaboration/group work
 - For those of you who rated this high, so you felt that Pivot did impact you in this way, can you give me an example of how or when this happened?
- b. ... the way you think about and/or approach a new risk/challenge
 - For those of you who rated this high, so you felt that Pivot did impact you in this way, can you give me an example of how or when this happened?
- c. ...your awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses
 - For those of you who rated this high, so you felt that Pivot did impact you in this way, can you give me an example of how or when this happened?
- d. ...your feelings about art and/or artists
 - For those of you who rated this high, so you felt that Pivot did impact you in this way, can you give me an example of how or when this happened?
- e. ...your perception of yourself as an artist
 - For those of you who rated this high, so you felt that Pivot did impact you in this way, can you give me an example of how or when this happened?

- f. ...your perception of your role or place within the community
 - For those of you who rated this high, so you felt that Pivot did impact you in this way, can you give me an example of how or when this happened?

 - g. ...your tolerance of or empathy towards other people who might be different from you
 - For those of you who rated this high, so you felt that Pivot did impact you in this way, can you give me an example of how or when this happened?
7. If you could only give us one word to describe what *Project Pivot* has meant to you, what would that word be?

APPENDIX B: Student Questionnaire

Tell us how you feel about your participation in Project Pivot!

How much do you think your participation in *Project Pivot* influenced...

...the way you think about, and/or approach, collaboration/group work	Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely
...the way you think about and/or approach a new risk/problem	Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely
...your awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses	Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely
...your feelings about art and/or artists	Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely
...your perception of yourself as an artist	Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely
...your perception of your role or place within the community	Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely
...your tolerance or empathy towards other people who might be different from you	Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely

APPENDIX C: Staff Focus Group Guide

QUESTION GUIDE

1. How would you describe *Project Pivot* to someone who didn't know anything about it? What is it exactly?
2. If you had to isolate just ONE key aspect or philosophy of *Project Pivot* that sets it apart from regular student classes at ACPA, what would that one aspect or philosophy be? (Reworked this from their perspective – how is it different from other student/teacher programs you do at museum?)
3. Do you think participating in *Project Pivot* has shaped who you are as an educator or administrator? If yes, how? If not, why not?
4. How do you think ACPA, as an institution, has benefited from its partnership with the Columbus Museum of Art on *Project Pivot*?