

**Arts-in-Corrections Pilot Project:  
at the Orleans Justice Center**

**A collaboration of the A.R.C.H. Collective  
and California Lawyers for the Arts**

**Evaluation Report  
August 31, 2023**

**Introduction**

This evidence-based evaluation report was written by Dr. Larry Brewster, Professor Emeritus of the University of San Francisco. The findings were based on pre and post-surveys written by Dr. Brewster that were administered at the first and the last sessions of the 12-week spoken word class presented by the A.R.C.H organization for women at the Orleans Justice Center.

The program started on January 10, 2023 under the auspices of Sheriff Susan Hutson of Orleans Parish; Astrid Birgden, the Warden of the Orleans Justice Center; and Gregory Carroll, the Program Director at the Center. Classes taught by Tuere Burns and Kathy Randels were held at the facility for 90 minutes to two hours on a weekly basis.

The evaluation project was coordinated by Toyin Moses, CLA Special Projects Manager, and Alma Robinson, CLA Executive Director, with support from Gene Meneray, Co-Executive Director of the Ella Project. The data that was

collected from the pre-and-post surveys was analyzed by Anisa Siddiqui, CLA consultant.

This pilot project and the evaluation report were funded by grants supporting the expansion of arts programs in correctional facilities from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Andy Warhol Foundation and the Art for Justice Fund, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

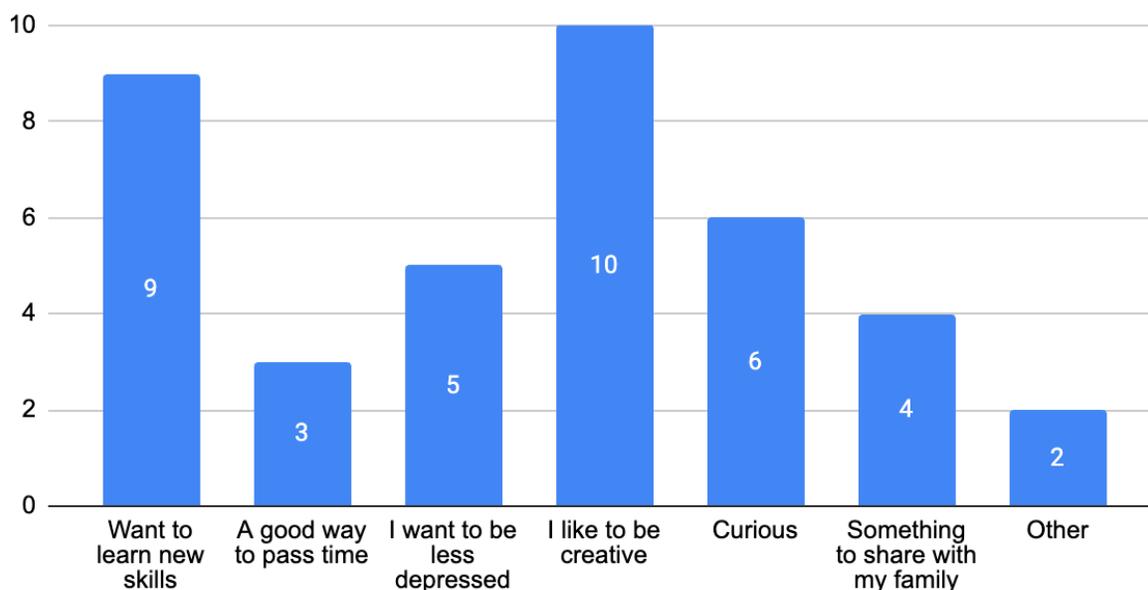
### **Participants' Backgrounds**

The findings of the New Orleans Pilot Project are based on the pre-and-post evaluation surveys that were completed by the 16 participants who started the program and 10 who completed it. Fifty percent, or five, of the participants who completed the program had studied or practiced art in the past. Music (31%), painting/drawing (25%), and writing/poetry (25%) were their predominant art mediums (Note: participants could select more than one art discipline.).

When asked why they enrolled in this art program, most reported that they “liked being creative” (63%) or that they wanted to “learn new skills” (56%). A third (38%) wanted to be “less depressed” (31%). Once again, participants were invited to provide more than one answer.

Chart 1 : Why did you enroll in this art program?

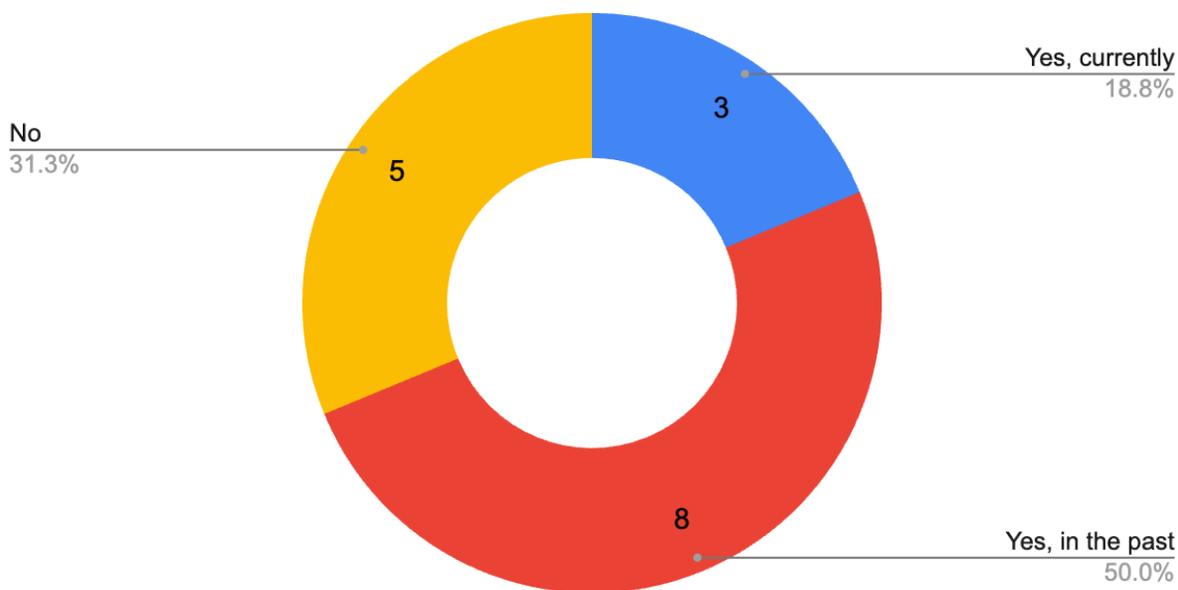
N = 16



When asked if they had taken classes in other programs, eight replied “yes, in the past” (50%), and three (13%) of the ten respondents answered “yes, currently.” Those who in fact have taken courses in other programs enrolled in “vocational” (three), high school/GED (six), or college courses (three.). Nearly half of the entering participants, or seven, think of themselves as an “artist”; whereas, seven do not self-identify as such.

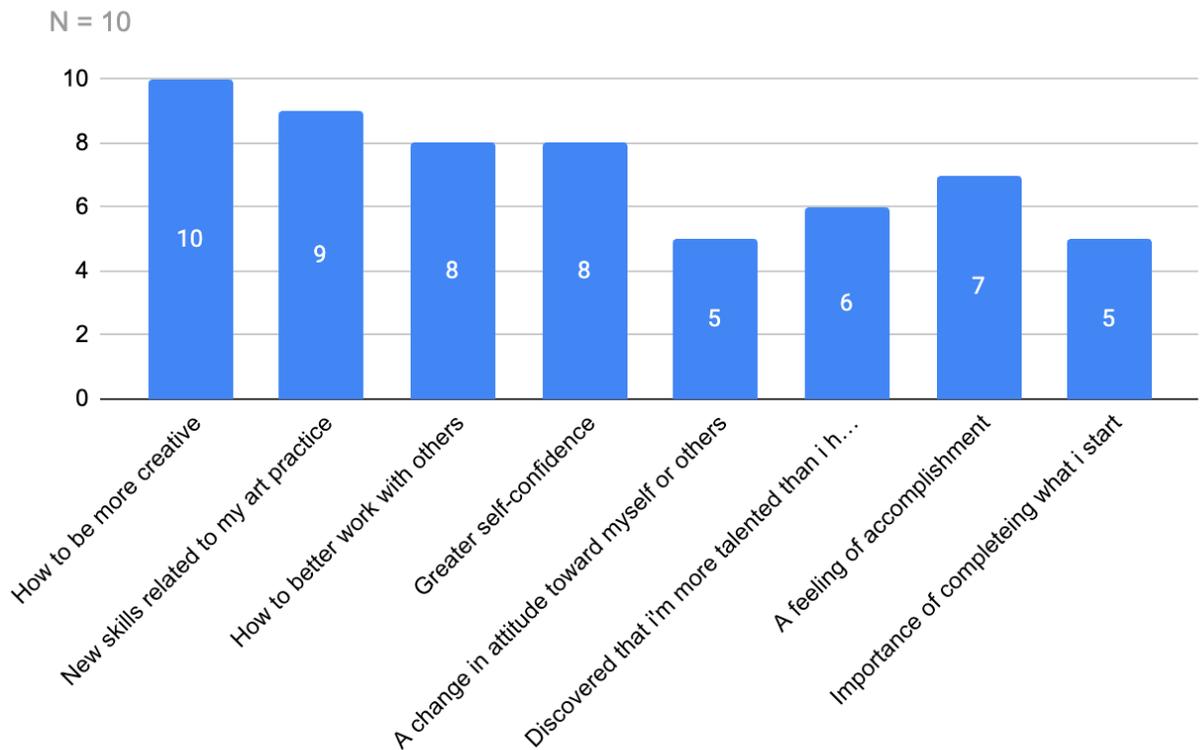
## Chart 2 : Have you taken classes in other programs?

N = 16



The 10 participants who completed the program “very much enjoyed the course they completed.” When asked what, if anything, they learned from the course, Chart 3 shows that all participants learned to be more creative, while 90% added new skills related to their art practice, and 80% achieved a better understanding of how to work better with others, and gained in self-confidence. The foregoing characteristics were high on their list of learned skills and behaviors. Half of the respondents had a change of attitude about themselves and toward others, and learned the importance of completing what they started.

Chart 3 : What, if anything, did you learn from the course you just completed?



Ninety percent wished to take additional art classes. One participant chose not to answer this question. Music, writing/poetry, painting/ drawing, and sculpture were the preferred art classes.

### **Attitudinal Responses**

To facilitate meaningful analysis of the participants' attitudes and self-assessment, we grouped the 43 attitudinal statements into the following categories:

- Active involvement and Energetic (Q's. 16, 23, 31)
- Comfort and Interaction with Others (Q's. 35, 36)
- Creativity and Artistic Expression (Q's. 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43)
- Emotional Wellbeing and Stability (Q's. 15, 22, 30)
- Leadership and Communication (Q's. 21,26, 29)
- Openness to Change & Adaptability (Q's. 14, 20, 28)
- Personal Productivity and Time Management (Q's. 12, 13, 18, 19, 25, 27)
- Self-Belief and Confidence (Q's. 17, 24, 32, 33, 34)

Chart 4 : Participants' Attitudes (Pre-Surveys)

N = 10

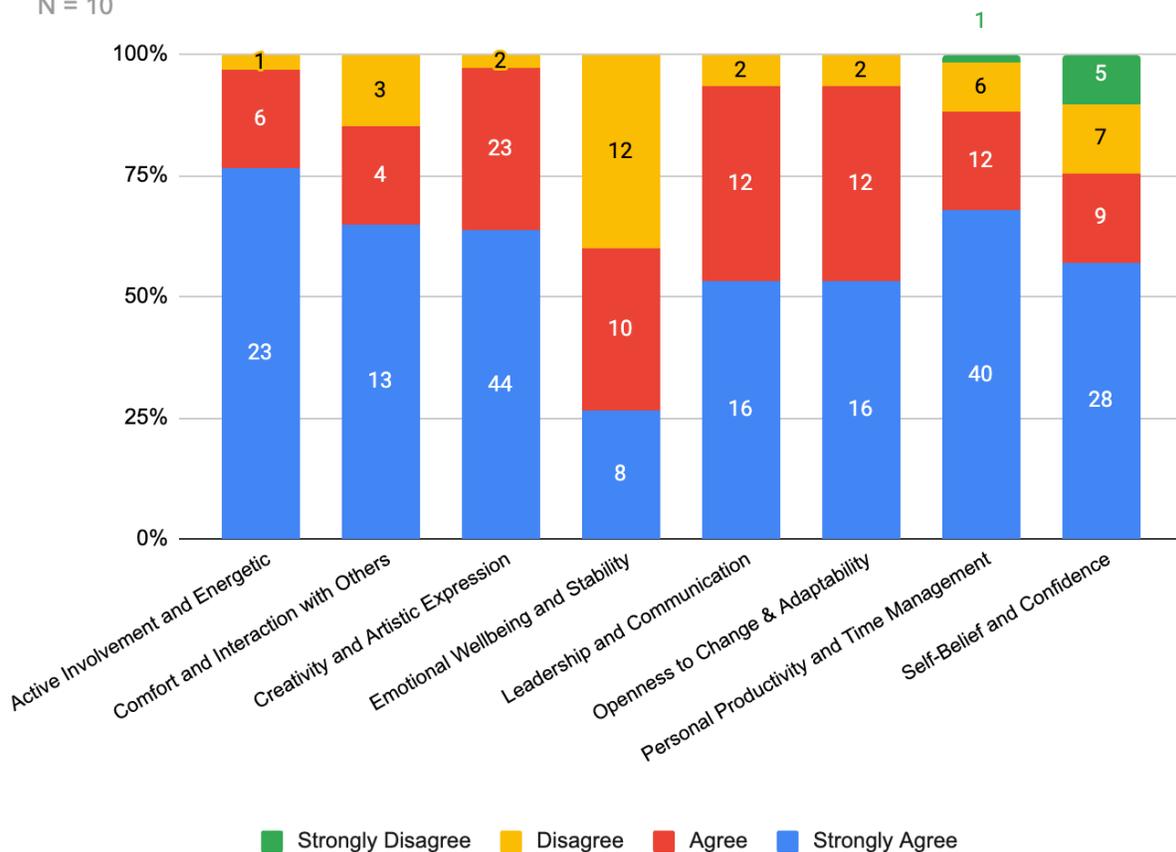
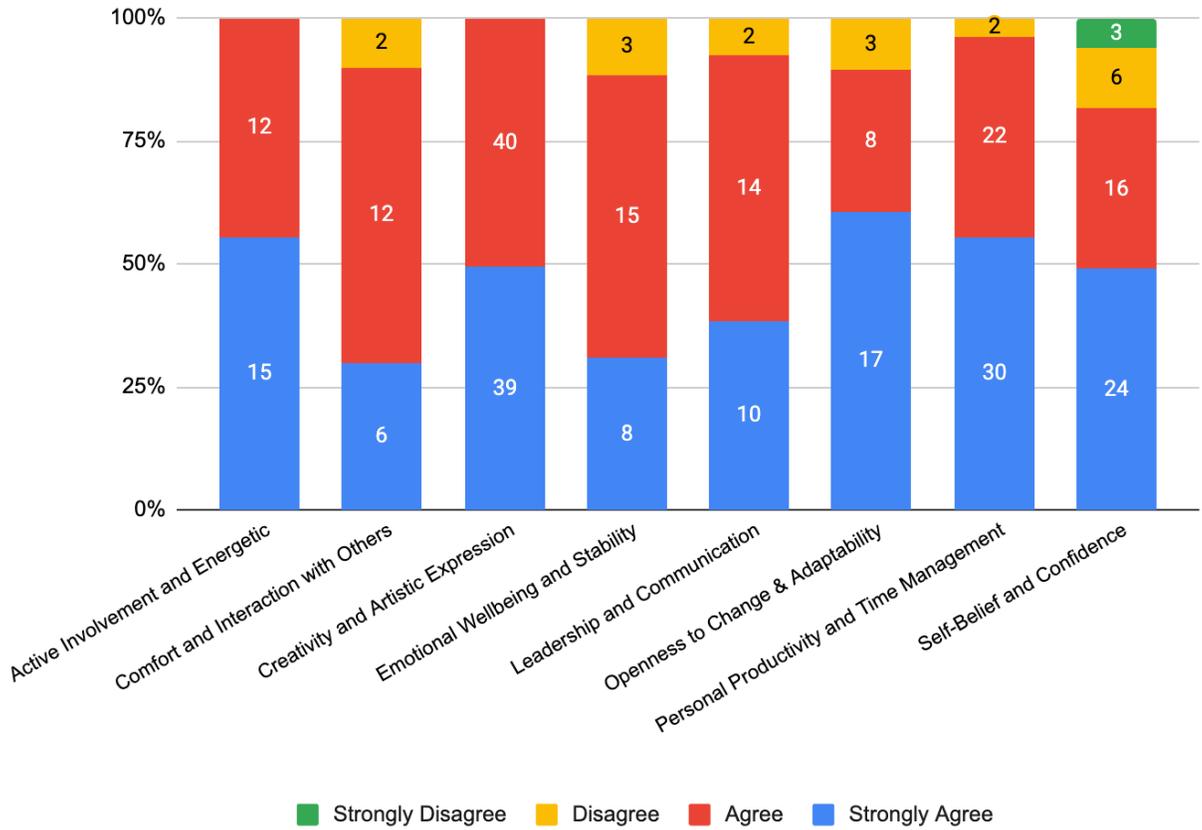


Chart 4 shows that a significant majority of the incoming participants saw themselves as active, confident, open to change, creative, leaders, productive, and comfortable with others based on their responses to the attitudinal questions in both the pre- and-post-surveys.

In other words, the pre-surveys show the participants are generally very positive (i.e., strongly agreeing or agreeing with the attitudinal statements). We therefore suspect that those who did not complete the class left for reasons beyond their control. Although a majority agreed or strongly agreed with statements about their emotional stability, and control over their anxiety, many expressed some doubt by replying “disagree” on a few of the statements that comprise the emotional wellbeing and stability category.

Chart 5 : Participants' Attitudes (Post-Surveys)

N = 10



The positive pre-survey responses to the attitudinal statements help to explain why the post-surveys showed little change in attitudes and self-reflection. While a couple of respondents changed their response from agree to strongly agree in response to a few of the statements, there were no changes in a negative direction. The most significant, positive change was on the “Emotional Wellbeing and Stability” scale (Chart 5).

## **A Final Word**

Although six of the initial 16 participants were unable to complete the program, all ten (10) who did, enjoyed the class, and nine expressed an interest in taking additional art classes. If given the opportunity, most would like to study music, writing/poetry, painting/drawing, and/or sculpture.

It may not be surprising that most of the participants enrolled in the program because they like to be creative, or that they want to learn new skills. Of particular importance is that a third of the entering students looked to the program to help reduce their depression.

When asked what they learned from the course, most said they learned to be more creative, added new skills related to their art practice, learned to work better with others, and they gained in self-confidence. Half of the respondents had a change of attitude toward others, and learned the importance of completing projects.

We learned that a significant majority of the participants feel themselves to be active, confident, open to change, leaders, creative, productive, and comfortable with others. Consequently, there is little change of attitude on completion of the program. Clearly, the course served to reinforce their positive self-identity.

“Emotional wellbeing and stability” is the one scale in which several participants expressed self-doubt. However, the post-survey data (Chart 5) shows that most of those individuals changed their response from “disagree” to “agree”— or in other words, expressed a positive change in dealing with their anxiety or discomfort in stressful situations.

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