

Creativity and the Arts in the Primary School

Discussion Document and
Proceedings of the Consultative
Conference on Education 2009

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Foreword

The INTO is proud of its tradition in supporting arts education. Since 1971 the arts have formed an important dimension of the primary school curriculum. Arts education is life-enhancing, is central to children's development and is invaluable in stimulating creative thinking. Indeed, arts education makes an important contribution to the wider goal of developing creativity in our society and economy. One of the most crucial roles of teachers is developing young minds through exploration, discovery and creativity. In times of economic downturns and recessions, a focus on the arts in education is timely and rewarding.

Arts education embraces both artistic education, that is the child making art, and aesthetic education, the child as receiver of art. The reproduction of tradition, solidarities and identities is essential to a good broad education. It is delightful to see that arts education in our primary schools is in a far better position than it was 20 years ago when Martin Drury of the Arts Council expressed his disappointment with the state of the arts in our primary school, both from a policy and practice perspective. The revised curriculum, and the professional development support that accompanied its introduction has made a significant difference. This is not to say that there are no issues to be addressed. The survey carried out by the Education Committee, which is contained in this report highlights some areas where additional support is required. It is perhaps not surprising that the newer areas such as 'looking and responding' in the visual arts curriculum and 'composition' in the music curriculum, not to mention the drama curriculum, which is entirely new, are the areas that require most support. Teaching itself is an art form and needs to be developed and nurtured through continuing professional development.

Part one of this report contains the discussion paper prepared by the INTO Education Committee for the consultative conference held in November 2009 in Gorey, Co Wexford. Part two contains the main proceedings of the conference. However, given the nature of the conference, there were many arts activities held during the conference that are not reflected in these proceedings. Local schools provided displays of visual art work, music (choirs and instrumental groups) and drama. The contributions of the teachers and children concerned are greatly appreciated and are a tribute to the wonderful work of primary teachers throughout the country where the arts are concerned. It was also not possible to include the Education Committee's dramatic presentation of the state of the arts in our schools, or the wealth of activity that occurred in the interactive workshops, though delegates will take their experiences with them to their schools and classrooms.

The Education Conference also focussed on the language arts. Deirdre Wadding, a primary teacher, now a professional storyteller, provided the conference delegates with a concrete demonstration of the importance of the story in education. She donned a cloak and captivated delegates with her telling of the traditional Irish story of *The Finding of Oisín*.

At the final plenary session, delegates were treated to a demonstration of some of our oldest traditional arts. The ancient Irish tradition of the *Agallamh Beirte*, literally meaning "Dialogue for Two", is a poetic battle of wits in which the fluency of the language, usually humorous or satirical, and the rhythm and rhyming structures are

paramount. The 'lúibíní' are sung in rhyme and reflect current and topical issues. Ray Mac Mánaís and Joe Ó Dónaill, both primary teachers, cleverly targeted topical education issues and INTO personalities, in a witty demonstration of a fast-moving, entertaining performance art.

I wish to extend the Organisation's thanks to all our guest presenters and contributors at the conference. In particular, I would like to record the organisation appreciation to John Carr, outgoing General Secretary, for his contribution to education over the years and for his stimulating and wide ranging presentation to the conference. The arts were always close to his heart, and this was reflected in his inspiring and thought provoking address. The artistic talent within the teaching profession is second to none and something of which to be greatly proud. As teachers we need to continue to develop our own artistic and creative talents. I also wish to thank Triona Stokes of Froebel College of Education who contributed to the drama and dance sections of the report and Paula Murphy of St Patrick's College who also contributed to the drama section of the report. The Organisation's thanks is also due to the Education Committee and the Education team in Head Office, under the direction of Deirbhile Nic Craith, Senior Official, for preparing this report and for organising a successful conference on the arts.



Sheila Nunan
General Secretary
November 2010

Part I

Creativity and the Arts in Education

Discussion Document

Introduction

Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited while imagination embraces the whole world.

(Albert Einstein)

Since earliest times when humans drew images on the walls of the caves, the arts have been our means of recording our human experience and of making sense of our world. The arts give expression to our understanding, our imagination and our creativity. As the world we inhabit becomes smaller, faster and more competitive, these qualities are increasingly important. The arts are an integral part of a complete, successful and high-quality education. Study of the arts enhances young people's intellectual, personal and social development.

A comprehensive arts education provides a rich and engaging curriculum that develops pupils' abilities to think, reason and understand the world and its cultures. It offers pupils opportunities to respond, perform, and create in the arts. The arts instil in our pupils the habits of mind that last a lifetime: analytical skills, the ability to solve problems, perseverance and a drive for excellence. The creative skills children develop through the arts carry them toward new ideas, new experiences and new challenges, as well as offering personal satisfaction. This is the intrinsic value of the arts and it should not be underestimated.

Schools and society must develop our children to become happy, well-adjusted citizens, rather than pupils who can just pass a test and get through school. We must ensure that our children can think creatively, skilfully, and "outside the box". The arts are a vital part of doing this and of ensuring that every pupil can achieve his or her potential and contribute fully to our society.

Creativity

According to UNESCO, "the encouragement of creativity from an early age is one of the best guarantees of growth in a healthy environment of self-esteem and mutual respect - critical ingredients for building a culture of peace."¹

Creativity is an elusive and contested concept. There have been many attempts to define it. Creativity has been described as 'a state of mind in which all our intelligences are working together' (Lucas, 2001) and as 'the ability to solve problems and fashion products and to raise new questions' (Gardner, 1993). Few experts agree on a precise definition, but when we say the word 'creativity', everyone senses a similar feeling. When we are creative, we are aware of a special excitement.

¹ <http://www.ccproject.org/quotes.html>

Creativity can be understood as having the power or quality to express yourself in your own way. Children are naturally creative. They see the world through fresh, new eyes and then use what they see in original ways. One of the most rewarding aspects of working with children is the chance to watch them create.

Every child is born with creative potential, but this potential may be stifled if care is not taken to nurture and stimulate creativity. Young children are naturally curious. They wonder about people and the world. Even before they enter primary school, they already have a variety of learning skills acquired through questioning, inquiring, searching, manipulating, experimenting, and playing. Children need opportunities for a closer look; they need time for the creative encounter.

Creative learning is a natural human process that occurs when people become curious and excited. Children prefer to learn in creative ways rather than just memorising information provided by teachers or parents. They also learn better and sometimes faster.

The term "creativity," as it relates to the classroom, goes beyond art class and school projects. At its best, creativity in the classroom is about how a teacher captivates students and inspires them to learn. Teachers who are practised in the art of developing creativity are generally focused on creating a classroom culture that thrives on creativity. They build a repertoire of strategies designed to spark new ideas and bring out a spirit of creativity in students, and they adapt and create ideas for their own curriculum needs. What is needed is teaching that is innovative. Children need to experience the unpredictable and the uncertain. They need lessons that produce surprise. As Fisher argued, creative learners need creative teachers who provide both order and adventure, and who are willing to do the unexpected and take risks (Fisher, 2002).

Creativity is the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. According to Linda Naiman, founder of Creativity at Work, "Creativity involves two processes: thinking, then producing. Innovation is the production or implementation of an idea. If you have ideas, but don't act on them, you are imaginative but not creative."² Naiman promotes the use of arts-based learning to develop creativity, innovation, and collaborative leadership in organizations.

A creative curriculum offers children plenty of opportunities for creative behaviour. Such a curriculum will call for original work, independent learning, self-initiated projects, and experimentation. Using curriculum materials that provide progressive warm-up experiences, procedures that permit one thing to lead to another, and activities that recognise and reward creative thinking makes it easier for teachers to provide opportunities for creative learning.

Children have a seemingly endless supply of creative energy. It shows up in their quirky impromptu rhymes and songs, in their imaginative play, and in their innate ability to make something out of anything. However, research on creativity points to a so-called "fourth grade slump" across various cultures (Torrance, 1967). It appears that when children begin school, their level of creativity is evident and often flourishing but, by the time they reach the fourth grade, they have become more conforming, less likely to take risks, and less playful or spontaneous than in earlier years. Today's children must be given the chance to develop their creativity to the fullest extent possible; not only for the benefit of their own future but also for the communities we all inhabit.

² www.creativityatwork.com

The focus of education must be on creating people who are capable of thinking and doing new things, not simply repeating what past generations have done (Fisher, 1990). We cannot limit people to doing only what they have done in the past if they are to be equipped for a world of challenge and change. As Warren G. Bennis quoted "There are two ways of being creative. One can sing and dance. Or one can create an environment in which singers and dancers flourish."³

It is hoped that the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) enables pupils in Irish primary schools to sing and dance but that it also creates an environment in which singers and dancers flourish. But also, the primary school curriculum should create an environment in which the talents of all our pupils flourish. The view put forward by Ashfaq Ishaq, FRSA Executive Director of the International Child Art Foundation, is that creativity can be encouraged in a variety of ways, and the arts are seen as a dynamic channel to foster a child's creativity. The primary school curriculum encourages creativity in many forms, though the particular focus of this discussion document is on the arts.

The arts in education

Many countries include an arts dimension in their national curricula. The British National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), in its report *Curriculum and Progression in the Arts: An International Study*, (Taggart, Whitby and Sharpe, 2004) presents findings of ongoing research that compares twenty-one countries' arts curricula. Ireland participated in the research. The survey of content and organization of each country's arts curricula found that:

- Overall, courses for the arts were treated as either separate subjects, e.g. music or visual art, or as larger learning areas covering several subjects, e.g. arts, creative arts (New South Wales, Australia) or as in Scotland, expressive arts. Queensland (Australia) includes a fifth arts discipline – media.
- All countries had well defined curricula for each of the disciplines of art and music as part of compulsory education.
- All countries included a cultural or national context for their arts curricula.
- All countries saw the arts as contributing to personal, social and cultural development, as well as purely to artistic development.
- Dance and drama were studied in most countries.
- No country included literature within its arts curricula.

The term arts education has had various meanings throughout the years, and generally includes music, dance, drama and visual art. The visual arts and music have traditionally received the lion's share of attention in education. Since the advent of a common curriculum, arts educators have struggled to have the arts taken seriously. Over the years, the arts have assumed the role of promoter of good citizens, accessory to academic subjects, special programs for the gifted or extracurricular activity. In *Becoming Knowledge: The Evolution of Art Education Curriculum* (1992) Denny Palmer Wolf suggests that the arts in education are a particular form of knowledge requiring work, understanding and skill equal to but distinctive from those of other subjects.

³ http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/w/warren_g_bennis.html

The role of arts education in forming the competences for young people for life in the 21st century has been widely recognized at European level (European Commission, 2009, p.3). Arts education is valued in developing creativity. Cultural awareness and creativity are seen as central transversal key competences which are included in the EU strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training. In March 2009, the European Parliament passed a resolution on Artistic Studies in the European Union, which recommended that artistic education should be compulsory at all school levels, that arts teaching should use the latest information and communication technologies, and that there should be a greater oversight and coordination of arts education at European level (European Commission, 2009, p.8). In 1999, UNESCO had called for the teaching of arts to have a special place in the education of every child, and later published its *Roadmap for Arts Education* in 2006, which advocated the strengthening of arts education. In 1995, the Council of Europe launched a project on *Culture, Creativity and the Young*, which examined the provision for arts education in the schools of member states. The Council later launched a Framework Convention (2005) and a White Paper on Intercultural dialogue in 2008. The European Commission produced a Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world in 2007 encouraging art education and active participation in cultural activities with a view to developing creativity and innovation.

The Eurydice Report on *Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe* (European Commission, 2009) confirms that visual arts and music are given higher prominence than dance and drama in the arts curriculum in member states. The report also stated that arts education has less status than literacy and numeracy in that it is allocated fewer hours. However, in most member states the arts are allocated more hours than foreign languages and physical education at primary level. The number of hours spent on arts education at primary level was between 50 and 100 hours per annum. Music, in particular, was well represented among extra-curricular activities provided by schools. The aims for arts education were similar among all countries studied. Nearly all countries mentioned 'artistic skills, knowledge and understanding', 'critical appreciation', 'cultural heritage', 'individual expression/identity', 'cultural diversity', and 'creativity' as objectives. Many arts curricula also mentioned cross-curricular links and the development of social and communication skills, and some countries include the acquisition of cultural and artistic competence as an overall educational objective of compulsory schooling. In some countries the various arts subjects are considered as separate subjects, while in others they are considered as an integrated area of study. The use of ICT in the teaching of arts is formally recommended in ten countries, including Ireland. In most countries initiatives are taken to organize visits to places of artistic and cultural interest for pupils or to establish partnerships with artists and some countries have specific organizations or networks to promote arts and cultural education. At primary level, the arts are most often taught by generalist primary teachers (European Commission, 2009, pp.15-16).

In 1995, The United States Department of Education reported in *Schools, Communities, and the Arts: A Research Compendium*, that researchers found that using arts education as a medium to teach academic subjects not only led to improvement in understanding of content but that student behaviour also improved in such areas as risk-taking, cooperation and problem-solving. The study also found that for students who struggle with curriculum and methodology based primarily on verbal proficiency, arts processes are extremely powerful. It was noted that through experiencing the arts they developed the capacity for sound judgment, attention to purpose and ability to follow through on tasks, and the ability to consider differing viewpoints and defer judgment (Welch, 1995).

According to research of neuroscientists such as Marion Diamond at Berkeley, the human brain can undergo changes in structure and functionality as a result of learning and experience - for better or for worse. Neural connections that make it possible for us to learn, remember, problem-solve and create can continue to form throughout life, particularly when we are in environments that are positive, nurturing, stimulating and that encourage action and interaction. Well-designed arts programmes provide the kinds of environments that enable such learning (Diamond, 1996). Not only can the brain be transformed, but it can itself be a transformer. For example, the experience of a magnificent sunrise might emerge in the form of a poem or a dance. Response to an exhibit of paintings might emerge in the form of music. Life experiences might find voice in the form of historical plays such as those written by Shakespeare. The arts provide the means for the human brain to function at its highest level.

It would be easier to achieve significant educational achievements if everyone learned in the same way, but not everyone does. In schools today there is a growing diversity of students from a variety of cultural, social, and economic backgrounds with very different ways of thinking, learning, and behaving. Children of various abilities and disabilities are in the same classrooms. Children from disadvantaged families learn together with more economically privileged students. School systems that rely on teaching primarily through the spoken and written word simply do not reach all these kinds of students. Students with similar backgrounds may also receive and process information differently.

There are students that can learn effectively by listening, and such students do very well in traditional classrooms where most of the information is presented orally. On the other hand, students with a visual learning style constitute about 40% of the population. It is important for them to have illustrations, charts, and diagrams along with words and numbers. For kinaesthetic students, who form around 45% of the population, abstractions presented in words and numbers may not be easily understood without concrete examples. The arts offer especially valuable tools to facilitate learning for those who are primarily visual and kinaesthetic, in addition to making it possible for all students to learn more effectively, retain what they have learned, know how to apply what they have learned in a variety of contexts, and feel more positive about learning.

Dr. Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences suggests that our school systems (which reflect our culture) teach and test primarily two kinds of intelligence - verbal and logical-mathematical. He suggests, however, that there are at least five other kinds of intelligence that are equally important. They include visual/spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. These intelligences provide the foundations for the visual arts, music, dance, and drama, and through these art forms most students will not only find the means for communication and self-expression, but the tools to construct meaning and learn almost any subject effectively. This is especially true when the arts are integrated throughout the curriculum at every level and not only taught as separate subjects.

In *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (1999) seven teams of US researchers examined a variety of arts education programmes using diverse methodologies which provided new and important findings on actual learning experiences involving the arts. The researchers found that learners can attain higher levels of achievement through their engagement with the arts. "When well taught, the arts provide young people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts and bodies. The learning experiences are real and meaningful for them. While learning in other disciplines may often focus on development of a single skill or talent, the arts engage multiple skills and abilities. Engagement in the arts nurtures the

development of cognitive, social and personal competencies” (*Arts Education Partnership, Executive Summary*, 1999, p.IX).

Although the *Champions of Change* researchers conducted their investigations and presented their findings independently, a remarkable consensus exists among their findings:

- *The arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached.*
Young people who are disengaged from schools and other community institutions are at the greatest risk of failure or harm. The researchers found that the arts provided a reason for being engaged with school or other organisations.
- *The arts reach students in ways that they are not otherwise being reached.*
‘Problem’ students often became the high-achievers in arts learning settings. Success in the arts became a bridge to learning and eventual success in other areas of learning.
- *The arts connect students to themselves and each other.*
Creating an artwork is a personal experience. By engaging his or her whole person, the student feels invested in ways that are deeper than “knowing the answer.” The attitudes of young people toward one another are altered through their arts learning experiences.
- *The arts transform the environment for learning.*
When the arts become central to the learning environment, schools and other settings become places of discovery. School culture is changed, and the conditions for learning are improved.
- *The arts provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people.*
With adults participating in lifelong learning, young people gain an understanding that learning in any field is a never-ending process.
- *The arts provide new challenges for those students already considered successful.*
Boredom and complacency are barriers to success. For those young people who out grow their established learning environments, the arts can offer a chance for unlimited challenge.
- *The arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work.*
Ideas are what matter, and the ability to generate ideas, to bring ideas to life and to communicate them is what matters to workplace success.

The visual arts

Children today are growing up in a highly visual world, surrounded by the images of television, videos, advertising displays, and other media. The human brain’s visual cortex is five times larger than the auditory cortex so it is hardly surprising that students respond positively to opportunities to learn through the visual arts. Children today do not have many opportunities to experience processes from beginning to end, and too often see only end products on television or on supermarket shelves. The visual arts not only provide these experiences, but also offer the means for helping students to understand and consolidate what they learn. There are also other skills involved: learning to use the tools of the visual arts, learning to observe carefully, learning to express one’s ideas visually, and learning that discipline and perseverance are necessary for achievement.

A visual arts curriculum provides opportunities to pupils to explore, express and experiment with ideas and to investigate possibilities of a range of materials and processes, through drawing, paint and colour, print, clay, construction, fabric and fibre. Children can explore their own experiences, stories, drama, music, or activities through making and creating art, either working on their own or collaborating with others, using a range of media, materials and processes. Children are also afforded opportunities to experience the work of artists and to appreciate the visual world through looking and responding to art, both within the classroom and by visiting galleries and exhibitions. As children develop an awareness of their visual, spatial and tactile environment they learn to appreciate the interplay between art and the environment, enhancing their own response to creative experience. Education in the visual arts can also contribute to children's self-esteem and sense of personal empathy.

What constitutes art is often a contested issue, as Nigel Warburton argued in "*The Art Question*" (2002). He took the view that art was not definable, and found Collingwood's definition of art as expression of emotion, and Bell's definition as 'significant form' too limiting. Art is one of the things that sets human beings apart from other animals (Neill and Ridley, 1995) and reflected the human urge to represent the world in various forms. The ancient Greeks were fascinated by questions of artistic representations, the relation of art to the emotions, the educational value of the arts, and the nature of the creative process.

Arguments to support the inclusion of the visual arts in education include: (a) self-expression and communication, (b) observation and the extension of conceptual knowledge through the involvement of perceptual and practical activities and (c) appreciation, the response of the individual to the work of others, (Herbert Read, cited in Breakwell D. R. (1976) *Beyond Aesthetics*, London: Thames and Hudson, p.90). Self-expression, communication, observation and appreciation are part of the visual arts curriculum in schools today.

Children need opportunities to investigate themes and issues that are meaningful to them. The visual arts help them to develop personal values and gain self-esteem by creating images and forms in relation to themselves and their environment. Looking and responding to art lead to an enlightened sense of environmental awareness as children develop their aesthetic perceptions. Through the visual arts, children learn to appreciate the visual form which characterises either their own expressions in art, or the work of other artists. They can respond emotionally to colour, they can study the impact of proportions, and develop a sense of structure, movement and perspective in visual expression. Art appreciation depends on understandings and according to Pepper (1949) to appreciate art, one needs understanding. The education of children in the arts should be the beginning of their initiation into a world of imagination made manifest through the senses (Reid, 1983).

Music

We are by nature musical, rhythmical people. We are surrounded by music every day, enjoy it for relaxation, and may dance to it, yet many of us have only experienced music in school during a weekly class lesson. Recent research suggests that music lessons, and even simply listening to music, can enhance spatial reasoning performance. The studies of Rauscher and Shaw confirm an unmistakable link between music and spatial intelligence. They note that "well-developed spatial intelligence is the ability to perceive the visual world accurately, to form mental images of physical objects, and to recognize variations of objects" (Rauscher and Shaw, 1995, p.46).

Some researchers suggest that the fact that the universities of India graduate so many brilliant mathematicians and physicists has something to do with early listening to music with complex rhythmical and tonal patterns. Oddleifson (1995) addressing the Council of Elementary Principals in Boston, referred to a renowned Japanese master mathematics teacher, whose nearly two million students have demonstrated incredible maths ability beyond their years, was asked the following question. "What would you say is the most effective way of heightening children's mental ability at the earliest possible stages?" He answered, "The finest start for infants is to sing songs. This helps to elevate their powers of understanding, and they register astounding speed in learning math and languages." (Oddleifson, 2005)

Hungary apparently does well in international science achievement tests. Researchers believe that this outcome is linked to the fact that Hungary has one of the most intensive school music programmes in the world with instruction starting at the kindergarten level. Their Singing Schools are based on the methods of Kodaly, and all children engage in singing every day. Both voice and instrument training twice a week are compulsory throughout the first eight years of schooling. Japan and Holland, also high achieving countries incorporate music instruction throughout the school years. Supporting music education for young children, the US National Child Welfare Association states, "through music, a child enters a world of beauty, expresses his/her inmost self, tastes the joy of creating, widens his/her sympathies, develops the mind, soothes and refines the spirit, and adds grace to the body", cited in Dickinson (1997).

As educators, teachers' beliefs, desires and aspirations about what is important in music education are key factors in determining how the aims of a music curriculum are incorporated into their teaching. Many studies have been performed to examine the effect of musical instruction on the brain. Curriculum areas most influenced by music education include language development, reading, mathematics, and science. Music itself is a form of language comprising patterns which can be used to form notes, chords, and rhythms. Experience of music helps a child to analyse the harmonic vowel sounds of language as well as to sequence words and ideas. Another curriculum area enhanced by music participation is reading. A child who participates in music activities experiences sensory integration, a crucial factor in reading readiness. Wilson's study (1989) reveals that music instruction enhances a student's ability to perform skills necessary for reading including listening, anticipating, forecasting, memory training, recall skills, and concentration techniques.

Mathematics is the academic subject most closely connected with music. Music helps students count, recognize geometric shapes, understand ratios and proportions, and the frameworks of time. Gordon Shaw (1993) found that piano instruction enhances the brain's ability to visualise and transform objects in space and time. This enhances a student's ability to understand fractions, geometric puzzles and maths problems. Armstrong (1988) reports that music educator, Grace Nash, found that by incorporating music into her maths lessons, her students were able to learn multiplication tables and maths formulae more easily.

At every age, experience of music affects academic performance. Susan Black (1997) reports that newborn babies have mechanisms in their brains devoted exclusively to music. These mechanisms help the newborns organise and develop their brains. Rauscher's study (1995) indicates that just fifteen minutes a week of keyboard instruction, along with group singing, dramatically improved the kind of intelligence that is needed for pre-school students to understand higher levels of maths and science.

Primary school music students also show increased learning in maths and reading. Studies have found that instrumental music students, with two or more years of study, scored significantly higher in tests of basic skills than did non-music students.

The scientific evidence is abundant, obvious, and compelling; there are strong connections between music instruction and greater student achievement. Regardless of age, exposure to music helps to develop and fine-tune the workings of the brain. Music training, whether instrumental, vocal, or music appreciation, helps develop a child's cognitive and communication skills.

Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences theory

The groundbreaking theory of multiple intelligences, developed by Howard Gardner of Harvard University, broadens our view of how humans learn and realise their potential. It shows that the arts can play a crucial role in improving students' ability to learn because they draw on a range of intelligences and learning styles, not just the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences upon which most schools are based.

In a January 1997 article, Gardner was quoted as saying that music might be a special intelligence which should be viewed differently from other intelligences. He stated that musical intelligence probably carries more emotional, spiritual, and cultural weight than the other intelligences. But perhaps most important, Gardner says, is that music helps some people organise the way they think and work by helping them develop in other areas, such as maths, language and spatial reasoning.

While it is understood that music education can have an important impact on musical intelligence, there is a significant amount of research supporting the impact of music education on all seven intelligences (as cited by Harvey, 1997).

Linguistic

A study by Hall in 1952, reported that when examining eighth and ninth graders, the use of background music in study halls resulted in substantially more improvement of reading comprehension than those that studied without music. In a study by Ramey and Frances Campbell of the University of North Carolina (as reported in "You Can Raise Your Child's IQ" in *Reader's Digest* October 1996), preschool children taught with games and songs showed an IQ advantage over those without the songs, and at age 15 had higher reading and maths scores.

Logical-mathematical

A study in Rhode Island published in the May 23, 1996 issue of *Nature* reported that first-graders who participated in special music classes as part of an arts study saw their reading skills and math proficiency increase dramatically. Students who studied music appreciation scored higher on the maths portion of the SAT than those without music education.

Spatial

In a study by Frances Rauscher and Gordon Shaw at the University of California, Irvine, that was presented in 1994 at the American Psychological Association, it was reported that pre-schoolers who took daily 30 minute group singing lessons and a weekly 10-15 minute private keyboard lesson scored 80 percent higher in object-assembly skills than students who did not have the music lessons.

Bodily-kinaesthetic

In a report of the significance of singing in *MUSICA Research Notes* (1996), Weinberger cites research of Kalmar dealing with the positive effects of singing in normal children in a long-term study, as she studied the effects of the Kodály method of instruction, and found significant effects on motor development and cognitive development of those participating in the music programme.

Musical

A report in *The New York Times International* in May 1996 indicated that in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and China music is a significant part of education and the children in those countries are far more likely to have what some regard as one of the most striking signals of a musical mind, absolute pitch. As reported in *The Musical Mind*, (Black, 1997) neuromusical investigations are producing evidence that infants are born with neural mechanisms devoted exclusively to music. Perhaps, even more importantly, studies show that early and ongoing musical training helps organize and develop children's brains.

Interpersonal

A study done in 1978 by McCarty, McElfresh, Rice & Wilson reported that a pattern of inappropriate student behaviour on a school bus was changed by playing music. Research at the Harvard Project Zero as reported by Colwell and Davidson (1996), suggests that arts activities for all students on Fridays and Mondays reduces the absentee rate on those days.

Intrapersonal

Martha Mead Giles found in a study reported in the *Journal of Music Therapy* that music and art instruction may be an important link to children's emotional well-being. In an *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* report, (1994), research was cited that in addition to an enhancement of self-concept as an outcome of music education, trust and cooperation, empathy, and social skills were also shown to be benefits of a music education.

The Mozart effect

Historically, music educators and music therapy researchers have provided clear evidence that music and music education does have a measurable impact. However, it was the research of Frances Rauscher, Gordon Shaw and colleagues, at the Center for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory at the University of California, dealing with the relationship between music and spatial task performance that resulted in the creation of the term "The Mozart Effect" and the thesis that music can and does make one smarter.

In October 1993 a study done by Rauscher, Shaw, and Ky found that listening to 10 minutes of Mozart's piano Sonata K.448 over a period of time increased spatial IQ scores in college students. A further study on spatial performance and music found that the spatial reasoning skills of preschool children who were given eight months of music lessons far exceeded the spatial reasoning performance of children who had no musical training. Whereas the effect of listening to Mozart lasted only a short time (about 15 minutes), the results of the study with preschool children suggested to the researchers that music can improve intelligence for long periods of time, maybe even permanently. In 1995, Rauscher *et al* replicated and extended their findings concerning the Mozart effect. In the most recent study, they used the same task as in their first experiment but

extended the types of listening experienced. Seventy-nine college students were divided into three groups: silence, the same Mozart as used in the 1993 study, and a work by Philip Glass. Only the Mozart group showed a significant increase in spatial IQ score.

These findings hold new and profound implications for the importance of music in education, especially the education of young children. Spatial reasoning is essential to success in a variety of academic subjects, particularly maths, the sciences and engineering. Many problems common to these disciplines are not easily described in verbal form, and depend on abstract thinking and visualisation – skills that result from highly developed spatial reasoning ability. The notion that music is important to the development of a child's intellect is not new. Plato believed music was the first subject that children should learn, to create a sense of order and harmony in the mind. Until now, however, no one has been able to demonstrate a direct, causal link between music and the development of human intelligence early in life. Rauscher's research also indicates that music training may most benefit those children for whom achieving academic and career potential is critically important: the disadvantaged. Music programs in schools may enable the disadvantaged to learn on a more equal footing with children from more affluent backgrounds. Because it is nonverbal, music, unlike many traditional teaching methods, does not force disadvantaged children to struggle with language or cultural differences. Also, unlike children from higher-income families, who have access to private music lessons, school may offer many disadvantaged children their only opportunity for music instruction.

Comment

Music should be prized and emphasised as an invaluable way to boost human brainpower. The challenge is to identify and articulate the music education programme that can be most successful in achieving this goal. As music educators teachers ought to be grateful for, and knowledgeable about major developments in recent years that have strengthened their position in promoting music as a significant discipline that ought to be at the core of the curriculum. Music educators have always believed that a child's cognitive, motivational, and communication skills are more highly developed when exposed to music training. The positive effects of music education are finally being recognized by science, verifying what music teachers have always suspected.

The increased use of learning objectives or outcomes has dominated recent educational reforms. For teachers of the arts, this has been problematic. Prescribing the outcomes of an artistic activity runs the risk of removing the sense of discovery and creation. A music education programme, like any other, should consist of sequentially organised learning experiences that lead to clearly defined skills and knowledge. The ultimate goal of music education is not great student performances, but musical learning that will allow young people to actively participate in their musical cultures for their entire lives. The programme should go beyond the performance of published music and also provide students with opportunities to experiment with musical improvisation and composition, thus building their creative skills. Music classes should encourage students to employ and develop their problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills, in the form of musical decision-making, self-evaluation, and other activities involving increased student responsibility. The music education programme should also emphasise the interdisciplinary potential of the skills and knowledge being taught; that is, facets of musical understanding can be applied to other areas of the fine arts, as well as to social studies, language arts, and other fields of study. If these elements are missing from a school music programme, classes can become mere rehearsals and music education becomes mere music production.

Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything. It is the essence of order and lends to all that is good and just and beautiful.

(Plato)

Dance

The Gulbenkian Report (1982), *'The Arts in Schools'*, emphasised the importance of dance in education as an arts component that allows engagement in an exploratory experience, that develops understanding, and actively enhances the imagination. The development of the 'midway model' by Jacqueline Smith Autard in the 1980s grew from a combination of both the professional and educational models that had hitherto co-existed in the UK. Within this model, artistic, aesthetic and cultural education can be potentially developed.

In *'The Art of Dance in Education'*, Smith-Autard (2002) broached the oft contentious process/product debate regarding dance in relation to the three strands of creating, performing and appreciating dance. Dance compositions or the performances of dance as products can develop dance appreciation through providing opportunities for creating, performing and viewing dance in Irish primary schools within Smith-Autard's model.

The Irish physical education curriculum dance strand includes both creative and folk dance. The emphasis within learning folk dances, representative of different cultures, is experiential - focused on engagement and enjoyment of the dances. Creative dance sees an exploration by the pupil of body parts, body shapes and body actions, in conjunction with concepts relating to movement dynamics relating to the body in space and consideration of the pupil's particular environment.

The educational model visible in both the British and Irish curricula stemmed from the work of Rudolph Laban in the 1940s, emphasizing the process of learning dance with the associated development of the individual's imagination and creativity. Laban's model focused on the particularity of experience for the pupil concerned, emphasising the child as an active and independent learner. The child's creative contribution to a dance might be a phrase he or she composes or extends, either individually or collaboratively. The phrases may be taught or simply viewed by the other dancers which develops appreciation of dance.

Arnold (1986) promotes the view that creativity is not exclusive to the gifted and talented, but something which can be accessible to all, subject to four conditions deemed necessary for creativity. The four conditions are accessed for presentation within a cycle. The first condition for creativity listed is novelty or originality. This is coupled with the condition of relevance i.e. relating to a specific field. The conflict condition relates to transcendence of culturally related fields, in terms of the idea going beyond what is contemporaneously culturally accepted as art. The final condition is the evaluative condition, which demands the work be appraised in accordance with the culturally constructed 'canon of what is considered good or bad art' (Arnold, 1986, p.257).

Neurological research on how the brain can most successfully and efficiently learn, linked nine principles that need to be in place for the brain to learn effectively with dance teaching and practice (Doyle, 2000). Dance as an activity was illustrated as one that uses both sides of the brain and relies on the senses for memorisation. Practising

and learning complex rhythmical patterns stimulates and energises the whole mind-body system. Many kinaesthetic students, who literally need to move to learn, find opportunities to do so through dance. Dance creates strong, coordinated, well-disciplined bodies that can move with grace and individual style. Preparing to give a dance performance by memorising the choreography, rehearsing, and collaborating with other dancers exercises and develops critical thinking skills along with persistence and perseverance.

Drama

The particular genre of theatre recommended in the revised Irish curriculum for primary schools (DES, 1999) is known as process drama. It has emerged from innovations in the fields of both theatre and education particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. While it embodies many of the elements of theatre such as role, tension, time and place, it differs from traditional theatrical forms of presentation in that it is predominantly improvisational in nature. In process drama children explore a fictional context containing an inherent tension, which has some thematic relevance for their lives. While the contexts in question are often initially inspired by stories, paintings, music and poetry, the exploration is deliberately structured to involve an open-ended quest for meaning. This quest inevitably leads to learning on a variety of levels – personal, social, artistic. In process drama children are learning both *about* and *through* drama.

The key principles of the Irish primary school curriculum include engaging the child acting as an active agent in his or her own learning, motivated by his or her sense of wonder and curiosity and using prior knowledge and experience as a basis for this learning. The drama curriculum hinges on these same principles, as well as placing language, and the social and emotional aspects of learning as intrinsic to the learning process. The pupils engage physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively as their higher-order thinking skills and collaborative problem-solving skills are employed.

In a drama in education lesson, a stimulus such as a story, picture or object can be used to heighten the interest of the group, introduce characters and suggest a set of circumstances in which a story might unfold. The teacher and pupils establish the fictional landscape of the drama and the time and place in which the action takes place. The teacher uses particular drama methodologies to develop the drama to desired educational ends: to deepen the children's commitment to the drama; to add tension; to develop relationships between characters; to develop plot; to play out potential courses of action; to consider the actions and behaviours of characters and to respond to and reflect on the action as it occurs. The teacher's role in drama differs from other subject areas as she/ he is afforded the opportunity of assuming a role in the drama, thus working with the children on the drama, by guiding the action from within.

Participants are offered opportunities to explore themes and scenarios as themselves but also as the characters, 'not me, not not me', as Richard Schechner (1988) famously claimed. The potential for developing empathy in this manner is one of drama's major claims as the participant learns about life and human existence through imagined experience. It is imagination, as part of our cognitive capacity as humans that permits us to consider and give credence to alternative realities. Drama facilitates this by enabling the participant to stand in the shoes of another. "Imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible" (Greene, 1995, p.3).

Drama employs a variety of modes of learning with and through the body in conjunction with the mind, senses and creative impulses. Opportunities for aesthetic education abound as the participants use these additional modes available to them to respond to the stimuli and express their interpretation of the situation presented. These interpretations are privy to the collaborators with whom the participants work and are subject to negotiation with these partners, to affect a shared response to the dramatic task.

The use of objects or props and other resources such as the addition of music are imbued with significance when employed within the fictional context. The teachers' and pupils' work can employ their creativity and imagination to explore and convey their versions of events. Artistic education is its own reward as the improvisatory nature of drama facilitates the potential unfurling of the imagination. This is made tangible through the expression of the group and the presentation of their work. The artistry of this work is shared amongst the other participants in the group, not as audience members but as 'spect-actors' (Boal, 1995), vested in the action.

The variety of modes of exploring and reflecting on the drama content created and presented engages multiple intelligences and modes of learning. In addition to physical modes of creation and expression, the participants draw heavily on language to create meaning. Written responses from participants writing as themselves, or in-role as characters can be used. Responses to the drama, as well as reflection or analysis through art work, such as drawing or sculpting can be facilitated. Through collaborating with others, skills of communication and negotiation are honed, and skills of listening, turn-taking and team work are practised. Via the social art form of theatre, the shared dramatic exploration of the group can foster a sense of shared ownership, identification and community.

Drama-in-education lessons can draw their content from a wide variety of sources. Learning themes current to the class level or interests can be drawn upon. Due to its active learning nature and the multiple modes of learning open to it, it appeals to a variety of learning styles and preferences. It can potentially capture topics from other curricular areas with this unique accessibility. History, for example, can be brought to life as the participant 'lives through' a historical event or era. By learning through the body and senses, an enhanced understanding of the topic can be gained. The complex nature of events or their surroundings may emerge, leading to a more holistic understanding of the topic at hand.

Dorothy Heathcote's innovative approach to education, *Mantle of the Expert*, uses drama as an impetus for productive learning across the curriculum. It is learning through drama. She describes it as taking on an enterprise with the class functioning as people sharing the work of the enterprise or running a project, which can take place over a period of a few weeks. Topics are chosen according to children's interest, for example, life in a medieval monastery⁴. When the students are in role in a fictional context they bring a sense of responsibility to their learning. They engage with the knowledge.

⁴ Chapter 5 in *Drama for Learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education* by Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton deals with the teaching of life in a Medieval Monastery. The topic is introduced with a letter from Bishop Anselm, requesting a book of rules to assist the founding of a house of nuns. The teacher, in role as the Abbott, will read out the letter to the class, inviting the children to take on the roles of monks. In their roles they take on the enterprise of running a medieval monastery in order to write a book of rules. In doing this they grow in expertise in the various roles they play. This can be done in groups – the kitchen, the farm, the scriptorium etc.

According to Heathcote⁵, this is an active, urgent, purposeful view of learning, in which knowledge is to be operated on, not merely to be taken” (p.32). Other areas of the curriculum can be integrated into the drama – language, art, maths, science, history, geography to name but a few. For example, in building a Norman House, the pupils can become Norman architects, builders and carpenters, or in a soup kitchen, issues such as health and safety, volunteers and resources, routines and rotas, making recipes, ordering vegetables, chopping vegetables, sorting leftovers and rubbish into correct bins can be addressed.

In a creative drama lesson, pupils plan how to interpret dramatically a story or poem, a piece of music, or a painting. They review, and if necessary, develop a plot, choose characters, create an imaginary setting, and then improvise dialogue and action. Theatre with children is a highly collaborative process, which encourages cooperation, compromise and commitment. As Patricia Pinciotti in her report *Creative Drama and Young Children* states:

The creative drama process integrates mental and physical activity, engaging the whole child in improvisational and process-oriented experiences. These dramatic learning activities nurture and develop both individual and group skills and enhance the participants' abilities to communicate their ideas, images, and feelings in concert with others through dramatic action.

(Pinciotti, 1993, p.24)

Arts for arts sake

In *The Arts and the Creation of Mind, What the Arts Teach and How It Shows* (2002) Elliot Eisner outlines ‘Ten Lessons the Arts Teach’.

1. The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships.
2. The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution.
3. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives.
4. The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem-solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity.
5. The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know.
6. The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects.
7. The arts teach students to think through and within a material.
8. The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said.
9. The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source.
10. The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolises to the young what adults believe is important.

⁵ Dorothy Heathcote’s archives have been donated, recently, to Trinity College Library to be housed and managed.

Claims that education in the arts leads to achievement in other academic subjects have been used to justify arts education in schools. However, a note of caution is voiced in Harvard's Project Zero's *"Reviewing Education and the Arts Project"* (REAP) (2000) which investigated the validity of such claims through a statistical examination of prior studies that met scientific criteria, including experimental designs with control or comparison groups. It warns: "Instrumental claims for the arts are a double-edged sword.... If the arts are given a role in our schools because people believe the arts cause academic improvement, then the arts will quickly lose their position if academic improvement does not result" (REAP, 2000, Executive Summary, p.1).

The report *Beyond the Soundbite: What the Research Actually Shows About Arts Education and Academic Outcomes* (2002) looked at a synthesis of existing studies on the relationship between teaching and learning in the arts and measures of academic achievement. In four out of seven studies, REAP's Mia Keinanen, Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner found a small relationship between dance education and improved reading in five to 12 year-olds. The other three studies showed that dance education improved achievement in nonverbal reasoning (visual-spatial skills, both moving and visualising in space). Based on twenty five music studies, REAP found evidence that listening to music leads to temporary improvement in spatial-temporal reasoning. In nineteen of the music studies, the evidence suggested that learning to make music improves spatial-temporal reasoning, and six studies indicated that further music training improves math and enhances reading. REAP also found evidence in eighty studies that classroom drama training led to achievement in a variety of verbal areas such as understanding of enacted stories, reading readiness and achievement, verbal language and writing.

However, arts educators must not allow the arts to be justified in terms of what the arts can do for academic achievement. The arts must be justified in terms of what the arts can teach that no other subject can teach. The arts offer a way of thinking unavailable in other disciplines. The arts are good for our children, irrespective of any non-arts benefits that the arts may in some cases have.

The arts are a fundamentally important part of culture, and an education without them is an impoverished education leading to an impoverished society. Studying the arts should not have to be justified in terms of anything else. The arts are as important as the sciences: they are time-honoured ways of learning, knowing, and expressing.

(REAP, 2000, Executive Summary, p. 6)

Concluding comment

A life without the arts is a life without insight into what it means to be human. In *Art as Experience* (1934), John Dewey suggests that when we begin to create and respond to the arts ourselves, we kindle the fires of emotion, perception and appreciation. We look underneath the surface realities of the world. We release our imagination.

The arts have existed since the beginning of recorded time. From ancient drawings on caves in the Pyrenees Mountains to graffiti on urban walls in inner cities; from the theatres of ancient Greece to the great concert halls of the world, the arts are powerful carriers of cultural meaning. In *Releasing the Imagination* (1995), Maxine Greene writes that once we begin to imagine other possibilities, we cultivate a lively and authentic curiosity for the world. The development of curiosity and wonder creates a personal and social consciousness that is necessary for living in our culturally diverse

world. By setting students on a lifelong journey with the arts, we encourage ongoing, informed perception, appreciation and relationship with the people of the world.

If students are to fully embrace the rich and diverse cultures of the world; if they are to live up to their full cognitive potential; if they are to be prepared for living and working in a technologically driven world; and if they are to live a life alive and wide-awake to the possibilities yet to come, the promise of the arts as basic education must be realised.

Creativity and the Arts in Education in Ireland

The development of the arts in education in Ireland

At various periods of our history, the arts and arts education have played a significant part in Irish society. From our earliest Celtic tradition we have the legacy of monuments such as Newgrange as well as the magnificent heritage of richly-ornamented bronze and gold artefacts. The Bardic schools played a key role in ensuring provision and continuity in educating future generations in the artistic traditions of the time. In the Monastic period, Ireland produced the illuminated manuscripts, religious objects of great beauty and remarkable stone sculpture. Once again, education in these arts played a pivotal role in the society of the time.

The subsequent decline of the monasteries and of royal patronage together with centuries of colonisation resulted in the downgrading of the social status of native Irish art and culture with a consequent decline in artistic and cultural education.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Dublin, in particular, gained in cultural status and a strong tradition of urban architecture and design emerged. During this time also, native traditions of oral poetry, music and dance survived albeit surreptitiously for the most part. The early twentieth century brought the Gaelic Revival when Irish poets, dramatists and novelists began to gain in national and international stature and significance.

Until the latter years of the twentieth century, the arts did not play a central role in the Irish school curriculum. Earlier education policy was focused more on national structures than on the content of the curriculum, which was almost exclusively focused around reading, writing and arithmetic. The challenge to ensure attendance in school also overshadowed the development of the curriculum.

In the nineteenth century, the curricular policy of the national school system concentrated on the provision of a basic minimum education for everybody. The main aim was the development of literacy in the English language and the attainment of a level of numeracy. A broader and more child-centred approach was introduced in 1900. This made singing, drawing and physical education compulsory in national schools. The establishment of the Irish Free State brought further change with the emphasis on the restoration of the Irish language.

The curriculum for national schools as devised in the early years of the Irish Free State remained in being, with only minor alterations, until the new curriculum of 1971 was introduced. The prescribed programme tended to be narrow, with Irish, English, arithmetic and singing forming the main core, while some history, geography and algebra were taught in senior classes. The introduction of the compulsory primary

certificate in 1943 led, once again, to narrowing of the focus of the curriculum to Irish, English and arithmetic.

By the time free secondary education for all was established in the 1960s, significant progress had been made since the dark days of the turn of the century, when the chief concerns were children's physical wellbeing and improvements in buildings and the school environment. It is not surprising that the arts did not figure as a major priority given the preoccupation with basic issues such as literacy, school attendance and physical health. Arts were seen as more of a luxury than a basic right.

However, the post war period from the 1950s onwards saw renewed interest in the arts in education when ideas influenced by progressive educators (in the tradition of Rousseau, Froebel, Pestalozzi, Montessori) which had been developing since the turn of the century, began to gain in popularity.

The pivotal landmark in the post war period in the UK was the *Plowden Report* (1967). This is often criticised as the key text which promoted excesses of child centred, progressive education ideas (Peters, 1969). The report is enthusiastic in its rationale for the teaching of the arts but is concerned with practicalities. Visual art is "both a form of communication and a means of expression of feelings which ought to permeate the whole curriculum and the whole life of the school. A society which neglects or despises it is dangerously sick" (p.247). The section on music has little on aims but is more concerned with practicalities to do with teacher training. It does place emphasis on musical appreciation as well as suggesting that this practice "has lately fallen a little into disrepute" (p.254) and asserting that 'there is a place for listening to good music whether played by the teacher or a visitor or heard by means of recorded sound' (p.254). The report saw a place for drama primarily within English and took a reasonably balanced view on the question of performance, "though some primary school children enjoy having an audience of other children or their parents, formal presentation of plays on a stage is usually out of place" (p.218). Dance is acknowledged and promoted within the section on physical education.

Much of the thinking which influenced the Plowden Report is also evident in *An Cúraclam Nua* (1971) for Irish primary schools. This brought radical change in the philosophy, approach and pedagogy of primary education. The inclusion of imaginative programmes in music, art and craft, drama and mime activities, physical education and dance, as integral parts of the curriculum, was seen as a new era in Irish primary education. However, much of the promised change was unrealised. Inadequate funding of resources, unsuitable school buildings, lack of sustainable professional development for teachers and the continuing spectre of exam pressures ensured that arts education remained the Cinderella of the education system.

In 1979, the Benson Report on *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* stated: "The Irish people have much to be proud of in their past. But the neglect of the arts in Irish education has meant that whole generations have lost the opportunity both of learning about their own artistic history and of acquiring the skills necessary to build upon it" (Benson, 1979, p.16). Martin Drury, Education Officer at the Arts Council, reiterated that statement in 1985, when he stated: "The acknowledged neglect of the arts in education continues". Also in 1985, the Curriculum and Examinations Board spoke of "the indefensible neglect of arts education" in its discussion paper *The Arts in Education*. In 1992, the Green Paper *Education for a Changing World*, did not envisage a role of any significance for the arts. Culture was prescribed in terms of enterprise, education in terms of working for life as a European citizen.

The 1985 Report from the Arts Council on the provision of music education in Irish schools, *Deaf Ears?*, stated that the young Irish person had the worst of all European musical “worlds” and that by any standards the state of music education was not a happy one in Ireland (Herron, 1985, p.50). This report was written prior to the review of the primary curriculum (1990) and the subsequent revision of the curriculum. The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) responded to the Arts Council report in the form of the Music Education National Debate (MEND) initiative. MEND was a comprehensive initiative involving conferences, seminars and the preparation of documentation pertaining to music education, culminating in a final report, which all work of the initiative was drawn together in *MEND A Review of Music Education in Ireland* (Henaghan, 2004). Henaghan acknowledged the developments in curriculum which led to the revised *Primary School Curriculum* in 1999 but highlighted the unequal access across the country to music outside the curriculum and the need for teacher education across the continuum of initial, induction and incareer professional development. Issues addressed by MEND included the continuum of music education provision, performance (to which only a minority have access), assessment, national culture and the place of traditional music, multi-culturalism, third-level music education and a forum for music education.

The process of MEND involved much debate on the philosophy of music education and the place of performance within music education. It also discussed the role of the specialist teacher versus the generalist teacher at primary level, with Professor Richard Colwell of Boston arguing the need for both, with the role of the specialist, who is first an educator, as supplementing the role of the class teacher and engaging in professional development of the class teacher (p.199). However, within MEND, there wasn't consensus on the issue, though there were strong views expressed that the child-centred approach to education at primary level was not good for music education, due to the lack of capability among teachers and a lack of professional development. MEND recommended the establishment of a National Forum for Music Education on a permanent basis, for the processing of issues related to music education in Ireland.

At the National Education Convention (1994) various agencies sought recognition for the centrality of education in the arts. The Minister for Education acknowledged this in her closing address: "the widespread concern we have heard for the place of the arts in education provides us with an agenda for action in this area". The White Paper, *Charting our Education Future*, marked a significant improvement in the standing of the arts. In relation to the primary curriculum, it stated "the Government affirms the centrality of the arts within educational policy and provision, particularly during compulsory schooling" (Government of Ireland, 1995, p.20).

The *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) sought to implement the recommendations of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (1990). It encompassed the philosophical thrust of *Curaclam na Bunscoile 1971* while reflecting the aspirations of the National Convention on Education, and of the White Paper on Education, *Charting our Education Future* (1995) which stated that "A good arts education develops the imagination, as a central source of human creativity" (1995, p.20) and the Education Act 1998 which specifically refers to promoting the development of the arts and other cultural matters as a particular function for schools (Education Act, 1998, Section 9 (f)).

Today, it is fair to say that the arts are generally alive and well in Irish schools, and there have been many innovative arts initiatives. One need only enter schools with their bright murals, student-created sculptures and enthusiastic dramatic and musical performances to know that something special is alive in primary arts education. Hopefully, progress has been made from the “stereotype of the arts in many Irish schools” as outlined by

Benson (1979, p.20) who contends that the arts “are often judged to be more interesting than useful, and their most significant contribution is frequently conceived of as a pleasant means of passing time. It is no accident that Friday afternoon is such a popular time for art and craft in the primary school. A set of subjects regarded and treated as unimportant will become peripheral in the curriculum” (Benson, 1979, p.20).

Music Network published a report in 2003 on *A National System of Local Music Education Services*, which led to the Department of Education and Science establishing Music Education Partnerships (MEPs) on a pilot basis in Dublin and Donegal under the auspices of the VECs. These partnerships provided support to primary schools in implementing the music curriculum and provided individual and group tuition in music. The MEPS succeeded in enabling more children to engage with music closer to home, and were considered successful projects but additional funding would be required to extend MEPs to other areas and this was not forthcoming. It is of note that the School Completion Programme offers support in music to schools participating in the programme.

The Special Committee on the Arts and Education was established in 2006 by the Minister for the Arts, Sport and Tourism, in conjunction with the Minister for Education and Science. The Report of the Committee, *Points of Alignment* (2007), has been the subject of detailed discussions between the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the Department of Education and Science and the Arts Council. While acknowledging that the Department of Education and Science is increasingly open to the enrichment of the curriculum and of the wider educational agenda by artists and arts’ organisations external to the school and that limited support is provided through teacher education and professional development, research, and social inclusion, the report views the lack of a dedicated budget for the provision of arts-in-education programmes as a significant constraint: “Arts provision for children and young people both in and out of school is arguably the single greatest fault line in our cultural provision.” (Arts Council, 2007, Summary, p.2). The Report makes several recommendations including the establishment of a National Arts-in-Education Development Unit to enable partnership, mutual understanding and joint actions by the arts and education sectors.

The report concludes with an essay by Dr. John Coolahan, Emeritus Professor of Education at NUI Maynooth in which he locates the arts within recent developments in the wider education scene in Ireland and within other relevant developments affecting provision for children and young people. He acknowledges that many valuable developments have taken place albeit in the absence of a coordinated or comprehensive plan of action. Thousands of young people have benefited from arts experiences, in and out of school and many productive partnerships have been established between arts organisations and schools. However, he concludes that “one of the great deficiencies has been the lack of a coherent vision or cohesive national plan” (Arts Council, 2007, p.45). Among other things, this has led to much fragmentation, and lack of co-ordination. The full potential of what is currently available is not being realised, and there is a lack of a cohesive development plan to expand provision. He advises that a number of significant attitudinal, structural and resourcing changes need to take place and states that “incorporation of the arts as an integral part of a holistic education would also be very much in keeping with Ireland’s image internationally as a country which has been blessed with artists of world renown, in a variety of artistic fields” (Arts Council, 2007, p.44).

The Primary School Curriculum 1999

The *Primary School Curriculum* (PSC) (1999) celebrates the uniqueness of the child and is designed to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life, including the aesthetic. It seeks to enrich the child's life as a child and to lay the foundations for happiness and fulfilment in later education and in adult life. The curriculum recognises the importance of developing the full potential of the child, to develop children's capacity for creative expression and response, to think critically and to learn how to learn. The rationale for arts education is outlined in the introduction to the curriculum as follows:

The curriculum enables the child to perceive the aesthetic dimension in every area. This enriches the learning experiences for the child and the different aspects of conceptual development. The uniqueness of the child is perhaps most apparent in the innate creativity of each individual, while valuing the child's creative response and expression of perceptions, insights, interpretations and knowledge is an important principle of the curriculum.

(PSC, 1999, Introduction, p.15)

The PCS outlines three general aims for primary education, which are supported by specific curriculum aims, incorporating a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to children of different ages and stages of development. Referring to the arts and creativity, it is envisaged that in engaging with the curriculum, the child should be enabled to:

- Develop an appreciation and enjoyment of aesthetic activities, including music, visual arts, dance, drama and language
- Develop the skills and knowledge necessary to express himself or herself through various aesthetic activities, including music, visual arts, dance, drama and language

(PSC, 1999, Introduction, pp 34-36)

The human experience is expressed creatively and imaginatively through the arts. Arts education involves both the cognitive and affective domains and "deals with a dimension of experience that contributes uniquely to the child's conceptual development and to the expansion and refinement of their view of the world" (PCS, 1999, Introduction, p.52). The arts education curriculum comprises the visual arts, music and drama and dance is developed through the physical education curriculum. The strands and strand units pertaining to these areas of the primary curriculum are summarized below. The PCS also recognizes the contribution of literature to arts education, which is experienced by pupils through the language curriculum.

The visual arts

The visual arts curriculum provides a menu of a wide range of activities that enable the child to develop sensory awareness, enhance sensibilities and allow the child a particular way to explore and create.

To develop the ability to communicate visually the child should be provided with the opportunity to 'make' art in two and three dimensional areas as well as to look at and respond to art works. An understanding of the visual elements of line, shape, form,

colour and tone, pattern and rhythm, texture and spatial organisation and the associated vocabulary are essential to understanding compositions.

The structure of the content of the programme should be based on the children's own experience, imagination and observations and on their particular stage of development

The six strands of the curriculum are:

1. **Drawing** which allows for creation, expression, clarifying thought and communication;
2. **Paint and colour** which provides for an appreciation and understanding of colour leading to expression of experience, interest and imaginative ideas as well as an awareness of colour in their own work and crafted and designed objects;
3. **Print** which encourages a focus on inventive and functional graphic processes;
4. **Work with Clay** gives opportunities to form and change a material imaginatively and to design and make objects;
5. **Construction** activities provide opportunities to explore the media of 3-D, balance and an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of particular structures; and
6. **Fabric and Fibre** which encourages the child to explore some of the design processes in craft and to appraise various craft materials.

While the development of ideas through imagery provides a balance to other subject areas in the curriculum, the visual arts curriculum must provide challenge and motivation. The six strands of the visual arts curriculum include the two strand units: making art and responding to art.

An adequate supply of resources, including materials and tools, is essential to encourage enthusiasm and interest. Community resources such as parents, artists in the community, galleries, craft centres and TV and DVD programmes, can make valuable contributions to a rich visual arts curriculum. ICT can provide ready access to the work of artists abroad and the widely available computer programmes allow children to merge technology and the creative process.

Assessment is an integral part of the revised curriculum and teachers need to develop criteria based on objective artistic values and identify both potential and progress. A checklist of such criteria would make for easy recording as well as a portfolio of examples of the work. Self assessment through responding to one's own work is another useful assessment tool.

A written plan of work decided by the whole staff but guided perhaps by those who may have particular expertise or interest will provide a clear sense of purpose for the visual arts programme. As a starting point, the exemplars in the Teachers' Guidelines book demonstrate many ways of realising content objectives. Continuous evaluation and reflection ensure the development of these objectives and further quality teaching and learning experiences.

Music

Music is so much part of everyday life that its nature and purpose are rarely questioned. It is a diverse and lifelong activity, enjoyed by people of all ages. As a universal part of all cultures, music exists in a great many forms, for a great many purposes and at many levels of complexity.

(PSC, Teacher Guidelines, Music, 1999, p.2)

The aims of the music curriculum are:

- to enable the child to enjoy and understand music and to appreciate it critically
- to develop the child's openness to, awareness of, and response to a wide range of musical genres, including Irish music
- to develop the child's capacity to express ideas, feelings and experiences through music as an individual and in collaboration with others
- to enable the child to develop his/her musical potential and to experience the excitement and satisfaction of being actively engaged in musical creativity
- to nurture the child's self-esteem and self-confidence through participation in musical performance
- to foster higher-order thinking and lifelong learning through the acquisition of musical knowledge, skills, concepts and values
- to enhance the quality of the child's life through aesthetic musical experience.

As educators, teachers' beliefs, desires and aspirations about what is important in music education are key factors in determining how they seek to fulfil those aims. Music provides children with opportunities to engage with a wide range of musical styles and traditions, to become involved in moving, dancing, illustrating, story telling and making drama. The music curriculum introduces children to music reading and writing, to song singing and to playing classroom instruments.

The music curriculum has three strands:

1. Listening and responding
2. Performing
3. Composing.

The strands are interrelated and activity in one is dependent upon and supportive of understanding in another.

Listening and responding

The listening and responding strand focuses on the importance of active listening leading to meaningful responses. The child should be provided with opportunities to listen to and experience a range of musical pieces and sound sources and should be challenged to respond imaginatively.

Performing

The performing strand emphasises the importance of using the voice both for the sheer enjoyment of performance and as a means through which musical skills may be expanded. Song singing is a vital aspect of the child's early musical development. The development of musical literacy is closely linked with song singing and is expanded through playing simple melodic instruments. In the music curriculum, literacy is explored through its two main components, rhythm and pitch. Opportunities to demonstrate growing confidence and understanding in making music using other music sources are afforded in the strand unit 'Playing instruments'. At first the child performs on tuned and untuned percussion instruments and later experiences melodic instruments (for example tin whistle or recorder).

Composing

The composing strand seeks to develop the child's creativity by providing an avenue for self-expression. The child selects and sequences material from a range of available sound sources, which involves listening and deciding what best suits the essence of what he/she wants to communicate or portray. Finally, the child is given an opportunity to evaluate the composing process and to record his/her work.

The musical elements

Musical activities are suggested within each strand unit that enable the child to develop an awareness of and sensitivity to the inter-related elements of music (pulse, duration, tempo, pitch, dynamics, structure, timbre, texture and style) and to grow in musical understanding.

The school plan will outline the nature and extent of music in the school, acknowledging the social and cultural environment, the varying needs of the children and the available resources. The curriculum recognises that the class teacher is the most appropriate person to teach the music programme while allowing for additional support from colleagues, parents, local music groups and audiovisual resources where these are appropriate.

Assessment, as in other areas of the curriculum, is an integral part of teaching and learning in music. A range of assessment techniques can enrich the learning experience of the child and provide useful information for teachers, parents and others.

Integration is an important principle of the curriculum - links within music itself are referred to as linkage while connections that occur between music and other subject areas are described as integration. Many of the expressive and imaginative aspects of the other arts areas can be supplemented by creative work in music. Music can convey different images to different children, and opportunities should be provided to illustrate responses to music through visual arts. Themes in music may be explored through dance, drama and gymnastics. Integrated themes can be highly motivating and satisfying for the children and are particularly useful in multi-class situations in small schools.

The music curriculum provides opportunities for the development and application of musical concepts and skills through the use of ICT. Children can have opportunities to see and hear various instruments, especially those which may not be readily accessible for them. They can explore sound through electronic media, record their improvisations and compositions and review their work. Performances can be received and transmitted and themes and topics can be prepared and presented in a variety of electronic media and communicated to a wider audience.

The curriculum emphasises active responses and music-making at all levels. This enables the child to gain first-hand experience of what it means to be a listener, performer and composer in the world of music.

Drama

As envisaged in the primary school curriculum, educational drama is a creative process that allows children to explore the full potential of drama as a learning experience (PCS, Teacher Guidelines, Drama, p.2). As stated in the Teacher Guidelines, relating to the drama curriculum, “the essence of drama is the making of story through enactment” (p.2). It is envisaged that “successful drama will reflect life in a realistic or metaphorical way” (p.2). The drama curriculum comprises interrelated activities which enable children to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding (PCS, drama curriculum, p.3).

Drama in the primary school, according to the primary school curriculum, should be process drama or classroom drama. Drama is taught through exploring life through the creation of plot, theme, fiction and make-believe. The curriculum does not wish to dwell on the display element of drama, and teachers are advised that educational drama should not be confused with what may be termed performance drama. However, the curriculum recognizes that performance or display drama has benefits for the pupil but only represents a part of the rich learning and developmental experience that drama has to offer. The highlight of many students' lives may be the opportunity to take part in a play, experiencing the process of rehearsing until the desired outcome is achieved, and often reliving the moment in memory throughout life.

Educational drama is based on life and encompasses the entire range of a child's experience and every facet of his/her personality. Educational drama constitutes a unique way of learning and, therefore, should be an indispensable part of the child's experience in school (PCS, Drama, Teacher Guidelines, p.5). The primary school curriculum contains nine aims and 16 broad objectives. The first aim is to enable children to become drama literate. The first broad objective is to develop the ability to enter physically, mentally and emotionally into the fictional drama context and discover its possibilities through cooperation with others (PCS, Drama, p.9). All class groupings have the same **Strand**, ‘Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding’ and the same three **Strand Units**, ‘Exploring and making drama; Reflecting on drama and Co-operating and communicating in making drama’. The prerequisites for making drama are ‘content, the fictional lens and creating a safe environment. Content is translated into story through the fictional lens. This process enables issues to be distanced making it safe for participants to handle them while they are presented in such a way that the essential elements become clear. The fictional lens through which the content of classroom drama is mediated is focussed differently at the various class levels. By sixth class, children may have a sense of how different genres like the tragic, the comic, the absurd can act as distinctive lenses on reality. The teacher has a crucial role in choosing, focussing and mediating the fictional lens for the children.

The elements of the drama curriculum are: Belief; Role and Character; Action; Place; Time; Tension; and Significance and Genre.

As stated in the Teacher Guidelines, the drama process involves story-making and not merely the acting out of stories (p.42). The Teacher Guidelines deal extensively with

approaches and methodologies for drama, school planning and classroom planning. Issues addressed include, the importance of drama, the continuity of drama, integration, An Ghaeilge, time allocation, special needs, organisational planning, developing staff involvement, sound levels, involving parents, integration of drama with other subject areas and teaching drama to multi-class groups. Assessment in drama is also addressed. The tools for assessment are largely similar to all the other curriculum areas and include teacher observation, teacher designed tasks and tests, work samples, portfolios and projects and curriculum profiles.

Story-making through process or classroom drama, viewed through a fictional lens, with appropriate content, and in a safe environment for the child are essential elements of the drama curriculum. Performance drama has benefits for the child but the curriculum advocates process drama as being the most beneficial way for children to experience drama

Dance

“Dance in education involves the child in creating, performing and appreciating movement as a means of expression and communication. Dance differs from the other aspects of the physical education programme in that the primary concern is with the expressive quality of movement and the enjoyment and appreciation of the aesthetic and artistic qualities of movement”

DES (1999) Primary Physical Education Curriculum

Dance is one of the strand units in the primary school physical education curriculum. It consists of folk and creative dance where the emphasis should be on the enjoyment of dance. As stated in the Primary School Curriculum; “In exploring, creating and performing dances children come to understand that dance is a medium for the expression of ideas, thoughts and feelings” (PCS, Physical Education, 1999, p.9).

An important aspect of folk dancing is being part of a harmonious group where children are fully involved. The spirit of caring and looking after others in a dance is more important than the mechanical movements involved. Children should learn to dance some Irish dances and some folk dances from other countries. The curriculum recommends that folk dance should be taught in a series of lessons, with sections of the dance developed in each lesson. The curriculum also states that steps or movement patterns which may be explored to develop co-ordination should be selected and an appropriate musical accompaniment chosen. It is envisaged that the curriculum will develop an understanding and appreciation of folk dance.

In creative dance children should be given opportunities to develop movements which express and communicate ideas and feelings. They should be given time to practise, discuss and refine their movements. There are four principles of body movement:

1. *What the body can do (body action)*
4. *How the body moves (dynamics)*
5. *Where the body moves (space)*
6. *With whom or with what the movement is taking place*

(PCS, Physical Education, 1999, p.66)

Lessons can be based on any of these principles enabling the children to develop a vocabulary of movement which they can then call upon when creating, performing and appreciating dance. Each dance being taught should be structured with a clear beginning, middle and end. Dance can be performed alone, in pairs or in groups. The importance of choosing an idea or theme and selecting a variety of warm-up routines, when planning a unit of work, is stressed. Teachers consider a broad outline of how the dance might develop, decide on the stimulus to be used – auditory, visual, tactile or kinaesthetic – and decide how to develop the theme into a series of lessons.

Participation and enjoyment are key aspects of the dance curriculum.

Assessment of the arts in the primary school curriculum

Assessment is an essential element of the teaching and learning process. One of its principal purposes is to provide the teacher with continuous detailed information about children's development, their knowledge, their grasp of concepts and their mastery of skills. This in turn leads to a greater understanding of the children and their needs and can help the teacher to design appropriate learning activities that will enable them to gain maximum benefit from the curriculum. This cyclic process of learning, assessment, identifying individual needs, evaluating teaching strategies, and planning future learning experiences is central to effective teaching and learning.

The *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) outlines **why** assessment is important in supporting children's learning, while the *NCCA Assessment Guidelines* (2008) describe **how** teachers can use assessment to make learning more interesting and motivating for children. They contain:

- a variety of assessment methods for gathering information about children's learning, ranging from child-led methods such as self-assessment and conferencing, to teacher-led methods such as teacher-designed tasks and tests, and standardised testing;
- advice to schools on developing, implementing and reviewing their policy on assessment;
- advice on the legislative requirements for schools in communicating information about children's progress and achievement.

Drama: what to assess

Assessment in drama is concerned with monitoring the development of the children's drama skills and concepts and the success with which they learn through an engagement with the three strand units of the curriculum. This entails a consideration of both the drama objectives and the learning objectives inherent in the content.

Exploring and making drama

In this strand the teacher assesses how successfully the child has preserved the impulse for make-believe play and is able to bring belief and spontaneity to the drama. This will manifest itself in the extent to which he/she enters into a role or a character and develops it in the context of the action.

Reflecting on drama

The success of the children's reflection will be seen in the extent to which they use it to create alternative courses for the action that reflect the issues being examined and in their ability to recognise the relationship between story, theme and life experience.

Co-operating and communicating in making drama

This will be seen in his/her ability to contribute to the shaping of the drama, both in discussion about it and as the action takes place. It will also be seen in the success with which the child develops fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters as the drama progresses.

Visual arts: what to assess

Assessment in the visual arts takes place as the child engages in the creative process of making art, when a piece of art work is completed and while making a personal response to art works. Although much of what can be achieved in visual arts education is observable, assessment should not be confined to skills and techniques. It should also identify the understandings, the attitudes and levels of commitment and the responses the child develops in the process of making art and of developing critical and aesthetic awareness.

Assessment should be concerned with:

- the child's ability to make art
- the child's ability to look with understanding at and respond to art works
- the quality of the child's engagement with art.

All three are interrelated and are assessed on the basis of

- perceptual awareness
- expressive abilities and skills
- critical and aesthetic awareness
- disposition towards art activities.

Music: what to assess

The first aspect of assessment will be concerned with the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes within the strands.

- *Listening and responding*
- *Performing*
- *Composing.*

In the *listening and responding* strand, assessment will link the two strand units 'exploring sounds' and 'listening and responding to music' by addressing the range of responses the child makes to music.

Assessment in the *composing* strand will examine the process, i.e. the efforts of the child to illustrate new musical ideas by improvising, composing and arranging sounds, alone

or with others, in ways that involve imagination, originality and risk-taking and that demonstrate control of musical materials and use of musical elements.

In the *performing* strand the extent to which children exhibit the skills and commitment required to demonstrate a sense of pulse, imitate simple rhythms and sing or play simple melodies will be assessed. In first to sixth classes the child's emerging understanding of invented or standard musical notation may also be noted.

The musical elements

The development of understanding of musical elements (pulse, duration, tempo, pitch, dynamics, structure, timbre, texture and style) should form an equally important aspect of assessment, interwoven as they are with the strand units, as outlined in the content statement.

Assessment tools: how to assess

The following assessment tools are recommended in all areas of the curriculum, including the arts:

Teacher observation

Most teacher observation is unrecorded. However, it can be useful to make brief notes from time to time about particular learning achievements or requirements of individual children so that you have something concrete to report to parents or other teachers who may be involved with the child.

Teacher designed tasks and tests

This approach to assessment is more structured than teacher observation and involves planning an activity designed specifically to indicate the child's ability to handle particular skills and concepts.

Work samples, portfolios and projects

This dimension of assessment is basically a collection of children's work. It can be a collection of graphic/pictorial scores in music, a written or visual art response to a piece of drama or music, photographs of children's engagement with the process of making art, for example. Children's work in music can also be recorded on an MP3 player or on free downloadable software such as Audacity, while their engagement with drama can be videoed. This approach can involve an element of self assessment by the children if they are given some input/choice as to what they want to include in their portfolio. (see 2 stars and a wish below under self assessment)

Curriculum profiles

Curriculum profiles comprise short descriptive statements about the child's achievement in the particular curricular area. Levels of achievement would be linked to curricular objectives and would be measured against a set of indicators scaled in order of complexity, similar to The Drumcondra Profiles in English.

Self assessment by pupils

Both the *Primary School Curriculum* and the *NCCA Assessment Guidelines* for schools encourage teachers to involve children in assessing their own learning from an early stage. There are several strategies that can be used effectively including:

- KWL; The children identify K, what they already know about a particular subject/topic, W, what they want to know and finally after studying the topic they identify L, what they learned.

- 2 stars and a wish; This strategy can be used in conjunction with work samples/portfolios (see above). The children can use this when choosing a piece of work to put into their portfolio. Children identify two things that they were pleased with or that worked well for them and one thing that they could have done better. This strategy could also be used to respond to a piece of visual art, music or drama.
- Success criteria; The teacher provides clear success criteria to the children before allowing them work on a task. The children must check that they have fulfilled the criteria before submitting the finished product. When others, including the teacher, are reflecting on the task they use the success criteria to direct their comments. For example, in improvisational drama, success criteria might include:
 - Good use of space
 - Not turning your back to the audience
 - Clear diction
 - End the drama with the statement provided
- PMI; This strategy is similar to 2 stars and a wish. The children choose a **Plus**, a **Minus** and something **Interesting** about, for example, a painting (Responding to Art) or a piece of music (Listening and Responding).

Evaluation of the arts in the primary school curriculum

To date, evaluations and reviews of the arts curriculum in primary schools have been confined to the visual arts curriculum. However, whole school evaluations in individual schools have considered the arts curriculum as a holistic endeavour, and most WSE reports, other than those which were thematic or focused evaluations, have commented on the arts to some extent. Both the NCCA and the DES carried out comprehensive reviews and evaluations of the visual arts, and their main findings are summarized below. It is encouraging to note that the findings were largely positive.

Primary Curriculum Review: Phase 1: Visual Arts

The Primary Curriculum Review Phase 1 (2005) conducted by NCCA focussed on only one element of the arts education curriculum, namely visual arts. The findings were largely positive. Providing a breadth of visual arts experience for children (using all six strands) was the greatest success reported by teachers, followed by children's enjoyment of visual arts and children's self-expression through visual arts. There was some concern that many teachers continue to focus mainly on the two-dimensional aspects of the curriculum i.e. Paint and Colour and Drawing. It was recommended that further support and ideas for using the 3-D visual arts strands (clay, construction, fabric and fibre) should be offered to teachers to enable them to implement the full visual arts curriculum.

The primary school curriculum encourages schools and teachers to provide a broad and balanced education for the child by integrating process-based arts education in many aspects of the child's learning. A total of three principals reported using visual arts in other subjects to provide an integrated learning experience for children in their schools. A number of teachers reported integration of visual arts with other subjects as a key

success. Three principals described the success of projects to create integrated learning experiences for children, one of whom explained that there is a sound rationale for engaging with project work that integrates the arts with other areas of the curriculum. Almost half of teachers questioned reported providing opportunities for children to experience the visual arts through theme-based activities which integrate the visual arts curriculum with other subjects *at least a few times a week* while almost another half reported providing these opportunities *once/twice a month*. These figures suggest that teachers have made progress in using thematic or interdisciplinary approaches to learning.

Teachers identified the breadth of children's visual arts experience as their greatest success with the visual arts curriculum. Most teachers attributed children's enjoyment in visual arts to the breadth of their experience with a variety of strands, media and activities. Children's choice of materials and techniques was also used to explain their enjoyment of the subject. A third reason reported by teachers for children's enjoyment focused on the inclusive nature of the visual arts. Teachers noted that the visual arts curriculum offers children with learning difficulties or special needs a chance to be included. The second element of children's self-expression reported on by teachers focused on valuing diversity of children's expression. Almost a fifth of teachers identified children's growing appreciation of art as a success of the visual arts curriculum. Children's increased self-confidence was identified by 16.4% of teachers as a success of the visual arts curriculum. Teachers cited the emphasis on process in the visual arts curriculum, as an important element of children's enjoyment.

Children in the six case-study schools identified visual arts as one of their favourite subjects and then explained what they liked most about it. Children's enthusiasm for the four newer strands of the visual arts curriculum (print, construction, clay, fabric and fibre), contrasts to some extent with teachers' low ratings of usefulness for (and perhaps use of) these strands.

Colour was the most frequently-cited visual element mentioned by teachers, followed by line, shape, texture, pattern & rhythm, form and spatial organization. A third of teachers reported that children in their classes have opportunities to see how artists, craftspeople and designers work with(in), and in response to, their environments.

Individual work is the most frequently-reported organizational setting used by teachers. These findings suggest that children have limited opportunities to develop socially and personally though groupwork and pairwork, including an appreciation of the benefits to be gained from co-operative effort. Despite this finding a majority of teachers reported that children in their class(es) have opportunities to discuss and talk about their own and others' work in visual arts.

Teachers reported an increased status of visual arts in their schools. Class size, classroom space, classroom organization, time, classroom planning and lack of resources were the most frequently-cited challenges faced by the teachers.

Visual Arts: An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation (DES 2005)

The implementation of the visual arts curriculum was found to be generally successful. In most classrooms a significant profile was given to the subject and pupils were encouraged to explore, interpret and enjoy art activities. The majority of teachers were found to have comprehensively embraced the principles of the curriculum and displayed a willingness to experiment with different approaches in order to foster creativity.

However, in a few classrooms it was found that activities were almost entirely teacher-directed, with an overemphasis on copying and the production of “template” or formulaic art, at the expense of creativity.

In the majority of classes teachers’ individual long-term planning was found by the inspectors to be good. It was related to the school plan and to the content and structure of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). In these classrooms a balanced approach to the exploration of the six strands and two strand units were outlined in their school plans with equal emphasis given to the *looking and responding* and *making art* strand. The development of an appropriate visual vocabulary and activities in two-dimensional and three-dimensional media were well planned for, also.

Teachers’ short-term planning was found to be good in a little less than half the classrooms visited. Specific reference to the content objectives of the curriculum and to the development of concepts and skills linked to the age, ability and interest of pupils was commended here. In more than half the classrooms, however, planning weaknesses were found in the lack of detail in the teachers’ written preparation, an over-reliance on lists and topics, inadequate reference to the *looking and responding* strand unit and limited work in three-dimensional media. In many of these schools the emphasis was on the generation of a plan rather than on the collaborative and co-operative nature of the planning process. Dates for review and prioritized action plans were not included. In a third of schools there were difficulties with regard to planning for continuity and progression in the programme offered to pupils. An overemphasis on “template” or replica art was found in teachers’ individual planning in a minority of schools. While the majority of teachers did not plan for individual differences in visual arts, the inspectors commented favourably on the positive elements of practice observed.

The six strands *drawing, paint and colour, print, clay, construction* and *fabric and fibre* were being implemented effectively in the majority of schools visited. Good features included creativity, the use of a wide range of media, materials and tools, an understanding and appreciation of colour from the observation of natural and manufactured objects, talk and discussion and the development of techniques and skills. Good practice in engagement with the *clay* strand was found in the majority of classrooms observed. However, there was little reference to this strand in teachers’ planning. There was little evidence of the inclusion of *construction* in teachers’ planning or practice in two-fifths of the classrooms visited. Weak practice was observed in the strands *print* and *fabric and fibre* in a number of classrooms. Personnel from artists-in-residence schemes and from arts centres had been invited to many schools. Several schools afforded pupils the opportunity to visit museums, galleries and craft centres.

The inspectors found that the *looking and responding* strand unit was explored in slightly more than two-thirds of classrooms. However, while particular emphasis was placed on pupils’ looking at and responding to their own work and to the work of their peers, little or no emphasis was placed on *looking and responding* to the work of artists in all six strands. In almost a third of classrooms an overemphasis was placed on the *making art* strand unit to the exclusion of the *looking and responding* strand unit.

One of the most significant omissions in whole-school policies was the lack of reference to a systematic and coherent approach to the assessment of pupils in the visual arts. Recommendations were made that whole-school policies should include reference to a systematic approach to the assessment of pupils, that teachers require specific advice and guidance on how to assess pupils’ progress and achievement in this area of the curriculum and that the NCCA should provide teachers with guidance on appropriate assessment strategies in visual arts.

The potential of ICT to broaden pupils' experience and understanding of the visual arts was not exploited in most primary schools. It was recommended that additional guidance should be provided to teachers that would facilitate the use of these resources.

The majority of teachers acknowledged positively the assistance and guidance received from the support services, School Development Planning Support (SDPS) initiative and the Regional Curriculum Support Service, in making possible the continuous development of school planning.

Parents' involvement in supporting the visual arts in schools appears to be limited. Parents were found to be involved only occasionally in policy formation or in contributing to and organising learning resources for the school in this curriculum area.

It was recommended that all six strands and the two strand units should be implemented in a consistent manner, and that each pupil should have a balance of art activities and experiences in each strand. An equal emphasis should be placed on the strand units *making art* and *looking and responding to art*.

Arts education in Northern Ireland primary schools

In 1989, the arts, that is 'music' and 'art', became statutory subjects under the Northern Ireland (Common) Curriculum. In essence these areas, like all subjects, mirrored the post-primary provision. That is each subject was presented as a discrete set of requirements which were intended to be taught in separate, timetabled lessons. Each subject under this arrangement contained a great deal of content and indeed it was rare in practice for teachers to be able to teach all that was in the syllabi or "Programmes of Study" in any subject area apart from those tested in the '11plus' examination.

For this and many other reasons the curriculum was generally regarded as unsatisfactory and a process of revision was undertaken. The aim of this process was not only to reduce the content to manageable proportions but to return to the first principles of primary education by applying the most up to date research findings on how children learn and by giving more freedom and autonomy to teachers. Most significantly, a complete break was intended with the discrete subject model and also a return to best practice in the cross-curricular approach underlay the model.

The primary phase of the curriculum comprises three stages: the Foundation Stage (years 1 and 2), Key Stage 1 (years 3 and 4), and Key Stage 2 (years 5, 6 and 7). The curriculum is set out in six areas of learning of which 'the arts' is one, comprising Art and design, drama and music. However, although the areas of learning are set out separately, the curriculum states that teachers should, where appropriate, integrate learning across the six areas to make relevant connections for children. This connectedness underpins the curriculum and has great significance for the arts. If this philosophy is followed to its conclusion then the arts will cease to be 'Cinderella' subjects and will achieve equal weight and status with other areas.

The NI Curriculum lays great emphasis on freedom and creativity. The document states, "art and design, drama and music provide rich opportunities for developing creativity, allowing children to express their ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world in diverse ways, through pictures, sound, drama and dance" (p.69). It is further stated that "the greater the encouragement children receive to express themselves freely through art and design, drama and music, the greater likelihood there is that children's individuality, imagination and creativity will blossom" (p.69).

There are many signs that schools are making great efforts to implement this approach to teaching the arts. To take one example the “Musical Pathways to Learning” programme is currently attracting increasing interest and it is likely that similar programmes will emerge as schools seek more sophisticated and effective methods of meeting very challenging expectations. It is intended that the revised curriculum will be fully operational in all Northern Ireland primary schools by 2012 and the schools’ inspectorate is currently acting on that premise.

Regarding support for the arts in Northern Ireland’s primary schools, provision for instrumental music is considered systematic and quite good. Music tuition is provided by peripatetic tutors from each of the five Education and Library Boards. Two of those in particular - the Belfast Board and the Western Board (covering Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh) - place great emphasis on a very high standard of instrumental achievement. In Derry, schools also set great store on success in ‘Feiseanna’ and a high musical profile is regarded as a sign of a “good” school. Whether these forms of provision will continue and be highly valued is open to question. In particular, the abolition of the Education and Library Boards and their replacement by a single Education and Skills Authority (ESA) covering all six counties may challenge existing local pride in high musical standards.

The position regarding visual arts activities is much more diverse. All provision tends to be ‘in house’ and is dependent for success on individual teachers with particular expertise or a love for the subject although from time to time additional resources can be provided in the form of a ‘tie-in’ with community based projects. Unfortunately in the present economic climate funding for these is likely to be very scarce in future. Drama, apart from the seasonal ‘school show’, follows a largely similar path to that of visual arts but can benefit from associations with music through dance and musical theatre.

In the Catholic maintained sector the arts have benefited from the need to publicly mark events in the liturgical calendar and in all sectors assemblies and similar activities also create a demand for pupils who can express themselves through music, drama or the visual arts.

In conclusion, therefore, the arts in Northern Ireland’s primary schools are entering a period of great change, challenging certainly in many ways but also providing abundant opportunities for greater engagement with the majority of our children as well as continuing to encourage high standards among the most talented individuals.

Supports for Arts in the Primary School

Introduction

This chapter describes a number of supports available to primary schools to support the arts curriculum. As described in the previous chapter, the primary arts curriculum is aimed at providing pupils with a broad experience of the arts during their primary school years. The revised curriculum for the arts has been welcomed by teachers, though it provides challenges as teachers seek to ensure that all strands and strand units of the arts curriculum are experienced by their pupils. The Department of Education and Science (DES), which has overall responsibility for curriculum matters, as advised by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), has provided some support to schools to enrich the curriculum in the arts through their support of arts organizations and the provision of professional development opportunities for teachers, though minimal. However, as outlined in The Report of the Special Committee on The Arts and Education, *Points of Alignment*, the Department has no dedicated budget for arts-in-education, which is seen as a significant constraint (Arts Council, 2007).

The Arts Council and the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism have a different but complementary remit of promoting the arts for all citizens, including citizens of school-going age. Both government departments and the Arts Council share a common concern for best practice in the domain of arts-in-education work. Many of the supports for schools that are described in this chapter are funded either directly or indirectly by the Arts Council.

The Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS)

The Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) subsumes and develops the work of the former Primary Curriculum Support Service (PCSP) and School Development Planning Support (SDPS). It provides professional development support to primary schools and is funded by the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Science⁶.

The core work of PPDS advisors is located in schools where they support individual teachers, groups of teachers and whole staffs in implementation of the primary school curriculum and in organisational and development planning.

⁶ From September 2010 the PPDS has been subsumed into a new Professional Development Service for Teachers, which incorporates both primary and post-primary schools

In-class modelling

In-class modelling, which may be a single lesson or a series of lessons, is an integral feature of the in-class support offered by the PPDS. Modelling comprises a series of stages that include dialogue with teachers before and after the modelled session. The PPDS advisor meets with the teacher to identify his or her needs. For example, in music the teacher may want support in the 'composing' strand. The advisor discusses why this strand is posing difficulty and what experience of music the class have had to date so that he or she can plan a lesson or series of lessons based on this information. During the post-modelling dialogue the teacher has an opportunity to discuss how he or she might develop the lesson himself or herself or how he or she might integrate it with other areas of the curriculum.

Facilitating the school planning day/staff meeting/post-holders meeting

Advisors can assist schools in facilitating, structuring and managing the planning day so that the development-planning process is used to address the school's priorities.

A school may wish to review drama in the school, for example. This review will help identify strengths as well as weaknesses in relation to the implementation of the music curriculum in the school. From this review decisions can be made as to how the strengths can be best utilised and how identified weaknesses will be addressed. This may result in some teachers deciding that they would benefit from in-class modelling to develop their own confidence or attend a music course in the local education centre. This will all inform the school plan in drama.

As schools may only close for one day for the purposes of school development planning, and an advisor may not be available to facilitate a school on their chosen day, advisors may also be available to facilitate a staff or in-school management meeting.

School clusters

Schools within a region may cluster to access the support of an advisor. This is particularly useful for smaller schools that have similar needs. It allows for dialogue and sharing of expertise and ideas between teachers. The focus of support is agreed between the participating schools and the PPDS advisors in advance.

After school workshops and courses

After schools workshops and courses can be provided either in a school or in an Education Centre, in collaboration and co-operation with the Education Centre.

Teacher Professional Communities (TPCs)

The PPDS works in conjunction with Dublin West Education Centre (DWEC) to create, develop and support communities of learners among primary teachers called Teacher Professional Communities (TPCs). The purpose of the TPC is to "enable the collective development of new knowledge, skills and competencies, new resources and new shared identities and motivation to work together for change" (Fullan).

A TPC may be initiated by a group of teachers who share an interest in a particular curricular area or who share a common challenge, for instance teaching in the infant classroom, language support teaching or teaching in the multi-class context.

PPDS website

There are many materials and resources available on the PPDS website at www.ppds.ie covering all curricular and organisational areas. In addition, materials from the EAL and Child Protection seminars are available in addition to many publications.

The Arts Council

The Arts Council is both a funder of organisations which provide services such as theatre-in-education or recitals in schools, and a direct service provider itself. For many years, the Council operated schemes that it had initiated such as Writers-in-Schools and Artists-in-Residence-in-Schools, as well as a School Exhibitions programme. Lately, the Council has become more strategic, delegating some of its own school services to appropriate organisations and funding directly (or indirectly through its support of local authority arts programmes) an increasing range of arts-in-education projects.

The Arts Council supports the arts among young people in non-formal settings also. The term 'children and young people' is not synonymous with 'pupils and students'. Children and young people are seen as citizens with cultural needs and entitlements, as individuals, as members of families and in communities. Therefore, the Arts Council supports youth arts in the community in addition to its central role in supporting the arts in the formal education sector.

Schools Exhibition Linkage Programme

In 1986, the Arts Council wrote to 20 Irish artists asking them to contribute to an exhibition on the theme of school. The Schools Show was followed by seven other touring exhibitions. These exhibitions are now part of a Schools' Exhibition Linkage Programme, a project involving Education Centres and the Arts Council. The Education Centres provide a programme of arts activities to enable young people, teachers and the wider school community to engage with the artwork. They actively encourage visits by school groups and establish links with schools interested in hosting an exhibition.

Case Study - The Tokens Project

In January 2007, the Arts Council announced it was seeking applications from the ten Education Centres currently housing one of the Schools' Exhibitions to develop a programme around their exhibition in collaboration with an Artist and school groups. The **Donegal Education Centre** applied for the funding with **Joanna Parkes** (Drama Facilitator) and **Joe Brennan** (Story Teller) to run a five week Arts Programme introducing the *Tokens* exhibition to 6th class pupils in Donegal, through a combined programme of drama and storytelling, with a view to enhancing access to the arts for pupils in isolated rural schools. The Arts Council awarded €7,940 in funding to Donegal Education Centre under its *Schools' Exhibition Project Scheme* fund. This pilot scheme was open to the 10 Education Centres hosting the Arts Council's specially commissioned Schools' Exhibitions. The scheme provides opportunities for schools to interact with contemporary Irish art in collaboration with one or more artists. The funding is aimed at developing a project that focuses on the exhibition.

The aims of the five week projects were to give the pupils an opportunity to:

- Engage critically and creatively with the work of professional, contemporary artists
- Engage as witnesses and as practitioners in a multi-disciplinary arts process
- Experience the life-enhancing pleasure to be derived from high-quality arts experiences which stimulate their natural sense of wonder and curiosity
- Make connections between art, school, learning and their own lives and experiences.

The objectives of the project were for the pupils to:

- Engage in a series of imaginative, explorative workshops with a focus on drama, story and creative writing
- Respond to and reflect on the sculptures in their own individual way and to participate in the whole-group responses and interactions
- Reflect on their time in primary school and prepare to transfer to secondary school.

The artists worked with four different groups of 6th class pupils - aged 11 to 12. There were approximately 80 pupils involved from seven schools. All of the pupils came from small rural schools. Due to low numbers in some schools two of the groups consisted of pupils from several schools who came together to participate in the project. The pupils headed to the same secondary schools in September so an additional benefit of the project was that they had already made connections with each other before starting in their new schools.

This project was supported by the **Rural Schools' Support programme**, under the **DEIS programme**. Schools were located around **Carrick, Kilcar, Dunkineely and Glencolmcille**. The schools' support co-ordinator, John Gillespie, was the link between the schools, the Education Centre and the artists on this particular project.

The artists visited the schools for four weeks, bringing a different sculpture out to the schools each week. The sculptures were designed so that they could be easily transported and therefore be moved relatively easily from school to school. Each week the Artists designed a programme that included some drama activities, a storytelling activity and exercises which build up concentration skills through focusing on the senses. The classes were encouraged to work in a range of small groups and on a variety of activities each week. On the fifth and final week all the classes were invited to the Education Centre in Donegal town to view all eight sculptures and to find connections between themselves, the sculptures and the artists' philosophy and ideas about their piece. They were also encouraged to think about different types of intelligences and to explore different ways of being clever.

The Ark

The Ark, Europe's first custom-built Children's Cultural Centre, programmes, promotes and hosts high quality cultural work which is by children, for children and about children. It is a charitable organisation, founded on the principle that all children, as citizens, have the same cultural entitlements as adults.

The Ark manifests this belief by presenting programmes across the arts of the highest quality, in association with leading professionals. From classical to popular and traditional to cutting edge, The Ark is both setting standards and exploring new dimensions in children's arts provisioning.

The Ark's social policy is to be as inclusive as possible while working within available financial resources. The Ark has organized a number of projects for children who are particularly disadvantaged socio-economically.

The Ark has also undertaken large outreach initiatives, where staff members work intimately with children from disadvantaged communities as well as children in a variety of health care environments.

Artist in Schools Scheme (Local Authorities)

The Artist in Schools Scheme facilitates a professional artist to make a series of visits to a school in his/her local county, to work with students on a specific project. Projects can range across all art forms. Most local authorities run this scheme.

Writers in Schools Scheme (Poetry Ireland)

To empower the participant by facilitating a magical and memorable experience through the imaginative, emotional and intellectual energy and belief in language that the writer brings to the classroom.

(Writers in Schools Scheme Mission statement)

The Writers in Schools Scheme part-funds visits by writers and storytellers to schools throughout the Republic of Ireland. There are over 250 writers and storytellers for schools to choose from on the Writers in Schools Web-Directory of Writers. It is one of the longest running arts-in-education programmes in Ireland. 2007 marked the 30th anniversary of the Scheme, run by Poetry Ireland and funded by the Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

There are two types of visits. The duration of the **A type** visit is 120 - 150 minutes. The **B type** visit consists of a writer or storyteller spending 300 minutes in a school. Visits can be divided into separate group sessions. An **A type** visit, for example, could consist of three 45 minute sessions with different class groups/ age levels. When a school selects a writer or storyteller they would like to invite from the WIS Web-Directory of Writers, contact is made to see if they are available. Once a date has been agreed between the school and the writer, the school completes an application form and sends it to the Writers in Schools office for funding approval.

INTO Professional Development Unit

Getting to Grips with Drama is a series of six workshops to support teachers in using drama in the primary school classroom, exploring its use as a tool for expression, curriculum implementation and development, which was organized by the INTO Professional Development Unit during the Autumn of 2009. The series was designed as a practical hands-on series of workshops allowing participants time and space to develop their own confidence in the area.

In addition, the PDU also organise a number of summer courses that deal with the Arts in Primary Schools – for example:

- Play to learn: story, drama and interaction across the curriculum
- Visual arts: fun and learning through looking and responding- in collaboration with Coláiste Mhuire, Marino

Ceol Ireland – Stage One Programme is run co-operatively by the INTO Professional Development Unit and Ceol Ireland, and consists of a two hour training session to train teachers in the activities, songs and games that appear in the *Ceol Stage One Programme* www.ceolireland.ie.

Music

Music has been very well supported by both funded and private outreach programmes in the last number of years.

One of the most renowned music programmes for primary schools is the **National Children's Choir**. It has its roots in the European Year of Music (1985) when Sean Creamer, a music inspector in the Department of Education and Science decided to celebrate the event in a unique way. With the support of a number of teachers, a large group of 4th, 5th and 6th class children learned and performed a repertoire of songs in public. Since then more than 85,000 children have enjoyed the experience of singing with the National Children's Choir. The choir is now organised by a committee who compile and provide a repertoire in vocal score format and on teaching CDs, organise summer courses for teachers interested in learning the repertoire and organise local rehearsal schedules for clusters of schools around the country. An average of 8,000 children participate bi-annually. The repertoire is taught as part of the normal school music programme.

Music in the Classroom is another very successful national initiative. It was started in 1989 when RTE and the Irish Times joined with keen musical enthusiast Gearóid Grant, a musician and music teacher. Their vision was to introduce orchestral music to primary school children. The initial resource of five audio tapes and teacher's manual grew to encompass a series of concerts performed by the RTE National Symphony and Concert Orchestra. Today, 40,000 children aged six to twelve years from primary schools around the country attend these concerts every year. The release of an updated version of the teaching resource in CD format generated funds that allowed for the production of Music in the Classroom Magazine, which is now published twice yearly.

Heritage in the Schools is a Heritage Ireland's scheme administered by the INTO. This is a nationwide programme which offers a panel of heritage specialists to visit primary schools and work directly with the children. Schools in Galway can avail of a music programme called Archaeology and Traditional Music, Dance and Song. Simon O'Dwyer, the facilitator is Ireland's only specialist in the musical instruments of prehistory. The presentation begins with the earliest habitation and progresses through the ages with a series of stories and tunes that are played on appropriate instruments at given times. The instruments include stone and bone whistles, stone percussion, musical bow, animal horns, bodhrán, bronze horns, Celtic trumpas and early medieval horns. The story ends with the coming of St. Patrick and the beginning of history. Children are encouraged to participate and answer questions throughout. The number of children who attend a presentation may vary depending on the space available (approximately 50, preferably less). The presentation normally runs for an hour and a half. Since 2002, Ancient Music Ireland has visited more than a 1,000 schools. The combination of story, music and imagery is an effective way to bring the ancient past to life and gives the children a sense of the passing of time and the evolution of people. This is particularly relevant with the emphasis placed on linkage and integration in the primary school curriculum.

The Arts Council fund many music initiatives for schools and local music groups through their Young People and Children Education (YPCE) scheme. The scheme tries to ensure that music is available to all irrespective of means, ability, geography, age or experience. Some of the funded musical programmes are:

Baboró: Leading annual international multi-arts festival, which programmes performances, outreach and workshops in theatre, dance, music, literature, opera, visual

arts and puppetry, specifically for children and families. Baboró takes place every October in Galway city and county.

National Youth Orchestra of Ireland: NYOI aims to provide leadership and inspiration to the most talented young Irish musicians, enabling them to expand and extend their classical music education training and experience through national and international performance at the highest professional standards. Through management of the National Youth Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland, NYOI Camerata and the National Youth String Training Orchestra, through annual national auditions and developmental programmes as well as through nationwide performances and radio broadcasts NYOI aims to build up awareness, access and participation in its performing ensembles by talented young musicians across the island of Ireland.

The Irish Association of Youth Orchestras (IAYO) was set up in Ennis in April 1994. It was incorporated as IAYO Ltd. in 1998, and became a registered charity in 2001. Membership of the Association is open to all Youth Orchestras in Ireland, whether linked to a school, a school of music, a college or university, or to an independent or community-based organisation.

The Irish Association of Youth Orchestras is a voluntary, non-profit-making Association, and a registered charity, supported by members' fees and the generous donations of friends. IAYO is grant-aided by the Arts Council. IAYO is a member of the European Association of Youth Orchestras, The National Association of Youth Orchestras (UK), the Forum for Music in Ireland, Jeunesses Musicales Ireland, and Feis Ceoil. One of the main aims of IAYO is to campaign at national level for improvements in access to music training and participation for all young people.

The Liffey Valley Orchestra is a member of IAWO. It was founded originally by Claire Condon in her own home as a recorder group and is self funded by members' fees and some local fundraising. West Dublin is its catchment area and it caters for musicians from eight year old to 60 year old. The group provides access to instruments through the instrument bank and this promotes the creation of a well-balanced orchestra. They have a tutoring system where musicians (grade 7/8 standard) who have progressed through the orchestra tutor new members. The orchestra performs publicly at Christmas and in the summer at the Aula Maxima, NUI, Maynooth. They also participate in the Fiddlers Green Festival in Rostrevor where, as part of their performance, they invite local musicians to join with them.

Simply Music is a percussion performance workshop, which incorporates interactive technology and live music performance. It has been specifically designed to support the music curriculum for primary level for both students and teachers and is supported by the Arts Council of Ireland. Simply Music has designed a series of 15 x two-day workshops within each school, which incorporates a professional musician working within the school context alongside the workshop groups.

Simply Drums: a percussion performance workshop, which incorporates interactive technology and live music performance. Workshop models include: arts-in-education workshops (in school), outreach programmes (arts organisations) and professional development programmes for teachers approved by the Department of Education & Science and The National Concert Hall. The workshops are developed in line with the stages of cognitive development of children within the primary curriculum. They are broken into the learning stages outlined in the primary music curriculum. The cognitive

content, both in terms of the performance aspects of the workshop and the level of interactivity is suited to the abilities of the relevant age group.

The workshops use a combination of technology and performance with a range of percussion instrumentation (including Boomwhackers, on and off screen) and also development of vocal and rhythmic development elements (e.g. action songs). Additionally, within the sessions, Simply Music introduces different forms of musical notation and rhythmic structures as per the music curriculum and which again are suited to the specific age range participating in the workshop.

The workshop uses technology to allow the students to gain confidence in their performance and to learn how to hold and play each instrument correctly. They learn to work independently with their instrument and are supported by the technology, which plays their melodic or rhythmic line in the background to support them and maintain continuity in the performance.

The musicians work with the students to develop their confidence and skills and each child retains through rote a series of rhythmic/melodic patterns which in turn develop into a musical piece which is performed live within the school on the final day of the workshop. The musicians continue to support and create innovative material as the workshop progresses and encourage musical innovation from the children to be incorporated into the final performance.

The outcomes of the workshop provide the students with an increased knowledge of percussion instrumentation, rhythmic and vocal development and musical experience through participation in live performance with teachers and other class groups.

Aspiro (Formerly Carlow Young Artists Choir) offers a musical education of the highest standards through the medium of choral music. Carlow native Mary Amond O'Brien formed Aspiro in September 1997 with the aim of facilitating young people to discover, nurture and experience the artist 'within'. As a world-class choral organisation, Aspiro promotes, develops and achieves self-growth and self-enjoyment in young people by educating a musicianship that lasts throughout and beyond their schooling. Believing in the innate musical potential of all young people, no auditions are required for membership – a unique feature of this hugely successful young choir. Aspiro currently has four ensembles - Junior, Intermediate (girls), Male Voice Squad and Senior. They are currently supported by the Arts Council and Carlow Local Authorities. Music Network, in association with the Arts Council also supported the choir through the Music Capital Scheme 2008.

Other local authorities also offer support in the music area. **Kildare County Council's Arts Service** with Herbert Lodge Arts Centre co-ordinate a music outreach programme. The programme provides quality arts experience for children in their school environment, while also promoting professional musicians living locally. The County Arts Service has established an instrument bank which offers instruments on loan to schools involved in the programme. Many of the children participating in this programme live in rural areas where there may be few opportunities to perform. Providing children with the opportunity to perform publicly is an important strand of the music outreach programme. To this end the Tzipora Children's Music Festival was established. Over 800 children from as many as 23 schools encompassing a broad range of music and song – chamber, percussion, woodwind, traditional and choral – showcase their work annually in Goff's Sales Arena.

Mayo County Council in conjunction with the Arts Council and the National Concert Hall's Learn and Explore Programme provides workshops for primary schools working with the Whistleblast Quartet.

The National Concert Hall provides a variety of musical events throughout the academic year for primary school pupils as well as family music programmes. They also provide professional-development courses for teachers during the summer months. Their "Learn and Explore" section of their website invites schools to put their name on their mailing list. Their main school project is "**Up the Tempo**". Sponsored by Ulster Bank, the project is aimed at bringing music to primary school children around the country. Each residency benefits from a series of music workshops facilitated by musicians from the National Concert Hall Learn & Explore Programme. Children take part in a series of fun and interactive workshops during each residency. This project partners with the Ulster Orchestra who run the 'Up the Tempo' project in Northern Ireland.

Another NCH music initiative for children is the annual staging of Howard Blake's quintessentially Christmas masterpiece "**The Snowman Movie – Live Concert**". The family Christmas special features the animated movie on big screen accompanied by live orchestra. Primary schools are encouraged to participate in the accompanying art competition the winning entry of which will be used as the front cover design of the concert programme for the Christmas show.

Music in the Docklands provides unique opportunities for school pupils to celebrate in music and song. It is sponsored by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority and the Education and Outreach Programme at the National Concert Hall. The project gives children an opportunity to work with music, musical instruments and professional musicians of the highest international standards. The musicians work closely with the children and teachers to help them compose their own music over a four-week interactive music composition-project. Each year four schools within the Docklands area participate. The project culminates in a 40-minute performance in NCH in front of families and friends.

Most **Education Centres** have been active in promoting the arts through the administration of courses for teachers. The Athlone Education Centre was the first centre to get involved with the samba drumming kits, and now many centres have purchased these kits and will lend them to schools for a few weeks. The plan is to provide a little training through workshops at the centres.

Exchange House Travellers Service operates an After School Programme for eight – twelve year olds. The programme has been running in Labre Park, Ballyfermot since 2001 and supports the children in their primary education by providing homework assistance, literacy support, computer skills and curriculum appropriate activities balanced with personal development activities such as art and craft, music and dance, games and projects and trips. The music programme has been run by CEOL and the children learn to read music, understand rhythm and sing together. The introduction of musical instruments proved so popular that a CEOL programme for learning the tin whistle was started.

Drama

An Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta

The Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta is an annual weeklong drama competition run by An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta. Founded in 1934 with the aim of promoting drámaíocht trí mhéan na Gaeilge, and participation therein, amongst school children of all ages, An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta oversees the running and organisation of the various local and regional drama festivals which precede the weeklong All Ireland festival. The local festivals are open to all primary and secondary schools as well as youth clubs and organisations. The competition is divided into various categories (Comórtas 1 right up to Comórtas 18) based on age levels and school sizes. For instance, Comórtas 1 caters for children up to and including 2nd class from primary schools with three teachers or fewer. Comórtas 6 caters for 5th or 6th class pupils from a primary school with between four and seven teachers. Comórtas 10, 11 and 12 are for second level schools while Comórtas 13, 14, 15 and 16 are for Ceoldramaí (Musicals). Prizes are presented in each Comórtas but the true emphasis is on participation and enjoyment. The Cumann is continually seeking to improve and expand and have in recent years added a new competition, Comórtas 18, especially for children from infant classes. The rules are few and simple. A drama must not run longer than 30 minutes. It must be in Irish. Any number of children can participate and the trend in recent years, given the emphasis on participation, seems to be that whole class groups are performing. Competitions start at the local (usually County) level with one or two day festivals depending on the number of entries. These are usually held in late February or early March.

Dramas which reach a sufficiently high standard at the local festivals are then nominated to progress to the regional (provincial) finals. The provincial finals are also usually no longer than two day events. Each Province then nominates a number of dramas (usually about 10 or 11) to progress to the All Ireland Finals or "An Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta". These were for many years held in Saint Patrick's College of Education in Drumcondra but the venue in recent times has been "An tIonad Ealaíne, an Muileann gCearr". These are usually run over a period of five days with the results being announced on the evening of the Final Day. Prizes are given in all 18 competitions as well as such special prizes as, "Best Primary School", "Best Secondary School", "Best Production of a newly written play" and the coveted "Best Overall Performance" or "Scothléiriú na Féile". The adjudicator is also free to award a selection of "Adjudicator's Awards" in such areas as costume, music, set etc.

Taking part in an Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta does, however, entail a fair amount of work for the teacher (or group of teachers) involved. The first problem to be overcome is finding a suitable drama for the class (or group) to perform. This can be a difficult enough task especially if a "whole class" play is chosen. An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta has sought to address this problem in recent years and have a link on their website (www.scoildramaiocht.ie) entitled "Foinsí Drámaí do Pháistí". Many teachers, however, choose to write new plays for their classes to perform, a decision which adds considerably to the workload involved. With the start of rehearsals come other considerations, such as the timing of rehearsal which can take up considerable amounts of time. Many schools choose to involve parents in the process, perhaps with costume preparation or set construction. Another consideration is the organisation and cost of transport to and from the various festivals. However, participation in an Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta is without a doubt a rewarding experience for any child and a highpoint in their school years which many fondly recall long after they have left school, and is deemed by teachers to be well worth the effort.

Cork Arts Circle - A 'School for Teacher' in the Arts

Cork Education Support Centre hosts the Cork Arts Circle which is an arts learning community, facilitated by Helen Hallissey, for primary teachers. The focus of the work is to enhance the child's learning in the classroom. Monthly evening workshops - *Meitheal* - are organised for a community of primary school teachers who seek to revitalise their teaching in and through the integrated arts. Each *Meitheal* has music, drama, visual arts and IT inputs based on a specific theme for the workshop. Themes, to date, have included Spring, Snakes, The Potato, Africa, The Celts, Puppets, Winnie the Witch. Fun and social enjoyment are key elements in the *Meitheal*.

The *Meitheal* is based on the notion of the Celtic gathering of revered artists, storytellers and teachers. This creative capacity, they believe, is deep inside the psyche of the Irish teacher and student. Those attending the *Meitheal* seek to develop their own creativity by pooling their own practical ideas and upskilling in drama. Teachers are provided with resources and skills to realise the 1999 drama curriculum objectives. It is an integrated arts approach with three circle participants, Mary Manning, Marian O'Callaghan and Helen Hallissey, who were honoured by being accepted to speak and present a *Meitheal* based on "The Fields of Athenry" at an international drama conference in Sydney, Australia in July 2009.

Concluding comment

This chapter has included a number of programmes and projects that aim to support schools with the arts curriculum. Some are state-funded programmes, while others are sponsored programmes offering support to schools either free of charge or at minimal cost. Others operate on a more commercial basis. There are many other organisations not included here that offer support, either directly to schools or for pupils outside school hours, such as Walton's School of Music, Ostinato and The Wicklow School of Music and Drama. Teachers welcome support from a variety of organizations in enhancing children's experience of and exposure to the arts. However, no matter how valuable such external support can be for teachers, it is still necessary to ensure that sufficient materials and resources are provided directly to schools to support the arts curriculum. In addition, professional development opportunities need to be available to teachers to enable them to enhance their own knowledge and skills in the area of the arts in education.

4

Creativity and the Arts in the Primary School

Results of INTO Survey - 2009

Introduction

In order to obtain a current picture of the views and practices of teachers in relation to *Arts in the Primary School*, the Education Committee of the INTO designed and circulated a questionnaire to 1,000 primary teachers selected on a random basis. A total of 209 questionnaires, a response rate of 21%, were returned. The questionnaire included a section on the visual arts, music and drama, in addition to some general questions about arts policy and practice within schools. Responses have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

Profile of respondents

The overall majority of respondents (93%) were female; 7% of respondents were male. Over a quarter of all respondents had fewer than ten years teaching experience; 17% had over 30 years teaching experience (see table 1 below).

Table 1 Length of teaching experience of respondents

Number of years teaching	%
<= 10	47
11-20	16
21-30	21
31+	17

In relation to the location of the schools, 16% of respondents taught in city schools, 22% taught in suburban schools, 27% taught in town schools and 35% taught in rural schools. The vast majority of schools (76%) were mixed. In total, 28% of schools were designated disadvantaged with 12% in DEIS Band 1, 10% in DEIS Band 2 and 6% designated as rural DEIS schools. Of the schools surveyed, 3% taught through the medium of Irish.

The average class size of respondents in the survey was 24 pupils per class. However, the number of pupils in each class ranged from less than 10 up to 36, with 18% of respondents having 30 pupils or more in their class. Almost 40% of respondents stated that they had an SNA working with their class.

Visual Arts

Time allocation

A little over a third of class teachers who responded allocated an hour to visual arts per week while about the same number allocated between an hour and an hour and a half. Significantly, about a quarter of respondents cited spending in excess of an hour and a half per week with the visual arts.

Table 2 Time allocated to teaching of visual arts per week (minutes)

Time allocated to teaching VA	%
<= 30 mins	2
31 – 50 mins	2
50 – 60 mins	34
61 – 90 mins	36
90 +mins	26

Teachers appear to spend far more time on *Making Art* rather than on *Responding to Art*. Almost all of the respondents devoted more than half of their time to *Making Art* with three quarters of them devoting all of their time to it. As many as 99% allocate less than half their time to *Responding to Art* with 80% of them claiming to spend 25% or less of their time allocation on *Responding to Art*.

Table 3 Percentage of time devoted to Making Art/ Responding to Art

Time devoted to making art/responding to art	% Making Art	% Responding to Art
<= 25 %	2	81
26 – 50%	5	18
51 - 75%	19	1
76 – 100%	74	0

The strand units *Paint and Colour* and *Drawing* seemed to dominate the visual arts programme. A third of respondents spend more than a fifth of their allocated time in the visual arts to these two strands, with a further 3% spending up to three quarters of their time on these two strand units. This contrasts with the fact that most respondents claim to devote less than a quarter of their time to *Fabric and Fibre*, *Construction*, *Clay* and *Print*. Three quarters of respondents (77%) indicated that they managed to teach all strands of the visual arts programme over the course of a school year.

Table 4 Percentage of visual arts programme (each strand) devoted to each strand

	<= 25%	26 – 50%	51 – 75%
Print	98%	1%	1%
Clay	97%	2%	1%
Fabric and Fibre	95%	4%	1%
Construction	95%	4%	1%
Drawing	65%	32%	3%
Paint and Colour	57%	40%	3%

Whole-class teaching seemed to be the most popular classroom setting in the visual arts with nearly 50% of the respondents spending more than half of their time in this setting. More time was spent in *group* settings than in *individual* settings. About 48% of respondents spent up to a quarter of their time and 41% between a quarter and a half of their time in group settings. Whereas as many as 66% of respondents spend up to a quarter of their time and only 14% between a quarter and a half of their time in *individual* settings.

Table 5 Classroom settings in the visual arts

Classroom setting in visual arts - % of time	Whole class	Group	Individual
<= 25 %	25%	47%	57%
26 – 50%	30%	41%	23%
51 - 75%	17%	4%	11%
76 – 100%	28%	8%	9%

ICT in visual arts

In relation to ICT, nearly 65% of those who responded to this question used ICT primarily for researching and presenting works to be used as a stimulus in lessons. However, somewhat over 20% indicated that they made no use of ICT (sometimes quoting inadequate facilities) and if this figure was added to the just over 10% who did not respond to the question, one might conclude that almost one-third did not use ICT either at all or else to an insignificant degree. Also significant is the very small number of respondents who indicated that they used ICT to actually produce work in the classroom. In their comments, teachers stated that little information was available to help teachers select suitable software for classroom use; that there was a shortage of suitable visual arts software for the primary sector and that the varied types of ICT hardware available in schools tended to generate an equally varied selection of software.

When questioned about the obstacles to using ICT, just over 46% of respondents quoted lack of suitable equipment and /or software as the main obstacle. Approximately 14% mentioned class size, either on its own or in conjunction with poorly-resourced classrooms. These concerns may be reinforced by the 15% who mentioned lack of time as a factor. Approximately 19% referred to their own lack of expertise as a major

impediment to progress. However, very significantly only 2% of respondents stated a belief that ICT was not valuable at their level suggesting that the overwhelming majority would use ICT if properly resourced and trained.

Table 6 Use of ICT in the visual arts

Use of ICT in the visual arts	%
Research	33
Do not use	29
Display	19
Modelling	12
Stimulus	7
Digital camera	6
Software tools	5

Most respondents to the survey do not use IT at all in their teaching of visual arts. The limited IT facilities in schools were mentioned as a reason for this. One teacher who did use IT actually downloaded the material at home for school use. The following comments illustrate the real situation in schools in relation to the provision of ICT:

We have only one very slow computer.

We have no internet access in the classroom.

Some respondents were support teachers who do not teach visual arts. The majority of teachers questioned gave no reason for non-involvement of IT and the visual arts. Many teachers used the internet to research information on artists, painting genres, different periods of art, works of art, crafts and lesson plans. YouTube and online galleries were mentioned as providing worthwhile access to art galleries and exhibitions. Use of the interactive whiteboard allowed teachers to model skills and techniques and this seemed to be particularly valuable in large classes. In addition, powerpoint, scanners, E beams and data projectors were used to make presentations but also to keep copies of the children's work. The reasons for scanning student work was not explained but perhaps it was for portfolio/assessment; or it might be related to the fact that many competitions allow large pieces of work to be scanned and forwarded in digital format. Software programmes such as 'Paint it', 'Paint', 'I am an Artist' and 'Art Pad' were all mentioned as suitable programmes. 'Sparkle Box' and 'Google Images' were also mentioned as an online resource for displays (labelling and framing) and for accessing pictures for collage.

Visual arts and the environment

The environment is used extensively by respondents in the teaching of visual arts. Nature and seasonal change along with leaves, flowers, animals and birds were the most popular, including leaf rubbings, still life and friezes of the outside world. One teacher uses a viewfinder through the window. Many teachers use objects from the environment for printing or recycle them for construction. A number of respondents mentioned perspective, lines, colour, shadows, texture, shapes and patterns in relation to the

environment. Buildings and bridges and the immediate classroom environment are used in the visual arts.

There was widespread acceptance that the natural local environment – school garden and hinterland, local amenities such as buildings, rivers, trees and shore - provided valuable opportunities back for pupils to handle objects and study shape, form, shade, colour, line and texture. Using items brought from either school excursions or children's own travels (shells, twigs, bark) provided a wide selection of materials for construction, printing and other art projects (weaving grasses, collage).

Table 7 Use of the environment in visual arts

Use of environment in the visual arts	%
To stimulate	46
As models	41
Use of materials from nature/environment	36
Displays of seasonal change	32
As illustration in other subject areas	9

Many art classes availed of scenes, landscapes, children's experiences and stories as models for drawing and sketching – many teachers mentioned use of a 'viewfinder' to isolate and focus on views. Images of 'Still Life' were also painted or drawn. Photography was another medium used to capture images from the environment. Seasonal changes and celebrations (Confirmation, First Communion, and Christmas) provided opportunities for art in school to be displayed for the wider community (parish church, posters in shop windows, notices in school yard).

Some schools used an 'Art Board' or an 'Art Corner' in a prominent area of the school to display collections for *Look and Respond*. One teacher mentioned work left following the 'Artist in Residence' programme and how it enhanced the environment.

Specialist teachers

Slightly over a quarter of respondents (28%) cited engaging the services of specialists/external teachers for the visual arts. Specialists or external teachers were most often sought for *Clay*, followed by *Fabric and Fibre*, *Construction*, *Paint and Colour*, *Print*, *Drawing*, in that order. A few respondents mentioned *all strands*. External personnel are funded by County Councils, schools, parent associations, grants and a number of other different schemes. Only three respondents cited that the children pay and there is no charge for a small number of them. In the majority of cases teachers are involved in deciding which aspects are taught by specialists with a small number involving parents. While 9% of respondents stated that they did not know if the specialist teachers referred to the Whole School Plan/Primary Curriculum in planning their teaching 16% of them stated that they do and a small number of them stated that they do not.

Supporting the teaching of the visual arts

Respondents indicated a number of supports required to support the teaching of the visual arts in their schools, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 8 Supports required to facilitate the teaching of visual arts

Supports required to facilitate the teaching of visual arts	%
Funding	39
Planning resources	36
Professional Development	19
Personnel	19
Space	12
Time	9
Class size	7

Undoubtedly, the biggest barrier perceived by teachers to the provision of a good visual arts programme was funding. Many children were provided with substandard materials, as illustrated in the following comments:

We use marla for pottery.

Air drying clay is too expensive.

I'm often unsure of the safety aspect of cheap materials we use.

You cannot use IT if there is no IT equipment.

I have no sink in my class room.

Teachers in general were very enthusiastic about the teaching of visual arts and requested support in the forms of in-service, demonstration videos, assistance from personnel with particular expertise, in-class support from PPDS, more articles in Intouch and clearer Curriculum Guidelines. Teachers also mentioned the advantages of having a centralised 'Art Room' where equipment could be stored, materials could be prepared in advance and cleaning up could be left until later. Size of class and the need for 'extra hands' (especially in the infant rooms) impinged on the provision of a good visual arts programme. This could certainly be linked to lack of funding for education in general.

A little over one-fifth of those who responded claimed that they do not manage to teach all strands of visual arts in the course of the school year. *Construction, Fabric and Fibre, Clay* and *Print* were cited as the strands most difficult to teach. Among the reasons given were lack of ideas, resources, materials, time, space, expertise and competence. A number of respondents felt that these strands took a lot of time in preparation. Others described them as "very messy". Many infant teachers claimed that they were difficult to organise with very young children.

More than 75% of respondents rated the *Curriculum Statements* and *Teacher Guidelines* to be useful/somewhat useful with the remaining rating them either very useful or not useful.

Table 9 Usefulness of the content of the curriculum statements and teacher guidelines in supporting teaching

Usefulness of content	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful
Curriculum statements	9%	33%	44%	14%
Teacher guidelines	11%	39%	42%	8%

Nearly a fifth of respondents claimed that they were not very confident or not confident at all in teaching visual arts.

Table 10 Level of confidence in teaching visual arts

Level of confidence	%
Very confident	27
Confident	56
Not very confident	16
Not confident at all	1

Music

Time Allocation

More than half the class teachers allocated an hour to music each week. Just under one-quarter (22%) allocated less than an hour, while the remainder allocated more than an hour per week to music.

Table 11 Time allocated to the teaching of music per week (minutes)

Time allocated	% of time
<= 30 mins	9
31 – 50 mins	12
50 – 60 mins	55
61 – 90 mins	14
90 +mins	10

Table 12 Percentage of time allocated to the various strands

Time allocate to the various strands	Listening & responding %	Performing %	Composing %
<= 25 %	39	9	88
26 – 50%	52	49	12
51 - 75%	6	28	
76 – 100%	3	14	

Composing was perceived by the majority of teachers to be the most difficult aspect of the music curriculum. Most time was devoted to *performance*: performance (choral and instrumental) has always been part of the curriculum and resources are available in most schools to support teachers who may not be skilled musicians/singers e.g. CD players with a wide range of CDs of suitable material for each class.

Another aspect of the revised curriculum was explored in questioning the teachers on classroom settings. Most teachers taught the whole class rather than groups or individuals. Teachers were not asked whether they differentiated their music teaching, therefore, it is not possible to ascertain if the large numbers taught in 'whole class' settings have music lessons differentiated. See table below.

Table 13 Class settings for the teaching of music

Time teaching music	Whole class %	Groups %	Individuals %
<= 25 %	2	62	83
26 – 50%	20	32	15
51 - 75%	21	4	1
76 – 100%	57	2	1

ICT in the teaching of music

A majority of respondents answered positively on their use of ICT in the teaching of the music curriculum. Teachers used technology for a variety of purposes:

- to download lyrics and music of songs;
- to record performances (software);
- to provide experiences of using musical instruments (interactive whiteboard software);
- to access information on the history of music and various composers;
- to access lesson plans or ideas for lessons;

However nobody specifically mentioned its use in the area of composing. A range of software was named as being compatible with the music programme: Van Basco, Musician, Thinking Things, Smart Board software and Audacity. However the internet featured as the most-used resource.

Table 14 Use of technology in teaching the strands of the music curriculum

Use of technology	%
None	41
Aspects of each	29
Listening and responding	16
Performing	14
Composing	0

For those who did not use ICT in the teaching of music, the greatest barrier was accessing information on available and relevant software. See table below. A lack of suitable hardware also caused problems. Schools have very few computers; many are old and not compatible with modern software. One teacher mentioned that their computer had no sound card; another reported that there were no speakers.

Table 15 Barriers to the use of ICT

Barriers to the use of ICT	%
Knowledge of available software	42
Resources	35
Time	23

Music and the environment

There was a varied understanding of using the environment in the teaching of music. Some teachers understood ‘using the environment’ to mean providing music for local or national events such as concerts, sacraments and Seachtain na Gaeilge. Most, however, used sounds from nature – birds, weather, wind - and sounds of the indoor environment – clocks, taps - to provide stimulus to compose music or provide models to be replicated.

Specialist teachers

A large number of schools (49%) engaged the services of a specialist to teach some aspect of music. Most of these teachers referred to the Whole School Plan (51%) however, a large number (15%) were not influenced at all by the school planning documents. The fact that in 35% of cases respondents did not know whether the specialist referred to the plan would be a cause for concern.

The provision of instrumental and/or choral tuition in the respondents’ schools was high (81%), most of it taking place within school hours (65%). A further 31% of respondents

indicated that instrumental and/or choral tuition took place both during and after school hours. Only 4% indicated that such tuition took place after school hours only.

Table 16 Provision of instrumental/choral tuition

Provision of instrumental/choral tuition	%
Both	52
Instrumental	23
Choral	13
None	12

In 77% of the respondents' schools tuition during school hours was provided by the teaching staff. Fewer staff were involved with the provision of tuition outside school hours (55%). External personnel were involved in providing in-school tuition according to 23% of respondents and in after-school tuition according to 45% of respondents.

In the case of tuition during school hours, such tuition is paid for in 29% of cases. In the cases where there is payment, school funds are used to pay 20% of the time with parents wholly or partially paying for the remainder. In the case of tuition after school hours, 50% of such tuition was paid for. There was no information on where funding came from to support tuition after school hours or whether it was provided voluntarily. In the cases where payment was expected it was almost all paid for by parents.

In 55% of cases all children participate in tuition during school hours, whereas only in 2% of cases do all children participate in tuition outside school hours. If all children are not involved it is because in some cases the tuition is focussed on particular class groups, with the majority of involvement in 3rd – 6th classes.

Table 17 Classes in which children avail of free tuition

Classes availing of free tuition	%
1 st / 2 nd class	15
3 rd / 4 th class	43
5 th / 6 th class	42

While very rare, there were occasions of children's involvement being based on their talent and children were auditioned before being allowed to participate. Usually, however, involvement was based on children's interest and their involvement was voluntary. In the case of tuition outside school hours, involvement was based on 'interest' and choice as might be expected with any out-of-school activities

Tuition in a wide range of instruments was reported, with tin whistles (81%), recorders (33%) and percussion (28%) being most popular. Other instruments mentioned included concertina, flute, viola and clarinet. However, it was interesting that there was tuition available in quite specialised instruments and most schools offered tuition in more than one instrument. In the case of tuition outside school hours, the range of

instruments was almost the same; although drums accounted for most of the percussion and there was a slight increase in the number of more specialised instruments.

Instruments in school

The vast majority of the schools surveyed (93%) had instruments for the children to use. Almost every school had percussion instruments, many of them listing a wide selection – shakers, triangles, tambourines, a variety of bells and chimes. Some schools referred to the recommended list of percussion instruments in the curriculum. There was also an availability of recorders and tin whistles ('for those who forget their own instrument'). An interest in traditional music was evident with some schools having a range of traditional instruments – accordion, concertinas, fiddles, flutes, bodhráns and button accordions. Pianos, keyboard and guitars also featured in many schools.

Supporting the teaching of music

Class size, space in classrooms and time constraints were mentioned as contributing to difficulties with planning and organization for the music curriculum. Shortage of resources, particularly instruments, books and knowledgeable personnel also interfered with the teaching of the music programme. The age and abilities of the children were linked to the other factors – without adequate resources and confident teachers, the curriculum could be seen to be too broad and demanding. In particular, teachers required focussed resources – CDs, song books, more age- focussed guidelines, and flexibility of timetable to allow skilled teachers to share/contribute expertise, in order to improve their teaching of the music curriculum.

Table 18 Issues in teaching music

Issues in teaching music	%
Teacher training and confidence	52
Organisation and planning	35
Resources	19
Age and abilities of children	10

Many of the teachers perceived their own lack of musical ability and/or training as barriers to teaching the music curriculum. This may have contributed to organisational difficulties. Inservice was considered a high priority particularly in the area of music literacy. It was suggested that the Cuiditheoir service should timetable visits to every school to support teachers and that *InTouch* should provide more articles on music in the curriculum. The survey indicated that although there are considerable differences between schools, a wide range of musical experiences was being provided. Further support vis-à-vis provision of resources and teacher professional development should be available. The table below illustrates teachers' opinions of their own confidence in relation to teaching the music curriculum.

Table 19 Teachers' confidence in teaching music

Confidence in teaching music	%
Very confident	14
Confident	43
Not very confident	37
Not confident at all	6

In general, teachers found the *Curriculum Statements* and the *Teacher Guidelines* useful to support them in their teaching of music.

Table 20 Usefulness of curriculum documents in supporting the teaching of music

Usefulness of content	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful
Curriculum statements	12%	50%	32%	6%
Teacher guidelines	7%	46%	39%	8%

Curriculum Strands

A positive response to the teaching of music was received with 75% managing to teach all strands in the course of the school year. However, many teachers experienced difficulties in particular areas, despite teaching all the strands every year. In their comments, only four teachers reported having no difficulty. One respondent praised the 'Ceol Programme'. Another respondent stated that she had a professional teach the class. Only two teachers reported that the teaching of all the strands caused difficulties. Twelve teachers reported difficulties with *listening and responding* and fourteen teachers listed problems with *performance*, some of them specifying music literacy, sight reading and intervals. School choirs and bands required teachers with expertise to direct them, according to some respondents. Composing was a hugely problematic area and, as the survey results indicate, many of the difficulties with teaching music pertained to this strand. The revised curriculum has introduced new aspects of music teaching but not all teachers are fully exploiting the potential of the music curriculum, mainly due to a lack of confidence or expertise and a lack of suitable resources.

Drama

Time allocation for drama

Respondents were first asked how much time per week they devoted to teaching drama. Responses from the class teachers varied from 10 minutes to 150 minutes per week, with 34% of respondents allocating 30 minutes and 38% allocating 60 minutes per week.

Table 21 Time allocation to drama per week

Time allocated to drama each week	%
30 minutes or less per week	43
31- 50 minutes	17
51-60 minutes	37
61-90 minutes	2
More than 90 minutes	1

In relation to *Exploring and making drama*, 26% of respondents reported that 50% of their drama time was concerned with *Exploring and making drama*. Only one respondent reported not engaging with this strand unit at all. Just under a third of respondents (30%) reported that 10% of their drama time was concerned with *Reflecting on drama*, with 22% reporting that 20% of their time was spent *Reflecting on drama* and three respondents reported not engaging with the *Reflecting on drama* strand unit at all. The responses also showed that 21% of respondents reported that 40% of their time was concerned with *Co-operating and communicating in making drama*, while 33% reported that between 25%-33% of their drama time was concerned with this strand unit. See table below.

Table 22 Time allocated to strand units

Time allocated to strand units	25% of time or less	30 – 50% of time	55-75% of time	More than 75% of time
Exploring and making drama	6%	58%	22%	14%
Reflecting on drama	42%	53%		
Co-operating and communicating in making drama	41%	54%	4%	1%

Class settings

Respondents were asked which classroom settings were used to teach drama. The highest percentage (33%) reported spending 10% of their time teaching drama in individual settings. The remaining respondents spent from 1%-100% of their time spent in individual settings. One respondent spend 100% of his/her time in individual settings. Regarding group settings, 23% of respondents spent 50% of their time teaching in group settings, while the remaining respondents spent from 1% to 100% of their time in group settings. Two respondents reported that they never taught drama in a group setting and five respondents reported spending 100% of their time teaching in group settings. A whole class setting was used by 19% of respondents for 50% of their time teaching while 15% of respondents reported spending 100% of their time teaching drama in a whole-class setting.

Table 23 Percentage of time teaching drama in various class settings

Time spent in settings	10% of time or less	15 – 30% of time	33 – 50%	More than 50%
Individual	51%	35%	13%	1%
Group	4%	22%	45%	28%
Whole class	6%	19%	40%	36%

ICT in drama

Only half of the respondents responded to the question on the use of ICT in drama. The majority of these (62%) reported not using IT in the teaching of drama at all or that it was not applicable. Only 8% of respondents reported using websites and using IT for finding drama resources. Two respondents reported using IT to record/watch their own drama. One respondent used music CDs in drama and another respondent reported using IT for their own planning only.

When questioned about the perceived barriers to using ICT in Drama, twelve respondents referred to the fact that they felt drama was a 'hands-on' subject and so did not see how IT would be useful or needed. Eleven respondents reported that there were no suitable software or websites available or if there were they were not aware of them. Eight respondents reported that they didn't know how to use IT in drama and eight other respondents reported a lack of resources as a barrier to using IT in teaching drama. Three respondents reported that they were not competent in the use of IT.

Use of the environment in teaching drama

Respondents were asked to indicate in what ways they used the environment (indoor and out) to support pupil learning in drama. A wide list was given, with the most popular being spaces and locations other than the classroom, using the environment for props and themes, seasonal factors and as a stimulus for imagination.

Specialist teachers

The majority (68%) of respondents reported not using the services of a specialist/external teacher for teaching drama while 32% reported that they did engage a specialist or external teacher to teach some aspect of drama. Of those who did engage a specialist/external teacher, 18% reported that the specialist taught all the strands, while 5% reported that they taught the *exploring and making* strand.

Respondents were asked to indicate who decided which aspects of the curriculum were taught by the specialist teacher. Of those that responded, 31% stated that the specialist or external teacher decided, 25% responded that the decision was made jointly by the specialist teacher and the staff or principal teacher, a further 25% stated that the decision was made by the principal teacher or post-holder and 18% stated that class teachers or the staff as a whole decided.

Of those whose schools did engage the services of a specialist/external teacher, 50% of the respondents reported that the specialist teacher did refer to the Whole School Plan/Primary Curriculum when planning what to teach. A further 10% of respondents reported that they didn't and 40% reported that they didn't know.

Respondents were then questioned as to how funding was provided to pay for the specialist teacher. In the majority of cases funding for the external teacher came from parents. In other cases the funding came from the board of management, DEIS grants, school completion programmes or local authorities.

Supporting the teaching of drama

In relation to teaching the curriculum, 70% of respondents stated that they did teach all strand units of drama in the course of the school year with 30% reporting that they did not. The strand unit *Reflecting on drama* presented a difficulty for 26% of respondents. The strand unit *Co-operating and communicating* caused difficulty for 5% of respondents, and the strand unit on *Exploring and making* drama was difficult to teach for 4% of respondents. A total of 10% of respondents found all strand units difficult while only 8% had no difficulty with any strand unit. Reasons posited by respondents for

why they found some strand units difficult to teach, included the age of the pupils (infants), time, difficulty for children expressing themselves or reflecting, lack of pupils' ability in oral language, space, class size, lack of confidence (teachers), lack of resources and lack of ideas.

Teachers were asked to suggest ways in which it could be made easier to teach the strand units with which they had difficulty. The most popular suggestions included the provision of practical ideas, courses, inservice and books. Other suggestions included 'more time' given that respondents noted curriculum overload as a barrier to covering all aspects of the strands, support from a specialist drama teacher or a teacher to model lessons, more space and fewer children in the class.

In relation to performance events, 89% of respondents reported that the school drama / Nativity play / Christmas performance was part of their drama curriculum, with 11% reporting that such activities were not part of their Drama curriculum. It was also noted that 92% of respondents reported that all children had an opportunity to take part in a performance event with 8% stating that they did not.

In relation to the usefulness of the *Teacher Guidelines* and *Curriculum Statements* in teaching drama, 11% reported that the *Teacher Guidelines* were not useful, 43% found them somewhat useful and 46% found them either useful or 'very useful'. Similarly, 17% of respondents reported that the *Curriculum Statements* were 'not useful', 46% found them 'somewhat useful' and 37% found them either 'useful' or 'very useful'. See table below.

Table 24 Usefulness of curriculum statement and teacher guidelines

Usefulness of content	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful
Teacher Guidelines: Drama	11%	43%	40%	6%
Curriculum statements: Drama	17%	46%	32%	5%

Finally, respondents were asked to rate their level of confidence in teaching drama. Only 13% reported that they were 'very confident' in teaching drama and 38% felt 'confident'. Almost half the respondents (49%) stated that they were 'not very confident' or 'not confident at all' in teaching drama.

General issues concerning the arts curriculum

This section of the questionnaire offered an opportunity to respondents to comment on some general issues pertaining to teaching the arts curriculum as a whole. This section deals with the arts in the community, school organisation for the arts, resources, relevance of the curriculum and future development of the arts.

Arts and the community

The arts curriculum recommends that pupils should be given opportunities to engage with artists in the community. Only 3% of respondents stated that their pupils never have an opportunity to see people from the arts community. For a further 18% of respondents, such opportunities occur every few years. Only 2% of respondents stated that their pupils have such opportunities once a month or more often, 37% stated that their pupils have such opportunities once a term and a further 38% stated that their pupils have such opportunities once a year.

Some schools have opportunities to partake in the arts by visiting outside agencies, though only 1% have such an opportunity once a month or more often. However, 36% of respondents provide such opportunities once a term, 34% once a year and 21% every few years. Only 8% of respondents stated that their pupils never had such opportunities. More than half the respondents' schools (57%) had been involved with local or national arts initiatives or projects. However, only a little over a quarter (29%) had received funding from a local arts council or local authority. Half (49%) received no funding whereas 22% of respondents didn't know.

School organisation for the arts

Posts of responsibility enable schools to allocate responsibility for the development and/or coordination of the arts curriculum in a school to one or more teachers. In one-quarter of respondents' schools (25%) one teacher had a post of responsibility for all the arts. In more than half of the respondents' schools (54%) one teacher has a post of responsibility for the visual arts and another teacher had a responsibility for music. In one-third of respondents' schools, (34%) one teacher had a post of responsibility for drama.

More than half the respondents (53%) stated that they availed of support for the arts from the PPDS (or PCSP). Of those that did, 81% found it very useful or useful. Only 8% didn't find it useful at all.

Respondents were generally satisfied with the amount of time recommended for the arts in the primary school curriculum. Almost one-fifth (19%) recommended that more time should be spent on the visual arts and only 1% stated that less time should be spent on the visual arts. Regarding music, 14% of respondents stated that more time should be allocated, while 83% stated that the amount of time suggested was sufficient. The time allocated to drama was considered sufficient by 75% of respondents, while 12% stated that less time should be allocated to drama. More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) use discretionary time for teaching the arts. A significant majority (84%) use blocks of time to support the implementation of the arts curriculum.

Resources

Respondents were very clear regarding their requirements for teaching the arts curriculum. The most-needed resources were funding and personnel, though resources, time, and designated spaces to work and to store equipment were also requisites especially when dealing with large numbers in classes. The importance of regular audits and inventories of stock was also mentioned especially when resources are limited and need to be shared with many teachers. Specific resource packs for particular strands were necessary to help with planning. Regular professional development for teachers was desirable. More specifically, banks of instruments, audio and visual DVDs were recommended for supporting music, materials and kits of artistic works were suggested for the visual arts and lesson plans, props and costumes, and drama books were requested to support drama teaching.

Storage and maintenance of equipment

In many schools there seemed to be an ad hoc approach to the purchase of equipment. For visual arts, teachers were most likely to be given individual budgets (generally from funds collected from the children) to buy their own requisites. Resources for drama were collected by teachers from second-hand shops or donated by parents. Funding for the purchase of musical instruments was usually provided by boards of management or parents' associations – possibly reflecting the fact that there is greater funding required in this area and that resources are more specialized. One school had instruments which were purchased by the curriculum grant when the revised music programme was being

introduced. Regarding the storage of equipment and resources, different forms of organisation are required in large and small schools. Examples given included the storing of equipment and resources in an art press, a cupboard in the staff room, in the post holder's room, or on a trolley in the office, or in the case of some smaller schools it was reported that teachers knew where everything was and when it needed to be replenished.

Satisfaction

Despite the pressures of under-funding, time and space constraints and large classes, teachers derived a great deal of satisfaction from teaching the arts. The following quotations illustrate the satisfaction and joy experienced by teachers in teaching the arts:

Children's positive response – enthusiasm, engagement, satisfaction, fun.

Children's improved skill level – repertoire of songs, piece of art work, drama performance for parents.

The quiet, contemplative vibe in a room full of budding artists.

Development of improved social skill: hearing children compliment each other.

Personal feeling of success in teaching a lesson that will impact on the future life of children.

The feel good factor of giving all children a chance to shine

Positive feedback from parents

The impact of the arts on other subjects in the curriculum – as the children illustrate/interpret other concepts across the curriculum.

It is evident that teachers' satisfaction in teaching the arts derives substantially from the children's own enjoyment and pleasure in engaging in the arts.

Relevance of the arts curriculum

According to the respondents to the survey, teachers have very positive views about the impact of the teaching of the arts on children's development and learning. Almost all respondents (98%) consider the arts a relevant or very relevant part of the primary curriculum. The arts encourage alternative thinking, enhance learning across the curriculum and nurture creativity and imagination. The arts build self-esteem, foster self-worth and allow children to experience success. In addition, opportunities are provided for experiential learning, problem solving through cooperation and collaboration is encouraged. Teachers can explore Multiple Intelligences Theory. Children develop their skills, understanding and dexterity and school is more enjoyable. The arts also provide links with the home as children love taking home artistic endeavours, singing songs, and reciting poems. As some respondents stated:

Art enriches all aspects of learning.

Art broadens horizons.... and opens up the scope of the world in a class room.

Art affords children the opportunity to express themselves in different ways that were traditionally allowed

An appreciation of the arts is the mark of a civilised nation

Respondents expressed numerous views in relation to the relevance of the arts in today's world. According to one respondent, the arts curriculum is more important than ever for children's social development given the huge growth in technology. Another respondent stated that the arts cater for children of all abilities and talents and allows them to build self esteem and develop non-academic skills. On the other hand, one respondent described the arts as an escape from 'heavy learning' and a break from academics for both teacher and pupils, while another expressed a concern that the enjoyment of arts shouldn't be allowed to detract from the "importance of the core subjects ... the three Rs". However, in general, the arts were seen as an essential part of the primary curriculum, offering children opportunities for life-long learning, and allowing them to be unique but also part of the culture and heritage from which they came.

Future development in the arts

Respondents raised a number of issues where change and development were needed in relation to the arts curriculum. As expected, the provision of adequate funding was mentioned by most teachers as the area needing most attention in relation to teaching the arts curriculum. Respondents also highlighted the need for ongoing and regular professional development for teachers. The employment of specialist teachers was also suggested. A reduction in class size and more freedom with timetabling were other priorities mentioned. Some teachers felt that strands such as '*look and respond*' or '*listen and respond*' placed an emphasis on language rather than creativity and were less likely to be attractive to children with communication difficulties or specific learning disabilities. Many teachers requested help with planning. Only one respondent recommended a review of the curriculum in order to contain less-ambiguous objectives.

There were requests for specific changes to each of the subject areas of the arts curriculum. '*Composition*' was seen as a problem area for many teachers in music, illustrated by one particular respondent's comment: "I'm at sea here". Other teachers questioned the relevance of this strand especially if it was not taught by a specialist or teacher with expertise. Teaching instruments, notation and harmony were felt to be outside the remit of the 'novice'. '*fabric and fibre*' and '*print*' were the difficult areas in the visual arts curriculum, with teachers citing lack of confidence/expertise as the reasons. The lack of availability of materials and implements also posed a difficulty. There needs to be improved access to artists in the community especially for schools situated a distance from art centres. In addition, it was suggested that age-appropriate lesson plans or a specific drama programme for each class would make for more successful teaching of the drama curriculum.

In addition to funding, which was repeatedly mentioned by teachers, lack of space, time constraints of an overloaded curriculum, the differentiation requirements of the multi-grade class and the need for an extra pair of hands (especially in visual arts in the infant room), were also frequently mentioned by teachers as issues impacting on the teaching of the arts curriculum. There was also a comment that parents might not always appreciate the value of the arts in their children's education. In some schools, the board of management or the principal might value the product more than the process. For example, it's good public relations to see the children performing in the NCH or the RDS, and it's great to see well decorated corridors. There is also a fear that the other subjects might suffer if a teacher is overly enthusiastic about the arts. However, on balance, the arts curriculum is greatly appreciated and teachers are most enthusiastic about teaching a holistic programme. However, additional support and resourcing from the Department of Education would be welcome if the arts curriculum is not to flounder.

Discussion and Conclusion

Arts education makes an important contribution to the wider goal of developing creativity in our society and economy. This is recognised in the curriculum handbook, where it is stated: 'A purposeful arts education... is life-enhancing and is invaluable in stimulating creative thinking and in promoting capability and adaptability' (PCS, Visual Arts, Music, Drama, Introduction, 1999, p2). Thus, it is clear that a quality arts education is a key objective within the wider twin goals of education, as defined in the current *Statement of Strategy 2005-2007* of the Department of Education and Science: '(i) enabling all individuals to reach their full potential and (ii) contributing to our current and future economic success'. The nature of the Irish economy and the ever-quickenening rate of change it is experiencing underline the need for economic and social policies that are underpinned by an education system that fosters creativity. Creativity is not a skill or a stand-alone intellectual process. It is more akin to an aptitude whose presence (or absence) has profound implications for both personal well-being and for enterprise, wherever applied, but especially in an economy characterised by knowledge, services and high-level manufacturing (Arts Council, 2007).

When it comes to encouraging creativity in classrooms, more is needed than simply generating activities. Pupils' creativity is directly impacted by the culture and climate that surrounds them. Before pupils can be supported to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions they need in order to be more creative, a culture and climate that is conducive to this learning must be provided.

First of all, it is necessary to ensure that there is a positive classroom and school climate in place – one that is constructive, non-threatening and is founded on the belief that all pupils can, and have a right to learn.

This climate can be created through the following means:

- First, open-ended and varied challenges or tasks can be set. Pupils should feel excited and challenged in the classroom, not restricted and directed. An open-ended task has no single correct answer or a single way of getting a correct answer. Therefore, open-ended tasks allow pupils to engage with and apply subject knowledge and skills in an imaginative and creative way, for example, through experimentation, role-play, problem-finding and problem-solving.
- A positive climate can be built by ensuring that the contributions of all pupils are valued.
- Risk-taking can be encouraged in order to get pupils to come up with new ideas and approaches. In order for pupils to contribute novel ideas, they need to know that their contributions are encouraged and that getting things wrong is part of the learning experience. For example, in classrooms, how teachers respond to

incorrect answers or how teachers show that everyone's opinion is valued by themselves and others is crucial to encouraging risk-taking among pupils.

- Encouraging genuine, open communication is also important. One way to do this is through discussion and debate. A climate with open communication promotes trust, is one where pupils feel they can speak their mind and support ideas, and is one where opinions are taken seriously.
- Teachers should also work to challenge assumptions and stereotypes and ensure that their pupils appreciate differences and diversity in others.
- Finally, learning and discovery can and should be fun. Pupils enjoy trying things out without knowing exactly what will happen next. This is why pupils seem to have fun while learning in primary school.

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Part 2

Proceedings of the Consultative Conference on Education

**13 & 14 November 2009
Gorey**

6

Presentations

Welcome

Milo Walsh, Cathaoirleach, Education Committee

Iwould like to briefly outline the work of the Education Committee. Under Rule 51 of the INTO rules the Education Committee has a role to advise the CEC on Educational Issues remitted to it by the CEC or researched by the committee itself.

This year we have just completed an in-depth study of WSE. This report will be available on the INTO website before the end of the year. The committee in this report has made what it believes to be some significant recommendations based on the views of teachers on the ground.

We generally work two years in advance of our Education Conference. However, we do take cognisance of the changing pedagogical and political landscape and further remits are added as the perceived need arises. We are presently looking at the area of learning communities. My colleague Aidan Gaughran will be expanding on this brief before the end of the conference.

The theme of this year's conference "The Arts and Creativity" was chosen for a number of reasons. There is a great feeling of doom and gloom over the country, including the education sector. During all the talk of builders, bankers and bailouts it can become difficult to focus on the central role that education plays in the development of any democracy. We felt that it was important to stress the crucial role a teacher plays in developing young minds through exploration, discovery and creativity. Teaching is itself an art form and needs to be developed and nurtured through proper induction and CPD. As the great American novelist John Steinbeck said...

I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist. Teaching might even be the greatest of the **arts** since the medium is the human mind and spirit.

We hope that by focusing on this topic of the "Arts" we would encourage you all to celebrate and congratulate yourselves on the important work you do in your schools and your communities.

The discussion document before you, which will be introduced by members of the committee, will, we hope, provide you with a background - both qualitative and quantitative - in order to stimulate debate in your discussion groups.

I would like to thank the local committee from the Gorey Branch that have worked very closely with us in organising the conference and I would like to welcome all the teachers

and children from the local schools that have given of their time and their talent. These schools are Riverchapel National School, Craanford National School, Gaelscoil Ghuaire and Gorey Youth Choir, Aileen Kennedy Traditional Group (Loreto), St Patrick's National School, Avoca (Choir & Drums)

Deirbhile Nic Craith, Senior Official

Ba mhaith liom cur leis an bhfáilte a chuir an tUachtarán romhaibh go dtí ár gComhdháil Oideachais ar na hEalaíona agus an chruthaitheacht i mbunscoileanna na hÉireann. Tá sé tráthúil gur ainmníodh 2009 mar bhliain Eorpach na cruthaitheachta agus na nuálaíochta. I mbliana, mar sin, tá tábhacht ar leith leis na hEalaíona.

Addressing the INTO Education Conference 20 years ago – also on the theme of the arts - Martin Drury of the Arts Council expressed his disappointment with the state of the arts in our primary schools at that time – both from a policy and practice perspective. He also challenged us to think about arts education – what it is, and its place in our primary curriculum. A lot has changed in education since then.

Today we give a lot of attention to teaching and learning. But what about education in its broadest sense? The reproduction of traditions, solidarities and identities? The imagination and creativity? Arts education? As Martin Drury said 20 years ago, a good education in the arts is a sine qua non of a good creative education. The purpose is the development of flexible creative intelligence.

So 20 years on, how good is arts education in our primary schools?

Arts education embraces both artistic education, that is the child making art, and aesthetic education - the child as a receiver of art. These are the strands of our primary curriculum. Alice O'Connell, on behalf of the Education Committee, will give us a flavour of how successful we believe we are in implementing the arts curriculum. She will also talk to us about arts education. She will be followed by other members of the Education Committee who also have a few things to say about the arts, and will do so slightly differently.

How the organisation of an Arts Week in a school can contribute to children's experiences of the arts will be outlined by Miriam O'Sullivan, who has successfully done so in her own school.

In bringing to you this year's theme, we wanted to ensure that creativity permeated all our work as primary teachers. Creativity is by no means confined to the arts – though the arts are central. We can be innovative and creative in all areas of the curriculum. But, do we still have this scope? Tomorrow morning, Dorothy Morrissey, of Mary Immaculate College, will talk to us about creativity in a culture of compliance, reflecting perhaps changing times in education!

As teachers we need to ensure that we are not only equipped with strategies, skills and techniques but that we have an opportunity to develop our own aesthetic selves and our creative impulses. This is crucial if we are to provide meaningful experiences for our pupils in the arts. It is hoped, delegates, that your participation at this conference will contribute to your own artistic and creative experience. As Milo has mentioned, children and teachers from the local schools have agreed to share with us their work in the arts during the conference.

We are also bringing you a flavour of some of our traditional arts. Some storytelling later this afternoon, and tomorrow a further example of our oral tradition. And of course we have our discussion groups and workshops.

The Education Committee decided this year to invite John Carr, our General Secretary to address conference. John Carr worked with the Education Committee when he was first appointed to the Head Office team. Addressing our Conferences in his earlier days he demonstrated his passion for education, for children and for teachers. At the heart of his passion was his interest in the Arts. This passion never left him. As Sheila mentioned, we have examples of art work by teacher artists on display in Head Office, and we also have the Teachers' Musical Society and a theatre in the Teachers' Club.

The Education Committee is honoured that he agreed to address us on imagination and the child at this year's conference which is his last in his capacity as General Secretary of the Organisation.

At the final session tomorrow you will have an opportunity to comment or pose questions on this year's theme.

Tá súil agam go mbainfidh sibh sult as an gComhdháil.

The arts and creativity in the primary school

Alice O'Connell, Education Committee

Since earliest times when humans drew images on the walls of caves, the arts have been our means of recording our human experience and of making sense of our world. The arts give expression to our understanding, our imagination and our creativity. As our world becomes smaller, faster and more competitive, these qualities are increasingly important.

Children are naturally creative. They see the world through fresh, new eyes and then use what they see in original ways. Indeed, it could be said that babies come into the world already programmed for an arts education. The newborn quickly recognises its mother by the form and shape of her face and by the sounds that she makes. Babies have an in-built sense of rhythm. Toddlers can't help but dance and sing along to any available music. They draw and scribble at every opportunity. Children naturally sing, dance, draw, and role-play in an effort to understand the world around them and to communicate their thoughts about it. One of the most rewarding parts of working with children is the chance to watch them create. That is borne out in teachers comments from our arts survey.

Despite the pressures of under-funding, time and space constraints and large classes, teachers derived a great deal of satisfaction from teaching the arts. The enjoyment came from:

- Children's positive response – enthusiasm, engagement, satisfaction, fun;
- Children's improved skill level – repertoire of songs, piece of art work, drama performance for parents;
- Development of improved social skill: hearing children compliment each other;

- Personal feeling of success in teaching a lesson that will impact on the future life of children;
- The feel-good factor of giving all children a chance to shine;
- Positive feedback from parents;
- The impact of the arts on other subjects in the curriculum – as the children illustrate/interpret other concepts across the curriculum.

Children come to our schools with thoughts and feelings, words and pictures, ideas and fantasies. They are intensely curious about the world. They are already artists, musicians, dancers and tellers of stories. The challenge we face as teachers is to use the wealth they bring us.

A very young child enters school with curiosity, expectations, questions, and the desire to feel competent and valued, and that young child should have those personal characteristics even more strongly when he or she finishes formal schooling. However, research on creativity points to a so-called “fourth grade slump” across various cultures. It appears that, although their level of creativity is evident and often flourishing when children begin school, by the time they reach the fourth grade, they have become more conforming, less likely to take risks, and less playful or spontaneous than in earlier years. For those characteristics to be extinguished, is to impoverish a lifetime.

Whether it's music, dance, theatre or painting; the arts do so much for our children. Many students find that the arts help them master academic skills. Drawing helps writing. Song and poetry make facts more memorable. Drama makes history more vivid and real. Creative movement makes processes understandable.

This, of course, is doubly true for the high-risk student, who often excels for the first time in an arts programme. Imagine what might happen to Leonardo da Vinci today if he were placed in the average school. A fatherless child, from a poor socio-economic background, a left-handed writer who loved to draw and challenge conventional thought, would be labelled an at-risk special education candidate.

The arts have far-reaching potential to help students achieve education goals. The groundbreaking theory of multiple intelligences, developed by Howard Gardner, broadens our view of how humans learn and realise their potential. It shows that the arts can play a crucial role in improving students' ability to learn because they draw on a range of intelligences and learning styles, not just the linguistic and logical mathematical intelligences upon which most schools are based.

Schools that incorporate the arts into the basic curriculum have found that this has a significant effect on overall success in school.

The visual arts

Children today are growing up in a highly visual world, surrounded by the images of television, videos, advertising displays, and other media. The human brain's visual cortex is five times larger than the auditory cortex so it is hardly surprising that students respond positively to opportunities to learn through the visual arts.

Children today do not have many opportunities to experience processes from beginning to end, and too often see only end products on television or on supermarket shelves. The visual arts not only provide these experiences, but also offer the means for helping students to understand and consolidate what they learn.

Music

We are by nature musical, rhythmical people. We are surrounded by music every day. Recent research suggests that simply listening to music, can enhance spatial reasoning performance. The studies of Rauscher and Shaw in 1993 confirmed an unmistakable link between music and spatial intelligence and resulted in the creation of the term "The Mozart Effect" and the theory that music can and does make one smarter. The researchers found that listening to 10 minutes of Mozart's piano Sonata in D K.448 over a period of time increased spatial IQ scores.

In 1995, they repeated the experiment but extended the types of listening experienced. Students were divided into three groups: silence, the same Mozart as used in the 1993 study, and a work by Philip Glass. Only the Mozart group showed a significant increase in spatial IQ score.

In a survey of science achievement in senior primary students, Hungary ranked first out of 17 nations. Their Singing Schools are based on the methods of Kodaly, and all children engage in singing and instrument training every day throughout the first eight years of schooling. Japan and Holland, the second and third highest achieving countries also incorporate music instruction throughout the school years.

The U.S. National Child Welfare Association (1997) states, "Through music, a child enters a world of beauty, expresses his/her inmost self, tastes the joy of creating, widens his/her sympathies, develops the mind, soothes and refines the spirit, and adds grace to the body."

Dance

Many kinaesthetic students, who literally need to move to learn, find opportunities to do so through dance. Dance creates strong, coordinated, well-disciplined bodies that can move with grace and individual style. Preparing to give a dance performance by memorising the choreography, rehearsing, and collaborating with other dancers exercises and develops critical thinking skills along with persistence and perseverance.

Drama

In a creative drama lesson, students listen to or read a story or poem, or hear a piece of music, or see a painting and plan how to interpret it dramatically. They develop a plot, choose characters, create an imaginary setting, then improvise dialogue and action. Clearly this process is a highly collaborative one.

The highlight of many students' lives may be the opportunity to take part in a play, experiencing the process of rehearsing until the desired outcome is achieved, and often reliving the moment in memory throughout life.

Arts for arts sake

Claims that education in the arts leads to achievement in other academic subjects have been used to justify arts education in schools. However, the arts must be justified in terms of what the arts can teach that no other subject can teach. The arts offer a way of thinking unavailable in other disciplines. The arts are good for our children, irrespective of any non-arts benefits that they may in some cases have. A note of caution is voiced in Harvard's Project Zero's "Reviewing Education and the Arts Project" (REAP) (2000). It warns:

Instrumental claims for the arts are a double-edged sword.... If the arts are given a role in our schools because people believe the arts cause academic improvement, then the arts will quickly lose their position if academic improvement does not result.

Studying the arts should not have to be justified in terms of anything else. The arts are as important as the sciences: they are time-honoured ways of learning, knowing, and expressing.

The Irish context

Throughout Irish history, the arts and arts education have played a significant part in our society. From our Celtic tradition we have the magnificent heritage of monuments and richly-ornamented artefacts while the Bardic schools provided education in the artistic traditions of the time. From the Monastic Schools, we have the wonderful illuminated manuscripts, religious objects of great beauty.

Despite the subsequent downgrading of the social status of native Irish art and culture, the hedge schools ensured the survival of our native traditions of oral poetry, music and dance.

The early twentieth century brought the Gaelic Revival when Irish poets, dramatists and novelists began to gain in national and international stature and significance.

Until the latter years of the twentieth century, the arts did not play a central role in the Irish national school curriculum, which was almost exclusively focused around reading, writing and arithmetic.

The *1971 Curaclam Nua* promised the inclusion of imaginative programmes in music, art and craft, drama and mime activities, physical education and dance. It was seen as a new era in Irish primary education. However, much of the promised change was unrealised, due to an all-too-familiar list of challenges. Inadequate funding of resources, unsuitable school buildings, lack of sustainable professional development for teachers and the continuing spectre of exam pressures ensured that arts education remained the Cinderella of the education system.

In 1979, the Benson Report on *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* stated:

The Irish people have much to be proud of in their past. But the neglect of the arts in Irish education has meant that whole generations have lost the opportunity both of learning about their own artistic history and of acquiring the skills necessary to build upon it.

Hopefully, with the Revised Curriculum of 1999, we have progressed from the “stereotype of the arts in many Irish schools” as outlined by Benson who contends that the arts “are often judged to be more interesting than useful, and their most significant contribution is frequently conceived of as a pleasant means of passing time”. The rationale for arts education is outlined in the introduction to the revised curriculum:

The uniqueness of the child is perhaps most apparent in the innate creativity of each individual, while valuing the child’s creative response and expression of perceptions, insights, interpretations and knowledge is an important principle of the curriculum.

Today, it is fair to say that the arts are generally alive and well in Irish schools. One need only enter schools with their bright murals, student-created sculptures and enthusiastic

dramatic and musical performances to know that something special is alive in primary arts education. There is sheer wonderment at the huge range of pupils' work that covers every spare inch of walls, shelves and even hanging from ceilings.

The *Primary Curriculum Review Phase 1* (2005) conducted by NCCA focussed only on visual arts but it is encouraging to note that the findings were largely positive. Providing a breadth of visual arts experience for children was the greatest success reported by teachers, followed by children's enjoyment of visual arts and children's self-expression through visual arts. This is reflected in the findings of our own survey.

The following list is a sample of teachers' thoughts on the impact of arts on learning. Arts education:

- Encourages alternative thinking
- Builds self esteem and fosters self worth
- Enhances learning across the curriculum
- Nurtures creativity and imagination
- Allows children to experience success
- Makes school more enjoyable
- Develops skills, understanding and dexterity
- Links with home
- Encourages problem solving through cooperation
- Affords children the opportunity to express themselves differently

The challenges and recommendations identified by teachers included:

- Funding, funding, funding
- Reduction in class size
- Lack of space
- Time constraints of an overloaded curriculum
- Differentiation requirements of multi-grade class
- Need for extra pair of hands – especially in infant classes
- Requirement for teacher training or the employment of specialists
- More freedom with timetabling
- Help with planning
- Less-ambiguous curriculum objectives

The fourth R - recession

The arts are often seen as the soft target when cuts are proposed. What are they for, what do they do really, why should they get funding over hospitals/education/emergency services/industry/transport etc.? This question was put to Colm Tobin recently on Morning Ireland, to which he replied and I quote:

“We’re not talking about the arts as a luxury in Ireland, we’re talking about it as a necessity. All we are saying is that we are an aspect of the health of the nation, an aspect of the education of the nation, an aspect of industrial policy. The arts is fundamentally

embedded in society and not a luxury... It is fundamental to the health and welfare of the nation."

Kevin Spacey made a similarly passionate defence of funding the arts in times of recession earlier this summer in *The Times*. He too feels strongly that the arts are not a luxury:

"I believe that, far from being luxury items, arts and culture are a necessity in our lives, as individuals and as nations. The arts inspire, uplift, challenge, stimulate our conversations, drive our debates and remain in our memories."

The buzzword of the moment is 'smart economy'; the economy of the future (if we have one) will rely on knowledge, information-gathering and will be run by creative workers. Innovation and idea generation, the ability to solve problems, to approach challenges in new ways, to think and work creatively with others, to embrace new ways of working are all skills that those in the creative sectors have in abundance, and use on a daily basis.

Arts educators have always known that students who engage in visual, musical and performing arts benefit in profound, lasting ways. Long after the paint dries, the strings grow still, or the stage lights dim, students who experience the arts firsthand carry within them lessons about the joy of creativity, the pursuit of excellence, and the cultural heritage we all share as humans.

Organising an arts week in a primary school

Miriam O'Sullivan, Scoil Mhuire, Lissivigeen, Killarney

I decided to do a presentation reflecting on a school's art week because I thought it might be of constructive use to show the stages that I went through in a particular arts week and how I brought it about from conception to implementation.

I am going to talk about one type of arts week that I organised. I don't think there is any such thing as a definitive version of an arts week. There is no one size fits all Arts Week. This model that I'm going to talk about, is based on bringing professional artists in from the outside to work with the children. I have worked in various other types of Arts Weeks where all the leadership or workshop leaders are generated from the inside. But it depends, of course, on the context of your school which is the best model to go for. In my own case, I teach in a 12 teacher school with 215 pupils in eight mainstream classes from junior infants to 6th in Killarney. The Arts Week that I am going to talk about today, we ran last year in the month of February. Coming from the county that I do, Kerry, there is a massive emphasis on football. I can say that from lots of different points of view and sometimes, maybe, it tends to overshadow other areas of endeavour and other areas of creativity. So I saw a gap in the market for an Arts Week in my own school. At the stage that I suggested that we go for an Arts Week I was only in permanent employment in the school for a year. So I went through it in a very structured way because I was still earning the respect of the school community I suppose. So it is in that context that I am going to talk to you about it.

Why an Arts Week and what do we need these things for? Aren't they luxuries? I think Alice demonstrated that point very well. It is anything but a luxury and while it should be a core area of education it sometimes gets neglected especially in times of recession when there is so much badgering about money and resources and nothing being there to promote the more aesthetic elements of curriculum. I think it is a very useful thing in a

school to put a special emphasis on the arts for a concentrated period of time because it sends a message to the whole school community and to the community outside that arts is a very important aspect of our curriculum in school, and that it is something that we continue to nurture through our curriculum. An Arts Week will enhance whatever life enhancing arts activities that are already happening within the school. Also I think it is a very laudable thing to have teachers and arts educators or artists working side by side because there is a huge mutual advantage in learning from one another and in the transfer of learning. In a place like Ireland many schools are far from a type of a professional arts venue and to that extent it is a bonus to be able to bring artists into the school to work with the children in their own classrooms. I don't think that should be the only thing that they do. You should also try to bring them to venues for other reasons but it is a very useful and purposeful activity to have an arts event of some sort such as an Arts Week in the school at regular intervals.

As I said already I was very new to the school when I came up with this idea and I wanted to bring the staff and the other stakeholders, the board of management and everybody, on board so in introducing the idea I went through the format you see here:

Arts Week – Lissivigeen School 2009 – The Plan!

- Proposal to the staff – September staff meeting 2008
- Proposal to the BOM – September BOM meeting 2008
- Scheduling the event and provisional engagement of artists – September/October 2008

First of all I wanted everybody to have a sense of ownership. I was not going to be able to do this on my own. I didn't want to do this on my own and I saw it from the outset as a team activity and therefore I wanted to bring everybody on board. Also there was going to be a cost involved and I didn't want to be left with the bill myself. At the end of the day, because while I can sing I don't think I could raise the price of the Arts Week! So I wanted to make sure that the board of management knew exactly what was involved - so I actually gave them a quotation in the proposal I sent to them for what the Arts Week would cost. I overestimated for obvious reasons and I put the figure at €3,000 for the Arts Week. Now it wasn't going to cost that much but I also had a plan in mind, to raise the money. I had hoped that it would be cost neutral to the school and that did work out in the end.

The next thing I had to do, having got that through the two channels of the staff and the board of management successfully, was to sit down immediately, start planning and to come up with a draft plan for an Arts Week. I think the main thing about organising an Arts Week is not that you have any specialist area of expertise in music, visual arts or anything else but that you have very good organisational skills and that you organise well in advance so that you can schedule it properly, so that it is done professionally, so that you can get the calibre and quality of artists and professionals that you want in for that week.

How do you find the artists to put on an Arts Week in your school? While there is no one place that you can go to find artists for your school, there are many different types of schemes which, a lot of the time we are so concerned with so many things in primary schools, people may not even know about. The first place I went to is the existing subsidised schemes - the *Heritage in Schools* scheme and the *Writers in School* scheme - because they are subsidised schemes and therefore the cost to the school is much lower

than if you were paying an artist yourself. They both have very good on-line directories. In fact, I had the privilege of working on the *Heritage in Schools* scheme as I worked in Head Office as an official for six weeks in 2000. But I did gain an awful lot of experience in that short time and one of the experiences was putting together the directory for the *Heritage in Schools* which is a wonderful resource for schools. I don't think enough schools use it, to be honest, but again the artists that are most used within the *Heritage in Schools* scheme are very difficult to track down if you don't get them in time. Also, the value of existing subsidised schemes like the *Writers in Schools* and *Heritage in Schools* is that they are vetted for the quality before you get to them so you know that you have a mark of approval coming with the people who come from those schemes.

Your local education centre may run workshops involving different artists so it is worth checking out who is available in the area. Also most county councils have some sort of a database. It can be difficult to find but if you dig deep enough and ask enough questions you will come up with the information as regards to what artists in your area are working in education or with children or both. There are many artists' organisations out there. Local artists are a huge resource to us because every little town or village in Ireland has potters or artists and jewellery makers and clowns and whatever else you can find. I think they are a resource that you can have on an ongoing basis at not a huge cost. They can also be useful in the longer term - as a longer term engagement with the school.

Find the money

I suppose finding the money is the biggest challenge. Especially at the moment, it is really difficult. I think it is even going to become more fun this year than it was last year and again next year. But be aware that there are subsidised schemes there like the *Writers in Schools*, and *Heritage in Schools*. There are also many different types of arts grants available at the moment from local county councils but you have to dig very deep to find that information sometimes. Not every county council advertises them to every school. Indeed in some county council areas, it maybe that your name is associated with that artistic activity and you get a direct mail out, which I do now. But before that, nothing used to come to school regarding the availability of arts grants. There are different types of grants. There are grants for specific purposes like allowing term engagements with artists. There are grants for once off workshops. So it is worth keeping an eye out for them. They do demand a good bit of work in terms of writing the proposal and that is very well worth doing as the better the proposal, the better chance you have of securing some funding.

One of the ways we managed to defray the expense in our school was by commissioning images.com to do a professional exhibition of the children's work. What we did was every child in the school had two pieces of work mounted and framed. It does rule out 3-D work, but that is another thing, you do what you have to do to make the money to run the Arts Week. So we had two pieces mounted by every child. Images.com charges the school a certain amount to do that and then the school can add a little bit on to defray the costs of an Arts Week. I'm not sure if I'm in favour of selling things back to the parents but if the purpose is to bring more art into the school, I can manage to justify that no problem. In fact, we raised a lot of money because the parents, even as hard as the times are, everybody bought at least one of their child's paintings and that managed to make a pot of money available to us for the artists.

Local financial institutions, and you might laugh, but one of the local financial institutions that I approached was the credit union. Our school would have a very close liaison with the credit union and the credit unions all over the country have a well developed community brief where they like face-time in sponsoring organisations. It is

not a huge amount of money but again if you write a good letter and you develop a good relationship with them they are very keen to assist in local initiatives such as Arts Week. Local businesses – may through parents – could contribute, maybe even a spot prize for something you are going to host during the week. It is great to get something, as again it puts the message out there that Lissivigeen school does this type of thing and you know they do it very well and they have lots of events involving the whole school community.

Another idea that I considered but I didn't go with was an option of work donated by local artists, where you would get local artists to contribute a painting and make an event of it, have an auction and sell the paintings and raise money that way. There are lots of others - you all are very aware of all the different types of fundraising events that schools involve themselves in anyway.

Proclaiming the good news

I decided to put the message out there as some of the staff in my school said to me "you love being in the paper". I don't love being in the paper and that is the truth of it but it makes a big impact, especially on the local funders, if they see a little piece in the newspaper with the name of the school and the name of their credit union or county council or whatever it is. It definitely helps. What I did last year was I made my own press release and I sent it to all the local papers. We got coverage - loads of photographs in the local papers. They all changed and adapted the press release to suit themselves. It was great and people were talking. And that is what we want - people to be talking about us to attract future funding in the future, to visit the school during the week and to get photographic coverage into the papers as well. The other thing to remember is to give as much public acknowledgment as possible to the providers of funding.

The main event

The main event was to happen the week of 9th February. We chose the week very deliberately as it was the week leading up to our mid-term break as we knew that everybody would be tired after the Arts Week. It was great to go out on a high into a mid-term break. The idea was that we were going to have three contrasting 60 to 90 minutes workshops for each class across the different disciplines and at the end of the week a celebratory concert for the whole school using local musicians and a night-time concert for parents only. There was a bit of learning involved in this because the night-time concert was on the night before Valentine's Day. I believe they were all out for candlelight dinners as we got a fairly small crowd! In fact we barely covered our costs that night. So if I was doing it again I would think of maybe something different. Although they visited the school during the week, you would like to have some sort of event to involve the parents in during the daytime as well.

The aftermath

In the immediate days after the event, when we came back after the mid-term break, I made out a short evaluation form. It went to all the teachers and the staff and any board of management member or parent who was there and collected their opinions. What appealed to them the most during the week? What would they change? It gave me a very good idea of how we could change and adapt things in the future. Also I wrote a very nice thank you letter, not a card but a full letter, to anyone who gave us money so that they would say - that one thanked us before and nobody else did - because these things do make an impact and it is worth finishing it off properly and leaving a good taste in their mouths.

The challenges

What are the challenges in running an Arts Week in the school? You are all well aware of them already I'm sure - organisation, time-tabling, scheduling - so that it is fair across

the board for every class. Also what we decided to do for that week was to cancel other in-school activities which happen from time to time. We just cleared everything so that it was just going to be us and the Arts Week. If it is a visual arts workshop you may need facilities like sinks etc, so you are going to have to devise your space beforehand. If you have space problems you need to consider all of those things in advance. Funding I think is the biggest challenge of all because it entails footwork from somebody or some group of people from the staff or the parents' association to go out and find the money.

It being the era of three letter acronyms I decided to come up with my own. So the solutions to the challenges I see as:

- A** for **advance** planning which I think is the most important.
- C** for **communications** with everybody and keeping people informed all the time. I was constantly sending notes to staff about, 'this is the schedule' and 'this is where your class will be' and 'you bring your class 10 minutes early' etc.
- T** for **team** and enlisting the help of others because you can't do these things on your own.

Feedback from teachers

I am going to show you feedback that came back from the questionnaires. There was no negative feedback. One teacher who had somebody in doing a multi-cultural workshop said every class in the school should have had this particular lady. And I agree with that but trying to work within the constraints of trying to organise for eight classes across a five day period means that you can't have one person doing eight workshops over the time. So you do the best with what you have.

So you can see from the following quotes that Arts Week brought the whole community together and I thought that this was very important. The school isn't just about the teachers and the children. It is about all the other stakeholders as well.

The arts week was a great success. It really brought the school community together and there was a great vibe about the place.

Child-friendly poetry portrayed in a lively and funny manner. His poetry, to quote the kids was based on 'normal' everyday things. Many children brought in work they completed at home after this workshop (without being asked to do so).

Due to the calibre and standard of those involved it all went extremely well and made the best use of the children's time.

What did the children think?

I took just one piece of feedback from a 3rd class child. Actually I only took this piece of feedback last week. I didn't give them any prompts as to what they did last year, so this is proof to me that something lives on in their minds after the initial experience ended. I think this child sums up everything. It did generate a great buzz when the exhibition was up and the parents were in and out and we made a cup of tea for them and we had music going in the background. It was a way to bring the parents in, in a non threatening way, in their own time, to have a walk around and look and also, as you can see, it made the children very happy to see their work displayed in such a way. Lots of the parents have commented since on the little gallery space they have in their house now with these pictures up.

On the arts week last year, I learned lots of exciting new things. I learned that in some countries they are not as fortunate as us. Also I learned that in Africa the dancing shoes are made of car tyres and that prevented bad backs. What made me really happy was that when we learned to play samba drums. It made me very proud when I saw my framed picture on the wall

(Darragh, 3rd class)

That brings me to the end of my presentation. I hope it was of benefit to you and I have no doubt that there is wonderful work going on in the arts in all sorts of ways in the schools. I know what a resourceful bunch we are, in spite of the straightened times. Thank you very much for your attention.

The imagination and the primary school child

John Carr, General Secretary

Introduction

This INTO Education Conference takes place against the backdrop of the most serious economic crisis this country has ever faced and indeed one of the most challenging times for the community of countries across the globe. The many assumptions that have underpinned international economic theory and practice, our national economy and our collective and individual sense of well-being have been exposed as false, simply evaporated or in many cases crudely blown away.

There are some who would perhaps question the value or even the purpose of discussing the arts, imagination and creativity at a time when many citizens of our state and indeed around the globe are focused on economic survival. But I put it to you that it is particularly because our current situation is so serious, so perilous and so critical that we as citizens and especially, we as teachers should, indeed must, focus on the imaginative and creative aspects of our work.

And so I am going to invite you to join with me for the next few minutes, not to lose ourselves in an esoteric or somewhat self indulgent consideration of the importance of the arts, imagination and creativity, but in clear and robust justification of why the arts should and indeed, must be at the core of everything we do in schools. And no more than on many Friday afternoons in primary schools throughout the country, I hope it will connect with your own sense of imagination of what can be and children's sense of awe and wonder of the world in which we live.

In trade union terms, our immediate individual and collective priority in the economic, social and political world must not be to put back together that which has failed us so dramatically in the last two years, but to re-set the economy to benefit the many instead of the few, the public instead of the privileged. I believe that we will only begin to do this if we are prepared to critically re-imagine the culture of today, to fundamentally re-shape our broken society and vigorously and purposely re-create a future that we might not see but in which our children and our pupils will live.

And the crucial building block of that future will be the imagination and creativity of today's children.

A challenge for schools

There is and will continue to be strong opposition to this viewpoint and it will come mainly from those who believe that the task of the teacher is simply to continue as heretofore, albeit making do with less while at the same time delivering more as An Taoiseach put it earlier this week. In expressing this viewpoint he was mirroring a perspective we generally associate with the so called captains of industry and their spokespersons.

Such individuals typically hold views of education indistinguishable from the 19th century industrialists who championed universal education only for the contribution it could make to profit, not to human development, personal fulfilment and societal well being. In place of the factory owner of two hundred years ago or the mine owner of the same period who saw schools as somewhere to send children until they were old enough to go down the mine, think IBEC spokesperson, economist in the pay of a financial institution or CEO of a multi-national corporation.

The channels of communication may have changed but the message is still the same. Educational purposes must be skewed or manipulated in order that the product will fit their particular narrow, economic or social requirements. We hear this regularly, in calls for more emphasis on literacy and numeracy, science and technology in schools, courses of study that some believe will serve the needs of industry.

For such people, two discredited and false educational hierarchies are still in place. Firstly, science, technology, mathematics and literacy are premier league subjects. The humanities are championship courses while the arts are very definitely conference league classes. Secondly, to them the teacher is a technician to carry out tasks ordained and designed by others.

Today, I want to look at the teacher as artist, at the teacher as “The Master” in the real sense of the word, whose canvas is the imagination.

I am reminded of the teacher who had the misfortune to be invited to a dinner party with a group of industrialists and manufacturers who spent the whole night talking about what they produced. Inevitably the teacher was asked by one of them “And what do you make?” Her answer was simple. “I make the future,” she replied. To some that may be clichéd but if you think about it, it is into your hands that the development of the next generation of children has been entrusted. That is at one and the same time an onerous responsibility but a remarkable opportunity and certainly more valuable than transporting several million travellers to out of the way airports no matter how much you appreciate punctuality as a virtue!

The arts have saved us in the past

And in case you doubt this and under-estimate the opportunity that you as teachers have in the coming years I ask you to look back a hundred years to the period in which a new vision of Ireland was not only imagined but actually brought about. A century ago, many of the new ideas of Ireland and Irishness which led to independence and the foundation of the state were nurtured in the schools of Ireland. Not exclusively in schools I hasten to add, but that period of history did coincide with a period of curriculum reform when the arts were accorded their place on the primary school curriculum. I also don't think that it was for nothing that the loss of Ireland to the empire was attributed to members of the INTO by a former English prime minister who no doubt appreciated that many of the new ideas were expressed and developed through the arts of language, poetry, story, music, drama, the visual arts and dance, in the public arena yes, but most especially in the school rooms of the country.

I believe we may debate aspects of the influence of the arts in the birth of our nation but that is in a way a moot point. The key issue to consider is if the arts played such a profound role at that critical time in our past, then they can and should be utilised fully to shape a new and better future for all of us.

And today I believe I am looking at the very people who will do just that.

Imagination in education

So today, in the time available, I wish to focus on the extraordinary gift, talent or power, call it what you will, that human beings have and that no other species, as far as we can tell, shares with us, which is the imagination. It is that which makes us distinctively human and in my view the only human trait on which we can rely to take us safely forward into the 21st century. Because when you think of it, we have no idea what the future will be like in three, four or five years time. How then can we have the faintest idea what the future will be like in thirty, forty or fifty years time, never mind sixty years time, when the infants you are teaching today will hopefully be approaching retirement?

Imagination has been the source of every human achievement in human history. In the field of literature, just consider Joyce, Beckett and Yeats. In Science, think of Newton, Curie and Einstein. In music, think of Mozart, the visual arts, Michaelangelo, and in drama, Shakespeare. It is the same in the worlds of business, the economy and technology. We remember those who dared to imagine a world that could be different, said “why not?” and then went on to make it so or inspired others to do so. It was imagination that gave us the Sistine Chapel, our great philosophical traditions, people on the moon, our musical and artistic heritage as well as the six thousand languages currently spoken on earth.

Imagination is the fertile soil in which every human achievement has germinated. Yet ironically, most of the individuals I mentioned as examples never attended formal schooling as we know it today. I wonder what would have happened had they been required to do so. How would we teachers have taught them? What would their end of year reports have been like? Must try harder! Needs to apply herself! Shows potential! And how many of us for instance would have fancied teaching English to Shakespeare, music to Mozart or philosophy to Aristotle?

For because of the way our education system is configured and controlled, I believe, as does Sir Ken Robinson, that we are in an almost systematic way jeopardising our children and consequently the future. Our children enter our education system with unfettered curiosity, unbridled creativity and unhindered imagination yet before they exit the system most of this has been stunted or in some cases entirely knocked out of them.

Professor Tom Collins captured this perfectly some years ago when he told INTO Congress of a visit by primary school children to a third level institution as part of a science week. He and his third level colleagues were stunned by the traits of curiosity, enthusiasm, energy and openness that the primary pupils brought to the hallowed halls of academia and were challenged to wonder what happened to students before they reached third level. He rightly laid the blame, not on second level teaching colleagues but on the examination system that dominates second level and in many cases pushes down on to primary schools.

He could equally have pointed to pressures on students to make subject choices at an early age not on the basis of what they enjoy, not on the basis of what they are good at

but on the basis of what someone else, usually a parent, thinks will deliver a well paid job or the highest points total in the Leaving Certificate.

Too many aspects of the education system kill children's innate willingness to take a chance, stifle their natural preparedness to be wrong and curtail their preference to work socially and co-operatively in pursuit of solutions to problems. Mistakes don't register with four year olds. The thing that terrifies most eighteen year olds every June is making a mistake in a Leaving Certificate exam. What terrible damage can be done in just fourteen years?

So the challenge for us is to take a stand against those malign influences both internal and external. In the case of the latter, we must not only oppose those industrialists who see schools as mere producers of human capital for their industries. We must show them that the development of creativity and the imagination will enhance and expand economic development far beyond traditional educational paradigms. In the case of the former, we must oppose the educational bureaucrats whose task is to enforce regulations, stifle creativity and maintain the status quo. And with every fibre of our beings we must stand up to those philistine politicians who view education as a drain on the exchequer rather than an investment in the future, those politicians who will happily speculate billions on a discredited banking sector that has ruined our country while refusing to invest mere millions in a well resourced and properly calibrated education system with the potential to guarantee the country's future.

Kieran Egan of the Simon Fraser University is another who agrees with Ken Robinson in general terms but argues cogently that imagination and creativity are not the sole preserve of traditional arts subjects. In the introduction to 'An Imaginative approach to teaching'⁷ he says that imagination can too often be seen as something peripheral to the core of education, something taken care of by allowing students time to "express themselves" in the arts while the proper work of educating goes on in the sciences and maths and in developing conventionally efficient literacy.

We know too that very often imagination is largely associated with and confined to, artistic expression in school. And because of this cultivation of imagination is left to arts education. A good example of this is the current obsession in the USA with what are called the STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and maths. This is gaining traction here as shown by a recent article by John Kennedy in the Irish Independent where he was advocating the use of ICT as a tool for learning. He quoted a representative from INTEL as saying "we have to have the best teachers teaching the most important subjects – maths, science, engineering and technology!"⁸

It always amazes me how such a narrow view is accepted of children's learning and development. It amazes me even more how such individuals can come to represent a successful company that depends on innovation and therefore, imagination. I believe in technology in schools. I wonder at the skill of youngsters in the area of technology. I am amazed by their confidence and competence in using technology and exploiting its creative potential and I fully accept its importance in the workplace of the future.

But, my vision for the future of Ireland is different. It is one that places the arts at the centre of what it means to be human and central to that is the imagination. Imagination must be at the core of the learning process and indeed, I would argue that engaging student's imagination in learning is one of the main challenges facing successful

⁷ Egan, K. (2005) *An Imaginative Approach to Teaching*. CA: Jossey-Bass

⁸ Irish Independent 29 October 2009

teaching today which Bryan Mc Mahon described as “leading children off into the magic territory of indigenous imagination.”⁹

I firmly believe that deciding how to make the daily experience in schools as imaginatively engaging as possible is the most complex task of facing modern educators and far more important and essential to what we do than school planning, writing notes and recording outcomes. Indeed, I would argue that obsession with these tasks is actually a barrier to the proper focus on the development of the imagination. Indeed, if we were able to focus more on imagination then there would be little need for the obsessive recording.

But unfortunately, imagination in education is a bit like the weather; everyone talks about it but nobody does anything, as Kieran Egan said in *Relevance and the Romantic Imagination*.¹⁰

Visions of art education

And this is partly because as Elliot Eisner says there is no single sacrosanct vision of the aims of art education. He goes on to outline several visions that could direct both the aims and the content of arts education today, never implying that they are likely to be found in their pure form but in the form of a mix of visions in every school and classroom. I would like to comment on a number of these today.

The first of these is discipline based art education intended to help pupils acquire skills and develop imagination needed for high quality performance requiring sophisticated forms of thinking, the development of sensibilities and technical skills. A key aim is helping pupils to see and discuss the qualities of art, a form of cognitive achievement that cannot be taken for granted. It also helps to develop an understanding of the historical and cultural context in which art is created and critically assess the value that art provides. Edward de Bono while not unsympathetic to this perspective entered a note of caution here when he said that creativity can be learned like basketball, which does not mean we will all be NBA stars.

A second vision of art education, visual culture, focuses on helping students to decode values and ideas embedded in both popular culture and the fine arts. In this vision, art education is consistent with other societal developments of which multiculturalism, feminism and postmodernism are but a few. This vision of art was never more necessary in a world where we have to prepare children to cope with a bombardment of lifestyle, body shape and materialistic images, the products of the commercial and advertising world. Robbie O’Leary, a principal in Tallaght told Pat Kenny on The Frontline programme last Monday that this is a critical skill for the modern primary school child, one that underpins their self esteem and self worth.

Another vision of art education is creative problem solving and is closely linked to the field of design. Development of this tradition flourished in Germany between the wars with artists such as Nagy and Kandinsky but is equally alive and well today in modern corporations like Apple, Sony and Toyota. We live in a world where the aesthetic properties of products rival their functionality and practicality. I spent some time looking at a very relevant example of this in the bar of this hotel last night and I invite you to study briefly the extra cold Budweiser tap.

⁹ Bryan McMahon (1992) *The Master*. Dublin: Poolbeg

¹⁰ Egan, K. (1991) *Relevance and the Romantic Imagination*, in Canadian Journal of Education. Vo. 16, No. 1. Pp.58-71

A fourth vision of art education is a very important one and it views art education as an emancipator of the spirit, providing an outlet for creativity. One of its champions, the Austrian Viktor Lowenfeld, partly blamed the outbreak of world war two on a German education system that suppressed the normal human urge to express creative impulses replacing them with aggressive and repressive tendencies. Lowenfeld believed art had not only an educational benefit but also a therapeutic one. According to him the child who developed freedom and flexibility in expression will be able to face new situations without difficulty.

A fifth vision of art education is one with huge resonances for the modern world and that is art education as preparation for the world of work. But regrettably what we hear from the world of business is a cacophony of calls for basic reading, maths and science as the real skills that are needed dismissing the rest as frills or additional extras. Nothing could be more wrong. Paul Harvey, the ABC broadcaster who died early this year captured this when he argued that yes the 'back-to-basics' curriculum had its place but that the arts were more basic to national survival than traditional courses of study.

The real basics needed are skills such as analysis, team work, allocation of resources, communication, tackling complexity and ambiguity. The arts provide an unparalleled opportunity to teach those higher level basics that are increasingly critical to today's workforce and work place. A startling statistic is that in recent years in the USA more people have lost their job because they couldn't work as part of a team than because of the recession.

A final vision for arts education is the contribution that art education makes to cognitive development. For too long the arts have been thought of as part of the affective rather than the cognitive domain of learning, easy as opposed to soft, simple rather than complex, emotional compared to mental or crudely, a nice way to spend a Friday afternoon. Nothing could be further from the truth in terms of the complexity and variety of what is taught in and through the arts such as flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, risk taking and the exercise of judgement. Allied to these forms of cognition is the significant contribution that the creative arts make to the so called basics, which you heard about earlier today. Michelle Obama captured this recently when she said, "Learning through the arts reinforces critical academic skills in reading, language arts and maths and provides students with the skills to creatively solve problems."¹¹

Far from being marginalized, downgraded or sidelined there are not only personal and social reasons for the inclusion of the arts in education but actually very strong economic ones as well. More and more people are beginning to recognize this such as former Arkansas Governor, Mike Huckabee who said, "I think the arts are perhaps singularly the most neglected part of our educational structure today. And there are some of us who really do believe that an education in the arts is not expendable. It is not extraneous. It's not extracurricular. It is essential. And without it, a student is not getting a full, complete, and total education."

Restoring the place of story

But you will forgive me if I indulge myself and engage on a topic which is dear to my heart but also shows that imagination and its development extends far beyond the traditional art subjects. I want to focus for a minute on story which has played a central role in the development of the imagination throughout the ages. All known cultures throughout the world have used stories to commit their social structures, relationships, significant events and so on to both individual memory and collective consciousness.

¹¹ 18 May 2009 at Opening of American Ballet Theatre

These stories, usually called myths, provided an important cohesion and relative stability to oral cultures. Egan argues that the messages encoded in myths were more memorable if they were put in the form of vivid and drastic events involving very strange creatures in weird circumstances. They invoked in the listeners' mind, vivid and strange images. These myths evoked, stimulated and developed the mind's potential for imaginative activity. "To most members of oral cultures the natural world is not made up of objective phenomena, but is rather imbued with vivid dramas in which gods and spirits of various kinds are ever-active and the individual's behaviour must be co-ordinated with these great dramas".

In Ireland, Bryan McMahon highlighted the important role of the story in education. "My entire life... adroitly turned into a story" he wrote and urged that the pupil must be lured to enter the mystery, to explore this magic cave, before he or she can unlock the secrets of the world about him or her. McMahon viewed the story as an instrument of education. "Every facet of classroom life, every subject, even one as sober as arithmetic, can be adroitly turned into a story."

Expanding on this theme he goes on to state that the hunger of the mind, of the imagination, is so ethereal as almost to defy definition, but it commonly indicates its presence in the story. The common cry of children is 'tell us a story' The Seanchaithe... silenced us ... Then we children were off into the magic territory of indigenous imagination.

Preserving a "window of wonder" is a plea for the imagination in the modern world of media, in children's television and in blockbuster movies from "Star Wars" through to Harry Potter. All the time it is expanding the imagination because the story is everything and everything is the story.

The average child is on a voyage of discovery, intent on creating a new world for himself or herself. The story often unlocks the door of the imagination, leading him or her forward to the delights of the learning process. Their imaginative lives must be populated with fantasy and fairytales, graduating through characters such as the Hulk, Superman, Wonder Woman and their modern equivalents, increasingly their sports or pop star idols and other heroes.

This sense of childhood perception being bright and vivid and childhood intellectual life being equivalently vivid and dramatic is common in childhood literature. We must take great care that the "imaginative freshness and vividness of childhood" is not lost. While we must lose that vivid immediacy of childhood perception, the "radiance which was once bright", we can nevertheless, as Egan states, carry it forward in our memories into "the years that bring the philosophic mind".

Conclusions

So in conclusion, we need to ensure that the imagination and creativity are integral aspects of all elements in the curriculum. We must equally be wary of misconceptions. One of these is that only special people are creative. It simply isn't true but this idea has taken root partly because only a few people connect with their creative capacities along the way and we celebrate them for that. Everybody has creativity. Everyone.

The challenge for us is to know how to cultivate that creativity. Children have immense natural capacities of innovation, creative thinking, alternative ways of seeing things, which are deeply personal capacities and great teaching has always been there to bring them out.

We need now to systematise these across whole systems and not see them as eccentric capacities which are the preserve of a few gifted teachers. Einstein put it well when he said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. For while knowledge defines all we currently know and understand, imagination points to all we might yet discover and create.”

Somebody once said the great problem with humanism is we aim too low. For education for the future I think we all have to accept that for now and for ever we have to aim very high in education and we have to succeed. Thinking differently, making and doing things differently were never more necessary or more important for this society. As Declan McGonagle Director of the National College of Art and Design said recently, we have suffered in Ireland, from short-termism but we cannot allow long term potential to be impeded or capped by short term thinking or mindsets. It is creativity in thinking long term that is needed most, but most importantly needed now.

In whose image? Cultivating creativity in a culture of compliance

Dorothy Morrissey, Mary Immaculate College

I’m going to begin this morning by inviting you to close your eyes for a few moments and to imagine the impact on your life if there was no creativity in the world, none at all. What are the things or the experiences that you would miss most?

Open your eyes. Chances are you would probably miss things like television, the cinema, cooking, reading, doing crosswords, DIY, listening to music, the radio, your laptop and lots more. Chances are, too, that you were able to imagine many other possible impacts on your life.

This capacity to imagine, to form mental images of things that are not actually present in the here and now, things that we may have experienced in the past, things that we might never have experienced is probably something that we take for granted. Yet through imagination we can revisit the past, reframe the present and anticipate future possibilities. The American philosopher of education, Maxine Greene, argues that our capacity as human beings to imagine, to ‘look at things as if they could be otherwise’ is what accounts for the yawning differences between us and other species.¹²

Einstein has claimed that

Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited while imagination embraces the whole world.

Imagination involves all of the senses. It involves being curious, noticing deeply, making connections, identifying patterns and asking questions. It is a capacity that very young children have in abundance. Brendan Kennelly captures this wonderfully in his poem, ‘Poem from a Three Year Old’

¹²Greene, Maxine (1995) *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass p.19. The work of Maxine Greene and the Lincoln Center Institute NYC underpins many of the ideas presented in this address. The development of these ideas has also been influenced by the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Parker Palmer, Kieran Egan and Ken Robinson.

And will the flowers die?

And will the people die?
And every day do you grow old, do I
grow old, no I'm not old, do
flowers grow old?

Old things – do you throw them out?

Do you throw old people out?

And how do you know a flower that's old? ¹³

Imagination, however, is not the same as creativity. You could spend your whole life imagining and nobody would notice. But you couldn't possibly say that someone was creative if they never *did* anything. Being creative involves actually doing something. It involved Kennelly actually writing the poem.

While some of you may be poets, most of you probably aren't. But you are probably creative in other ways. Consider, for a moment, ways in which you are creative. Consider some of the creative things you do. Now, I'm inviting you to rate your creativity on a scale of 1-10. Hands up, those of you who would rate yourselves at 10, 9 . . . 2. Now let's do the same with intelligence. Hands up, those who would rate yourselves at 10, 9 . . . 2. How many of you gave yourselves a different score for intelligence than creativity? Why is that? Is it because you believe that intelligence and creativity are entirely different things? Are they?¹⁴

Csikszentmihalyi¹⁵, a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago, defines two types of creativity: Creativity with a big C and creativity with a small c. Creativity with a big C is the Creativity that changes culture. Einstein (in Physics), Picasso (in visual art), Marie Curie (in physics) and Martha Graham (in dance) were creative in ways that changed culture, or the domain of culture in which they worked. Creativity with a small c refers to the personal creativity involved in discovering things that may be important to one's own life or work, making it more fulfilling and enjoyable but not necessarily resulting in fame or renown.

Csikszentmihalyi spent five years interviewing one hundred exceptional individuals who had made a difference to a major domain of culture such as the sciences, the arts, business or government, and who were still active in that or another domain. He found that these people were complex individuals who tended to exhibit opposing characteristics, that instead of being either extroverted or introverted they were:

- Extroverted *and* introverted
- Physically energetic *and* quiet and rested
- Convergent *and* divergent thinkers

¹³ Kennelly, Brendan (1999). 'Poem from a Three Year Old' *A Time for Voices: Selected Poems 1960-1990*. UK: Bloodaxe Books.

¹⁴ The idea for this activity was borrowed from Ken Robinson.

Robinson, Ken with Lou Aronica (2009) *The Element: How Finding your Passion Changes Everything*. London: Allen Lane (an imprint of Penguin Books) p.35 and p.55

¹⁵ Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Collins.

- Playful *and* disciplined
- Imaginative *and* rooted in reality
- Humble *and* proud
- Traditional and conservative *and* innovative and rebellious
- Passionate *and* objective
- Prone to suffering *and* enjoyment
- People who did not conform to rigid notions of gender stereotyping¹⁶

At various times either one of two opposing characteristics might be dominant in these individuals, but these individuals were just as likely to be exhibiting both simultaneously; to be holding the tension between them. Csikszentmihalyi¹⁷ claims that it is unusual to find conflicting characteristics in the same person, as we tend to specialise in certain characteristics and to neglect what might be complementary ones.

Our formal education system supports and promotes such specialisation and neglect. Indeed, our entire Western cultural tradition is based on what Parker Palmer¹⁸ calls 'thinking the world apart': dividing it into this or that, black or white, male or female, arts or science, academic or non-academic, us or them, good or bad. Even the nursery rhymes and fairy tales we teach very young children induct them into this way of thinking. Take, for example, this nursery rhyme:

Sugar and spice and all things nice
That's what little girls are made of

Rats and snails and puppy dogs' tails
That's what little boys are made of.

And this one, which demonstrates, to paraphrase Palmer, 'thinking the individual apart'

There was a little girl
Who had a little curl
Right in the middle of her forehead.
When she was good
She was very, very good
But when she was bad she was horrid.

Undoubtedly *either-or* thinking has its usefulness. By dividing everything into opposites children can bring some order into their world. And it has given human beings great power, particularly in the areas of science and technology. But it also fragments reality and in its denial of complexity and chaos it denies the wholeness, wonder, excitement and uncertainty of life.

As teachers, we have been successfully shaped and moulded in a predominantly *either-or* education system. A system based primarily on measurable results in a limited range of competencies: learning things off and figuring things out. And this has been equated with being intelligent. In this system imagination, creativity, divergent thinking, risk-taking, and the capacity to learn from mistakes have been underdeveloped, devalued or ignored.

¹⁶ Csikszentmihalyi (1996) pp.55-76.

¹⁷ Csikszentmihalyi (1996) p.76.

¹⁸ Palmer, Parker (1998) *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass p.62.

But as Einstein, someone who was Creative with a big C, puts it

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted

Ken Robinson jokes that our education system did a good job in training us to operate from the neck up and then only with one side . . . as if the most important function of our bodies was to be a form of transport for our heads. That it actually educated us out of our creativity.¹⁹

Today creativity in classrooms has been identified as the answer to the nation's problems. It is expected to produce the innovators and entrepreneurs of the future, the ones who will make a difference to our economy. But this drive for creativity is accompanied by an even greater drive for accountability. Teachers complain about an ever-increasing amount of paper work, increased regulation and scrutiny, and pressure to ensure that children perform well on standardised tests. And when it comes to Whole School Evaluation reports there is scant, if any, reference to the status of creativity in the school. The reports give most attention to those subjects high in the traditional hierarchy: English, maths and Gaeilge and least to those low in that hierarchy: namely the arts. The drive for greater regulation and scrutiny has found its way into teacher education too, with the focus on student achievement of measurable learning outcomes within the context of a national accreditation or regulation process. Such control and governance is, I would suggest, far more likely to encourage the creation of a culture of compliance than a culture of creativity; a culture in which teachers encourage children to perform as they have performed; a culture in which they educate children 'in their own image'.

Teachers complain about an over complicated and broad curriculum. But people who are Creative with a big C are specialists in only one or two domains. They have extensive knowledge of the rules and traditions of those domains and this enables them to mindfully break the rules while being simultaneously attentive to them. As Isaac Newton observed:

If I have been able to see farther than others, it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants

All of which raises questions, at the very least, about the value of a broad and balanced curriculum in educating for creativity. It also raises questions about the capacity of teachers to deliver on it without extensive collegial and professional support: the limits of human psychic energy make it impossible to specialise in more than a few discrete domains.

The task then of cultivating creativity in classrooms is an onerous one; and one which must surely begin with the cultivation of the teacher's own creativity.

Learning to love
the open-ended mystery
of not knowing why

(Elizabeth Carlson)²⁰

¹⁹ http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html

²⁰ Carlson, Elizabeth. 'Imperfection'. Published in Intrator Sam M. And Megan Scribner (eds (2003) *Teaching with Fire: Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Teach*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass

This requires courage. It requires us to move beyond compliance; beyond the *either-or* thinking for which we ourselves were rewarded with good or good enough grades; to move beyond our fears. It requires us to move outside our comfort zones, to be curious, to question, to play, to take risks, to develop ideas, to consider things differently, and to frame mistakes as opportunities for learning. In the words of Thomas Edison

I have not failed, I've just found 10,000 ways that don't work

It also requires the courage to cultivate the characteristics that we lack, the ones opposed to those in which we have specialized: if extrovert, learning to experience the world as an introvert; if analytical, learning to trust intuition. And it requires us to look beyond ourselves and, to paraphrase Palmer again, to think not only ourselves but the world together by embracing paradox

Paradox is another name for . . . a way of holding opposites together that creates an electric charge that keeps us awake. ²¹

Wide awake we are less likely to inadvertently advocate that children play safe, to give assignments without choices or to only allow particular answers to questions. And it makes it more likely that we can support children to have wild imaginings, ask questions, make connections, examine things from a variety of perspectives, take calculated risks and value the opportunities for learning presented by their mistakes.

Undoubtedly the cultivation of classroom creativity requires committed creative teachers. And if these teachers work in schools in which there is a culture of creativity, playfulness and collaboration the potential to enhance children's creativity is greatly increased. If these schools participate in any of the initiatives and projects described in this conference's discussion paper, or in other initiatives and projects fostering creativity, then the potential for classroom creativity is even further enhanced.

Cultural transformation is incremental. It must start somewhere. Why not with you, and you, and me? Let us be the ones. In the words of Arthur O'Shaughnessy

We are the music-makers
And we are the dreamers of dreams ²²

²¹ Palmer p.74.

²² O'Shaughnessy, Arthur. 'Lines from the Music Makers'. Published in Turley, Margaret (Ed) (1997) *First Anthology of Poetry*. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy of Music.

Plenary Discussion Session

The panel consisted of Alice O'Connell, Education Committee, Dorothy Morrissey, Mary Immaculate College, Deirbhile Nic Craith, Senior Official and was chaired by Milo Walsh, Education Committee.

Questions

Delegate 1

In relation to funding for the arts and especially for the visual arts, should there be a set amount per teacher every year because it seems to vary from school to school and even from teacher to teacher in different schools?

Delegate 2

How do you think that in-service for visual arts might be made available around the country for teachers in rural areas?

Delegate 3

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the INTO and indeed the Education Committee on the timeliness on this particular conference theme and I would like to thank everybody for their contribution because it was a most creative conference in lots of ways. My question is related to the previous speaker and it is also in relation to the discussion document / report and the obvious need there is for increased continuing professional development, particularly in some areas of the arts curriculum. I think when we talk about creativity we are looking for solutions. When we look at this report there are a number of things that stand out. One of them is that the relationship between the arts and the community at local level needs to be strengthened very much and to do this requires that an awful lot of agencies who are available to provide the support, we must find a way of co-ordinating this provision and bringing it together in some way so that it has real impact, particularly in the rural constituencies where there isn't much access very often or where the access is quite different.

Secondly, I think that in the context of the reduction in the supports available, particularly in personnel who are excellently qualified and who have given tremendous service, we need to be looking at a way that will keep these people as mentors or advisors. We need to create a new kind of dynamic for support for teachers in schools.

My final point, cathaoirleach, is that at a time when we know that there are very many restrictions and restraints, particularly from an economic point of view, this is an opportunity, I think, for all of us to be more creative in the way that we approach arts education and I want to particularly compliment Dorothy Morrissey this morning on trying to break open what is necessary in this time. At some of the workshops over the last couple of days it was very evident that our own attitude to what constitutes arts

education needs careful reflection and revisiting and perhaps very often our own expectations are a limitation when it comes to classroom practice and school practice. I think that is a very serious challenge that we have to face in the next decade and even sooner. I would very much like to see us trying to adopt a co-ordinated, cohesive approach to finding some solutions to some of these questions.

Responses

Dorothy Morrissey

I would lump a few of those together, in terms of the development of creativity the whole thing of teacher confidence, particularly in the arts, is a huge issue in the discussion document. In terms of creativity and looking at those who are creative with a big C, they specialise in one or two domains of culture. As teachers, I would suggest that we can't be specialists in all 10 domains of culture that we are expected to teach in the primary school and if we don't have the knowledge, confidence and skills to give the children, then the children can't learn the skills and knowledge that they need in order to be creative in that domain. In order to be creative in that domain you have got to have the skills and knowledge attached to that domain to be creative in it. So therefore, as I suggested somewhat this morning, in terms of in-service then there is a huge need for collaboration among teachers. We have the skills among the profession but how can we use them most effectively, perhaps within schools or between schools. Funding is another issue. I deal in ideals not money!

Milo Walsh

In terms of funding there really is no simple answer to that one in terms of managing your own budgets in a school situation. At one of the workshops this morning one of the presenters stated that they were spending a lot of money on needless things in terms of the visual arts, where there were not necessarily cheaper options, but they were actually making bad decisions on the ground, sometimes because of adverts and promotions.

Delegate 4

As a teacher teaching 30 years, with the revised curriculum teaching drama is new for me and teaching it as a subject. Would there be a possibility of having courses rolled out countrywide as similar to the summer course hosted by Head Office this summer?

Milo Walsh

In terms of the PPDS service they are still in existence and I think the INTO Professional Development Unit are looking continually at the whole area of the curriculum. So that is something that we can take cognisance of.

Reports from Discussion Groups

Introduction

Delegates were assigned to different discussion groups to facilitate closer examination of some of the issues that arose from the conference documentation and presentations. Each one of the seven discussion groups was given a list of questions to focus on. Members of the INTO Education Committee acted as facilitators and rapporteurs. The collated responses of the participants are outlined below.

Question 1

“The Arts instil in our pupils the habits of mind that last a lifetime: critical analysis skills, the ability to deal with ambiguity and to solve problems, perseverance and a drive for excellence”. In what ways does this statement reflect our experience of teaching the Arts to our pupils?

Response

Art is a leveller which contributes from a different base within people. It allows people to communicate in a different way, creating confidence within oneself. When life was more rural children were integrated in the arts in society where there was a lot of artistic activity in housework and work on the farm e.g. making bread, stacking corn, thatching. In this modern consumer society we are consumers rather than creators.

Children learn through communicating through the arts in different ways – writing, orally, visually – which develops their understanding.

The arts give children a break from teacher-led instruction. It allows for teamwork in a non competitive way. The dynamics of the room change and give children a sort of comfort zone, promoting a good physical environment which is bright, colourful and visually appealing to children. The Arts can be a positive experience for children with learning difficulties, and enhance the environment for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, who might come from environments where there is very little grace, beauty or quietness. In a broader sense participating in the arts improves life in the school.

It was suggested that all areas of the arts developed problem-solving skills, but particularly in drama, where role-play is used. Visual arts develop co-operation through working together on construction projects and other group activities, which also promote perseverance. Drama and music foster tolerance of others and their views and abilities. Good interpersonal skills are developed as the arts promote group discussion and enjoyment.

One group stressed the importance of the arts in conveying to the children that **perseverance** plays a part in developing skills and talent e.g. practising for a show. It was felt that it is important for children to see that it is important to persevere even if things are challenging – it was felt that the skill of perseverance is a good one to develop.

There was some debate regarding **critical analysis skills** and their link to the arts in the primary school. Subjectivity in terms of responding to paintings in art galleries was cited as an example of difference of opinion in terms of critical analysis. It was felt that while art appreciation involves a certain degree of critical analysis, the focus in the Arts in Primary School should be more in terms of ‘celebration of expression’.

One delegate, who is a rural co-ordinator in DEIS schools in the west of Ireland referred to “rural disadvantage”. She said that the West is so far from the periphery of Europe that it is very important that the arts are brought to these schools.

Question 2

What professional development is needed for us, as teachers, to increase confidence in teaching: construction, fabric and fibre, print and clay in Visual Arts?

Composing in Music

Drama

Are there other professional development needs in the arts and how best should teachers engage with professional development in the arts?

To what extent do teachers get an opportunity to develop their own artistic selves, either in colleges of education or during their teaching career?

Response

Participants agreed that many teachers lacked confidence around the teaching of some areas of the arts, in particular drama and composing in music. Whilst a number of participants felt that they were given opportunities in the colleges of education to develop their own artistic skills, they also believed that they were given little practical help in how to develop these same skills in their pupils. Some participants agreed that composing in Music was easier than it sounded.

In general, participants felt that while the in-service that had been given for the introduction of the revised curriculum in the arts was good, it was not sufficient. It was suggested by one group that a way of tackling this might be for individual teachers from a school to undertaking in-service and present what they had learnt to the other members of their staff.

Other suggestions made were that skills should be built on little by little; various books should be recommended; and that resource kits for the arts should be put together in schools. Co-teaching was another suggestion i.e. a teacher talented in an area of the arts would swop classes with other teachers. In-class modelling by trained facilitators was also suggested. The suggestion that received most support was that there should be put in place a provision of sustained, on-going professional development in the arts for all teachers.

The following were some suggestions for in-service/professional development:

- Blogs, videos on you-tube, teachers’ TV
- Artists in schools, where teachers observe/participate
- On-line exemplars, web based programmes, blended learning

- Courses run during term time, but in evenings, should count for EPV days as is better to do these courses during school time so you can try out/experiment with what you are learning
- Arts advisors from PPDS
- Peer support groups within an area, such as local drama circles or teacher professional communities (TPCs)
- Specialist/expert available for on-line support/blogging
- A more co-ordinated approach nationally to the *heritage in schools/artists in schools* scheme to ensure all schools get to participate.
- Partnership between visiting specialist teachers and mainstream teachers to develop teachers' confidence and competence, specialist give ideas/suggestions for teachers to try out before return of specialist. On-line support could be available in between visits
- Opportunities for teachers to develop their own artistic interests
- Recognise the importance of the Christmas play / production / concert within the curriculum

Question 3

"Creativity involves two processes: thinking, then producing. Innovation is the production or implementation of an idea. If you have ideas, but don't act on them, you are imaginative but not creative.". How can we develop a classroom culture that thrives on creativity? What is innovative teaching? How do the arts contribute to children's creative development?

Response

It was suggested that a culture of creativity could be developed in the classroom by having an open, welcoming, safe and receptive environment where all creative efforts were valued. Pupils should be given opportunities to explore, and questioning techniques should promote thinking. There should be an atmosphere of spontaneity in the classroom.

It was further suggested that in promoting individual creativity the use of visual arts to respond where oral or written responses have been seen to have failed, could be used. Different methodologies should be used to appeal to multiple intelligences. The approach to teaching of the arts should be holistic and free, where there is no right or wrong answer. There should be no fear of failure and there should be openness to new ideas. There was a general consensus that engaging in the arts allows children to develop creatively at their own pace, is important in promoting empathy and can be a calming experience. It was mentioned that there was instant satisfaction in producing an art product.

With regard to a definition for innovative teaching, participants felt that there should be an emphasis on the *journey* rather than the end-product. The teacher should use a variety of methodologies that children enjoy. All contributions from pupils should be valued and there should be structured fun for both teachers and pupils. To be innovative, teachers should know the abilities, interests and individual talents of pupils and children should also be given time to think.

Question 4

Many teachers throughout the country have expertise in the arts – how could this expertise on staffs be fully utilised?

Is there a place for the specialist teacher in the teaching of the arts? (If yes, what should such a role be, and what should be the relationship with the class teacher?)

Is it possible to teach a skill competently without being skilled in that area yourself – teaching an instrument, or a choir? Or is there more to arts education than the teaching of skills and techniques?

Response

The specialist teacher was considered to be a bone of contention. Issues that contributed to such contention included payment and the role of the class teacher vis-a-vis the specialist. One delegate suggested that specialist teachers could be employed in the short-term, as a form of CPD, in order for class teachers to gain expertise, but that the specialist teacher would then become redundant. Another suggestion was that retired teachers could be utilised, that their expertise could be tapped into and that they should be remunerated. One teacher felt that children benefit from an occasional visit from a specialist, for example the *Artist in school* scheme. Another suggested some sort of system where an external person would initiate work and that the class teacher would then follow through with it – a sort of apprenticeship. PPDS advisors are in a position to provide this sort of support. One teacher who had worked in a private school in Italy, stated that there were lots of specialist teachers employed and that the system worked well. The following comments illustrate the range of views among teachers on the issue:

- Many schools already use music teachers and/or drama teachers
- Specialists welcome on an occasional basis e.g. drama groups, plays, poetry workshops, storytellers
- The class teacher knows the children best, can view progress and development
- Fear of specialist taking over
- Good idea to utilise expertise within the school itself
- Passion more important than expertise

All agreed that a level of competence is required to teach some strands of the music curriculum such as composing, song singing (in tune!!), teaching an instrument.

There was a consensus that by introducing a specialist teacher, the bar would be set too high, thus causing stress to teachers and adding to the feeling of curriculum overload. It was also agreed that if there were specialist teachers in some schools and not others (as is currently the case) then a 'two-tiered system' would emerge. Children can avail of specialist tuition outside of school, the school's role is to give children a broad range of experiences and to give them a general overview/experience of the art subjects. It was felt that specialist teachers should be available to all or none. It was queried if the DES and/or INTO had guidelines on the issue, covering things such as charging children for this service, and the implications of the class teacher not teaching a particular aspect of the curriculum.

There was a suggestion that members of staff should be supported and encouraged (financially and time wise) to specialise in different aspects of the curriculum that the school identified as an area in need of development. It was noted that this is happening through Dublin West Education Centre and the PPDS's initiative re 'Trainers of Teachers' programme (TOTS).

Question 5

The use of ICT is encouraged in teaching the arts. What are the possibilities in using ICT in supporting the arts? What are the barriers to using IT in teaching the arts?

Response

It was noted that ICT was used to access museums and art galleries. Teachers use interactive whiteboards particularly for the “Looking and Respond” strand of the curriculum. Some teachers have used PhotoStory and some allow their pupils to use clip-art for illustrating poetry and stories. There seems to be a notable difference in experience between NQTs and older members of staff in the use of IT, it was felt that both can learn from each other. Internet resources/websites can be shared. A general fear was expressed that ICT could take away from creativity and imagination, if teachers cannot avail of professional development in the use of ICT as a tool for learning rather than an end in itself. Other barriers to the use of ICT in the Arts included a lack of resources, a lack of funding, a lack of expertise, a lack of professional development and a lack of broadband.

Question 6

Finding time for the arts is always a challenge. Is time management more of a challenge in teaching the arts than in other subjects? How do teachers ensure a balance across the arts curriculum?

Response

In general, the participants were of the view that finding time for the arts could sometimes be difficult, especially in respect of visual arts, with extra time needed for locating resources, planning, organisation and cleaning up. Music and drama was considered easier to manage. Multi-class situations presented particular difficulties. Possible solutions suggested for time-management were the use of time-blocks and seasonal themes, use of music for learning e.g. Mozart for maths. Quieter music could be used for reflective time (creative writing, visual arts). Another suggestion was the use of music on corridors e.g. march music when children are going out to the yard. Music appreciation displays could also be on corridors.

Ensuring a balance across the arts was considered teacher dependent. It was suggested that drama was low priority for many teachers, especially for those whose first encounter with the subject was during in-service for the 1999 curriculum. However, participants acknowledged the importance of drama and how it could be used in Circle Time.

Suggestions regarding possible solutions to balancing the arts were to have a well thought-out timetable and not to always consign the arts, in particular visual arts, to Friday afternoons. The majority of participants seemed to agree with this.

Question 7

In the Primary Curriculum Review - Phase 1: Visual Arts, only 2% of respondents reported no challenge in assessing children’s learning in visual art. Some teachers (38%) in the INTO survey questioned the appropriateness of assessing children’s progress in visual arts stating that: *“the process is most important”, “not really quantifiable”, “no accurate way of assessing”, “can’t be standardized”, “an individual and personal activity”, “very subjective”*.

What are the challenges in assessing children's learning in visual art? What is the place of assessment in the arts curriculum? Music? Drama? Dance? Visual Arts?

Response

Subjectivity of what you are assessing was stressed by the various respondents – the following analogy was given by one respondent: 'In maths, it is more clear-cut. If the child knows the answer, he knows the answer. In the arts, it is more subjective'. Success/brilliance was acknowledged by the group as something that it is hard to be definitive about with regard to the arts as teachers have different expectations/preconceptions about what is 'good' in art/music/drama.

The **what of assessing** was queried - the process/the experience/the end product?

The **purpose of assessment** was also queried. In maths/literacy, the child may be offered learning support if difficulties emerge or if the teacher can identify areas of difficulty and support the child in these areas but the purpose of assessing in the Arts was not quite so clear.

One group felt that **assessment of confidence level** is easy to carry out and is also valuable. **Teacher observation** was also noted by this group as being a key tool in terms of skill assessment e.g. fine-motor skills, manipulating materials.

There was general consensus with regard to allowing the children the space and **freedom to respond** to the arts in various ways.

The importance of **participation** in the arts was regarded as something that should be conveyed to the children.

There was strong agreement in the whole group that a depth of knowledge in a given arts area is necessary to assess key skills areas.

Appendix I

Workshop Presentations on the Visual Arts

Music – a creative encounter

Mary Manley, PPDS



Warm-up



Oooh! Ain't that funky now
Churn it up, churn it up
Push it, push it, push it, push it
Jump, clap, jump, clap
Monkey, monkey, monkey,
monkey.

Primary Professional Development Service

Can you play?



* * * * *



Primary Professional Development Service

Discussion Paper



Imagination

.....is more important than knowledge.

For knowledge is limited

while imagination embraces the whole world'

Albert Einstein

Primary Professional Development Service



Aims of Arts Education

ideas
feelings
experiences
aesthetic awareness
visual, aural, tactile, spatial environments
awareness of, sensitivity to and enjoyment
creative expression
solve problems creatively
joyful participation
confidence; self-esteem
imaginative thinking
personal fulfilment
enjoyment



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Every child is born with creative potential



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What does creativity look like?



- 'When we are involved in it we feel we are living more fully than during the rest of life'
-creativity may not lead to fame and fortune.....make day-to-day experiences more vivid; more enjoyable, more rewarding...boredom is banished and every moment holds the promise of a fresh discovery (Csikszentmihalyi)



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How do we make children more creative, imaginative....



- Creativity arises from the synergy of many sources and not only from the mind of a single person
- A person cannot be creative in a domain to which he/she is not exposed
- It is easier to enhance creativity by changing conditions in the environment than by trying to make people think more creatively

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Creativity (discussion paper)



- 'Children need opportunities for a closer look; they need time for the creative encounter.to experience the unpredictable and the uncertain.lessons that produce surprise'

As Fisher argued, creative learners need creative teachers who provide both order and adventure, and who are willing to do the unexpected and take risks (Fisher, 2002).

Primary Professional Development Service

Images of Composing



Primary Professional Development Service

Let's listen

(Castleknock Educate Together, Dublin)



Composing is a creative process which involves exploring, selecting, organising and using sounds to make music

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Objectives for Composing



- **Select sounds** from a variety of sources to.....
- **Invent** and perform short, simple musical pieces
- Recall, answer and invent simple melodic and rhythmic patterns
- **Talk** about his/her work/work of other children
- **Invent graphic symbols** or use standard notation to represent selected sounds
- **Record** compositions on electronic media.

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Creativity.....and composing



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Composing for a range of purposes

Experiment with sound/sound sources	Soundscape	Accompany a story, poem, rhyme, song	Portray characters
Explore musical elements	Illustrate a sequence of events	Explore rhythm	Explore pitch
Respond to /accompany pictures, photos, film	Convey a mood or atmosphere	Overture	Explore rhythm & pitch
Ostinato	Respond to other arts areas	Illustrate an abstract concept	Self expression

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Monkey on the Treetop (poem)



Monkey on the ground, starts to climb a tree
 He picks up a coconut and drops it down on me
 He swings from a branch, he hangs upside-down
 He makes it to the top, he jumps all around
 Monkey in the tree-top starts back down the tree
 He picks up a pineapple and drops it down on me
 He picks a banana, he picks a giant bunch
 He makes it to the bottom and we both have lunch

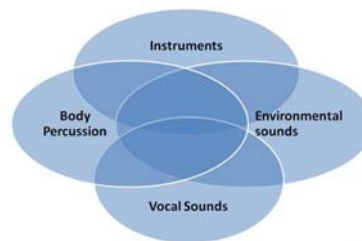
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Composing process/cycle

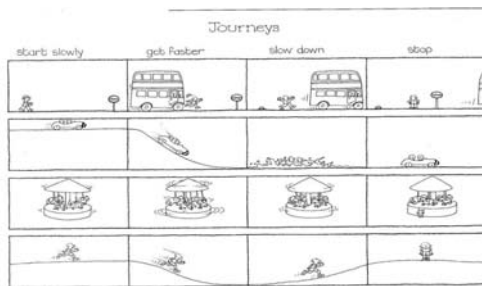


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EXPLORING SOUNDS is foundation



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Monkey on the Treetop



Monkey on the ground, starts to climb a tree
 He picks up a coconut and drops it down on me
 He swings from a branch, he hangs upside-down
 He makes it to the top, he jumps all around
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 He makes it to the bottom and we both have lunch

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Composing for a range of purposes- some possibilities

Experiment with sound/sound sources	Soundscape	Accompany a story, poem, rhyme, song	Portray characters
Play with instruments at start	Bus journey	Poem- 'Monkey'	'Monkey'
Explore musical elements	Illustrate a sequence of events	Explore rhythm	Explore pitch
Play lines softly/loudly; Structure as piece is put together	Continue the story	Fruit of the jungle- syllables	Monkey climbing down Happy monkey dancing Rhythm patterns on chime bars

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Options for Composing

- Rhythms
 - pear; melon; co-co-nut; bag of app-les (pictures and syllables)
 - rhythm patterns of the jungle
- Pitch
 - sing s-m or have group with pentatonic chimes
 - play rhythms on the chime bars; compose a jungle tune
- Sequence of events
 - story of monkey being lost? Journey through forest and other animals.....
- Elements
 - fast/slow; loud/soft as perform

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Composing for a range of purposes- some possibilities

Respond to /accompany pictures, photos, film Video- wildlife http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xfcmQHmOk&feature=related	Convey a mood or atmosphere Exotic jungle	Overture Create jungle music for start of story	Explore rhythm & pitch Separately and then together
Ostinato 'mon-key in the tree top' on instruments	Respond to other arts areas Video- Kandinsky	Illustrate an abstract concept Eg winter composition	Self expression Throughout!

Options for composing

- **Ostinato:** 'mon-key in the tree top'
- **Overture** – sounds of the jungle-day, night, animals' lunch time
- **Mood/atmosphere**.....person annoyed when fruit dropped, celebrating lunch
- **Respond to other arts areas**.....painting of jungle

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Responding to visual art through composing



Composing- Kandinsky

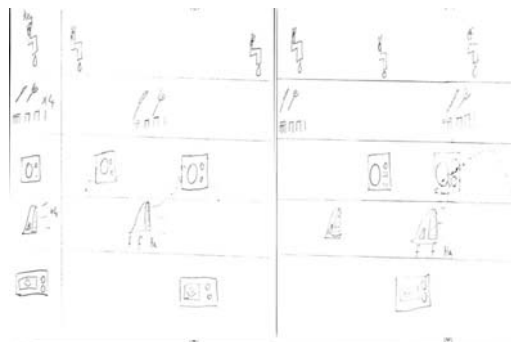
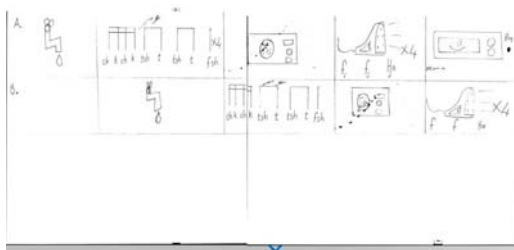
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Creativity: were you involved in.....



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Children's Compositions Notating Kitchen Sounds



Primary Professional Development Service

Primary School Curriculum

'Arts education encompasses a range of activities in the visual arts, in music, in drama, in dance and in literature. These activities and experiences help the child to make sense of the world; to question, to speculate and to find solutions; to deal with feelings and to respond to creative experience'



Primary Professional Development Service

Conclusion



Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything. It is the essence of order and sends to all that is good and just and beautiful.

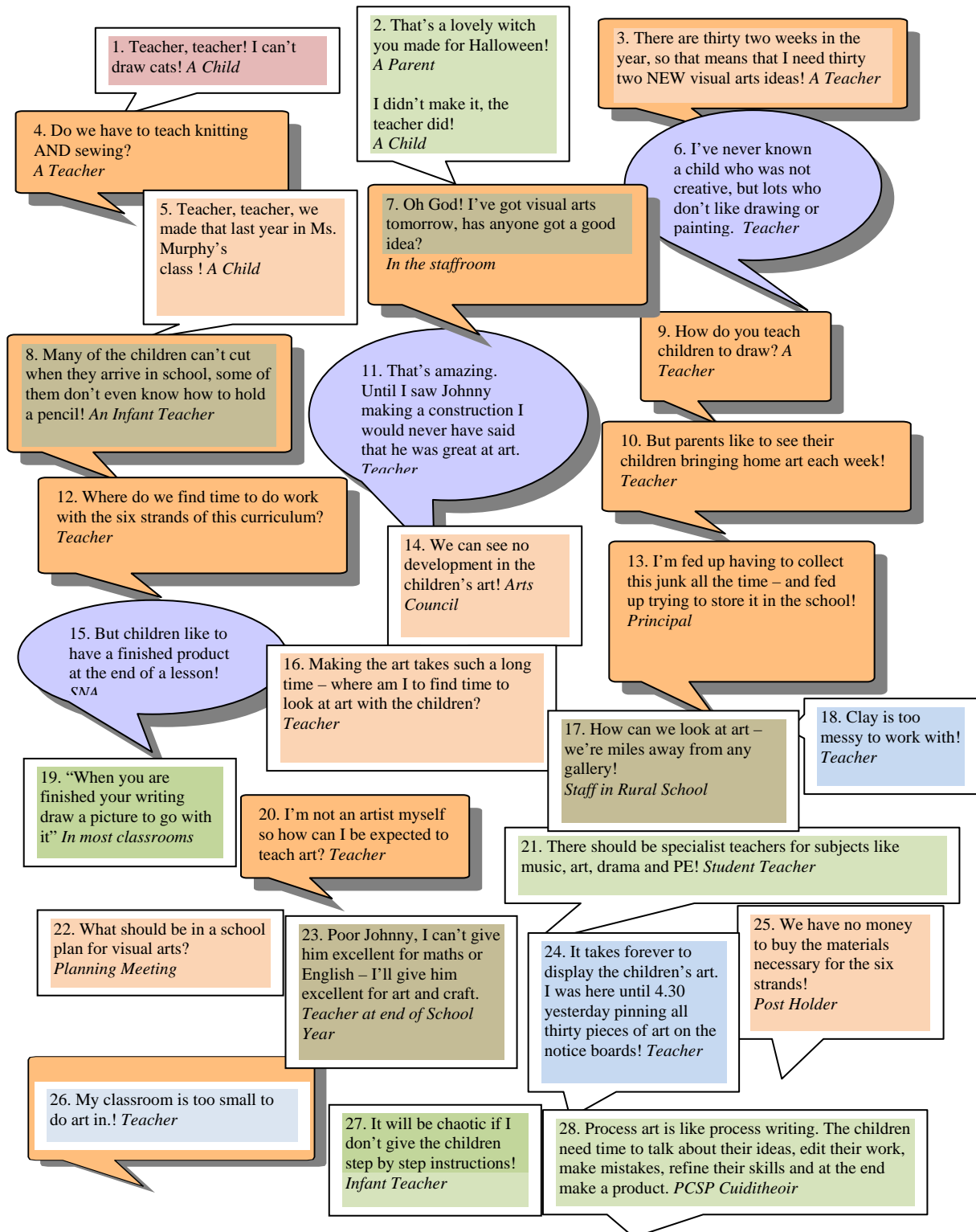
Plato (Discussion Document p.13)

Primary Professional Development Service

Teacher! Teacher! I can't draw!

Michael O'Reilly

Comments about art



On reading the Education Committee's very comprehensive report on the state of the arts in primary education I was struck by the concerns expressed by teachers in relation to the teaching of visual arts. These concerns mirror those expressed by many of my students studying for the Higher Diploma in Primary Education with Hibernia College and those expressed by the many teachers I meet on in-career courses. During my period working with the Primary Curriculum Support Programme, as a visual arts *cuiditheoir*, I noted down teachers', children's, parents' and critics' concerns in the form of comments and plan today to present some of these to you. In discussing a selection of these comments I hope to possibly suggest solutions to many of the perceived difficulties.

NOTE: These comments are selected from among those that form the discussion material in Online Lesson One in Visual Arts Education on the HDiPE Course with Hibernia College. For the purposes of this presentation I have numbered each of the comments on the previous page.

1. Teacher! Teacher! I can't draw!

2. That's a lovely witch you made for Halloween! I didn't make it, the teacher did!

"The task of the teacher is not to teach clever techniques or to demonstrate ways of producing images and forms he/she finds acceptable but to build on interests and strengths by drawing the children out and making suggestions as appropriate." (Teacher Guidelines, 1999)

The ultimate aim of the drawing curriculum is to encourage children to develop their own personal style of drawing and the suggestions therein are firmly based on the following principles:

- everyone can draw
- children proceed in sequence through a series of discrete and recognisable stages in developing their drawing
- children's drawings are about communicating messages and meaning and represent the world as they see it, their purpose is therefore different than drawing merely to achieve representational images
- success in drawing comes through exploring the possibilities of all the materials
- drawing cannot be 'taught' through the use of demonstration, or through following steps in 'how to draw' manuals
- the most important part of learning to draw is learning to look.

Therefore the teacher need not worry that he/she cannot draw, his/her vital role is to provide access to the materials, to encourage children to explore with these, to provide stimuli, to recognise and encourage individuality and above all else to develop the children's skills in observation.

The certainty regarding the nature of fine art and children's art is that it has little to do with simple imitation. It is always a by-product of thinking and feeling and not a mindless making of likenesses (although at its worst, some so-called art teaching comes near to this definition).

Margaret Morgan (Editor)

Art 4-11: Art in the Early Years of Schooling.

Teachers at infant level report that children are arriving in primary school infant classes with pre-conceived ideas about what “art” is – simply copying a sample, colouring in an adult drawn image – or merely watching as the preschool teacher makes something for them to take home.

Many commercially produced “art books” merely reinforce this idea – as indeed do many children’s TV programmes.

All of this contradicts the central message of the visual arts curriculum and all theories of visual arts education – that it is process that is important.

The question for us as teachers is how to counteract these messages. We need to

- make a distinction with the children between what is their own art and what is mere replication
- move away from the current emphasis on colouring in work – difficult as many workbooks in other subject areas contain far too much of these types of activities
- recognise the distinction ourselves between adult art and children’s art and thus value the children’s art ourselves
- inform parents that in our schools we engage children in process art and explain this concept to them
- engage in much more talk and discussion with children before, during and after art activities
- look at and respond to the work of artists who themselves explore and experiment with materials and ideas – and not concentrate so much on the representational arts

3. There are thirty two weeks in the year, that means I need thirty two new art ideas!

A theme or topic that is relevant to children’s experience should be chosen in advance, or may occasionally arise spontaneously during a motivating session. Through planned and open-ended questioning, children should be stimulated to conjure up ideas, feelings, images and experiences which are significant for them. Verbal stimuli could be used, as well as visual, aural (sounds) or kinaesthetic (dance, drama), and they would include visually descriptive poems and prose extracts.

Areas of the children’s experience would include

- the world they know and live in
- people and other creatures
- the fantastic and the mysterious.

This approach enables children to ‘live’ the experience, real or imagined, and to make a response that is unique to them.”

The problem with the phrase “I need thirty two new ideas “is in the three words I, new and ideas. In the first place it should not be I, the teacher, whose ideas are looked for – surely the ideas of the children are what is important. Why would we feel that each time we stand in front of a class that we need something “new” – this is not how we approach

work in other subject areas, we revise, redo, revisit and improve. The problem with the word “ideas” is that often we use this word, when in fact what we are looking for are mere samples for the children to replicate!

4. Do we have to teach knitting AND sewing?

The curriculum outlines three broad ways of working with fabric and fibre

- Changing the surface of fabrics
- Creating new fabrics
- Constructing with fabric and fibre

At any class level therefore we should be working within these three broad areas. In each area the curriculum offers a menu of activities from which teachers can select.

CHANGING THE SURFACE OF FABRICS will involve us in work such as drawing, painting or printing on fabrics, dyeing fabrics (tie and dye / batik), decorating fabrics with fibres (collage, appliqué, embroidery), deconstructing fabrics.

CREATING NEW FABRICS involves any work when we are using fibres to make up a new fabric (de-constructing, knitting, weaving, crochet, macramé).

CONSTRUCTING WITH FABRIC AND FIBRE will involve work we do with fabric collage, appliqué, soft toy making, and puppetry.

The answer to the question

Knitting is one of the activities on the menu for creating new fabrics. If knitting is chosen for exploration it should begin in third class – but would need to be developed in all older classes to ensure development in skills and techniques.

It would not be envisaged that a teacher would involve his/her class in exploring all of the activities, processes, skills or techniques outlined in the curriculum, rather that s/he would select from the menu on offer – all the time ensuring a balance between 2-D and 3-D and between making and looking.

5. Teacher! We made that last year in Ms. Murphy’s class!

“Visual arts activities should be structured to show sequence and growth in complexity and should build on earlier experiences and skills acquired.....it may be necessary at times to devise a class programme that incorporates activities from different class levels”.

Comments such as this one made by children again indicate that they have been led to believe in the “replication” model of visual arts – where they are expected merely to reproduce or copy a sample of something representational. When we as teachers begin to teach fractions to fourth class, the class does not cry “Teacher! We did fractions last year in Ms. Murphy’s class!” Why not?

But children have readily accepted the ideas of engaging in process as they write (refer to English Curriculum) when they:

- draft ideas
- make rough drafts
- edit these drafts

- revisit these drafts
- improve on these drafts and
- create a product.

- 6. I've never known a child who was not creative, but lots who don't like drawing or painting!**
- 11. That's amazing. Until I saw Johnny making a construction I'd never have said he was great at art.**

We need to consider here the theory of multiple intelligences – or the idea that all children possess different learning strengths. This is why we should aim, in any lesson / experience in any subject area, to include the verbal, the visual and the kinaesthetic.

Different learning strengths will also be apparent within the visual arts programme:

- children who are verbally strong may enjoy looking and responding activities
- children who are spatially aware may excel at drawing activity
- children who are musically intelligent may enjoy responding to music through painting
- children who are physically gifted may excel at activities in construction or fabrics
- children who love maths may love the step by step nature of printmaking.

The curriculum has been designed to take account of all these strengths and likes – through the inclusion of three 2D strands, three 3-D strands and the strand units of making and looking and responding. As teachers we need to create a balance between all of these in our classrooms to appeal to all children.

Consider the descriptions of these two types of intelligence:

Spatial Intelligence

- reports clear visual images
- reads maps, charts and diagrams more easily than text
- daydreams a lot
- enjoys art activities
- good at drawings
- likes to view movies, slides or other visual presentations
- enjoys doing puzzles, mazes or similar visual activities
- builds interesting three dimensional constructions
- gets more out of pictures than words while reading
- doodles on workbooks, worksheets and other materials

Bodily Kinaesthetic Intelligence

- excels in one or more sports

- moves, twitches, taps or fidgets while seated for a long time
- cleverly mimics other people's gestures or mannerisms
- loves to take things apart and put them back together again
- puts hands all over something seen
- enjoys running, jumping, wrestling or similar activities
- shows skill in a craft (e.g. woodworking, sewing, mechanics) or good fine motor coordination in other ways
- has a dramatic way of expressing him/herself
- reports different physical sensations while thinking or working
- enjoys working with clay or other tactile experiences (e.g. finger-painting) “

Is it surprising then that Johnny (who may slot into the kinaesthetically intelligent bracket) might prefer to and indeed excel at, work in the area of construction?

7. Oh God! I've got visual arts tomorrow. Has anyone got a good idea?

20. I'm not an artist myself so how can I be expected to teach art?

21. There should be specialist teachers for subjects like music, art, drama and PE.

“Systematic planning by the teacher for the development of concepts, skills and attitudes, and their assessment within units of work, will be crucial for the success of the visual arts programme. In planning a unit of work for his/her class, the teacher will be aware of the progress the children have made, as well as the special needs of some children. In selecting content, a balance will be maintained between work in two and three dimensional media, and between opportunities for making art and for looking at and responding to art.”

Painting is a path towards happiness.

Children naturally experience this happiness – if they're allowed to remain free and if one doesn't criticise them or try to influence them. A child's imagination is unlimited. It soars into realms that have long since become *inaccessible to us adults*. Children link the most incredible things with one another, as though doing so were perfectly natural and logical. There is no “right” and “wrong”. Everything is possible. And above all there's no such thing as “talented” and “untalented”. These value judgements are made only in adult life. When children whom no one has “trimmed” or “instructed” take a brush in hand, it seems almost as though God were painting through them. Their paintings reveal that the inner and outer worlds are indistinguishable.

(Antje Tesche-Mentzen Children's Art)

“Children should not be taught to follow instructions unquestioningly, as this is likely to hinder creativity and spontaneity. They should be helped to appreciate the value of working independently and on their own initiative, and experimentation and interpretation should be encouraged equally in 2D and 3-D work. In an art lesson, the children should remain the designers: this role should not be taken from them.”

Consider

- do you need to be a mathematician to teach maths?
- do you need to be a poet yourself to explore poetry with children?
- do you need to be a scientist to engage in simple experiments with children?
- do you have to be a musician to explore simple percussion with children?
- should you need to be an artist to facilitate children's exploration of their own ideas in visual arts?

No one will dispute the fact that a teacher who has a specific interest in visual arts themselves will add another layer to the curriculum as outlined – but this was not the basis on which the curriculum was designed.

The issue of specialist/peripatetic teachers has often been raised for some subject areas – notably those listed.

The curriculum in every subject area is firmly based on the idea that it is can be explored and taught by the generalist teacher.

8. Many of the children can't cut when they arrive in school, some of them don't even know how to hold a pencil.

We need to analyse what has been happening in recent years that has resulted in this shift. Based on discussions with teachers we might propose the following

- that young children are being less exposed to play activities at home that involve paint, clay, drawing, cutting, etc.
- that many children are attending play schools where they are being given the message that art is all about the production of replicas – more often than not completed by or made entirely by the adult
- that many publications purporting to be about visual art also emphasise this notion of replicating a sample
- that many textbooks reinforce this notion through the overuse of colouring-in and copying activities
- that even the media, in particular some television programmes, reinforce these messages
- that possibly we ourselves have been sucked into this mindset and left feeling that our role as the teacher is to accumulate samples for the children to recreate
- that the basic message to children is that their own art is no good because it doesn't look like an adult generated product

Can you suggest activities that children might engage in during group activity times in infant classes – that would develop the simple skills needed (cutting, tearing, sticking, fine motor skills, etc?)

9. How do you teach children to draw?

19. When you are finished your writing, draw a picture to go with it.

Children draw from an early age if they are given the opportunity. Drawing emerges alongside verbal language. It is an active exploring process that enables the child to experience and understand a wide variety of perceptions, thoughts and feelings. At the earliest stages it may be better to think of ‘ mark-making ’ rather than drawing. Drawing traces the child’s engagement with experimenting, investigating, remembering or imagining. A key thing to remember is that a drawing is evidence of both a child’s struggle to understand and to communicate.

(Eileen Adams -Drawing Power- The Campaign for Drawing. 2002.)

Visit a website:

So then, what’s the answer to the question?

Simply put, you don’t teach children to draw – or at least you avoid the idea of the “ This is how you draw a”. The teacher draws as an adult, and demonstrating a particular way to draw something is interfering with the child’s progress through the stages of development.

This does not mean that you do nothing. You should be trying to

- encourage active looking
- talking to children about the content of their drawings
- encouraging children to add more detail, colour. Pattern, etc. to their drawings.
- encouraging each child’s particular style of drawing through looking at the wide range of styles used by artists (e.g. contrast Leonardo da Vinci, Picasso and Quentin Blake.
- like writing – encouraging drawing for different purposes

To paraphrase Betty Edwards from *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* - “ Most people fail to draw because they try to draw what they know is there, rather than what they actually see “.

Traditionally we have asked children to write first and then to add illustrations. However many teachers in special needs education indicate that turning the sequence around can be of great benefit to children who have difficulties with literacy. Drawing, for example, a series of cartoons that illustrate a story told orally can be of great use to these children in structuring their writing.

10. But parents like to see their children bringing home art each week.

15. But children like to have a finished product at the end of each lesson.

Do they? Has anyone ever asked them? Might they not prefer to see regular interestingly presented collections of their children’s art coming home, rather than the parade of replicas? Why not try a little survey yourself?

We do need to explain the nature of children’s art to parents – and this is best done at parents meetings for parents of reception classes.

Art is not just about painting. It's about seeing and saying what you see

Jane (8)

Might it not be the case that children have simply gotten used to this idea? Might it not also be the case that what they have gotten used to taking home is not visual arts at all – but mere replicas or copies of the sample that the teacher has shown them? Might it not also be the case that most art that is sent home is sent during seasonal or festival occasions – Christmas / Valentine's Day / Easter, etc. – and is usually of the decorative / replica type?
Think about this.

- 12. Where do we find time to do work with the six strands of this curriculum?**
- 16. Making the art takes such a long time – where am I to find time to look at art with the children?**
- 17. How can we look at art, we're miles away from any gallery.**

The only way to do this is to plan our work in a linked and integrated way – while abandoning the ideas that each lesson will end in a product or that we can engage always in whole class work. Consider the following:

- would it be organisationally possible or desirable to explore monoprinting with a class of thirty five?
- would a group of children be able to complete a construction or a fabric appliqué in a single two-hour session?
- can a child create an interesting piece in clay without opportunities to first explore with the media and experiment with drafts?

We need also to look at how much work in visual arts we are engaging in during work in other subject areas:

- how work in looking at the work of artists integrates with oral language activities
- how work in designing and making from the science curriculum integrates with construction activities
- how work in shape and space in the maths curriculum integrates with work in paint and colour and printmaking
- how work in media studies in the SPHE curriculum might integrate with the looking at and responding to art strand unit

Can you think of other integration opportunities?

A work of art is created twice – first by the artist and then by the viewer. It is continually being recreated in the minds and eyes of observers. A work of art invites interrogation – but we the viewers are also the ones who are interrogated. Art can be an opportunity for many kinds of cognition, including the sense of wonder that Aristotle said was the spur to philosophy

(Robert Fisher, Teaching Thinking)

The main objective of the second strand unit in the visual arts curriculum might be summarised as follows: *Children should be enabled to look at and respond to their own work, to the work of other children and to the work of artists.*

Therefore, as part of our work in visual arts we need to allocate time for children to talk about what they might do in their art and to talk about work they have completed. Reserving a special chair in our classrooms (to be called “The Artist’s Chair”) on which children are asked to sit and speak about their own art, is one technique that can be successfully used here.

Organising displays of children’s art around our schools provide opportunities for children to look at art by other children. Working on a theme and inviting other classes into our classrooms to look at and to listen to children speaking about their art might be considered.

Looking at the work of artists may appear daunting to many of us probably because we have looked on it as “ art appreciation “ demanding of us a wide knowledge of such subjects as art theory and art history. If however we take a different approach and ask the following questions

- Who is to do the looking?
- Who is to do the responding?
- Is there any correct answer?

The task becomes much easier, more informal and more open ended.

“Opportunities to look at and respond to the work of artists are present in many of the other curriculum areas – if we expand our own thinking on who is the artist!

- Book/text illustration
- Photographs
- Diagrams in Maths and Science
- Clothing and fashions in History and SPHE
- Posters and advertising
- Website design
- Local buildings and sculpture
- Pottery and household ware, etc.”

Visual art is not confined to the fine arts. Not all visual artists work in the area of fine arts. Visual Art does not just exist in frames hanging on gallery walls.

Can you make a list of other places where art exists, a list of people who work in the area of visual arts. To start you off consider

- art on the internet on calendars
- a photographer or a fashion designer

- 13. I'm fed up having to collect all this junk – and fed up trying to store it in the school.**
- 18. Clay is too messy to work with.**
- 24. It takes forever to display the children's artwork. I was here till 4.30 yesterday pinning all thirty pieces of art on the notice board.**
- 26. My classroom is too small to do art in.**
- 25. We have no money to purchase all the materials to do the six strands.**

MOST COMMON SCENARIO

On Thursday I asked the children to bring in lots of materials for construction on Friday. Half brought in nothing, the others brought in so many cereal boxes that we were falling over them for the rest of the day. A Teacher.

THE ALTERNATIVE

1. Plan to do construction well in advance – ideally as part of exploring a theme across the six strands.
2. A few weeks before the construction is to begin divide the class into construction groups.
3. Ask each group to decide on what they would like to construct and to tell you and the class about it.
4. Ask each group to design (draw) their proposed construction and to decide what materials they will need to make it.
5. Ask each group to write down a detailed list of the materials they will need to collect to build their construction and allocate the task of finding particular materials to individuals in their group.
6. As a class make an inventory of classroom materials that will be needed – scissors, card, staplers, masking tape, glues, coloured papers, paints, brushes. Order materials as necessary.
7. On the day before your construction project is to begin, ask the children to get back into their groups, get out their plans and lists and remind themselves of who has to bring what from home.
8. Have a small supply of found materials for emergencies – in case someone is ill.

Anyone who has ever given clay to young children, be they teachers or parents, will know how excited and focused children become when they start to handle it. The apparent ease with which it can be worked, changed and formed by even very young children, and their immediate physical involvement shows how important it is as a creative material. Within the curriculum clay has a particularly unique place, and the three dimensional properties which it offers in the exploration of form, space, texture, weight and structure are of special value.

(Peter Clough, Clay in the Primary School)

At infant level the emphasis is placed mainly on the first area i.e. playing with clay and with allied materials such as plasticine or playdough. We should be moving away from

the replica-based, once-off product activities (e.g. making hedgehogs that all look the same by sticking matchsticks into a ball of clay) towards a more open-ended exploration of clay (where the children are encouraged to explore, talk about and describe clay work and where each individual is allowed the time and space to create his/her own unique pieces – pieces that, to us as adults, may not sometimes be representational.) A clay session with children might therefore follow this sequence

- talking about what clay feels like and recording the descriptions in a word bank (integrate with oral language)
- discussing what actions we can perform with clay (pull, push, pinch, squeeze, flatten, roll, etc.) and again recording this vocabulary
- describing what they themselves feel they have created through play
- pressing found objects and tools into clay to make patterns and textures
- choosing a theme to work with and having a go at making a variety of things associated with this theme (e.g. animals, food, monsters, etc.)
- working with a new ball of clay when the first one begins to get dry (store these in a basin and cover with a damp cloth in order to refresh for further use)
- choosing to make a favourite thing connected to the theme that we might keep, allow to dry and decorate.

The sequence of work outlined above might indeed be applied as a model to a clay session at any class level – simply change the theme you are using e.g. at middle class level use the theme of fruit, at senior class level choose a theme such as 3-D shapes (integrate with mathematics) or characters from a class novel (integrate with reading work).

KEY MESSAGE

In order to implement the primary curriculum in full we must use natural clays because

- only with these clays can we really explore, experiment and engage in process work
- only with these clays can we make slip thus enabling children to join clay effectively and
- these types of clay can be recycled thus allowing for more regular work with this medium.

The most widely available types of natural clay are terracotta clay and buff clay. Avoid using nylon-reinforced clay (often commonly referred to as newclay).

Displays themselves can be either a short term celebratory experience or something which is kept in the classroom or school to be used and developed. This involves skills such as labelling, note-taking, creative or descriptive writing, modelling and the skill of adding appropriate information books. In this way displays become ongoing experiences and may be built up and used in the same way as any other major resource.

(Margaret Jackson, Creative Display and Environment)

There are a number of basic points that need to be raised in relation to display

- no one ever said that all the children's pieces need to be displayed at the one time

- consideration might be given to rotational display – where a particular group’s art is displayed for a period
- we need to consider how to involve children in the display of their own work
- displays do not need to be completed in one “sitting” – they can evolve gradually
- there are simple rules that can be followed to ensure effective display

If space is at a premium a number of strategies might be tried

- drawing activities are usually not precluded by space – and much of the work in the paint area can be done using coloured drawing media
- some projects might be given as homework
- work in areas such as construction and fabric and fibre might be engaged in by groups rather than by individuals
- some work might be block timetabled and engaged in outside during fine weather
- many techniques can be explored in miniature

Can you think of other strategies that might prove effective?

In relation to the issue of money for the purchase of visual arts materials (each school obviously has its own system of collecting these monies) but I would ask school to consider the following points

- consider the central purchase of materials such as printing rollers, fabric scissors, etc. – central purchase always requires one individual to monitor this and to look after materials centrally
- consider how much money is wasted by the purchase of unnecessary expensive materials such as pritt stick, googly eyes, paint trays, non recyclable clay, glitter, florescent papers and paints, etc.
- consider how much money is wasted through not looking after materials correctly e.g. leaving paintbrushes in water overnight

23. Poor Johnny, I can’t give him good for maths or English, I’ll give him excellent for art and craft.

Read the sections of the curriculum that deal with assessment.

Why Assess?

Assessment helps inform the teaching and learning process. Assessment techniques help to identify the strengths (learning potential) and challenges of the child, enable the teacher to choose appropriate teaching strategies and provide useful information for teachers, parents and others. Assessment also provides a basis for recording and reporting. School policy should ensure that a manageable approach is adopted, one which is valid, reliable and uniform throughout the school.

When Assess?

- As a child engages in the creative process during the Visual Arts activity
- When the work is completed-discussion following an activity

- While making a personal response to work of other children, artists and craftspeople.

What Should Be Assessed?

A range of activities completed over a period of time including those involved with integration. We assess children's ability to

- make art
- look with understanding at and respond to art works

Assessment involves the following areas:

(1) Perceptual Awareness:

- Is the child aware of the elements of art? (line, pattern, colour, shape, space etc.)
- Can he/she see them in the natural and built environment and discuss what he/she sees?
- Can he/she use these elements in the creation of his/her own work, according to age and ability?

(2) Expressive Abilities and Skills:

- Can a child express his/her ideas, feeling and experiences through a varied range of art materials?
- Can the child respond to a stimulus and use the materials imaginatively and confidently?
- Is the child learning new skills, appropriate to their age and ability (e.g. cutting/colour mixing/making a pinch-pot/monoprinting)

(3) Critical and Aesthetic Awareness:

- Can a child view art with openness and increasing sensitivity? Is the child curious? Does he/she ask questions? Does the child recognise categories of artworks (according to their age and as the Curriculum becomes established)?
- Does the child make judgements-do they like or dislike art-works for a reason?
- Is the child affected – does he/she have an emotional response, e.g. “It makes me feel.....”

(4) Disposition Towards Art Activities:

- Does the child have a positive approach to art?
- Does he/she enjoy it and get personally involved?
- Is the child's work personal and inventive?

27. It will be chaotic if I don't give the children step by step instructions.

I never do a painting as a work of art. All of them are researches. I search constantly .
(Picasso)

If it were possible for children to develop without any interference from the outside world, no special stimulation for their creative work would be necessary. All children would use their deeply rooted creative impulses without inhibition, confident in their own means of expression. When children lose self-confidence in their own means of creative expression to the extent that they say “ I can’t draw “, some interference in their lives has caused this inhibition and withdrawal into the self. Often the mistake is made of evaluating children’s creative work by how the product looks, its colours, its shapes, its design qualities, and so forth. This is unjust, not only to the product, but even more to the child. Growth cannot be measured by the tastes or standards of beauty that may be important to an adult.In art education, the aesthetic quality of the final product is subordinated to the creative process – including thinking, feeling, perceiving and reactions to the environment – that is important.

(Lowenfeld & Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth (8th Edition)

Step by step outlines by the teacher would only be used in the area of demonstrating specific techniques to groups of children – never in relation to making a product that is merely a replica. Step by step demonstrations might suit areas such as

- the stages in making a monoprint
- the stages in constructing a coil pot
- how to cast on knitting

14. We can see no development in the children’s art.

Probably the reason many teachers have felt that this was so was again because much work in the past concentrated on the production of once off replica style products. An emphasis on this type of work meant that children had no opportunities to

- develop their own ideas
- use their own ideas
- practice skills and techniques
- learn from their mistakes
- discuss their own art
- look at the work of artists
- look at the work of other children
- practice drawing and other techniques
- explore a wide variety of materials
- make choices
- build on previous work
- revise, revisit and redo
- etc. etc.

If all of the above were missing, would it not have been impossible to see any development? Consider if we had taught maths in this way – where at every lesson we selected an activity at random and did it only as a once off.

28. Process art is like process writing. The children need time to talk about their ideas, edit their work, make mistakes, refine their skills and at the end make a product.

At any stage of a personal process a product exists, even if it is only a half formulated idea, a group composition in the making, or whatever. Processes essentially take place on products, not in the abstract. We have to be thinking about something, imagining something, making something. This is not an abstract activity without any visible signs.We can only relate to other people, through their products, what they say and do. Essentially private processes are publicly manifested through the products, which may be regarded as provisional, but are always important from the point of view of human communication.

(Keith Swanwick, A Basis for Music Education.)

Therefore the visual arts curriculum should not be considered anti-product, it is saying that all good art products come about as a result of good processes.

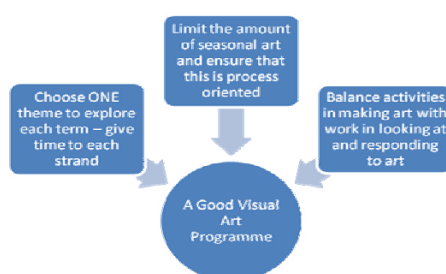
22. What should be in a school plan for visual arts?

Not a syllabus – the curriculum is the syllabus. Not a list of activities for each class – this is also the curriculum. In my view the following is the ultimate school plan – in a nutshell

In every class in our school the children will be enabled to

- develop an awareness of the elements of art as they exist in the environment and as they can be used in his/her own art
- develop a variety of art skills and techniques in order to effectively engage in the process of making art
- engage in the process of making art, in both 2-D and 3-D forms, through experimenting with a wide range of art materials in order to visually represent his/her experience, imagination and observation
- develop a critical awareness of his/her own art, the art of classmates and of a variety of artists from various times, cultures and genres

Recommendations



Looking and Responding – Awareness, Appreciation and Appraisal in the primary school curriculum

Dr. Michael Flannery

Below is an edited version of the slides used by Michael in his workshops.

His background

- Primary teacher
- Senior Lecturer at Coláiste Mhuire, MIE
- Continuing professional development and online CPD

- PhD in Education @ NCAD
- Research: *Online continuing professional development: Discourse analysis of primary teachers' perspectives regarding Awareness, Appreciation and Appraisal in Art*
- Masters in English Language Education @ Canterbury Christ Church University
- Higher Diploma in Community Arts Education @ NCAD

Some proposed reasons for the inclusion of *looking and responding*

- exercising critical and imaginative thinking
- developing reflective intelligence
- applying *cognitive* emotions
- visual literacy
- cultural literacy
- appreciating multiple perspectives and viewpoints
- the value of attentive looking
 - o the importance nuance
 - o the relevance of metaphor
- the value of time with respect to
 - o shifting perspectives
 - o snowballing
- developing our art making skills repertoire
- communication (confidence and competence)
- knowledge of other subject areas
- exploring the real, unreal and the surreal realms

The primary school curriculum promotes balance between looking and responding and art production throughout all four levels

Looking at and talking about works of art [craft and design] is also presented as one of four suggested practical starting points for art production

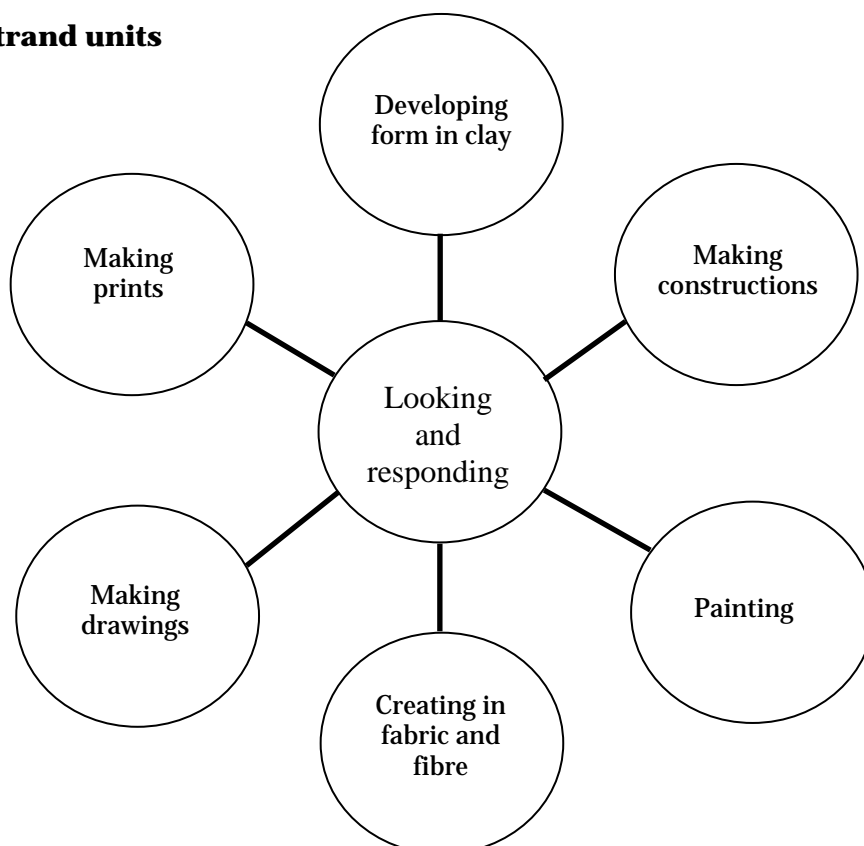
Curriculum reviews and national research indicates that art awareness, appreciation and appraisal is not embraced as successfully as other aspects of looking and responding or the visual arts curriculum

1999 Visual arts primary curriculum

Developing form in clay	Looking and responding
Making constructions	Looking and responding
Painting	Looking and responding
Creating in fabric and fibre	Looking and responding
Making prints	Looking and responding
Making drawings	Looking and responding

Another way of perceiving LAR in the primary school curriculum (LAR as a hub strand unit which is shared by all six media orientated strands)

Strand units



One definition of art

- What is art?
- Institutional theory proposes
 - o Any object which has altered or influenced by human agency or effort
 - o The resulting object has been in an art gallery, museum or shown in an exhibition context.

Taste, preferences, appreciation versus informed opinion, reasoned evaluation, criticism and appraisal

- We all have preferences
- What are yours?
- Taste defines the viewer
- Personal connection
- Stages of artistic development
- Interaction
- Shifting perspectives

One suggested approach to artworks which have a tangible work to be viewed

- Pair, share and compare
 - o Talking about your preferences and consider why?
 - o Examine the work in relation to
 - Content
 - Form
 - Process
 - Mood
 - o Whole class survey
 - Orange card signifies a liking, connection or a wanting to do learn more about the work
 - Blue card signifies disconnection, disinterest or dislike
 - Discuss different perspectives

Art history tells us how often the general public takes awhile to embrace emerging art forms or the avant garde

- Contestation and anger
- Confusion
- Increased Familiarity
- Growing appreciation with shifting perspectives
- Becoming much loved
- Considered a canonical work of art

Not all works of art aims to communicate beauty

Some art works trigger questioning

Some work concerns itself with rule breaking and non conformity

Some artworks change or perceptions and definitions of what is and what isn't art

Art

- Communicates
- Is another way of knowing
- Thrives on its multiplicity of viewpoints
- Evolves from theory, invention and discovery
- Does not always concern itself with beauty
- Both conforms and rebels
- Contributes to and is influenced by culture

Criticism

- Is a genre of verbal discourse
- For some is all about interpretation
- For others involves reasoned evaluation
- Often commends and recommends
- Evolves with emerging theories of art
- Involves both emotion and cognition
- Is grounded in theory

A suggested approach abbreviated as FISH was introduced to teachers via OCPD

- Obtain first impressions
- Investigate further
 - o Content
 - o Process
 - o Form
 - o Mood
- Use as a stimulus for art production
- Ask 'Have we learnt something from the artwork, the artist or the process?'

A suggested FRAME for LAR

- Find work allow work find you!
- Research a little to be fair to more ambiguous work and the artist in question
- Ask three interesting questions
- Mediate children's responses
- Evaluate the LAR experience