



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE)
Submitting as a: Peak body
State: NSW

Summary

The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) believe a key factor in achieving educational success for all Australian students is the provision of quality learning experiences in The Arts at primary and secondary school.

In the NAAE's submission to the Review, we cite the growing body of Australian and International research to unequivocally demonstrate the enormous positive impacts that The Arts (Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Art) can have on students' academic and non-academic success.

Our recommendations:

The NAAE advocates for the full implementation of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts in all states and territories in Australia across the primary and secondary years of schooling.

The NAAE strongly advocates for increased professional learning opportunities across the five Arts subjects (Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts) in primary schools to support teachers to effectively teach The Arts and improve student academic and non-academic outcomes in Arts and non-Arts areas.

The NAAE recommend increased time allocated in pre-service teacher training for primary teachers to gain further expertise in teaching The Arts. The NAAE recommends that primary generalist teacher education courses should require students.

Main submission

INTRODUCTION

The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) is a coalition of peak arts and arts education associations who represent arts educators across Australia. NAAE members are: Art Education Australia (AEA), Australian Dance Council – Ausdance, Australian Society for Music Education (ASME), Australian Teachers of Media

(ATOM), Drama Australia, Music Australia, National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) and The Music Trust (observer).

The NAAE refers to 'The Arts' as a key learning area in the Australian Curriculum, which contains five discrete subjects: Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts. Policy documents recognise the central role The Arts play in the lives and education of young people. However, as Bamford (2006) notes, there is often a gulf between education policy and the lip service given to the arts and opportunities for it to be provided within schools.

NAAE believe a key factor in achieving educational success for all Australian students is the provision of quality learning experiences in The Arts at primary and secondary school.

In a political environment which espouses innovation and 21st Century capacities such as collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking, imagination, communication, agility and empathy, the experiences and learning that a properly implemented Arts curriculum offer are profound. The Arts provide the logical conduit through which these capacities and related skills, in both the social and emotional domains, can be developed. A number of reports (see *The Heart of the Matter* 2013; *Humanities Graduates and the British Economy: The Hidden Impact* 2013; *Australia's Future Workforce? CEDA* 2015), argue that creativity and innovation will be key to successful 21st Century economies, particularly in developing responses to multi-perspective or 'wicked problems' (Rittel and Weber 1973).

Reports note that in the knowledge economy, new workplace skills and the fostering of an innovative, agile and robust workforce will prove to be vital to national and international creative economies. To date, emphasis has been centred on STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) at both school and tertiary levels as a focus of preparing Australian students to be successful in the 21st century economy. However, increasing demand and realisation of the need for creativity and innovation has resulted in recognition that many more disciplines have an essential role to play.

CURRENT RESEARCH

If young Australians are to be successful at school and beyond school, we must ensure that they have access to a quality Arts education. Each Arts subject promotes different approaches to creativity, innovation, collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking and communication, and helps young people become more successful learners. However, both the National Review of School Music Education and National Review of Visual Education illustrate that arts-based instruction in the primary years is strongly linked to socio-economic advantage, meaning that those students from less privileged backgrounds are deprived of arts learning.

Australian and international research has continued to show the multitude of benefits that The Arts can have on student academic and non-academic outcomes (Fleming, Gibson & Anderson, 2016; Martin et al, 2013; Winner et al., 2013; Catterall et al., 2012; Ewing, 2010; Bamford, 2006; Catterall, 2002; Deasy, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Fiske, 1999).

Internationally, several key largescale studies illustrate the unequivocal benefits to student success.

Fiske's (1999) *Champions of Change* indicated that the Arts; provide ways of engaging; those students who were otherwise difficult to engage; connect students to themselves, to each other as well as to the world; transform the learning environment itself, and importantly; challenge those students who were already successful.

Critical Links (Deasy, 2002) provided a compendium of 62 research studies that explored the relationship between the cognitive capacities developed through learning and communicating in dance, drama, music and the visual arts, and students' academic and social skills. Deasy's major findings on the positive effects derived by those involved in arts-rich (an American term meaning students who have access to quality Arts education) education programs included: Positive achievements in reading, language and mathematics development; Evidence of increased higher order thinking skills and capacities; Evidence of increased motivation to learn; and Improvements in effective social behaviours.

Australian and international case studies of the impact The Arts can have on student academic and non-academic success are vast and well documented. In Singapore where the Ministry of information, Communication and The Arts (MICA) developed an unique schooling model embedding The Arts across the curriculum showed that "the first cohort of students of the School of the Arts all passed the International Baccalaureate diploma examination, and almost 44% students obtained a score of 40 or above (which places them in the top 5% students taking the examination)" (Winner 2013). The research also showed that, "this is a remarkable academic outcomes the school enrolls about 200 students annually through Singapore's Direct School Admission (DSA) scheme from various academic backgrounds, including students who are (statistically) unlikely to enter university given their score at the Primary School Leaving Examination". A notable Australian study was conducted by Bryce et al. (2004) comparing two Year 4 classes in South Australia. One class engaged a Drama-based artist-in-residence mentoring style program and another class was conducted in a traditional, non-arts based pedagogical approach. The evaluation noted substantial differences between the arts-rich class and the non-arts-rich class. The arts-rich class achieved higher results in all areas tested, including literacy, numeracy, writing and key competencies including problem solving,

planning and organising, communication and working with others (Bryce et al., 2004, p. 14).

The NAAE notes that countries that place high value on the Arts in education are generally ranked higher in PISA, including Finland, Korea, Singapore and China. Whereas countries who have systemically reduced Arts Education in schools have fallen in the PISA data. Australian research has also illustrated how The Arts contribute uniquely to student success. Ewing's (2010) meta-analysis for the ACER found that "students whose learning is embedded in the Arts achieve better grades and overall test scores, are less likely to leave school early, rarely report boredom and have more positive self-concepts than those students who are deprived of arts experiences".

WHAT SHOULD EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS LOOK LIKE?

The NAAE strongly advocates for all Australian students to have access to all five Arts subjects throughout their primary and secondary schooling as the capabilities, skills and knowledge embedded in The Arts provide a unique suite of experiences that will prepare students for life and work in the 21st Century. This entitlement was endorsed by COAG however currently the agreement to ensure parity of curriculum offerings across all jurisdictions is not being implemented in all states and territories thereby undermining equitable provision for students.

The NAAE advocates for the full implementation of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts in all states and territories in Australia across the primary and secondary years of schooling.

MEASUREMENT OF SCHOOL QUALITY AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

NAAE advocates for a balanced approach to measuring success in schools. Limited, reductive and narrow data collected through external exams, such as NAPLAN, is not an accurate or meaningful way of measuring student and school success. Nor can the assessment approach used in NAPLAN capture success and outcomes across all subject areas. The reductionist approach positions knowledge as being static instead of fluctuating, contextual and personal. The negative impacts of NAPLAN and other high-stakes external assessment is well documented (see High Stakes Testing Literature Review by the Whitlam Institute 2012).

High stakes external assessment will never truly tell parents, teachers and the community if Australian students are successful. Andreas Schleicher, director of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is clear about the notion of what success in education means. He says:

... success is about helping children [and young people] to shape their future and to participate meaningfully in our societies. Not just as a participant but as a creator, a shaper of tomorrow's world. (Schleicher in Clark 2016, p. 22)

In this statement Schleicher is making direct reference to schooling systems globally, but there is a need to broaden the notion of education to life-long engagement rather than something that occurs between the ages of approximately five years and eighteen years of age. Schleicher makes the point that rather than just teaching and assessing subject specificity, 'we need to think about what sort of people we need to create tomorrow's world, and what [the] fundamental building blocks to shape that' (Schleicher in Clark 2016, p. 23). Schleicher goes on to say that:

When you do this you arrive at ways of thinking – creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving – and ways of working – collaborations, social-emotional skills, character, resilience, leadership, empathy. (ibid.)

The missing piece of the puzzle, says Schleicher, is the 'clear articulation of those dimensions. And better measures and metrics' (Schleicher in Clark 2016, p. 23). In addressing this gap there has been some thought around this as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) has introduced a measure for social skills.

Significantly, there is strong empirical evidence that arts learning and engagement in formal and informal curriculum structures creates profound change for students and school communities around well-being, self-esteem, self-regulation and motivation (see Caldwell & Vaughan 2012; Ewing 2010; McCarthy et al. 2004; Fiske 1999). For example, Martin et al. (2013) suggest that, 'students participating in the arts increasingly saw themselves as part of a larger local community, felt they had contributed to that community, and had a greater sense of meaning and purpose ... participation in the arts has been linked to greater civic engagement' (p.711). Caldwell, Vaughan & Harris (2011) reported on an arts-based program through The Song Room (TSR) intervention in disadvantaged schools and found a range of significant improvements, included: "Improved school attendance (65% less absenteeism with participation in longer-term TSR in comparison to those that have not participated); higher academic achievement (including the equivalent of 1 year gain in NAPLAN literacy for long-term TSR schools compared to equivalent schools); as well as enhanced social and emotional wellbeing".

Most recently, a longitudinal, mixed method study from academics at the University of Sydney in partnership with the Australia Council for the Arts reported on the impacts of the Arts on student academic and non-academic outcomes. The study involved 643 primary and secondary school students from 15 Australian schools. The study (Martin et al., 2013) denotes the positive student outcomes in both academic (motivation and engagement) and non-academic (self-esteem and life satisfaction)

as a result of Arts engagement. Importantly, this study also found that Arts learning improved student academic achievement in non-Arts subjects.

NAAE advocates for a national research project to develop the scope and scale for evaluative measures for all Australian students across the five arts forms that not only reports on arts and cultural attainment but also captures measures allied to arts learning as outlined above.

SCHOOL FUNDING

The NAAE strongly advocates for increased professional learning opportunities across the five Arts subjects (Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts) in primary schools to support teachers to effectively teach The Arts and improve student academic and non-academic outcomes in Arts and non-Arts areas. We acknowledge the important work of Artist-In-Residence programs and teacher mentorship programs that have a particular focus on teacher professional learning (eg Caldwell et al 2011 & 2012; Hunter et al, 2015; Ewing & Saunders, 2016; Ewing, 2010; Gibson & Smith, 2013). To ensure the entitlement to all five art forms as endorsed by COAG is implemented NAAE recommends increasing the time allocated in pre-service teacher training for primary teachers to gain further expertise in teaching The Arts and would recommend that this be included in the accreditation process for universities to demonstrate when seeking endorsement for primary education bachelor degrees and primary education masters of teaching.

NEW OR EMERGING AREAS FOR ACTION WHICH COULD LEAD TO LARGE GAINS IN STUDENT IMPROVEMENT THAT NEED FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OR TESTING AND HOW THEY COULD BE DEVELOPED

At best the current education focus in Australian schools can be described as being focused solely on literacy and numeracy attainment, as current standardised testing regimes only capture student achievement in these terms. Robin Alexander (2016) notes:

This attitude produces a curriculum that rightly prioritises literacy and numeracy, but is ambivalent about science while treating the arts and humanities as desirable but inessential; that elevates the basic skills of reading, writing and calculating over those of orally communicating, relating successfully to others, solving problems and striving for the common good; that pays more attention to children's test performance. (Alexander, 2016, p.2)

As noted in the research above, full implementation of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts across all primary schools in all states and territories is a new and emerging area for action that would warrant further development or testing.

It would be prudent to rethink what current testing mechanisms are measuring and how they are measured. NAAE advocates for a process to extend the vocabulary of

assessment and evaluation in order to allow proper consideration of the achievement of aims. It would be useful to draw on Robin Alexander's work for the Cambridge Primary Education Review (UK) where he argued for measurement to be reframed as indicators. Alexander espoused in *What is Education for?* Submission to House of Commons Education Committee Inquiry into the Purpose and Quality of Education in England (2016) that:

Measures measure, indicators indicate: they do different jobs. A measure is a procedure, device or unit for measuring and is irrevocably tied to quantity. An indicator is a more complex and variable clue about whether something is happening and if so to what extent. Approaching clouds indicate the imminence of rain but they don't guarantee it and they certainly don't measure rainfall. A noisy classroom may indicate lack of student concentration but it doesn't conclusively prove it, still less measure the precise balance of student attention and inattention. (Alexander, 2016, p. 6)

Alexander goes onto say, if we are validly to evaluate the performance of schools in relation to the complex spectrum of human learning and behaviour then we must enlarge the evaluation options to include indicators.

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