

***‘The Arts’ in education***  
***A review of arts in schools and arts-based teaching  
models that improve school engagement, academic,  
social and cultural learning***

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## 1.0 Background

The Northern Territory Ministers for Arts and Education, have jointly requested a Literature Review that informs the development of an arts in schools model for NT schools that will improve the engagement of students in the early years and create opportunities for improving language, literacy and numeracy, social development and learning outcomes.

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (DET) currently administers over 150 schools with an enrolment of approximately 33,000 students, 40.5% of which identify as Indigenous. Of the 1,306 NT Indigenous children enrolled in their first year of school who were assessed as part of the 2009 Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) national census, around 76% of these children (i.e. 995 children) were reported to have language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE).

Research into key success factors in Indigenous education, resulting in better school attendance and educational outcomes has highlighted the value of: teachers having high expectations of students; schools honoring and respecting linguistic and cultural differences; culturally responsive school programs and curricula, and; strong partnerships between schools and communities (Dockett, 2008; Purdie et al, 2000; Eades 1993; Kanu, 2002; Bell, 2004; Antone (2003). Department of Education, Science and Training (2007) *What Works. The Work Program, Core Issues 7*)

NT schools have a long history of the involvement of the arts in schools but there is limited evidence regarding the impact of arts in schools programs or arts based teaching approaches on student engagement, language development, literacy and numeracy and other school learning outcomes.

The high proportion of very small schools and schools in remote areas has meant that most schools do not have teachers with an arts background or training in arts education. For this reason there has been a growing trend for NT schools to engage visiting artists to conduct arts activities in schools. These are generally run as an adjunct to the school curriculum with little involvement of the schools teaching staff or links being made with other areas of the school curriculum. Anecdotal reports suggest that such initiatives can improve student engagement and involvement in the arts activities. However, the short duration of these activities usually means that the reported benefits are rarely lasting.

More sustained arts in schools programs involving partnerships between schools and local art centres, musicians and other artists have been developed in some NT communities. While the evidence of the educational and other benefits of such programs is largely anecdotal, more systematic arts in schools programs with defined methodologies designed to integrate with the broader school curriculum, and/or aim to impart arts education practice skills to teachers within the participating schools have become available in recent years.

The delivery of such programs is often evaluated as a requirement of funding but few of these evaluations have included formal assessment of their immediate or longer-term impact on student educational outcomes and few have been reported in the published literature. Future NT programs aimed at improving student learning outcomes through arts/education partnerships would therefore need to consider

- current national and state/jurisdiction initiatives and parameters
- the international, national and local evidence base
- the broad contexts (cultural, language, geographic) of the Northern Territory
- the demographics of the local workforce and other factors that would impact on successful implementation.

## 2.0 Definitions and rationale

The Arts in schools typically focus on student learning of aesthetic understanding and arts practice developed through the arts forms of music, visual arts, dance, drama and media which can be experienced either singly or in combinations. The Arts provide a range of media for students to express themselves in creative ways and to develop a critical appreciation of their own works and those of others. (ACARA, 2010; Western Australian Curriculum Framework, 1998)

The Northern Territory Curriculum Framework states that the Arts are“...‘languages’, they have their own conventions, codes, practices and meaning structures....they are never neutral. They help to construct, reinforce, challenge and transform social, cultural, political and religious values.’ And further ‘They can prepare the positive development of a young mind destined to interact in an ever-changing world, and provide the life skills, confidence and character building necessary to meet the challenges and opportunities that life will present’. (2002)

The arts in education has variously been described as:

- a way of teaching and learning that has the potential to be used as a strategy for learning across the curriculum impact upon on a range of educational outcomes
- a way of teaching and learning that has the potential to impact upon teachers’ professional learning and enrich classroom practices and be embedded in all content areas
- a way of collecting and using data that has the potential to inform new solutions to old problems

### 2.1 The inclusion of The Arts in the Australian Curriculum

The *National Education and the Arts Statement* was released in 2007as a joint initiative of the Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), and the Cultural Minister’s Council. This joint initiative occurred in recognition that the arts are not merely a subject to be included in schools curriculum but that there are benefits for both education *and* the arts in creating partnerships between schools and communities.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008) states:

“The curriculum will enable students to develop knowledge in the disciplines of English, mathematics, science, languages, humanities and the arts; to understand the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life; and open up new ways of thinking. It will also support the development of deep knowledge within a discipline, which provides the foundation for inter-disciplinary approaches to innovation and complex problem-solving”.

By way of a rationale for the inclusion of *The Arts in the Australian Curriculum* The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) states “The Arts have a special relationship with learning, in that the Arts can be learned and can be used as a tool by which to learn about something else. Fully understanding the Arts involves critical and practical study. Through critical and practical study students have the opportunity to explore, experiment, create, analyse and critique, and ultimately discover multiple meanings in artwork”.

ACARA continues: “The Arts are fundamental to the learning of all young Australians. The Arts make distinct and unique contributions to each young person’s ability to perceive, imagine, create, think, feel, symbolise, communicate, understand and become confident and creative individuals. The Arts in this Australian curriculum will provide all young Australians with the opportunity to imagine and creatively engage, personally and collectively within their real and imagined worlds. Engagement in all the Arts, shapes our thought and activity, and makes a significant contribution to the broader community. Each of the Arts assists in developing identity, confidence, social participation and inclusion. Cultural diversity and indigenous cultural heritage are integral to all art forms”.

## 2.2 Ways of including the Arts in schools

Education systems and schools internationally in Australia have chosen a variety of ways of including The Arts in their curricula. This generally depends on who is available to deliver arts programs in schools, locally and at state/territory levels. Programs are usually delivered one or various combinations of:

- arts educators (teachers in schools with expertise and training in The Arts)
- community artists (artists in the local community with or without teaching qualifications)
- arts providers which 'sell' an arts program to an education system and/or school through a product
- generalist teachers (teachers in schools with no specific qualifications in The Arts)

Arts programs have been developed by a range of private providers in response to both the recognition of the importance of the Arts in learning, as demonstrated through research, and the recognition that there are often few arts educators in schools (particularly remote), few community artists willing to make themselves available as providers of programs, and that generalists teachers often do not feel comfortable delivering arts programs due to their lack of expertise.

ACARA states in the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum : The Arts*, that "Currently, knowledge in the Arts is not universally understood and taught in all schools. It is only in recent years that the Arts has become a key learning area in all states and territories at all age levels. Previously, some art forms have had stronger presence than others within the curriculum. In many schools, the Arts, particularly Dance and Drama, are still mainly offered as co-curricular or extra-curricular activities; Media Arts appears in some, but not all, State and Territory Arts curricula; and in one state Music and Visual Arts only are legislated for inclusion in the curriculum".

Arts programs are delivered in a variety of ways in schools. Arts educators deliver arts programs that currently reflect the curricula of states and territories around Australia. In secondary schools these are mostly 'stand alone' subjects that are timetabled to be delivered in specific time slots and on particular days of the week. In primary schools, unless there are Arts educators on staff, programs and units of work in the Arts – when offered - are often delivered by generalist teachers. Some schools enable external programs through their school plans and budget allocations that may include artists-in-residence, arts infused programs where arts educators, community artists and generalist teachers work together (Tait & Falk, 2010), arts 'events' or venue-based programs in galleries, performing arts centres and museums which students attend (Victorian Department of Education, and Early Childhood Development, 2009).

When Arts programs are developed and implemented in a school, either including external artists and/or program providers or not, they are often referred to as '**School-Based arts programs**'. '**Community-based arts and education partnerships**' are those that are generally developed within the community, sometimes in consultation with the school community. (Dreezen et al 1999)

## 2.3 The quality of arts programs in school education

Few jurisdictions provide quality criteria to enable schools to judge the quality of an arts program before 'purchasing it' for their school. The State Government of Victoria invites participation in its *Artists in Schools program*<sup>1</sup>, assessing programs according to the following criteria:

- A strong and innovative artistic concept
- The involvement of a suitable practising professional artist – high quality work and strong communication skills
- The extent to which the project supports learning across the curriculum in line with the Victorian (Curriculum)
- The extent to which the project creates opportunities for teachers to expand their skills and knowledge
- How well the project is planned and supported by the school.

Similarly Arts Queensland has four quality criteria used to assess its Artist in Residence program<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Artistic integrity

- a strong and innovative artistic concept
- the involvement of professional artist/s with appropriate expertise
- definition of a recognised artist:
  - has specialist training in their field (not necessarily in academic institutions)
  - is recognised by their peers (recognised practitioners working in the art-form area)
  - is committed to devoting significant time to the artistic activity)

### 2. Student centred learning

- engaging and challenging learning experiences
- implementation of the Queensland curriculum

### 3. Teacher professional learning

- professional learning opportunities for teachers to expand their skills and knowledge in creative practice through interaction with professional artists
- ongoing creativity in teaching the arts through building new and sustainable practice

### 4. Planning, resources and partnerships

- effective project planning including budget and timeline management (including appropriate rates of pay to the artists)
- strength of the partnership model
- collaborative processes utilised.

Bryce et al in the literature review for their Evaluation of School-based Arts Education Programs in Australian Schools (2004) identified the following features/themes of successful international and Australian programs with caution, due to the limitations of comparing and synthesising results of a wide range of different approaches: A supportive school administration: i.e. where teachers *are* supported and *feel* supported by their school leadership team; Quality provision and expectations of excellence; Recognition of progress and accomplishment; Opportunities for individualised instruction; Risk-taking; for students and teachers is encouraged and the environment supports them; and use of innovative teaching techniques.

There is some overlap between the intended *qualities* presented by both Arts Victoria and Arts Queensland and the *qualities* enacted in the provision of the programs as identified by the research of Bryce et al. These have synthesised from research which will be outlined later in this paper.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.arts.vic.gov.au/Funding\\_Programs/Education\\_Partnerships/Artists\\_in\\_Schools](http://www.arts.vic.gov.au/Funding_Programs/Education_Partnerships/Artists_in_Schools)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.arts.qld.gov.au/docs/air-guidelines-2011.pdf>



'Quality of provision' is subjective since it can be viewed from the perspective of the artist, the school and the students. Orfali (2004) developed a framework for determining quality in artist-school partnerships, unpacked each of these perspectives based on research undertaken by and for the Arts Council in England. She stated that, from the artist's perspective, best practice occurred when staff were really committed and supportive, shared their ideas and skills and were willing to work with the artist; programs had cross-curriculum links that gave importance to projects and the creative process; parents became involved, enhancing the school-parent partnership.

From the school's perspective best practice occurred when schools linked their school improvement plan with the arts projects – including through funding; when schools continued to build on the learning experienced for both staff and students; and schools invested in the arts as a means to enhance the curriculum. From the perspective of students, best practice occurred when students themselves were allowed to explore their own ideas, take risks and make mistakes, and were allowed to work in teams including with other years and ability groups.

### 3.0 Partnerships between schools and outside Arts agencies

The *National Education and the Arts Statement* released as a joint initiative of the Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), and the Cultural Minister's Council (2007) is underpinned by three principles:

1. All children and young people should have a high quality arts education in every phase of learning.
2. Creating partnerships strengthens community identity and local cultures.
3. Connecting schools with the arts and cultural sector enriches learning outcomes.

The statement is derived from an extensive national and international evidence base and makes strong nationally agreed statements about the quality of school and community-based arts and education partnerships, as follows:

- School based arts experiences should be diverse, based on models of effective practice, and embedded from the early years through to graduation in order to unlock the creative potential of our children and young people
- Community-based arts and education partnerships build social cohesion, respect, community spirit and active local citizenship. In an era of globalisation, partnerships between schools, artists, cultural institutions, communities, businesses and governments help to strengthen local identity and culture.
- Creative partnerships that include opportunities for students to present their work can help forge bonds between parents, families, schools and communities, and encourage active involvement of parents, and families in their children's education.
- The arts are integral to sustaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, including both traditional arts practices and new forms of artistic expression among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban and regional areas.
- Communities with schools as hubs for creative engagement can achieve intergenerational understanding and belonging, enhance social cohesion, improve quality of life and promote active community engagement.
- Creative partnerships build community capacity and capability. They also invigorate and revitalise teachers, providing fresh perspectives on diverse learning styles and creative ways to help more students reach higher levels of achievement.
- Effective education and the arts partnerships must be collaboratively planned and delivered around a shared vision focused on improving learning outcomes for students.

- The personal engagement of teachers in arts and cultural practices can provide a wide range of arts and learning opportunities for their students.
- Family, community members and independent arts teachers play a crucial role in the many pathways through which young people develop creative skills ;and learn to appreciate their own and others; cultural traditions and values.
- In order to foster their crucial role in arts education, it is necessary to provide opportunities to build and sustain the skills and knowledge of both teachers and artists through pre-service teacher education and ongoing dialogue and professional development with both groups.
- Connections and collaborations between artists, creative organisations, teachers, schools and educational institutions must be strengthened to allow all students to realise their full creative potential.

In 2009, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development released a report that focused on the role played by arts sector partnerships in enhancing student engagement, social learning, personalised learning, innovation and the development of arts-related knowledge. The report outlined that nature and variety of partnerships in Victoria between Arts and Education, outlining a broad range of research that supported this relationship. In concluding, the report acknowledged that ‘student engagement in the arts can have a positive impact on all the dimensions of physical, personal and social learning’ and that “Arts partnerships in education can influence student’s generic social skills”. (p.54)

#### **4.0 Research linking the Arts to improvements in student learning**

There is a plethora of research into the benefits of including the Arts in schools to students and their lives and learning. However, the lead writer of the ACARA shaping paper quoted above, Professor John O’Toole, commented at a symposium (O’Toole, 2010) that the Arts and education have often regarded one another with suspicion and that one of the reasons for this is likely to be the limited large-scale research on the impact of the Arts on student learning in Australia, leading to the impossibility of quantifying their impact in ways preferred by governments.

This statement is derived from the research: the report by Bryce et al quoted above noted the lack of commonality between arts programmes in published studies and reports. This is largely due to the range of different Arts forms (listed in 1.0 above), the broad range of variables and the lack of consistency of approaches. Other studies acknowledge the lack of ‘hard evidence’ that moves beyond correlation (i.e. a relationship between student learning and their involvement in arts programs) to *a direct causal link* between involvement and learning (Winner & Hetland, 2002; Rabkin, 2002; Ewing, 2010; Bryce et al, 2004).

Hetland & Winner (2004) analysed a range of research evidence that claimed evidence of transfer of learning from the arts to academic subjects. As a result of their meta-analysis they argue that the arts “have great value in a child’s education but that this value is due first and foremost to the importance of learning in the arts. While arts study may in some cases in-still skills that strengthen learning in other disciplines, arts programs should never be justified primarily on what the arts can do for other subjects”. Causal relationships were found between:

- classroom drama and verbal achievement (comprehension – when working with structured plots; oral language development- especially when working with unstructured plots such as role-play; vocabulary). The transfer of skills from one domain to the other needs to be explicitly taught since it does not occur automatically.
- music listening and spatial reasoning, and music instruction (to groups and individuals) and spatial reasoning (for students aged 3-12 over 2 years).

#### **4.1 Arts partnerships and arts programs research**

There are a number of significant reports on the impact of arts education in Schools internationally. These include *Champions of Change*, (Fiske, 1999), *Critical Links*, (Deasy, 2002), and *The Wow Factor* (Bamford, 2006). These large scale reports reveal the overwhelming number of research studies that demonstrate positive student learning outcomes achieved through successful arts partnerships between schools and the professional arts sector.

Reports on the impact of arts education in Australian Schools include *the Arts and Australian Education: Realising Potential* (Ewing, 2010) for the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), *Evaluation of School-based Arts Education Programs in Australian Schools* (Bryce et al, 2004) for ACER, and *Education and the Arts Research Overview* (Hunter, 2005) for the Australian Council for the Arts. These reports 'group' the impacts of Arts programs on schools, students, teachers, and communities. They also group improved learning outcomes in different ways including improvements in academic, social, cognitive, behavioural, health, social, economic, lateral thinking, and creative skills.

Smaller studies contained in these and the international reports show relationships between participation in arts programs (including in a range of arts-forms) aimed at a range of schooling phases, and increased

- **Academic Achievement** for example Bamford, 2006; Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanaga, 1999; Wetter, Koerner, Schwaninger, 2009; Rothman & McMillan, 2003.
- **IQ** for example Schellenberg, 2006.
- **Student engagement** for example Fletcher, 2005; Fullarton, 2002; Russell, Ainley and Frydenberg (2005)
- **Attendance** for example Dreezen, Aprill & Deasy, 1999
- **Attitude to attendance** for example Uptis & Smithrim, 2003
- **Performance on standardised reading and verbal tests for example Butzlaff, 2001**  
**Verbal skills** for example Hetland & Winner, 2001
- **Reading for pleasure** for example Uptis & Smithrim, 2003
- **Literacy levels** for example Bamford, 2006; Hunter, 2005; Spillane, 2009
- **Reading proficiency (Low SES students)** Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanaga, 1999
- **Attitudes towards school** for example Uptis & Smithrim, 2003 Year 6 girls
- **Attitudes towards learning** for example Hunter, 2005, Galton 2008
- **Resilience** for example Oreck, Baum & McCartney, 1999
- **Self-regulation** for example Oreck, Baum & McCartney, 1999
- **Self-esteem** for example Brice Heath, 1999; Hunter, 2005; Uptis & Smithrim, 2003
- **Sense of identity** for example Oreck, Baum & McCartney, 1999
- **Self-concept** for example Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanga, 1999
- **Sense of self-efficacy** for example Deasy, 2001
- **Sense of motivation** for example Bamford, 2006; Cotterall, Chapleau & Iwanga, 1999; Hunter, 2005
- **Personal skills and capacities rooted in their personal recognition of themselves as competent, creative, and productive individuals**, Brice Heath, 1999

Studies demonstrating improvement in *behaviours* as a result of participation in the arts in schools include those showing improvements in capacity to empathise (Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanga, 1999; Hunter, 2005), improve tolerance (Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanga, 1999), improve cooperation, collaboration, and communication, (Hunter, 2005).

In addition, the arts have been used widely to target students deemed 'at risk' due to a range of factors such as low SES backgrounds, disengagement from schooling and low literacy levels. (Baum & Owen, 2007; NGA,

2002; Oreck et al, 2002). Hunter (2005) cites research that demonstrated that frequent praise in “creative activity that doesn’t necessarily rely on a right and wrong way of doing things was perceived to dispel many students’ fear of failure – a perceived major factor in ‘at-risk’ students’ non-engagement with learning.”

## 4.2 Pedagogy and the arts

Whilst studies show relationships and connections between the arts and learning, few focus on *why* learning in and through the arts brings about these improvements.

Galton, M. (2008) explored the pedagogy used by successful artists to bring about transformations in pupil’s attitudes to learning, particularly among disaffected students with an anti-school disposition. Results indicated that one of the factors which influence student motivation is the culture in which the learning is situated, that is

- the equal-power relationship established between the artists and students which emphasised students as co-workers and co-learners
- the artists scaffolded activities by allowing students the time and space to sort out their ideas (validated by hunter’s work: ‘...not relying on a right and wrong way of doing things...’); the artists were not constrained by curriculum deadlines as teachers usually are
- the artists see students responses to tasks as emotional rather than cerebral (no fear of ‘failure’ means a safe learning environment is created)
- the artists offer feedback that extends student ideas rather than offering corrections

This study focused on the approaches used by an artist with no teaching qualifications. Bernard (2008) also discussed the nature of the pedagogies used with disaffected youth. Her work focused on classroom teachers using the arts with students who had been socially excluded for a range of reasons including poverty, special needs, family origins and history, and impacts of racism. These students excluded themselves or were excluded from, schools. One of the teachers she worked with ‘democratised’ music learning by creating a pedagogical setting that involved reflection on his own practice; he changed the learning reality of his students by listening to them rather than talking, explaining or transmitting. He said “... when you are listening to kids who have given up, who don’t find school relevant let alone meaningful, who are more often removed from lessons by teachers for one reason or another, much of the quality of what you are hearing is your effect on them”.

This teacher drew on the research of Jeffery (2005) who demonstrated the importance of providing supportive, flexible and adaptive structures in classes that redirect negative energy into something positive, in this case such as creation and performance in music. Pitts (2007) found this was particularly true if students are given more responsibility within and beyond the music classroom.

### 4.3 Learning through arts and Aboriginal students

Recent research by Walton et al (2010) using English language songs and jingles significantly supported the phonological and phonemic awareness learning, known to be significant predictors in childrens' learning to read. (Konza, 2006; National Reading Panel, 2000). Their research used a culturally-appropriate curriculum (songs that included elements of Aboriginal culture) for Aboriginal children in Canada. Findings revealed that songs, when used as part of the reading program in schools, are extremely effective tools to teach pre-reading skills. (It should be noted that Northern Territory schools are soon to embark on a school-based program that is underpinned by this research, developed in partnership between the Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce and the NT School of Music Education, as part of the *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy*).

There is very little research into the use of the arts in learning for Indigenous students in the Northern Territory – particularly in the early years of schooling. Of some note are the case studies described in the work of Bryce (2004) who evaluated four Australian school-based arts programs to examine the impact of the programs on student participation, engagement, attendance, and learning outcomes.

Two of the programs were Northern Territory Music programs: *Boys' Business* and *Indigenous Music Education Program*; the former aimed at improving student engagement in the middle primary years and the latter aimed at providing basic literacy and life skills development through music education. Results indicate that involvement in both program led to improved attendance at school but neither produced hard evidence that participation in the programs enhanced academic progress. Some of the 'low achieving students' in both groups appreciated the fact that they could participate without having to read and write; the arts provided opportunities for students to start to learn.

Tait, (in Hunter 2005) designed an intensive music education program integrated into the Years 5-7 school curriculum which was delivered through a school/arts partnership in the Northern Territory. Key findings of the research were that there was a marked transformation in the quality of teacher-student relationships, and that there was a *perception* of improved attendance; although attendance data did not show an increase, the researchers suggested that students became more visible and engaged in the school community.

Additionally, Tait (2005) conducted an evaluation of the impact of an arts-based educational approach developed and implemented in Northern Territory government schools, *Music for learning and life*. This program was implemented over the period 2002-2004 and investigated effects on school attendance, quality of participation, literacy and numeracy, and arts knowledge for upper primary Indigenous students. She found that '...on-site team-teaching using strategies such as peer coaching, work shadowing and mentoring had positive effects on teachers' practices, and enhanced teacher-student relationships. The teacher participants reported that the enhanced quality of relationships had improved educational outcomes'.

A range of small, localised projects involving the arts have been funded in remote schools for many years that have developed programs to address individual school priorities. One such example occurred at Wanarn Remote Community School in Western Australia. The school saw an opportunity to apply for funding associated with School Drug Education and Road Awareness which enabled them to use rap music with secondary students to focus on the issue of petrol sniffing. (Wanarn Rap Music Project). The school used the funding to source an Indigenous musician who works with CAAMA radio, and professional singer and a sound engineer/DJ. The Aboriginal Islander Education Officer in the school worked with this singer and the students to write lyrics in the home language of the students and the professional singer wrote them in English. The

message was 'Stay strong in your culture and yourself', a culturally appropriate response; the song was recorded by the students.

The recording was sent to other schools and the media and students made films of themselves singing it. The outcomes from the project have been highly positive; the school had no instances of student petrol sniffing at Wanarn in the year following the recording. In addition, the students learned many social and educational skills including taking responsibility, raised self-esteem, improved pride and sense of identity, recording, singing and timing skills, literacy and language skills, and heightened awareness of employability skills needed to work in the music and recording industry.

## 5.0 Using story-telling in learning

Cooper et al (1994), and Troeger, (1990) have shown that literacy learning is increased through children's engagement in storytelling activities. Storytelling derives from the oral tradition and has been linked with art, song, dance and other kinds of public performance (Mallan, 1991; 2003).

### 5.1 *Wakakirri*

*Wakakirri Story Dance*, or 'Wakakirri' is a performing arts event for schools in Australia. The competition, open to all school students, includes a variety of story-telling activities including stories through dance, creative writing, short film production, cartooning and story-singing. It has been successfully operating in Australia for 13 years and is sponsored by the Australian Government, *BeyondBlue* and publishers Allen and Unwin.

The program is based on the story-telling research cited above. The *Wakakirri* Festival is underpinned by the notion of *story as performance*. Whilst *Wakakirri* is underpinned by research concerning the effectiveness of story-telling as developing resilience, healthy development, building communities based on empathy, tolerance, and understanding, helping children to know and better understand their worlds, have a greater sense of their identity, improved literacy capabilities including prediction, vocabulary, point of view and story resolution, there is currently only anecdotal evidence that the festival provides a vehicle for these developments.

There are a small number of NT schools that participated in the 2010 *Wakakirri* Festival and these schools report favourable engagement and participation outcomes for students, particularly Indigenous students.

### 5.2 *The role of media-arts in schools*

Media-arts is a relatively new arts form and encompasses artworks created with new media technologies, including digital art, computer graphics, and computer animation. As a result of this there is as yet very little research concerning its effectiveness in engaging, students, developing psychologically favourable attitudes to school and hence underpinning or scaffolding improved academic outcomes.

Some media-arts – animation and clay-animation in particular – use the story-telling research referred to previously, as the basis for programs in working with early childhood and older students.

Hawkins (2007) studied the use of animation with a number of primary and early childhood classes in Western Australia including from a remote government school. She found that using digital art and storytelling processes enabled through the animations produced better early literacy outcomes in the children, including higher-order skills such as critical thinking and justification, as well as increasing student's vocabulary.

There are also numerous anecdotal case reports of media-arts being used, successfully, in schools around Australia but little published evidence to support their sustainable impact.

## 6.0 Conclusions

It is now generally accepted that there are significant benefits of arts learning and engagement in schooling. The arts have been shown to create environments and conditions that result in improved academic, social and behavioural outcomes for students, from early childhood through the early and later years of schooling.

Due to the range of arts forms and the diversity and complexity of programs and research that have been implemented, it is difficult to generalise findings concerning the strength of the relationships between the arts and learning and the causal mechanisms underpinning these associations. In particular, the limited availability of national and international empirically based research into the relationships between learning in and through the arts to improve school learning and other developmental outcomes of Indigenous students highlights the need for research to establish which kinds of programs are most effective and sustainable in the Northern Territory context.

Nonetheless, the research reviewed in this report suggests the design and delivery of future arts-based program in Northern Territory schools *to improve engagement of students in the early years and thereby increase literacy and numeracy learning outcomes* should include:

- Pedagogies used in delivery of the arts which create learning environments that enable students to take risks, are not focused on any one 'right' way of doing things, or pre-conceived ideas or products.
- Pedagogies which are deliberately scaffolded to enable students to demonstrate existing talents and skills and which enable students to exercise 'choice' and to have a 'voice'.
- Programs focus on deliberate learning goals whilst valuing the unique opportunities created by the arts to motivate, engage and improve attitudes to learning.
- Opportunities for ongoing teacher professional learning to build confidence and competencies. This can be on-the-job learning enabled by structured opportunities for shadowing, co-teaching and peer coaching.
- Supporting visiting teaching artists and arts educators who bring different but complementary skills, knowledge and arts practice to educational settings.
- Collaboration between local and visiting arts-based practitioners (educators and/or artists) with school-based educators (e.g. classroom teachers) involving intensive blocks of time to jointly plan, deliver and evaluate the impact of the intervention.
- Commitment from educational leadership to enable additional non-contact time for participating teachers, and also recognise (and pay for) the time artists need to contribute and partner with teachers and assistant to enable skills and knowledge transfer to sustain quality arts-based practice in schools.

## 7.0 Recommendations

- 1. Planning for future arts in schools programs in the Northern Territory will need to be explicit about the intended purpose, scope and target student populations these programs will serve**

Consideration should be given to which stages of child and adolescent development offer greatest potential for the arts in schools to maximise their reach and capacity to improve student's sense of self as a learner, impact on school engagement and development of foundational skills for life and learning. In particular, this should capitalise on language and cultural assets in the community which are most familiar to the students as a key means for scaffolding other academic and social learning. These factors are all vital to the selection of program strategies and delivery modes most appropriate to the target student's specific learning needs.

- 2. There is a need for the systematic development and evaluation of the delivery of arts programs which are effective, sustainable and relevant to the cultural and socioeconomic circumstances of NT schools and communities.**

Given the evidence of the effectiveness of range of promising models for sustainable arts in schools partnerships demonstrated in other school and community contexts, there is an opportunity to capitalise on existing local knowledge and experience in the arts and education and investigate the potential of a limited number of such programs relevant to the cultural, social and economic circumstances of NT communities. This should include an audit of current programs, practices to establish a baseline from which the wider impact of new initiatives can be assessed.

- 3. A quality framework should be developed for NT schools for the selection of suitable programs and approaches**

This quality framework should ensure culturally responsive teaching and learning standards which meet the social, emotional and learning needs of students and align with curriculum and assessment requirements. This could be informed by such frameworks from other jurisdictions and the methodology for program selection under the NT Literacy and Numeracy Evidence Framework.

- 4. Trials of new arts in schools models and pedagogical approaches will require planning for their longer term implementation to demonstrate program efficacy, effectiveness and sustainability.**

A common feature of successful models in other contexts has been their development through an initial intensive establishment phase which is then incrementally scaled up to ensure that appropriate program and policy supports are available to ensure on-going quality of implementation, program fidelity and monitoring of outcomes. In the NT context this could be enabled through new partnerships between schools, community organisations and university and research institutions (e.g. CDU School of Education, Centre for School leadership and Menzies School of Health Research) to leverage additional resources. This is vital to the generation and dissemination of new knowledge about effective arts in schools practice.

- 5. The current short-term nature of funding for arts in schools programs has not enabled the accrual of practice wisdom, or sufficiently embedded pedagogical approaches in schools for engaging children and their learning through the arts across the curriculum.**

Greater investment is required in the pre- and in-service training of teachers and teacher assistants to increase their repertoire of pedagogical approaches for learning through and about arts. This should include practice training in working in partnership with visiting and local arts practitioners.



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