



National Advocates for Arts Education
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NAAE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PAPER

The Arts in the Early Years Learning Framework and National Curriculum

1. Preamble

The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) believe that the arts must be included as a key learning area in the development of the Early Years Learning Framework and National Curriculum, as they are central to realising the Government's priorities for a genuine education revolution.

Our aim is to ensure that opportunities for **creativity, innovation, cultural understanding** and **social inclusion** are provided in the education of young Australians. Research evidence shows that arts education develops these skills and understandings as no other subject area can, and we therefore promote both the intrinsic and instrumental value of each art form for these reasons.

'Innovation is not only the province of scientists, engineers and economists; it has also captured the interest and attention of researchers in the creative, visual and performing arts ...'
(*'Between a hard rock and a soft space: design, creative practice and innovation'* by Dr John H Howard, CHASS, April 2008)

The NAAE represents Australians concerned with Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts education. We believe that our individual art forms must be properly resourced within the curriculum, but have common concerns about:

- the lack of mandated representation of the arts within the curriculum K to 10,
- inadequate pre-and in-service teacher education and professional development in the arts,
- the lack of adequate arts resources, teaching standards and research.

This submission focuses on evidence in support of mandating the arts as an essential learning area in the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Curriculum.

2. Australian Government Supported Research

Research evidence dating back to the mid 1990s supports the proposition that a National Curriculum that does not include the arts will ignore essential basic values, skills and understandings. These include:

- National Review of Visual Education (2006)
- National Review of School Music Education, 2005, and the National Music Workshop, 2006
- *PMSEIC Working Group on 'the Role of Creativity in the Innovation Economy'*(2006)
- *Creative Innovation Strategy*, Australia Council for the Arts (2006)
- *Arts Education – report by the Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts reference Committee (1995).*

3. Support for the inclusion of the arts as a key learning area in the National Curriculum

3.1 National Education and the Arts Statement (Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) and the Ministerial Council for Education Employment and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) 2007 (p.4)

Individuals' creative skills and capacities are nurtured through a balanced and dynamic education rich in arts and cultural experiences. Every child deserves such an education, with carefully planned opportunities to learn in and through the arts. Education systems that value and develop individuals' creative capacities help to position Australia as a vibrant nation in the global context.

A growing body of international and Australian research demonstrates the multiple benefits of an arts-rich education from an early age. Over and above the obvious development of individual creativity and self-expression, school-based arts participation can increase learners' confidence and motivation, thereby improving school attendance rates, academic outcomes and the wellbeing and life skills of children and young people.

The arts foster imagination, risk-taking and curiosity—important aspects of creativity. Governments, businesses and communities now widely regard creativity and innovation as fundamental to social, economic, cultural and technological growth. ...

We now need to mobilise our arts and education systems to reap the full benefits of creativity in our lives as individuals and communities, making us a creative and innovative nation.

3.2 Australia 2020 Summit Idea

Creativity and innovation within the school curriculum and the centrality of the arts have also been amplified in the **Initial Summit Report (April 2008)**. Towards a Creative Australia: The Future of The Arts, Film and Design stream of the 2020 summit stated:

Creativity is central to sustaining and defining the nation, fuelling the imaginations of citizens, nurturing our children and nourishing healthy communities. Creativity is broader than the arts, but the arts are central to creativity [p.29].

One of the key top ideas from the stream was to overtly link the arts and education:

Mandate creative, visual and performing arts subjects in national curricula with appropriate reporting requirements for schools. Explore new opportunities for extension and development such as Creativity Summer Schools, pre-service and in-service training for teachers [p.30]

There must be a focus on the main art forms – music, dance, drama and the visual arts – as well as general encouragement of creative thinking as a core capacity for all students [p.258].

3.3 Creative Innovation Strategy (Australia Council for the Arts 2006) noted:

The arts have a big role to play in contributing to the development of a culture of innovation in schools and other educational settings; ...our future prosperity demands a well-informed and active citizenry, consisting of individuals able to communicate well, think originally and critically, adapt to change, work cooperatively, connect with both people and ideas, and find solutions to problems as they occur. Recent Council research demonstrates that school-based arts participation contributes to developing these very abilities in students. We also know that good quality arts education partnerships improve student attitudes to learning and contribute to better quality teaching and school leadership. [from 'Creative Schools, promoting arts education in schools' (p3)].

4. International research

International research studies emerging from the United States and England (see Fiske, 1999; Colwell, 1999; Harland, Kinder, Lord, Stott, Schagen, Haynes, Cusworth, White, & Paola, 2000) provide evidence that quality learning experiences in the arts contribute in significant ways to social success and impact positively on education and the academic achievement of students.

Social exclusion in Britain has been addressed by the arts and cultural programme Creative Partnerships, with the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) investigating young people's engagement with learning and educational opportunity and the profile of the arts in the social inclusion agenda (Kinder & Harland 2004).

4.1 Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy (2008)

This document outlines the embedding of cultural learning in a national curriculum. Within the UK education sector key departments will align to:

- *establish the "Find Your Talent" programme piloting five hours of culture a week for children and young people. The "Find your Talent" programme will involve:*
- *lessons about culture – helping young people develop as critical spectators, participants and creators in the cultural world*
- *learning through culture – using engagement with the arts and other activities to boost creativity, attainment and personal development. [p.14]*

5. Recommendations

National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) recommend that the following immediate action be taken:

1. The Federal Government to schedule the inclusion of the arts as a key learning area in the development of the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Curriculum in Phase 2.
2. When included in the National curriculum each art form (i.e. dance, drama, music and visual arts) maintain its integrity and be taught sequentially.
3. The Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs matches the \$40,000 committed by Cultural Ministers Council (2 October 2008) to develop a framework for a national curriculum for the arts.

NAAE Members

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