

ACADEMY GALLERY

Entangled: Art and the Tasmanian Primary School



Jasmine McKimmie, Grade 6, St Marys District School

Exhibition artists: Primary students from Launceston Church Grammar School, Scotch Oakburn College, St Marys District School, Trevallyn Primary School, Ravenswood Heights Primary School
Exhibition dates: 24 August – 22 September

Entangled: Art and the Tasmanian Primary School

*I think of the way we are in the world; acting upon it and being acted upon,
Always open to possibilities, to pathways seen and unseen.
We are entangled with one another, in our doing and undergoing with the world around us¹*

Every day, teachers alongside their students navigate an ever shifting space of learning. This is a living space, where the events and activities of the internal and external collide in complex, sometimes unexpected and messy ways that implicate upon the meaning we make and take away with us. Our ways of knowing are constantly brought into question as the world and what we know about it changes around us; sometimes leaving us to question our truths and understandings, and how we come to 'know' them. The means through which we look at information and how this shapes the understandings we form are also an important part of this entanglement. There is much for teachers and students alike to learn about the arts themselves, and how experiencing and encountering ideas and information through the arts can enable us to see alternate perspectives and possibilities.

What happens when a child encounters the world from a perspective of artistic response, and what happens when children use the Arts to communicate their ideas and their truth through art? How do these questions entangle with the opportunities teachers might seek to create for young people to experience the world in and through art? These are but some of the questions that emerge from the art making, art learning and art teaching intersect, and these are questions of interest and significance to primary classroom teachers and secondary specialist art teachers alike.

While art, in varying degrees has been part of Australian school curricula since the Hobart Declaration², art education in Australia has progressed significantly with the announcement in July 2015 that five Arts strands (dance, drama, media art, music and visual art) are now mandated across Australian schools through The Australian Curriculum: The Arts. Previous to this, the Arts were delivered to Australian school students through state and territory ministries of education in various and diverse ways from specialist delivery to generalist teacher delivery³. This resulted in a wide difference in the delivery of Arts education for Australian school students across the states and territories. The Australian Curriculum: The Arts means that every Australian child across the country should have access to the Arts during their years of schooling. However, curriculum change and consequential enactment of shifting and evolving curriculum in the classroom poses complex challenges for how teachers deliver on this. We understand that successful implementation and enactment of curriculum change is contingent upon how quality teaching, learning and assessment are defined, interpreted and translated by educators⁴. Further to this, arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important⁵. (Elliot W. Eisner).

The UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education tells us that teachers benefit from professional learning experiences which can enrich their teaching methods, and in-school projects that involve collaboration between artists, teachers and schools can cultivate powerful and transformative learning opportunities from and for all perspectives⁶. When implementing new curriculum, ongoing support to enable teachers to adapt their existing strengths and skillsets without compromising their values and pedagogical preferences is needed. This need has been affirmed by the National Advocates for Arts Education⁷

¹ Greene, M. (2008). Commentary: Education and the arts: The windows of imagination. *Learning landscapes*, 2(1), 17-21.

² Hobart Declaration (1989),

³ MacDonald, A., Barton, G., & Baguley, M. (2016). Teachers' curriculum stories: Perceptions and preparedness to enact change, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 56(4) 1 -15.

⁴ Barton, G. M., Baguley, M., & MacDonald, A. (2013). Seeing the bigger picture: Investigating the state of the arts in teacher education programs in Australia. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38

⁵ Eisner, E. W. (1985). *The educational imagination* (p. 176). New York: Macmillan.

⁶ UNESCO (2006). Road Map for Arts Education. The World Conference on Arts Education: Building Creative Capacities for the 21st Century, Lisbon, 6-9 March 2006.

⁷ National Advocates for Arts Education (2016). National Advocates for Arts Education supports implementation of the Arts curriculum.

(NAAE) in their outlining of the implications of mandating the Australian Curriculum: The Arts, where schools and teachers have and need flexibility to make decisions about how they teach the curriculum in accordance with the needs of their students, the requirements of their school and local curriculum authorities⁸. In order to help them realign their existing pedagogical practices, Tasmanian primary teachers have the opportunity to engage in pedagogical and classroom inquiry that adopts a flexible approach to helping teachers interpret and enact the new Australian Curriculum: The Arts. Initial insights surfacing from the classroom teachers and their mentors in relation to the art inquiries they have enacted indicates complex and diverse storylines about the challenges faced in interfacing with and enacting the new curriculum.

Small differences can have large effects. The arts traffic in subtleties⁹.

The inquiries are experiential, highly contextualised and site specific, constituting personal interests and priorities that entangle student, teacher, school and community curiosities. Some of the benefits described refer to the opportunities to build rapport with feeder schools, cultivate reciprocal student to student and teacher to teacher possibilities for ongoing inquiries, where primary students can lead senior students in art inquiry, and opportunities to reflect upon and transform approaches to practice.

*The Arts, it has been said, cannot change the world,
but they may change human beings who might change the world¹⁰*

Just as the arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer, our teachers, when presented with opportunities to explore how they might enact new curriculum can come to embrace complex forms of problem-posing and solving, where purposes are seldom fixed, and can be changed with circumstance and opportunity¹¹.

Dr Abbey MacDonald and Dr Malcom Bywaters

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⁸ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2015b). Australian curriculum: Endorsed and Improved.

⁹ Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. Yale University Press.

¹⁰ Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

¹¹ Eisner, E. W. (1985). *The art of educational evaluation: A personal view*. Taylor & Francis.

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