

Introduction

Wherever we are in society, we are surrounded by the Arts. This text has been designed by artists, and the words you read are but visual artworks representing the oral storytelling foundation of all societies. Its layout was designed by artists, using multiple media forms. You are reading it in an environment where the soundscape will hopefully allow you to concentrate. Your body is probably positioned to minimise discomfort and maximise efficiency, while communicating to all those around you your current state of thought (whether consciously or not). Surrounding you may be posters, objects, noises, people interacting with facial expressions, probably some communicating via Facebook, Instagram or other social media using increasingly advanced technologies. The Arts power our lives, yet too often we power down children as they enter formal education (preschool and upwards), stifle their natural forms of communication and interaction, and slowly destroy their ability to be creative and to think diversely.

This text aims to demonstrate the power of each of the five Art forms in the Australian Curriculum as a discrete source of knowledge and also as a pedagogical tool to access other Learning Areas. *Teaching the Arts: Early childhood and primary education* is a book born out of the requests of children and teachers. As authors and educators of Initial Teacher Education students and also as consultants in schools, we were continually met by colleagues and children who were frustrated by the fact that, while there were excellent texts out there, none seemed to fit their requirements. This text aims to meet that need. This is not the ultimate answer to how to teach the Arts; it represents just one of many ways. There is, however, a dichotomy in its title. By its very definition, the title condones and possibly promotes the idea that the Arts are separate from other forms of knowledge and, indeed, from society. However, one of the key threads running through the text is that the Arts are embedded in life and in all aspects of education.

Imagine (a key process for the Arts) a newborn child. Newborn children gaze at all the new faces that surround them. They observe and mimic facial expressions (drama); they listen to the sounds around them – their pitch, tone colour and rhythm – and develop their language skills (music). They engage with shapes and designs and explore the world through their eyes and through creating new shapes with objects (visual arts). They try to sit – and fall; they learn control of their arm movements, their bodies and their balance with fine and gross motor skills (dance). Before long they are playing on smartphones, tablets, computers and televisions (media). Babies learn through the Arts and with the Arts. Often, through our focus on isolated formal learning and, let's be honest, our own feelings of inability, we slowly come to ignore the value of the various art forms as educational tools, even though they are the very forms of learning that everyone initially engages with.

From our earliest beginnings, we humans have used the Arts to understand and explore our world, both physical and spiritual, for the Arts create meaning within us.

2 ■ TEACHING THE ARTS

This is done all around the world. Let us consider the mask – an aesthetic artefact and a performance device. There are few, if any, societies in the world where we do not find references to, or images of, masks. Sometimes we are even given clues, recorded for example in ancient rock carvings and paintings, as to how they might have been used. These clues tell us that masks have been with us from prehistoric times through to the current era (Edson, 2005). There is no definitive time when they were first introduced; however, their purpose is and has always been to transport and transform the user and the observer (Foreman, 2000). Masks have an audience, whether in entertainment or in ritual. The difference between these two functions can cross boundaries. Ritual is fascinating for the individuals who participate in it, as they are actively engaged in it while still being able to glorify and observe the spectacle around them (Campbell, 1969).

Masks, like the Arts themselves, challenge the identity of the individual. This fact is clear in the definition of the Arabic word *maskhahra* (to falsify or transform) and of the English word *mask* (to conceal). The human mind focuses clearly on the face of the individual and thus, through the concealment of this core identifier, the mask allows the individual to be separated from their identity and their movements to be interpreted as separate from the individual. Shamans were able to use this function of masks to allow them to represent and embody the spirit world, as is represented in the Mesolithic rock art at Trois Frères, France or at Aunanrat, Tassili in Algeria (Lévi-Strauss, 1982).

Throughout history the mask has allowed a freedom and licence for individuals to adopt personae and roles other than their own. In medieval masquerades, the individual was relieved of responsibility and the moral certitude of the times and was able to revel in their society's perceptions of immorality without fear of retribution.

All the Arts have this power to surprise. How can we separate the Arts from each other, let alone divide them into separate Learning Areas? In a world where there are developing crises concerning the environment, energy, human resources and basic foods, and fundamental political polarisations regarding these, even in established societies, can we ignore the Arts and the creativity they cultivate? Someone has to find new ways to create sustainable resource applications; ways to engage our society and bridge the equity gaps in all areas. This won't happen unless the next generation embraces creative ways of thinking. As a human race we can't survive without the Arts; therefore, we must be confident in passing on their power to the next generation. Indeed, as drama is often about the transformation of the individual into the 'other' to explore aspects of the human condition, there can be no question that the role transformation plays in the lives of all schoolchildren needs to be identified and explored. Eisner, for one (Eisner, 1998), uses the Arts in education as a focus for this.


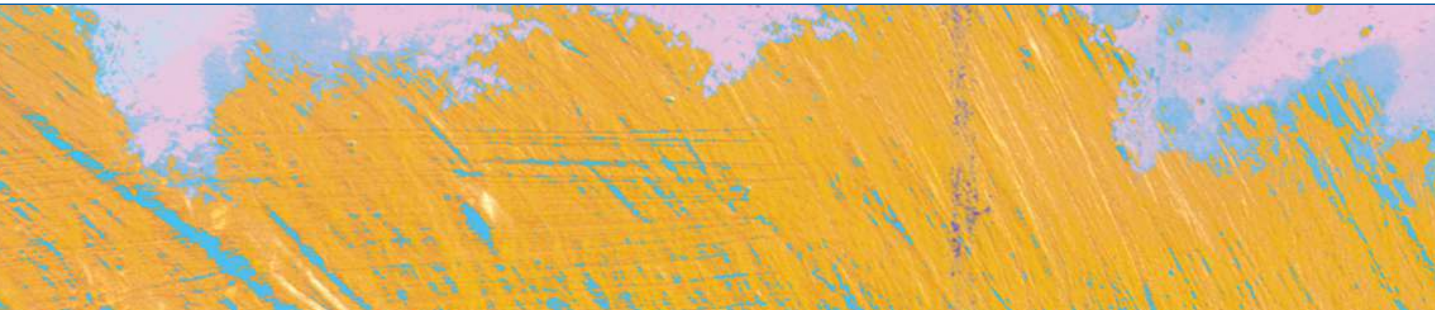
When coupled with the idea of the Arts as a social, anthropological or ethnographic study, the possible value in delivering them to children is apparent. The use of the Arts within the classroom gives children the freedom to explore and establish their identities in their childhood years, thus fulfilling the purposes of schooling on multiple levels. This both meets curricular needs and addresses the wider 'hidden curriculum' of creating individuals with skills to embrace society.

This text is divided into three distinct areas of educational development: why the Arts (the purpose and the past); the Arts Learning Areas (the knowledge, the skills and the present); and embedding the Arts (the application and the future). In each chapter, we have tried to model good teaching practice by offering a knowledge download, practical activities, opportunities to demonstrate understanding, methodologies of application and significance and purpose as to why. For educators and their students it is a win-win situation. For early childhood and primary educators, the issue is not so much about when we should engage with the Arts, but more when we should not.

We hope you enjoy reading and applying the ideas and concepts in this text as much as we do, and aim to continue doing so, for many years to come. If we do not teach the Arts across the curriculum, we deny children the most basic abilities to communicate, explore and share. If we teach them the Arts, we empower them and, as a bonus, introduce them to a great source of joy and pleasure.

PART 1


Why: the Arts in education and society



This first Part focuses on why the Arts are important in education and, more broadly, in society. It is important that you understand this, because we all come to the Arts with different backgrounds and experiences. The role of the Arts in education – the ‘why’ of this book – is not always as clear to people as other areas of study, such as reading, writing, sport and adding or subtracting. While some people may understand that the Arts are incredibly powerful and valuable because of experiences in their own lives, many, sadly, have not had the opportunity to experience the power of the Arts. This Part aims to help you form your own view about why the Arts are important in society and in education, and also to help you experience this for yourself through many Arts-based activities and learning opportunities.

In Chapter 1 we start by discussing what an Arts vision for education may look like and encourage you to develop a hopeful and positive vision for the Arts in your classroom. In Chapter 2 we explore some of the research and thinking about the value of the Arts and encourage you to evolve a rationale for yourself that will provide your learning with a foundation for professional action into the future. In Chapter 3 we look at ways to embed learning about traditional and contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts understandings and practices, and the Arts of our closest neighbours in Asia, with integrity and respect. We will also investigate ways in which we can explore and respond to local and global problems, such as sustainability, through the Arts and education.

This Part will provide you with a strong and thoughtful foundation which will enable you to continue to work with the Arts with the skills and understandings necessary to make important decisions about the Arts in your classroom for years to come.



1



A vision for the Arts in education

We have a clear choice, we can choose to passively accept the education system we have been 'gifted' or we can choose to change it to meet the needs of young people facing the challenges of an uncertain world.

From Transforming Schools: Creativity, critical reflection, communication, collaboration
by Miranda Jefferson and Michael Anderson

In this chapter

In this chapter we will explore the unique nature of the Arts along with what the Arts 'do' for people. The differences between Arts education policy and its actual provision will be presented with particular reference to the need for broad access to, and equity in, Arts education in primary and early childhood settings. The importance of an approach to Arts education that encourages and embeds learner agency and cultural diversity is discussed, and the benefits of sustained 'quality' Arts education are presented. Your role in the provision of the Arts in early childhood and primary education is discussed and a 'praxial' vision for the Arts in education is presented.

By the end of this chapter you should have a clear understanding of:

- what the Arts are and what they 'do'
- the need for access and equity in Arts education and the 'gap' between policy and provision
- learner agency and cultural diversity in Arts education
- sustained, sequential and 'quality' Arts education
- a 'praxial' vision for the Arts in education
- your role as an educator in Arts education.

Introduction

Remember when you were a child? Remember what it felt like to ‘squish’ paint around a piece of paper? What it felt like to dance and sing along to your favourite TV characters, whether they were bears, birds or dinosaurs? Remember what it felt like to make something new out of playdough, or to wonder what playdough might ‘taste’ like? Remember what it felt like to be totally ‘wrapped up’ in the moment of painting a picture or of ‘being’ a pirate? (Baker, 2012)

Those sensational experiences did not feel like ‘learning’ to you at that moment, did they? As adults we so often forget what those experiences felt like, and can continue to feel like. As John Lennon said, ‘Every child is an artist until he’s told he’s not an artist’ (Fawcett, 1976, p. 55). Those sensations were central to exploring your world, expressing yourself, sharing your expressions with others and just having great fun. These are some of the things that the Arts ‘do’ for us.



We believe that the Arts are everywhere. Everyone has artistic potential, and we all have a right to explore our individual identities and cultures through the Arts (Bamford, 2006; UNESCO, 2006). For millennia the Arts have been a part of what it means to be human, to express and communicate our individual and shared perceptions of our world, what it is like to live in a particular culture and what it is like to express personal and shared emotions (Robinson, 1999). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) considers Arts education to be a ‘universal human right’ for *all* children (2006) and highlights the importance of Arts education in cultivating creative potential and cognitive development.

8 ■ PART 1 WHY: THE ARTS IN EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

As a central part of human existence, the Arts are a natural part of children’s worlds, and children enjoy and value them in their daily lives (Barrett & Smigiel, 2003). Quality Arts education enables children to learn valuable Arts skills and understandings (Hunter, 2005; McCarthy et al., 2004) in addition to cultivating many of the important dispositions that are of value in life and in other areas of learning (Bryce et al., 2004; Deasy, 2002; Ewing, 2010). The Arts have a unique capacity to help all children to reach their creative potential and to engage in genuine, lifelong learning. These observations about the fundamental role of the Arts in education will be explored in much greater detail in Chapter 2, but it is also important for you to be aware of them as you read this chapter.

The Arts are central to the education of children because they occur through our senses, rather than linguistically or mathematically; or, as O’Toole (2012, p. 7) writes, ‘We make sense through our senses, and thus we give meaning to our reality’. Learning through all of our senses and with our whole body is generally referred to as **embodied learning**. Jefferson and Anderson (2017, p. 109) write that ‘Cognition is embodied when the physical body plays a significant and causal role in cognitive processing’.

Embodied learning: holistic, cognate, kinaesthetic learning that occurs when using our whole bodies to fully express ourselves. Mind and body work in unison in the moment.

TEACHER TIP



Watch the video ‘It’s Time to Invest in Embodied Learning’ by Tommaso Lana on YouTube.
What are people learning and how are they learning in this video?

Teacher tip

The central premise of this book is that children must first think and act through their senses *as* artists in order for them to value and engage meaningfully with the Arts as a central part of their daily lives. Our vision for Arts education, based on this premise, is that early childhood and primary settings provide children with a rich education in the Arts that gives them genuine agency (discussed later in this chapter); that includes each of the five art forms of dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts; that is culturally situated (discussed later in this chapter); and that is sustained over time.

In the classroom

When you are next working with children, take notice. Notice how much of their learning is ‘embodied’ during any given day. Notice what sort of learning is embodied and how. When you next teach children plan to give them an opportunity to embody their learning in some way.

As digital technologies rapidly develop, the concept of ‘audience’ has begun to change and Arts content, such as music, paintings and movies, have become increasingly portable

and flexible, providing new ways to access the Arts for more people, in lots of different locations (Biasutti, 2017; Cayari, 2011; Cremata & Powell, 2017; Webb, 2007). At the same time, artists are employing new technologies that invite audiences to become actively involved in responding to or even creating Arts, forcing them to move beyond passive consumption of an artistic ‘product’. Artist and audience are key terms used throughout the Australian Curriculum: The Arts. Children therefore need skills and understandings *as* artists and *as* audiences to prepare them to be able to navigate Arts practices, content and forms in the 21st century. We ask you to reflect on and consider, throughout this book, how you can achieve this critical outcome, for the children in your care, through your beliefs and practices as a teacher.

She lies in bed in her room filled with pink Swedish-designed furniture, which is child-sized and covered in images of music, flowers and fluffy animals. The clock radio alarm clicks on and she opens her eyes and smiles as she recognises her favourite song and singer. Her mum is downstairs practising Zumba; her dad is already on his laptop sending emails. The wardrobe is full of logo-stamped kids’ gear, but she selects her eco-friendly school uniform.



She switches on the TV, flicking through the channels of children’s shows, sitcoms, cartoons and movies as she listens to music on her tablet through her earphones. Her favourite song comes on again and she jumps up to dance along with the images on the screen. Soon she joins her parents,



Reflection activity
Video: Tate Britain Art Gallery





who are perched on handcrafted bar stools in the kitchen, chatting via Skype to Grandma in Scotland. With the digital screen in the corner of the kitchen announcing the top news stories of the day, she selects from the different, bright, gift-promising boxes of cereal, and eats from her theme-designed dish. Her lunch is packed into her popstar lunchbox, cleverly matching her brightly decorated schoolbag and shoes. Popping her tablet in, she heads for the car ... all this before leaving the house. The Arts are everywhere.

We have all had different experiences with the Arts in our lives. Some of us have had full, rich and rewarding encounters with them; but sadly, some have had little experience of them at all. However, we have all had some contact with the Arts. The Arts are a part of our individual worlds regardless of our formal experiences of them.

Bearing in mind the widespread nature of the Arts in society, as described above, reflect on the role the Arts have played in your life and play in your life today. Share your reflections with a colleague. It is important for you to know that this is not a judgmental process; rather it is about you reflecting on the Arts in your life and what that means for you today as you start reading this book.

What role have the Arts played in your life?

Creativity, critical reflection, communication and collaboration

The 4Cs (creativity, critical reflection, communication and collaboration) were developed by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (now the Partnership for 21st Century Learning) around the turn of the century. This organisation, based in Washington DC in the United States, brings together business, education and government leaders with the aim of ensuring students have the skills necessary for life in the 21st century. The 4Cs are part of an overall strategy or framework for 21st-century learning called P21. The 4Cs offer a way of viewing or thinking about learning and teaching that has the potential to challenge and alter entrenched structures and attitudes about education.

Recently the Grattan Institute released a discussion paper entitled *Towards an adaptive education system in Australia* (Goss, 2017). This paper stated that:

Our current education system is not fit for purpose given the complex challenges it faces. These challenges show up in flat or declining performance in national and international tests; in the unacceptable number of students who are not ready for life after school; and in the persistent equity gaps among our schools, despite increased needs-based funding (p. 3).

Jefferson and Anderson (2017, p.10) likewise note that:

The testing and reporting regimes imposed on schools by governments in western economies such as Australia and the United Kingdom have created a market-driven schooling system that is much more about training for rapidly disappearing types of work than it is about imagined futures.