



# **AUSTRALIA COUNCIL**

## **Submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry Into The Education of Boys**

**Contact Details:**

Paul Weingott  
Project Coordinator  
Education, Access and Community Relations  
Promoting the Value of the Arts  
Audience and Market Development  
Telephone (02) 9215 9046  
Toll-free: 1800 226 912  
Fax (02) 9215 9074  
Email [p.weingott@ozco.gov.au](mailto:p.weingott@ozco.gov.au)

# House of Representatives Inquiry The Education of Boys

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Boys <i>and</i> Girls versus Boys <i>or</i> Girls</b> Gender and Equity	<b>9</b>
<b>The Earlier the Better</b> Early Intervention	<b>12</b>
<b>Australian Research to Date</b> The Australia Council Australians and the Arts Other Australian Research	<b>17</b>
<b>International Research to Date</b> Does the Arts Make it Better? <i>Champions of Change</i>	<b>23</b>
<b>Broadening the Scope of Literacy</b> Literacy through the Arts	<b>27</b>
<b>Educational Needs for the Future</b> The Role of Education in Complexity Thinking Creativity for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Effecting Synthesis in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	<b>30</b>
<b>Leadership and <i>Joined-Up</i> Solutions</b> The Way Ahead	<b>34</b>
<b>Getting It Right</b> Arts at the Centre Not the Margins Integrated Curriculum	<b>37</b>
<b>Research for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</b> What do we need to Know?	<b>38</b>

# The Education of Boys

## Executive Summary

The Australia Council in the following submission to the House of Representatives *Inquiry into the Education of Boys*, seeks to establish a case for the importance of the positive intervention of arts education. We consider and indeed reference the fact that arts education, its disciplines and methodologies offers strategies to enhance boys' educational, social, cultural and thereby personal development and achievement.

The Australia Council considers that there is a strong case for further attention and resourcing of arts education, given its centrality to delivering successful educational outcomes for Australia's young people.

We base our case on the premise that boys and girls are different and unique and require a repertoire of diverse teaching approaches to meet their different needs. However, it is also eminently clear to us that there are similar principles and practices that can be found to characterise arts education and that prevail in delivering good educational outcomes for both.

The Council, in supporting this approach turns its attention to a complex model of gender and its impact on equity, identifying the fact that differences between male and female learning patterns are affected by a range of other intersecting socio-economic as well as physiological factors. Gender cannot be considered in isolation despite its importance. Young people as early as the age of four are indicating preferences for different learning content. This may well have to do with physiological as well as social and cultural reasons. Young children also evidence preferred learning styles which cross gender boundaries and can be explained through reference to cognitive psychology.

The Council takes a long-term view of general educational practice and forecasts that it will change to become more arts education inclusive in order to meet the demands of a rapidly changing society. Accordingly, Council draws on current Australian and international research to develop the argument for the extension of the concept of literacy as singularly relating to reading and writing. Validating arts literacies and providing educational experiences that contribute to them supports the direction in which society is moving. Increased *creativity* and the capacity to engage in "*complexity thinking*" are the survival tools of the future and arts education sustains both.

In pursuing this line of argument, the Council's submission will focus attention on the following topics.

- **Boys and Girls versus Boys or Girls**  
Gender and Equity
- **The Earlier the Better**  
Early Intervention
- **Australian Research to Date**  
The Australia Council  
Australians and the Arts  
Other Australian Research
- **International Research to Date**  
Does the Arts Make it Better?  
*Champions of Change*
- **Broadening the Scope of Literacy**  
Literacy through the Arts
- **Educational Needs for the Future**  
The Role of Education in Complexity Thinking  
Creativity for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Effecting Synthesis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- **Leadership and Joined-Up Solutions**  
The Way Ahead
- **Getting It Right**  
Arts at the Centre Not the Margins  
Integrated Curriculum
- **Research for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
What do we need to Know?

The Australia Council actively seeks partnering opportunities for creative collaborations with the various education and teacher training sectors nationwide in order to ensure that young Australians have increased exposure to high quality arts education. The Council is committed to engaging young people of both genders to perform to their highest potential in a rapidly changing and demanding world. Arts education will support them to meet its challenges in thoughtful, pragmatic and creative ways.

## Recommendations

Accordingly, the Council proposes the following course of action to further its intentions.

### Coordination and Information Dissemination

- **The Australia Council is uniquely placed to initiate and deliver on policy direction and leadership in arts education, in conjunction with the nation's key education bodies, its policy makers and service deliverers.** It has already begun the process by instigating a formal arrangement with CESCEO to ensure that information exchange processes are established. Communication structures are in place to initiate dialogue and the possibilities of more active collaboration between the Australia Council at ministerial level, and all Ministers for Culture as well as for Education and with the support of local government. **The formal support of this Inquiry to the Council would be valuable in highlighting the significance of arts education issues and in supporting implementation strategies incorporating a whole of government approach.**
- This coordinated approach would facilitate the following:
  - **Identification of particular national action research initiatives** based on collecting and/or analysing existing data to discover the state of art education teaching and resourcing in Australia, both in school and out of school **ie an Australian arts education mapping exercise**, hopefully manipulating data already collected by our educational institutions, with the input of relevant education authorities at national and State and Territory level, in conjunction with the ABS.
  - **A national teacher-training audit of those teaching arts subjects in education systems**, to examine the current state of teacher training and resourcing and the need for further professional development opportunities when teachers have been in the workforce a number of years. The Council would work in collaboration with the tertiary sector on this.

### Identification of Priority Projects

- Given the key evidence that arts learning can have a defined impact on the academic performance of students from impoverished backgrounds, there is a responsibility for us to explore this further. We will develop well-constructed partnerships between schools and arts organisations which will support students to overcome obstacles to their success at school. Any such initiatives will have as integral to them, a long-term evaluation process. Dissemination of information on such exemplar projects would be of benefit to teachers and arts practitioners and point the way to strategic intervention.
- **Identification of priority projects**  
ie Analysis and evaluation of how arts education practices are able to improve the circumstances of young people *at risk*. (Indigenous and NESB male student focus).  
Assessing the extent of arts education available to rural youth and identifying any differences between the attitudes and experiences of young boys and young girls to the arts.

### Developing Partnerships

- The Australia Council will look to **synergistic partnerships with organisations which are already undertaking research in related fields**. For example, the **National Acoustics Laboratory** has already made a submission to this Inquiry evidencing data that boys' hearing response rates are significantly lower than those of girls. For our purposes it would be worth disaggregating the data if this is possible to see whether or not boys who play a musical instrument attract enhanced results in relation to their non-musically trained peers.

### Building on Current Initiatives

- **Council will continue to draw on current complementary structures and practices** already established eg its Youth Panel. Members provide policy advice and direction with the aim of increasing access to Australia Council projects and funding for young people and promoting a better understanding of Council's functions and processes. Similarly, initiatives in audience development have meant the instigation of projects specifically intended to capture the enthusiasm of young developing audiences thereby promoting their engagement with the arts and art products. The Council will continue to monitor the effects of such initiatives on young audiences.
- Through the Community Cultural Development Fund (CCDF) the Australia Council already puts into practice some of the very strategies recommended by the *Champions of Change Report*. The Australia Council will explore the **potential of the CCDF to further auspice lighthouse projects**, particularly in conjunction with current Audience Development initiatives, in a coherent and strategic way, with a view to analysing their impact on young people. Given the data emphasis on the relationship between artists and schools ie through artist-in-residencies and through the development of after school arts projects, it is important to **examine the extent of current education based initiatives taking place through CCDF**. CCDF to assess with a view to having transferability or validity as lighthouse projects which can be replicated to **deliver high quality community based arts learning programs outside of school**.

- Through its Promoting the Value of the Arts (PVA), Education Strategy, Council is addressing itself to junior secondary schooling, through Years 7-10. Its focus is the low expectations of students at the middle years of schooling, literacy and teenagers, the subject/learning area crowded curriculum, the place and contribution of the arts to the curriculum, the transition between primary and secondary education and the need for greater continuity in the middle years. In conjunction with the PVA Forums nationally, **Council will prioritise recommendations (arising from *Education and the Arts* and *Involving the Arts Sector* in promoting the value of the arts)** as they relate to these concerns.

The Australia Council welcomes the opportunities that this Inquiry offers in relation to addressing matters of joint concern as well as interest. We are hopeful that there will be opportunities for genuine collaboration with key stakeholders in the areas of boys and educational achievement through the arts.

Our aim is to ensure that we make a difference, particularly to Indigenous children and bicultural children and especially those in rural areas, some of whom who all too often operate from a sense of failure about themselves and their capacity to achieve. We believe that arts education interventions will genuinely make a difference for the better. As a nation we cannot afford such tragic wastage. If there is a sense of failure it should reside in the system that has failed them rather than those young people most affected.

# The Education of Boys

## Introduction

*I often say that I might not have been President if it hadn't been for school music. And it's really true...It is a universal language. It is the music of the heart and the language of the heart.<sup>i</sup>*

U.S. President Clinton in his final term of office was speaking at Joseph Lanzetta School on June 16 last year at a "Save the Music" school event. The school is an elementary school in East Harlem which less than two years previously, had been identified as low-performing and where 80% of students had not been able to read at grade level. In the last year the number of third graders reading at or above grade level went up by more than 300%. President Clinton went on to talk about the interventions that had made the difference in that particular school.

By inference, his list was headed by a dynamic, energetic and creative principal of Hispanic background and his team of committed teachers, working in partnership with supportive parents aided by complementary practices such as smaller classes, after-school programs, parent engagement, arts engagement and students in school uniform. This latter reference to school uniform was highly applauded by parents and was presumably perceived as a move to equity rather than a move to conformity.

In the context of the school music program, President Clinton went on to elaborate not only on what music had given him personally but the need for creative interventions of all kinds at the school level. He lamented the loss of music, art and physical education programs from American education in the previous twenty years and concluded, "the consequence is that ...student achievement is lower than it ought to be, and the kids are not as healthy as they should be."<sup>ii</sup>

He noted that the *Commission of Arts and the Humanities* identified the critical factor in the success of arts programs in schools as being the active support of the local community and parents who identified and committed to the need for creative opportunities for their children. He then went on, based on a body of US research over the last decade, to assert that "learning improves in school environments where there are comprehensive music programs. It increases the ability of young people to do math...it increases the ability of young people to read...most important of all, it's a lot of fun."<sup>iii</sup>

The then U.S. President's parting message to the young people he was talking to was "you are living in a world where all kinds of different people live in America, and where Americans, through the Internet and travel, are going to have to relate to all kinds of different people around the world."<sup>iv</sup> He was alluding to the fact that the arts is able to offer these young people access into worlds other than their own because the languages of the arts can communicate and create connections through their expressive power.

Essentially, universality is achieved through the power to communicate in diverse ways through various art forms, cutting through national and international boundaries to deliver meaning via the symbolic, the perceptual and even the mythic. Vocabulary, syntax and grammar alone do not circumscribe communication.

This is a powerful accolade for the arts and it should be noted that it occurred in the context of a leader and an administration which not only believes in the value of the arts for all young people but sees it as essential to their capacity to reach their full potential. This was reflected in the intent to place the arts at the forefront of American educational concerns as the vehicle of impetus to improve both student achievement and student health in 1994. It was then that strong supportive language about the importance of arts education became centrally included in other key education legislation and allowed arts education advocates to lobby for community and financial support.

By 1998 large-scale corroborative research at a national level was evidenced through longitudinal studies demonstrating that "instruction in the arts, including music, improved student performance, supporting the premise that the arts are not just the province of a gifted few." The results from the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Program*, involving students in arts activities through after school programs, were so promising in "improving learning and keeping students safe" that initial funding of \$1million grew to \$450 million by the year 2000.<sup>v</sup>

This example has been detailed because the strands of its meaning hold major lessons for the future of Australian education and how it might best meet the needs of its students in all their diversity and complexity. Indeed, the strategies initiated by educators, policy makers and program administrators, must be reflective of that very complexity and diversity. To have as champion for the arts the endorsement of the person embodying the highest echelon of leadership in a country, is inestimable. It automatically confers value on the arts and secures enviable resourcing. It is time to develop such advocacy in Australia.

In this submission the Australia Council will unravel the various strands woven together in this example, tease them out and finally weave them together again in a new form, in order to usefully suggest cooperative, strategic directions and initiatives which may be taken to realise the potential of Australia's young people. Council is mindful of the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry and its focus on the social, cultural and educational factors affecting the education of boys, particularly in the early and middle years of schooling.

The Australia Council wishes to submit a case to the Inquiry for further attention and resourcing of the arts in education, given its centrality to delivering successful educational outcomes for Australia's young people. Implicit within this is a view that successful education is inclusive of boys' needs and sensitive to their development and that engagement with

the arts will enhance their capacity to perform to their full potential. In support of this, the Australia Council actively seeks closer partnering and opportunities for creative collaborations with the various education and teacher training sectors nationwide.

## **Boys and Girls versus Boys or Girls**

### **Gender and Equity**

While this submission will refer specifically to boys and arts education where there is available data to back up any assertions; fundamentally, the Australia Council believes that the achievement of gender equity is about equitable educational, social and cultural outcomes for both boys and girls. Gender equity for one gender should not be achieved at the expense of the other.

That boys and girls perform differently, and indeed at different times, should be no real surprise to us. They are different. This is because of a highly complex set of intersecting variables including the pedagogic, the physiological, the socio-cultural, the psychological, the ethno-linguistic, the geographic and the economic. It is not possible to understand the impact of gender on achievement unless the way it intersects with these variables is also understood. Given these variables, to treat boys and girls in exactly the same ways virtually guarantees inequitable outcomes.

Yet policy makers face a major dilemma here, because they also know that there are practices eg good teaching methods, and support structures eg good teaching methodologies and environments, that are as beneficial in outcomes for boys as for girls. So, technically, using the same methods to teach both males and females should be reasonably safe and lead to equitable education outcomes for both genders.

However, even this is not straightforward. There is indeed a sameness about the best of teaching practices. Good teachers teach first and foremost with the aim of engaging the interest of their students and then aim to keep that interest and sustain high levels of curiosity, energy, enthusiasm and motivation to match. Parallel to this they must also employ relevance, connection and appropriateness in order to meet student needs through their discipline content. This however is where the *sameness* ends.

Every student is a unique individual as well as a class member. They deserve to be respected for their inherent differences and the contribution these make to the sum of the group learning. Their notions of being male and female are not constructed and enacted simply because of being born male or female.

An education system which looks to gender alone to explain scholastic underachievement is missing the point. To effectively address underachievement we need to look further than *is it because he is a boy?* More relevant may be that he is a 14 year old boy who speaks Arabic as a first language, has five siblings, parents who work long hours, lives in Lakemba in a 3 bedroom house, likes or hates school, plays soccer badly and the drums well, has mates with set ideas of what it means to be valued as a male, likes computer games, thinks his PE teacher is 'cool' and his Maths teacher 'sucks', wants to make an impression on a girl who goes to his school and reads magazines and watches TV. All of these conspire to tell him what boys should look like, act like and indeed what they should like or not like and what they should aspire to and achieve.

Each student is a highly individual mass of sometimes contradictory experiences, perceptions and influences. As individuals who also happen to be boys or girls, students prefer to receive not only different subject content but also to receive information in different presentation styles and to engage with content through a range of diverse preferred learning modes. This has implications not only for what teachers teach but also for the way teachers teach.

Howard Gardner, Professor in Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and of *Project Zero* fame, came into prominence when he first articulated the notion of *multiple intelligences* in 1984.<sup>vi</sup> He came to his theory through extensive research in the area of cognitive and developmental psychology, examining the connection between the arts and cognition. He has revolutionised international understanding of the concept of intelligence.

Intelligence is no longer viewed as singular nor is it seen as effectively measurable by the use of intelligence quotient testing which has fallen dramatically out of favour, nor is it restricted to literacy and numeracy. To an advocate of the centrality of the arts to education, it is of interest that Gardner's research was sparked by a curiosity to explore talents in music and visual art, particularly in young people who were autistic, or had suffered brain damage, or were exceptionally gifted, and to cross-reference his findings further against their cultural contexts.

To date, he has identified the various multiple intelligences as: verbal/linguistic, mathematical/logical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, auditory/musical, intrapersonal and interpersonal. This latter has given rise to *Emotional Intelligence*, a concept currently popularised by the international business and corporate management communities. Most recently he has also identified a *naturalist* intelligence which deals with the capacity of individuals to relate to nature, and an *existential/spiritual* intelligence. These intelligences work in harmony, but often are evidenced as preferred modes of learning or interaction.

Gardner's theories have formed the basis for educational reform and changed teaching practices. The implication is that there are at least nine different teaching methodologies, all of them incorporating creative, arts-based strategies.

However, as much as this might offer the opportunity of a revolution in teaching, it does not necessarily make teaching easier.

Difficulties can arise when half the class has a different set of identifiable interests and needs to the other half. Add to this an overlay of at least nine different individual intelligences and preferred learning modes and a teacher's role becomes ever more demanding. This is especially so given society's tendency to look to education as a panacea for every existing social problem.

Teacher's roles are not always supported by school systems, structures or buildings which make it easy for them to teach to the range of variables which meet the needs of their students.

For all sorts of reasons the infrastructure of our education systems is based on ages rather than stages of young people's development (which differ for boys and girls) and for the most part operates outside the theory of *multiple intelligences*, despite Gardner's phenomenal success with Australian as well as American teachers. While this remains the case we must seek ameliorating interventions which do the best by all our students and still reside compatibly within those structures, or alternatively, bend them and expand them in ways which do not damage the whole.

In the absence of what Gardner describes as "individual-centred school(s)"<sup>vii</sup> (Gardner 1993:xix) it may be timely to look at the education of young people in more creative configurations. This is especially the case at the onset of puberty when constructing what it means to be male and what it means to be female is at its most challenging. Although not advocating a move back to single sex schools, it may be possible to consider different ways to create spaces and timetables conducive to the interests of engagement and learning for both male and female students.

There is a need to create spaces in the school day/week/year where boys are grouped with boys for certain activities, others where girls are grouped with girls and spaces where the two come together to co-create and communicate rather than to compete or erode learning environments for each other. This needs to be complemented by teachers skilled in working across the range of intelligences, who operate from a pluralist rather than a singular methodology and understand the complexity of gender influences and constructs.

The arts in education, each with its own specialisation, already draw on specific intelligences and uses related techniques to enhance student achievement within them eg visual art, dance or drama. The potential is there for teachers of the arts to support all teachers in working more effectively across intelligences using current arts based techniques which can be incorporated into other specific discipline based learning.

## **The Earlier the Better**

### **Early Intervention**

When Rod Sawford, MP, chaired the first public hearing for the Inquiry into the Education of Boys, he heard first from representatives from the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA). The DETYA spokesperson highlighted a number of potential intervention points and amongst these was the need to address the literacy needs of boys, especially in the early years. As well, intervention was identified as necessary at the transition: "from primary to secondary schooling and then on to post compulsory schooling; influencing the socialisation of boys to promote positive connections with the school, the community, their families and peers; and teacher training and development, including in understanding the different learning styles and needs of boys and girls."<sup>viii</sup>

The Australia Council agrees with this need to intervene at an early stage to better understand what very young people are learning and what their preferred styles of learning are. Research on studies done with young people indicates the there are significant differences already established by the age of four and that their perceptions of what is appropriate learning for boys and appropriate learning for girls has already begun to diverge.

Howard Gardner cites the most important finding about learning to come out of cognitive science as being the swiftness with which world views become entrenched in young minds. In an interview directed to the needs of business leaders he states: "When we're young [and here he cites examples referring to children at the age of four], we form very powerful models of the world. While these models are not particularly productive, and sometimes they're entirely wrong, they're very difficult to change because they're so deeply entrenched. Many problems that people run into when they are trying to bring fresh ways of thinking to an issue arise because such deeply entrenched misconceptions get in the way." (Gardner: Interview transcript. Reprint No 99109)

Gardner gives an example of the notion of hierarchy being deeply embedded in four year olds and that this carries through into adult life where business constantly falls back on hierarchical structures and decision making processes despite much talk about hierarchy being outmoded and a desire to move to cooperative, flatter structures. Children reflect the cultural and value systems they see and experience first hand in their earliest years, which is why the need to develop cultural literacy and acceptance of pluralistic models is essential from the earliest years.

In applying this principle to education, Gardner uses the example whereby "if you only read about wars from the point of victors and losers, you really don't have a sense of what the world is like. But if you read about a particular war in different textbooks, or look at movies about it made in different cultures [from different viewpoints], you get a much more varied picture of the scene, the strategy, the players and their concerns in that particular conflict." (Gardner: Interview transcript. Reprint No 99109)

Corroboration of Gardner's assertions about entrenched world views and indeed, in this case, gender constructed preferences as early as the age of four, can be found in the research done by Nicolopoulou, Scales and Weintraub. Their analysis of the stories of children aged four, indicates very significant differences in the narrative styles of boys and girls. The differences evident in the symbolic imaginations of the two are startling. They raise questions about how boys and girls construct their social universe, how they locate self within it, by using spontaneous story telling as the cognitive tool to help them master reality in making sense of the world around them.

The researchers analysed 582 stories, which were told by children to their teacher over the period of a year. The stories had been dictated to the teacher in the morning and later in the afternoon they were read aloud to their classmates and acted out by the child authors and other children they selected to take part in the enactment. In analysing the stories the researchers treated the narrative in its symbolic form with the purpose of conveying meaning rather than focus on its linguistic construction.

Of the 28 children, 14 boys and 14 girls, 60% of stories were dictated by girls and 40% by boys. The children were from middle and upper middle class families and the nursery school deliberately attempts to create a non-sexist, egalitarian atmosphere. To construct their stories they must inevitably draw on the cultural images around them and the messages behind them.

However, this is selective and they draw on different images and heroes from television, videos and children's books. "Even at age four, they are able to appropriate them [images] and to some degree manipulate them for their own symbolic ends."<sup>ix</sup> What became clear was that boys and girls told different kinds of stories, both in terms of their subject matter but also in terms of their narrative structure, its form and their use of the symbolic imagination. They demonstrated different experiences of both social relationships and aesthetics, and while both genders bring order to experience, both show different preoccupations with issues of order and disorder.

In the girls stories, the notions of resolution and happily ever after type scenarios prevailed. They focused on a coherent plot, a continuous plot line, symmetry, stable characters and social relationships and the centrality of harmonious family relationships. These often reflected the rhythmic, cyclical patterns of everyday domesticity. While also taking on board romantic fairy-tale romance images, they tended to tie them back to the family romance, even animals are brought into the family by being turned into pets. Great care is taken to reestablish order by the end of the story if it has been under threat or disrupted in any way. Girls suppressed or buried disruption and threat under a blanket of order. (Nicolopoulou,1994:107-110)

Boys on the other hand dealt with these explicitly. In fact they elaborated on and intensified the disruption which characterised excitement and an opportunity for action. The boys' stories were almost diametrically opposite to those of the girls. Perhaps it should not be a total surprise that out of the hundreds of boys' stories told only three mentioned getting married, although families got an occasional mention. Boys' stories were characterised by the generation of action and excitement.

Movement, action and excitement were themes for their own sake and less likely to be part of a coherent plot or methodical structure, indeed often generating "associative chains of exuberant imagery...the restless energy of their stories often overwhelms their capacity to manage it coherently...and [they] often seem to begin or end almost randomly...content is typically linked to an explicit emphasis on violence, conflict and the disruption of order...favourite characters tend to be big, powerful, and often deliberately frightening: warriors...monsters and huge or threatening animals...ghosts and skeletons are also common...a consistent striving toward action, novelty and excess [and] often [they] strive for escalating images...[and] revel in movement, [and] unpredictability" (Nicolopoulou,1994:110-111)

The researchers concluded that the differences were beyond the superficial, indeed the stories told were systematically different. "These four year-olds have already developed two distinct aesthetic styles. The style informing the girls' stories tends towards what might be called "socialist realism", while the boys' can usefully be termed picaresque surrealism." The research underscores the complexity of the dynamics informing the construction of gender identity and the development of such early differences in "symbolic imagination and in cognitive and sociocultural styles", manifesting in significant aesthetic differences. (Nicolopoulou, 1994:113-121)

Similar work by Anne Haas on young artists asserts that "...art and play have critical roles in children's growth as symbol makers "...and that " literacy development is interwoven with each child's growth as a symbol user and a social being...During the early years children become fluent and inventive users of symbols, including gestures, pictures, spoken words and written ones.

Around age 5 or 6, young children become capable of using notation systems such as alphabet letters. They often appear first in children's artwork...Children even refer to the drawing act as " writing" sometimes...children begin to represent figures in addition to action in their drawing, they come to use letters to represent particular objects...Children [then] begin to use the characteristics of the sound of the name to invent spellings...[later] they create imagined worlds through shared symbol making [with their friends] and [evidence a] curiosity about what their friends are doing. [Ultimately they experience] the tension between the need for social connection and for personal voice." (Haas Dyson,1990: 50-55)<sup>x</sup>

Respected Australian researchers, Nora Alloway and Pam Gilbert present a case which resonates with the work done by the American researchers noted above and they too question current narrow notions of school based literacy. They offer

an alternative model for understanding literacy performance at school and ask teachers to engage with the conceptually demanding work needed to expand their notions on literacy and their responses to it. In particular, they aim to shift blame attribution for unsatisfactory literacy results from individual students and their families to a more analytical questioning of the relevance of literacy definitions and the need for more complex teaching practices.<sup>xi</sup>

They challenge the preeminent significance of the gender factor and are equally concerned with the multitude of intersecting variables that significantly affect results. It is unacceptable in any school system that the lowest scores attained are invariably by young people either of Indigenous, bicultural background or low socio-economic background. Indeed, the lowest scores of all are achieved by the group of boys who are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background and from rural environments.

It becomes all too tempting for educators to adopt a deficit model of thinking which resides comfortably in the notion that it is *intellectual* or *social deficit* on the part of the students and their backgrounds that creates the perceived problem. Presumably this message is translated with great subtlety by those youngsters who must dread or feign indifference at the advent of the next testing process, knowing the results in advance.

This cycle begins at the earliest stages of schooling and by the time these students reach high school the patterning of failure has been well established. Failure is devastating to self-esteem and worse still is contagious. It spills over into other subjects, often labelled as *poor attitude*. This expectation of non-performance can too easily become a habit if there are no intervention measures or even worse, inappropriate interventions which cannot resist attributing blame.

These findings raise questions not only about literacy definition and testing per se but also about the extent to which schools, teachers and curricula are responsive, flexible, open and sensitive enough to be able to engage young people in ways that are culturally relevant and appropriate to them and their needs.

In line with Nicolopoulou's research of the stories of four year olds, Alloway and Gilbert see in operation at a slightly later age, an outward seeking male principle which can be discordant in the classroom and militate against boys capacity to comply with and mirror the skills required to achieve traditional concepts of literacy. Self-disclosure and the capacity to bare the soul are not their preferred learning styles and a literacy which forces their compliance to this norm, as well as to sitting still, listening in silence, and being neat and tidy and careful of texts and able to perform at morning talk presentations is a literacy they are almost guaranteed to fail. Worse still is the risk that by association, failure at literacy becomes synonymous with failure at school.

Alloway and Gilbert cite the fact that many boys have literacy skills that are not recognised in the classroom. Indeed they may not see a relevance to writing stories or essays but they have a sophisticated capacity to tackle the technologies of the future. Many five year olds are already computer literate before they even begin formal schooling. Boys, and also girls, by the time they reach middle school can be highly computer literate and able to carry out complex tasks that involve the manipulation of data, reading instructions to create web pages and use complex software, surf the net and engage with literacy in ways which are relevant to them.

The researchers suggest the need to think beyond "integrationist, assimilationist and culturally imperialist models that attempt to fit everyone into the uncompromising hegemony of the mainstream when defining achievement in literacy." This can result in a culture of child focused remediation when "it may be the curriculum and teaching practices that are in need of remediation." Instead they propose that it is time "to stop asking what's wrong with those who don't want what we offer" and perhaps offer them what will engage them as a basis for building upon.  
(Alloway and Gilbert, 1998)

Anne Haas Dyson takes up the challenge and offers teachers concrete advice on what they need to do from a child's very first appearance in a school setting, in order to promote a more generous approach to the acquisition of literacy. She suggests there are five developmental steps and each is accompanied by teaching strategies, primarily arts education methodologies, that support that literacy development.

In reflecting on the ways children naturally come to literacy learning, she employs specifically arts based cross-curricular or interdisciplinary teaching approaches in their earliest years in order to support traditional literacy acquisition. These are:

- *First, educators should allow children many opportunities to freely use the arts- to draw, play, write, dance and sing...Children are not copying the world but examining it, and through imaginative creations, manipulating it to express their ideas and feelings about it. They do not need dittos and worksheets, but play corners, blank sheets of paper, crayons, markers, paints and other constructive materials with which to invent worlds.*
- *[Children's] writing is couched within their drawing, talking and playing...Beginning in the early years, teachers can help connect print with the liveliness of children's use of other symbolic forms...even 3-, 4- and 5- year-olds can collaboratively transform themes of their dramatic play into dictated texts and back again to play...use of drawing, social talk and dramatic play helps infuse meaning into their written language.*
- *...talk to children about their efforts and, in that way, to help them reflect upon their processes...Since children's products often belie their messages, talk about both products and processes must be informed by careful observation, and it must allow each child to stay in charge of his or her intention.*

- *Educators can surround children with engaging examples of the symbolic products valued in their culture. These stories, songs, poems, pictures and other objects and events provide children with both content to stimulate their imaginations and new forms to reflect upon and perhaps incorporate in some way into their own efforts.*
- *Self-expression...seems to be nurtured by the tensions between the need for social connection and for personal voice. When symbol making becomes a significant aspect of one's social life, it takes on new urgency. Yet, to concentrate on one's own images and stories is also important...teachers might best allow children the interactive space to pursue their own rhythms, their times for joining with others and their times for pursuing their own agendas. (Haas Dyson, 1990:56)*

## Australian Research to Date

The Australia Council

### *Australians and the Arts*

The Australia Council has made *education and the arts* a priority area of attention. Education has always been of significance to the Council but the push for priority attention has largely been driven by Council's recently commissioned Australia-wide research. Its landmark report, *Australians and the Arts* details community wide perceptions of the arts and support for the role of the arts. The Report arose out of Council's concern that despite the enormous growth in arts activity in Australia over the past thirty years, community engagement appeared to be static or perhaps declining.

One of the key findings of the research was that 85% of Australians agree with the statement that "the Arts should be an important part of the education of every Australian kid" and 86% would feel more positive about the arts if there were "better education and opportunities for kids in the arts."<sup>xii</sup> (Saatchi and Saatchi, 311)

In keeping with this, a number of the report's recommendations focus attention on the links between education and the arts. Recommendations 25 and 26 are specifically intended to encourage young people to participate in the arts, making relevant opportunities available to them as they are growing up and recognising that there is a high correlation between their level of arts involvement when they are growing up and the value they place on the arts in later life.<sup>xiii</sup> (Saatchi and Saatchi, 103)

In considering these recommendations, it is important to note the centrality of family to arts experiences for young people. Parental involvement is the strongest single factor to encouraging positive attitudes to the arts and this is also borne out by current American research. This points Council in the direction of providing parents with the incentive and the opportunities to support their children's engagement in the arts. This also means that in effect, definitions of the arts are also most likely to be circumscribed by parents and there may well be a case for broadening the definitions.

In resonance with current American findings which point to the overwhelming success of after school arts projects, it is clear that there needs to be much greater connection between school-based art activities and community or after-school based arts involvement. Education is the one factor most strongly linked with attitudes to the arts than any other. It is a predictor to valuing the arts.

Young males, not surprisingly, value sport more than the arts and this holds lessons for the arts world. (Saatchi and Saatchi, 151) The sporting arenas have been much more effective in engaging young people, they are considerably better supported, better funded and better market targeted. Their media coverage makes sports a force to be reckoned with and the role models employed by the sports industry to generate enthusiasm for their cause provides the arts sector with food for thought in making the arts more accessible.

Perhaps one element that gives sports the edge over arts, apart from historical tradition, is the capacity of team sports to engender a sense of comradeship and strong bonding and group affiliation. On the other hand, participation in the arts however, is often seen as observation rather than participation-based. It is also not necessarily seen as fun and where this is the case this perception needs to be shifted dramatically. The arts and sport did have one thing in common, both were most likely to be significantly valued pastimes when parents had encouraged their children's involvement and where that involvement included an outside school set of experiences.

The Report specifically addresses Recommendation 28 to the promotion of the value of the arts among men and boys, recognising that they have a lower positive perception of it than women and girls. Moreover, there is also a perceived lack of opportunities for men and boys to become involved in the arts either individually or together. (Saatchi and Saatchi, 231-2). A later recommendation highlights the need for this target group to include men and boys in Australia's rural sector.

Success in involvement in the arts needs to be measured outside as well as inside the formal education system. More research and analysis is needed to consider the impact of one on the other and the combined impact on young people's valuing of the arts. In keeping with this, there is also a need to show how arts education can deliver real benefits to individuals and to the nation as a whole. The benefits themselves need to be clearly articulated and measurable, and American research is doing this via longitudinal research undertaken in the last decade. An underlying challenge for the arts is not only linked to its promotion but most importantly to enhancing both understanding of what the arts can constitute and increasing access to it in its various forms.

To do this it is necessary to clarify the role of the arts sector in delivering effective arts education. Artists have a significant role to play in the direct delivery of arts teaching and as role models, both inside and outside the formal education sectors. (Saatchi and Saatchi, 311) The most significant recommendation pertinent to this Inquiry is Recommendation 64. This seeks to identify the best ways in which the arts sector can work together with the education system to deliver high quality and relevant arts education for children. This implies closer interactions and opportunities for collaboration through a range of arts/education partnerships with the aim of generating more effective education and increased opportunities for children in the arts. (Saatchi and Saatchi, 390-1). The Australia Council welcomes the opportunity for collaborative partnerships with Australia's education and teacher training institutions through the processes of this Inquiry.

Data recently released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on children's participation in cultural and leisure activities is of interest. In the 12 months to April 2000, 29% of children aged 5 to 14 years were involved in at least one of four selected organised cultural activities (that is, playing a musical instrument, singing, dancing or drama) outside of school hours. By comparison, 59% participated in sports activities out of hours, usually organised by the school, a club or association.

Twice as many girls as boys participated in at least one of these activities. The highest participation rate was in the ACT at 34% involvement in cultural activities. Playing a musical instrument was the most popular cultural activity at 18%, followed by dancing, 10%, singing 5% and drama 5%.

However, 30% of young people did not participate in either cultural or sporting activities. This raises a host of questions and also sets up the need for additional data. There is currently no data collected which tells us how many children are taking arts based classes at school and how many of them carry them through their later years at school or into the tertiary sector, or as private individuals. Perhaps one of the first priority collaborations between the arts and education could usefully identify the nature of the data required to undertake a mapping exercise on the extent and diversity of arts practice related to education in conjunction with the ABS.

## Other Australian Research

Unfortunately there is a dearth of rigorous longitudinal data in Australia, which brings together boys, educational achievement and the arts. In researching this submission to the inquiry, much work was located on issues arising out of the study of: boys, literacy and education, and much on: arts and education, but there was an embarrassing gap relating to the correlation of all three.

Much respectable research points to cognitive, affective and behavioural enhancement for boys as a result of undertaking arts based activities or arts disciplines but Australian research stops short of evidencing a causal link between positive arts education and enhanced educational achievement for children of either sex.

The discipline of dance has however contributed a considerable body of learning about the way that dance is perceived by boys and the implications of this for male gender construction, particularly in boy's' formative years. Both David Spurgeon, Coordinator of the Dance Degree Program at the University of New South Wales, and Jeff Meiners, Ausdance NSW, have written extensively on these issues.

A paper by David Spurgeon, delivered at a conference in Finland considers "why men don't dance and why dance is frequently treated with suspicion."<sup>xiv</sup>

He considers the "dance curriculum, dance pedagogy, the gendering of dance, mass sport, homophobia, the state of men and looking and appreciation." (Spurgeon, 1997:8) In line with other researchers, he counsels against giving boys dance experiences which are teacher and curriculum determined, without being flexible enough to address student interest and student need. He reinforces an earlier plea for teachers to "show a respect for their students' social, emotional and intellectual stage of development, particularly with regard to the language used." (Spurgeon, 1997:9)

There is some evidence however, evident in certain projects, that there are instances where dance for boys has made some inroads into shedding its relationship with ballet and by stereotype, all things feminine. Meiners' reflects that "Boys, (even as young as four) have often said 'dance is for girls'".<sup>xv</sup> He uses specific examples of contemporary dance images to explore the changing images of dance for boys, especially with the advent of Dein Perry and *Tap Dogs* on the scene, and the film *Footloose* where the major narrative was the collaborative dance development of two young males.

It is clear that increasingly boys relish taking risks with dance, pushing their physicality to its limits and engaging audience attention with the performance of the dance. However, it would be relevant to do further research on whether this enthusiasm is to do with an acceptance of bonding with an all-male performance group rather than a mixed gender dance group. The images conjured by dance groups such as *Quantum Leap Youth Choreographic Ensemble* and in dance programs such as *Industrial Hardware*, being undertaken by the Choreographic Centre (ACT) seem to have a potent attraction. At recent auditions, the Choreographic Centre had to cut short their auditions process because they had so many more hopeful aspirants than they could logistically take on board.

There is a body of fledgling but sporadic project-based work which is occurring nationally but is not always thoroughly researched. It would be timely perhaps to look at projects that are under way to monitor the participation particularly of young boys of Indigenous background and boys whose first language is not English, in order to consider the effect that such programs have on other areas of their school and home lives. Some work has been done in this field. A research report on improving outcomes for Indigenous students through the arts was published in March, 2000.

It reported on projects operating at both urban and remote sites in four States and Territories and investigated the extent to which student involvement in the arts could support attainment of the Mayer Key Competencies. The project trialled "teaching and learning practices in arts centred programs aimed at improving literacy and numeracy skills, and career pathways for Indigenous students."..[One] offered a new course in music at Senior level. One site aimed to improve oral literacy skills for students who did not speak English as their first language and incorporated English as a Second Language teaching strategies. Yet another aimed to open up career options, and to reinforce positive identification with Indigenous heritage by developing an artists-in- residence program. Still another site worked with students at risk to develop career pathways through the arts, while another used the arts to build better community links through an artist-in-residence program to complement existing arts courses in the school.<sup>xvi</sup>

In the majority of cases the students outperformed the targets set for them, including in writing and oral language outcomes, despite the fact that in some classes this was considerably more difficult to achieve than in others. In the case of the music program, students were enthused but not really keen to undertake the associated writing tasks. The writing element and the theory were only introduced when the retention rates improved. In fact the writing component was "slotted in so the kids just sort of did it without noticing."  
(Mc Rae, 2000:105).

The key findings of the study were that engagement in the arts is likely to assist in the development of productive learning relationships and can enable students to experience success on a regular and public basis...increasing student motivation, attendance and participation. As well it became clear that the arts can offer an important way to develop and express Indigenous cultural history with pride and that arts learning which addresses culture and heritage identity issues can have benefits for literacy, numeracy and employment related competencies. (Mc Rae, 2000:106).

Such studies are invaluable in forging new ground, but also point to the need for tracking data over a period of time to understand whether the benefits are realised in the longer term. Again, this confirms that, on the whole, in Australia, longitudinal research does not appear to be our strong point.

There are exceptions eg with health-based studies such as that undertaken by the National Acoustics Laboratory (NAL). This has recently released results which show significant differences between genders in relation to hearing response rates and it is understood that these have been made available to the Inquiry. It would be of interest to disaggregate the data or do a complementary study which would show whether or not boys who play a musical instrument or sing, have hearing response rates which are the same as for other males of a comparable age group and whether musical competency ameliorates the detrimental male aging effect of hearing loss.

Again, we increasingly fall back on the results of American, European, Asian and British longitudinal research in the fields of education and arts education more particularly, and extrapolate from their data. It was disappointing in analysing the submissions from various educational institutions that the positive interventions provided by various arts activities which already exist in the school sector and which support boys' educational achievement were usually overlooked.

In part this is possibly due to the fact that literacy improvement has not been the main purpose of such interventions. Like the NSW boys' arts project, *Machismo*, established in 1999 at James Cook Boys' High School, Kogarah, which has already come to the attention of the Inquiry, such projects are likely to have other primary objectives. Improved self-esteem through active engagement with the arts is more than likely their starting point, along with enriched arts experiences and broader arts exposure. The other factor is that all too often such projects evolve and grow and develop skills in other areas than originally intended. However, this largely remains undocumented, or the evaluative mechanisms set up to measure the initial funding purpose are too inflexible to deal with what may be seen as very positive additional, but nonetheless tangential outcomes.

It would be misleading however, to leave the impression that there is no research occurring in Australia on the nexus between education and the arts. There are many research projects, happening all around Australia, which address these issues, but there appears to be a lack of any coordinated approach to research, save for Council's most recent study.

To date, critical thinking in the areas of the arts and education and particularly on the notion of broadening literacy to recognise the existence of multiple literacies, specifically arts literacies has been realised through the work of the National Affiliation of Arts Educators, (NAAE) which is run on a voluntary basis. However, its farsighted work could make it a catalyst organisation, working in conjunction with the Australia Council and the various State and Territory arts authorities, to articulate future research directions for arts education. Other key stakeholders including tertiary arts based educational institutions which would auspice discourse and analysis to engage the broader arts community in an ongoing education/arts dialogue also need to be included.

Much of the existing research seems geared towards the upper high school and tertiary sectors. Jennifer Bryce & Adrian Harvey-Beavis of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) have explored the need to link secondary education with the world of work. In a 1997 conference paper, they built on earlier work undertaken by the NAAE and looked at "the phenomenon of high youth unemployment and the consequent tendency of young people to stay on at secondary school to complete post compulsory education... [Further, they argued that] one way that education systems have tried to address the problem of high youth unemployment has been through the establishment of more explicit links between secondary school and the world of work.

[They considered the extent to which Australia's Mayer Key Competencies] can be addressed in upper secondary school arts courses and the kinds of links that can be made between upper secondary and tertiary level arts programs and the world of work. They noted that the Key Competencies are seen as generic skills and attributes which coexist with and possibly complement the school or university curriculum. The purpose of the competencies is to help students achieve skills that it is believed they will need in the workplace - whatever that workplace might be.<sup>xvii</sup>

...[Their research suggested that] the Mayer Key Competencies can 'work' in areas of arts learning. This is not just in a superficial 'mapping' way where they can be 'spotted' in the curriculum, but in a more integrated way where it can be seen that through the arts young people can acquire these competencies which may then help them 'put general education to work'.

[It is not possible to know yet]... whether the acquisition of generic work-related skills and attributes at school or university will help to bring the world of work closer to the world of the student [of the arts]. However the study did find that it is possible to address these kinds of skills and attributes in an arts context.<sup>xviii</sup>

Much research, Australian and international, directs us increasingly to the need to develop better integrated curricula for young people at all levels of schooling with a greater reliance on interdisciplinary teaching methodologies. There is a trend in discipline based research in the arts, to point to their wider applicability across the curriculum as is evidenced in the results of the projects listed in this section of the submission.

## International Research to Date

### Does the Arts Make it Better?

#### *Champions of Change*

*Music helps me in subjects such as Maths (u know the counting, Half beats etc etc etc!!) Music helped me a lot in learning TO dance since I started to dance very late & timing in the music & your feet was very important. Half the people in my class didn't quite get the timing right so they didn't get the dance right. Maria<sup>xix</sup>*

Maria' is a thirteen-year-old Australian high school student and in her mind the links have been made between music, maths and dance, with music seen as enhancing performance in the others. While there is much anecdotal evidence which supports the connections made by Maria, there has until recently not been substantive research evidence to back her up. However, international research and indeed Australian, details the benefits that come from direct engagement with the arts. Most of it has had its genesis in the cognitive psychology research field through Howard Gardner's work at Harvard. As Shirley McKechnie says in her address to the International Symposium on the Arts and Education in 1997, "Many cognitive psychologists now claim that the balance between experiential learning and the development of a critical sensibility is a balance between left and right brain processes. In the search for an understanding of the nature of creativity, others have had plenty to say about whole brain thinking in recent years."<sup>xx</sup>

The most impressive data to date is found in the American document *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*. It has come about as a result of research commissioned by the Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Over a period of several years, seven teams of researchers undertook the examination of a variety of arts education programs using varied methodologies. The research was instigated because although it was felt instinctively by many that arts education creates significant changes in the lives of young people, that was insufficient in a society which makes decisions based on objective measurement and research evidence. Consequently researchers examined well-established models of arts education and also addressed the broader context of arts education and which also examined the arts in out-of-school settings, so as to understand the impact of the arts on learning not just on formal education. (Fiske,2000;Preface)<sup>xxi</sup>

In brief, the seven research projects demonstrated conclusive positive cognitive links that flow from the application of arts education. Results indicated an impact on children's capacity to think creatively and to bring a high degree of meta-cognitive processing skills to problem solving. There was evidence of knowledge transference and a capacity to make connections and develop a sense of belonging to an arts-based community as well as develop literacy skills through varied arts disciplines eg drama, music, dance. Most importantly, researchers addressed the need to look at a host of variables which impact on young people and a particular focus was to consider the ameliorating impact of arts education on young people who were impoverished socially and economically and /or, at risk.

Richard Riley, the Secretary of the Department of Education (USA), when introducing the report asserts what arts educators have long known. In order to learn you must have a desire to learn. Acknowledging that positive arts experiences provide this, he commits to "increasing high quality arts learning in the lives of young Americans." He characterises the report findings as "groundbreaking quantitative and qualitative data and analysis...investigating the content, process and results of learning in and through the arts." (Fiske, 2000: vi)

The most startling finding of the report comes from the data analysis, over a decade, of 25,000 students which factor in socio-economic variables. In all cases students with a high level of arts participation out perform "arts-poor" students on virtually every measure. In fact, the report takes the approach that given that learners can attain higher levels of

scholastic achievement on literacy and numeracy tests, arts interventions represent a significant advance in enhancing the performance of "youngsters from disadvantaged circumstances."

Even more telling is that the advantage for students of low-income backgrounds makes a more significant difference than for their counterparts. "Sustained involvement in particular art forms-music and theatre are shown to be highly correlated with success in mathematics and reading." (Fiske, 2000:viii)

This latter finding is enhanced by cross-referencing with the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) results. CAPE results are themselves a result of a ten year long study by Shirley Brice Heath which directed its attention to after-school programs in the areas of sports/academic, community involvement and the arts. These programs were particularly geared to youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Not only were the youth in all these programs doing better at school than their peers from the same socio-economic backgrounds, but the young people attending the arts programs were outperforming *all* the other groups, despite having been initially categorised as "at risk". It was clear to researchers that characteristics of the arts programs, ie their capacity to enable young people to assume roles, responsibilities, take risks and generate and abide by rules, had a great impact on all other aspects of their lives and in enhancing their academic achievement. (Fiske, 2000:viii)

The other area of interest to researchers and educational planners is that of the findings of the project which addressed learning in and through the arts (LITA). Its findings were borne out by other studies in the report. These were that learning in the arts unequivocally has significant impacts on other learning domains. LITA data suggested a dynamic learning model operates whereby " learning in one domain supports and stimulates learning in the others which, in turn then supports learning in a complex web of influence described as a "constellation"...[It provides] compelling evidence that student achievement is heightened in an environment with high quality arts education offerings and a school climate supportive of active and productive learning." (Fiske, 2000:viii)

Fiske goes on to analyse from the results of the study why it is that the arts tend to dramatically change the learning experience for so many young people. He views the arts as playing a nurturing role in "the development of cognitive, social and personal competencies." He highlights the considerable consensus amongst the findings of all researchers and hazards that in part the success of the arts is linked to the fact that arts experiences regularly engage multiple skills and abilities, even within a single discipline form whether it be visual arts, dance, music, theatre, creative writing, design or any other. (Fiske,2000:ix)

We could speculate that it is perhaps fundamentally because the arts are more demanding of response and relentless in pursuit of that response than other subject disciplines. In essence they demand engagement and can be very forgiving and accepting in the face of that engagement. Fiske himself distils eight reasons from the research to answer the question as to why the arts change the learning experience.

These are that the arts:

- Reach students who are not otherwise being reached and for whom the arts can be the only reason to go to school;
- Reach students in ways that they are not otherwise being reached and who may have been stereotyped as class failures..."problem" students were able to use success in the arts as a bridge to success in other areas of learning;
- Connect students to themselves and each other...finding that the attitudes of young people towards each other were often altered when they inhabited the same arts learning community;
- Transform the environment for learning...when arts is central to the learning environment its culture is transformed, discipline boundaries are broken down and teachers are renewed;
- Provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people...they become facilitators of learning or coaches, supporting lifelong learning by example;
- Provide new challenges for those students already considered successful by continuing to provide challenge ...to create and to mentor; and
- Connect learning experiences to the world of real work...they have to bring their ideas to the table, garner support for them and implement and realise them, just as in any company. (Fiske,2000:ix-x)

In turn, the benefits of the arts learning experiences were seen by Fiske as being evident in their capacity to provide experiences for young people to interact directly with art as art makers and with artists as professional practitioners. This involvement supports extended engagement in the artistic process and the simultaneous attainment of "flow"<sup>xxii</sup> and focused attention.

A spin-off of this is the encouragement of self-directed learning and its concomitant requirements of self-regulation and resilience as well as risk management and risk taking. For learners, the arts offer the benefit of promoting complexity learning through the provision of complex, multi-dimensional experiences, with associated multiple possibilities and outcomes.

Perhaps most significantly, the arts learning experience requires highly skilled teachers who themselves are lifelong learners and open to the same transformative experiences as their students and become advocates and leaders for institutional and systemic change. This opens the door for engaging community leaders and marshalling resources. One of the studies found that "the single most critical factor in sustaining arts education ...is the active involvement of

influential segments of the community in shaping and implementing the policies and programs of the district." (Fiske,2000:xi)

There are lessons arising from this research for us in Australia. There are also policy implications which are not restricted to America alone. The policy implications arising from this study are directed to arts educators and administrators as well as policy-making and funding bodies in the arts and in education. Fiske identifies the opportunity to re-energise the teaching workforce by addressing generic teacher training and preparation as well as ongoing teacher development as a result of this report. He also sees the development of after-school arts projects and articulates the need to expand and deliver high quality arts learning programs outside of school as well.

Given the evidence that arts learning can have a defined impact on the academic performance of students from impoverished backgrounds, there is a responsibility to develop well-constructed partnerships between schools and arts organisations to support students overcome obstacles to their success. Implicit in this is the need to give priority attention to the development of collaborative arts experiences for young people. This is about developing communities of arts learners rather than just opportunities for "stars" and flags a potential need to reexamine the adaptability of school schedules and structures to make space for these arts learner communities to emerge. (Fiske,2000:xi-xii)

## Broadening the Scope of Literacy

### Literacy through the Arts

Education and literacy are not synonymous. Educational achievement is not only about reading and writing. The capacity to communicate is not the same as being literate. There is more than one valid literacy.

These are perhaps dangerous assertions to consider but none threaten or negate the significance and the gift of being able to read and to write. What they do however, is highlight the danger of defining young people by one aspect of literacy performance alone, rather than using their capabilities in other literacies as building blocks which can also engender more positive experiences of reading and writing.

Young people today operate in a world where they will argue persuasively for the most desirable mobile phone and can articulate its advantages, even if they can't spell the words correctly or write an essay on mobile phones to a satisfactory standard. This doesn't mean that they should be encouraged to negate spelling, but increasingly, they live in a world where Spellchecker makes spelling seemingly irrelevant to effective communication for them.

Phillip Adams, prominent author, commentator on social and cultural issues and broadcaster talks about India as a country where the majority of the population are unable to read a newspaper and yet asserts that it is likely to "become the first modern society to leap-frog over literacy." (Adams, 1998) In fact, India is rapidly developing a reputation as a world leader of electronic communication and represents a place where people, in the main, receive information via television and computer.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Theobald, a Canadian adviser to government, says "that [in the future] there will be a need for other [than print] media." He talks about the increasing societal need for those who will translate ideas "between levels of competence: it should be possible for grade-school children to understand important issues such as hunger and prejudice as well as more sophisticated thinkers...New realities are often only grasped experientially, rather than through intellectual debate...each of us needs to understand as fully as possible... we may grasp more if we use images rather than analysis to break through our current thinking..." (Theobald,1997:68-9)<sup>xxiv</sup>.

*The arts community has always...[held] up a mirror to our foibles ... enabling us to see...it is often easier to see an alternative vision of reality through the arts than through intellectual argument.* (Theobald,1997:59)<sup>xxv</sup>

This tells us that increasingly, we need to allow for expanded definitions of literacy and that both arts and education bodies need to come together to engage in the debate. The recent and challenging Australian exposition of the arguments for moving beyond a limiting definition of literacy is put by Editor Joan Livermore and her contributing authors in the 1998 publication, *More than Words can say*.

Livermore argues the case for a view of literacy through the arts persuasively and indeed preempts the findings of the current American report, *Champions of Change*, substantiated by empirical and longitudinal research. This report makes a convincing case for the resulting positive impact of arts literacies on more traditionally perceived areas of intellectual achievement such as literacy and numeracy.

*More than Words can say* offers a range of stimulating and challenging interpretations by educators and practitioners; of visual literacy, design literacy, dance literacy, music literacy in the information technology age, literacy through drama and performance and media literacy and the information age. Indeed the arts are presented here as unique languages in their own right.

The central position taken is that the prime purpose of arts education is to "introduce students to the arts world" (Livermore, 1998:1) and to support, develop and extend their own arts capacities within the multiple worlds offered by the arts. Each foray or exploration into the various worlds of the arts brings with it a challenge. Being able to understand and interpret or decode the language and symbol systems of any art form through its processes, practices, perceptual

and sensory filters and rituals, has more than one application. It has the potential of multiple transference i.e. taking the learned skills related to making and communicating meaning into other areas of learning and to other education disciplines.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Livermore is of one accord with Theobald and Adams when she states the following.

*Although great efforts are being made to improve levels of verbal literacy in schools, many educators believe that the new modes of electronic communication will demand a much broader range of literacy and perceptual skills. Information is now presented in many forms other than words, and it seems to make sense that we should find out more about the ways in which people interpret information presented in these other forms.*<sup>xxvii</sup>  
(Livermore, 1998:1)

Everytime, students *read* a new set of linguistic data, whether its representation is symbolic, perceptual, sensory, cognitive or any combination of these, a different set of aesthetic, intellectual, emotional and physical skills and capabilities is called into action. Each time this happens a new entry point is accessed and eventually patterns in the new world begin to be seen and felt, compared and assessed. As with the learning of any new language, once you glimpse the new world language takes you into, then you know that there must be other worlds waiting to be entered and explored and you know that there is more than one way of perceiving and thinking about life. We think in symbols and their associative connections.

This demands teaching which is responsive, flexible and adaptive, utilising techniques which match Gardner's multiple intelligences. It is at this point that the value of the arts is more than the inherent value of the arts, paramount though that may be. It is at this point that arts education, with its multiple literacies can extend and apply its skills base and teaching methodologies to other subject-based disciplines.

Silvia Jahnsons, an Australian visual artist currently living in the United States, and herself a former secondary school art teacher, recently spoke of the long term relationships which she has formed with her local schools. One Montessori kindergarten in Los Angeles boasts a life-sized Walter Crane hand painted alphabet and pictures on its walls, so that its students learn reading and writing, inspired by the need to make up and tell stories generated from the images on the walls around them. The elementary school next door looks forward to a special maths day every year when Silvia paints the outline of a whale to scale on the school playground. Students listen to whale sounds and make up their own whale songs while they embellish the whale with a full maritime scene. The whale outline is the starting point used to learn about units of measurement eg they learn how many shoe lengths wide it is. It also becomes the basis for learning about the ecosystem which they interpret and draw with Silvia's help.

The junior high school next door is the only one in the United States to boast a to-scale, facing true north, map of the United States of America, on its asphalt playground, created in road sign paint. It is topographically accurate, complete with mountain ranges, lakes and rivers. It took eighteen months to complete, and as she worked the curiosity, motivation and engagement of the students at the school increased accordingly. She delights in the fact that when she is at the school she can hear students saying things such as, "I'll meet you in Minnesota in five minutes. Just wait for me in Minneapolis!" A painless way of physically engaging with geography and mathematics and the physics and chemistry of paint unaffected by heat and rain, all through the visual arts.

The effects of Silvia's work are reminiscent of Gardner's latest research. He has broadened the notion of educational achievement as being well beyond applied intelligence and literacy. Most recently, he examines world thinkers and leaders such as Ghandi and Virginia Woolf and posits that one of the traits that makes them achievers is their "ability to tell stories that engage others and compel them to act or feel." (Gardner, 2000: 17)<sup>xxviii</sup>

Those students who have engaged with Silvia will no doubt feel compelled to tell very special stories about that engagement. Her latest project is working closely with the teacher who takes the special reading class to create a Harry Potter room. Here she dresses up as the storyteller and reads to students who then translate and perform and dance the stories in ways that have meaning for them, as well as shared meaning, while developing their fledgling literacy skills through visual and performance art.<sup>xxix</sup>

This example is illustrative of the kind of productive partnerships and collaborations that can and do occur between practising artists and teachers who are open to experimenting with methodologies unfamiliar to those of their traditional discipline base. Arts literacies and the methodologies through which they are expressed have cross-curricular applicability and indeed enhance the interest and motivational levels of students when applied to other disciplines.

# Educational Needs for the Future

## The Role of Education in Complexity Thinking

We live in a complex society which makes complex demands on us. The new century is one in which these demands will increase. Indeed there is a body of futures thinking which suggests that we cannot continue to live our old lives in the same old ways. Charles Handy, an in-demand British futures and management consultant, comes to the conclusion that lifetime hours of work will inevitably decline in the next generation and that dramatic shifts in the social contract are therefore inevitable. (Theobald, 1997:116).

Robert Theobald, in *Reworking Success* goes so far as to say that "the very concept of jobs is obsolescent and that we must move on to thinking about "right livelihood" where people do work they like." (Theobald, 1997:116). He asserts that international decision making is not keeping up with the challenging rate at which we need to be changing direction and that nothing short of creative "mindquakes" which "evaluate relative impossibilities" and responses to them through large-scale dialogue will support us in the future. (Theobald, 1997:117)<sup>xxx</sup>

What then does the future in education hold for young Australians? At the very least, they will move from schooling into a world where their only certainty will continue to be change. Schooling has a responsibility to support and equip them for negotiating the transitions they will make. It will be expected that they be eminently flexible in adapting to changing circumstances and elastic enough in their thinking to come up with creative options to meet the challenges posed. It will be demanded that they have the capacity to take in complex thoughts and processes, distil the essence of these and create meaningful connections in order to address tasks, negotiations and issues fruitfully.

Two of the key competencies they will require are *creativity* and *synthesis*, irrespective of gender. There are many ways in which creativity can be evidenced; it is not limited to being evidenced through writing. However, by fostering creativity and affording young people a related sense of achievement the spin-off effect is often enhanced application and development in other areas of education.

The skills of creativity and synthesis thinking can be developed from the earliest age and are skills which arts education actively works to develop, nurture and enhance. There is much scope for partnerships between national and State and Territory education and arts authorities to further young people's development in attaining these competencies.

## Creativity for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*With learning Music I also meet interesting people. Could it be that it was the interesting people that were the ones that created the ARTS?*<sup>xxxi</sup>

The question posed by this trumpet playing twelve-year-old Australian consumer of education, makes the inevitable connection between creativity and the arts. At the other end of the spectrum, Vincent Chow, the Chairman of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and a deliverer of education services is engaging with how this connection may best be used.

*The reform of education in response to the "crisis of creativity" is recognised by some of the world's foremost thinkers as the key issue now and for the new millennium. Encouraging acceptance of this idea and changing what people think of as education is a long term goal of the Council...[there are]...far-reaching implications for education of fresh ideas about human intelligence and potential and the new roles for the arts in social, cultural and economic development.* (Robinson, 1997:Chairman's Preface).<sup>xxxii</sup>

This application of creativity is seen very broadly. It is not seen as being linked narrowly to arts related vocations. The benefit of arts education is seen as applicable to everybody because it actively encourages new ways of perceiving the world and operating within it. In arguing for mandatory arts education, the sponsor of the symposium stated:

*Successful business is assisted by the qualities engendered by the arts and imagination, creativity, sensibility, lateral thinking, communication skills and practical skills are an asset to any career.* (Robinson, 1997: Sponsor's Message)<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Ken Robinson, Professor of Arts Education at the University of Warwick, Chair of the Blair Government's National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education is perhaps the foremost world authority on Arts Education. He also explores the notion that the arts are an investment in the future as well as for lifelong living because skills they engender such as creativity are indeed learned skills. He also confronts the tensions between education and the arts seeing themselves in commercial terms, when in reality they represent huge national investment. Yet he alludes to the paradox that despite the need for creative thinkers in tackling the future and the fact that all national policy documents for education acknowledge the need to promote creativity, innovation and adaptability as skills for the future, "the arts are being cut back in every education system in one way or another."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Basically industry and business have taken up the challenge although education systems would not yet appear to have come to terms with the need for developing new workforce skills. Business understands and is fuelling the push for increased creativity knowing that the world economy has shifted dramatically from a manufacturing to the "intellectual properties sector, service economy, and in particular the cultural industries.

In the UK currently, rock music earns more in international trade, income and export value than the motor industry. ...the intellectual property sector in America is worth something like 500 billion dollars currently...the convergence of information entertainment systems is a phenomenon that is with us now...most national systems of education think that what they have to do to compete ...is to be more intense in academic education...and that intelligence in general is the same as academic intelligence in particular...a capacity for verbal reasoning, propositional knowledge and certain sorts of mathematical reasoning...we have not recognised in our educational institutions yet...that we think about the world in all the ways we experience it. We can think visually...musically...in terms of sound, movement space and relationships...We must establish...that intellectual ability is multi-faceted and is as rich and complex as the human mind itself.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Business is not waiting for education to catch up. State and Commonwealth government agencies are setting up professional development workshops in creative thinking, some have written creativity into their capability and competency requirements as well as their mission statements. There is a burgeoning business in creativity workshops. This has spilled over into industry and businesses in Australia which have embraced and invested in creativity workshops for their staff. Businesses are currently being established which derive their very existence from the significance and transferability of creativity across specialisations.

In Switzerland, *The Ideas Factory*, regularly employs 14 to 20 year olds to brainstorm corporate problems, in order to come up with creative strategies which move beyond existing limits and boundaries and offer radical, dramatic departures from traditional corporate thinking. This in turn creates a stimulus effect for experts who have been grappling with the issues who then refine and test the initial ideas stringently for viability.

In Australia, we have similar agencies e.g. *Quantum, the Ideas Bureau*, which brings together diverse talents eg management, architecture and art to develop design solutions to problems. The *Hot House* runs on a similar model to the Swiss one and favours the use of the unpredictable e.g. bringing together a group of accountants, traditionally stereotyped as unimaginative, to apply their collective imaginations to corporate client problems.

The increased demand for and application of creativity is likely to create vocations that have not even been thought of as yet. Increasingly we are developing an aesthetically demanding population and new generations of discerning design conscious consumers committed to the creation of *lifestyle products*. It is timely that our education systems invest in the creativity of their charges from the earliest ages.

## Effecting Synthesis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*Previously we learned more and more about less and less. In the future, people will need to know, in a very real sense, less and less about more and more. The basic required skills will be to understand patterns quickly and to make sense of their meaning in specific times and places, rather than to solve problems within a previously understood approach.*<sup>xxxvi</sup>  
(Theobald, 1997:68)

Art education teaches a curiosity and an engagement with patterning; designing patterns, interpreting them, decoding them and seeing the differences, similarities and connections between patterns. The learning processes are the same whether or not the reading of them occurs through the spectacles of their specific coda; musical, mathematical, visual, spatial, auditory and/or physical.

Synthesis thinking occurs when we are able, after exposure to individual patterning, to recognise connections and differences in and across patterns. Currently we tend to train our educational focus in a segmented, specialised way, we work at developing certain parts of a child's capacity e.g. reading, writing, painting but the system and the young people in it, need a more integrated world view and the skills which will enable them to make the connections across reading, writing, painting, maths, music and the rest.

The arts offers a perfect opportunity to actively understand and create syntheses. The USA Congressional definition of the arts incorporates, "but is not limited to: music-instrument and vocal; dance; drama; vocal arts; creative arts;...painting; sculpture and photography; graphic and craft arts; industrial design; costume and fashion design: motion pictures; television; radio; tape; sound recording; presentation; performance and exhibition of major art forms;...environment." (Robinson: VCA Speech)

When you go to see a dance work currently, it is not unusual for it to incorporate text narrative or perhaps deconstructed text, a visual installation, an electronic media component and specifically composed music and live musical or vocal rendition as part of it. Artists collaborate with other artists all the time and in so doing they create new forms of arts practice. They are in the business of synthesising complementary and even seemingly discordant notes to create a new whole. It is one of the reasons they challenge society; they don't readily recognise borders and limitations, they experiment with new tools to make the unthinkable thinkable, they work with technology, science, physics and mathematics to generate their works.

As a sector they are probably more advanced than any other in developing the skills of creativity and synthesis necessary for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It would be a resource waste if our education systems did not make the best use those skills for its students. When artists enter a school, they bring their own richness of language to the young people with whom they interact. They break the systemic circuit and create an intervention through their practice as well as offering a menu of different ways of making meaning.

# Leadership and *Joined-Up* Solutions

## The Way Ahead

Increasingly, the Blair government's approach to "joined-up" solutions as a methodology blueprint for government is finding favour, particularly throughout Europe. In essence, it purports that you can't solve a problem by looking at it in isolation. For example if the perceived problem is literacy levels of boys, you can't deal with it effectively without all the other variables which affect it e.g. social, cultural, economic, systemic and the rest. At a governmental level, this involves a whole of government approach e.g. in this instance, it might involve DETYA working closely not only with State Education bodies to address resource and systemic problems, but also the following as examples.

The Australia Council might be asked to develop in- and after-school and community based arts education programs with a literacy enhancement aim. DIMA may well be asked to support after school classes and community based classes for parents and children for whom English is not the first language. DOTRS could prove useful for exploring specific education based supports through Rural Transaction Centres or fund touring theatre productions and complementary workshops for young people as part of their engagement with key rural issues. Centrelink and DEWRSB may need to address workplace support options for parents at the workplace or for the unemployed in order to enhance their capacity to support children's learning. ATSIC may need to work with all of the above agencies to effect better educational outcomes for Indigenous young people as well as expanding specific programs of its own. The ABS may work with DETYA and the Australia Council to build in more telling statistical data which will identify measures of progress over a period of time.

The list is endless, but the critical factor at Commonwealth level is to work towards an agreed purpose and to know what everyone else is doing so that a genuinely integrated and coordinated approach can be taken to address the issue of concern. In this case it may be that the issue articulated is not as narrow as boys and literacy. Perhaps this issue can be contextualised in a broader approach, where the key issue focus is preparing Australia's young people to meet the challenges of the future through education (and not simply schooling). This is in line with current thinking as articulated through the Public Service and Merit Commission who are taking the lead in exploring the viability and applicability of such approaches to the Australian scene. There is a role for the House of Representatives Inquiry in pursuing this further.

However, it is pertinent to return to the initial focus of the Inquiry. It is also important for the boys to have the last say. The following is a reminder to us of why we are determined to bring about more collaborative partnerships between education and the arts. The following is an extract from an E-mail written by a young man who is currently looking for his *niche in life*. Having almost completed what he called a *soul-destroying university degree* in *Building and Project Management*, he decided it was not for him and is now exploring other paths.

We are talking about a young Australian male just turned twenty-one, one who plays jazz saxophone, learnt violin from age three, is an accomplished dancer, weightlifter and surf lifesaver and has acted professionally on stage as well as in film. In addition he is bright enough to achieve university entrance and focus on several part-time jobs simultaneously to support himself through study. Despite all of this, Paul feels he has not achieved his potential by not having taken up the challenge to follow the path of his choice, and this remains with him.

*...About the topic of young males underachieving at school and in life...There is no doubt in my mind that activities outside of school help complement learning. Whether it be sport, theatre, or craft, they are all character building. When you become good at something you obtain personal confidence, this confidence washes over into the academic arena and young people excel.*

*At my school, the high achievers were the ones that were balanced, in all facets of life. They had lots of friends, they were exceptional at sport and naturally their academic record followed suit. They were dedicated, and above all they believed they could achieve greatness.*

*The worst thing I could have done was to stop ballet, in year 11. I was good at it, I did not realise it at the time, but it was character building. I had confidence in myself that I could do something well, and this kept me focused and made me believe I could achieve. Along with the physical strength from hours of training, mentally it was tough, setting new challenges for my self. When I stopped the regular training to give more time to study I went worse at school. I lost the balance. I found myself wasting more time trying to make myself study. I had no release from stress, and anxiety.*

*I also believe young males underachieve because they have no role models or mentors to learn from. How do you know what is right? Why should I believe what the teacher is telling me? Young men are more sceptical than females, they want to see results and they listen to those who have achieved as opposed to some teacher drilling them with facts and figures. That's why sporting heroes inspire young men.*

*I believe that school does not create leaders, or high achievers. It is the individual's desire and passion that do this alone. Too much faith is placed on schools to produce 'good stock' but the real lessons are learned from life. School in many respects stifles individuality, but it does teach young people to think, provided the teachers allow this to happen.*

*The best advice I obtained from school was at a year 12 assembly, I don't know who this guest speaker was but he said to us: "If somebody offers you an opportunity always say yes, because everything you do is a learning opportunity".*

Paul offers us a learning opportunity. Through him we are able to glimpse the complexity of factors and pressures operating on young men today. Paul stopped dancing, despite the fact that he was good at it, derived confidence from it and it gave him a sense of focus, challenge and achievement. By Year 11, he felt clearly that it was time for serious work and study in order to achieve better academically.

It seems a waste that our children consider that enjoyment and learning are mutually exclusive and we as adults validate this for them continually. In hindsight Paul has understood the links between doing well at something you are passionate about "washing over into the academic arena" but he cannot remake his choice.

Clearly, a range of influences led him to believe that the work he was doing in the arts did not qualify as important enough to deserve being developed in his senior years. It would seem that even young people with a passion for the arts developed early in their lives can feel that the arts are somehow less real or less important or less challenging, or less status deserving than academically driven school subjects and that the future demands something more serious of them.

Early positive engagement in the arts is questioned and diminished when young people receive messages that tell them the arts are not viable vocationally. This is a very narrow attribution of validity. It also denies the kinds of vocational opportunities that are open to young people because they have developed, through arts education, the very skills that make them desirable in the emerging workplaces of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Schools, teachers, parents and community can unwittingly conspire to determine a young person's future without taking into account the things they do well because they derive pleasure from them. The Australia Council is concerned that their range of options is narrowed far too early. If, as a society we want to genuinely engender a love of lifelong learning, there is no reason our young people cannot do music and economics or dance and football or visual arts and science. In fact we are learning that arts subjects have a multiple purpose. As well as being valid disciplines in their own right, their methodology has applicability across the curriculum and the capacity to integrate curriculum thinking.

Our young people should not be forced to make choices between the arts and Academe, as if they were mutually exclusive. Indeed, even Spellchecker tells us that Academe is deserving of a capital A, presumably unlike the arts! Performing effectively in one should enhance performance in the other and current research is validating this. The either/or mentality is outdated in this world we continually reshape as we move into the next century. Ken Robinson in his VCA address points to the fact that there are too many adults who define themselves by the point in their education where they discovered what they couldn't do rather than what they could do. "They only become successful once they've recovered from their education. We can't afford that." <sup>xxxvii</sup>

In Australia, this is the right moment for education, arts and community interests, to come together to give effect to what the arts can contribute not just to improved literacy for boys, but also to education more broadly through its capacity to perceive, make and communicate meaning. If together, the arts and education take up the challenge, the next generation of young men like Paul may not have to regret their choices or be left wondering about wasted potential and what direction their lives should be taking.

## Getting It Right

### Arts Education at the Centre Not the Margins Integrating Curriculum

The findings of *Champions of Change* moves arts education firmly from the policy making and resourcing margins to centre stage. This means centrality to both curriculum content and teaching technique. The arts, in conjunction with education, can usefully broker and support the creation of those spaces which allow venturing, risk taking and risk management by students through arts based exploration on behalf of students, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Arts practices embody the very diversity and complexity that the arts represent in symbol, visual and verbal imagery and perceptual and sensory imagery. That creation of safe spaces through the arts allows for non-judgemental (this does not negate discernment and aesthetic discrimination) acceptance and representation and encourages analysis and scrutiny. Such spaces support highly motivated learning and allow young people to explore in ways which reflect positively on their self esteem, energy and application as well as their capacity to analyse and question.

The spaces may but do not have to be physical. They can be time spaces. They can be collaboration between what is in a teacher's head and in the students' heads. They may well require the teacher to turn into that lifelong learner we have previously spoken of and adopt new arts inclusive learning methodology.

There is a need for the school world to reflect the diversity of the worlds around it and the worlds of the students in it. The arts contribute to the complexity thinking necessary to engage meaningfully with the intersecting worlds they inhabit.

The arts has the capacity to lead the way in the development of a truly integrated curriculum approach because the methodology of all arts subjects engenders curiosity and engagement and intensity and is applicable across disciplines. It is as much content as it is methodology without sacrificing one for the other. Most importantly, the creation of these

spaces must start young and may need to include single gender spaces as well as the spaces to meet together as a group. Creating the space will allow for reflection and the later creation of dialogue.

Allowing and indeed creating multiple spaces, along both gender and preferred learning style lines, in the school day and in school practices, will work for both genders. Each gender needs its own space as well as a common meeting ground, it is not a matter of either or mutual exclusivity.

Indeed what works for one has to work for both genders and bring out the best in each.

## Research for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### The role of the Australia Council

The role of the Australia Council is to show leadership in developing arts/education partnerships in Australia, firstly as an instigating coordinating body and then in taking up arts based issues as a *whole of government* approach. Council has already taken on the mantle of responsibility.

- Through its Youth Panel it has established an advisory cohort of young people who are providing policy advice and direction. The Youth Panel recently issued a communique on the major issues it is addressing, not the least of which are its intent to increase access to Australia Council projects and funding for young people and to promote a better understanding of Council's functions and processes.
- Through its initiatives in audience development Council has instigated projects specifically with the intent of capturing young audiences and promoting an enthusiasm for engaging with the arts and art products e.g. through its New Audiences Program.
- Through the Community Cultural Development Fund (CCDF) the Australia Council already puts into practice the very strategies recommended by the *Champions of Change* report. It funds community initiated opportunities for artistic collaboration and partnerships, most often with young people and professional artists, at a community level. Arts activity engendered through the CCDF addresses the issues of parent /community inclusivity that are so clearly identified as success strategies in the *Champions of Change*. It may well have the potential to further auspice lighthouse projects, particularly in conjunction with current Audience Development initiatives, in a coherent and strategic way, with a view to analysing their impact on young people.
- Through its *Promoting the Value of the Arts* (PVA) strategy Council is currently running nation wide forums which focus on its priority attention areas. These include *Education and the Arts*, *Involving the Sector*, *Arts-Media Relations* and *Rebranding the Arts* in promoting the value of the arts. As results from these forums are already showing, considerable attention is being given to increased collaborative partnerships which include professional artists working with students more intensively both in and out of the formal schooling system.
- Through its PVA Education strategy, Council is addressing itself to junior secondary schooling, through Years 7-10. Its focus is the low expectations of students at the middle years of schooling, literacy and teenagers, the subject/learning area crowded curriculum, the place and contribution of the arts to the curriculum, the transition between primary and secondary education and the need for greater continuity in the middle years.
- The Australia Council is uniquely placed to initiate and deliver on policy direction and leadership in arts education, in conjunction with the nation's key education bodies, its policy makers and service deliverers. It has already begun the process by instigating a formal arrangement with CESCEO to ensure that information exchange processes are established. Communication structures are in place to initiate dialogue and the possibilities of more active collaboration between the Australia Council at ministerial level, and all Ministers for Culture as well as for Education and with the support of local government.
- Increased communication between the top echelons of government through to government at the local level, is intended to lead to the identification of particular national active research initiatives on key issues. One may well be with the intent of analysing and evaluating to what extent arts education practices are able to ameliorate the circumstances of young people at risk. Dissemination of information on such exemplar projects would be of benefit to teachers and arts practitioners alike and point the way to strategic intervention on a broader scale.

### What do we need to know?

*Champions of Change* has already done some of the hard work for Australian policy makers, by establishing a solid body of research evidence which can be built upon. Policy implications arising from it may usefully support Australia in identifying priority targets for further research, preferably longitudinal. Despite the significance of the research, Australia is not America and it cannot be taken for granted that American research and models will be immediately applicable to the Australian situation. In order to best address Australia's immediate arts education needs and how these may enhance student performance in traditional and other literacies, we might usefully address our attention to the following.

- There is a need to collect and/or analyse existing data to discover the condition of art education teaching and resourcing in Australia, both in school and out of school. This would amount to an Australian arts mapping exercise, hopefully manipulating data already collected by our educational institutions. The Australia Council is well placed to initiate and coordinate such an exercise in collaboration with the relevant education authorities at national and State and Territory level, very likely with the input and support of the ABS.

- The Australia Council may also look to synergistic partnerships with organisations which are already undertaking research in related fields. For example, the National Acoustics Laboratory has already made a submission to this Inquiry evidencing data that boys' hearing response rates are significantly lower than those of girls. For our purposes it would be worth disaggregating the data if this is possible to see whether or not boys who play a musical instrument attract enhanced results in relation to their non-musically trained peers.
- Given the key evidence that arts learning can have a defined impact on the academic performance of students from impoverished backgrounds, there is a responsibility for us to explore this further. We are well placed to develop well-constructed partnerships between schools and arts organisations which will support students to overcome obstacles to their success at school. These are likely to require setting up collaborative arts experiences for young people with a view to developing communities of arts learners supported by family and community. Any such initiatives will have as integral to them, a long-term evaluation process.
- Council's research as articulated in *Australians and the arts* already identifies the need to better understand the existing negative perceptions of boys and men to the arts, and especially the attitudes of those living in rural Australia. It would be timely to undertake the research to more clearly define what this means and how it might impact on the educational achievement of those boys. Setting up and sustaining an appropriate arts education initiative which can be tracked over a period of time would shed some light on the ways in which educational performance can be enhanced by arts education. It is equally important to disseminate the results of any initiatives undertaken in order to gauge their applicability as model projects.
- Research confirms that teachers are pivotal to the success or failure of arts education programs. In keeping with this, Council in collaboration with the tertiary sector, will undertake a teacher-training audit of those institutions providing training in the arts, to examine the current state of teacher training and resourcing and the need for later professional development opportunities when they have been in the workforce a number of years. This will ascertain how well equipped to teach arts disciplines future teachers may see themselves being and to assess what further skills development they may need and their willingness to teach collaboratively across disciplines.
- Given the data emphasis on the relationship between artists and schools ie through artist-in-residencies and through the development of after school arts projects, it may be pertinent to examine the extent of current education based initiatives taking place through CCDF. One example may well be a current arts based project for Arabic speaking males in Sydney's inner west. CCDF may examine closely the characteristics of such programs and their outcomes in order that they can be assessed as having transferability or validity as lighthouse projects which can be replicated to deliver high quality arts learning programs outside of school.

The Australia Council welcomes the opportunities that this Inquiry offers in relation to addressing matters of joint concern as well as interest. We are hopeful that there will be opportunities for genuine collaboration with key stakeholders in the areas of boys and educational achievement through the arts.

Our aim is to ensure that we make a difference particularly to Indigenous children and bicultural children, especially in rural areas, who currently operate from a sense of failure about themselves and their capacity to achieve. We believe that arts education interventions will genuinely make a difference for the better. As a nation we cannot afford such tragic wastage. If there is a sense of failure it should reside in the system that has failed them rather than those young people most affected.

- 
- i Remarks by President Clinton at VH1 Save the Music School Event, June 16, 2000. 2000 White House Education Press Releases and Statements.
- ii *ibid*
- iii *ibid*
- iv *ibid*
- v FACT SHEET President Clinton Encourages Support of Arts and Music Education June 16, 2000. 2000 White House Education Press Releases and Statements.
- vi Gardner, H. 1994. *Frames of Mind. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Fontana Press, London
- vii *ibid*
- viii Transcript of Public Hearing, Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations: *Education of Boys: Discussion*. 5.10.2000 Hansard, Canberra.
- ix Nikolopoulou, A, Scales, B and Weintraub, J. gender Differences and Symbolic Imagination in the Stories of Four-Year-Olds in Haas Dyson, A & Genishi, C, *The Need For Story: Cultural Diversity in Classroom and Community*. 1994 National Council of Teachers of English: Illinois
- x Haas Dyson, A. *Symbol Makers, Symbol Weavers: How Children Link Play, Pictures and Print*. Research in Review. *Young Children*, January 1990.
- xi Alloway, N & Gilbert, P. *Reading test literacy data: benchmarking success?* Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, October 1998 p249 (1).
- xii Saatchi and Saatchi, *Australians and the Arts*. A Report to the Australia Council. Australia Council, 2000, Sydney.
- xiii *ibid*
- xiv Spurgeon, D. *The Men's Movement*. A paper delivered at The 7<sup>th</sup> International Dance and the Child Conference, 1997, Kuopio, Finland.
- xv Meiners, J. *Dance and gender: males and dance: what's the issue?* Macquarie University Arts 100 Lecture. March 1999.
- xvi McRae, D et al. *What works? Explorations in Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students*. Australian Curriculum Studies Association and National Curriculum Services, Canberra, 2000.
- xvii *ibid*
- xviii *ibid*

- 
- xix Private E-mail correspondence 19.1.2001, Canberra.
- xx McKechnie, S. *Thinking Dancing; Matters of Art, Value, Doing and Knowing*. International Symposium on *The Arts and Education: Hong Kong*, March 1997.
- xxi Ed by Fiske, E. *Champions of Change. The Impact of the Arts on Learning*. USA 2000
- xxii "Flow". Concept attribution to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- xxiii Adams, P. 1998. *India Aims to Pass the Screen Test*. Weekend Australian, April 11, 1998.
- xxiv Theobald, R. 1997. *Reworking Success new communities at the millennium*. New Society Publishers, Canada.
- xxv ibid
- xxvi Edited by Livermore, J. 1998. More than WORDS can say: A view of literacy through the Arts. Australian Centre for Arts Education, University of Canberra, Canberra.
- xxvii ibid
- xxviii Kurtzman, J. *An Interview with Howard Gardner in Thought Leaders, Strategy and Business*. Booz, Allen and Hamilton, 1999.
- xxix Telephone conversation with Silvia Jahnsons. Canberra, 12.1.2001
- xxx ibid
- xxxi Personal Correspondence, 18.1.2001, Canberra.
- xxxii Robinson, K. 1997. *Facing the Future: The Arts and Education in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Hong Kong.
- xxxiii ibid
- xxxiv Robinson, K. VCA Curriculum Audit, Transcript of Keynote Address, 16 December 1999.
- xxxv ibid
- xxxvi Theobald, R. 1997. *Reworking Success new communities at the millennium*. New Society Publishers, Canada.
- xxxvii Robinson, K. VCA Speech

**Prepared for the Australia Council by:**  
Vasiliki Nihias  
Director, Voyaging Pty Ltd  
January 2001