

DECEMBER 2022

Arts in Education

Review of Creative Scotland Research into Arts
and Creativity in Schools in Scotland

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Appendix One: Reference list

High Level Findings

About this report

This short report sets out findings from a review of Creative Scotland supported research into arts and creativity in schools and education in Scotland. The review focused on three main reports:

- [MAKE Learn: Craft and Making Education in Scotland Today, 2021](#)
- [Mapping Contemporary Visual Art and Design in Scotland, 2022](#)
- [Research into Theatre, Dance and Drama Use in Scottish Primary Schools, 2022](#)

The report also considers findings from the National Partnership for Culture independent report, which included education and learning as one of the first four priority areas considered by the Partnership.

The value of arts and creativity in education

There is clear evidence from the three reports that arts and creativity can:

- engage pupils in learning in a fun way – including pupils who may otherwise be less engaged in other areas of the curriculum
- empower young people in their learning, with pupils co-producing or designing activities
- support cross curricular learning – enabling in-depth exploration of topics, and building literacy skills through arts and creativity activities
- develop skills around critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, problem solving, group work, resilience, curiosity and inquisitiveness – which are important across all areas of learning and build skills across the curriculum through the arts
- support health and wellbeing, emotional literacy, expression and inclusion
- contribute to skills for employability
- support young people to think about how to respond to the climate emergency.

It is important to note that there is a wide range of other research available about the value of creative learning through the arts. [Appendix One](#) of this report is a brief list of evidence.

Barriers to arts and creativity in education

The three reports identified barriers to arts and creativity in education including:

The high level of flexibility and local autonomy in the curriculum – Although the flexibility is valued, it can result in a varied offer around arts and creativity, often reliant on the skills and interests of teachers.

The balance between creative thinking and practical skills – There were mixed views on this complex issue, with some feeling there is an over-reliance on supporting practical and technical skills development, and others feeling there is too much focus on creative thinking.

Teaching time and competing priorities – With reduced teaching time on arts in broad general education, and a wide range of priorities within schools impacting the range and quality of opportunities available.

Teacher confidence – Although many teachers are capable and keen to integrate arts and creativity into their approaches, many have not had prior training or experience in this field.

Connecting schools and artists – Many artists find communication with schools challenging, due to the need to connect with the correct teacher and make an appropriate offer of support at the right age and stage.

Resources – Teachers are sometimes spending their own money to buy materials or access personal development, and most teachers find access to resources for materials, tools, artists and visits to arts organisations to be a barrier, and an issue in terms of ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Understanding of careers in arts and creativity – There is a perception that arts are not valued in school and society, and that studying art or going into a career in creativity may limit career options.

What would help?

The three reports identified similar themes for embedding arts and creative learning in education in Scotland:

- develop a shared vision and strategy around arts and creativity in education
- establish professional development and peer networking opportunities for teachers to build their skills, knowledge and confidence around arts and creativity
- undertake work to increase understanding of the value of arts and creativity, through developing clear evidence about the benefits of arts and creativity for learning, wellbeing, skills and careers
- support collaboration between arts and education sectors through sharing information and ideas, connecting offers clearly with the curriculum, and working to build relationships between arts organisations and schools at local authority level
- support schools with the cost of using arts and creativity, including for materials, for engagement with artists, or to visit arts organisations
- build understanding of the range of career pathways in the arts and creative industries, and support diversity and inclusion in the sector.

Discussion

The research involved a series of short conversations with arts, creativity and education professionals in Scotland, to explore ideas in more depth and sense check whether findings resonated with practitioners and policy makers.

The value of arts and creativity

Overall, stakeholders agreed with the findings around the value of the arts and creativity in education. Stakeholders highlighted in particular the significant role that the arts and creativity can play in supporting literacy and numeracy skills in an accessible and current way.

Across all areas of learning, stakeholders felt the arts and creativity could add value through opening up new ways of learning, engaging less engaged learners, developing metaskills including critical thinking, problem solving, social intelligence, resilience, innovation and teamwork, and reinforcing learning across different subjects and topics.

Stakeholders also felt that the arts and creativity could support personal wellbeing, including through exploring expression, emotions, community, social issues and sense of self, which was critical to recovery from the pandemic.

The barriers to arts and creativity in education

Stakeholders agreed with the findings around barriers to embedding the arts and creativity in education. Discussion particularly focused on a barrier around understanding the value of the arts and creativity in education. Stakeholders indicated that some schools found it challenging to see the benefits that arts and creativity can bring across the curriculum, and how they link with the core priorities of literacy, numeracy and recovery from the pandemic.

The barriers around connecting artists and schools also resonated strongly with stakeholders, who felt that relationships were both critical to success, and challenging to develop. More widely, stakeholders agreed that there were barriers relating to teacher confidence, teacher time, timetabling and resources.

What would help?

Overall, stakeholders felt that for the future it would be vital to clearly connect the arts and creativity to literacy, numeracy, metaskills and recovery from the pandemic, demonstrating how arts and creativity can contribute to these outcomes. This would help to show that the arts and creativity can be a way of supporting these outcomes. Stakeholders felt that demonstrating how the arts and creativity can offer different ways of learning and support inclusion and learner engagement was a key priority for the future.



The arts can absolutely permeate all the literacy and numeracy outcomes."

Research Participant

Some felt that by raising awareness of the value of the arts and creativity, this would help to inform discussions about resources – but were aware that this was a tricky area in an environment of pressured public sector finances.

More widely, stakeholders also felt it would be useful to think about skills development and networking opportunities in the arts and creativity for teachers and more accessible ways for teachers and schools to connect with artists and arts organisations.

1

About this report



Introduction

This report sets out findings from a review of Creative Scotland supported research into arts and creativity in schools and education in Scotland.


Method

This review focused on three main reports.

- **MAKE Learn: Craft and Making Education in Scotland Today, 2021** – This report, commissioned by Craft Scotland and MAKE, reviewed the provision and development of craft education in Scotland. Creative Scotland sat on the steering group for this research.
- **Mapping Contemporary Visual Art and Design in Scotland, 2022** – This report, commissioned by Engage and Engage Scotland, explored innovative teaching and learning in arts and creativity, described the challenges that schools face, and suggested ways for the visual arts and education sectors to better support young people's learning.
- **Research into Theatre, Dance and Drama Use in Scottish Primary Schools, 2022** – This research was commissioned by Creative Scotland and managed by Imagineate. It explored how to better support schools in engaging with theatre, dance and drama.

It is important to note that all three research reports were undertaken in the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic. The review also briefly considered the wider context, including the Culture Strategy for Scotland and education reform in Scotland.

The report then informed a short series of conversations with arts, creativity and education professionals in Scotland, to explore ideas in more depth and sense check whether findings resonated with practitioners and policy makers.



Discussions were held during October and November 2022 with 17 practitioners, managers and policy makers in the fields of arts, creativity and education. These discussions explored the findings from this review in relation to:

- the value of arts and creativity in education
- barriers to arts and creativity in education
- what would help to address barriers.

Findings from these discussions are included at the end of each relevant chapter within this report.

2

Context



Introduction

This chapter explores the context to arts and creativity in schools and education in Scotland.

Scotland's National Performance Framework

Scotland's National Performance Framework is a set of national outcomes reflecting Scotland's values as a nation, and the aspirations for the future.

In 2018, a dedicated outcome for culture was included in the National Performance Framework for the first time. This aimed to raise the strategic profile of culture and affirm Scottish Ministers' commitment to culture and the positive impact it can have across people's lives.


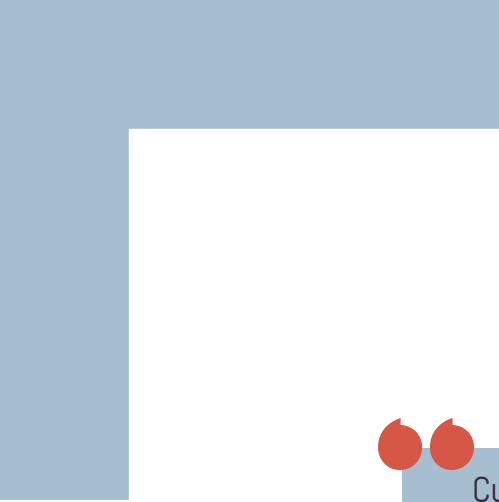


National Outcome: "We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely."

Culture Strategy for Scotland

In February 2020, just before the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, a Culture Strategy for Scotland was published. This strategy set out a vision of Scotland as a place where culture is valued, protected, nurtured and woven through everyday life.

The strategy aimed to place culture as a central consideration across all policy areas, including education and reducing inequality.



Culture is a huge resource through which many aspects of Curriculum for Excellence can be delivered and creative approaches to teaching can also be successful in raising attainment across non-creative subjects."

Culture Strategy for Scotland

In relation to culture, education and young people, the strategy committed to:

- working to embed the principles of the United National Convention of the Rights of the Child (Article 31) – I have a right to relax and play
- working with Creative Scotland and Education Scotland to help improve cultural experiences for learners of all ages
- partnering with Creative Scotland and Engage Scotland to identify best practice and barriers, developing new approaches to supporting schools, teachers and pupils to engage more confidently with contemporary art and design
- working with Creative Scotland and the National Youth Arts Advisory Group to secure ways to ensure that the voices of children and young people continue to be heard in cultural decision making.

National Partnership for Culture

To support the delivery of the Culture Strategy for Scotland, the Scottish Government established an independent National Partnership for Culture.

The National Partnership for Culture provides a cross-sector, interdisciplinary voice to advise and influence Scottish Ministers on the delivery of the strategy, and measure change towards realising the ambitions of the strategy.

In March 2022, the National Partnership for Culture produced its first independent report, making recommendations to the Scottish Government to support the delivery of the strategy. Education and learning was the first of four areas considered in this first report, which the partnership judged as critical to recovery. The recommendations made within this report are considered alongside the recommendations from wider research, in Chapter Five.

Creative Learning Plan

Creative Scotland's 10-year Creative Learning Plan was developed in 2013 and sets out a vision, mission and goals for creativity within education. The Creative Learning Plan focuses on creativity skills across learning contexts – around curiosity, imagination, open-mindedness and problem solving.

“This is what creativity is: the capacity to generate ideas that have value to the individual, to look at familiar things with a fresh eye, to examine problems with an open mind, make connections, learn from mistakes and use the imagination to explore new possibilities.”

Creative Learning Plan

The [Creative Learning Plan](#) was refreshed in 2021 in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The refreshed approach continued to emphasise that creativity is a process, a way of looking at things with a fresh eye, examining problems with an open mind, making connections, learning from mistakes and using imagination to explore new possibilities.

Refreshed Vision	The Scottish education system enables everyone to recognise, develop and apply their creativity to ensure they thrive in an increasingly complex and fast changing world.
Mission	To embed creativity at the centre of Scottish education and adopt a collaborative culture where all learners are empowered, creative and confident.
Goals	<p>Collaborate - build networks and relationships to create conditions to enable creativity to flourish across all places of learning.</p> <p>Empower - co-create the conditions and environments in which learners lead their learning and apply their creativity.</p> <p>Embed - ensure creativity is embedded, prioritised and actively informs curriculum rationale and that creativity is explicit through the learning journey.</p>

Education reform

The Scottish Government has a strong commitment to supporting children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society. It is committed to supporting pupil attainment at school, and closing the poverty related attainment gap.

The education system is based on Curriculum for Excellence, which recognises that creative approaches are fundamental to improvement in all aspects of education. It includes a broad general education from early years through to S3, and a senior phase which provides opportunities to attain, achieve and study for qualifications, awards and other planned activities.

Expressive arts is one of eight curriculum areas, and in addition creativity skills are recognised as important across the curriculum, including being inquisitive, open-minded, able to harness imagination and being able to solve problems¹.

Curriculum for Excellence has been in place for 20 years and the Scottish Government is currently reforming Scotland's education system, including a national discussion on education, an independent review of qualifications and assessments, and reforming education bodies.

A review in March 2022 explored a future vision for Scottish education. It found that there were many positive features of Curriculum for Excellence, with clear evidence of some innovative and creative approaches being taken. Stakeholders valued the empowerment and autonomy of schools and practitioners to provide a curriculum that best suits local needs.

However, it was recognised that innovative and creative approaches were offered inconsistently, resulting in inequity of offer for some learners. Wider concerns included a perception that the system was too exam focused, resources were variable and there was an overload of demands on schools and teachers. The review suggested a national discussion to establish a consensus on the vision for Scottish education, and a focus overall on placing the learner at the centre of all we do.

¹<https://education.gov.scot/media/yeufmx4t/cre39-impact-report.pdf>

3

The value of arts and creativity in education

Introduction

This chapter explores evidence about the value of arts and creativity in education, based on findings from the three reports covered in this review. These reports explored craft and making education in Scotland, contemporary visual art and design in schools in Scotland, and theatre, dance and drama use in primary schools in Scotland.

It is important to note that there is a wide range of other research available about the value of the arts and creative learning through the arts, and this chapter explores the points raised within the three reports under consideration.

Engagement and learning across the curriculum

There is strong evidence from across the three reports that arts and creativity can drive engagement in learning across the curriculum.

Engaging pupils in learning

Arts and creativity can be a way to engage young people in learning, who may not engage in other activities. Through arts and creativity, young people can find new ways of learning that suit their needs, and teachers can build these into their teaching practices.



Arts and creativity activities can provide a fun way for young people to learn without realising it. Through using arts and creativity, teachers can build participation and engagement through sparking imagination, and support pupils to develop a depth of knowledge on a topic in an enjoyable way.



Children often don't see drama and theatre as formal learning, and this enables them to feel more relaxed, which in turn makes them much more open and willing to digest and retain information and understand the learning."

Teacher

Where artists work with young people in school settings, pupils can explore positive alternative spaces for learning and benefit from the expertise of adults who are not regular teaching staff. While this could be of benefit to all young people, one report found that it could be particularly beneficial for people with additional support needs.

One report highlighted that arts and creativity can also be a key way of empowering young people in their learning, with pupils leading on designing activities or co-producing artistic outputs. Using co-production and working collaboratively can help young people and their families develop a sense of ownership over their learning, through bespoke and tailored approaches.

Cross curricular learning

Arts and creativity can also contribute to learning across the curriculum. The research reports highlighted that arts and creativity can be a key way of enabling learning across the curriculum and supporting creative learning through the arts. For example, arts and creativity can be used as a tool to learn about current topics or events, and to tie cross-curricular subjects together.

The reports also highlighted that arts and creativity can be an accessible route to learning more widely across specialist subjects such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The reports also presented evidence that arts and creativity can build literacy skills through young people writing, talking, listening and telling stories, having an impact on vocabulary and quality of writing more widely.



The quality of the [pupil's] writing improved quite a lot and the actual story lines and the way that they were describing things and their vocabulary came on quite a lot."

Teacher

Skills development

There was evidence from all three reports that arts and creativity have the potential to develop young people's skills for learning more widely, including critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, problem solving, group work, resilience, curiosity and inquisitiveness. One report highlighted the impact arts and creativity can have on motor skills.

Health and wellbeing

There was clear evidence from all three reports that arts and creativity in an education environment can support health and wellbeing and build inclusion.

Generally, arts and creativity helped to improve mood, reduce anxiety and foster feelings of happiness and calmness. For example, one of the reports highlighted that schools felt that a positive increase in mental health was the most important aspect of the arts-based work they were involved in².



The reports also showed that arts and creativity can support emotional literacy, through providing safe opportunities to explore emotions, thoughts and feelings in a relaxing and supportive way. One report found that pupils felt that art departments and art activities provided places where you could be yourself, express your emotions and have a sense of being supported. The arts and creativity activities created a fun and calm environment that nurtured friendships and built relationships with teachers.

Wider health benefits included respite from digital overload and promotion of physical activity, for certain art forms.

Employment and careers

Two of the reports included a focus on secondary school pupils, and these highlighted the contribution that arts and creativity can make to skills for work and employability. In particular, these reports highlighted that schools, and further and higher education organisations, had a key role to play in developing the skilled, talented creative employees of the future – with the cultural and creative sector being a key driver of employment and innovation. Arts and creativity at schools can help raise awareness of future career options, and effectively prepare young people for a range of inspiring, sustainable and fulfilling careers.

Climate emergency

Finally, one report highlighted the value of arts and creativity in schools in supporting young people to think about how to respond to the climate emergency. This was a particular point in relation to arts and creativity activity which involves thinking about how we use materials in an ethical and sustainable way, and developing skills for mending, repairing and upcycling.

More broadly, this point was also raised within Scotland's Culture Strategy which clearly set out the potential of culture to play a major role in tackling the global climate emergency, connecting people to place and helping them to understand and relate to environmental challenges.



Discussion

Stakeholders in arts, creativity and education explored findings around the value of arts and creativity in education, and broadly agreed with the areas identified by the three research reports.

Engagement and learning across the curriculum

Literacy and numeracy

Stakeholders agreed that arts and creativity could drive engagement in learning. In particular, stakeholders highlighted the strong links that arts and creativity can make in relation to literacy and numeracy.

Stakeholders recognised that the focus of schools after the pandemic was on literacy, numeracy and recovery from the pandemic. It was felt that the arts and creativity could play a significant role in supporting literacy and numeracy skills in an accessible and current way.

Stakeholders talked of connections in relation to:

- the importance of rhyme, music and phonological awareness in literacy
- the connections between problem solving and critical thinking and numeracy
- the platform and hook that the arts and creativity provide in engaging learners in literacy, numeracy and wider learning.

Through using arts and creativity to explore literacy and numeracy, pupils who may be less engaged, more reluctant or may think they don't enjoy literacy and numeracy can often connect with more creative ways of approaching learning. Using arts and creativity also offers learners different styles of learning, in recognition that everyone is individual and enjoys learning in different ways.



It's literacy and numeracy by stealth, often."

Research Participant

EXAMPLE: WRITING A MOVIE SCRIPT

One teacher talked about using a creative approach to build literacy skills, through supporting the class to write a movie script for a book they are reading. Some pupils find the writing more accessible, as it is in shorter sentences and snappier lines, the way a conversation flows.

Another stakeholder explained that a teacher had developed a live essay with the class. They developed it as a live essay, reported back as a performance with live quotes, and then go away and write the essay individually.

Wider engagement in learning

Stakeholders also talked about how arts and creativity can support engagement with learning more widely, across all aspects of learning. Arts and creativity were felt to add value through:

- engaging pupils who may struggle to engage in learning at school
- opening up new ways of learning and new learning styles
- giving pupils space to improvise, try things and learn
- providing space to achieve, show skills and contribute
- connecting body and mind, enabling learning in a kinaesthetic way
- reinforcing learning across different subjects and topics.

It's a vehicle for children to learn in a non-judgemental way. I would argue the same with outdoor learning or play. They're either a vehicle that enables you to learn a range of other learning outcomes or they let kids who are artistic shine. And it's not necessarily the same children who would shine in a classroom."

Research Participant

It provides that freedom of expression and opportunity to find their way of learning, what it is that they enjoy, to play to their strengths."

Research Participant

Stakeholders felt that there was a need to tie this together and connect this for teachers, so that it is clear how arts and creativity can contribute to supporting the whole curriculum, including literacy, numeracy and raising attainment.

Skills for life, learning and work

Stakeholders agreed with the findings of the reports that the arts and creativity can develop skills for work and employability, and stressed the wider contribution that the arts and creativity can make to the development of skills for life, learning and work. It was felt that the arts and creativity could support skills across young people's development – including critical thinking, problem solving, social skills, teamwork and listening. Stakeholders also felt that learning through the arts and creativity built confidence through providing the freedom to try things, get things wrong, take your own decisions, learn and develop resilience. Some felt that learning in this way could build a self-driven love of learning, and skills development which could be transferred anywhere, no matter what role, employment or industry young people go into.



It's also about the confidence of the young person, their ability to collaborate, be open minded, be curious, to have the vision to create something. Those are always going to be needed..."

Research Participant



Creativity has to permeate, and should permeate, everything that we do. It is the skill that we're going to have to have in our future. To create, to be resilient, to know you can try again, to pick themselves back up."

Research Participant

A number of participants highlighted the important connection between the arts and creativity and the development of metaskills. The [Skills 4.0](#) report by Skills Development Scotland sets out a skills model to drive Scotland's future, and focuses on the development of metaskills including self management, social intelligence and innovation. Some participants highlighted that skills around creativity, critical thinking, curiosity and sense making were critical to innovation.

Health and wellbeing

Participants agreed with the findings from the three reports that arts and creativity can support health and wellbeing and build inclusion. Participants talked of the value arts and creativity can bring in terms of:

- Supporting expression
- Exploring emotions
- Building a sense of self
- Fostering a sense of community
- Building a positive school ethos and environment
- Connecting schools and families

Stakeholders felt that supporting personal wellbeing was critical to recovery from the pandemic, and recognised the need for support around young people's mental health in the current context.



I can't think of anything better that does help... If there is something on a young person's mind and they want some way to express that, they can do it within the arts."

Research Participant

EXAMPLE: VELCRO POETRY

In one area, the local authority education team worked with two poets and Impact Arts to develop Velcro poetry to help young people to explore their emotions. This was in response to a suicide at one school. The project aimed to highlight how positive and negative language can affect mental health and wellbeing, and encourage pupils to express their feelings in a positive way.

Two poets worked with pupils to write poetry, create artwork inspired by the poems, and perform and record their poems. Each pupil was gifted a Velcro poetry book containing their poems and artwork.

Some of the pupils taking part were not engaging in school or in English classes, but enjoyed the project and gained qualifications through it.



Positive social change

Stakeholders agreed that the arts and creativity could play a key role in supporting young people to think about how to respond to the climate emergency. It was felt that the arts and creativity could also play a broader role in bringing about positive social change through supporting young people to value different perspectives, express themselves, connect to culture and history, and explore the role we all have to play in moulding and creating our society.

4

Barriers to arts and creativity in education



Introduction

This chapter explores the barriers to arts and creativity in education which were identified by the three reports included in this review.

Flexibility and local autonomy in the curriculum

All three reports highlighted that local decision making and flexibility in the way Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence is interpreted and delivered can result in a varied offer around arts and creativity in different classrooms, schools and local authorities across Scotland.

All three reports found that arts and creativity in schools is often reliant on the interests, experience, knowledge and skills of individual teachers rather than school, local authority or national policy. This means that the inclusion of arts and creativity in education settings is very dependent on individual teachers.

As schools often take quite different approaches to Curriculum for Excellence, one report found that it could be hard for artists and art organisations to develop consistent methods of working.

Focus on creative thinking

There were mixed findings between reports in relation to the current focus on creative thinking within the curriculum, and the impact this has on arts and creativity in education. One report found that the focus on creative thinking within the curriculum reduced the focus on practical activities, and separated the creative activities of thinking and doing.

This report found that there was a need to encourage interdisciplinary learning to draw together critical thinking and problem-solving skills with practical skills such as materials knowledge, making and hand skills.

However, another report which focused on secondary schools found that the arts curriculum was perceived to be restrictive and prioritise technical skills over conceptual skills or creativity. It was felt that this stifled creativity and discouraged experimental work in the senior phase, with a focus on passing exams and producing a portfolio. There was some evidence within this report that Advanced Higher provided opportunities for more creativity and experimentation.

Teaching time

Two of the reports found that teaching time could be a considerable barrier to arts and creativity in education. One report found that 72% of teachers found teaching time to be a barrier to using arts and creativity³.

In particular, two reports highlighted that the reduction of teaching time in broad general education art and design at secondary school (up to S3) had an impact on the range and quality of opportunities available. It found that some types of art were seen as too time consuming and difficult to deliver within short teaching periods.

The reports also highlighted that schools have a range of competing priorities, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. One report found that a strong focus on recovery through literacy and numeracy led to concerns that arts and creativity would be marginalised within the curriculum. The focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) rather than STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) was also identified as a barrier, with some feeling this led to a reduced priority and status for arts at school.

Teacher confidence

While all three reports highlighted that many teachers are very capable, keen and want to integrate arts and creativity into their approaches, they also found that many have not had prior training or experience using arts and creativity.

One report highlighted that expertise and experience were being lost, with the loss of peripatetic art teachers, and lack of sharing of expertise between those confident using arts and creativity in the curriculum.

The reports found that few teachers were comfortable teaching subjects or using approaches they didn't have expertise in.

I think expressive arts is one of those subjects that is difficult to teach and be enthusiastic about teaching it if you don't feel comfortable with it yourself."

Teacher

Artists involved in one of the research reports also highlighted that engaged teachers who see the value in arts and creativity leads to the work being integrated into classroom learning, with follow up and themed lessons which can increase impact.

For the project to be truly impactful there must be collaboration with teachers, and teachers must actively support and engage."

Artist

Artists and arts organisations connecting with schools

While one of the reports found that 80% of artists feel well equipped and confident to engage with schools⁴, all of the reports found that communication and reaching the right person within schools can be an issue.

With arts and creativity approaches often led and driven by committed and interested teachers, the reports found that artists could find it difficult to connect with the correct teacher, or those with a particular interest in using arts and creativity. Some artists and arts organisations found it hard to communicate with schools beyond those answering phones and emails and reach the right person who may be interested in engaging.

These challenges mean that artists and arts organisations often work mainly with schools where they have built up a relationship, and teachers know and trust their approach. It can be hard for artists and arts organisations to connect with new schools, when schools are busy and have competing priorities and other external partners wanting to work with them.

Resources

All three reports identified that resources were a barrier to arts and creativity in education. Two reports found that financial barriers affected the availability and quality of resources. Both of these reports noted that teachers are sometimes spending their own personal money to buy materials or access professional development opportunities in arts and creativity.

One report found that 88% of teachers surveyed said that access to resources for materials and tools was a barrier to teaching craft in the classroom. Another report found that the main reason for schools not engaging with theatre, dance or drama in the last five years was cost, with three quarters of schools identifying this as a barrier⁵.

There was a general sense among teachers of feeling that arts and creativity is underfunded and considered non-essential. Many felt unequipped by resources outside of basic art supplies.



There isn't money for anything other than paint and paper."

Art and design teacher

One report noted that there were different approaches taking place in different local authorities, with teachers in some areas seeing more financial barriers than in others.

The financial barriers were felt to have been exacerbated by the pandemic, with a lack of access to materials both at home and in class. One report found that lack of family resources to pay for arts and creative activities at home was a barrier to going on to study art in senior phase.

One report also found that artists and arts organisations seeking to work with schools found that costs were a barrier to school participation. Schools identified cost of performances and travel as a key barrier to taking part in visits to arts venues, and artists found they could experience barriers to accessing space for creative activities within schools – particularly where they required a large space for performance, drama or dance.

All three reports also highlighted issues around equality. One report found that ensuring equity between pupils when some can pay for opportunities and some cannot, was a key factor for schools considering trips or visits to arts organisations. Another emphasised that participation in arts and creativity is not equal, with people in less deprived areas able to access paid-for opportunities and less likely to have taken part in certain arts activities. Another report highlighted that a lack of representation in the curriculum for many communities, such as people from ethnic minorities or working class backgrounds – may exacerbate this inequality.

Understanding of careers in the arts and creative industries

Two reports found that the connection between arts and creativity and employability was under-developed in education policy. The third report focused on pupils of primary school age, and did not explore this area.

The reports found that there was a general perception that the arts are not valued in school and society, and that studying art at school, at further and higher education and going into a career in arts and creative industries was not generally perceived as a good career path. One report found parents and carers were not seen to value expressive arts as a subject, with a perception that art is not relevant and useful to future careers. This report found that there were misconceptions within schools and among parents about limited future career options for those studying art and design. The report highlighted a lack of understanding about how the subject can contribute to potential for employment within the creative industries and beyond.

One report highlighted that a lack of evidence of the impact of arts and creativity in education and beyond was a barrier. It found that arts and creativity projects in schools were often small scale, local and short term with little documentation or evaluation to evidence the outcomes on learning and skills.

Discussion

Stakeholders explored findings around the barriers to arts and creativity in education, and broadly agreed with the areas identified by the three research reports. Many said that these barriers and challenges had been around for a long time, and were not new.

Understanding of the value of the arts and creativity

Stakeholders across the arts and education felt that a key factor was the understanding in schools – among leaders and teachers – of the value of the arts and creativity.

Those involved in this research stressed that teachers are incredibly creative, skilled and dedicated – but that they are also hugely stretched in terms of their workload and priorities. Stakeholders indicated that with a strong focus in schools on literacy, numeracy and recovery from the pandemic, teachers often don't have the time to map, consider and understand how the arts and creativity could contribute to these areas. Stakeholders recognised that teachers were very busy and under pressure, and needed support to see the wider benefits that the arts and creativity can bring across the curriculum.


Some stakeholders also felt there was work to do at senior management and leadership level to enhance understanding of the value of the arts and creativity being fully embedded in the curriculum.



Leadership, It's all about whether the leadership team see it as a priority."

Research Participant

Some felt that creativity was often seen as subjects like art and music, and was not yet recognised as something which goes right across the curriculum.



Within the Scottish education system, creativity has been seen as an added extra and is often boxed into subjects like art and music. In the future we will need to begin to see creativity in its broadest sense."

Research Participant

While a few stakeholders felt that specific art forms should be referenced within the curriculum, others felt that it was more useful to talk generally about the arts and creativity. One stakeholder felt that the debate about whether STEM should include the arts (STEAM) would limit the arts to a particular field, whereas there should be a focus on how the arts and creativity can contribute right across the curriculum.

Connecting artists and schools

Arts practitioners felt that strong relationships and partnerships between artists, arts organisations and schools helped to embed creativity in learning. Working closely with enthusiastic and engaged teachers was felt to help ensure that visiting artists connect with the curriculum, and there is a positive collaboration with teachers and artist working as partners in supporting young people's learning.

However, getting into the schools to build connections and relationships was seen a barrier for many artists and arts organisations. While stakeholders in the arts and education valued the flexibility of the curriculum, most felt that this meant that approaches were very dependent on individual teachers and schools. Stakeholders suggested that coordination and strategic direction at local authority level around the arts and creativity in schools helped to make it easier to connect artists and schools, and integrate artist led activity into the curriculum.

Once you are in there, the relationships that are built makes it much easier for ongoing engagement."

Research Participant

When there is a positive collaboration with a professional artist, it really develops their understanding of what creativity could be, and how useful it is for the pupils."

Research Participant

A few discussed shifting to a focus on learning communities, rather than schools, with learning driven by a community – including teachers, artists and others.

Teacher confidence

Stakeholders involved in this research agreed that teacher confidence could be a barrier to embedding arts and creativity. Some suggested that challenges included:

- limited opportunities to see arts and creativity in action
- concerns about taking risks in the classroom
- having the time to review practice and think about another way of doing things
- limited teacher training on arts and creativity – particularly for primary and early years teachers.

One group of participants in the research discussed the confidence of primary teachers, where teachers are generalists rather than subject specialists. A few felt that reductions in teacher class contact time had resulted in arts specialists leading class activity during teacher non-contact time, which did not help to build the skills of teachers in this field.

Resources

Most participants felt that there were issues with how arts and creativity were resourced in schools, with the main issue being a lack of a strategic, sustained investment in the arts and creativity. Some felt that as schools and arts organisations attract funding for specific ideas, they are not sustained over time, and are not always driven by the needs of the school and learners. However, a few said that there were many ways to embed the arts and creativity in learning which did not require additional resources, and that the main barrier was understanding and attitudes towards the arts and creativity in learning.



It isn't about physical resources. It's not going to cost anyone any money to write a poem."

Research Participant

Senior phase exams and timetabling

Finally, a few stakeholders felt that the focus on the exam diet for senior phase pupils limited creativity, and meant there was a focus on teaching for exams and achieving exam results. A few felt that timetabling and a crowded curriculum offer meant that young people were needing to choose between different types of subject, which could make it difficult to embed creativity.



You're not just a creative or a scientist. You can be a creative scientist."

Research Participant

5

What would help?



Introduction

This chapter explores the evidence about what would help to embed arts and creativity in education, based on the findings and recommendations from the three reports included in this review.

The recommendations are also set in the wider context of the report from the National Partnership for Culture, which made recommendations in its first report in March 2022 about how to support the delivery of the Culture Strategy for Scotland. Education was one of four key areas considered in its first report, and considered critical to recovery.

A shared vision and strategy

Two of the three reports considered in this review suggested that there should be a national discussion, shared vision and strategy around arts and creativity in education. Two reports highlighted that it was important to ensure that marginalised communities had their voices heard in these discussions, and that equality, diversity and inclusion underpinned decision making.

This chimes with the National Partnership for Culture recommendations that there should be agreement about a consistent cultural education offer across Scotland, and a national plan to embed artists and other creative practitioners in all schools, in ways that align with the curriculum.



Without a guarantee of equitable provision and access to artists or arts organisations there is an inherent inequity which results in a differential experience depending on school and location."

National Partnership for Culture

The National Partnership for Culture emphasised that this national plan should learn from local and regional successes, and be accompanied by resources to support delivery of the plan. It also emphasised that the national plan should recognise that different approaches will need to be taken in different areas to meet local needs.

NPC Recommendation 1.1	The Scottish Government should guarantee the equitable provision of cultural education both in formal and informal education for young people.
NPC Recommendation 1.2	Relevant agencies should be charged with developing a national plan to embed artists and other creative practitioners in all schools, in ways that align with the curriculum.

More widely, this suggestion has the potential to link with wider discussions about education, and the ongoing national discussion to establish a consensus on the vision for Scottish education.

Skills and networking for teachers

All three of the research reports explored the need for skills development and networking for teachers. The reports highlighted that many teachers sought support to enable them to embed arts and creativity in their teaching approach, and deliver arts and creativity activity themselves.



I think that providing more opportunities for teachers to build their own skills and their knowledge and their own confidence, would really support having more of it in school."

Teacher

The ideas explored in the reports included:

- appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers
- peer networking for teachers to reinforce skills development, share skills and ideas and build confidence
- shadowing opportunities through teachers participating in artist led activities alongside students, to increase their capacity to use arts and creativity in their own practice.

This chimes with themes explored by the National Partnership for Culture, which identified a need to upskill educational professionals around creativity and culture, including skills around community engagement and targeted approaches to creativity with certain families and individuals as needed.

Increasing understanding of the value of arts and creativity

All three reports found that there was a need to increase understanding of the value of arts within schools. The reports suggested this could be done through:

- clear evidence about the impact of the arts and creative learning for young people, including literacy, creativity and confidence
- clear evidence about the wider benefits of the arts and creative learning in relation to wellbeing, skills and careers.

One report found that 85% of schools said that clear evidence of benefits to the pupils would encourage them to engage in arts and creativity in the future.⁶

Supporting collaboration between arts and education sectors

All three of the research reports suggested that there was a need to support collaborative working between artists and arts organisations and schools, so that they can work together in meaningful ways. Reports highlighted that this would require:

- building up trust, dialogue and relationships between artists and schools
- information about what is available and the range of opportunities for schools to engage with artists and arts organisations
- examples of how arts and creativity can integrate into the curriculum and the benefits to learners
- demonstrating a person-centred and empowering approach to working with young people, with children able to take ownership of their own learning
- artist awareness of what schools need, so that arts and creativity inputs can be offered at an appropriate time and stage to link with the curriculum
- local authority support to build more networking and partnership opportunities between schools and cultural organisations.

One report highlighted the role that the [Creativity Portal](#) or similar portal could have in supporting schools to easily understand the bank of opportunities available to them in working with artists and arts organisations.

Supporting arts and creativity financially

All three reports found that support with costs and funding would help to embed arts and creativity in schools. This could include resources to purchase materials for school and home-based activities, funding to bring artists to schools or employ artists in residence, funding to employ specialists to teach arts and creativity within schools, or funding to meet the cost of visits to arts organisations and venues outwith the school setting.

This chimes with wider evidence from the National Partnership for Culture which found that while almost all (98%) primary teachers feel culture is critical in education, most (73%) feel under resourced to deliver culture as part of the curriculum.⁷

Valuing careers in the arts and creative industries

Two of the reports highlighted that there was a need to build understanding of how arts and creativity and studying art and design in the senior phase can lead to a wide range of potential career opportunities, in the arts and creative industries and beyond. One report suggested that Creative Scotland and Education Scotland could play a key role here, making a case for the contribution that studying art and design makes to wider society.

This links with the National Partnership for Culture finding that work needs to take place to strengthen routes from school, through higher and further education and into employment. The National Partnership for Culture particularly noted that careers in the arts and creative industries are often seen as unattainable or not viable for young people from certain backgrounds, and there is a need for increased diversity in the sector in terms of demography and socio-economic characteristics.

NPC Recommendation 1.3

Greater support and guidance should be provided to education professionals and young people to help demonstrate accessible pathways into careers in culture.

The Culture Strategy for Scotland also includes recognition that more needs to be done to support equal opportunities to access, participate and develop a career in the arts and creative industries.

Discussion

Stakeholders explored findings around what would help to embed the arts and creativity in education. Participants explored what would help around the main themes emerging from the three research reports, and shared their thoughts.

Much of the discussion focused on increasing understanding of the value of the arts and creativity within education, which participants saw as a key priority.

Increasing understanding of the value of the arts and creativity

Overall, stakeholders felt it was vital to clearly connect the arts and creativity to literacy, numeracy and recovery from the pandemic. It was felt that demonstrating how arts and creativity can contribute towards these outcomes would help to reduce concern about competing priorities, and **show that the arts and creativity are a way of working – not necessarily something extra.**

Stakeholders also felt that it was important to make clear that the arts and creativity are not just about talent for artists, but are about **supporting equality, inclusion, different ways of learning, and the development of metaskills.** Stakeholders also felt it was important to emphasise the opportunity for learner led learning and co-design within the arts and creativity, offering new ways to engage learners of all styles and abilities, in ways that more formal learning can sometimes exclude.

Some stakeholders emphasised that there should be a clear message that it can't just be assumed that through the arts, metaskills will be developed. **The arts and creativity need to be used clearly, intentionally and in specific ways to bring about skills development.**

A few stakeholders felt that **this work to increase understanding of the value of the arts and creativity needed high level advocacy, involving work with heads of service, head teachers and senior management.** A few mentioned the importance of contributing to the National Discussion on education in Scotland, to make a case for embedding creativity within the work of schools and learning.

Wider priorities

Discussion about wider priorities was more limited. However, stakeholders fed back on the ideas within the research reports:

- **Shared vision and strategy** - Many felt that there was a need to move beyond vision, to action planning and resourcing. However, a few indicated that a national vision and strategy may be a useful tool for influencing schools, in demonstrating the value of arts and creativity and how it connects across national policy areas. A few felt that having local authority strategies or policies were particularly useful, helping artists and arts organisations to see how the arts and creativity were embedded in the work of schools, and to make sure their offers clearly connected to the curriculum.
- **Skills and networking for teachers** – Most agreed that this was important, to build confidence, upskill teachers and connect teachers to share learning, ideas and knowledge.
- **Supporting collaboration between arts and education sectors** – Most felt that this would be useful, through providing clear and accessible ways for teachers and schools to connect with artists and arts organisations. A few felt that this should involve exploring existing systems available, and how they could work more effectively.
- **Supporting arts and creativity financially** – Some felt that by raising awareness of the value of the arts and creativity, and how they can contribute to literacy, numeracy, the attainment gap and metaskills, this would help to inform discussions about costs and resources. However, some participants did not feel that it was realistic to think about resources, in the context of significant public sector finance challenges and budget cuts.
- **Valuing careers in the arts and creative industries** – Overall, there was a feeling that attitudes had changed a little and that understanding of the value of careers in the arts and creativity had increased. A few mentioned some good work had been done on this recently, by organisations like Skills Development Scotland.

In conclusion

Overall, this research identified that a key priority for the future is clearly connecting the value of arts and creativity to the core education agenda. This includes clearly demonstrating how the arts and creativity contribute to literacy, numeracy and recovery from the pandemic, as well as inclusion, metaskills development and supporting learning in a person-centred way.

In this way, the arts and creativity can be seen as an approach and a way of working which contributes across the curriculum, supporting existing educational outcomes, rather than adding additional work and priorities. While this requires clear, intentional use of the arts and creativity to achieve outcomes, it should support and complement outcomes for learners, offering up new ways of learning, engaging learners of all styles and abilities, and widening opportunities for learner led learning.

Appendix One: Reference list

It is not within the scope of this report to undertake a full review of the wider literature available. However, just a few examples include:

Evidence from Scotland

- [Evaluations of the Youth Music Initiative, for Creative Scotland](#)
- [Face to Face Expressive Arts during Covid 19, for Creative Scotland](#)
- [Arts in Education Recovery Survey 2020, for Creative Scotland](#)
- [Creative Education in Scotland Review 2021, Culture Counts](#)
- [Creativity 3-18 Curriculum Review Impact Report, Education Scotland](#)
- [Creativity in Learning and Teaching, General Teaching Council for Scotland](#)
- [Creativity and Learning: What is the connection? Thought Piece](#)

Wider evidence

- [Arts Education in Secondary Schools: Effects and Effectiveness](#)
- [The Arts in Education: Evaluating the Evidence for a Causal Link](#)
- [The Role of Arts in School Education](#)