

**Department of  
Education  
Stakeholder and  
Schools  
Consultation on  
Creative Youth  
Plan 2023-2027**

**Consultation  
Report  
May 2022**

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## Introduction

The Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and other stakeholders, is currently involved in developing a new Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027 as a key pillar of the Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027. The Creative Ireland Programme is a high-level, ambitious, all-of-government initiative to mainstream creativity in the life of the nation. The core proposition is that participation in creative activity promotes individual, community and national wellbeing.

A wide-ranging consultation process involving several strands is being undertaken by the Department of Education, the Department of Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs, and the Arts Council. For its part, the Department of Education established an Internal Steering Group and a short-term Creative Youth Consultative Stakeholder Group comprising relevant internal and external stakeholders comprising both education and creative organisations.

Over six weeks, organisations were invited to participate in the Creative Youth Consultative Group. This commenced with a 1-hour online workshop which took place on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022. The online workshop introduced the context for Creative Youth and outlined the consultative approach. Following this event, each organisation was invited to submit a written submission and to participate in a small number of online focus groups. The Consultative Group concluded their work with a closing workshop at the end of April 2022. Over the six weeks, the focus groups considered many key themes and priorities, challenges and proposed solutions to foster creative activity in primary, post-primary and out-of-school community settings. The findings from these discussions will inform the development of the new Creative Youth Plan as well as informing other education aspects of the overall Creative Ireland Programme.

## Consultation process

The purpose of the consultation process is to ensure that the voices of key stakeholders are heard on particular issues which emerged during other phases of the consultation process and to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to inform the new Creative Youth Plan.

The Department of Education has engaged H2 Learning to assist in running this consultation process. In collaboration with the Department of Education Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit, H2 Learning set up the consultative group and moderated a series of meetings and focus groups with stakeholder organisations. The stakeholder organisations were invited to make written submissions as part of the consultation process. H2 Learning facilitated the technical design and delivery of the focus group sessions online and subsequently analysed the discussion transcripts, as well as the stakeholder submissions, to compile the Creative Youth Consultation Report.

This report provides a high-level overview of the perspectives shared by the participants during the consultation process, as well as data collected through school surveys. The participants shared a wide range of views, initially categorised as observations or suggestions. Observations were merely statements in relation to a particular topic, while suggestions hinted at an action that could be taken to improve that topic or issue. This report shares these observations and suggestions under a number of headings, before commenting on the potential impact of these on the next Creative Youth Plan.

Date	Consultative Activity
11 <sup>th</sup> March 2022	Invitations were sent to stakeholders to participate in the consultation.
22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2022	Initial Consultative Group Workshop
23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2022	Call for written submissions opened to participants.
5 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	<b>Focus Group 1:</b> Partnership between Formal and Non-Formal approaches
14 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	<b>Focus Group 2:</b> Extending the Range of Creative Activities for our Young People
15 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	Call for written submissions closed.
26 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	Final Consultative Group workshop

Table 1, Consultation Process Activities

## Creative Youth Consultative Group

The Department of Education established a short-term Creative Youth Consultative Group comprising relevant internal and external stakeholders. Stakeholder organisations were identified by the Department of Education and were invited to participate in the Creative Youth Consultation. The stakeholder organisations were asked to nominate a representative with particular interest/expertise in the area of creativity in education.

The following organisations participated in the Creative Youth Consultation:

- An Foras Pátrúnachta
- Arts and Culture in Education Research Repository
- Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
- Clare Arts Office
- Council of National Cultural Institutions
- Educate Together
- Education Support Centres Ireland (ECSI)

- Encountering the Arts Ireland (ETAI)
- Irish Museum of Modern Art: IMMA
- Irish Primary Principals Network
- Irish Second-Level Students Union
- JCSP Demonstration Library Project
- Junior Cycle for Teachers
- Kerry ETB
- Laois and Offaly ETB
- Limerick and Clare ETB
- Music Generation National Development Office
- Muslim Primary Education Board
- National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education
- National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
- National College of Art and Design
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
- National Museum of Ireland
- National Parents Council Post Primary
- National Parents Council Primary
- School of the Divine Child
- Teachers Union of Ireland
- The Teaching Council

## Format of the Focus Groups

The key stakeholders participating in the consultation process were invited to participate in two focus groups. The Focus Groups (see Table 1) were held online between 11<sup>th</sup> March and 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

Twenty-four participants participated in Focus Group 1, which focused on partnerships between formal and non-formal approaches to creativity in schools. Seventeen participants participated in Focus Group 2, where the discussion focused on extending the range of creative activities for our young people.

Each online session commenced with a brief overview of the purpose of the session and located it within the context of developing a new Youth Plan. The etiquette for running the session was also outlined (figure 1) at the outset, and participants were encouraged to share their views through the microphone or the chat facility. Participants were informed that their contributions would be shared anonymously and that the session would be recorded only for clarification purposes and to facilitate the subsequent writing of this report to ensure all views were accurately captured.

Participants were encouraged to use the chat facility to add comments during the discussion. At the end of each session, participants were invited to share their key points on what the new strategy should address on the Focus Group Padlet. H2 Learning personnel took detailed notes of

the contributions during the live sessions, and these were further enhanced after each session by listening back to the recordings.

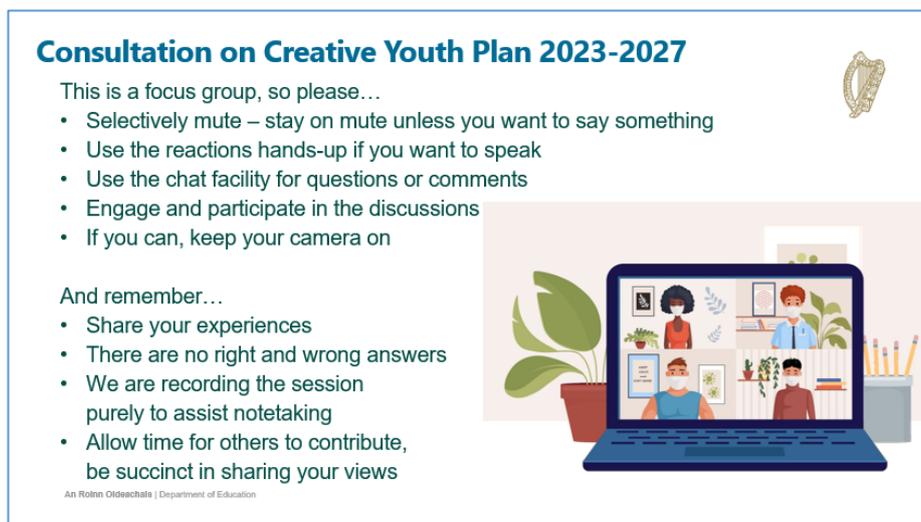


Figure 1, Focus Group Etiquette

In advance of each live session, the Department and H2 Learning developed a series of prompt questions to guide the discussion. The questions triggered insightful contributions from those in attendance about their participation and experience of the Creative Youth Programme. H2 Learning met with the Department of Education team after the workshops concluded and identified the emerging themes.

## Call for written submissions

In total, 17 submissions were received from the following organisations:

- Arts and Culture in Education Research Repository
- Arts in Junior Cycle
- Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
- Education Support Centres Ireland (ECSI)
- Encountering the Arts Ireland (ETAI)
- Irish Primary Principals Network
- Irish Second-Level Students Union
- Kerry ETB
- Laois and Offaly ETB
- Limerick and Clare ETB
- Music Generation National Development Office
- Muslim Primary Education Board
- National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education
- National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
- National Parents Council Primary
- School of the Divine Child

## Consultation analysis approach

At the conclusion of the consultation process, H2 Learning reviewed and identified the key contributions made through the focus groups and written submissions. There was quite a lot of overlap in the contributions from the groups so further analysis was carried out using a thematic review approach.

During this phase, the original contributions of the participants were recorded, and these were subsequently edited and extrapolated to capture the full meaning of their contributions. To avoid repetition, similar contributions from across the focus groups were amalgamated. Subsequently, each contribution was assigned a thematic label, which was derived and informed from the prompt questions.

The analysis phase identified that contributions were typically observations or suggestions. Each statement was duly labelled as an observation or a statement. A master spreadsheet was developed that captured the contributions and the thematic labels, and an analysis of this data is presented in the following section.

## Online Schools Consultation

A total of 411 schools responded to the online school surveys that the Department of Education administered in March-April 2022. Thus 11% of all schools responded to the survey, which is a very high return rate for surveys of this type.

### Primary Schools and Special Schools survey

303 schools responded to the Primary and Special Schools survey. This represents 9% of the total number of Primary and Special Schools. This sample captured a wide range of school types, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

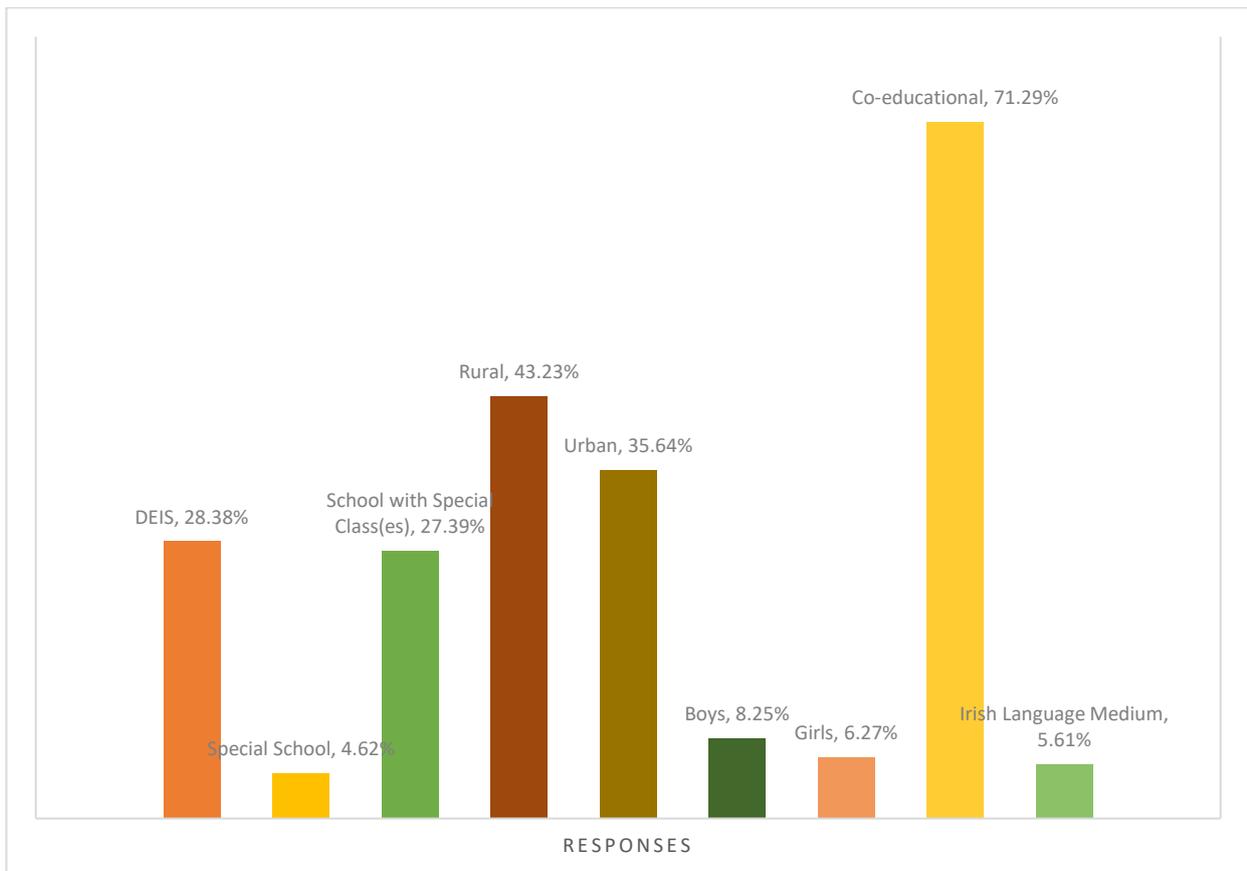


Figure 2, Primary School respondents by school type

Out of the total number of Primary and Special Schools that responded, 72% have participated in Creative Youth initiatives to date.

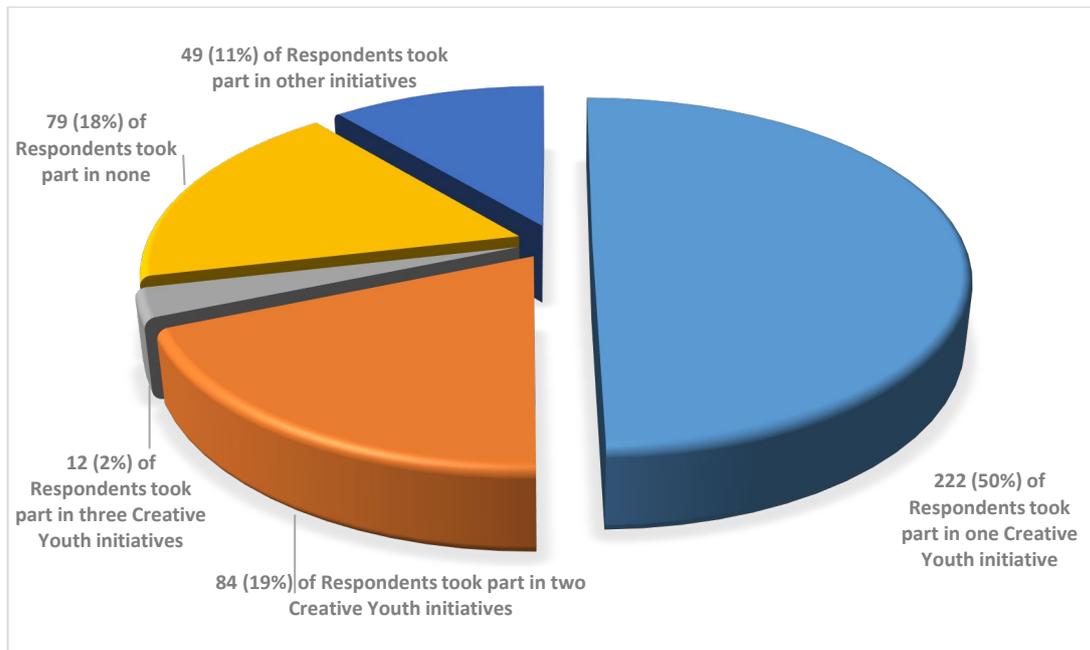


Figure 3, Number & percentage of primary and special school respondents who took part in one or more Creative Youth Initiatives

## Post-Primary schools survey

130 schools (17.5% of the total number of post-primary schools) responded to the Post-Primary Schools survey. Each of the 130 respondents could select one or more school types, as post-primary schools are classified under one or more school type categories. Figure 4 below captures the range of school types that responded to the survey.

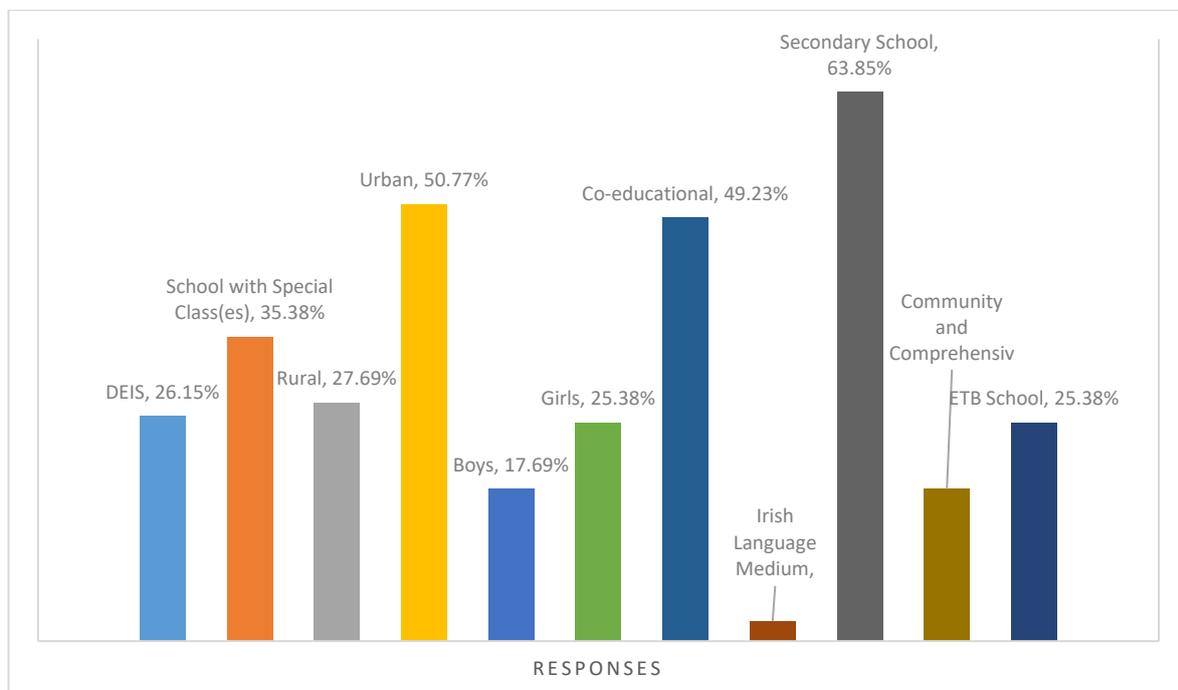


Figure 4, Post-Primary School respondents by school type

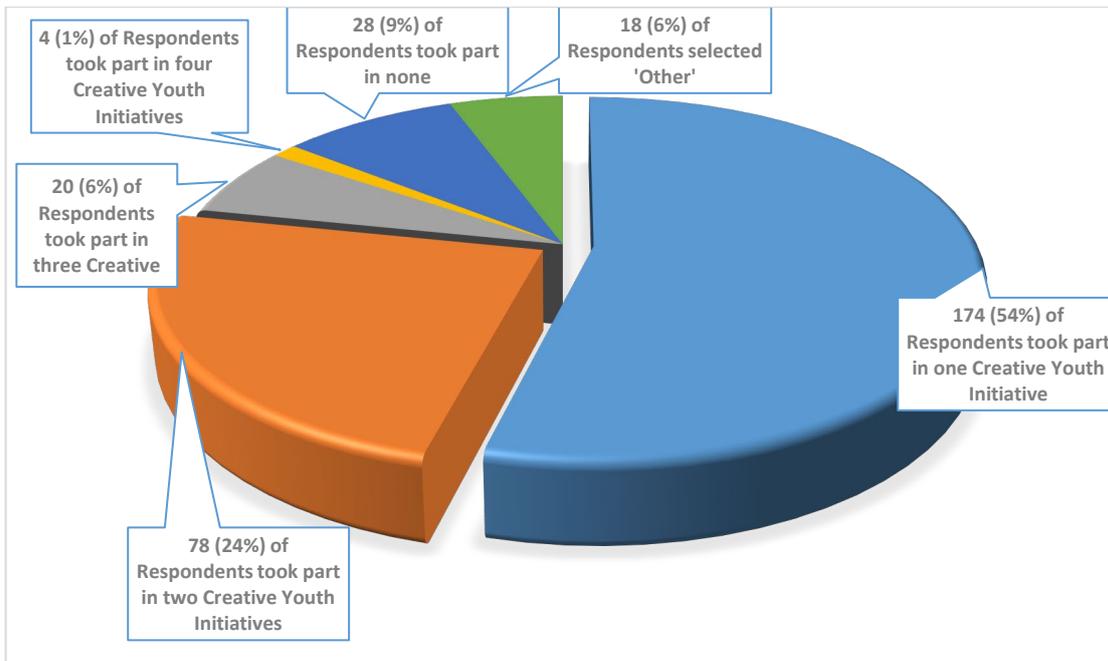


Figure 5, Number & percentage of post-primary respondents who took part in one or more Creative Youth Initiatives

## Benefits of Creative Youth initiative to schools and pupils

The primary and post-primary schools that responded to the survey reported a high level of satisfaction with the Creative Youth initiative. They highlighted a wide range of benefits arising from their participation, and these are captured in Figures 6 and 7 below.

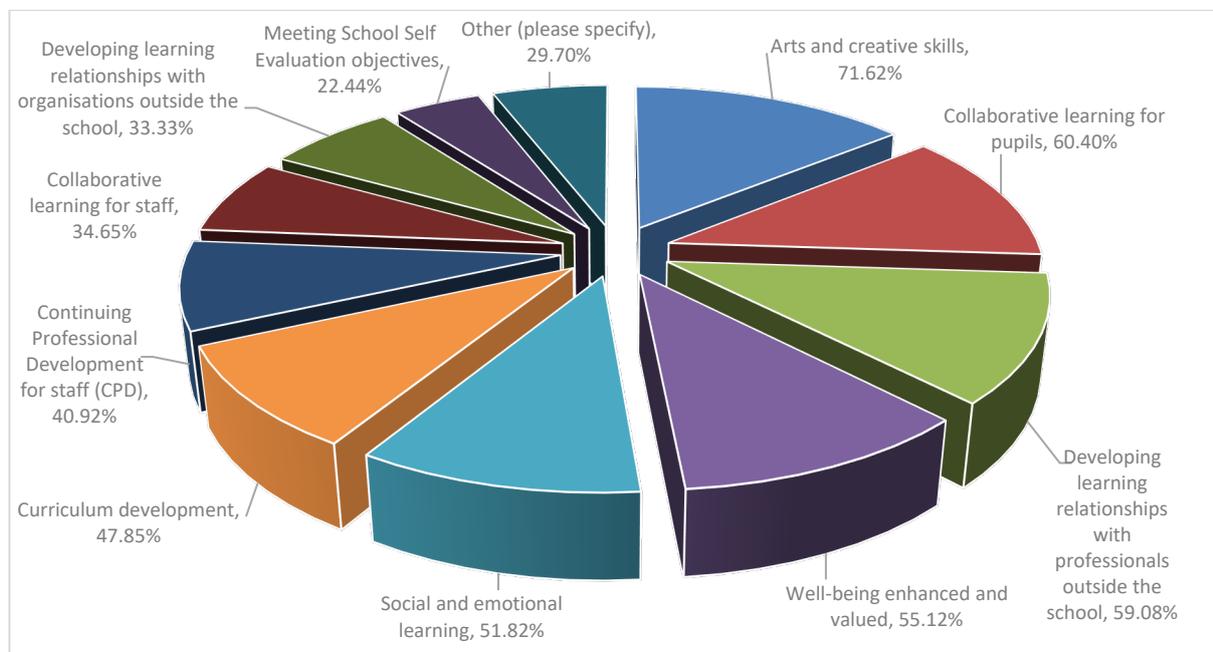


Figure 6, Benefits of participation reported for primary and special schools.

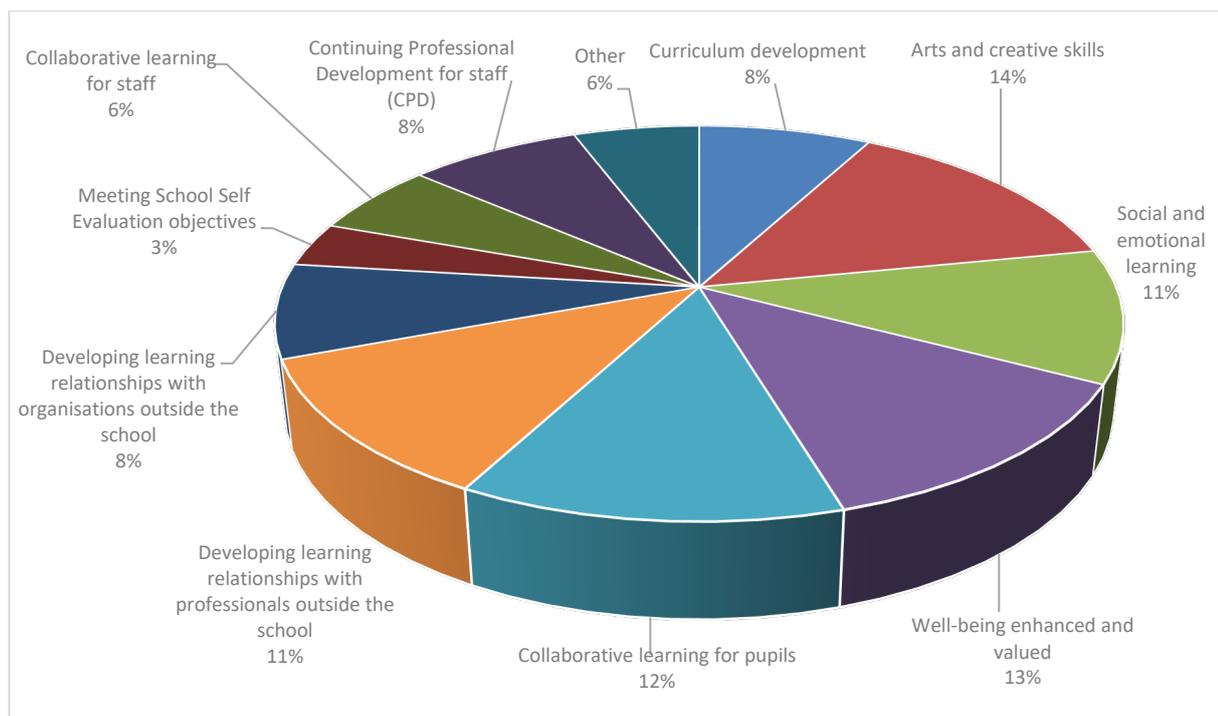


Figure 7, Benefits of participation reported for post-primary schools.

## Non-engagement of schools

In addition to asking schools to identify the benefits of participation, respondents were also asked to select one or more reasons for non-engagement in Creative Youth programmes.

A range of reasons/options for non-engagement were presented, and these were:

- Lack of awareness/information;
- Other school development areas/priorities;
- Lack of time;
- Covid-19;
- Systemic pressures;
- School culture;
- No interest

Figure 8 below captures the results and shows that issues such as lack of awareness, lack of time and Covid featured prominently, as did other factors not recorded. In addition, some schools shared further explanations for non-engagement through the following observations.

*The curriculum is already so overloaded. Staff pressures – staff may not feel interested in or qualified to engage with the Arts. There are also behavioural challenges in certain classes.*

*Primary School*

*It can be difficult as a teacher to find time to dedicate to the programme, the school year is short and it is a full calendar so it can be hard to complete the programmes to a satisfactory standard within a short time frame.*

*Post-Primary School*

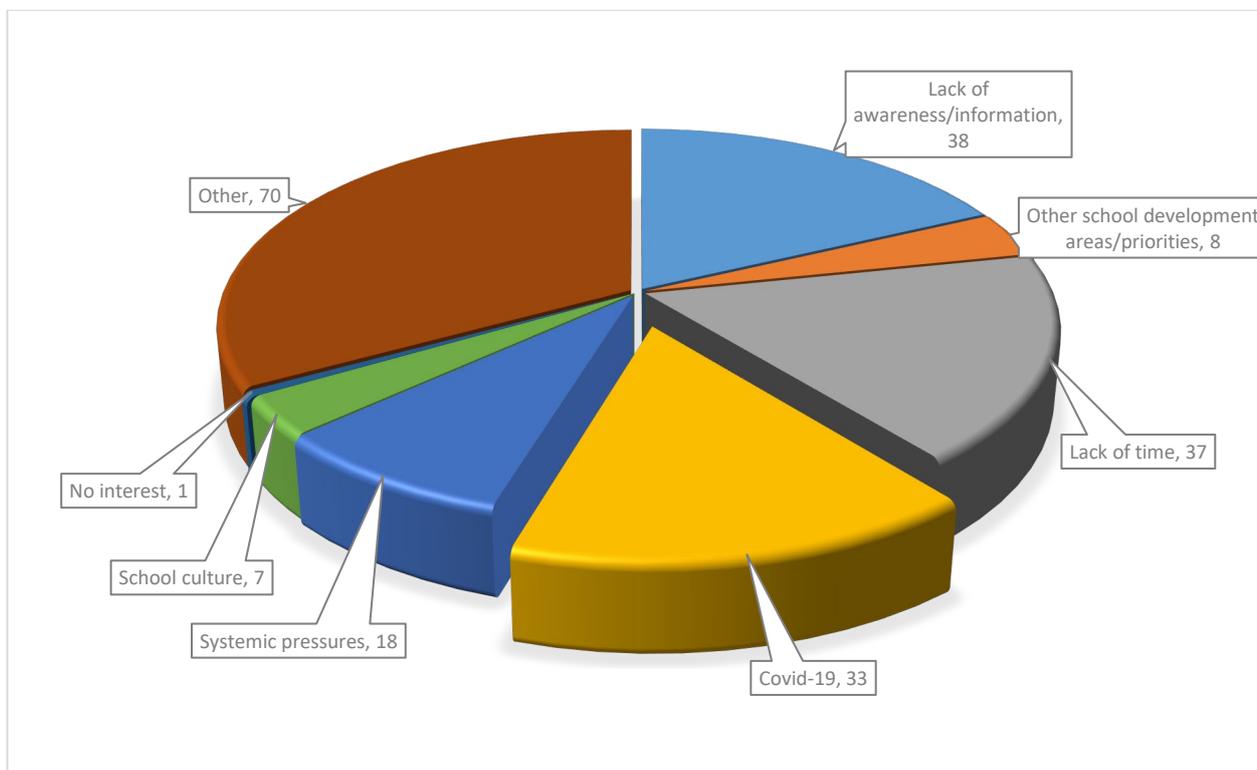


Figure 8, Reasons why Post-Primary schools did not engage in Creative Youth programmes.

## Creative Youth challenges

While schools continue to be the best place for providing young people access to creativity and the arts under the Creative Youth Plan, they reported many challenges. These are captured in Table 2 below.

Main Barriers to Creative Practice in Schools		
Barriers	Primary/Special Schools	Post-Primary
Lack of time	71.62%	77.69%
Curriculum overload	73.27%	63.85%
Lack of funding	62.71%	59.23%
Systemic pressure - SEN supports, sub-cover, release time	53.47%	46.15%
Increased paperwork	42.90%	49.23%
Lack of training / CPD	47.85%	43.08%

Lack of awareness of creative initiative opportunities	34.98%	50.00%
Lack of confidence	36.63%	26.15%
School facilities /space	26.73%	33.85%
School culture	8.58%	15.38%
Broadband	13.86%	12.31%
Lack of ICT Skills	11.22%	13.08%
Communication issues within the school	4.95%	6.92%
Other	5.61%	10.00%

Table 2, The main barriers to creative practice in schools.

There appears to be consistency in the main priorities across primary and post-primary schools in terms of lack of time, curriculum overload and lack of funding. Throughout the consultation process, many participants suggested a review of some aspects of the Creative Youth plan that may need to be revamped or reconsidered. Particular consideration needs to be given to the application process and the additional administration required at school level, specifically the range of child welfare and protection requirements involved.

## Curriculum overload

Curriculum overload is reported as an issue in both primary and post-primary schools. Primary schools in particular reported some frustration with trying to find the time within the school timetable to accommodate Creative Youth activities and these are captured in Figure 9 below.

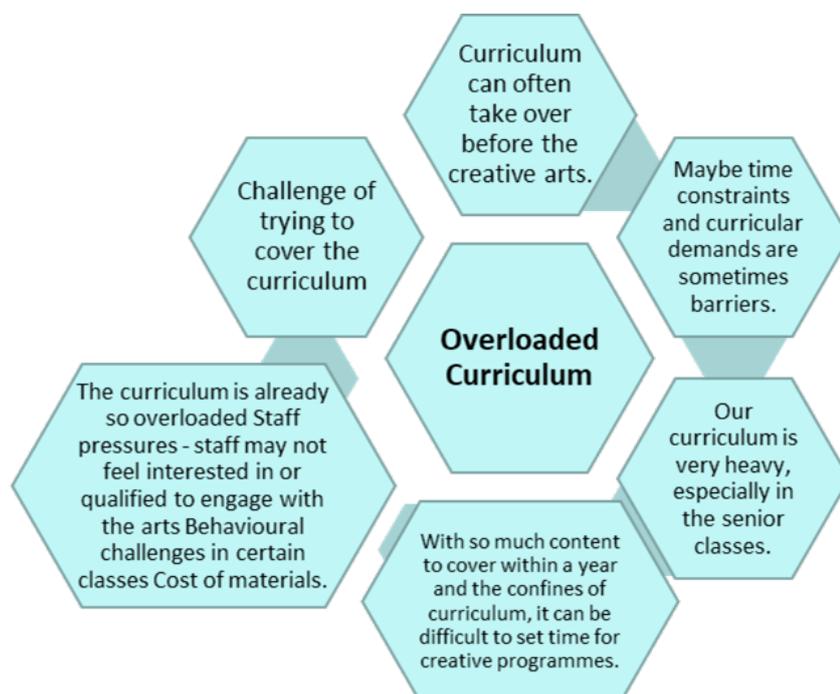


Figure 9, Feedback from primary schools regarding the overloaded curriculum

## Administrative overhead

Many schools referred to the extra administrative work involved in the application and reporting process for Creative Youth projects in their schools. Many principals in particular, would like to see the paperwork simplified and streamlined as they are under severe time pressure.

*However, Creative Schools has a lot of arduous paperwork, time-consuming for busy schools. As a teaching principal, I have talked to others in the Creative schools' project and the number of meetings and form filling is not worth the amount of time a teaching principal has to put in. Arduous, unwieldy application and evidencing through reporting and paperwork. Let's not ruin it with unnecessary complication and lack of clarity.*

*Primary School*

Some schools reported frustration with the application process, particularly for Creative Schools and Creative Clusters.

*I would like to make the point that there is no transparency in the selection criteria for Creative Schools or Creative Clusters. Remember, the process of applying for these programmes is quite onerous and time-consuming, yet there is never any guarantee of being accepted. Most schools would love these opportunities but the process of getting there is not easy. I think more schools would engage if they had more of a guarantee of availability.*

*Primary School*

In the main, these schools submitted unsuccessful applications and they would like more transparency around the application process. They would like to see greater transparency about why schools were unsuccessful.

## Teacher substitution

Schools also reported issues associated with the availability of substitute teachers. In many cases, planned activities could not go ahead because teachers could not be released as the school could not get a substitute teacher to cover their school duties. Principals are conscious of not adding to the workload of teachers, and therefore, this is a potential threat to the project.

*Until all issues relating to the availability of substitute teachers are addressed nationally it is not possible to add to the workload of teachers, nor make them available for other projects or CPD.*

*Post-Primary School*

## Covid-19 restrictions

Schools also reported that Covid-19 restrictions have had a major impact on planned Creative Youth activities. In many cases, activities have had to be rescheduled or cancelled, as no visitors could visit the schools.

*Schools are struggling with so much as we come out of the pandemic. We are trying to make up for learning loss and trying to re-establish structures and routines for students. Primary School*

Schools did however try to improvise by moving some activities outdoors. They also embraced technologies such as Zoom to interact with artists and used video instead of in-person performances.

*We were in the middle of our Creative Schools Programme when the Covid-19 lockdown occurred. We adapted by lengthening the timelines, using outdoor space and re-calibrating our projects to be achievable under the regulations at the time. We had to curtail/cancel a number of planned off-site visits. Our planned visits to the school were re-scheduled and adapted. Primary School*

## Time management and teacher expectations

Most teachers prefer to have a partially finished, if not fully finished product, by the end of a Creative Youth session. However, many programmes focus on the process which sometimes means teachers feel there is little 'progress' being made.

## Other challenges

In addition to the issues outlined above, the schools also identified the following challenges. These ranged from lack of time for planning to lack of creative spaces and facilities for creative initiatives.

- Lack of time for planning
- Lack of funding
- Increased paperwork
- Lack of training / CPD
- Little opportunity to share good/best practice

- Curriculum overload
- Lack of awareness of creative initiative opportunities
- Systemic pressures
- Lack of suitable school facilities /space for creative initiatives

## Creative Youth Initiatives

Creative Clusters, Creative Schools and BLAST, along with the Teacher-Artist Partnership & Residency Programme, Arts in Junior Cycle and NAPD Creative Engagement, are positive examples of initiatives that showcase the impact of creativity on children and young people's learning, development and wellbeing in the formal school setting.

*As a school we have hugely benefitted from participation in a number of programmes involving a wide range of 'artists'. They have brought their skills, energy, motivation and processes into the school for all members of the school community, not just the students. The partnership relationship between the education professional and the artist has been key to the success of the programme. Teachers can teach creative skills, but the passion that artist bring and the positive sense the children derive from working beside a real life 'artist' is very powerful. The whole school community benefits from these programmes and interactions*

*Primary School*

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the feedback provided by schools relating to their engagement with specific Creative Youth programmes. In general, there was strong approval for the initiatives which have resulted in very positive experiences for both teachers and students. Many also noted that collaboration with creative practitioners has inspired further creative development in schools and that Creative Youth is helping position creativity and learning at the centre of school life.

*The Creative Youth programmes can open up new avenues of engagement and learning. The students benefit from extra resources and meet artists and creatives outside the school setting through Creative Clusters. It allows the students to be creative and nourishes their creative growth. Great initiative which enables Primary and Post Primary schools to work together in the interest of students – greater understanding of schools.*

*Post-Primary School*

## Creative Clusters

Participating in Creative Clusters appears to have been one of the most successful initiatives of Creative Youth 2017-2022. A Creative Cluster consists of between 3 and 5 schools collaborating on the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of an innovative arts and creative learning project. The project should support the participating schools in addressing a common

issue or challenge, identified by that Cluster. The Creative Cluster initiative is managed by the network of 21 full-time Education Centres and is nationally coordinated by the Department of Education through the national administrative base in Tralee Education Centre.

*Creative Clusters allowed us to improve collaborative practice for staff and students in and between schools.*

*Post-Primary School*

Typically, Creative Clusters include schools at different stages of their journey in using creativity in the classroom. Creative Clusters ties into all other DoE Policies and strategies including SSE, Digital, Wellbeing, DEIS, Languages, ESD etc.

*Staff benefit from collaborative work, creatively and imaginatively developing in a professional manner. As we are situated in a creative and artistic town there is a wealth of talent to nurture if given the opportunity.*

*Post-Primary School*

Teachers learned to take risks and to appreciate the value of making mistakes and learning from them. Their understanding of creativity broadened well beyond the arts to include all subjects and everyday activities, and to include creative processes.

*There are a huge number of advantages in these programmes for students, staff, the whole school community, artists, and arts organisations. Opportunities to learn in different ways, have fun, explore, imagine, collaborate, think outside the box, go wild in a good way, build relationships, get different viewpoints, see through an artistic lens, stop seeing failure & see creative exploration, creative safe places, confidence building, pressure off students, students & teachers really enjoying arts learning, support for Teachers & students, enhancing curriculum development, focussing on being creative in many ways, opportunities for students to engage with the arts in a fun and inspirational way, respect and understanding of the important role of artists and the arts in the school community.*

*Post-Primary School*

However, some schools reported frustration in applying for inclusion in the Creative Clusters Programme and it was suggested that the number of Creative Clusters should be increased to meet increasing demands from schools.

## Teacher Artist Partnership

The Teacher/Artist Partnership (TAP) CPD summer course and residency programme is an arts-in-education initiative in which artists train to work in partnership with teachers. The TAP Summer Courses are coordinated and delivered through the network of the 21 full-time Education Centres and take place in either July or August each year. TAP is nationally coordinated by the Department of Education through the National Administrative base in Tralee Education Centre. Each course involves 20 teachers and 4 professional artists and is delivered by trained Teacher Artist Lead Facilitator Pairs. The initiative also includes funded Artist in Residency opportunities in which participating teachers and artists work together in collaboration in the school during the following academic year. Schools have reported a high level of satisfaction with the programme.

Many schools commented on the value of the partnerships to both students and staff. Using the expertise of artists in the local community strengthens the reciprocal relationship between school and community. Schools also focussed on the importance of learner engagement through creative, fun and hands-on learning.

*TAP and BLAST provided staff and students with the unique opportunity to work collaboratively with external artists who are trained in partnership working with teachers. The pupils really engaged in creative and critical thinking, as they developed so many skills, whilst working collaboratively. These are excellent avenues for teachers to participate in CPD also.*

*Primary School*

Feedback from the schools' survey highlights the many benefits for participating schools. These are outlined in Figure 10 below.

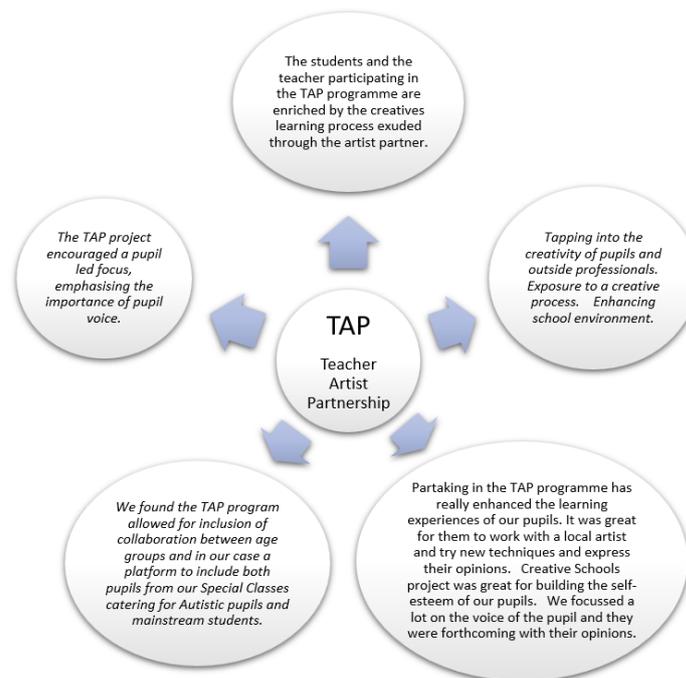


Figure 10, Advantages - Teacher Artist Partnership (TAP)

The consultation has highlighted the importance of CPD for teachers, as well as for artists working in partnership with schools, as being crucial to the long-term success and sustainability of the overall Creative Youth plan. In order to achieve the long-term objective of cultural and creative education, it will be necessary to build a critical mass of education and arts professionals who are well versed in the theoretical frameworks of arts and creativity education and equipped with the skills and techniques for delivering such programmes.

- Continuation and enhancement of the Teacher Artist Partnership CPD as a Model for teacher Continuous Professional Development.
- It is also proposed that the TAP model which has been proven to be successful at a local, national and now international level be expanded into other broader areas of creativity.
- Retention of EPV days for Teacher CPD at Primary level.
- The extension of TAP to include creative activities (and practitioners) beyond the arts.

## Creative Schools

It was widely recognised that the Creative Schools programme has been well received in schools. It had a wide reach and covered both Primary and Post Primary schools under one programme for the first time ever. The initiative aims to understand, develop and celebrate the arts and creativity in schools. The initiative will support schools to develop and begin to implement their own Creative School plan and it will develop and strengthen the relationships between schools and the broader cultural and community infrastructure within which they operate.

*I've been teaching for eighteen years and these are wonderful initiatives, really exciting developments and we are moving in the right direction. I love that since we have been part of the Creative Schools Programme, our children look at creativity in projects and approach it as a key criteria - this is amazing and a great development. We are definitely on the right track, it just would be great to simplify the approach – thanks*

*Primary School*

It was noted that Creative Schools is artist led and this has been important in elevating the profile of the arts in many schools. The view was shared that although the arts are already part of the Primary School curriculum, Creative Schools has given extra impetus to the importance of the arts and creativity at primary level. While many respondents reported that the initiative was well received, the paperwork attached to the Creative Schools Programme, both in terms of the application process and project reporting, requirements was referenced by many schools and stakeholders as being arduous.

*Building links, contacts and relationships with outside agencies and professionals and a network of contacts for assisting with CPD and delivery of the visual arts curriculum.*

*Primary School*

Schools highlighted the positive impact that Creative Schools has played in encouraging and embedding creativity across all subject areas.

*Creativity across all subject areas, especially the Creative Schools programme.  
Post-Primary School*

However, many schools voiced concern about the administrative work involved in applying for and running Creative Schools as it is seen as a time-consuming process in terms of the organisation and reporting of project activities.

*I agree with creativity being put at the centre of education. I think it is a healthy, wonderful approach. However, Creative Schools has a lot of arduous paperwork, time-consuming for busy schools. As a teaching principal, I have talked to others in the Creative schools' project and the number of meetings and form filling is not worth the amount of time a teaching principal has to put in. Arduous, unwieldy application and evidencing through reporting and paperwork. Let's not ruin it with unnecessary complication and lack of clarity.*

*Primary School*

Schools also acknowledged that teachers had to do a lot of this outside of school time. They would like to see the administrative aspects being simplified or additional resources provided to alleviate the extra burden in the form of substitute cover or additional administrative hours.

*Creative Schools application was way too time-consuming. The Creative Associate played a huge role in ensuring Teachers and Artists understood where each other was coming from and helped build good relationships with artists, arts organisations, arts venues and made sure that students' voices were heard and consulted in a meaningful way. Too much admin work for schools in Creative Schools for a small amount of money.*

*Primary School*

The role of the coordinating teacher was also highlighted by some principals. In many cases, they are relying on the goodwill of an enthusiastic teacher to deliver the programme.

*It can bring huge pressure on the enthusiastic coordinator in the school. Our experience of Creative Schools is that it facilitated a wonderful process of developing ideas and potential initiatives, but that practical support fell away when it was most needed, leaving the school's Creative Schools Coordinator to liaise with outside artists, arrange workshops with other teachers and students, work with school caretakers, and to manage funding.*

*Primary School*

## BLAST

The Arts-in-Education BLAST Residency Programme was launched in 2021 to provide up to 489 new Arts-in-Education Residencies in both primary and post-primary schools each year. Similar to TAP, BLAST is being coordinated through the network of 21 full-time Education Centres. It is also nationally coordinated by the Department of Education through the National Administrative base in Tralee Education Centre.

Schools that have participated in BLAST report a high level of satisfaction and have welcomed the opportunity to work with a professional artist on creative projects and place a high value on the collaborative partnership approach between the creative practitioners and teachers.

*The BLAST project has totally changed the perspective of the school staff regarding the importance of creativity and creating opportunities for creativity in primary schools. It has proved the richest opportunity for cross-curricular learning in a fun, relaxed and interactive environment. It has greatly increased confidence in pupils and has strongly developed their thinking skills and flexibility.*

*Primary School*

Key to such partnerships has been the opportunity for students to see artists working on-site and to see their collaborative work develop and progress from idea to realisation.

*Huge benefits to children's wellbeing, especially after the past couple of years with Covid related school closures. Taking part in the BLAST programme has given a real burst of energy to children and staff alike. It has given children the opportunity to extend their interests and sample new dance forms in our school. They have loved every minute of it and are so excited to participate and engage in what is being taught each week. Children from our ASD classes have been able to reintegrate with their peers for elements of it which have also been fantastic for them. Similarly, teachers have found it very beneficial for their own CPD.*

*Primary School*

Many of the respondents indicated that they would welcome the retention and further expansion of the BLAST initiative to give schools an opportunity to work with artists who have been trained to work in partnership with teachers.

*BLAST brought creativity alive in the school, wellbeing and positivity to learning, new ways of learning and broadens students' experiences. Develop students' skills engaging with creative professionals. Increases awareness of the value of creativity and its importance in supporting the development of student key skills.*

*Post-Primary School*

There is a growing consensus that the artists need to have been trained and have engaged in school residencies under the Teacher-Artist Partnership CPD and Residency initiative if they are to be eligible for the Register of Approved Artists for BLAST. Where artists have not been trained to work in partnership with teachers the impact and success of such initiatives have not proven to be as successful or impactful in schools.

*Experiences where they meet people who are passionate about what they do but also share the process of their craft. We participated in the BLAST residency we hoped that it would be an equaliser for all our third-year students. Those who might not consider themselves writers were given time, encouragement, and support to write.*

*Post-Primary School*

Furthermore, some noted that the experience also provided opportunities for students to consider creativity related careers and third-level options, thus opening their minds to creative careers.

*We participated in the BLAST programme, and it helped to develop creativity and promote arts within our school and was so beneficial. This will help engage students and make them aware of other career opportunities in a creative setting. They can learn new skills and participate in a programme that promotes learning and also participation alongside their peers.*

*Post-Primary School*

## Arts in Junior Cycle

Arts in Junior Cycle consists of a series of professional development experiences for teachers to support student engagement with the arts at Junior Cycle level. The initiative is administered through Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) and Monaghan Education Centre. The vision of Arts in Junior Cycle is for all Junior Cycle teachers to value, enjoy and be enriched by the arts and to see the arts as integral to learning. JCT as co-designed and developed learner-centred Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) experiences for teachers of Junior Cycle in collaboration with professional creative practitioners and arts organisations.

This has led to the provision of supports and experiences that meet teachers' needs and interests from one-off workshops, workshop series, communities of practice, podcasts and films. These experiences have been positively received by schools and have provided teachers with the opportunity to engage in hands-on CPD based on learner-centred and creative teaching methodologies, content knowledge and alternative viewpoints or perspectives from their own.

Junior Cycle workshops/CPD for teachers enhanced engagement with all students, enhanced teaching and learning methodologies, collaboration, and reignites a passion for teaching & learning.

*Post-Primary School*

Further development of the Arts in Junior Cycle model across the second-level system offers an opportunity to expand support for teachers to value the arts and creativity, support their wellbeing, empower them to be creative practitioners and practice learner-centred methodologies in the classroom. Some consideration needs to be given to how artists/creatives and arts organisations are supported and provided with CPD to assist them in understanding curricular reform, collaboration and how educational systems work, particularly at post-primary level.

*Demonstrating viable careers within the arts to students. Modelling collaboration between artists and teachers. Encouraging diverse representations of ideas and challenging the status quo.*

*Post-Primary School*

## Arts in Education Portal

The ethos for the Arts in Education Portal is about building a community of practice within arts, creativity and education, and providing a space where both artists and teachers can be supported and inspired. There is a strong view that Arts in Education is providing a centralised place for schools that lists key resources for schools, such as lists of museums, arts centres, support and funding links, so as to make it easier for leaders and teachers to tap into these existing supports, form partnerships and ultimately secure funding. It also provides a platform where good collaborative practice in arts-in-education and arts education will be supported, developed and enhanced.

Stakeholders suggested that the Arts in Education Portal should be further developed and promoted as a centralised space so that it maps all aspects of arts in education in Ireland. This will require further funding so that it can be further enhanced, developed and advertised as a centralised space for arts and creativity in education in Ireland.

## NAPD Creative Engagement

The National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) supported creativity in schools for many years prior to Creative Ireland and the NAPD Creative Engagement Programme now operates under the umbrella of the Creative Youth. Through the programme, local artists or arts groups come to the school and work with the students on collaborative projects that complement curricular learning in the arts, culture and heritage. This partnership has mutual benefits to both artist and school.

*NAPD Creative Engagement facilitated the engagement of students in creative activities and brought out talents that are sometimes not seen in the day-to-day life of the school.*

*Post-Primary School*

Schools commented that the Creative Engagement Programme allowed them to provide opportunities for their students that they might not experience outside of school. Schools specifically remarked in particular that it gives students opportunities to interact on a one-to-one basis with creative practitioners and that it has widened their career perspectives.

*It brings a certain excitement/difference to the student engagement - a different approach. It also connects the students with the fact that there are people earning a living and being a creative person as a job - very supportive to the 'creatives' in the class when so often they hear that science & engineering is what is valued in the workplace. NAPD Creative Engagement was a great experience.*

*Post-Primary School*

## Creative Youth Partnerships

The Creative Ireland Programme has supported the piloting of Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYPs) through the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Respondents have noted the important role that the LCYPs have played in encouraging local partnerships that foster and encourage creativity for the hardest to reach young people. The focus is on information sharing and collaboration between the host ETB, local authorities, the non-formal education sector, family support services and youth services. This has enabled more targeted delivery in direct provision settings; homeless settings; traveller and youth work settings; and marginalised Family Resource Centre networks. It has also led to the development of youth theatre and the advancement of digital creativity among young people in rural settings.

A recurring view was that the Local Creative Youth Partnership Programme moves out of the pilot phase so that it becomes a mainstream activity across ETB settings. This will require an enhanced and ring-fenced budget for LCYPs. The view was also shared that the Creative Youth Plan needs to integrate the principles of youth participation and youth voice, as exemplified by LCYP, across all its activities.

It was also highlighted that Youthreach should be included in a number of Creative Youth initiatives and not just in the Creative Schools and Creative Clusters projects.

*Youthreach students often feel marginalised from their peers as a result of leaving school. Expanding the initiatives to take in YR programme may go some way to address this. Also, more often than not YR students are more engaged in practical hands-on education rather than theory.*

*ETB*

## Other initiatives

Throughout the consultation and feedback from schools, a number of initiatives in schools were mentioned that come under the arts and creative banner outside of the Creative Youth Plan.

These include:

- ALA:AO Artist in Schools scheme
- Ark Outreach Programme
- ARTiculation
- Branar Galway
- Children Books Ireland book bursaries
- CRAFTed
- Creative Engagement
- Creativity in the Classroom - Forest School
- DCC Visual Thinking in Arts Programme
- Griffith College Drama teacher in residence
- Embrace
- Erasmus+ Creative mobility
- FÍS
- Five Lamps Arts Festival
- Hugh Lane Gallery Artist in Residence
- Local Art Galleries
- Living Arts
- Music Generation
- Music Generation Ireland Choral Project
- National Gallery of Ireland Artist workshops
- NCAD student placement
- Peace Project IV
- Per Cent for Art
- Poetry Ireland
- Portal Documentation Awards
- Story Seed (Fighting Words)
- The Pushkin Project
- Tulca
- VEX coding and robot building

## Themes Emerging from the Consultation

Through the consultative process, we have identified a number of important themes which have emerged. This section explores these themes and summarises the observations and suggestions provided by stakeholders through their submission and focus group deliberations. Where appropriate, these are interlinked with feedback and commentary from the school surveys.

### Creativity is a key pillar of our education system

Creative initiatives can stimulate the development of a wide range of creative, innovative and collaborative skills that are in demand in the 21st century workplace. Future curriculum development should prioritise how creativity can complement every subject so that creative approaches and practices can be embedded in all aspects of teaching and learning.

The view was shared that individual arts projects, although well intentioned, will not in and of themselves embed creativity in schools. It is important that Creative Youth maintains strong synergies between the various initiatives being offered to schools and that the specific programmes are implemented in a coordinated way at school level.

It is also important that connections are developed with the draft Roadmap for the Creative Industries, in consultation with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, focusing on design-based, digital creative and content creation industries.

### Defining creativity in the Irish education context

It is timely to look at how we broadly define creativity across the Irish educational context without being prescriptive. Many respondents highlighted the need for continued work in placing creativity at the centre of learning in schools. The need to instil a creativity mindset, as a way of being and a process rather than seeing it as something additional (particularly at Senior Cycle), was a recurring theme across the focus group consultations.

The next Creative Ireland and Creative Youth Plan should support the promotion and prioritisation of a broader understanding of creative expression. This should include discussions across all education settings on the role and importance of creativity to our wellbeing thus enabling all our people to flourish.

The view was also shared that the new Creative Youth plan should adopt the *Arts in Education Charter* definition of creativity, as it is a more accurate reflection of what schools are trying to achieve through participation in these programmes.

*The Arts in Education Charter and its aims are in line with Creative Ireland and Creative Youth and even in some circumstances outshine them. One example of this might be found in how each policy defines creativity. The Charter states: "We accept that creativity is neither a skill nor a stand-alone intellectual process. It is an aptitude whose presence (or absence) has profound implications for personal wellbeing and is*

*in line with the mission statement of the Department of Education. While the arts have no monopoly on creativity, they foster it particularly well.” This language is clear, concise and summarises the Charter’s view on the importance of creativity within education.*

*Irish Secondary Students Union (ISSU)*

## **Fostering a creative culture in schools**

There was a strong recognition that there is a creative culture in every school, but every school is different in how it approaches creativity. In schools where such a strong creative culture exists, they tend to become more actively involved in Creative Youth programmes. The view was shared that every school should be required to develop a comprehensive creative/arts programme in each year so that all students have opportunities to participate in a range of creative opportunities.

Many respondents highlighted the importance of developing a creative mindset among teachers, students and the wider school community. This includes the development of skills such as creativity, critical thinking and problem solving so that curiosity and innovation are nurtured through all aspects of school.

*For our school Creative Clusters allowed us to look at creativity in our school and identify areas in which we needed some extra support. It also allowed for curriculum development and staff CPD in areas that staff members felt that they needed extra support in.*

*Post-Primary School*

A number of submissions noted that the Inspectorate needs to more openly acknowledge creativity in the classroom and across schools during inspections. The Inspectorate may require CPD in recognising and acknowledging creativity throughout a school. Such an approach could encourage and support schools on their creative journeys.

*I think the inspectorate should have a role also. Creativity Policies could be developed by schools. I think at the societal level, we have a limited understanding and valuing of education - one which is academic and values memorisation skills and exam prep over skilled teaching and higher-order learning. This puts pressure on schools and school leaders. We need to educate the public as we educate teachers and school leaders as to the value of providing opportunities to enhance student creativity in schools.*

*Post-Primary School*

Others noted that creativity needs to be recognised, acknowledged and celebrated at all levels, from young people to teachers, principals and schools themselves. This could be done through

formal and informal mechanisms such as through an awards programme, providing digital badges to schools or accreditation for teachers and learners.

*As part of our Creative Schools research, we discovered that concepts of creativity were never mentioned in the teacher training or CPD of the vast majority of teachers, outside Art, Music and some English teachers. Students reported that their opportunities to be creative in school were mainly extra-curricular, arts subjects, Junior Cycle project work, and the Transition Year programme. Students felt that once the 'serious work' of fifth and sixth year came along, there was no time for creativity. I hope that the new senior cycle programme embeds and rewards creativity as a key skill.*

*Post-Primary School*

The view was shared that the central role that schools and teachers have in ensuring that all young people can be guaranteed access to creativity should be strongly acknowledged in the Creative Youth plan 2023-2027.

## **Fostering creative collaboration**

There is a strong sense of partnership between the creative practitioners, teachers and learners and this has enabled a sharing of skills and mindsets through work with children and the adults who support them. The mutual respect between creative practitioners, teachers and learners has been important in the successes achieved so far. This collaboration is helping teachers to understand what the design process involves and provides opportunities for teachers to engage with the arts.

In Creative Youth 2023-2027 there should be an acknowledgement of, and provision for, the central role that schools and teachers have in ensuring that all young people can be guaranteed access to creativity. Provision for harnessing the skills of teachers (and other educators), who are also skilled creative practitioners to mediate inter-agency collaborations and need to have a strong voice in the design of initiatives, are required to ensure that young people develop their creativity from year to year, as they progress through the education system, and to provide CPD for other teachers and for creative practitioners working in, and with schools.

The Creative Youth plan should reconsider the current consideration that most of the initiatives available to schools focus on creative programmes for young people that involve working directly with artists. In expanding the range of projects, it might be better to consider the identity of teachers as creatives and educators in the design of Creative Youth initiatives. This could involve a more nuanced focus on supporting teacher creativity and a focus on how the teacher's identity, as a creative person, links back to the classroom, to their teaching and wellbeing – which will embed creativity in and leave a legacy in schools.

There is no doubt that the Creative Clusters have been instrumental in encouraging creative collaboration among staff in their own schools and between schools.

*Staff observations include the high quality of the interactions with children and the expectation of success. We are very proud of how we developed as a staff, working collaboratively in advising each other and searching for the student voice.*

*Primary School*

Partnership and collaboration at every level are crucial to ensure the success of creativity in schools. Schools should be supported to build on existing collaborations and foster new partnerships, by providing access to adequate funding to extend residencies in schools with trained artists and creatives and enable access to experts in the field, so they can develop and embed creativity in the range of projects.

*Great opportunities for learner experiences in relation to the area chosen. Great opportunities for staff CPD. Great opportunities for the school to form relationships with other organisations.*

*Primary School*

## **Teacher CPD is vital to the successful implementation & embedding of creativity**

Many contributors highlighted that professional development and planning time is fundamental to the success and embedding of creativity in schools. Further school support and CPD are required to develop the creative skills of teachers and SNAs working with a variety of professional partners.

*For our school it allowed us to look at creativity in our school and identify areas in which we needed some extra support. It also allowed for curriculum development and staff CPD in areas that staff members felt that they needed extra support in.*

*Primary School*

Teacher artist partnerships are critically important in providing opportunities for teachers to work with creative practitioners in schools. It was felt that the skills of teachers (and other educators) who are also skilled creative practitioners could be further developed and utilised to mediate inter-agency collaborations. This would help to ensure that young people develop their creativity from year to year as they progress through the education system.

*Further CPD training for staff/whole staff is required in order for a creative culture to be embedded into schools as classroom teachers are central to implementing a creative culture of learning and teaching.*

*Post-Primary School*

Initial teacher education has an important role to play in encouraging newly qualified teachers to harness their own creative talents for the benefit of learners.

*I think CPD for school leaders and teachers to show the benefits of enhancing student creativity is essential. I think each school is different and the programmes should be co-created with school staff but should cover the full range of artforms. Programmes could be developed across the art forms which have a built-in capacity to be augmented to suit the school context.*

*Post-Primary School*

## **CPD for Creative Practitioners is also vital**

Feedback from the consultations indicates that local artists, creatives, cultural and heritage organisations and community groups have all played a vital role in developing Creative Youth programmes in schools. In the majority of cases, there has been a strong working relationship between the creative practitioners and teachers, and this has led to positive creative and innovative experiences for young people in schools.

However, it is important that artists are provided opportunities to develop their skills and experience of working in educational settings, so they are empowered to develop their artistic work in a collaborative and supportive environment. Many expressed the view that consideration needs to be given to how artists/creatives/arts organisations are supported and provided with CPD, so they better understand the education system, what is in the curriculum, and how schools work.

## **Role of the Education Centre Network**

The success of the Creative Clusters as a model for teacher CPD was facilitated by the leadership and administrative support provided at a local level by Education Support Centres of Ireland (ESCI), a national network of 21 local Education Support Centres which coordinates teacher support and CPD at a local level throughout Ireland.

A number of contributors and schools have acknowledged the key role the Education Centres have played in reducing the administrative and financial management burden for schools. There was a recognition that the network of Education Centres should be harnessed and funded more fully across the system in terms of streamlining Creative Youth initiatives to schools.

## School leadership is key to fostering creativity

Throughout the consultation, there was a recognition that school leadership is a key to fostering creativity across the school and integrating the provision of creative activities for learners. The proactive role of the principal has been a key factor in schools which have engaged with Creative Youth initiatives.

While the participation of some schools was driven by individual teachers, participation should not have to depend on whether there is an interested teacher to initiate and drive creative initiatives.

It is important that school leaders provide opportunities to empower all school staff to be creative in their work with children through CPD. Providing time for teachers to develop their own skills and to develop creative activities is also seen as an important factor in successful participation and in encouraging staff to embed creativity within and across the curriculum.

## Curriculum and assessment considerations

There was a strong view that the subject structure of the school curriculum presents a barrier to creativity in itself. Creativity by its very nature is not confined to specific subjects and involves a cross-curricular and cross-disciplinary approach. This approach is more conducive to the early years and primary education. At post-primary, it is important to focus on where there are opportunities for more flexibility and creative partnership can be explored through programmes such as Junior Cycle short courses, Transition Year programmes and Leaving Cert Applied.

*Students develop creative thinking skills and awareness. Form confidence and build relationships and connections with peers, staff and outside agencies. Widen their views of life. I have found students who have participated in creative initiatives have gone on to do better in exams and are more successful in college. Creative youth programs also reach more students - who might not have the opportunity or didn't take a creative subject.*

*Post-Primary School*

There was a recognition that future curriculum development teams should prioritise how creativity and the arts should complement every subject so that creative approaches and practices can be embedded in all aspects of teaching and learning.

It was also noted that we need to encourage diverse forms of assessment that reflect both the varied creative practice in schools and the diverse forms of creative expression that will result from a more flexible and creativity-focussed curricular approach.

Some participants felt there is a need to develop the connections between the coding programme in Primary, the Junior Cycle coding short course and Computer Science at Leaving Certificate as these present great opportunities for students and their teachers to provide coordinated access to creative technologies for students.

The proposed changes to the Leaving Certificate provide opportunities to embed creativity at Senior Cycle. The proposed Leaving Certificate subject *Drama, Film and Theatre Studies* could further open up youth theatre to students. The proposed subject *Climate Action and Sustainable Development* ties in with Creative Climate Action and Sustainability. It would be important that the possibilities around this work be fully considered when these new subjects are being developed.

*The promotion and facilitation of student voice, student participation, and student leadership in our school community. Aesthetically, a positive promotional opportunity for our school as the proposed area is close to the newly developed viaduct. The development of community spirit and celebration of local skills. The enhancement and support of cross-curricular teaching and the development of creative teaching.*

*Post-Primary School*

## **Creativity starts in Early Childhood settings**

Early childcare settings are seen as very important in developing a creative mindset in young children and their parents. Children in early childcare settings are naturally curious and creative. Creativity in the Early Years sector is supported through the national practice frameworks, *Síolta* and *Aistear*. The emphasis is on promoting a holistic approach to encouraging and supporting creativity, imagination and individual expression in young children.

The draft Principles for the Facilitation of the Arts in Promoting Play and Creativity in Early Learning and Care that are currently being developed around Early Childhood are proposed to further underpin young children's quality engagement with the arts in Early Childhood settings.

Feedback from the consultations indicates that there is further opportunity to address access to creativity in the after-school space, where children and young people can meet, engage and lead out on creative pursuits that are informal, self-directed, and that are child and youth voice led.

Views were expressed that while creativity is well supported in early childcare and at primary level, the challenge isn't about developing creativity, rather it is about ensuring that the growth of creative thought and expression isn't dampened as children move through the education system.

## **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

The new Creative Youth plan should include, as a priority, the identification of gaps in the provision of creative practice in schools and in community settings and strive to ensure equity in reaching the most disadvantaged in society by targeting resources to those areas in which equality of opportunity for young people is not provided or equal. This could be, for example, in school settings where priorities lie elsewhere.

Many schools also reported student wellbeing as a key benefit of their involvement in Creative Youth.

*The promotion of the Arts among the students and the community is beneficial. It creates awareness and interest in an area as well as helping wellbeing.*

*Post-Primary School*

Feedback from the consultations indicates that the Local Creative Youth Partnership Programme provides a mechanism for information sharing and collaboration among key players at a local level to provide targeted creative opportunities to the hardest to reach and marginalised young people. It is important that this programme moves out of its current pilot phase so that it becomes a mainstream function coordinated by the 16 Education and Training Boards.

## **Creativity and Special Education**

Pupils with special and additional needs thrive in a creative culture where they can develop their critical skills while enjoying the creative process. The development of partnerships between artists and arts organisations with special education teachers has brought new learning to schools especially when it focuses on the learning process and gathering student voice. Collaborations and partnerships between artists and teachers are powerful experiences where each can share their expertise in nurturing creativity in young people. It is important that the professional artist has an understanding of specific physical or learning disabilities, especially when working in a special school or class.

It was also noted that the July provision programme, which is run as an extension to a school's learning programme, could be used to provide out of school creative programmes, particularly for learners with disabilities. This could include creativity weeks in July focussing on specific skills learning for pupils with special or additional needs.

## **Creativity and STEM education**

There is a need to ensure that the Creative Youth plan recognises the strong linkages between creativity and STEM, particularly in fostering design, creativity and innovation. Many submissions refer to STEAM and would like to see the Arts fully integrated with the STEM subjects.

Views were expressed that the interlinkage between the STEM subject and the creative arts through STEAM initiatives is very important. This was exemplified by Creative Clusters in particular as it links to other policy areas including the Digital Strategy for Schools, STEM Education Policy, DEIS, Wellbeing Policy Statement and the Framework for Practice National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development.

## **Provision of creativity spaces in schools**

There was a recognition that young people need a creative environment in order to be creative. Many submissions noted that investment is required to provide suitable spaces, equipment and

teaching and learning resources. There was a strong message that continued investment will be required to successfully implement Creative Youth programmes, with more flexibility for schools on how the funding can be used so that it can encourage creativity, innovation and spontaneity. The recent funding to support school connectivity and digital learning has been welcomed in this context.

*We are currently creating our own Creative Learning Space - an open learning environment where the environment is built around the learning activities. This is our version of a Future Classroom Lab or TCD's Bridge 21. Microsoft is helping on the technology side to it.*

*Post-Primary School*

The view was shared that the Building Unit in the Department of Education should include provision for physical areas for the arts as part of the design of all new schools in line with the responsibility outlined in the Arts in Education Charter 2013.

The role of the school library as a hub for creativity was also noted. Views were expressed that future funding should prioritise provision to support schools' libraries, so as to ensure that the resources available to students are current, inclusive of and appropriate for the digital environment as well as being culturally inclusive and diverse, and reflective of the makeup of contemporary Ireland.

## **Creativity and public engagement**

Many respondents expressed the view that learning takes place first and foremost in the home. The role parents can play is vital in fostering creativity. However, many parents are unaware of the possibilities for providing creative opportunities for their children outside of the home or do not see the benefits of

Views were expressed that there is a need for a communication strategy to connect all areas of the Creative Youth plan so as to ensure the greatest involvement and contribution from the national network of organisations, creative practitioners, schools, parents and the wider community.

This communication strategy should engage with all layers in the education system, and also make efforts to connect the formal system with non-formal, informal, and community settings. The aim will be to develop effective communication at all levels where different initiatives and strands overlap and between other state and non-state providers of arts and creativity in education practices.

## **The need for further research**

It was widely reported that there is significant good practice already happening in schools and this, combined with the expertise of the Irish educational research community, should help to

inform any new creative interventions. Many responses referenced the need for ongoing research in order to establish a strong evidence-based approach to creativity in schools.

Many contributors believed that the Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027 needs to put more emphasis on embedding a research dimension in all Creative Youth initiatives from the outset, as well as alongside their development. Evaluation and research initiatives can be used to document excellence and to examine creative initiatives with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion and impact on young people's holistic development and general wellbeing.

The need to share existing examples of good professional practice in creativity education was also raised. At post-primary level, arts in education resources could be provided to exemplify best practice for specific subjects

This could also enable the development of more robust criteria for future funding of creative projects in schools. There were suggestions around using the recently developed OECD rubrics and ongoing evaluation of impact as a basis for future funded initiatives.

Research and evaluation could facilitate the development of resources that provide best practice examples of arts in education to inform practice. Future-proof the building and storing of Arts and Culture in Education Research Repository (ACERR) as part of the Digital Repository of Ireland's (DRI) databases to maintain an evidence-based approach to any and all future work in the area and make this research accessible to as wide an audience as possible (NCCA).

## Future possibilities

Many contributors believe that Creative Youth needs to reach every school so that every young person has the opportunity to engage in creative initiatives & artistic partnerships on a continuous basis.

*Creative in Schools and the retention, easy ability to continue to participate in Creative Clusters and Blast. These are important to the continued development of the student body and make sure there is not a stop and start feel to these initiatives. More local initiatives around sustainability like trashion fashion or the Relove Competition would be good also.*

*Post-Primary School*

Schools are not necessarily able to do this on their own and they would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with creative practitioners and to have an involvement in programmes such as Creative Clusters and BLAST. To this end, every school should be able to get support from a Creative Associate when needed.

*Creativity needs to be central to learning as it's the skill of the future. Artists view things differently hence partnerships with schools and artists are crucial to creative skills development, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation & wellbeing.*

*Post-Primary School*

Many other possibilities were mentioned by schools in relation to previous & future engagement in Creative Youth Initiatives. These are summarised here.

- **ARTiculation** is in its early stages in Ireland - Roches Court trust sponsor it. It helps students find and use their speaking voice but it's all about ART. Articulation is struggling and could do with being properly funded and supported.
- An **artist in residence** for the short-term programmes in **Youthreach** settings.
- Area of wellbeing and psychological support. For example, **Artist in Residence**, art therapists, and more drama in the curriculum.
- **Artist in residence** for a short project, Permanent structures like sculpture and murals, art project large scale to enhance student and staff wellbeing. Positive initiatives like clay therapy - lots of bonding needed for students as time needs to be made up.
- Artists/craft/designer in residence on an ongoing basis as it brings about collaborations with teachers and professional creatives and enriches student learning. this could support links with local artists/craft workers/designers etc. Also, annual funding given to the school to specifically fund creative initiatives, materials, workshops etc. (I think it would be important the evidence of how funds were used for the creative engagement should be required in order to ensure ongoing funding in the following academic years). Programme whereby creatives across a range of disciplines can be listed on a central database so the school can have access to a range of creative contacts in their local regions.
- As it's strongly encouraged that students engage with artists, this is now a huge part of the subject & very beneficial for both students and schools. Funding is very helpful as it's difficult otherwise for school & students to pay for the artist's time.
- **Arts in Junior Cycle** should include filmmaking because we've never made a film and pupils would learn so much from the process. Visual arts because we could enhance certain areas of the school while pupils learn skills and develop their creativity.
- **BLAST**, Art therapy and facilitation time for art teachers to be timetabled for students who need this type of work. Develop wellbeing and coping strategies through art.
- A programme that promotes the value of mindfulness and mindful thinking in promoting wellbeing & creative thinking. Creating confidence among young people that anyone can be creative.
- We are open to creatives of all types but would welcome working with writers/poets, filmmakers and sound artists. Of course, we would always like

to work with sculptors, artists and actors too. But for something really different we would love to work with a sound artist.

- A structure which allows paid cover for teachers as so much time is required to organise and implement courses and hoping to get **Creative Clusters**.
- **Creative Clusters** - there are two DEIS schools in close proximity to us. We try to foster a community of practice between the schools. It would benefit all students in these to schools to work collaboratively together and experience different school cultures and pedagogy.
- I would like to research more into the **Creative Schools** programme. I would like to find out what programmes would best suit the school and what they can offer to the students.
- Creativity across all subject areas, especially the **Creative Schools** programme. I myself am a creativity researcher and have proposed a programme for TY students yet sports and other areas are seen as more important.
- We would dearly love to become part of the **Creative Schools** Programme. We had already accepted the **Creative Cluster** this academic year and we could not do both. We're hoping next year to be successful in our application for Creative Schools.
- I would love to see **creative initiatives** maybe in simple film making projects or perhaps collaborative projects where a number a small schools could come together to undertake creative projects e.g., a contemporary children choir which would culminate in a community performance. Many small schools because of their multi-class structure and small staff, don't have the time, facilities, resources or expertise that larger schools have do a collaboration in **Creative Clusters** would be very rewarding.
- Children, especially those in small schools or those in DEIS rural school do not have the same access to a variety of teaching staff within the school or outside of the school.
- Visiting artist in the future **BLAST/Creative Clusters**. CPD Workshops for both staff and students – **NAPD Creative engagement** and **Arts in Junior Cycle**.

## Conclusions

Creative Youth has been well received by those schools that have participated in it to date and it has played an important role in developing a creative culture in these schools. It has had a positive impact in schools which has resulted in greater levels of partnership among children, teachers and creatives in school, across subject areas and in the wider community. This model is working well and is it respectful and effective in how it works in schools and with the wider community.

Initiatives such as Creative Clusters, Creative Schools, BLAST, Teacher-Artist Partnership CPD & Programme, Arts in Junior Cycle and NAPD Creative Engagement are positive examples of initiatives that provide opportunities for children and young people to experience the impact of creativity in their learning, while also impacting on their development and wellbeing in the formal school setting.

The Creative Youth Plan has provided important support to ensure young people are provided with opportunities to participate in creative initiatives. The Plan provides a structure and a vehicle for schools nationally to engage in a range of diverse creative programmes. The consultation phase has captured the central role that schools and teachers have in ensuring that all young people can be guaranteed access to creativity. For some, this may be one of the few parts of their lives where they have such opportunities. The consultations confirmed that Teacher Artist/Creative partnerships are critically important in providing opportunities for teachers to work with creative practitioners in school.

Participation in creative initiatives has the potential to stimulate the development of a wide range of creative, innovative and collaborative skills that are very much in demand in today's 21<sup>st</sup>-century workplaces. The world of work is seeking individuals who will actively engage in problem-solving and in finding creative solutions to the growing list of real-world problems.

There is a strong sense of partnership between the creative practitioners, teachers and learners and this has enabled a sharing of skills and mindsets through the work carried out with children and the adults who support them.

The mutual respect that exists between the creative practitioners, teachers and learners has been extremely important in the success achieved so far. This collaboration is helping teachers to understand what the design process involves, and it also provides opportunities for teachers to engage with creativity and the arts and for artists/creatives to learn about schools and the curriculum.

Furthermore, the consultation found that greater consideration could be given to teachers' identity as creatives in their own right. There is a need to develop a more nuanced focus on supporting teacher creativity and how a teacher's identity, as a creative person, links back to their work in the classroom, and to their wellbeing.

In Creative Youth 2023-2027 there should be an acknowledgement of, and provision for, the central role that schools and teachers have in ensuring that all young people can be guaranteed access to creativity. Provision for harnessing the skills of teachers (and other educators), who are also skilled creative practitioners to mediate inter-agency collaborations and need to have a strong voice in the design of initiatives, are required to ensure that young people develop their creativity from year to year, as they progress through the education system, and to provide CPD for other teachers and for creative practitioners working in, and with schools.

School leadership is key to fostering creativity across the school and in integrating the provision of creative activities for learners. The proactive role of the principal has been a key factor in schools that have engaged with Creative Youth initiatives to date. School participation shouldn't depend solely on whether there is an interested teacher to initiate and drive creative initiatives, it should be underpinned by strong leadership and commitment to creativity

Creativity is not exclusive and there should be a creative culture in every school. There is no one form of creative culture and the consultation phase recognizes that every school is different in how it approaches creativity and this should be captured and celebrated.

Individual arts projects each year, although well-intentioned, will not embed creativity in schools otherwise. Therefore, there is a need for projects and initiatives that are embedded into the school setting over time, so they grow and evolve with time.

While schools continue to be the best place for giving young people access to creativity and the arts under the Creative Youth Plan, schools have experienced a range of challenges, including the provision of time for planning and CPD; increased administration in applying for and implementing programmes; limited opportunity to share good/best practice; lack of suitable school facilities /space for creative initiatives, and a lack of awareness of creative programmes.

Pupils with special and additional needs thrive in a creative culture where they can develop critical skills while enjoying the creative process. The development of partnerships between artists and arts organisations with schools and special education teachers is key to ensuring such experiences are available to those with special and additional needs. Such targeted interventions have brought new learning to schools, especially when it focuses on the process and the gathering of the student voice.

There is significant good practice already happening in schools and this, combined with the expertise of the Irish educational research community, should help to inform any new interventions. The inclusion of a strong evidence base underpinning the Creative Youth initiatives would further strengthen the programmes. This could be achieved by incorporating a research dimension in all Creative Youth initiatives from the outset so that they could grow and develop over their lifecycle. Evaluation and research initiatives can be used to document excellence and to examine the impact of creative initiatives on issues such as equality, diversity and inclusion and on young people's holistic development and general wellbeing.

To conclude, Creative Youth has been well received and it is timely to build on the goodwill and positivity that it has garnered to date.

Furthermore, it is timely to look at how we broadly define creativity across the Irish educational context without being overly prescriptive, so that creativity becomes a key pillar of our education system. We need to instil a creativity mindset as a way of being and a process rather than seeing it as something additional and extra.

## Key recommendations

The consultation phase has identified the following key recommendations in relation to the next phase of the Creative Ireland and Creative Youth Plan.

- The next Creative Ireland and Creative Youth Plan should support the promotion and prioritisation of a broader understanding of creative expression. It needs to move beyond a narrow understanding of the term creativity, and it should consider the definition of creativity contained in the Arts in Education Charter.
- Provision of CPD opportunities for teachers prior to, and throughout their engagement in Creative Youth initiatives is both critical and essential to embed creativity in schools and in education at every level.
- Continued work is required in placing creativity at the centre of learning in schools. There is a need to consider creativity as a mindset or as a way of being and a process rather than seeing it as something additional and extra in schools (particularly at Senior Cycle). Additional consultation is required across all educational settings on the role and importance of creativity to our wellbeing and flourishing as a people.
- Future curriculum development should consider how creativity can complement each subject, so that creative approaches and practices can be embedded in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Encourage diverse forms of assessment, that reflect both the varied creative practice in schools and the diverse forms of creative expression that will result from a more flexible and creativity-focused curricular approach.
- The proposed LC subjects *Drama, Film and Theatre Studies and Climate Action and Sustainable Development* should include strong creative elements. The possibilities for including creativity in new curricula should be fully explored when new specifications are being developed and piloted.
- Develop the obvious connections between the Coding programme in Primary, the Junior Cycle Coding short course and Computer Science at Leaving Certificate as these three programmes offer great opportunities for students and their teachers to have coordinated access to Creative Technologies for students.
- Professional development and planning time is fundamental to the success and embedding of creativity in schools. Therefore, there is a need to enhance the existing CPD initiatives at Primary, by increasing the length of time of the trained artist in residency opportunities

and at Post Primary level to develop a range of professional learning activities for teachers to support such activity.

- Provision of CPD for all creative practitioners working (or who wish to work) in schools needs to be designed and offered as part of all creative programmes.
- Further school support and CPD are required to develop the creative skills of teachers and SNAs who are working with a range of professional partners.
- The Education Centre Network, supported by the Arts in Education base in Tralee Education Centre and through national coordination, has played a key role in Creative Youth initiatives to date and has reduced the administration and financial management burden for schools and this support should be funded and harnessed more fully so as to streamline CY initiatives in schools.
- The Creative Clusters Programme should be further enhanced through the provision of additional funding and through expansion to more schools – through the establishment of additional numbers of Creative clusters per Education Centre.
- It is important that Creative Youth initiatives are linked to other relevant DoE Policies and strategies such as SSE, Digital, Wellbeing, DEIS, Languages, ESD etc.
- There is a need to include a strong research element into all Creative Youth initiatives from the outset so as to inform their development. This will require some research funding based on clear criteria for the evaluation and research elements of the project.
- The Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027 needs to put more emphasis on embedding a research dimension in all Creative Youth initiatives from the outset, as well as alongside their development. Evaluation and research initiatives can be used to document excellence and to examine creative initiatives with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion and impact on young people's holistic development and general wellbeing.
- There should be greater recognition and acknowledgement by the schools' inspectorate in relation to the presence of creativity in the classroom and creativity in school inspection reports. Such an approach will encourage and support schools on their creative journeys.
- Creativity needs to be acknowledged and recognised at all levels and across all stakeholders in education; from young people to teachers, principals and schools themselves. This could be done through formal and informal mechanisms such as awards, accreditation, digital badges, ECT credits or similar. The key is to recognise such practices in schools.
- Local Creative Youth Partnerships have been very important in identifying the needs of young people at the local level in communities and should be expanded nationally.
- There are further opportunities to collaborate with national cultural institutions that have the capacity to facilitate inter-disciplinary and cross-curricular projects at primary and post-primary levels.
- Facilitate the development of learning networks to cultivate collaboration and the sharing of excellence in practice through local, national and international research and learning partnerships.

- School leaders should be supported to empower all school staff to be creative in their work with children through CPD, providing time for teachers to develop their own skills and focus on embedding creativity within the curriculum.
- Important to acknowledge that creative learning takes place first and foremost in the home; therefore, it is important to recognise and encourage the role parents can play in fostering creativity.
- Consideration needs to be given to how artists/creatives/arts organisations are supported and provided with CPD to assist them in understanding curricular reform, collaboration and systems, particularly at post-primary level.
- Consider provisions to support schools' libraries, ensuring that the resources are current, inclusive of and apt for the digital environment but also culturally inclusive and diverse, reflective of the makeup of contemporary Ireland.
- The Arts in Education Portal should be further developed and promoted as a centralised space mapping all aspects of arts in education in Ireland. This will require further funding so that it can be enhanced, developed and advertised as a centralised space mapping all aspects of arts and creativity in education in Ireland.
- A reduction in paperwork and administration for Creative Youth initiatives in schools should be encouraged.