Flying Arts Alliance Inc. Connecting Visual Arts with School Curriculum Research Project Report

Executive Summary

The findings of this report demonstrate how effective collaboration might be a conduit for creating rich and deep learning experiences for primary and middle-schooled students. Beginning with a general overview of the current state of the ACARA Australian Curriculum for the Arts, this research was conducted across 2014 with a variety of participants (primary and middle school teachers, artists, students and administrators) from Far-North and South-East Queensland. The goal of Flying Arts Alliance for this project was to "facilitate the delivery of quality visual arts experiences in the classroom ... and provide insight into the role of the visual arts as an enabler of learning in other curriculum areas" (Clark, 2012).

Theoretical anchors were used from educational theorists such as Arnold Aprill, Etienne Wenger, and Melinda Dooly to articulate a definition of collaboration as a community of practice. This key concept underpins the entire report as it posits the importance of participation and reification as necessary to genuine engagement in learning and transformation of knowledge. Collaboration, using this definition, occurs in a social learning construct where the communities (and the schools within these) provide a vast landscape of practice that ensures collaboration and rich learning experiences.

Data from a combination of Stage One and Stage Two (details following) describe in many consistent instances how remote school communities demonstrate the above definition of collaboration out of necessity. Remote schools provided examples of communities of practice at work that greatly supported the learning outcomes of the Flying Arts Alliance directed 90-minute lessons in Stage Two of the project. The presence of the artist working alongside the teacher in the classroom was an important visible indicator of advocacy for the arts in schools: participation in the creation of new knowledge about non-arts content through using the arts (reification) indicated how the arts in schools stimulates and supports external artistic and educational endeavour.

Despite the challenges of budgets, timetables, and spaces the Stage Two workshops demonstrated genuine how collaboration created an aperture for transformational learning through a pluralistic application of literacy. The definition of literacy as a singular, discursive pursuit is woefully underwhelming as a pedagogical priority, and this report suggests multiple literacies at work during collaboration that allowed students, teachers and artists to translate and transcend their already-existing knowledges of content. The evidence of the consistent interflow between engagement, imagination and alignment (and re-alignment) suggested that there was deep engagement that demonstrated the classrooms were dynamic locations for creating the identity consistent with a community of practice (Wenger, 5).

Overall, this report makes a set of recommendations about advocacy, literacy and professional development for consideration and application by Flying Arts Alliance in order to further develop its agency as a key player in visual arts education in Queensland.



Background, Scope and Context of Project

Flying Arts Alliance Inc. is a not for profit arts and cultural development Association which for over 40 years has been providing visual arts development services to artists, teachers, schools and communities in regional and remote Queensland.

Over the past five years particularly the organisation has expanded its education agenda and services to include workshops and residencies in schools around the state as well as live and online professional development training for art educators. It has been particularly active in following the progress of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts and keeping educators abreast of developments through its various stages. Discussion with and feedback from art educators over this period of time shows that: "Teachers in regional and remote Queensland, especially primary and middle school teachers, clearly express a need for better access to professional development training in the arts - especially with immanent implementation of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts" (Clark, 2012).

Additionally, over this period, Flying Arts' work with professional artists in regional and remote areas indicated that many artists were keen to expand their employment opportunities by working in schools: "Artists in regional and remote Queensland express a need to be valued and recognised in their communities and earn an income as an artist. Many are particularly interested in delivering workshops in schools" (Clark, 2012).

In mid 2012 Flying Arts presented a webinar to its network of school teachers with Arnold Aprill - Founding and Creative Director of Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education — on the topic of 'Putting the Arts at the Centre of Curriculum'. Discussion during this webinar revealed:

- > Arts Educators express a need for new and innovative ways to enhance learning in the classroom
- ➤ Arts Educators are very interested in the prospect of working collaboratively with artists in the delivery of education experiences that address arts curriculum and non-arts curriculum (Clark, 2012.

This background was the foundation for the design of a specific grant request in 2012 by Stephen Clark (CEO Flying Arts Alliance) to:

"...inspire creative and practical collaboration between primary and middle school generalist teachers in regional communities and local artists to facilitate the delivery of quality visual arts experiences in the classroom ... and provide insight into the role of the visual arts as an enabler of learning in other curriculum areas" (Clark, 2012)

The project outline to apply this assertion was to: undertake a pilot professional development workshop in Brisbane for educators and artists (2013) to test ideas about collaboration and set the parameters for future regional workshops; deliver six professional development workshops in regional Queensland to explore the values of teacher/artist collaboration (Stage One: Semester One, 2014); and then, using outcomes from these workshop sessions, implement 6 classroom case studies in teacher/artist collaboration in regional areas that were to be fully evaluated (Stage Two: Semester Two, 2014). Participating teachers and artists in Stage Two were to be nominated from the Stage 1 group by Flying Arts Alliance staff based on outcomes of Stage 1.



Funding for the entire project including pilot study, workshops, case studies and research was granted by the John Villiers Trust and the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation.

Project Personnel

- Stephen Clark: Executive Officer, Flying Arts Alliance: conceived the project, wrote the grants
- Professor John O'Toole: Emeritus, Lead writer ACARA, Board Member Flying Arts Alliance
- Anne Roylance: Head of Arts, Wynnum State High School, Flying Arts Education Consultant
- Chrissy Dwyer: Education & Professional Development Coordinator, Flying Arts Alliance
- Cate Collopy: Education & Professional Development Coordinator, Flying Arts Alliance
- Paul Thompson: Administration Coordinator, Flying Arts Alliance
- Associate Professor Janet McDonald: Chief Investigator on the CASC Project, Board Member of
 Flying Arts Alliance, School Coordinator (Creative Arts) at the University of Southern Queensland,
 Faculty of Business Education Law and Arts, Toowoomba Q.

2013 Pilot Workshop: 25 August, 2013, Brisbane Institute of Art, Brisbane

This pilot was designed as a proto-type of the collaboration workshops that would be offered in the six regional areas in Stage One of the project (Semester One, 2014). Flying Arts facilitated this one-day trial workshop which involved four artists and 12 Primary Teachers. The participant feedback was very positive as there was a clear instruction and advice provided about the Australian Curriculum, particularly the Arts Curriculum (provided by Professor John O'Toole) that provided a "source of inspiration" (Preliminary Research Report, August 2013).

Overall, this workshop provided preliminary insight into how this kind of professional development should be delivered in the regions and also helped to confirm the type of data to be collected at the six sites and classrooms (see below for details), as well as determining the broad guiding principles to be used to evaluate the project:

- What is collaboration and how can we enable it in schools?
- How is learning enhanced through collaboration?
- Can it be structured in a set of methods/experiences for deliver in schools?

These principles stop short of being "research questions" as they remained deliberately broad in order to allow for a wider interpretation and application by participants.

2014 Regional Pilot Workshops and Collaboration Workshops Stage One – Six Regional Pilot Workshops (Semester One)

Associate Professor Janet McDonald, Ann Roylance, and a Flying Arts appointed artist facilitated these workshops at the following schools:

Cairns: 9 March, Trinity Bay SHS.
Townsville: 23 March, Ryan Catholic College.
Mackay: 11 May, Mackay Central SS.
Gold Coast: 1 June. Harris Fields SHS.
Cooroy: 25 May, Noosa District SHS.
Toowoomba: 15 June, University of Southern Qld.
10 Teachers, 8 Artists.
12 Teachers, 3 Artists.
7 Teachers, 4 Artists.
9 Teachers, 4 Artists.
8 teachers, 4 Artists.



The first part of the workshop consisted of Ann discussing the Australian Curriculum for the Arts and the various resources available through the ACARA website and Flying Arts that teachers could use to scaffold arts in their schools and arts across the curriculum. This was followed by artists providing presentations of their work and how they might offer links to the curriculum. Breakout sessions with artists and teachers working on a specific lesson plan ensued followed by the presentation of these to the group as a whole.

Data (in the form of an anonymous survey by Flying Arts) asking teachers and artists to define collaboration and its potential for enhancement was retrieved at the beginning of the day and at the end in order to provide a baseline overview of the culture of collaboration in schools and communities. This also helped to confirm the best use of data collection methods for Stage Two of the project (see below for details).

Stage Two – Six 90-minute Collaborative Workshops in Schools (Semester Two)

Flying Arts chose the schools based on vitality of the lesson plans created in Stage One and also the remote position of the school compared to a metropolitan centre. Flying Arts also assisted by supplying the artist and school with art supplies required for the lesson, these were then donated to the school in appreciation for their participation.

Data collected at each site was in accordance with the Ethical Clearance obtained by Associate Professor Janet McDonald from the USQ Office of Research (Approval No. H14 REA 135). These were the same in each site:

- Pre-Workshop, individual phone interview with teacher and artist (dates in works cited section)
- Post-Workshop, individual phone interview with teacher and artist
- Pre and Post-Workshop group interviews with a selection of students from the lesson (selected by the teachers), 20 minutes before the lesson and immediately after.
- Still photographs of each lesson
- Teacher and artist journal matrix that was sent to all teacher and artists in Stage Two and gathered through Semester Two.

Schools visited:

- Mt Molloy SS (MM), 28 July 2014: 1.5 hour drive west of Cairns.
 - Lesson on entomology (science) using fine drawing and inks, composite class of Year 5-7,
 14 students.
- Moranbah SHS (Mo), 5 August 2014: 2 hour drive west of Mackay.
 - Lesson was for a Year 8 Art class on 3-D mixed-media art making, 23 students.
- Belgian Gardens SS (BG), 19 August 2014: Townsville.
 - Lesson on the phases of the moon (science) using found objects and paint, composite class of Years 6-7, 21 students.
- **Tanduringie SS** (T), 2 September 2014: 1 hour drive south of Kingaroy.
 - Lesson on Chinese culture using fine inks and Chinese-style painting, composite class of Years 6-7, 14 students.



Kin Kin SS (KK), 11 August 2014: half hour drive south from Gympie.

Lesson on maps (geography) using textures, mixed media. Composite class of Years 2-3,
 21 students.

Harris Fields SHS (HF), 27 August 2014: Logan City.

Lesson on cultural ancestry (history) using screen printing and cultural design/patterns,
 Year 5, 28 students.

The bulk of the analysis in this report is in regard to the data collected in this case-study phase (Stage Two) of the project. The data was reviewed using the theoretical framework outlined below.

Stage Three – Webinar and Finalisation of this Report

The final public activity relating to this project was the webcast of a project review and topline summary of findings presented via the Flying Arts Web TV Channel to its network of teachers throughout Queensland. The webinar, which also included an update on the status of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts, attracted 53 participants.

Theoretical Framework

The Arts Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is an independent statutory authority tasked with "improving the learning of all young Australians" (1). This body is responsible for the rolling out of a Australian Curriculum to increase high standards from Foundation years to Year 12 across all states and territories in Australia. According to their website, the writing of the Arts Curriculum was begun in 2009 with the intention of all five arts (Visual Arts, Media, Drama, Music and Dance) to be taught in various modes from Kindergarten to Year 12. There have been several drafts of this document, consultation periods and reviews of this curriculum but final approval for this curriculum is pending. On page five of the Introduction to the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts* (August 2011), the following aspirational statement is connects the arts curriculum to specific learning skills:

As <u>emerging critical and creative thinkers</u>, students will gain the confidence and the tools to understand and critique the Arts in everyday life. Students will learn that the <u>Arts exist in process as much as in finished artistic products</u>. Process does not have to result in a product or performance. Through their Arts studies, students will discover that artists work both individually and in groups, and that the <u>Arts connect many creative and mainstream industries contributing to the development of a vibrant, modern and inclusive Australian society.</u>

In the sections on "The Structure of the Australian Arts Curriculum", the document clearly indicates the importance of the processes of making (the doing) and responding (the thinking and thinking about doing) as organisational process which support the aesthetic and artistic development suggested in the document. More can be read about this initiative at www.acara.com.au, however the debate about the Arts Curriculum is widely regarded as stalled at the time of writing this report. Schools, however, continue to ready themselves for the interpretation and application of this curriculum and this is the climate into which this CASC Project was delivered. Please see John O'Toole's Flying Arts Webinar (28 October, 2014) for a detailed description of the current Arts Curriculum debate.



Although these documents and debate were part of the context of how this project is framed, this research report does not unpack the specific details as to the sequencing of the Visual Arts curriculum suggested in the *Shape of the Curriculum* (2011) document. Rather, this project looks beyond just the Visual Arts to use the techniques and skills of the medium to engage students in content areas outside of "the arts". Flying Arts believes that the merging of curriculum in this way has great potential to promote and locate the specific ways in which the arts engage learners in order to achieve critical and connective knowledges outlined in the Introduction of the curriculum document. Flying Arts posits that rich and deep learning activities may be developed through the consideration of collaboration between teachers and artists in the generalist primary classroom, and be inclusive of students at all stages. Currently, the only statement of the consideration of crosscurricular use of the arts can be found in the above document under the heading "Links to Other Learning Areas":

Some Arts subjects have direct relationships with other subjects. All the Arts are relevant to history and geography studies, because the Arts embody some of the most significant and recognisable products and records of all cultures. Drama and media arts have a strong focus on language, texts and narrative, and aspects of these two Arts subjects are taught as part of English. Dance has links to health and physical education. <u>Visual arts has links to design and technology</u>. It is important that students can see connections to other learning areas within the curriculum (21).

The remainder of this theoretical position of this report will address ways in which to frame and define how an effective model for collaboration might be perceived as enabling an enhanced set of learning potential. The Findings section will further demonstrate how the six schools nominated for Stage Two of this CASC Project manifested many of the key aspects of these definitions.

Communities of Practice: Collaboration as Social Learning

The most important theoretical framework anchoring the findings of this project comes from the work on Communities of Practice by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave. These educational theorists invented the term in the late 1980s as they posited that learning occurs through social learning systems and dimensions. A community of practice will deliver a more meaningful learning experience because of its social unity and findings from the CASC Project indicate that collaboration is a specific manifestation of this theory in practice. Wenger's online essay, "Communities of practice and social learning systems" (1998), states that engagement in social contexts relies on personal participation as well as the production of physical and conceptual artefacts. "Meaningful learning in social contexts requires both participation and reification [literally "to make into an object"] to be in interplay. Artefacts without participation do not carry their own meaning and participation without artefacts is fleeting, unanchored and uncoordinated.... This process is dynamic and active. It is alive" (pp 1-2).

Wenger considers the practice (over time) of this interplay creates a socially shared history of learning within the community and the individual resulting in a "regime of competence" that constitutes a set of "criteria and expectations by which they recognise membership" (2). In other words, identity is produced: a shared understanding of "what matters" gives rise to a particular perspective on the world, which enhances the participants' ability to engage productively with each other and to develop an appropriate repertoire of resources (knowledge) that is accumulated over time. Regardless of the external constraints or factors on this community of practice, the practice



responds according to their engagement and collective sense-making of their "local logic" (2). This regime of competence therefore is the long term goal and benefit of active collaboration (participants bringing their own knowledge to the community) that champions the practice of participation and reification.

This concept forms the basis from which the findings of this project are analysed: collaboration between teacher, artist, student and other relevant parties in a school/community setting is dynamic and conducive to providing rich seams of experiences for the enhancement of learning, regardless of the socio-economic make-up of the cohort. The communities and schools that participated in the CASC Project provided the "landscapes of practice" (3) that input into their social learning systems.

The body of knowledge of a community is therefore greater than the sum of its parts, as learning is a "social becoming" and gaining competence from this "entails becoming someone for whom the competence is a meaningful way of living" (3). The most effective collaborative practices manifested themselves in regional remote communities and/or which in most cases might be categorized as residing in a lower socio-economic locale. These communities demonstrated very specific long-term collaborative strategies that made full use of volunteers, parents, and administrative support to model engagement for students in their schools. Their example of knowledge being an outcome of deepened engagement in the flow of "landscapes of practice" was effective in demonstrating Wenger's assertion that this produces three key modes of identification (originally called "modes of belonging" by Wenger in 1998): engagement, imagination and alignment (5). These three modes are about how learning is positioned in the community of practice; how the participation is negotiated and practiced in action (and for the purposes of this report) and through collaboration.

Certainly this work is commensurate with the findings of Arnold Aprill, the founder of CAPE (Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education) who stated in a Flying Arts Web TV Presentation (2013) that the "rule of three" passionate innovative staff (including supportive administration support) is "really important" to create a space of innovative thinking and negotiating with the visiting artist. This, then reduces the "parachuting" of the artist who then disappears; Aprill understands that paying attention to the nourishing and growth of all participants is necessary for the project to have ongoing efficacy and agency (again, through the combined practice of participation and reification).

Similarly the work of other educational specialists working in the field of collaborative learning provide similar insight into the socially constructed aspects of collaboration. Based on the definitions developed by Bruffee (1993), David Luce (2001) defines collaborative learning as something that "translates how others make sense of themselves and their role in the world into a new, socially constructed knowledge-based community" (21). They emphasise the notion of participation in community/culture and that collaboration is therefore necessarily about inclusion, dialogue, compromise, and sharing authority of the construction of knowledge (22). Collaboration is neither a consensus nor an enforced democracy, it is a flexible "space" for the application of knowledges that is shared, engaged, negotiated and enriched because of the participation of the individuals. Melinda Dooly (2008) states that collaboration is not just cooperation; it "entails the whole process of learning" and that students (as well as teachers and artists in this project's context) are "responsible for one another's learning as well as their own" (2). When discussing the benefits of collaboration, Dooly states the students engaging in groups and discussions become better critical



thinkers: "what they are learning and how they are learning it" (2). This potential for transforming knowledge from one application to another through engaging socially is central to understanding how collaboration manifested itself in the six educational settings interrogated in Stage Two of this CASC Project.

The theorists in the section provide some helpful insight into how collaboration might be perceived as a way to manifest social learning that suggests the presence of a community of practice. This reframes the classroom as having the potential to practise participation and reification as modes of meaning-making that aid in developing critical thinking that can create apertures for transforming knowledge from one medium to another. These key concepts will be further interrogated in the next section on emerging themes.

Themes Emerging from Findings

This report has interrogated the different data sets from Stage One and Two of the CASC Project which provide rich sources of description about the collaboration process, and also the ways in which collaboration manifested itself in the schools and communities. The themes that emerged offer exemplars of the kinds of learning experiences expressed by the above theoreticians, and significantly, the patterns of these experiences were repeated throughout most of the research sites.

Overall, there is ample evidence from this project that manifests collaboration as a method of providing engaging learning experiences, created pedagogical "space" of rich and deep thinking, action, sharing, knowledge connection and generation of new knowledge. In many ways, these findings are nothing new to the well documented (and often stereotyped) artists' understanding of the transformational experiences that arts participation can release in participants and communities.

This analysis, therefore, aims to provide specific evidence of the potential of collaboration to inspire and inject strategies for retention, knowledge attainment, genuine cross-curricular connections, and well-being into schools and their supporting communities.

Collaboration as participation and reification

The evidence suggests a specific application and manifestation of Wenger's notions of participation and reification throughout the emerging (and sometimes well established) collaborative practices observed in the six schools participating in Stage Two of this study. Between the two actions students, staff and support personnel actively negotiated meaning "on the floor" of the classroom in what was particularly a social learning system. In all instances, students actively created "artifacts" from participating in bringing their own knowledge, merging this with what the teacher and artist brought to the space. There was engagement, imagination, and alignment to the curriculum/learning objectives of the lesson throughout the lessons; each site creating its own "landscape of practice" that one teacher stated was where "the experience is greater than the content" (HF, 27 August, Teacher Journal). There was a distinct lack of imposition of the collaboration process onto the students from the teacher/artist partnerships, rather the emphasis on student experiencing the art forms through content (and content through the art form) was a key focus and resulted in a re-framing of "just doing art" in the classroom: "Often I think art perhaps is something separate, a little bit of an add-on the side, but this [lesson] really brought it in and showed its relevance to the whole of the curriculum (T,10 September, Artist Post-Workshops



Interview, 1). The experiences offered learning that was greater than the sum of its parts, and this was a recurrent observation across all sites, and this seems to be a central consideration of Wenger's theory on communities of practice.

In Stage One of the project, the baseline data collected from all participants in the pilot workshops suggested an already-established belief in collaboration as important to increasing genuine engagement in the classroom. In summary, teachers and artists described collaboration as a respect for arts and education "cultures" that is more than simply cooperation, and rich learning experiences could be obtained through using the arts to anchor and experiment with curriculum in the classroom. Simultaneously, there was a distinct awareness of constraints expressed by both teachers and artists in this phase. Budgets, timetables, spaces, numeracy/literacy priorities, staff attitudes, administration attitudes, parental concern, "red tape" were all overwhelmingly suggested as aspects that could paralyse a collaborative process in a school. These concerns were valid and authentically expressed by Primary "generalist" teachers who had very little or no arts training and most definitely because the content of the Stage One Pilot Workshops were situated inside Professional Development addressing the collective anxiety regarding the application of the pending the approval of the Australian Curriculum for the Arts. The concerns did not, however, hinder the collective desire for investing in rich learning experiences for students in schools, and this study makes suggestions in the recommendation section as to how Flying Arts might further address these for teachers and artists.

Flying Arts decided to specifically choose lesson plans generated from Stage One focusing on schools that were either more remote than those in major metropolitan centres or supporting a lower socio-economic tax base in order to further interrogate how collaboration operates in these circumstances.

"... just seeing the way different students responded or seeing what they actually could do or hearing the way they talked about something they made. It really deepened my belief that it's [collaboration] a worthwhile thing to do" (BG 9 September, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 2).

Remote communities/schools lead the way in collaboration

As positive as the learning experiences were at each school, the awareness of the spectre of the "one-off" or "parachuting" (Aprill) artist into a community was a concern for the Flying Arts team. The one, 90 minute lesson that was initially planned by the artist and teacher in Stage One was to be implemented with assistance from Flying Arts (purchasing of arts materials, delivery of artist and researcher to the school, administration, etc.) as part of Stage Two. It was not until the preworkshop interviews with teachers and artists that a fuller picture of the nature of their organic collaboration began to be articulated. From this data set, the teachers and artists described multiple-access opportunities to each other between Stage One and Stage Two which had not been overly prescribed by Flying Arts (including Facebook, phone calls, email and face to face meetings).

The high incidence of contact between artists and teachers was surprising, given that no combination of personnel had worked nor known each other prior to Stage One. Three out of the six teachers in the Stage Two had some arts training, but these was also not a mitigating factor in the frequency of meetings prior and post the workshop between teachers and artists. Generally,



teachers were excited by having a "real" artist and expert visit their classroom in order to extend the professional connections of themselves and their students. Both artists and teachers often described the mutual regard they held for each other which was no doubt conducive to creating trust and respect in the classroom and, most importantly, modelled to students who participated in the experience: "...it's good for the kids to be exposed to a different teaching style ... that was another thing where their learning was enhanced...just being able to see their classroom teacher involved in sensing her excitement and mine with [the artist] as well... they [students] can see that as well" (HF, 4 September, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 2). In turn, the students followed suit and in many cases were able to understand how the collaboration between teacher and artist was manifested, "I've seen how they've planned lessons for us, like so we can understand it better" (HF, Student Pre-Workshop Interview, 4).

In all cases, collaboration was not anything new to the schools in this study. Recurring comments from teachers and artists in the pre and post workshop interviews demonstrated that more remote schools and/or those residing in lower socio-economic areas were very familiar with collaboration internally and externally to the school. A school in Far-North Queensland not only promotes group collaborations across year levels due to the small population of students, but also engages with volunteers (ex-teachers, ex-scientists) who regularly come to the school to teach students about gardening, harvesting and cooking in the kitchen facility at the school (MM,24 July, Teacher Pre-Workshop Interview, 2-3). Visiting specialists are a regular occurrence in these schools because they are part of the fabric of the community and the school becomes a conduit for all kinds of conceptual, artistic, mathematic, and utilitarian knowledge for students and the community. Volunteers have helped to design, build and transform the disused tennis court into a vibrant hydroponic garden that creates an "artefact" that promotes healthy eating in the student body. Here is a manifestation of the practice of participation and reification where notions of a community of practice is a specific site of social learning that ultimately champions relational experiences in real time at the site of the activity. "You know, we form relationships, we have better appreciation of the other person or persons....you don't want to leave the same way you come in, so your value for your collaborator grow[s] as you feel their commitment" (HF, 5 September, Artist Post-Workshop Interview, 3).

This example represents a similar context found in other remote schools which had small population of students in composite learning groups, with a small number of teachers and a support mechanism of teacher aids and volunteers from the community. Wenger's idea of collaboration falling under the scope of a "community of practice" was rendered highly visible across all schools observed: where collaboration was already an integral and highly useful way of building capacity in the school.

A second-year middle school teachers stated that her choice to live remotely had connected her to a more vibrant and collaborative learning environment, "[Here] has been a lot easier to figure out what we are teaching, or why we are teaching itI don't think I would have been this effective a teacher on the Gold Coast if I had stayed there, after coming here it's been the best experience" (Mo, 30 July, Teacher Pre-Workshop Interview, 1). In these contexts, the perceived "limitations" of small remote schools was challenged; the rich and vibrant "landscape of practice" available to teachers and students was a clear indication of the collaboration as a social learning system that creates meaningful learning opportunities that are polyphonic and malleable. The "collaborative space" is not simply one of learning content, again, the theme of the learning experience being



greater than the sum of its parts is significant because students did articulate not just what they were learning but how they were learning it.

"We worked really well in collaboration because we let one person do what they though first and then the next person we let them try and so we voted on which one we thought was the bestAnd if one person didn't agree on it we'd sort of try and get something that everyone agreed on but if that didn't work out the we'd just do what most people through was the best idea" (BG, 19 August, Student Post-Workshop Interview, 3).

Spatial and locational awareness was key to how collaboration might be shaped in the schools chosen for this project. It would be appropriate to suggest that the schools had complex "landscapes of practice" that did impact upon how students made meaning through the practice of engagement, imagination, and alignment (Wenger, 5).

Advocacy – active participation and reifying results

The collaboration of the entire experience in the classrooms revealed not only rich interaction between teacher and artist (including pre-planning) but also how the students engaged with each other and the teaching team. One key finding about reification was how it manifested itself in the noise/sound of the classroom. A Flying Arts colleague, Cate Collopy noted during our fourth visit that "learning has a sound to it" which she expressed as collaboration having a "hum to it, something quite lyrical, little songs, little exchanges in the discovery" (Field Notes, BG 19 August). I can certainly concur that the noise of the classroom, particularly on this occasion was particularly vibrant: moments of intense silence when mastering a technique that had been demonstrated, patches of laughter, heated exchanges, actively interacting with materials, discussions with teachers/artists, humming of tunes, music playing in the background, creative word play and retelling of jokes from previous night's TV or You Tube watching. The participation generated a plethora of noise, chaos and mess that more traditional learning environments might dismiss as uncontrollable. The collaborative teams seemed to thrive in this environment whether it was a purpose-built art room, outdoors, science lab or regular carpeted classroom.

The noise (and silences) of these learning landscapes directly pointed to students at play, experimenting deeply with the materials, giving instant feedback to the emerging artefact; participation was necessary and dynamically engaged as the awareness of the "special" significance of the lesson was honoured by them freely endowing the experience with goodwill and enjoyment. Students were able to describe the effect of choice in materials made by their peers and how the artefact came together: "We felt happy and I was excited because it was like she kind of painted for hours and we felt like it was so outstanding that it started hurting our eyes cause we kept staring at it" (HF, 27 July, Student Post-Workshop Interview, 2). The social and cultural literacy of the school students were seemingly enhanced throughout the 90-minute lessons, directly linked to working through the artist and the artists' media to engage in the curriculum content and the attitudes/behaviours modelled by teacher and artist championed experimentation and vibrant discussion above all other endeavours. This resulted in pleasurable situations where students were encouraged to bring and use their own knowledges to the making and discussion; the palpable atmosphere was that this was a "pleasure, not a burden" for all participants (HF Teacher Journal). One student's response to a question about how they might like to learn was, "I like to learn very funly [sic], not strict" (MM,28 July, Student Pre-Workshop Interview, 6), and this articulation of how



they enjoyed active participation is a vital step towards internal advocacy of the efficacy of collaborative teaching/learning methods.

This project suggests a model of how these collaboration and cross-curricular experiences provide participants an opportunity to be vibrant and "happy" and regular engagement with this kind of practice can create an internal acceptance or advocacy by the school and community. This increases (sometimes imperceptibly) the support for not just art in schools, but rich learning activities that engage participation and reification. This supports Wenger's claim that the one-off occurrences have little effect without the regular practice to create a regime of competency across all participants that make the school a conduit for innovative learning. The engagement at the site of producing identity is indistinguishable from participation at all social levels. One teacher described how the cultural make-up of her metropolitan, low SES school meant that any contact from the school was usually "bad news" and that parents mostly avoided coming to the school, but with her Visual Arts expertise being injected across the primary years had resulted in parents who were "very very happy with it and my Principal tells me that the parents would riot if the visual arts program was closed" (HF, 26 August, Teacher Pre-Workshop Interview, 5).

Advocacy about genuine arts engagement must begin internally in the school through the repetition of opportunities for participation and reification that collaborations such as these manifest. This internal advocacy has the potential to create "believers", supporters and sponsors internal to the school community that envelopes and wraps in the community through the participation of artists and other collaborators. It is a key step to increasing the visibility of collaboration and positioning it as a key learning "point of difference" for a school that wants to convince key internal stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, school administration) to engage arts in and with the curriculum. This is a commensurate finding to the work of Arnold Aprill; "you've got to share their thinking process with parents and once teachers see the parents valuing their kids artistic thinking, then the teachers relax and they get invested in the art-making" (August 2013). In FNQ, one school tasked students who had made art works to then curate them in the school library featuring before and after photographs, and design sketches to "produce" the art in a public space. They also made greeting cards of their art sketches and screen-printed aprons that were all on sale at the school office (and given to guests/collaborators as gifts).

So the reification part of the community of practice model of collaboration is greater than only the creation of art objects; the pedagogical activity and processes garner support internally and also blur into external community programs and local knowledges, informing and extending the landscape of practice. The empowering process of having student created works exhibited, externally assessed in art competitions, country shows and fetes, were expressed by teachers who were engaging with their artists collaborators outside of the 90-minute lesson. The injection of the artist's expertise (and connections) was a valuable addition to the culture of the school and teachers themselves:

"I think that having that opportunity to collaborate, you know it opens up other doors. It opens up other avenues just personally for my own creative process look at my connection to my local art galleries because that's where [the artist] works" (KK, 28 August, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 4).



Advocacy that begins internally in the school spreads to the external culture of the community and one of the conduits, in this particular project was the artist who provided an extension to the landscape of practice to and from the content and the classroom itself. Even though there were other collaborative projects taking place in most schools and the students were already experienced in learning through collaboration, the artist provided a vital link to "artworlds" outside the school that became part of the wider ecology of advocacy for arts (through the participation and reification practice) in education, and this ultimately supported the internal advocacy being undertaken.

"...I wanted it [the collaboration outcomes] to become an exhibition and I contacted lots of art galleries....It would be great if we could have a school exhibition, we don't necessarily have to have it in a gallery. We could have it at school because showcasing the kids' artwork so that it becomes memorable for them, but for inviting their parents to come to it: that's being collaborative" (HF, 26 August Artist Pre-Workshop Interview, 3).

The scope of this report was limited to taking data at the schools at the time of the collaborative workshops; it did not measure the extent to which this one workshop has changed the culture of a school or how it may have enhanced content knowledge over a period of time. Yet, information discussions and post-workshop interviews with teachers and artists suggest that there was a residual excitement generated by the students. One teacher sent an email stating,

"...the workshop definitely had an impact [the artist] has been back to comment on the students' work, a small group are coordinating the creation of an art piece for our classroom ...using leftover workshop materials, and I'm slipping art into our learning all of the place (which the students have independently notices and commended thoughtfully on)" (BG, 7 September, Email, Teacher).

In terms of how the findings emphasise the role of emerging advocacy and the collaborative behaviours used by remote location of the school community, the data indicated that these were important to how a regime of competence is created in these contexts. "Over time, a history of learning becomes an informal and dynamic social structure among the participation, and this is what a community of practice is" (Wenger, 1998, 1). This was made explicit by a consistent pattern of discussion by teachers, artists and students themselves regarding how the workshop enabled a "different way of looking"; increased and imaginative reification. In fact, this emerged as a key indicator of how learning was enhanced and this was seminal in just how the term "literacy" might be reframed and recalibrated through collaboration. This will be discussed further under the next heading.

Collaboration promotes enhancement of learning

So for me collaboration is when everybody brings and gives. They give of their time, their talent, their money, their skills, their concerns, their frustrations, their hopes, their dreams, even their disagreements... I've done collaboration with other artists and there have been disagreements, but its learning how to rise above the disagreement....Because, you know, as collaborators you come together, you don't own it anymore. (HF,5 September, Artists Post-Workshop Interview, 3)



Re-framing a critical and plural application of "literacy"

This quote sums up the potency that many contributing artists and teachers experienced through Stage Two of this project. They were able to articulate these notions in much more detail after the workshop had been conducted and many of the sentiments regarded the tendency towards change and transformation of what "was" into something that had not previously been there. In all schools there was mention of observing how students were beginning to look and see differently, "... they were involved with something that was quite a different way of reading, quite a different way of engaging with visual literacy that they perhaps haven't really been taught to do before... it seemed quite meditative..." (MM 7 August, Artist and Interviewer, Post Workshop Interview, 6). What participants are articulating is the variability of the term "literacy" in these contexts; how students "saw" and changed their perspective denotes the presence of critical thinking that transforms the knowledge they bring into something else. This finding suggests the creation of a new lexicon about "literacy" that re-aligns it from purely a singular, discursive, knowledge-making convention to a vibrant practice in "ways of seeing". Visual literacy, aesthetic literacy, spatial literacy, material/technical literacy: all terms that could help to critically re-frame the importance of "literacy" in Australian schools (ACARA), because these could be observed as discrete sets of knowleges that blend together the practice of application and discovery. One artist also articulated the kind of "numerical literacy" that is undertaken when working in artistic media: "...children when they are looking at changing the proportion of something ... working from a small scale to the larger scale, there are so many ways that they measure in art, particularly in observational drawing" (MM 7 August, Artists Post Workshop Interview, 6).

The transformational quality of the collaborative environment created in these workshops was evidenced by how often teachers and artists referred to students using experimentation to resist their usual tendency to be either right or wrong. "I think because art is not a formulated thing if something goes "wrong" you just take it from there and see what happens next...I think it gave some of the kids a bit of confidence..." (BG 9 September, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 1). What was observed in all workshops was the relative ease between the teacher and artist. The teachers would begin the lesson to anchor it in the learning objectives, then the demonstration would occur with the teacher alongside asking students to repeat key terms or make connections to the curriculum. The priority was always to lead the students to doing it themselves as quickly as possible so that both teacher and artist could walk around the class, offering advice and positive feedback. "... the art teacher really helped us... she let us do all the fun stuff and ... she didn't take over..." (BG 19 August, Student Post-Workshop Interview, 4). The result was a noticeable cultural shift from students wanting to be "right" or "complete" to students becoming more comfortable with experimenting, therefore transforming their ideas from a discursive literacy to a visual one.

"I feel a lot of them by the end of the lesson got the idea of the fact that we weren't looking for perfection; we were looking at experimenting...by the end a few of them were really good at reciting back what we were talking about with the elements and principles and they were like 'oh I understand what we're doing about texture now', because it all looks great and feels great" (Mo, 26 August, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 3).

Post-interviews with students at this school also supported this teacher's observations. In response to the question: what did you learn today, some answers were, "That everything doesn't have to be perfect", "To experiment with it, don't just throw it out, keep experimenting", "I took less things out,



like I put it on but then I took it out to change to a different style" (Mo 5 August, Student Post-Workshop Interview, 1).

The transformation of literacies taking place perhaps, more accurately, is a process of translation between literacies where students bring knowledge from one medium and are encouraged to recast it using different media (visual media). This translational reification of one knowledge (which could be material to conceptual and vice versa) to enhance or change understanding of that knowledge is an important educational finding, and most importantly, the aim of all pedagogic pursuits:

"...you can turn art into different ways of learning so what we did today with the moon phases... we could have turned art into English if it was possible, which it probably is....instead of having a normal science lesson we can find out, like make textures Textures can have, like make your drawing or your painting look a lot more like you're actually there in the scene" (BG 19 August, Student Post Workshop Interview 1).

One teacher described her collaborative behaviour as openly encouraging students to "bend the rules" of "regular" classroom engagement. "... I set the learning goal, [then] I encouraged them to bend the rules and so they would find... one student wanted to use pastels and I asked her why and she was able to justify why ... I thought 'yeah, why not?'" (HF 4 September, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 1). What was key to this learning experience was the mixture of discursive literacy (the student asked to verbally justify her choices) and then the activation of this idea in a visual literacy (a reification of the idea without words). This was another example of the process of "re-alignment" to critically disrupt rules that "should be" to embrace something beyond this.

Transformational Enhancement: Mess, Choice, Material

At all times, choice (both in students' making decisions as well as the choice of materials) was a recurring influence on how students genuinely participated and reified concepts; they responded positively to being viscerally engaged with what they were making. Choice became part of the process of applying knowledge in multiple ways:

"... it's introducing the range of materials that really is a form of collaboration if you allow students to choose... where children aren't told 'we're all going to do the same... they were given a variety of materials and told that they could make choices independently to express what they wanted" (MM 7 August, Artist Post-Workshop Interview, 3).

A teacher expressed that she thought the collaboration was increased and enhanced when students became more comfortable working with the materials. "She [the artist] picked quality resources...[we] are so budget conscious that quite often we would never purchase the more expensive paper.... It made a difference for you feeling... the kids were using the nice stuff" (KK, 28 August, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 2). This was also acknowledged at other schools where students were reminded of the "special" and specialist knowledges of technique that the artist could impart in order for them to transform their ideas. Above all, the social learning capacity of the students was enhanced due to the need for students to share the materials and negotiate their use in their groups (their community of practice).

"I found it very rewarding to see how the students all worked together...how they were helping each other out And in selecting colours...they would talk to each other about [it]....I



was hearing this whole unity of doing the colours, missing the colours, holding the screen down 'I'll clean the screen...it's your turn to pick up the squeegee..." (HF 5 September, Artist Post-Workshop Interview, 1).

The collaborative learning enhancement necessarily afforded mess in order to also help engage students in "different ways of seeing" because this was fundamentally different to how teachers might avoid mess in their classrooms. "... the whole concept of doing things that are tactile and doing art, that it is okay to make a mess because we just clean it up...which sometimes is a thing for teachers. When it comes to art, they don't really want to have to deal with the mess" (KK 28 August, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 1). This remains a concern for many generalist primary teachers, that they may not have the spaces for conducting such "hands-on" activities. Yet, throughout the observations of many different "spaces" used in this project, there was a set of instructions and procedures that were adhered to by teacher and artists that the students understood as extraordinary but necessary to enable the experience; in fact it is part of the contract of working within all artistic media. This did not seem to concern any of the participants and any frustration expressed was in regard to students navigating their way through the choice of materials. Teachers and artists were able to re-frame this as being a necessary part of the student stretching themselves and, again, renegotiating the boundaries of what is "right" or "wrong" in the making: "A few of them were like 'this is so frustrating' cause it was a very fiddly kind of [activity]. I think that kind of patience and care really taught them a bit about 'you've got to really stick at things in art for a couple of weeks, it's not going to get done in a lesson" (Mo, 26 August, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 3). The mess increased the attending to the "making" and the literacy of transforming / translating knowledge from one form to another.

Most of the artists and teachers also frequently expressed how their own learning was enhanced and that they felt that Stage Two of the project was an extension of their own professional development that was transformative at their place of work. One teacher expressed this as her increased ability to be a conduit and resource for other teachers in her school:

"...and they were picking my brain.... that empowerment of professional development in terms of their [other teachers at the school] acknowledging skills that I have and knowledge that I have and tapping into that as professional resources... is quite empowering in a school setting" (KK 28 August, Teacher Post-Interview, 3).

Enhancement was also articulated in how teachers expressed their own growth, not so much as artists, but as flexible facilitators of knowledge that are a vital part of the experimentation inside the community of practice. In some cases, this seemed to involve an enhanced critical perspective that linked them into the transformational potential of "working in the medium". The following teacher expressed how her change of view promoted what she felt was the "real" lesson (greater than the content):

"It's funny because when we train to be teachers, we learn to do all these lesson plans... to use our time really effectively to make sure the whole 70 minutes are used properly... last year I was in that head space....Now it's like 'you know what? I know I've got ten weeks, I know we'll get back to it [syllabus]...if they're engaged now I'd rather keep this engagement, keep them learning. And they experiment, they took out the inks and the water colours



from the collaborative lesson ... they're confident in using those things now" (Mo, 26 August, Teacher Post-Workshop Interview, 5).

Overall, the enhancement was mutual and collaborative in its impact; teachers, artists and students were able to significantly discuss how the collaborative lesson transformed their "ways of seeing". This was a recurring facto that seemed indelibly linked to notions of literacy, as this involved the navigation and critical experimentation with materials, choices, and the translation of various knowledges through the layered social learning experience of collaboration.

"The kids just want more, they want more out of the learning experience, they want something they can really hold and touch and admire. You know we were asking them 'where would be a great place to exhibit these?' and they said 'we should exhibit them in this room because this is where we created them and people can come in and have a look whilst they're having a science lesson... so they thought that [science lab where the collaborative lesson took place] would be the perfect place for it, kind of the birth of it which is really nice" (BG, 29 August, Artist Post-Workshop Interview, 3).

Conclusion

What this report does is demonstrate how effective collaboration might be as a conduit for creating rich and deep learning experiences for primary-schooled students. The learning enhancement was not only experienced by students, but teachers also engaged in deeper consideration of the how content might be delivered in their schools, and artists contemplated how they might re-frame their adjunct service to schools as conduits into wider communities supporting the school. Although the report does acknowledge the "special event" and "one-off" notions of the collaboration workshops in Stage Two, the data suggests that the instances of goodwill, improved understanding and access, increased clarity about the existence of collaborative networks, and the realisation of a variety of communities of practice were effective outcomes that could increase the collaborative practice in the future.

Despite the challenges of budgets, timetables, and spaces the Stage Two workshops demonstrated genuine collaboration through rich, cross-curricula arts experiences that created transformational learning through a pluralistic application of literacy. In doing so, what was observed at the schools was the engagement of a variety of collaborative behaviours that demonstrated the key premise of these as creating social learning experiences which are a hallmark of Wenger's description of communities of practice. The evidence of the consistent interflow between engagement, imagination and alignment (and re-alignment) suggested that there was deep engagement that demonstrated the classrooms were dynamic locations for creating the identity consistent with a community of practice (Wenger, 5).

The research team wishes to thank the very mindful and germane contributions that were made by all participants in this research: teachers, artists, students, parents, volunteers and school administrators. They gave freely of their time and generously provided exquisite detail about their engagement in this project and their renewed understanding of the vastly effective strategy for learning that seemed to already surround them: collaboration.



Recommendations for further Action

In order to best make use of these findings, the section below offers recommendations and resources for schools, artists and the Flying Arts Alliance to consider for further focusing on how collaboration and communities of practice can be deployed more regularly in classroom contexts so that a regime of competence begins to emerge. Many of these recommendations are aspirational, yet, are designed to increase further discussion upon how the findings in this report may be applied in schools and communities.

Advocacy through Professional Development

Professional Development is a potent way of building capacity in remote or any community. The premise of this kind of model is to increase social learning, sharing where participants are engaged by contributing to the collective knowledge of the group undertaking the workshop. This can then increase a community's "regime of competence" that is then brought back to the school for further dissemination and action. This offers a desirable way to assist a school/community develop avenues for advocacy that are both internal and external to their contexts. Teachers must become better advocates for the arts in their schools and be able to engage with others to realise the potential of this kind of collaboration. In most cases, artists already have advanced skills in advocacy as they are more likely to write and acquit grants that develop community based outcomes and experiences. Arts are not the only key parts of the curriculum, but they can also provide specific reification of learning experiences; the arts can make visible the social learning taking place through participation that is strengthened by an enhanced engagement with other content areas. Advocacy, therefore, is about re-framing literacy and establishing a clear link between the various types of aesthetic literacy and key learning outcomes of the Australian Curriculum. From this research project, the advocacy of aesthetic literacy involves (but is not limited to) student participation and reification through the following:

- Experimentation: particularly de-emphasising what is "right" and "complete" (product) to emphasising process and experimentation
- Choice of materials: what feels right, what looks good
- Relational: the social learning imbedded in the community of practice
- Translational, transformational and critical enquiry: how is knowledge applied and how does it change?

One recommendation is that Flying Arts Alliance provide specific Professional Development for teachers so they may learn to design and implement easy and consistently deployed methods of data collection in their classrooms that demonstrate need and how the costs might off-set the learning outcomes. The workshop should enable standard budgeting considerations of actual costs of artists, travel, accommodation, per diems, on-costs, etc., which need to be clearly linked to visible outcomes. In this way, schools become a collective advocacy agent that immerses itself in the community of practice of collaboration. These development opportunities could use local artists to also help scaffold their own experiences of setting goals, gathering evidence and consolidating the need through requesting of funds. In terms of Aprill's notion of the "rule of three", this professional development could have implications across a broad range of collaborative experiences not just for teachers but for students, parents and administration as well. This kind of advocacy expands Wenger's notion of the landscape of practice so that the enterprise of the school becomes something that deepens the already existing collaborative richness of many school communities.



This kind of advocacy is also about creating a living narrative about the community of practice; the school may have its own learning goals and values, so how are these imbedded in the data that can be gathered at the site to best manifest these. A clear narrative of what the school/community believes needs to be visible in what the school/community does.

Teachers, artists, parents, administration and students may wish to begin their advocacy by openly discussing the costs of creating rich learning experiences and the costs of not doing them. Below is a conceptual example based on some of the findings of his research:

Cost of doing Collaboration

- Increased reliance on process
- Reduced fatigue
- Reduced attrition
- Reduced boredom
- Increased attraction to the arts
- Increased community partnering
- Increased cross-fertilisation
- Increased reputation innovating standards
- Increasing deep and rich learning experiences for all

Cost of NOT doing Collaboration

- Increased competitiveness for resources
- Reduced problem solving skills
- · Reduced flexibility
- Increased isolation/intolerance
- Increased duplication of effort
- Increased paranoia
- Reduced engagement

Further Professional Development models created by Flying Arts may expand upon the theme of collaboration and advocacy through any of the following suggestions:

- How to Structure Collaboration around the Australian Curriculum (Arts): providing distinctive
 application of ACARA materials to create rich learning experiences but to also develop a
 schedule and methods for collecting evidence of participation and reification during
 collaboration.
- Sourcing Collaboration from Your School and Community: how to value-add without increasing workloads, and design and implement specific communities of practice to enhance learning in schools.
- Collaboration and Literacy: artists and teachers work together to design a collaborative learning experience that identifies and reifies a variety of literacies or numeracies across curriculum areas.

Flying Arts Alliance: Resource Support

Flying Arts is already a leader in providing online/interactive resources such as webinars to capture the knowledge of a wide variety of artists and teachers. These are already well-received and utilised by the Flying Arts membership, and a further recommendation would be to increase Flying Arts' provision of learning portals and archives to support the suggested regime of Professional Development. Some suggestions that came out of Stage One of the research are:



- Repository of units of work/lesson plans that have come out of collaboration case-studies and use ACARA "language" and structures
- Flying Arts Certification for artists to work in schools covering Blue Cards through to having completed recommended Flying Arts Professional Development
- An annually updated list of artists (and artist-teachers) from a variety of regional and remote locales around Queensland. This should include a list of costs for workshops, travel, accommodation to help schools budget for collaboration
- Commissioning of further collaboration workshops in remote communities in order to increase models for a repository/archive of best practice collaboration case-studies
- Bursaries to pay for Professional Development in remote school communities
- Guidelines for Artists (written resource/repository to parallel Professional Development): how to drive a collaborative community of practice with your local school/s
- Guidelines for Teachers (written resource/repository to parallel Professional Development): how to advocate for collaboration in your school

These recommendations are necessarily a summary of the many suggestions that were made either formally or during informal discussions during workshops and pilot events. The team has endeavoured to anchor these in the literature and case studies considered in this report, so that greater links can be made between collaboration and communities of practice.

Fin

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