



Submission to Department of Education and Skills

Statement of Strategy 2016 - 2018

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INTRODUCTION

The National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Department of Education and Skills' Statement of Strategy 2016 - 2018. As the national development organisation for youth theatre in Ireland, we make this submission with a specific focus on the arts, and particularly drama, in education.

Specifically we recommend:

- An expansion of focus from STEM to STEAM subjects.
- Introduction of drama as a subject at second-level.
- Retention of drama as a curriculum subject at primary school level
- Full implementation and resourcing of the Arts and Education Charter 2013
- Mainstreaming of relevant all-of-government policies on 'Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making' and 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.'

BACKGROUND TO THE SUBMISSION

We make this submission from our position as the expert organisation in the development and representation of quality youth drama practice. NAYD represents a membership of 60 youth theatres from across Ireland. While our principal focus is on non-formal education, NAYD has long advocated for the inclusion of arts, and particularly drama, in formal education at primary and post-primary level and in further education. NAYD's activity in the area of drama in education has included:

- Leading a series of pioneering Educational Drama conferences in the 1990's
- Taking a leading role in the Educational Drama Forum in the 1990's and the campaign to include drama within the school curricula.
- The development and publication of *Step by Step Educational Drama* (2007) and *Step by Step Together* (2010), providing teachers with cross-curricular approaches to using drama in the primary school classroom.
- NAYD is a member of the Encountering the Arts Ireland alliance (ETAI)
- NAYD has developed a full level 6 FETAC award in drama and delivers it to 15 trainees annually. The award includes a process drama module and trains facilitators to work within different applied drama contexts.
- NAYD was a key partner with the Arts Council of Ireland, the Association of Teachers' /Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI) and the Abbey Theatre in the Performing Arts Learning Support (PALS) Pilot in Autumn 2013. This involved the introduction of a teacher's delegation to NAYD's theatre engagement programme for young people, Young Critics.
- NAYD has delivered training under the Arts in Junior Cycle English Programme to teachers in partnership with the Department of Education, the Arts Council of Ireland, ATECI and the Abbey Theatre.

RESPONSE TO THE DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Recommendations by NAYD are made in response to Section 5 of the Department of Education and Skills contribution to the Programme for Government.

Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students

1. Expand strategic focus from STEM to STEAM

Towards the goal of 'promoting creativity and entrepreneurial capacity in students' the approach outlined contains an emphasis on promoting STEM subjects. It is our recommendation that the Department of Education and Skills expand its focus from STEM to STEAM.

It has been acknowledged by the OECD¹ that, "In modern societies, all of life is problem solving. Changes in society, the environment, and technology mean that the content of applicable knowledge evolves rapidly. Adapting, learning, daring to try out new things and always being ready to learn from mistakes are among the keys to resilience and success in an unpredictable world"

This rationale underpins the growing international movement towards STEAM. The inclusion of Arts subjects in the continuum of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths is increasingly being posited as essential in ensuring that people are equipped with the creativity required to truly fuel innovation.²

By engaging in a creative act, be that making visual art, creating a theatre or dance performance or making a short-film, students learn to find creative solutions to creative problems. In the act of artistic creation students develop their imaginative skills, skills that are central to innovative thinking. Students learn the importance of agency in realising creative goals and thus develop entrepreneurial skills. The process of creation requires the student to try different approaches and make decisions about what to develop and what to discard. The student must learn to conceive of and reflect on failure as a necessary risk when creating something new. These are the 21st century skills that a 21st century education must provide.

The Department states clearly in the Programme for a Partnership Government that "new subjects should be introduced such as the arts" but a greater commitment to inclusion of arts subjects as central to promoting creativity and entrepreneurial capacity is needed.

¹ OECD (2014), Pisa 2012 Results: Creative Problem Solving: Students' Skills in Tackling Real-Life Problems (Volume V), PISA, OECD Publishing.

² Cultural Learning Alliance (2014), STEM + Arts = STEAM

2. Introduce Drama as a subject at second-level and retain Drama in the Primary Curriculum

Furthermore, clarity on *what* 'arts' subjects should be introduced is required. Given that Visual Art and Music are already curriculum subjects at second-level, the addition of a Performing Arts subject would add significantly to arts education at second-level. Drama in particular encourages students to imagine alternative realities, problem-solve and take creative risks. Drama methodologies that focus on ensemble work and devised theatre are particularly effective approaches to developing student's critical, creative and entrepreneurial skills.

For example, participative drama practice as has been developed by NAYD in non-formal education contexts, promotes many of the 'Statements of Learning' and 'Key Skills', outlined in the new Junior Cycle. The specification for a Short Course in Artistic Performance, provides an opportunity for introducing Drama at second-level and could provide the starting point for developing a second-level Drama Curriculum.

3. Full implementation and resourcing of the Arts and Education Charter 2013

The Department's contribution to the 'Programme for a Partnership Government' makes no reference to the Arts in Education Charter 2013³. This has been the Department's most strategic development in the area of arts and should be prioritised in the Statement of Strategy 2016 - 2018

An immediate and achievable action would be to sustain and resource the existing Arts in Education Charter. The Charter, which has harnessed partnership with the Department of the Arts to improve and extend arts experiences for children and young people in Education has prioritised implementation, and stands as a model of positive inter-departmental collaboration. A clear commitment should be made to continue to implement the Arts and Education Charter; to properly resource all of the commitments within it; to evaluate it's effectiveness to date; and to build on the partnership approach to further enhance the arts in education. Related developments such as the introduction of the role of National Director for the Integration of Arts in Education and the creation of the Arts in Education Portal should also be maintained.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

The Department should explicitly recognise and commit to meeting its responsibilities under existing national policies as they relate to children and young people.

Specifically, the Department should consult students in the development of education policy under the provisions of Objective 7 of the 'National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015 – 2020: "Mainstreaming the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation and

³ Department of Education and Skills (2013) Arts in Education Charter

research.⁴

The Department of Education and Skills should also consider its role as Sponsor for Outcome 2 of “Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 – 2020”: “Children and young people are achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development”⁵

⁴ Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015), National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020

⁵ Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2014) Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 - 2020



About NAYD

The National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD) was established in 1980 to support the development of youth theatre in Ireland.

Since then, NAYD has been supporting youth drama in practice and policy by advocating the benefits of young people's participation, promoting quality youth theatre practice and providing leadership for the sector. Now representing a membership of 60 affiliated youth theatres, the organisation has seen thousands of young lives enhanced and transformed by the experience of youth drama. Today, NAYD continues to work towards the sustained development of youth theatres in partnership with local authorities, youth services, theatres, arts centres, organisations and individuals. A commitment to young people and theatre is at the core of the work of NAYD. The value we place on this unique relationship will continue to shape the work of the organisation into the future.

NAYD promotes

- Drama as a medium for learning and as a means of expression for young people
- The advancement of the artistic, personal and social development of young people through drama and performance related skills
- Youth theatre as a medium to extend and enhance young people's understanding of theatre as an art form
- The emergence and development of youth theatres in Ireland

For more information see www.nayd.ie