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Nine secondary schools in Leeds are each hosting a professional artist as part of an innovative project organised by Leeds ArtForms. This exists to promote the arts within Leeds schools and artist's inputs are free. The uniqueness of this 'carousel' project is that LAF pair artists with a host school and teachers to gain an understanding of schools, students and the curriculum before designing and delivering a workshop to pupils, then reflecting and refining the workshop before going on to deliver in other schools. Teachers were highly committed to the project, discussed learning contexts, helped in planning workshops, and adapted timetables flexibly. Artists have a wide range of practice and provided schools with a valuable insight into their lives and the economic realities a professional artist.

Teachers identified common aims they wanted their students to develop: 'More people skills, answering / questions, focusing on the wider aspect of Art'. Self-discipline – thinking of different resolutions, rather than a predictable response'. 'The ability to discuss an artist's work with the artist' 'willingness to take risks and experiment with their artwork'. 'Openness to new ideas and approaches'. 'to develop an understanding of how artists operate'

Most of the artists had had very little recent contact with schools and developed greater understanding and empathy with the role of teachers: 'I did get a sense that teachers are working a lot to targets and teaching practical art skills, they don't have a lot of time to discuss or expand students' awareness of contemporary art'.

However, artists also raised some issues for schools and teachers: 'Many of the teachers expressed how busy they were, I don't feel they realised how busy I was'. It is easy for teachers to forget that practising artists have a freelance role; when they are investing in their own professional development they might be turning away paid commissions.

Delivering to several schools provided a very special learning experience and all were clear on the journey they had undertaken.

'I get a buzz out of teaching and explaining new things and witnessing the pupils' response and then helping them in their work and seeing and hearing their reactions from what they have produced'.

Artists and teachers also commented on students' gaining an understanding of the opportunities open to them within the creative industries.

One teacher considered his students had 'gained a different way of thinking about art' and this accords with the importance attached to thinking skills in the new secondary curriculum. Additional benefits included: raising the profile of the department across the school and other students asking to take part and seeing involvement as a goal for the future. Two G&T students from a school in challenging circumstances gained sufficient self confidence to take up the offer of after school classes at Leeds College of Art and Design directly as result of their workshop experience.

In every workshop the high level of student engagement was obvious. One particularly 'challenging' year 8 class worked intently throughout a two hour workshop. These students recognised they were viewed as a difficult class but identified the freedom to organise themselves as individuals, pairs or groups, the opportunity to 'choose' and 'make decisions' in the workshop as major factors in the excellent behaviour seen throughout.

One boy really appreciated the artist's pieces, illustrated in her PowerPoint, identifying one he would like to 'have on his wall'. Fascinating discussions opened out around what constituted a final piece and how creative risk taking and independence can be fostered within a system that on the one hand explicitly encourages, even requires this, yet at the same time imposes targets.

The depth of students' thinking was impressive with many engaging with ideas and issues at a high level. One group described their 'TV set construction' as 'looking back and confronting the viewer', deliberately subverting the traditional meaning. Targets, learning outcomes and any form of recognised assessment were conspicuously and rightly absent from the workshops recognising that it isn't always possible to ensure material quality outcomes in these activities.

The significance of this project lies in the close and sustained contacts between artists and teachers supported by LAF. The developing expertise of the nine artists has created a rich resource in the city that can be drawn on by schools within Leeds and beyond. One artist has already delivered training to support the new secondary curriculum with this RSA. LAF are planning a publication to disseminate the outcomes and are actively planning for a similar project to run in 2010 building on the lessons learned this year.

Ted Kennedy is a Regional Subject Adviser for the new Secondary Curriculum and Fast Track Assessor.

For further information including the artists involved contact Clare Biggs at Education Leeds **Clare.Biggs@educationleeds.co.uk**

