

Creating Critical Connections through the Arts: The Y Connect Report

Examining the impact of
arts-based pedagogies and artist/teacher partnerships
on learning and teaching in one Australian Secondary School

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PREFACE

It is twenty years this year since the landmark *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* report was released. This report drew together the findings of seven teams of US based researchers to offer a comprehensive summary of the impact on children and young people of arts experiences. In this report, the authors (Fiske et.al, 1999, p. ix) proposed that, “When well taught, the arts provide young people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts, and bodies”. The report then went on to outline key findings (pp. 12-13) including that: the arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached and in ways that they are not otherwise being reached; the arts connect students to themselves and each other; the arts transform the environment for learning; the arts provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people; the arts provide new challenges for those students already considered successful; and the arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work.

Eleven years later, Robyn Ewing (2010) created a report for the Australian Council for Educational Research entitled *The Arts and Australian Education: Realising Potential*. This report mapped the significant contributions and potential of Arts Education in Australia, citing a growing body of literature that supports the view that young people benefit in many ways from engagement with artists, the Arts and arts organisations. The identified benefits, like those outlined within the *Champions of Change* report ten years before it, are social, emotional, aesthetic and educational. In spite of these benefits, the Ewing report argues that for various reasons, the potential of the Arts to “foster the development of creativity and imagination, and to facilitate social change” (p.5) in Australia has not been realised.

Meanwhile, studies focusing on student wellbeing such as *Are the kids alright? Young Australians in their middle years* (Redmond et al., 2016, pp. xi-xii) have argued that given the current complexity of young people’s lives, a focus on wellbeing needs to be at the heart of policy.

Set against this backdrop, the Y Connect Project, a partnership between Yeronga State High School (SHS) and researchers from Griffith University, was designed and implemented. Funded by the Queensland Department of Education through its *Collaboration and Innovation Fund*, the Y Connect Project brought students, teachers, school leaders, artists, arts organisations, and researchers together in an attempt to enhance young people’s connectedness, their engagement and achievement in learning, and their sense of belonging. To address these goals: arts-based pedagogies were employed across the curriculum; teachers partnered with artists and arts organisations; and arts projects became part of the natural landscape of the school.

During its 2.5-year duration, more than 900 hours of Y Connect related activity took place, including 784 individual events ranging from classroom-based lessons and professional development sessions, to formal and informal performances and displays. In total, this activity created 15 342 points of interaction between members of the school community and Y Connect artists and involved 48 teachers and 36 artists and arts organisations. These statistics suggest that the Y Connect Project may be the largest project of its kind ever conducted in a single school anywhere in the world.

This report provides a detailed analysis of the Project’s six case studies and four research questions, drawing heavily on the perceptions of the students, teachers, school leaders, and artists who were directly involved. We believe their voices are crucial. As researchers, we hope the findings outlined here will be used by educators, policy makers, artists, arts organisations and the broader national and international community to more fully realise the potential of the Arts within schools, while also gaining a clearer understanding of the mostly untapped opportunities which the Arts, artists and arts-based pedagogies offer in supporting young people to reach **their** full potential.

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- Thanks, must also go to Griffith University for its ongoing support for the research work, with special thanks to the School of Education and Professional Studies and the Griffith Institute for Educational Research (GIER).
- Y Connect was all about partnerships. The Project team would therefore like to thank all of the individual artists and arts organisations who supported the work. Particular thanks must go to Circa, La Boite, Opera Queensland and QPAC (Queensland Performing Arts Centre).
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Y Connect Project Partners

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List of Abbreviations

ACARA – Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority

AIR – Artist-in-Residency Programs

AL – Additional Language

ARC – Australian Research Council

CALD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

DET – Queensland Department of Education

DRTA – Direct Reading and Thinking Activity

EALD – English as an Additional Language or Dialect

EE – Essential English

ESL – English as a Second Language

GOMA – Gallery of Modern Art

HL – Home Language

HoD – Head of Department

ICSEA – Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage

Int – Interviewer

LBOTE – language background other than English

LOTE – Language other than English

NAPLAN – National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy

PD – Professional development

PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment

Q – Question

QPAC – Queensland Performing Arts Centre

SHS – State High School

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

TAPS – Teachers Accessing Peer Support

TESMC – Teaching ESL students in Mainstream Classrooms

Voc Ed – Vocational Education

WOW – Women of the World

YLT – Yeronga State High School Leadership Team

THE Y CONNECT SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

The Y Connect Project was a partnership between Yeronga State High School and researchers from Griffith University. Funded by the Queensland Department of Education through its *Collaboration and Innovation Fund*, the Y Connect Project brought students, teachers, school leaders, artists, arts organisations, and researchers together in an attempt to enhance young people's sense of belonging and connectedness, and to generate improvements in several aspects of learning. To address these goals, arts-based pedagogies were employed across the curriculum, teachers partnered with artists and arts organisations, and focused arts projects became part of the natural landscape of the school.

Implemented over an extended period of 2.5 years from 2016 to 2018, the Y Connect Project generated more than 900 hours of activity, including 784 individual events. These events included: artist/teacher partnerships in classroom-based lessons involving dance, drama, media arts, music, visual arts, mathematics, and English students from Years 7-11; professional development sessions for teachers; formal and informal performances and displays; visits to theatres and galleries; and support for individual students to engage directly with arts organisations. In total, this activity created 15,342 points of interaction between Yeronga SHS students and Y Connect artists and involved 48 teachers and 36 artists and arts organisations.

The Research Context

Situated within an inner suburb of Brisbane, Australia, Yeronga State High School is an independent public school under the auspices of the Queensland Department of Education (DoE). It caters to students from Years 7-12 and has a student population of just over 750 students, including a high proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The students attending the school are from a range of backgrounds, including local, refugee, asylum-seeking and immigrant backgrounds. During the timeframe of this Project, they came from more than 70 different countries, with 76% having a language background other than English. 51% had refugee backgrounds or were people seeking asylum. Many such students arrive at Yeronga with limited experience of schooling, limited English and low confidence. Given these statistics, targeted programs are employed to support students who may struggle to connect with learning and because of this lack of connection, may fail to achieve learning success. In the past, the school has been successful in winning several important educational awards based on these programs.

Research Design

In order to understand the impact of the Y Connect Project, four research questions were developed:

1. How has participation in the Y Connect Project impacted on the **students** involved?
2. How has involvement in the Y Connect Project impacted on the **participating teachers and school culture**?
3. How has involvement in the Project impacted on the **artists** and what have they learnt about teacher/artist partnerships through participation?
4. What **factors enabled and constrained** the success of the Y Connect Project?

To address these questions, six case studies were developed. These cases were not identified in advance by members of the research team, but rather emerged in response to the interests and needs of the school community.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, with the balance across these paradigms being firmly placed on qualitative sources. The decision to emphasise qualitative data was based on a desire to understand the student, teacher, leader, and artist experiences phenomenologically – from their

perspectives. In addition, while the research team were keen to identify the impact of the Project on aspects of academic achievement, our aims mostly related to the affective dimensions of learning such as engagement and belonging. As such, the research team determined that emphasis should be placed on data collection processes that helped to understand and give voice to the perspectives of the Yeronga State High School teachers and students. The data sources included: an activity log to track student participation; pre- and post-project student surveys; a post-project teacher survey; student achievement data (National benchmark and school-based in Mathematics); student, teacher, school leadership and artist interviews; observations; photographs; video; artefact collection and teacher planning documents.

Within each of the following cases, data were collected for various periods of time and across multiple student cohorts:

Case Study One:	Focused Arts Projects
Case Study Two:	Artists in Arts Classrooms
Case Study Three:	Artists and Arts-based Pedagogies in the English Classroom
Case Study Four:	Drama in the Essential English Classroom
Case Study Five:	Mathematics and Movement
Case Study Six:	Forum Program – Drama for Hope and Belonging

Case Study One – Focused Arts Projects

This case examined student involvement in extra-curricular focused arts projects. Fourteen long, and short-term projects were delivered as part of this case, involving students in Music, Drama, Circus and Dance. These projects included the Performing Arts Club, an after-school drama program, and the Circus program, delivered in collaboration with international circus company, Circa. Other projects included: On the Green, where student musicians performed during break time; Guitar Club and Physical Theatre Group. The case was conducted from 2016-2018 and involved 285 hours of activity, 188 events and 4110 points of student contact across the different projects.

Case Study Two – Artists in Arts Classrooms

This case focused on partnerships between artists and arts teachers and examined the impact of these on the Arts learning and engagement of students. Throughout the course of the case study, 18 artists worked in partnership with 17 arts teachers and their students to address a range of curricular topics and processes including: choreography and structuring of new works in Dance; monologues, devising, clowning and physical theatre in Drama; video creation, soundscapes and editing in Media Arts; ensemble building, drumming and composing in Music; and sculpture and installation development in Visual Arts. The case was conducted across 2016-2018 and involved 289 hours of activity, including 259 events and 4845 points of student contact. Students were also involved in six excursions. These experiences mostly involved students in Year 7-10, although there were some opportunities for senior students to engage as well.

Case Study Three – English

This case examined the impact of artists and arts-based approaches on the teaching and learning of English for students in the middle years of schooling (Years 7-10). The case involved EALD and non-EALD English classes from Years 7-10, with involvement being dependent upon teacher interest. 14 teachers and 7 artists were involved. The case ran from 2016-2018 and involved 216 hours of activity, with 213 events (including 200 classroom-based lessons) and 4254 points of student contact. Although there was an emphasis on drama-based approaches within this case study, music and dance artists were also involved. Further aspects included excursions to theatre-based performances and workshops.

Case Study Four – Essential English

This case examined the impact of drama pedagogies within the Essential English classroom. The Essential English program is an additional subject that students take alongside their other (mainstream) classes to support their English language development. Participants in this case study were students enrolled in Essential English classes in 2015 semester 2, 2016 semester 1 and 2017 semesters 1 and 2. In total it involved 38.5 hours of delivery and 37 events resulting in 666 points of student contact. Process Drama was the predominant form used.

Case Study Five – Mathematics and Movement

Here the focus was on partnerships between dance artists and Mathematics teachers. The case study involved 66.5 hours of duration and 53 events, including 43 classroom-based lessons and ten design and planning sessions between the teachers and the artists. Overall there were 981 points of student contact throughout the case, involving students in Years 8-10. Teacher-artist partnerships were a focus here, with collaborative planning sessions being essential to identify suitable approaches to the different topics including: fractions and decimals; ratios; area, volume and perimeters; geometry, including angles; algebra; and probability and statistics.

Case Study Six – The Forum Program

The focus in this case was on enhancing the connectedness and belonging of participating students. Using a drama-based approach, the program, which ran during school hours, was delivered to a group of specially selected Year 11 and 12 students from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds. Most of these students were selected because they were considered to be vulnerable or experiencing difficult life challenges, while a small number were included based on their capacity to be strong role models. The Forum Program consisted of 27 workshops, resulting in 27 hours of delivery and 486 points of student contact. By the time this case concluded at the end of 2016, 32 young people had participated at various times.

Key Findings: Question One

How has participation in the Y Connect Project impacted on the students involved?



The image above provides a visual representation of the categories of Y Connect findings as they relate to research question one. This question focuses on the young people who participated in this project. It shows that these impacts can be understood in relation to six connections:

- connection to self
- connection to each other
- connection to learning
- connection to and belonging within the school community (abbreviated across this report to connection to the school community)
- connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations
- connection to the future through the creation of alternate possible selves (abbreviated across this report to connection to possible selves).

Of course, not all of the participating students experienced all of these connections and not all students experienced them to the same degree. In addition, while the pieces of the puzzle are shown in the diagram as discrete and separate, in reality they overlap.

Connection to Self



Analysis of data across all six case studies revealed a very strong and consistent message of improvements for participating students in their connection to self, including key aspects such as: confidence; ownership; persistence and self-directedness; motivation; identity and self-efficacy; pride; pleasure; and a willingness to take risks. Many of these aspects were particularly evident within the Focused Arts Project Case (CS1), while in the Mathematics and Movement case study (CS5), enhanced confidence, motivation and pleasure were commonly reported. In the Artist in Arts Classroom Case (CS2), students identified a growth in their pride and once again confidence. For participants in the three cases where drama pedagogies dominated (Cases 3, 4 and 6), or when a large number of participating students were from refugee backgrounds (Cases 4 and 6), many students indicated pride in the progress made in their self-expression. Other aspects of self that were identified across the cases included self-worth; trust; pleasure; and imagination. Some students also reported a reduction in stress.

Summary of Findings

1. Many students reported improvements in confidence, motivation or self-esteem as a result of engagement with artist/teacher partnerships, within the classroom and beyond.
2. Across the cases, students who experience school as a challenging or de-motivating place, were identified as developing enhanced confidence, trust in each other and pride in their achievements.
3. The arts-based pedagogies and involvement of artists also enhanced aspects of self for high achieving students, with the additional artistic challenges serving to improve their motivation and willingness to take risks.
4. The Y Connect pedagogies and approaches were beneficial for students with an EALD background, supporting their confidence to speak, present and share ideas.
5. The involvement of artists, together with an expansion of arts-based pedagogies and projects served to “awaken” student agency and voice across the school community.

Connection to Each Other



Connection to each other refers to the outcomes generated as students engaged more positively with a broader range of students within and across year levels, cultural and religious groups, and genders. This enhanced connectedness was supported by the practices employed in both classroom and project work, with the Y Connect pedagogies and practices requiring high levels of collaboration, team work and often, a shared commitment to a common goal (including for both informal and formal performances and exhibitions).

While these connections were identified across all case studies, the connections across year levels were particularly important for the students involved in Circus and other extra-curricular projects. As they required extended engagement, including participation in after school and weekend sessions, these projects created spaces for new friendships to be forged. Bound together by a shared drive to create a performance or exhibition they could feel pride in, the students needed to pull together and commit. Importantly, younger students came to know and feel comfortable around older students, including student leaders, creating relationships uncommon for students not involved in multi-age projects.

Summary of Findings

1. New friendships and expanded social networks were forged through participation in arts projects which involved long-term engagement and collaboration towards a shared goal.
2. These friendships and networks created safe spaces for a small group of students who reported feeling marginalised in some other groups.
3. Vertical relationships were developed as students of different ages and experience collaborated on arts projects, creating mentoring opportunities and improving social capital.
4. The Y Connect approaches, which emphasised active and aesthetic engagement, collective problem solving and dialogue, demanded collaboration and strengthened connections between students.

Connection to Learning



Connection to learning is used in this report to describe growth in three key areas associated with learning: engagement and attitudes towards learning; skill development; and understanding and achievement. Improvements in some or all of these areas were identified in all cases with the exception of the Forum Program (CS6) which intentionally emphasised the development of hope and belonging rather than having a particular curriculum focus.

Engagement and attitudes towards learning

Improved student engagement with learning was the most significant outcome across all five cases in relation to connection to learning. It was identified by both teachers and students, with the most common reason given for these improvements being the shifts in pedagogical approaches employed, whilst the expectations and energy of the artists were further reasons provided. Students repeatedly referred to the learning process as “*fun*”, while teachers reported that otherwise disengaged students demonstrated positive shifts in their involvement and willingness to engage when artists were present.

Skill development

A range of skills were noted by teachers and students as improving as a result of participation in the various cases. These skills included: artistic, creative and performance skills; thinking skills – including higher order thinking and problem-solving skills; aspects of literacy including oral language and presentation skills; writing skills; reading skills and skills required for communicating effectively in the English language.

Understanding and achievement

Across Cases 2, 3, 4 and 5, teachers and students consistently reported improvements in both understanding and achievement. For example, in the Artists in Arts Classrooms Case (CS2), teachers across all five Arts disciplines suggested that their students’ results had been enhanced by partnering with artists, while in the Mathematics and Movement Case (CS5), four achievement related benefits were identified including improvement in the: recall of mathematical concepts; understanding of mathematical concepts; retention of mathematics vocabulary and assessment results for some students. In relation to this latter point, quantitative data supplied by the school, via the Head of Department, revealed that the prolonged engagement of teachers across the duration of Y Connect had a positive impact on student retention of concepts taught, with student results in relation to the pre and post-tests being, on average, higher when teachers were involved in the Y Connect Project. Within the English Case (CS 3), improvements were noted in the depth of understanding experienced by students, especially in relation to plot and character within literature, with this deeper understanding leading, for some students, to improved achievement within assessment tasks. Finally, analysis of the NAPLAN data across multiple cohorts of participating students revealed a small overall improvement in the school’s literacy results, together with stronger improvements in reading and writing for some students, especially those with EALD backgrounds.

Summary of Findings

1. Artist/teacher partnerships and innovative pedagogies created new and embodied ways of enacting curriculum, deepening students’ engagement and understanding of key concepts.
2. These partnerships and pedagogies were particularly successful for students who struggled academically, for whom engagement was an issue or were EALD students.
3. Y Connect approaches improved key skills essential for learning, including: oral language; reading and writing; critical and creative thinking; and creative, artistic and performance skills.
4. Some students and teachers reported that these skills were developed to an extent that would not have been possible using other approaches.

5. Students and teachers reported gains in academic achievement as a result of participation in the Project, including within national benchmark tests (NAPLAN) and Arts, English and Mathematics assessments.

Connection to the School Community



Connection to the school community is used within this report to describe the impact of Y Connect on the young people's sense of belonging within and connectedness to the broader school community. Analysis reveals that an enhanced sense of belonging through connection with the school community was identified within three of the six case studies: Focused Arts Projects (CS1); Artists in Arts Classrooms (CS2); and Forum Program (CS6).

Within the Focused Arts Projects case (CS1), students offered various statements relating to an enhanced sense of connection to the school, with some arguing that school was simply more fun than before, while others felt that the school was giving them something extra – looking after them in a particular and unique way. In arguing this point, they identified other schools that weren't being offered these opportunities and as such, felt special. Students involved in the Artists in Arts Classrooms case (CS2) offered similar perspectives, claiming that they were fortunate to attend a school that provided them with opportunities to engage with professional artists and to learn directly from highly skilled and creative individuals. A number expressed their thanks and wanted the government to know that they were grateful.

Within the Focused Arts Projects (CS1), a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community was also created through engagement with the wider community, including via performances, displays and other programs, serving to bring the community into the school and for some, to go out into it.

Finally, within the survey responses and across the interview data, new and different types of relationships with adults were described, including with both teachers and artists. These relationships were seen by students as being a critical aspect of connection to school, offering different benefits from friendships and connections with other students.

Summary of Findings

1. Students reported that the Y Connect Project made them feel proud to be part of the Yeronga school community and expressed their gratitude for the unique opportunities it provided.
2. The commitment required to work towards public performance and display outcomes led to higher levels of student involvement creating connection to school and a sense of belonging.
3. Improved relationships between adults and students were reported, including a stronger sense that the adults in the school community care about students' opinions and well-being.
4. The aesthetic, collaborative, agentic and dialogic nature of the Y Connect work, provided opportunities for young people to speak up, be heard and therefore feel more closely connected.

5. A small but significant improvement in the school attendance data was noted, suggesting a positive link between involvement, enjoyment in learning, belonging and attendance.

Connection to the Arts, Artists and Arts Organisations



Connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations captures the findings associated with the relationships that were built between students, artists and arts organisations, together with the flow on effect to student understanding of, interest in and appreciation of the Arts more broadly. This connection is highlighted in three of the six case study reports - Focused Arts Projects (CS1), Artist in Arts Classrooms (CS2) and the English case (CS3). Within the Focused Arts Projects case (CS1), students were excited by the opportunity to work with artists who they described as “*hard core*” in terms of their expectations, demanding more of them than their teachers might, with many students suggesting that they stepped up in response to these demands. With their energy and enthusiasm, which one student described as “*changing up the dynamic of the room*”, artists were also viewed as being capable of helping young people to find new and sometimes easier ways of engaging with learning.

Within visits to arts organisations as part of the Artists in Arts Classroom case (CS2), students also had the opportunity to see artists at work, and to experience their work environments. These opportunities served to break down barriers between the students and these sometimes very large cultural organisations. Based on their responses to these opportunities, one teacher described events like these as “*turning points*”, helping students to see their own work as art.

Across these three cases in particular, the artists helped students to develop a whole new range of skills, with an extended vocabulary to go with it. They also gained confidence by seeing stories about people like themselves being played out by professional actors, including actors with refugee backgrounds. As a result, artists became role models.

Summary of Findings

1. The different types of relationships created between the artists and young people made some individuals more aspirational, whilst others were simply encouraged to do better.
2. Opportunities for young people to engage with arts organisations and to attend cultural venues broke down perceived barriers and perceptions that these sites weren’t for them.
3. Direct engagement with and within arts organisations, created opportunities for the diverse Y Connect participants to extend upon their existing social and cultural capital.
4. The Y Connect Project brought new people, including some from similar backgrounds, into the lives of the students, creating new heroes, mentors and role models.
5. For some participating students who faced multiple life challenges, Y Connect enhanced their connection to the Arts, which in turn, built self-esteem, confidence and a sense of belonging.

Connection to Possible Selves



Connection to possible selves captures the outcomes articulated by students about how the Project impacted on aspects of self that are futures oriented, including their thoughts about career pathways. From the outset, one of this Project's key goals was to offer students horizon breaking experiences that would help them to identify career options, both within the Arts and Creative Industries and beyond. In terms of careers within the Arts, the Project team were keen to "normalise" the work of artists.

However, the notion of pathway perceptions emerged as being too narrow, with the term "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986) being applied instead. Enhanced connections to the future via the identification of alternate possible selves emerged strongly in the Focused Projects case (CS1) and the Artists in Arts Classrooms case (CS2).

The possible selves developed by students were not solely focused on careers in the Arts, but rather, represented a broad range of fields. Students had begun to see themselves differently, with these differences supporting them to feel more confident in general about their futures. Closely associated with connection to self, was the confidence boost which many students experienced across the duration of the Project. This boost enabled them to dream larger, with futures less constrained by anxiety, fear and self-limiting beliefs.

Summary of Findings

1. Engagement with artists and visits to arts organisations gave some students the chance to identify possible selves outside of their usual realms of experience.
2. As academic attainment, self-regulation and persistence are enhanced when new possible selves emerge, their identification undoubtedly had important flow-on effects for these students.
3. The opportunities for students from refugee backgrounds to meet with and learn from artists with similar backgrounds were critical for the identification of alternate possible selves.
4. The possible selves identified were not confined to ones associated with the Arts, as they also included new aspirations across a range of disciplines, including many requiring tertiary studies.

INFORMING CASE STUDIES

In this section a summary of the key findings of each of the six case studies is outlined.

Case Study 1 – Focused Arts Projects



The approaches used within this case impacted positively on all six connections. Below is a summary of the case specific findings:

1. Extra-curricular arts projects, supported by partnerships between teachers and artists, offered holistic benefits for students, with key aspects of self being enhanced.
2. The public performance and display outcomes associated with these projects were particularly critical in nurturing improvements across the six areas of connectedness.
3. Extra-curricular activities gave students opportunities to build self-confidence in a learning environment where the pressure and constraints of assessment were absent.
4. These activities provided opportunities for all participating students, irrespective of their academic levels, to experience success and be recognised for their achievements.
5. Students benefitted from interacting with individuals and groups within their school community beyond those they would normally engage with within timetabled school activities.
6. Mixed year groups created bonds between students of different ages.
7. Participation in the arts projects created positive emotions such as pleasure, happiness and hope. Even difficult tasks were associated with pride and achievement.
8. Vulnerable students, especially some involved in the circus group, were supported to challenge themselves, persist, take risks and trust each other.
9. The professional expectations of artists relating to public outcomes, supported students to work harder to extend their own artistry and to create quality outcomes.
10. Opportunities to work closely with artists on long term projects, broadened students' appreciation of the work of artists and expanded their pathway perceptions.

Case Study 2 – Artists in Arts Classrooms



Improvements across all six connections were also noted within this case.

1. Students reported positive personal growth as a result of engagement in the learning opportunities related to this case. They specifically noted enhanced pride, confidence and the capacity to “*be myself*”. Many recognised they had developed important personal but transferable skills.
2. Better relationships emerged between teachers and some students as teachers were able to see students “*in a new light*” as they responded differently to the content and pedagogical relationship with the artist.
3. Non-subject specific learning, such as collaboration, and the willingness to engage with others, were also enhanced in this case. Through communal experiences that created shared memories, students increasingly valued teamwork, including across diverse cultural groups, and came to understand that different people learn differently.
4. Students and teachers reported that higher levels of subject-specific learning and achievement in the Arts were produced through learning guided by high quality teachers/artist partnerships. In particular they noted an improvement in the students’ arts-related written work as a result of transference from practical skills.
5. Stronger connections to the school community were evident through students reporting an increased desire to attend, and to be more involved in, school activities. Some also reported an enhanced sense of responsibility and improved relationships across cultural groups.
6. Throughout the timeframe of this study, enrolments in arts curriculum subjects grew. Students and teachers recognised the value of knowing individuals and organisations in the arts community and were conscious of the professional standards and professionalism involved in arts careers.
7. Artists, in many instances, became additional role models for students. Students valued opportunities to see their own arts work in a professional context, and to access the works of a range of professional artists. They were able to imagine a larger range of career possibilities, in both arts and non-arts fields of endeavour.

Case Study 3 – English



The figure above demonstrates that four connections were enhanced through participation in this case study: self, each other, learning and Arts, artists and arts organisations. Below is a summary of the key findings:

1. Artists and arts pedagogies in the English classroom made learning more active and engaging for students, reducing boredom and helping students learn with “*fresh brains*”.
2. Academic achievement improved for some students, particularly in writing and speaking, with a more embodied and artistic understanding of literature being further benefits.
3. The involvement of highly skilled actors and their use of aesthetic approaches supported the development of vocabulary acquisition, understanding of texts, empathy towards characters and the confident expression of ideas.

4. The presence and support of professional artists not involved in the assessment process, put the students at ease and reduced their anxiety. They felt particularly supported when preparing oral presentations, with this being a strongly expressed view of EALD students.
5. Many students felt more confident in approaching written tasks when arts-based pedagogies were employed **prior** to engagement in writing as they supported idea and language development.
6. Students benefitted from higher levels of collaboration which created an environment of peer-based support and widened their circle of engagement.
7. Excursions to cultural venues and opportunities to meet artists built cultural capital and normalised arts experiences which in turn enhanced connection to learning in English. These opportunities were particularly important for those students who might not normally access such events.

Case Study 4 – Essential English



Three of the six connections were enhanced through participation this case study: self, each other, and learning. Below is a summary of the key findings associated with these connections:

1. Students and teachers reported growth in self-confidence, and the capacity to take risks (*"with permission"*) in learning. Students suggested that it was important to feel safe, to relax and have fun as they were learning. For some, this process of learning through drama contributed to the capacity to *"know yourself"*.
2. The strong emphasis on working in groups improved students' capacity for collaboration and cooperation. Students valued opportunities for *"working with friend"* and *"helping each other"*. They noted that group work gave them chances to take on responsibility and work with different people, thus making new friends.
3. Oral communication and presentation skills were enhanced. One student considered that drama pedagogy lowered barriers (*"the fence"*) to learning. Deeper understanding of language was evident through classroom interactions and through the more complex writing produced as a result of the drama classes.

Case Study 5 – Mathematics and Movement



The figure above demonstrates that three of the six connections were enhanced through this case study: self, each other, and learning. Below is a summary of the key findings:

1. Movement pedagogies supported learning through the physical representation of Mathematics concepts. This embodied engagement gave students a “*lived*” experience which many students reported as being helpful in assisting their understanding, recall and retention, and academic achievement.
2. Students and teachers alike reported improvements in students being able to think “*outside of the box*” which created “*lightbulb moments*” for some students.
3. Movement pedagogies made Mathematics more enjoyable, particularly for disengaged and struggling students. These students also benefitted most in terms of lifts in achievement.
4. The shift in pedagogies reduced some students’ stress, heightened their engagement and focus, and increased their confidence, motivation and pleasure.
5. The participatory approaches meant that students couldn’t be passive but instead were required to engage directly with mathematical concepts and their peers.
6. The collaborative nature of movement pedagogies also encouraged students to work together, improving students’ confidence and in one class, mitigating gender divides.
7. Comparisons between pre- and post-test results showed that student outcomes improved following participation in Mathematics and Movement lessons. However, the greatest improvements were generated when teachers applied these approaches following a period of extended engagement with artists.

Case Study 6 – Forum Program



The figure above demonstrates that improvements in three of the six connections were revealed within this case study: self, each other, and school community. Below is a summary of the key findings:

1. Participation increased some students' confidence, self-worth and self-efficacy. Students reported that they trusted themselves more and found greater value in their contributions.
2. EALD students reported improved oracy, with this being connected to their enhanced confidence and self-efficacy. They were more willing to talk in class and share ideas and opinions.
3. The collaborative nature of the drama pedagogies encouraged oral language development through the normalisation of participation, interaction and communication.
4. Vulnerable refugee and asylum seeker students benefitted from participation in a program without assessment. Without this pressure, students took risks in their use of language and in their presentation of self.
5. The specific environment developed within the Forum Program contributed to higher levels of student enjoyment and improved teacher-student relationships.
6. This Program created a space where students felt welcome and experienced a sense of "home", which in turn appeared to result in positive feelings of belonging and connection within the school community.

Key Findings: Question Two

How has involvement in the Y Connect Project impacted on the participating teachers and school culture?

Eight areas of benefit to teachers were identified. In summary, they indicate that teachers experienced new ways of understanding and enacting curriculum, with these new ways serving to expand existing pedagogical repertoires. For more experienced teachers, the shifts served to revitalise their practice, leading to higher levels of enjoyment and engagement, while irrespective of experience, teachers reported positive shifts in their professional identity. Some suggested that they felt a greater sense of freedom to explore, others developed new artistic skills. Perhaps most importantly, many teachers reported improved relationships with their students and colleagues. The overall school culture also shifted, with, not surprisingly, a greater emphasis on the Arts and a perception that these subjects now represent the *"soul of the school"*.

Given the high rate of teacher attrition that is currently having a negative impact on the teaching profession, and the rising costs of off-site teacher professional learning, these findings are highly significant and suggest that the involvement of artists across curriculum areas can serve to support teacher learning in ways that are both cost effective and enjoyable.

Key Findings: Question Three

How has involvement in the Project impacted on the artists and what have they learnt about teacher/artist partnerships through participation?

Four intersecting sets of features and conditions were perceived by artists as contributing to successful outcomes. These included: practice features, organisational conditions, partnership conditions and artist responsibilities. Effective practice features were identified as those where: active, energetic and collaborative engagement was encouraged; students were offered aesthetically charged experiences with opportunities to exercise agency within a safe and supportive environment that was judgement free; the work was challenging but supported through scaffolding and built upon students' own stories and experiences; deep professional expertise and the use of professional language were key features; and where professional practices, processes and expectations drove the work.

Conditions for success fell into two categories: organisational conditions and partnership conditions. These are outlined with the report but overall suggest that the Y Connect processes were most successful when both artists and teachers saw themselves as partners and as reciprocal learners (Kind, de Cosson, Irwin & Grauer, 2007, p. 858). This reciprocity meant that while many of the Yeronga SHS teachers developed their own artistic practice through working with artists, learning to re-imagine and apply new artistic processes in the classroom environment, artists also developed numerous skills as they learnt from the teachers, including how to facilitate large groups and behaviour management techniques for young people with diverse needs.

Significantly, as this reciprocal learning took place, it nourished mutual respect for individual expertise which grew over time. Both teachers and artists experienced growth and success, finding a positive sense of their own capabilities and a respect for each other's individual professional expertise.

Key Findings: Question Four

What factors enabled and constrained the success of the Y Connect Project?

Four key enablers were identified: leadership and the existing school culture; the professionalism of the teachers and artists; the extended duration of the Project and the participation of the artists; and the program of teacher professional learning which was delivered in parallel with the Project. Meanwhile, challenges and constraints were: locating suitable artists and making effective matches with teachers; partnership processes – including responsibilities and shared understanding of goals; artist expectations and understanding of the students' complex lives; spaces for teaching; and time – including time to plan, document and share and time with students.

When considered together, these findings suggest that while there were challenges associated with the Project, they were mostly able to be overcome through two of the key enablers – leadership and the professionalism of the teachers and artists involved. While space and time remained as challenges across the Project, these challenges are common in busy secondary schools and do not appear to have greatly hindered the outcomes achieved. In response to the challenge of matching artists to teachers, a later section of this report, focused on sustainability and scalability, includes recommendations aimed at providing advice for schools interested in adopting the Y Connect model.

Significance

The Y Connect Project is of national and international significance. The model implemented across the 2.5 years of the project's duration has produced benefits and notable impacts across the school community, including for teachers and students, and beyond the school community, for artists and arts organisations. In the following sections, we will outline the significance for students, teachers, artists and in relation to key policy priorities.

Significance for Students.

In this section, the six connections used within this report are applied in discussion of the Project's significance for students.

Connection to Self

Throughout the research literature there is agreement that a positive sense of self is a prerequisite for wellbeing and learning. The Y Connect Project findings reveal strong impacts in terms of many aspects of self, including confidence, motivation, trust, pride and self-esteem. Throughout the Project students reported pleasure, challenge, and opportunities to take risks. Together and individually, they

worked towards common goals to create outcomes in which they felt pride, and where their artistic and creative capabilities were celebrated. Self-expression, self-esteem and self-confidence improved for many students, alongside imagination, creativity and artistry. Students' ideas were seen as important, with adults and other students listening to them and incorporating these ideas.

In the 21st Century context where, too often, young people have experiences that can diminish their sense of self, including through bullying or cyberbullying, a project like this one, that enhanced so many aspects of self, is clearly important.

Connection to Each Other

Positive connections between and among students were also produced, with these having flow-on impacts for wellbeing, learning and achievement. Across all six cases, students, teachers and artists reported improvements in the connections between students. This outcome is especially significant for a school community such as Yeronga SHS, given its diverse student population. It suggests that the expanded opportunities for young people to collaborate in both classroom and extra-curricular contexts, helped to construct bridges between cultures, genders and ways of being.

A contributor to bridge building was the expansion of existing student networks, enabling the formation of new friendships within supportive environments. Given that secondary school students often feel marginalised, opportunities to locate friends from across the school community are critical. The vertical relationships created when students engage with others from multiple year levels serve to shift school culture and break down barriers.

Given the recent studies suggesting that loneliness and isolation are growing issues for young people (Weinberg & Tomy, 2015) the findings of the Y Connect Project relating to collaboration and connectedness are clearly significant.

Connection to Learning

This report includes a considerable body of literature about the positive relationships between the Arts and learning. The research outcomes offered here align with the findings of these studies, with improvements in engagement, skills, understanding and achievement being noted. The most important improvements were for students who struggle academically or for whom engagement is a challenge. Clear benefits were also identified for EALD students. Several skills essential for learning, including oral language and writing were enhanced. In addition, critical and creative thinking skills and creative, artistic and performance skills were improved. While these skills may be developed through other means, they are developed quite differently through the Arts and for some students to an extent that might not otherwise be possible.

Given the statistics outlined in the recent Grattan Institute Report (Goss et al., 2017) which suggest that the passive disengagement of students is a growing problem in Australian schools, coupled with concerns about falling literacy and numeracy standards, as measured through national and international benchmark testing, these findings are highly significant. They suggest that student disengagement might, at least in part, be overcome through opportunities for students to engage with artists and/or by teachers expanding their approaches to include arts-based pedagogies. Improved engagement will undoubtedly impact positively on learning outcomes. For example, it appears that the students who engaged more frequently and regularly within Y Connect, made the most significant improvements on aspects of NAPLAN. These positive outcomes were particularly evident for students with a language background other than English.

Connection to the School Community

As noted earlier, Wehlage et al. (1989) argue that a student's sense of belonging within their school community is developed through attachment, commitment, involvement and belief in their school, with belonging to a community being critical for emotional wellbeing and learning. The findings outlined across this report indicate that the Y Connect approaches supported these dimensions. Within any secondary school, programs and approaches that can support students to feel a strong connection to their school community are clearly significant. However, this connectedness is particularly important for students with refugee backgrounds, especially those who have suffered trauma due to their departure and/or arrival experiences. For some of these young people, a sense of belonging to a community can be difficult to develop, but it seems that the aesthetic, collaborative, agentic and dialogic nature of the Y Connect work, both within the classroom and beyond, provided opportunities for these young people to speak up, be heard and feel more closely connected.

Connection to Arts, Artists and Arts Organisations

For some students, the new connections formed with the Arts, artists and arts organisations were the most critical of all, with the artists becoming role models and mentors. Young people need positive role models beyond celebrities, sports stars or social media influencers. The Y Connect Project brought new and exciting people into the lives of the students, with some of these being from similar cultural or socio-economic backgrounds. As such, new heroes emerged, and relationships of a different order were formed. These relationships helped build aspirations and encouraged students to do better.

In addition, interactions with dynamic and creative artists supported some young people to take greater risks and without the pressure of school assessment, to try out new ideas. For a small number of students who have experienced repeated failure or for whom life has presented multiple challenges, successful participation within Y Connect classes and projects not only enhanced their connection to the Arts, but to other areas of life and learning as well.

In this Project, opportunities for young people from low socio-economic or refugee backgrounds to engage with arts organisations and to access cultural venues were especially important, serving to break-down perceived barriers or perspectives that these cultural sites weren't for them. By engaging directly with, and within, these organisations, all students built upon their existing social and cultural capital.

Connection to Possible Selves

Through deep involvement in arts projects and multiple chances to engage with artists and arts organisations, Y Connect supported its young participants to broaden their pathway aspirations, whilst also helping them to develop the confidence and drive to pursue these re-imagined futures. Given that possible selves emerge through awareness and direct "lived" engagement, the Y Connect Project was critical as a vehicle for identifying and exploring options that might otherwise have been outside their realm of experience. As academic attainment, self-regulation and persistence are all enhanced when young people broaden their range of positive possible selves, the outcomes associated with this connection have the potential for on-going and long-term impact.

Conclusion

In the current educational context of secondary schooling, where young people often feel disconnected from each other, from learning, from their school community and from their futures, these findings remind us that there **are** other ways of enacting education. This report demonstrates that the Y Connect way is capable of adding real value for learners and learning by employing the expertise of artists in partnership with teachers and the curriculum and making use of the power of arts-based pedagogies. It is clear that more needs to be done to raise the awareness of school leaders and school systems about the highly significant role the Arts and artists can play in secondary schools.

Significance for Teachers.

Earlier in this report, the benefits to teachers of participating in the Y Connect Project, and engaging in partnerships with artists, were reported as falling into eight main categories. These were:

- New ways of understanding and enacting education;
- Expansion of pedagogical repertoire and confidence in the application of these expanded practices;
- A revitalisation of practice leading to enhanced enjoyment and engagement in the teaching process;
- The development of a range of artistic skills and understandings;
- A greater sense of freedom to explore and a renewed awareness of the importance of playfulness and creativity;
- Shifts in individual teacher's professional identity;
- Shifts in teacher/student relationships and teacher perceptions of students; and
- New or renewed awareness of the value of the Arts for young people.

Given the high attrition rate for early career teachers, which according to the Queensland College of Teachers (2013) may be up to 50%, together with looming teacher shortages, approaches that create greater enjoyment of, and engagement with, the teaching process, are essential. In addition, for experienced teachers, the revitalisation of practice, achieved through professional learning partnerships occurring directly within teachers own classrooms, is also significant, especially given the cost of professional development activities that are delivered off-site or fail to provide teachers with the kind of learning they are looking for.

According to Matherson and Windle (2017, pp. 30-31), the professional learning teachers seek can be understood according to four themes: learning opportunities that are interactive, engaging, and relevant for their students; opportunities that show them more practical ways to deliver content; opportunities to have a voice in what they are offered in terms of professional learning; and opportunities for learning that are sustained over time. They go on to suggest that teachers need close to 50 hours of professional learning to improve practice and student learning. Given that the Y Connect model provided opportunities for teacher professional learning that matched all of these criteria, it would seem that there is an imperative for educational leaders at all levels of policy and governance to consider carefully the potential return on investment of employing high quality artists to work alongside their teachers.

Finally, while it is impossible to evaluate the benefits derived from the growth in teacher professional identity, the associated increases in confidence that empowered some teachers to seek opportunities to share their learning with others across the broader educational community should not be overlooked or undervalued.

Significance for Artists.

The artists involved in this study identified a set of benefits resulting from their involvement in Y Connect:

- Enjoyment and satisfaction derived from developing young people's artistry, confidence and self-efficacy;
- Opportunities for community engagement and making a difference;
- Opportunities for learning including: reciprocal learning; cultural learning; and developing their own artistic practices;
- Recognition and awareness of their capabilities; and
- Employment.

The contributions artists can make within a whole range of community contexts are not always well understood or appreciated, however, within some fields this recognition is growing. For example, in the health area, artists are increasingly being seen as key players in the sector, working in hospitals, aged care facilities, therapeutic centres and more (Hartley & Payne, 2008; Hatton, 2014; Hulbert, Ashburn, Roberts, & Verheyden, 2017; McCormick, 2017; McGreevy, 2016; Meyer, Schreck, & Weidner, 2014; Sextou & Hall, 2015; Sextou & Smith, 2017). By contrast, the education sector has been slower to capitalise on the possibilities that relationships with artists provide.

The Y Connect Project has given voice to artists and provided them with opportunities to reveal their skills and to reflect upon the contribution they can make to the learning and teaching process.

The Arts and artists have a long history as being fundamental to the process of educating communities and cultures through the communication of ideas and meanings. Within contemporary educational contexts however, the Arts have become increasingly marginalised. This Project has shown however that artists have a key role to play in enhancing educational outcomes and as such, their involvement in education must be expanded. The Y Connect model demonstrates that effective arts-learning partnerships, embedded within curriculum contexts, can generate highly positive and important impacts for all stakeholders.

Significance in relation to Education Priorities

Within the original funding application, seven Queensland Department of Education priorities were identified as informing the Y Connect goals. They are used here to identify the Project's significance.

Expanded opportunities for all students to reach their potential.

There are many social, financial and emotional barriers that can limit a young person's potential, with these sometimes being especially high for students with a refugee background. The Y Connect Project offered alternate ways of enacting curriculum and expanded opportunities for young people to engage with learning, each other, and adults, including artists. By offering these alternate approaches, a clearer sense of the real potential of some young people was revealed, while others were supported to connect more effectively to learning, developed new friendships or gained a stronger sense of belonging. These outcomes suggest that the Y Connect model allows for and assists access to expanded opportunities for young people to reach their potential.

Creating a culture of engaging learning that improves achievement for all students.

Secondary school classrooms can too often be places where young people feel disconnected and disengaged. However, across the Y Connect Project, teachers have keenly engaged in professional learning opportunities and have worked with artists to re-plan units and re-invigorate established practices. These efforts have strengthened the already strong desire held by many teachers to modify their practices and have created a school culture where active and engaged learning is emphasised.

Catering for students' academic, social and emotional needs.

Y Connect has been influential in supporting the academic, social and emotional needs of many Yeronga SHS students. Students' emotional needs were addressed through enhanced connection to self, while the improved connection to each other and connection to the school community nurtured the students' social and emotional needs. These connections are foundational for learning. While these connections were not apparent for every participating student, or to the same extent for every student, nevertheless through its creative approaches, the Y Connect model has shown itself to be an effective and alternate way of catering for the varied needs of students.

Opportunities for students to make successful transitions to further education, training and employment.

Through engagement with artists and arts organisations, together with horizon breaking excursions, internships, public performances and exhibitions barriers that might otherwise have restricted or

constrained effective transitions to further education, training and employment in the Arts have been broken down. More broadly, through participation in projects of extended duration, students have come to understand that commitment, time management, team work, creativity and focus are all required to achieve a successful outcome. These insights and the associated skills that emerge from a commitment to them, have also supported students to imagine new and richer possible selves.

Improved learning outcomes for all students, with an emphasis on reading and writing.

The NAPLAN data outlined within this report, reinforced by the qualitative findings offered across the relevant case study reports, indicate that the Y Connect Project was successful in developing improved learning outcomes for students in several curriculum and literacy areas, particularly writing. Through arts-based pedagogies and effective teacher/artist partnerships, students at all writing standards were helped to overcome the hurdle of the blank page. At a time when Australia-wide the writing skills of secondary students, as measured by NAPLAN, are stagnant or declining, the Yeronga SHS students, especially those who have the most to gain, made solid progress in countering that trend.

Breaking down boundaries between disciplines and finding new ways to develop curriculum structures that are student needs focused.

The Y Connect Project applied a transdisciplinary approach to learning and teaching, providing an effective example of how the boundaries between subjects can be broken down. For example, within the Mathematics and Movement case, dancers worked alongside mathematics teachers to promote the learning and engagement of students. Similarly, strong outcomes were achieved in the English classroom through the involvement of dance, drama and music artists. These findings indicate that arts-based transdisciplinary approaches can be effective in addressing the diverse needs of a wide range of secondary students, especially those who struggle with achievement or engagement issues.

Developing models of curriculum delivery that would be available to be used in other low SES contexts or with students who are disengaged or disconnected.

Since Yeronga SHS has an ICSEA rating well below the Australian average, the findings outlined here are of key significance for similar low SES schools looking to identify curriculum delivery models suited to these contexts. By taking an alternate approach to the issue of disengaged or disconnected students, the Y Connect team has created an innovative and successful model which other schools can replicate. As one teacher noted so eloquently, Y Connect has given teachers the opportunity to look at the learning and teaching process through “new windows”. However, transdisciplinary models of curriculum delivery, such as the one employed across Y Connect, have not always been well understood and have too often been overlooked. This report reveals that the Y Connect model, where the arts and artists are embedded within and across the curriculum, is a delivery model that more educators should consider.

Conclusion

Through its long-term presence within the school community and its responsive approach to the interests and capabilities of those who participated, Y Connect has served, as one student said, “to lower fences”, fences that too often separate students from learning, from each other, and from both their current and future selves. In the process, it has helped to re-shape the Yeronga SHS culture, transforming it to one with the Arts as “the soul of the school”.

When taken together, these outcomes are clearly significant and echo the findings of many national and international studies which have also examined the impact of artist/teacher partnerships and arts-based pedagogies. The repeated emergence of highly positive outcomes such as these give rise to two key questions: why have artists and arts-based pedagogies failed to gain greater acceptance and application within the schooling sector and, how might educators and the broader community gain a better understanding of the possibilities for young people which this “other way” of enacting

curriculum offers? We hope that this detailed Y Connect report, including the suggestions relating to sustainability and scalability offered, will make a contribution to discussions around these two questions and a further one which asks, given these highly positive findings, **Y not Connect?**

THE Y-CONNECT FULL REPORT

PART 1 - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Y Connect Project saw students, teachers, artists, and arts organisations collaborating to support the learning, engagement and sense of belonging for young people attending one Queensland secondary school. It was conducted across the period January 2016 to July 2018 at Yeronga State High School (Yeronga SHS). Funded by the Queensland Department of Education's *Collaboration and Innovation Fund*, the artists and teachers involved in the Project employed arts-based pedagogies across a range of curricular and extra-curricular contexts. Further key features of the Project included the involvement of professional artists working in partnership with the teachers and collaboration with several key Brisbane-based Arts Organisations. The accompanying program of research was undertaken by academics from Griffith University. This research focused on attempting to understand the impact of the Project on the students, the teachers, the school community and indeed the artists.

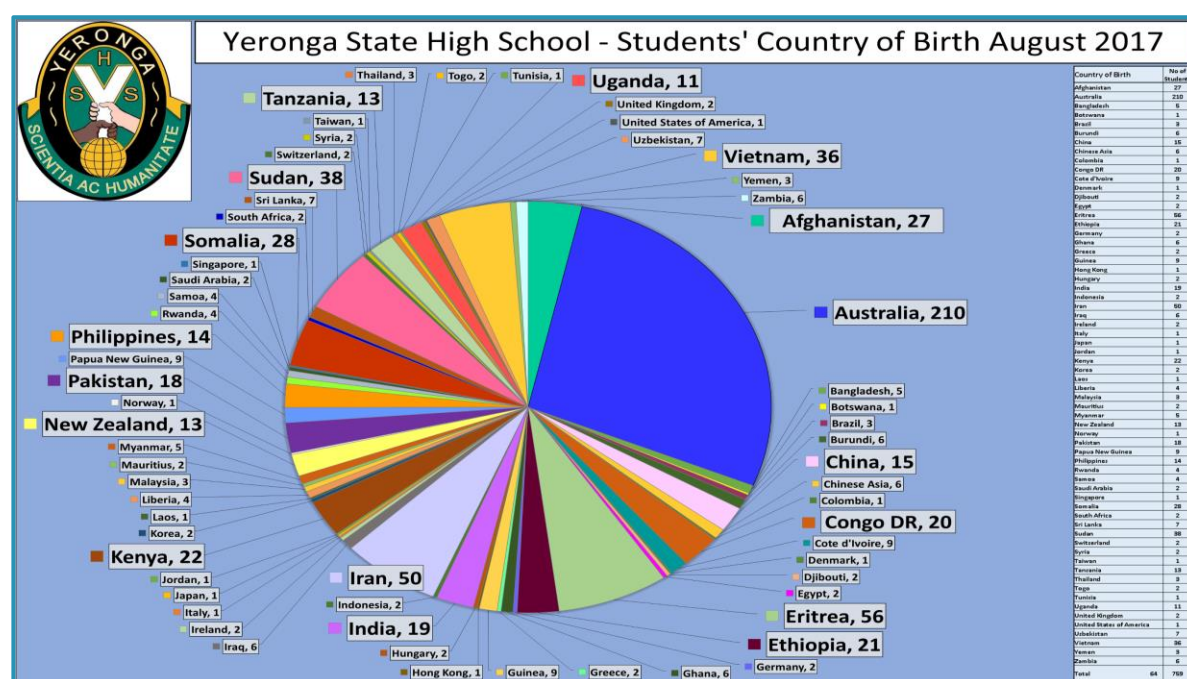
75% of the funds provided through the *Collaboration and Innovation Fund* were expended at the school level to fund the payment of artists, partial teaching buy-out for the Project Manager, teacher release for various professional learning opportunities, transport costs for students to attend external events, and a small amount for the purchase of Y Connect specific equipment. The remaining funds were used to cover some of the costs associated with researching Y Connect, including wages for research assistants and research fellows, together with transcription costs.

This report, compiled by members of the Griffith University research team (which also included the school-based Project Manager Adrienne Jones), shares the key findings of this Project with the broader national and international arts and education communities and follows on from a specially convened one day Symposium in November 2018, where the preliminary findings were shared with the school community and other interested arts and education professionals.

1.2 Yeronga State High School

Situated within an inner suburb of Brisbane, Australia, Yeronga State High School is an independent public school under the auspices of the Queensland Department of Education (DoE). It caters to students from Years 7-12 and has a student population of just over 750 students. The students attending the school are from a range of backgrounds, including local, refugee, asylum-seeking and immigrant backgrounds. They come from more than 70 different countries, with 76% having a language background other than English. 51% have refugee backgrounds or are people seeking asylum. Many of these students come to Yeronga with limited experience of schooling, limited English and low confidence. These circumstances have the potential to inhibit their ability to engage with the school and broader community. In addition, some students have experienced significant trauma – either in their countries of origin or because of their arrival journeys.

Figure 1.1. Yeronga State High School Students' Countries of Birth at August 2017



Yeronga SHS has a high proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. It has an ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) rating of 898 which is significantly below the Australian Average of 1000 (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [ACARA], 2018). This statistic reflects the fact that 66% of the school population are in the bottom quartile of this scale, compared to an Australian average of 25%. Given these statistics, targeted programs are employed across the school community to support students who may struggle to connect with learning and because of this lack of connection, may fail to achieve learning success. For example, to support language development for English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) learners, teachers employ the pedagogy of Teaching ESL students in Mainstream Classrooms (TESMC), together with the employment of High Impact Teaching Strategies, including demonstration lessons hosted by teachers.

To support these programs and support structures, the school is well staffed with 84 full time equivalent teaching staff and just under 41 full time equivalent non-teaching staff (40.9), including 14 multilingual teacher aides. Attendance levels are very high, with the statistics outlined within the Australian Government's My School website (ACARA, 2019) revealing that in 2018 the attendance rate for all students in semester one was 91%, with 71% of all students attending 90% or more of the time.

The school offers both academic and vocational options for students, with the 2018 statistics demonstrating that a high proportion of students completed Vocational Education and Training certificates and diplomas, as well as school-based apprenticeships. Post-school destinations data, again as outlined on the My School site (ACARA, 2019) indicates that for the 2017 cohort 31% transitioned to university, 18% to vocational study and 21% to employment.

In recent years the school has been highly successful in winning awards for excellence, including the 2018 State Multicultural Award for Best Educational Institution and in 2013 it was a State Showcase Award winner in the category of Excellence in Senior Schooling.

In terms of arts provision, prior to the commencement of the Y Connect Project in 2016, the school offered Drama, Music, Visual Art and Dance, however the enrolment numbers were low in senior Drama and Music and as such needed to be offered as composite classes that included both Year 11

and 12 students. Visual Arts classes were slightly larger. Junior school Drama was taught in years 8/9/10 with 16 - 20 students, while Music was taught in years 9/10 with around 16 in each class. In 2016/17 the new Head of Department (HoD) for Visual and Performing Arts introduced some changes to the type of Music offered, expanding it to include lunchtime performances (Green Jam) and Music in Practice, a guitar program which commenced in early 2016 and allowed students to learn guitar for free. These programs were effective and served to increase the uptake of Music in the school. The School at this time was also involved in the Queensland State School's Creative Generation with students taking part in choirs/drumming and performance. The Performing Arts Club was already in action, meeting on Monday afternoons and a performance created by this group was a play entitled *Waiting for Aurash*. This play by Sanaz Hamoonpou, who was teaching at the school at the time, focused on an Iranian story and included opportunities for Farsi speaking students to present in their first language. The Performing Arts Club students also performed at some outside festivals including WOW (Women of the World Festival). At this time, however, no external artists were involved.

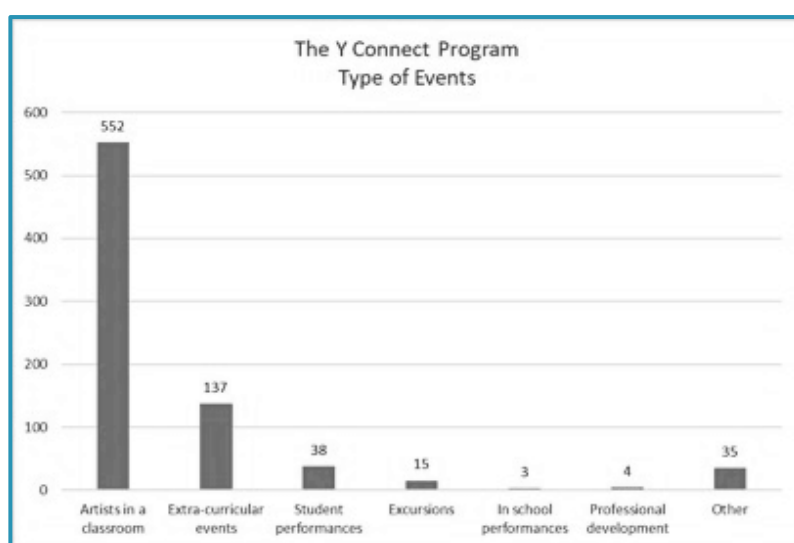
1.3 The Project

Across the Y Connect Project, staff, artists and students engaged with all five of the Arts disciplines represented within the Australian Curriculum: The Arts (ACARA, 2018). These disciplines are Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts. As such, the Project saw: visual artists working alongside Art teachers; musicians working with Music teachers; actors, directors and playwrights working with drama teachers; media artists working in Media classes helping students to create exciting sound and vision; and choreographers partnering with teachers in Dance classrooms. Importantly however, the Y Connect work also extended beyond arts classrooms to include: opportunities for Mathematics teachers and students to work with choreographers to extend upon and strengthen mathematics learning; English students engaging with playwrights, actors, and musicians; newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds developing their English skills by engaging with specialists in process drama as a medium for language learning; a small group of specially selected students participating in a Forum Program designed to grow their sense of hope and belonging; while a further select group worked with circus artists to hone a range of skills within and beyond circus acrobatics.

In addition, students worked with artists and teachers to prepare school and community-based performance and gallery events. A small number were supported to undertake training schemes with key cultural organisations, while a large number attended professional theatre performances, workshops and rehearsals. A further component of the Project was teacher professional learning where teachers attended specially designed professional learning sessions designed to support their skill development or to support planning processes and collaboration between artists and teachers.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the mix of activities that were conducted under the banner of Y Connect across its duration. It highlights the fact that the overwhelming majority of sessions were classroom based and part of the everyday curriculum. This emphasis was important for the staff and leadership team as they were keen to support learning within everyday contexts, rather than to restrict artist involvement and arts-based pedagogies to special events, projects, displays or performances.

Figure 1.2. Type of Events Conducted as Part of the Y Connect Program



All of this activity was coordinated by a school-based Project Manager (Adrianne Jones) who was part of the Yeronga SHS staff and a member of the research team. In addition, across the Project's duration Adrianne also worked as a teacher and Head of Department. Her work in the school was supported by the school leadership and a Steering Committee made up of community members (parents, community elders, staff and leaderships representatives), refugee support organisation members, leaders within the Arts community and research team members.

1.4 Background and Funding

A pilot study, conducted as a partnership between Yeronga SHS and Griffith University, was conducted across 2014/15. This work was aimed at supporting a small number of students with refugee backgrounds, with a pedagogical focus on drama-based approaches. This pilot work revealed that connectedness, self-efficacy, language and inter/trans cultural awareness could be generated using drama approaches. In late 2015, the Queensland Department of Education announced that it was offering funding opportunities via its *Collaboration and Innovation Fund*. This fund was designed to support and extend upon existing partnerships and had the overall goal of generating innovative approaches likely to support student engagement and learning.

Set against this backdrop, a team led by the then Head of Department for Performing and Visual Arts, set about completing an application for funding. This team was made up of teachers from across the school community, together with the two Griffith academics involved in the pilot (Bundy and Dunn). Together the team designed a Project that would build on the pilot by: widening the Arts disciplines involved; partnering artists and teachers; and extending the scope of the work to a broader number of students and subject areas. The application indicated that the project would be aimed at supporting learning outcomes, self-efficacy and sense of belonging within the school community. The funding application also identified the importance of working in partnership with Brisbane arts organisations to offer students opportunities to engage in cultural experiences beyond the classroom. Finally, the application indicated that the Project would culminate in a community sharing of its outcomes.

The following connections to existing government priorities for students were identified:

- Expanding opportunities for all students to reach their potential;
- Creating a culture of engaging learning that improves achievement for all students;
- Catering for students' academic, social and emotional needs;

- Opportunities for students to make successful transitions to further education, training and employment; and
- Improved learning outcomes for all students, with an emphasis on reading and writing.

In addition, contributions to system-wide innovation, learning and improvement were specified as:

- Developing models of curriculum delivery that would be available to be used in other low SES contexts or with students who are disengaged or disconnected; and,
- Breaking down boundaries between disciplines and finding new ways to develop curriculum structures that are student needs focused.

Partners listed in the application included: the leadership team at Yeronga SHS, Heads of Department and interested teachers; researchers from Griffith University; key Brisbane arts organisations; and local artists.

The following goals for students were articulated:

- Increased connectedness and sense of belonging to school and community;
- Enhanced engagement in learning;
- Improved reading, writing and speaking;
- Improved communication and teamwork skills;
- Improved confidence and sense of self-worth;
- Improved engagement and attendance;
- Overcoming language and literacy barriers;
- Extension of students' existing artistry;
- Assisting EALD students
- to settle into the school/community environment; and
- Expanded pathway perceptions.

The application also indicated that evidence would inform decision making at every stage of the Project, including the application itself, which was inspired by several important local and international studies such as: *Champions of Change* (Fiske et al., 1999); *Critical Links* (Deasy, 2002); the findings outlined by Caldwell and Vaughan in *Australia: Transforming Education through the Arts* (2012); Catterall's work on *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risks students* (Catterall et al., 2012); and an Australia Research Council (ARC) funded Refugee Arrivals Project conducted by Griffith University researchers (Balfour, Bundy, Burton, Dunn & Goodwin, 2015). Deasy and Stevenson's (2005) *Third Space: When Learning Matters*, which documents the positive results achieved when low socio-economic schools use arts practice and artists throughout the curriculum, was also influential.

1.5 Why a Focus on Connection and Belonging?

Jose, Ryan and Pryor (2012) indicate consensus among researchers that a sense of connectedness is a basic psychological need, and that there are positive outcomes when this need is fulfilled. Meanwhile, Antonsich (2010) has examined belonging as a component of connectedness and argues that the feelings of belonging to a place (place-belongingness) are closely linked to self-formation. He identifies five factors that contribute to place-belongingness: auto-biographical (personal experiences and memories attached to a specific place); relational (personal and social ties); cultural and economic (including safe and stable material conditions); and legal (citizenship and resident permits). We saw these ideas as being important given that key Yeronga SHS staff had shared the view that for some of their students, one or more of these points of place-belongingness was absent. We therefore hoped that Y Connect might achieve what McGraw et al. (2008) found, which was that "school connectedness [is] associated with lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress in Year 12" (p. 34).

Also relevant to the development of the Project's aims was the work of Beth Crisp. Crisp (2010) claims that all human beings require some level of belonging, arguing that when you belong, it is easier to take risks, to attempt tasks not attempted before, and to "meet new people or go to new places" (p. 124). When belonging is desired but denied to a person, there is likely to be negative impact including feelings of "isolation and loneliness" (Crisp, 2010, p. 127). Crisp further argues that while a sense of connection or connectedness emerges as a result of participation in "societal organisations or social networks" (p. 124), connection itself may not impact directly on one's sense of subjective identity. For this reason, programs that are designed to increase connection without also focusing on building belonging are unlikely to succeed. Crisp uses the example of programs that create access pathways to university for students who might not normally participate. If, once they get to university, there are no programs in place to support a sense of connection, they are likely to feel isolated and the pathway program will have failed. Similarly, schools must focus on programs that offer students connection to others through their participation in worthwhile/meaningful activity. Students need to experience the positive emotion that attaches to belonging as they participate in meaningful activity.

1.6 Why a Focus on Pedagogies?

In designing this Project, the school and research team members were keenly aware of the opportunities which a project of this kind might generate in terms of re-imagining and re-invigorating pedagogies in the school and beyond. Pedagogy is a term considered central to education, however its meaning is contested and often informed by very different beliefs about the teaching and learning process. For example, Robyn Alexander (2015) describes pedagogy as "the act of teaching and the ideas, values, knowledge and evidence that shape and justify it" (p. 253). Other researchers (Aitken, Fraser, & Price, 2007; Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2008; Murray, 2015) emphasise that pedagogy is relational, based on active relationships between teachers and learners; learners and learners; and, learners and the environment in which they learn. Bielaczyc, Kapur and Collins (2013) consider that teachers and students together co-create learning within a community of learners as classroom interactions play out. Jenny Leach and Bob Moon highlight the importance of theories and beliefs by all co-participants in the learning process when they define pedagogy as "a dynamic process informed by theories, beliefs and dialogue, but only realised in the daily interactions of learners and teachers in real settings" (Leach & Moon, 2008, p. 6).

While the term pedagogy is one that is regularly used by educators, it is less familiar to artists. Nonetheless, there is a growing body of work related to the "studio" pedagogies of expert artists teaching others to become equally expert in a particular aspect of art-making. As such, a useful definition, for this research project is that pedagogy is, "Any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance the learning in another" (Watkins & Mortimore as cited in Waring & Evans, 2015, p. 27) as this definition encompasses formal and informal teaching contexts and by any person engaged in a teaching activity, not teachers alone.

In Australian secondary schools, considerable emphasis is placed on the performance of students as measured by a range of national and international standardised tests. There is also a focus on "quality" teaching, with researchers such as John Hattie (2009) arguing for acknowledgement of a series of impact factors which he identified as being most important for achieving improved results. However, across this period, far less attention has been paid to identifying pedagogies that are capable of lifting student engagement. This is somewhat problematic as the challenge of student disengagement is a critical one. A recent report by the Grattan Institute (2017) focused on this growing problem. The Grattan report draws upon a large-scale study completed in mostly low socio-economic Western Australian schools (Angus et al., 2009) to suggest that, "as many as 40 per cent of students are unproductive in a given year", with "nearly one in four students being compliant but quietly disengaged" (p. 3). This level of disengagement is highly problematic, with possible causes being boredom, a lack of challenge or potentially, work that is too difficult or disconnected from student interests. In response to these causes, the authors of the Grattan paper (Goss, et al., 2017, p. 23)

recommend a series of approaches including: high expectations for every student; good teacher-student relationships; clarity and structure in goals and procedures; and active learning approaches, including opportunities for students to work with peers. Given that arts-based pedagogies are both active and collaborative, these recommendations are highly relevant in relation to this Project.

In addition, by focusing on pedagogies, we were also taking account of the Yeronga SHS student population, which as we have already seen, includes students from a diverse range of countries and cultures of origin. As such the entire team was keen to expand its understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies. In his work, Hattam (2018) draws upon the writing of several key authors to suggest that culturally responsive pedagogies emphasise and respect students' identities and backgrounds as key sources for learning, while also placing high expectations on students and working to ensure these are realised. Importantly, he also argues that in order to realise the value of culturally responsive pedagogies, it is essential for teachers to redesign their approaches and curricula.

In their recent review of literature relating to Australian school practices and the education experiences of students with a refugee background, Miller et al. (2018) argue that "opportunities for academic learning and the development of social capital within the school context can be enhanced with relevant pedagogy and policy which draws upon and highlights the positive individual qualities that these students exhibit" (p. 339). They argue that further research into appropriate pedagogies is needed, suggesting as well that curricula need to be more flexible in order to allow for greater innovation.

1.7 Why Artists and Arts-Based Pedagogies?

In 2012, Catterall et al. examined four longitudinal studies on the Arts and achievement with at-risk youth. They found that at-risk youth who engaged deeply in the Arts, tended to fare better on a range of academic and civic behavioural measures than their peers who lacked this level of arts engagement. This study confirmed the findings of the landmark *Champions of Change* research led by Fiske in 1999 which outlined several key findings (pp. 12-13) relevant to the Y Connect goals including that: the Arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached and in ways that they are not otherwise being reached; the Arts connect students to themselves and each other; the Arts transform the environment for learning; the Arts provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people; the Arts provide new challenges for those students already considered successful; and the Arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work.

More recently, a large-scale UK based Creative Partnerships Program was conducted, resulting in the identification of the benefits of funding creative practitioners to work with teachers and schools. This program, which ran from 2002-2011 is described by Thomson, Coles and Hallowell (2018) as the "most ambitious, biggest and longest running arts education intervention in the world" (p. 15). It was aimed at transforming the experience of schooling for students in the UK by extending the range of approaches used by teachers and as such, achieving change at the whole school level. Across its duration, 5,000 schools, 90,000 teachers and over one million young people were involved (Thomson, Coles & Hallowell, 2018, p.15).

The Creative Partnerships Program findings (Thomson et al., 2018, pp. 18-20), suggest that the Creative Partnership activities:

- Improved student attendance;
- Increased motivation and application;
- Improved learning;
- Strengthened 'soft skills' including efficacy, collaboration skills, expression and communications skills, respect for and appreciation of others, and personal satisfaction and happiness;

- Supported schools to develop better relations with parents and the community; and
- Made schools 'better places'.

Another relevant and recently completed study (2016-2018) is *the Tracking Arts Learning and Engagement Project (TALE)*. Supported by funding from the Arts Council England, the report emanating from this three-year longitudinal project conducted within 30 English secondary schools with a commitment to the Arts, is entitled "*Time to Listen*" (Tracking Arts Learning and Engagement, n.d.) and is organised according to four research questions. One of these questions relates to what students gain from engagement in arts learning experiences, including those delivered by teachers who participated in a range of professional learning opportunities offered by TATE and the Royal Shakespeare Company. As such, this study also offers some important findings relevant to the Y Connect Project including the following six main themes (pp. 10-12) which emerged from student interviews:

- Students believe they have more sense of agency and independence in arts lessons than in other lessons. They feel "more free".
- They like the fact that there is no right or wrong in the Arts.
- Arts lessons help them build self-belief and confidence.
- The Arts produce a sense of well-being; they are a valve for releasing pressure.
- They think that studying the Arts is demanding and they have to work hard.
- They think arts teachers are a bit different.

Within the Australian context and as noted above, the work of Robyn Ewing (2010) has been significant. Her report, *The Arts and Australian Education: Realising Potential*, created for the Australian Council for Educational Research, maps the contributions and potential of Arts Education in Australia. Ewing (2010, pp. 14-15) draws particularly on the work of McCarthy et al. (2004) to argue that these benefits are both intrinsic and instrumental, with the instrumental benefits being cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural, health related, social and economic. She notes that while none of the studies completed thus far have been able to demonstrate a direct causal relationship between the Arts and improved outcomes, due to the fact that there are far too many variables to be controlled, there is a growing body of quality literature that supports the view that young people benefit in many ways from engagement with artists, the Arts and arts organisations.

One example of a project currently being conducted within Australia that aims to add to the body of quality data is the *School Drama Project*. This project, which commenced in 2009 as a partnership between Sydney Theatre Company and the University of Sydney, and continues today, sees artists partner with teachers to specifically develop the literacy and dramatic skills of primary school children. In 2011, the research team (Ewing, Hristofski, Gibson, Campbell & Robertson, 2011, pp. 36-37) released a set of finding associated with teacher professional learning and improvements in students' literacy/English. Alongside of these they also noted a range of affective student outcomes including improvements in confidence and social skills, especially for shy students or those marginalised by ability with language and/or disabilities.

In designing the Y Connect Project and its accompanying research, we drew upon these findings and hoped that the students at Yeronga State High School might experience similar benefits. A further goal was to create a report that might usefully contribute to this growing body of research about the impact of arts-based approaches. The report that follows provides a synthesis of what we learned.

PART 2 – RESEARCHING Y CONNECT

2.1 Introduction

In order to understand the impact of the Y Connect Project, four research questions were developed:

1. How has participation in the Y Connect Project impacted on the young people involved?
2. How has involvement in the Y Connect Project impacted on the participating teachers and school culture?
3. How has involvement in the Project impacted on the artists and what have they learnt about teacher/artist partnerships through participation?
4. What factors enabled and constrained the success of the Y Connect Project?

To address these questions six case studies were designed, with data being collected for various periods of time and across various student cohorts:

Case Study One:	Focused Arts Projects (extra-curricular Arts projects)
Case Study Two:	Artists in Arts Classrooms - Performing and Visual Arts
Case Study Three:	Artists and Arts-based Pedagogies in the English Classroom
Case Study Four:	Drama in the Essential English Classroom
Case Study Five:	Mathematics and Movement
Case Study Six:	Forum Program – Drama for Hope and Belonging

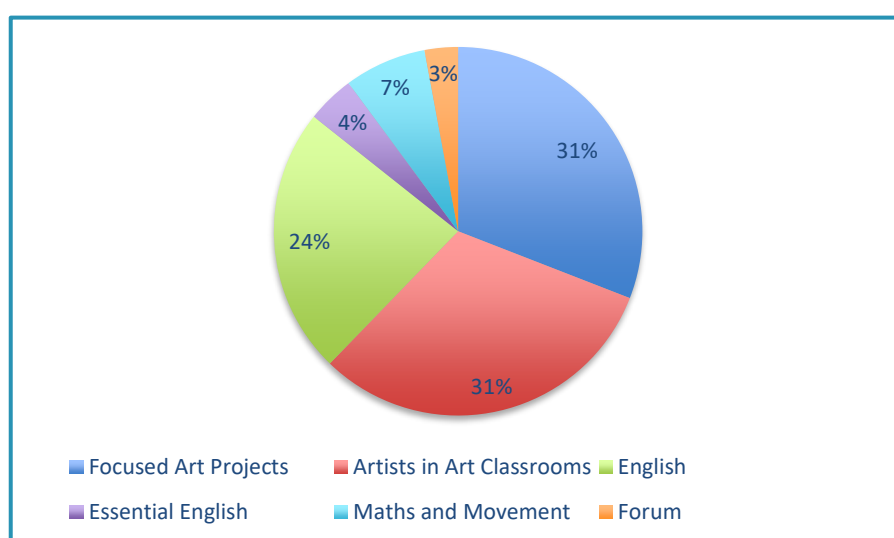
These cases were identified using an iterative process that was responsive to the evolving nature of the Project. This iterative approach meant that the cases were not identified by the research team in advance, but rather were created in response to key decisions and principles identified at the school level. For example, a principle determined by the school team within the early stages of the Project was that teachers should have the agency to “buy in” to involvement rather than be coerced or required to participate, while another was that the duration of each individual case should be determined by the participating teachers according to their desire and/or capacity to continue their involvement in the work of the case. The result of this responsive flexibility meant that most cases were extended across the full duration of the Project, with the impact on the research being that data collection involved multiple cohorts of students. While this approach limited the research team’s capacity to “contain” the data, it nevertheless widened the number of participants and gave the school and researchers the chance to make improvements to the pedagogical and partnership aspects of each case as it progressed.

An associated impact relating to this decision regarding teacher involvement was that student participation in the curricular aspects of the Project was dependent upon their teachers’ decision to opt in or out. This meant that there was a considerable disparity for students across the school in terms of their Y Connect participation, with some students being involved in a significant number of curriculum related Y Connect sessions while others had no opportunities at all. Fortunately, irrespective of teacher involvement, access to most of the extra-curricular activities included within Case Study One: Focused Arts Projects was available to all students, irrespective of year level or other experience.

The graph below provides a visual depiction of the percentage of overall Project time for each of the cases. It reveals that the six cases varied considerably in terms of time and the resources that were allocated to them, with these differences often being associated with the number of students and teachers involved. For example, the Essential English case was small-scale as it related to just one group of Year 10 students in each of two years, which was a similar situation for the Forum Program

where only selected students from Year 11 participated. By contrast, one of the largest cases, the Artists in Arts Classroom study, occupied far more of the overall Y Connect time as it involved students across year levels and arts disciplines including Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts. It also ran for the full duration of the Project (2.5 years). Similarly, the English and Focused Arts cases were large scale, involving students across year levels and over the full Project duration. Finally, the Mathematics and Movement Case was smaller than others due to the fact that artist involvement tended to be limited to a small number of lessons at key points in each term's unit, rather than weekly involvement across the entire term as was the situation in some of the English and Artist in Arts Classrooms cases. It began with one teacher and her Year 8 students in 2017, and then was expanded to include further teachers in 2018.

Figure 2.1. Percentage of Overall Project Time According to Case



Across the research, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, with the balance across these paradigms being firmly placed on qualitative data sources. This decision was based on our desire to understand the Project phenomenologically – from the perspective of the participants. While we were also keen to identify the impact of the work quantitatively, including on academic achievement, given our aims relating to the affective dimensions of learning such as engagement, self-efficacy and belonging, the research team determined that emphasis would be placed on data collection processes that helped us to understand and give voice to the perspectives of the Yeronga SHS teachers and students. The opportunity to be heard is critical for all students, but as Miller et al. (2018) argue, this is particularly the case for students from refugee backgrounds.

2.2 The Study Participants

This study involved a number of different participants including teachers, researchers, school leaders, artists and students. At times, some individuals associated with the Project wore many “hats”, being at various times both researchers and artists (including some of the university academics), while others were teachers and artists, and one, the Project Manager, was researcher, artist, teacher and school leader.

Given this situation, it is important within this report to provide the reader with clarity in relation to how various position titles are applied. One option considered by the team was to use hybrid terms like artist teacher or teaching artist as per the considerable discussions about titles that are found in the literature. For example, some authors suggest that artists predominantly define themselves as creative practitioners based on their artistic expertise, knowledge and the skills they possess (Galton, 2008), as well as through the pedagogic skills they use and develop in their work in schools (Hall &

Thompson, 2007). Pringle (2002) advises that artists working in schools often identify themselves as co-learners as they resist describing what they do as 'teaching'.

The term teacher artist is also used in the literature and in practice to describe teachers who artfully and effectively use an aesthetic dimension within their practice. The teacher artist's approach to practice is often based on experiential encounters that enable learners to locate themselves sensuously and consciously within their world (Gattenhof, 2013, p.12). Paulo Freire's approach and philosophy of education is also important here as it stresses teacher/student relationships (1970). For Freire, education is not seen as a one-way process whereby knowledge is transmitted to students, but as a collaborative effort where students are also seen as co-artists, contributing to ideas, decisions and desired outcomes.

However, in order to avoid confusion, we have opted to simplify what is already a complex situation, and so the following terms are used: artists, teachers, arts teachers, researchers and school leaders. These will now be discussed in turn.

2.2.1 Artists.

Within this report the term artist is used to refer to professional artists employed by the Project. They were most often individuals who have followed an artistic career path and had a portfolio of employment across a range of arts contexts. Although some of their work may take place in a school context, they do not identify as being teachers, but rather as individuals with particular artistic expertise at a professional level within one or more arts disciplines. When in schools, artists draw upon their experience and expertise to enhance learning.

The term artist will also be used to describe members of the research team (Bundy, Dunn, Jones, Hassall, Lazaroo and Stinson) when they interacted with staff and students to deliver artistic and learning outcomes. In relation to the university staff, this artist work was not paid for by the school with Y Connect funds or through the research funding allocated to the Project, but instead was completed as part of the university's commitment to service within the community. Given that all six of these individuals have arts qualifications and all have worked in university settings for many years, delivering arts programs at a tertiary level, the term artist, while not exactly fitting the definition above, is appropriate here.

2.2.2 Teachers.

Within this report, this term is used as both a collective term to refer to individuals employed by the school to teach students, and also to differentiate between individuals whose pedagogical approaches and teaching areas sit outside of the Arts (such as some without an arts background who taught Mathematics and English), and arts teachers (see below).

2.2.3 Arts teachers.

Prior to the Project commencing, there was already a group of highly skilled arts teachers working in the school, with these arts teachers having expertise across single and multiple arts disciplines. Many of these individuals could quite rightly have also been given the title of artist in this report. However, we have chosen here to describe those individuals, for whom all or part of their work is associated with the delivery of Arts Education, including Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts as arts teachers. At times, for convenience and to achieve necessary anonymity, they are also referred to under the collective title of teacher.

2.2.4 School leaders.

This title is used to refer to all members of the Yeronga State High School Leadership Team (YLT) and includes the principal, three deputy principals, as well as deans of junior/middle and senior schools, heads of departments, literacy and numeracy coordinators and guidance counsellors.

2.2.5 Project manager.

This term is used when discussing the work of Adrienne Jones who was the Yeronga SHS based Y Connect Project Manager. At other times, comments made by or about Adrienne will be identified as offered by a school leader (when she was spoken of in relation to her Head of Department role) or artist (when relating to her work as artist, in both classroom and professional learning contexts).

2.2.6 Researchers.

As noted above, six members of the research team were also involved in an artistic capacity at various points across the Project. For example, two members of the team with playwriting, directing and acting backgrounds worked as artists to create and direct a performance entitled “Dust” that was performed by students involved in the extra-curricular Performing Arts Club. Others from the research team, including those with specialist process drama skills, collaborated at various times with English, Essential English and EALD English teachers to deliver lessons within those classrooms. Three research fellows were employed at various times (Penton, Lazaroo and Le), together with one research assistant (Hallewas). One of the research fellows (Le) remained at arms-length from the Project, taking responsibility for key aspects of the quantitative data set, including to ensure the anonymity of all survey responses.

2.2.7 The students.

As noted above, the young people who participated in this Project were all students of Yeronga SHS. While the bulk of the case studies were directed at students in the junior secondary years (Years 7-10), there were also opportunities for older students to engage with artists and/or within programs and projects that made use of arts-based pedagogies. For example, older students, including those in Years 11 and 12 were keenly involved in the various Performing Arts Club projects and Musical events which saw artists collaborate with students from across the entire school cohort, while the students selected by the school administration team for involvement in Case Study Six – Forum Program were all year 11 and 12 students. In a small number of Year 11 and 12 performing and Visual Arts classrooms, artists also engaged with these older students to support curriculum delivery.

The duration of student involvement in the Y Connect Project, which extended across all of 2016, 2017 and the first half of 2018, meant that some students who were in the lower grades in 2015, were able to engage with artists for the full 2.5 years. Others however, including Year 7 students who commenced in 2018, were only able to participate for six months. By this stage, however the Y Connect Project had become deeply embedded in the school culture and as such students were aware of it and participating within it from day one.

2.2.8 The Red and Blue Dot students.

A unique component of the research design employed to understand the Y Connect Project was the tracking of two groups of students who we came to refer to as the “Red Dot” and “Blue Dot” Students. In this study, the term Red Dot is used to describe students who, due to the participation of their teachers within curricular sessions, together with their personally elected involvement, were engaged with multiple aspects of the Project and across multiple years. Students identified as Red Dot (n=126) are best described then as those who were involved in multiple curricular and extra-curricular activities across the period of active data collection, or alternatively, were highly involved in one or more aspects of the Project for shorter periods of time.

The term Blue Dot (n=38) was reserved for a small sub-set of the Red Dot group. These students were identified within teacher, artist or student interviews, or informally through anecdotal teacher reporting, as individuals who seemed to be experiencing a strong upward trajectory associated with one or more of the Project aims including learning outcomes, behaviour, attitude, self-efficacy, collaboration or their vision for future career pathways. Once identified, the Blue Dot Students were interviewed more frequently, including as members of focus group interviews at various points across

the Project, and for a small number, within individual interviews following key experiences, and again at the Project's conclusion.

2.3 The Data Collection Processes

In the following section, the quantitative and qualitative data collection processes used to research the Y Connect Project are outlined.

2.3.1 Quantitative data.

To support our understanding of the impact of the Y Connect Project on teachers, students and artists, several key quantitative data sources were employed.

2.3.1.1 Y Connect activity log.

The Y Connect activity log was used to identify the who, what, where, when, how and how long of each case study. Created in Excel, the log provides a record of the various Y Connect events conducted across the Project's duration, the specific artists and teachers who were involved, the student cohorts who accessed these activities and the time allocated on each occasion. This activity log has enabled us to understand the differences between cases in terms of student, teacher and artist participation, while also supporting our ability to track the involvement of specific students, including those identified below as the Red and Blue Dot Students.

2.3.1.2 Student surveys.

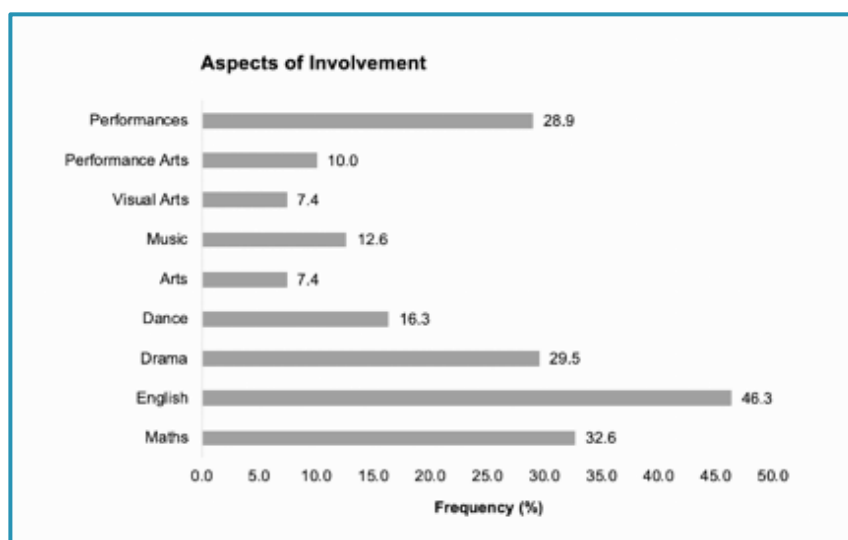
A student survey was administered at the start of the Y Connect Project and again at its conclusion. This survey made use of a Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree), together with opportunities for students to add open ended responses. The pre-project survey was constructed in five sections: an initial background and demographics section; Section One - Satisfaction, relationships and confidence; Section Two - Belonging; Section Three - The Arts; and Section Four: Teaching approaches.

Within the survey completed at the conclusion of the Project (post-project survey), an additional section, focussing specifically on Y Connect, was added. The design of some sections of this survey was inspired by national surveys with similar goals, including the Australian Children's Wellbeing Survey which was part of the *Australian Children's Wellbeing Project* (Redmond et al., 2016) and *Growing up in Australia – The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (Australian Government, 2016). In addition, two questions within the belonging section of the Y Connect survey were specifically drawn from the *Australian Children's Wellbeing Survey* (Redmond et al., 2016) in order for comparisons with larger data sets to be made. Both pre- and post-project surveys were administered during school hours using a Griffith University online survey tool entitled Lime Survey. Within this allocated time, students were invited but not compelled to complete the survey. According to the ethics protocols for this research (see section below), student responses were anonymised and not made available by name to any staff or research team members other than the designated research fellow (Le).

Within the post-project survey, we were able to create some comparisons between student groupings based on the student provided demographics (although at times this was incomplete). While some of these comparisons did not reveal any interesting outcomes (e.g. comparisons by gender and year level), interesting outcomes were made possible by separating the responses of participating students and non-participating students, as well as participating EALD and non-EALD students. While not all students provided the information required to determine these groupings, a sufficient number did, and these comparisons are reported later in the report. In addition, where students included in their responses their countries of birth, tentative discussions about some aspects of the Project in relation to students with refugee backgrounds was made possible.

Figure 2.2 (below) provides an overview of the aspects of the Y Connect Project in which the post-project survey respondents indicated involvement. It reveals that the bulk of respondents deemed to be participants, worked with artists in their English and Mathematics classes, while a significant percentage also engaged in performances (both formal and informal).

Figure 2. 2. Post-Project Survey Results – Participation in the Y Connect Project



It should also be noted here that there are several weaknesses in relation to the reliability of the survey data. For example, one area of weakness within the construction of these two surveys was the fact that within the pre-project survey, students were offered a “don’t know” option that was not included in the post-project survey. A further weakness is the fact that pre- and post-surveys were completed by different groups of students (given the 2.5-year time gap). In spite of this, we are somewhat confident that, irrespective of the particular survey respondents, the instrument did enable us to capture overall shifts in student attitudes across the school community. It should also be noted that there was a disproportionate number of post-project survey respondents who had only been involved in Y Connect for one year (41.8%), with more than half of these being in Year 7 (28.5%). Finally, it appears that students opted in and out of questions at will, with the number of respondents differing markedly at times from one question to the next.

Nonetheless, consideration of the two surveys, including the student responses to the open-ended questions, does offer some alternate insights to support and/or contrast with the qualitative responses which dominate this report. In particular, given the students’ anonymity within the surveys and their self-selection in terms of completing them, the surveys offer an alternative means of understanding the Project’s outcomes.

2.3.1.3 Teacher survey.

A second survey, designed to capture the views of the teaching staff (both participating and non-participating), was also employed. This survey was only administered at the conclusion of the study. It included several response types including open questions, Likert scale responses and other question types designed to gather more complex responses relating to teacher perceptions of types of impact and the student cohorts to whom they related. Within this survey the following sections were included: Demographics; Section One: Perceptions of the overall impact of Y Connect on participating students; Section Two: Perceptions of the impact of Y Connect on social and academic dimensions; Section Three: Perceptions of the impact of Y Connect on teachers and their pedagogies; Section Four: Legacies and future directions.

2.3.1.4 Student achievement data.

Systems data relating to student performance in the Australian national benchmark tests for literacy and numeracy, the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), was also employed and informs this report, while data relating to school-based testing has also been used within the Mathematics and Movement case study. In regard to the systems data, the university research team drew upon the expertise and experience of the Yeronga Middle School HoD for support. He provided the research team with the NAPLAN results as they applied across cohorts and across the Project's duration, while also developing a series of graphs outlining the relative gains made by specific cohorts of students, including in particular the Red and Blue Dot Students.

2.1.3.5 Attendance data

In order to support discussion around the issue of belonging, the research team drew upon attendance data reported on the Australian government's My School website (ACARA, 2018). Specifically, the team examined the Term 3 attendance records for Yeronga SHS students across the period 2015-2018.

2.3.2 Qualitative data.

Several qualitative data sources were used to support this study, with the most significant of these being individual and small group interviews. These interviews involved artists, teachers, students and school administrators. Student interviews made up the bulk of the interview data with 255 students being interviewed, with this total including students who were interviewed on multiple occasions. The term unit has been used here to indicate that, as noted above, some key students were interviewed on multiple occasions. Artists were involved in 18 separate interviews, while there were 56 participants within teacher and school leadership interviews. Once transcribed, these interviews created over a thousand pages of transcript.

Across this extensive interview process, the various participants gifted us with powerful personal statements about their experiences within the Project, describing both its positive and negative aspects. They also shared their perceptions of the challenges and constraints associated with the Project.

2.3.2.1 Student interviews.

Interviews with student participants were completed at several points across each case study, with the decision about timing being determined by the nature of the Project work. For example, interviews relating to the Focused Projects (Case Study One) were generally conducted soon after each projects' conclusion, although for ongoing projects such as the Circus work, interviews tended to be at key points in each year. By contrast, within the English and Mathematics case studies, interviews with teachers and students were timed to capture perceptions following the completion of a unit of work where an artist or arts-based pedagogies had been employed.

The vast majority of student interviews were small group interviews involving between three and six students. Only the older students who participated in Case Study Six (Forum Group) and selected Blue Dot Students were interviewed individually. Interviews were conducted by members of the research team, or by research assistants and/or research fellows. The interviews were mostly semi-structured, with a set of pre-determined questions being used to shape the direction of the interviews. All interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed.

Participation within interviews was governed by three factors: student interest and willingness; their level of involvement and capacity to comment in an informed manner on the specific case; availability on any given day; and their status in terms of the ethical clearances gained. In the latter stages of the Project, attempts were made to ensure that, wherever possible, Blue Dot Students were included.

2.3.2.2 Teacher and school leadership interviews.

Across the duration of the Project, members of the school leadership team were interviewed individually. In addition, interviews involving teachers who were participants in each case study were completed, with the vast majority of these being individual interviews. Teacher and school leaders were asked within these interviews to comment on their perceptions of the impact of the Project on the students, their own planning and pedagogical skills, the nature and value of the partnerships with artists, the characteristics of the pedagogical approaches and the challenges and benefits of working with artists. Within some interviews, school leaders and teachers were also asked to comment on aspects of the emerging findings that had been shared at various points in time within staff meetings. Towards the end of the research, teachers and school leaders were also asked to express their viewpoints in relation to the impact of the Project on school culture, together with questions about the future of the Y Connect approach and sustainability issues.

2.3.2.3 Artist interviews.

Interviews with artists were designed to gain their perceptions of the value of the Y Connect Project for students, but also to comment upon teacher/artist partnerships. They were also invited to identify the conditions required for success. All artist interviews were individual. Some were recorded face to face, however, due to the time constraints facing artists, others were conducted by telephone. While attempts were made to interview all artists, this was ultimately not possible.

2.3.2.4 Observations, video recordings and still photography.

While the classroom sessions, performances, gallery and theatre visits and other events were being conducted, teachers and members of the research team captured a series of still photographs and video recordings. While these images and recordings were often highly interesting and valuable as data sources, their availability to a broader audience is necessarily limited by the fact that many of these recordings contain images of students not covered by the informed consent process. Within this document, the only images used are those that have been specifically approved via the consent process or for which no consent is required due to the inability to identify individuals within them.

2.3.2.5 Artefacts of student work.

Within almost all of the case studies, artefacts of student work were also collected. These artefacts included sample assessment tasks, samples of classroom writing, images of student artworks (including Media and Visual Arts works) and recordings of performances.

2.3.2.6 Planning documents.

The involvement of the artists, together with the application of arts-based pedagogies meant that key aspects of teacher planning needed to be modified, with planning documents being revised or re-designed. As a consequence, assessment tasks also needed to be modified at times. As such, a significant number of planning documents were created across the Project, with these documents being gathered to support understanding of pedagogical shifts.

2.4 Analysis

Analysis of the interview and qualitative survey data was completed using the NVivo software program, with the transcribed interviews being uploaded and organised into their relevant case study folders. Next an inductive process of analysis was used to identify key ideas emerging from the data, with nodes recorded within the NVivo code books. Once identified, these nodes were then grouped and re-grouped by members of the research team, both individually and collaboratively, in order to identify the relationships between them. The Y Connect code books are highly complex as the interview data is not only significant in quantity, but rich in quality.

In the next phase of analysis, the research questions were used to re-group the data. In relation to question one, relating to the impact of the Project on students, this re-grouping process resulted in

the identification of the six connections outlined in detail within this report including: connection to self; connection to each other; connection to learning; connection to the school; connection to the Arts and artists; and connection to the future via possible selves. These connections will be reported in detail below.

Meanwhile, the quantitative survey data were analysed using SPSS, with this analysis being completed by a research fellow with expertise in this area (Le) who was not involved in the data collection process and who never engaged in the direct work of the Project. In this work, chi-squared statistics were used to explore the differences between the different study groups including by: EALD/non-EALD; year level; pre and post study; and in one instance, to separate out the responses of students from refugee backgrounds.

Where inferential statistics were used (chi-square test), an alpha of 0.05 was used to determine significance (i.e., if $p < 0.05$, significant), having met the condition for using a chi-square, with 20% or less of the cells having expected counts less than 5. The strength of the relationships, i.e., effect size, was also examined using Cramer's V. Interpretation of the strength of a relationship (effect sizes) was based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines with regard to the r family values, i.e., ϕ /Cramer's V in this study, which is rarely above .70. These guidelines are based on effect sizes usually found in studies in education and behavioural sciences (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2013).

2.5 Ethics

Permission to conduct the research associated with the Y Connect Project was provided by the Principal of Yeronga SHS. All ethical clearance and informed consent processes were managed by Griffith University with the distribution and collection of these forms being managed by the school-based Project Manager and staff. Participants and their parents/carers (where students were not old enough to provide their own consent) were invited to choose their child's level of participation in the research including: completion of online surveys, participation in audio-recorded interviews, researcher access to student's artefacts such as written or creative work, and photos/videos of classroom activities.

As this was a partnership Project, many of the usual issues associated with school-based research, including concerns about a lack of reciprocity in the research process were not a factor here. The research project was focused on understanding the impact of what was essentially a school-managed and directed Project, relating to the delivery of curricular and extra-curricular activities. Irrespective of the consent provided by students regarding their participation in the research, they were, in most cases, required to be involved in the activities occurring. Ethical clearance was therefore only required for participation within the formal aspects of the data collection process.

Within this report, all student comments have been anonymised, with every effort being made to ensure that individuals cannot be specifically identified. While teachers, artists and school leaders, have been acknowledged in various sections, the comments included within the report have not been attributed to individuals, with the exception of those offered by the Project Manager in that capacity.

2.6 Limitations

Due to the iterative and organic nature of the Y Connect Project, together with the somewhat chaotic nature of a large secondary school, the research design sometimes needed to take a back seat. This has meant that there is some unevenness in the data set in terms of the number of interviews per case and the make-up of these interviews in terms of the ratio between artists, teachers and student interviews.

In addition, while it was always our goal to gather and include data relating to student achievement in individual subjects, this proved to be too difficult. For example, in an initial attempt to map student

achievement, we were provided with access to current and back copies of the school's report booklets, which outlined student results within specific terms and semesters. We had planned to use them to follow a smaller cohort of students, such as our Red Dot Students. However, the data we gained through this process proved to be unsatisfactory due to several limiting factors. These included the fact that for Arts subjects, student enrolment changed on a term by term basis, meaning that student grades could not be effectively tracked. Additionally, as EALD students moved into mainstream English classes, their assessment expectations changed, meaning that comparisons were not appropriate. As well, while artists worked in some English and Mathematics classes and not others, they were also only involved in teaching some topics and concepts, but not all. When taken together, these factors led us to the view that the achievement data we were considering was neither conclusive nor trustworthy, especially when combined with the high rate of student turnover across the Y Connect Project.

It should also be noted here that the research team members were resistant to attributing academic improvements or otherwise directly to the Y Connect work. This view was based on the fact that while artists and arts-based pedagogies were intentionally used to support student learning and achievement, teachers and other support staff were simultaneously working very hard to support achievement using a range of non-arts-based pedagogies. For this reason and given the differences in the approaches from teacher to teacher, any attempt to make claims about subject specific achievement data would have been problematic.

PART 3 – THE FINDINGS

In this section we summarise the key findings of the Y Connect Project, drawing upon the data collected across the six case studies, together with more general data including from the various quantitative sources previously outlined. These findings are organised according to the four research questions:

1. How has participation in the Y Connect Project impacted on the students involved?
2. How has participation in the Y Connect Project impacted on the participating teachers and school culture?
3. How has involvement in the Project impacted on the participating artists and what have they learnt about teacher/artist partnerships?
4. What factors enabled and constrained the success of the Y Connect Project?

In relation to Research Question One, which focuses on the impact of the Project on the students of Yeronga SHS, the report begins with a short summary of some of the key findings from the post-project teacher survey. This is followed by an outline of the major themes to emerge from the remaining data. These themes are identified as six connections. Each of these connections is considered in turn, and organised as follows:

- A brief summary of the relevant literature;
- Consideration of the survey and other quantitative data (where relevant);
- A summary of the connections as represented within the various cases together with qualitative data that is not presented elsewhere (for example leadership data); and
- A summary and commentary on the significance of the findings.

Following this, we outline the findings associated with research questions two, three and four.

In Part Four, we offer six detailed Case Study reports, created to provide a detailed account of the practices and findings associated with students that are presented in summary form in this section.

3.1 Research Question One

How has participation in this project impacted on the students involved?



3.1.1 Introduction.

The image above provides a representation of six connections identified as being enhanced for students who participated in the Y Connect Project: connection to self; connection to each other; connection to learning; connection to and belonging within the school community (abbreviated across this report to connection to the school community); connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations (abbreviated at times to connection to the Arts); and connection to the future through the creation of alternate possible selves (abbreviated across this report to connection to possible selves).

In this report, *connection to self* refers to the way the Project served to build self-confidence, self-efficacy, creativity, imagination, identity as a learner, and more. *Connection to each other* refers to the outcomes generated through the requirement for collaboration within classes and projects, and to the sense of teamwork that was generated as students engaged with each other within and across year levels, cultural and religious groups, and genders. *Connection to learning* is used here to describe the impact of the Project on the students' attitudes towards learning, as well as the academic outcomes achieved including understanding of concepts and specific skill development. *Connection to the school community* relates to a sense of belonging within the school, while *connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations* is included to capture the findings associated with the relationships that were built with artists and Arts organisations, together with the flow on effect to student understanding of, interest in and appreciation of the Arts more broadly. The remaining connection, *connection to possible selves*, is included in response to the outcomes articulated by students about how the Project impacted on those aspects of themselves that are futures oriented. This complex connection will be discussed in depth later in this report.

Within the Y Connect image above, these connections are depicted as individual pieces of a puzzle which come together to form a Y. This Y is designed to represent each participating Yeronga SHS student. It positions *connection to self* at the base of the Y, with this placement being intentionally designed to indicate that across all of the cases and indeed the broader data set, *connection to self* appears to form the foundation for all of the other connections.

Of course, not all of the participating students experienced growth across all of these connections and not all of them experienced this growth to the same degree. However, there is convincing evidence across the data set to support the view that for the majority of participating Y Connect students there were improvements in some of these connections, while a smaller number experienced improvements in many or all of them. In addition, while the pieces of the puzzle are shown in the diagram as discrete and separate, in reality they overlap, with the categorisation of data into one or the other of these connections being difficult at times. For clarity and consistency however, decisions had to be made and these decisions are outlined in the sections below where we discuss the connections in turn, using both data from the Y Connect Project and broader literature.

In addition, it should be pointed out that several other connections were also identified within the data set including: connection to parents/families; connection and belonging within the broader local and Australian communities; and connection to the students' own cultures. Arguably, these could have been added in their own right to the Y Connect puzzle. However, as they appear far less frequently within the data set, we decided to limit discussion of these to their relevant case studies.

Before moving on to discuss these six connections, we first share the outcomes of the post-study teacher survey relating to impact on students. This decision has been taken because the survey structure does not allow its outcomes to be easily grouped according to these six connections.

3.1.2 Teacher survey outcomes.

While 48 teachers participated in the Project across its duration, only 26 teachers completed the survey, with 19 of these having direct involvement with the students and artists. This low response rate can be explained by several factors: the co-incidence of the Project concluding and school reporting occurring; the fact that many of the participating teachers had been directly interviewed and therefore felt that survey involvement was not necessary; and the perception amongst non-participating teachers that they had little to offer.

Within the first section of the survey, respondents, irrespective of their direct involvement, were asked to identify the specific student cohorts (if any), which they perceived as being positively influenced by the Y Connect Project. In response to this question, the teachers not involved in the Project (see Figure 3. 1) identified students in the junior years of schooling (Years 7-10), together with students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) as experiencing positive benefits. By contrast, those teachers with direct involvement (see Figure 3. 2) identified students who struggle academically, struggle with engagement and motivation, and who lack confidence. Indeed, 18 of the 19 teachers directly involved suggested that the Project had impacted positively upon those who struggle academically, while 17 of 19 participating teachers identified enhancements relating to students with engagement and motivation issues.

Figure 3.1. Teacher Survey Results Branch A

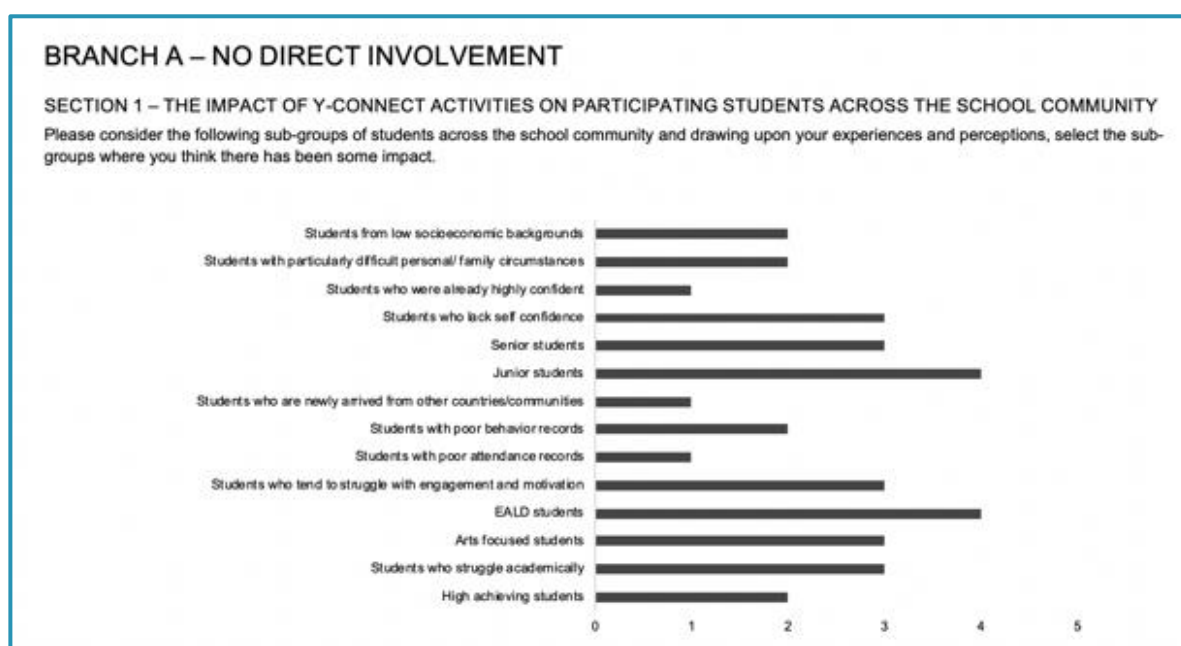
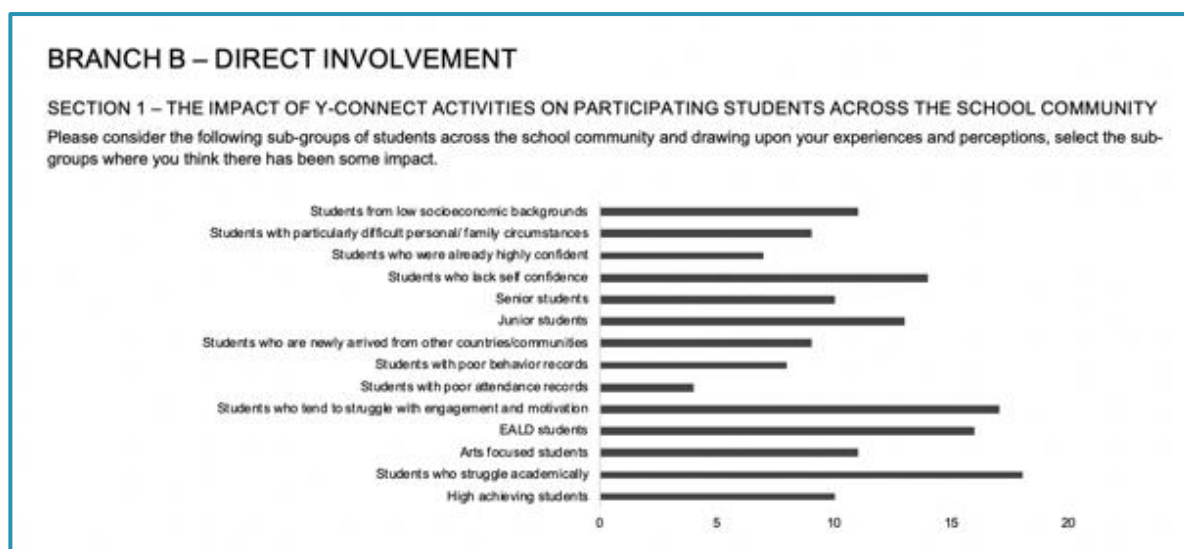
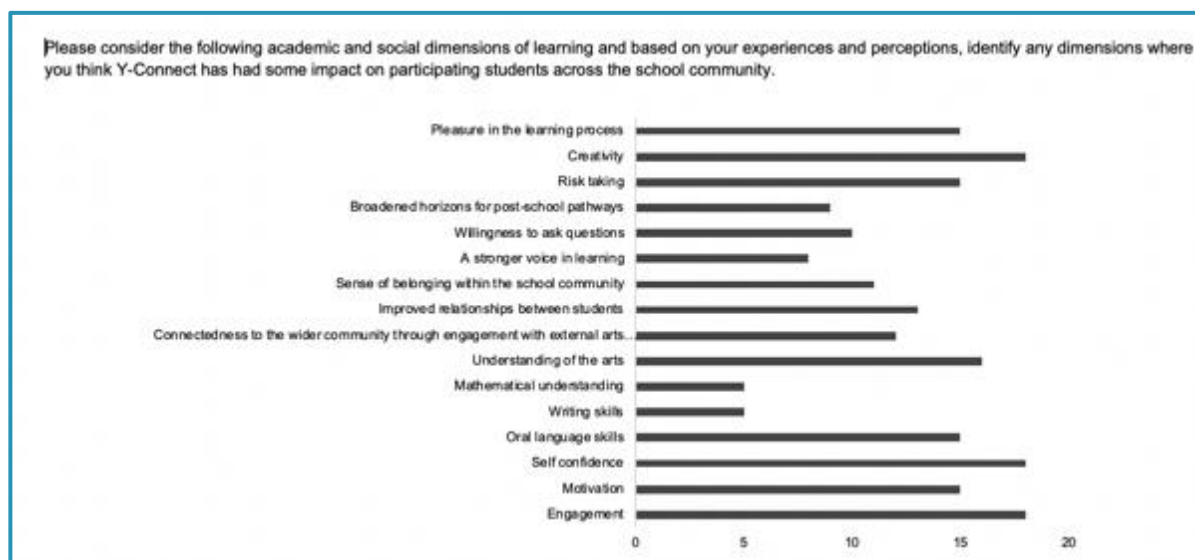


Figure 3.2. Teacher Survey Results Branch B



In terms of the type of impact, teachers directly involved in the Project (see Figure 3. 3) identified self-confidence, creativity and engagement as the top three, while pleasure in the learning process and risk-taking were two further aspects consistently identified. The remaining highly rated impacts identified by participating teachers were understanding of the Arts, oral language skills and motivation.

Figure 3.3. Teacher Survey Results – Type of Impact



When describing the level of impact on students (see Table 3. 1 below), once again, self-confidence, motivation, engagement, understanding of the Arts, and pleasure in the learning process appear as the most significant impacts. However, in this part of the survey, improved relationships with other students also emerged as a key impact.

In terms of the level of impact, 6 of the 15 responding teachers noted significant impact on most students in their classes in terms of engagement, with the remaining 7 identifying some impact on most students. Similarly, 5 of 14 teachers noted significant impact on most students in terms of pleasure in the learning process, with a further 4 of 14 noting significant impact on some students.

Table 3.1. Teacher Survey Results – Level of Impact

#	Dimensions of learning	n	a	b	c	d	e	b&d	c&d	b&e	D/k
1	Engagement	15	0	2	3	2	6	1	1	0	0
2	Motivation	15	0	2	2	5	4	0	2	0	0
3	Self confidence	14	0	0	3	3	4	0	4	0	0
4	Oral language skills	12	0	2	1	4	3	0	2	0	0
5	Writing skills	10	1	2	4	1	1	0	0	0	1
6	Mathematical understanding	8	2	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
7	Understanding of the arts	13	0	0	5	4	2	0	2	0	0
8	Connectedness to the wider community through engagement with external arts organisations	12	0	0	2	6	2	0	1	0	1
9	Improved relationships between students	15	0	2	3	5	3	0	2	0	0
10	Sense of belonging within the school community	14	0	3	4	4	1	0	2	0	0
11	A stronger voice in learning	12	0	4	2	4	1	0	1	0	0
12	Willingness to ask questions	12	0	3	4	2	2	0	1	0	0
13	Broadened horizons for post-school pathways	13	0	2	2	5	1	0	1	0	2
14	Risk taking	13	0	3	1	3	4	1	1	0	0
15	Creativity	15	0	2	3	5	4	0	1	0	0
16	Pleasure in the learning process	14	0	2	1	4	5	1	1	0	0

Note: a=No impact; b=Some impact on some students; c=Some impact on most students; d=Significant impact on some students; e=Significant impact on most students; D/k=Don't know

As noted above, the voices and viewpoints of teachers and school leaders were also gathered through the interview process. The qualitative comments emerging from these interviews, together with those generated within student and artist interviews, are mostly reported within the various case study reports, and also within the summary reports relating to Research Questions 2-4.

3.1.3 Connection to Self.



It (Circus) helped me to shape my way of thinking in a way that I don't take the simple way out...

A range of important aspects of self are associated within the educational literature as impacting upon the learning of secondary students (Doménech-Betoret, Abellán-Roselló, & Gómez-Artiga, 2017; Phan, 2017; Phan & Ngu, 2018; Rowell & Hong, 2013; Thomson et al., 2018; Usher & Pajares, 2008; Zimmerman, 2000). These include confidence, motivation, self-efficacy, identity as a learner, agency and more. Within the literature too, these important aspects of self are repeatedly identified as being positively impacted through Arts participation. For example, as stated above, within the Thomson et al. (2018, pp. 18-20) report relating to *Creative Partnerships*, a range of concepts associated with self were identified including improvements in students': efficacy; expression and communications skill; respect for and appreciation of others; and personal satisfaction and happiness. Meanwhile, within the *Time to Listen* report (Tracking Arts Learning and Engagement, n.d.), further aspects of self were

noted including: agency and independence; self-belief and self-confidence; well-being and pressure release. Similar positive benefits were also captured within the *Champions of Change* Report (Fiske et al., 1999), including the overarching finding that engagement with the Arts “connects students to themselves” (p. ix).

Across the Y Connect data, including both the qualitative and quantitative data sets, there are strong indications that the Project had a positive impact for many students on key aspects of self.

3.1.3.1 Quantitative data.

Student Surveys

While the survey questions included within both the pre- and post-project student surveys were clearly not designed according to the six connections identified as a result of the data analysis process, there are sections and individual questions that are relevant to many of these, including *connection to self*. Here the section focused on confidence is of key interest. The table below (Table 3.2) compares the results across the two surveys, with the pre-project student survey being referred to as Phase 1 and the post-project one as Phase 2.

Table 3.2. Pre- and Post-Project Student Surveys – Confidence

#	Confidence	Phases	n	SA	A	N	D	SD	D/k
1	I feel I can succeed at school.	Phase 1	204	41.2	40.2	13.7	1.0	1.5	2.5
		Phase 2	298	33.9	45.6	15.8	2.3	2.3	0.0
2	I like to ask lots of questions at school.	Phase 1	200	17.0	34.0	34.5	7.0	7.5	0.0
		Phase 2	297	24.2	26.6	37.0	9.4	2.7	0.0
3	I feel confident speaking in front of others.	Phase 1	203	20.7	28.1	26.6	16.7	7.4	0.5
		Phase 2	296	21.3	32.1	26.0	14.9	5.7	0.0
4	Adults listen to my opinions at school.	Phase 1	196	15.8	38.3	31.6	6.1	2.0	6.1
		Phase 2	296	22.0	41.2	30.4	3.0	3.4	0.0
5	Teachers understand me.	Phase 1	200	20.0	39.0	28.0	5.0	3.5	4.5
		Phase 2	295	22.0	41.4	27.5	6.8	2.4	0.0
6	It is important for me to do well academically at school.	Phase 1	199	56.8	32.2	8.5	2.0	0.5	0.5
		Phase 2	296	56.8	32.1	8.8	1.7	0.7	0.7
7	My parents/guardians have high expectations for my learning outcomes.	Phase 1	201	45.8	41.3	8.5	1.5	0.5	2.5
		Phase 2	297	49.2	36.4	12.1	1.7	0.7	0.0
8	I feel pressured by the schoolwork I <u>have to</u> do.	Phase 1	196	18.9	34.2	26.0	15.3	4.6	1.0
		Phase 2	298	23.8	30.2	29.2	12.1	4.7	0.0

Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree; D/k=Don't know

While some of these questions may be viewed as also being relevant to other connections including *connection to others* and *connection to the school community*, the table nevertheless offers some interesting insights. For example, while Table 3. 2 suggests a small drop from pre- to post-project agreement in relation to students’ overall self-confidence about success at school (Q1), from 81.4% to 79.5%, examination of the data relating only to those students who were active participants in the study (Table 3. 3) reveals a very small rise, with 81.7% of participating students offering agreement to the statement. Of perhaps more interest is the result for participating students with English as an additional language or dialect (Table 3. 4), for here the level of agreement rises to 83.8%. By comparison, the percentage of agreement for non-participating students was 75.9%.

Table 3.3. Post-Project Student survey - Participating (Yes) and Non-Participating (No) Student Responses, Confidence

#	Confidence	Involvement	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I feel I can succeed at school.	Yes	186	37.6	44.1	12.9	3.2	2.2
		No	112	27.7	48.2	20.5	0.9	2.7
2	I like to ask lots of questions at school.	Yes	185	25.4	25.9	36.2	10.3	2.2
		No	112	22.3	27.7	38.4	8.0	3.6
3	I feel confident speaking in front of others.	Yes	185	23.8	33.0	24.3	14.1	4.9
		No	111	17.1	30.6	28.8	16.2	7.2
4	Adults listen to my opinions at school.	Yes	184	23.4	40.2	31.0	2.7	2.7
		No	112	19.6	42.9	29.5	3.6	4.5
5	Teachers understand me.	Yes	183	25.1	40.4	26.8	6.6	1.1
		No	112	17.0	42.9	28.6	7.1	4.5
6	It is important for me to do well academically at school.	Yes	185	58.4	31.4	8.1	1.6	0.5
		No	111	54.1	33.3	9.9	1.8	0.9
7	My parents/guardians have high expectations for my learning outcomes.	Yes	186	50.5	36.6	11.8	0.5	0.5
		No	111	46.8	36.0	12.6	3.6	0.9
8	I feel pressured by the schoolwork I have to do.	Yes	185	25.9	31.9	28.1	9.2	4.9
		No	113	20.4	27.4	31.0	16.8	4.4

Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree

Table 3.4. Post-Project Student Survey – Participating EALD and Non-EALD Student Responses, Confidence

#	Confidence	EALD	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I feel I can succeed at school.	EALD	99	42.4	41.4	11.1	3.0	2.0
		Non-EALD	75	33.3	49.3	13.3	2.7	1.3
2	I like to ask lots of questions at school.	EALD	99	28.3	23.2	38.4	6.1	4.0
		Non-EALD	75	22.7	28.0	33.3	16.0	0.0
3	I feel confident speaking in front of others.	EALD	98	21.4	34.7	24.5	12.2	7.1
		Non-EALD	76	23.7	32.9	23.7	17.1	2.6
4	Adults listen to my opinions at school.	EALD	98	28.6	34.7	30.6	1.0	5.1
		Non-EALD	75	18.7	46.7	32.0	2.7	0.0
5	Teachers understand me.	EALD	98	32.7	33.7	24.5	7.1	2.0
		Non-EALD	76	17.1	48.7	27.6	6.6	0.0
6	It is important for me to do well academically at school.	EALD	99	63.6	24.2	9.1	2.0	1.0
		Non-EALD	75	54.7	38.7	5.3	1.3	0.0
7	My parents/guardians have high expectations for my learning outcomes.	EALD	99	61.6	25.3	11.1	1.0	1.0
		Non-EALD	76	38.2	50.0	11.8	0.0	0.0
8	I feel pressured by the schoolwork I have to do.	EALD	99	32.3	24.2	25.3	11.1	7.1
		Non-EALD	75	18.7	37.3	33.3	8.0	2.7

Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree

Comparisons between different cohorts within the post-project survey are also of interest in relation to Question 3 which relates to confidence in speaking in front of others. Here we see that overall agreement rose from 48.8% prior to the Project to 53.4% following it, with the level of agreement for participating students (Table 3. 3) being 56.8% compared to non-participant agreement of 47.7%. Somewhat surprisingly, given the challenges EALD students often face in terms of language confidence, we see that EALD participants (Table 3. 4) appear to be slightly more confident about speaking in class than their non-EALD peers (56.1% vs 55.7%). This same pattern is repeated in relation to Question 2, which relates to having the confidence to ask questions, however this time with very little difference being noted between groups. For example, we see that once again the participating students are slightly more confident than the non-participating students (51.3% against 50.0%), and that EALD students agree at the rate of 51.5% against 50.7%, these responses suggest limited impact.

Although the differences were not obvious in Question 1 and Question 3, significant difference was observed on Question 4, which states: "Adults listen to my opinions at school" ($\chi^2 = 24.082$, $N=492$, $p<.001$), where 54.1% of students in the pre-project survey agreed or strongly agreed with this statement compared to 63.2% in the post-project survey. There was little or no difference for this question between participating and non-participating students however, or between EALD and non-EALD students.

3.1.3.2 Qualitative data.

In terms of the qualitative data collected across the six Y Connect case studies, analysis reveals a very strong and consistent message of improvements in connection to self. Staff, students and artists in all six case studies reported these improvements. For example, within the Focused Arts Projects Case (CS1), which examined participation of students across a range of mostly extra-curricular projects, a considerable and important set of connections to self were identified. These included: confidence; ownership; persistence and self-directedness; motivation; identity and self-efficacy; pride; pleasure; and a willingness to take risks. These outcomes were particularly strong within the perspectives offered by those involved with the circus group, and also by students who participated in extended collaborative projects – across both visual and performing arts. Within the Mathematics and Movement case study (CS5), confidence was overwhelmingly the most commonly identified connection to self, with motivation and pleasure also being reported, while in the Artist in Arts Classroom Case (CS2), pride and once again confidence emerged as most significant. For participants in the three cases where drama pedagogies dominated (Cases 3, 4 and 6), particularly where a large number of participating students were from refugee backgrounds (Cases 4 and 6), confidence was again dominant, including in terms of oral language and/or the confident use of English. Other aspects of self that were identified across these cases (3, 4, 5) included: self-expression; pride; self-worth; trust; pleasure; the development of creativity and imagination; and a reduction in stress.

A detailed account of connection to self is offered within each of the case study reports in Part 4, however it is useful to briefly summarise these findings here. For example, students spoke about finding new ways to be happy, about developing a greater sense of achievement, of experiencing pleasure in the learning process, of learning to trust in others and of increased awareness of their leadership skills. Through active, collaborative and participatory pedagogies, often delivered by artists who worked in new and exciting ways, many students became more motivated while others developed pride in their work. Some students overcame nerves to present more effectively in the English classroom, while others discovered, across Mathematics, English and Arts classroom that learning requires risk-taking and trust. Students referred to as “*fringe dwellers*” or “*difficult*” were seen by their teachers in a new light, as reluctance and negativity was replaced by enthusiasm and commitment. Some found their voices, literally, gaining the confidence to speak up and speak out, while others learned to simply be themselves or to trust in their own ability. One or two suggested that participation in Y Connect had made them feel braver, shy students delivered lines in booming voices for public audiences, while students whose self-esteem had been battered by years of failure, felt some success.

Importantly too, enhanced connections to self were also evident for confident and high performing students, with these individuals reveling in the expectations for heightened artistry that were placed on them by artists and by the teachers working alongside of them.

Attempts by two school leaders to “capture” these shifts in self are important to share here. In the first of these, the leader uses the notion of “*coming alive*”, while the other refers to a sense of “*awakening*”. The first leader suggests: “*That’s my perception – they [the students] have come alive!*”, while the second offers a more detailed response noting:

I don’t know whether Y connect was an initiator or an enhancer, but it’s kind of come together, this idea that our kids need to develop a voice.... I think it is part of a wave of awakening of our kids, that what you have to say is important.

3.1.3.3 Summary of findings.

1. Many students reported improvements in confidence, motivation or self-esteem as a result of engagement with artist/teacher partnerships, within the classroom and beyond.

2. Across the cases, students who experience school as a challenging or de-motivating place, were identified as developing enhanced confidence, trust in each other and pride in their achievements.
3. The arts-based pedagogies and involvement of artists also enhanced aspects of self for high achieving students, with the additional artistic challenges serving to improve their motivation and willingness to take risks.
4. The Y Connect pedagogies and approaches were beneficial for students with an EALD background, supporting their confidence to speak, present and share ideas.
5. The involvement of artists, together with an expansion of arts-based pedagogies and projects served to “awaken” student agency and voice across the school community.

3.1.4 Connection to Each Other.



Third of all [Y Connect impacts] is relationships with people. When we get to do something together, that creates a bond within each other and that bond can lead to friendship and friendship could lead to be family.

In a school as culturally and linguistically diverse as Yeronga SHS, the importance of students being connected to each other in meaningful ways cannot be overstated. When the Y Connect Project was developed, a desire to improve the students’ sense of belonging and connectedness to the school were explicit goals. However, we had not fully acknowledged that a key part of belonging to the school is the ability to connect with others within it. In their research work within a US context, Mendenhall et al. (2017) found that one of the key factors for the successful engagement and academic achievement of students with refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds is the provision of opportunities for students to work in heterogeneous groupings, including to complete shared or group projects. These groupings might be mixed according to age groups, cultural, religious or ethnic identities, or by gender. Meanwhile, connections between students can range from deep friendships, to simple acts of recognition within the school playground or indeed beyond the school, within the local community.

Due to the structure of Australian Schools, where students are sorted according to levels of schooling, connections between students mainly occur between students of similar ages. However, vertical connections are also made possible when young people work on projects that are designed specifically to include students from multiple year levels. Song et al. (2009) argue that while the research findings are unclear in relation to the academic benefits of multi-age classrooms for academic work, there are significant social benefits when children and young people collaborate in mixed age groupings including within after school clubs. These benefits include developing communication skills, enhanced co-operation skills, and leadership development with a concurrent increase in self-esteem.

Within the classroom context as well, opportunities for newly arrived students to connect to others through group work are essential, with Picton and Banfield (2018, p. 10) recently arguing that within

Australian schools, “structured interaction between all students must be prioritised in classrooms so that young resettled people may have possibilities to break into existing friendship groups”. Without these structured collaborative activities, students can remain isolated, especially as many are attempting to navigate what Miller, Ziaian and Esterman (2018, p. 347) describe as the challenge of bridging, where they are continually trying to develop different “ways of being for a range of environments”.

Given this, educators need to consider and identify the types of structured activities that are most suitable for bringing diverse students together. Here the work of Barrett (2018) in relation to developing intercultural competence is of value. He argues that when designing group activities with intergroup contact and ultimately friendships in mind, the activity must require students to collaborate to achieve a common goal. He also suggests that when completing these tasks, students need to see themselves as having equal status, noting that within each group everyone should “have an equal opportunity to express their views, make suggestions, and influence group decisions” (p. 96). A further important feature of these tasks, according to Barrett, is that they need to be of prolonged duration.

3.1.4.1 Qualitative data.

Analysis of the Project data revealed that improvements in the level of connectedness between students was reported across all six case studies. These included connections with students from different cultural and religious groups, genders, and year levels. This enhanced connectedness appears to have been generated by the practices and pedagogies employed, including both classroom and project work. In many cases, these pedagogies and practices required collaboration, team work and often, a shared commitment to a common goal (including informal and formal performances and exhibitions).

While these connections were identified across all case studies, it is clear that the connections across year levels were particularly important for the students who were involved in Circus and extra-curricular activities within the Focused Projects Case (CS1) and Artists in Arts Classrooms Case (CS2). For example, students reported that as a result of their participation in these projects, some of which extended across many weeks and involved after school and weekend sessions, new friendships were forged. Bound together by a shared drive to create a performance or exhibition they could feel proud of, the students needed to pull together and commit. Importantly, younger students came to know and feel comfortable around older students, including student leaders, creating relationships uncommon for students not involved in multi-age projects.

Even when the performances were informal and only viewed by classmates, such as within the EALD English work (CS3), this same drive was apparent and served to connect the students to each other. In addition, even within those classroom environments where collective outcomes were not required, there was still considerable data gathered that pointed to an improved sense of connection to others, with the various cases being subtly different in terms of the types of relationships established and the reasons these occurred. For example, in the Mathematics and Movement Case (CS5) the connections were mainly created due to the problem-solving nature of the work, while in the English classes (CS3) it seems that the artists simply demanded that students work together, including in mixed cultural and gender groups. As a result, one teacher noted that in the classes involving artists “*there was nowhere to hide*”.

Within the Essential English Case (CS4), feelings of safety and comfort, built in part on a sense of connection to others, were deemed to be particularly beneficial, serving to break down cultural and gender-based hierarchies, and encouraging students to communicate with more confidence. As the detailed case study reveals, for some language learners, this was an important outcome of the application of arts-based pedagogies, including process drama.

Finally, for those students who participated in the Forum Program (CS6), connections between students were made possible by the creation of an environment where the emphasis was placed on process rather than product, where opportunities were opened up for these particularly vulnerable students to have a voice, and where flexibility and responsiveness in terms of the form of the work were key. Here the small group size provided opportunities for students to “find” like-minded others, resulting in new friendships.

In attempting to summarise the viewpoints of staff and students in relation to this important connection, two comments are useful – one from a senior student involved in one of the Focused Arts Projects who discusses the notion of family, and one from a member of the school leadership team who notes that Y Connect provided opportunities for new vertical relationships to form:

When they [the students] first came in everyone was sort of, I don't know, just going for the auditions and stuff. When we came out, they were sort of like my drama family. Everyone who I would look to, or have those moments together doing Drama Club because of all the time and commitment we put in. There was not a single person that I didn't really like. I liked all of them ... even for us, I enjoyed those year 7 kids because they would just have like, some energy. They were all doing everything and, oh, it was crazy.

We [school leaders] were upstairs doing this visioning thing with the kids. And they were in eight tables and they were all mixed up, so 7 to 12. And I said to [another school leader], "I'm just going to sit back and I'm going to see." So of course, all the older kids, the big kids started getting it organised. And then I see little [year 7 student] was sitting there talking to [year 12 student leader] and he was just lounging in his chair. I said to [fellow school leader] have a look at how comfortable he is. These two were in the Musical together ... so this [connection] is vertical.

3.1.4.2 Summary of findings

1. New friendships and expanded social networks were forged through participation in arts projects which involved long-term engagement and collaboration towards a shared goal.
2. These friendships and networks created safe spaces for a small group of students who reported feeling marginalised in some other groups.
3. Vertical relationships were developed as students of different ages and experience collaborated on arts projects, creating mentoring opportunities and improving social capital.
4. The Y Connect approaches, which emphasised active and aesthetic engagement, collective problem solving and dialogue, demanded collaboration and strengthened connections between students.

3.1.5. Connection to Learning.



It [Y Connect pedagogies] just helps you understand the play or whatever you 're doing on a deeper level. Because instead of just sitting there reading it, like in a regular English class, you get engaged and you dig deep into the characters, and the physical actions, and it makes you understand it better.

In a recently completed systematic literature review focused on the impact of arts participation on children's achievement, Jindal-Snape et al. (2018) argue that:

In some respects, trying to 'measure the impact' of a range of aesthetic and emotive experiences which themselves defy categorization – let alone the difficulties of proving causality between participation and effect - might be seen as an overly positivist, reductive enterprise which negates the very essence of artistic expression. (p. 60)

However, in spite of their reservations, they proceed and identify 24 studies published between 2004 and 2016 which meet their criteria for inclusion in the synthesis. They suggest that while not all of these studies would meet the standards often required by public bodies to justify funding or policy changes, when taken together, they nevertheless provide a strong case for the academically-related benefits to children and young people of engagement with high quality arts experiences. They draw upon the findings included in these papers to discuss various categories of benefit (pp. 66-67) including literacy, mathematics, overall academic achievement, and academically-related attributes that could have a positive effect upon attainment. Within this final category, the attributes identified across the various papers include: verbal and visual memory; listening and learning skills; problem solving and thinking skills; commitment to education; working better as a team and perseverance; improved attitudes towards learning and school and ability to engage with the work of education; and, concentration and ability to organise. Jindal-Snape and colleagues (2018, p. 68) conclude their review by suggesting that upon the basis of these findings, "there appears to be sufficient evidence to justify support for 'high-quality' (clearly defined), longitudinal arts education programmes for children in schools and community settings on the basis of their potential to enhance academic achievement."

In the introductory sections of this report, findings from a range of international studies (see Part 1) focused on the arts and achievement were offered, with almost all determining that while a direct correlation between academic achievement and engagement with quality arts experiences may be difficult to identify, nonetheless, arts engagement repeatedly reveals significant associated benefits, with many of these having the potential to create flow-on effects for achievement. In line with these reports, we will not be attempting here to suggest causality between attainment and participation in the Y Connect Project. However, we have included within the various Y Connect case study reports offered in Part 4, a wide range of data which keenly supports our view that for those students who engaged with multiple aspects of the Project and over an extended period of time (Red and Blue Dot students in particular), the improvements noted in terms of engagement, attitudes to learning, understanding and skill development are likely to have supported improvements in their academic achievement.

3.1.5.1 Quantitative data.

Within this section of the report, three sets of quantitative data are used: teacher survey data; student survey data; and NAPLAN data.

Teacher survey data

Before moving on to discuss the student survey data, it is worthwhile to first return to the post-project teacher survey data outlined above (see section 3.1.2). There we reported that while teachers who were uninvolved in the project suggested that students in the junior years of secondary schooling (Years 7-10) and those with an EALD background gained the most from participation in the Y Connect Project, teachers who were directly involved overwhelmingly (18 of the 19 respondents) identified

students who struggle academically as benefitting most, while 17 of 19 teacher respondents identified students with engagement and motivation issues. In addition, in terms of the type of impact, teachers directly involved in the Project identified self-confidence, creativity and engagement as the top three. Finally, in relation to the level of impact, 6 of the 15 responding teachers noted significant impact on most students in their classes in terms of engagement, with the remaining 7 identifying some impact on most students.

These findings are important in relation to connection to learning, confirming the perceptions of teachers offered within the interviews which also highlight the importance of this Project as a vehicle for re-engaging disengaged students and for supporting those who lack confidence or struggle academically.

Student survey data.

As in the section relating to connection to self, here we also focus mainly on responses from the post-project survey, with an emphasis on responses from participating students. Similarly, we also compare the responses of two groups of participating students – those with English as an additional language or dialect, and those who identified in the survey as native English speakers. This comparison is useful given that two of the Project cases were particularly designed to support the needs of EALD students (the Essential English case and the Forum Program case), while significant attention was also paid to supporting EALD students within the English case.

The table below (Table 3. 5) outlines the responses of both participating and non-participating students in relation to the value of having artists working with their teachers. It reveals that the participating students are generally very positive about the value of artists in relation to key aspects associated with learning. For example, Question 1 relates to enjoyment and reveals that 72.5% of participating students indicated agreement to the statement: I have enjoyed having artists in my classroom. In addition, in response to Question 2, which was aimed at identifying students' perceptions of potential shifts in their interest and involvement when artists work with their teachers, 69.2% of participating students indicated agreement. Finally, 47.7% of students indicated agreement to the statement in Question 4: My assessment results improve when artists and teachers work together in my classroom.

In interpreting these outcomes, it should also be noted that even for those students who did not participate in the Y Connect Project, and who are therefore unlikely to have had sufficient exposure to artists to comment, the responses were also highly positive. Nevertheless, when taken together, the responses to Questions 1, 2 and 4 in the section on Learning with Artists in the Classroom, would seem to confirm the qualitative data provided in the individual case study reports offered in Part 4. They suggest that students perceive engagement, enjoyment and improvements in assessment outcomes as all being positively associated with partnerships between artists and teachers.

Table 3.5. Post-Project Participating and Non-participating Student Survey Results – Value of Artists and Arts Projects

#	Learning with Artists in the Classroom	Involvement	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I have enjoyed having artists in my classroom.	Yes	171	35.1	37.4	20.5	4.7	2.3
		No	87	23.0	32.2	35.6	3.4	5.7
2	When artists work with teachers I am more interested and involved.	Yes	172	29.7	39.5	24.4	4.1	2.3
		No	88	23.9	33.0	30.7	6.8	5.7
3	Artists are not very helpful in supporting my learning.	Yes	174	6.9	12.1	23.6	37.4	20.1
		No	87	5.7	13.8	28.7	33.3	18.4
4	My assessment results improve when artists and teachers work together in my classroom.	Yes	170	20.6	27.1	35.9	12.4	4.1
		No	83	18.1	25.3	47.0	4.8	4.8
5	My teacher seems to enjoy working with artists.	Yes	168	34.5	35.7	25.0	3.0	1.8
		No	82	20.7	29.3	42.7	4.9	2.4

Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree

A comparison between the responses of EALD and Non-EALD students (Table 3. 6) is also worth considering here and suggests that for students with English as their additional language, the experience of having an artist in their classrooms is even more positive. For example, in relation to Question 2 which invites students to respond to the statement: When artists work with teachers I am more interested and involved, the data reveals that 76.6% of EALD students agreed with this statement, while the non-EALD students were less enthusiastic, with 61.5% agreeing. A similar situation occurs in relation to Question 4 relating to assessment outcomes. These results show that while 55.1% of EALD students agree overall, by contrast, just 35.7% of participating non-EALD students agreed. These figures appear to suggest that EALD students have a stronger appreciation for the value of artist/ teacher partnerships in relation to learning, although both groups are positive.

Table 3.6. Post-Project Participating Student Survey Results - Comparison Between Non-EALD and EALD Student Responses to the Value of Artists and Art Projects

#	Learning with Artists in the Classroom	EALD	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I have enjoyed having artists in my classroom.	EALD	87	46.0	33.3	14.9	2.3	3.4
		Non-EALD	71	23.9	45.1	22.5	7.0	1.4
2	When artists work with teachers I am more interested and involved.	EALD	89	39.3	37.1	18.0	3.4	2.2
		Non-EALD	70	18.6	42.9	31.4	4.3	2.9
3	Artists are not very helpful in supporting my learning.	EALD	90	8.9	11.1	20.0	37.8	22.2
		Non-EALD	71	5.6	9.9	26.8	39.4	18.3
4	My assessment results improve when artists and teachers work together in my classroom.	EALD	89	23.6	31.5	29.2	11.2	4.5
		Non-EALD	70	15.7	20.0	45.7	14.3	4.3
5	My teacher seems to enjoy working with artists.	EALD	88	42.0	31.8	19.3	3.4	3.4
		Non-EALD	69	27.5	40.3	29.0	2.9	0.0

Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree

Unfortunately, while it would also have been highly beneficial to break this data down in other ways, for example by comparing the perceptions of high achieving and lower achieving students, this was not possible given the anonymity of respondents.

NAPLAN data.

As part of our consideration of connection to learning, we offer here some results relating to a set of standardised tests used in Australia. Entitled NAPLAN, these tests are completed by students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 and are designed to identify student progress in reading, writing, language conventions such as spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy. The results of these tests are reported using a common scale so that growth over time can be identified. The outcomes of these tests are recorded on an individual and school-based level, with each school's performance across the relevant year levels and in each of achievement areas being published on the Australian Government's My School website.

At Yeronga SHS, students commence at Year 7, completing their first set of secondary level tests not long after arrival at the school. They then complete further tests in Year 9. The tests have multiple purposes, with one of these being to determine the growth in student achievement across a two-year period. As such, consideration of the NAPLAN results of the Yeronga students across the period 2015 to 2018 provides some interesting points for discussion, especially in terms of progress made in comparison to state and national growth averages. However, within the Yeronga SHS context, these comparisons can be hindered for the following reasons:

- Many students arrive in Australia after Year 7 or do not have sufficient language skills to complete the tests at Year 7, even if they are in the country.
- There is a considerable level of transience in this school population, with students moving schools regularly - either to connect with family who have just arrived or because of housing affordability, parental work, and other circumstances.

In addition, and specifically in relation to the Y Connect Project, a significant number of our participating students were already in Year 9 or 10 when the project commenced, and as such their NAPLAN data is not relevant.

Nevertheless, across the duration to the project, some interesting outcomes have emerged in relation to the NAPLAN literacy data. Of particular interest is the fact that across the last two years, the Yeronga SHS Year 9 students have made considerable gains in their writing results, with the results for students who completed both Year 7 and Year 9 tests across 2015-2017 and 2016-2018 showing improvements - especially for students who completed the Year 9 test in 2017. The figures below (Figures 3. 4, 3. 5, 3. 6 and 3. 7), taken from the My School website (ACARA, 2019) provide a snapshot of the improvements demonstrated by these cohorts, with only the reading results across the 2016-2018 cohorts showing limited improvement. They offer a comparison between the achievement gains for Yeronga SHS (maroon line), all Australian Schools (black line), and schools with similar students (blue line). These similar students are identified according to the ICSEA rating given to the school they attend, with this rating being calculated based on the average level of educational advantage of students. Factors taken into consideration when calculating educational advantage include parents' occupation/s, parents' education, the school's geographic location and the proportion of indigenous students.

Figure 3. 4. Yeronga SHS NAPLAN results for Year 7-9 Writing 2015-2017 averages

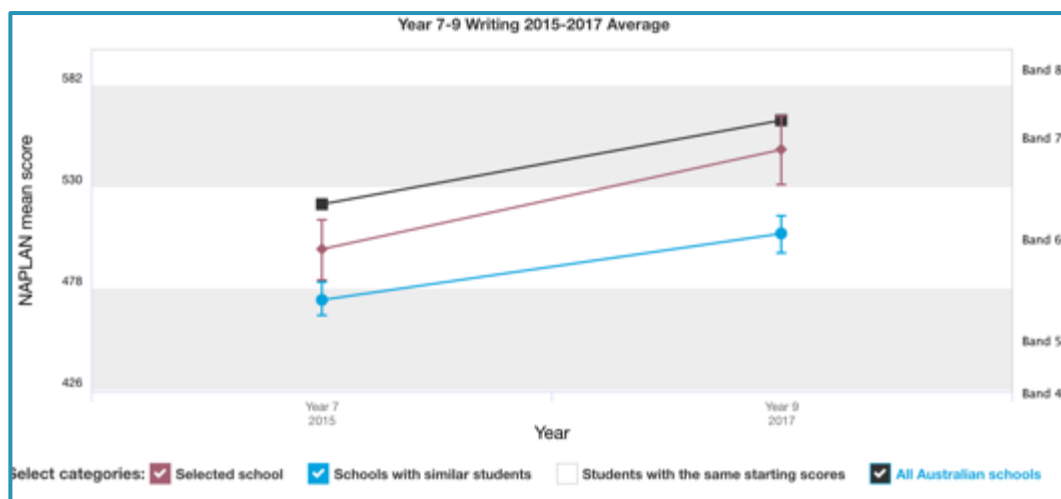


Figure 3. 5. Yeronga SHS NAPLAN results for Year 7-9 Writing 2016-2018 averages

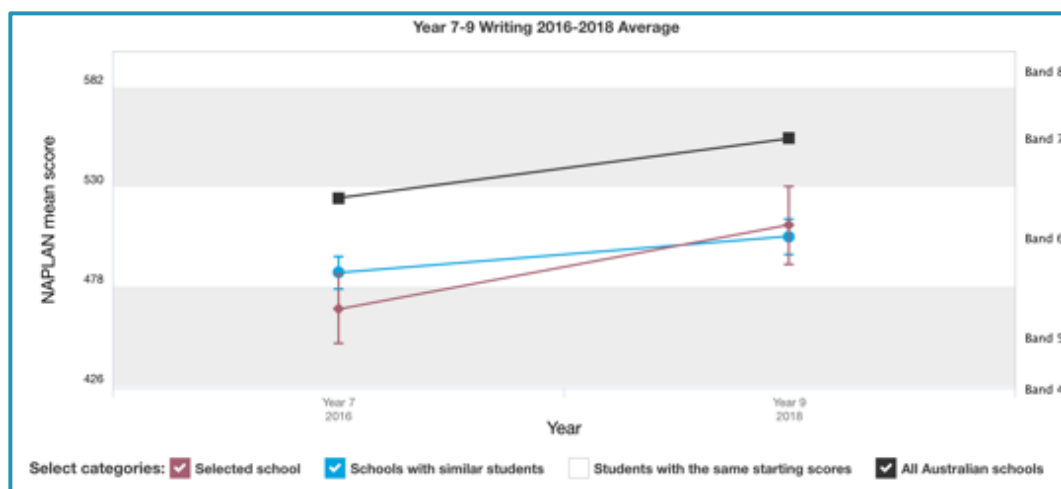


Figure 3. 6. Yeronga SHS NAPLAN results for Reading 2015-2017 averages

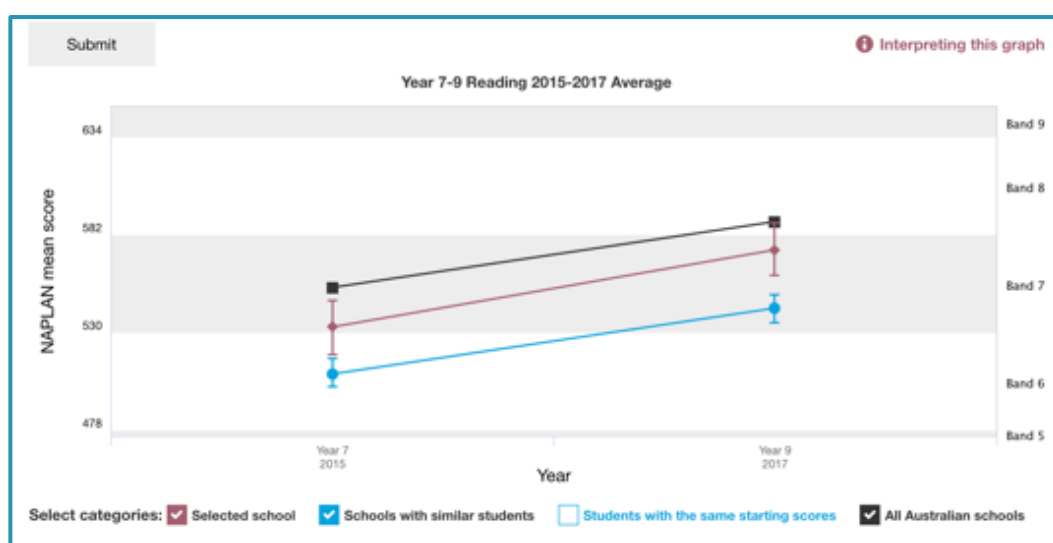
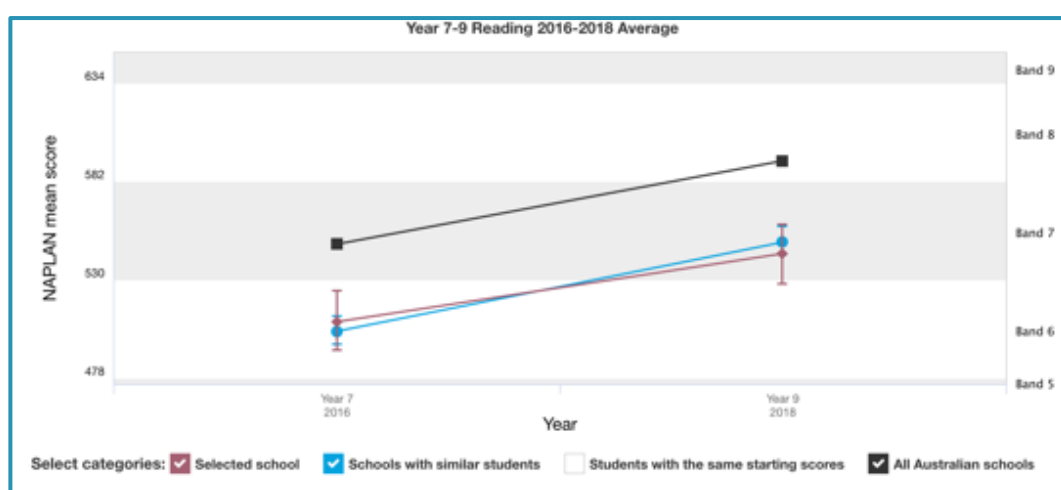


Figure 3. 7. Yeronga SHS NAPLAN results for Reading 2016-2018 averages



These improvements are in contrast to an overall national situation, where the writing results for students in Year 9, especially for boys, are sliding. In relation to these outcomes, the following comment was offered by a member of the school leadership team:

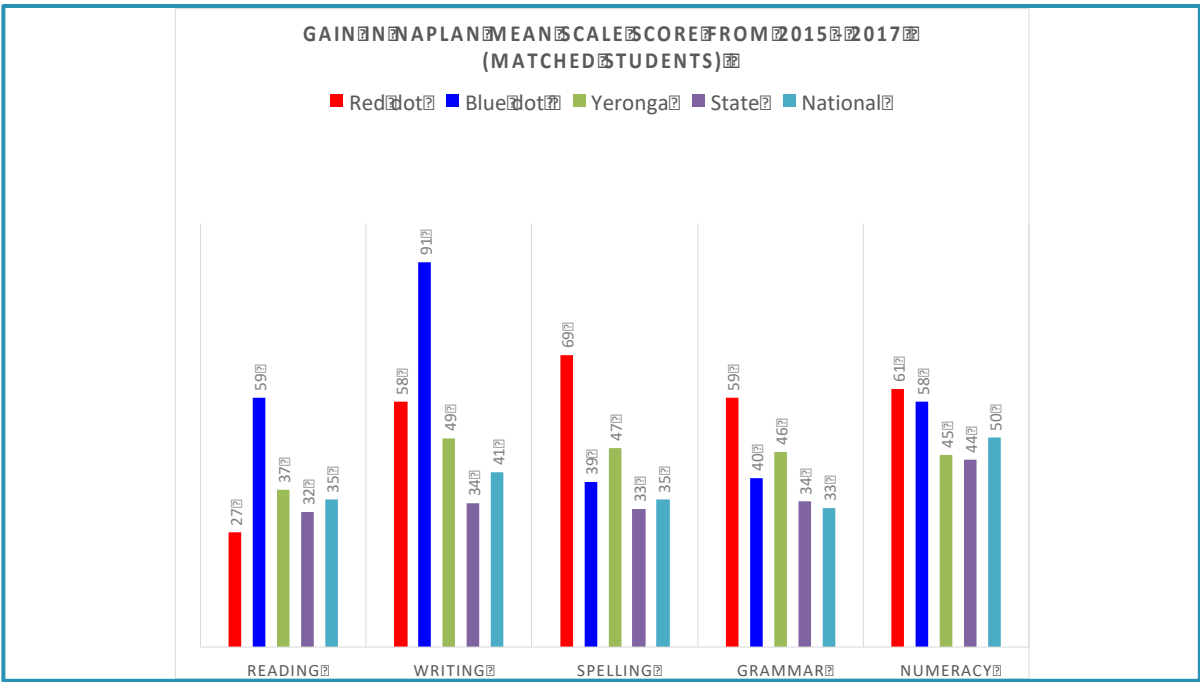
Last year we bucked the national trend and improved. And this year it's improved again a little bit. So, we maintained the lift and went up a bit more. So, it's really great news. And the [year] sevens, who only had four months of Y Connect, they've done pretty well too. Their writing is great. So, our writing's going fine here. There might be a few things that are impacting on that but certainly the [year] nines again there is a bit of a trend there. Having opportunity to be creative and having... to do lots of drama and put it in writing. So yeah, it's very positive.

In addition, and at a smaller scale, it is worth considering the NAPLAN reported literacy gains made by the Project's Red and Blue Dot students. These are outlined below in Figures 3.8 and 3.9 which were created by a member of the school administration team based on the names of Blue and Red Dot Students we provided. They focus on student gains in NAPLAN mean scale scores for literacy and numeracy and highlight in particular the impressive improvements made by the Red and Blue Dot

Students in the area of literacy. They relate only to those students who completed both the Year 7 and Year 9 tests at Yeronga SHS.

Two comparison periods are utilised: 2015 to 2017 and 2016 to 2018. The first figure (Figure 3. 8), relates to the 2015 to 2017 period and shows the average gains made by the Red and Blue Dot students, as well as those for the overall Yeronga SHS cohort, together with average gains for students across Queensland and Australia.

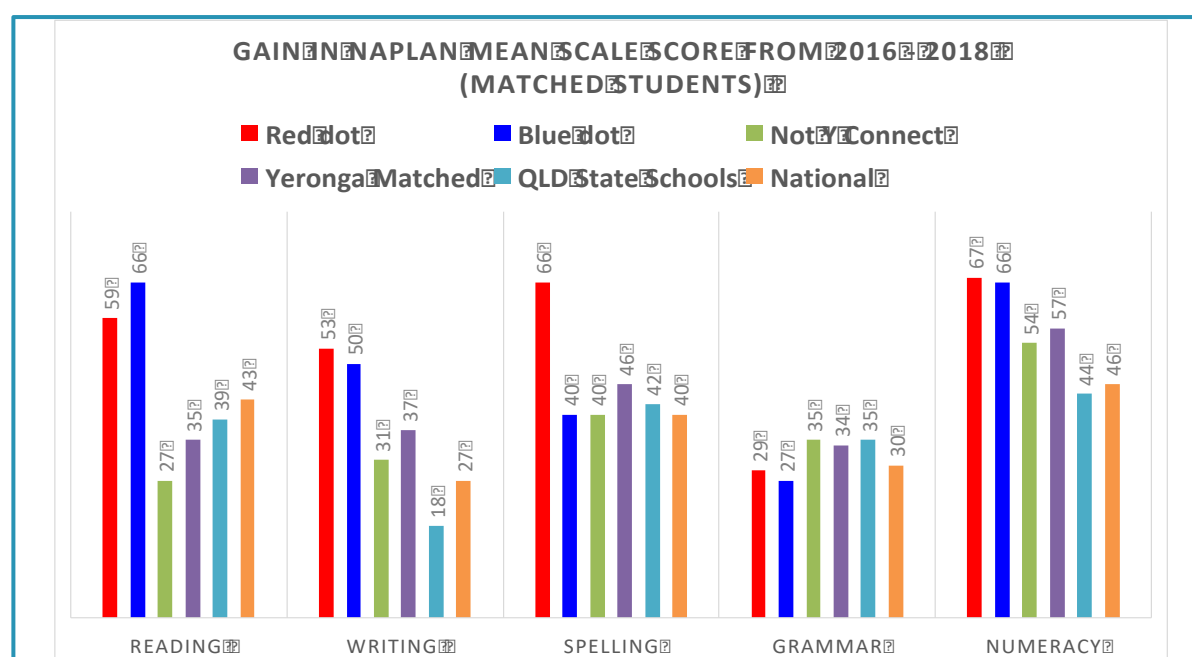
Figure 3.8. Gain in NAPLAN Mean Score 2015-2017



Of interest here is the fact that overall, the Yeronga SHS gains (green) in almost all areas (with the exception of numeracy) are above the state and national averages, while the Red and Blue Dot results are above or well above in all areas except reading for Red Dot students.

The next figure (Figure 3. 9) relates to the 2016-2018 period and offers a different configuration of the data, outlining the Queensland state schools and national gains compared to the Blue and Red Dot students, the gains achieved by students who were not identified as falling into one of these categories (i.e. Not Y Connect) and the overall Yeronga SHS results (listed here as Yeronga matched).

Figure 3.9. Gain in NAPLAN Mean Score 2016-2018



Here the data reveals that the overall Yeronga SHS cohort (purple) has outperformed both the Queensland State School and National averages in writing, spelling, and numeracy, while the Red and Blue Dot students have achieved stronger gains in most areas with the exception of grammar for both groups and spelling for Blue Dot students.

In addition, given the significant number of Yeronga students with English as an additional language, it is also useful to consider the nationwide data for students with language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE). The following statistics drawn directly from the My School website (ACARA, 2019) reveal that for all Australian students with an LBOTE who progressed from Year 7 to Year 9 across the 2015-2017 period, the average gain in writing was 44.2, while in Queensland it was 38.2. By comparison, in the same period, the overall Yeronga cohort achieved an average gain of 49, with the Y Connect Blue Dot students achieving an average gain of 91, and the Red Dots students an average gain of 58. Then, across the 2016-2018 period the average gain in writing across Australia for all students with a LBOTE was 30.7, and in Queensland was 24.4. Here we see that the overall Yeronga SHS gain was higher than both of these at 37, while for the Red and Blue Dot students it was 53 and 50 respectively.

Meanwhile, for reading in the 2015-2017 period, across these same year levels (7-9) the national LBOTE average gain was 35.1, with the Queensland LBOTE average gain being 34.0. By comparison, the Yeronga SHS cohort made a gain of 37, with Blue Dot students making a gain of 59, while the Red Dots averaged 27. In the 2016-2018 period, these LBOTE reading gains were 47.8 nationally and 43.6 for Queensland, while the overall Yeronga average was lower than both of these at 35, the Blue dot students achieved a gain of 66 and the Red Dots of 59.

While these results are clearly very pleasing, it is important to recognise that a range of factors contributed to them, including the extensive work done by teachers and other specialists outside of Y Connect. Nonetheless, the school administration team were thrilled with these outcomes, including an overall improvement in writing outcomes for the Year 9 students across both Y Connect years - an outcome that went against the national trend. In response to these results, one school leader noted:

It's not just the end product, it's the confidence that they're prepared to put pen to paper. Because nationally, NAPLAN telling us that kids writing is going backwards, that kids are reluctant writers. And we certainly haven't found that. So, I think that's been a big thing.

Overall then, while this report is definitely not claiming direct causality between Y Connect activities and these results, it would certainly seem to be appropriate to contend that the Y Connect approaches contributed, including through the positive impacts reported by teachers and students in relation to several key aspects of attitude and understanding that contribute to literacy. These aspects almost certainly supported flow-on improvements which positively influenced the improved overall NAPLAN results outlined here.

3.1.5.2 Qualitative data.

Connections to learning were identified in all cases with the exception of the Forum Program (CS6). Its absence is not surprising however, given that the focus and purpose of this group, as its title suggests, was to create a space for students with particularly difficult backgrounds and circumstances to come together to participate in drama-based workshops without the pressure of assessment, specific curriculum focused learning goals or performance outcomes. The four remaining cases (Cases 2, 3, 4 and 5) were all focused specifically on curricular areas, with two of these being English related (CS 3 and 4), one Mathematics related (CS5) and the Artists in Arts Classroom case (CS2) addressing the five individual disciplines included within the Australian Curriculum: The Arts. Not surprisingly then, within the reports relating to these cases, the connection to learning aspect is given close attention, with the outcomes being reported across three key areas: engagement and attitudes towards learning; skill development; and understanding and achievement.

Engagement and attitudes towards learning

Across five cases, improved student engagement was the most consistent theme within *connection to learning*. Here we saw that the majority of students and almost all teachers and artists shared the view that this stronger engagement was mostly due to the partnerships between teachers and artists, based mainly on the shifts that occurred in terms of the pedagogical approaches, and in many cases, the expectations and energy of the artists. Students repeatedly referred to the learning process as being “fun”, while many teachers reported that students who were otherwise disengaged in other areas of school life, or when participating in lessons delivered using other pedagogical approaches, demonstrated a shift in their involvement and willingness to engage. This qualitative data confirms the survey outcomes for participating students, which, as previously reported, revealed that 69.2% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they were more interested and involved when artists worked with their teachers. It also confirms that teacher survey data where 17 of the 19 participating teachers who responded to the survey identified improvements in engagement as being in the top two benefits of the Project.

In relation to the specific case study reports, within the Focused Arts Projects case (CS1), students noted that they were now more “*keen to learn*”, while others, especially those involved in the circus group or in extra-curricular activities showed improved commitment. While engagement in these extra-curricular activities and projects is not surprising, these improved engagement levels are also strongly represented within those cases focused on curricular offerings (CS2, 3, 4 and 5), with attendant improvements for some students in their behavior. For example, within the Artist in Arts Classrooms case (CS2) teachers reported positive shifts in the behavior of several particularly disruptive students, while overall, they noted that students appeared to be a lot more focused.

Within the Mathematics and Movement case study report (CS5), it is noted that the movement approaches and involvement of the choreographer added variety to the lessons, which kept students interested, lifted engagement and improved focus. These improvements in engagement levels were, according to both teachers and the students themselves, particularly beneficial for students who

otherwise struggle to engage or who generally find Mathematics challenging. Of particular interest here are the comments from students about the movement-based approaches helping them to overcome what they referred to as boredom.

This theme was also present within the English Case Study (CS3), with one student referring to the Y Connect lessons as “*the funnest way to learn*”, another referred to them as a “*revolution*” in teaching, while an English teacher referred to the transformed engagement of one EALD student as “*really miraculous*”. Students argued that the active learning processes that were applied kept their “*brains fresh*”. Of key importance here was the work of the artist in helping the students engage with the literature they were studying. Using a range of techniques, including the actor delivering monologues as one of a novel’s characters, reading sections of a play or novel in a highly expressive and emotive way, or through role plays where the students had the chance to become the characters, there was general recognition that the students’ motivation to read their novels or plays, and engage more deeply, had been developed.

Finally, while a small number of students in both the Essential English Case (CS4) and the Mathematics and Movement Case (CS5) had some initial concerns about the approaches, referring to them as “*silly*” or “*weird*”, most came to recognise that even if these pedagogies were not of value for them, that they did help to engage many other students in their classes and were therefore useful.

The following comment from one of the school leaders provides a useful summary of how many teachers understood the shifts in the students’ engagement:

This [Y Connect] is a really, really good strategy to engage kids but not just kids who are really needy. You can engage kids anywhere across the spectrum. From kids who are really thoughtful and quite traditionally intelligent, to the kids who are the trouble makers and all the rest of it. I think that's the real beauty of it for me. It engages everybody. It doesn't matter where they come from or what their skills or abilities are. Everyone gets wrapped up in it so I think that's a really positive thing.

Skill development

In response to participation in the Focused Arts Projects (CS1), students appear to have achieved improvements in a range of skills including artistic, creative and performance skills, as well as improvements in students’ the ability to work collaboratively. Some EALD students also expressed the view that participation in Performing Arts Club sessions had improved their English language skills. Within the Artists in Arts Classroom case (CS2), these skills were also noted, with the involvement of the artists appearing to be particularly beneficial for developing artistry through a focus on technique. Thinking skills were also enhanced, including higher order thinking, critical thinking and problem-solving. These thinking skills were also noted within the Mathematics and Movement Case (CS5).

Within the two English focused cases (CS 3 and CS 4), key findings in the area of skill development, not surprisingly were associated with many aspects of literacy including oral language and presentation skills, writing skills, and reading skills. In the English Case (CS3), the key factor driving improvements in writing skills appears to be spontaneity, with the drama and music work serving to activate their imaginations and boost their ability to generate the flow of ideas needed for effective writing. As one teacher noted, “*They could immerse themselves in it and therefore have more complex and nuanced reactions to a task*”. However, the Essential English Case Study report (CS4) also reveals that the process drama approaches also supported improvements in leadership and collaboration skills.

Understanding and achievement

Across Cases 2, 3, 4 and 5 teachers and students consistently reported improvements in both understanding and achievement. For example, in the Artists in Arts Classrooms Case (CS2), teachers

across all five disciplines suggested that their students' results had been enhanced through their partnerships with the artists, while in the Mathematics and Movement Case (CS5), four understanding and achievement related benefits were identified including improvement in the: recall of mathematical concepts; understanding of mathematical concepts; retention of mathematics vocabulary and assessment results for some students. In relation to this latter point, quantitative data supplied by the school via the Head of Department reveals that the prolonged engagement of teachers across the duration of Y Connect had a positive impact on student retention of concepts taught, with student results in relation to the pre and post-tests being, on average, higher when teachers were involved in the Y Connect Project. Importantly, it should also be noted that this data reveals that for teachers with long term engagement in the Project, the continued involvement of the artist in their classroom did not produce any additional benefits once the skills and understandings of movement-based pedagogies were initially developed.

Further support for the role played by Y Connect in enhancing students' connection to learning and ultimately their levels of understanding and achievement is evidenced within the English Case (CS 3). Here we see that what is mostly highlighted within this case are improvements in the depth of understanding experienced by students, especially in relation to plot and character within literature, with this deeper understanding leading for some students to improved achievement within assessment tasks. Another strong theme from students was the view that opportunities to work one on one with an actor, when preparing for assessed oral presentations not only gave them a boost in their confidence, but also helped them to improve the quality of their material and its delivery. Comments of this kind were particularly prevalent in the interviews involving EALD students.

Finally, the NAPLAN data reported earlier in this section is important in terms of achievement, with the overall improvement in the school's literacy results, together with those identified for the Blue and Red Dot students, providing further support for the claim that the Y Connect approaches were beneficial to many students in relation to understanding and achievement.

3.1.5.3 Summary of findings

Earlier in this report we have noted that our attempts to closely track student achievement within individual subjects were not successful and as such, no claims about causality will be made. Nevertheless, when taken together, the material presented here relating to the three themes associated with connection to learning (engagement, skill development and understanding and achievement) make a strong case that participation in the Y Connect Project positively impacted on the achievement and understanding, albeit at different levels, and in different ways for individual students. For some students, the benefits were mostly attitudinal, serving to lift their engagement within individual lessons and in relation to specific subjects. For other students, new skills were developed, and existing ones enhanced, while in some cases, the partnerships between artists and teachers, the specific expertise of the artist, the nature of the pedagogies employed or a combination of these, worked to improve students' achievement or at the very least, their perceptions of these.

Overall, the findings outlined here and within the five relevant case study reports (CS1-5) suggest that:

1. Artist/teacher partnerships and innovative pedagogies created new and embodied ways of enacting curriculum, deepening students' engagement and their understanding of key concepts.
2. These partnerships and pedagogies were particularly successful for students who struggled academically, for whom engagement was an issue or were EALD students.
3. Y Connect approaches improved key skills essential for learning, including: oral language; reading and writing; critical and creative thinking; and creative, artistic and performance skills.
4. Some students and teachers reported that these skills were developed to an extent that would not have been possible using other approaches.

5. Students and teachers reported gains in academic achievement as a result of participation in the Project, including within national benchmark tests (NAPLAN) and Arts, English and Mathematics assessments.

3.1.6 Connection to the School Community.



Performing...It makes me happy, it makes me feel like I belong here, like I am like other humans...you know what I mean?

3.1.6.1 Background literature.

The literature addressing belonging in the school context indicates that it is a complex concept with many dimensions, which according to Wehlage et al. (1989) include attachment (personal investment in the school), commitment (compliance with school rules and expectations), involvement (engagement with school academics and extracurricular activities), and belief in their school (faith in its values and its significance). Antonsich (2010) extends upon some of these ideas by arguing that “belonging should be analyzed both as a personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)” (p. 644).

A sense of belonging, according to Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) is particularly important for refugee students who must overcome significant resettlement issues including general wellbeing, successful adjustment, and future economic and occupational success. Correa-Velez, Gifford, and Barnett (2010) also note that “over their first three years of settlement, refugee youth’s experiences of social inclusion or exclusion have a significant impact on their subjective wellbeing” (p. 1404) and that “establishing a sense of belonging in early resettlement is foundational for well-being among refugee youth” (p. 1399). Edgeworth (2015) also highlights that, “fitting in at school and achieving belonging has an affective dimension, where failure to belong can be distressing” (p. 352). In response to these risks, Uptin, Wright, and Harwood (2013) state that “it is the type of school that former refugee students attend that determine pathways to inclusion or exclusion within the school, both in culture and pedagogy” (p. 135) and that “schools have the power to deconstruct the negative political discourse and prevent marginalisation and inequality” (Uptin et al., 2013, p. 135).

Of course, the challenges associated with belonging are not limited to students who have refugee, asylum seeker or immigrant backgrounds. Students from a range of other backgrounds can experience significant challenges in gaining and maintaining a sense of belonging. For example, students newly arrived at a large secondary school from smaller primary schools may struggle to make the transition, finding it difficult to identify friends or teachers who can support them in their new learning space.

3.1.6.2 Quantitative data.

Within this section, two data sets are discussed: the attendance data across the Project period and the student survey data.

Attendance data

While this data may have also been considered within the connection to learning section of this report, it is offered here to support discussion of the notion of belonging. The data used has been drawn from the My Schools website (ACARA, 2019) and includes overall attendance rates in Term 3 and the percentage of students attending more than 90% of the time in this same period. The Term 3 data set has been selected for discussion here as across many Australian schools there is a marked drop in the attendance of less engaged students at this time.

The table below (Table 3. 7) reveals that from 2015 through to 2018, the overall Term 3 attendance of students at Yeronga SHS rose by 2% from 88% to 90%, while a 4% improvement in attendance was recorded for the proportion of students attending 90% of the time or more - from 62% in 2015 prior to commencement of Y Connect, to 66% in 2018). These are positive outcomes, especially given the priority placed on attendance within Queensland Department of Education policies. Of particular significance is the 4% improvement from 2015 to 2018 in the proportion of students who attend 90% or more of the time in Term 3, suggesting that connection to the school, as demonstrated through attendance, improved.

Table 3. 7. Yeronga SHS Term 3 attendance rates 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Student attendance rate – Term 3.	88%	89%	90%	90%
Proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time - Term 3.	62%	62%	64%	66%

Survey data

Within the pre- and post-project student surveys, Section 2 was devoted to questions relating to belonging. The table below (Table 3. 8) provides an overview of the results of these two surveys in relation to this section. Once again, phase 1 within the table refers to the pre-project student survey results, while phase 2 relates to the post-project results. It reveals some interesting outcomes, with several of these being statistically significant. One of the most important of these in terms of belonging is Question 5 which asks students to respond to the question: The people in the local community seem to respect my culture. Here we see that from the commencement of the study to its conclusion, the level of agreement for students grew from 65.4% to 76.3% ($\chi^2 = 33.619$, $N=473$, $p<.001$). In addition, significant difference was observed on Question 9 (I feel like I belong in this school) ($\chi^2 = 19.672$, $N=488$, $p=.001$), with overall agreement growing from 64.5% to 71.2%, with the biggest shift being in the strongly agree category which saw a rise of over 10%.

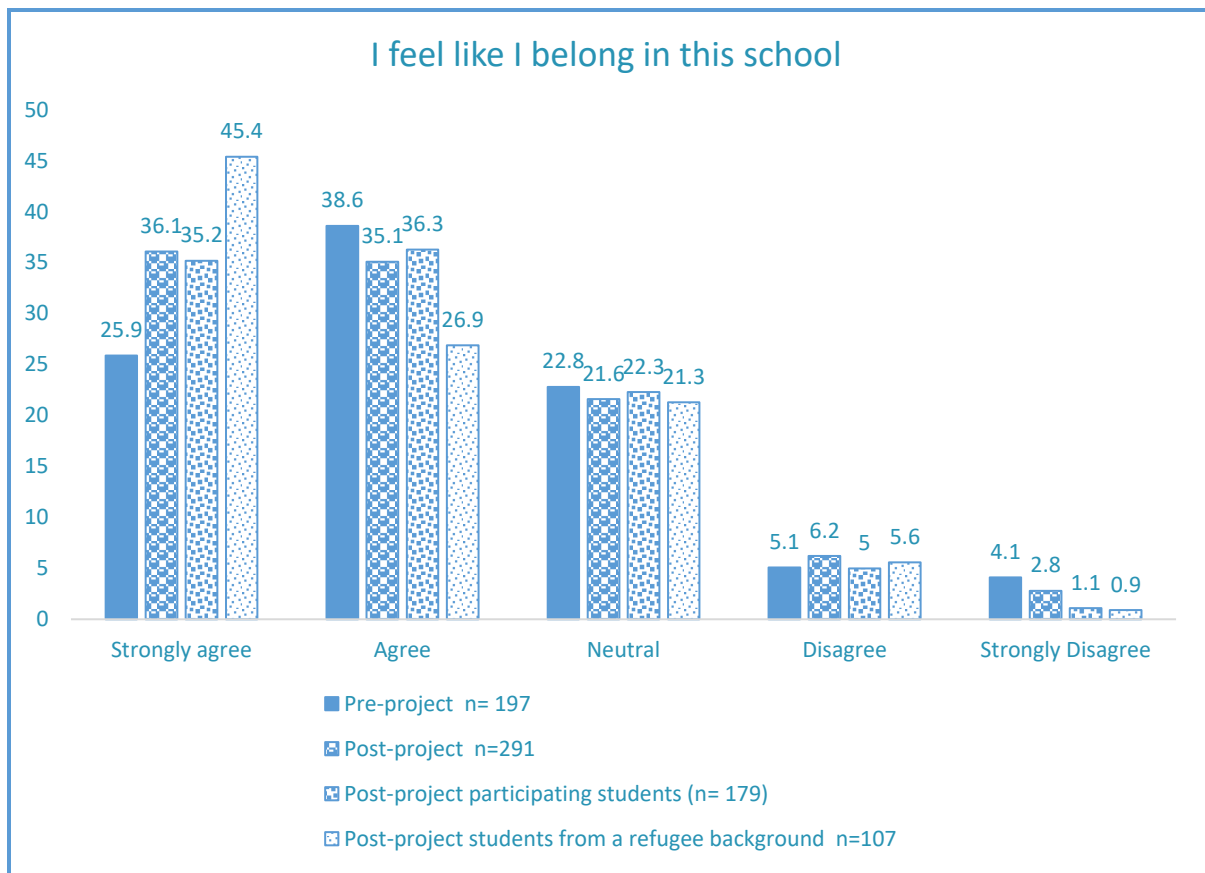
Table 3. 8. Pre- and Post-Project Student Survey Responses – Belonging

#	Belonging	Phases	n	SA	A	N	D	SD	D/k
1	My classmates accept me for who I am.	Phase 1	203	27.1	51.2	12.8	2.5	2.0	4.4
		Phase 2	294	32.3	43.9	17.7	3.7	2.4	0.0
2	My teachers accept me for who I am.	Phase 1	203	33.5	46.8	11.8	2.0	2.0	3.9
		Phase 2	292	40.8	38.7	16.4	2.4	1.7	0.0
3	The students at this school respect my culture.	Phase 1	198	25.8	45.5	19.2	1.5	2.5	5.6
		Phase 2	286	32.2	45.1	17.5	3.1	2.1	0.0
4	The teachers at this school respect my culture.	Phase 1	197	40.1	39.1	15.2	0.5	1.5	3.6
		Phase 2	288	46.2	37.8	13.9	0.7	1.4	0.0
5	The people in the local community seem to respect my culture.	Phase 1	191	22.5	42.9	22.0	1.0	2.1	9.4
		Phase 2	282	34.8	41.5	20.2	2.1	1.4	0.0
6	I always feel safe at school.	Phase 1	200	31.5	40.5	18.5	5.0	2.5	2.0
		Phase 2	290	36.2	42.1	16.6	3.8	1.4	0.0
7	I always feel safe outside of school.	Phase 1	202	17.8	39.6	26.2	10.4	3.5	2.5
		Phase 2	286	26.6	35.3	28.0	7.0	3.1	0.0
8	I feel a sense of pride in who I am.	Phase 1	200	34.5	40.0	18.0	3.5	1.5	2.5
		Phase 2	287	41.1	39.4	15.7	3.1	0.7	0.0
9	I feel like I belong in this school.	Phase 1	197	25.9	38.6	22.8	5.1	4.1	3.6
		Phase 2	291	36.1	35.1	21.6	6.2	1.0	0.0
10	Teachers understand and listen to me.	Phase 1	199	24.6	48.7	19.6	2.5	2.5	2.0
		Phase 2	291	28.5	44.7	22.7	1.7	2.4	0.0
11	I feel like I belong in my local community.	Phase 1	194	22.7	44.3	21.6	3.1	2.1	6.2
		Phase 2	288	30.2	41.0	22.2	4.2	2.4	0.0

Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree; D/k=Don't know

Figure 3.10 (below) provides further information about this question by specifically identifying the post-project responses of students from refugee backgrounds, and by separating out the post-project responses of participating students. It reveals variations between the data sets in terms of overall agreement to the statement about belonging (ranging from a low of 64.5% in the pre-Project survey to 72.3% overall agreement for students with refugee backgrounds in the post-survey). What is most significant however, is the very high level of **strong agreement** for students with refugee backgrounds, which sits at 45.4%. Nevertheless, it also true and quite concerning that across all of the post-survey groupings, more than 20% of students still offered a neutral response to this question. On a more positive note, strong disagreement for participating students fell to just 1.1%.

Figure 3. 10. Pre- and Post-Project Student Survey Responses – I feel like I belong in this school

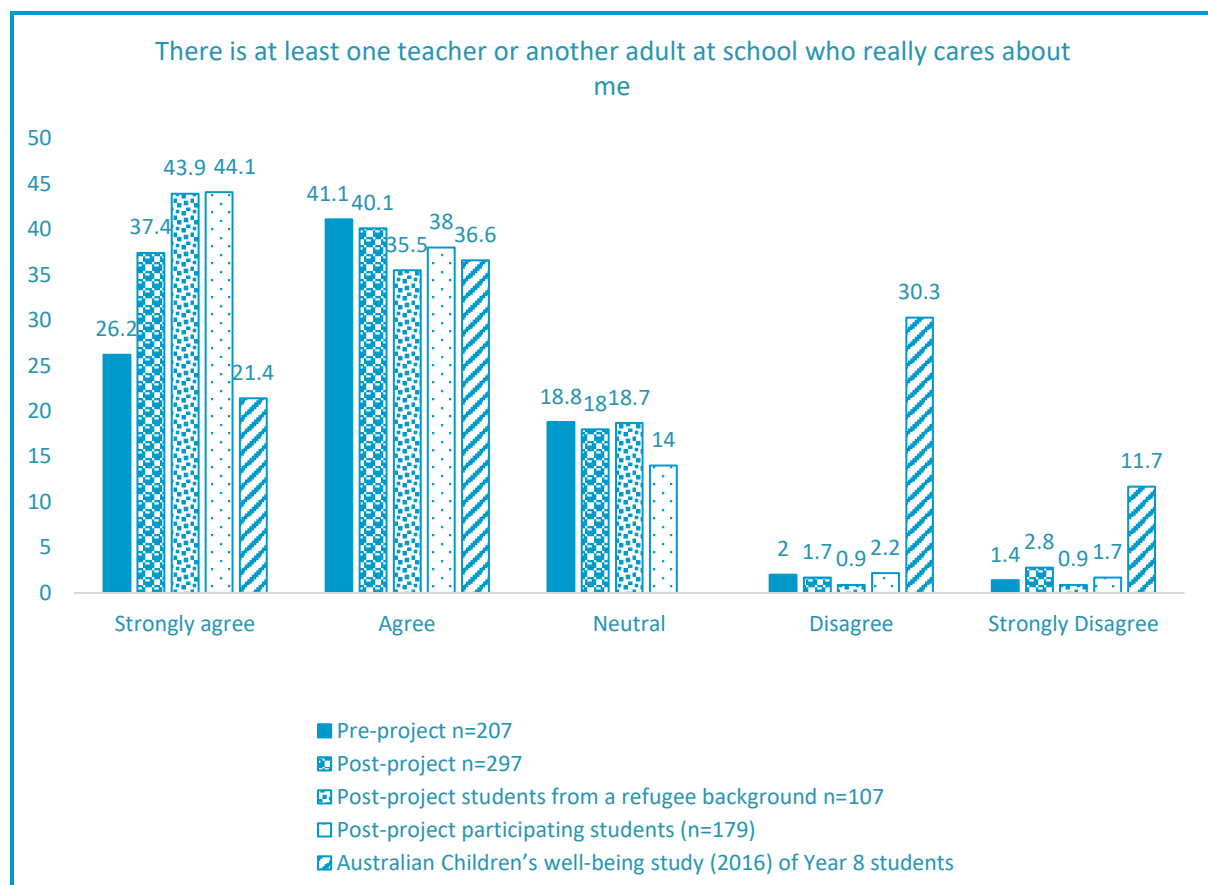


A question from an earlier section of the survey (Relationships with teachers and other adults) is also relevant to this discussion, with the results outlined below in Figure 3.11. It asked students to respond to the statement: There is at least one teacher or another adult at school who really cares about me.

In this figure, pre- and post-project results are compared, with the post-project results again being teased out to examine the post-project responses of students with a refugee background and those offered by participating students. In addition, and for comparison, results for this same question (albeit using a different scale), drawn from the Australian Children's Wellbeing Survey (Redmond et al., 2016) are also outlined. The figure reveals that on this question there are significant differences between the pre- and post-project survey outcomes, with the greatest difference being between pre-project respondents and post-project participating respondents (67.1% agreement compared to 82.1%). Also significant are the percentages for strongly agree, with 37.4% of respondents within the post-project survey strongly agreeing with this statement compared to 26.2% in the pre-project survey, while strong agreement for participating students sits at 44.1%.

Figure 3. 11. Pre- and Post-Project Student Survey Responses – Connection to Teachers and Staff: A comparison between overall, participating, students with a refugee background and Australian Children’s Wellbeing survey (2016) responses (*)

Note: * Strongly agree=Very much true; Agree=Pretty much true; Disagree=A little true; Strongly Disagree=Not at all true



These results are especially noteworthy when compared with the results of the large-scale 2016 Australian Children’s Wellbeing Survey on this same question. Here we see that the level of strong agreement, at 21.4 % for very much true, is relatively close to the pre-project survey results of 26.2%, which were also gathered in 2016. This significant improvement in all categories, but especially for participating students, suggests that the Y Connect Project was highly effective in building relationships between adults and students that supported their sense of belonging.

3.1.6.2 Qualitative data.

An awareness of an enhanced sense of belonging through connection with the school community was identified within three of the six case studies: Focused Arts Projects (CS1); Artists in Arts Classrooms (CS2); and Forum Program (CS6). This finding is not surprising, due to the nature of these cases. For example, the Forum Program (CS6) brought together a small group of especially selected students and provided them with a safe and consistent space for exploring ideas and reflecting on them using dramatic strategies. In these sessions, key practice features included a check in, where everyone was greeted and invited to share something with the rest of the group; student goal setting and choice of group size; and group reflections. Given these highly student-centred practices, it is unsurprising that students’ sense of belonging was enhanced.

Within the Focused Arts Projects case (CS1), students offered various statements relating to an enhanced sense of connection to the school, with some arguing that school was simply more fun than before, while others felt that the school was giving them something extra – looking after them in a particular and unique way. In arguing this point, they identified other schools that weren't being offered these opportunities and as such, felt special. Students involved in the Artists in Arts Classrooms case (CS2) offered similar perspectives, claiming that they were fortunate to attend a school that provided them with opportunities to engage with professional artists and to learn directly from these highly skilled and creative individuals. A number expressed their thanks and wanted the government to know that they were grateful.

In some cases, students suggested the work had created a stronger community spirit, which also helped them to feel like part of a school team, which appears to have positively influenced their attendance. As noted above, there were some small overall improvements in attendance across the Project's duration, however perhaps more importantly, there were also improvements for individuals with poor attendance records. For these students, the presence of artists in their classrooms on a given day, the chance to participate in circus training, or to share their music skills to peers within lunch time events like *On the Green*, gave them something to look forward to and made coming to school more attractive.

Within the Focused Arts Projects (CS1), a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community was also created through engagement with the wider community, including via performances, displays and other programs, serving to both bring the community into the school and for some, to go out into it. The internal events occurred across the Project's duration and ranged from informal Y Connect evenings where visual arts installations and exhibitions were brought together with music, dance, and drama performances, to more polished, larger scale events such as the highly successful promenade performance event entitled *Inner Outer Space* and the contemporary performance based on Romeo and Juliet entitled *Star Cross'd Smashed*. In response to these, both performing and non-performing students felt pride in both themselves and the group's achievement.

External events were also important and included opportunities for the circus students to rehearse and perform alongside professional Circa artists at Brisbane's Judith Wright Centre, while one group of visual arts students publicly exhibited their arts at the Queensland College of Art gallery. Students also performed at a Griffith University Creativity Symposium.

Finally, as noted within the survey responses and across the interview data, it seems that new and different types of relationships with adults were formed, including with both teachers and artists. These relationships are a critical aspect of connection to school, offering different benefits from friendships and connections with other students. For teachers, these relationships were enabled due to the presence of artists in their classrooms, freeing them up to engage more deeply with individual students or as we will see in relation to the findings associated with Question 2 relating to teachers, to see their students in a different light. Relationships with artists were also created, with many young people being inspired and excited by working with creative people who they saw as "*being from the real world*". These strong relationships are reflected, as we have seen earlier in this section, in the improved outcomes to the survey question asking the students if they felt there was an adult in the school who really cares for them. There we saw that an impressive 44.1% of participating students offered strong agreement to this statement – a result in stark contrast to reported result for the same question within the 2016 *Australian Children's Wellbeing Survey* of 21.4% or even the pre-project survey result of 26.2%.

3.1.6.3 Summary of findings.

1. Students reported that the Y Connect Project made them feel proud to be part of the Yeronga school community and expressed their gratitude for the unique opportunities it provided.
2. The commitment required to work towards public performance and display outcomes led to higher levels of student involvement creating connection to school and a sense of belonging.
3. Improved relationships between adults and students were reported, including a stronger sense that the adults in the school community care about students' opinions and well-being.
4. The aesthetic, collaborative, agentic and dialogic nature of the Y Connect work, provided opportunities for young people to speak up, be heard and therefore feel more closely connected.
5. A small but significant improvement in the school attendance data was noted, suggesting a positive link between involvement, enjoyment in learning, belonging and attendance.

3.1.7 Connection to the Arts, Artists and Arts Organisations.



Being around people who have the drive to do more...because they're not the kind of people that you see every day...so you get another aspect of what's out there and how other things are done.

While there is a significant body of literature which explores teacher/artist partnerships, far less work examines the relationships between artists and young people within school contexts. One exception is the work of Burnard and Swann (2010) which focuses on pupil perceptions of learning with artists. In that work, which particularly focuses on composing contemporary music, the artists were seen by the students as being particularly good at encouraging and facilitating collaboration, while also encouraging students to think of themselves as real composers. Of additional importance to these students were relationships, which the authors claim are different from those they experience with teachers. For example, the students suggested that the relationships with artists were less hierarchical and more 'real world', generating both trust and inspiration.

Another study which also explores these shifts in relationships, this time within the context of visual arts, is offered by Mark Graham (2009). He examines the way teaching artists shift the dynamics of teaching and learning, arguing that teaching artists, including full time arts teachers, create classrooms characterized by "hospitality toward students, spontaneity, playfulness and a spirit of enquiry" (p. 86), and also, one where "teaching becomes more about cultivating an environment or social context where the teacher's experience and interests intersect with students' backgrounds, needs and interests" (p. 91). Graham suggests that these relationships are usually focused on the art work being created rather than routines, behaviours and performance, which he suggests is the case in more traditional classrooms.

In the sections below, the quantitative and qualitative data associated with the new and extended connections between the students and artists will be discussed. In addition, the new perspectives

students developed in relation to the Arts themselves will also be briefly outlined, drawing upon the findings from the three case studies where evidence of these connections is offered.

3.1.7.1 Quantitative data.

Enrolments in Arts Subjects

Since the commencement of the Y Connect Project, enrolments in Arts subjects have grown. For example, and as noted earlier in this report, prior to Y Connect Drama in the senior school had to be offered as a composite class made up of both Year 11 and Year 12 students with a low of just 7 students in total in 2013. By contrast, at the start of 2019, numbers had grown markedly, with 22 students enrolled in Year 11 Drama, and a further 23 in Year 12. Meanwhile in the same period, interest in the Visual Arts has also risen markedly, with a fifty percent increase in Visual Art and Certificate Art across years 10, 11 and 12.

The following comment from one of the school leaders makes specific note of these shifts, suggesting that this growth is due to students now seeing themselves as more connected to the Arts and successful because of them:

Well, the kids see themselves as being successful. So, when they come to see me to change subjects, or when they select those subjects, they say, "Oh, you know, I'm really good at drama or I'm good at arts or I'm good at...". So, they see themselves as being successful in it, and being able to experience success in it, which is really important for them.

She goes on to exemplify this by offering the following story about an individual student:

I can see how her success in that one arts area has just shifted her whole mindset about herself. She would come to me and say, "I'm really bad at maths or, I'm really bad at learning, I'm not very good at English". And be really down on herself, but she hasn't come and spoken to me like that since term one. So, it's really kind of shifted her thoughts about herself, and that she can learn and she can do it. She [now] says, "I'm good at drama, I'm good at talking, I'm good at writing, I'm doing much better. Maths is still difficult for her, and she goes, "Maths is hard, but I'm trying my hardest". So, it's just a complete change. And she still has, because of her circumstances outside of school are challenging for her sometimes, but she hasn't had the meltdowns that she used to have.

Survey Data

Within the post-project student survey, a set of questions were included to specifically address the relationship between artists and teachers and also to gain a sense of students' responses to having artists work with teachers on special projects. Once again, the most useful data here is the post-project data that relates to participating students. Obviously, comparisons between participating and non-participating students are not useful in this instance.

Below is a table (Table 3.9) that outlines EALD and non-EALD responses. It is interesting to note the high level of neutral responses from both cohorts of students in relation to question 8, which asked students to respond to the statement: My teachers are highly skilled and don't need to work with artists on projects and performances. In both cases the neutral responses were in the low 50% range, one of the highest neutral scores across this survey. This would seem to indicate that while the students wanted to indicate that they did want artists working on their projects, they appropriately didn't feel comfortable disagreeing about the skill of their teachers.

In other sections however, there was strong agreement from both groups of students (78.8% for EALD and 68.8% for non-EALD) that they enjoyed working with teachers on Y Connect projects, and also to

the proposal that these projects were more successful when artists and teachers worked together (76% EALD and 70.8% for non EALD). These very strong positive responses from participating students, irrespective of language backgrounds, reinforce the qualitative data offered across the cases where students, in almost every interview, expressed their appreciation for the opportunities to work with artists and to connect with the Arts more generally.

Table 3.9. Post-Project Student Survey - Non-EALD and EALD Student Responses and Special Projects

#	Working with Artists on Special Projects and Performances	EALD	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I have enjoyed working with my teachers on special Y-Connect projects like performances or art projects.	EALD	80	45.0	23.8	27.5	1.3	2.5
		Non-EALD	64	34.4	34.4	21.9	4.7	4.7
4	Arts projects and performances are more successful when artists and teachers work together.	EALD	81	39.5	37.0	19.8	1.2	2.5
		Non-EALD	65	24.6	46.2	26.2	1.5	1.5
5	My teachers are highly skilled and don't need to work with artists on projects and performances.	EALD	78	15.4	20.5	51.3	9.0	3.8
		Non-EALD	63	6.3	22.2	52.4	14.3	4.8

Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree

Finally, in relation to connection to the Arts themselves, it is useful to compare the responses of participating and non-participating students within the post-project survey in relation to studying arts subjects. The table below (Table 3.10), offers a summary of this data and provides some interesting insights. For example, in relation to Question 1 of this section, it is clear that the involved students had a far more positive response to engagement in and enjoyment of the Arts (83.8%) than their non-participating peers (70.2%), with a similar situation being the case in relation to most other questions.

Table 3.10. Post-Project Student Survey – Participating and Non-Participating Student Responses

#	Ideas and experiences in relation to learning or experiencing The Arts	Involvement	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I enjoy doing Arts subjects like dance, drama, music, design, visual arts and/or film at school.	Yes	179	53.6	30.2	10.6	1.7	3.9
		No	104	36.5	33.7	16.3	5.8	7.7
2	I participate in Arts activities like dance, drama, music, design, visual arts and/or film outside of school.	Yes	176	35.2	21.0	21.0	12.5	10.2
		No	96	20.8	21.9	25.0	19.8	12.5
3	I am unlikely to take an Arts subject like dance, drama, music, design, visual arts and/or film in Years 11 and 12.	Yes	177	11.9	20.3	19.8	23.7	24.3
		No	105	10.5	23.8	28.6	20.0	17.1
4	I enjoy making visual arts, design or film and media works.	Yes	181	33.1	33.1	21.0	9.4	3.3
		No	102	19.6	36.3	23.5	13.7	6.9
5	I enjoy participating in performances such as music, dance, or drama.	Yes	178	38.8	25.3	21.3	6.2	8.4
		No	101	26.7	22.8	28.7	12.9	8.9
6	The Arts help me to understand the world in different ways.	Yes	178	32.0	30.9	26.4	6.2	4.5
		No	100	23.0	29.0	29.0	12.0	7.0
7	My family encourages me to take part in Arts events.	Yes	178	28.7	21.9	32.6	10.1	6.7
		No	104	17.3	19.2	35.6	17.3	10.6
8	I would like to work in an Arts related job when I leave school.	Yes	174	22.4	15.5	29.3	17.8	14.9
		No	98	10.2	16.3	32.7	24.5	16.3
9	My family would be supportive if I chose to work in an Arts related job when I leave school.	Yes	177	35.0	22.6	24.9	9.6	7.9
		No	102	20.6	27.5	30.4	12.7	8.8
10	I like learning in classes where artists are involved.	Yes	176	38.1	26.7	26.7	5.1	3.4
		No	102	27.5	24.5	34.3	7.8	5.9

Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree

3.1.7.2 Qualitative data.

This connection is highlighted in three of the six case study reports - Focused Arts Projects, Artist in Arts Classrooms and the English case. This result is not at all surprising given that these were the cases where students had the most extended and closest relationships with artists, while also being the cases where students travelled to attend events held in theatres and galleries. For example, within the Focused Arts Projects case (CS1), students were excited by the opportunity to work with artists who they described as “*hard core*” in terms of their expectations, demanding more of them than their teachers might, with many students suggesting that they stepped up in response to these demands. With their energy and enthusiasm, which one student described as “*changing up the dynamic of the*

room”, artists were also viewed as being capable of helping young people to find new and sometimes easier ways of learning. For example, one student involved in one of the Focused Arts Projects (CS1) offered the following comment: “[Sometimes] *you get stuck on a wall and you can’t figure out how to pass it, but they [artists] can say the smallest thing that can help you just hop over it and it makes it so much easier for everything.*”

Within visits to arts organisations as part of the Artists in Arts Classroom case (CS2), students also had the opportunity to see artists at work, and to experience their work environments. These opportunities served to break down barriers between the students and these sometimes very large cultural organisations. For the Visual Arts and Circus students, these opportunities extended to presenting their work in these spaces, with the Visual Arts students having their work professionally displayed at the Queensland College of Art gallery, while the Circus students performed as a curtain raiser for a professional performance by the Circa artists. Suddenly the students started to see themselves as belonging within these cultural sites - prompting some to take friends and family back to these sites on weekends. Based on their responses to these opportunities, one teacher described events like these as “*turning points*”, helping them to see their work as art. Indeed, for one student enrolled in Media Arts (CS2), their engagement with an artist helped them to see that what they were doing in that subject was in fact art and as such, a vehicle for self-expression.

Across these three cases, the artists helped students to develop a whole new range of skills, with an extended vocabulary to go with it. For the two fortunate students who gained internships with arts organisations through Y Connect, their skill development was obviously more acute, as were the relationships they built. One of these students noted: “*It’s perfect, like you meet these people and if you impress them you can either name drop them in random conversations, or if you ever need anything, you can go, “Hey, I’m that guy you yelled at three days ago!” It does connect you to people.*”

They also gained confidence by seeing stories about people like them being played out by professional actors, including actors with refugee backgrounds. As a result, artists became new role models, encouraging the young people they met to be “*brave and tough and not afraid of anyone*”.

3.1.7.3 Summary of findings

While it could be argued that connections to the Arts, artists and arts organisations are less significant than those associated with self, each other, the school and learning, for some students these were the most critical connections of all. This appears to have been particularly the case for those students who already saw themselves as successful in the Arts and were consequently looking out for role models and mentors, but also for young people who lacked confidence and were therefore excited to find that these dynamic individuals supported them in new and judgement-free ways. Without the pressure of being assessed by the artists, students took the opportunity to become risk-takers or simply to try out new ideas.

The findings relating to connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations may be summarised as follows:

1. The different types of relationships created between the artists and young people made some individuals more aspirational, whilst others were simply encouraged to do better.
2. Opportunities for young people to engage with arts organisations and to attend cultural venues broke down perceived barriers and perceptions that these sites weren’t for them.
3. Direct engagement with and within arts organisations, created opportunities for the diverse Y Connect participants to extend upon their existing social and cultural capital.
4. The Y Connect Project brought new people, including some from similar backgrounds, into the lives of the students, creating new heroes, mentors and role models.

5. For some participating students who faced multiple life challenges, Y Connect enhanced their connection to the Arts, which in turn, built self-esteem, confidence and a sense of belonging.

3.1.8 Connection to Possible Selves.



It just means the ability to think out of the box and to do things that people don't expect you to do. I want to be part of the creative industry and I do see myself way down the line in the creative industry.

The final connection identified is the connection to the future via the imagining of alternate possible selves. The team were unaware of this concept prior to the commencement of the research but identified it within the literature in response to the significant level of data that appeared to be related to the impact of the Project on their perceptions of themselves in the future. Markus and Nurius (1986) first introduced the term possible selves with the intention of “complement[ing] current conceptions of self-knowledge” (p. 954). In developing this idea, they drew on self-concept research that examines the complexity of self-knowledge and its role in regulating behaviour. They also noted that the concept of possible selves had previously appeared in self-concept literature in diverse forms. For example, James (as cited in Markus & Nurius, 1986) had written about “potential social Me” (p. 956), while Levinson (as cited in Markus & Nurius, 1986) had been concerned with “the imagined possibilities of the self as motivating forces” (p. 956).

Other discussions of this term suggest that possible selves can be understood as the “future oriented components of the self-system” (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989, p. 212) or as “the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves we could become, and the selves we are afraid of becoming” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Meanwhile, Oyserman, Terry, and Bybee (2002) clarify that possible selves are “hypothetical images (the self one would like to attain, the self one would like to avoid)” (p. 314).

Possible selves are significant because they serve as incentives or catalysts for future behaviour (Anderman, Anderman, & Griesinger, 1999; Markus & Nurius, 1986). This occurs because “individuals strive either to approach or avoid certain desired and undesired possible selves” (Anderman et al., 1999, p. 4). Additionally, as Markus and Ruvolo (1989) note, representation of realising a goal is essential to achieving that goal. Possible selves can provide the circumstances “to organize and energize one’s actions” (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989, p. 212) and the self-knowledge of what is possible can “frame behavior, and ... guide its course” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 955) – thus allowing an individual to select future behaviours (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Possible selves provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation and additionally between self-concept and motivation (Markus & Nurius, 1986). As Teraji (2009) states, “comparison between the actual self and the ideal self has important motivational consequences. The response to perceived discrepancy can be shaped toward desired behavioural change” (p. 45). However, it is important to

note that Norman and Aron (2003) examined the underlying mechanisms for possible selves and motivation and found that “motivation to attain or avoid an important possible self was significantly predicted by its availability ... accessibility ... and the extent to which its attainment or avoidance is perceived as under one’s control” (p. 500).

This final point is critical to the Y Connect Project as it was through engagement with a range of individuals from outside of their normal schooling experience, such as artists and others employed within arts organisations, that some of the Yeronga SHS students were able to identify pathways and role models that would not normally be available to them. Teachers also play a significant role in developing higher education possible selves. Rossiter’s work (2007) reinforces this aspect noting that interactions with teachers and other mentors were “the point of origin for a possible self as they became aware of new options for themselves” (p. 10). This author also states that “a clear and consistent message from a teacher who believes in the student’s ability to perform well is noted and remembered as a cornerstone of confidence, even by very competent students as they consider what is possible in the future” (p. 13). As stated above, in the section addressing connection to self, these acts of affirmation from artists and teachers were a strong theme within the data, suggesting a clear link between connection to self and connection to possible selves.

Marcus and Nurius (1986, p. 965) apply the concept of possible selves to education more broadly stating, “the general notion is that if we want to change behavior, for instance, academic performance, we need to change the academic self-concept”. Therefore, as Anderman et al. (1999) note, “it is particularly important for educators to be concerned with the development of present and possible selves during early adolescence” (p. 4). Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, and Hart-Johnson (2004) also argue that possible selves can promote feeling good (I’m going to do better next year) or can promote self-regulation (I want to make sure I do better next year) and the authors found that positive academic outcomes were only likely when the possible self could plausibly work as a self-regulator. Self-regulatory possible selves involved concrete strategies and simply having an academic possible self or selves, was not enough to promote an improvement in participation or grades. Similarly, Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006) also found that the qualities of the possible self are significant: “Youth who are not equipped with specific PSs that make engagement in school (attending, putting effort into homework, engaging teachers) a necessity are more likely to fall behind in high school” (p. 200). The authors also note that academic possible selves require students to ask questions of themselves and their possible selves. Additionally, Leondari, Syngollitou, and Kiosseoglou (1998) found that students who imagined themselves succeeding as a result of hard work and who had specific and elaborated possible selves, outperformed other groups in academic achievement. They also found that these students demonstrated more persistence in tasks.

3.1.8.1 Quantitative data

Survey data

Of particular significance are the responses offered in relation to the question about working in an arts related job in the future. Here we see that 37.9% of participating students agree with this statement, with a further 57.6% of these students agreeing that their parents would be supportive of them seeking this kind of employment. While it is not surprising that the non-participating student agreement levels are lower, what is interesting is the difference between the agree levels in this survey and those in the pre-project survey. There, we discovered that 31.3% of students would be interested in an arts career. This small difference in aspiration suggests that while the Project certainly created connections to artists and arts organisations, these connections generally did not translate, for the survey respondents at least, into students articulating a desire to work in an arts related field.

Table 3.11. Post-project Student Survey – Participating and Non-Participating Student Responses: Learning or Experiencing the Arts

#	Ideas and experiences in relation to learning or experiencing The Arts	Involvement	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I enjoy doing Arts subjects like dance, drama, music, design, visual arts and/or film at school.	Yes	179	53.6	30.2	10.6	1.7	3.9
		No	104	36.5	33.7	16.3	5.8	7.7
2	I participate in Arts activities like dance, drama, music, design, visual arts and/or film outside of school.	Yes	176	35.2	21.0	21.0	12.5	10.2
		No	96	20.8	21.9	25.0	19.8	12.5
3	I am unlikely to take an Arts subject like dance, drama, music, design, visual arts and/or film in Years 11 and 12.	Yes	177	11.9	20.3	19.8	23.7	24.3
		No	105	10.5	23.8	28.6	20.0	17.1
4	I enjoy making visual arts, design or film and media works.	Yes	181	33.1	33.1	21.0	9.4	3.3
		No	102	19.6	36.3	23.5	13.7	6.9
5	I enjoy participating in performances such as music, dance, or drama.	Yes	178	38.8	25.3	21.3	6.2	8.4
		No	101	26.7	22.8	28.7	12.9	8.9
6	The Arts help me to understand the world in different ways.	Yes	178	32.0	30.9	26.4	6.2	4.5
		No	100	23.0	29.0	29.0	12.0	7.0
7	My family encourages me to take part in Arts events.	Yes	178	28.7	21.9	32.6	10.1	6.7
		No	104	17.3	19.2	35.6	17.3	10.6
8	I would like to work in an Arts related job when I leave school.	Yes	174	22.4	15.5	29.3	17.8	14.9
		No	98	10.2	16.3	32.7	24.5	16.3
9	My family would be supportive if I chose to work in an Arts related job when I leave school.	Yes	177	35.0	22.6	24.9	9.6	7.9
		No	102	20.6	27.5	30.4	12.7	8.8
10	I like learning in classes where artists are involved.	Yes	176	38.1	26.7	26.7	5.1	3.4
		No	102	27.5	24.5	34.3	7.8	5.9

Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree

3.1.8.2 Qualitative data.

From the outset of this Project, one of its key goals was to expand students' pathway perceptions, to offer them horizon breaking experiences that would help them to see a range of future career options, both within the Arts and creative industries and beyond. In terms of careers within the Arts, the Project team were keen to "normalise" the work of artists, so that students could see that there were everyday people who earn a living through their work in this field.

We soon came to note however, that the notion of pathway perceptions was too narrow to capture what the Project appeared to be achieving, with the term possible selves being used here instead to give a shape to the way participation in the Y Connect Project impacted upon and extended these young people's perceptions of the future. However, connections to the future via the creation of possible selves were not apparent in every case, appearing only in two – the Focused Projects case (CS1) and the Artists in Arts Classrooms case (CS2). This is potentially because these cases offered the greatest opportunities for deep exposure to and relationships with a range of artists, while also giving some students the chance to move out into and engage with the broader arts community.

For example, one student who was involved in one of the Focused Arts Projects (CS1) discussed the opportunity he had to work with a leading Brisbane playwright, explaining that it confirmed his future career for him: *"It was so perfect being part of that thing with [artist]...I've developed a sort of taste, I've developed a personal aesthetic ... You know you eventually just kinda reach the point where you're like, I'm really good at this one specific thing and it's just so me, that it's like the only thing I could possibly do"*. In an earlier interview he also offered this comment:

I mean a big part of having artists come in is that they are current member of that career path...so they bring a knowledge that you might not get with a teacher, that they might not be able to provide. And sort of a current look into what that career might entail. So, it's sort of like an ultimate perspective.

For other students, the Project appears to have given them the motivation to seek tertiary studies in arts and creative industry degree programs. One senior student offered the following comment in response to a question about the potential benefits of the Project:

Them [artists] showing me that there's a way to go through the industry and become an artist has put a bit of a fire in me to work hard and actually complete all my studies and graduate so I can find my own journey through that. Also, showing that balance...showing me time management that I can use in other subjects...all those artists, they come from the industry, so they help fill in those gaps in the puzzle to help us become well-rounded people.

Later in that interview, this student revealed that his dream was to audition for entry to a university acting program with the ultimate goal of doing comedy.

Within the detailed case study reports offered in Part 4, the specifics of the possible selves outlined in these cases are provided, however, it should be noted that these possible selves were not solely focused on futures involving careers in the Arts, but rather, were far more diverse than this. As discussed above, there was no discernible shift within the survey responses in terms of student aspirations for a career in the Arts. However, within the qualitative data, it was clear that students had begun to see themselves differently, with these differences supporting them to feel more confident in general about their futures. Closely associated with connection to self, the confidence boost which many students experienced across the duration of the Project, enabled them to dream larger, with futures less constrained by anxiety or fear.

A useful example from the data illustrating a student expressing renewed confidence in connection to his future is included in the following extract from a student interview:

Int: I guess my question is, when you look at yourself in the future what do you see?
Student: I see a big guy.
Int: A big guy?
Student: A big guy, who will achieve a lot of stuff, yes.

3.1.8.3 Summary of findings.

Within the interviews involving members of the school leadership team, one leader notes:

It's that concept of pathways, so people can see that being involved in the Arts in and of itself doesn't necessarily mean they want to be an actor or performer or whatever, it's about building a sense of self and a sense of confidence, so they can go and be whatever they want to be, whether it's an engineer, or working in a shop, or whatever. It's about the social-emotional wellbeing part of it, which then improves everything else...

These ideas provide a useful reminder that, within the context of Y Connect, enhanced connections to their possible selves do not relate to the somewhat narrow view that students will embrace career paths within the Arts. Rather, the findings outlined here suggest that participation in Y Connect, particularly deep involvement in projects and multiple opportunities to engage with a range of artists and arts organisations, has been shown to support aspiration across a range of pathways, together with the confidence and drive to chase them.

1. Engagement with artists and visits to arts organisations gave some students the chance to identify possible selves outside of their usual realms of experience.

2. As academic attainment, self-regulation and persistence are enhanced when new possible selves emerge, their identification undoubtedly had important flow-on effects for these students.
3. The opportunities for students from refugee backgrounds to meet with and learn from artists with similar backgrounds were critical for the identification of alternate possible selves.
4. The possible selves identified were not confined to ones associated with the Arts, as they also included new aspirations across a range of disciplines, including many requiring tertiary studies.

3.2 Research Question Two

How has participation in the Project impacted on the participating teachers and the school culture?

3.2.1 Introduction.

Catterall and Waldorf's (1999) research relating to the *Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education* (CAPE) program reminds us that research into arts partnerships needs to take account of the perspectives of all participants, including both artists and teachers (p. 60). In addition, while projects such as Y Connect clearly have much to offer all stakeholders, including artists, teachers and students, as Kind et al. (2007) suggest, much needs to be done if arts programs and projects are to be seen as a useful means of teacher development and as a means of achieving school transformation and change (p. 859). Uptis (2006) refers to research from the United States which suggests that while arts-partnerships can affect student learning in positive ways, issues of time and institutional constraints are often experienced by both artists and teachers in school environments, and these can impact on the success of the work. Kress et al. (2005) propose other factors can also prove to be challenging, including an educational culture of accountability, which may lead schools to be less concerned with the realisation of individual students' potential, rather than standardised testing results.

Fortunately, that was not the case within the Y Connect Project, with teachers generally being highly supportive of the Project, its aims and approaches. Of course, this was in part due to the opt in nature of the Project and the fact that the Yeronga SHS leadership team had, long before the commencement of Y Connect, identified the importance of the Arts in young people's lives. This support was evident through the various opportunities students already had to engage with the Arts, both through the long-term provision of arts subjects and extra-curricular opportunities.

Nonetheless, the research question focused on teacher perspectives and the two that follow (relating to artist perspectives and the challenges and enablers of the Project), are critical to this report for they provide a focused account of the Y Connect Project as experienced by teachers, school leaders and artists.

In the section immediately below, the attention of the report is aimed at identifying the perspectives of the teachers and leaders, including their views about the impact of the Project on school culture. To do this, the analysis draws upon 53 interviews, involving both teachers and school leaders across the duration of the Project, together with the results of the post-study teacher survey.

3.2.2 Impact on Teachers

The impact of the Y Connect Project on teachers fell into eight main categories. These were:

- New ways of understanding and enacting education;
- Expansion of pedagogical repertoire and confidence in the application of these expanded practices;

- A revitalisation of practice leading to enhanced enjoyment and engagement in the teaching process;
- The development of a range of artistic skills and understandings;
- A greater sense of freedom to explore and a renewed awareness of the importance of playfulness and creativity;
- Shifts in individual teacher's professional identity;
- Shifts in teacher/student relationships and teacher perceptions of students; and
- New or renewed awareness of the value of the Arts for young people.

3.2.2.1 New ways of understanding and enacting education.

This finding mostly relates to teachers who were not previously engaged in or with the Arts, including those working in English, EALD English or Mathematics classrooms. Others were members of the leadership team who prior to Y Connect may not have appreciated the opportunities that engagement with the Arts can offer students. One of these teachers, in this case an EALD teacher, provides the following comment as a really useful example of what this finding means on an individual level. She suggests that by working with artists and by witnessing the application of arts-based pedagogies within Y Connect, she became aware of and learned to look out of different windows:

*Y Connect ... it perhaps gives me another window to look out of ... It's not just looking out of that window of, oh, can they write and do they have the language? Can they read? Do they understand the language? It's let's look out **this** window for a change. If we do this as a movement or if we do it as an enactment, do I then get everybody participating? So, for me it's learning to look out that window, but if you're not trained to look out of that window, you don't tend to open it, you know?*

Another teacher referred to their new understanding of education as being derived from the fact that artists think differently about learning:

I learned a lot from [artist] as well, having her in there and the journeys sometimes she would take and she wasn't, in her head, she's not thinking in a teacher space in that we have to achieve this this week, then we need to move onto their different element in a subsequent week.

For some educators, these shifts were easier than others, with even those keen to be involved taking a while to become accustomed to “different ways of thinking”. One school leader suggested:

I think like anything it's required extra energy and a different way of thinking. Again, in talking to people, they've really been excited by that. Maybe initially, what's this all gonna be like? But they've been excited by it because it's shown them a different way of getting really good outcomes.

Finally, another school leader expressed surprise that the Y Connect Project had “touched the hearts of people”, conceding that they were cynical at first and had been “prepared to shut the whole thing down” if it wasn’t working for the teachers and students. However, they have been stunned by how readily Y Connect became “embedded” in the school and “loved by the school community”. This school leader defended this initial reluctance by outlining the challenges they initially saw for achieving this transformation:

Teachers are hard people to win over, you know that. They like to lock themselves in their own box and get on with their own work. They are inundated with change with political forces, driving whatever change as well as school imperatives and what not. And they're not easy people to convince ... It was opening their classrooms up to non-professionals, not other

teachers. It was about invasion of their curriculum time. It was about trust because teachers are accountable for their results. So, it was about building trust that the results are actually going to be enhanced by this.

In offering these views, this leader echoes many of the comments across the data set which suggested a level of concern about the risks associated with enacting such major pedagogical reform. However, by the conclusion of the Project, it appears that many staff had begun to look out of “new windows” and seen alternate ways of understanding and enacting teaching and learning.

3.2.2.2 Expansion of pedagogical repertoire and confidence in the application of these expanded practices.

Not surprisingly, the expansion of pedagogical repertoire was the most commonly identified benefit for teachers and was present in every case. For example, within the Essential English case study, all teachers who were involved throughout 2016 and 2017 period stated that their practice had changed, with one teacher pointing out that she now regularly uses drama strategies such as hot seat and role-on-the-wall in her teaching practice. She also noted that she had added movement to all her classes, conceding however that now that the artists were no longer working with her:

Some of the movement type stuff, like getting the kids up and getting them into groups and that type of thing, I don't use, because I don't have the time, and the energy, or the space to move all the desks just so we can stand in a circle and make shapes and things like that.

In terms of these new approaches, the modelling that occurred directly in their classrooms was important for some. For example, one teacher noted:

It gives me more confidence to use it because I've seen the artists and how they deliver something. I can read about something but if you see it ... and you're a part of it, it has a great deal more impact.

Another teacher expressed surprise that they themselves hadn't come up with some of the activities they had seen the artist use, noting:

Every so often they [artists] would come up with a new activity, and I'm like, "Oh, geeze, why didn't I think of that?" If you really think about it, it's really not that complex. Yet it just does a whole lot more and kids just interact with it in a whole different way. I'm like, "Damn, why didn't I think of that?"

Transference of strategies was also discussed, with several teachers being inspired enough to adapt the approaches they had observed and to apply them with different cohorts of students. For example:

I took one of the activities from my year nine class and implemented it in a year eleven class and saw a similar outcome. So, the year elevens aren't engaged in this process [Y Connect], but I saw a similar outcome by completing that same activity.

These pedagogical shifts were noted and highly valued by school leaders, and this was especially the case for those teachers who they perceived as previously being fearful of making changes. The following comment is reflective of this perspective:

...having the artist in there, has promoted, and stimulated, and encouraged her/him to be able to do those stand-up activities which they've always been scared of. Too scared to let the kids move in case chaos descended on the classroom. But that artist helped them to break down those barriers. Less the ability to teach the concept, it was more the ability to break down the barriers of let's get the kids up ... and to show them that it's not as scary as they think to have kids moving in classrooms.

These qualitative comments were reinforced within the post-Project teacher survey, where all but two of the responding teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Y Connect Project had positively influenced their pedagogical practices (see Figure 3.12 below). A similar number also agreed that the Y Connect Program had positively influenced the pedagogical practices of others in the school community (see Figure 3.13 below).

Figure 3.12. Teacher Survey – Impact on Pedagogical Practice

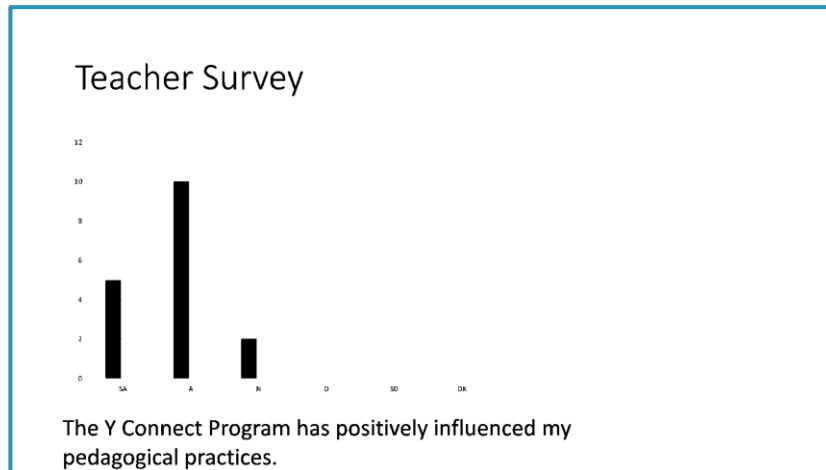
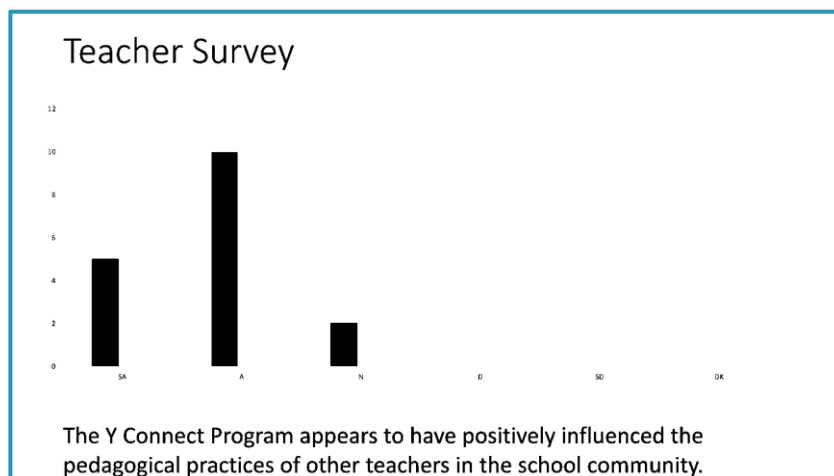
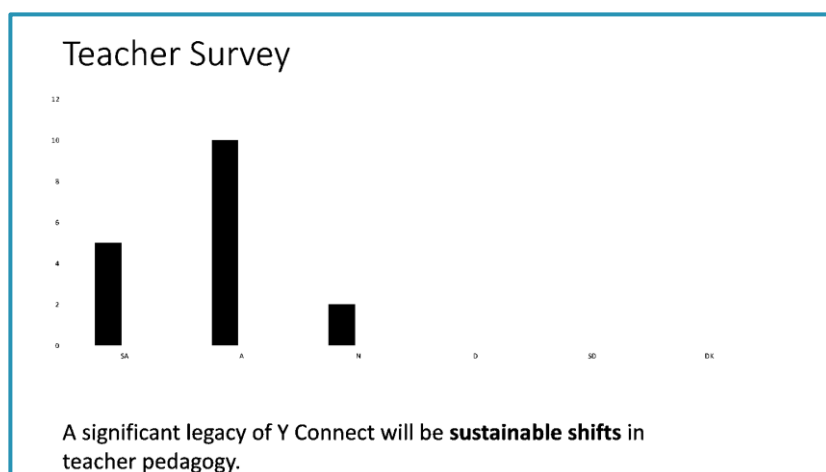


Figure 3.13. Teacher Survey – Impact on Pedagogical Practice of Others



Importantly, teachers were asked to comment within this survey on the legacies the Project had created within the school community. While small in numbers, almost all teachers who responded to this question noted that sustainable shifts in teacher pedagogy would be one of these legacies. These results are offered in Figure 3.14 below.

Figure 3.14. Teacher Survey – Sustainable Impacts on Pedagogical Practice



In summing up these pedagogical shifts and their level of sustainability, one school leader commented on the long-term impact of Y Connect for some of the English and Mathematics teachers involved:

For about five or six teachers, I think there will be very deep changes in their planning. I think that units have been rewritten, I think approaches to books have been changed and I think there's some really interesting things happening. I think for some others there'll be some intermittent ways that they'll endorse that and certainly they're aware of other strategies that you can apply in the English classroom and maths classroom.

3.2.2.3 A revitalisation of practice leading to enhanced enjoyment and engagement in the teaching process.

The notion of revitalisation was apparent across the data set, but was definitely more evident for teachers who were arts trained or already working in the Arts. For them, the collaboration with artists did not necessarily introduce them to new strategies or techniques, but rather, reminded them of key aspects of their craft. In some cases, these reminders served to renew their passion for arts education. For example, one school leader noted that partnering with artists “*sort of refines and extends your skills. You know watching someone like [artist] in a classroom ... is terribly professionally developing no matter how long you've been teaching. And it's revitalising.*” Another arts teacher expressed herself differently, referring to the process as “*reigniting a flame*” within them.

In some cases, the revitalisation process was subtler, being more about reminding experienced teacher artists to maintain practices they already knew to be effective. For example, one noted:

I think you kind of get set in your ways. I suppose you get in further into your career you just do things the same as you did the year before potentially. And I think that's good to shake things up a bit and think differently about how we teach.

She suggested this slippage occurs because teachers “*sometimes get a bit lost in all the politics of school and what we have to do and what we are required to do*”, arguing that having the artist in her classroom reminded her of the importance of “*just going back to the grassroots of it all*”.

Supporting this idea, a school leader associated with the Arts offered this comment:

I think the other exciting thing is when you see a teacher that's been at the school for a long time or has been teaching for a long time, who goes, "We need to do more of this again. I've forgotten about this". Or, "This is something I'd like to do more of."

3.2.2.4 The development of a range of new artistic skills and understandings.

This finding related almost exclusively to the teachers already teaching arts disciplines. As noted above, while many teachers from within and outside the Arts suggested that they developed an extended pedagogical repertoire, for the arts teachers already working in the school, the participation of the artist brought them invaluable opportunities to learn from and about latest developments in their art form at industry standard.

For example, while arts teachers from the field of Drama appreciated the chance to observe the directing skills of a professional director, valuing the opportunity to “*come in and really closely watch what he does and learning from him*”, others within the fast-moving digital arts fields were able to gain immediate and industry standard professional learning relating to new techniques. The three following comments from Visual and Media Arts teachers are associated with these benefits:

We had a look at some stuff around treating animation and modelling with specialists and we had a look at multi-cam set ups and so you know for a teacher to learn some of that stuff from scratch, you're talking about months of work ... so, it meant that not only did the students pick it up and learn that from somebody in industry, but the teachers picked that skill up also, and are now competent to go and teach that subject.

Especiallly with Media, it's really hard to keep current on all the programs and the functionality and how it's used in industry, I find; and even ... I mean, I haven't been on a Media PD but even if you go on PD, it's so infrequent. I think that you kind of lose that ... your finger's not on the pulse as much because you're so into the teaching. So, having someone who's current from industry come in...

My knowledge has stagnated in a way.... especiallly in something that moves as quick as design technologies and 3D printing and all the rest of that.

For another Visual Arts teacher at Yeronga, a range of artistic learnings were made available, with each one being highly valued:

I love seeing what other artists do, and what other people do and how they approach it, and what works they show for inspiration and how they explain it, and what they do. I always learn something from watching something like that. It enriches my mind too because even though I can do plaster moulds and plaster casting, I didn't ... don't do it in exactly the same way that [artist] did. And he had ... has a lot more equipment and tools and he's so organised and set up. It's a difficult thing to do in a class when you only have a short lesson, so having him kick us off like that made a huge difference.

3.2.2.5 Freedom and renewed awareness of playfulness and creativity.

Across the interview data, teachers repeatedly commented upon the sense of freedom they experienced when working with artists or using arts-based approaches to teach their subjects. This sense of freedom seemed to emerge for some teachers as they broadened their tight focus from one that was driven by assessment or by the need to “*cover the curriculum and its content*” to a focus on students and their need for some playfulness in the classroom. In the process of doing this, teachers re-discovered the value of agency. One teacher referred to this as being free to “*drop the reigns a bit*”, while the following comment offers a more extended version of this viewpoint:

I think it's been nice to have a bit more freedom and flexibility, in choosing things that will work for the students. Because we've got an opportunity to not stick one hundred per cent to the script, so to speak, of what is prescribed with the curriculum and the activities that you should

do, and that type of thing. We've had a little bit of opportunity, so I guess that almost gives us maybe more agency around us as professionals.

For one teacher, higher levels of playfulness were particularly important for the Year Eight students, based on their personalities and levels of engagement, while for another teacher, the presence of the artist and his very different approaches reminded her that when faced with a challenging group, authoritarian approaches were not the solution. She discovered instead that she needed to be herself, and also to be positive and playful. To support this key learning, the following story was shared:

I was really firm with them [students], and kind of had this different approach than I normally would. And in about week three of term one, [artist] came in. And it was the first lesson that he had, and he was doing these fun things with them, and he engaged them in a really positive way, in a really playful way. And it just reminded me that I could engage students in that way; it doesn't have to be authoritarian type of approach. So ever since that day, I can remember it, I saw the kids in a totally different light. They responded positively. I was smiling. They behaved when he was there, 'cause they were engaged, and they were having fun. So since then, I switched back to my normal approach, and I was again, myself, more playful and more positive, and it brought the class together.

3.2.2.6 Shifts in individual teacher's professional identity.

As the Project progressed, so too did many teachers' sense of professional identity, with several aspects being positively influenced. These included: how other teachers perceived the value of their work; their sense of belonging within a team and indeed the school community; and their interest in and willingness to both attend and deliver professional learning experiences.

In terms of the first of these, how other teachers in the school perceived their work, a key factor influencing this more positive sense of identity was the public nature of some of the Project outcomes, including performances, and the impact these performances were having on the students and indeed the school community. One example was the *Inner Outer Space Performance* which was a promenade style event that invited a very large audience of parents and students to move from site to site across the school, engaging as they went with Dance, Drama and Music performances. These performances had all been created within the normal arts curricular lessons and therefore involved a large number of junior secondary students (years 7-9). At each site, the audience was presented with a different group of students, but with each group's performance being connected to the theme of inner and outer spaces. The work culminated with a drumming finale on the school oval, presented by a large group of students. Upon its conclusion, almost the full cast of students from across the various groups involved in *Inner Outer Space* danced joyously together. In response to this work, one teacher noted with some pride:

There's such a vibe around. I just kept saying, "There's just a buzz." There was a buzz for two weeks and the walk that we did [as part of the performance] ... all of the staff remembered that walk that morning... going through the school. And people who weren't involved in it were just looking and it's so important.

A Visual Arts teacher offered a comment about how Y Connect had generated an appreciation of the value of the Arts, which led to them being treated with a higher level of respect:

Our school just as a whole, I think teachers take it more seriously now. I think as an arts teacher, sometimes it's like, "Oh, you teach arts. Oh, it's just arts," but now, I feel like people are really seeing their worth, even in admin and everywhere. It's everywhere. It's like, "Oh, wow."

In relation to the second aspect of professional identity, the sense of belonging, one teacher who was relatively new to the school noted:

It was really good to be able to be involved with it [Y Connect] so early on in my transition into the school, and it really builds us up as a little group, and I think it really allowed me to get to know everyone and they get to know me and see what I'm capable of.

Perhaps most importantly, teachers involved in the various Y Connect case studies also seemed to gain increased confidence in their pedagogies, with many taking the opportunity to both attend and present about Y Connect at various state and national conferences. These conferences included those associated with the various arts disciplines, but also professional development events relating to English and EALD English. Regarding these opportunities, one EALD teacher offered the following comment about presenting at an international conference:

We've really enjoyed doing it. It's been really interesting, and it feels like something we should share with people ... I feel like, with professional development there's so many things that we go to that are great, but they take a lot of time, a lot of work, and they're not particularly creative or interesting. But this is something ... they [conference participants] could put it in their classroom tomorrow and really get a payback from it. So, it just seems like something that really ... it's really worthwhile, and yeah, we just wanted to share it with people.

3.2.2.7 Shifts in teacher/student relationships and teacher perceptions of students.

A very important outcome to emerge in terms of the impact on teachers, was an awareness by many of the Yeronga SHS teachers that through their involvement in the Project, shifts had occurred in their relationships with individual students and also of their perceptions of students. These shifts were noted across the data set, and were evident in data from Arts, English and Mathematics teachers.

Some of these shifts in perception were associated with underestimating a particular student's skill level or capacity to achieve positive outcomes, while others were associated with the capacity of individuals to engage when motivated and interested. In both these situations teachers across the study simply indicated that they were seeing students *"in a different light"*. The following extended comment is indicative of this type of shift, and comes from an English teacher:

This kid. What am I going to do with him? And then since I saw him in Drama, it was like this other child, and he was just confident and hilarious. And I could see that he really wanted that attention and that stimulation. He had the whole class laughing, and he was a natural actor, and very creative. And his writing ... I was able to really see [what] brought him joy. So then since those lessons, I really built on that with him. I said, "[student] you're really an artist. You're incredible. You're creative". So, I've kept having that conversation with him...

Another teacher offered a broader perspective on this benefit:

I think it helped me to see which students are wanting to engage but maybe don't have the capacity to understand how best to engage, so especially in group work. Students will often disengage in group work because they find that skill difficult. It helped me to identify which students they were, and how to support them better in that process. There were certainly some students who behaviourally were very challenging, but when it came to the core of it, they had amazing ideas, and once I was able to tap into that well, their behaviour changed and they were able to be more focused because they saw that their ideas were valued and what they were contributing was valued, and I think for some of them that really helped them to be more responsible in the classroom.

For many teachers, it was simply having another adult in the room, someone else to lead the teaching process, so that the students' own teacher could become a co-participant rather than always being the leader. These opportunities led one experienced teacher to offer the following comment:

Oh, well, for a start, they're able to see me as a participant, just like they are a participant, because I am ... for example when [artist] asks for a story, I'll give him a personal story as well, and so they're seeing me as a human being, not just as a big bad teacher, so it's actually nice to have somebody else facilitate that so that I can just be another participant.

This teacher then went on to say that having an artist present also enabled them “to reengage with students. Not that I've felt that I ever disengage with students but just as an old dog, we always like to keep current and see what drives the students”.

For one Dance teacher, a key benefit of partnering with artists was the opportunity to watch the students and identify how they interact with each other. She argued that as a Dance teacher, she is often doing the movement too and so cannot see what is happening as effectively. She concluded therefore that, particularly with her Year 9 class, she was “able to get to know them more and see what was going on”.

Visual Arts teachers also expressed surprise in terms of student capabilities, with one noting:

[Artist] came and we did mono-printing, and he made these amazing prints ... and they [students] made these beautiful artworks. I was really blown away, because, to that point, I hadn't really seen that in them.

This teacher then followed up by commenting on the work of an individual student claiming that, “I think up until that point, I hadn't seen that spark in her and maybe that realisation that she could do this”.

Finally, teachers also commented on the shifts that occurred in their perceptions of students following attendance at external events such as performances and gallery visits. For example, in relation to written work completed following a visit to La Boite Theatre to attend a performance of *The Village*, where actors with refugee backgrounds shared their stories of arrival, including an actor who was a past Yeronga SHS student, one teacher offered this comment:

We brainstormed afterwards, and reading their essays that they had just written ... So, that was really great, and I learned lots about the students going through that process.

3.2.2.8 Renewed or new awareness of the value of the Arts for young people.

Teachers and school leaders articulated the view that a key benefit for them was to be reminded of how important the cultural and social capital generated by engagement with artists and the Arts is for young people. For example, one school leader noted that participation in Y Connect:

... just reminds me again and again and again of the importance of the Arts for young people, to give them a sense of voice and a sense of pleasure. So, when I see young people firing with an artist, it's so important.

3.2.3 Impact on School culture.

Within this section we consider the impact of Y Connect on the Yeronga SHS school culture. While long-term shifts and future directions for the school will be discussed later in this report, here the focus is on the shifts in culture that occurred *during* the Project. These shifts ranged in type, with some relating to how the staff perceived, engaged with and responded to students, while others were associated with how staff viewed the culture of the school itself.

In relation to the first of these, staff engagement with and perceptions of students, one school leader suggested that teachers and the leadership team had begun to hold a stronger value on giving young people a voice noting: *"I think, as a whole, the school is now starting to understand the need for young people to be given those opportunities to perform and to speak"*.

In terms of the latter view on staff perceptions of school culture, including how the school viewed its priorities and areas of emphasis, the following comments, also from leadership, are of interest:

And I think Y-Connect, the pedagogy of Y-Connect, just melds so beautifully with our pedagogical framework. But it does it in a living, breathing, moving arts sort of focus, which seems to strike a chord with our kids. I bet you'd find it would strike a chord with all kids. It's becoming part of the soul of the school, the Arts. And I wouldn't have said that two years ago.

We've been doing our school visioning and if I look at the themes coming through ... if I had done this three years ago, the Arts wouldn't have rated a mention. Now for our school community ... the themes that are coming through are around the value of the Arts. They want a performing arts centre built. They want further connections with the community in terms of the Arts. They want arts embedded in classrooms. They want to see it visually around the school. It has had a huge influence. It has had a huge influence.

And then in terms of school culture, we used to just be ... What kids used to excel at in this school was sport. So, it was always sport that would be the kids who were kind of seen as the popular cool kids, but now the kids who are doing circus, and the Musical, and seeing, and performing, and all that kind of stuff, they're now seen as the cool kids, like it has cultural capital, being involved in those programs, whereas it didn't before.

3.2.4 Conclusion

It is impossible to quantify the impact of the Y Connect Project on the teachers involved, however the eight areas of benefit outlined here in relation to teachers, together with the reported shifts in school culture, are useful here. Teachers have identified new ways of understanding and enacting curriculum, with these new ways serving to expand their pedagogical repertoire. For more experienced teachers, these shifts have served to revitalise their practice, leading to higher levels of enjoyment and engagement, while irrespective of experience, teachers have reported positive shifts in their professional identity. Some have reported a greater sense of freedom to explore, others have developed new artistic skills. Perhaps most importantly, many reported improved relationships with their students and colleagues. The overall school culture has also shifted, with, not surprisingly, a greater emphasis on the Arts and a perception that they now represent the *"soul of the school"*.

Given the high rate of teacher attrition that is currently having a negative impact on the teaching profession (see Section 6.2 of this report), and the rising costs of off-site teacher professional learning, these findings are highly significant and suggest that the involvement of artists across curriculum areas can serve to support teacher learning in ways that are effective, cost effective and enjoyable.

The views of two teachers sum this impact:

I feel, you know, that we were probably a creative school before, but just having those artists come in...it just gave us all a boost. It increased professionalism as well and...self-efficacy. And that heightens motivation and the vibe, and brings you together as teachers, because you're all kind of working together on something. And so yeah, you just feel a bit special you know?

For me as a teacher, I'm a totally different person...I've really changed a lot in terms of the way I reach out to my students. I also think I've really jumped over that gap of me being the provider of the

knowledge...Now it's more dynamic, a really interactive process without even consciously noticing that...It has really strengthened myself, opened up new ways of me looking at my professional identity.

3.3. Research Question Three

How has involvement in the Project impacted on the artists and what have they learnt about teacher/artist partnerships through participation?

This section draws upon interviews with artists, with the aim of identifying the impact of the Y Connect Project on the participating artists. It is also included to give voice to their views about teacher/artist partnerships, including about the conditions that are required for success and the challenges that may be inherent for them within the Y Connect approach.

18 artist interviews have been analysed, with the views of artists who worked in the classroom on curriculum-based materials within English, Mathematics and Movement and Artists in Arts Classrooms case studies, together with those of artists who were engaged to support extra-curricular activities and focused projects included. The viewpoints presented represent all five Australian Curriculum Arts disciplines (Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts), together with Circus Arts.

3.3.1 Informing literature.

There is a large body of literature that discusses research pertaining to arts partnerships, yet artists' voices and perspectives are often missing from the literature. Nevertheless, what is clear in the literature is that artists often need support to confront their assumptions of teaching and to examine other ways of conceptualising 'being a teacher' that are not rooted in stereotypical images or what is immediately apparent on the surface. When offered this support, artists can begin to see teaching as a deeply personal, creative, artistic, aesthetic, generative act and that as artist-teachers, they can become agents of personal and social change (Kind et al., 2007, p. 857).

Much of the research on artists in schools has focussed on the creation of collaborative and sustainable *partnerships* between teachers and visiting or residential artists and space for reciprocal learning (Burnard & Swann, 2010, p. 70). Pringle (2002) advises that, within these partnerships, tensions may arise between artist-led teaching and "the expectations and procedures of certain types of school content" (p. 49). This claim aligns with Hallmark's (2012) research as part of *The Arts as Collaborative inquiry, Arts Education Policy Review*, which noted that issues can arise due to the fact that the delivery of arts content in schools can be strongly directed by the school's performance-heavy goals and over-reliance on canonical content, while artists may have shallow understanding of the broader curriculum. Further, Hall, Thomson, and Russell, (2007) suggest that tensions may occur as artists are usually part-time workers on temporary contracts and as such have relatively low autonomy in the school, even though the subjects may have status in the school curriculum. Further, teaching-artists who occupy intermittent posts, receive variable supervision as teachers and are not always asked to serve in a role that acknowledges them as a critical link between arts specialists and classroom teachers (Fineberg, 2004; Remer, 1996). Finally, artists generally come into schools as individual practitioners on short-term contracts and as such, do not always have the mutual support of artists working in other schools.

Based on these challenges, Kind et al. (2007) argue that artists can feel a lack of support from like-minded *artistic* peers and note that they don't get sufficient opportunity to reflect with other artists (Kind et al, 2007, p. 843). Fineberg (2004) also suggests that artists may not be sufficiently equipped to teach after short planning sessions with teachers (p. 56), implying that perhaps longer periods of communication and planning with teachers would be helpful. Myers (2003) also suggests that although artists may be very accomplished in the practice of their art, this by no means guarantees an

understanding of how to teach in schools (p. 11). Further, Myers (2003) offers the alternate perspective and states that teachers do not always find it easy to build sufficient confidence to translate artists' perspectives directly into classroom environments.

Kind et al. (2007) advise then that it is necessary to clearly identify the artist's role and their relationship in the teaching environment and refer to programs like *Learning Through the Arts* (Canada) which they claim never had any intention of requiring teaching artists to 'teach'. Their research also acknowledges that problems may occur when artists are positioned as teachers. So, while teacher/artist partnerships can often be rewarding as relationships are built over time, they may also be complex and can sometimes be characterised as difficult (Hall & Thompson, 2007; Jeffrey, 2005; Ledgard, 2006).

Lee (2013) claims her most significant and rewarding teaching-artist experience was with the Drama for Schools Program in Texas wherein drama-based activities were used to investigate change and or transformation in the learning environment and further, to develop strategies for teacher and teacher-artist professional development. Lee's research suggests that 'there are 3 main areas of consideration that impact on a successful relationship between teaching-artists and teachers in the school environment:

- Collaboration: The teaching artist and teacher relationship.
- Artistry and Pedagogy: Working from individual expertise.
- Reciprocal Learning: Negotiating lesson planning and developing a shared responsibility for teaching.

Based on these various challenges, key authors in the literature (Burnard & Swan, 2010; Ewing & Saunders, 2016; Kind et al., 2007; Lee, 2013) suggest that the best relationships occur over time, with this time allowing for deep bonds of trust to develop and where respect for discipline similarities and differences is mutual.

Burnard and Swann's (2010) research is also useful in terms of identifying some of the other conditions for success. They argue that the degree of time and space enabled by timetable for supporting meetings and sustainable dialogues with artists, networking and discussing learning needs and experiences upon which knowledge is constructed, are the most important elements of promoting successful learning experiences. However, these processes are dependent upon the teachers' and artists' ability to stay in communication with each other's professional views (p. 80). They also advise that:

... building partnership reflection to support partnership collaboration and collegiality is essential if artists, teachers and students are to explore and share questions and encourage each other to question their own learning in relation to creating a new order of artistic experience as active participants. (p. 81)

In terms of the differences between how an artist approaches the teaching process compared to a teacher, research refers to the way artists tend to build a more collaborative-based approach to artistic experiences in schools, with this approach also being more sensory, immersive and grounded in different ways of working in the classroom environment (Jeffrey, 2005, p. 83). Discipline-centred curriculum often places the teacher as the expert and conveyer of knowledge with art as a body of knowledge with skills and techniques to be mastered promoting artistic learning through attention to technical and formal properties rather than [as artists believe] learning as an experience (Choi & Bresler, 2001). The open processes and methods embraced by artists, particularly those involving the social practice of art, often contradict the structured systems of schooling (May et. al, 2014, p. 175).

3.3.2 Findings

Across the many highly detailed and reflective interviews that involved artists, some of which extended for more than an hour, Y Connect artists outlined four intersecting sets of features and conditions that they perceived as contributing to successful outcomes. These included: practice features, organisational conditions, partnership conditions and artist responsibilities.

3.3.3 Practice features.

The term *practice features* is used here to describe the characteristics of the work that artists identified as having positive impacts on students, with these impacts ranging from pleasure to deep understanding, and from belonging to specific skill development. In opting to use the term *practice features* in this section, we have intentionally chosen not to use the term used in other parts of this report - namely “pedagogical characteristics”. This is because the term pedagogies was not generally employed by artists, who instead mostly described the features of their work and artistry.

It should be noted however, that the practice features listed below do not only relate to the practices of the artists, but also to practices generated via a collaboration between teachers and artists. These were practices:

- Where active, energetic and collaborative engagement was encouraged;
- Offering aesthetically charged experiences;
- Where students had the opportunity to exercise agency within an environment that was judgement free;
- Offered within a safe environment;
- That were challenging, but with these challenges being supported through scaffolding;
- That were also pleasurable and responsive to students’ abilities;
- That built on students’ stories and experiences;
- Informed by deep professional expertise;
- Supported through the use of professional language;
- Supported by the use of professional practices and processes; and
- Driven by professional expectations.

As many of these practice features are addressed in detail within the individual case study reports included in Part Four of this report, they are not discussed individually here. Nevertheless, they are offered to give voice to the perspectives of the artist and will be examined closely in future publications.

3.3.4 Conditions for success.

As a key part of the interview process, artists were asked to identify the specific conditions which they perceived as being essential for successful curricular and extra-curricular engagement. As a result of analysis, two sets of conditions were identified: organisational and partnership.

3.3.4.1 Organisational conditions.

- Project management and organisation.
- Provision of planning and reflection time.
- Clear processes of communication.
- Extended engagement and sufficient duration per visit.
- Budget.
- Adequate spaces and resources.
- Minimisation of interruptions.
- Flexibility of engagement.
- Careful matching of artist, teacher and class.

3.3.4.2 Partnership conditions.

- Shared and agreed understanding of purpose.
- Mutual respect.
- Teacher as active co-participant.
- Clear delineation of roles including teacher responsibility for overall behaviour management.

Most of these conditions are self-explanatory, while others have been discussed in some detail above, in association with the research question relating to teachers. It is nevertheless useful to consider some of these from the perspective of the artist. For example, while teachers were strongly focused on the importance of planning time, artists were also keen to build in more time for reflection and debriefing processes. This lack of opportunities for reflection was mostly identified as being caused by the hectic pace of school life, coupled with the busy schedules of artists. This combination of factors tended to result in insufficient time for teachers and artists to come together to talk about the work just completed. As such, one artist involved in a number of projects offered this view:

I haven't had much time to reflect on this project, to be honest. The work on it was so hard and fast that having more time to reflect probably is something that we could have included in the process a bit more.

Another artist was keen to have more time to debrief with the students themselves, arguing that she needed feedback from the students as well as the teacher, while others were philosophical about the situation, acknowledging that the classes just kept coming and that there is always “*all this stuff going on*” and that “*it's all so fast and furious*”.

Given this high-paced environment, clear communication processes were deemed by artists to be essential, especially for the smooth running of projects. This clear communication was also needed for exchanging ideas between artists, so that everyone working on a performance or event had a shared understanding of the bigger picture. In some situations, however, the communication between artists was not as clear as it could have been, leaving one artist frustrated by the fact that plans being presented were unrealistic. Their view was that they needed to be more involved in the earlier design phases of each project in order to contribute more effectively to the work.

For others, it was more the day-to-day communication that was problematic, including issues such as which room, what time, which class etc. Associated with these concerns were ones relating to disruptions. While every experienced educator knows that disruptions are part and parcel of schooling, a number of the Y Connect artists were frustrated by them and couldn't understand why they couldn't be more effectively avoided. For example, one artist exclaimed: “*You're just killing time, and valuable time, resources, when other people come in and start taking away from it, if that makes sense*”. Another artist complained:

... especially at a school like [this], where classes are continually interrupted by um, you know, assemblies. So, you think you've got a 55-minute class, and then ... the students come in 25 minutes late. So, trying to do what you can do in short periods of time is very difficult, and I think that affects the art as well. Because the time you get to spend with them is so short.

In relation to partnership conditions, the first of these, the need for a shared understanding of purpose, was the most prevalent in the data set. Again, and again within their interviews, artists expressed frustration about those times when they appeared to be on a different page to the teacher, mostly arguing that they could have been far more effective if they had a better understanding of what the teacher was trying to achieve in a given unit.

3.3.5 Artist responsibilities.

Artists also articulated a clear understanding of their responsibilities, some of which proved to be quite challenging. The following list provides a summary of these:

- Preparation, punctuality and planning,
- Sensitivity to school protocols,
- Respect for the curricular demands on teachers including assessment,
- Willingness to work with students of diverse ability levels,
- Sensitivity and respect for individual student backgrounds and circumstances,
- Responsive to teacher and student needs,
- Cultural awareness, and
- Commitment (in spite of competing Projects).

Included amongst these responsibilities was one relating to the effective management of their various commitments, leading one artist to suggest that, *“It’s a juggle ... with commitments that are all over the place”*, while another provided the following perspective:

I think the amount of hours and commitment that we did was always bigger than we had first expected, even with the knowledge that we had of the project beforehand ... this is not a Y Connect specific thing, but as artists today, you have to be working on a number of projects all the time, just because of the nature of the way things are at the moment, and the funding and support and resources that means you have to spread yourself further across projects.

Based on these important responsibilities and conditions for success, it is clear that the artists were most effective in their work and most satisfied with their involvement when a trusting and reciprocal relationship between teacher and artist was created, and when both teachers and artists participated in teaching classes. While some students considered that the artist knew a good deal about their art forms, they also conceded that not all were good managers of classroom dynamics, or experienced and effective communicators with teenagers. Based on this, one student spoke of the teacher as being the *“bonding between the artist and the students”*, while almost all students acknowledged that it was important *“to have your teacher there as well”*.

3.3.6 Artist benefits.

Artists also outlined a series of benefits that accrued for them through involvement in Y Connect. These were:

- Enjoyment and satisfaction derived from developing young people’s artistry, confidence and self-efficacy;
- Opportunities for community engagement and making a difference;
- Opportunities for learning including – reciprocal learning; cultural learning; and developing their own artistic practices;
- Recognition and awareness of their capabilities; and
- Employment.

3.3.6.1 Enjoyment and satisfaction derived from developing young people’s artistry, confidence and self-efficacy.

This was by far the strongest theme within the data in terms of benefits for artists. Again, and again, artists spoke in their interviews about the satisfaction they derived from seeing young people develop their artistry, confidence, self-efficacy, and other positive outcomes. One artist used the word *“gratitude”* to describe her feelings:

I think the sense of gratitude that you get when it clicks with the students and they get it or something shifts in either their confidence or understanding of something or their engagement with something that you give them and it's nice to see those moments of the shifts.

For arts organisations too, there was a sense of being “lucky” to be involved with the Yeronga students, with one arts organisation leader claiming: *“I think it’s [Y Connect] incredible and I think [arts organisation] is really lucky to be a part of something like this, because it really broadens our week...”*

For others it was the joy of seeing students “come in with that excited attitude of wanting to learn”, together with the realisation that there were some significant shifts occurring for individuals. For example, one artist shared this story:

Because you've got a couple of non-verbal kids ... I think that was one of the moments where a lot of the teachers were just blown away. Where some of the nonverbal kids were getting up on the stage for starters with the script and they'll read it in front of the other kids. They [the teachers] were just all coming up and going, "Oh, my gosh." I've never seen that. I've never seen that. I've never seen her get up on stage in front of anyone. I've never seen her read in front of anyone”.

At other times it was the enjoyment of being recognised and acknowledged by the students themselves, with one artist claiming: *“Not just like once, but like all the time and they [students] be like, "Ah, yeah, I'm so glad you were there today. You just made the biggest difference. You know?”*

3.3.6.2 Opportunities for community engagement and for making a difference.

Given the challenging personal lives of many of the students within the Yeronga school community, including for some their traumatic arrival stories and ongoing visa issues, almost all artists at some point within their interviews expressed feelings of pride in being able to engage in work that they saw as making a difference. For some it was the broader aspect of ‘community engagement’, while for others, their desire to make a difference was rooted in an understanding of some of the young people’s stories. For example, one artist had heard that one of the students she was working with may have been a child soldier in their war-torn home country, and this awareness sparked a strong desire in her to support him. She noted:

...he was having lots of problems, lots of problems. But then he did stuff and it was amazing, and that was really great ... At first, he was really disruptive, but he jumped in there, and that was so great.

Others were constantly surprised by the students and how well they coped given their experiences. For example, one artist articulated his respect for the students, given that:

There’s so much they [students] choose to leave at the door that I don’t know about ... and you find out after teaching them, and you’re like, really, that’s what they go through before they come to class? And you’re like ... and here I am upset about whatever. You know? Trivial sort of first world stuff ... so even for them to turn up, and then to go, “Okay, I really enjoy this!”

Another artist described her desire to make a difference this way:

I certainly love this type of work because it is so important. I don't think this is answering your question, but I do also find this work with people who are traumatised, I'm a very sensitive person, so I expend a lot of energy, so I have to be careful of that. Which I'm sure, a lot of people experience. In saying that, that's the work I really value because I know, it's a good thing for all of us...

Finally, this comment:

So yeah, there were lots of those particular moments, I think. Like hearing about [student] so badly injured in a refugee camp, you know, very shy, very timid, coming up to [teacher] and saying, 'Do you think I can be a theatre director?' You know, those sorts of moments I think are really special.

3.3.6.3 Opportunities for learning.

As noted in the summary statement above, there were several categories of learning identified by artists including: reciprocal learning; cultural learning and the development of artistic practices.

Reciprocal learning: Artists valued the collaboration with teachers and felt that great benefit accrued when everyone recognised the particular expertise of each individual. At these times they felt respected, and as the Project progressed, those artists who had extended engagement with the Project talked about their feelings of shared responsibility for learning and the reciprocal nature of the relationship – artists learned from the teachers, and the teachers learned from the artists. They suggested that it was the ongoing and developing relationships, afforded by longer tracts of time, that were seen as most fruitful. For example, one artist noted:

She [the teacher] said that she learned a lot from me about Buffon. A lot. And I learned a lot from her about managing things.

Like this artist, many spoke of the benefit of working alongside a teacher and how this experience contributed to their ability to structure learning for young people. A media artist explained:

I definitely learnt from [teacher], just how to prepare for younger groups of students, cos I've previously worked in university teaching environments where it's kind of up to the students to prepare their own materials and keep up with the lesson and keep their own notes. But [teacher] was really great within the first couple of sessions of just being like, "They need worksheets to work through, they need headers to kind of lead them on, so that you give them a few key words that they can then build on because it's too much to ask of 15 year olds and year ten students to pull something out of nowhere. They need structure." So, he was excellent at showing me the kind of structures that I needed to put in place to get the most out of our workshops. And I was really grateful for that.

Similarly, a visual artist made comments about the way the teacher helped them to understand what was needed when working with secondary students:

[Teacher] was really instrumental in calling the students' attention to certain points, cos this was the first time I'd really worked with high school aged students, within my Visual Arts practice, so just, [teacher] always knew when to grab their attention, when they needed help focusing on certain points, or what they needed to take notes on. And that I maybe wasn't aware of. So yeah, that was really important just his knowledge of classroom teaching, was a huge assistance.

For one artist, a key learning from teachers was focused on classroom management, including knowing how to react in difficult situations:

I certainly learnt a lot in terms of learning when to get upset and when not to get upset, and when to just like go, "Okay, guys." Or when to just stop the activity. Okay, don't ... Stop trying to make it work. They need to know that what they're doing is wrong, and then if they want to continue, then make a group decision to do so.

However, this reciprocal learning didn't just come from engagement with teachers, but also from students. Artists also learned from the students. For example, one visual artist noted:

Absolutely, I learnt a lot about my own practice as well and I was really grateful to the kids for they taught me about how people can interpret different information and different artworks and how they respond to it. I think at that age, you just have such an honest instant response to artwork that was really refreshing, so I got as much out of it as the kids did hopefully and I'd absolutely do it again.

Cultural learning: Artists also expressed the view that they developed key learnings based on their engagement with students from rich and diverse cultural backgrounds. This perspective was apparent across several arts disciplines, including the Visual Arts, with one artist suggesting that the students' designs were inspiring as they were so different from what they were used to, including their mark making and the colours they selected. In offering this perspective this artist described his engagement with a student from Papua New Guinea:

...just the colours and the really grass roots designs that he was doing, greens, oranges and browns. I mean he mixed up bright colours at that level too and.... the designs were unfamiliar to me.

Artistic practices and other skills: At times the learning came from working with other artists, especially within the Focused Arts Projects where sometime two or three artists worked together. For example, the creative development and production work relating to the *Star Cross'd Smashed* performance involved a professional playwright/director, choreographer, designer and lighting/sound professional, while also drawing upon the expertise of a significant number of arts teachers from across Drama, Dance, Music and Visual Arts. This large team worked closely together and as such there were significant opportunities for artists to develop and extend their skills. In response to this environment, one very experienced artist suggested: "Every workshop or rehearsal that we had was also unique in its different ways, so we were always learning and collaborating together to manage those things".

In relation to another project, one artist noted:

I came on board as an opportunity for me to actually build my facilitation skills and it's been a while since I worked in high schools, 'cause I used to be a high school teacher and I used to work with a lot of high school youth in theatre, but that was years ago ... I felt like I wanna get back into working with that age group and again learning, so having [another artist] as a mentor to develop my skills was useful.

Like the artist above who referred to the students as reciprocal learners, some Y Connect artists felt that they had benefitted artistically from working so closely with young people, including the opportunities this afforded to better understand their responses including the fact that they, "Have such an honest, instant response to artwork that's really refreshing". This artist then went on to suggest that given this learning, they "got as much out of it as the kids did".

3.3.6.4 Recognition and awareness of their capabilities.

This aspect of the work was very important for some artists, including those who had self-doubts about the value of their artistry. For example:

I think that sometimes I go through periods of not believing in myself, and so I think that [being employed as an artist in Y Connect] was really helpful. I do know lots of stuff. I am a good

person. I know things, and things that will benefit other people, and things that are of value, will help in terms of some sort of humanity in some way.

An artist from another arts discipline spoke about how other employers didn't seem to value their work and felt that the opportunity to work at Yeronga had been a real boost for them. They noted:

I have a name at Yeronga now, so that has expanded my profession ... so the Brisbane artists' community see me as something a bit different. Even [other employer] see me as a little bit more of an artist ... They always knew that I was an artist in my own right, but that has been given some type of value.

Another artist spoke of the importance of the school and Project trusting their expertise when they offered the following comment:

I really liked them kind of trusting that we knew what we were doing, you know? Well obviously they hired us because they thought we had a lot of skill in what we were doing. Which we did.

3.3.6.5 Employment.

One artist spoke of the 'privilege' of working in the school and the value of having paid work while also using their artistic skills:

I had to work at a bottle shop for like seven years, trying to keep an income coming in. And having the privilege of working at a school and ... You know. I think using the skills that I actually have to help other people is wonderful, and to be rewarded for that is excellent as well. And it's allowed me to pursue a lot more in my career than I was able to when I was working that other job because it's more hours for way less money. And this is a really fair and reasonable amount of money.

This same artist also spoke of the benefits they believed resulted from working with other artists:

And I know that the students are getting, and the teachers are getting ... a lot from watching it and seeing what's happening, seeing the development of the kids, having fun doing it. And all just kind of having these amazing experiences together, that you wouldn't have if there weren't different artists going around the school. And as an artist, seeing other artists come in. Like watching what they do and going, "Wow, that's really cool".... We all have different talents, and I think dividing everyone up into like that's maths, and that's only math [is problematic]. But if you can learn it in a different, creative, cool way, why wouldn't you?

3.3.7 Conclusion

Consideration of the artists' perspectives has been critical to gaining an understanding of the multifaceted responsibilities and conditions needed to create collaborative and creative spaces for learning as part of the Y Connect Project. The findings outlined in this section, when coupled with those outlined above in relation to teachers, suggest that the Y Connect processes were most successful when both artists and teachers saw themselves as partners and as reciprocal learners (Kind et al., 2007, p. 858). This reciprocity meant that while many of the Yeronga SHS teachers developed their own artistic practice through working with artists, learning to re-imagine and apply new artistic processes in the classroom environment, artists also developed numerous skills as they learnt from the teachers, including how to facilitate large groups and behavioural management techniques for young people with diverse needs.

Significantly, as this reciprocal learning took place, it seems that there grew a mutual respect for individual expertise which was nourished over time. Both teachers and artists experienced growth and success, finding a positive sense of their own capabilities and a respect for each other's individual professional expertise.

Of course, there were other factors that enabled this project, together with constraints and challenges, and these are outlined below. However, by paying close attention to the perspectives of the Y Connect artists, we hope that this report has served to create some useful guidelines to inform future partnerships between artists, schools and other organisations.

3.4 Research Question Four

What factors have enabled and constrained the success of the Y Connect Project?

3.4.1 Introduction.

In this section we consider the factors that enabled and constrained the success of the Y Connect Project. Some of these factors have already been addressed in other sections of this report and are therefore not discussed in detail here. In addition, the case specific enablers, constraints and challenges are included within the individual case study reports outlined in Part 4.

3.4.2 Informing literature.

In their work on artist-teacher partnerships in learning, Kind et al. (2007) identify some of the key tensions and dilemmas that impact on the relationships and thus effectiveness of having artists working in schools. One of these tensions relates to the notion of artists "being teachers", with these researchers noting that some of the artists in their study strongly rejected this idea and thus found themselves "at a deeply unsettling juncture of how to locate or understand themselves" when they worked in schools (p. 855). Part of this discomfort may spring from unfair expectations, which according to Fineberg (2004, p. 56) is that within just a couple of visits, artists might be able to teach teachers how to teach "what the artist took years to learn".

Within McLauchlan's (2017) *Playlinks* study, which involved 248 elementary school classrooms in pre- and post-production workshops connected to live theatre events that visited schools, a number of key challenges were also identified. For example, McLauchlan shares how artistic workshops were sometimes implemented on days that teachers were away on professional development and classes were supervised by supply teachers who lacked awareness of artistic context or content. Further, within the context of that project, teachers often utilised the drama workshop time to generate report card marks. Actors involved in the project commented on not being respected in the workshop space and discussed the hardships associated with dealing with large groups of students in a single session. The following complaint from an artist illustrates this point:

... often the groups were too big ... Some Principals wanted to put three classes together ... it became crowd management. You're not delivering an art workshop anymore. You're just maintaining peace ... some semblance of order in the large room ... it was very clear that these were schools who didn't value what was being offered. (Interview transcript in McLauchlan 2017, p. 139).

Based on these experiences, McLauchlan (2017) cites Pitter (2005, p. 5) and argues that successful implementation of artist-in-classroom and in-residency programme initiatives hinge on twin factors: "the degree to which 'arts are valued in schools' and 'practically reflect the partnership between school officials and artist educators'" (p. 138).

Fortunately, within the Y Connect Project, both of these factors were in place, with the school leadership team and staff generally holding an already high regard for the Arts, while the partnerships between the artists, arts organisations and the school were carefully curated and managed by the Project Manager, who was both a member of the Project team and the school community.

However, it is also worth noting here that in spite of the challenges outlined above, McLauchlan (2017) claims that artist-implemented activities are beneficial and engage students in experiences that may enhance learning across wide ranging objectives. This was certainly the case in the Y Connect Project, with several key enablers being identified as supporting these positive outcomes.

3.4.3 Enablers.

Across the teacher, leadership team and artist data, a series of enablers were identified. These were the:

- Leadership and school culture;
- Professionalism of the teachers and artists and the quality of their partnerships;
- Extended duration of the Project and the long-term involvement of some key artists;
- A parallel program of teacher professional learning.

These enablers are discussed below.

3.4.3.1 Leadership and school culture.

The leadership of this Project was multi-faceted and included members of the school leadership team (Principal, Deputy Principal, Heads of Department, and other senior teachers). Their support for the Project was crucial in terms of setting the agenda for the work and also for helping to generate the principles driving it. For example, by identifying early on the importance of teacher involvement being on an “opt in” basis, the leadership team demonstrated an understanding of their staff and the need to gain their “buy in”, allowing the Project to grow in an organic rather than forced manner. Then, as the Project progressed, the leadership team’s ongoing interest in the Project’s various developments was vital for maintaining momentum.

Importantly, key members of the school leadership team were also willing to acknowledge the leadership work of staff across the school, with the following response from one key leader, when asked about enablers, being reflective of this perspective, while also identifying an aspect of the school’s culture:

People with the vision. I think we've been lucky to have a number of people ... who have been really crucial to getting things running. I think maybe [the success of Y Connect] comes down to the fact that we do have such a diverse school and that we do have, we've tried many different sorts of programs over the years and people are actually really willing to take things on.

A comment from another member of the leadership team also relates to school culture, this time in relation to teacher quality. They note: *“I think we've got a flexible approach within our school from our teachers ... So yeah, our school has been embracing and flexible”*. A further leader suggested that the willingness of the teachers to open their classrooms to artists and researchers was a key factor, suggesting that this was because at Yeronga, teachers were used to having other people in their classrooms due to the number of students requiring additional support.

The final enabler identified under the category of leadership was the key role played by the Project Manager. In her school-based leadership role, she was responsible for multiple dimensions of the Project, including: liaising with the university-based researchers and school leadership team; sourcing

and coordinating the involvement of artists; communicating with teachers in relation to their participation; organising and leading professional learning opportunities; keeping the school community informed of Project activities and directions; and finally wrangling students in relation to a whole host of administrative matters associated with the Project. The following comment from a school leadership team member communicates these multiple challenges very effectively, while also highlighting the importance of having an effective Project Manager:

[Project Manager] is incredibly courageous. If she thinks something's in the best interest of the kids, she won't let it go, and she won't let people sabotage things. And she's got a very good way of working with leadership teams and with teachers to make sure everyone's on board, everyone's in the loop. She knows who her heroes are, and she makes sure she has conversations with people, and runs things by people, and she's just constantly networking, and thinking. So, her being able to do that has definitely contributed to the success, and being able to balance some tricky things at times, like artists' expectations with teachers' expectations with students' expectations, and trying to make all of that work.

Later in the same interview, this school leader goes on to offer advice for other schools that might be interested in adopting the Y Connect model:

They need to have a project manager who is really at the top of their game in terms of understanding not just the practical side of the Arts and having connections with artists and all the rest of it, and being able to do that, but also understanding the theory and the philosophy behind it, because you have to be able to articulate that, to advocate for it.

3.4.3.2 The professionalism of the teachers and artists and the quality of their partnerships.

Across the data set artists articulated a genuine sense of respect for the teachers and the job they do, while teachers were also keen to articulate their respect for the quality of artists with whom they worked. While there were partnerships that didn't work as well as others (and these will be discussed within the constraints section below), there were very few occasions when this mutual respect was not apparent. Key to this was artist selection, with one school leader noting that success "comes down to picking the right people. Some are better than others".

Fortunately, across the Y Connect Project, these selections were mostly successful, with only a small number of artists not working out. In relation to this issue, the Project Manager offered this comment:

There were one or two that were a little bit of the 'artist is a magician'. "I'll just come in and I'll just dazzle them." There was a teeny bit of that. And there was one that we didn't get back as a result of that.

Given this careful selection process, there were almost no issues at all with artists recognising the value that a teacher's curriculum and pedagogical skills added to the relationship, causing one artist to suggest:

It was really good to work with [teacher], because she gave me a lot of, not specifically for each student but a lot of background, what those kids might have been through. It did influence what I was going to teach and how, and she was extremely supportive. I liked how she, we had a plan, but depending on how the students felt, that plan really changed. Really, in the moment, and I like to teach that way, I think it's really important, and she was very good like that. We collaborated very well, she's a very good teacher, and knows how to read a room very well.

Conversely, there was genuine respect for the artists and their skills, with one school leader commenting about one of the artists:

And you've artists like [artist] who is just so professional and such a deep thinker. She would write copious reflections afterwards, which we could then use ... Not that you would expect everyone to be as assiduous as her, but she had a need to collaborate with teachers. She was a deep thinker.

In many cases the relationship between artists and teacher saw responsibilities distributed slightly differently, with this being due to the fact that the artist was only present occasionally, while the teacher was there every day of the working week. As such it was an advantage to the artist to have an experienced teacher manage classroom behavioural expectations:

Visual artist: Well I relied on them for the class behaviour and everything, like say even though the kids listened to me and that was all good, ... I relied on them [the teacher] to do that.

Teachers also retained a curriculum focus:

Dance teacher: I guess because [artist] has come in and driven the creative process and I have taken it and rehearsed it. Our roles have been quite different, and I guess I've probably tried to manage it from a behavioural point of view. Whereas, [artist] has just focused on [the artistic content].

All partnerships were not equal however, with one teacher noting:

I think I've grown as a teacher as result of having [artist 1] in the classroom and I've also realised that not every artist is ideal in the classroom situation. And I'm reminded back to when I had class last year and we had [artist 2] and it wasn't a good fit ... dare I say the ego was not appropriate for the students.

Of course, the partnerships worked best when there was ongoing communication and collaboration between the artist and the teacher, and when they saw each other as members of a collaborative team, working together.

Music artist: And then, when we realised that is just a little bit too ambitious, I checked in with her and said, "I think I want to reduce it, a little bit, in the scope of how we can go" and she went, "Great!"

Clowning artist: I really enjoyed teaching with [teacher], he is excellent. Excellent. He was very welcoming of my skills, but I also knew how to support him, too. You know. We were a good team.

3.4.3.3 The duration of the Project and the extended engagement of key artists.

Another enabler associated with the Y Connect Project was its 2.5-year duration, which ensured that long-term relationships were developed, and the impacts of the Project charted. For the artists, the duration of the Project was particularly important, helping them to: establish an identity within the school; develop an understanding of the school, its culture, and ways of working; get to know the students and their particular capabilities; and perhaps most importantly, to feel accepted and included within the school context. Indeed, one artist became so enmeshed that he became known as the "school actor" - a title he relished. For teachers, this extended engagement enabled the evolution of partnerships, including a growing awareness of what each artist could offer and how best to make the most of their skills. Finally, for the students, it meant that the artists became part of the fabric of the school community – people they recognised and responded to.

This extended duration was also important for the research team members, helping them to develop the trust that is crucial for the data collection process. School leadership team members, teachers and indeed the students themselves were able to become comfortable having university staff attend their planning meetings, join in and at times lead their professional learning sessions, and participate in classroom activities.

Of course, these relationships didn't develop overnight – they had to be established and then carefully managed so that deep engagement could occur, for as one school leader notes, *“It's a mutual benefit if everybody takes time to establish the relationship so that the teachers and the artist trust each other. The students and the artists trust each other.”* However, in relation to the artists, variety was also important, and getting the balance right between this and extended artist engagement was needed. The following comment from the Project Manager, sums up this challenge:

Well, it is a few things to keep in mind, because while it's great to have an artist like [actor] who the kids really know and trust and to have that continuity, it's also great in other art subject areas to have variety as well and for the students to meet a variety of artists. So, both are true, and both are important, variety and continuity...

3.4.3.4. Teacher professional learning.

A final enabler identified by teachers was the provision of a parallel program of teacher professional learning. Offered as part of the school's Teachers Accessing Peer Support (TAPS) Program, the Y Connect related learning was importantly instigated and run prior to the arrival of artists or the commencement of the various case studies. This meant that teachers were able to come to understand the purposes of the Project, some of its theoretical underpinnings and key aspects of arts-based pedagogies. These sessions were mostly delivered by the Project Manager, with additional delivery by members of the research team.

Topics addressed across these sessions included: an introduction to the literature associated with Arts engagement for low SES and disengaged students; the importance of oral language in the classroom, including specifically theories and practices to support oral language development through the Arts; the characteristics of effective pedagogies in the secondary classrooms; the nature of aesthetic engagement; and how to plan and work in partnership with artists. Practical workshop sessions were also included, with these having a focus on introducing teachers from across the various curricular areas to some of the strategies associated with language and arts rich classrooms.

The following comment from a teacher who participated in several workshops captures what many of the participating teachers saw as the benefits of this professional learning:

What was good about the PD was that it was quite academic. She (Project Manager) would give us journals to read...so it felt like she wasn't just saying, “This is fun”, but also that there was a reason why we're doing this and so I felt really confident to kind of advocate for it at meetings when maybe it was more of a, “Oh, we need to do NAPLAN prep, we need to do it like this and this”. [I could say], “Well maybe we could do that, but also this, because this is really important for these reasons too.” So, feeling the confidence in having artists in the English classroom for literacy purposes.

3.4.5 Constraints and challenges.

A key part of the research process was the ongoing work of identifying constraints and challenges. Fortunately, given the extended duration of the Project and the close relationship between the University research team, the Project Manager, and the school leadership team, these challenges were usually quite quickly addressed. However, even by the end of the Project, there were still issues that

remained unresolved. For example, within the post-Project teacher survey, a number of very specific areas for improvement were identified. These included:

- Issues of space including the need for larger and more varied spaces, especially for English and Mathematics sessions;
- Behaviour management issues;
- The need to promote more broadly the successes of the students who participated;
- The need for a stronger emphasis on written literacy, while maintaining the work associated with oracy skills;
- Finding ways to limit the number of cancelled classes due to competing, simultaneous demands; and
- The need for more sharing sessions so that staff involved or not currently involved could hear more about what was happening as the Project progressed.

Broader constraints and challenges were identified through analysis of the interview data including:

- Artist suitability and artist/teacher compatibility;
- Partnership processes including the allocation of responsibilities;
- Artist expectations and understanding of students' complex lives;
- Problems associated with inappropriate physical spaces; and most pervasive of all across the data set,
- Issues of time, including time to plan, to document and share, and time with students.

In addition, a number of case specific challenges and constraints were also identified. These are discussed in detail in each of the individual case study reports that follow.

3.4.5.1 Artist suitability and artist/teacher compatibility.

The issue of artist suitability and artist/teacher compatibility has mostly been addressed above as an enabler of the Project, given that almost all artists who were employed proved to be effective choices, while most of the partnership matches were effective. However, it is worth noting here some of the particular challenges identified. For example, one school leader made the following important comment:

Look, I think that you need to make sure that with the artist, that you are really familiar with their work, because even though you may be familiar with an artist from seeing their work, that's completely different to them workshopping in a classroom ... There are some artists that I think I should have spoken to a little bit more at length about the requirements of our classrooms....

Some of these requirements were curriculum related and others were student related, but interestingly, some were related to important general skills like punctuality and reliability. For example, one school leader noted:

I think the most critical thing I'd say about artists is they have to remember that we're working and operating in schools still. So, things like punctuality are really critical. So, if an artist is 10 or 15 minutes late for a class, it's really bad.

They went on to suggest that artists also had to realise that schools are “messy places” and that considerable flexibility is needed.

However, flexibility is a two-way street, and in some situations, it was the teacher who needed to be more willing to adapt and adjust to the challenges of the incoming artist, including, as one school leader noted, “not feeling anxious and protective of their rooms”. As such, the artists sometimes faced

varying levels of flexibility and engagement, and therefore struggled as they moved from working with one teacher to working with another.

Creating the “*perfect match*” was also challenging at times, and while some artists worked incredibly well with one teacher, their way of working was not as effective with another. For example, while one partnership was described by a school leader as “*a marriage made in heaven*”, with the partnership enabling teacher and artist to “*work beautifully together*”, this was not always so, with the biggest challenge being identifying the best partnerships for arts teachers. In relation to this issue the Project Manager offered this insightful comment about brokering partnerships for arts teachers:

In English and Mathematics and everywhere, I think it was so exciting for everyone. It was so different, it worked really well. But it gets much tougher when it's the Arts. The artistry that's being unfolded in the room has to really match what they're doing. Because you've got teachers who are experts sometimes in their art form. I think it [the partnership] has got to be highly tuned and highly refined.

Potentially, this may have been the reason why some arts teachers initially showed reluctance about being involved in Y Connect. However, once they were matched with an artist who had particular skills that they felt they lacked, were related to cutting edge industry level processes or techniques, or included alternate approaches to which they felt students would respond, they became committed to the Project. This situation was described by one of the school leaders:

A number of our teachers in the beginning weren't keen to have an artist. Didn't want an artist in the classroom and said, "Look we can do it all." And it's been really interesting you know, once they had an artist and were convinced to have an artist in the classroom, they've changed their idea and they're asking for artists all the time.

3.4.5.2 Partnership processes – including responsibilities and shared understanding of goals and purposes.

A key challenge identified across almost all of the cases, but especially those cases involving professional artists working within curriculum areas (Artists in Arts Classroom, English and Mathematics and Movement), was that of ensuring that everyone involved was “*on the same page*”, holding a shared understanding of the goals and purposes of the work. Sometimes within the early stages of a partnership, this shared vision and purpose were not apparent - causing difficulties which included lost opportunities to maximise learning. The following artist comments are typical:

It would've been good right from the start, before I was hired, to know what the teacher had to assess them on in the end, and what her assessment process was going to be so I could've more clearly been helpful rather than sometimes I wondered whether ... in the end I wondered whether I was eating up her time. She had to herd them towards this assessment.

Yeah. I think, though, I would ... I think it might be more useful for next time to potentially write a whole semester at a time. So even if it means I have to come in for a couple of days and just plan with teachers...

There are challenges for artists, from my perspective, working in a classroom that has such a specific curriculum, that doesn't really ... because the kids have to learn this, and that's what they're getting assessed on, so trying to develop skills within that rigid framework is quite difficult.

Fortunately, as the Project and indeed each individual case progressed, communication processes improved which in turn led to greater clarity of purpose and alignment of goals. This was especially so when artists engaged long-term within a particular case or with a particular teacher. However, there

were still situations where artists and teachers had different perspectives on what was needed to achieve successful outcomes. For example, one artist questioned the level of challenge a particular teacher was offering:

Then, in forms of challenging the kids, I think sometimes they, especially with the year eights, sometimes the exercises were too simple and too straightforward and so, they would lose interest and ... you've got to keep them on their toes otherwise they just go off with the fairies and do whatever they want.

3.4.5.3 Artist expectations and understanding of students' complex lives.

One challenge identified in several cases studies was associated with the nature of the student cohort at Yeronga SHS and the lack of understanding artists had of the complexity of their lives. Given that many of the student participants had previously navigated extremely challenging journeys to reach the school, a key challenge identified by both artists and teachers was the importance of ensuring that everyone was sensitive to young people's stories and their ongoing difficulties. Here, some artists were more effective than others, causing a school leader to note:

They [artists] need to be a little bit more aware of ... while they want them to be as perfect as possible in their art form and what they're doing, that these young people have incredibly complex backgrounds and lives and if they're in a bad mood, it takes them a while to warm up. We can't get cranky with them about that. Our job is to gently guide them into it. So sometimes some artists aren't quite as committed to the children as we are. Not all, but some. They're just not as into the children. They're just not as connected because they don't know their backgrounds often too. But a lot of them are. But sometimes they're just not as concerned about their welfare. Just an observation.

However, artists were keenly aware of this issue, and indeed of the inadequacies of their level of knowledge about particular students. For example, one artist who worked on focused projects as well as within the curriculum areas noted:

When you're coming into somebody else's classroom and somebody else's environment, you have to collaborate with them because they know the students better than you do. But ... at Yeronga, there's more understanding and patience, cultural awareness and protocols involved in the way that you work there that really had to be led by the teachers. We had to work together and find ways of sharing that information in a respectful but also positive way, so that what we're doing is creating a positive impact on the students and not necessarily ... you know I think when there's a disconnection between understanding between yourself and the students, that's when things don't happen or the students would leave or things would bubble to the surface, so that was a really important thing to do. And I think I probably have a greater awareness of that process after working at Yeronga.

For this reason, one artist described her experiences as “like I was on a roller coaster”, given that some of the kids were so at-risk, meaning that their emotions could spill over at any time.

A further challenge associated with knowing and understanding the students was the need for the artists to gain the trust of students. Considering the nature of the work, this was particularly important for the circus artists,

It probably took us at least a term or two [to create trust]. There were definitely kids who straight up were willing to trust us and they jumped on board kind of straightaway ... But I reckon it took us a good term to get them to ... not respect – they had respect for us straightaway ... A full semester for them to be entirely ... a bit like our friends to an extent.

We're not just their teachers, and we're different from their teachers. We're their circus trainers, but a bit friendly.

Even when working with students from less challenging backgrounds, there was sometimes a need for teachers to “reset” artist expectations. These comments from two different teachers are reflective of this issue:

And I think that the artist always needs to be reminded of that fact. That they are dealing with students and some students who did not choose the subject, some students who had no idea what the subject's involving. We had two students come halfway through the semester, one of which ended up being way more problematic and ... completely put two members of the class off their game and we lost them further. So that's just an example of the school environment and how the school can change at a wink.

Well I had to reset the artists expectations about what the kids could get out of this and aim the bar at something that was achievable for the kids.

3.4.5.4 Spaces.

Somewhat surprisingly, the issue of space was not dominant in the data set, possibly because many of the arts teachers and artists involved in the Project are accustomed to working in difficult spaces. However, for the teachers working in the Mathematics and Movement and English focussed cases, space was more of an issue. For example, one Mathematics teacher argued that, “*We need to get better classrooms*”, given that the room they are currently working in is “*tiny*”. This teacher then went on to suggest that if movement was going to continue to be used as an approach to teach Mathematics, a “*specially designated Y Connect room*” was needed in order to avoid the time wasted in moving the furniture or having to go outside.

3.4.5.5 Time – to plan, to document and share, and time with students.

Time here refers to a range of factors, reflective of the complexity of this Project: time to plan, to document and share learnings, and time with students. In almost every interview involving teachers and artists, the challenges of time emerged. Some of these challenges are no different to those that occur in any busy Australian secondary school, however the Y Connect Project did create some additional time challenges. These are now discussed.

Time to plan: Time to plan was identified as the greatest challenge for both teachers and artists. As we have seen previously, both groups expressed the concern that insufficient time was available to engage in highly effective collaborative planning processes. While there certainly were professional development days and various planning sessions allocated to planning, there was nevertheless a sense that planning time was a key constraint within the Y Connect Project. The timing of this planning was also an issue, with the artists suggesting that they needed to be involved earlier in the process – at the unit planning phase rather than at the lesson planning phase. For example, within the Mathematics and Movement case, one artist noted:

I feel like planning ... we almost did it too late because once they've already taught the lessons that they wanted me to cover as a movement lesson as well, it was difficult to go into how they would teach it 'cause they've already done it.

Another comment, this time from a teacher, includes some interesting comments and questions about the challenges of time:

You've got to find that, you've got to start to build that relationship, you need to plan out the unit, you know so time's a critical thing. How do you find time in schools to make these things

happen? Arts people love doing extra-curricular stuff, and they don't mind giving up time when it comes to these things. But everybody's time poor and becoming more time poor in schools. So, I guess if you're looking at continuing the same sort of program, it's how do you build that in? And we've been lucky here, admin support has been fantastic.

Time for teachers to document and share their learning: While this theme was not addressed extensively in the data set, it is an important one and as observers of the work of this Project, it was apparent to the research team members that this was an issue. It mostly emerged because teachers were encouraged to co-participate in lessons and focused projects, rather than to observe. While co-participation was repeatedly identified by both artists and teachers as being a key condition for success, this co-participation also meant that teachers were not able to record or document what they were seeing and hearing, and for this reason felt they didn't always get the full benefit of what they had just experienced. Allied to this concern were further concerns about how their learning was shared with each other. In summarising these concerns, one teacher suggested that the biggest negative they had about Y Connect was *"the merging point between Y Connect and our school"*, with time being the element that was handled least effectively. The following comments from this teacher summarises some of these issues:

I think one thing I could have done to improve it would have been to document things ... sit down after every lesson I've had with Y Connect and really make sure it's incorporated in my core planning ideas. And share that stuff with next teacher. I have been kind of overwhelmed, I think it was teaching five classes that, that kind of got lost in the interests of my teaching.

They go on to note:

All these teachers who have many experiences in Y Connect, they're all kind of like separate islands. Around the school, we give each other feedback, we love to have this support and Y Connect has been amazing for us. But I really dream of a situation where we had the time to sit altogether and go, "How do we document this down into a plan that in our absence someone else could pick up and run." ... I don't think it's Y Connect's fault at all. I think it's the time and it's the constraints of being in an educational system obviously that is really outcome based.

Time with students: The final challenge associated with time was mostly articulated by artists and referred to their desire to have more time to spend with students. However, time, from the teachers' perspective, also needed to be balanced with consideration of the curriculum and assessment requirements. Finally, the students were also aware that time was a factor they needed to consider. Below are some examples of these three contrasting perspectives:

Artist: *We'd like to offer more material to them, but within the hour it's quite hard to. And I guess an hour a week, they get to a certain level – like skill-wise, I wish we could spend more time with them. It's like they all have such abilities, they picked up everything really easily, all I wish is that we could do more.*

Artist: *A lot of the work that I would have liked to have done, especially the at risk or refugee kids, we didn't really have enough time for because the lessons are so short. However, we did get something together and they presented, which was wonderful, and school was quite happy about it.*

Teacher: *Time sometimes. Sometimes times and assessing the ... there's a lot of pressure on teachers, I suppose, to access and teach the curriculum and make sure we're covering all the content descriptors. So, often time is probably the*

biggest burden. But, in terms of limitations, the end result is probably what we're getting is far greater outweighed compared to those limitations. And if it's collaborative and planned, I think time we can manage quite well.

Teacher: *I feel very supported ... it's just timing is difficult. So, the way our terms are structured, you know we got a week for assessment, twice - so we have two pieces of assessment so it's really only two or three learning weeks where you could use Y Connect at the start of the unit. So that means two weeks at the start, and then in week six and seven, that's another opportunity. It's not like every week you have an opportunity so working out the timing a bit better with building- I wouldn't even mind doing an intensive week, do one week where I see [artist] every day, for a week, on a unit. I think that would be beneficial for the kids, to squeeze it in, get condensed into a week rather than across three or four weeks.*

Student (when asked about time taken from English classes to attend Circus):

Int: *Do you reckon you lose or gain? Like, do you find, when you come back to English, you're kind of behind, or?*

Student: *Sometimes.*

Student (when asked about artist being involved in EALD English):

Student: *The bad thing is like, we don't have time to learn.*

Int: *To learn...?*

Student: *For assignments...*

Int: *So, you're losing time to do your assignments ... that worries you a bit?*

Student: *Yeah.*

3.4.6 Conclusion.

In this part of the report we have summarised the key enablers, constraints and challenges associated with this Project, identifying the four key enablers as: leadership and the existing school culture; the professionalism of the teachers and artists; the extended duration of the Project and the participation of the artists; and the program of teacher professional learning which was delivered in parallel with the Project. Meanwhile, challenges and constraints were identified as: locating suitable artists and making effective matches with teachers; partnership processes – including responsibilities and shared understanding of goals; artist expectations and understanding of the students' complex lives; spaces for teaching; and time – including time to plan, document and share and time with students.

When considered together, they reveal that while there were challenges, these were mostly able to be overcome through leadership and the professionalism of the teachers and artists involved. While space and time remained as challenges across the Project, these challenges are not uncommon in busy secondary schools and did not greatly hinder the outcomes achieved. In response to the challenge of matching artists to teachers, within a later section of this report, focused on sustainability and scalability, recommendations aimed at supporting schools interested in adopting the Y Connect model, but avoiding these types of challenges, are offered.

PART 4 – THE INFORMING CASE STUDIES

4.1 Case Study One - Focused Arts Projects



Within this case, all six connections were strongly evident within the data set.

4.1.1 Research question.

This case study was designed to address the following research question: What was the impact on participating students of their involvement in extra-curricular Focused Arts Projects?

The Focused Arts Projects that were delivered as part of this case study all shared similar aims, including:

- Creating a sense of community and belonging;
- Building secure and positive relationships;
- Opportunities for enjoyable artistic encounters and social experiences;
- Opportunities for new connections to be formed;
- The creation of artistic outcomes supported by skills development, artistic inclusion and collaboration; and
- Public performative outcomes.

4.1.2 Participants.

Participating students: Student participation and recruitment varied according to the specifics of the project. For some projects, such as the after school Performing Arts Club, students could sign up voluntarily. For other projects, such as the Circus program, teachers at Yeronga State High School nominated specific students whom they felt would benefit from taking part. It should be noted that access to the Focused Arts Projects was school wide and was inclusive of all ages and year levels.

Key teachers: John Aloizos, Jacqi Bottger, Karina Bray, Karen Caslin, Kiera Deakin, Sanaz Hamoonpou, Adrienne Jones, Amy Kallis, Chloe McIntosh, Tiffany O'Brien, Domini Roblin, Cassandra Tsimboukis, Ian Vogt.

Key artists: Claire Christian, Casey Douglas, Daniel Evans, Leah Gardener, Jeremy Gordon, Linda Hassall, Natalie Lazaroo, Bree Le Cornu, Phoebe Manning, Nerida Matthaei, Stephen Rowan, Mark Taylor, Anna Yen.

Partnering arts organisations: Circa Contemporary Circus, La Boite Theatre Company, Opera Queensland and Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC).

Other participating arts organisations: Queensland Theatre.

4.1.3 Scope.

The case study was conducted across 2016-2018. The total duration of the Focused Arts Projects was 285 hours and included 4110 points of student contact with the various projects. Altogether there were 188 events including 38 student performances of Music, Theatre, Circus and Dance. In addition, there were four excursions to theatre and performing arts events including visits to Circa, La Boite Theatre, Queensland Performing Arts Complex and Queensland Opera.

Fourteen long- and short-term, extra-curricular projects were delivered across this case study, involving Drama, Circus, Music and Dance. Core projects included the Performing Arts Club – an after-school drama program that saw the students working with professional artists, directors, choreographers and lighting designers to develop a series of extracurricular performances. These performances included a contemporary performance project addressing climate literacies, a promenade performance that included various performative arts disciplines (Dance, Drama, and Music) and a contemporary re-imagining of Romeo and Juliet. Another core activity - the Circa Circus project - involved students who were selected by the school administration team based on their perceptions of its potential impact on their self-confidence, behaviour and/or leadership skills. This project involved professional artists from the internationally recognised circus company, Circa, who trained students in a range of circus skills, leading to several performance outcomes – including a performance at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts in Brisbane.

Other examples of Focused Arts Projects included On the Green, which involved student musicians performing during break time, School Choir, School Band, Guitar Club, Physical Theatre Group and the Y Music Gallery. The various projects offered students skill development opportunities with external artists and arts organisations, excursions to cultural spaces and opportunities to both watch and take part in live performances. In addition to the examples detailed above, skills development contexts included digital media training, music technology, shadow-puppetry, physical theatre, voice, playwrighting and opera singing workshops. Further, two students were given the opportunity to participate in Industry immersion workshops with Opera Queensland and Queensland Theatre. All projects involved collaboration between teachers and artists.

4.1.4 Data sources.

- Interviews with teaching staff.
- Interviews with participating students.
- Interviews with artists.
- Student surveys.

4.1.5 Informing literature.

The following section will outline some of the literature regarding extra-curricular projects in schools. A range of language is used to describe extra-curricular activities, with several authors using the term 'after-school'. It is important to note that within the Y Connect Project some Focused Arts Projects, such as the circus group, despite being conducted during school hours were extra-curricular. The term after-school has been used below where it reflects the authors' language, however, it must be considered that after-school is a limiting term that does not encompass the scope of this case study.

Through the literature, the qualities of extra-curricular projects are revealed as being distinct to activities that occur within classroom-based learning. Lauer et al. (2006) state that the meaning of 'out of school time' programs is that the "children are doing some-thing other than activities mandated by school" (p. 276). Halpern (2000) also states that after-school programs should not be distracted by schooling-related problems and instead be able to focus on "providing the opportunities and relationships critical to meeting other developmental needs of children" (p. 187). Halpern argues that children require spaces in addition to school, where learning can be self-directed, experiential and

enjoyable, where talents can be nurtured and identities explored, and that “after-school programs are well-suited to meeting these needs” (p. 186). Fitzhugh and LaPadula (2004) state that “after-school time is unique and offers many opportunities that school-based learning cannot” (p. 41).

In terms of the needs of extra-curricular projects and the participating students, Lauer et al. (2006) state that after school programs must be “developmentally appropriate and attractive to participants” (p. 276). Halpern (2000) notes that the design of extra-curricular programs needs to balance elements of safety, guidance and enrichment. He also states that projects must provide “spaces that children, especially those 8 or 9 and up, can feel they own” (p. 203). Fitzhugh and LaPadula (2004), in discussing the large-scale Arts Corps project in the USA, also felt that a characteristic that determined success in this case was the long-term duration of a project in a school. The authors state that “students stay with Arts Corps all year and into the next, developing powerful mentorship relationships with their Teaching Artists” (p. 42). Wright (2015) also acknowledges that the support of the school staff, including the leadership teams, is particularly important to the success of extra-curricular projects. Halpern (2000) notes that it is particularly important to provide extra-curricular opportunities for low income students, although Chapin, Deans, and Fabris (2019) acknowledge that “CALD [culturally and linguistically diverse] and immigrant students are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities” (p. 11). Chapin et al. (2019) also note that there is limited research that focuses on culturally diverse students’ experiences of extra-curricular activities.

Chapin et al. (2019) state that “many extra-curricular activities are effective interventions for promoting the skills and qualities that enhance school engagement” (p. 10) and Shernoff (2010) found that students who participated in after-school programs for one year were found to have higher English grades and higher social competence than non-participants. The Australian SongMakers project engaged students in schools with professional Music artists. Hunter, Broad, and Jeanneret (2018) discuss five core outcomes from this project: expanded skills, knowledge, and appreciation of the practices of song writing and recording; engagement and enjoyment in the learning process; professional and industry knowledge; mastery orientation, motivation, and self-efficacy; and group work and collaboration. Fitzhugh and LaPadula (2004) found increased social interaction, particularly between year groups, and Annand (2019) noted that following a school’s participation in an extra-curricular drama project, “staff share stories of children having wider friendship groups, of speaking up in class and of simply being happier” (p. 207). Fitzhugh and LaPadula (2004) also reflect on the confidence that students gained and Pitts (2014) states that “teachers emphasised the creativity, concentration and enjoyment that the children had brought to the sessions” (p. 140).

Further benefits include skills development and students’ broadening their horizons of the art form (Pitts, 2014; Amanda Watson & Forrest, 2008). Pitts (2014) also found that students were motivated to improve their skills further and that over time students shifted their understanding of what it meant to be ‘good at’ the activity. Wright (2015) noted that students took on a variety of roles thus extending their skills beyond the direct art-form to other areas such as lighting and sound. Wright also found that students developed capabilities such as self-management, enterprise, critical thinking and creativity and Pitts (2014) states that “teachers noted that self-discipline and behaviour improved” (p. 140). Pitts also states that an independent inquiry into the same project “emphasised the effects of music learning on children’s emotional literacy and imagination, with clear benefits for both social interaction and attainment in literacy” (p. 104).

Engagement with professional artists is significant within the literature, with students, teachers and researchers noting the importance of these interactions (Pitts, 2014; Amanda Watson & Forrest, 2008; Wright, 2015). Performance outcomes for the projects are also discussed as being important within extra-curricular arts activities (Fitzhugh & LaPadula, 2004; Pitts, 2014; Amanda Watson & Forrest, 2008; Wright, 2015). Amanda Watson and Forrest (2008) illustrate the pathways created by live performances. As one student involved in the project stated, “Because of this event, my intention to

pursue a career as a composer was confirmed” (p. 321). Amanda Watson and Forrest also highlight further students who have gone on to study composition at university and discuss a link between participation in the projects and the desire to study composition within the school curriculum. Furthermore, Pitts (2014) notes that: “their [the students’] definitions of ‘who is a musician’ were broadened by the workshops.... The children had learnt that becoming a musician is open to everyone” (p. 143).

4.1.6 What did it look like in action? Pedagogical characteristics.

Due to the diverse nature of the various Focused Arts Projects, including the range of art forms utilised, it is important to note that there was no single approach. However, the data revealed some shared pedagogical characteristics which were particularly significant to this case study including:

- Mixed age groups;
- Building trust;
- Challenging activities;
- Active, encouraging and interactive approaches;
- Opportunities for students to learn new skills and approaches;
- Professional expectations; and
- Opportunities for fun.

The extra-curricular focus, with a school-wide scope meant that students interacted in mixed age groups. This created unique opportunities within the school for students to interact with others that they wouldn’t usually connect with in their school day. Students commented extensively on this approach as a positive element of the Focused Arts Projects and this is discussed further in the findings section in relation to the students’ connection to each other, with one Year 11 student noting that these projects were: *“One of the few spaces where every grade comes together and works on something”*.

Teachers also recognised that the mixed age focus of the projects was a valuable characteristic that offered a unique approach within the school: *“I haven’t seen that in a school where year levels mix like the sevens with the twelves, the eights with nines, and it’s always positive, encouraging amongst them”*.

Presenting the students with challenges also emerged as a key approach within this case study. One of these challenges related to academic experiences:

Some of the things I learnt was that Music is not as easy as they make it seem. ‘Cause when I first wanted to learn, I thought it was going to be all fun and games, but there’s a serious side to everything, and I learned that.

Physical challenges were also part of this approach, particularly within the Circus project where students were learning increasingly difficult circus techniques: *“Well, for me, what was most challenging, was like, having to ... work out some tricks and stuff like that. It made my brain work even harder than it usually does”*.

At times, the content of the projects also presented challenging concepts that pushed the students to consider new approaches to the world. In describing one such challenge, one artist noted:

They were challenged by the text because we set the text in the future, after the day of the “final disaster”. So, we talked about, we had a different relationship to language because we have no history left, we have nothing left. What was really interesting about it, is that some of

the students said, "Well, we're all refugees now." That idea worked really well in terms of challenging them.

We wanted to challenge them other than just doing something that we felt was immature or just comedy. We wanted something important that's affecting society today. And I think the kids responded well to the fact, 'cause they could identify these issues in their lives, environmental issues and the very likely possibility of things going extinct and yeah.

Interestingly, students often positively referred to this approach and looked forwards to facing difficult activities, particularly within the Circus project: *"Most thing I enjoyed about circus is ... pushing far beyond my comfort zone"*.

Int: What would you look forward to most to do it again?
Student1: Learning new tricks
Student2: Harder tricks.

Further connecting to the concept of challenge, the artists also approached the projects with a professional mindset of what they wanted to achieve and with professional expectations of the students. As a Dance artist who was involved in Performing Arts Club stated:

I definitely think they were challenged throughout the entire process. Why? Because we were asking them to learn new skills across multiple disciplines. We were also not dumbing down any of our ideas or processes because they were school students, or because English is their second or third language.

The artists also supported students to reach their potential and encouraged them to try their best: *"They're [the artists] telling us to improve again, and just saying, 'We know your potential and we can improve it'. And set that potential on fire to show everyone"*.

The introduction of new skills was also an approach within this case study. This is significant in this context because skills development that aren't possible within classroom environments, could be offered through the extra-curricular arts projects. One artist noted:

What I did really like about working in Performing Arts Club was, we spent a lot of time with the students on skills development, so a lot of stuff I would have liked to do in the performing arts classroom, the Drama classroom [as part of the artist's engagement with case study 2 – artists in arts classrooms], we actually got to do in Performing Arts Club.

This approach is also noteworthy because in addition to ongoing skills development, students often referred to learning *new* skills and techniques. This was particularly significant within the Circus project, where clearly defined skills and *'tricks'* were learnt.

Another characteristic was that students could join the projects at any time and didn't need to have prior experience with the artforms. This meant that the pedagogical approach had to be flexible to accommodate students of all skill levels. As a Dance artist stated: *"In the third project we also had students who hadn't worked with us across the other two projects join as well, so you had to really be aware of the different skill levels in the room"*.

Additional characteristics specific to the Focused Arts Projects context included: projects were goal orientated and time specific; participation was free with no financial cost to the students; there was no assessment; and at times students received individual support within the extra-curricular format – especially when multiple artists were involved. Projects catered to different interests, were responsive to students' needs and skills levels and at times were able to introduce material that connected to the

students' various cultures. Fostering agency, discipline and focus were also characteristics of the pedagogy. Projects were inclusive, created opportunities for peer-led learning and some students also commented that it was ok to make mistakes. Reflecting on what the artists contributed, some students felt that the artists were committed, brought energy to the room and adopted a 'hands on' approach. Other students also noted that storytelling techniques were used and traditional source materials were adapted into contemporary versions, as was the case with the Romeo and Juliet performance through the Performing Arts Club.

4.1.7 Impact on learners and learning.

Analysis of the Focused Arts Projects data indicates that the outcomes of this case study encompass all six connections: connection to self, connection to each other, connection to the school community – belonging, connection to possible selves, connection to learning, and connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations. While in the other case study reports, where student quotes have been used, the year level of the student, and where appropriate, the subject area have been identified, in the Focused Arts Projects case study, due to the mixed year groups, identifying year levels was not a focus. As a result, in this case study, student quotes are framed with information about the project/s to which a student refers, but information about year level is not typically included.

4.1.7.1 Connection to self.

Connection to self, had the highest number of individual outcomes across the case study, with confidence, pleasure and the development of self-concept being the major benefits to students. Students spoke at length about the impact that participation in the Focused Arts Projects had on them as individuals, with a wide range of outcomes included in this. One Circus student suggested that he had learnt to *"just go wild, go free"*, while another in the Performing Arts Club, when asked what he would say to others who weren't part of the project, stated that you can find *"a new place within yourself where you can be happy"*. Students, teachers and artists spoke about the inspiration that the students found in the work and one of the students stated that being part of the Circus project made him feel *"more hopeful"*.

Confidence was one of the major outcomes for students in this case study. Many students realised that they could not only perform, but could perform in front of an audience with confidence in their abilities. Students also spoke about overcoming their fear of failure, taking risks and finding confidence in their own skills and abilities. This confidence allowed students to push themselves further and achieve things that they hadn't thought were possible. Further, it was noted that the active and encouraging environment in the Focused Arts Projects helped in gaining confidence to speak in front of the group or audience: *"We do more actions instead of sitting on a table, instead of sitting in class and doing some writing. We should go out and do activities. That's what helps us build our confidence"*.

Students, particularly within the Circus project, learnt to take risks and have confidence to take part in challenging activities that took them out of their comfort zone: *"Well, I was scared at first, learning it, I had to do a couple of drills, like rolls and stuff to learn it, and then I finally became more confident and went for it"*.

For some students, increased confidence improved their overall experience of the project:

Int:	You like it now?
Student:	Yeah.
Int:	Why?
Student:	Because I'm not scared. I'm confident.

Other students felt that the confidence gained in the Focused Arts Projects helped them achieve better results within these programs, and this also extended to other areas of their lives, such as achievement in assessment and overall self-efficacy:

It makes me more confident when performing in front of people, and I know I can learn lines now especially big chunks of wording that I have to say by myself at one point, and I just feel more confident in drama now. I feel like I can present more and get better grades and do good at what I'm doing.

The empowering effects of students' increased self-confidence and the connection to self-efficacy are supported by the following teacher's comment:

And [some students who left Circus] have stayed in Drama ... it gave them confidence in their physicality so that they could go on and do drama. And these were pretty at-risk kids, two of them, and now three or four of them are in my Drama class and they say that's why they did it. So, it meant that it gave them a sense of empowerment, I think it was good for their self-efficacy, they felt confident, and that's why they've continued doing arts.

Another key outcome within connection to self was that of pleasure. Students enjoyed doing the Focused Arts Projects and expressed a strong sense of 'feeling good'. Most of all, students had fun and took pleasure in performing, learning and sharing the experience with others. Students felt that the artists were funny and created a sense of fun within the projects, which in turn made students enjoy the experience. Another member of the school leadership team also commented on how much the students enjoyed the projects: "They keep coming back, they tell me they're enjoying it.... It's something special, something they enjoy doing".

Students found pleasure in doing an activity that they enjoyed: "It was fun for me, because I really like singing". Performing on stage and getting a good reaction from the audience also created feelings of pleasure, such as those described by this circus student:

Int: What else about the show? Do you remember the show?
Student: Oh yeah, my fans. My fans were crazy, all screaming.
Int: How did that make you feel then?
Student: I felt like a boss.

Students also commented on the wider impact of the sense of fun: "It was a very new but fun and ... I reckon it'll stay with me for a long time". Furthermore, feelings of pride also emerged as an outcome in this area:

It was really good because like everyone was there watching and we were just like new to it and then performing and then at the end, everyone just stands up and just claps for us. The feeling was just great.

Shifts in self-concept were also evident within this case study. For example, these two students involved with the Music projects, developed a strong sense of self-belief: "I don't really know what's changed. Because now I believe in myself that I can do it and I will show it, so it's because of that" and "All I can say is to just always believe in yourself and don't let anyone bring you down by the negative words".

Students also expressed a sense of identity and self-efficacy. Several students described themselves as 'creative' while one student stated that he was "wise thinking". One of the circus students noted that the Circus project "made us feel like ourselves" and that it made him feel like he was "great for something". As a result, a member of the school leadership team noted that the Circus project re-

positioned the status of those students, thus shifting their sense of self-concept: *"So that's about self-esteem, isn't it? Kids that are always the wrong side of school, being showcased"*.

Several participants found that they achieved things that they previously thought they couldn't do and discovered new talents or aspects to their personalities:

When I first came to this school, I was quite a shy person. And then [art teacher] threw me into Drama and I opened up. Uh, that I had skills that I never thought I had. I found that I was able to act when I really didn't think I'd be able to.

Other students developed their thinking around elements such as resilience and persistence and applied this within their own self-concept: *"That anything's possible if I actually try", "That it may seem hard at first, but if you actually try, it's possible to achieve it" and "What I learnt, the body achieves what the mind believes"*.

Furthermore, the extra-curricular nature of the projects and the fact that access to participation was school wide, meant that older students identified the projects as opening up leadership opportunities. As one older student in the Performing Arts Club stated:

I really stepped up leadership wise, because [the artist] trusted me to teach some of the smaller kids their lines and how to project. So just that responsibility was a real benefit. I definitely believed in myself a lot more after that performance ... that really gave me a lot of confidence in the other aspects of my life.

Additionally, several students reported feelings of success and achievement through their participation in the various projects. Due to the absence of assessment, the concept of achievement emerged not in the area of academic gain, but a sense of achievement through doing something difficult, or overcoming personal challenges. Performing, especially for the first time, was something that students often found very difficult, and several students discussed the sense of achievement that came from having done this:

Student: So, then the Music started and I started to get a feel for the Music, and then after we started playing for like about two minutes, I started to get used to it and then....
After that, I was relieved....
Life goal achieved....
One of my life goals was to either perform or overcome my stage fright.
Int: So, you did both.
Student: Yeah.

Students also commented on the positive feelings that this sense of achievement gave them:

Int: Did lots of people come and watch you?
Student1: They told us we were really good and they were proud of us.
Int: So how did that make you feel about yourself?
Student2: Like really happy. I'd do it again.

The Dance teacher in the following quote felt that achievement had occurred through participation in projects, with students overcoming some significant challenges: *"With the Star-Crossed Smash [performance], I think there were definitely some students who really struggled with English and communicating, but, overcame huge boundaries and barriers in participating"*.

In connection overcoming personal challenges, students also commented on having courage. The following statement from one of the Performing Arts Club artists illustrates that this was a positive outcome for some students: *"The kids say things like, 'I love working with you. You make me feel brave'."*

Motivation also emerged as a benefit for some individuals. Students noted that the feelings of pleasure and achievement they gained in the projects gave them further motivation to succeed: *"If we did get better at it, and more motivated then we'll want to do it. And the artists bring that motivation and make us more interested in it. It makes you want to achieve more"*.

Overall, students didn't discuss a significant shift in attitude or behaviour in relation to the Focused Arts Projects. However, in relation to the Circus group where some of the students had previously been identified as disengaged at school, a change in attitude was identified by a member of the school leadership team:

I think those kids were fringe dwellers. [Student] has been in quite a bit of trouble at school. She's an Indigenous kid. Been in quite a bit of low-level trouble. Not really that interested in school, so we're still working on that with [her] —got regular parent meetings with her grandparents. But in terms of her level of behaviour, she hasn't come into my radar at all for probably the last six months or so....

[Student] is one that teachers would flag to me as being someone who lists as disruptive in class—that hasn't happened. So, all of those kids have been chosen for a reason, and a lot of it as I said has been around engagement. So, the fact that none of them have been flagged — they're not kids that I've been working with — says to me that either they're maturing, which kids often do when they go into year 10 ... or they're connecting with school and their peers.

One of the circus artists also discussed a shift in attitude for one particular student:

She's kind of gone from being a bit reluctant to do anything, and then they had a performance and she did really awesome. Her mum came along and watched that and it was a pretty big achievement for her to do that one trick.... There was a massive difference in her.

Students also found the value of persistence and self-directed learning. Several students stated that they practised skills and techniques at home and that they found effective ways to overcome challenges: *"Well, it's been a while I've been wanting to do that flip for a while, and I had to push myself through the obstacles to officially complete it". "Practice ... and probably a week or two — we all went to each other's houses, and we were working together about it".*

Another aspect of this was that students developed their sense of personal responsibility and improved areas such as time-management: *"Like learning your lines, you have to be responsible at home, you have to manage time, you have time to do your school work and reading lines, learning lines and stuff"*.

Students also expressed that they felt ownership over the work and that this was a positive outcome for them, as the following statement from a Performing Arts Club student illustrates:

We fully had pieces that we had to give our input in, when it actually came to writing and things, and we'd have our hands in actual direction, not just in activities.... Yeah that was it, and our own stories, everyone in the Drama Club at that point — their stories and their experiences, so yeah, it was more an ownership thing.

4.1.7.2 Connection to each other.

Developing connections to each other was a major outcome within the Focused Arts Projects case study. Students felt that working together in collaborative and interactive ways benefitted them as they were able to work as part of teams that trusted each other and that supported the individual members of the group. These findings are particularly important as students have often stated that working together was the best part of an experience. This also connects to findings detailed elsewhere in this case study report, such as belonging and interpersonal skills development.

Students felt that meeting new people and developing increased social capital were beneficial elements of the Focused Arts Projects. These outcomes were discussed by students across all the various art forms involved in the Focused Arts Projects and formed a significant part of their experience: *"It was good building relationships with my fellow peers that were in my group with me. We became closer, like closer friends"*.

One student, who was involved in the music projects, explained that a reason for the development of strong friendships within the group, was that students had a shared experience with each other: *"Certainly, more friends in music, because with music, you meet people that enjoy music as much as you do, and you have something in common, and you have something to talk about"*. Another student stated that he felt proud of his peers in the Music program: *"I feel proud of the other students, of what they've learnt"*.

Interestingly, the connections between year groups often extended beyond the boundaries of the projects. This is demonstrated by the following statement from an arts teacher about the students who were involved in the music projects:

Connection, connectedness definitely. Like there's a real community now of the musical kids, and they're reminiscing, and they'll see each other in the playground and there's connections between Year Sevens and Year Twelves, which is really cool. Which maybe wouldn't have happened.

Students also felt that they connected with each other by working together through the collaborative and interactive qualities of the various art forms. This was particularly evident within the circus group, who felt that learning to work together and being part of a team were significant elements of their experience. Several students involved in this group stated that *"the best part"* was working together and one student noted that he enjoyed *"cooperating with friends"*. The following statement from one of the circus artists illustrates the need for, and the process of, connecting to each other in this project:

You don't have a choice except to work as a team. And you can see elements of where they didn't used to, there's definitely moments of where, Okay, they're not working as a team at all, but between now and then, definitely that has come majorly. You can set them a task now and they'll get it done ... Confidence, working as a team and just feeling part of a group is one really important thing. Not like a gang, but they're a special group.

Students involved in the music projects also commented on the collaborative aspect of the work, particularly in relation to the support and the artistry that came from working together: *"Like when I get to the front of the school band and that everyone brings different ideas. And when we mix it, we mix the ideas together, it becomes very good"*. Another student involved in the music projects stated that:

Student: If you forgot a line, you could wait and then pick up the line again, and come back into the song, so you can't really make a mistake.

Int: So, it felt, am I right to say it felt that you were able to rely on other people to sort of help?

Student: Yeah.

Trust also emerged as a key area of connection to each other. Once again, this was a particularly significant outcome for the circus project. The element of trust was important in this context because circus tricks involve physical risk and participants need to put their safety in the hands of others:

Well, when we were in pairs and we had to trust each other ... I was also scared about that too, and there was one where somebody would stand on the other person's shoulders, and you have to what is it, sit on their shoulders, and that was quite challenging, and had a good amount of trust.

Students involved in the circus project not only found that trust was important, but that learning to trust others was also a significant outcome: *"I actually learned that I could trust more people at the same time"*.

Students involved in other art forms within the Focused Arts Projects also found that trust formed an important element of their connection to each other, such as this student's statement about the School Band:

With a band, there's a lot of strength in it, because we all rely on each other, and I think we build on each other, we're just one person, in just different parts. I feel like if you made a lot of mistakes, they wouldn't trust you as much to be a good performer, I guess, and if you made a mistake on stage, it'd be embarrassing for the entire band. So, when they don't judge you, you rely on them, and you trust them as well when we make mistakes.

Due to the extra-curricular nature of the Focused Arts Projects students found that they formed connections with others that wouldn't normally occur. This is significant because within the Y Connect Project, this finding is unique to the Focused Arts Projects case study. This benefit is illustrated by the following statement from a student discussing the Performing Arts Club:

[It's] one of the few spaces where every grade comes together and works on something. It's definitely a benefit for me because I now know a bunch of students from all the grades. It really helps me interact with everyone else and make friends.

For some students with few prior friendships, being able to meet new people and develop connections outside of their year group enabled them to increase their social capital in ways which previously hadn't been possible. As the following statement about Performing Arts Club demonstrates, being able to meet new people led to a transformation of the following student's school experience:

Since I came to Yeronga in 2015, no 2016 actually, I've never known seven kids, no friends or anything ... but here I came to Drama and I met them, now we're friends, lunchtime we play together.

As noted above, these connections between year groups also presented leadership and role-model opportunities for students and created an environment of peer to peer learning:

You get to know different students and not just people in your grade ... they can be good role models and even if you're in the lower grade you can learn from them and they can learn from you.

The connection to each other also came in the form of students performing to their peers. This was particularly significant for the circus students, as a member of the school leadership team illustrates:

For once these kids are shining, when traditionally these kids wouldn't shine. They're not the kids that walk across the stage twice a year for academic achievement in a subject. This gives them a chance to shine in front of their peers.

Another important element of the connection to each other is demonstrated by the following statement from an artist who was involved in *Inner Outer Space* which concluded with a drumming performance. She notes that working together through the Arts broke down cultural and social boundaries between the students and focused instead on everyone being together enjoying themselves:

Yeah. And just seeing them at the end with the drumming. They were all up dancing, the white kids, the Asian kids, the African kids, the 75 nations were all up there dancing with their arms around each other having a great time. I think, if we could share that video to the world, we'd go, "Okay, this is how it works." There was no bullshit between them.

4.1.7.3 Connection to the school community.

Enhanced connection to the school community was another major finding within this case study. This is interesting within the context of the Focused Arts Projects as these activities took place on school grounds (aside from any excursions) but, fell outside of the everyday school routine and timetabling. An example of this is Performing Arts Club which took place after school. Engaging with the school through activities that were external to the 'normal' classes and break times, enabled students to interact and connect with the school in a different way. This impacted students through a variety of different outcomes, such as their attitudes towards the school, sense of belonging and their relationships to teachers and staff. The significance of this shift in connection to the school community is illustrated by a school leader who stated:

Connectedness. I think that's also evident through the engagement lens. You can see that students are feeling more, because they're engaged and happy at school and doing things, that's transformative and it goes into other areas and it helps them feel connected.... I think the connections are off the wall high. It really, we saw young people saying things like "ah, this is why I come to school, this is amazing, this is my favourite part of the day". So, I think that that's really important.

Shifting attitudes towards school was a further major finding in relation to this connection. Students looked forward to the activities they were doing and therefore school also became something to look forward to:

<i>Int:</i>	<i>How did being part of the circus workshops make you feel about coming to school in general?</i>
<i>Student1:</i>	<i>Something that you're looking forward to.</i>
<i>Student2:</i>	<i>Especially on Wednesday.</i>
<i>Int:</i>	<i>So, you're looking forward to coming to school?</i>
<i>Student2:</i>	<i>Only on Wednesdays.</i>
<i>Int:</i>	<i>So, before the workshops, what was school like to you?</i>
<i>Student3:</i>	<i>It was like really repetitive, the same thing every day, nothing different.</i>

Students identified that school had become enjoyable and they spoke positively about coming to school: *"I felt good about coming to school, because if it wasn't for the um, Music program, then I wouldn't enjoy school that much".*

One student, who had attended the school for two years, stated that the circus project had been the “best thing so far”. Other students also found that the Focused Arts Projects provided an incentive to attend school and helped them to manage negative experiences of stress:

Gives you an incentive to want to go, because every time you do go, like, aw nah, I have to go to Drama Club and then that's good because it's almost like stress relief, like maybe you've had a long day, and then you go to Drama Club and you can just let that all out, and then you're much okay after that. So, it's a good stress reliever.

For some students, the increased sense of connection to the school community and change in attitudes towards school had a profound effect on their attendance and motivation to remain in education. This was noted by a school leader when she stated:

So, the intensity of that experience - i.e. circus - helped them to come along and do other things, and importantly, for that group, to stay at school. So that's not even an attendance thing, that's a, just staying at school. That's, that they've managed to get to grade eleven. So, they've found something that they actually enjoyed a bit ... And they've stayed at school and that's a big deal.

This statement was also supported by one of the circus artists who felt that the circus project had given students the motivation to be at school and that it provided students with a reason to come to school, other than “being forced to”. Some students also commented on this, with one Music student stating that: “The only reason I came to school on Friday was because we had the music program”.

Another major finding within the connection to the school community was that of belonging. Interviewed students felt that the Focused Arts Projects created a welcoming and inclusive environment for students across year levels. For the majority of students who regularly attended the sessions, a sense of community and belonging was created. This emerged in two ways: a sense of belonging within the project group and a sense of belonging within the wider school environment.

One of the Performing Arts Club artists discussed a particular moment involving a student who had felt very nervous before performing live. This artist noted that a feeling of belonging to the Performing Arts group was important for that student and that this had supported their ability to perform:

I think [the teacher] especially had to keep telling him that we want you there. You're very important to the group. And I think giving him that sense of accomplishment and that he belongs there, and he forms a key part of the whole performance. And he performed beautifully.

A member of the school leadership team also noted that for the marginalised students involved in the Circus project, a sense of belonging within a school group might otherwise be unobtainable:

Feeling the nerves, the tightness of the group – us against the rest of the world – and they're really important social skills and human skills that often-marginalised kids don't feel. And they don't often get the chance ... unless you're in a sports team, which means you're good at sport, or a debating team which means you're good at debating ... you don't often get a chance to be part of a team like that.

Furthermore, an interesting perspective emerged from a student involved in the Performing Arts Club, who felt a sense of belonging from doing what he was good at and being able to share his talent with audiences: “Performing a role on stage just defines where you belong doing something, like making people laugh and being on stage and then just seeing the audience's reaction from stuff you do”.

Extending this perspective beyond the individual programs, students who participated in the Focused Arts Projects commented on *“being part of something bigger than yourself”* and felt an increased sense of connection and belonging to the school: *“I haven’t been very connected myself, ‘cause I like to stand out from things. But I feel a lot more connected to the school in total”*. Furthermore, one teacher felt that the whole school community had come closer as a result of a performance from the Performing Arts Club: *“More community minded, yeah. And just simply being a part of something.... Yeah, I think it brings the school community closer if you like”*.

Several students discussed their connection to the school community through the opportunities that they had received as part of the Focused Arts Projects. For these students, the connection came from feeling that the school had given them an opportunity:

Like, I’ve always wanted to be an actor when I was a kid. It was just like an awesome opportunity to join drama group, because it was just a passion that I have and I’ve always loved it.

Student: *Something I’ve always wanted, that’s why I joined the music program, yeah ...*
Int: *It gave you the opportunity to do something you’ve always wanted to do?*
Student: *Yeah.*

Several students also discussed the performances they had done in front of the school:

When we did “On the Green”, I got to perform in front of lot of people, which was good for me because I’ve performed in front of a small group of people before – which was my group – but then I got to perform in front of a lot of people, and then I wanted to go on to assembly to do it, so it’s just led me to more, which was good.

Furthermore, a teacher commented on the sense of connection brought about by the performances from the perspective of the school audiences:

I mean, I really saw it last year when we did Inner Outer Space. Just the fact that it was a night time event, and we were walking around for an hour and a half, or whatever it was. Then just hearing people’s responses as you’re walking along, we got oohing and ahing, and then watching them at the finale with the drums and they just couldn’t stop raving about the whole evening.

A further connection to the school community was the development of teacher and student relationships through participation in the Focused Arts Projects. One student noted: *“To be honest, I never knew how much a teacher could care about a student, or students. They’ve helped us so much”*.

4.1.7.4 Connection to possible selves.

Through participation in the Focused Arts Projects, students began to see employment pathways into the Arts and the creative industries. Significantly students also suggested that they could see how the skills they were building in the Arts could assist them in taking other career pathways. For example, one student realised that effective communications skills are necessary in undertaking nursing as a career and recognised that Y Connect involvement was supporting the development of these skills. For others, the possibilities of what they might be able to do in the future widened. Staff commented on how the projects, excursions, activities and experiences appeared to have given the students a wider perspective on career opportunities or how the artistic experiences undertaken had provided insights about how art forms can be used in other contexts.

For some students, participating in the Focused Arts Projects had an effect on their possible selves and future pathways. For example, one Performing Arts Club student with a refugee background, auditioned for and was accepted into a prestigious university undergraduate acting degree, while one school leader suggested that as a result of participating in the various performances, approximately thirty students now aspire to continue with the creative arts as a future pathway:

That's a pretty important range of artists to work with. And I think, for those young people they've had a pretty intense experience and that a lot of them want to be artists. There's about thirty of them, I think. In the school. That did a bit of this one and then a bit of that one and now they're absolutely committed to staying in, working in artistic ways, I would go so far as to say.

Some students clearly stated this intention to pursue the creative arts as a professional career including one who noted: *"It's inside my blood, I really like to learn about it more and more and more. To get professional, and to sing for the people and to sometimes tell them about life"*.

Internships created through the Focused Arts Project case study, supported two students in placements at Queensland Theatre Company and Opera Queensland. This built upon the possible selves that these students developed within the Y Connect program and developed further connections and pathways into the creative arts industry, equipping the students with professional resources for their futures. Other students also noted how the Focused Arts Projects had helped their future pathways, such as this student who was involved in the Music programs:

This would've helped a lot, especially in the future, I'd be thinking back to this, and I'd be like, Oh I'm so glad I did this. It's helped me a lot, and yeah, I think it'd be ... I'd like it to be a big part of my future.

In some instances, the connection to possible selves was one of discovery, where students realised that it is possible to be an artist, or work in the creative industries and that this is therefore an option available to them:

I would love to do something like that [acting] in the future, I would like to be like them [the artists] in the future being creative, I love being creative. Like 'cause I've always been passionate about drama, but I've never really thought of it as like anything that I'd follow. But working with all these artists and seeing how fun it is and how much life they bring to every situation, it makes you feel more passionate and makes you feel like if I got the opportunity to follow something in that path, I definitely would...

Watching the artists also inspired students and expanded their awareness of what is possible and what they could personally achieve:

So, it's like, they got a good foot in the door of what circus can be, but they do one element of it, but then if you train THIS much, it can be this much as well. So, I know, especially [student], said to me, he felt very inspired, and totally amazed and no idea there is that much more and there is even more from our youth troupe.

For other students, participating in the projects opened them up to experiences and art forms where they have discovered their own passion and talent, thus creating possibilities and pathways for them to pursue:

Yeah, it's definitely kind of set my course for what I kind of wanna do outside school. It's not acting, for me, it's writing and directing – I want to get into that. So, doing Drama Club has

really set sort of ... has made that decision so much easier, of what I kind of wanna do creatively when I leave school.

Some students commented on choosing creative subjects at school or setting goals to help them realise their possible self in the future: “Yeah, I’m gonna learn to play some instruments too, so if I really want to, I can go on more with that”.

Artists and teachers also supported students by establishing pathway options that would help them achieve their goals:

He's been talking more recently about studying Music. I know he wants to do law and there might be a bit of pressure for him to do law from parents potentially.... But I've also planted the seed that he can do both law and Music through QUT. So hopefully that gives him an option, because he thought it wasn't possible.

4.1.7.5 Connection to learning.

Analysis of the data within this case study also revealed connections to learning, with the major outcome in this area being skill development.

Skill development: This is the key outcome in this case in relation to connection to learning, with the development of artistic, creative and performance skills being significant. For example, students discussed the development of performance skills such as voice, projection, focus and line learning as well as their overall approach to acting. As one of the Performing Arts Club artists stated:

Then at the end, after the showing in term three, the girls came and thanked me and [the other artist]. And one interesting thing they said, "you really taught us how to be an actor", but they never knew that you needed to think of all these things when you're acting. They just thought acting just means standing there and just acting, but it's about all these different things that you have to think about like your focus, your storytelling, how you hold your body in space. It gave them a greater sense of what it means to perform. And it's good that they reflected, that they actually learned about that. They thought about the learning.

A Dance artist involved in the Performing Arts Club also noted that students who had been working on a project for a while built up their skills to the point that they were able to contribute their own unique qualities to the work:

To ask them to come into a room and learn Shakespeare is quite a challenge, but they all took it on board, and towards the end they were really starting to bring their own personalities to the role as well...that's a mature step of somebody who's been working in a certain way for a while.

In the Circus project, students extensively referred to their skills development around learning new circus tricks:

<i>Int:</i>	<i>What were some things you learnt during the workshops?...</i>
<i>Student1:</i>	<i>Cartwheels, backflips, front flips...</i>
<i>Student2:</i>	<i>Learning new skills like doing tricks off the trampoline, the mini-tramp.</i>

One student involved in the Music projects, stated that it was exciting to learn new techniques and develop her skills, while another student commented that the music project he was involved in had given him access to skills that he wouldn’t otherwise be able to learn. A further dimension of this point was offered by one of the artist teachers, who stated that the Focused Arts Projects gave students a place to practise their skills, thus developing their artistry.

Another major finding within the area of skills development, was that students felt that they had developed their interpersonal and group skills through working on Focused Arts Projects. This primarily involved learning to work as a creative ensemble, developing creative work in groups and performing effectively together: *"My best experience at circus would have to be ... working as a team"*. This area of learning was a challenge for some students who were not used to working in group situations: *"Working as a group, because I like singing on my own, and I had to work with people around me. But I overcome that and was able to sing all together"*. Further areas of interpersonal skills development included learning to negotiate as a group and working together to find the best creative outcomes: *"Choosing a song together was really difficult, because we all wanted to do different things and we had to decide on one. And also, getting the harmonies right together was something we had to learn"*.

In terms of other areas of skill development, some students felt that participating in the Performing Arts Club had improved their English. This was primarily due to reading scripts and memorising lines and students found that they were also accessing new vocabulary through this process: *"Definitely built our vocabulary and gave us new words that they [the artists] speaking to us"*. Several comments also emerged around the Focused Arts Projects offering students new approaches to developing creative work and expanding their skills in these directions. One of the artist teachers stated that it had *"broadened their horizons"* and shown students that there are other alternatives and options to what they already know.

Engagement: Engagement was high amongst some students participating in the Focused Arts Projects. One student noted that it was *"heaps of fun"* to learn different new approaches and techniques. The strong sense of engagement within performances was illustrated by the following student who stated that:

And they just made it fun and exciting and made you really wanna go there because you didn't want to miss out on the game because they might play it next week and go, "Alright, we're playing this game", but then you'd be like, "What game"? "Oh, we played it last week", and you're like, "Dang it, I missed out on it!"

A benefit of the extra-curricular nature of the work was that students in projects were able to engage in different ways throughout the project, focusing on areas that were of interest to them. As the following artist stated: *"There was one student who wanted to engage in the writing process. He wrote a short piece that we included in the play"*. A dance artist involved in the Performing Arts Club also noted the case of a student who didn't want to be involved in a music project because he didn't like the style of music. The dance artist suggested that he wrote a piece that appealed to him and she stated that: *"In the end, he ended up rapping and doing a solo in the show"*. The dance artist stated that:

There's so many stories like that, where I think it's just empowered a whole lot of them in different ways, because we were able to not just Dance, not just write music, not just sing a song, or get up and write a script, they could pick their way of working, or something that they were interested in.

Positive engagement outcomes also occurred for students who were known to be disengaged in other areas of their school life:

He was one of those kids that was quite known for being disruptive, or was very disengaged from the classroom environment.... then the next time I came into the school, he came running out and found me, and was like, "I need to show you this song that I've written".... It was so

awesome and he was so proud of himself, and I think a lot of people were quite shocked that he had invested himself into what we were doing.

Engagement was a particularly strong outcome within the Circus project, where interestingly, some of the students had been selected by the school because of previous disengagement. Students found themselves with a willing commitment to the physical and time-based demands of the project and a self-driven interest in the work. One student referred to himself as being “*keen to learn*” while another revealed that he practised circus tricks at home in his own time. Engagement grew over time for some students, with one of the artists noting a participant who did not fully engage to begin with, “*but now she’s here every session*”. The considerable engagement of this group is illustrated by the following statement from one of the circus artists:

We’ve had some trips where we’ve had to go from here to go over to our circus studio, so they had to be here earlier, before school even started, so we’ve definitely had that commitment from the kids throughout. And in terms of coming up to the performance, we asked them to come in on their school holidays, after they finished school, we still asked them to come on school holidays and do their last rehearsal with us, and they all managed to be here on time, and I think that’s a really big commitment coming to school on school holidays.

Understanding: As the Focused Arts Projects were extra-curricular, students didn’t comment on any impact to their assessment results. However, some students did feel that the Focused Arts Projects had supported learning through developing their understanding of the work: “*I think he really helps us to understand every bit*”.

This is also reflected by the following comment from an artist teacher: “*But I think it gave him more perspective on things, gave him more Music insights of how Music can be used in other contexts*”.

Following the contemporary performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, several students commented that the play had made the text and language accessible and that they were now able to better understand and approach Shakespeare’s work:

Student: That was the first time I did a Shakespeare play, but other than that I didn't know too much about him. I know that he had very wacky language and it was hard to pronounce, but the play made it very simple to pronounce, and that definitely helped me with Shakespeare.

Int: So, do you think if you have to study Shakespeare in higher grade you will be less-

Student: Yeah, definitely.

4.1.7.6 Connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations.

Students felt that the artists had a lot of experience and expertise in the various art forms. They commented that they were excited to learn from the artists and were keen to get as much out of having them at the school as they could. The major outcome in this area of connection to the Arts and artists was the students’ appreciation of the professionalism that artists brought to the projects, and especially the performances. Several students and arts teachers commented that artists improved the quality of the performances. Students also felt that artists’ professional experience in the industry meant that they were equipped with a high level of knowledge and an ability to create a high standard of work:

I felt they [the artists] had a lot more experience at making plays, as opposed to our Drama teachers. They have years of experience backing them up and they’ve done this with people

like us before, so they knew exactly what they were talking about. Where Drama teachers have done school plays, not out, big productions.

Students found that the inclusion of professional performance elements such as lighting and sound also contributed to the professionalism of the work:

Well, I've done many other plays in like ... spare time, but we've never had a full-on director or lighting, so it was very fun to have all the sound effects and the lighting in the plays. And the directors were ... it made it even better than it was with the general play.

Students also felt that the artists had high expectations of them, which made students rise to the challenge and develop their own professionalism: *"They demand more of us.... which makes perform us better"*. Importantly, students expressed great pleasure at being part of professional performances and suggested that their enjoyment was enhanced because of the professional aspects of the work: *"I felt so happy 'cause that's my first professional performance that I ever did ... I felt so amazing"*.

Another finding was that students benefitted from the exposure to artists in ways that extended beyond the professionalism and quality of the work that was developed:

I remember him [artist with refugee background] talking to us and that was, I think, the most impactful thing. Not on acting, not on anything to do with the stage really, but just impactful on myself and hopefully others. Like I really took something away from that. I can't really remember what it was, but I just feel better for talking about that, to that matter.

The exposure to arts performances and arts spaces through excursions was also important for those students who wouldn't normally have the opportunity to do this. As the following student stated:

Pretty important because most kids don't go out and see it on their own because maybe their parents aren't interested or don't have the money to. But if you get a ticket to go, it's a really good experience.

Through the Focused Arts Projects, strong partnerships were also developed between the school, students and a range of art organisations. An example of this is the circus group working in Circa's professional training space in Brisbane and being able to watch the circus artists perform in professional shows. The following statement by a school leader illustrates the importance of these connections and the impact that they potentially have on the young people:

We held a whole series of excursions that went to La Boite about this time last year. And the kids went in there, they workshopped in there, and they worked on the stage and they worked on the set. All, again, breaking down barriers that they belong in different places than what they might think that they do.

One of the circus artists also discussed the process of students learning to trust the artists. She noted that for some individuals this took time, but that these connections were formed:

Int: How long did it take to build that trust and relationship?
Artist: As a full group, it probably took us at least a term or two. There were definitely kids who straight up were willing to trust us and they jumped on board kind of straightaway – there were a few that didn't.

Several students also expressed gratitude towards the artists and spoke about not taking the opportunities for granted:

I would like to say, thank you for the help you've given to me, and the support, and the care you've shown me throughout the years, and helping me to learn the drums.

Don't take it for granted, because some schools in Brisbane don't get this kind of experience.

4.1.7.7 Connection to the Australian community.

A further impact, external to the six major connections, was that students felt connected to the Australian community. Students, especially those from at-risk and refugee backgrounds, also felt 'welcomed' through the connections made with the artists. One student offered this particularly important response:

To me the performances made me feel like becoming an Australian and becoming a part of the Yeronga community. [It] makes me feel like I can give back to the community in a way, through my performances.

4.1.7.8 Connection to family.

The performance outcomes that were part of several Focused Arts Projects, opened up opportunities for families to come and watch the students' work. Although there is no specific data about family members, several interviewees commented on the support that many families gave the students and the feelings of pride and excitement that they experienced. This is demonstrated by the following quote from an artist teacher:

His parents came every night I think he said, and yeah, they were so excited by the end. I know their family were here every night ... dressed up and just really excited. Even some of our ELD families who live far out ... Mum came all the way in.

4.1.8 Challenges.

There were several challenges identified within this case study, although all of these were found to be pertinent to only a small number of students, teachers or artists. One of the most significant challenges was that of student commitment to the projects. This included inconsistencies with student attendance and students having multiple priorities, including often conflicting family commitments. The realisation of arts projects can prove difficult when the students' attendances and or rehearsal behaviours are not consistent. With those projects that ran after-school, this scheduling posed difficulties for one student who found that he arrived home very late in the evening on that day.

Some student behaviour posed a challenge to teachers and artists and as a result one artist noted that students were not used to doing a "*creative development process*" which made some of the activities more challenging. The same artist also felt that at times, some students didn't want to engage in the serious side of the work and simply wanted to have fun.

Although the partnership between artists and teachers was largely successful, there were tensions at times. One artist teacher noted that communication from the artist/s was sometimes confusing. In other instances, teachers found that the artist/s were not aware of the complex needs of the students, or of working in a school context. A small number of teachers also noted that there was not enough time to plan with the artists, particularly at the start of projects, and that they needed to understand "*the big picture*" from the artists' perspectives.

Some of the artists found that having a short workshop duration was challenging and that this limited what they could offer the students. One circus artist also mentioned that they would have liked more workshops with the students so that they could develop more skills.

4.1.9 Conclusion

These findings suggest that the various Focused Arts Projects provided students with opportunities to enjoy the rigor of working with artists who shared expertise in specific art forms in which they were interested. Students also appreciated the expectations the artists had of them e.g. requiring them to develop and rehearse skills specific to the particular project and its requirement. New friendships were forged often with older students helping the younger students and taking on mentorship roles. Students were asked to collaborate with each other as part of an effective ensemble and for the most part such collaborations proved to be positive. Positive peer to peer, artist to teacher and student to artist relationships were built. Some of the students who were reluctant speakers when the work began, developed the confidence to voice their ideas and opinions. Throughout this work the students variously experienced success and achieved a positive motivating sense of their own abilities to use what they learnt through the projects to build pathways for their future. A sense of belonging, artistry and importantly trust developed. The school's decision to support the numerous extracurricular activities provided the opportunity for these young people to have a valuable and joyful experience while also providing important opportunities for teachers and artists to work together outside the classroom environment. The shared responsibility undertaken in the collaboration between artists and teachers in the extracurricular projects was significant, offering rich opportunities, not only to the students, but also to the artists and teachers who became reciprocal learners (Kind et al., 2007, p, 858).

4.2 Case Study Two - Artists in Arts Classrooms



4.2.1 Research question.

This case study was designed to address the following research question: How have partnerships between artists and arts teachers impacted on the Arts learning and engagement of the young people involved? Across the data set, growth across all six connections was strongly evident.

4.2.2 Participants.

Participating students: Arts classes (Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, Visual Arts) from Years 7-10 across 2016, 2017 and 2018. Classes participated as a result of teacher decision to engage in the study, and their interest in working with an artist.

Key teachers: John Aloizos, Karina Bray, Karen Caslin, Gordon Collis, Maxine Conroy, Susanne Devonshire, Sam Fraser, Sanaz Hamoonpou, Adrienne Jones, Amy Kallis, Alice Kulbat, Chloe McIntosh, Domini Roblin, Ermina Jansen Skripic, Cassandra Tsimboukis, and Ian Vogt.

Key artists: Clint Bolster, Zac Boulton, Campbell Brennan, Steve Britton, Thom Browning, Shaun Charles, Claire Christian, Dan Evans, Leah Gardiner, Linda Hassall, Marta Kawka, Phoebe Manning, Nerida Matthaiei, Mick Nieddu, Naomi O'Reilly, Elliott Orr, Camilla Serisier, Anna Yen, and Liesl Zink.

Partnering arts organisations: La Boite Theatre Company, QPAC and Opera Queensland.

Other participating arts organisations: Queensland College of the Arts, Griffith University; Grin and Tonic; Raw Dance Company; SAE/QANTM (Media Arts); and Shock Therapy Productions.

4.2.3 Scope.

- 289 hours duration.
- 4845 points of student contact across all five art forms.
- 259 events from Term 2, 2016 to end Term 2, 2018.
- 17 teachers and their classes across the span of the case.
- 18 artists.
- 6 excursions.

4.2.4 Data sources.

- Student interviews.
- Teacher interviews.
- Artist interviews.
- Pre- and Post-project student surveys.
- Photographs.
- Unit and lesson plans.

4.2.5 Arts focus areas.

- Dance: choreography and structuring of new Dance works.
- Drama: monologues, text interpretation, devising and work creation, forms – realism, shadow puppetry, theatre of the absurd, clowning, physical theatre.
- Media Arts: video creation, soundscapes, editing.
- Music: ensemble building, drumming, public performances, choral and bands, composing.
- Visual Arts: sculpture, installations, gallery exhibitions and displays.
- Multi-arts events and performances which were created during curriculum time.

4.2.6 Background.

This case study is one of the largest of the six connected cases within the overall study. For this case, artists were engaged to work in partnership with teachers in curriculum areas included within the Australian Curriculum: The Arts. This meant that: dancers/choreographers worked in Dance; actors and playwrights in Drama, and so on. In addition, within one series of lessons a dancer/choreographer worked in a Visual Arts classroom to develop students' understanding of the concept of space. The artists were selected in response to subject-specific needs identified by teachers.

Participation models included:

1. One-off artist workshops to share particular professional expertise;
2. Artists and teachers working in partnership as co-planners and co-teachers; and
3. Artists and teachers working together, within the curriculum, to create a multi-arts performance or to create a public art exhibition.

The study sought to value-add to regular arts classroom practices by enhancing the learning experience through the addition of current, professional expertise of particular artists. The Y Connect Project Manager acted as liaison within the teaching community and worked to engage artists that would value-add to the learner experience. In some instances, the artists provided expertise that the teachers felt was lacking in their own content-base and pedagogical repertoire. For example, the Media artists engaged were able to provide access to new processes and technologies, with one of

the media teachers describing the selection of one artist who had technological expertise the teacher had identified was lacking.

So [artist] is a bit of an expert on the different Adobe Software Suites. So, he came in and just helped students work on their projects and facilitated that. And then with his expertise he showed them and me some new little tips and tricks to use in their learning and their projects.

Teachers believed that opportunities, such as this, enabled them to update their skills and to connect to contemporary arts industry practices. On other occasions, specific artists were selected because the Project Manager identified particular interests or needs within the student population. As an example, playwright Future Fidel visited both Drama and English classes, with his time in the school proving to be highly impactful. A former asylum seeker, Fidel became a role model that students connected with on many levels and his presentations were spoken about frequently in student interviews. Later in the Project, students had the opportunity to visit La Boite theatre to attend a final dress rehearsal of his play *Prize Fighter* and to meet some of the actors who also had refugee backgrounds.

4.2.7 Rationale.

Artists in classrooms have been seen as stirring things up (Pringle, 2002), creating magic moments (Harding, 2005) and providing a wow factor (Bamford, 2006), with their involvement bringing benefits in classrooms for learners, teachers, artists and the broader community. Hall and Thompson (2007) have criticised projects where:

The aim is not that the curriculum should be transformed by the vigour, creativity and innovation of the partnerships but that a further item should be added to the curriculum shopping trolley, a treat and a pick-me-up for the teachers and the children. (p. 319)

With this caution in mind, the Artists in Arts Classrooms case study, sought to establish and maintain vigorous partnerships, characterised by ‘creativity and innovation’ and to reject the practice of artist-education interactions whereby the Arts were utilised purely for decoration or fun. Instead we sought to embed quality arts learning in subject-specific arts curriculum classrooms by curating artist-teaching partnerships that concentrated on enhancing the Arts learning of the students.

Hall, Jones and Thomson undertook extensive work in this field, predominantly in the ‘Creative School Change Project’ (Hall, Jones, & Thomson, 2009) following on from the Creative Partnerships project in primary schools in the UK. An educational evaluation of the Creative Partnerships project (Ofsted, 2006, summarised from its Executive Summary, p. 2) found that:

- Pupils benefited from working with creative practitioners, particularly in terms of their personal and social development;
- Some attributes of creative people were developed: ability to improvise, take risks and collaborate with others; however, these were not readily transferred to the development of original ideas and outcomes;
- Successful programs were well led and had clear aims;
- The program often produced evidence of changed attitudes, behaviours and more creative approaches for both teachers and pupils;
- Pupils were inspired by opportunities to work closely with professional, creative artists; and
- Involvement gave pupils high aspirations for the future, informed by understanding of relevant skills.

Gattenhof (2013) evaluated a three-year artist-in-residency project in 17 primary classrooms in Queensland. She suggests four major challenges for artist/teacher partnerships: dynamic

environments; teachers/school connectedness and program dissemination; adaptation to school demographics; and retention and stability of teacher artists and professional artists. In this paper she recognises that schools are complex and everchanging environments; that teachers need to be clear and connected to the program's goals; that it is necessary for artists to be responsive to the cultural and socioeconomic influences within the school community, and the value of having ongoing, stable partnerships with teachers and artists. Gattenhof concludes by suggesting that success factors include that a partnership model must be replicable, yet flexible to meet the needs of the school, and stresses the importance of building a legacy of the partnerships, for example through the provision of resources or templates for practice.

Hall et al. (2007) identified two overarching pedagogical orientations in artist/teaching partnerships in the UK: "performance pedagogies" and exploratory/expressive pedagogies. They observed that "performance pedagogies" fit most readily into "current [primary] school culture" (Hall et al., 2007, p. 615) and that these are "particularly suited to activities with a strong instructional discourse, for example teaching technical language or techniques" (p. 616). They link performance pedagogies to a strongly instrumental approach (cf. McCarthy et al., 2004) and tell us that performance pedagogies are:

- Future oriented;
- Segmented and sequential; and
- Paced to be cumulative.

They contrast this pedagogical orientation to a more humanistic and self-expressive orientation that is evident in a more exploratory, speculative and expressive mode of teaching where "the rhythms are likely to be more recursive and the units of time might need to be longer and more open-ended" (p. 616). Open-endedness and extended periods of time are difficult to accommodate in many school structures, so perhaps it is unsurprising that the skills-focus of performance pedagogies sit more comfortably within schools where activities are likely to be constrained by the school context, including issues such as student grouping, timing and timetabling, and a vocational orientation.

In their study, Hall et al. (2007) also noted that artists were strong and valuable role models for the students, presenting as interesting and creative adults who made a living from their own art-making. In terms of artist-teacher partnerships, they suggest that artists...

...need the support of teachers who know the children and have a sustained relationship with them. This relies on teachers and artists being willing to work together as partners, to respect one another's expertise and to give time in exploring theoretical standpoints and analysing pupils' work. (p. 617)

4.2.8 What did it look like in action? Pedagogical characteristics.

Within this case study artists were partnered with teachers for two reasons: one, so that both teachers and students were given opportunities to explore and enhance their creativity in the learning process; and two, to allow artists and teachers opportunities to collaborate and invigorate each other's pedagogies. Analysis of the data for this case indicates that, in the classroom practices where artists were involved, particular pedagogical characteristics were more evident.

During interviews, students and teachers identified a range of pedagogical characteristics that were apparent in the teaching-learning processes applied within this case. Dominant amongst these were: active, challenging, collaborative, embodied, encouraging, flexible, fun and scaffolded ('step by step').

Active and embodied: Students spoke of how they "*learned differently*" through active and embodied pedagogies, that these provided "*energy*", that they learned through "*doing*" and identified that this

way of learning helped embed learning more deeply. A Visual Art teacher noted that collaboration with a dance artist enabled him to use dance activities in the teaching of space: *"the dancing activities made it so obvious what we were trying to show them"*. In this instance the concept of space, in the Visual Arts, was explored in an active and embodied way, and the concept was easily grasped by the whole class. When the artists were in the room, there was more *"energy"* and *"it was more intense"*. A number of students also recognised that people learn in different ways.

Challenging: Teachers, artists and students spoke positively of the increased challenge of the work when teaching-artists were in the classroom. To a large degree this was because the artists brought with them a *"professional approach"* and this was highly valued by the students. Students told us, *"They teach us like ... like we're another professional"* and that this was important because, *"They're not treating you like you are a child; they're treating you like you're an individual"*.

A music artist explained his position, one that was shared by other artists who contributed to the program:

As is usually the case, I set the bar high, when I got into any teaching, drumming experience. ... I don't wanna ... "dumb it down"- [where] I have to reduce the expectations of what we might produce, what [we] might create.

In response to this artist's work, a teacher considered that the artist held *"the bar at a different level"* and *"they [the students] reached it. Yep. He was so motivating for the kids"*.

One teacher noted, *"They treat kids like adults in a way, and I think that that's what kids need at that age"*, while another suggested that a significant benefit of working with an artist was the capacity to enhance and extend the learning for students who were more advanced. These learners were ready for the challenge:

However, I think the main advantage was that the artist could extend the students that needed ... that were willing and ready to get extended, which was wonderful. The artist provided another person in the room to push and press the students that were ready for it.

Collaborative: Teachers noticed the increase in collaboration and cooperation in their classes. One noticed his students *"began to realise, well it wasn't just strength, it was actually teamwork: working harmoniously with others, trusting other people"* and that the teamwork produced work of greater complexity and higher quality.

One of the Music teachers was pleased with the development of ensemble skills that were evident when students had opportunities to work with a professional musician and prepare for a public performance: *"The kids actually talked about teamwork and how it wasn't about standing out. It was supporting each other and a lot of them mentioned that"*.

Even in the Visual Arts classroom, where work is usually characterised by individualism, the teacher observed that: *"I think all these kinds of tasks, especially when the artists come in, there's a bit more collaboration going on I think than we would usually do in a classroom setting"*.

Students, too, noticed positive outcomes from engaging with collaborative pedagogical approaches. In one focus group interview a group of boys spoke of how collaboration helped build connections across cultural groups:

Student 1: *When we work with ... in our Drama class, there's include lots of people from different culture. When we work with each other, first of all, we get their*

culture, we introduced with their culture, with their opinion. We learn how to work with team.

Student 2: It hard to communicate with them, aye?

Student 1: Yeah, it's supposedly will complicate because their thing was different. Our thing was different. We try to combine this opinion make some good work.

Other students considered that since being involved in the Artists in Arts Classrooms program, they *"felt more positive to work with other people. More comfortable"*. They told us that *"having the artist in the room made you talk to other people"*.

Encouraging: *"When an artist comes in it opens doors"*. So said students in one music, dance, and drama focus group interview. In both group and individual interviews many students spoke of how they found interactions with the artist to be positive and encouraging. Another was asked this question about a dance artist, *"What sticks in your mind about her?"* and the student responded, *"She's encouraging"*. Perhaps because of this, many teachers identified particular students who they saw in a new light, and who became interested and engaged in learning when the artist worked with the class. These students were often those considered disengaged or troublesome, but the encouragement of the artist *"opened doors"* for both students and teachers. The students were able to see the potential for success in the subject, and the teachers were able to see greater potential in the students. Another, this time a Dance teacher, pointed out that she was able to see a difference in some of her behaviourally challenging students as they demonstrated increased engagement in group work (contributing to the essential skill of working as an ensemble) when working with the artist. Following this, she was able to *"tap into"* the new knowledge of her students and value their ideas more.

A digital artist saw the value of individualised interactions: *"They weren't too keen to come forward with ideas or responses in front of the whole class, but talking one on one with them, we were pretty good at getting that out of them"*. Many students explained that having an additional skilled person in the room meant that they were given more individual attention, and this meant that the quality of their work improved. Students could see the value of individual input at crucial times. For example, one Year 9 Drama student pointed out the result of one-to-one encouragement on a particular student: *"During class there was a girl who wanted to cry because she didn't want to do a presentation, then [artist] talked to her, and then she went up and got an A"*.

Flexible and responsive to students: Students recognised that *"there are a lot of ways people like to work"* and that flexible approaches were more responsive to student needs. Artists, too, were conscious that flexibility was essential in their approaches. Here are some comments from artists who explained how they responded to the students:

Drama Artist: *So sometimes big group activities don't work at the start, but maybe they'll work at the end. Or you can sense their behaviours really well, so you're not going to throw them into a crazy, wild activity. I just do something a little bit more slowed down at first, so that they get their attention, their energy in sync.*

Clowning/circus artist: *I was very flexible about what I taught, and tried to see, read the situation and be helpful in the situation ... It has to be made to be flexible, but that's the thing that I really enjoy doing the most, actually being flexible and reading the situation.*

Music artist: *I guess the main thing, with that as soon as I could see the skill level, I was able to adjust my expectations and that way, adjust my response to whether how quickly they got learned and be able to give them great feedback.*

Visual Artist: *These girls they were talking about make-up. I could hear them talking about make-up. I couldn't engage them, and so I went home that night and I thought, look at that, those girls are going to do a print if it kills me. Then I thought, okay, well they're talking about make-up, I'll go and get my ... I'll try to just smash it up and at least it's [about] their faces. I brought them in and just had a bit of a chat to those girls first and did a mono print, it was just a two-stage mono print and they loved it. The next thing they were into it, so I felt I had achieved something, and I'm like yes. It's a lot of work, a lot of hard work, and I loved those students. Just, they actually taught me a little bit, their designs, they were different to what I was used to. Their mark-making, the colours that they used, that they picked. Yeah, it was a great exercise.*

Fun: As in the other case studies within this project, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of having fun, both in learning and in creating art. Many of the artists were alert to the importance of fun and how it contributes to engagement and learning. They told us:

Music Artist: *And when it comes to art, generally, especially something like African drumming, it's gotta be fun! It's gotta be fun. If it's not fun, then forget about it. So, it's gotta be fun.*

Visual Arts Artist: *There was, okay, in the ... nine and 10 class, there was more fun, more relaxed.*

Drama Artist: *And you just see their faces light up, because you give them permission to be someone other than who they are. And I think that is what the real transformative power is, with some of those kids, is that you give permission to be someone other than who they are, so they can forget their experiences, they can forget their personal trauma, hardship, lives ... and play.*

Clowning Artist: *... and the fun, the fun is important.*

Having fun, as part of the learning process, contributed to the creation of a positive classroom atmosphere and higher engagement from students.

Int: *So, what's different about learning with the artist than in regular class?*
Student: *It's a lot more fun.*

In interviews, students frequently reinforced this view, offering comments about the importance of having fun while they learn: *"Well, they showed us to have more fun while doing Drama. It was just a better atmosphere when they were in there."*; *"We learned that would could bring our ideas together to create something so amazing, and we had fun along the way"*.

Scaffolded: Lev Vygotsky (Daniels, 2001) introduced the concept of scaffolding as an important contribution to the learning process. By scaffolding, he means the support provided to assist students to achieve learning that is just outside what is possible for them when they are working alone. As learners progress the scaffolding is gradually removed so that they can achieve the desired outcome independently. In the Arts classrooms, scaffolding was provided by what one of the teachers called *"bridging activities"* as the students moved from one experience to the next. One (Drama) artist acknowledged the importance of *"linking each exercise to the next"* so that there was a logical and

developmental sequence to the learning. A Visual Arts teacher explained how the students gained confidence through the scaffolded process as the artist showed them step-by-step before they began to try out the technique. She took notice of how the artist managed the process and was able to continue to support the learners towards independence.

The kids have got confident enough from [artist] showing step by step, and doing it. And then we as teachers did a little bit with them, and then I've watched and learned. And they're more confident because it's a complex process, they're more confident.

Gaining confidence in the process contributes to the willingness to experiment, take risks and innovate, all of which are essential to arts learning. This characteristic operates in partnership with the challenging, flexible and responsive characteristics. The work at this school, required the professional artists to make decisions that would lead students towards accomplished, quality work but without making the standards expected of them impossible to reach.

4.2.9 Impact on learners and learning.

Overall, all teachers and most students and artists identified that the artist-teacher partnerships had produced positive impacts on learning. These impacts, as in all other case study reports, have been grouped according to the six connections outlined in the overall findings section of this report. Within this case study, all six connections emerged from the data: connection to the school; connection to possible selves; connection to learning; connection to the Arts; connection to self; and connection to each other.

4.2.9.1 Connection to the school community.

As stated, one of the aims of this study was to promote a sense of belonging within the school community. Many of the students interviewed for this case study, from across all of the art forms, were highly positive about the difference participation had made to their sense of belonging to the school community.

For example, a Drama student who had tended to struggle with engagement and behaviour, described the shifts that occurred for him due to a new relationship between himself, his arts teacher and an artist. Other data reveals that this particular artist saw a great deal of potential in this young man and together with the arts teacher, they invited him to take on a series of leadership roles within Drama lessons. These leadership opportunities appear to have made a difference to his sense of belonging:

Student: There is a difference.
Int: Well, how is it different ...?
Student: It feels like I belong here, miss, 'cause, the teachers already know me, that I can do this and stuff. And they know I'm going to this school and stuff....
Int: So, what do they do that make you feel like you belong?
Student: 'Cause when we go to Drama, I do the activities, I have to be the first person to stand at the front and teach the other students to warm up, then another student comes, and do his speech, and tell the other seven to warm up too.

This was confirmed by the second student who stated: “We can think we're part of a team”. Here we can see that the sense of belonging emerges from the teachers ‘knowing’ the students and giving them responsibilities within the class. These students also identified as being part of a team, with shared experiences and memories.

Another group of Year 9 students spoke of their connection to the school and that, as a result of working with artists they wanted to attend and be involved in more things. For example, one student

told us that school was more fun, that this had made him want to come to school more, and that he was “more involved in a lot of things”.

In the same interview another student spoke about involvement in events, particularly identifying evening events created to bring together some of the work completed within arts classrooms: “Yeah, cause it's like given everyone a chance to get to know each other when we have things like Y Connect night where everyone comes for entertainment and everything like that”.

A third student said:

I think it makes us stronger because we're working together. And when you work together as a group there won't be fighting or anything. Like at this school there's no fighting because we're a group. We work as a group.

Such comments were common in many interviews. While the school already promoted a positive sense of identity and pride in the school, it seems that events and activities offered as part of this case study contributed to affirming student and school connections.

4.2.9.2 Connection to learning.

Generally, comments from teachers indicated that increased student engagement led to fewer behaviour issues, and a better focus on learning. Many teachers spoke of the students achieving better academic results for tasks and projects that had included artist input. There was a transfer of skills into final products. One teacher noted:

They hadn't realised just how much learning they were doing. I think because of the journals their literacy was also improving, and certainly their artistry, their degree of professionalism when performing.

Academic achievement

Media teacher: *So, some of the students were able to do some things beyond what was intended in their projects. So, I guess that's academic achievement within that subject, as they were able to do more technical things and layering things that I didn't necessarily expect to teach them, because that's a little bit more advanced.*

Drama teacher: *definitely academic achievement [improved].*

These are just two of the many comments relating to how students' academic achievement improved within the Arts subjects they were studying. A Visual Arts teacher explained that this may have been “because we've learned that little bit more that we didn't know before”. Improved academic achievement in literacy more generally was noticed by many teachers, who speculated that it could be a result of the new language demands inherent in class. One stated that students were “learning to build their English skills just by listening and practicing”. One of the Dance teachers explained how the Arts practices and rehearsal led to improved results in presenting assessment in that subject: “So they had all of that experience first before they got into the presenting. Then the results, they were improved for that set of kids, for that cohort”.

In Visual Arts, having the artist talk “about the aesthetics and the different constructs and showing them different things” was important because the students could use this in their written essay task: “That's all what they have to write about for their essay as well”. A Drama teacher spoke glowingly of the results in the clowning assessment when, unusually, not one student failed the task. They noted: “I think that was probably the class with the most success because not a single person failed”. A Visual Arts teacher explained:

Then when we had [artist] out this year, we did see a big increase in kind of the academic achievement, I guess. It could be a bit of a cohort thing, but I think it's just the access to the materials and kind of maybe that more professional approach.

In Drama, and in Visual Arts, there was evidence that the practical knowledge and skills the students were developing in their arts practice transferred into their written work:

Drama teacher: *Because they had, we were doing something physical, I still had to keep their journal writing up. So, they still had to write about what they were learning, and how they were interpreting their learning. They had something more substantial to write about, as well. They still, even despite their performing grade, their written grade had also, responding grade, had also improved.*

Visual Arts teacher: *Yeah, I think the essays they wrote were more inspired or maybe less begrudging.*

One of the Visual Arts essay assessments showed a significant growth in understanding by one student, who had not engaged well previously, while a Drama teacher noted that overall the level of professionalism when performing had improved:

Visual Arts teacher: *I think [he took art because] it was just an elective that was on the line, and in his essay, he began his essay weirdly with a bunch of random quotes from artists, and about art, which is not really a conventional thing to do. But I loved it because he was thinking and inspired and interested, and one of the quotes was his own. Something along the lines of "Art is anything. Anything can be art that you draw meaning from becomes ... Anything that happens that you draw particular meaning from becomes art."*

Drama teacher: *They hadn't realised just how much learning they were doing. I think because of the journals their literacy was also improving, and certainly their artistry, their degree of professionalism when performing.*

As a flow on effect, these positive academic results appear to have contributed to more students choosing arts subjects for further study, with a teacher noting:

[Student] did really well after that, and she's gone onto choose year 10 art. She came and saw me at the subject selection evening, and said, "I'm really keen to do senior visual art." That's interesting, because I think up until that point, I hadn't seen that spark in her and maybe that realisation that she could do this.

One student explained:

When I first did Drama, I didn't really think much of it, I only did it to try to get rid of my fear of stage fright. But since I've done Drama with [artist], I've felt a lot more passionate about Drama and feel like I'm definitely going to do it for the rest of my schooling.

Throughout the timeframe of the project, there has been a growth in arts enrolments within the school, plus a growing number of students who are working towards continuing to study the Arts once they complete high school.

Engagement and attitude

Students and teachers both commented on the increase in enjoyment of learning and the positive attitudes that accrued. This impacted on attendance, behaviour and deeper engagement with subject content.

Teachers made comments such as: *“Yes, I think their attendance improved as well. As I said, quite a rowdy group. And a potentially disruptive group, their attendance was, I think, better because they thought it was just fun”*. One student explained that their attendance had improved because learning *“different stuff”* was enjoyable: *“Yeah, I really enjoyed coming to school than staying at home, because when you go to school, you learn some different stuff, yeah, and improve kind of”*.

Behaviour: Other teachers commented on specific students who had exhibited challenging behaviour and been disruptive and the changes in them:

Particularly the year eight coordinator was just blown away, because these were students that he had spent numerous hours, numerous lunch times, numerous detentions with, and here they were focused and performing as they should.

A Dance teacher spoke of how behaviour change impacted on her:

I was actually really proud of them on their performance night because their behaviour, which has been atrocious all year, not all of them but some of them, they were actually well behaved compared to other classes on the night, and it made, I guess, me see that it was worth that persistence and consistent kind of pulling them up on those things.

The shift towards positive behaviour often was more evident in students from troubled and difficult backgrounds. For example, one teacher shared:

[School leader] was talking about how [student] was a child soldier, and so he was having lots of problems, lots of problems. He did stuff and it was amazing, and that was really great, because he was a very heavy influence ... at first, he was really disruptive, ... but he jumped in there, and that was so great.

When asked what the greatest impact on their students was, a Dance teacher replied, *“Well, definitely engagement”*. This was backed up by one of the Drama teachers who suggested that because the students were more engaged, *“they are a lot more focused”* and this contributed to positive learning outcomes. Many teachers commented on the change in individual students, with the following comment being representative of the type of changes that became evident. As a result, many teachers saw some students in a new light.

He performed and he was very keen to be involved. I guess watching him over that period of time from non-engagement to being really keen to be engaged and building those relationships. Not only has he connected with other students, and built relationships, and now converses with [others] and participates in group work, he voluntary wants to perform.

And for another student:

As soon as we got those drums out, he was at every lesson, early. He was there practicing at lunch time. He was there, like, asking [the artist] questions. So, in particular, he was one of - a big, like a light bulb, moment for me.

Out of just one Media class, seven students applied to work on Creative Generation (an Education Queensland initiative), something that was unheard of for previous cohorts, according to a school leader.

Yeah, I think the connections and that building of interest in a subject and connected with the teacher and with the other people that come in was definitely there. We had a number of kids from our year nine class get so interested in the media stuff that was done with them that they applied for Creative Generation.

Cooperation: The positive impact on collaborative and cooperative skills, of having artists work in arts classrooms, was evident in many of the interviews. One Dance teacher explained the impact on her class particularly clearly:

You can see that they're much more successful at some of those very basic, group skills because they've got some language around that. They've developed language. They know how to direct the rest of the group to do something and count. They're using all of that Dance vocabulary and being able to just generate ideas. That's something that they always struggle with at the start.

This quote emphasises the importance of having the language to work in, and manage groups of peers. Many of the class projects resulted in a public performance or display, and collaboration while working towards shared goals was essential. Not only did students develop the desire and capacity to work with others, but they learned how to use language to explain, listen and negotiate as they collaborated.

Students too, recognised the learning in terms of cooperation. A Year 8 student explains: *"He [the artist] taught us that drama wasn't just about acting, it was team work, and to focus and to listen"*. Another, older student told us: *"I learned in Drama class how to respect each other, how to listen to them and how to get idea how to communicate with them"*. Students recognised their own progress in developing cooperative skills. The following is a typical comment, this time from a Year 10 student: *"We've learnt a lot [of] things like working in groups. Particularly, I wasn't good at working in groups, but then this year improving working in groups"*.

Cooperation skills seem to have built through the passage of time and gaining familiarity with the artists, and the Project. One student explained: *"Well this isn't just within the last month but through the whole Y Connect I felt more positive to work with other people. More comfortable"*. Others saw the value of working in groups as being a reciprocal benefit. They found that working with others, especially those who saw things differently, might be an advantage. Here are two students in conversation about the gains that are possible when working in such a situation:

Student 1: *Is easier, so you can see, because you would look at something a certain way, and then someone else comes and they can build on your idea, and they can show you a different way of how you can reach that goal that you're trying to achieve.*

Student 2: *Yeah, they can.*

Student 1: *And help you.*

Student 2: *They totally shift the direction you're going when you've got one thing you wanna do and you've got the way you want to do it, and maybe someone ... come in, and they just go "Hey, you can maybe do it this other way." And that can totally shift it, it might be easier, it might be harder.*

Skill development: Students identified that they had learned a range of skills, from basic “*eye contact and confidence ... speaking clearly*” to other transferrable skills. Being aware of the value of school-based knowledge as it transfers into work and life experiences outside school provides motivation for students to engage more deeply in learning. One student became aware that the organisation and discipline of keeping a Drama journal was useful, both inside and out of the school context. She explained:

Yes, this journal has been great. Not only has it helped me with my schoolwork but also my father gets me to keep ledgers and diaries for his work and where it used to be a laboursome task, now I can do it very efficiently.

Many performing arts students identified performance skills and stagecraft as being valuable, subject-specific skills: “*Student: We all learned how to [improve] movement. You and [artist] show us how to move and how to [modulate] higher notes for voice and just for our position, where we have to stand*”. Year 9 Drama students identified that the process of learning lines offered opportunities to develop expressive, modulatory skills, accents and confidence:

Student 1: You're learning all sorts of things when you learn lines too. New words, new ways of saying things.

Student 2: Accents.

Student 3: Verbal confidence. You know?

One artist described her process of improving volume and voice projection as part of a clear focus on skill-building in her pedagogy:

So rather than just saying it as a line, I would make them run on the spot for two minutes, as fast as they possibly could, and then yell out ... 'I am 16!' And they were absolutely astonished, the difference. You know, so really simple, simple skills development, or simple techniques to help them understand.

A Dance teacher explained how, initially even very simple skills, such as retaining a pose, were challenging for some students. In this instance, she was able to draw attention to those who were more accomplished. The peer-scaffolding, in this case, contributed to improvements for all students in the class:

I guess one example was they had to come on stage and be still in their pose on a particular count, and even that was incredibly difficult for many of the students, and there were a couple of students who kept doing that, repeatedly were able to do it, and their pose was well defined, it was very clear, it was well thought out, and I was able to point that out to other students, and then that helped others to be able to see what they then in turn needed to do.

The process of practicing and practicing until movement skills become tacit is an important part of the rehearsal process. One artist explained how one student was strongly motivated to succeed, and worked independently to refine his juggling skills: “*And this fellow ... he stayed at lunchtime or morning teatime for a good half hour, keeping on learning the skills of the plate juggling. He just stayed there, learning the whole, you know*”. The artist explained that she changed her approach in response to the students, recognising that they responded positively to a focus on skills: “*So, in the end, I ditched the so-called play part of my pedagogy and went straight for the technique*”.

In Media, the skills of the artist who was highly experienced in working with a range of media technologies, allowed the students to fine-tune their work and enhance their artistry:

I think he maybe helped them with their visuals, so I think like tweaking things or bringing things up or talking about things where they've changed maybe a colour scheme or design elements or composition or some functionality. I think with the artistry he would have helped.

Thinking: Many teachers were positive about the depth of thinking, including critical thinking and generating ideas, that they saw emerging from interactions with artists. Here are some typical comments from teachers of Drama, Media, Visual Arts and Dance:

But with this project ... when we had [artist 1] in and [artist 2] come in for a lot of the writing and the putting together. We could spend more time workshopping it. So, they were really thinking.

Nothing does it better than creating from critical thinking that comes through these activities with artists or arts experiences.

So it was that problem solving and higher order thinking and critical thinking [that was different].

Being able to just generate ideas. That's something that they always struggle with at the start. Seeing them now going "Okay, now we can actually generate these ideas. We can actually manipulate that idea and do it this way as well as this way".

Understanding: The following is an extended quote from a Dance teacher that illustrates the aim of moving students beyond a skills-based approach to one that builds more complex understanding. By co-teaching with an artist, she felt more confident with this process:

Most of our students haven't had a background in dance, and so they don't really have an understanding of how to construct dance and how a dance creates meaning. And most of what they see as things that might be considered popular dance or popular dance moves, like the floss, or something that they've seen on YouTube that they just try to replicate. Our goal was to make them into dance artists, helping them to get a vision that Dance can communicate a message, communicate meaning, and share about who they are. And for them to be able to have opinions and make a work of art that says something about them. And so, that involves them understanding the language of dance, and dance is actually quite dense in language. And all of those words are quite new. And even some of our basic action words are very new to some of our students. And so, we were trying to find the best way to help them to develop that language, use that language, but have fun and be engaged at the same time.

Understanding, in any art form, encompasses much more than skill development. The Arts, historically, have been means of communicating and expressing ideas and concepts relevant to groups, societies and cultures.

4.2.9.3 Connection to possible selves.

One of the ambitions of Y Connect was that it would, in a sense, normalise artistry within the school. This ambition sought to make participation in arts learning a normal and accepted part of daily life. It was hoped that such an approach would contribute to the possibility that students could see that making art was also a potential career choice, and that many artists were able to successfully earn a liveable income through their work. By offering the possibility of meeting and working with artists on a regular basis, a key goal of the Project was that careers in the Arts would become feasible pathways for some. In relation to this goal, the Project Manager said:

Firstly, for our students – because I know this cohort well – I really wanted them to have opportunities to meet artists, because they don't have a lot of that in their class—in their

normal day to day life. Many of them want to be artists, so I wanted them to have access and opportunities to work with artists as much as possible, so I think it helps provide pathways. And I think that they deserve it. They need the opportunity to say, 'I can be an artist'. We've got a very strong Voc Ed [vocational education] in our school and I don't want them to think they have to go down that pathway, I want them to think about the fact that they can go into creative industries or become artists themselves, and I think through meeting artists, that starts to make it seem like this is something that we all can do, and it's part of normal life, and I think that's very important.

This aspiration was echoed, passionately, by one of the artists in this case, who herself, was from an immigrant background. She said that she wanted the students to be able:

To dream big and not settle for, "I'll just work in a low-paying job because that's what society expects for migrants to do." To actually have the right to be, "I wanna be a writer, an artist, a director, to have a voice, to tell my stories." All that. That, I think actually is one of the big things. I don't know, I mean, I don't know what the kids think. Whether any of them get that big picture. In a way it doesn't matter, you know? Just the little trickle effect of opening their window for now of what's possible. It's a role, not just me, but the whole project. There's a lot more that's possible than to be, have a big life. Have a big life.

Opportunities to see that it was possible to work as an artist meant that some students were able to consider possible arts careers for themselves. As one teacher pointed out, students came to realise, *"well, this is what [artist] does for a job. She actually creates things. She actually dances and so I think they could see this is someone's profession"*. Another teacher stated that it was *"good for them [the students] to see, have opportunities to see their artists doing their thing"*.

Rather than arts subjects being only a part of schooling, it was eye-opening for some young people to realise that artists can support themselves. Students spoke of the artists being *role models* who contributed to students' aspirations. One said:

It just started like seeing these people around us, like who role models, about how people feel about them, it makes you wanna become like them. Just like, they're doing great things, I wanna be like them. Or they're impacting on other people's lives and it's just cool.

One student told us that he had identified a *"problem"* in his current life situation and that working with artists had allowed him to consider how he might go about *"fixing the problem"* so that he can do what he wants in the future: *"Fixing the problem, and then how I want to be in my future because I'm learning different things so I think if I grow up, I can do this one"*.

Quite a few students saw that learning in the Arts offered a strong foundation for career paths that were not necessarily arts focused. One assured us that arts learning was important:

Not only for people going into the performance arts, but it's good for people who just have to ... because there's other professions that are like a performance art. You know, speech, politicians, business men. That's good for them as well because it is all Drama really. Like Drama classes, but especially this, confidence boosters. That's what they are. They're confidence boosters that teach you to be more pronounced and confident and being able to get up in front of a room full of people sat down judging you to be able to be confident and be able to speak clearly and give good concise thoughts about you are feeling.

One Drama student spoke enthusiastically and at length about the difference studying in that art form had made to him.

- Student: Since Drama was the main thing that changed my life, I'm committed to stick with it all the way to the end and by that saying I want to get into the drama industry and just doing what I love what I'm doing the rest of my life.*
- Int: Okay. So, what sort of things in drama would you see yourself doing?*
- Student: Acting and getting into movies and theatre maybe. Just the ability to have a good time and learn new skills and getting the knowledge and pretty much more friends in the future, because I wasn't going to be good at making friends and pretty much that's all.*

Students realised the value of establishing connections with practicing artists and that this might help them in the future:

It also gives connections if you've been thinking about that for a job you could see what it would actually be like as a career 'cause of these people that actually have the career. And it can even when you're older and looking for work, if you already know people in the industry can make it a lot easier.

In an interview with two Visual Arts students, one of whom studied several art forms, the discussion extended to them considering a range of possibilities in their future – having an ‘open mind’ about the possibilities.

We also had some people from Y Connect come in for Drama and I had some come in for Music too. That was another kind of profession and way of life that we got shown. I can imagine that, in any subject, it has opened up our minds a bit. In any subject, you can imagine that there probably would be so many job opportunities and so many different things in that subject.

Importantly, the artist experience allowed the students to see a career in the Arts might be possible. One Dance teacher reported:

I think students understand, although it's taken a while, students then can understand, well, this is what [artist] does for a job. She actually creates things. She actually dances and so I think they could see this is someone's profession. This is not just a subject that's been learned ... and they're doing some dance and we're having a bit of fun. I think they [realise this] is something this person makes a living from. Yeah, I think for some of the year sevens that wasn't, they couldn't conceptualise that to start with. They had no framework model. Actually, people do dance for a living. They had no idea. I think from that point of view it's beneficial.

4.2.9.4 Connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations.

One of the challenges of including Arts in school curriculum is to retain a concept of arts and artistry rather than thinking of them simply as other subjects in the curriculum. Through learning alongside professional artists this project connected the students with the Arts in more profound ways. Many students had had little exposure or engagement in arts learning and Y Connect transformed their perceptions. One student explained: “I like it. I wasn't that interested in art, in being in the Arts, but now I am” and a Year 9 Dance student made this statement: “Like when we were doing before, we didn't think of it as an art, at least I didn't. It was more of things to do. But then afterwards it was a way to express ourselves”.

A number of students spoke positively about being able to express and communicate their own ideas through art-making, and teachers noted that the artists were able to assist the students to draw on their own experience to create new work. A Dance teacher commented that, “Students really love it when [artist] picks up one of their ideas and uses it”.

Other students had their perceptions of what constituted art enhanced by the experience. One of the Media teachers explained that the students were “*uninterested at first because they didn’t see it as an art*”, but rather as a technology. However, experiences with the artistry of the professional teaching-artist engaged the same students and contributed to creative and innovative media outcomes.

One of the Dance teachers pointed out that one of the values of working with the professional artist was that students saw the high quality of her work and recognised the effort and skill that is required. She told us:

They had a deeper appreciation of the art form, but I think they sort of realised how difficult contemporary is, and how then that they probably wouldn't be able to do, even though they were contemporary, they knew then that they ... Sometimes kids have unrealistic dreams where they want to go on and be a dancer, but if you hadn't had any dance training, you can't really be a dancer. So, I kind of think that was a bit more of a light bulb moment, that they needed to do a lot more to get, if they had ever wanted to get to where they wanted to go.

Artists encouraged critical and creative thinking in relation to aesthetic decision-making in arts creation by asking questions as part of the teaching process: “*Well, I wanted them to start thinking about why they were using that colour? Why were they joining these heads together? What did it mean? That things had symbolism*”. Processes such as this, an explanation of the steps or planning and justification of aesthetic choices by the artists in practice, assisted students in understanding each art form more deeply. Added to this was the modelling, and scaffolding, of skill development in each of the art forms. While the elements or concepts may not have been made explicit through direct instruction in every instance, students learnt by doing, observing, trialling and participating in arts learning experiences.

For some, opportunities to see their own work in a professional context made a difference. One of the art teachers spoke of the impact on the students of being able to exhibit their own work in the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, gallery. This public gallery regularly hosts exhibitions by established and emerging professional artists. The chance to display their work publicly was a significant turning point for many students in the class, and as a result they saw their work as belonging to an artistic norm. The teacher spoke of the significance of seeing their own work in a gallery:

I think that was really what did it, because I think when you put stuff ... as soon as something goes in the white cube and it's cut off from the context of where it's made, it gathers such an intimidation and authority, but to see their own work pass that boundary.

One significant outcome from the Y Connect experience is that, following visits to professional venues organised within Y Connect, students began to travel independently and with friends to public venues. One arts teacher shared this story:

Yeah, one of them was away on that day, so they missed seeing their art in the gallery, but the other two students that weekend, took the third friend back to GOMA [Gallery of Modern Art], so they went back to GOMA. ... The two other students took the student [the one who had missed out] back to GOMA and showed them around all the stuff we did. Gave their friend a tour of the gallery.

One girl, following a Y Connect theatre visit, returned to South Bank with her family. She was keen to share this place with them and to assure them that it was a safe place. In addition, one Visual Arts student was so motivated by her visit to the gallery that she took her father on a mystery tour which

ended up at the Queensland Art Gallery, so that he could share in the enjoyment she felt when on the school excursion.

4.2.9.5 Connection to each other.

As mentioned earlier, the participation of artists in arts classrooms or the involvement of the class in working towards a curriculum focused performance outcome supported by an artist, seems to have contributed significantly to students' capacities for cooperation and collaboration. Through these processes, students appeared to become more strongly connected to others in their classes as two teachers explain:

Drama teacher: *Definitely our classes become more connected, it was very disjointed before, so over the course of the semester the class has ... it feels more like a class that works together more now.*

Visual Arts teacher: *I do think it increased the sense of connection, because the project that we worked on.... both projects actually, there were aspects of group work in them. When we did the plaster casting, essentially, we made a class set of plaster casts, so I'm like, "I need someone to mix plaster." Two students would volunteer to mix plaster together. It just worked together, because there were just a bunch of jobs that needed to get done, and then the video art project they did in groups, and we had this massive checkbox of clips that they had to get and it didn't care who it was of, but your group needed to produce these clips.*

A drama artist made connection to each other a focus of his pedagogy: *"Part of it is about having fun and letting go of normal classroom rules and so being able to move to work together and connect to each other".*

Some students even spoke of using the skills they had developed as being a way of connecting and giving back to their community. One, in a small group interview, stated clearly, *"It helped us in our community"*.

4.2.9.6 Connection to self.

Students spoke of being able to *"be myself"*, of developing pride in themselves and their capabilities. They gained in confidence, particularly the confidence to try new things as the fear of failure became less of an issue. Pride in self was mentioned frequently in interviews. One student explained how the artist helped to build this sense of pride:

He tell me to be like himself, to trust yourself. To know yourself you can do this. When I first see [artist], I was thinking I can't do this, I'm not gonna do drama, I'm no good at this thing and he just said to me, "You can do it." "Just be by yourself and just try your best." And I just said okay I'm trying and now I became a great actor.

Another student reflected on her growth as part of the program:

Lots of connections, to be honest, because it makes me, it's something first of all I enjoy very much. Secondly, I can be myself because I'm, I'm gonna be honest, I'm not the A student in maths or science, and usually in those kind of classes I feel very closed off, because I don't understand as much as all those kids do, like, everyone's saying the correct answer and I don't know what's going on in that class. But in Drama, I know how it feels, like you know what to do, you know how to act. It just so much fun. But you still learn at the same time.

Yet another shared that the work had made them feel more confident about speaking up when working with others, and that confidence together with the capacity to share opinions contributed to a sense of personal pride.

Because you know when you speak to people, their opinion and your opinion is different. So, when you combine their opinion with your opinion and make it one, it makes you feel that you're giving an opinion and you have to be proud of yourself.

For some, becoming braver was a strong, positive personal outcome: *"Yeah ... um, 'cause I'm not a talkative guy, but now I know how to talk to people and communicate with others ... and then ... Drama makes me brave".*

The program of regular public performances contributed to self-confidence in many. The students reflected on their performances positively and loved viewing recordings of the events: *"Yeah, when I watched myself, I was like, wow. If I could that, I could perform anywhere I want".*

Many of the artists were conscious of connecting with the cultural backgrounds and personal histories of the students. They endeavoured to include students' stories and experiences whenever possible:

Music artist: Not my forte. But I wanted to bring in a multi-cultural aspect into our class because we have - out of the 16 kids, we have 14 of who are - and so I really wanted them to kind of experience some of those rhythms were actually from the cities that our kids were born in. So, for them to go, "Ah, this is my music - and play that".

Drama artist: You can experience and talk these things and the beauty of this school in particular is that a lot of the kids have had experiences similar to the stuff that we look at and by just stepping through it, identifying the stuff they can really have some profound epiphanies I suppose about their experiences. And how do they talk about those ... or use those stories to ... in their assessment, and also to better themselves.

In Media and Visual Arts, students created video installations based on their personal experiences and bodies; in Dance too, they developed choreography based on their own journeys. The works developed by students were created in a safe, supportive environment which allowed them to share vulnerabilities. This contributed to a process of building inner-strength for the students, as they were able to share their stories. As one clowning artist explained, in our current cultural context in Australia, where tensions relating to culture and religion may contribute to feelings of disenfranchisement, or even shame, it is important to have a safe, expressive space: *"To show people, because we are in a society that judges, that shames, I think to be in a very safe environment where you feel so free to show people different sides of you".*

4.2.10 Conclusion

When considered together, these six connections present a compelling case for the participation of artists in arts classrooms. While some arts teachers were at first unsure of the need to partner with artists, given their own high-level artistic skills, they soon came to realise that appropriately selected and matched artists could make a difference to their students in many ways. In the various sections above, the benefits to students have been outlined in detail, including opportunities to work with specialist artists, the introduction of specialised language, a deeper appreciation of the various arts disciplines and new ways of seeing their own abilities. Some students were also inspired by the artists, seeing that they had been able to make a living from their art-making.

In the opening section of this case study report, we noted that artists in classrooms have been seen as stirring things up (Pringle, 2002), creating magic moments (Harding, 2005) and providing a wow factor (Bamford, 2006). The findings outlined here would certainly seem to confirm these claims, with the 289 hours of activity associated with this case serving to enhance students' artistry, enjoyment and confidence.

The study is also notable in that the results indicate that artists working alongside teachers in arts curriculum classes enhanced each of the six areas of connection discussed in this research report. While it might seem evident that connections to learning in the Arts, and connections to the Arts and arts organisations would grow as a result of artist and teacher partnerships, evidence from this case also suggests that connections to self, others, the school community and possible selves were significantly impacted through participation in this case. As a result, it is possible to suggest that quality arts experiences, with effective partnerships between teachers and carefully selected artists, have the potential to positively impact on each of the six Y Connect connections.

4.3 Case Study Three - Artists and arts-based pedagogies in the English Classroom



4.3.1 Research question.

This case study was designed to address the following research question: What is the impact on the teaching and learning of English for students in the middle years of schooling (Years 7-10) when artists and arts-based approaches are employed? The figure above demonstrates that four of the six connections were enhanced through this case study: self, each other, learning and Arts, artists and arts organisations.

4.3.2 Participants.

Participating students: Selected EALD and non-EALD English classes from Years 7-10 across 2016, 2017 and 2018 depending on teacher interest in being involved.

Key teachers: Suzanne Devonshire, Sanaz Hamoonpou, Matt Jensen, Ellie Lunden, Chloe McIntosh, Tiffany O'Neill, Tiffany Ostwald, Alana Phelan, Fi Stefani, Liz Stewart, Taraka Sticha, and Julie Whiting.

Key artists: Zac Boulton, Candy Bowers, Shaun Charles, Claire Christian, Julie Dunn, Future Fidel, Leah Gardener, Adrienne Jones, and Liesel Zink.

Partnering arts organisations: La Boite Theatre Company.

Other participating arts organisations: QPAC.

4.3.3 Scope.

- 216 hours of duration.
- 4254 points of student contact within the “English” case.
- 213 events including classroom based workshops and design and planning sessions.
- between artists and teachers.
- 14 teachers across the span of the case.
- 7 key artists.
- Multiple excursions.
- 200 classroom-based workshops.
- 9 design, planning and PD sessions.
- Across the case an emphasis was placed on drama-based approaches, while music and dance were also used on occasions.

4.3.4 Data sources.

- Student interviews.
- Teacher interviews.
- 5 artist interviews.
- Teachers Survey 2018.
- Observations.
- Photographs and video recordings.
- Unit and lesson plans.
- Student writing samples.

4.3.5 Case study approach.

Across the 2.5-year duration of this case study, students in varying year levels and with widely diverse English skills, engaged in many different arts-based approaches, with these being used for a range of purposes. The participating students were enrolled in both mainstream English classes and EALD English, with the EALD classes being organised to cater for smaller groups of students and with more specialised teachers. The bulk of activities were offered to students in Years 7 - 9.

Arts disciplines employed within this case study included drama, dance and music, however the overwhelming majority of activities and artists were drama focused. This decision was based on the extensive literature that has been created over time (and is reported below) which identifies the positive benefits of using drama pedagogies in the English classroom.

It is also important to point out here that there were various delivery models included within this case study and these were as follows:

- Professional artists (drama, dance and music) planning with teachers and co-delivering lessons within specific units of work;
- Staff from within the school and beyond (including the Project Manager and one member of the university team) delivering English lessons to mainstream and EALD classes using process drama and other improvised drama forms;
- Visits to a range of theatre-based performances as part of the English curriculum; and
- Visits to La Boite Theatre by EALD classes to participate in workshops delivered by La Boite staff.

Across these delivery models, students: met playwrights and explored with them the creative processes of scriptwriting; worked with actors to explore character, write monologues and then polish

their skills in performing them; and in EALD classes, students quite new to English overcame their concerns about reading and performing by starting with very small script extracts, before moving on to extending upon them through improvisations. These improvisations were then joined together to create short performances shared with peers and members of the school administration.

At other times, students were given opportunities to:

- Participate in activities designed to develop their oral language confidence, vocabulary, and fluency;
- Deepen their engagement with literature including novels, plays and poetry, through activities where they directly experienced the characters and the situations explored within these pieces of literature;
- Overcome the ‘hurdle of the blank page’ by engaging in drama activities prior to writing;
- Explore vocabulary and language relating to Australian identity through dance;
- Get into the mood and language of poetry through music;
- Improve their spoken presentation skills and confidence through one on one sessions with an actor;
- Respond to music in the creation of written texts; and
- Meet actors, stage managers, technical team members and playwrights after professional rehearsals and performances.

4.3.6 Informing Literature.

Ryan (2014) articulates how contemporary notions of literacy involve a repertoire of skills, understandings and knowledges that are interconnected in various ways; she further explains that how individuals draw on this repertoire is extremely personal, with these responses shaping their literate identities across different contexts. The Arts, Ryan claims, can perhaps challenge and instigate a heightened awareness of such literate identities. Even though Ryan’s article points largely towards becoming literate *in* the Arts—rather than through an arts-integrated curriculum—there are some useful arguments raised in relation to the notions of self and society. For instance, she asserts that work in the Arts is created and informed by cerebral dialogues with self and others. Ryan thus suggests that educators can draw upon the Arts to encourage students to engage in self-scrutiny and to apply aesthetic skills and knowledge in ways that relate back to the self. She cites Kushner’s arguments that being reflective in perceiving and creating art work—and the related social structures within the discipline—can inspire students to challenge certain accepted ways of being, perhaps leading to social change.

Given the emphasis placed within this study on the use of drama-based approaches, the remaining section addresses literature focused on the use of drama within the English classroom and specifically its role and value in the development of writing and speaking.

4.3.6.1 Drama and Writing

This informing literature section has been adapted from Dunn, Harden and Marino, 2013.

The positive impact that drama can have on students’ writing has been the focus of a good deal of literature, especially within Australian publications (Ewing, 2009; Ewing 2010; Gibson, 2012), with both anecdotal and research-based evidence being offered to support claims of its positive effects. However, one of the most comprehensive lists linking drama and writing is offered by Winston (2004). He suggests that the positive effects of drama on writing include: improved motivation to write; providing children with substantial ideas and experiences that can be used in their writing; the ability to respond as individuals; increased output of writing in a shorter period of time; richer vocabulary and sentence structures; a stronger sense of audience; and improved empathy for the characters being written about (p. 26).

Meanwhile, Cremin et al. (2006) offer a summary of the features of drama that support these benefits including: the presence of tension; the degree of engagement; time for incubation which the extended imaginative experiences in the drama and writing allowed; and the strong sense of stance and purpose, gained in part through role adoption, which helps to provide audience and purpose for the writing (pp. 8-15).

Similar benefits and features have been noted by other authors, extending back to Carole Tarlington's work in 1985. She noted that drama provides a meaningful context in which writing can take place (p. 199), with these contexts offering a range of purposes and registers. These include formal and public registers, as well as reflective and personal ones that allow for the affective part of learning to be explored. Significantly, she also recognised the importance of what she called 'pressure' in providing the impetus, urgency and motivation for writing to occur, while noting as well that these tensions provide opportunities for strong engagement with the affective domain.

This link between emotion, tension and writing has been explored by Dunn and Stinson (2012) who argue that it is the intentional provocation of emotion which sets drama work apart from other approaches used in educational contexts. They draw on the work of Courtney (cited in Booth & Martin-Smith, 1988), who suggests that it is the link between imagination and emotion that is critical. He claims that "imagination, by relating emotion and knowledge, brings about an affective – cognitive synthesis; our imagination enables us to both know and feel about dramatic events and to unify these to a new species of knowledge" (p.71). In the context of activating writing, this affective-cognitive synthesis can be very powerful, generating a range of emotions. These emotions, when coupled with the rich visualisations conjured by the imagination during engagement within dramatic worlds, can be a powerful motivating force, leading to the creation of detailed and high-quality written texts. The value of drama as a planning activity in preparation for writing was investigated by Moore and Caldwell as long ago as 1993, with their conclusion being that drama gives the writer the chance to "test out, evaluate, revise and integrate ideas before writing begins" offering a "more complete form of rehearsal than discussion" (p. 10).

Neelands, Booth and Ziegler (1993) have also considered the relationship between drama and writing, and in particular the importance of role which takes children "inside their own stories" (p. 13). McNaughton (1997) suggests that this insider view helps writers develop the personal voice of their character and the ability to "identify with him/her on an affective as well as a cognitive level", demonstrating a greater use of dialogue, giving variety and interest to the written text and helping "to give the reader a sense of being witness to the story" (p. 76).

The idea that drama provides authentic situations for writing to occur, despite the imaginary nature of the contexts generated, was investigated by Schneider and Jackson (2000), who claim that writing in role gives students the ability to think in a different way and from a range of perspectives about both the form and the content of their writing. This is supported by the cross-study analysis of children's writing from five classrooms performed by Crumpler and Schneider (2002), who found that when students are "engaged in the reading, writing, thinking, responding process – their *whole being* is engaged" (p. 78).

4.3.6.2 Drama and oral language.

A more detailed discussion of the role of drama in supporting oral language is offered in the following case study, but in very general terms, oral language is at the heart of both Drama and English. O'Toole and Stinson (2013) have argued that, as putting ourselves in other people's shoes to imagine their human situations and contexts forms the basis of the art form of drama, this positions it very well as a vehicle for developing oral language. They identified four dimensions of oracy including: functional, dialogical, linguistic and paralinguistic, suggesting that drama serves to develop all four of these dimensions through the use of role and the establishing of dramatic contexts. In terms of role, they

argue that role allows for modelling and experimentation with language, while the dramatic contexts created within drama, together with their inherent tensions, motivate students to engage purposefully with language and language registers.

4.3.7 What did it look like in action? Pedagogical characteristics.

Across the English case study data, students and teachers continually referred to the Y Connect pedagogies as offering opportunities to energise the learning environment, with a range of different terms being used to capture this shift. For example, one teacher used the word “*refreshing*” to describe the Y Connect lessons, suggesting that the drama-based approaches used with her class “*change the energy*”, while another teacher suggested that it was the “*dynamism*” of the artists which caused these shifts. Students agreed as well, with one group of Year 8 EALD students suggesting that drama-based approaches were a way to “*hype up learning*”.

By contrast, early on in the case study, the skills of a musician were called upon, with her involvement having the opposite effect. Used at the start of the lesson her music was employed to prepare students to learn, and according to the teachers it had a calming influence on everyone. In relation to this, the artist noted:

Music is pretty evocative on its own so while the teacher was doing her warm up and getting them to settle after being on break and all that sort of stuff, I'd be sitting there, tuning my guitar and I'll just start playing some very soft, slow Music which was actually, you could just sort of gently see...and then I'd hang on an unresolved chord and then everyone would start looking around. It's uncomfortable. But, yeah, I'd say, "Okay, now I've got your attention."

For the vast majority of interviewed students, one of the key characteristics of the Y Connect approaches was that they got them up out of their seats and moving. This was seen by many as a benefit, with one Year nine student claiming: “*I think you can learn better by getting up and moving, not just sitting down and keep writing. So, if you get up and do more stuff, you can gain more like that*”. This perceived lack of opportunity to move in other classes lead one Year 7 EALD student to complain that a lack of movement in other English classes restricted his ability to “*imagine stuff*”, going on to claim that sitting in your chair is “*not going to help you think*”.

Accompanying these opportunities to move more, were opportunities to talk more, with many students across the data set arguing that they need more time to speak to each other in class. This perspective was strongest amongst the EALD students who appeared to crave more talk time. Somewhat surprisingly the data also suggests that these same students were excited that the pedagogical approaches employed at times within this case study gave them opportunities to perform for each other and for informal audiences. Possibly stimulated by their visits to La Boite Theatre to engage in workshops within professional rehearsal and performance spaces, it seems that even the more reserved students who had never before engaged in performance of any kind, appreciated the chance to participate in the informal performances that were occasionally included within the lesson sequences, with the chance to don costumes and use props to support these performances being a further positive feature of the approach. One student described her response this way: “*So yesterday [the brief, informal performance] was really fun. I enjoyed it with my friends, with the group that we worked. It was good working together and I really like the costumes*”.

For the students in the mainstream classes, a significant number of responses related to the value they found in using drama-based approaches to gain a better understanding of the characters and situations within novels, plays and other literature. This aspect will be examined in more detail below in the section outlining connection to learning. Further characteristics valued by staff and students included: teacher and artist spontaneity; the freedom to take risks and make mistakes; the variety of strategies used; and the very presence of and input from professional actors and playwrights. In

relation to this latter point, students appeared to really appreciate the involvement and participation of the actor, as well as the differences between their ways of working and those of their regular teacher. In regard to this, one student noted: *“When the artist comes in, it’s more like, you guys are all equal, and you know there’s someone important and they’re taking time out of their day and schedule to help us learn”*.

4.3.8 When was it most successful?

Student and teachers in both mainstream and EALD English classes agreed that the best outcomes were achieved when the artist helped the students to engage with material that was the focus of a particular unit, especially early in the term. They believed that this early involvement by the artist supported them to gain an understanding of and engagement with the unit focus. Later in the term they appreciated having the artist return in order to support them with their assessment task. By describing their preferences in this way, students were suggesting that they didn’t want the artist in their English classrooms all the time, but rather in short bursts as an energising, supportive and aesthetic influence over their learning.

4.3.9 Impact on learners and learning.

As noted previously, within this case study growth in four connections was identified: connection to learning; connection to self; connection to each other; and connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations. These connections will now be discussed in turn.

4.3.9.1 Connection to learning.

Connection to learning was the strongest theme to emerge from the English case study. These connections have been broken down into three components – attitudes to learning, skill development, and achievement, including improved depth of understanding.

Attitudes to learning: Irrespective of age, ability or gender, across the data set students repeatedly identified improvements in their engagement and enjoyment in the learning process. One described it as *“the funnest way to learn”*, while another claimed that the responsive approaches adopted by the artists, where they developed learning experiences spontaneously based on students’ ideas was a *“revolution”* in teaching.

While students spoke about improvements in their willingness to participate, including to engage in reading and writing processes, teachers described some important individual cases of significant shifts in student attitude. The following extended quote from an EALD English teacher, referring to one of her students (later identified as a Blue Dot Student), is worth quoting at length:

It is really miraculous! I think that’s the word for it in EALD contexts. I think because you can see the shift more clearly because they’re really in the process of acquiring as much as they can from the new language. And I have had a student in my setting, [student], for example, who started being really, unwilling and reluctant to participate in anything or even be willing to put his hand up. And everything kind of sounded meaningless in a way, in the context of classroom for him. And we’ve had [artist] come and he’s worked with him and ... I don’t know, I can’t really measure or pinpoint how the shift has happened, but he is now one of the students who turns up first and comes in and he is really help cooperating on the learning activity for other students as well, he sets the classroom up in a way. He’s always willing to try, he’s still shy in speaking, but he gives it a go, which has never been the case ... So, this is like really joyful for a teacher to see ... we are now seeing that really huge shift in people’s attitudes towards learning.

Importantly, in relation to engagement, a mainstream English teacher working with year nine students was challenged by a suggestion that the engagement might just be a novelty factor, with the students

possibly not seeing the connection between the drama work and their learning. She immediately dismissed this notion responding: *“No, it is a novelty factor at first. But I think once they settle in to it, they see it works, as a learning tool. Because they become very engaged.”*

Within their responses, students reinforced this position again and again, with one high achieving Year 9 student suggesting:

If you learn a normal way, you usually sit down and write, or read, or watch a couple videos, but doing it with drama, you get to actually do what you are learning about, and you get to be active about it. It just becomes more interesting.

This type of comment recurred frequently across the data set, with the following transcript involving four year seven students from an EALD English class providing a useful summary of the attitudinal benefits:

- Student 1: *Behaviour. Because when we’re happy, we’re good. But when we’re angry, we’re negative. But when we’re happy, we’re positive. And when we’re positive, we’re good.*
- Int: *What other ways does it help?*
- Student 1: *It helps you think.*
- Student 2: *Because we get to experience*
- Student 3: *And our brain’s fresh.*
- Student 4: *But when we’re bored, we can’t.*

Skill development: While many students appreciated that the Y Connect approaches served to enhance their speaking skills, including for assessments requiring individual oral presentations, a considerable number also noted that their participation had also positively impacted on their reading and writing skills. Here, the skills of the artists, together with the embodied, collaborative and spontaneous nature of the pedagogies, appear to have been particularly important in terms of supporting skill development across these areas.

Speaking: In relation to developing speaking skills, the responses of students in the EALD English classes and the mainstream classes were, unsurprisingly, quite different. This was due to their quite different English language abilities, and also due to the different approaches used by the artists in these two teaching contexts. For example, within the mainstream English classes, the artists tended to focus on supporting the students to develop presentations for assessment, including working with individuals or small groups of students to develop their ideas, confidence, understanding of the character and plot, or simply vocal technique and articulation. By contrast, within the EALD English classrooms, there was a much stronger emphasis on working towards small group presentations, including informal performances for classmates and interested members of the administration team.

While the teachers and artists were initially quite concerned about including performance opportunities for EALD students, there was far less hesitation on the part of the students themselves, with several students in each class reveling in the chance to perform, especially when costumes, lighting and other theatre related techniques were included to support the overall outcomes. Indeed, even for the more reluctant speakers and performers, there was a real sense of accomplishment when they overcame their anxieties and performed for classmates, in some cases, for the first time ever.

Of course, this process of moving from drama activities in the classroom context to small group presentations in the school theatre didn’t happen quickly, and indeed required the input of artists and teachers for several terms before students were ready to engage in this way. Initially, the focus was on building student vocabulary, with one Year 8 EALD student noting: *“[Actor] helped me out with*

words I didn't even know before ... but when he came to our class every time, I learned some more words...”, while another student in the same cohort explained: “Some words that you don't understand, and then when you act it and you show the actions, then you know”.

However, the arts-based approaches were not just useful for students developing their English-speaking skills. They were also important for mainstream students, with a Year 9 English teacher offering the following comment about how the Y Connect pedagogies provided students with new ways to express themselves:

I just see them differently. They have these different positive behaviors and are able to express themselves. See, we don't allow them to express themselves. In fact, it's more about everyone's gotta be quiet and follow the rules and things. And so, when you see them coming out like that, that's wonderful.

Reading: In relation to reading, one Year 9 mainstream student suggested that when the actor engaged in a dramatic reading of a section of their set novel, they became more “*curious about*” and “*interested in reading the novel*”. Further, one of the Blue Dot EALD students, within an individual interview, offered this detailed description of the impact of drama-based strategies including improvisation on his reading:

When we do performance and stuff, we get given scripts to read. I'm not that good a reader. So when it comes down to it, I have to use my improvisation skills, and that really is like pushing me out of my comfort zone because I'm not a good reader, so yeah, like, having the teachers teach me how to improvise, because they say, “Don't say everything word for word, just feel it out as you go, you don't have to say it exactly as it is”. So that helped me in terms of English. Usually I'd be in English, doing an assignment, and I'd be reading everything word for word, and it'd take me forever to actually read that through before writing the assignment or something like that. And it really trips me up. But having the teachers teach me that improvisation skill really makes it easier, because I'm not really struggling with the reading anymore. It's helping me improve more in class, trying to get better marks.

Writing: Even more evident in the data, are comments from students and teachers about the benefits of the Y Connect approaches for writing. These benefits, from the perspective of the students, included those associated with: “*coming up with ideas on the spot which helps in English when you're writing narratives*”; supporting their imaginations through enactment which then allows them to “*write what I feel about it*”; helping students gain a better understanding of the topic – “*I think if you have a better understanding of the topic that definitely impacts on how much you write*”; putting themselves in the shoes of the character which “*gives us a better idea of what we need to do*”; supporting students to come up with ideas – “*I normally come up with better ideas when I'm improvising*”; and improves the volume of ideas and ease within the writing process.

One group of Year 9 mainstream English students clearly recalled a lesson where students were asked to create and then share improvisations related to the novel being studied, as a precursor to writing a new section for the novel. Within this lesson, the visiting artist introduced them to various forms of dramatic tension, including tension of mystery, surprise, task, and relationships. Their responses indicate that they found this structure really useful in supporting their writing with the artist who led the lesson reporting the following response:

One of the very reluctant students in the class just couldn't stop writing. He said to me, “Miss, how many pages do we need to have for our assignment?” I said, “Two”, and he said, “I've already written two!” So, it seems like these students had never heard of dramatic tension before, and because they had acted out their ideas about the various tensions in each scene

and then shared them with the others, they had plenty of great ideas to write about. They were motivated and excited to write.

These perceptions about improved motivation to write were confirmed by a member of the leadership team who noted that in the year nine English classes, students said that the active and dramatic approaches used in the Y Connect lessons helped them jump into the assessment tasks more quickly. She noted: *"They could immerse themselves in it and therefore have more complex and nuanced reactions to a task"*.

Achievement and depth of understanding: These improved skills in the areas of speaking, reading, and writing were not unexpected however, given that these were the focus within Y Connect planning sessions between teachers and artists. In addition, emphasis was placed on employing approaches that helped to deepen the students' understanding of plot and character as a means of scaffolding their writing and oral presentation assessments. To achieve this, the artists involved across the English case study used a range of strategies including, delivering prepared and spontaneous monologues as key characters, being interviewed in role as key characters using the hot seat technique; inviting students to participate in improvisations; and expressively reading sections of the set novel. The following Year 9 student perspectives are therefore useful in determining the value of these strategies in terms of deepening understanding:

First of all, role playing and putting yourself in character's situation makes you understand their situation better instead of just writing as a third person party, you get into the character. And then since the assessment was in first person, you kind of understand your character way more and how they would think, and how they would react and stuff like that.... it's more like you explore it, and then you find your own kind of understanding the character...

It just helps you understand the play or whatever you're doing on a deeper level. Because instead of just sitting there reading it like a regular English class, you get engaged and you dig deep into the characters, and the physical actions, and it makes you understand it better.

You understand the character more, the more you understand the more you can write.

The flow on effects of this deepening of understanding, according to the HoD of English, were improvements in achievement data. When asked if she had seen any changes in the actual assessment outcomes for individual students she responded:

HoD: *Definitely. Definitely. I probably have had, maybe a handful of kids in that current class that I've got, who would have been reluctant writers and this process has allowed them to engage without a fear of being wrong or a fear of their ideas being rubbish. It just seems to have taken all that anxiety and pressure away that they've been able to access the curriculum like they probably haven't accessed it before.*

Int: *Have their results changed?*

HoD: *Yes. So, I had a couple of students who were probably toward the lower end ... potentially a couple of D students. I'm not going to have any of that this time around at all, with any of them.*

Students were also prepared to attribute improved academic outcomes to the involvement of the artist in their classroom, with two EALD English students responding in this way to a question about their results:

- Student 1: *Yes, I got an A!*
 Student 2: *First time I got a B and now I got an A.*
 Student 1: *It helped us because we got to know how it feels ... it was easier.*

In some cases, especially for EALD English students, it was the practical exploration of ideas and emotions that helped to deepen their understanding and subsequent achievement. For example, in one unit focused on the novel *Warhorse*, Year 7 students were encouraged to embody the various emotions included in the novel and to talk about emotive language as they did so. Similarly, within a Year 8 EALD unit, students were also focused on emotion, with three students offering these comments about how the drama work with the actor helped to deepen their understanding of a set of characters in preparation for an oral presentation which was to be delivered in role:

- Student 1: *Being the characters. It gave us more ideas about the characters.*
 Student 2: *Give us more clue about what the characters might think or do, instead of just reading the book and just reading what the book is saying, you can act and just try to feel what the character is going through.*
 Int: *Mmm, so you found that acting it out gave you a clearer idea, or more ideas than just what the book told you?*
 Student 3: *It showed us what the character would actually think and the emotions, so when we were writing our story, we can actually tell the people who are reading the story what the character actually feels.*

And then later in the same interview another student noted:

- Student 4: *It helped me to think more about how the characters would be thinking, and in my speech, I just kept on imagining what Isabelle was feeling at the time.*

4.3.9.2 Connection to self.

By far the most significant finding relating to connection to self is that students found that the Y Connect approaches supported growth in their overall confidence and for many EALD students, their language confidence. Importantly, this growth in confidence, appeared for some students to create new and more positive perspectives on themselves as learners, with several expressing pride in the outcomes and growth achieved. Within a school context where the majority of students are from non-English speaking backgrounds, this finding is critical.

The following examples, relating to the impact of the case study approaches on three less confident students, are offered by different teachers, and serve to support these claims relating to improved self-confidence:

One very shy girl ... I hadn't really heard her speak for the first, sort of, four weeks. Could not get anything out of her, and she really didn't participate much at all. That day when [artist] came was the first time I've heard her speak out loud. She stood up and did the little skit with [another student] about, you know some child and mother. And that sort of changed. It was a turning point for her. She was talking more. I mean she's still very ... but she's speaking. The next week she did an improvisation. So that was a huge change.

[The approach] makes them come out of their comfort zone and speak in front of the class, share their ideas with each other. Whereas, I think students are very good at, if they want to hide, they'll hide. And it's been great to see the way that [artist] works to ensure that no one gets to hide, but they still all feel comfortable.

She [student] would speak with this very quiet voice during the classes and to this day sometimes ... [but] she is really a lot more confident now. I really saw the difference on the stage when she was to perform her lines. Her voice suddenly was booming. And I was so surprised to see that. But at the same time, she didn't have those reservations and that somehow disappeared. So, I think that Y Connect, when she actually saw everyone else was doing that and she was part of it and she wasn't thinking twice.

The majority of interviewed students also spoke about confidence building, with the EALD students in particular suggesting that the nature of the pedagogies demanded their participation and direct engagement, while also serving to expand their vocabulary and pronunciation. One student explained their development this way:

Like, for example, first, when I was in class, and I was too shy and not talking to anyone, because of my language. But yesterday I feel like "you can speak, so you can try it". So yeah, I love it [Y Connect approaches].

As noted above, this improved confidence appears to have had a flow on effect to how some students perceived themselves as learners. This was particularly the case for one of the Year 8 EALD students who discovered a passion for and genuine pride in his dramatic achievements noting:

It was amazing, miss. I can't even wait to see my video [of the short performance]. I can't see myself because I'm not two person. So, I wanna see what I did. I'm really proud of what I did, miss. I memorised all the paper, I didn't use any. And nobody else except me did that ... I like acting, miss. It fills me like my soul. I am, miss. You see when I'm bored or when I'm not act. I can't do anything or ... what's the word. When I feel like not doing anything. When I am acting, feels like miss. My life is like in acting because I'm good at everything I do. I'm proud of it.

Another in the same group noted: "My favourite thing to do is acting. I do love acting. Acting makes me feel like I'm trying to be somebody, you know, which is great".

Further aspects of self: While not as pervasive in the data as the outcomes outlined above, students also indicated that participation in the pedagogies used with the English case study had: enhanced their creativity and imagination; improved their self-expression; developed their willingness to have a go; and made them feel less stressed, more relaxed. Here it seems that the enjoyment and pleasure derived from the pedagogical approaches used in the case resulted in a classroom environment where the students could relax and enjoy learning. The following is a typical comment in relation to this aspect of self: "When we're in class we feel more pressure but when we're here we feel relieved. Because [actor] makes it really fun".

4.3.9.3 Connection to each other.

While not as strong a connection as the connections to self that are outlined above, opportunities for students to connect to each other were still clearly evident, particularly in the teacher data. Here it seems that it was a combination of the pedagogies employed, together with the attitudes of the artists towards group work, that created a perception, held by the majority of English staff, that an extended sense of student to student connectedness was developed. It appears that the artists held a routine expectation that students would work in mixed groups – including the mixing of genders, abilities and cultural groups, while the specific demands of the pedagogies *required* collaboration and thus led to a natural willingness on the part of students to engage with others.

The following teacher comment reflects the notion of artist expectations in relation to group work:

But I just noticed over that six months ... she just totally transformed. I do think that the drama was a big part of that, because [actor] could force her to work with different people, and challenged her do different things, and everyone was making mistakes, and there was humour. She just kind of was able to work with people that she would not have been able to work with at the beginning ... they just all got used to working with each other. So that was really good, because there was that, you know, not just with her, but with others as well, like a bit of gender divide sometimes.

Another teacher noted:

...that connectedness to each other and being able to work together and really, by the end of it, yes, I could see that I could pair off two kids that at the beginning I would never have thought would work together, and they actually managed to build off each other. By gosh, those kids were like so supportive of each other ... and I thought, that's wonderful.

Summarising this sense of connectedness, a further English teacher referred to the pedagogies as “*building their team spirit*”, while a school leader directly involved in English suggested that the students were “*more united together as a group*”, with the Y Connect approaches serving to “*tighten the group*” and enable them to “*work really collaboratively*”.

Importantly, in relation to the overall goals of the Y Connect Project, this connection was identified by teachers as resulting in students being “*kinder to each other*”, allowing them “*to laugh with each other*” and to create an environment where students “*can feel like they belong*”.

4.3.9.4 Connection to the Arts, artists and arts organisations.

Connections to the Arts, artists and arts organisations were generated within this case study through the participation of artists in English classrooms (including actors, playwrights, musicians, and dancers) and through visits to arts organisations. Within these visits, students had the chance to engage directly and indirectly with artists, including in the case of theatre events, within pre- and post-show discussions, and in one case, within the rehearsal process. These theatre visits were enabled through the Y Connect partnerships with the QPAC and La Boite and included a range of theatre styles from traditional to contemporary. In response to these opportunities, students learned that these cultural sites were there for them, and as one student noted, “*not just for posh people*.”

Importantly, attempts were also made to provide opportunities for students to engage with work created by artists with refugee and immigrant backgrounds. These latter opportunities were particularly valued by the students and specifically included: in-class lessons delivered by a successful Brisbane playwright; attendance at a rehearsal of a play written by this artist; visits to La Boite to participate in workshops co-facilitated by two young actors with immigrant backgrounds; and attendance at a theatre event entitled *The Village*. At this latter performance, which depicted a series of refugee arrival stories, one of the performers was a past student of Yeronga SHS and as such, his involvement created a great deal of excitement.

In planning for attendance at this particular event, some members of the Y Connect team originally had some reservations about the potential for it to have a negative impact on students who themselves had difficult arrival stories. However, this was not the case, with all students reporting highly positive responses, mostly relating to the fact that while they sometimes found the work challenging to watch, they were pleased to witness stories like their own being played out and shared to young people of all types of backgrounds.

The following two comments offered in response to attending the performance of *The Village* provide useful examples of responses from students with refugee backgrounds:

They were talking about...what happened to their family. Some of them have the problems when they go here. And when I heard the story, I thought about my story when I got here.

They kind of taught us their feelings and what happened to them in the past. It kind of was sad...[but] they had confident to tell us what happened to them. They didn't even lie, and that's so kind a thing. I was proud of them telling us the truth and sharing us with their past. Yeah, because some people don't like to share...

When taken together, the opportunities for both mainstream English students and those within the EALD English groups to engage directly with artists within and beyond the school, served to forge meaningful connections between the students, the artists and the arts organisations. These connections differed from student to student, but in some cases were highly significant. The following anecdote, offered by one of the EALD English teachers, provides insight into one of these significant connections:

[Artist with refugee background] came and did this wonderful talk, you know, and [student] ... came up to us and said, "Can I have a photo with him?" And then the next day, [student] says, "Miss, I'm gonna be like that man!" Really positive. I think the level of connection that [artist] has added for some of the kids ... I think the value of that for our kids is just indescribable. And I think getting more people in, I don't even care who they are, they don't have to be arts people! But people that they can relate to that are similar to them, that they can say, "This is me." Of course, you can talk 'til you're blue in the face about possibilities and everything else, but as soon as they see somebody standing in front of them who says, "I am like you in this, this, this, and this." They look like me, they talk like me, they've had similar experiences, and look at what they've done. Just, you know, it shows them the possibilities. Because so many of their role models that we show them, seeing the people who come visit, are not necessarily like them. And, while that's great, it doesn't have anywhere near the impact that [artist] had on them.

Commenting on the same playwriting sessions a student echoed the response of this teacher noting:

[Artist with refugee background] came to our English class and he told us to be brave and tough and not to be scared of anyone. He also told us about his life and that his parents passed away. And we asked him questions about his life and he answered. And he made us tough and brave.

Another noted:

It was like bold. So, we're not afraid to speak out. So, act like our voice and stuff. Cause some people are very like shadow they don't like speaking, they're very quiet. So, he said, 'Don't be afraid to speak at length and be bold'.

Students also connected very personally with other artists in the English case, but particularly the young actor who came to be known as the "school actor". Within their interviews, the students repeatedly commented on the work he had done with them and the positive outcomes it had generated in relation to attitudes, learning and achievement. They suggested that his involvement was important because he was "different" to their teachers. Over and over again students described him as being "energetic", while others spoke of his ability to engage their emotions or take them to a deeper level in terms of their understanding.

4.3.10 Conclusion

The data generated in response to the 216 hours of English-related Y Connect activities provide strong support for the claim that the partnerships between artist and teachers within both mainstream English and EALD English classrooms, together with the opportunities for students to engage directly with arts organisations through attendance at performances and specifically designed and facilitated workshops, resulted in a series of enhanced connections for the participating students including *connection to self, to each other, to the Arts, artists and arts organisations and to learning*.

Of course, as noted previously, not all of these improved connections were experienced by all students, and indeed not to the same extent. Nonetheless, for many of the students who participated in this case study, and especially for those young people who struggle for various reasons to engage with or make improvements in key aspects of English such as speaking, reading and writing, the various Y Connect approaches made a difference. Of particular importance was the dialogic nature of the learning environment, with students having a lot more chance to speak rather than listen, opportunities which not only gave them the chance to improve their vocabularies, but also their confidence. Through the drama-based pedagogies they also developed a keener interest in and understanding of the various plays, poems and novels studied. Students engaged more deeply with key characters, plot lines and the language of literature, actively exploring these aspects through strategies that served to connect them to the author's ideas and along the way, with each other. This stronger level of interest and connection had a flow on effect on their writing, in some cases giving students a desire to communicate - to share their ideas.

In addition, students, especially those in EALD English classes, appreciated the chance to perform, mostly within informal presentations to classmates. For many of these students, these presentations were their first chance ever to act, to get up on a stage and present. With support from the artists and with the addition of some minor props and costume items, these students experienced pride and a sense of achievement in both their developing English language skills and success in overcoming shyness and anxiety.

Overall, this case study report reveals that arts-based pedagogies, delivered through partnerships between highly skilled English teachers and energised and enthusiastic artists, as well as through engagement with arts organisations, have rich potential within secondary school contexts. It also suggests that artists may be important untapped resources within EALD English classrooms.

4.4 Case Study Four - Drama in the Essential English Classroom



4.4.1 Research question.

This case study was designed to address the following research question: What is the impact on the teaching and learning of English for students in Essential English classes (an additional subject taken alongside mainstream classes to support language development) when drama is used as a learning medium to extend and diversify existing pedagogical practices? The figure above demonstrates that three of the six connections were enhanced through this case study: self, each other, and learning.

4.4.2 Participants.

Participating students: All students enrolled in Essential English classes in 2015 (s2) 2016 (s1) 2017 (s1 & s2).

Key teachers: Sandra Bantick, Jacqi Bottger and Sanaz Hamoonpou.

Key artists: Adrianne Jones and Madonna Stinson.

Partnering arts organisations: La Boite Theatre Company.

4.4.3 Scope.

- 38.5 hours of duration.
- 666 points of student contact.
- 37 events including 36 classroom-based workshops and one theatre excursion.

4.4.4 Data Sources.

- Student interviews.
- Teacher interviews.
- Teacher artist reflections.
- Speaking and Listening Recording Instrument records 2017.
- Unit and lesson plans.

4.4.5 English language learning focus.

- Oral communication skills: posture, status, volume, confidence, listening, speaking.
- Language: vocabulary, register, dialogue.
- Awareness of self and others.

4.4.6 Background and context.

This case study focused on a number of different cohorts of students enrolled in 'Essential English' (EE) classes. The cohorts comprised students transitioning from another school dedicated to the development of the English language proficiency of recently arrived migrants, into the regular

academic program at Yeronga SHS. These students were new to the school and the class took in new enrolments throughout the term as well as in 10-week blocks from the language school. Each class of students had varying first languages and, while many spoke several languages, they had low levels of fluency in English. The cohort frequently was made up of students who were refugees or asylum seekers and many of these were dealing with issues related to trauma, and the uncertainty of visa applications. The EE students required additional time and support before being able to manage the academic language requirements of core subjects and spent six months in EE classes taught by specialist EALD teachers. For this case there were 4 cohorts of students: 2015 (pilot group – Term 4); 2016 (Terms 1 & 2); and 2017 (Terms 1 & 2; and 3 & 4). The maximum class size was 18 students. A teacher aide regularly attended lessons to provide individual language support as needed. The case commenced with a short pilot phase, in 2015, with a class led by one of the EE teachers. Following this, a new key teacher became involved and all planning focused on her class. A third EE teacher participated in a number of classes when the key teacher was unavailable. The two teacher artists planned the process drama workshops that culminated each term for the classes and they were facilitated by one of the artists depending upon availability. In Semester 2, 2016, the school scheduled Science instead of Essential English, and as such, the Drama in Essential English program was postponed until 2017.

To assist with an appropriate language level in the workshops, the teachers employed a ‘Bandscales Overview’, adapted from the Bandscales provided by the Queensland Government (Education Queensland, 2012). The drama component of the EE language program concentrated on speaking and listening. Students entered the class demonstrating a wide range of capabilities across the scale, which may have included only some aspects from Levels 2 and 3. Students are not required to achieve a particular level before moving out of the Essential English class, but in the majority of cases, students working consistently at Level 4 would typically no longer need additional language support.

Together, the teachers and the teaching-artists planned that within each term’s work (a ten-week block), students would work with an overarching theme. For the various cohorts involved in this case study these were: *What is belonging?* and *What is strength?* (a brief overview of the two themes can be seen in Table 4.1)

Table 4. 1. Themes and Focus for Each of the Ten Week Terms.

OVERARCHING THEMES	
WHAT IS BELONGING?	WHAT IS STRENGTH?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Culmination - process drama based on “My Two Blankets” a picture book by Irena Kobald & Freya Blackwood ➤ Strong scaffolding and incremental challenges ➤ Establishing processes for working, individually, in pairs and small groups ➤ Students accessing “mental dictionaries” of which they were unaware ➤ Artistry in planning and delivery ➤ Focus on oral language ➤ Social and emotional learning (groupings) ➤ Reflection time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Culmination - Cyclone process drama ➤ Building on basic drama strategies – hot seat, teacher in role, whole class role play ➤ Encouraging collaboration in pairs and small groups ➤ Purposeful talk in context ➤ Driven by dramatic tension ➤ More challenging participatory demands in terms of artistry and language

4.4.7 Informing literature and rationale

Internationally, drama is being increasingly recognised as a valuable approach for the teaching of second and additional languages (Stinson & Winston, 2011; Winston, 2012; Winston & Stinson, 2014). Approaches vary but include: games and language activities (Maley & Duff, 2005); script-writing and playbuilding (Goldstein, 2003); role plays (Di Pietro, 1987); 'drama grammar' (Even, 2011); performative language teaching (Even & Schewe, 2016); and process drama (Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Liu, 2002; Piazzoli, 2018; Rothwell, 2011; Stinson, 2008). Writers in the field commonly emphasise the importance of active and embodied learning processes that include aesthetic and sociocultural awareness.

In this case, one of the artists was highly experienced in working with drama and additional language learning, having contributed to research and practice in the field for more than fifteen years, while both were highly experienced in the design and delivery of process drama. The classroom approach drew heavily on their combined experience. This case also involved a close collaboration between the key teacher and the artists. The key teacher was keen to learn more about how to include drama in her pedagogy. The approach was trialled in the final term, 2015, and refined throughout 2016 and 2017. Drama was scheduled for one hour per week. It was decided that the 1-hr drama sessions would focus on developing oral language skills. Other classes, during the week, connected with the theme and concentrated on learning experiences related to reading and writing.

Based on a request by one of the school leaders directly connected to the Essential English program, there was a strong emphasis placed on the eventual obsolescence of the artists, with the long-term goal being to develop a program of work that could be implemented by the regular EE teacher once the Y Connect Project was concluded. As a result, much of the teacher–artist discussion involved explanation of why particular activities and experiences were chosen and, at her request, the key teacher across most of the case period was provided with a range of scholarly and research readings about drama and additional language teaching. The process involved a *gradual release* model, whereby the teaching was modelled by the artists and as confidence grew, the teacher incorporated activities and strategies into her own approach. The repetition of the themed units was beneficial in this regard, as the same or similar activities were refined and repeated in the units over the full duration of the case.

4.4.8 What did it look like in action? Pedagogical characteristics.

This section examines the eight key pedagogical characteristics of the Essential English Case, that emerged in the data as being of particular importance. These were a different way of working, active/embodied, acts of imagination, incremental/structured, safety, relaxed and collaborative, silly, and fun.

A different way of working: Students commented that drama was a different way of working, and as such, one of the initial challenges was to encourage the students to participate more actively and collaboratively in learning activities. Prior experience of learning, before coming to Australia, had been strongly teacher-directed using didactic approaches and many, at first, thought that the drama activities were 'silly', demonstrating reluctance to engage or participate, until the learning benefits became apparent. Following a change of perspective, they were able to articulate their appreciation of the affordances of the drama pedagogy as outlined within this interview:

- Int: *What's different about it?*
Student 1: *When you're doing that you have to act more; you don't do more talking [in regular class].*
Int: *It gives you more opportunity to talk, and in normal classes do you have opportunities to talk?*
All: *No. Sometimes, just answering questions.*

- Int:* So that's in the normal classes. So, is it different because you have to...? I'm just trying to work out what's different.
- Student 1:* I think it's dramatic language.
- Int:* So, tell me a little bit about what you mean [by dramatic language]
- Student 1:* You talk and then you act at the same time.

However, the students found the need to react and respond in the moment of the drama challenging and recognised that this particular language demand contributed to their learning. This accords with Vygotsky's (1978) claim that the spontaneous, dialogic speech act is a more complex, cognitive act than writing as there is no time to edit.

They noted that in regular classes you “just get to get up and talk”, but drama offered opportunities for active and purposeful talk. They also commented that drama required them to work in different combinations, not just as a whole group when “everybody's focused on their thing” but, drama workshops included pairs, and small and larger groups or as a single whole group.

One of the teachers spoke extensively about drama being a different way of working. Her long comment is worth repeating here:

And one thing that I really can never forget is those lessons that we have, either [artist] or [artist] are sitting and reading to them from a picture book, reading a story, they're all sitting down in a circle. I've kind of felt a bit of that child inside as we all have. Kind of, that was a spark for me ... we're actually seeing growth, quiet. They calm down, that sort of peaceful moment, and forgetting about the fact they were in school, in a classroom.... It was really a genuine moment of, sort of, engagement that I will never forget. I think that was, like, or even that lesson with the blankets. I sort of felt that was such a human thing, genuine thing to do in a classroom that we never do. It was really interesting for me.

Processes and techniques that are the ‘stuff’ of drama workshops, such as storytelling, story-reading, varying the group size and dynamics, playfulness, spontaneous dialogue, and so on, were novel for both students and teachers, and time was required for the students to feel comfortable in participating in new ways.

Active/embodied: Drama is an active and embodied art form with established connections to second-language learning (Brauer, 2002; Liu, 2002; Wright, 2005). The students began to recognise that they learned well through active and embodied participation. One student told us, “If you act [you] move your body”. Another remembered movement as being important in the lessons, noting: “Yeah, we standing up, do some moving”. Comments about getting up and away from desks and learning through movement were common in many interviews. One student articulated that, “The acting made it easier to learn and also motivates you to learn”, indicating that active and embodied processes and activities contributed both to motivation and to ease of learning.

In one group interview (4 female students) the participants were asked to identify the three things they gained from learning English using drama. They indicated that these were: 1) confidence, because of acting in front of the class; 2) movement, using the whole body to communicate; and 3) space (linking to proxemics and status). These responses are evidence of a growing understanding that language learning is not simply about vocabulary and grammar, but that status and confidence, body language, gesture and proxemics are all foundational to learning a language.

Acts of imagination: Students enjoyed being able to use their imagination in drama. Some were surprised at how this made them feel and how vividly they were able to create an environment. Towards the end of each 10-week term block, the drama workshop extended over several sessions

and was in the form of a Process Drama. It was important that this complex form was attempted once the students had some understanding of some basic drama conventions, so each process drama (*My Two Blankets* and *The Cyclone*) was designed to employ increasingly complex aesthetic and language demands, the foundations of which were developed in the weekly drama workshops. In interviews many students spoke of the vividness of the environment (a sub-tropical island) that they had imagined. For example, one student recalled: *"I saw the acting and I saw the different things, like the big ocean, the shark.... It was interesting ... It was really magical"*.

For these students the permission to pretend was a powerful transformative tool. Some even pointed out the importance of being granted permission to use their imaginations in drama: *"We did it with permission, you know"*.

In this interview the students went on to explain that permission to use their imagination allowed them to feel and see the thunder in the storm and to participate in the fictional environment. They explained that, within the fictional dramatic context, they were more deeply engaged and had a reason to do things differently. Thus, drama provided both a reason and purpose for their actions. Here, the permission to pretend, provided the students with the capacity to vividly create an illusory environment in a regular classroom setting. Alongside this, their participation in the drama, in that imagined environment, together with the established roles and dramatic tension, gave them a reason to participate and to accomplish tasks.

The process drama work also appeared to have impact on the students' written work when it emerged from or was related to the experience. The teacher noted that writing produced as a result of the process drama work was more complex and emotional:

Certainly, writing about the process drama we did in-role, I got a lot more from some kids. Not even necessarily in quality of writing. But, in the things that they were telling me, and it was much in the emotional side.

Incremental/structured: Key to the successful use of drama as a learning medium with learners who have limited fluency in the target language is the incremental steps required to acquaint learners with working in this way. The students were not used to working together, nor were they experienced in working orally prior to written work. In the initial stages it was important to gain focus and attention, and to incorporate a relatively large number of short activities and tasks, each of which connected to the theme of the unit, for example, 'What is belonging?'. The first phase of each unit involved short drama skill-building activities related to the theme. Sessions were carefully structured to move from individually oriented skills, such as holding still and making eye contact, through to embodying words and phrases individually, then in pairs, then as a whole group. One teacher commented:

I mean they have a lot of energy, generally, but they were allowed to express it. Right? It was unleashed a little bit more. Without them getting silly because the structure moved from task to task. Not a lot of time just to get silly.

Early workshops incorporated basic drama exercises such as freezes, adding captions, and tapping in with single words or phrases. Short and uncomplicated roleplays were also used, so that the students learned to co-create short dramatic texts and share them with others. One of the teachers noted the incremental approach:

First ... very small groups, like three. Only three students and then only perform for another group of three. Then it just developed. Within just a few weeks, to being able to do it for the entire group. That was the greatest achievement. They do have to give speeches like PowerPoint presentations in their classes. That would have been impossible for some of them

to have done. I saw that that's a really great gain. It's social but it's also, they need it academically as well.

Later the students were required to collaborate in pairs and small groups with increasing language demands. In line with findings from previous research (Stinson, 2008), the partners and groups were regularly changed, so that English was the shared language and students could not work in their home language (HL) and then translate for each other. The activities required them, increasingly, to work and think in English.

Safety: As noted within the discussions above, some students unfamiliar with drama and were at first resistant to engaging with it as a learning medium. Therefore, as in all drama work, and perhaps most significantly with participants with the particular life experiences of these learners, the importance of safety in the learning context was paramount.

For these students, drama was a way of learning about safety, both individually and in groups, (such as in the Cyclone drama that was set in a deliberately 'dangerous' imagined dramatic context, and where the students had to help each other during the emergency). It also made them aware of others who tried to distract them from learning. They told us that working in drama had allowed them to: *"Be aware of them. Stay away, away"*.

The students recognised the value of being in control of their own actions and storying, and of their own decisions to *stay away from* negative influences and to feel safe in the imaginative, learning process.

Relaxed and collaborative: Working in a collaborative and safe space permitted students to share ideas in groups and build on these. This deflected the pressure away from individuals being required to provide a single, correct answer and led to a more relaxed dynamic in the classroom. One student noted: *"It's hard to remember the learning things. It's kind of- here- to, working together as a group, and she [a friend] has some ideas, work with each other. Sometimes feel relaxed"*.

A teacher also commented on the more relaxed approach to learning. She noted that engagement had improved and that the students were more relaxed during learning experiences:

Probably engagement, I'd say. It does give them a way to relax within the group. Because often, we're so stuck at our desks, and reading and writing, and "let's get onto the next activity", and "let's move on with this", and "let's move on with that", we often don't have a chance to have those less formal interactions with students, and for them to be able to come up with those ideas on their own, that often it's a lot of responding to what we're giving them, instead of giving them something, and letting them develop it further, which I guess they probably don't have a lot of opportunity to do that in a lot of the other areas that we work in, like a novel study, or writing a newspaper, or whatever else it is that we're doing in English curriculum classes.

Stephen Krashen (1981), a seminal additional-language learning theorist, proposed that the Affective Filter Hypothesis plays a large part in assisting or hindering language acquisition. In simple terms, the 'affective filter' is either the emotional barrier or bridge to learning. In one group interview, one of the students, without prompting, suggested that drama helped lower the barriers to learning. In their terms *there was "a lower fence"*.

Int: *What's different? Can you talk to this for me??*

Student: *Yeah. There was ... We have a lower fence to be with the drama stuff.*

For this student, having a 'lower fence' made learning more likely.

Silly: As mentioned earlier, drama-based pedagogies were different to the learning approaches that the students had experienced previously. Many came into the class with little respect for this approach. Indeed, as one student stated, they thought *“it was a silly way”* to engage with language and they did not comprehend that it might assist with learning. As time progressed however, the students could see the benefits of working in this way:

- Student: *Yes, I like drama. It's a good way to learn English, and it's my first time that I take it. I haven't done it before.*
- Int: *So, what did you think before you did it the first time? Did you think it was going to be a good way?*
- Student: *No. I thought it was a silly way.*
- Int: *Did you? That's interesting. Tell me what's silly, why you thought it would be silly?*
- Student: *Because, I don't know. We were in the class and acting, being ... What's the word?*
- Int: *And now you've changed your mind.*
- Student: *Yeah.*
- Int: *Tell me-*
- Student: *Because it gives you a kind of confident, you know? To do different things.*

Learning experiences in drama required the students to step into the unknown. As the fear of participating in unusual activities was diminished, the students were able to see that this different way of learning allowed them to do different things, to explore different ways of interacting with each other, and to take chances with language use. All of these contributed to their learning.

Fun: As in many of the other cases, students frequently mentioned that learning had become fun, in contrast to other approaches they considered more ‘boring’. They recognised that they were learning, while engaged in fun activities and experiences. Here is an example of comments from one group interview, which included students who were adamant that learning through Drama in EE classes should continue:

- Student 1: *And everything would be boring.*
- Student 2: *Boring. Especially if you're doing...you'd be shaking, you'll be scared.*
- Student 3: *You need some friends, it's good too*

When asked if they would recommend learning through drama to students at another school or who were just coming to Yeronga, they were happy to recommend the approach: *“Yes, they should do it because it's fun. It makes you laugh”* and *“In the morning when I look at my diary, it says I have drama, I just feel happy, I don't know why”*.

4.4.9 Impact on learners and learning.

In this class context, the constantly changing cohort membership required the teachers to be particularly responsive to individual student needs. Many of the students lacked confidence and found it difficult to speak loudly or stand still. As such, a good deal of time was spent in building confidence with games and activities involving freezes and holding focus, and the workshops frequently included breathing and articulation exercises. The students often spoke of being shy. They certainly needed encouragement to participate, make eye contact and contribute in dialogic interactions.

Each of the four participant groups was very different in terms of dynamics and required a responsive approach to teaching rather than following a particular lesson as planned. The particular dynamics of each group meant that, very often, additional time was needed when working towards learning goals. For example, in relation to one group, the artist declared: *“I can't believe it has taken me six weeks to*

get them to work in pairs!!! Fortunately, this comment turned out to be a ‘critical moment’ for this group, for in the drama lesson the following week, this barrier to cooperation seemed to have been dismantled and the classroom practice was transformed, with far more willingly engaged participants. In this instance it had simply taken additional time for these students to build sufficient trust to enable them to join in with each other and collaborate within this different way of working.

4.4.9.1 Connection to learning.

Students and teachers were able to identify the direct impact of drama on their learning. Areas they considered to have improved through participation in the program were confidence in speaking, writing, presentation skills, collaboration and cooperation skills, and leadership skills.

Skill development – confidence in speaking and self-presentation: There was general agreement that drama helped build confidence, especially in unfamiliar contexts. We were told:

The drama, like if you ... like you gotta speak like the people in front, then you practice then you- like you do, and you have confidence. And it help with the writing, we have drama writing, and like speaking, yeah. That one is the best in drama. You improve.

The following student explained that the confidence drama built in the present, would assist later in life when employment required the skill of speaking confidently in front of others: *“People might go one day job, or might be a lot people in front of them, like a - yeah, so, you might need to get help from drama. And they'll be able to taking acting”*. Many students could see the value of confidence in drama for their future pathways. One student offered:

In my opinion, keep continuing drama and it's give you lot of feedback while you finish or graduate from high school and go work, find a job or going in the same stuff, so dramatic language or college drama. It helps you to get up and speak in front of everyone and it takes all of the pressure whenever you get up.

Other students connected the confidence in self-presentation skills that they were learning in the EE classes with specific career paths that they were considering pursuing. One, who hopes to be a lawyer, said that drama helped with, *“Speaking in public and don't get shy”*.

Skill development – writing: As mentioned elsewhere in this report, there is a large body of evidence of drama's capacity to contribute to improved writing (see, for example, Anderson & Loughlin, 2014; Booth & Neelands, 1998; Crumpler & Schneider, 2002; McNaughton, 1997; Winston, 2012). In this case student outcomes backed up the existing research. Here, the drama workshops seemed to engage the students deeply on an emotional level and provided them with a reason to write. As a result, their writing was more extensive and more complex. One teacher offered:

Certainly, writing about the process drama we did in-role, I got a lot more from some kids. Not even necessarily in quality of writing. But, in the things that they were telling me, and it was much [more] in the emotional side.... [T]hey really, really could put themselves into that position. Far, far more than I thought- Than they would have if it was just a reading or writing exercise.

Skill development – collaboration and cooperation: As confidence and trust grew, students began to enjoy the classes more. They realised that the value placed on collaboration rather than competition within the class contributed to their learning. One student explained:

And the only thing I like is they communicate [with] each other and they talk and they enjoyed each other.... Nobody is perfect in that class. The class I had no one was saying, "I'm perfect, I'm better than everyone." People were like equal. If the people didn't know anything, they

were helping each other to get to the point that everyone wants to get, to be not shy, friendly, yeah. That was the main thing.

Another, intending to be a nurse recognised the collaborative skills that had developed through practical group activities, stating that drama activities had contributed to “*helping each other*”.

Skill development – leadership: One male student, who normally was reticent to participate and almost completely non-verbal in class, volunteered to take role as the ‘captain’ in the final process drama. He surprised everyone in the room by taking the clipboard with the class list and, loudly and clearly, reading and calling out everyone’s full names to allow them to board the boat. Later, in a group interview he said:

I actually learned about being in leadership.... you and the teachers are the same, so you have to help others to get a bike. For example, when we were going down the hill? ... And some of them were having a broken arm, broken, so we have to help them to go down. All of the captains have to help, that's the responsibility of the captains.

For this student, the opportunity that drama offered for him to step into the shoes of someone else was a powerful transformative moment. The teachers were astonished that he had offered to be a captain as he had not previously shown any indication that he was interested in being a leader. The process drama offered him an opportunity that allowed him to explore the status of such a role and to identify that leaders have responsibilities.

4.4.9.2 Connection to each other.

The nature of the work led many students to find ways to collaborate with the other class members and build connections to their peers. One teacher suggested:

I think one of the main gains was that they gained confidence to speak in front of the class. They have lower English levels but also, culturally, aren't comfortable in Australia yet. Most of the students were very quiet. I saw over the semester that we did it how much more open they were and able to get up there and just perform for their peers.

Although this comment might seem to be more about connection to self or connection to learning, within this case study there were specific cultural tensions which also included some issues of hierarchy. As such, it was important that these tensions were reduced and the hierarchical barriers overcome. To do this, a classroom environment was created where students collaborated with each other, including in mixed cultural and gender groups.

Another teacher commented that the drama workshops had contributed to ‘connection to each other’ in the following way:

I think teamwork, and class cohesiveness is a really big part of that in getting to cooperate in different ways is very valuable. Even simple behaviour management in the class, if you've got the whole class working together, I feel that that works.

In a group interview, the students were asked how drama helped with others. One offered: “*Communicate with different culture, movement, commanding language*”.

Each of the EE classes was made up of students who came from a range of cultures and locations. In a class of eighteen, it was rare to have more than two or three students who came from the same cultural background. For these learners then, the ability to connect and communicate with others was very important. One student suggested that students who were new to drama workshops:

... should also get up and do some activities and have so much fun, start communicating others friends that they never met each other. A person who's alone, they might be also communicating [with someone] that they never spoke to.

One teacher noticed that the sociocultural approach embedded in this medium of learning and interactions meant that, *"They actually learned about the Australian culture more"*.

4.4.9.3 Connection to self.

Although drama often involves taking on the character of others, one student explained that it also allowed for a stronger connection to self. She said: *"Drama's like acting, and then you know yourself, and then you get to know a lot of things. But in them, if you don't have drama, then you won't even learn yourself"*.

Part of the process of knowing yourself is the experience of working in role at what Neelands has defined as Level 3 role-taking (Neelands, 1998, pp. 16-17), when the student has moved from behaving "as they would in any social situation that involved their classmates" (Level 1) to beginning "to imagine, how someone who is different might respond and behave in the circumstances of the drama". The same student gave a clear example of how role-taking helped her distinguish between herself and the self-in-role as a mean student.

Int: *It was hard wasn't it, because remember I said try to choose somebody that you're not like. So, if you are the class clown, try and choose the good studious student. And so, you felt a little bit different when you-*
Student: *I chose the mean one, but first I didn't know I could do it, but then I did it.*

That last comment was said with great pride.

In another group interview, one of the students offered a term that is very affirming about what drama had offered her:

Student 1: *Drama is like a story for life, right?*
Int: *A story for life! That's wonderful.*
Student 1: *It's a story for life, what you do for your life, what you do like- like existing history, like-*
Student 2: *What happened to you.*

Because the classes allowed the students to share their own stories and bring their life experiences to their interpretations in a dramatic form, these students had begun to realise the power of drama as an expressive and communicative medium.

4.4.10 Challenges.

Challenges particular to this case and impacting on its outcomes included:

- Timeframe and regular changes of student population: The study took place within a relatively short timeframe, within which there were many changes to the student population. Each term required time to be used for assessment and this sometimes impacted on time for drama.
- Each group was so very different. It was clear that there was no one-size-fits-all plan that could accommodate the learning needs of all, so the planned program needed to be flexible and reflexive in implementation.
- Space: classes were held in a regular classroom, which was shared with other classes. Therefore, it was not possible to decorate the room with results of the learning (vocabulary, character profiles, stories) and each week the lesson time was eroded by the process of

moving the furniture so that we could have space for drama and then returning the furniture to the original position at the end. This became, on occasions, a difficult situation and a cause for complaint from some students.

- Variation in language levels. Students could be at the extremes of Level 2 and 3 on the Bandscales and at all stages in between. When their language level was high enough to leave the class, they were enrolled in other, more mainstream classes.
- Planning time could not take place within school hours because of timetabling constraints. Planning was undertaken outside regular school hours and was often rushed.

4.4.11 Enablers.

Enablers particular to this case and impacting on its outcomes included:

- Having material to refine and reuse: the capacity to develop materials to support the two overarching themes and to refine these through repetition and responsiveness in different class contexts meant that we had confidence in the robustness of the resources.
- Development and use of 'Speaking and Listening Recording Instrument' to identify areas that required additional attention in planning for learning. This instrument can be used as an assessment and/or a diagnostic tool to determine the focus of learning. The key teacher noted:

Working with [artists], and myself, we've really changed it, and moved it, and had a look at what the kids need, and moved along. I think that's probably been more of the journey, is having a look at what suits these kids, and what's the best way to run it, and then what are we getting out of each time we run it, because we're lucky enough to get to run it twice a year.

- Partnerships between the teacher and artists: in this instance, because the same artists were working with the class on a weekly basis, the capacity for repetition meant that the teacher and the teacher/artist were able to grow in understanding of each other's ways of working. In addition, this approach also allowed for the gradual hand-over to the teacher of pedagogical responsibility.
- Student enthusiasm: Despite some resistance at first, the students for the most part became enthusiastic and positive about the approach. One teacher commented, *"When students missed a class because they were sick or something, they regretted it. That also tells how engaged they were and what it meant to them. How they valued ... they valued other people coming in"*.

4.4.12 Conclusion

This case study reinforces the findings of other research into the affordances of drama as a learning medium in second and additional language learning contexts. Thus, we align with existing research that claims that drama is a highly effective learning medium, when skilfully applied in language learning contexts. The pedagogical characteristics identified by students and teachers, within the case, add nuance to the existing and growing body of literature in the field. This case provides evidence of the following connections as described earlier in this report: connection to learning, connection to each other, and connection to self. Learners reported gains in confidence, understanding of language, the capacity for collaboration and understanding of others. Learners also gained in understanding of themselves, each other, and the capacity for drama to be an expressive and communicative medium. In addition, both learners and teachers considered that our approach to learning language through drama was valuable and as such they aspired to continue working in this way.

The following comment from one of the school leaders, relating specifically to the Essential English case offers a useful summation of the benefits of working in this way. They note:

Being able to have Y Connect involved in the Essential English class, and supporting those young people, because Essential English is something that's really important. Before Y Connect came along, we didn't really have an engaging way to improve students' Essential English ... because that is something that's super important with language acquisition – not just talk as a process, but also talk as performance and that link just wasn't there.

4.5 Case Study Five - Mathematics and Movement



4.5.1 Research question.

This case study was designed to address the following research question: What is the impact on the learning and teaching of Mathematics for students in Years 8-10 when partnerships between dance artists and Mathematics teachers are used to extend and diversify existing pedagogical practices? The figure above demonstrates that three of the six connections were enhanced through this case study: self, each other, and learning.

4.5.2 Participants.

Participating students: Selected Mathematics classes from Years 7-10 across 2016, 2017 and 2018 depending on teacher interest in being involved.

Key teachers: Peter Cooper, Ben Habermehl, Rachael Huguenin, Emily Jones and Sabina Syed.

Key artists: Renee Place, Leane Ungerer and Liesel Zink.

4.5.3 Scope.

- 66.5 hours of duration.
- 981 points of student contact within the “Mathematics and Movement” case.
- 53 events including 43 classroom-based workshops and 10 design and planning sessions between artists and teachers.
- 14 teachers and their classes across the span of the case.

4.5.4 Data sources.

- Student interviews.
- Teacher interviews.
- Artist interviews.
- Teachers' Survey 2018.

- Observations.
- Photographs and video recordings.
- Unit and lesson plans.
- Student test samples and results – pre and post-tests.

4.5.5 Mathematical concepts addressed.

- Venn diagrams.
- Fractions and decimals.
- Ratios.
- Area, volume and perimeters.
- Positive and negative integers.
- Co-ordinates.
- Geometry including angles.
- Algebra.
- Probability and statistics.
- Index notation.

4.5.6 Background.

This case study was instigated at the request of the now retired HoD, who was keen for the Mathematics teaching team to be part of the Y Connect Project. The aim was to explore the pedagogical and learning potential of partnering dance artists with Mathematics teachers. Mostly completed in Year 8 and 9 classrooms, the work was aimed at improving these students' mathematical understanding relating to aspects of the Australian Curriculum. Student engagement and motivation were further inspiring factors.

To kickstart this case study, a series of professional learning workshops involving all members of the Mathematics Department, were co-developed by the Project Manager, the HoD and a well-known Brisbane dance artist and choreographer. During these sessions, the possibilities and possible constraints of using dance and movement-based approaches were explored, with early adopter teachers also identified. Lessons were then planned in partnership between Dance artists, the HoD and the participating teachers, with the first step being to identify the specific middle years of schooling mathematical concepts best suited to a movement-based approach. As in other cases across the Y Connect Project, the participation of individual students was reliant on the participation of their teachers.

As the Project progressed, so too did the delivery models, including the level of involvement of the dance artists, with their participation also being dependent upon their individual availability. This flexibility eventually resulted in two models of delivery:

- Dance artist as both co-planner and co-teacher; and,
- Dance artist as co-planner without co-teaching.

These two models were deemed to be an essential means of achieving sustainability for the program, with the new HoD (from 2017) being keen for teachers to take increasing control over the teaching process as the program progressed. For some teachers this was a fairly easy step as they grasped the possibilities quickly, while others, including those new to the program, took more time and appreciated the continued presence and involvement of the dance artist within their classrooms.

4.5.7 Informing literature.

Australia has witnessed a steady slide in the number of students studying Mathematics in Year 12. In 2016, just 7% of female and 12 % of male students studied Advanced Mathematics (Finkel, 2018). Alan Finkel, the Australian Chief Scientist, commented on this falling participation by suggesting that data

revealed a 20-year decline in the proportion of students taking intermediate and advanced Mathematics at year 12. In addition, concerns have been raised about the outcomes achieved by Australian students completing the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), with Mathematics outcomes declining by 30 points since 2003 (Thomson, De Bortoli, & Underwood, 2017).

Disengagement in Mathematics in the middle years is also of great concern, especially with recent studies such as those created by Collie et al. (2018) involving 194 Australian secondary school students across three rounds of data collection and five academic years of schooling, which confirm that Mathematics aspirations decline over time, while disengagement increases over this time. In attempting to understand why this might be the case, Skilling et. al. (2016) conducted in-depth interviews with 31 Australian high school teachers to identify their perceptions of engagement in the Year 7 Mathematics classroom. They identified four practices which these teachers saw as being effective in supporting and extending student engagement in Mathematics. These are practices that: emphasise the relevance and future value of Mathematics; enhance student autonomy and empowerment; emphasise student interest; and emphasise interpersonal relationships. They also identified practices that limit student engagement, with these being low expectations and controlling teacher styles; as well as the perception that completing curriculum requirements was more important than using practices more likely to engage. In relation to this latter perception, Skilling et. al report that the most common reason for not using more practical approaches was insufficient time.

In response to these concerns, a number of articles (Bush, Karp, Lentz, & Nadler, 2017; Cunnington, Kantrowitz, Harnett, & Hill-Ries, 2014; Leandro, Monteiro, & Melo, 2018; Moore & Linder, 2012; Rosenfeld, 2011; Anne Watson, 2005; and Wood, 2008) have reported on attempts to employ movement and arts-based approaches within Mathematics classrooms. However, these studies have almost exclusively been conducted in primary school settings, particularly in early years classrooms. Others, while aiming to improve Mathematics achievement, have tackled the problem by focusing on dance rather than Mathematics in the hope that there would be flow-on benefits. Studies where secondary Mathematics teachers partnered with dance artists are difficult to locate.

Nonetheless dance and mathematics can be excellent partners in learning. Belcastro and Schaffer (2011, p. 16) describe these links by arguing that “there are superficial links such as counting steps or noticing shapes, but also deeper connections such as mathematical concepts arising naturally in dance, mathematics inspiring dance, or using mathematics to solve choreographic problems”. Others go further, creating projects where mathematical concepts are taught, reinforced and applied through Dance and movement. For example, in her work in a primary school setting in rural Western Australia, Wood (2008) employed dance approaches to teach shape, measurement, number and chance and data. She found that engagement improved, which in turn fostered a higher level of talk about these concepts. The study also revealed that students gained deeper and more contextual understandings.

4.5.8 What did it look like in action? Pedagogical characteristics.

Within the interview process, teachers, artists and students involved in this case study were invited to comment on their Y Connect experiences, including to describe its pedagogical characteristics. Here it is important to point out that only some of the lessons in each unit were taught using movement, while the lessons themselves were not all movement focused. Instead, there tended to be a warm-up session, followed by the movement component which extended for varying durations of up to 20 or 30 minutes, followed by a written component where the students had the chance to apply what they had just experienced to solve problems in a written format. This application phase was deemed to be critical, ensuring that the students made links between the movement and the mathematical concept in its more abstract form. As one teacher noted, “*they [the students] don’t want to move for 60 minutes*”.

While most lessons were delivered as a partnership between the dance artists and the teachers, with both participating actively in the teaching of the students, in some cases the Mathematics teacher preferred to let the dance artist lead during the movement aspects of the class, before taking over to re-connect the students to the concept as articulated in their text books or on the whiteboard.

Analysis of their comments in relation to this latter aspect revealed the following characteristics: active, agentic and embodied; collaborative; creative and playful; encouraged risk taking; provided opportunities to create somatic knowing (knowing through the body); established a fun learning environment that catered for different levels of achievement; and was a space where mistakes were not judged. Importantly, there was also general agreement amongst respondents that to be successful, the work needed to be challenging. Here the comments of one of the dance artists are useful: *"In terms of challenging the kids, I think sometimes, especially with the year eights, sometimes the exercises were too simple and too straightforward and so, they would lose interest"*. A Year 8 student reinforced this perspective when he wanted the movement sessions to "extend" them.

Nevertheless, the students really appreciated the opportunities for active learning, with a Year 8 student describing the approach in this way: *"... we're not just sitting down in one place and getting distracted, we're all focusing on the one thing and the different ways we can come about it [the answer] as well"*.

Another student from the same year level captured the sense of agency the students experienced when she offered this description of how the dance artist worked:

She would make us think outside of the box ... and she'd make us use our bodies and stuff. So, she'd make us think of what to do. Again, she wasn't just telling ... it was a bit negotiated. It wasn't just someone dictating the whole class. We had a say in how we'd like to come about it ... so yeah, just gave us a bit of a hold on the reins.

Finally, one of the Dance artists describes in her words the different ways that movement can be used in the Mathematics classroom, offering these words:

Some people can really learn through moving and getting up and physicalising the maths with their body and sometimes that can be as much as their physical movement, just engaging them in the maths. But at other times, using movement to actually problem-solve as well. And I think that's where the real magic comes, when they [students] have to use their bodies to try and understand the concept so that they can then translate that into writing as well.

4.5.9 Impact on learners and learning.

A small number of the interviewed students suggested that the approach had generated no impact on them or their learning, while a further small group of students noted that while there were benefits, these were only associated with students who they perceived as struggling with Mathematics understanding or confidence. Others quite rightly indicated that it wasn't sufficient as an approach, with one student noting that *"Even though it did teach us, it didn't really cover the whole basis of what we needed to know"*.

A further student suggested that it took her some time to recognise the benefits of the approach, offering this comment:

It was kinda strange to start with, like whoa doing something in maths class what is it? And then it was kinda fun because for the first time in my whole school life I've actually enjoyed doing something in maths.

Overall however, all teachers, artists and the majority of the interviewed students identified positive impacts. These impacts, as in all other case study reports, have been grouped according to the connections they generated. Within this case study, three connections were identified: connection to learning, connection to self and connection to each other, with connection to learning being by far the most significant.

In the sections that follow, these connections will be outlined, drawing on analysis of a range of data, with an emphasis on the interview data that was analysed using the NVivo program. Below however is a diagram created using Leximancer content analysis software which offers a different way of understanding the data. This program creates a visual image of the key themes and their connections based on the interview transcripts. It reveals that within the interview transcripts, the concept of movement is unsurprisingly connected to doing, which is importantly connected to remembering. It also reveals that the respondents saw movement as being “different” but importantly linked to learning, which is linked to better. The connection between artist and talk is also of interest here, suggesting that the presence of the artist may have served to create a more dialogic classroom.

Figure 4.1. Key Themes and Connections



4.5.9.1 Connection to learning.

Within the Mathematics and Movement case study, connection to learning was by far the strongest connection, with comments mostly being focused on how the movement-based approach supported mathematical understanding and achievement. However, important attitudinal benefits were also identified, and these are discussed below.

Mathematical understanding and achievement

Qualitative data: Analysis of the qualitative data revealed that the involvement of artists and/or the adoption of a movement-based approach planned by teachers and artists working collaboratively had created a series of benefits relating to student understanding and achievement. These included:

- Improvement in the recall of mathematical concepts;
- Improvement in the understanding of mathematical concepts;
- Improvements in the retention of Mathematics vocabulary;
- Improved assessment results for some students; and
- For some students, the creative challenge of thinking outside the box.

These findings suggest that through embodied engagement, some students were not only able to gain a clearer understanding of a particular concepts, but some of them were also able to transfer and

apply this understanding within assessment contexts. For example, in relation to the recall of concepts, one teacher, referring to work relating to algebraic equations explained: *“That’s the light bulb moment. They’re remembering what the variable meant, and that it was three because it was three claps. It’s a physical representation of the abstract. That’s what they remember”*.

In terms of how this physical embodiment of abstract concepts was then applied in written assessment, a school leader noted:

... especially with your alternate angles, the Dance pattern ... I saw a kid doing it before his exam with his fingers. I walked in and I was just watching them doing their post exam for the case study, and I watched him using his fingers on the desk like a mini-version of the Dance.

In support of these teacher perceptions, a Year 9 student offered a description of how he drew on memories of his embodied experience to support achievement, noting: *“Then I remembered the most, it’s sort of stuck in my head. Through tests actually and stuff, I would just see people and it sorta got me the answer”*. Indeed, one younger student (Year 8) offered the following description of movement-based pedagogies, *“Instead of sharpening your pencil, you sharpen your brain!”*.

In terms of recalling experiences from the movement sessions and using this recall to support work within examination contexts, one student suggested that his memory had been activated because he had *“lived it”*:

We were in shapes and stuff and remembering formulas then in the test, you can remember back to that, instead of just on the whiteboard. Cause you can see it instead of hearing it and you lived it ... Yeah. You lived it.

In attempting to understand how she experienced a similar impact one student explained her thoughts this way:

It perhaps used a different part of our sort of brain? We haven’t done anything like this throughout my last high school and I think it’s just a different way to come about learning ... different concepts like, definitely we learnt differently, and it helped ... so yeah.

Quantitative data: The table below offers a summary of the quantitative data reported to the university research team by the current Head of the Mathematics Department at Yeronga SHS. This data was generated by the teachers themselves, drawing upon pre- and post-tests that they conducted across the duration of the project. These tests related to the specific mathematical concepts taught using movement and dance-based approaches. The table takes into account the period of involvement of individual teachers with the Y Connect Project, as well as the model of delivery they selected.

Of course, a range of other variables not included in the table would also be relevant, such as the experience level of the individual teacher and the specifics of each cohort of students. Nevertheless, it appears to indicate that the prolonged engagement of teachers across the duration of Y Connect had a positive impact on student retention of concepts taught, with student results in relation to the pre and post-tests being, on average, higher when teachers were involved in the Y Connect Project. It also reveals that for teachers with long term engagement in the Project, the continued involvement of the artist in their classroom did not produce any additional benefits once the skills and understandings of movement-based pedagogies were initially developed.

Table 4.2. Summary of Teacher Generated Quantitative Data – Mathematics and Movement

	<i>No Y Connect approaches employed</i>	<i>Y Connect approaches delivered as partnership between Mathematics teachers and Dance artists</i>	<i>Y-Connect approaches delivered by Mathematics teacher but informed by professional learning delivered by Dance artists + collaborative planning sessions</i>
<i>Teachers involvement with Y Connect Program</i>	<i>Nil Y Connect involvement</i>	<i>.5 to 2 years + Y Connect involvement</i>	<i>2 years + Y Connect Involvement</i>
<i>Relative student gain based on pre and post-test of concepts taught using Y Connect approaches</i>	<i>4-8%</i>	<i>5-12%</i>	<i>5-14%</i>

Attitudinal benefits: In addition to the benefits outlined above relating to understanding and achievement, a significant majority of respondents also identified attitudinal benefits. These were described as follows:

- When used in the early part of the lesson, movement-based approaches helped to prepare students to learn;
- Movement approaches added variety which kept students interested, lifted engagement and improved focus; and
- Students suggested that Mathematics became exciting, fun and less stressful.

Of these responses, the majority were associated with engagement, with teachers, artists and most students agreeing that student engagement levels were higher across the Y Connect sessions. This was deemed as being particularly important for students who don't normally enjoy Mathematics for various reasons. One teacher noted: *"He needed that different kind of stimulation to make him engage and like what he's learning"*.

A potential reason for the improved level of enthusiasm was identified by one of the participating teachers who suggested that her enthusiasm was projected onto the students and that when she became more engaged, her students did too. She argued: *"Teachers acted as learning role models for students because we were learning new things too"*.

Another perspective, offered in the extended response below, highlights the value of improved student engagement for individuals who have specific learning challenges:

[For] low literacy, low numeracy, students who are disengaged, absolutely hate maths ... They come to a [Y Connect] lesson not feeling threatened because they start the lesson and then move. They're not being told, "Okay open your text books, start this question", that they know they're going to get wrong. So immediately they go, "Oh, I can participate in this. I know how to move. I can move my body to the instruction that's being given". And they are applying that engaged feeling to the rest of the math lesson. That's what I see happening in class. And then when we sit down to do our work either on a worksheet or a text book, they go, "Oh, okay, I

can get it more now because I've just moved in it." It's making that connection. So, yeah, it's definitely engaging those kids who are normally disengaged and giving them the opportunity to participate in non-regular maths classroom.

In relation to the reduction in stress, three Year 7 students offered the following comments:

Student 1: I prefer the movement, just because it's more relaxed than doing work on paper.

Student 2: It's less stressful, I guess. Like, you're not really on a time limit except for the end of class.

Student 3: It's a bit less stressful and more fun.

Interestingly, one Year 8 boy linked attitudinal and understanding benefits when he described his responses in this way: *"Normally I'd be just writing stuff down, sometimes I'm bored of it, mostly stressed just thinking about it. But then movement kept me engaged so I was more focused, so yeah, definitely helped me remember it".*

Importantly, it should also be noted that not all students enjoyed the Dance component of lessons, with some being resistant, especially at first. In some cases, this resistance was related to preferring not to move, while for others there was the perception, highlighted above, that movement-based approaches are only useful for students who are not *"good at maths"*. Within one artist interview, these differences were highlighted:

It is very interesting to see how some kids really responded and they got really excited over the fact that they would be doing maths but in a very different way, and then you also had kids where they went, well, I don't like dancing, I don't wanna move.

4.5.9.2 Connection to self.

While this connection was nowhere near as regularly articulated in the data compared to connection to learning, within the teacher data it was certainly highlighted as being significant. It included perceptions that the following aspects of self were enhanced: learner confidence, learner identity, learner motivation, pleasure in the learning process and an associated notion of required participation.

In terms of this latter notion, emphasis was placed on how important this was for students from a non-English speaking background who, when using other approaches, often lacked the confidence to take a risk or articulate their views. Here a school leader's comments in relation to EALD students are interesting: *"Getting them up and moving and away from their books, they can't hide. So, the ability to talk and to relate to other students and to explain what they're doing is brilliant".*

For another teacher, this was coupled with the idea that the more active and collaborative approach used in the Y Connect Project created a greater sense of a community of learners where everyone is respected. She noted: *"I think with maths if you have low self-esteem associated with maths, you do really badly ... so if you're confident you're going to do better".*

In a later interview, when asked to identify the benefits, if any, of the Y Connect approach, this same teacher again highlighted aspects of self, including pleasure, confidence and motivation:

I think improving their confidence ... because maths is one of those subjects, you either love it or hate it and a lot of kids hate it. So, for them to actually enjoy coming to maths lessons I think would absolutely inspire them to engage across the board and the other curriculum areas and just like coming to school more ... I think it improves their general confidence in their maths ability and definitely more motivated and just- you know fun.

Finally, one student sums up the connection to self when they note: *“It’s a bit less stressful and more fun”*.

4.5.9.3 Connection to each other.

A second minor connection was the sense of connectedness which was engendered between students. For the students themselves, the collaborative nature of the work gave them the chance to learn in a team. For example, *“Well, if a teacher gives you a sheet, you have to basically work it out in your head or ask the teacher and stuff. But if you work as a whole group, you can boost your confidence”*.

From the teacher’s perspective, this student to student connectedness was beneficial in mixing up gender and social groupings. She notes:

I think the mixing with other people was good and it was good that [artist] got them up and she got them moving, because traditionally the class sits, girls on one side and the boys on the other. That’s how they’ve chosen to sit. It was good seeing them mixed up. They got to talk to other people they wouldn’t normally associate with, so that was really good from that side of things.

4.5.10 Challenges.

Of course, this case study was not without its challenges. These included:

- Artist knowledge of Mathematics concepts and vocabulary,
- Alignment of language between teacher and artist,
- Selection of units – this approach is not suitable for the teaching of all Mathematics concepts,
- Managing student participation,
- Matching teachers and artists,
- Managing student perceptions of dance in the Mathematics classroom,
- Catering for all achievement levels,
- Time and timing – including planning time, and,
- Classroom environment - space.

Of perhaps most significance amongst these was the one associated with artist knowledge of Mathematics concepts and vocabulary. For this reason, the partnership process was critical, with quality time spent planning lessons being particularly important. In relation to these processes, one dance artist noted:

I found that with the movement and planning for a movement lesson for maths I needed to know how exactly they [the teachers] would teach the rules of maths so I can apply that, not just in a very literal way with my movement classes, but, apply the rules and all of that into the movement as well.

In terms of managing student perceptions, as noted above, some found the whole concept quite confronting at first, with one student suggesting she was confused: *“It was my first time doing something like this, so I was a bit confused. I also was a bit shy, I don’t really wanna Dance in maths in a classroom, it’s a bit weird”*.

Other challenges listed above related more to teachers than students, including matching artists to teachers, finding time to plan and the issues associated with space were discussed earlier in this report in relation to Research Question Two.

4.5.11 Conclusion

The data generated within this case overwhelmingly suggests that the involvement of a dance artist and the use of a movement-based approach for the teaching of Mathematics within these junior secondary classrooms resulted in a series of positive outcomes – especially for those students who struggle with their understanding of or engagement with Mathematics. Within these sessions, the Mathematics classroom was transformed, with both teachers and students experiencing a more energised form of learning. One student's comments in relation to this aspect are insightful:

What I really loved was the teacher also actually enjoyed and wanted to do it. They didn't just say, "Okay kids ... what do you do for subtraction ... they'd be kind of like, "What do you DO for subtraction?" It made us more like engaged.

Given responses like these and the others offered above and across the data set, the HoD revealed within the interviews conducted at the conclusion of the formal Y Connect data collection period that movement-based approaches would now be included in all planning documents from year 7 to year 10 and that professional development sessions and the in-class involvement of dance artists would continue into the future. He argued that although there were challenges, these were mostly easily overcome through good teacher and partnership management. Importantly, he also commented on the transformation of some of the Mathematics teachers who were reluctant at first, suggesting that he had seen a “metamorphosis” that had transformed them “from sceptics to promoters of Y Connect and movement as a pedagogy.”

4.6 Case Study Six - The Forum Program: Drama for Hope and Belonging



4.6.1 Research question:

This case study was designed to address the following research question: How did participation in the Forum Program impact the sense of connectedness and belonging of the Forum participants? The figure above demonstrates that improvements in three of the six connections were revealed within this case study: self, each other, and school community.

4.6.2 Scope.

The Forum Program consisted of 27 workshops, resulting in 27 hours of delivery and 486 points of student contact. The Forum Program saw artists adopt drama-based approaches in an attempt to create a sense of hope and belonging. It was driven by several important principles relating to the learning environment including the need to create a space where: students could experience a sense of community and a sense of belonging; secure and positive relationship building was encouraged amongst peers and between the participants and teachers; people were able to trust each other; joyful encounters and experiences were created; and where the learning activities were meaningful, challenging but ultimately achievable.

4.6.3 Participants.

Participating students: The students involved in this case study were a specially selected group of Year 11 and 12 students from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds, ranging in age from 16 to 20 years. A small number of these were selected for participation in the group based on their ability to be strong role models, while the majority were included because they had specific vulnerabilities or life challenges including anxiety, limited family support, exposure to or experience of domestic violence, and limited English language skills. At the beginning of 2016, there were officially 17 Year 11s (13 females and four males) and eight Year 12s (three males and five females) in the group. By the time the Project concluded at the end of 2016, 32 young people had participated at various times. Countries of origin for the participants included: Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Kenya, Liberia, Pakistan, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda. Their declared first languages included: African, Ewe, Dari, Dinka, French, Kurdish, Pashto, Somali, Swahili, and Tigrinya. The visa subclass of the young people initially enrolled gives some indication of the difficulties of their lives. These include refugee (visa sub-class 200); woman at risk (visa sub-class 204); global special humanitarian entrant (visa sub-class 202); and aged dependent relative (visa sub-class 114). Two students were persons seeking asylum – one had a bridging visa, the other had no visa.

Key teachers/artists: Penny Bundy, Sanaz Hamoonpou, Adrienne Jones.

Other participating arts organisations: QPAC.

4.6.5 Data Sources.

- Initial interview with the Deputy Principal who established the group and selected the participants.
- Co-teacher interviews.
- Reflective conversations between team members.
- Teacher planning and reflection documents.
- Ten student interviews.
- While video footage of class work was also captured, this material was unable to be used as research data because insufficient informed consent was achieved in order for this to occur.

4.6.6 Informing literature.

This informing literature section has been adapted from Bundy, 2017.

Correa-Velez et al. (2010, p. 1400) argue that the settlement experience for individuals with a refugee background can be potentially more damaging than the pre-migration experience. They suggest that people need to feel welcome and included, and that they need a sense of belonging and achievement in their new land (Correa-Velez et al., 2010, p. 1399). Yohani (2008, p. 313) found in her work that 'connectedness to others' plays 'an important role in enhancing hope', with hope recognised as a 'key in coping, overcoming adversity, and living under uncertain and stressful life experiences' (Yohani 2010, p. 258). Although numerous scholars recognise this, Yohani and Larsen (2009, p. 246) found that there was a lack of focus on hope in programs designed to support refugee communities.

Te Riele (2010, p. 36) draws attention to the three elements that comprise Snyder's (2002) broadly recognised theory of hope: goals, pathways to achieve goals, and agency – the perception that one is capable of working towards the goal. Te Riele (2010, p. 39) has argued however that hope needs to be considered in the context of the agency of individuals and groups together with the social conditions that constrain and support them. Young people need experiences in the classroom that allow them to feel success. They also need to experience secure and positive relationships with family,

peers and teachers. A person who feels supported by their personal and social networks is more likely to experience hope than one who is isolated. A person who feels secure in their settlement status is more likely to experience hope than one who is not.

In response to this situation, Cassity and Gow (2005) outline several recommendations to encourage a sense of belonging. They highlight the need for a communal, community development approach, which includes peer mentoring and a vision for the long-term participation of refugee young people. Uptin et al. (2013) offer more specific recommendations, suggesting that activities such as sports and music offered “spaces and identities where it was possible to become included within the school culture” (p. 132) but warn that some of these opportunities run the risk of reinforcing racial stereotypes. They go on however to offer an example of one successful approach that has strong links to the Y Connect Forum Program case study, outlining the experiences of a young participant within a Drama class:

She was given an opportunity in Drama class to say who she is, to be seen and heard, to share some of her experiences and to present her ‘refugeeness’ in a way where she is in control of how she could present herself. The result of this gave her acceptance and friends and a sense of connecting and belonging to the school. (p. 134)

4.6.7 What did it look like in action? Pedagogical characteristics.

Key characteristics included:

- The application of a range of drama forms, including extended process drama work;
- A check in, where everyone was greeted and invited to share something with the rest of the group;
- Student goal setting;
- Choice of group size; and
- Group reflections.

Of these, the check in section of each session appeared to be particularly important, with one member of the teaching team suggesting that it allowed time for the participants to be still and take a moment instead of rushing into the session. She noted:

... we never had that, “Yes, let’s get it done,” thing. We had that moment of stillness to us, in the beginning, that I really love, that, “Let’s just sit,” and, “What are you doing today?” Or kind of a moment that, “Okay, I’m not rushing this, let’s just greet”.

Students also noted that both within this check in time and across the sessions they were encouraged to share their ideas and reflections, creating opportunities not always available in other classes. One of the senior students stated:

If the teacher asks for ideas, in those other classes, its optional if you put your hand up when you want and when you don’t want but in here you go around and people actually say what they have in mind but in other classes like no one is there to actually tell them, like to say, what’s in their mind even if they have great ideas.

Another young man highlighted the importance of having the freedom to express his feelings:

I really like the fact that we have the freedom of expression in the classroom because most other time in our classroom you don’t really have that. Freedom. You just have to do what you’re meant to do. This class gives us freedom to express ourselves in ways that we don’t normally do in other classes.

The topics explored within the drama sessions were also critical, with a coherent stimulus being explored from different angles each week. Importantly, as noted by one of the co-teachers, the engagement of the students was dependent upon this stimulus offering: a complex and engaging story told well; a genuine authentic tone; a sense that the teacher was sharing something important with them; having the potential for meaningful activities and a role for the students to find themselves in within the story.

The choice of a situation and a character they could identify with while at the same time offering sufficient distance in terms of time and place from their own cultural experiences was also important. However, the personal difficulties and dilemmas faced by the characters in the drama work needed to be of sufficient interest to them and could have been their stories too.

Another aspect of the approach was the choice of tasks and roles, with one co-teacher noting that when the students were given the job of being the teachers, they were also given the power of the story:

Again, I learned that if the task is not demanding them to be someone meaningful in the story, like you gave them the role of the teacher – they had a job, it matched the story, and they were going to, you know, find out the destiny or really change the course of the story. So, if they are given the power of the author, which you did, they felt really powerful and they acted it.

In addition, there were no right answers, no right ending. The students needed to use their imaginations to solve the difficult situations that characters in the various stories faced, with the fact that these stories came from people of backgrounds different from their own, being significant.

4.6.8 Impact on learners and learning.

Analysis of the interview data revealed that three of the six connections were strongly present within the data relating to this case: connection to self, connection to each other and belonging through connection to the school community. These connections will now be discussed.

4.6.8.1 Connection to self.

The most significant aspects of self that were highlighted in the data set were confidence, self-worth and trust, with the most common of these being confidence. Here many students noted that while their shyness in other classes was having a negative impact on their willingness and ability to talk and engage, their participation within the Forum Program was helping to reduce this: *“It makes me feel comfortable talking in front of people because after working together we have to present our point of view which is really good. I think it can take away shyness.”*

One of the co-teachers made a similar comment suggesting:

I think we’ve definitely added to their oracy and confidence in speaking. Even if they’re saying things that in English might not sound perfect, but that willingness to say something in front of others, I think we’ve come a long way.

In spite of these positive outcomes however, one of the teachers felt that the Forum sessions could have done more to extend this confidence into other learning areas, including writing. They noted: *“I personally wanted to see, again from the ideal point of view, wanted to see how we could try and help them a little bit more in the literacy a tiny bit, that confidence.”*

Nevertheless, the confidence boost some of them did achieve appears to have flowed over to improvement in their sense of self-worth, including their ability to trust themselves to make useful contributions. The following comments from three students are reflective of this:

... I did not trust myself in doing everything but now I trust myself, because when I bring up something, like how I was bringing up something that we can do in the drama, and it's come up a good thing, and I feel like the leader of the group, the little group and ... I find it works.

Before I didn't thought [sic] that I can do things but now I feel and know and believe that I can do stuff. Before I didn't know that I am good at stuff. Whenever people say do this, I say no. I can't do it. But now I realise that I can do it because I feel more better seeing what I can do.

Sometimes I feel like I'm a person who can't do anything or was not good enough, but when I'm like working in a team I try my best to what the teacher is expecting and teacher is always telling me that I am doing great and kind of stuff.

One of the teaching team suggested that the absence of assessment requirements might have contributed to the students' enjoyment of the sessions and their consequent growth in confidence arguing:

I feel like in other classes, because of the curriculum, the force that we have and the assessment and the grading that is attached to it, people are quite more cautious in terms of, "Well, every risk I take, there's a consequence", ... Whereas in our class, because there's no grading involved ...

One relatively new student seems to sum up how participation in the Forum Program enhanced her connection to self:

I just get a feeling [in another class] like I'm nobody in the class. Everybody is on the top and I'm nobody. I feel discouraged by myself. But in the drama class [Forum], it's really, really important and it takes away some worries and makes you feel comfortable about yourself. Makes you value yourself. You know? Feel confident in yourself. Do what you can do and it's alright. Not stressed and worried.

4.6.8.2 Connection to each other.

Another outcome arising from the collaborative approaches used appears to be that students formed stronger connections to each other, with the students suggesting that the drama sessions required them to help and support each other. One young man commented that in all his other classes he just did individual work, but that within Forum, the pair and small group work encouraged him to participate, to contribute his own ideas, to take risks, and to communicate. Others noted that this collaboration had a flow on effect to their oral language skills and language confidence. Here are three typical comments:

In a small group you get to learn because you know something, but you don't know all. You get to share ideas and learn from all the people. You improve your speaking with other people. As much as you speak you make mistakes, and someone will be able to correct you. You can be able to learn from them.

Most of the people in there, English is not our first language, and some people don't feel comfortable about talking among public, and some people feel shy to speak out their mind. These sessions are really good because they help people to share their ideas, helps people to communicate, improve their communication skills. It helps them also to build up their confidence. Yeah to learn from each other which is really good.

Here you get to share things. And you just get to learn how to share. Normally I'm not that kind of person, who likes telling things, sharing ideas. I'm not really that kind of person that

shares ideas. Just keep quiet. But this class just helps me you know. Here it's easy to share ideas because everyone is doing the same thing.

The comfort felt by the students as they worked together with the same group of peers also influenced their willingness to contribute ideas. For example, one student stated: *"When we are here, we don't mind. It's like we are like brothers and sisters. We talk to each other and everyone gives their own opinion in what we are doing and we discuss about it."*

4.6.8.3 Connection to the school community.

For the majority of students who regularly attended the sessions, a sense of community and belonging was created. They identified as members of this particular group and noted that they would greet each other in the playground outside class time. Many commented on feeling comfortable working in this environment, sometimes even comparing this to how they felt in other classes. A student who was relatively new to the class and to Australia stated:

So, it was very hard for me but the day I came here, it was, it felt like I'm home. Everyone is my friend. My family. You know. So, I didn't feel anything. Just very good and happy. Every time. Talk to anyone. Tell anyone that I trust my things you know.

One of the teaching team noted similar characteristics of the sessions:

I see a degree of self-expression that normally I don't see a lot of in other classes that happens in our class, and I think it's because they feel like, "Whoa, there's no risk here for me." Like, "Whoever I am, they're going to just smile and be interested to learn more about." We're interested in their ideas, and every day we go we do a greeting, we talk to them and we just want to learn more about them, that interest comes from, all of a sudden I think they feel like, "Well, there's no risk-taking here. I can just be who I am."

Later she added:

I think that is a really good sense of a student or someone from a different culture thinking, "These guys are really interested. They're here for me, really, not just because they have to or that this is a class." Whereas, I think in other classes that's not the case because we always have a job, "Let's go," and we're there for that job.

These teacher comments are reinforced by the offering of one student who felt supported in the Forum Program and believed that the teachers genuinely cared about her:

Oh my god. I think because we can talk about it. What we do. In my [other] class it's like, you go to class and you don't just talk and she'll look at you for language. She's not focusing on you, on how you feel because sometimes I might be feeling really depressed. If I don't speak it out, she won't know. That don't help me focus what she is saying. And I will never get what she is saying. That's what happens to me most of the time.

One of the teaching team offers the following comment that seems to summarise the value of the work in terms of creating a sense of belonging:

... belonging really means that you're kind of wanted somewhere, not that you're just welcome because it's a good thing to welcome people ... I think, especially for our students, when we make them feel like there's something in you that I need or something that you're adding to this, that's when they really, genuinely, without any outsider feeling, they feel, "Oh, there's a spot for me".

4.6.9 Enabling factors.

A number of key points emerged as contributing to these positive outcomes. These include:

- The willingness of the students to engage;
- The collaboration across the teaching team and their willingness to listen to students;
- The structure of the sessions and the drama approaches adopted, including the agency of the students;
- The drama work was challenging and required them to solve problems creatively with no right and wrong answers;
- The qualities of the stimulus materials which encouraged meaningful engagement;
- A classroom environment where people felt that they were valued as individuals by the teachers and their peers, accompanied by permission to have fun; and
- Feeling a sense of success/ achievement led to further willingness to attempt new tasks which in turn had the possibility of leading to further achievement.

4.6.10 Conclusion

Within this case study, the attempts to create a safe and creative space for the young people to engage in were successful. New friendships were forged in a workshop space filled with joy, optimism and fun. These conditions were especially important for those young people for whom these conditions are not always available. Within this group there were opportunities for students to be playful, creative, physical, and ironic. The fictional worlds and characters explored were of sufficient interest to matter. Positive peer to peer and student-teacher relationships were built. Some of the students who were reluctant speakers when the work began, developed the confidence to voice their ideas and opinions. Throughout this work they variously experienced success and a more positive sense of their own capabilities. A sense of belonging developed. The school's decision to create the space for a program like this provided the opportunity for these young people to have a valuable and joyful experience.

PART 5 – FUTURE DIRECTIONS, SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALABILITY

While the outcomes shared across this report suggest that Y Connect approaches have much to offer a range of stakeholders, including students, teachers and artists, key questions remain, including those associated with future directions, sustainability and scalability. In the following sections, these three topics are addressed in turn.

5.1 Future Directions

Across the final interviews, as well as within the post-study student and teacher surveys, respondents were asked to consider the prospect of the Y Connect funding coming to an end, and also to make suggestions about future directions and possible alternate delivery models in light of this lack of continuing funding.

5.1.1 Student survey responses.

In the final section of the post-study student survey, students were invited to offer qualitative comments about the prospect of the Y Connect Project coming to an end. While the team had already gathered qualitative comments about this potential situation within final interviews, we were keen to check the authenticity of these via the anonymous survey process.

Analysis of these student survey comments reveal that some respondents were not at all concerned about the potential of Y Connect concluding. For example, one student suggested that this was good news and offered the comment: “farewell to bad rubbish”, while another failed to see any links between Y Connect and learning when they wrote: “I’m here for one thing and one thing only, getting my education, not to go to Y Connect”. In addition, a small number of respondents complained that they had not had sufficient chance to participate and as a result felt like they had “missed out!” In spite of these comments, the majority of respondents appeared to be disappointed, either for themselves or others. Some typical examples were:

I think Y Connect plays a significant role in some students’ learning. I feel when Y Connect finishes classes may not be as interesting as they were. I think it should continue as it is an important learning tool for many students.

It worries me that students including myself won’t be able to have the experience or opportunities to participate in these activities any more, especially those with a passion and skill for the Arts.

I feel bad for future students who would not be able to work with artists and I am also sad myself because I will no longer get the chance to. I think a similar program should be put in place after Y Connect finishes.

It was brilliant having artists and such amazing opportunities surrounding the Arts, which really has made normal school days more enjoyable and has boosted my confidence. I hope that the school could bring back the Y Connect program as it was so much more enjoyable than the average class room. Bringing in real artists, with real advice because they have more knowledge and accurate advice to pass down to young artists in our school. Overall it was a brilliant program.

One student suggested it “should be standard”, while another said it was “not good” that Y Connect might end, because Y Connect in general and the *Star Cross’d Smash* performance in particular had been “unbelievably awesome”. Finally, one student offered this simple comment: “I am sad!”.

5.1.2 Student interview responses.

One question included in the interviews conducted at the conclusion of the study, asked students to suggest what they would say to the Queensland Minister for Education about the project. Somewhat surprisingly for our team, many simply wanted to say thank you for the opportunities and the funding that was required to make the Project happen. For example, one boy offered this response:

We'll say thank you for doing this for us, it help us learn things that we didn't know before. You see, we can talk to people now and we can tell them how we feel and it might help us. So, thank you for that.

Others wanted to plead for more artists, with one student from a refugee background offering a request, not only for artists, but for artists from diverse backgrounds: *"We need more artists in school, miss, to teach us more. Different artists from different countries, miss"*. Another noted that they would tell the minister to continue the program, *"because it just can open up doors for other people"*.

Some students were very particular about what they wanted in terms of arts exposure. For example, one student was keen to see theatre visits continue:

I think the best way they can spend money to people, especially refugee people, that is the best thing. Because refugee people, some people, we went to the theatre, they never been to it, or they don't even know what theatre is, they don't even know. They don't even know how to communicate with people. They only know how to communicate with the people like their family, but others bring little people together. They learn how to talk. They go out the theatre, see shows how to act. That's the main thing.

Within one set of interviews, students were asked to consider a range of funding choices, including more money for technology and other equipment, new buildings, more teachers or teacher aides, or more money for artists. In response to these options, the vast majority of students chose artists, offering comments similar to the following:

I think Y Connect should continue because it's a very good opportunity for all of us and other schools should have the same opportunities. Working with the artists is completely different than working with our ordinary teachers we have every day and I think we should continue working with artists.

Another senior student offered the following words in response to these various options:

Y Connect, that's the way to go. Because it's just broadening my perspective as a human in society, so I can go out and relate or be able to communicate with people, which is just a skill to have that you need for every job, for every opportunity to be able to take it with two hands and to go out. Not just me becoming an actor, but everybody whether they want to work in a shop or they want to have their own business, that sort of thing. Just to communicate with people and understanding people which is an important skill.

Even younger students were keen to link Y Connect with future skills for employment, with a Year nine student suggesting that funding should go to artists and Y Connect projects:

... because it [Y Connect] gets everyone involved and a lot of people want to join it. It gives you a lot of opportunities because if you have different skills you get better chances of getting different jobs.

5.1.3 Teacher and leadership interview responses.

Within the series of final interviews, teachers and leaders were asked to consider future directions for the school following the Y Connect experience. Their responses were very positive, indicating that artists and arts-based pedagogies have become part of the fabric of the school. Below, a selection of comments from several school leaders are offered:

We're already talking about changing the way we approach our curriculum and I guess Y Connect has been a significant seed in that change of thought. We're looking at years seven to ten. We're looking at how can we embed the sorts of things that have been happening in Y Connect throughout and that's across curriculum areas. Because it's just been so powerful. When I see these kids, I see a really bright future, so I don't want to let go of that.

Every school like ours has got discretionary funding, you know, where you put your money ... Do I hire a teacher aid? A teacher? Or an artist? ... I know there's going to be a significant advocacy for continued artists in the school.

I really think the spirit of projects like this will go on. Because we now have one, we've done one on such a big scale that is really exemplary across the nation and I think we can hold onto projects like this to keep breathing more.

I couldn't imagine actually our junior secondary without Y-Connect anymore – it's part of our pedagogy. It's what we do.

5.2 Sustainability and Scalability

A challenge constantly noted within studies where artists are engaged in schools is that of sustainability (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001), especially when research focuses solely on improving practice rather than ensuring sustainability (To, Chan, Lam, & Tsang, 2011). The Y Connect Project was no different in that regard, with scalability also being an area of interest.

One artist addressed this challenge by asking, “How do we extract ourselves?” However, most teachers, leaders, students and indeed other artists were more interested in an alternative question, “How can we maintain the involvement of artists?” In other words, the majority of participants held the view that rather than considering how to make the approaches sustainable through teacher professional development leading to the ultimate extraction of artists, the school should be looking for ways to ensure that artists remain a continuing and positive presence. In addition, artists, school leaders and the researchers considered an associated question: How can the Y Connect Project processes be scaled up for application in other schools and school regions across Queensland and Australia?

The responses to these questions within the literature and in the data set as well, are often intertwined. Currently, across Australia there are a range of models to support the participation of artists within schools. Indeed, Australia has a strong tradition of artist-in-residency programs (AIR). However, the bulk of these are aimed at the development of specific arts skills and often focus on the development of a specific artistic outcome such as a performance, display or lasting artistic product such as a mural.

The guidelines for AIR program applications vary considerably from state to state. For example, in Queensland, applicants must be from schools or kindergartens, with these organisations expected to make some contribution to the project costs. Then, with this funding in place, opportunities for additional funds from the government range from \$5,000 to \$20,000. Other states have different application arrangements, but in almost all cases, the application process is a competitive one.

While highly beneficial in many ways, analysis of the Y Connect data suggests that the outcomes achieved by this Project would not have been possible using traditional AIR models. This perspective was reinforced strongly by one of the school leaders who noted:

We've had artists in residence before, like a six months artist in residence and that's fabulous, it does a lot of good things, but I think having multiple artists coming in and changing those artists just keeps building the depth of knowledge and experiences for both students and teachers.

One teacher draws on a range of different ideas and experiences across the Project and comes to a similar conclusion, suggesting that in the future, the school needs for artists not to be “trapped” at the school all the time, but rather...

... for them to be doing their work and being inspired, but being able to come and visit us frequently ... You can't replace that. So, you know, what [actor] did with the students, as much as I can use some of the strategies, and I will, it was a whole different thing ... So, you know, we can't replace that ... I think the ideal scenario for a school would be to just have that interaction with so many different artists.

Given these responses, which are common across the data set, a summary of some of the limitations of the traditional AIR model, in light of the Y Connect findings, is now offered:

1. Artist in residence programs have tended to involve just one artist or arts organisation engaged in one school community over an extended duration. This model offers very limited flexibility in terms of employing multiple artists from different backgrounds and/or arts disciplines.
2. The artist must commit to an extended period of engagement and must commit a long way out given the application deadlines etc. This can mean that artists are locked in and are therefore unable to respond to other professional opportunities during this period.
3. Schools are often unaware of who is “out there” and are often reliant on word of mouth recommendations for selecting artists. This can be problematic.
4. The AIR projects are almost always about generating products and are mostly focused on arts learning rather than engagement across the curriculum. For example, there appear to be very few examples of artists being engaged to work within Mathematics or English departments, with artist/teacher partnerships to support curricular outcomes outside of the Arts being rare (with the Sydney Theatre Company School Drama Project being a notable exception).
5. When schools miss the cut-off deadline for applications for AIR programs or are not able to invest the time associated with locating artists and creating project plans, the key alternative response tends to be either not to employ artists at all or to do so via incursions or one-off, one day workshops. However, as noted across this report, the Y Connect findings clearly indicate that extended engagement is essential, but that this extended engagement need not be in a block of time and may indeed be better delivered in smaller amounts of time over the duration of the term or year.
6. Artists currently have limited or no opportunities to showcase their skills to schools or to articulate the contributions they could make. In return, schools have limited opportunities to identify high quality artists who are able to provide effective input into specific curriculum areas.

By contrast, the Y Connect model, which allows for multiple artists working within the school across a range of curricular areas and at times on extra-curricular projects, provides far greater flexibility for both the artists and the school team. For example, an artist with a background in acting can be employed to collaborate with a group of English teachers for one or two days a week across a specific term or unit of study, while another artist, perhaps with expertise in dance might be working simultaneously in the Mathematics classroom. The following term, a visual artist might be employed in a similarly flexible way to support a teacher seeking to extend upon their expertise in using a particular technique, while in another part of the school a musician might be engaging with a group of students to develop their composition skills. This simultaneous and flexible approach means that costs can be substantially reduced, and for the cost of an additional teaching assistant or less, any given school can have the opportunity to engage artists across the curriculum. In the following section, a proposal to support the delivery of a Y Connect-like approach to a broader range of schools is offered.

5.2.1 The Artist Library Proposal

In order to address the limitations within current AIR programs, and in order to achieve some level of sustainability and indeed scalability, a proposal has been developed by the research team members to create what we have come to refer to as an “Artist Library”. The following section of this paper offers a summary of some of the possible features of this proposed artist library:

1. The library would take the form of a digital resource supported by a full-time manager who would broker short and long-term partnerships between artists and schools.
2. Teachers, principals, curriculum coordinators and Heads of Department could visit the digital site to identify artists that might be a suitable match for their particular curricular or extra-curricular needs.
3. Artists would create short digital profiles identifying their specific skills and offering a summary of the types of learning opportunities they could support.
4. A Steering Committee would be established to create guidelines designed to ensure that artists and school staff work in mutually respectful ways and where the partnership processes are clearly articulated.
5. The manager would be physically located at an appropriate site (e.g. a hosting university or arts organisation).
6. The manager would have multiple responsibilities:
 - a. Brokering partnerships between individual artists and schools;
 - b. Arranging professional learning opportunities and Artist Library accreditation processes including blue card checking;
 - c. Identifying appropriate artists and supporting them in the creation of their digital advertisements;
 - d. Supporting artists to understand their potential value in school environments;
 - e. Promoting the Artist Library to both schools and artists via social media, conferences, Arts Markets etc;
 - f. Working with a Steering Committee to oversee the Library and ensure quality work is delivered within the schooling system;
 - g. Ensuring that there is equity and fairness in terms of payments to artists; and
 - h. Reporting to funding and host organisations.
7. The sustainability of the library would, in the long term, be achieved through minimal brokerage fees, together with minimal artist membership fees.
8. Borrowing guidelines would be aligned with best practice international research findings and would therefore encourage artist engagement that is meaningful for all parties involved.

PART 6 – SIGNIFICANCE

The findings of the Y Connect Project are of national and international significance. The model implemented across the 2.5 years of the Project's duration has produced benefits and notable impacts across the school community, including for teachers and students, and beyond the school community, for artists and arts organisations. In the following sections, we will outline the significance for students, teachers, and artists, as well as in relation to key policy priorities of the Queensland Department of Education.

6.1 Significance for Students.

In this section, the six connections used within this report are applied in discussion of the Project's significance for students.

Connection to Self

Throughout the research literature there is agreement that a positive sense of self is a prerequisite for wellbeing and learning. The Y Connect Project findings reveal strong impacts in terms of many aspects of self, including confidence, motivation, trust, pride and self-esteem. Throughout the Project students reported pleasure, challenge, and opportunities to take risks. Together and individually, they worked towards common goals to create outcomes in which they felt pride, and where their artistic and creative capabilities were celebrated. Self-expression, self-esteem and self-confidence improved for many students, alongside imagination and artistry. Students' ideas were seen as important, with adults and other students listening to them and incorporating these ideas.

In the 21st Century context where, too often, young people have experiences that can diminish their sense of self, including through bullying or cyberbullying, a project like this one, that enhanced so many aspects of self, is clearly important.

Connection to Each Other

Positive connections between and among students were also produced, with these having flow-on impacts for wellbeing, learning and achievement. Across all six cases, students, teachers and artists reported improvements in the connections between students. This outcome is especially significant for a school community such as Yeronga SHS, given its diverse student population. It suggests that the expanded opportunities for young people to collaborate in both classroom and extra-curricular contexts, helped to construct bridges between cultures, genders and ways of being.

A contributor to bridge building was the expansion of existing student networks, enabling the formation of new friendships within supportive environments. Given that secondary school students often feel marginalised, opportunities to locate friends from across the school community are critical. The vertical relationships created when students engage with others from multiple year levels serve to shift school culture and break down barriers.

Given the recent studies suggesting that loneliness and isolation are growing issues for young people (Weinberg & Tomin, 2015), the findings of the Y Connect Project relating to collaboration and connectedness are clearly significant.

Connection to Learning

This report includes a considerable body of literature about the positive relationships between the Arts and learning. The research outcomes offered here align with the findings of these studies, with improvements in engagement, skills, understanding and achievement being noted. The most important improvements were for students who struggle academically or for whom engagement is a

challenge. Clear benefits were also identified for EALD students. Several skills essential for learning, including oral language and writing were enhanced. In addition, critical and creative thinking skills and creative, artistic and performance skills were improved. While these skills may be developed through other means, they are developed quite differently through the Arts and for some students to an extent that might not otherwise be possible.

Given the statistics outlined in the recent Grattan Institute Report (Goss et al., 2017) which suggest that the passive disengagement of students is a growing problem in Australian schools, coupled with concerns about falling literacy and numeracy standards, as measured through national and international benchmark testing, these findings are highly significant. They suggest that student disengagement might, at least in part, be overcome through opportunities for students to engage with artists and/or by teachers expanding their approaches to include arts-based pedagogies. Improved engagement will undoubtedly impact positively on learning outcomes. For example, it appears that the students who engaged more frequently and regularly within Y Connect, made the most significant improvements on aspects of NAPLAN. These positive outcomes were particularly evident for students with a language background other than English.

Connection to the School Community

As noted earlier, Wehlage et al. (1989) argue that a student's sense of belonging within their school community is developed through attachment, commitment, involvement and belief in their school, with belonging to a community being critical for emotional wellbeing and learning. The findings outlined across this report indicate that the Y Connect approaches supported these dimensions. Within any secondary school, programs and approaches that can support students to feel a strong connection to their school community are clearly significant. However, this connectedness is particularly important for students with refugee backgrounds, especially those who have suffered trauma due to their departure and/or arrival experiences. For some of these young people, a sense of belonging to a community can be difficult to develop. Fortunately, the aesthetic, collaborative, agentic and dialogic nature of the Y Connect work, both within the classroom and beyond, provided opportunities for these young people to speak up, be heard and feel more closely connected.

Connection to Arts, Artists and Arts Organisations

For some students, the new connections formed with the Arts, artists and arts organisations were the most critical of all, with the artists becoming role models and mentors. Young people need positive role models beyond celebrities, sports stars or social media influencers. The Y Connect Project brought new and exciting people into the lives of the students, with some of these being from similar cultural or socio-economic backgrounds. As such, new heroes emerged, and relationships of a different order were formed. These relationships helped build aspirations and encouraged students to do better.

In addition, interactions with dynamic and creative artists supported some young people to take greater risks and without the pressure of school assessment, to try out new ideas. For a small number of students who have experienced repeated failure or for whom life has presented multiple challenges, successful participation within Y Connect classes and projects not only enhanced their connection to the Arts, but to other areas of life and learning as well.

In this Project, opportunities for young people from low socio-economic or refugee backgrounds to engage with arts organisations and to access cultural venues were especially important, serving to break-down perceived barriers or perspectives that these cultural sites weren't for them. By engaging directly with, and within, these organisations, all students built upon their existing social and cultural capital.

Possible Selves

Through deep involvement in arts projects and multiple chances to engage with artists and arts organisations, Y Connect supported its young participants to broaden their pathway aspirations, whilst also helping them to develop the confidence and drive to pursue these re-imagined futures. Given that possible selves emerge through awareness and direct “lived” engagement, the Y Connect Project was critical as a vehicle for identifying and exploring options that might otherwise have been outside their realm of experience. As academic attainment, self-regulation and persistence are all enhanced when young people broaden their range of positive possible selves, the outcomes associated with this connection have the potential for on-going and long-term impact.

Conclusion

In the current educational context of secondary schooling, where young people often feel disconnected from each other, from learning, from their school community and from their futures, these findings remind us that there **are** other ways of enacting education. This report demonstrates that the Y Connect way is capable of adding real value for learners and learning by employing the expertise of artists in partnership with teachers and the curriculum, and making use of the power of arts-based pedagogies. It is clear that more needs to be done to raise the awareness of school leaders and school systems about the highly significant role the Arts and artists can play in secondary schools.

6.2 Significance for Teachers.

Earlier in this report, the benefits to teachers of participating in the Y Connect Project, and engaging in partnerships with artists, were reported as falling into eight main categories. These were:

- New ways of understanding and enacting education;
- Expansion of pedagogical repertoire and confidence in the application of these expanded practices;
- A revitalisation of practice leading to enhanced enjoyment and engagement in the teaching process;
- The development of a range of artistic skills and understandings;
- A greater sense of freedom to explore and a renewed awareness of the importance of playfulness and creativity;
- Shifts in individual teacher’s professional identity;
- Shifts in teacher/student relationships and teacher perceptions of students; and
- New or renewed awareness of the value of the Arts for young people.

Given the high attrition rate for early career teachers, which according to the Queensland College of Teachers (2013) may be up to 50%, together with looming teacher shortages, approaches that create greater enjoyment of, and engagement with, the teaching process, are essential. In addition, for experienced teachers, revitalisation of practice achieved through professional learning partnerships occurring directly within teachers own classrooms are also significant, especially given the cost of professional development activities that are delivered off-site or fail to provide teachers with the kind of learning they are looking for.

According to Matherson and Windle (2017, pp. 30-31), the professional learning teachers seek can be understood according to four themes: learning opportunities that are interactive, engaging, and relevant for their students; opportunities that show them more practical ways to deliver content; opportunities to have a voice in what they are offered in terms of professional learning; and opportunities for learning that are sustained over time. They go on to suggest that teachers need close to 50 hours of professional learning to improve practice and student learning. Given that the Y Connect model provided opportunities for teacher professional learning that matched all of these criteria, it would seem that there is an imperative for educational leaders at all levels of policy and governance

to consider carefully the potential return on investment of employing high quality artists to work alongside their teachers.

Finally, while it is impossible to evaluate the benefits derived from the growth in teacher professional identity, the associated increases in confidence that empowered some teachers to seek opportunities to share their learning with others across the broader educational community should not be overlooked or undervalued.

6.3 Significance for Artists.

The artists involved in this study identified a set of benefits which they had experienced as a result of their engagement with the staff and students of Yeronga SHS as part of Y Connect. These benefits include:

- Enjoyment and satisfaction derived from developing young people's artistry, confidence and self-efficacy;
- Opportunities for community engagement and making a difference;
- Opportunities for learning including: reciprocal learning; cultural learning; and developing their own artistic practices;
- Recognition and awareness of their capabilities; and
- Employment.

The contributions artists can make within a whole range of community contexts are not always well understood or appreciated, however, within some fields this recognition is growing rapidly. For example, in the health area, artists are increasingly being seen as key players in the sector, working in hospitals, aged care facilities, therapeutic centres and more (Hartley & Payne, 2008; Hatton, 2014; Hulbert, Ashburn, Roberts, & Verheyden, 2017; McCormick, 2017; McGreevy, 2016; Meyer, Schreck, & Weidner, 2014; Sextou & Hall, 2015; Sextou & Smith, 2017). By contrast, the education sector has been slower to capitalise on the possibilities that relationship with artists provide.

The Y Connect Project has given voice to artists and provided them with opportunities to reveal their skills and to reflect upon the contribution they can make to the learning and teaching process.

The Arts and artists have a long history as being fundamental to the process of educating communities and cultures through the communication of ideas and meaning. Within contemporary educational contexts however, the Arts have become increasingly marginalised. This Project has shown however that artists have a key role to play in enhancing educational outcomes and as such, their involvement in education must be expanded. The Y Connect model demonstrates that effective arts-learning partnerships, embedded within curriculum contexts, can generate highly positive and important impacts for all stakeholders.

6.4 Significance in Relation to Education Priorities

Within the original application, seven Queensland Department of Education priorities were identified as informing the Y Connect goals. They are used here as a way of summarising the significance of this Project for policy makers.

Expanded opportunities for all students to reach their potential.

There are many social, financial and emotional barriers that can limit a young person's potential, with these sometimes being especially high for students with a refugee background. The Y Connect Project offered alternate ways of enacting curriculum and expanded opportunities for young people to engage with learning, each other, and adults, including artists. By offering these alternate approaches, a clearer sense of the real potential of some young people was revealed, while others were supported to connect more effectively to learning, developed new friendships or gained a stronger sense of

belonging. These outcomes suggest that the Y Connect model allows for and assists access to expanded opportunities for young people to reach their potential.

Creating a culture of engaging learning that improves achievement for all students.

Secondary school classrooms can too often be places where young people feel disconnected and disengaged. However, across the Y Connect Project, teachers have keenly engaged in professional learning opportunities and have worked with artists to re-plan units and re-invigorate established practices. These efforts have strengthened the already strong desire held by many teachers to modify their pedagogical practices and created a school culture where active and engaged learning are emphasised.

Catering for students' academic, social and emotional needs.

Y Connect has been influential in supporting the academic, social and emotional needs of many Yeronga SHS students. Students' emotional needs were addressed through enhanced connection to self, while the improved connection to each other and connection to the school community nurtured the students' social and emotional needs. These connections are foundational for learning. While these connections were not apparent for every participating student, or to the same extent for every student, nevertheless through its creative approaches, the Y Connect model has shown itself to be an effective and alternate way of catering for the varied needs of students.

Opportunities for students to make successful transitions to further education, training and employment.

Through engagement with artists and arts organisations, together with horizon breaking excursions, internships, public performances and exhibitions barriers that might otherwise have restricted or constrained effective transitions to further education, training and employment in the Arts have been broken down. More broadly, through participation in projects of extended duration, students have come to understand that commitment, time management, team work, creativity and focus are all required to achieve a successful outcome. These insights and the associated skills that emerge from a commitment to them, have also supported students to imagine new and richer possible selves.

Improved learning outcomes for all students, with an emphasis on reading and writing.

The NAPLAN data outlined within this report, reinforced by the qualitative findings offered across the relevant case study reports, indicate that the Y Connect Project was successful in developing improved learning outcomes for students in several curriculum areas, particularly in writing. Through arts-based pedagogies and effective teacher/artist partnerships, students at all writing standards were helped to overcome the hurdle of the blank page. At a time when Australia-wide the writing skills of secondary students, as measured by NAPLAN, are stagnant or declining, the Yeronga SHS students, especially those who have the most to gain, made solid progress in countering that trend.

Breaking down boundaries between disciplines and finding new ways to develop curriculum structures that are student needs focused.

The Y Connect Project applied a transdisciplinary approach to learning and teaching, providing an effective example of how the boundaries between subjects can be broken down. For example, within the Mathematics and Movement case, dancers worked alongside mathematics teachers to promote the learning and engagement of students. Similarly, strong outcomes were achieved in the English classroom through the involvement of dance, drama and music artists. These findings indicate that arts-based transdisciplinary approaches can be effective in addressing the diverse needs of a wide range of secondary students, especially those who struggle with achievement or engagement issues.

Developing models of curriculum delivery that would be available to be used in other low SES contexts or with students who are disengaged or disconnected.

Since Yeronga SHS has an ICSEA rating well below the Australian average, the findings outlined here

are of key significance for similar low SES schools looking to identify curriculum delivery models suited to these contexts. By taking an alternate approach to the issue of disengaged or disconnected students, the Y Connect team has created an innovative and successful model which other schools can replicate. As one teacher noted so eloquently, Y Connect has given teachers the opportunity to look at the learning and teaching process through “*new windows*”. However, transdisciplinary models of curriculum delivery, such as the one employed across Y Connect, have not always been well understood and have too often been overlooked. This report reveals that the Y Connect model, where the arts and artists are embedded within and across the curriculum, is a delivery model that more educators should consider.

6.5 Conclusion

Through its long-term presence within the school and its responsive approach to the interests and capabilities of those who participated, Y Connect has served, as one student said, “*to lower fences*”, fences that too often separate students from learning, from each other, and from both their current and future selves. In the process, it has helped to re-shape the Yeronga SHS culture, transforming it to one with the Arts as “*the soul of the school*”.

When taken together, the outcomes for the four stakeholder groups identified here are clearly significant and echo the findings of many national and international studies which have also examined the impact of artist/teacher partnerships and arts-based pedagogies. The repeated emergence of outcomes such as these give rise to two key questions: why have artists and arts-based pedagogies failed to gain greater acceptance and application within the schooling sector and, how might educators and the broader community gain a better understanding of the possibilities for young people which this “*other way*” of enacting curriculum offers? We hope that this detailed Y Connect report, including the suggestions relating to sustainability and scalability offered, will make a contribution to discussions around these two questions and a further one which asks, given these highly positive findings, **Y not Connect?**

PART 7 – A BRIEF POST SCRIPT

As the data collection processes concluded at the end of June 2018, this report relates only to the period between commencement of the Project and that time. Since then however, some important decisions relating to the ongoing role of artists and arts-based pedagogies within the Yeronga SHS community have been made and flow on events and actions have occurred. Many of these are having highly positive ongoing implications which are worth noting. These are as follows:

1. Based on the highly positive outcomes generated by the Y Connect Project, the Yeronga SHS principal, Mr. Terry Heath, in conjunction with his leadership team, decided at the start of 2019 to continue to fund artist engagement in the school under the ongoing banner of Y Connect. A key part of this funding was allocated to continue the Circus program funding for the full 2019 period. It is now continuing at maximum capacity with students on a waiting list.
2. With this funding in place, expressions of interest were called for teachers to participate in ongoing Y Connect work. The response was very strong, with all Performing Arts/ Visual Arts/Creative Industry teachers (10 teachers), five English/EALD teachers, three Mathematics teachers and one Languages Other than English (LOTE) teacher for Chinese expressing interest in remaining or commencing their involvement in the program. These expressions of interest have to date (end of term one, 2019) generated the following projects:
 - Within the performing arts area, the physical theatre/ clown artist, a professional actor and a mezzo soprano have so far been reemployed, while in relation to Focused Arts Projects, a director/ actor has been employed.
 - In the English classrooms the school actor will return this term, but is currently unavailable due to his work and subsequent employment in other schools.
 - The LOTE Chinese teacher, who has wanted to be part of Y Connect for some time, is working with a performing artist (director and writer) who speaks Mandarin. They will work together for five weeks to support students in the Year 7, 8 and 10 classrooms to create performances in Mandarin.
 - The Literacy Coordinator is planning to employ a series of story/process dramas to support engagement in the English classroom. She is using the pedagogical approaches used within Y Connect, drawing on the expertise of an artist, who now works part time in the school as a teacher, to deliver these sessions. This work is being developed in direct response to concerns about the engagement of some Year 7 students who are new to the school this year. The goal of the approach is to promote engagement and writing.
 - Mathematics teachers are planning workshops with one of the Y Connect Dance artists in term 2. This work will be specifically focused on a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) collaboration focused on bees.
3. At the end of 2018, the senior students and teachers elected the student leadership team. This voting resulted in six positions, with four of these being won by students who were heavily involved in Y Connect. The positions included two cultural captains, and a sports captain. Three of these students were part of the circus group across the previous years,

while all were also involved in the Artists in Arts classroom case, and importantly, several of the Focused Arts Projects.

4. Teachers who were heavily involved in the Y Connect Project across 2016-2018 have developed agency in terms of managing their partnerships with artists. As such, the Project Manager, as broker, has a reduced role to play.
5. A group of Yeronga SHS parents formed a Performing Arts Committee in late 2018 in order to ensure that the momentum generated by the Y Connect Focused Arts Project work was maintained. This is a very proactive group that meets every month.
6. As noted in one of the points above, one of the award-winning Y Connect artists who also had a teaching background, opted to join Yeronga SHS as a part-time member of the teaching staff following her work within the Project. The remainder of her work is within the industry as a playwright and director. Her continued involvement with the school in this new role has provided an interesting range of opportunities for the school, given that she is simultaneously working in industry and in the school. Based on this unique situation, members of the school leadership team asked each other, "How can her skills be best used to support the language and artistic development of students?". In response to these discussions, a 'creative practice' subject has been set up for the Year 10 students to provide rich creative experiences for students who may not feel they are ready for the formal work and challenges of Drama within the Australian Curriculum. It is proving to be a popular subject for a range of students, including those at the early stages of their English language learning journey, special needs students, at risk students and interestingly 2- 3 highly academic students who find this class to be a "safe space" for their expression.
7. Opera Queensland, the peak cultural organisation for Opera in Queensland, partnered with Y Connect across 2017 and 2018 via an internship program for a student from a refugee background with an operatic voice. During that period the student attended performances and joined two holiday youth opera programs at the Conservatorium of Music, which culminated in public performances at the Brisbane Powerhouse Theatre and at Opera Queensland. Opera Queensland Education and Community Producer Mark Taylor, then applied for and was awarded a Community and Gambling Fund Grant to collaborate with a group of Yeronga students to compose and then perform a song. This collaboration involved a well-known Brisbane composer and other artists associated with Opera Queensland. The project continued over a six-week period. Using the students' own words and stories, a group of up to four artists worked with the students to create a 5-minute song that explored their feelings about belonging. The eventual product, "Songs of Belonging", was performed at the Y Connect Symposium at the end of 2018 and at Opera Queensland events. It is also to be studio recorded for further release.

The school continues to collaborate with Opera Queensland, with the aforementioned student currently attending a holiday workshop. In addition, Opera Queensland have now applied the model developed within "Songs of Belonging" to engage with other schools across the state, including those with students who are marginalised in other ways.

8. In late 2018, the Y Connect Symposium was held in order to share with members of the School community, the artists and the wider arts and education communities, the key findings of the Y Connect Project. The day attracted more than 80 delegates in all. During the day, researchers, artists, teachers, school leaders, members of the Y Connect consultative group, education leaders and arts leaders were able to respond to the findings and share responses to this material as well as to explore future directions.

9. Based on her outstanding work as the Project Manager of Y Connect, together with her other work in support of Arts Education over an extended period of time, Ms. Adrienne Jones has been named as a finalist for the 2019 Australian Education Awards, with the results to be announced in Sydney on August 15.
10. Later this year (2019) two members of the school leadership team (Principal and Dean of Pedagogy) will present at the ICP Conference in Shanghai, China. The Y Connect Project and its impact on teacher pedagogies will feature strongly in their presentation.
11. At the end of 2018, three Yeronga SHS students were accepted into university to study arts related degrees. Two of these were accepted into drama focused programs, with another accepted into a music degree. This is a significant achievement given the relatively low number of students who are university entry qualified based on their Year 12 studies. One of these students received a scholarship from an external organisation to support these studies, with a key part of the application for this grant being their Y Connect experiences and leadership.

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