

Submission for Tasmanian Education Review

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Who I am

I work in the Arts, was a school music teacher for 24 years in NSW and now produce learning materials and musical performances for schools to enrich the delivery of music in the curriculum for the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. I was also employed in the UK for 5 years to design school wide, inclusive arts activity to promote a better culture of learning and community in schools in low socio economic areas of need across England.

Responses to questions in Themes 1,2,4

Defining Success

What do you think are the reasons for finishing Year 12?

Access to further education; time to develop intellectually, emotionally and socially before moving into workforce or further study; completion of Year 12 is a recognised qualification by employers, A Year 12 certificate is recognised as part of the learning pathway into TAFE and other vocational learning; and is a requirement/prerequisite for further pathways such University courses.

What do you think success looks like during and after the formal years of schooling in Tasmania?

Confident learners, intellectually curious, a knowledge of the world beyond the classroom, appreciation for the work of others, community minded, creative thinkers. Children who have aspiration to achieve their best, no matter their ability level.

How can we better encourage young people to aspire to achieve their ambitions?

Creating more learning opportunities that allow for lateral thinking, creative problem solving, sharing and celebration of achievements and avoiding the one size fits all approach. This can be done without broadening subject choice – more within subject learning.

What is working well and why?

The primary schools which have cross curricular, interrelated subject learning.

The secondary schools which focus on specific achievement, set standards and work to achieve them. E.g. music at Taroona High, Hutchens School, Scotch Oakburn School.

Schools that have a connection to professional organisations which stimulated teachers and students alike.

Strengthening Supports and Engagement for all learners

What do families do well to support their children and young people in their learning?

Take them to “enrichment” like concerts, a zoo, theatre, or sports coaching, libraries, free creative events. Things that stimulate and build on learning. If parents consider it a learning opportunity to learn with their children, learning is valued by the whole family.

What support helps families to do this?

Free events, online access to exhibitions, family programs at galleries, concert halls and museums, responsible journalism that informs about opportunities, regulates the gossip, slander etc and celebrates individual achievement.

What can be done to better support students who are struggling or at risk of falling behind to get back on track?

Less of the rote, one-size fits all learning (which clearly does not work) and more collaborative, problem-solving learning. Finding ways for students to shine because they are neurodiverse or aural rather than visual learners etc. Many teachers do not have a set of tricks to use in the classroom to cater to all learning styles and sometimes need to be reminded of some of these along the journey.

Arts programs in schools at the centre of the curriculum and offered daily. SO MUCH EVIDENCE for this exists but still principals’ balk. See Yahl Primary School SA, St Mary’s North and Petersham Public School NSW, Bulman School NT, Challis Primary School WA and of course Feversham School in the UK which has inspired many other disadvantaged schools and led to the Music in Secondary Schools Trust (MiSST) instrumental program in numerous secondary schools in southern England and showing extraordinary results.

Arts programs are inclusive, promote open ended, differentiated learning, often connect with students who do not do well with the 3Rs and drier, theoretical or less practical subject areas, and create an outlet for self-expression which is more socially acceptable than bad behaviour

How can we ensure all Tasmanian learners get the most out of their education and reach their full potential?

Cross-curriculum programs that are arts based, investing in educational training for the many artists and musicians who have the subject knowledge and can be mentored on the job to develop education skills. Celebrating arts through things like the festival of voices which are accessible to students across the state, more community music making support (e.g. singing and dance which allows for families to learn and support their children.

In secondary schools there should be less siloed subject learning. Teachers who understand the interrelationship of subjects and work collaboratively have informed understanding of learning and assessment, experiment and are more creative according to the AITSL Project Q study. A collaborative learning environment fosters community, appreciation of others and encourages healthy competition.

Theory learning is important and can inform practice, while practical experience can deepen theoretical understanding. Having a reason to apply theoretical knowledge and learning through doing is a smart way to learn and proven to be a more effective learning method. Changing the way we

approach secondary teaching to include more discovery learning or learning where the students have to find the fact requires critical thinking and problem solving skills, and can be done collaboratively so students develop group work skills as well. But it is a revolutionary proposal and against the “safer, how we always did it” methods of our aging teacher population.

Support for our teaching workforce

How can we get more great teachers and school leaders and help them do their jobs well?

Tasmania is a small state so it should be possible to create mentoring and teacher support programs which will encourage new teachers, isolated teachers, and teacher who are struggling with aspects of behaviour, skill development or general confidence.

Knowing there is a support system beyond the school walls can help. It can also double as a mentoring system for professionals transitioning into teaching who need general education support like assessment strategies, classroom management and programming help.

Giving school leadership material they can share in staff meetings to build the sense of team– success stories from inside the school, inspirational videos (like this about worth: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-jlxSqVCcw>), or videos that stimulate professional discussion like: https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_do_schools_kill_creativity?subtitle=en

or group singing (which boosts the release of endorphins and serotonin – feel-good happy hormones) or making activities, making time to share issues and ask for help in a safe environment.

Sharing with teachers the findings of the World Economic Forum about the skills and knowledge required for the leaders of the future so they can see how important their roles are and where the focus should be.

How can we keep the existing workforce feeling energised and supported so they stay?

Offering practical, useful PD that helps time poor teachers develop the specific skills and subject mattered needed to do their jobs well. Everyone gets stale and a program of skill development, including the sharing of new resources that they know how to implement and work.

In NSW, through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, I started a program called Tuned Up for generalist primary teachers who wanted to be better at music. We took 20 who applied from across the state and did a week of music bootcamp with them. We did singing, composing, how to listen, preperformance – all the skills of the music curriculum, and had them sharing ideas and exploring how to use the ideas in their own schools. Most importantly they became a buddy system – separated geographically but sharing ideas and supporting each other online. They had to share the material with their schools, and many are now leaders in the Board of Studies, or in their regional school networks. The access they had to the orchestra that week and professional music makers and conductors was inspirational and got them excited about teaching. Importantly they started sharing their stories of how it impacted their teaching and that of their colleagues, which showed they were important in their school’s community and being valued.

This sort of initiative is an easy model to replicate in various areas around the state and could be widened to other art forms. HOWEVER teachers are time poor and schools leadership need to be given these modules for trial, not asked to create them.

Also, less of the administrivia now required by all teachers, more of the creative teaching planning time would help.

MANY professional arts organisations (both state based and national ones) are keen to be involved with school as a resource to teachers, in fact music of their funding is tied to their connection with children and young people. In a number of cases philanthropists are keen to through money at these sorts of initiatives, but it is the private not public schools who take them up.

Most heads understand the value of an arts rich education but have no idea how to implement it, or sometimes someone who thinks “our children do not like classical music or art” etc blocks contact at the front desk.

I feel very passionate about this and would be keen to talk further or join some committee to work on enabling better arts learning should it be useful.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this survey.

Kim Waldock

