

An initiative is already up and running in The Arts Society Wessex Area, where the first two Continual Professional Development (CPD) Twilight Sessions for Secondary School art teachers, facilitated by the Wessex Area have taken place. These were held on Wednesday 6th March 2019 and Tuesday 15th October 2019 We asked some of those involved to explain what the project has to offer.

Heather Leach, Deputy YA Area Co-ordinator & Young Arts Representative, Kington Langley

As a recently retired teacher, I know how hard it is getting art teachers out of school for CPD and that there's decreasing emphasis on the importance of art at GCSE and A Level. Art teachers are, of course well qualified to deliver the art curriculum to their schools, but it was clear additional support was needed. With the enthusiastic support of the Area Team we decided to trial a facilitating scheme that would enable teachers to share good practice, create new resources and to come up with enhanced creative ideas that could be taken back to their schools. We talked to experts at national and governmental level – including NSEAD and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for art, craft and design in Education - to get a clearer idea of the national situation. This would enable us to respond to our local needs. We developed a three-year plan to offer high-quality CPD in art and design to secondary school teachers, with £1,000 a year to fund two workshops a year, which the committee approved. **Mandy Mills**, an Advisor for Art & Design and now an independent specialist leader in education, seemed the ideal person to help facilitate the courses. She met with teachers and in response to their feedback, organised two sessions with sculptor Fiona Campbell. We were delighted with the response from

attendee. We are currently developing with Roche Court Educational Trust a one-day, “2D to-3D Explore, Make, Communicate”, workshop and are keen to get other planned sessions up and running as soon as Covid allows.”

Fiona Campbell, Artist

“The Arts Society team told me that sculpture is something that often falls by the wayside in school art classes due to lack of ideas, time and money, which is why teachers had asked for it to be the focus of their CPD session. Also, with schools ever budget-aware and keen to increase their ‘green’ credentials, they wanted ideas from me as to how they could use reclaimed and waste material in projects with their students. A wirework session seemed ideal. I began with a Power Point explaining the work of relevant artists such as Louise Bourgeois, and El Anatsui, the Ghanaian artist who pioneered use of old bottle tops in his extraordinary installations. I’d gathered lots of relevant images for the group to look at, plus great bundles of chicken wire, rope, hemp, buttons, old cogs and plastic waste for everyone to use. Taking plants and creatures as our theme, the group definitely grew in confidence as the evening progressed and they formed their own sculptures, with lots of one-to-one tuition from me. It was particularly interesting to see how participants responded to being students rather than teachers! At the end of the evening I know they left with lots of ideas, and a written step-by-step guide to wirework. It was so enjoyable that I’m definitely keen to lead another group.

Julie Bush, Art Teacher, Hardenhuish Secondary School, Chippenham

“CPD for teachers isn’t just for the sake of it – it has to enable us to become better at what we do, so we can further enrich the lives of those we teach. The Twilight Session facilitated by The Arts Society

Wessex Area was led by a professional artist, was free for us to attend, didn't cut into teaching time as it was held after school – and we got supper, too! Attending it from a practical point of view, then, was a no-brainer – and, most importantly, it offered us what we needed: the chance to get together with our peers, expert, hands-on training in sculpture and fresh ideas as to how we could create curriculum-based, multi-sensory learning experiences for those we teach.

Fiona had an Aladdin's cave of materials for us to play with, and one of the many things I learned was that there are two ways of approaching an art project: either 'here's what I want to make, how am I going to do it with what I've got?' or 'what can I make with what I've got?' I think this is what's often forgotten when it comes to the benefits of art: it's not just about creativity, it's about solution-finding. And then there are the acknowledged benefits for our mental health – such a key issue for all of us, especially now and especially for the young. If I can help my students find new ways of finding themselves and increasing their skills through art, I'm delighted. Fiona and The Arts Society Wessex Area's session helped me to do this, allowing me to recharge my creative batteries in the process. I now have plenty of ideas that I can pass on, not just to my students, but to other art teachers, too – so it's a very cyclical initiative.”