

The Arts Society Wessex 3-year CPD initiative.

Background for TAS Magazine article

Below is our thinking about the value of arts education in schools and the driver for The Arts Society Wessex Area YA development.

The development of motor skills and the self confidence that comes with mastering a new skill, concept or the satisfaction of performance gives students an opportunity to step outside their comfort zone and grow as individuals. The country needs people who can present ideas fluently and articulate their thoughts effectively and the arts provides a great nursery for developing those skills

Art education teaches students how to interpret, criticize, and use visual information, and how to make choices based on it. Arts students are constantly making informed decisions and are actively learning in class – they are actual musicians, artists, dancers, performers and as near to real life scenarios that can be achieved in schools.

Perseverance is a crucial skill for the future – to keep on going when it's hard to learn something new but when a skill is mastered a student realises that all that hard work has paid off. The benefits of this knowledge and mind-set will bring huge advantages for society at large

Collaboration and accountability in class or after school means that students have to work together, support each other responsibly. They know they need to do the best they can to make an event work but also that if they make a mistake they take responsibility for that and realise that this is how we learn and grow as adults.

Might the current growth in mental health issues in schools come from the lack of arts provision? Students are now less likely to have to learn how to be more self-reliant, gain self-confidence through collaborative activities, learn to persevere and build but only to stress out about exam results”.

- Jenny Gilks is the Wessex Area Young Arts Area Co Ordinator and I work with her to help organise and co ordinate the YA events in the Wessex Area. Each year she organises a Young Arts Day for all the Young Arts Representatives of the 22 societies in Wessex.
- As a recently retired teacher I knew that getting art teachers out of school for CPD was getting increasingly difficult and the emphasis on EBACC subjects meant that art at GCSE and then A Level was under threat.
- Jenny and I had a meeting with the General secretary of NSEAD – the National Society for Education in Arts and Design and then invited her to come and speak at the YA Day.
- She told us of how art teachers were having to pay for their own CPD, and in their own time, the job losses and the general drop in morale. Some help was required

- Jenny and I had also attended a meeting of the APPG for art, craft and design in education. all party parliamentary group at the Houses of Commons. I had met Susan Coles, who is the contact for the group, through an earlier art project that had been co-sponsored by The Arts Society and NSEAD. Again, we heard about the need for sustained CPD.

Each arts society has a commitment to support arts education in schools and this they do very successfully in Wessex.

However, our support for CPD needed to be an area wide initiative over a period of time if we were address the needs of the teachers.

We have a very active and supportive Area team in Wessex. Members organise study days and the surplus is available for well researched projects across the Wessex area.

I undertook some research into who might lead this work, venues, the type of CPD that was wanted and when and where they could be held.

With this underway Jenny proposed that the Wessex Area look at the possibility of a three-year CPD project with enough funding each year to organise two workshop sessions.

The committee agreed a budget of £1,000 a year for three years.

- Mandy Mills, used to be the Advisor for Art & Design and advanced skills teacher in Wiltshire. In that role she ran CPD courses and came into schools to support teachers. She is now an independent specialist leader in education.
- I knew Mandy from when I worked in Wiltshire and I asked her firstly, if she could run some sessions and to ask secondary school art teachers what they actually wanted.
- In response to the feedback she received Mandy organised two twilight workshop sessions with Fiona Campbell, a sculptor who works with recycled materials. This meant that sculpture projects could be developed that was cost effective and could be used in different key Stages.
- They were held free of charge in two schools in different parts of the Wessex area so that they would attract teachers across a wider area. Supper was provided as well as a resource pack put together by Mandy that teachers could use back in school.
- By being twilight sessions whole departments could attend and as well as learning new techniques a department could plan how the projects could be incorporated into their schemes of work.

Working with other agencies

- We contacted Roche Court Educational Trust, who Jenny and I had worked with before and they agreed to run a day's CPD using the sculpture on their site as a

starting point. Again, there was to be a resource pack to be used back in school to develop the ideas explored on the day.

- This had to be postponed due to the lockdown but once we know what schools are planning and capable of engaging with we will run the session
- Wiltshire Learning Resources Centre. Following the APPG session in London I found the LRC and spoke to the manager Tina Ward to see how we could collaborate.
- She was organising a STEAM Day. This followed on from a previous STEM day – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.
- Like us she thought that the Arts (the A in STEAM) made for better learning in schools.
- She was keen to have The Arts Society Wessex Area on board as both a sponsor and to have a stand on the day
- Again, we approached TAS Wessex Area for funds to develop this new strand of CPD into the primary sector.
- Discussions with Tina meant that we could sponsor sets of books on the environment for attending schools and we could offer a twilight CPD session for the primary school teachers who attended the day.
- On presentation of this request to the committee we were granted £500 to make this happen.
- The day was a great success. We could talk to head teachers, classroom teachers, classroom assistants, members of Wiltshire Council, parents and students.
- About 20 teachers signed up for the CPD session but again this has had to be postponed.
- As Wessex Area funding was being used to develop this project reports and budgets were presented to the committee, reports were also made at Area Chairmen's meetings and at Area Co Ordinator's meetings in London.
- We would not have been able to undertake all this 3-year development without the strategic planning of the Wessex Area Committee and its successful study days
- Our next development is to extend the CPD sessions into the south of the Wessex Area working with schools and trainers who know their area as well as Mandy knows the north of the area.