

EDUCATION

The Pre-Tertiary Education Masterplan (2012) for arts and culture submitted under the Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR) was aimed at providing our young with opportunities for wider exposure to the arts through quality instruction in the core curriculum, co-curricular activities (CCAs) and enrichment programmes. These efforts complemented pre-existing initiatives, such as the longstanding NAC Arts Education Programme funded by Tote Board since 1993.

The following desired outcomes of arts education by 2025 under the ACSR were articulated:

- a** By the time they complete secondary school, every child will have:
 - i. Exposure to arts programmes across all five art forms (i.e. visual arts, literary arts, dance, theatre and music)
 - ii. Attended a performance or exhibition in a professional arts venue
 - iii. A learning experience in school with a Singapore artist or arts group
- b** To enable the delivery of quality arts education to every child:
 - i. Every teaching artist and arts instructor will be trained not only in the art form but the basics of teaching and learning
 - ii. Every arts educator (i.e. arts teacher in schools) will have the opportunity to collaborate with a Singapore artist, arts group or arts institution, to facilitate the exchange of ideas and practices across the education and arts sector

- iii. Every school will be committed to develop a holistic and integrated arts education programme

Research has found that early exposure to the arts is important as it has an impact on the development of all-rounded individuals. In addition, the Population Survey on the Arts indicates that childhood engagement with the arts leads to a positive impact on arts attendance, participation and interest levels in the arts in the future¹. The 2016 Arts and Culture Employment Survey also showed that 92% of arts workers were involved in arts activities before starting work in the arts and 69% were involved in an arts-related co-curricular or extracurricular activity in school.

Our Education Plan from 2018 to 2022 builds on the outcomes achieved during ACSR and responds to critical developments in the education and arts landscape as outlined below.

► ANALYSIS OF CURRENT STATE

Since 2012, there has been a greater awareness of the importance of the arts, and the need to improve the quality of arts experiences for students in the formal mainstream curriculum. To ensure a coordinated approach, the Ministry of Education (MOE) conducted a re-organisation to bring all curricula and co-curricular units in the Visual and Performing Art forms (Art, Music, Theatre, Dance) under the ambit of the Arts Education Branch in 2011. To support the professional development of Visual Art and Music teachers, the MOE-Singapore Teachers Academy for the Arts was set up in 2012 to support quality Art and Music instruction in the formal curriculum. In 2017, the Programme for Active Learning was

fully rolled out to all primary schools and the revised Visual Art syllabus was launched. Work in the Special Education (SPED) and preschool sectors has been gaining traction, with growing interest in how the arts can provide positive, inclusive experiences and enhance students' skills.

Strengths

Overall, there has been an increase in arts education programmes and NAC support provided to preschools, SPED and mainstream schools. This includes providing greater opportunities for partnerships with Singapore artists, and enabling students to have deeper engagement in and through the arts. NAC has also grown efforts to ensure quality of instruction through various tiered professional development initiatives for artists and arts instructors in partnership with key institutions². To date, about 85% of the artists in NAC's database³ have attained basic pedagogical qualifications through these courses. Beyond the formal school curriculum, there has been growth in regular family programmes that cater to children, such as those run by our key cultural institutions.

Weaknesses

There is limited local research on the impact of arts education and early exposure to the arts. Such research would enable better informed policy and programme design, and contribute to curriculum and pedagogy developments in the mainstream and tertiary sectors. At present, there is also no structured framework outlining a professional developmental pathway for arts instructors and teaching artists, and there is a shortage of trained artists to address the needs of the preschool and SPED sectors. There is also a limited number of master teaching artists who are able to provide leadership and mentorship for the broader sector, or engage in research and develop signature pedagogies. Teaching artists and arts instructors need to develop deeper knowledge and skills to design and implement programmes and curricula that achieve arts educational goals and outcomes within and out of schools.

Opportunities

With the increased focus on the preschool sector⁴, there is room to provide more early exposure to the arts by working with key partners. There

is, however, an immediate need to train artists and preschool educators to support this growth. Similarly, efforts in the SPED schools have been growing⁵ and there are opportunities to support platforms that encourage greater inclusivity. There is also room to integrate the arts into various learning areas⁶ and for NAC to strengthen collaborations with schools interested in growing their arts programmes through the Applied Learning Programme and Learning for Life Programme.

Threats

Several factors may impact the arts education ecosystem. The declining birth rate has resulted in the merger of schools with impending changes at the tertiary sector. Smaller student populations in schools could result in insufficient resources to support arts education programmes. Another challenge is that our schools are faced with increasingly crowded time-tables with many competing demands which could result in the arts being given less priority.

- 1 2017, Population Survey on the Arts. Those who took part in arts and cultural activities during their childhood had a higher level of attendance (59% vs 54%), participation (25% vs 22%) and interest (41% vs 37%) in the arts than those who did not.
- 2 Examples include NIE International, Seed Institute and Social Service Institute (SSI).
- 3 ~1200 of the ~1400 artists (across mainstream, SPED and preschool) in the NAC database have been trained.
- 4 At the 2017 National Day Rally, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced that 40,000 new preschool places would be added by 2022, and a new National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC) would be set up.
- 5 For example, in 2018, SPED schools have been invited to participate in the Singapore Youth Festival (SYF) together with mainstream schools.
- 6 From 2013-2017, NAC piloted the Teaching through the Arts Programme (TTAP), working with primary school math and science teachers to use the arts as a pedagogical tool. The pilot phase has provided some insights on how such pedagogies could be further developed.



► ENVISIONED STATE AND OUTCOMES

Arts exposure at an early age is important. Equitable access to well-designed and facilitated arts education experiences supports the holistic development of children, seeds the development of future audiences and increases social commons. An education in and through the arts also helps students appreciate other cultures and develop a sense of national pride.

By 2022, NAC envisions that the arts education sector will be a professional sector, with a sustainable base of artist-educators who have attained minimum qualifications in both their art form practice and pedagogy. There will also be a pool of master teaching artists who will be able to provide leadership in arts education through conducting research and providing mentorship and training. Our cultural institutions, national companies and major companies will dedicate resources to providing engaging educational experiences in support of audience development. Arts educators within the formal school system will also have the avenues to deepen their practice in the various art forms.

NAC also believes that deeper research is needed so that we can develop more evidence-based policies in arts education. We will work with partners to explore the impact of early exposure to the arts and signature pedagogies in an arts-enhanced education to influence future programmes. This will also position us to contribute to global thought leadership.

Finally, to support the holistic development of the child while fostering an appreciation of other cultures and developing a sense of national pride, every child and school will have access to quality learning experiences with a Singapore artist or arts group.

To realise the vision for Arts Education and in support of our strategic priorities, there will be a focus on the following areas:

- a** Developing a professional sector to support quality instruction in and through the arts;
- b** Growing research and contributing to thought leadership;
- c** Seeking strategic intervention at the policy and curriculum level to increase access to quality experiences in and through the arts;

- d** Deepening engagement with schools and nurturing distinctive schools in the arts⁷; and
- e** Supporting positive first experiences in the early childhood sector.

a Developing a professional sector to support quality instruction in and through the arts

NAC will like to develop a more structured plan to professionalise the arts education sector (comprising teaching artists and arts instructors who work across different contexts and domains), which may include a skills or competency framework and articulation of a professional development pathway. This will require us to examine the sector's manpower needs closely, and conduct research on skills and development needs. Concurrently, NAC hopes to continue working with both local and overseas partners to provide training opportunities, and to also address the needs of specific areas, such as in the preschool and SPED sectors. There is also a need to develop the facilitation and audience engagement skills of artists (an example is the concept of Teaching Artistry⁸) and their ability to work both in schools and outside schools. One example is in the design and implementation of programmes, and documenting successful audience development approaches.

Finally, efforts to support quality arts instruction must continue to include support for arts educators within schools to deepen their own creative practices. NAC will strengthen existing collaborations with MOE and work with new partners such as the newly formed National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC) to support the professional development, especially of preschool teachers in the arts through Pre-Employment Training and Continuing Education and Training efforts.

b Growing research and contributing to thought leadership

NAC will embark on research and documentation projects with partners to better

understand the impact of early experiences in the arts on children, and document the pedagogies of an aesthetic education⁹ in the Singapore context. To augment this effort, NAC will convene a roundtable for arts education that could include MOE, educational institutions such as School of the Arts, the education arms of key cultural institutions and master teaching artists. The roundtable will support future advocacy efforts for the arts, develop signature pedagogies, conduct research, and support the development of thought leaders in arts pedagogy, both locally and internationally. The roundtable could also contribute to or lead efforts to articulate a professional development plan.

c Seeking strategic intervention at the policy/curriculum level to increase access to quality experiences in and through the arts

NAC will continue to work closely with MOE to augment the opportunities available for students to engage with the arts as part of their studies, co-curricular activities and enrichment programmes, and to develop interest in the traditional arts from a young age. A more holistic and aligned approach will be taken in providing all students with access to quality experiences in and through the arts. NAC and MOE are already collaborating with key cultural institutions to provide schools the opportunity to participate in specially-designed programmes at museums and performing arts centres that offer students authentic experiences linked to their school curriculum.

We will also continue our work with MOE to incorporate the arts into learning areas that extend the main arts curricula, looking especially at Character and Citizenship Education and deeper learning about our multicultural heritage. There is also potential to explore how the arts can be further used to enhance the school experience for students with disabilities.

Another area for close collaboration is arts programming for key arts education platforms such as Singapore Youth Festival and the biennial Arts Education Conference to increase the reach of Singapore arts content and artists.

NAC will also support the development of digital resources that can be made available on MOE's online platforms, such as the Student Learning Space. This will help build greater awareness of Singapore artists.

d Deepening engagement with schools and nurturing distinctive schools in the arts

While there are many schemes from NAC that support arts programmes in schools today, the programmes are largely ad-hoc and may not be part of a longer-term vision for how the arts can play a more integral role in schools. NAC will deepen engagement by brokering strong and sustained artist-school partnerships. In line with this, customised support will also be provided to schools that have indicated a niche area in the arts so that they can serve as role-models for others across the mainstream, special education and early childhood sectors. NAC envisions that these distinctive schools are characterised by a holistic and integrated approach to incorporating the arts across curricular and co-curricular domains, or by distinctive arts programmes that deepen student engagement in and through the arts.

7 Schools that have a holistic and integrated approach to incorporating the arts across curricular/co-curricular domains, and may offer distinctive arts programmes that deepen student engagement in and through the arts.

8 According to a definition from USA-based Dr Eric Booth (eminent teaching artist, scholar, actor), a Teaching Artist is a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills, curiosities, and habits of mind of an educator, who can effectively engage a wide range of people in learning experiences in, through and about the arts. See <http://ericbooth.net/the-history-of-teaching-artistry/>

9 The term 'aesthetic education' is borrowed from the late Maxine Greene, eminent philosopher at Teachers College, Columbia University, who espoused that aesthetic literacy (developing the capacity to perceive and attend) and robust imagining are keys to the flourishing of learning and democracy.



e Supporting positive first experiences in the early childhood sector

Working with partners in the early childhood sector, we will develop teaching resources to complement the Nurturing Early Learners Framework, share best practices of integrating the arts into early childhood learning with preschools through online resources, Communities of Practice, and learning journeys; look into facilitating the exchange of ideas and practices between preschool teachers and artists; and support the training and development of artists who wish to conduct programmes in the early childhood sector.

► SUMMARY

In summary, the Education Plan will focus on:

- a** Developing a professional sector to improve the quality of instruction;
- b** Building a robust body of research in the area of arts education, with a long-term view to position Singapore as a thought leader in the region;
- c** Strategic intervention at the systems and policy level to increase access to quality arts experiences;
- d** Deepening engagement by nurturing distinctive schools in the arts through sustained artist-school partnerships; and
- e** Working with key partners in the early childhood sector to expand the reach of best practices in the arts.