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Creative pedagogies: "Art-full" reading and writing

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ABSTRACT: This paper reports on a small-scale research inquiry, designed to support teachers in a Melbourne primary school to bring together the arts, reading and writing in their classrooms in ways that create possibilities for "art-full" teaching and learning. The principal, concerned by underperformance on State literacy tests of the school's largely working-class and NESB population, requested David Hornsby and other members of the project team from the Education Faculty at La Trobe University to offer whole-school professional development. The focus was on developing oral language as a foundation for literacy learning, enacting Britton's claim that "reading and writing float on a sea of talk". The project team introduced the teachers to a range of innovative classroom practices for using visual and performance arts, literature, music and crafts. Drawing on video, interviews and writing samples, a number of teachers worked collaboratively with the research team to develop case studies of individual students with a range of literacy aptitudes and social skills. A key research question was: "What do children take from their engagement in arts-based activities into reading of literary texts, and potentially into writing from the perspective of another character?" In this paper we ponder this from three vantage points: by outlining the informing principles in our research project; confirming insights from current interdisciplinary work about children learning to see, do, act and say in play; and analysing the research data from the initial phase.

KEYWORDS: Arts-based inquiry, play, creative arts, visual arts, pedagogy, children's literature, reading, writing in role, multiliteracies.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents initial findings from a small-scale research inquiry and pilot project, *Creative pedagogies: Integrating the arts within literacy teaching* in primary classrooms.[1]

[1] The research was funded by a La Trobe University Faculty of Education research grant in 2007.

In the field of English teaching, language and literacy, researchers and teachers, building on the initial contribution of psycholinguists in the 1970s, have increasingly attended to literacy learners and the processes involved in the making of meaning linguistically, through reading and writing. Living with the everyday phenomena of multimodal literacies, educators today are becoming increasingly aware of the interdependence of meaning-making visually, performatively and linguistically.

In Australia over the last decade, the rich cultural resources of the arts have received minimal systems-level support in primary schools. National media debates have centred on calls for a standardised national curriculum, "scientific" literacy instruction and measurable outcomes. Tensions have been created for teachers by contradictory imperatives – the narrowing of literacy curricula to emphasise basic skills and higher attainment levels in national testing, and simultaneously the advocacy of a broad primary curriculum, encompassing the teaching of citizenship, languages other than English, environmental sustainability and bike education, to name but a few "essential" curriculum areas. Both in Australia and Britain, the domination of cultures of performativity in teaching and the "surveillance culture of "low-trust" schooling" (Vulliamy, 2006, p. 179) have contributed to the diminishing of professional autonomy for teachers and a reluctance to experiment with classroom innovations (Galton & McBeath, 2002, 2004). Overall, such dominance reflects an official impatience with the complexities of teaching and learning, as in the underlying assumption that "one size fits all".

Curriculum policies, in Victoria and other Australian States, may well provide informed, inquiry-based frameworks for inclusive, imaginative learning. However, following trends in Britain and the US, the state education departments have mandated literacy tests of decontextualised skills which are used to construct "league tables" and apportion funding (Snyder, 2008). The results are used inappropriately as a measure of the effectiveness of schools and teachers, and no account is taken of the socio-cultural context within which the school is located. For teachers, there is a tension between implementing curriculum policy and preparing students to learn holistically, and to perform well in these kinds of assessments. Such tensions and contradictions are the inescapable contexts within which teachers work. Rather than the prevailing systems-level "solution" of routine in-service training, predicated on the belief that "one size fits all", teachers actively seek opportunities for on-going professional learning – learning that takes into account the complexities of their diverse classrooms and provides a potential space for critical reflection and the development of alternative pedagogies.

While pre-service, teacher training courses introduce generalist primary teachers to using the arts in their teaching, we have observed as literacy educators that there are many teachers who lack the confidence or awareness to make connections between the arts and literacy development. The Early Years literacy programme in Victoria, for example, was a prescribed approach to literacy education, which encouraged little connection between literacy teaching, literature and the arts. The impact on the profession was to constrain the development by teachers of inclusive, contextualised pedagogies. Classroom reliance on the routine – read first, write second – has had a reductive impact on what teachers could do and children could learn. Print-based literacy has long been dominant in schooling, working to advantage some and disadvantage others. "Art-full" pedagogies, as described in this paper, are inclusive,

broadening the forms of participation, expression and acknowledgement, and allowing greater access to multicultural and multimediated worlds. If creativity and innovation in teaching are to be encouraged, teachers require support to redesign their literacy pedagogies to connect more effectively with the needs of their students.

A number of school-based research studies document how creative pedagogies successfully use and interconnect the arts with language learning. In the primary classroom, Moore and Caldwell (1993) found that drama and drawing were effective forms of rehearsal for narrative writing and more successful than discussion. Case studies indicate that using creative arts in schools improves children's literacy, one example being the Charles Dickens Primary School in London, which uses an artist-in-residence programme and partnerships with local arts organisations to bring the arts into the classroom. This has resulted in a significant improvement in children's literacy (http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/). Heath and Wolf (2004, 2005) researched the Creative Partnerships Artists-in-Residence programmes in British schools. Their books celebrate both the richness of creative, transformative learning by children under the rigorous instruction of professional artists (for example, learning to look at and critique one's own work), and the capacity of such multimodal arts-based education to bring about whole-school change (also Heath *et al.*, 2007; Flood, Heath & Lapp, 2008).

EXPLORING "ART-FULL" ALTERNATIVES

This article outlines a collaboration between university researchers and classroom teachers which aimed to enrich literacy teaching through integration of the arts. We believed that creative, imaginative pedagogies that utilise the arts in classrooms provide alternative opportunities for engaging students holistically, in literature and writing, engaging hearts, heads (felt-thought) in "embodied" learning. Our project therefore set out to explore alternatives to the routine.

The following principles informed our work:

1. Children and young people achieve learning gains through participating with others in "art-full" exploration, beginning with *seeing* (learning to look, to sustain visual focus), and *doing* (enacting, role-playing as in created or performative arts) accompanied by *saying* (inner speech, verbalising, narrating), reading and writing (Heath & Wollach, 2008, p. 6).

2. "Art-full" engagement (in the creative arts) enacted through role-play and a range of roles, supports language and literacy development. That is, role-play through seeing, doing, and saying carries through to and enriches reading and writing. For instance, Barrs and Cork's school-based research (2001) studied children's engagement in drama, reading and writing-in-role and thereby identified the interdependent development of "the reader in the writer". Using role-play to explore themes and issues prior to reading texts encourages the development of connection points to the text and the possibility of "seeing two worlds at the same time" (Hertzberg, 2007). Heath & Wollach (2008) use evidence from neuroscience in their claim that role-play enhances language

development, and in particular, role-play encourages "creative jumps and seeking reconciliation among disjuncture and disparities" (p. 7).

3. Transformative learning is associated with imaginative, "playful" exploration within a "potential space", that of "play". Winnicott (1971) helps us to understand this "space" or zone as located between the individual and the outside world – an intermediate, inter-personal area. Allied concepts include the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978), cultural experience of the arts and literature (Winnicott, 1971) and "aesthetic response" (Rosenblatt, 1970, 1978; Grant, 2007). "We have to play along in order to know" (Heath & Wollach, 2008, p. 7).

Current interdisciplinary work by artists, linguists, neuroscientists, historians and evolutionary biologists provides rich evidence in support of the three principles above. "Making meaning for us comes through seeing, communicating, and acting together; our neuronal capacities insist on this interdependence" (Heath & Wollach, 2008, p. 10).

Seeing, thinking and saying work interdependently to move us beyond the eye's images – "beyond the sensed evidence", back into stored memory, and forward "to look into the future with some awareness of prediction or possibility" (p. 6). Cognitive and visual psychologists, Kelly (1955) and Gregory (1974) long emphasised the critical interplay between attending to present information, remembering the past, and predicting into the future. The interdisciplinary work builds on such insights. "In essence what we see in any moment both feeds into and enables past memory, and it activates and enables our sense of ourselves as actors moving with agency into the future." This work assists us to understand "why making connections, completing, and especially moving the past into the future matter so much to us in our efforts to read and to interpret symbols systems and icons" (Heath and Wollach, 2008, p. 6).

> In their play, children learn to see, do, and be simultaneously…for here [in play] they enact and embody roles they take on for themselves; they shed those roles that others assign them (for example, that of child, student, or pupil). In the roles they assume in play, as well as in their own created and visual arts, children learn to project consequences and subsequent actions, issue strings of words, and extend themselves in their imaginations, beyond the current visual field....Sustained visual focus, role-playing and verbal explanation or narration (in either inner speech or spoken language) work together….Though we may never know why or how vision supports the verbal and the performative or enactive, some key points are becoming clear with each year of research in the neurosciences. Seeing, imaging, and perceiving, or much mental visual activity that we consider essential to "thinking", "understanding", or "enabling" relies on attending and acting, seeing and doing. (Heath & Wollach, 2008, pp. 6-7).

INTRODUCING THE PILOT RESEARCH PROJECT

The aims of the pilot project in one primary school were:

1. to investigate the extent to which teachers are currently using the arts in literacy development;

2. to identify factors affecting use of the arts, including organizational, resource, curriculum and personal factors;
3. to pilot and evaluate a professional development programme designed to assist teachers:
   - develop innovative classroom practices involving the visual arts (art, crafts, media), performing arts (music, drama, dance) and literature that promote engagement with reading and writing;
   - develop a broader range of approaches to teaching writing;
   - evaluate their own teaching by becoming more reflective and reflexive practitioners.

Phase 1 (Pilot Project, 2007)

The selected primary school, in the north of Melbourne, caters for 400 students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, with Arabic and Turkish two of the main languages spoken. The Principal invited the project team to work with the staff over the whole year. We introduced the project at a staff meeting and invited all teachers to complete an initial questionnaire. From the questionnaires, we were able to map the teachers" current use of the arts and identify the constraints they experienced. All staff, principal included, participated in four, arts-based, professional development workshops facilitated by Sarah Brooke, an experienced, university-based arts educator.

The five teachers who opted to participate in the case-study research component each identified three students (high-achieving, middle-range, under-achieving in literacy). We interviewed the teachers about their nominated case-study students (in Prep/Kinder, Year 5 and Year 6) and asked them to speculate about how they thought arts-based activities might influence the students' reading and writing responses and attitudes. We interviewed these students about the arts and their uses of literacy. During the year, the teachers compiled a file of writing samples and classroom observations for their case-study students, and we collected video and photographic data of students and teachers at work. These various forms of data were discussed with the teachers throughout the project, and final reflections were gathered in a group interview at the end of the year.

Professional development for linking the arts and literature

Each of the four, professional development workshops was designed to provide experiences and extend the teachers' repertoires in the creative arts. The content of each workshop centred on one aspect of the creative arts (dance, drama, visual art, music) in use with a particular, picture story book. Discussion followed about various ways of using the creative arts activities to encourage active reading of the book, and imaginative writing emerging from the "art-full" experiences. A fifth workshop, with teachers who had elected to focus on case studies, provided opportunities for brainstorming and discussion about specific activities that they would use within their literacy programme, based on the book *Our Granny* (Wild & Vivas, 1993).

The workshops were informed by the pedagogy of Orff Schulwerk. This is predominantly an approach to teaching music and movement, but the overarching ideas were able to be transferred to the experiences offered in drama and visual art.

Maubach (2005) suggests that the "essential perspective of the Orff approach is that of a creative education. Use of imagination, recognition of creativity, understanding through problem solving, expressiveness and artistry are the fundamental tenets of this music education approach" (n.p.). The Orff Schulwerk approach demands specific teaching techniques which lend themselves to education in all areas of the creative arts. Beginning with the simple and moving to the complex, providing for learning through active participation, encouraging play and playfulness in learning, and working in teams are all recognised as crucial within this approach.

In one of the workshops, the picture book selected was *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox and Julie Vivas (1987). It tells the story of a young boy asking elderly people from the nursing home next door, "What's a memory?" The workshop activity focused on character and the teachers worked in small groups with newspaper and masking tape to make a figure with a particular set of qualities. The groups then displayed their creations and others suggested words to describe the character of their figure. A representative question was: "What is the right thing to do?" This workshop demonstrated how participation in an arts activity generates the potential for engaging and connecting with new texts. Three other workshops focused on different picture books: *A True Person, Swimmy* and *Edwina the Emu.*

"ART-FULL" ACTIVITIES IN THREE CLASSROOMS

In collaboration with the case study teachers in Prep, Year 5 and Year 6, we developed a sequence of activities for their students on the theme of lifecycles, encompassing visual art, drama, sculpture, shared reading of a text and various forms of written response. Teachers were interested in developing activities which could be used across year levels, and all felt their students would enjoy the opportunity to sculpt their own grandmothers from play dough well before the literacy activities.

Each teacher adapted this sequence (creative arts activity, reading, writing) to suit their students' varying capabilities. In this section we introduce three of the teachers, Pam, Dwaine and Tim and describe the cycle of "art-full" activities they used with their students.

Pam

Pam, an early career teacher in her third year of teaching, joined the project because she wanted to expand her teaching repertoire, especially in literacy. As a teacher of students beginning school, she was concerned to ensure that her literacy teaching met the expectations of parents and her more experienced mentors in the school. She felt that the arts offered her a way to connect with the emerging literacy skills of her five and six-year-old students and was particularly interested in using the arts to build vocabulary for personal writing.

Pam had been using creative visualisation with her students to engage their imagination prior to writing and to relax them when they returned to the classroom after active lunchtime play. She began one "art-full" lesson with a guided visualisation in which she described a series of scenes involving an imaginary tree. The sequence took them from their "first vision" of a tree to more detailed images

until finally they were asked to imagine themselves relaxing under their beautiful trees. Pam then moved on to link this visualisation activity to a discussion about grandmothers. She said to her Prep children, "I want you to create a picture in your minds..."

[Video Clip 1]

While their eyes were closed, she described different characteristics of grandmothers to help them assemble their image of their own grandmother. She then demonstrated some techniques they could use to shape the play dough and asked them about their own grandmothers. The children then went to their tables and made play dough grannies. Discussion around the tables as they worked was animated and general hilarity followed as heads and limbs fell off when the children attempted to move their figures on the cardboard bases supplied.

The children shared their play-dough grannies and described them orally at the end of the lesson. Pam prompted with questions to build their descriptive vocabularies and to identify the unique features of each child's grandmother, asking "What does your grandma like to do? How does she wear her hair? Why does she walk the dog?" She also asked students to describe the clothes their grandmother was wearing and how they reflected her favourite activities.

Pam then moved on to read *Our Granny*. It was received with great delight, as this video clip shows.

[Video Clip 2]

After reading the book, Pam again drew attention to the range of grandmothers' clothing illustrated in the text and probed the students' understandings of the significance of some of their choices.

Transcript 1: Prep

Pam:	Okay, why was this grandma sometimes wearing grandpa's old red jumper with the holey sleeves. Why did she like to do that, Harriet?
Harriet:	Because it reminded her of grandpa.
Pam:	Yeh so when she wears it she thinks about grandpa.
Girl:	My mum always wears my grandma's cardigan….that reminds her.

Pam: Really? How do you think grandma feels when she wears grandpa's old red jumper with the hole in the sleeves? Liam, how do you think she feels, when she wears grandpa's jumper?....You think she feels warm? How else do you think she feels?

Liam: Comfy.

Pam: Comfy, Desi how do you think grandma feels when she is wearing grandpa's old jumper?

Desi: Sad.

Pam: A little bit sad. Why would she feel a little bit sad? Why do you think she might feel sad?

Desi: Misses him.

Pam: Misses him. I think so too.

Pam was able to extend children's humorous response to the grandmother's "wobbly bottom" to include awareness of the emotional significance of the clothing and the sadness accompanying the loss of a grandparent, thus opening up the possibility of an enriched response to the text. The children were given the opportunity to discuss their personal experience in relation to the text and encouraged to articulate a range of empathetic interpretations.

In their interactions around the text, Pam was encouraging meaningful discussion about loss and helping the children to "see the world" through the eyes of a grandmother. She was hoping to resist a technicist approach to the text and aimed to create a space where different layers of meaning could be explored. Nevertheless, the exploration stopped short of a deep analysis of the theme and debate around possible alternative positions. Further, there was no extension of the children's responses to the visual complexities of the text. Perhaps this is evidence of the way in which the teacher-centred approach promoted by the Early Years programme lingers on in the classroom. As an early-career teacher, Pam was seeking to extend her repertoire of practice through participation in the project. Her participation could be understood as a mode of resistance to unexamined, received practices.

For the teachers involved in the focus group, there was a sense that, together, they could risk questioning their former classroom practices in the light of what they had been learning while exploring the arts.

Dwaine

Dwaine, in his first year of teaching, enjoyed the challenge of being completely "in charge" of his own classroom and was excited about the opportunity to conduct research and reflect on his practice. Dwaine, first-generation university graduate, spoke with pride about being a teacher and the capacity it gave him to contribute in the wider community. He took up positions of responsibility in the school and enrolled in further study, two expressions of his active shaping of a professional identity.

The ten and eleven year old students in Dwaine's Year 5 had also made play-dough grandmother sculptures in a previous lesson and were invited to tell stories about their own grandparents – often humorous, sometimes poignant. Dwaine began by sharing stories about his own grandparents, and then commented on the students' perceptions of their grandparents. Under the heading *Our Granny,* there were four columns on the

white board: "Physical Appearance", "Jobs", "Personality", "Miscellaneous". Dwaine recorded students' contributions under each category, probing their responses, clarifying meaning and building a descriptive vocabulary for inclusion in the writing activity which was to follow the role-plays and reading of *Our Granny*. Students eagerly articulated their grandparents' distinctive characteristics: grinning cat and baby-loving grandmothers; grandparents who are so consistently happy that they were annoying; a grandfather who begins stories with "once upon a time" but drifts off and never finishes; and a grandmother who becomes angry when her grandchildren are reluctant to push her wheel chair around the nursing home.

The students in pairs then told brief "grandmother anecdotes". Stories highlighting the uncertain delights and dilemmas of relationships with grandparents from diverse cultural backgrounds found wide empathy and generated much humour, as the following extract shows.

Transcript 2

Chris:	My grandmother always pinches me on the cheek. *(Class breaks into animated agreement.)*
Dwaine:	You know, that's a very important one. You know, I'm twenty-four and it doesn't stop. Even though my grandma is about this tall *(indicates with his hand a height up to his shoulders),* and I'm grown up, she still does that to me *(demonstrates pinching his own cheek).*
Robyn:	My dad's mum she speaks Greek and sometimes I get into trouble for things that I don't even know I did. Like, say, if I leave my drink on the bench just because I need to keep drinking it, and she says in Greek, "Hurry up and finish this. I need to go wash the dishes" and I go, "What? What did I do?" And she keeps on yelling at me. *(All laugh.)*
Dwaine:	That's a good one. So I've got a picture in my head of that. So there you are, you're getting yelled at in another language and you've got no idea what she's yelling. Have you ever tried to work out what she's saying?
Robyn:	Yeah, I've tried to ask her and she goes, "You'll find out soon." *(All laugh*.)
Pat:	My Gran she always hugs me so I sort of can't breathe.

Students then formed groups to develop and perform role-plays, based on their anecdotes. They portrayed a wide variety of "grannies":

- a grandmother, exercising with a TV aerobics programme, arguing with her grandchildren over the remote control, when they wanted to change the channel;
- a grandmother injuring her back after a disco dancing session in the lounge room with her grandchildren;
- kids playing in the back garden and being told to get off the lawn by their grandmother;
- grandmother arriving for a visit, bringing her traditional chocolate treats for the grandchildren which were loudly fought over;

- granddaughter being pinched on the cheek by her Greek grandmother in greeting and then urged to eat and finish her food and drink so grandmother (Yaya) could wash the dishes.

These role-plays revealed the students' ability to construct mini-narratives, to "think in role", to collaborate in a group setting and to direct each other toward an effective and entertaining representation of their complex and diverse relationships with their own grandmothers. The subsequent writing activity, which followed the reading and discussion of *Our Granny*, required students to project themselves into the future and to write as grandparents. Through the role-plays, students identified some significant features of the grandmother-grandchild relationship across cultures and used these understandings to write about themselves as grandparents. Deeper analysis, including an exploration of stereotypes around gender, age and culture, was not evident. In further workshops, the research team plans to model strategies teachers might use in developing critical questioning.

Tim

Tim had been teaching for about eight years and was passionate about teaching and learning. Interested in sport, he communicated energetically with his Year 6 students, whom he team-taught with Marija, his similarly experienced and energetic colleague. After the introductory play-dough sculpting activity, Tim and Marija explored with their students their reasons for depicting their play-dough grandmothers in the ways they had. They followed this with a class discussion, exploring stereotypes relating to the elderly with their Year 6 students and listed words often used to describe grandmothers on the whiteboard. In pairs, the students then developed sample interview questions for a role-played interview between a fictionalised grandmother and an interviewer. Tim set the scene by saying, "You have to put yourself in the shoes, or the slippers, or the funky shoes of the granny….That's the granny you are going to become in the interview."

[Video Clip 3]

With the help of props, shawls, wigs and hats distributed by the music teacher, Nerida, the students interviewed each other in role – one as interviewer and one as granny.

Transcript 2: Year 6 Role-play

Grandma:	I suffer from dementia.
Interviewer:	Do you have any kids?
Grandma:	Me and my husband…….my back, oh, my back…..I have a small TV in my house and my beautiful husband brings me home some KFC and I just go…….
Interviewer:	So did you like being young?
Grandma:	No, old is better because you have an excuse for being lazy…Don't you understand I like being lazy.
Interviewer:	I like being lazy, too, I get into trouble if I don't do one single task, so you are lucky. I want to be old.
Grandma:	Yeh, I love it.
Interviewer:	Have you ever been on the internet?

Grandma:	...do you mean on that UTube?
Interviewer:	Yeh, yeh, do you play on the computer all night long?
Grandma:	Yes, you see I love UTube, you get to see beautiful people, like you.

There is some challenging of stereotypes here. For example, old age can be enjoyed rather than dreaded, and a grandmother can be slightly flirtatious! The role-play interviews were playful and allowed students to be humorous in entering more fully into the shoes of another.

The music teacher orchestrated a class chant, using phrases about the grandmothers students had just created. Nerida used students' words to create a rhythmic chant.

Transcript 3: Year 6 Chant

Nerida/Kids:

Really really really cool,
Really really really cool (repeated)

Knit one pearl two, frail is she,
Knit one pearl two, frail is she (repeated)

Grandma"s cool she wears blue jeans
She"s not like the pictures in the magazines.
Grandma"s old but young at heart
If you pull her finger she will do a fart.

The general hilarity created through composing and practising this chant culminated in a class performance of this group chant, with each table repeating their phrase and tapping a rhythm with their hands on the desks This "art-full" play involved all the students, their bodies moving and voices loudly combining in an exhilarating sea of noise and movement. A class reading of *Our Granny* followed, which prompted similar great amusement to that witnessed in the prep classroom. In the next lesson, the students wrote in role as grandmothers.

TENTATIVE FINDINGS: TOWARD "ART-FULL" PRACTICE

This section outlines tentative findings about teachers' and researchers' learning. Phase 2 of the project will further investigate the gains in children's literacy learning, with particular emphasis on writing.

Teacher learning

Firstly, teachers identified, at the beginning of the project, a number of obstacles preventing them making greater use of the arts in the classroom. By the end of this pilot project, their reflections on what had changed suggest that obstacles were being viewed as opportunities. They tended to shift:

- from seeing time as a problem to devoting time for the arts;
- from low levels of confidence to an excitement about possibilities;
- from uncertain knowledge to improvement in "know how";

- from concerns about maintaining authority and classroom discipline during "open" activities to trusting children to engage in self-directed exploration;
- from concerns about confined spaces to realisation that children inhabit space in many different ways;
- to embracing the arts and the opportunities for more co-operative and collaborative work.

It is hard to imagine these developments occurring apart from the modelling and scaffolding of "art-full" pedagogies in a non-threatening environment. Perhaps teachers planning together with colleagues across year levels, and with the research team, became more open and playful in designing cross-age classroom activities. The project itself created spaces for teachers to talk about how individual students might benefit from arts-based activities, to talk through the design of such activities and the practicalities of implementation.

Secondly, teachers not only learnt to be intentional in their use of the arts, but they also prioritised the arts in the time they gave for "art-full" exploration and play. In this way, they resemble the artists, and not the teachers in Galton's study. Children's accounts described artists in the classroom as giving enough space and time for the children to explore and engage in the task, but described teachers as pacing tasks according to instructions and time-based restrictions (Galton, 2008).

We observed teachers in our project becoming more "artist-like" in that they encouraged playful activities; they allowed time for individual and group exploration, thinking and response; they encouraged collaborative talk; they allowed more time for exploration. This is evidence for what Galton found: that artists differentiate by task, whereas teachers differentiate by pace. Teacher comments included:

> Pam (Prep): "I now try to incorporate as much activity as possible prior to reading the book."
>
> Dwaine (Year 5): "Now I spend a lot of time on the arts before getting into writing activities."
>
> Tim (Year 6): "Role-play gave them a greater knowledge of historical facts and relationships before reading *Eureka Stockade*."

Thirdly, teachers found that play and story was generative of language and that through play and story under-achieving students became socially confident and articulate. It was as if these children were learning to *see*, *do*, *be* and *say* simultaneously in their play. Taking on roles for themselves, they generated the language that carried through into their reading, responding and writing in role. For example, Pam (Prep) remarked of one of her case-story students: "Liam has enjoyed doing the arts-based activities….He always enjoys listening to stories. He loves drawing and telling stories as he draws." Even though Pam thought this had not yet "led to writing", Liam was clearly becoming a writer, composing sustained texts orally as he drew.

According to Year 5 teacher, Dwaine, "The puppet activity worked extremely well, especially for a student suffering from Oppositional Defiance Disorder, who, after initially refusing to participate in a group, joined in and did a fantastic job in his

team." Year 6 teacher, Tim, commented that: "Some children find it difficult to talk, (read or write) but…when they become a different character (talking as a newspaper puppet). There's no comfort zone to worry about and you see the person come out…a different character." For instance, John, a struggling student, created and performed a playscript for the first time. Tim was able to offer him the feedback: "I haven't seen anything like that from *you* before, John."

Finally, teachers found themselves changing the sequence of their reading pedagogy. Reading is one of many "art-full" activities. Previously, teachers followed a routine of starting a reading lesson with the text. If they used the arts, it was usually after the text had been "delivered" (Figure 1).

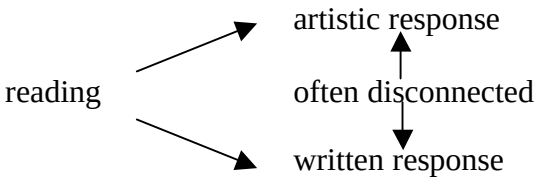

Figure 1: A routine linear approach

Tim sums up the shift to another model (see Figure 2) in his classroom: "We get our heads around the book *before* reading…enjoying the text instead of delivering it by habit." The project teachers now understand that when children begin with the creative arts, they are engaged in attending, seeing, thinking and using language in ways that open up multiple connections with diverse texts.

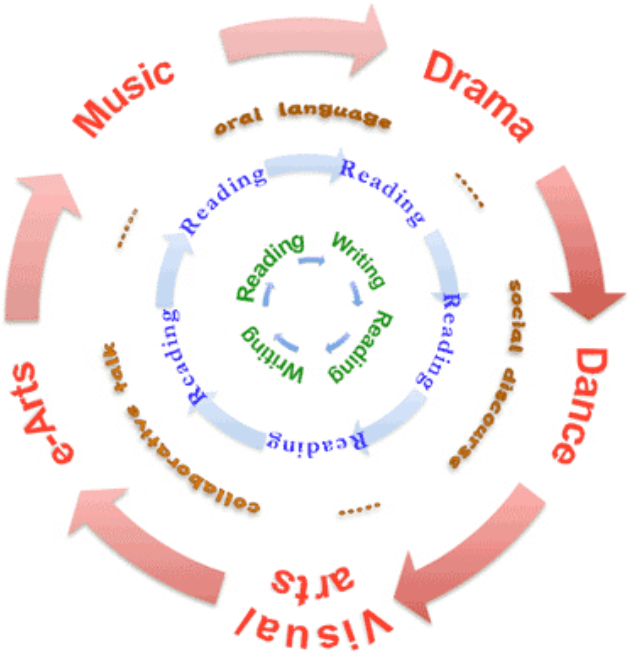

Figure 2: An integrated, "art-full" arts/literacy model

This diagram represents our attempt to relocate reading and writing pedagogy within a spiral and recursive exploration of the arts.

A significant researcher finding was that significant and enduring *change* requires significant *time* for professional learning. For hosts of reasons, the project team had less time in the school than was hoped, and teacher participants less time to give. Although we established a timeline with teachers early in the project and all participants were enthusiastic, as the year progressed meetings were rescheduled or hurriedly conducted amidst a plethora of other pressing demands. In the second phase of the project, researchers hope to have more time for collaborative work with individual teachers. Funding did not include payment of teacher release time to attend meetings or engage in project writing workshops, so teachers were taking on the project's demands as additional dimensions of their considerable professional responsibilities.

A second finding was that teachers take up arts activities that are modelled for them. Teachers became intentional about using "art-full" activities prior to reading and writing, as modelled during the workshops. Other options, such as ways of asking questions to enrich reading and writing in role, were discussed with but not implemented by the teachers. Workshops in 2008 will model a repertoire of "art-full" reading and writing activities around texts.

Finally, it was clear that both teachers and educators can create powerful new possibilities for children's reading and writing by relocating literacy pedagogies within the creative, playful use of the visual and performing arts. That is, "art-full" reading and writing in role grow out of prior playful exploration in the arts. Starting with seeing and thinking, doing and saying, the children we observed moved into role-play enactments. Some began making connections with remembered pasts and imagined futures, but all of them generated the language to compose and tell stories. This playful activity sets in motion learner strategies for attending and connecting, predicting and confirming, integrating and completing, that together make possible full engagement in reading and writing.

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