



A Forum on Integrating The Arts into our Children's Lives

**Tuesday, November 6, 2007
Arts Court, Ottawa**

A Summary Report



Funded by The Ontario Trillium Foundation. The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, receives annually \$100 million of government funding generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative.

Introduction

Artists, educators and presenters from across the province gathered at Arts Court in Ottawa on Tuesday, November 6, 2008.

The day was designed to bring together and coordinate the efforts of educators, performing artists and community presenters so that children can benefit from the best performing arts experiences possible.

We enjoyed a musical theatre performance of *Oz* by **La Cie Vox Théâtre** and a percussion and dance performance by **rhythm Project**, with students from 2 local schools. We participated in interactive voice and percussion workshops with members of both companies. We were inspired by a panel discussion and breakout discussion groups.

We truly did **Think Creatively...Participate Actively...Imagine Artistically and Experience Passionately!**

An important component of the day was to gather participants' comments and ideas in the form of a survey conducted by Cheryl Ewing of eyeGo to the Arts. A total of 46 completed surveys, representing a return of 64%, were submitted to form the basis of this report.

General Results

Attendees:

- 35% identified themselves as teachers without an arts connection
- 4% were involved in presenting the performing arts and
- 28% were artists or connected to an arts organization
- The remainder self-identified as involved in two or more sectors.

Arts involvement:

- 26% of those attending are currently involved in the arts
- 54% of those who were involved in the arts had some training earlier in their life
- In the education sector,
 - 39% had training in instrumental music
 - 6% had training in vocal music
 - 33% had theatre training
 - 17% had dance training
- In the arts (artists and presenters) sector,
 - 67% had training in theatre
 - 22% had training in instrumental music
 - 28% had training in vocal music
 - 22% had training in dance

The arts and teaching:

- The education sector was fairly evenly split in their perception of how their own performing arts experiences impact their comfort level in teaching the arts. There was a slight leaning towards experience having an impact but not decidedly so – about an 60/40 split.
- The majority of the educators rated themselves as being unacquainted with each of the identified genres – contemporary dance, classical dance, instrumental music, choral music, opera, and theatre. Instrumental music and theatre had a slight edge. Opera and contemporary dance were the most unfamiliar of the art forms.

Specific Results

We asked a series of questions about attending performances; seeing arts education as a valuable part of children's learning; and whether each child has the ability to express him/herself creatively but needs help. The arts and presenting sectors strongly agreed with all of these statements. The

educators strongly agreed with the later statements but only 50% indicated that attending performances is a regular part of their own life.

Those identifying themselves as having a connection with both arts and education had the lowest scores regarding their own attendance but the highest as regards children and arts education. It was noted that the Ministry of Education needs to give credible support to the Arts as a viable curriculum and not lip service with no time & funding attached.

Who do you think should take a leadership role in exposing children to performing arts?

Overall, the identification of what organization should take responsibility was fairly evenly split with a range of 87% to 91% indicating the Ministry of Education, the educational system and local artists and arts organizations. Municipal and community venues, parent and community groups, and the Ministry of Culture came in at 78%, 80% and 83% respectively.

It was also suggested that local businesses, the family, media and any educational program also has a role. It was also noted that "While it is fine for community groups to expose students to events there has to be an understanding and working relationship with schools with regards to school timetables. Schedules, bus issues, curriculum and literacy priorities which create barriers to flexibilities in presenting arts events."

Artists and arts educators were strongly in favour of local artist/arts organizations taking a leadership role (94%), followed by the educational system at 89%. The Ministry of Culture was cited by only 72%. Educators were evenly split with the educational system, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture all received 89%. Note that attendees could indicate all that they felt applied.

Those seeing themselves as encompassing both the arts and education sectors were unanimous in agreeing that the educational system and Ministry of Education should be leaders. With the exception of the family at 80%, the other factors were all related at 90%.

What barriers do you think limit exposing more children to the performing arts?

Parents unfamiliarity with performing arts was seen as the greatest barrier across the sectors (87%). Cost came second at 79%. Children's unfamiliarity with performing arts or unfamiliarity with a theatre were scored the lowest at 47% or 33%. Educators noted that there is too much focus on literacy and numeracy. Artists scored teacher's lack of interest at 72%, educators scored this barrier as 33%.

Comments included:

- Lack of positive role models in media.
- TIME – one can't dig in and dig out. One has to commit a certain amount of time and energy.
- Bus costs.
- Using it in the classroom.
- Too much focus on literacy and numeracy.

Overloaded schedules for classroom teachers; arts becomes an extra rather than integral to classroom life.

Overall there was agreement that going to a performance or a theatre is not a frightening experience for people, although about a quarter of the educators did indicate that they believe that these can be frightening experiences.

61% of the educators think that children should experience more performing arts in their school district. 44% want to know more about available financial resources. Only one person expressed concern about his/her lack of knowledge regarding the performing arts.

Those with an arts interest attended because they want children to experience performing arts in theatres and wanting to learn about educators' needs regarding introducing children to the performing arts.

Comments included:

- Opportunity to see what other school districts and other areas are doing, such as National Capital region.
- I'm very aware of local issues, but wanted to keep abreast of current opinions

The Performances

La Cie Vox Théâtre presented *Oz* at the beginning of the forum for the delegates and an invited francophone elementary school audience. During the second half of the morning **rlthm Project** performed for an English language elementary school.

Delegates were asked a series of questions about engagement, reflection and whether they were challenged.

Engagement:

- Thirty-three of the attendees returned Part II of the survey. The majority (76%) felt that the children attending the performance of **La Cie Vox Theatre** were completely engaged. Response to **rlthm Project** was mixed with 30% neutral, 33% greatly and 30% completely engaged. **La Cie Vox's** performance of *Oz* fared better in the rating of the attendees. 61% were completely absorbed but only 33% of those expressed the same response to **rlthm Project's** performance.

Reflection:

- The delegates were asked to consider the extent that the performance caused the respondents to reflect on their own opinions and beliefs, *Oz* received a rating of greatly by 36% of the respondents and another 12% rated it as completely. The **rlthm Project** was similar with 42% rating their response as greatly and 9% as completely. Three of the respondents rated their absorption in the **rlthm Project** as a 4 or greatly absorbed, two others rated their absorption as being complete – a 5.
- The responses to 'To what extent did the performance cause you to reflect on your own opinions or beliefs' were very close with both performances. Overall the response to both was strong with *Oz* having a total of 48% indicating either greatly or completely and **rlthm Project** at 51%. The next question: 'How much did the performance inspire you to introduce elements of performing arts in your classroom' again had very close results: 54% and 51% with the majority of these being completely inspired. The artists and programmers were greatly or completely inspired to program *Oz* (48%) but were less interested in **rlthm Project** (30%).

Challenged:

- Intellectually 69% were engaged by *Oz*, only 45% by **rlthm Project**. The response to whether the respondent was provoked or challenged by the message was fairly evenly split across the lower end at 24% with only 18% greatly provoked or challenged. The **rlthm Project** scored even lower with a greater number of respondents indicating not at all or little.

This would be a good experience for all children was the response of 76% of the attendees. About half stated that they gained an appreciation for skills learned in a short period of time; and, realized that all children can benefit from participating in arts regardless of skill level. One commented that the workshop time slot was too short to achieve any of the stated objectives.

The Workshop

The morning finished with all the attendees participating in one of two workshops, 42% found that their participation was personally challenging.

- Imagine Artistically – the voice (conducted by Pier Rodier of **La Cie Vox Théâtre**)
- Experience Passionately – rhythm and movement (conducted by Larry Graves of **rlthm Project**)

Comments include:

- Playing music in front of others is something fairly new to me and it made me think about bringing music to my own animation workshop
- It was excellent!
- Went past comfort level – that was good!
- Too basic
- It was out of my comfort zone as I'm sure students in school feel each day with new subjects.
- Wow!
- Always good to put yourself in a learner's shoes
- 4 characters with 4 voices – challenging and new neutral walk – almost all drama workshops for learning start with this but not a new warm-up.
- Auditory and kinetic learners come from a very different start point than I did. I realized how important it is for children who see things the way Larry does, I may be missing their needs.
- I expected dance.
- Too quick, too superficial because not enough time, did not join disparate elements together.
- So difficult to coordinate all the different rhythms.

The Panel Discussion

A Panel Discussion *Connect Creatively* consisting of individuals active in developing arts education opportunities in the community followed the workshop and it did not score well. The highest scores were only 36% indicating that it was supportive and a source of new ideas.

The Discussion Groups

Following lunch, the delegates gathered in one of three discussion groups – education, presenters and artists. Each group was given the task of identifying five key questions to take back to the larger group at the end of the day. Delegates found the discussion groups to be stimulating and supportive, providing knowledge and additional resources that are available.

Following is the summary of the final session. Jamie Grant, General Manager of the Centre in the Square, Kitchener received the Top 5 Questions from each break out group (educators, artists, presenters) and asked the entire delegation to work collaboratively to answer the questions and identify solutions. Due to time constraints, not all questions were answered.

French Educators:

QUESTION	OVERARCHING THEMES	DISCUSSION NOTES FROM SESSION #4 with JAMIE GRANT
1. Is it possible to evaluate creativity, creativity of artistic programs and of students participating in programs?	<i>Evaluation and Assessment</i>	Ministry of Education is working on this – it is something that educators really need How has creativity increased?
2. How to increase the creativity that exists between students and teachers? How to make sure there is always a resource person available to the teacher in the schools?	<i>Resources for Teachers</i>	- advocate to Board and Ministry to ensure arts consultants and resource personnel available in schools
3. Can the Ministry of Education set up an online resource, database accessible to all young people in province and divided by Region?	<i>Resources for Teachers</i>	- a lot of teachers are generalists teaching in a discipline they have no background in – they need a centralized place for finding these resources

4. How do we help people with extra curricular activities?	<i>Access and Equity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increase budgets around the activities? - Media partnership – Macdonald's sponsors athlete of the week - artist (or student artist) clip on TV
5. How do we create a generalized policy across school boards province-wide with flexibility to adapt to needs of each Region – giving a foundation to all the school boards?	<i>Advocacy and Policy Creation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give precise objectives to arts advocacy organizations to act upon - need to give more financial support to artists working with children/youth

English Educators:

QUESTION	OVERARCHING THEMES	DISCUSSION NOTES FROM SESSION #4 with JAMIE GRANT
1. How can we use technology to increase access to arts experiences and artists? (centralized source)	<i>New Technology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CODE brain based research is available at www.cccio.on.ca www.eyego.org
2. How can we provide equal access to the arts for rural schools while understanding opportunity and costs?	<i>Access and Equity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Busing students to venues is very costly
3. How can we use the arts to make connections between the community and schools?	<i>Community Partnerships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a collaborative board to educate each other and discuss issues on local level – i.e. buses (number) between Friday and March Michelle (children's festival), Tim(English educator)
4. How can the arts community influence policy on how the arts are delivered in school?	<i>Advocacy and Policy Creation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need the arts community to speak up about the importance of the arts -Speak to Minister re Development policy, new changes forbids building of artistic facilities but mandated to build sport facilities - Group to meet with new MPP – needs support of Arts Council – - Develop strategy that reaches beyond this group (i.e. see Coalition for music – has had thousands of people sign petition re speaking about something we want to see changed) - Incorporate GG in the discussion - Policy for the arts represents the research that is out there supporting arts in education – lack of space, resources, specialized teachers - Work for children should receive the same kind of funding as work for adults
5. How can artists help educate the educator? And can artists incorporate career education?	<i>Community Partnerships</i>	

The Artists:

QUESTION	OVERARCHING THEMES	DISCUSSION NOTES FROM SESSION #4 with JAMIE GRANT
1. How can Artists promote a continued respect for their needs and cultural conditions?	<i>Value of the Arts and Artists</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Artists need to establish their needs, be clear as to needs and reflect this in contracts - contracts need to be respected i.e. space - Need proper facilities in schools – appropriate place for a performance - infrastructure – relates to teacher/student ratio (funding formula)
2. How to get the community to acknowledge and respect artists' seniority and maturity (ie. mentorship, entry level opportunities)?	<i>Value of the Arts and Artists</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - artists need money to create and develop their workshops specifically for youth - OAC level that artists should be allowed to make per day as required to pay consultants (i.e. \$500 daily) as per Compass grants - equalization of artists v.s consultant fees
3. Are there different ways to bring students to artists? To theatres, to workshops, this in an important and very different relationship to the arts.	<i>Community Partnerships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presenters and agents need to recognize artists' realities and they need to understand the necessity of physical, emotional & physical space in which to create the work. - Two valid experiences: in school & in venue
4. Are there ways to deal with the inequity across the river/ between the various boards/ the rural-urban split?	<i>Advocacy and Policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Artists will help with lobbying, will work with presenters, agents to educate - Ministry of Education get more involved in the arts – policies should have longer life – to reach wider pool

Presenters:

QUESTION	OVERARCHING THEMES	DISCUSSION NOTES FROM SESSION #4 with JAMIE GRANT
1. How to reach the educators (Min, principals, teachers, school boards) to give an understanding of importance of arts, awareness and empower them to become broader consumers? i.e. tools	<i>Resources for Teachers</i>	Showcases – of artists available to be booked – 10 – 15 min presentation
2. What is the role of the presenter/artist in arts education – where does it stop?	<i>Community Partnerships</i>	
3. How to work with other arts organizations to collaborate not compete?	<i>Community Partnerships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a collaborative board to educate each other and discuss issues on local level – i.e. buses (number) between Friday and March (Michelle (children's festival), Tim(English educator)

4. How to balance needs of Presenter, artist, consumer (financial) so artist is properly compensated?	<i>Value of the Arts and the Artist</i>	
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For more information

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Template: C:\Documents and Settings\stephanie\Application
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot
Title:
Subject:
Author: Joanne Churchill
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 3/23/2009 1:02:00 PM
Change Number: 2
Last Saved On: 3/23/2009 1:02:00 PM
Last Saved By: Stephanie Luke
Total Editing Time: 1 Minute
Last Printed On: 3/23/2009 1:02:00 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 8
Number of Words: 2,648 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 15,096 (approx.)