



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

**Tuesday, May 12, 2009
Market Hall Theatre and
Showplace Performance Centre, Peterborough**

A Summary Report



An Agency of the Government of Ontario

Introduction

Artists, educators and presenters from the expansive Kawartha region of the province gathered at Market Hall Theatre and Showplace Performance Centre on Tuesday, May 12, 2009.

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 performance of ***A Story Before Time*** by **Kaha:wi Dance Theatre**, along with students from Prince of Wales Public School, followed by a Q & A with the performers. We learned Iroquois community and social dances with members of the dance company. We were inspired by a panel of local performing artists and producers who work closely with the schools and participated in discussion groups and planning sessions.

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 41 completed surveys, were submitted to form the basis of this report.

General Results

Attendees:

- 61% of those attending were educators
- 63% as artists or representing an arts organization
- Remaining split between venues and presenters
- 60% of the teachers in attendance were also artists
- The majority are employed full-time (73%), 24% are part-time employees

Arts involvement:

- 44% of those in attendance are currently involved in the arts
- 37% have had training but are not currently directly involved
- Twenty-four have a hands-on experience with theatre
- A little over a third have experience in dance and instrumental music
- Only 22% had no arts training at all
- Of the 10 attendees who said they came only because of their involvement in the education sector, 5 had earlier experience in the arts and 1 is currently involved. Their experience was in theatre and instrumental music.

The arts and teaching:

The education sector indicated their performing arts experience greatly impacted on their comfort level in teaching the arts – 40%. This percentage was consistent within a couple of percentage points whether or not there was an arts interest. One-third were ambivalent.

Overall the attendees were most familiar with theatre (68%). Music and dance followed at 39% and 34% respectively.

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. All sectors represented strongly agreed with the first two statements (98% and 90% respectively). Interestingly, those who self-identified as both artists and educators did not necessarily believe that children need help to express him/herself creatively. (53%)

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

Response was fairly evenly split ranging from 71% (municipal and community venues) up to 98% feeling that the education system should be the leader. It was noted that the decline in arts experiences for children has made it difficult for adults to encourage children to participate in something that the adults find unfamiliar in their own lives.

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

The comment in the previous question about the impact of a lack of experience as a child makes it difficult for adults to encourage participation was reflected in the responses to this question. 88% identified parents' unfamiliarity, followed by teachers at 76%. Attendees also noted that lack of time for parents and teachers and at school due to other curriculum demands is a barrier. An individual also noted that society and government promotes sports over the arts.

Given that so many of the attendees have had arts experience it is not surprising that they did not feel that going to a performance or theatre is a frightening experience for someone unfamiliar with performing arts activities.

Attendees agree that children should experience more performing arts in school (66%). They want to know more about financial resources (54%). These first two statements were consistent regardless of the sector the individual represented. Overall attendees were intrigued by the opportunity to participate in workshops based on performing arts (51%). Almost half (49%), expressed their concern about the future of performing arts. Educators without an arts background were not as concerned about the future. Their concerns were with the present. They wanted to be more aware of performing arts opportunities in the community as well as available local artistic resources. Those with just an arts interest agreed with the first two statements and wanted to learn more about educators' needs regarding introducing children to the performing arts (56%). Comments included the desire to see how to incorporate performance and visual arts and create a partnership rather than a segregated relationship. Also, children have a right to experience more artistic practices in our schools.

All sectors believe that teachers' unfamiliarity with performing arts and cost are the biggest barriers. Educators identified teachers' lack of interest, along with unfamiliarity with arts and artists, and presenters identified teachers' and parents' unfamiliarity. Comments included:

- The arts are not a Ministry of Education priority;
- Performances do not always reflect our diverse community;
- Lack of time in day; competition with sports and standardized testing;
- Math/Literacy focus in schools;
- It is difficult for teachers to take on the extra work needed to organize performances;
- Not too expensive, just not enough money.

The Performance

Attendees to the Peterborough Arts Ed Forum were treated to a performance of **Kaha:wi Dance Theatre's *A Story Before Time***, based on a First Nations' story. All felt that the children in the audience were engaged. The adults were also deeply engaged.

The performance was such that it did not generally caused attendees to reflect on their own opinions or beliefs, however many (62%) were inspired to introduce elements of performing arts in their classroom. The artists were inspired to perform or program for children. The performance did engage the attendees on an intellectual level (76%). It also provoked or challenged the attendees.

The Workshop

The morning finished with all attendees participating in a workshop led by the dancers. Attendees generally found it to be somewhat personally challenging. Comments included with this question addressed not only the participatory workshop but also other elements of the day. They included:

- Simple dance for a dance professional.
- It was fun!
- As the speed increased, I had trouble keeping it going right. But I would like to do these steps with my students, so I will persevere.
- I found it really useful to meet with my secondary colleagues but felt that the inclusion of visual art was missed.
- Format of the create 5 questions session was awkward since it started with a question.
- Liked the involvement/collaboration of the various stakeholders i.e. Public board, Catholic board, performers, venue managers, arts organizations – valuable.
- Simple, inclusive and fun but not particularly challenging.
- Have a little hip issue, pain when sitting for awhile.

The attendees realized that participation in performing arts activities requires the development of a team (62%). They also agree that such an experience would be good for all children (62%).

- It offers all of the above (referring to the statements in the participation question), benefits and increases appreciation for future performances.
- Next workshop should include elementary/secondary students, parents, trustees.
- My value of/appreciation for the arts/arts education has been fueled by education and career path since high school. It's why I do what I do everyday!
- Many of these 'realizations' are beliefs I held prior to the workshop.
- I already knew most of this, but was reminded or reinforced.

The Panel Discussion

A panel consisting of individuals active in developing arts education opportunities in the community followed the workshops. Attendees found the discussion to be a source of new ideas – 57%. Comments included: *Would have been nice to have facilitation with questions*, as well as *useful to hear points of view from performers and arts administrators*.

The Discussion Groups and Planning Session

The delegates gathered in one of three discussion groups – elementary school educators, secondary school educators and presenters and artists. They were given the task of identifying what they needed to

know from the other groups. They then gathered for a large discussion group that led to commitments for moving forward. The delegates found the discussion groups to be supportive (67%), a source of new ideas (57%) and stimulating (52%). One delegate commented that it was *really helpful to meet and discuss with secondary colleagues*. The majority learned about additional available resources (86%).

Following the small discussion groups, the delegates met in a large group. Again, the majority (86%) felt that they developed a network of contacts that will assist them in reaching their goals in improving arts education opportunities. It was noted by the delegates that it was helpful to have a list in a handout but many in attendance were not included. This was addressed following the Forum when an updated attendance list was provided to all of the delegates. The majority (81%) learned about additional resources available.

In considering the impact of the Arts Ed Forum as a whole, 86% felt it was a worthwhile experience and would recommend it to colleagues. The majority (90%) felt part of a larger group with similar goals and 58% were provoked or challenged by an idea or message. The Forum did not cause the majority of delegates to reflect on their own opinions or beliefs but did help equip the delegates (52%) to develop a working partnership with others in the community.

When asked what was missed delegates commented:

- Art creation in the schools
- Creation grants for artists in the schools
- My area of Muskoka/Parry Sound had no other representatives. That was unfortunate for them. I know you tried to contact people about it.
- Brining in students and parents to the discussion.
- Needed trustees and young people.
- Other stakeholders – Trent University, Fleming College, Theatre Guild.
- A list of grants we can apply for to bring theatre to rural communities.
- Visual art – local art gallery as a meeting site or role visual art plays in context of theatre and/or dance. Was an arts forum but many questions and discussions were geared exclusively to drama and dance. It was useful to be made aware of the other disciplines but there were several visual arts teachers present as well today. Perhaps discussion that allowed for a further breakdown into disciplines for example: secondary visual art/secondary drama/secondary music – may have offered a more in-depth reflection.
- Today was really well thought out!
- Time for fledgling committees to meet. Kids present to get their take.
- This was great, but....there is a huge need for teacher training in the arts. It is/has not been a priority (language/math) and teachers are ill equipped – lack of confidence – with the division of drama/dance in the new curriculum. Many teachers will be frustrated by the thought of teaching dance workshops. Great opportunity to have a voice! (about common “Arts” concerns).

Further comments:

- Wonderful play/performance this morning. Thank you for the food, refreshments, wine and cheese and chance to network.
- Thanks for your hard work! Well run, engaging day with great food.
- Thank you, I would love to get together again to create solid workable solutions.
- Follow up required and the Arts Ed Forum Committee needs to send the email addresses of all participants to have on file. I know it's in the booklet but it would be helpful to have them on file to improve communication.
- Great day – great company – ideas – opportunities to move ahead and get something done that will benefit the children, youth, presenters, educators and even the parents!
- Great day, but keeping within the timeline is really important. It is tough to end great dialogue but in order to keep people coming back for more, it's okay to respect/enforce the agenda.
- Thanks! Really valuable!

Break Out Sessions and Wrap-up

The delegates, as mentioned, met in three teams to determine five key questions to be addressed by the full group at the end of the day. The questions posed by each team are listed with the responses from the wrap-up session facilitated by Warren Garrett.

Elementary Educator's Team

What can presenters do to motivate and engage teachers, students and parents? (prior to performance)

- Family night – reduce price barriers
- Email from someone who has seen the performance with two liner
- Have a 'reporter' to spread the news
- Open house during school hours for teachers and students – experience venue and communication – come to see what they are missing
- Tap into parent councils for communications
- Artists and presenters appear at staff meetings/parent councils
- Use the PA system creatively in the school
- Use professional development days – actors work with teachers on sample workshop

How do we solve transportation issues, especially in such spread out school boards?

- Offer full day – partner with other arts organization
- Encourage two venues to work together on programming to allow for sharing of bus (small schools/different age groups)
- Share bus between two schools
- Corporate sponsor
- Expand artist visit between schools
- Theatres throughout the board working together more often i.e. same show into other municipalities

How can we advocate together to get an Arts Rep in each school?

- Talking to Teacher's Federation as well as the Board (reluctance to make this a required extra for the Board due to contracts)
- Seek out like-minded people to make one on one personal connections
- Infiltrate the parent councils
- Networking opportunities for those teachers who are interested (i.e. sports)
- Internally the Board is understood to be the Board of Trustees – the administration is a power structure with limited decision making – the Board of Trustees is the real source of power
- The Trustees of School Council Appreciation Night – school council members and trustees are invited to a big event with speaker – get invited

How can we replicate the River Run model?

- Get someone to write grants
- Approach GE, Pepsico and others who sponsor in this community – parents, trustees and presenter to help sell the idea
- Market Hall and Showplace work together to make it happen
- Include theatres and corporate sponsors in other communities so it includes all
- Make it a requirement that students write a theatre review / make it necessary that they go twice a year to see a performance

Is it possible for local theatre to share resources (props, costumes, equipment, locally written scripts) with the schools?

- Formalizing the process
- Many theatres already have a process in place – common practice in the professional world
- Peterborough Theatre Guild, Arbor Theatre – constantly building, striking, storing props, sets, etc.
- Some theatres such as Showplace Peterborough and Market Hall do not have the ability to do this due to the nature of their business
- School community and community theatre to work out a process and communicate to the schools – formalize communications so new teachers are not missed
- Provide some PD for new teachers – training, here are resources, etc. – expand the role of the Art Reps
- Can items be donated to classrooms? Do community theatres have a yard sale annually?
- Don't hesitate to call Ray (Showplace) or Karen (Market Hall) to begin and they will direct you to a resource

Secondary Educator's Team

How can local arts community groups get their information to educators at the beginning of the school year?

- Teachers have to set schedule very early – timing late August (last week)
- Each board has own website – no specific website to post – perhaps a wiki to be created for groups to post their info
- Can the board websites have a side bar link with community links? i.e. theatre youth groups – would need to have Trustees behind it
- Internal email will allow for creation of folders
- Presenters, at time of creating programmes should be in conversation with schools to avoid conflict of dates

How to create opportunity for educators at large to network?

- CODE (Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators)
- No connection between the teachers in the different boards
- Can presenter invite them to theatre for meetings
- Arts Education Committee?
- Ray will organize a network – setting up a listserv, will convene a face to face meeting (everyone – not just secondary)

How do artists find out more or gain a better understanding of educators needs (i.e. tie in into curriculum, scheduling issue)

- Curriculum.org – posted on government websites
- Every year the school board will have a focus i.e. anti-bullying, anti-smoking – generally set by the end of the school year
- Want the artist to be aware of what the educators are aiming at
- Talk to guidance counselors, or at-risk person at the Board
- School calendars are available on websites
- Responsibility of the artist to be aware and have to want it – not an easy thing to do, it is an investment on the part of the artists
- At beginning of the year, have the information to the school so that teachers can fit it into their personal schedule

- The new curriculum includes very skills driven and creative driven arts expectations – includes arts in the community, arts from other cultures
- We need to educate parents and administrators that the arts are valuable
- Take possession of the curriculum
- Calendar for next year is out now
- Royal Conservatory of Music has a course that helps artists understand what the curriculum is – OAC sponsored right now – runs on an ongoing basis
- The KPR board has an “Areas of Emphasis” creates an ‘alternate curriculum’ from the Trustees i.e. next four years will have emphasis on Emotional Intelligence
- Helpful for teachers to be able to identify parts of the document

How to work together with presenters and educators to change the perceived value of Arts Education to advocate better together?

- Bring in trustees, principals to see and understand the value of what their students are seeing
- Send personal email invitation with specific time frame to specific key people
- So much emphasis on math and reading – music is math – reading and writing – get kids to write songs – show how business people have gained skills through the arts
- Community partnerships i.e. seniors’ group to come – paying tickets to contribute to the costs
- Multi-faceted audiences to offset costs and increase audiences – charge group rate

Presenters and Artists Team

How can we better collaborate?

- Network via Ray Marshall

How can we discover education needs re timing, programming, content, and logistics?

- As above

How can we create bridges between parents, community venues, children, artists, and schools?

- Mail catalogues to parent councils with letter regarding sponsoring for your school – talk to the principal – get them to influence their own school
- Opportunity for mini-showcases at existing festivals and events (i.e. folk festivals) and at a venue where people are already supporting another thing
- Short DVD with clips from shows – or on the web – helps discussion
- Need to go to specific teachers – often goes to staff room and then disappears – i.e. Arts Rep so they have responsibility for it – also makes the individual person feel important
- More matinee performances available for larger ensemble groups
- How do we communicate to parents what their children have seen? Intrinsic value – we haven’t asked the children. What captivates them? What is it in promo material that draws them in? Is it okay to send children home with something – discussion for parents – this is what I saw today – a memory piece
- Take advantage of summer drama/dance camps to prep students
- Donna Walker Kuhne – seeking out community leaders to be ambassadors – this term carries some status so they are proud to reach out to the community
- Student leaders
- 10:30 am is best for start time – get back in time for buses
- Lots of parents have not been in a theatre – their kid coming home can convince them to attend and that theatre is a valuable part of their life as well

Can schools use venues during school hours? Renegotiation/reallocation of resources.

- Yes
- In three years only two schools have used Showplace – between 9 am and 4 pm the theatre is dark five days a week although staff are here
- Ray will donate first visit to the theatre to use the stage as long as it requires only work and house lights
- Doors are open, the lights are off – after the first visit the cost is negotiated
- Network the information

What do I learn from the performance?

- The theatre experience is a learning experience. It is not what they are going to take home, it is just being here.

Three things going forward from today

- **Networking (Ray to host Fall 2009 to plan for May 2010)**
 - Bill
 - Steve M. PV
 - Jessica KPR
- **Communicate**
 - Steve R. – will explore WIKKI as method
 - Jennifer will send out email with up to date delegate list
 - Website
 - Listserv
- **Arts Ed Committee including students (from three boards)**
 - Nansi KPR
 - Steve
 - Krista English (reFRAME Film Festival)
 - Steve M.
 - Ray
 - Karen
 - Ray board
 - Nadé
 - Jonny/Linsi**Agenda items**
 - Replicating Linamar model
 - Advocacy

For more information

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