

**Submission
No 77**

**INQUIRY INTO ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese

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SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Optimising Teacher Support and Professional Development for Arts and Music Education

About our Organisation

Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) is a system of 80 Catholic schools across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, one of the fastest-growing areas in New South Wales (NSW). With more than 45 500 students and 5000 staff, our commitment to education is demonstrated through a range of innovative programs designed to connect students with real-world opportunities. This includes our highly successful trade training programs at CathWest Innovation College, vocational education and training programs across 26 sites, and our technologically-driven virtual school, School of Now.

CAPTIVATE is our Creative and Performing Arts initiative for primary and secondary Catholic schools within the Diocese of Parramatta. We encourage students from Kindergarten to Year 12 to engage with the CAPTIVATE program. Whether students are just beginning or are already accomplished in dance, drama, music, or art, CAPTIVATE offers a broad range of opportunities to develop their talents and creativity. Our aim is to foster a vibrant arts culture within our schools, supporting students in exploring and excelling in their artistic, music, and creative pursuits.

Executive Summary

Arts and music education are vital components of a well-rounded education, contributing to students' creative, cognitive, and emotional development. However, numerous challenges currently impede their effectiveness and accessibility in NSW. This submission examines some of these challenges through the lens of the CAPTIVATE program, which provides a relevant case study of how targeted interventions can address broader systemic issues in arts, music, and creative education.

To address these challenges, the following key issues and recommendations are presented. These recommendations, while not directly drawn from Robinson and McMillan's (2017) work, *Lying on the floor: Why Australia can lead the world in music education*, are guided by its insights and offer actionable strategies to enhance arts and music education in NSW.

Key Issues and Recommendations

1. Opportunities for Genre-Specific Professional Development

Issue: Arts educators often lack sufficient opportunities for professional development tailored to their specific disciplines. This limitation can hinder their ability to deliver high-quality instruction and stay updated with current practices and trends.

Recommendation: Develop and implement comprehensive professional development programs that cater to various art forms, such as visual arts, music, dance and drama. These programs should include workshops, conferences, and mentorship opportunities designed to enhance educators' skills and knowledge. For example, specialised workshops on contemporary music techniques or

modern visual art practices can help educators stay current and effectively incorporate new methodologies into their teaching. Additionally, establishing a network of expert practitioners and educators across all education sectors to share resources and best practices can further support professional growth.

2. Collaboration with Artist Practitioners

Issue: Direct engagement with professional artists can significantly enrich the educational experience, providing teachers and students with authentic artistic insights and practices.

Recommendation: Expand initiatives such as CAPTIVATE's Access Artists program, which connects educators with practising artists. This program should be scaled up to include more artists from diverse disciplines and regions while also leveraging Australia's multicultural richness. By facilitating artist residencies, workshops, and collaborative projects, teachers can integrate real-world artistic practices into their curriculum, and students can gain exposure to a variety of artistic perspectives and techniques. This collaboration can also foster long-term partnerships between schools and arts organisations, enhancing the overall quality of arts, music, and creative education.

3. Moderation and Collaboration

Issue: Effective arts and music education requires collaboration among educators, professional associations, and educational institutions to share best practices and resources.

Recommendation: Strengthen and formalise networks among government and non-government schools, tertiary institutions, and professional arts organisations. This could involve creating forums or online platforms for regular interaction, resource sharing, and collaborative projects. Initiatives such as joint professional development workshops and cross-school arts festivals can foster greater collaboration and improve the quality of arts and music education. Additionally, establishing a centralised database of arts education resources and best practices can support educators in accessing up-to-date information and tools.

4. Curriculum Timetabling Pressures

Issue: Arts subjects often struggle for space within a crowded curriculum, leading to their marginalisation and reduced focus.

Recommendation: Reassess and adjust timetabling practices to ensure that arts education receives adequate emphasis. This includes integrating arts subjects into the core curriculum and developing flexible scheduling options that allow for regular and consistent arts instruction. Schools should also explore interdisciplinary approaches that integrate arts with other subjects, thereby enhancing its presence and relevance in the overall curriculum. Providing dedicated time for arts subjects and ensuring that arts education is not overshadowed by other academic demands are crucial for maintaining a balanced curriculum.

5. Generalist Teacher Training

Issue: Generalist teachers frequently receive minimal training in arts and music education, impacting their confidence and effectiveness in delivering arts instruction.

Recommendation: Revise generalist teacher training programs to include robust arts and music education components. This should cover fundamental principles, teaching methodologies, and strategies for integrating arts into the general curriculum. Professional development should also be provided to existing teachers to enhance their ability to teach arts and music effectively, addressing any gaps in their current knowledge and skills. Incorporating arts and music education into initial teacher training and offering specialised workshops for current educators can help build confidence and improve instructional quality.

6. Innovative Staffing Practices

Issue: Arts and music specialists are often isolated and under load in their individual schools and required to divide their teaching time across multiple non-arts subjects, which can dilute their effectiveness and impact in growing and sustaining student enrolment in elective arts subjects, creating a deleterious cycle of student attrition.

Recommendation: Consider implementing innovative staffing models, such as dedicated arts and music education positions or teams, working across schools. This could involve creating full-time roles for arts and music educators or establishing partnerships with local arts organisations to provide consistent support. Such models can enhance the quality and continuity of arts and music instruction and learning, as well as address issues related to staffing and resource allocation. Additionally, exploring collaborative staffing arrangements, such as regional arts teams, can ensure that resources are utilised efficiently and equitably.

7. Collaborative Arts Projects

Issue: Opportunities for collaborative arts projects, especially between urban and regional schools, are limited.

Recommendation: Develop and fund collaborative arts projects that connect schools across urban and regional areas. This could include school exchanges, joint performances, and regional arts festivals. Partnerships with professional and community arts groups can also enhance these initiatives, providing students with diverse artistic and music experiences and fostering greater cultural exchange. Encouraging joint ventures and collaborative events can bridge gaps between different educational settings and promote shared arts and music learning experiences.

Current Support Structures

For Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese, the CAPTIVATE program is a key initiative in providing specialised arts learning pathways, with a particular focus on primary education. By integrating arts into the co-curricular activities of primary schools, CAPTIVATE fosters early artistic development and supports students' engagement with the arts from a young age. For secondary schools, CAPTIVATE offers enrichment opportunities, albeit through an extra-curricular model, that enhance students' skills and prepare them for further study or careers in the arts. This targeted approach ensures that the program meets diverse artistic interests and educational needs, enriching the overall arts, music, and creative education landscape for children and young people in Catholic schools across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

To maximise the effectiveness of arts and music education, conducting an ongoing comprehensive assessment remains crucial. While CAPTIVATE has made significant strides, such assessments help identify gaps in support and refine professional development offerings. Feedback from educators participating in CAPTIVATE provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of current programs and highlights areas for enhancement. By addressing these needs, we ensure that all educators receive the support required to deliver high-quality arts, music, and creative education and contribute to the sustained success of CAPTIVATE and similar initiatives across our schools.

Enhancement Strategies

Programs such as *Wired for Sound* and *Drama Literacy* exemplify effective approaches:

- **Wired for Sound:** This program targets early literacy development through music. It focuses on enhancing auditory processing and executive function, preparing children from preschool to Year 2 for formal language learning. The program features a structured curriculum of music activities delivered before literacy instruction, aimed at building foundational language skills. Key components include face-to-face training for educators, school-based observations, and online reflection support.
- **Drama Literacy:** Designed for students in Years 3 to 6, this program uses drama to develop inferential comprehension and visual literacy. It supports students in understanding and expressing complex ideas through embodied cognition and dramatic practices. The program includes interactive drama sessions and professional development for teachers to integrate drama effectively into their teaching.

Both programs are grounded in research and offer practical methods for integrating arts into education, demonstrating the value of evidence-based approaches in enhancing student learning outcomes.

Regional and Remote Schools

Ensuring equitable access to arts and music education is particularly challenging in economically disadvantaged areas. The CAPTIVATE program addresses this by delivering arts learning opportunities across a broad range of schools, including those in under-resourced communities. In 2023, CAPTIVATE provided 99 arts programs to 32 primary and 21 secondary schools, reaching over 4,000 students. This systemic approach ensures that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have access to quality arts education. Expanding these efforts to cover more regions and schools will further enhance equity and access to arts education. Additional support measures, such as targeted funding and resources for schools in low-income areas, can further address these disparities.

Curriculum Integration

To effectively integrate arts, music, and creative education into the broader curriculum, it is crucial to maintain precision and specificity in teaching:

- **Arts for Arts' Sake Learning:** This approach focuses on providing genre-specific training and performance opportunities, emphasising technical skills and artistic expression. Maintaining high standards in these areas ensures that students develop expertise and appreciation for the arts.

- **Arts Pedagogy for Learning:** This approach uses arts practices to improve oracy, reading, inferential comprehension, and embodied cognition. It enhances students' capabilities in communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, supporting their overall academic development.
- **Arts Participation for Wellbeing:** This approach utilises arts participation to improve mental health, community cohesion, and personal wellbeing. Recognising the broader benefits of arts education supports its integration into the curriculum as a vital component of student development.

Maintaining high standards in arts, music, and creative education ensures that students gain the technical mastery and broader cognitive and social benefits associated with arts learning.

Measuring Impact

1. Wired for Sound Program

Program Design and Delivery: The Wired for Sound program serves as a model for measuring the impact of arts and music education interventions. This three-year professional development initiative for K-2 generalist teachers integrates music into literacy instruction. It includes:

- **Face-to-Face Training:** Workshops and training sessions for teachers.
- **School-Based Observations:** Facilitators observe classroom practices and provide feedback.
- **Online Reflection Support:** Ongoing support through online platforms.

Impact Measurement:

- **Language and Literacy Development:** Measures such as Hearing and Recording Sounds, Text Levels, and Self-Correction are used to track improvements in literacy skills.
- **Teacher Capacity Building:** Tools such as the Collins Generalist Teacher Self-Efficacy Tool and the Music Practice Development Survey assess changes in teacher confidence and skills.
- **Support for Low Readers:** Progress in low readers is monitored using the Collins Beat Keeping Running Record Tool, linking improvements in reading performance to beat-keeping activities.

2. Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative and Quantitative Data: A mix of qualitative feedback and quantitative metrics provides a comprehensive view of the program's impact. This includes data from teacher reflections, student assessments, and program evaluations.

Continuous Evaluation: Ongoing data collection and analysis help identify areas of success and areas needing improvement. This continuous evaluation allows for the refinement of the program and ensures that it effectively meets its objectives.

Conclusion

This submission offers an overview of key issues impacting arts, music, and creative education in New South Wales, with a focus on practical recommendations for improvement. Informed by insights from Robinson and McMillan's (2017) work and the experiences of the CAPTIVATE program in Catholic schools across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, it highlights critical areas for development and proposes actionable strategies to enhance arts and music education across the state.

Key Areas of Focus:

- **Professional Development:** We emphasise the need for targeted professional development programs tailored to specific art forms, as well as the importance of integrating artist practitioners into educational settings to enrich teaching practices.
- **Collaboration and Networking:** Strengthening networks among educational institutions, professional associations, and arts organisations is crucial for sharing resources, best practices, and fostering collaborative projects.
- **Curriculum Integration and Timetabling:** Adjusting curriculum timetabling practices to ensure that arts and music education is given adequate emphasis and exploring interdisciplinary approaches can address the marginalisation of arts subjects.
- **Teacher Training and Innovative Staffing:** Enhancing generalist teacher training in arts and music and implementing innovative staffing models can improve the quality of arts instruction and support educators effectively.
- **Equitable Access and Regional Outreach:** Addressing disparities in access to arts and music education, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas, and expanding regional initiatives are vital for ensuring all students benefit from high-quality arts programs.
- **Impact and Evaluation:** We highlight the importance of continuous assessment and evaluation of arts programs, such as *Wired for Sound* and *Drama Literacy*, to measure their impact and effectiveness. These evidence-based approaches provide valuable insights into student outcomes and areas for improvement.

In conclusion, by implementing the recommendations outlined in this submission, we can create a more robust and equitable arts and music education framework in New South Wales. This will ensure that arts and music education fulfil their potential to foster students' creative, cognitive, and emotional development, preparing them for future success and contributing to a culturally enriched society.

We urge the Joint Select Committee to consider these recommendations and support initiatives that will enhance the quality and accessibility of arts, music, and creative education across the state.

Reference

Robinson, P., & McMillan, R. (2017). *Lying on the floor: Why Australia can lead the world in music education*. In T. Bentley & G. C. Savage (Eds.), *Educating Australia: Challenges for the decade ahead* (pp. 148–162). Melbourne University Publishing.