

Enough with the claims – show me the evidence.

A personal account by Noel Dunne on the conversation between school leaders and artists and creatives at the ACME Meeting on 04-10-11

ACME is a new west midlands network of artists and creatives who work with children and young people. This was the third meeting of the network. The charter that explains the need, purpose and functions of the group is attached to the end of this report.

Over 30 artists and creatives meet with three school leaders to review:

- The changes happening in education and the impacts this will have on schools working with artists and creatives.
- What schools might want from artists and creatives to meet the new challenges.

Lee Batstone, Head of Madley Primary Hereford, Jan Taylor former Head of Leighswood Primary Walsall and Qamar Riaz Director of Learning at Shireland Collegiate Academy Smethwick shared, with great honesty and openness, their insights and observations. Many many thanks to them. These are some of the insights I gained from what they said.

Demonstrate Impact

These are all school leaders who are absolutely convinced of and committed to creative approaches to teaching and learning and the value of artists / creatives working in schools. They don't need the old arguments justifying why artists working in schools is a good thing. If a school leader is making a decision between employing a Learning Support Assistant and contracting an artist to work then they need to know that that spend is going to achieve impact.

What they need in order to justify spend is:

- Evidence of impact on children's learning



- Evidence of impact on teachers professional development
- Evidence of impact on curriculum improvement

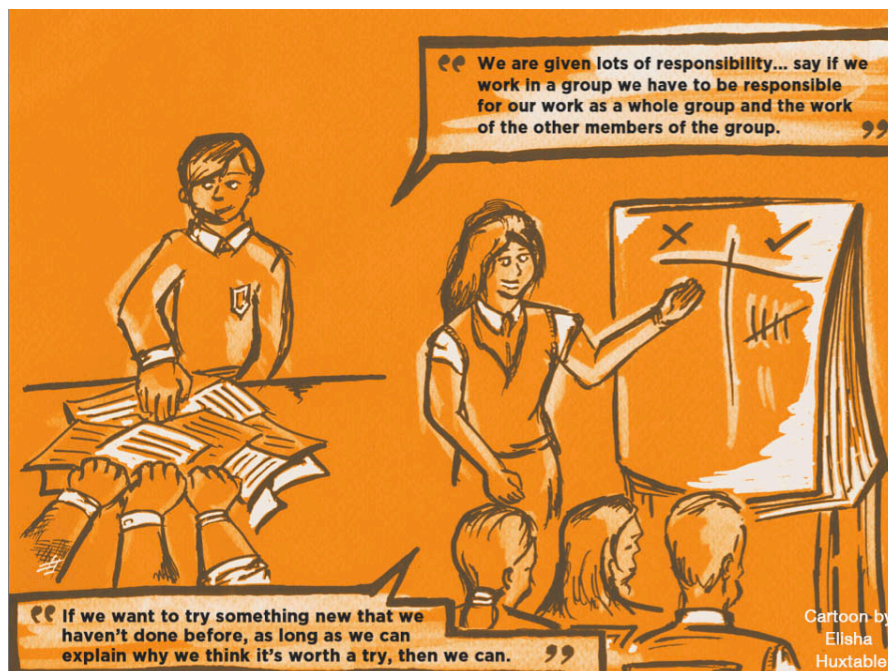
It's no longer about projects – it's about services

Get real people: no one, but no one, is going to be sending our briefs looking to commission artists / creatives to deliver projects. Those days of teeth grinding responses to Creative Partnerships briefs are over. But don't shout 'Hurrah' too gleefully. Schools will not be commissioning artists / creatives to run projects. They are looking to buy services. So get selling.

Do your research

- Find out about each individual school's vision, ethos and result. Personalise your approach to each school you are trying to sell to.
- Look at clusters of schools: school are forming academies, trusts and foundations and working as networks: sell to a cluster.
- Look at the new Ofsted Frameworks and new curriculum guidelines and explain how what you do can help schools deliver these requirements.
- Use the language of school improvement to describe what you do. Don't bother talking about bringing arts into the classroom talk about being a literacy consultant who uses creative approaches.

And don't bother sending a blanket email to head teachers – their P.As are expert fodder filters.



Deliver teaching services

- Schools don't have to employ fully qualified teachers to teach all subjects. As long as you can demonstrate that you can deliver quality learning experiences then you can be contracting to deliver music lessons, drama clubs, and art classes – just as sports coaches do.

- Help a school justify their spend on you by showing how what you do will have an impact on basic skills. Give school leaders a school based solution. For example CPD in a school has more impact than sending someone out on a course.
- Create *packages of intervention* that are replicable. Maybe work with other art form specialists to create cross art form offers.

Present Value for Money

- Schools will look to get more for their money. Offer a twilight CPD alongside a day's work with a class.
- Be prepared to have to negotiate your prices and packages. Schools will expect to get more for their money than in times of plenty.
- If you don't drop your prices you can be assured that someone else will!

So in summary

Create packages of service

Use the right language to describe them

Research who you're going to try and sell to

Gather your evidence and demonstrate your impact

Examples of Evidence: cartoons created by Elisha Huxtable of Creative Alliance using quotes from teachers and children at Victoria Park Primary School and Shireland Collegiate Academy collected during evaluations undertaken by Noel Dunne.

The next meeting of ACME: a west midlands network of artists and creatives who work with children and young people will take place between 6.00pm and 8.00pm on **Wednesday 2nd November**. Its' currently planned to be at Nomad at The Custard Factory but due to numbers we're looking for an alternative free space to accommodate over 30 people. The next session will focus on demonstrating impact and every person who attends is invited to bring along a piece of their evidence and some statistics so we can start to pull together a tool kit we can use to sell our services.

ACME: a west midlands network of artists and creatives who work with children and young people

In order to establish the need for, purpose of and function of a network for practitioners and creatives working with children and young people, practitioners were asked to respond to a series of questions. These responses were then ranked by the participants to form a plan of action shown. The raw responses are listed in Section two.

NEED FOR THE NETWORK

1. To have a voice – access to each other and decision makers
2. To give the opportunity to develop practice

PURPOSE OF THE NETWORK

1. To be connected – to know what is going on – and to be empowered by this
2. Lobbying – having strength in numbers and being able to have an influence as a group

FUNCTION OF THE NETWORK

1. To find and share information
 - Showcasing and social events
 - Directory – more effective than online
2. To market and promote the work we do
3. To organise events and opportunities
 - Support to sell and access to decision makers and budget holders (including; ACE, schools, Arts Connect WM)
 - Practical marketing
 - Platform for discussion about good practice and quality
 - Good quality CPD run by practitioners
 - Awards event to celebrate good practice

NEXT STEPS

1. A series of meetings -
 - **4th October** – Invited head teachers from the region, primary and secondary to give:-
 - a) Their perspectives on the changes happening in the education sector and the impacts they see this having on their work with freelance artists and creatives
 - b) How they interpret what schools need and want from practicing artists and creatives
 - c) What they think are schools changing priorities during this time and how artists and creatives can help meet that challenge
 - **2nd November** – Invite representation from Arts Council, West Midlands
 - **8th December** – Invite Jan Roman for an update on Arts Connect West Midlands