

## 2 IMPROVING LEARNING DISPOSITION THROUGH THE ARTS

### ARTS AND OTHER CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT INTERVENTIONS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON LEARNING DISPOSITION

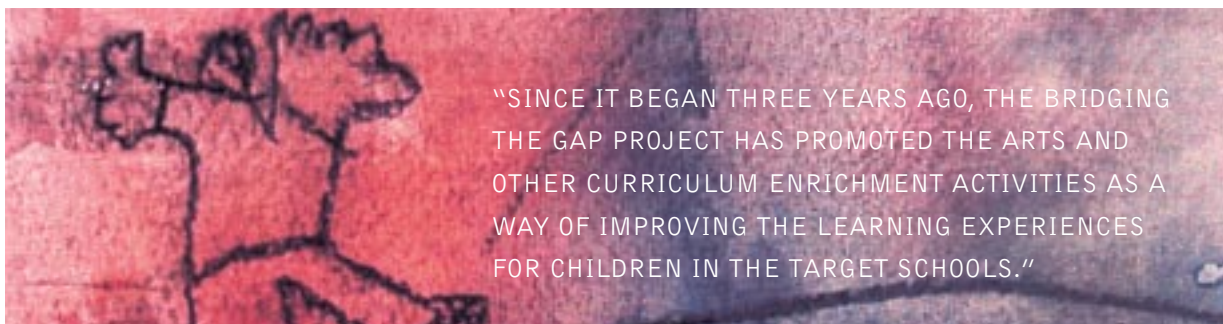
Since it began three years ago, the Bridging the Gap project has promoted the arts and other curriculum enrichment activities as a way of improving the learning experiences for children in the target schools. A large number of school-based projects supported by Bridging the Gap focus on providing access to music, drama and visual arts activities for children who would otherwise not have these opportunities. There is an underlying assumption that involvement in these activities has a positive impact on learning disposition, and that this will in turn produce gains in achievement.

International research has shown that learners can attain higher levels of achievement through their engagement with the arts. However, the research in Ireland is inconclusive. There is as yet no clear evidence that any of the interventions targeted at addressing educational disadvantage has produced measurable gains in the achievement of pupils on standardised tests, for example of literacy and numeracy.

In the case studies that are included in this section, schools have collected data to show how involvement in the arts has had an impact on a range of factors that affect learning. One school shows significant improvement in reading test results following an arts programme. Several schools describe the impact of the arts or enrichment

programmes on learning in other curricular areas, and on the development of generic transferable learning skills.

Many of the projects have produced visible improvement in pupils' self-esteem, which is seen as contributing to a more positive learning disposition. Some schools describe improvements in attendance and in the involvement and support of parents, which is shown by research to be an important factor in the achievement of children (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). In several of the projects described here, it is clear that a major outcome is the raising of expectations of teachers and parents. There is an extensive literature documenting the relationship between teacher expectations and learner outcomes. A climate of high teacher expectations is a commonly cited feature of effective schools (Sammons, Hillman and Mortimer 1995). A number of these case studies show that teachers can develop their own skills through working alongside arts specialists as part of a school-based project. This enhances their professional practice and broadens the range of teaching and learning resources available in the school. It inspires teachers to adopt new routes to learning in their classroom. In the same way, a project such as a school garden can provide a valuable teaching and learning resource for a whole school community, as shown in one of the case studies below.



“SINCE IT BEGAN THREE YEARS AGO, THE BRIDGING THE GAP PROJECT HAS PROMOTED THE ARTS AND OTHER CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES AS A WAY OF IMPROVING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN IN THE TARGET SCHOOLS.”



## CASE STUDY 2.1

### IMPACT OF ARTS PROGRAMME ON READING TEST RESULTS

#### SCOIL MHUIRE BANRÍÓN, MAYFIELD

#### PROJECT ACTIVITY:

Developmental education through the medium of art, with three themes for the year:

- Environment
- Education for all
- Children's right to self-expression.

The school collaborated with a local arts centre and neighbouring boys' school to stage public exhibitions of pupils' work in the arts centre.

#### GOALS OF PROJECT

To raise awareness in school of a variety of developmental education issues including environment, peace, and social relationships through a mixed media arts workshop and exhibition.

#### Pupil related goals

- To promote self-esteem in each child through the creation of various pieces of art and seeing these pieces in an exhibition.
- To motivate the children to think for themselves and to write different articles using their experiences in the art class as a background.
- To promote good attendance through being involved in a project that requires regular attendance e.g. an art project that requires continuous work.
- To promote social skills and teamwork as the children would need to work together to create a single piece of art.
- To promote the building of tolerance as children of different abilities would be working together.
- To provide a stimulating and fun series of workshops that engages the children in experiential learning.
- To enhance the Visual Arts curriculum and also the SPHE AND SESE curricular. The school collaborated with a local arts centre and with its neighbouring boys' school to stage public exhibitions of pupils' work in the arts centre.
- To enhance performance in creative writing through several follow-up activities

- To enhance computer skills as the children have to type up and present the many follow-up activities
- That the children will learn about the various issues: environment, education in other countries, freedom of expression.

#### Teacher related goals

- To interact with pupils in a context outside of the direct curricular areas
- To explore development education with the pupils through a variety of methods and media
- To give the teachers a variety of art techniques to explore issues and develop creativity.

#### Goals related to parents and families

- That the children would discuss with and involve their parents in their project
- That the parents would attend the various art exhibitions to be held over the course of the project.

#### DATA COLLECTED

##### Nfer – Nelson Group Reading Test 9-14 5th/6th Class

19 children were tested before programme began in September 2003, and re-tested at the end of the programme in May 2004 (five special needs children who participated in the programme were not included in the testing).

#### Results

In 11 cases out of 19, children's reading age improved, by up to three years in some cases. Of these 11, five of the group went from having a reading age below their chronological age to above.

In 2 cases, children maintained reading age well above their actual age.

Remaining 6 achieved a similar reading age to that achieved in the 1st test.

#### 6th Class

19 children were pre-tested in September 2003 and post-tested in May 2004.

#### Results

Eight children had reading ages at least two years above chronological age.

In 6 cases, their quotient increased by 3 – 6 points.

Four children achieved the same result – reading below their age level.

One child had improved from below age level to age level.

#### OUR OWN EVALUATION

##### Positive aspects of the project

- Children's enthusiasm, confidence and interest developed over the year.
- A sense of achievement and pride was generated by the exhibitions.
- Teachers felt that these activities would be useful to their classroom arts practice.

##### Learning points for teachers

While the course was implemented by a skilled arts facilitator, each activity was simple yet effective. Teachers

are now more willing and more resourceful in handling art activities in their classrooms.

##### Attendance

Attendance was consistently good over the year. There was an improvement as the year and perhaps the project progressed. Very few pupils were absent on the "art day".

##### Motivation/Self-esteem

Success builds upon success! This has been obvious throughout this project. Besides becoming more assured about art activities, the children have grown in their ability to respond to challenges in other curricular areas. They are constructive in their approach to project work. As previously mentioned they are more informed about global issues.

##### Effect on school and wider community

Not only have those directly involved learned but there has been a "knock-on" effect throughout the school. Many classes viewed the exhibition, learning about the issues in the process. The children were encouraged to discuss issues about re-cycling, education and freedom of expression in their homes.



"BESIDES BECOMING MORE ASSURED ABOUT ART ACTIVITIES, THE CHILDREN HAVE GROWN IN THEIR ABILITY TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES IN OTHER CURRICULAR AREAS"



## CASE STUDY 2.2

### THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS ON RAISING THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE WHOLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

SCOIL MARIA ASSUMPTA, BALLYPHEHANE

This project is based on the philosophy that music is an organised expression of ideas, feelings and experiences. It provides for sensory, emotional, intellectual and creative enrichment and contributes to the child's holistic development. As part of the project, a school Orchestra has been formed, and 54 children receive individual instrumental tuition in violin, cello and flute.

#### PROJECT GOALS

##### Aims for pupils

- To enable children from a disadvantaged background to develop their musical talents
- To enable the child to develop natural abilities and potential, to acquire techniques and practise the skills necessary for creative expression and for joyful participation in different art-forms
- To value the child's confidence and self-esteem through valuing self-expression
- To develop technical and artistic skills, involving muscular co-ordination and sensitive movement as well as skills of perseverance and self-discipline that are essential to self-expression
- To enable the child to develop her musical potential and to experience the excitement and satisfaction of being actively engaged in musical creativity.

##### Aims for the whole school community

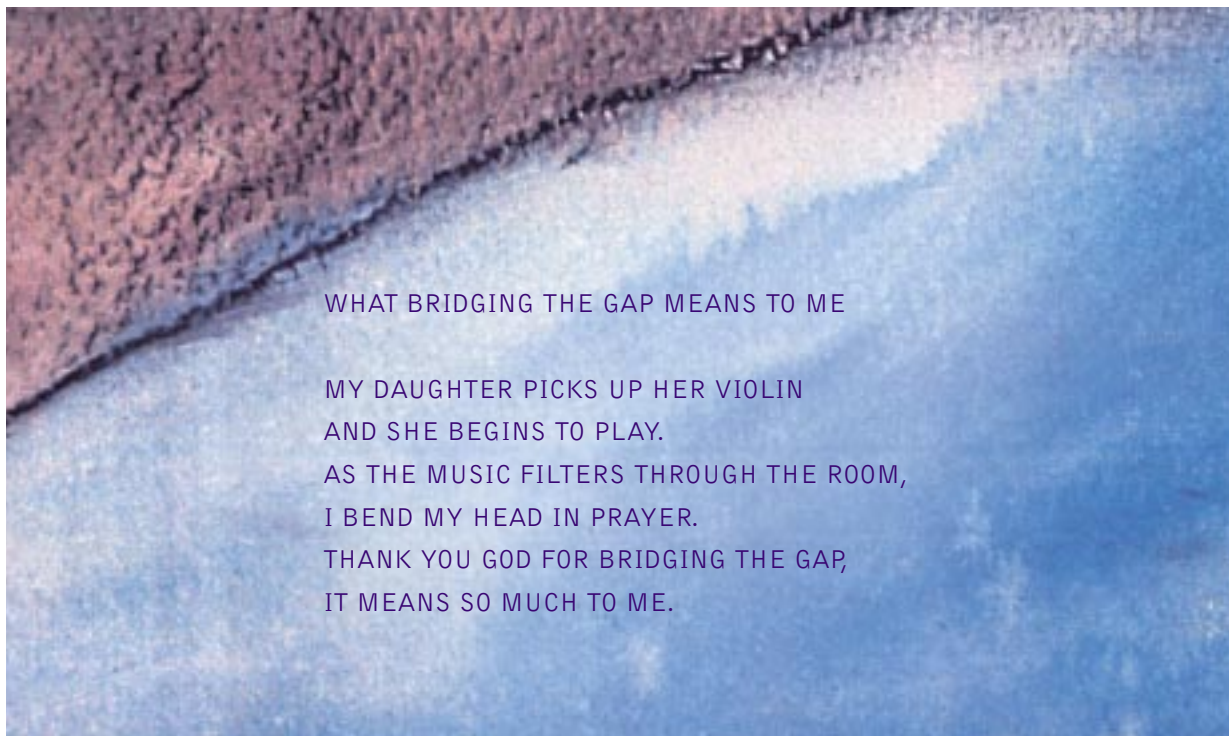
Bridging the Gap aims to be a whole school undertaking. Every child in the school now plays a musical instrument and reads music. Every teacher is very aware of what is happening in the project, both in music and in another activities. Parents are also involved, and they aspire to support for children in every way they can. Parents met with the music teacher to learn basic music theory, and to discover how to make the practice of music enjoyable for their children.

#### MEASURING ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS

- Assessment was carried out through formal and informal observation by teachers
- The music teacher assessed each child weekly
- Some children took examinations with an external examiner
- Children who had progressed took Royal Irish Academy of Music examinations (Preliminary and Grade one), achieving high grades
- A video was made of children at the beginning, middle and end of the year to record progress
- Parents were invited to see their children performing at least twice during the year.

#### IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

- The children love playing their instruments
- They are learning musical theory
- They have become confident and talented musicians
- The quality of their music is excellent
- They aspire to continue playing in secondary school
- The discipline of our pupils while playing is a joy to behold. They are totally focused, their behaviour is exemplary and attendance is very high
- Pupils carry their instruments with pride; they learn to take proper care of their instruments and the "feelgood" factor for them is immeasurable
- Parents are very involved with the learning of their children. They are extremely appreciative that their children have this wonderful opportunity to learn music
- The teachers and the principal are extremely motivated and enthusiastic about the project and they plan a whole school performance in music and drama for the 2005 year of culture.



#### OUR OWN EVALUATION

The most important learning point from this project has been that with motivation, desire, imagination and willpower anything is possible. We believe that we will never stop learning and that strong leadership ensures success.

“The Bridging the Gap programme has changed our lives completely. Giving my child music lessons was something that, financially, I would never be able to do. So when

the programme started in our school I must say both my daughter and I were excited. With great patience and dedication from her music teacher, she now has a great love for music. None of this would be possible only for the help and support of the Bridging the Gap programme, which I hope will continue for many years to come. Finally, from the bottom of my heart, thank you UCC.”

(Parent)

## CASE STUDY 2.3

### IMPACT ON SKILLS AND PRACTICE OF TEACHERS

#### ST MARY'S ON THE HILL, KNOCKNAHEENY

This project introduced pupils and teachers to new ways of integrating music and visual arts into everyday classroom activity.

#### PROJECT GOALS

Working with two fourth-class groupings, the aim was to develop individual creativity and to improve levels of

- participation
- attendance
- presentations and pride (wearing of school uniform)
- listening skills.
- "getting on" with each other and respecting each other.

#### PROJECT ACTIVITY

Visiting art and music specialists conducted workshops with the target classes and the class teachers also participated in the workshops. A music teacher from the school staff replicated the six-week music programme with

other classes, and provided ongoing support and resources to enable teachers to continue the programme with classes as part of the regular curriculum activity.

#### IMPACT OF THE PROJECT ON MUSIC SKILLS OF TEACHERS

Class teachers said that the programme took away the "taboo" of music:

- it gave the more confidence in teaching aspects of music other than singing
- it encouraged some teachers to take part in music courses outside of school
- it showed teachers how to approach the different aspects of the music curriculum
- It reassured teachers that they didn't have to be music specialists to implement the revised curriculum
- the programme also gave the children great enjoyment.



## CASE STUDY 2.4

### TRANSFER OF ICT SKILLS TO OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS

#### DEERPARK CBS

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#### PROJECT ACTIVITY

This project involved 15 Transition year pupils in learning skills that led to the award of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL).

#### PUPIL RELATED GOALS

Despite increasing access and familiarity with computers, most students do not possess formal ICT skills. We proposed the completion of a full ECDL course for our Transition Year students to give them high skills and confidence in using computers. We hoped the skills would transfer to improved performance in other curriculum areas. We timetabled the activities for a full afternoon every Friday to improve full attendance.

We wanted to “raise the bar” in terms of teacher expectations of students’ work presentation, and we also wanted to use ICT skills in as many classroom situations as possible.

We hoped to impress the parents with the attainment by the students of the ICT skills involved in completing the ECDL. We hoped this in turn would increase parental educational aspirations for their children and also translate into good academic performances by the students.

#### IMPACT OF PROJECT

The project produced a number of significant outcomes:

- Student attainment of a wide range of ICT skills
- Increased student confidence & esteem
- Increased level of academic performance
- Enhancement of presentation of academic work
- Fantastic public relations and publicity for the school.

#### Most important learning point

- The initiative displayed by many of the students to work without direction at improving and enhancing their own work.
- The level of teamwork and co-operation within the group, which manifested itself clearly when two students did not measure up to the ECDL testing, yet were not left out by the group.

#### DATA COLLECTED

##### Measuring achievement:

The most obvious achievement was the completion by 13 of the students of the full ECDL Programme. Before the course the students had no formal training in ICT and by April 2004 they had successfully completed all modules. They transferred the ICT skills into most academic subject areas but particularly to complete two outstanding projects:

- (i) On AIDS, which was presented to President Mary McAleese in Dublin in May 2004.
- (ii) On Local History, four projects presented to the Lord Mayor and UCC ACCESS Programme.

Comments from teachers, parents and students have been extraordinarily positive. The level of presentation enhanced scholarly academic work. Both projects will go on display in the community in the next academic year and the History Project may be included in the activities related to Cork’s Year of Culture. Projects by our students were part of a Bridging the Gap display at a conference for school managers in April 2004.



## CASE STUDY 2.5

### ENHANCING TEACHERS' SKILLS, SCHOOL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

#### ST. PATRICK'S INFANT NATIONAL SCHOOL, GARDINER'S HILL

We are an all Infant National School situated on Gardiner's Hill, in the North of Cork City. We have a large catchment area covering Montenotte, Mayfield, Dillon's Cross. All the boys and girls are involved in this music and environment project i.e. 5 classes of Senior Infants and 5 classes of Junior Infants- 175 children in all.

#### GOALS OF PROJECT

##### Pupil related goals

- To develop in the children an awareness and an appreciation of the beauty of our environment.
- To inculcate in the children a sense of responsibility towards the environment, jointly assuming responsibility for caring for our school garden.
- To introduce 80 new Junior Infants to "music"
- To enable the children to develop musical concepts as outlined in the Revised Curriculum
- To improve self- esteem and concentration skills
- To provide an enriching arts experience for all children through music and movement.

##### Teacher related goals

- To use music as a teaching and learning medium
- To upskill all members of staff in the area of music
- To use our natural environment more fully as a resource in teaching activities
- To work together with the children, parents and community to design and create a school garden.

##### Goals related to parents and families

- To involve parents, grandparents and siblings in classroom / school activities
- To give children and parents access to musicians and arts facilities in their own community
- To work together with families/ parents in the creation of a school garden.

#### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

##### Music workshops

We have a music specialist who provides a 20-minute music workshop with each class once a week in liaison with the class teachers. All class teachers work together with the music teacher in a supportive, interactive way to help each child achieve our goals. All areas of the music curriculum are covered – performing, creating music, listening and responding to music.

Workshops were also available where parents were invited into school to take part in musical activities with their own children. Our music specialist provided in-service support for all our teachers on three occasions building on past years' work.

##### School garden

All staff and pupils were involved in designing and creating a school garden. Children contributed to the design of the garden. All children, staff and some parents were involved in the digging, planting and creation of the garden. Plants and shrubs were donated by local garden centres. The school caretaker was highly involved in the creation and maintenance of our garden. This new garden area and our immediate environs are now being used more fully as a lively and stimulating resource for class activities.

##### Integrating arts and learning resources in school and community

- Visits by local musicians, and by professional bands, story tellers, theatre group, to school
- All classes visited the Opera House to see "Cinderella" by Lambert Theatre
- Visit to Art Exhibitions and to Crawford Art Gallery
- Role models in our local community visited classes, for example, Postman, Bus Driver, Doctor, Pet Shop Owner.

## IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

### Impact on Pupils

- The impact of the project can be seen in the achievement of the pupils in playing music, responding to music and especially in performing. The overall factor is the delight of all the children in taking part in this project.
- The children are very keen to participate in each workshop and derive a lot of enjoyment from the activities.
- They easily and enthusiastically participate in each “big performance” having gained immense confidence and pleasure from performing on an on-going basis.
- All children are achieving including those who academically are weak.
- The children are taught to show respect and care for the environment in which they live and this is demonstrated by their behaviour and attitude.
- They have taken ownership of the school garden and in doing so have developed a sense of responsibility.
- All thoroughly enjoy trails and activities involving their natural environs.

### Impact on Parents

- Families and parents are very pleased that their children have access to music in such a structured and enjoyable way.
- Parents derive great joy and pride from watching their children take part in performances and also realise the importance of building self esteem.
- Having access to UCC and The Opera House has meant a great deal to many families.
- Parents were delighted to be involved in the creation of the school garden and love the idea of their children working and learning in a beautiful natural area as they live in the heart of a city.

### Impact on Teachers

- Teachers have gained a level of skills in music, which equips them to carry out the revised curriculum with ease.
- Preparing children for performances isn’t as stressful as before.
- Teachers are more willing to use the natural environment and in particular the school garden as a resource for activities.
- Some of our teachers availed of the I.T. Training and again were upskilled.

Our Music program is now well established and for many of our children it is second nature for them to play an instrument and to perform either for their peers or larger community and it is very rewarding for us as teachers to witness this. The expertise and commitment of our music specialist and the enthusiasm and attitude of all teachers and parents makes this possible. For many children and parents, having access to UCC and the Opera House has opened up a whole new world to them looking into the future and this helps to build self esteem, confidence and self-belief. With the creation of our school garden it made many of us realise the valuable resource that is “the natural world”. We are already making use of this for trails in all subject areas and hope to develop our vision further in the future.

We plan to continue with and build on the achievements to date with our project in music and care for the environment. Each year we are introducing 100 new children to the delights of music and performance and the beauty and variety of nature in our environment. One of the reasons our project was successful was because all staff were involved and this will continue to be the case.

## CASE STUDY 2.6

### DEVELOPING CROSS-CURRICULAR SKILLS THROUGH DRAMA

SCOIL NA CROISE NAOFA, MAHON

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In this project drama sessions are conducted by a visiting drama teacher with first, second and third class boys. The focus of the sessions is on

- listening
- concentration
- co-operation.

Each session includes warm-up exercises, mime and movement, listening games, role play, verse speaking and both structured and improvised drama exercises.

#### DATA COLLECTED

Feedback on the drama sessions was obtained from the pupils, from their parents and from the class teachers. Both pupils and parents and were overwhelmingly positive

in their responses to the programme. Teachers commented particularly on the relevance of the programme for developing general learning skills as well as skills in other curricular areas, for example:

- self-esteem and self-discipline
- ability to co-operate with others
- memory, thinking and listening skills
- language skills
- self expression, articulation and confidence
- music and reading skills
- skills relevant to the “Walk Tall” programme, relationships and sexuality education (RSE) and social, personal and health education (SPHE).



## CASE STUDY 2.7

### IMPACT OF ARTS ON PUPILS' SELF-ESTEEM SUNDAY'S WELL GIRLS' NATIONAL SCHOOL

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This project focuses on music in the classroom and on the development of a school choir.

#### PROJECT GOALS

- To foster an interest in music, which could last a lifetime
- To enhance the self-esteem of the pupils through participation and performance
- To develop a school choir, which will become a long-term feature of the school .

#### DATA COLLECTED

Questionnaires were sent to parents and to teachers about the impact of the project on the children.

#### IMPACT OF PROJECT

Both teachers and parents have noted an increase in the level of self-confidence and self-esteem particularly in the senior classes.



## CASE STUDY 2.8

### ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH DRAMA

#### ST MARK'S BOYS' NATIONAL SCHOOL, THE GLEN

#### THE PROJECT

Each pupil attends the Speech and Drama class with his peers. Classes take place once a week for 30 minutes. The classes run from September to June. Five class teachers and one Drama Teacher work together in the project. Class work is continued during the week in each class.

The classes involve movement, play reading, role-play, choral verse, play production and mime. Each pupil participates in a play. The development of mime skills and the production of a mime exercise on a given topic are also included.

#### PROJECT GOALS

- To enhance communications skills of pupils.
- To give pupils the opportunity to perform in public.
- To develop a sense of confidence in the pupils regarding performance and self-expression.
- To motivate pupils to communicate clearly and accurately.
- To develop a sense of teamwork through verse speaking, choral verse, drama and mime.
- To encourage positive interaction with peers whether it is praise or constructive criticism.
- To improve the language skills of pupils.
- To enhance number skills through rhythm exercises in the junior classes.
- To develop and positively exploit the musical skills of pupils by incorporating them into drama activities.

#### Teacher related goals

- To improve the receptive and expressive skills of pupils in all areas of school life.
- To maintain a high level of expectation for the pupils.
- To improve teacher communication with parents and vice-versa.

- To broaden parental support in all areas of school life.
- To increase the amount of positive interaction with parents.
- To improve the learning environment of the classroom.

#### Parent related goals

- To facilitate parents in nurturing the talents of their children.
- To encourage parents to see the value of the activities of the project.
- To increase the level of parental support for project activities through costume making and attendance and recording of events.
- To broaden this support to all aspects of school life and school activities.

#### DATA COLLECTED

- Adjudication comments at Feis Maitiú
- Auditions for roles
- Review of performance
- Recording of poems at their introduction and at performance stage
- Video recording of school concert
- Comments from pupils
- Comments from parents
- Comments from teachers
- Pupils evaluate their own performance
- Pupils constructively evaluate others' performance.

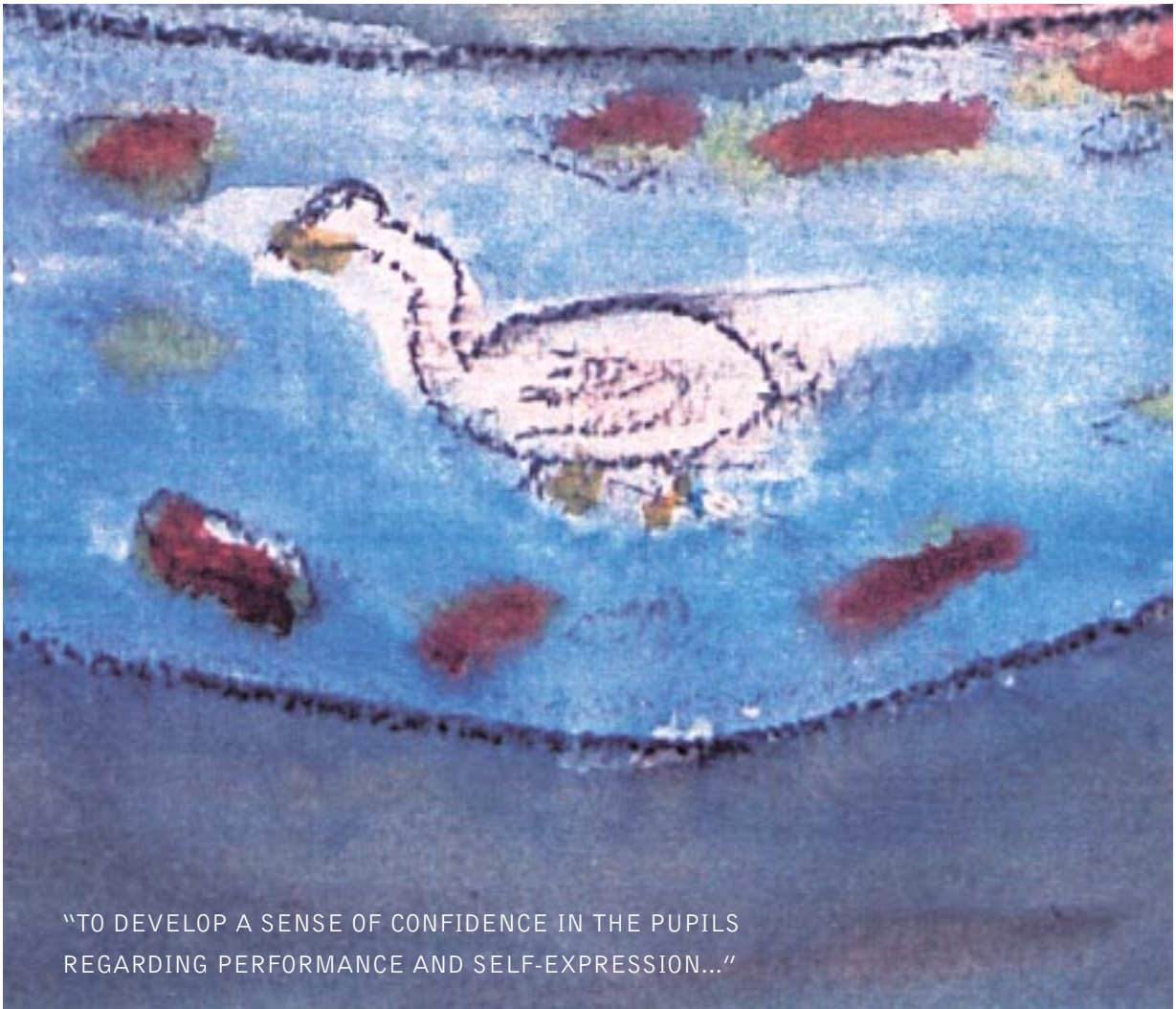
#### FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The Speech and Drama classes have identified pupils with language and speech difficulties. The school has employed a Speech Therapist on a part-time basis, to help alleviate or eliminate speech problems. This development has shown great success to date.



Children with special education needs seem to thrive on the positive atmosphere associated with the Speech and Drama class. It was suggested that they might benefit from "alternative" intervention. As a result an Educational Kinesiologist was employed from September

2003 to December 2003. Documented evidence would lead us to believe that the intervention was very worthwhile from the academic, behavioural and self-esteem point of view.



"TO DEVELOP A SENSE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PUPILS REGARDING PERFORMANCE AND SELF-EXPRESSION..."

## CASE STUDY 2.9

### IMPACT OF THE ARTS ON LEARNING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### SCOIL NAOMH THÉRÈSE PRIMARY SCHOOL, BISHOPSTOWN

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#### GOALS OF PROJECT

The central goal for the project was to enrich the education in the arts of the pupils in the school. The vast majority of Primary School pupils who live in this area attend extra-curricular classes in music, speech and drama and dance. The pupils of Scoil Naomh Thérèse do not. We decided to use Bridging the Gap funding to pay for Arts Education for all our pupils and literally to bridge the gap between them and their more privileged counterparts.

We planned an integrated programme where art, music, dance and drama would be interlinked. As this is a Scoil Lán Gaelach we decided to put an emphasis on Irish art and culture. Our goal was to purchase copies of artwork and employ experts in music, speech and drama and dance to explore the themes of the artwork with the pupils.

#### PROJECT GOALS

For pupils

- Awareness and appreciation of Irish art
- Increase their skill and enjoyment of Irish dance
- Appreciation of and proficiency in the performance of instrumental music
- Enjoyment, appreciation and proficiency in the creation and performance of drama
- Overall increase in their self-esteem through achievement in the arts.

For teachers

- Assistance from experts in areas in which they do not have expertise
- Confidence in their delivery of the curriculum in the arts
- An increased insight into the needs, talents and personalities of their pupils

For parents

- No financial burden towards their child's education in the arts
- An increased awareness and appreciation of their child's potential
- Improved interaction with the school and teachers

#### PROJECT ACTIVITY

**Art**

In September the pupils and teachers discussed the pictures we wished to buy. A number were selected and purchased from the National Gallery. All of the pictures had themes relating to children. These were displayed around the school hall and corridors in October. All of the pupils (29) had art classes based on the content of the pictures. Pupils examined the dress of the characters in the pictures and studied the history of the era in which the pictures were painted.

**Drama**

We employed a drama teacher and pupils were taught drama in two groups for one half hour each week. The class teachers followed up on this work during their own class time. The senior pupils created their own drama based on the pictures we had purchased. The plays were performed with great success for the Annual Christmas Concert. During the spring and summer terms the pupils have been preparing to perform at the Summer Concert.

**Dance**

The senior pupils learned dances, which related to the pictures chosen for the drama and these were integrated into the script. Dance lessons continue with development in knowledge and skill.



### Music

It was decided that it was very important that the pupils would learn an instrument and be able to perform. Accordingly a music teacher was employed (a music student from UCC) to teach recorder to 4th and 5th class and tin whistles to 1st class. The pupils had half an hour lesson per week. They were taught to read music from the stave.

### DATA COLLECTED

The nature of the topic for our project being the arts we placed an emphasis on the process not the product. The most significant result of Scoil Naomh Thérèse involvement in the Bridging the Gap project is in the

quality of involvement and experience of our pupils have had during the year in specific curricular and cross-curricular areas. They have achieved high standards in Dance, Drama, and Music.

Curricular areas, which have benefited both the pupils and teachers, include the following

### Gaeilge

The teachers we employed using Bridging the Gap funding either were fluent in Irish or were willing to use as much as they had during their classes. This has made Irish more relevant to our pupils and has increased their ease and fluency. All teachers have observed a marked improvement

in the pupil's use of spoken Irish during the year. The visit to Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha was another excellent way of integrating Irish into the pupils' everyday lives.

### **Drama**

First and foremost our pupils have hugely enjoyed their drama classes. They have a great sense of achievement and pride in their ownership of the drama they created themselves. Pupils are self-confident and enthusiastic. They demonstrated this enthusiasm by bringing their scripts out to the playground voluntarily and learning and practising their lines during playtime. Parents were hugely impressed with the quality of the drama, which they presented at Christmas.

### **Music**

Pupils have enjoyed their music classes. They have an increased appreciation of instrumental music. They can play a wide range of tunes. As they have learned to read the stave they can now learn new tunes for themselves. They were delighted and amazed recently when a pupil brought in the sheet music for the film Titanic theme tune and they found that they could play it. The Concert in Áras na Mac Léinn was enjoyed and gave the pupils a wider experience of music performance.

### **Physical Education**

The Irish dancing classes have ensured that the dance element of this area has been very well covered. The visit to Petersburg Outdoor Education centre ensured that the Outdoor element of the Curriculum has been delivered superbly.

### **Art**

The visual environment of the school has been enhanced by the paintings. Art appreciation has also been assisted greatly.

### **History**

The history curriculum was assisted by the paintings purchased, the various visits to UCC and the historical sites visited en route to Petersburg.

Parents have expressed huge gratitude for the input the project has made on their children's lives. One parent informed the school that one day when passing UCC in the bus her daughter pointed out the University and stated, "I'm going there".

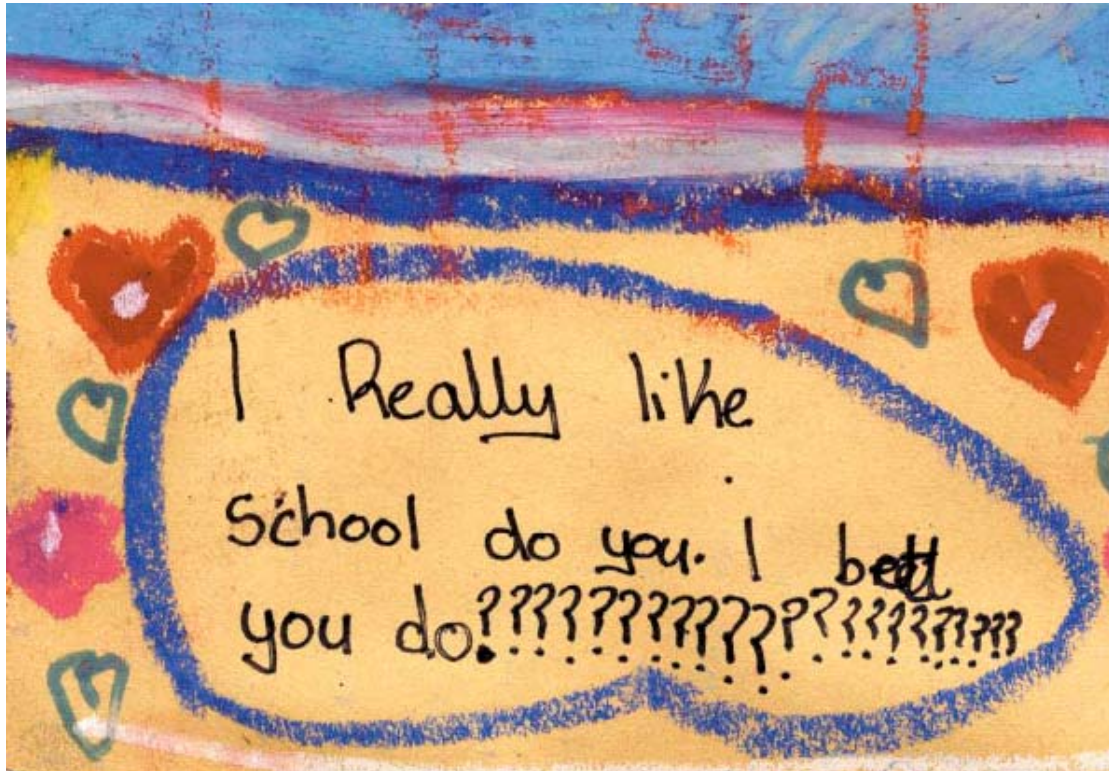
### **OUR OWN EVALUATION**

- The best thing about the project was the enjoyment of the pupils, the progress they made in curricular areas and their personal growth in confidence and self-esteem.
- The most important learning point was the wonderful experience of being involved in a project, which gives an excellent example of best practice and is guided by most idealistic people and follows superlative educational principles. The support in information, in finance and above all in enthusiasm in delivering a broad curriculum to our pupils was invaluable.
- My only wish is that Bridging the Gap could continue forever.



## CASE STUDY 2.10

## VISITS TO THE CORK OPERA HOUSE



In collaboration with the Cork Opera House, a programme of subsidised tickets for children from Bridging the Gap schools was organised again in 2003-2004. The programme was extremely popular, with more than twenty schools taking the opportunity to enable pupils attend professional theatre performances, including musicals, pantomime, Shakespearean drama, a puppet show and a rhythm and dance performance. Feedback from schools is overwhelmingly positive, with most mentioning a range of benefits for pupils of attending live performance, including: improved attitudes to learning, increased motivation, and enhanced communication skills, social skills, artistic awareness and appreciation.

Attendance at a performance was usually preceded by preparatory work in the classroom and most classes completed follow-up activities after the performance, for example:

- classroom discussion
- writing, music and artwork related to the performance
- preparing their own drama performances
- learning some of the songs, in the case of musical productions.

Some classes had the opportunity to participate in workshops organised by the Opera House, and feedback on these workshops is that they were very useful and they enhanced both the pupils' enjoyment of and their learning from the performance.

Schools have not formally monitored the impact of this part of the project. However, it is clear from the feedback received from teachers and parents that the opportunity to attend professional performances in Cork's premier live entertainment venue significantly enhances the educational experience of pupils in the target schools.

For the Bridging the Gap project, the subsidised tickets programme is a worthwhile exercise in that it is relatively cost-effective and most of the administration is handled by the Opera House. A small number of schools indicated that they encountered difficulties in arranging bookings for some performances this year, and they were disappointed that the number of tickets available for certain shows was limited. However, all of the schools say that they are in favour of continuing the programme in the future.



## CASE STUDY 2.11

### IMPACT OF THE ARTS ON IMPROVING LEARNING SKILLS

#### SCOIL ÍOSAGÁIN, FEARANN RÍ

The number of pupils involved in the school band project is 168. They range from second class to sixth class. There are four teachers involved in the band.

#### PROJECT GOALS

The goals set for 2003 - 2004 were to train the second class pupils to play a musical instrument. The starter instrument chosen was the tin whistle. The other objectives we wanted to attain, were to promote a love of music and encourage the students to play a second instrument. We also asked through a questionnaire if learning an instrument and being part of a large band was good for the students both academically and personally.

#### PROJECT ACTIVITY

Sixty-one students started in September 2003 to learn the tin whistle. Over the following months with daily training, forty-eight students are now in the band and can play various tunes.

We then looked at the remaining 120 members of the band to see how many played a second instrument and how many still just played the tin whistle. From September to December all the different instruments were training individually (Tin Whistle, Guitars, Drums, Accordions, Melodicas, Banjos and Xylophones), after that they trained together to make up the band. We gave a recital in the City Hall in the Cór Fhéile. We also had a recital for parents and invited guests in the North Presentation Hall in May, 2004. Our last recital of the year took place in May for parents. This included all members of the band and the four teachers who train the band.

The band takes up a large slice of daily school life, and pupils and teachers practice at any available opportunity. Lunchtime can be halved. Practice also takes place at

various other times during the school day. When the band is performing elsewhere, all class teachers are available to supervise.

#### DATA COLLECTED

We collected data, by video, camera and by handing out questionnaires to parents, teachers and pupils.

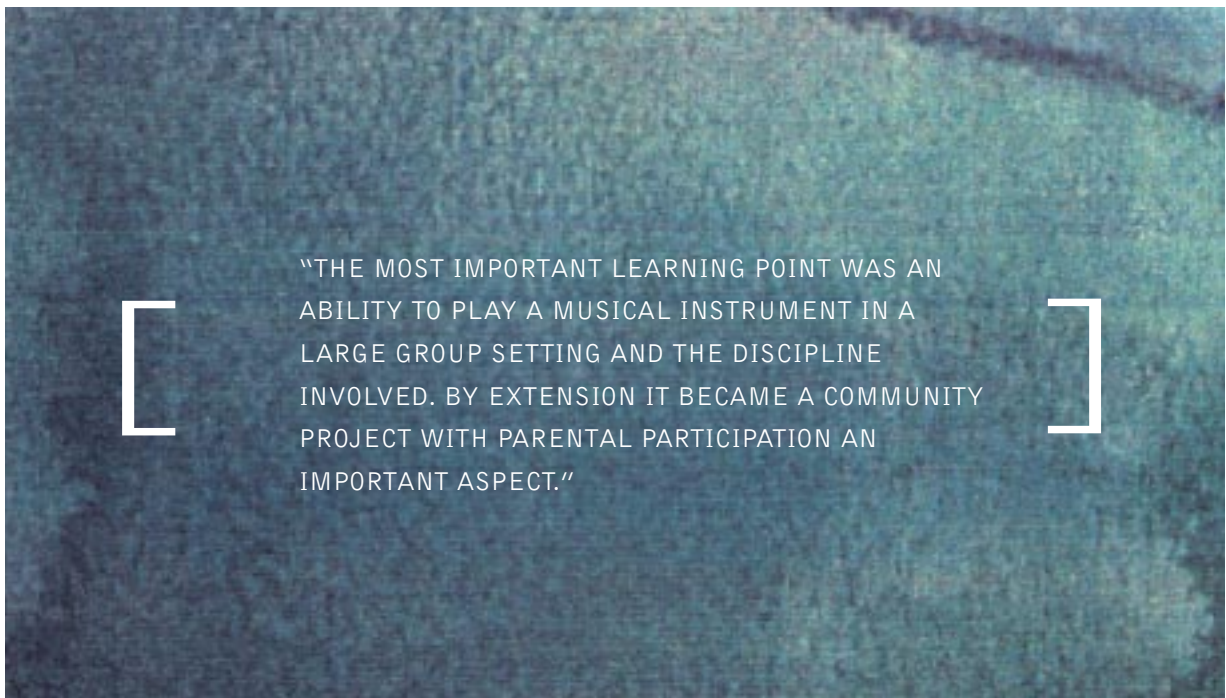
In a questionnaire sent to teachers whose students participated in the band, teachers were asked whether they felt pupils benefited both academically and personally by learning a musical instrument. All teachers agreed that they did.

Teachers found pupils who took part in the school band had greater concentration levels and that their listening skills had improved. Performance in specific curriculum areas such as art and mathematics were enhanced. It also improved their fine motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination. Others said improvements were also to be found in both drama and English.

Teachers also found that pupils' social skills had improved. "As they play music with both their teacher and peers they seem to have a more sympathetic relationship and react better towards each other".

A questionnaire was given to the pupils who were asked if they enjoyed the experience of working in a band and being part of a team. They all agreed that it increased their confidence and also made them appreciate music more.

A questionnaire was also handed out to the parents of the second class pupils to find out how they felt about their child learning an instrument and participating in the school band. The replies were favourable and encouraging.



They were happy that their child would be involved in such a large team and felt it gave their children the confidence to perform on stage in front of an audience.

#### IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The impact of our study was that the majority of pupils who participated in the school band, play one or more instruments by the time they reach sixth class. It showed that out of a second class, of 61 pupils, 48 remain as active members of the school band. It shows the dedication of the staff and parents who believe that music should and must play an active part of both the curriculum and their

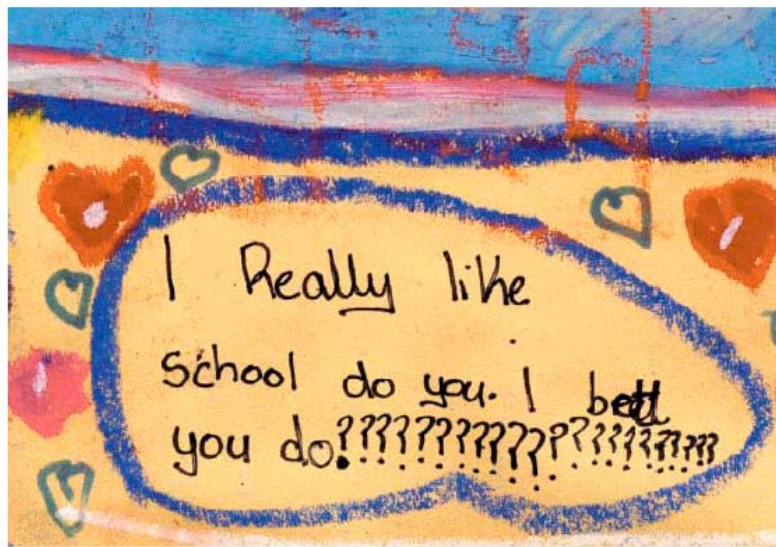
children’s lives. And children can and will benefit from being in the band both academically and personally.

In the principal’s view the most important aspect of the project was the enthusiastic involvement of such a large percentage of the target group – way up on the 50% envisaged. The actual figure was 80%.

The most important learning point was an ability to play a musical instrument in a large group setting and the discipline involved. By extension it became a community project with parental participation an important aspect.

## CASE STUDY 2.12

### TYGER TYGER BURNING BRIGHT PROJECT



This project was sponsored by Bridging the Gap in association with Cork Printmakers and Fota Wildlife Park. One fifth or sixth class from each of eight primary schools participated. The project included:

- Illustrated talks about conservation given in schools by staff from Fota Wildlife Park
- A guided visit to Fota Wildlife Park
- Two printmaking workshops conducted in schools by artist members of Cork printmakers group
- An art exhibition of finished prints in the Cork vision centre.

The schools who participated in the project have reported that the pupils enjoyed the activities and learned a great deal from the different aspects of the project. Teachers were able to build on the work of the project by conducting

preparation and follow-up activities in classroom. Many parents attended the art exhibition and were very proud to see their children's work displayed in such a professional manner.

Teachers reported that the project had an impact on pupils'

- attitudes to learning
- motivation
- career aspirations
- communication skills
- social skills
- artistic awareness and appreciation.

They enjoyed the hands-on aspect of the printing and they saw a purpose to their involvement in the project. The interaction with pupils from other schools and with adults



from outside the school was beneficial. The project offered many opportunities to work in groups, to communicate their thoughts and ideas and to promote tolerance and consideration for others. The printmaking workshops provided an opportunity to learn new skills and work with new tools in an innovative way. The children took great pride in the finished product and in the fact that their prints were offered for sale to a very eager audience on the opening night of the exhibition. The funds raised from the sale of prints will be used to support a project on the conservation of tigers.



All of the participating schools considered the project to be well organised, enjoyable and beneficial. From the point of view of the Bridging the Gap project, it represented a very good collaborative venture with Fota Wildlife Park and the Cork Printmakers group. Schools were offered an opportunity to provide a range of learning activities for their pupils which would not otherwise have been possible. It appears to have had a very positive impact on the learning disposition of pupils, although this has not been formally measured in any of the participating schools. It also engaged many parents actively with their children's learning,

## CASE STUDY 2.13

### IMPACT OF THE ARTS ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

SCOIL MHIURE FATIMA, AN MHAINISTIR THUaidH

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Our traditional music project is targeted at our three fourth classes. The project involves 15 students and two class teachers; one as overall project co-ordinator and one as a music tutor. Three further tutors are involved, all of whom are music students from University College Cork.

#### PROJECT GOALS

##### General Goal

We wish to establish a school band, beginning with pupils in 4th Class. We will employ tutors to develop the musical talent of 15 pupils in button accordion, violin, mandolin, guitar and traditional Irish flute.

##### Pupil related goals

- That the children will have the chance to perform publicly at a musical performance
- That 90% of the pupils would wish to continue in 5th class
- That the pupils will be able to play, as a band, six traditional tunes by June 2005
- That by the time pupils reach 6th class 50% would consider purchasing their own instruments.

##### Teacher/Parent Related Goals

- We hope to increase the musical knowledge of the three 4th class teachers in these instruments.
- We hope by increasing the positive interaction between the pupils and the school that there will be an improvement in overall classroom performance and attitude.
- We hope that as the pupils experience success in this new area, their overall confidence will improve and that they will have greater expectation of success in other academic and social areas.
- We hope that the project, with its emphasis on the marriage of school based work backed up by home based

support and practice, will further improve our home/school/community relationships.

#### PROJECT ACTIVITY

In discussion with teachers, 15 children in fourth class were targeted and they were invited to take part. All the targeted children agreed to take part with the support of their parents.

We had one tutor per instrument except in the case of the fiddle and mandolin, which were taught by the same tutor. This meant that the pupils were working in very small groups, in a very positive, supportive environment which provided early and sustained success. The children had one session per week with the tutors.

Each class in the school attended at least one live musical performance in the Opera House during the project period. In addition, each of the targeted fourth classes and the majority of the other classes attended the Cork Pops Orchestra performances in Cork City Hall. All of which has served to heighten awareness of music within the school and also awareness among staff, parents and pupils that we are forging a new tradition of live music in the school.

#### DATA COLLECTED DURING THE PROJECT

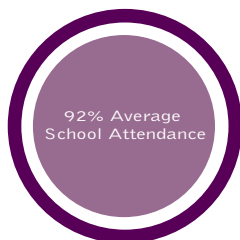
- Interviews with children carried out by tutors, principal, project co-ordinator.
- Interviews with parents carried out by Home/ School/ Community Liaison co-ordinator and by principal.
- Attendance records for music classes.
- Attendance record for school.



**IMPACT OF THE PROJECT IN 2003-2004**

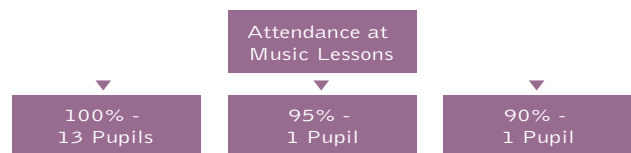
Clearly, as evidenced by their own comments, the project had a very positive effect on the children’s enjoyment of music but this was only the beginning of the impact the project had. As the lessons progressed and as the children discovered new skill in themselves and achieved success in such an obvious manner, their confidence grew as did their desire to challenge themselves. The pride of achievement and the necessity of effort to achieve success is well summed up in the comment, “It takes a lot of patience to be good at it.”

The very presence of the project in the school greatly heightened an awareness of music throughout the school. The boys were heard practising music in the yard in the mornings. The music being heard around the corridors and the visits to the live performances in the Opera House and City Hall all served to heighten this feeling of participation in something important, something desirable. As we prepared for Christmas, for example, our normal Carol Service developed into an impromptu concert as more teachers chipped in with ideas for using the musical and singing talent in their classes. I have no doubt that the presence of the project not only enthused the staff and pupils in this direction it also provided much of the confidence needed to stretch the tradition.



In terms of attendance, the figures we collected speak for themselves. Such attendance at the lessons not only reflects great credit on the tutors but is a ringing statement of commitment on behalf of the children

themselves. The high level of general school attendance among the boys participating illustrates that involvement in school events, commitment to a school based group activity and positive experiences within the school can lead to improved school attendance. This can serve as a very effective foundation on which to base programmes to counter early school leaving.



We specified that a benchmark for success in the immediate term would be the willingness of 80% of the children to continue with the project into fifth class. Notwithstanding the work, effort and commitment required to be part of the project, 100% of the boys wish to continue.

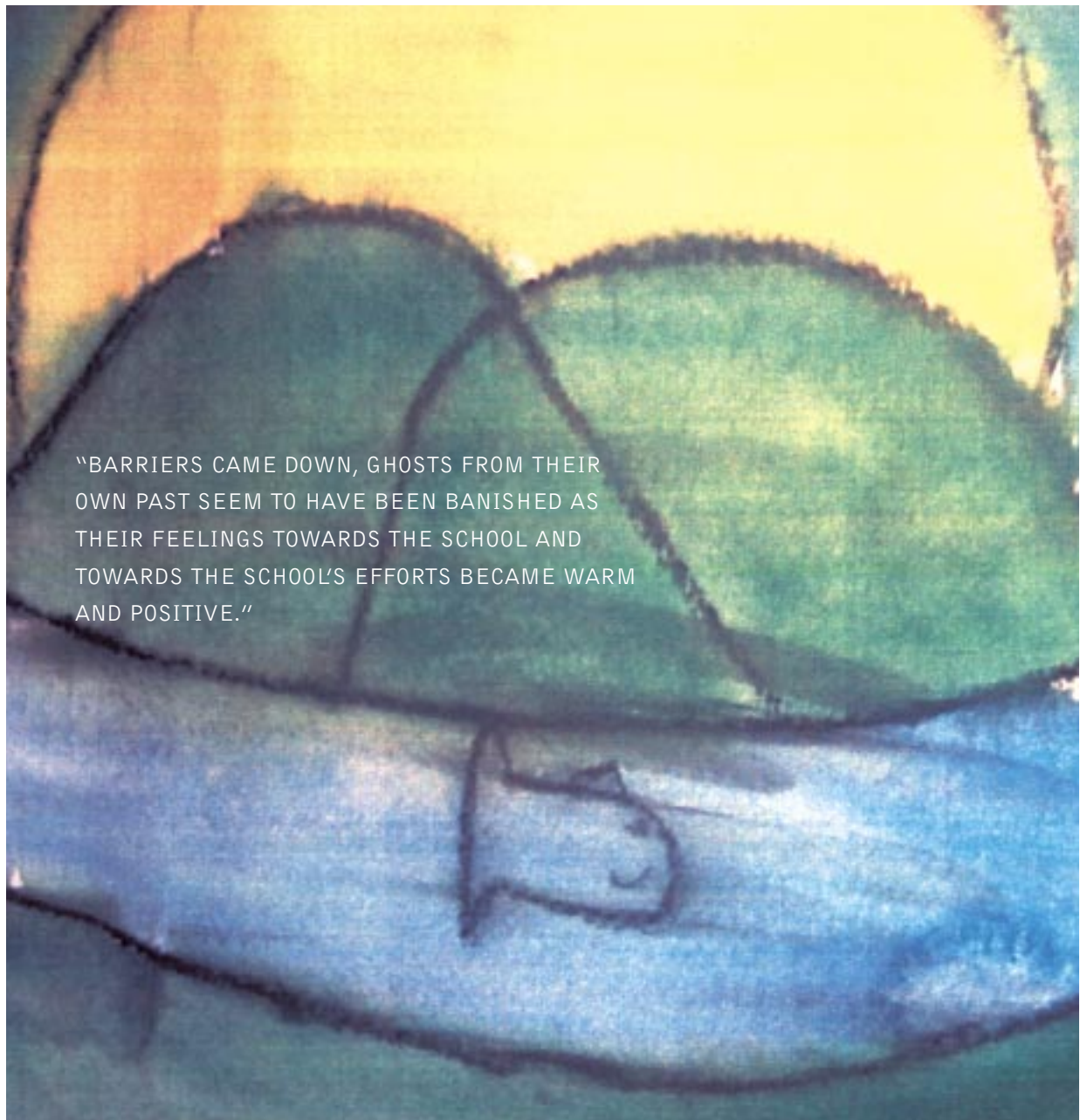
If the project spurred a heightened awareness of their own talent and abilities among the pupils, it led to a veritable surge of parental pride. The parents’ comments bear this out, but what no evaluation can measure is that look of fierce pride manifest in a parent’s face as they look into the school yard and see their son, lost in concentration as he and one or two others play the pieces which they have practised for so long.

As well as pride in their sons, the project undoubtedly reached out to parents who otherwise had little to do with the school. Barriers came down, ghosts from their own past seem to have been banished as their feelings towards the school and towards the school’s efforts became more warm and positive. Parents could see what their sons were achieving and their trust and confidence in the school became greater as a result.

OUR OWN EVALUATION

The best thing about the project was hearing the children playing tunes in the yard before school began in the mornings.

The most important lesson: Be patient, success doesn't happen overnight.



## CASE STUDY 2.14

### WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL ARTS PROJECT?

ST. PATRICK'S BOYS' SCHOOL, GARDINER'S HILL

#### OUR PROJECT

A professional drummer taught drumming skills, theory, music appreciation, music culture to the pupils on a weekly basis. All 12 Classes from 1st to 6th Class (260 pupils) and 12 class teachers were involved. Classes took place on a Tuesday. Each class had an allocated time of half an hour. This scheduled time increased prior to concerts and other performances.

#### OUR GOALS FOR 2003-2004

- To modify and improve poor behaviour & attitude patterns in the class
- To develop interpersonal skills
- To help students get in touch with their feelings and emotions
- To improve pupils' attendance by creating a positive, fun approach to school
- To improve motivation amongst pupils, parents, teachers and others involved in the project.
- To teach pupils a new skill that will equip them for life
- To create and sustain better higher levels of parental involvement.

#### DATA COLLECTED

We collected a variety of data:

- Written poetry and rap music composed by the pupils
- Recordings of individual and groups work
- A CD of the pupils of St. Patrick's Boys' & Girls' Schools drumming
- Verbal feedback from parents & professionals in the music industry
- Comments from parents and other staff members.

#### IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The impact of this project has been profound.

- Attendance is 100% on Tuesdays (Drumming Day)
- Pupils' behaviour has improved greatly partly in fear of losing out on Drumming class
- Pupils' application to work has improved throughout the year
- Pupils' self-esteem and attitude to school have improved
- We received very positive feedback from pupils, class teachers, learning support teachers and above all parents on the project
- Pupils have developed a confidence in their own creative ability and are keen to perform in front of others.
- A few pupils have expressed an interest in furthering their music career.

#### OUR OWN EVALUATION

Of the three projects we have been involved with, we believe that this project has had the most impact on the school as a whole. Tuesday is regarded as a 'fun' day at school. There is a fun-filled air in the building. Pupils are willing to miss other activities rather than drumming. Initially, not all teachers were very enthusiastic about the programme but once it got up and running, teachers were as enthusiastic as pupils.

The most important learning point this year has been that programmes can only be successful if:

- The most professional person is recruited to perform the task
- Tight structures are in place
- High expectations are set
- All staff members are in unison and have the same belief in the project outcome.