

A New Direction Schools Forum March 2014: Brokerage – schools and arts & cultural organisations

The second AND Schools Forum of 2014 took place on 20 March at the Museum of London. Teachers and arts organisations came together to explore how schools can identify and commission cultural activity with arts organisations and work together to enhance the cultural offer to pupils.

Following a presentation and discussion of research findings from EdComs (an independent education consultancy), teachers and cultural organisations shared their best practice in marketing, planning, and delivering cultural activities for pupils. Their top tips are below. Additional notes and signposting added by A New Direction are indicated using an arrow (→).

Top tips for schools

Where to look

While the internet can yield a vast array of ideas and contacts, searching can be a time-consuming process. Forum attendees suggested the following sources of information:

- Arts Council England has produced a list of cultural education resources (see <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/culturaleducationresources/search.aspx>). The organisations featured on this list could be a good place to start
- The London Curriculum
 - Currently being developed and piloted by the Greater London Authority, the London Curriculum uses London itself to inspire resources and activities. The first five subjects of the curriculum are Art, English, Geography, History, and Music – they will be launched in July 2014. Although they have been developed for KS3, they may still provide useful prompts and ideas for teachers working with other Key Stages
- Your local music hub.
 - A music hub is a collection of organisations working in a local area to create joined up music education provision for children and young people, both in and out of school. A complete list of hubs can be found at <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-funding/funding-programmes/music-education-hubs/>.
- Try individuals – not just big organisations
 - Creates opportunity for on-going dialogue
 - Better quality control
- Word of mouth
 - Use your existing networks - talk to other teachers within your school or from other schools to share ideas, best practice and get recommendations
 - Set up learning walks with nearby schools or your feeder school/s
- Look at other programmes for inspiration
 - E.g. artist in residence
- Arts Award can be a useful way of developing partnerships
 - There is a map of Arts Award Supporter organisations that might be a useful source of ideas for partners (see www.artsaward.org.uk/supporter)

→ Transport for London offers free off-peak travel for school groups, when booked in advance. See here for more information <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/students-and-children/school-parties>

Building support for the arts within your school

- Look for advocates in senior management team who can support the inclusion of more cultural/arts activities
- Artsmark can be a useful mechanism for building support for cultural activities from senior management and can drive schools to find partnerships
 - The Artsmark network provides a variety of resources, including an online module on partnership working (currently costs £40 to join - see www.artsmark.org.uk/network)
- Consider how the arts can be integrated into your curriculum to improve the delivery of lessons and share this with other educators at your school

Groundwork

- Projects are most effective when schools support organisations to understand their needs:
 - Create a brief – outline the needs of the schools, the planning needed, meeting timeframes, prep, etc.
 - Calendar of what offers are appropriate at what time
- Don't be afraid to make specific requests
- Where possible, schools and organisations should meet to tailor offerings and strengthen relationships
- Allow time for projects to develop

Schools' tops tips for arts organisations

- Create opportunities for teachers to discover your work:
 - Host cultural trade fair for head teachers
 - Consider an 'educator' stand at performances/cultural events, so teachers can speak with someone about how the organisation could come into the school
 - Taster sessions and free tickets allow teachers to see the work and reduces their risk in commissioning work
- Communications should:
 - Use target words (e.g. literacy)
 - Target senior leaders
 - Demonstrate impact and how this is measurable
 - Provide a clear offer with all the immediate information teachers need (e.g. key stage, curriculum links, timings, cost)
- Take things like exam timetables into consideration when making offers to schools
- Offer to work with more than one school or one department at a time to reduce costs
- Think about how your offer can be cross-curricular or support non-arts subjects. This can also help teachers who may be less confident/familiar with commissioning activities.