

Panel
Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System
Department of Education
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2 August 2023

National School Reform Agreement

NAVA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System Consultation.

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) is an independent membership organisation which brings together the many voices of the visual arts, craft and design sector to improve the fundamental conditions of work and practice. We do this through advocacy, education and the Code of Practice for the Visual Arts, Craft and Design. Our network comprises over 50,000 artists, arts workers, galleries, arts organisations and industry bodies.

Since its establishment in 1983, NAVA has been influential in bringing about policy and legislative change to encourage the growth and development of the visual arts sector and to increase professionalism within the industry. NAVA has been part of vigorous advocacy campaigns for the mandating of visual education in all schools around the country. In 2008 NAVA joined with other peak artform bodies and teacher organisations in the four other arts disciplines (drama, dance, media and music) to form the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE). As part of this network, NAVA played a key role providing expert advice at every stage of the development of the current national curriculum and acting as intermediary between our constituents and ACARA.

In 2022, NAVA launched a Teacher Toolkit and established a Community of Practice for Educators to strengthen visual arts teaching and learning with industry best practice. This initiative was established through a one-off grant from the Australia Council for the Arts which we are no longer eligible to apply for. Unfortunately, NAVA no longer has the funds to support this deeply valued program.

Professional practice is an essential part of learning in all secondary school visual arts curriculums that are taught in Australia. Members of NAVA Community of Practice for Educators are secondary school teachers, gallery educators and curriculum specialists, from across Australia, at different career stages and with varied expertise and experience.

The Community of Practice for Educators has been meeting to:

- Explore innovative approaches to strengthening visual arts teaching and learning with professional visual art practice.
- Discuss approaches for the practical application of the Code of Practice for Visual Arts, Craft and Design in classrooms and schools.
- Connect educators working across all visual arts curriculums in Australia to enable peer-to-peer professional learning among the group.
- Share information and knowledge through open and transparent discussion.



- Provide constructive feedback and advice on gaps in professional development and resources for visual arts and design educators.
- Share and discuss developments in visual arts education research and advocacy.

From NAVA's consultation with teachers, the education system needs to facilitate collaboration between curriculum authorities and the arts sector to provide teachers with a comprehensive map of resources and clear explanations about how they link to the curriculum. A map would support teachers in finding resources that reflect the broader ecology of the visual arts sector as well as the learning needs of their students. A resource map would also support early-career visual arts teachers and those teaching out-of-field.

Based on conversations that NAVA undertook in 2021 with secondary school students engaged in the AGSA Neo Ambassador program, students are increasingly looking for opportunities to learn about diverse contemporary artists and mediums, while being able to see themselves and the issues that are important to them reflected in their own learning.

In the two and a half years that I've been studying art at high school, we've only ever learned about white male artists, which is really sad because my school prides itself on diversity and yet they don't teach it, which is really crappy.

AGSA Neo Ambassador

Finding quality resources is currently time consuming for teachers. To engage students, teachers differentiate learning and consider students' voice, interests, learning styles and backgrounds. Yet, teachers struggle with planning student learning when they are teaching subjects they are not familiar with or specialists on, or are teaching across too many different subjects.

Teacher retention would be supported through professional development, opportunities to connect with each other and having greater access to online visual arts teaching resources. Resources could include lists of local artists, tips for engaging a diverse range of artists, help with materials management, more thorough work samples to help with marking, and an online portal of curriculum aligned resources, programs and events for visual arts education, similar to Education Services Australia's Civics and Citizenship portal.

In response to the Terms of Reference, NAVA makes three recommendations for consideration. These recommendations aim to support students, redress educational disadvantage and reduce teacher workload and burnout:

1. Funding for increased access to arts education in primary schools, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. Schools, and teachers, will benefit from increased student engagement, student outcomes, and mental health and wellbeing.
2. Funding to support an allied network of existing teacher associations and community groups, maximising the impact of their work.
3. Funding for teacher professional development, particularly micro credentials to upskill teachers in arts education targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Please contact me for any further information I can provide.

Sincerely,

Penelope Benton
Executive Director