



A Community of Practice

**THE ARTS IN EDUCATION PORTAL
STRATEGY 2023–2027**

A five-year strategy for the Arts in Education Portal,
Ireland's national resource for arts and creativity in education

Introduction

The establishment of the Arts in Education Portal was an objective of the 2012 *Arts in Education Charter* and the 2017 *Creative Youth Plan*. The Arts in Education Portal is funded under Pillar 1 of the *Creative Ireland Programme (Creative Youth)* which is a five-year all-of-government, culture-based initiative that emphasises the importance of human creativity for individual, community, and national wellbeing.

The Arts in Education Portal was developed and launched in 2015. Since then, it has become the key national digital creative resource, dedicated to promoting and supporting embedded interaction between creative practitioners and educators. Underpinning the development of the Portal is a strong and implicit shared belief in the intrinsic value of creativity and the arts in the lives of children and young people. The Portal, through the content that it shares, has a role in advocating this value.

It continues to be the go-to site for best practice resources centred on the integration of arts and creativity in education. It will continue to be centred on student engagement with the curriculum by way of rich and authentic learning for the 21st century and beyond, through understanding how to improve the impact of our work and generate new knowledge about the important contribution that creativity and innovation can make to the educational change agenda in Ireland. It enhances collaboration in designing classroom and education environments where the combination of knowledge, innovation and creativity is seamless in the students' expression of learning.

Under the new Portal Strategy 2023–2027, which will align with the next *Creative Youth Plan 2023–2027* currently in development, the aim is to continue to make the Portal the key national digital resource for arts, creativity and education practice in Ireland.



Katie Sweeney
Portal Committee Chair



*Image courtesy of photographer Emma Eager,
2018 National Arts in Education Portal Day*

Executive Summary

The Arts in Education Portal Strategic Plan 2023–2027 is a pivotal step towards building on the success of the last seven years of the Portal as an essential resource and reference point for supporting arts, creativity and education practice in Ireland. This plan is guided by a clear vision and mission, and underpinned by the core values of **Innovation**, **Inclusivity**, and **Integrity**. It sets out four key priority objectives for the next five years.

Priority One

Deepen credibility in the portal as an intrinsic resource for our users

Under priority one the Portal will focus on continuing to expand on its content and programming both on- and offline ensuring that it offers resources and fuels conversations that are of the greatest value to the community. Fundamental to this will be inviting continuous feedback from the arts and creativity in education community, partners and stakeholders to work to consistently improve the Portal's offering.

Priority Two

Ensure the portal and its programming is inclusive and celebrates diversity, reflecting all children and young people in Ireland

Central to priority two is the theory 'you cannot be what you cannot see'. The Portal is committed to ensuring that accessibility and diversity are prioritised. This means there will be more diversity of representation within the Portal's content, and attention paid to the way content is presented to break down barriers to accessibility. It is also critical that the child's/young person's voice be a central part of the Arts in Education Portal's content and of future decision-making structures.

Priority Three

Play a collaborative role in the support and implementation of arts and creativity education in Ireland

Priority three will be focused on strengthening the Portal's partnerships and collaborative alliances across the arts and creativity in education sector to ensure that the Portal remains a centrally embedded and strategic resource, giving voice to and enhancing arts and creativity in education practice in Ireland. This supports a sense of connectedness and joined-up thinking across the sector.

Priority Four

Build a vibrant and highly-engaged arts and creativity in education community

Under priority four, the focus is on continuing to build a vibrant community of practice both on- and offline and to deepen our connection with the Portal audience through a range of initiatives, including a professional development and training programme. Initiatives to increase visibility and reach new audiences through targeted literature and digital channels are also part of the work of this priority.

Read about our priorities and how we will achieve them in more detail on pages 19-23

We talk about this concept of community, of practice and practitioners but in a very real sense I think what the Charter has facilitated and what the Arts in Education Portal provides is an opportunity to make real that notion of community.

Prof. Gary Granville, Emeritus Professor of Education at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD), 2020 National Arts in Education Portal Day

About the Arts in Education Portal

Our Vision

Our vision is for an Ireland where every child/young person can **express themselves** through **equal access** to arts and creativity in education.

Our Mission

Our mission is **to inspire** a highly collaborative community of educators, artists, and creative practitioners **to improve** the experience of arts and creativity for all children in early-years, primary and post-primary education across the country.

Our Values

Our mission is underpinned by the core values of **Innovation, Inclusivity, and Integrity**. With the experience of the child/young person at the heart of what we do, we strive to support the community of arts and creativity in education, **showcasing** excellence, **promoting** inclusive values, and **representing** new and diverse models of engagement and best practice.




Image courtesy of artist Aoife Thomas, Scoil Bhríde, Convooy, Co. Donegal



*Image courtesy of Lorna Kavanagh, Artist Tunde Toth,
Scoil Mhichil Naofa, Athy, Co. Kildare*

Initiative & Achievements

The Arts in Education Portal was one of the objectives of the Arts in Education Charter, launched in 2013 as a joint initiative of the then Department of Education and Skills, and the then Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, working with the Arts Council. The Charter presented a milestone in the cross-departmental cooperation in the area of arts and education.

Since then, substantial work has been ongoing to further the provision of arts activity both in and outside schools to develop the creative potential of all children and young people. Aspects of the Arts in Education Charter are currently funded under the Creative Ireland Programme Pillar 1 and this strategy is developed within the context of the incoming Creative Youth Plan 2023–2027.

The core proposition of the Creative Ireland Programme is that participation in cultural and creative activity promotes individual, community and national wellbeing. Pillar 1 recognises that children and young peoples creativity must be nurtured across all aspects of their lives from birth.

Key Definitions

In the seven years since its inception, the Portal has connected the community in the following ways:

- Online the Portal's users have grown from over 9,000 in its first year in 2015 to almost 17,000 in 2021.
- Offline and virtually the Portal has welcomed almost 2,000 attendees to Portal events since its launch.
- With over 1,100 active subscribers to the monthly newsletter with an average open rate of 40%.

As the Portal develops year-on-year, the community of artists and teachers, nationally and regionally, is growing. And the Portal's role as an essential resource and reference point for supporting practice on- and offline, is becoming more embedded within ongoing practice.

What do we mean by creativity and the creative process in the context of the Portal?

Creativity encompasses the arts and all broader creative practice. The Arts in Education Charter (2012) from which the Portal originated, presents the view that creativity is neither a skill nor a stand-alone intellectual process, but an aptitude whose presence, or absence, has profound implications for personal well-being.



Mena

Image courtesy of Emma Kavanagh, Artist George Higgs & The Dock, Scoil Mhuire, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim

In education, creativity is children's and young people's use of their imaginative capabilities to transform their thinking and produce original and innovative ideas and solutions to problems. It involves children and young people engaging with others to investigate and hypothesise about existing knowledge, challenge assumptions, play with possibilities and take risks.¹

The arts provide a unique platform within which innovation and creativity can flourish, while creativity can and should be a feature of all disciplines and all learning environments. Providing high quality arts and creativity in education for children is a fundamental pillar of a creative society, while play and imagination should permeate all domains of the curriculum, at all levels from early learning and childcare to higher education. All learning provides opportunities for creativity to be nurtured and developed.

What do we mean by the voice of the child/young person?

In highlighting models of best practice with children and young people, it is essential that the child's/young person's voice be a central part of The Arts in Education Portal's content. Children's and young people's voices are prominent on the Portal through Project/Partnership features, guest blogs and documentation videos; in which they talk directly about their experience of collaborative creative practice in education settings.

This Strategy sets out objectives to more actively involve children and young people in decision-making aspects of the Portal, as well as the development of dedicated resources that support practitioners to listen to, and act on children's and young people's voices and opinions within creative engagement.

This work will be underpinned by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY)'s national centre of excellence and coordination on giving children and young people a voice in decision-making, Hub na nÓg, as well as the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making* (2015–2020), the *United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child* and the model of participation developed by Professor Laura Lundy at Queen's University.

1: DoE Inspectorate, 2021, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/611873-chief-inspector-reports/>

One of the things that really hits me is a real energy, there's a real enthusiasm for the policy but also to make it happen in the school... What I hope is that things like the Portal and the Charter will enable that enthusiasm to be spread so it's contagious and all the other people in the schools get that enthusiasm as well.

Prof. Anne Bramford OBE, Strategic Director of Education and Skills for the City of London, 2017 National Arts in Education Portal Day

The Portal's Audience & Remit

The core audience for the Portal is: early years educators and leaders, teachers across mainstream and special school settings, school leaders, teacher/artists, artists and other creative practitioners. It includes anyone who has an interest in collaborating with children and young people in or for schools, including STEM and cross curricular contexts. It extends to creative industries and gallery, venue, arts centre and festival curators and education managers who are creating programmes for schools.

The Portal was established to cover Early Years, Primary and Post Primary and while aligning with Creative Youth Plan 2017–2022 the Portal will still have a remit up to and including Senior Cycle cohort and age group which encompasses Youth Reach and some LCYP cohorts. It does not encompass Further and Higher Education.




Image courtesy of Róisín Loughrey, Artist Fiona Linnane, St Brigid's National School, Limerick



*Image courtesy of photographer Yvonne Cullivan,
2019 National Arts in Education Portal Day*

Portal Content

The Arts in Education Portal provides a window into the diversity, depth and breadth of arts and creative practice in education taking place all across the country; and has showcased some of the other flagship arts in education and creative initiatives that have emerged through the Arts in Education Charter and Creative Ireland Pillar 1 Creative Youth.

As an online space the Portal is updated weekly.

Within its **main content** framework, the Portal features:

- A comprehensive directory, mapping arts in education provision across the country
- Seminal reports and reading material that contextualise the sector and provide a historical and theoretical framework for its development over the past forty years
- Project/Partnership features, contributed by artists/creative practitioners and teachers who are engaged in current projects within education settings
- News, opportunities and events

Commissioned content on the site includes:

- An ongoing series of blogs, contributed by Guest Bloggers, bringing a wide range of practice-based insights from perspectives across the sector
- Critical essays that interrogate and validate arts and creativity in education practice practice, through an academic, research-based or theoretical lens
- Newly commissioned videos, exploring artforms, process and practice by contemporary Irish artists
- Project feature videos, developed through documentation awards

Offline, the Portal's annual conference, the **National Arts in Education Portal Day** has become an important landmark event in the Autumn calendar for arts and creativity in education community. The annual **Spring Portal Regional Day** also connects with the community at regional level to share and showcase practice in different parts of the country.



*Image courtesy of Lorna Kavanagh, Artist Tunde Toth,
Scoil Mhichil Naofa, Athy, Co. Kildare*

Governance

The governance of the Arts in Education Portal is overseen by a Portal Editorial Committee, comprising representatives of the stakeholder groups that the Portal serves. The Portal Editorial Committee has an advisory, editorial, and strategic role.

The role of the Portal Editorial Committee is to:

- Oversee and support the work of the Project Manager (Fixed-Term) in the development of the Portal from a leadership perspective.
- Support the Project Manager in developing a plan and implementation strategy for development of the site.
- Advise and make recommendations on the functionality of the Portal.
- Report to the relevant Departments and Agencies represented.
- Make recommendations for site content and how this will be managed on an ongoing basis.
- Promote the Portal and represent its best interests.
- Provide expert insight and information from their own technical, educational, creative and artistic fields of practice.

The Terms of Reference can be found on the Portal website www.artsineducation.ie

This interest in creativity and in particular the value of creativity in enhancing the quality and learning of children and young people, that is a subject that is now spreading across the globe.

It's not just happening in little boxes of the arts but it is actually the way that young people are experiencing learning, it's fundamental to all of their learning.... When you are learning like that you are 100% present.

***Paul Collard, Chief Executive at Creativity Culture and Education (CCE),
2018 National Arts in Education Portal Day***

Development of this Strategy

In 2020, the Arts in Education Portal celebrated its five-year anniversary. The Portal Editorial Committee felt it was an opportune time to undertake a research project to review the scope and performance of the Arts in Education Portal. The outputs of this research project included an audience survey, qualitative consultation with our Portal Audience Forum, and the findings of an Analytics and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) Audit. These outputs informed the next phase.

In 2021, the Portal Editorial Committee participated in a series of strategy workshops facilitated by an independent expert. The outputs of these sessions formed the basis of a strategic plan which was then tested with key stakeholders and portal user cohorts, whose feedback has been incorporated into this document. This strategy sets out the objectives for the Arts in Education Portal for the next five years. It reflects the ambition, commitment and determination of the Portal Editorial Committee to support the community of arts and creativity in education.

A close-up photograph of a hand playing a xylophone. The xylophone has light-colored bars and is set against a dark blue background. The hand is positioned over the bars, and a mallet is visible, ready to strike. The image is partially obscured by a diagonal white line that runs from the bottom left towards the top right.

Image courtesy of Emma Kavanagh, Artist Fiona Linnane, Mid-West School for the Deaf, Limerick



*Image courtesy of photographer Yvonne Cullivan,
2019 National Arts in Education Portal Day*

Priority One

Deepen credibility in the portal as an intrinsic resource for our users

Goal One

Curate content and programming which is up-to-date, relevant, relatable, and topical

How will we do this?

- Explore the idea of thematic programming allowing for a deeper engagement with 'current' topics of interest - using art and creativity to initiate and fuel conversation in those areas e.g. Sustainable Development Goals, Cultural Diversity
- Include guidance on Garda vetting, cybersecurity, imagery, and data consent in our resources section
- Ensure the lived experience of children and young people is expressed and the voice of the child/young person is represented directly throughout relevant content

Goal Two

Build a culture of exchange with our peers in the arts and creativity in education ecosystem of both Irish best practice and international innovation

How will we do this?

- Develop and resource a research programme to ensure we are proactively keeping up with and sharing best practice
- Engage key stakeholders including children and young people, with the quality of our content
- Invite international peers and perspectives to speak at our National Day
- Regularly invite reflection from our audience (artists, teachers and young people)

Goal Three

Meet the needs of our users, ensuring our content highlights and draws out issues of relevance to practitioners on the ground

How will we do this?

- Audit current content and resources available to users, identifying gaps
- Harness the Portal Audience Forum and run critical peer review sessions to enhance the quality and duty of care of our content
- Carry out semi-annual user experience surveys and ensure feedback is incorporated into UX update programme plans
- Meet our community of users where they are at, from a universal access point of view, ensuring we are gathering feedback without barriers
- Ensure the Portal and all its activity is GDPR compliant and that web security is a priority

How will we measure success?

- Positive feedback from educators, artists and creative practitioners
- Consistently improved UX survey scores, increased user traffic and attendance at events
- Feedback loops are integrated into all of our online and offline activity
- Highly engaged cohort of peers and stakeholders
- Inclusion of work on the Portal is a validation

Priority Two

Ensure the portal and its programming is inclusive and celebrates diversity, reflecting all children and young people in Ireland

Goal One

Diverse representation throughout our featured projects/partnerships and a balance of participation of under-represented schools, genders, marginalised groups, geographic origin, education settings, and creative practitioners

How will we do this?

- Activate the theory ‘you cannot be what you cannot see’ by proactively seeking out to attract artists and creative practitioners who reflect the diversity of schools populace and inviting project feature submissions from under-represented practitioners
- Run communications campaigns with schools of the target cohorts to encourage participation, connecting with the community at a local/regional level to ensure balance of representation beyond urban centres
- Actively engage with organisations dedicated to diversity and inclusion training, and leverage, support and amplify those efforts where we find them

Goal Two

Increased accessibility of our content and programming

How will we do this?

- Maximise accessibility of content online and offline, encouraging offline participation where possible
- Acknowledge barriers to access for those artists and creative practitioners without internet/computer and work with other support organisations to ensure equality of access to our resources

- Continue the Portal’s commitment under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 by providing content in both English and Irish
- Commitment to using plain English throughout our content and to seek to have translations available in other languages for specific content

Goal Three

Establishing the essential role of educators and creative practitioners in collectively developing a voice of the child/young person definition for our work

How will we do this?

- Ensure the voice of the child/young person is heard through our featured content, acknowledging children and young people’s communications in all forms — non-verbal, physical, etc. — and our responsibility as adults and in policy to respond to these expressions in enacting the voice of the child/young person
- Establish an appropriate youth advisory consultation policy for the Portal by 2024 with support from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY) resulting in a youth advisory group

Priority Two

Ensure the portal and its programming is inclusive and celebrates diversity, reflecting all children and young people in Ireland

How will we measure success?

- Increased participation from seldom heard cohorts of children and young people. For example children and young people; in care, from minority ethnic backgrounds, with special education needs, living in rural isolation
- Portal Diversity, Equality & Inclusion policy published
- ISL and closed captioning provided for all events, transcripts available where possible
- Accessibility is prioritised at our National and Regional Days
- Future designs of the website will be compliant with the Accessibility Act
- Conduct a survey on accessibility and barriers to participation
- Increase in content available in the Irish and other languages on the Portal
- Youth advisory consultation policy in place by 2024
- Have an established youth advisory group for the Portal by 2025
- Have published dedicated resources on the website about the child's/young person's voice
- Commit to presenting the child's/young person's voice through 40% of the website's content

Priority Three

Play a collaborative role in the support and implementation of arts and creativity in education in Ireland

Goal One

Increased visibility of the extent of the portal work and impact with our key funding stakeholders

How will we do this?

- Actively promote the Portal as a valuable resource to the sector
- Devise and implement a stakeholder engagement strategy to ensure our stakeholders understand where the portal initiative sits within the arts and creativity in education environment and how we can work together further our shared objectives
- Support public consultations on arts and creativity in education matters

How will we measure success?

- Present at minimum two national conferences a year
- Increased arts and creativity in education submissions in public consultations in relevant matters
- Increased arts and creativity in education representation at government discussions
- The voice of the child/young person is represented at the table through Youth Advisory Group and website content. See above
- The Committee has presented the portal at two high profile sectoral conferences

Goal Two

Forge collaborative alliances with ecosystem partners to ensure the voice and lived experience of children and young people is included through our representation and work

How will we do this?

- Participate in collaborative activity where appropriate to further promote the implementation of arts and creativity in education policy
- Develop and share information for our users on how to include the voice of the child/young person in their artistic or creative practice

Priority Four

Build a vibrant and highly-engaged arts- and creativity-in-education community

Goal One

Expand and diversify our community of users

How will we do this?

- Implement recommendations of the portal review and relaunch the Portal with an improved user experience, clarity of strategy, and reinvigorated purpose
- Increase promotion and interaction across social media channels
- Ensure dissemination of our resources and projects across all online and offline channels, and ensuring they reach the front line of teachers, where they are most relevant

Goal Two

Deepen our engagement with all users, designing more opportunities for the community to build connections

How will we do this?

- Design and implement an arts and creativity-based professional development and training programme for our community of users
- Recognise national cultural providers as valuable constituents in the arts and creativity in education community, leveraging a deeper relationship with the National Cultural Institutions to build greater connection
- Explore digital community tools to help bring our community closer to each other

How will we measure success?

- A marketing and engagement strategy and plan will be designed and delivered
- Increased engagement on social media platforms - 30% annually
- Increased attendance at Arts in Education Portal events both online and face to face
- Increased users of the Arts in Education Portal year on year — 30% annually
- A highly engaged and active community which has a number of online and offline touchpoints for connection, and evidence that we are reaching the frontline teachers
- Professional development and training programme in arts and creativity in education in place by 2025. Pilot by 2025 with national rollout by 2027



Image courtesy of Emma Kavanagh, Artist George Higgs & The Dock, Scoil Mhuire, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim

Wider Policy Context

ACI (2008). Arts Council Ireland. *Points of alignment: Report of the special committee on the arts and education*. Dublin.

Department of Education and Skills & Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, (2012). *Arts in education Charter*.

CECDE & NCCA (2006) Síolta, The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education

NCCA (2009) Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

NCCA (2009) Senior Cycle Key Skills Framework

Department of Education and Skills (2015) A Framework for the Junior Cycle

Department of Education and Skills (2016) LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOL 2016 A Quality Framework for Primary & Post-Primary Schools

TCI (2016). Teaching Council of Ireland. *Cosán: Framework for teacher's learning*. Dublin: TCI

Culture 2025: A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025 (DTCAGSM): Culture 2025 is a policy framework that defines the scope and sets the direction for government policy in the whole cultural field. It sets out the current state of affairs in a broad range of categories across the cultural sector, the aspirations the government has for those areas, and the government's commitments to achieve those aspirations. *Culture 2025* is underpinned by: the intrinsic value of culture; the value of arts, culture and heritage to our lives and our communities; the right of everyone to participate in the cultural and creative life of the nation; and the value of creativity to individual and collective wellbeing.

The *Creative Ireland Programme* is the main implementation vehicle for the priorities identified in *Culture 2025* – a five-year-all of government initiative, from 2017-2022, which places creativity at the centre of public policy. It is a culture based programme designed to promote individual and community and national wellbeing. The core proposition is that participation in cultural activity drives personal and collective creativity, with significant for individual and societal wellbeing and achievement. In February 2022, Government decided in-principle that the Clár Ildánach/Creative Ireland Programme should continue on an-all-of-government basis for the period 2023-2027.

Creative Youth Plan 2017-2022 (DTCAGSM): The *Creative Youth Plan* was published in December 2017 and aimed to give every child practical access to tuition, experience and participation in art, music, drama and coding by 2022. Implementation of the Plan has been led by the Creative Ireland Programme, in partnership with the Department of Education (DoE), the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and the Arts Council. A successor to the *Creative Youth Plan*, covering the period 2023-2027, is currently under development with the addition of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).

Department of Education and Skills (2019). *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023*. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2020). *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Dublin: NCCA European

Children's School Lives (2022) - national longitudinal cohort study of primary schooling in Ireland

NCCA (2022) Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report

Project Ireland 2040, published in 2018, is a €116 billion National Planning Framework which aims to guide Ireland's development over the next 22 years. It identifies 'Culture, Heritage and Sport' as one of its ten Strategic Investment Priorities, particularly in relation to improving quality of life and adding to a sense of place.

The Arts Council's current ten-year strategy *Making Great Art Work* (2016-2025) includes a key objective to plan and provide for children and young people. The objective includes a number of actions including to achieve the full implantation of the Arts in Education Charter (2012) working with both the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

The Arts Council's Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy launched in 2019 'strives to respect, support and ensure the inclusion of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today, from all sections of society, from existing and new communities, and from all social backgrounds, ethnicities and traditions.'

In their Paying the Artist Policy, launched in 2020, the Arts Council 'recognises its role in promoting equitable and fair remuneration and contracting within the arts' and furthermore 'in leading change through undertaking and sharing research, through supporting developmental actions that improve capacity and transparency, through the requirements we place on funding recipients and through our partnership and advocacy work'.




Image courtesy Éilís Murphy, Artist Vera McEvoy,
St Kilian's National School, Mullagh, Co Cavan

Thank you to

Kids' Own Publishing Partnership, Arts in Education Portal Managers
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*Cover image courtesy of photographer Emma Eager,
2018 National Arts in Education Portal Day*