

Section 1: Research Digest

Education

Evaluating Creativity

The Evaluation of the 10 Gallery Education Projects of encompass 2000 [UK]

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Objectives

The overall aim of this project was to increase participation in the arts through collaboration between galleries and a range of organisations such as schools, youth centres and community organisations. Specific aims were to promote school/gallery collaborations, to foster links between galleries and their communities, to promote new models of good practice and to support local arts development. Specific objectives included involving living artists and contemporary art, to enable professional development and to encourage school-leavers to be involved with galleries.

Methodology

Data for evaluation were collected using a proforma, an assessment from an evaluator attached to each gallery, an interview with a gallery educator or project leader, a pre-visit questionnaire and an exit questionnaire. Two meetings were held with gallery educators and artists, one at the beginning and one at the end of the programme.

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Summary

The encompass programme was organised by engage during 1999 and 2000 for two targeted audience groups: [i] primary school children and their families and [ii] 16-18 year-olds. The project took place at nine gallery spaces. It was funded by the Arts Council of England through the Arts for Everyone Lottery programme.

Projects require careful consideration with a balance between open-ended processes and the need to have a focus for participants. Working with 16-18 year-olds demands an understanding of the lives of this age group and the need to find a way of the project being accepted. Projects need to dovetail with other relevant timetables such as the academic year. Mentoring is important and can be of an informal or formal kind. Projects of

this sort may involve risk and require support and commitment from gallery management and staff. Links with teachers are crucial and projects need to find a niche within school or college structures. Face-to-face promotion can work well with 16-18 year-olds, especially when extra inducements can be offered. These projects can often highlight lack of project management knowledge and skills. Experience of working with schools is helpful. Flexibility is also important.

Training for evaluators would have been useful and more work needs to be done on how to evaluate creative and imaginative work, as questionnaires do not always capture the quality of experiences. Working effectively with participants requires greater consideration. Evaluation must also allow for changes within projects and their aims. Particular successes for the overall project included national status and some national media coverage. In one case, the project has led to the establishment of a permanent group to plan and develop future projects. encompass was also successful in acting as a catalyst in local areas.

The report's conclusions are that: [i] new projects of this kind can create unique opportunities for young people and adults to understand and enjoy art; [ii] national projects can provide benefits that are greater than the sum of their parts; [iii] research and planning are essential; [iv] effective marketing is important; [v] the special contributions of gallery educators, artists and teachers should be recognised; [vi] evaluation can contribute to project development; and [vii] timing is critical to a project's success.

Availability

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