

Coláiste Bríde
Creating a *Home Away from Home*:
The *Home* exhibition and establishing the *Green Gallery*
Evaluation Report
January – May 2010



'We're all talented'

Creative Engagement



An Roinn
Turasóireachta, Cultúir agus Spóirt
Department of
Tourism, Culture and Sport

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	4
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	6
FINDINGS	8
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WAYS FORWARD	16
WORKS CITED	18
APPENDIX A: APPLICATION FOR <i>HOME AWAY FROM HOME CAFÉ</i> PROJECT	19
APPENDIX B: STUDENT EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE ACTIVITY	20
APPENDIX C: STUDENT ARTS-BASED FOCUS GROUP ACTIVITY	21

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Bríde received a significant grant to take part in a Creative Engagement project funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Creative Engagement, was set up and is still managed by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) in 2005 with a maximum award of €5,000 per school. The scheme promotes a partnership approach to the promotion and development of the arts in second-level schools, based upon positive interaction between learner, teacher, and artist. The programme also emphasises pupil-centred teaching and learning.

Coláiste Bríde became aware of the fund through an inservice held by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals. This grant enabled students and teachers to work with an artist in order to establish an art gallery within the school canteen. The project, *Home Away from Home*, commenced on Monday 22nd February and continued each Monday from 4 – 6pm for 8 weeks. The programme culminated in an exhibition called *Home* of the work and portfolios created in the canteen's new art gallery, entitled the *Green Gallery*.

This report presents the evaluation findings from that project and makes suggestions for ways to continue development of the *Green Gallery* within the school through shared approaches.



Students at work on watercolours

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Aim:

To establish and foster student ownership of a student art exhibition space within the school canteen through the creation of artworks by students that emphasises process and introduces students to new styles of contemporary art-making

Objectives:

- To encourage students to take new creative approaches in making art work
- To introduce students to different contemporary artists who work with drawing and photography
- To introduce students to working with new methods of drawing and new artistic media
- To emphasis 'process' in the creation of completed artworks through the use of journals
- To create a completed body of artworks for an exhibition entitled *Home* that will launch the new *Green Gallery* space in the school canteen
- To introduce students to the process of curating and installing an exhibition through the launch of the new gallery space



Artist Jane Fogarty assists a student in making her visual diary

Overall Timeframe:

Proposal development: October – November 2009

Application design for participants and participant selection: January – February 2010

Project delivery and showcase: February – May 2010

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Artist

The school consulted with the Youth Arts Coordinator for South Dublin County Council, on their proposal for the Creative Engagement application. Based on the ideas presented, the Youth Arts Coordinator suggested visual artists whose working methods and experience were felt to fit the project brief. Jane Fogarty was selected based on her method of working and artistic style, which was seen to fit the proposed project. In addition, Jane has a great deal of experience working with young people in the arts. Finally, as a former pupil of Coláiste Bríde, Jane brought a great deal of knowledge to the project regarding the school, its art curriculum, and its community. The artist's role in the *Home Away from Home Café* project was to guide and encourage the students in the art making process, to plan and organise the running of the exhibition and to mediate what is involved in this process for both the students and teacher involved.

The Teacher

The overall coordination of the project was carried out by Home Economics teacher, Louise Ronan, who has been running her own business within the school for the past two years called *Food For Thought*, a healthy eating initiative. With support from the principal and art teachers within the school, Louise was inspired to apply for Creative Engagement in order to set up an art gallery that linked closely with the ethos established within the canteen—one that not only emphasised healthy eating, but also a healthy lifestyle, encouraged through a comfortable and welcoming environment within the school that is owned by the students as well as reflective of their talents and interests.

The Students

Art teachers explained the detail of the project during their art classes and the project coordinator, Louise, designed an application form for those interested to complete and submit (Appendix A). Once all applications were received a meeting was scheduled in order to choose 15 students. The school's three art teachers assisted the project coordinator in selecting participants. The criteria for selection were based on a student's ability, attitude to work and school attendance to date. 14 students from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, TY, and 5th year took part in the project.

The Evaluator

South Dublin County Council's Arts Office offered in-kind support to the project in the form of documentation, monitoring and evaluation. This work was carried out by the Council's Youth Arts Coordinator.



Visual Diaries

The Project

Students worked with the artist for two hours every Monday after school for 8 weeks from February, creating work for exhibition at the gallery opening in May. All work created was centred on the theme of *Home Away from Home*. Workshop sessions consisted of an introduction to particular styles of art through presentation of work by modern and contemporary artists, such as Kiki Smith, David Hockney, and Alexander Calder. Along with drawing, students worked with new media than they usual do in the classroom setting, such as wire sculptures,

photography and water colour. At the start of the project, students made their own books which they used as visual diaries in which to sketch, write and keep ideas for artwork throughout the project. These journals along with a selection of completed work were exhibited at the launch of the *Green Gallery* in the canteen when the project reached completion.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Project monitoring and evaluation was carried out by South Dublin County Council's Youth Arts Coordinator, the artist, and the teacher involved in the project.

Evaluation Aims:

- Assess the learning gained by students regarding contemporary artists
- Investigate the learning gained by students regarding creative processes
- Gather impressions of the students' overall experience in participating in the project
- Examine the impact of having an outside artist working in the school on
 - The artist
 - The teacher coordinating the project
 - The students
- Consider the impact of having an outside artist working in the school on the wider school environment

'I've made new friends, and used many new things in art. It has shown me a new idea to what art is. And open my eyes to what exactly I like about art.'

Student

Method

The methodology employed for this evaluation included a number of approaches in order to strengthen the validity of the findings. Approaches included observation, interviews, questionnaires and 1 focus group discussion.

Direct observation was taken as an approach, which involves attending a workshop or workshops. This method allows for the evaluator to gain an understanding of workshop delivery as well as the interaction occurring and relationships developing between students and workshop facilitator.

In addition, students were asked to complete brief questionnaires at the end of three different workshops. These questionnaires, which were delivered through a postcard activity (see Appendix B) were general and focused on the positive and challenging experiences that might result from the workshops. The information collected on postcards were utilised to facilitate discussions with the young people about how they felt the workshops were going and whether or not they felt anything could be improved. This activity allows for the artist involved to also take part and share viewpoints on activities undertaken thus far.

Detailed questionnaires were also completed by the artist and teacher coordinating the project at the mid-point of programme delivery. A concluding group discussion was facilitated with the teacher and artist to review activities undertaken and learning gained.

Also at the conclusion of the programme, an arts-based focus group was held with the students to review the project in its entirety. Discussions focused on the highlights, both positive and challenging, participants perceived resulted during the programme as well as learning gained (see Appendix C).

Below is a summary of the methods undertaken for the evaluation:

- Observation of workshops took place on the following days:
 - Feb 22
 - March 8th
 - March 22nd
 - April 12th
- Attendance and observation at exhibition opening, May 7th
- Workshop feedback/survey activity with young people (3 different times)
- Mid-point questionnaires for both artist and teacher coordinating project
- Interview/discussion with both artist and teacher at conclusion of project
- Focus group activity with young people at conclusion of project

Unfortunately, the three art teachers who advised on the project were not approached to participate in this evaluation due to time constraints. However, this evaluation will be shared with those individuals as well as the principal as a point for colleagues to discuss ways forward in continuing the development of the *Green Gallery*.

'I loved working with the cameras and wire. It was a great new art experience as I have never used them before as an art form'

Student



Students learned about the styles and work of modern and contemporary artists

FINDINGS

This section details findings from the evaluation of Coláiste Bríde's *Home Away from Home* project and is divided into three main areas: Youth Experience, Collaborative Experience and Project Logistics. 'Youth Experience' focuses on the skills developed and experiences had by the young participants involved. 'Collaborative Experience' reflects on the working relationship of an outside artist with teachers in the school and 'Project Logistics' concerns project delivery. This chapter informs the conclusion of the evaluation report: Recommendations for Ways Forward.



Students speaking at the exhibition opening about the Home Away from Home project.

Youth Experience

As 8 weeks is a short amount of time, emphasis was not placed on building technical skill; rather, the project focused on exploring ways of being creative. The project may not have inspired everyone to become an artist but those who were initially interested have been encouraged to pursue it as they have enquired about portfolios, various courses and colleges. The artist encouraged the students to take notes on various artists, and gave them information on websites to research for different artists. Their visual diaries/art journals are testament to their interest and learning in the project.

Students commented that they appreciated the different ways in which they have been allowed to explore art during the project. Students explained that the artist's approach to teaching art is different to that of the classroom situation and they seem to have really embraced this new style of teaching. They also commented on the fact that they were able to work with new media. There was particular interest and enjoyment shown in working with watercolour and photography.

'I enjoyed all of the art sessions, expanded my view of art through different approaches in photography, wire works, experimenting our emotions through the brush, painting images in water colours.'

Student

The project helped students interested in pursuing a career in the arts greater knowledge about that pathway. The artist on the project was a past pupil of the school. That link helped students to see the artist as a role model. In working with her, students

were able to ask her about her own career path and learn more about careers in the arts. In addition, the approach the artist took in helping students develop work was through the creation of art journals/sketchbooks. Students took these journals home and worked on their ideas in their own time, sharing work with the artist and fellow students, gaining feedback on the ideas they were developing. The artist helped students to make connections between this practice for the project and how 'actual' artists work. She explained the importance of developing portfolios and how these journals were the students' own portfolios. Finally, seeing work develop from idea to product to being presented in an exhibition also exposed the students to various aspects of careers in the arts.

Most students stated that they had made new friends during the project. It was felt that the application process was a good way to encourage mixing as students who applied have a keen interest in the arts and were able to meet other students of similar interests. In addition, the project involved students from across year groups, which encouraged bonding across the school. Some 1st years who were initially nervous at working with 5th years, had become friends by the end of the project.

'With the opening of an exhibition space and hopefully the integration of an arts programme the students should see that a career in art is something, which is very possible and rewarding... Hopefully with this project students should see that an education in art opens up possibilities, which extend to being a practicing artist, curation, education and many things between.'

Project Artist

Summary of Outcomes for Young People:

- The application process students underwent to join the project ensured that students who were involved were interested in the project
- Students gained experience in developing art portfolios
- Students developed practical skills in different visual arts forms not offered within the school curriculum, including wire 3D work; watercolour, and photography
- Students gained greater awareness of modern and contemporary arts practice as all activity was linked to professional artists' work
- Students achieved greater awareness of pathways into arts careers through meeting the artist and hearing of her experiences in the profession

- Students gained learning and experience around exhibiting artwork
- Students expressed confidence gained at having presented not only their work, but at having given speeches at the opening of the *Home* exhibition
- Most students felt they had gained new friends as a result of the project

Collaborative Experience

The project had a great deal of support within the school. The support and initiative of the school principal was key to the project's development. The school principal attended an inservice about the Creative Engagement Fund. Upon return to the school, she approached teacher Louise Ronan with the opportunity to apply for the fund. She saw that Creative Engagement provided a chance for Louise to involve students more directly in applying what they have learned about healthy living within the classroom. As a teacher, Louise clearly demonstrated a great deal of initiative and motivation, herself, in putting together and delivering the project proposal.

This Creative Engagement project also had support from outside the school. The Youth Arts Coordinator of South Dublin County Council advised on the application and on sourcing an artist to work with the students. She also assisted with the monitoring and evaluation and documentation of the project, alleviating some of the pressures that an additional school project can put on the timetable for teachers. The Fund helped to build new relationships between teachers/school and the local authority. It is hoped that the Youth Arts Coordinator can continue to advise the school, when needed, on promoting the sustainability of the *Green Gallery* created as a result of the Fund and making links with other artists and the area arts centre, RUA RED, in order to further assist young people in building on the learning gained during this project.

The project provided opportunities for collaboration among students, teachers, and artist. The three art teachers were described as being 'very supportive of the project.' They advised on selecting students, devising the project timetable, and helped provide support supervision (with relation to child protection) to the artist, Jane, during project delivery. They also visited sessions to see progress made and to give feedback. Other studies have shown that cross-school support for these types of creative projects, which link school learning through creative engagement outside classroom time, are critical to delivering meaningful outcomes that have an

'I have enjoyed this project and I have learned new techniques and different ways of painting. I liked having someone in instead of our teachers doing this with us. I really like the visual diaries because you put down ideas and drawings, you could experiment.'

Student

impact within the whole-school environment beyond the life of the project (Thomson, 2007). The dedication of teachers across disciplines to continue to develop the *Green Gallery* with students after project completion demonstrates the success Coláiste Bríde has had in this Creative Engagement project.

As the project involved students from across year groups, friendships have developed beyond typical year divisions, which provide a bonding of the student community within the school.

The project assisted both the artist and the coordinating teacher in professional development. The teacher felt that she built skills and strengthened relationships with colleagues and students in the school. She explained,

‘[This project] has allowed me to facilitate and work alongside a group of students, the art teachers and also the artist. The project has allowed me to develop my organisational skills and facilitation skills... It has allowed me to get to know some students whom before this project I may not have been in contact with. It has given me the confidence to drive a project forward. It has also developed my negotiating and facilitation skills as I am very aware that I am working alongside three art teachers and I am a home economics teacher so I wanted to ensure that they had sufficient input and was always grateful of their opinions and support for the project.’

The artist felt that while the project did not relate directly to her own artistic practice as a visual artist, she gained insight into approaches to art making. She stated,

‘It interests me to work with young people of all ages and to see the development of creativity. It also benefits my organisation skills in the establishment of an exhibition space as this is something that I have considered doing myself which would feed into my artistic career.’

The exhibition and launch of the gallery was a fantastic closing event for the project. It helped the school make wider links in the community, as staff from RUA RED, South Dublin Arts Centre attended in addition to Councillors and other artists. The project coordinator explained, ‘It was wonderful to have Derek West [from NAPD] attend. His presence and speech on the night helped affirm our approach for ourselves and the students, too.’

'I think that this project is a testimony that there is emphasis on the arts within Coláiste Bríde as often within schools academic subjects are placed higher on the totem than creative subjects such as art, music, drama etc. It is the education system which creates this hierarchy but to encourage creativity as much as academia is something I feel should not be overlooked.'

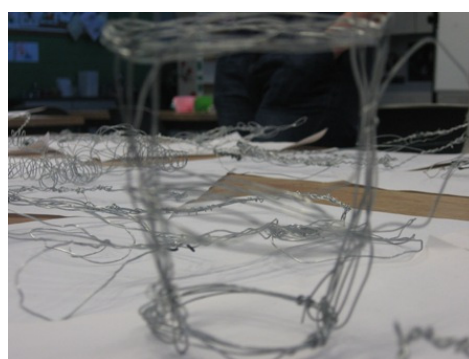
Project Artist



Visual historical timelines of the project and participants' experiences

Summary of Outcomes related to Collaborative Experience:

- The coordinating teacher gained new organisational, negotiation and facilitation skills as well as strengthened relationships with students and colleagues
- The artist engaged with new approaches to art making
- The project as a whole, and particularly the launch of the *Green Gallery*, helped the school make links to the wider community, both in relation to the locality, the arts, and education
- The project allowed for teachers to collaborate on the project, sharing their skills with colleagues outside the classroom environment
- The project seems to have been an enjoyable experience for all involved in its delivery



Works made in wire

- The project demonstrated the importance that Coláiste Bríde places on the arts and creative learning and the significant role a school principal plays in championing that position
- The project demonstrated the care and determination that teachers put into the work they do in the school, even outside the requirements of the timetable.
- Delivering the project as an after-school initiative allowed the school and students, in particular, to achieve arts and creative learning outcomes within a curriculum area outside that of the arts, promoting arts in education as a whole
- The establishment of the *Green Gallery* within the school canteen provides new opportunities to build new audiences for the arts among students, teachers, and school staff. It also provides new opportunities to link students to learning more about careers in the arts

Project Logistics

Individuals involved in the project seem to have had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in developing and delivering the project. The fact that the schools' three art teachers shared in some of the responsibility of the project through providing advice was of great support to the teacher who coordinated the project.

The artist took the responsibility for assisting students in curating and hanging the *Home* exhibition as well as developing the creative tasks for the project. She enjoyed the freedom she was given to develop the project ideas. The artist explained that it was 'fantastic to work on such an open project where I devised exactly what would be involved in the project, it was very liberating. All members of staff were very supportive and seemed genuinely happy to have a past pupil working on the project.' At least one of the art teachers assisted in selecting work for exhibition.

The coordinating teacher did an incredible job at overseeing the project's development and delivery and the art teachers pulled together to help provide space, assistance with child protection requirements and other advice as needed. While there was a great deal of school-wide support, it should be acknowledged that the project did place additional pressure on the coordinating teacher, giving added responsibilities to an already full timetable of work.



The exhibition opening of Home and the launch of the Green Gallery


The students involved in the project came from a diverse range of ages and levels within the school. This diversity may have contributed to the high level of timidity exhibited at the beginning of the project. The artist was able to 'break the ice' with and among students through 'name game' type activities and getting a radio with music into the room, creating a relaxed and fun atmosphere for focusing on creative development.

The project provided funding for some equipment, such as cameras, frames for the gallery space and other materials for hanging a show, which the school did not otherwise have at the time.

Summary of Outcomes related to Project Logistics:

- Individuals involved in the project seem to have had a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Individuals directly and indirectly involved in project delivery pulled together to share resources
- School-wide support and cooperation among colleagues are key for the successful delivery of a project of this nature as it adds a great deal of additional work to an individual teacher's timetable as well as for the whole school
- New equipment was purchased for the school to sustain the exhibition gallery
- A new camera was purchased for the school through the Fund, which will assist in the documentation of future school projects
- Exhibition materials, such as frames were purchased through the Fund, which will help sustain the gallery space

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WAYS FORWARD:

- *Take time to familiarise the artist with the school community, its arts curriculum and opportunities already provided.* As a former pupil of the school, the artist involved was able to bring a great deal of knowledge to the project, which can be seen to have benefited project delivery, partnership working and outcomes achieved by young people. Future projects may consider ensuring that familiarising the artist with the art teachers and the curriculum as well as the school community is allocated within pre-project planning time.
- 
- Working on a still life*
- *Keep the mood light and relaxed, encourage mixing and sharing.* The diversity of ages and levels among the students was a great positive to the project. Students came together based on their common interest in the arts, regardless of age or school level, however, not uncommonly, these gaps also created amounts of timidity and reserve among the students initially. As the project was an after-school activity
 - *There is huge potential for long term work to continue.* The project artist is interested in continuing to support the gallery initiative.
 - Student exhibitions could take place twice a year: at Christmas time and at the close of the school year with different themes for each and a different teacher assigned to coordinate each in order to share the workload. Work created could happen through after-school workshops or fit into the timetable and match curriculum requirements.
 - Work created for these exhibitions could be by Transition Year students through a dedicated art class that works all year, or it could be modular with an 8 week focus twice a year, following a similar model to that of this project.
 - Leaving Cert Applied course students could also be the focus participants, though this may present challenges as students who participated in *Home Away from Home Café* were somewhat self-selected through an application process.
 - Professional artists could be invited in to show work in the gallery and do residencies (either long-term or for one-off workshops) within school art classes or after-school art projects. This idea would allow students to gain

- access to and information from working contemporary artists. Perhaps links could be pursued with the county's new art centre, RUA RED.
- The gallery could also be utilised during different theme weeks within the school, not only as an exhibition space, but as a creative gathering place for talks, and sharing of poetry and/or music and other creative work.
 - Students can get involved in curating the gallery through a Gallery Club. Students could be involved not only in curation and installation (calls could be put out for work to be presented under a 'theme'), but also in programming activities and events in the gallery space, learning more about careers in curation, events planning, and arts administration. Students would gain a great deal of skills in organisation, presentation and working together as well as within the arts.
- *Continue to maintain links with the local authority.* South Dublin County Council's Youth Arts Coordinator is interested in and willing to provide further advice and support for future projects in relation to the gallery.
 - *Ensure that the workload is shared.* Managing and coordinating any future projects related to the gallery will take the same amount of cooperation that the *Home Away from Home Café* project demonstrated. In order to continue development of the space and any linked programming, the school will need to ensure that while there are clear roles and responsibilities, no one teacher is bearing the responsibility every time. Further, shared working on the project, as with this project, will help to maintain school-wide ownership of an interest in the space.

What students liked...

'...getting to try new things, like photo composition...'

'...the way we got to try different games and help us relax and get to know one another...'

'...getting to have our own ideas on what we think looks right...'

'It's good to have a different teacher who has [another] intake of art, who has recently experienced what I hope to experience in a few years...'

Students

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Selecting work for exhibition

APPENDIX A: APPLICATION FOR *HOME AWAY FROM HOME CAFÉ* PROJECT

Creative Engagement Art Gallery Project

Coláiste Bríde has been very lucky to have received a grant to take part in a Creative Engagement project funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism. This grant will enable us to set up an Art Gallery within the canteen area of our school. Creative Engagement seeks to involve students, teachers and a chosen artist to carry out the project. We are delighted to announce that a past pupil of Coláiste Bríde Jane Fogarty will be the artist co-ordinating this exciting project. We are looking for fifteen students to get involved in 8 workshops. The workshops will commence on Monday 22nd February and will run for 8 weeks. Classes will start at 4pm sharp until 6pm. Full attendance for each of the workshops is required. If you are interested in taking part in this exciting new venture please fill out the application form below. Places are limited and students will be chosen on the basis of their suitability to the project. Students finished work will be displayed in the new Art Gallery in the canteen.

Student Name:

Tutor Group:

Art Teacher:

Year:

Why do you think you would be suitable for this project?

What previous art experience do you have?

The workshops will take place every Monday from 4pm-6pm starting in Monday 22nd February. Will you be able to **commit to all of these times** as full attendance is crucial to the success of the project?

Do you have any other experience that you feel you could bring to this project?

Would you be interested in pursuing art as a future career?

Parents Signature:

Students Signature:

APPENDIX B: STUDENT EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE ACTIVITY

This activity can be done after every workshop to gather feedback on the students experiences.

End of Workshop survey:

This activity can help foster discussion about how workshops, events and activities have gone on a particular day. You can keep the cards and repeat the activity to see how things evolve in the project. This activity could also be done with facilitators and partners in project delivery.

Time: 15 – 20 mins

Objectives:

- To learn from the group's experiences about how a workshop went
- To facilitate discussion with participants about the activities engaged in that day
- To provide an avenue for participants to articulate ways in which workshops/sessions may be improved

Steps:

1. At the end of the day's sessions, give participants two different colors of post-it notes or cards.
2. Ask them to write what went well during the session on one color and what could have been better on the other color.
3. Explain that the information they give will be used as best as possible to improve subsequent sessions.
4. Please write one idea per card
5. When everyone is done, put up the post it notes under the correct categories on a wall. The facilitator should read the notes out loud, asking for general clarification, should anything be confusing. Start by reading what could have been better and finish with what went well, so the day ends on a good note. No one need admit who wrote what, but the points made can be used as discussion.
6. Thank everyone for their hard work!

Gawler, M. (2005) *Useful Tools for Engaging Young People in Participatory Evaluation*. UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Office.

APPENDIX C: STUDENT ARTS-BASED FOCUS GROUP ACTIVITY

Activity: Historical Timeline

1. Get into groups of 3 or 4
2. Draw a timeline of a period of time of interest to your evaluation. It might be one month, a few months, or a year
3. Write or use pictures to mark down the key moments and dates of your project.
4. Ask the groups to present their timelines and share why they think these moments are so important to the project.
5. Take notes as the group shares.

Materials: glue, newspapers/magazines, large paper, pens, markers, pencils

Objectives: to give an understanding of important moments in a project from the viewpoint of participants or even the project facilitators