

Reflections on the PTI Conference for Art and Music

16-19th November 2012

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Bernice McCabe's Opening Speech:

Mrs McCabe spoke about the two key principles of the PTI: inspiration and empowerment. The conference was to be one run *by* teachers, *for* teachers to reconnect them with their subject. Although the PTI is a non-political charity, Mrs McCabe stated that it would not be appropriate for any government to dictate key education principles; because it has been consistently proven that it is teachers, as the subject specialists, who know best. Mrs McCabe stated her view that Music and Art form essential parts of a rich and balanced curriculum and that every child should be entitled to art and music teaching as part of a rounded and balanced education. It was acknowledged that as a new subject area in the PTI programme there would be a lively and stimulating debate on the issues surrounding the future of Music and art in Schools. Mrs McCabe impressed on delegates the need to form a positive vision and discuss possible solutions to current issues such as the omission of the arts in the EBac. In Mrs McCabe's words 'we need to have a relentless optimism about the future of teaching.'

Conference outline:

Please refer to 1st page of final report.

My reflections as a Stream Designer:

When planning the conference with my fellow stream designer, Lawrence Haigh (Head of Music at North London Collegiate), we agreed that though delegates will have chosen teaching as a means of communicating their commitment to the importance of music, music teachers are also, at heart, performers. Therefore it was important to design a course which enabled teachers to experience innovative ideas and practices in order to inspire delegates with a fresh energy. Teachers were given the opportunity to experience the love of their subject through academic lectures, practical workshops and time to discuss the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of Music teaching. Delegates were also given the opportunity to attend an English Music Concert performed by the London Philharmonic, giving teachers time to reflect on the importance of live music in students' education. Although I was involved in the planning of the conference, I was unaware of the impact this conference would have on me personally. Courses like the PTI are an essential complement to any successful music department if they are to succeed. On their own, exam courses do little to stimulate innovative teaching.

On the issues surrounding the EBac, teachers agreed that making Music a compulsory subject was not a suitable way forward. It was acknowledged however, that the omission of Art or Music in the EBac, by implication, devalued the subject and had a detrimental effect to the way parents and Head teachers viewed them. In some schools Music Teachers are asked to teach GCSE music during lunch times and before school and also find that management are reducing option blocks. This has a direct impact on numbers and the message this sends to pupils is very clear – Music is not an academic or essential part of your education and therefore should be an 'extra' if you have the time to study it.

The conference message was very clear. Music and Art should be an integral part of a child's education. Any education that fails to provide the arts in a full and serious way is depriving children of finding a way to develop a sensitivity, understanding and tolerance towards others. Students also find ways of expressing themselves through a form of creative intelligence which helps them to develop richer lives as adults. The arts necessarily complement the rational methods that form the basis of many other curriculum subjects. *Please see final report page 2.*

I am very proud of the values we hold onto as a school. Music is important and I am committed to ensuring that we maintain these values. As Music Teachers our aim should be to give all children a love of music that will last a life time, whether they are gifted musicians or students who take part because they enjoy singing in a choir or band. Our extra-curricular music programme is wholly inclusive and over a third of students at Davenant belong to a choir or band, way above the national statistic of 14% quoted by Ofsted.

There are ways in which, as a Department we must build on providing opportunities for pupils to access instrumental tuition as pupils should, if they wish to, be entitled to do play a musical instrument. As a Department we must also ensure that pupils are exposed to a wide range of musical styles, including Classical Music and to the great composers of Western Classical Music. The inclusion of 'seed works' at Key Stage 3 will be an area of focus of mine in the future.

I am now a part of the PTI Schools programme, for which I have set objectives to be reviewed in July 2013. Attached is the final report written for the plenary session of the conference.