



Art to Start



working with artists in early years settings



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Art to Start

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Introduction to the concept

DAISI's *Art to Start* is an action research pilot project set up to create opportunity for artists and teachers to explore child centred approaches to creative arts experiences together through provoking, documenting and analysing the creative learning journeys of early years children. The project aims to promote a different approach to the way artists work in schools and other early years settings. Fundamentally this is about the artist working alongside the children, using their skills and experience as a provocation to the children's own interests, then observing and recording their responses. In discussion with a key member of staff, these observations are then analysed and the next step on the journey is planned.

The project aims to promote a different approach to the way artists work in schools and other early years settings.

This approach goes completely against the notion of the artist as provider of product or even as teacher of specific skills (although the skills might well be taught if it was agreed that the inputting of these would further enable a child's learning journey). This also goes against the idea of pre-planning the learning that a class will embark upon. In this model it is not up

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to the artist or teacher to decide what the children will learn, it is up to them to find out what the children want to learn and to provide them with the resources to do so.

The story so far



In 2005 – 06 the first pilot version of *Art to Start* was rolled out. In this initial pilot phase, four artists were resident in four early years settings for six days each. The results of this pilot phase were overwhelmingly successful for artists, teachers and the children involved. Subsequently further funding was sought in



order to carry out an extended and much more ambitious project. The aim was to continue DAISI's exploration into the practicalities of working in this way with larger numbers of settings and for longer periods of time. Two fundamental questions underpinned the second pilot phase of the project: What new challenges would be thrown up by increasing the scale of the project and would the organisation and the project design be equipped to meet them? Would the positive outcomes make a deeper, more sustained impact because of the extended opportunity for contact time between artists and their settings?

The project set up

Funding for the second pilot phase of the project was secured from the Big Lottery Playful Ideas programme during 2007 and with this in place it was decided to run phase two during the academic year 2007 – 08. The new funding allowed for the project to effectively double in size. Eight artists would now be resident in eight settings with twelve days of contact time each, in each setting. Those settings and artists who had taken part in phase one were all given the opportunity to return for phase two. This decision was taken for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was important to reward the loyalty, commitment and hard work of the original participants. Secondly, their experience in the working methodology of *Art to Start* would be a tremendous resource for those who would be starting from scratch. Thirdly, the opportunity to compare and contrast the two experiences would be important in evaluating the effectiveness of the second, more extensive pilot phase. In practice, the idea of being able to meaningfully compare residencies in phase one and two proved to be unworkable. Even where the artist

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worked in a setting for a second time, there were so many other variables that the points of comparison were negligible. They were working with different children and different staff for a different length of time and often in a different space within the setting.

Of the four original artists, two, Catherine and Teresa Grimaldi, were recruited for the second phase. Tommy Casby had left the Devon area and was living in Ireland, while Claire Murray was preparing for a major exhibition and did not have the time to devote to the project.

Teresa Grimaldi (visual artist)	Stoke Hill Pre-School, Exeter
Catherine Grimaldi (visual artist)	Stoke Hill Infant School, Exeter
Hugh Nankivell (musician)	Homelands Primary School, Torbay
Peter Margerum (sculptor)	Tarka Tots Nursery, Sure Start Children's Centre, Bideford
Simon Ripley (print maker)	Ilfracombe Infant and Nursery School
Pip Jones (performing artist)	Heathcoat Primary School, Tiverton
Cara Patterson (illustrator)	Oak Tree Pre-School and Nursery, Ilfracombe
Ali Jones (musician)	Northam St George's C of E Infant and Nursery School, North Devon

Of the four original settings, three, Stoke Hill Infant School (Exeter), Ilfracombe Infant and Nursery School and Heathcoat Primary School (Tiverton) returned for the second phase.

Recruitment of new artists

Artists were recruited for the remaining vacancies. A training day open to all interested parties was run on 24th September 2007. This day aimed to introduce the project and its aims, to report briefly on phase one and to place the project in a national context (see appendix for training day schedule).

Following this day artists were invited to enter an expression of interest and were then interviewed. This process produced a range of different artists from a number of different art forms and with a variety of levels of experience.

The artist and setting partnerships

The matching up of artists and settings was a difficult process based on a number of different factors. There was a desire first of all to match settings with the art forms they had expressed an interest in, although this was not always possible. Secondly there were practical considerations because of the nature of the county of Devon. Four of the settings recruited were in the far North of the county. None of the artists recruited were based in this area, with obvious implications for time, travel and the environmental impact of the project. There was also an awareness that the settings involved in phase two were more diverse than in phase one. Phase one had been made up entirely of early years classes in Primary or Infant schools. In phase two five of the settings were similar. Of the other three, one was a Children's Centre nursery class, one was a private nursery located within a Children's Centre and the third

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was a pre-school. This increased diversity was also a factor in matching artists to settings.

Further training



A second training day to further embed the ethos and methodology of the project was run on October 16th 2007 (see appendix for schedule).

The more ambitious nature of phase two meant that it was inevitably going to be more difficult to keep in touch with each

individual journey through the project and to be able to offer assistance when things became tough. To try to help partners keep in touch with the centre, a blog site was set up to allow participants to communicate with each other and with DAISI, in order to help the organisation keep in touch with developments and to help prevent artists from feeling isolated. An informal system of buddying was also introduced so that each artist and setting were paired with the artist and setting most closely located to them. The hope was that these pairs would share developments but also communicate at times when the process didn't seem to be working, to offer ideas about how to move on if a block seemed to have become impassable.

The increasing size of the project meant that there were far more logistical problems in setting residencies in motion than during phase one. Some of these problems were purely down to the logistics of getting an artist to and from North Devon in time to do a day's work. For this reason one artist, for example, elected to do contact time in two-day blocks and stay overnight to cut down on travel time. For various other reasons, not all the residencies followed the one day per week over a twelve week period contact time that had originally been envisaged, but the likelihood of individual artist and setting needs had been foreseen and the project set up was flexible enough to allow for different models in practice.

The residencies

The residencies took place between November 2007 and April 2008, and all were successfully completed in terms of delivery of sessions.

All of the residencies reported moments of success where the approach yielded an unexpected insight or a breakthrough for an individual child, but some of the journeys were clearly more comfortable than others.

The outcomes from the individual residencies were extremely wide ranging. All of the residencies reported moments of success where the approach yielded an unexpected insight or a breakthrough for an individual child, but some of the journeys were clearly more comfortable than others. What follows is an analysis of some of the factors that contributed to making the process smoother and some of those that presented challenges. This analysis has been kept at the general rather than the individual level in order that it might help inform DAISI's practice in developing and managing a project like this in the future. Each individual residency collected an enormous amount of detailed documentation, recording and analysing children's responses to the work. This was shared at the project's dissemination event on 15th May 2008 (see appendix for programme), and is available to be looked at on request.

Relationships

The relationship between the artist and a key member of the setting staff team is at the heart of the *Art to Start* project. To some extent this relationship is a variable that it is difficult to control. Some pairings found themselves immediately on the same wavelength. In other residencies it sometimes took

longer for pairings to work out and establish their roles and relationship and this had an impact on the development of the work.

The project residencies were at their most effective when the artist and key member of staff felt secure enough in their partnership to take risks.

In some settings, staff issues such as changes or shortages etc. meant that it was difficult for the artist to establish a key contact and this was probably the most serious impediment to the successful development of the residency. Generally speaking it was easier to establish the key contact in school settings, where roles and hierarchies are more clearly defined. The project residencies were at their most effective when the artist and key member of staff felt secure enough in their partnership to take risks. There were a number of factors which contributed to promoting this level of security.

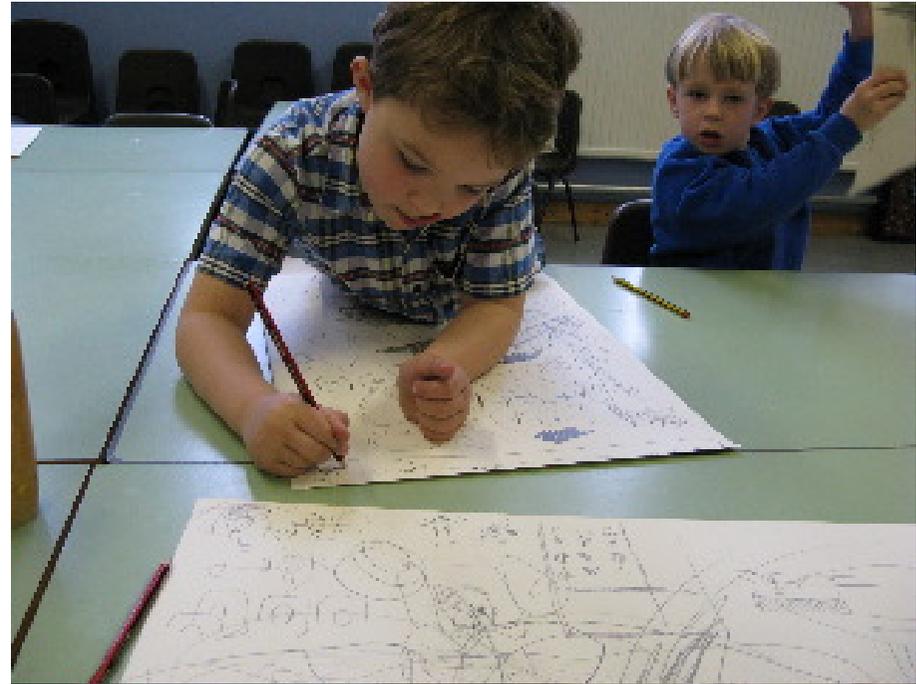
- Confidence in each other's expertise and ability to analyse a session openly
- Personal relationship
- Feeling that the wider setting community and particularly the senior management were behind this spirit of exploration and risk taking
- Knowledge and experience of this way of working
- The prevailing educational culture of the setting

Residencies were most successful in settings which were confident about the way they were already doing things, where this confidence promoted an openness to new approaches to

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learning. Where settings were under pressure, perhaps from outside bodies like OFSTED, or from internal pressures like staff shortages or lack of space, the residencies were likely to face more challenges in coming to a successful conclusion.

The training days run prior to the start of the project provided most, but not all, participants with an adequate introduction to



the approach. In settings where there were staffing issues around work schedules or recruitment etc. it was sometimes difficult to provide the consistency necessary for the artist to work as in depth as they might have liked. It might be that some of the training in future needs to be tailored more to indi-

Sam waited until there was a moment for himself at the piano keyboard.
He went and sat himself in the middle of the piano stool.
This is where he likes it the best.
Sam likes to listen carefully as he plays.
Often he will play a note and then lean his ear towards the keyboard.

“It is a very special world, Sam’s three year old world.”

Corky was underneath the piano and had pushed down the sustain pedal.
Sam played a phrase with both hands – the notes rang out.
He waited a while as it died away.
Then he played another phrase of five notes – all on the same note.
Again he waited the same amount of time.
He played a third phrase with both hands.
He waited.
He played a fourth phrase
He paused.
And finally a fifth phrase.
Corky then depressed the practice pedal and the music became quieter and moved somewhere else.

Listening back to these five phrases, with the sounds of the active nursery in the background, it is a very special world, Sam’s three year old world.



vidual setting needs and perhaps delivered in situ to the wider staff team, to avoid the sense that the project is isolated or misunderstood in the wider setting community.

The project ethos

During phase two of the project the nature of the approach created challenges in a number of settings. These challenges were overcome by each pairing in their own individual way and some of the outcomes were more satisfactory than others. The main obstacle to overcoming challenges produced by the approach was perhaps when the senior management in a setting had not been party to the project training days and therefore did not fully understand or were not in sympathy with the approach. In future work it would be important for DAISI to include an extended opportunity to get to know settings more thoroughly before the project began, to ensure that there was a clear, shared understanding of the project's ethos and pedagogy. This extended opportunity for research around the project's compatibility with settings might help towards preventing misunderstandings later in the process. Such an opportunity would require additional resources during the project research and development phase. It should perhaps also be a requirement for a member of the setting's senior management to attend pre-project training along with the key member of staff, and for that training to devote more time to exploring the challenges presented by the approach, in order that everyone goes into the project with eyes fully open. This is perhaps particularly important in non-school settings where authority is devolved amongst a large staff team and where the manager of the setting is not necessarily present in the room during con-

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tact time. In a school setting the teacher has authority in their own classroom so even if a shared understanding and sympathy for the approach has not yet been achieved in the wider school community, the project can still enjoy its own life within that small corner of the institution.

Communication and explanation of the project and the approach to the wider community in each setting was perhaps



one of the biggest challenges presented by the increased capacity of phase two. If further projects were to be undertaken it would be important to plan in detail how to achieve this in each individual setting to avoid the risk of pairings feeling isolated or

misunderstood within their settings.

The individual art forms

The increased capacity of phase two allowed the project to explore working with different art forms. Music was perhaps the most challenging of these, possibly because it is seen very much as the preserve of the skilled and as such less accessible than something like drawing or storymaking. Also, perhaps because it is inherently noisy, it is a form that is seen to encroach more on others and take up more than its fair share of space in the setting. This tendency to be too loud can also be equated with the fear that a visual art session will become too messy, or in other words will spiral out of the control of the adults who are in it. Each residency found its own way of dealing with these challenges. Again this is a rather inexact science as settings' tolerance levels of noise/mess/unbridled creativity differ widely. Some took the noise and the mess outside or to another designated space. Having the option of being able to do this clearly helped take the pressure off in certain situations where tolerance levels were being approached. With this experience in mind, the availability of alternative spaces is something that should be fully researched and catalogued by DAISI prior to placing artists in a setting in any future project in this field.

Buddying/mentoring

The fledgling buddying system provided some artists with a useful resource to share thoughts and concerns. However, it

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was hampered by logistics and the simple fact that people were working on different days and at different times hindered its effectiveness. In future projects it would be important to develop the buddying system in order to get the best out of it, or to instigate a new system that might offer a more formalised channel of support to artists. Several artists mentioned in feedback that a more hands-on mentoring system would have been helpful to them, although this would obviously have financial implications and would need to be worked into any future funding applications.



The project blog was taken up enthusiastically by some of the artists involved and this provided an important point of contact

with these particular residencies for DAISI staff. No members of setting staff chose to use the blog.



Project duration

Generally speaking the feedback from settings and artists was that the increased amount of time available for the project was

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appropriate and provided opportunities to extend and deepen children's learning journeys. A small number felt that they had only scratched the surface in twelve weeks, while most thought the time was about right. Several expressed the opinion that only at the end of the twelve weeks did they feel fully equipped to start and that they would have loved to go back and start again with all this knowledge and experience safely on board. A number of the projects took some time to bed in and the increased amount of time available allowed these projects to overcome initial challenges and provide a satisfactory outcome for the staff involved, which might not have been the case had the project been curtailed timewise.

The challenges in terms of time were more often presented by the feedback and analysis sessions than by the contact sessions with children. In some settings staffing issues meant there wasn't the necessary time to devote to looking back over documentation and this made it difficult to effectively plan the next stage of the journey. There was a wide range of expertise across the project as a whole in terms of the skills required to analyse records of a session in order to tease out lines of enquiry. Further training might have helped to increase people's confidence in their ability to see the next stage, but again this would have required a more tailored and targeted training programme with obvious implications for project resources.

Impact

Several artists reported that the project had a major impact on the way that they approached their work, both in terms of their work in schools and their own creativity.

“[the project was] more rewarding than I could possibly have imagined.”

One of the musicians, Hugh Nankivell, reported that ‘As a musician and a composer I learnt more through *Art to Start* than in any other educational setting in twenty years.’ Simon Ripley said that the project was ‘More rewarding than I could possibly have imagined. I have never had such a response when working in a school.’

Returning to a more formal product based approach to workshops was a challenge for some and people reported that they had become freer and less didactic in their approach to leading workshops, even if they were still product based. There was a strong sense that artists were inspired by having the time and space to work alongside the spontaneous creativity of young children and that they were able to redirect some of this energy into their own work. All projects had moments where the value of the approach was recognised through an individual moment of unexpected creativity or collaboration.

*“As a musician and a composer I learnt more through *Art to Start* than in any other educational setting in twenty years.”*

Key members of staff also reported in most cases that they had found the impact of the project illuminating. Many had been moved by the effect on particular individuals in their care who were able to respond in previously unseen ways thanks to the approach. Several expressed a desire to modify the way

that they approached their every day teaching in order to allow for children to follow their own interests more freely. There was also an increased sense that the requirements of the curriculum and the early learning goals were covered by this approach in a much less prescriptive and much more creative way. Some staff also reported that working in this way presented them with challenges, both in terms of the organisation of their day and their more normal practice. Issues around time, space, noise etc. arose from time to time in most residencies. In most cases these issues were relatively straightforward to resolve, or to circumvent.

Several expressed a desire to modify the way that they approached their every day teaching in order to allow for children to follow their own interests more freely.

The range of outcomes from phase two of the project was much wider than phase one. The successes were more intense and with a much deeper impact. One residency has produced an application by the individual artist and staff partner to Youth Music for further funding in order to further explore the approach.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes and learning from this second phase of the *Art to Start* project, the following are recommendations that DAISI should consider implementing if a similar project were to be carried out in the future.

1. The process of identifying settings with an interest in taking part should be lengthened and very systematic. Each setting recruited needs to have an active interest in exploring different approaches to working with artists in their setting and to be able to commit to allowing key members of staff non-contact time to work with the artist on analysing the documentation. In order to facilitate this, consideration might be given within the *Art to Start* budget to providing financial assistance to settings to provide some supply cover.
2. Additional resources should be built into the project development phase so that DAISI can take on additional responsibility for sharing the aims and ethos of the project with the wider setting communities. This would further support the artist and setting staff and their actions towards this goal. This might entail DAISI staff running a twilight staff meeting at each setting in order to ensure that the nature of the project is fully understood in the setting before it begins, and with the aim of giving all members of staff an investment in the future success of the residency.
3. Further support and guidance should be provided to help the project to maintain a visibility within the setting. This might take the form of facilitating a meeting with parents to present documentation from the project, or provid-

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ing further staff meetings to deal with questions arising from working in this way.

4. A more formalised system of mentoring for individual artists should be instigated to ensure that artists feel they have somewhere to go when challenges present themselves and to avoid a sense of isolation if circumstances become difficult. Mentors should be appropriately skilled and experienced to be able to provide this extra level of support.
5. Heightened consideration should be given to the logistics of working over such a large area. This might take the form of positively seeking artists from particular geographical areas, or providing further funding to cover accommodation costs and cut down on travel.
6. Serious consideration should be given before the project grows dramatically in size again. The implications in terms of the support demanded by the increased numbers of settings and the increased length of each residency could not have been fully foreseen before this project, but became evident during its life. This increase would need to be factored in to any future funding bid.

Sandra Barefoot and Mike Akers
Art to Start Consultants

DAISI, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Exeter, EX2 7NL
01392 385214 admin@daisi.org.uk

Art to Start Artists in Early Years Settings (0-5)



Art to Start at Maccombe Primary School reception, with artist Claire Murray, March 2008

This training day is for invited artists and settings as well as artists and settings who are already participating in this year's project.

Training Day

Monday 24th September 2007

An open training day for artists, setting staff and other interested education and arts individuals and organisations that will:

- build on the experiences of the Art to Start pilot project
- review current developments in the creativity and the early years debate
- inform about regional, national and international initiatives
- be a chance to network, share ideas
- try out approaches to child centred creative working and documenting.

To book your place on this popular training day, please complete and return the attached form. Places are limited and will be available on a first-come-first-served basis.

DAISI is extremely pleased to have once again engaged Sandra Barefoot and Mike Akers in the role of Project Consultants. Over the past 5 years, Sandra (specialist within Deaf Theatre) and Mike (playwright) have been researching the impact of storytelling, performance, interactive play and documentation in early years settings with children aged 3 to 6 years. At present they are resident artists, mentors and documentors within two nursery settings in Bristol and linked with the renowned 5x5x5 Creativity in the Early Years research programme based in BANES. Sandra and Mike, with the help of keynote speakers including Sally Jaekle, Regional Early Years Adviser, Creativity, setting staff and artists will lead the training day.



Art to Start Artists in Early Years Settings (0-5)

TRAINING DAY OUTLINE for 24th September 2007

Training day to be led by Sandra Barefoot and Mike Akers, *Art to Start* Research and Project Development Consultants

10.00 am	Tea, coffee, biscuits	12.30 pm:	Small group discussions: Sharing ideas and thoughts about different art forms and provocations
10.15am	Introductions: Brief background information about DAISI and the development of <i>Art to Start</i> Brief outline of Sandra and Mike's backgrounds and developments in their Early Years practice/research	12.50 pm	Reflections
10.25 am	Presentations: (15 mins each) Sally Jaeckle: Regional Early Years Advisor; presenting regional perspective on developments in creativity Introducing 5x5x5 in context: brief overview (Sandra - 5 mins) Lyndsey Fuller: Lead Teacher of Footprints Children's Centre, Bristol: Reggio Emilia Case Study Artist from <i>Art to Start</i> pilot programme 2006-07 presents case study	1.00 pm	LUNCH
11.30 am	Tea, Coffee - discussions	1.45 pm	Presentation: Sandra and Mike to present project undertaken with Sarah Moody: The composer within the 3 year old child - Oliver
11.45 am	Starting points: Looking at provocations and beginnings Activity: Mapping	2.00 pm:	Documentation discussed: methods, making learning visible, impact
12.15 pm	Responses and viewing	2.15 pm	Practical activity: PLAY: documentation in practice
		3.15pm	Reflections
		3.30pm	Close
<p>DAISI (Devon Arts in Schools Initiative) aims to develop the creativity of young people by enriching their experience of the arts and works closely with teachers, governors and artists to strengthen the relationship between the arts and education sectors. For further information contact us on 01392 385214</p>			





Art to Start
Artists in Early Years Settings (0-5)

TRAINING DAY OUTLINE for 16 October 2007: at CCANW

Training day to be led by Sandra Barefoot and Mike Akers, Art to Start Research and Project Development Consultants

- 10.00 am Meet and Greet
- 10.15am Activity 1:
Teachers and Artists to break into separate groups and show 'perceived representations of each others roles'
- 11.00am Getting to know your setting/buddy setting and artists
Artists to share and illustrate with examples their process of working
Teachers to share their process of working
(coffee/tea given out whilst this takes place)
- 11.30am Reflection/recording key points of difference and similarities in processes
- 11.45am Activity 2: Provocations and enquiry
The Forest..... explore, find and create a place in the woods where children will be invited to explore their interests
'What interests you? How can you manipulate the environment to invite enquiry?'
- 12.45pm Observe each place and share thoughts
- 1.15pm Lunch**
- 2.00pm Documentation: exploring the language of documentation
- 2.15pm Break into small groups to analyse examples and discuss
- 2.30pm Reflection/issues raised and discussed
- 2.50pm Children's interests ... an example (Mike)
- 3.00pm Settings/artists ... beginnings... ideas.. starting points!
- 3.30pm The process of the project discussed
- 4.00pm Close

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**Art to Start
Artists in Early Years Settings (0-5)**

Interim Sharing Day Agenda: Thursday 7th February 2008



Art to Start at Ilfracombe Primary School, reception, with artist Claire Murray, March 2006

- 10.30 – 11.00: Arrival, coffee and feedback forms
- 11.00 – 11.30: Practical activity, mapping the journey of your project so far
- 11.30 – 12.15: Feedback from activity so far
- 12.15 – 1.00: Lunch *(please bring your own 'main course' i.e. sandwiches etc. DAISI will provide the 'extras' such as fruit, juice, crisps etc.)*
- 1.00 – 1.30: Discussion groups:
*What has been the impact on children?
What has been the impact on adults?
What have been the challenges & successes of the teacher/artist collaboration?*
- 1.30 – 1.40: Feedback main points from the discussion to the whole group
- 1.40 – 2.40: Practical documentation activity: focussing documentation
- 2.40 – 3.00: Coffee & biscuits
- 3.00 – 3.30: 'Open Space' activity – 5 challenging questions
- 3.30 – 3.45: Issues arising from these questions and from the day generally
- 3.45 – 4.00: Housekeeping about the project report & dissemination event
- 4.00 : Close

Please confirm your attendance to DAISI
Tel: 01392 385 214 email: admin@daisi.org.uk

Art to Start Artists in Early Years Settings (0-5)



Art to Start, Bosford Sure Start Centre and Tarka Tots Nursery, with artist Peter Margerum

Dissemination Event Invitation

15 May 2008, 4-7pm
Belmont Chapel, Exeter

DAISI's early years project, *Art to Start*, funded by the Big Lottery's Playful Ideas has enabled under 5s in 8 of Devon's early years settings to experience new creative play opportunities. Local professional artists have been working closely with DAISI and the children's play leaders and teachers to frame stimulating environments in which they have followed the children's lead. A childhood chance to explore, experiment and discover alongside creative practitioners has been the name of the game!

For the wider setting community an opportunity to build skills and confidence to embed in future work, and to find out how playing and learning intertwine in the child's own creative journey. This project follows our DAISI Art to Start pilot project in 2005/06 which showed strong evidence of the positive impact of artist interaction with under 5s across a range of learning and social outcomes.

The dissemination event will be your opportunity to meet the participating artists and setting staff, hear about their learning experiences within the project and take part in discussion led by Sandra Barefoot and Mike Akers, *Art to Start* Project Consultants.

For further information or to request a booking form Tel: 01392 385 214 or email: admin@daisi.org.uk

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Art to Start Artists in Early Years Settings (0-5)

Dissemination Event outline 15 May 2008: Belmont Church, Exeter

4 – 4.30pm	Arrival and viewing displays / materials
4.30 – 4.40pm	Introduction: Liz Hill, Director, DAISI
4.40 – 5.00pm	Homelands Primary School gives formal presentation & questions
5.00 – 5.20pm	Ilfracombe Infant and Nursery School gives formal presentation & questions
5.25 – 5.45pm	Informal presentations 20 minutes for settings Stoke Hill Pre-School & Heathcoat Primary School in two spaces
5.50 – 6.10pm	Informal presentations 20 minutes for settings St George's C of E Infant & Nursery School & Bideford Tarka Tots in two spaces
6.15 – 6.35pm	Ilfracombe Oak Tree Pre-school formal presentation, Stoke Hill Infant School informal presentation
6.30 – 7.00pm	Further questions and close

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