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The subject of this evaluation is **TALES**, a storytelling project for 10 year-olds, commissioned by *axis: Ballymun*, Dublin. During the project, professional tellers develop story skills with pupils over six weeks. The process was evaluated using questionnaires and interviews with storytellers, teachers and pupils the evaluation measures and explores the impact of the project on learning. Pupils learning improved significantly on a range of curricular, personal, social, artistic, cultural, lifelong learning and decision-making domains.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION



Figure 1. A pupil telling a story at the axis: Ballymun celebration.

*"If you want your children to be intelligent, tell them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, tell them more fairy tales. When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than any talent for abstract, positive thinking."*

- Albert Einstein

*"Every child should have access to quality play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood."*

- Irish Government. *Towards 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006 – 2015*

## 1.1 Origin

TALES was first planned and devised in 2007 by axis: Ballymun<sup>1</sup> in association with Aideen Mc Bride, a local storyteller and primary school teacher.<sup>2</sup> She had introduced storytelling within her own classroom and saw the benefits to the pupils first hand. After a period of research and development TALES was born, with thanks to funding from Dublin City Council Arts Office and involving two storytelling artists, Aideen McBride and Jack Lynch.

## 1.2 Structure

Over twelve hundred people have participated in the project since 2007, based on the TALES evaluation in 2009. One class from each of 7 primary schools in Ballymun is involved each year. All workshop sessions have taken place in the classroom for one hour each week for six weeks.

In TALES, pupils experience good practice in telling stories and then are supported to tell a story of their own. The class vote on which stories should represent them. Finally the chosen story is told at a Storytelling festival in axis: Ballymun where all participating schools, including parents and families listen to each other's stories. The value of this is that children see their work being affirmed by significant non-school guardians and friends. The teachers see a focus for the work that visibly supports the curriculum objectives. Management of the process from beginning to end is through axis: Ballymun.

The storytelling day in axis: Ballymun is evidence of how TALES opens the gates in combatting, as Zipes says the "cultural and political conditions of homogeneity, conformity, and planned cretinization of our young" (Zipes 2004, p. 34). TALES is an opportunity to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.axis-ballymun.ie/>

<sup>2</sup> Axis develops over 17 arts-in-education interventions, sustainability is a key feature. See [http://www.axis-ballymun.ie/secure/central/page/Arts\\_Development/Default.241.html](http://www.axis-ballymun.ie/secure/central/page/Arts_Development/Default.241.html)

reverse the flow of energy, from one that persuades children to passively consume culture to become agents of culture where children are made aware that they too can create culture, moreover that it is their right *as citizens*, with the consequence of acquiring the very qualities , confidence, memory, detail, performance and endurance which all involved in education would wish to see.

This storytelling project is coherent with government policy as stated “The top priority...in terms of arts spending is for spending targeted at children and young people”<sup>3</sup>

### 1.3 Arts Education Versus Arts-in-Education

TALES is an arts intervention. The definition used here is that identified by the Irish Government’s Arts and Education alignment Report (2008)<sup>4</sup> which defines *Arts education* being what the teacher normally teaches on the class room , whereas *arts-in- education* being where a visiting artist to a class partners with the class teacher.<sup>5</sup> As such it might be called applied storytelling; a cousin of Boal’s applied theatre<sup>6</sup> whose aim is cultural and social enrichment.

This project does not claim to be able to radically change a community overnight and is aware that other opportunities for children’s voices need to be heard in the community. However, storytelling can bridge the community of home with that of school. If schools develop a pupils’ sense that they have a right to a personal story within the collective, that pupil may be more likely to achieve success in the school system.

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<sup>3</sup> The Public and the Arts (2006) Government of Ireland.

<http://www.amateo.info/pages/pdf/The%20Public%20and%20the%20arts%202006.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Available on line at [http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/Arts\\_education\\_en\\_08.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/Arts_education_en_08.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> “Arts-in-education practice involves skilled, professional artists of all disciplines working for and with schools in the making, receiving and interpreting of a wide range of arts experiences.” [www.artscouncil.ie/research/Arts\\_education\\_en\\_08](http://www.artscouncil.ie/research/Arts_education_en_08)

<sup>6</sup> Augusto Boal has written extensively about how interactive methods may be used to develop consciousness in people. Once such qualities are realised he argues, the citizen can begin to develop his own cultural identity and sense of power.

A key value of TALES is that the child is the heart of the storytelling process. It would be a value that each child and every child should participate at the level where they can learn and achieve. Agency is at the heart of this process. Through storytelling it is hoped to attract children in to the learning space and have them *choose* to stay there. The challenge is to find out what it is that this child finds important for them. If a child identifies that they even have a question to ask. Such an action may motivate a child to further engagement in the learning process. After participation in TALES the hope is that a child is now on a journey of discovery with implications for teaching, learning and schools that can only benefit each party to the child's learning process.

Augusto Boal speaks of pedagogy being "*transitive, if not, it is not pedagogy*" - in other words in relation to TALES stories are not talked about, stories are told. TALES is an act of creation of one's own tale rather than interpretation of another's.

#### **1.4 Challenges and Opportunities within TALES**

Having two adults in the class brings up questions of responsibility and leadership. Some of the formality of the teacher role is transferred to the storyteller by children—simply by dint of the school setting; this formality may have implications that are positive, in that the storyteller can do what s/he cannot normally do—build a mentoring relationship with the children, based on the art form and the pupils' apprentice role. Classroom etiquette produces a different effect to a theatre; the teacher ascribes power as a visitor to the storyteller, much as mother might ask a child to talk with a visitor in the family parlour. The impact of the experience may be enriched if each person affirms the other's role. The story teller in the end needs teacher cooperation to work in this space. This is not quite the same as a theatre- where access is a free choice, dependent on desire and availability of

money. The Arts and Education Alignment Report seems to support such partnerships and speaks of *“the alignment of the imperatives of the curriculum with the distinctive nature of arts experiences ...there is too, the critical alignment of two professions: the teacher and the artist.”*<sup>7</sup> TALES embodies this approach- a partnership based on the strengths of each profession.

Arguably this artist-teacher partnership can be achieved by a combination of structure and spontaneity which allows for the best of both approaches to operate symbiotically. Such structure needs to be open, flexible and dynamic – revealing the real questions that the children have, rather than giving answers they care little about. Such an experience is valuable in terms of pupils’ aesthetic and pedagogical learning. To do this one needs above all to be clear as to what the key objectives are. These need to be behavioural, achievable and observable. Without this one cannot say truly whether change has reliably occurred. It is suggested that the best way to achieve such change is by involving storytellers and teachers -in partnership- with the process of setting objectives in the first place.

### **1.5 Overall Aims of TALES Programme**

- Develop links between the schools and axis: Ballymun
- Stimulate awareness of storytelling as an art form in the classroom
- Develop communication skills of each pupil
- Link to the school curriculum (NCCA 1999) and the teacher’s professional development

### **1.6 Aims of the Evaluation**

The TALES Project evaluation questions seek to determine the value of the planning and implementation of TALES.

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<sup>7</sup> Points of Alignment Report (2008).

The aims below are a guide to finding useful information that will be fed back into the project development. Such aims are flexible enough to allow input from each key stakeholder and structured enough to hold each person in the process and provide markers for measuring success.

1. Provide a reference point for decision making by the artistic management team.
2. Examine the relationship between the values and practice of the project.
3. Assess the impact of the project on key stakeholders.
4. Provide a view of the strengths and challenges.
5. Recommendations for the future development.

#### ***1.6.1 Implementation questions emerging from aims***

These *aims* have been broken down into *domains* to facilitate focussed discussion. The implementation questions emerging from these aims can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation aims, domains and implementation questions.

<b>Axis Aims</b>	<b>Evaluation Domains</b>
Develop links between the schools and axis: Ballymun.	Community
Stimulate awareness of storytelling as an art form in the classroom	Arts heritage
Develop communication skills of each pupil.	Self-esteem and Empathy
<b>Implementation Questions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In what ways does the storytelling experience of TALES impact on the key stakeholders over the domains identified?</li> <li>- What explicit <i>difference</i> did TALES make to key stake holders?</li> <li>- How is this model working? What are its strengths, weaknesses, lacks and gaps? Where are its tensions?</li> <li>- If doing TALES again, what would be done differently?<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>	

TALES meets the criteria of the Dublin County Council Arts office, which are broad in nature. However, to validate TALES we need to know the impact of the project itself on its key stakeholders.<sup>9</sup> As the Dublin County council criteria identify and describe the broader strategies and management issues, it is felt necessary to also have criteria that reflect and

<sup>8</sup> Supplementary questions used in interviews with teachers include:

1. How can the project best engage children and teachers?
2. How can the project achieve parity and equity in implementation?
3. How will the project reflect and include the range of diversity in classrooms?
4. Which domains need more support and strengthening for focus and sustainability?
5. Are key stakeholders clear about the nature, purposes and value of the project?
6. Where is the balance between art and education in the TALES project?
7. How will we know the project is developing the practise of self-esteem and inclusion, as well as the value?
8. How will we know whether the impact of the project affects children's participation in democracy?
9. How are the children developing as independent storytellers?
10. Does storytelling contribute to pupils' curriculum skills, including literacy?

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.dublincity.ie/RECREATIONANDCULTURE/ARTSOFFICE/ARTSFUNDING/Pages/ArtsFunding.aspx>

relate to the theoretical ideas behind the project itself. Without such detail one may be less able to make useful policy and implementation decisions in future. Some form of reliable verification is necessary provide reasonably accurate data.

In particular the Dublin County Council Strategic criteria indicate why the need for evaluation at this stage may be opportune, as *“one of the conditions of funding of TALES 2012 is that we offer it to schools in areas surrounding Ballymun ...We would like to make it ... possible to expand the project, without losing its core”*<sup>10</sup> A key purpose then is to evaluate TALES, with an intention of identifying its core values and practices.

### **1.7 Focus**

The primary focus of this evaluation will examine the preparation and implementation phases of TALES. Critically, this will take place from *inside* the project subjectively as opposed to external object assessment. The subjective opinions of participants will inform much of the evaluation. The evaluation seeks to honour the intentions of the TALES programme and also the potential and inherent richness of its impact. Aims, objectives, questions, discussion and analysis will be viewed through these domains. This should sharpen the focus on the evaluation’s preparation, implementation, discussion and findings of TALES.

The domains chosen have the flexibility to link meaningfully the ideas that support such a project. There follows a brief description of the domains which are divided into two strands, (a) Personal /social and (b) Cultural /political.

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<sup>10</sup> Niamh Fitzpatrick –TALES Programme Officer of axis:Ballymun- Questionnaire response to Q.6

### 1.7.1 Strand A: Personal/social domains



Figure 2. Child telling story to peers.

#### 1.7.1.1 Self-esteem

This phenomenon has been used to support changes in curriculum over the past twenty years (Reasoner<sup>11</sup>; Mosely<sup>12</sup>). There is much research that measures its effect on motivation, inclusion, and academic achievement. It is a necessary element of any teaching enterprise. If the conditions of relationship are present then the child is more likely to learn and achieve [Hefferon 2000<sup>13</sup>].

#### 1.7.1.2 Empathy

Empathy leads to mutuality of feeling and widening of perspective especially in matters of social tension. Without empathy a fair and more tension free society may not be possible. With it, much is socially possible, especially in collaborative endeavours, such as team work, management and corporate planning, all necessary skills of the workplace. This *othering* value of self-esteem activities has implications for inclusion. Recognising the other as

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Building Self-Esteem in Elementary Schools, Administrators Guide. <http://www.selfesteem.org/menu/aboutus/advisory/robert-reasoner.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.circle-time.co.uk/site/research/56>

<sup>13</sup> Hefferon C. (2000) Process Drama - its Effect on Self-Esteem & Inclusion of Primary Fifth Class Boys and Girls. M.Ed. Thesis (DCU).

*opportunity* for pupils, rather than *threat* may have far reaching consequences which relate directly to the domain under discussion here.

Belonging and inclusion are integrated with empathy. Reasoner speaks helpfully of the five pillars of self- esteem<sup>14</sup> that are dynamic and inter-relational. These can help to structure a sessions with pupils as human beings at the heart, as opposed to what Freire calls “*empty vessels*” to be filled with decontextualized knowledge. Polanyi speaks of the fact that “*there is no true text without context*”<sup>15</sup>. TALES has the potential to provide such personal and social context.

### **1.7.2 Strand B: Cultural-political**

#### **1.7.2.1 Community**

Communities have the potential to form a child’s ability to make decisions. Two communities are important in the life of a pupil. Their home and school. How they act in these situations can be a marker for their future. Capacity for decision making is enhanced by practise. Such practise is available through the conscious use of potential for decision making that the TALES process offers.

Parental support can be a predictor of educational success. The inclusion of a family celebration of TALES is evidence of parental involvement which is seen as important in developing sustainable literacy levels. (NESF p.26<sup>16</sup>)

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<sup>14</sup> Security, identity, belonging, purpose and confidence. The value of Responsibility is added to balance the potential for egotistic self-realisation. See <http://www.self-esteem-nase.org/what.php>

<sup>15</sup> Rohr, R., Ebert, A. (2011) *The Enneagram a Christian perspective*. New York. Crossroad. p. xviii.

<sup>16</sup> National Economic and Social Forum (2009) *Child Literacy and Social Inclusion: Implementation Issues*. Report 39. Nov.2009.

The idea of choosing what one wants to learn in a particular area is progressive for some. Moreover, choice and responsibility are cornerstones of the EU Memorandum for Lifelong Learning. There is evidence that children who are involved in outside school activities become more active in community when they get older. Many voluntary clubs and societies for young people operate in Ballymun offering opportunities for democratic involvement.

Community involvement in literacy is also a key factor as children's literacy can slip back if not consistent, as there may be gaps between school and community influences. Cregan (2008)<sup>17</sup> speaks of children needing explicit support in acquiring the "literate style language" required in school. Storytelling has the capacity to bridge the literate language and street language which allows freedom of passage between the complementary language registers of both. Tales can promote this whilst also facilitating "partnership between the educational and community stakeholders" which is essential for success (NESF 2009 Recommendations p. xxiv).

#### *1.7.2.2 Learning*

There are two areas of learning that are foregrounded in TALES. One area is individual cognitive skills such as memory retention, retrieval and narration, or intra-personal intelligence (Gardner 1985)<sup>18</sup>. The other is affective, i.e. co-operation and collaboration or as Gardner (1985) would say, interpersonal intelligence. To encourage positive social behaviour, empathy and mutuality it is necessary to have these as a building block.

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<sup>17</sup> Cregan, A. (2008) From Difference to Disadvantage: "Talking Posh": Sociological perspectives on the Context of Schooling in Ireland. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

<sup>18</sup> Gardner, H. (1985) Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligences. New York : Basic Books,

For investment in children's education TALES fulfils the indicators of the EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2006)<sup>19</sup> Social skills such as self-confidence, self-direction and risk-taking are also increasingly important, because people are *“expected to be able to behave much more autonomously than in the past.* (p.11). Also that the responsibility of the system is to help the child in *“Learning how to learn, to adapt to change and to make sense of vast information flows are now generic skills that everyone should acquire”* (p.11). However, this may have implications for teachers and teaching in that *“Enabling individuals to become active learners implies both improving existing practices and developing new and varied approaches to take advantage of the opportunities offered by ICT and by the full range of learning contexts.”* (p.13) Storytelling may be one such context which has value for this type of approach. The memorandum continues *“We still know and share too little, for example, about how to generate productive self-directed learning, whilst remembering that learning is ultimately a social process”* (author's underline, p.14).

That storytelling is a social process is not contested. However this approach has implications and consequences for teachers and others who work in education. *“Teaching as a professional role faces decisive change in the coming decades: teachers and trainers become guides, mentors and mediators (author's underline).* Their role – and it is a crucially important one – is to help and support learners who, as far as possible, take charge of their own learning. (p.14).

If children are to take charge of their learning, opportunities such as TALES are ideal situations for learning without a high risk. So if the approaches and methods are to change

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<sup>19</sup> A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. EU.Reference: <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/MemorandumEng.pdf>

then the motivation which educators seeks to instil may available through the storytelling, if it is mediated in a way and *with focus* on these talents and capacities. This has implications for planning and training of storytellers, but the result for all is realisable. *“Active learning presupposes the motivation to learn, the capacity to exercise critical judgement and the skill of knowing how to learn. The irreplaceable heart of the teaching role lies in nurturing precisely these human capacities to create and use knowledge.”*<sup>20</sup>

In TALES, curricular learning is clearly evident especially in Oracy, Literacy, History, R.E. and SPHE. Such learning emerges *from* and is also located *within* the storytelling experience. The importance of using TALES as a cross-curricular frame is absolutely crucial. Such a frame allows children to make links between learning and become the meta-learners, learning how to learn, as the EU memorandum promotes.

### 1.7.2.3 Literacy

DES defines literacy as the integration of reading, writing, speaking and listening (DES 2005a. p34). Storytelling seems well placed to fill each of these roles, as the preparation for the telling in TALES normally includes all four modes.

The storyteller is not just using the senses and expressive element of their make-up they are also using the cognitive. The whole body is involved. The value is that the skills are embodied and the learning is made more significant because more than the head is involved in pupils learning, the whole body, heart, mind and soul.

Cognitive and aesthetic learnings might suggest a binary approach, where equal value is given to the roles of Teacher and Artist. Dichotomies of identity and responsibility

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<sup>20</sup> A Memorandum on Lifelong learning.EU .Reference: <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/MemorandumEng.pdf>

melt within facilitative frameworks, as the holistic nature of the experience is held within this facilitative storytelling frame.

NESF (p.17) states that a person being familiar with and *“able to use oral language ...is a developmental precursor to school based literacy learning”* (DK Dickenson & Sprague, 2002). This type of oral literacy is called ‘oracy’ in the NESF report. However we need to be aware as well of Zipes plea to avoid settling for functional literacy, which would negate many of the gains that storytelling provides, due to the lack of nuance, significance and deeper meaning that telling a story to one’s peers provides. If Storytelling were to be defined as *embodied literacy* it may help clarify the role of oracy in the development of literacy.

NESF (p. 24) also affirms the *“key role of oral language in supporting reading”*. Clearly there are opportunities in TALES to provide such a context. A block to literacy in the past may have been the *“lack of validation of learning styles of all learners”*. Oral telling is one style of showing one’s learning; along with discourse practise it surely suggests the adoption of a more nuanced understanding and evaluation of critical texts.

<sup>21</sup>Active literacy promotes active citizenship, which is a key domain of this project, in which pupils are offered opportunities to participate in a process and event that seeks to develop cultural, social and political and economic participation. But where does one start? If we accept, as Kofi Annan states, that *“literacy opens the door to democratic participation*

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<sup>21</sup> A further personal and social impact of active Literacy is psychological wellbeing and self-respect, happiness, identity and decision making. Economic well-being, financial support, productivity, wealth physical wellbeing: health, nutrition, safety. Social well-being: relations, friendship, empathy, civic involvement, democratic empowerment, (Hartley and Horne, 2004; Maxwell & Teplova, 2007).

*and active citizenship.*"<sup>22</sup> then a good place to start would be where children are at. If a child is unwilling to speak they may be less likely to see the value of reading, so to be orate and literate in storytelling is a large step in the right direction.

#### *1.7.2.4 Citizenship*

In western terms, active citizenship is closely connected with democracy. To develop democratic institutions, participation is mandatory. The citizen will be more likely to participate in responsibility for democratic institutions if the other domains of TALES project are significant in their life. The idea of choice in what one learns and engages with, is central to self-directed learning of an active citizen. The project has an opportunity to develop the *citizen storyteller*, telling his and his community's own story.

The sheer simplicity of storytelling may have led it to being somewhat overlooked as a mode for change, but its effect is manifold both within the learner and those who listen to the stories being told.

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<sup>22</sup> (National Social and Economic Forum, 2009) P.17.

## 2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

### 2.1 Research Methods

The research design consisted of a hybrid of qualitative and quantitative approaches as recommended by Guba and Lincoln<sup>23</sup>. In relation to the evaluation of the storytellers, both artists were observed in action with the children of two schools for the whole process. Both artist-storytellers were interviewed in open question style for 45 minutes each.

In relation to the pupils response to the storytelling, a short form questionnaire was used which focussed on the domains mentioned in previous section. Pupils filled out post-project evaluations of their experience. The questionnaire language was adjusted to reflect the reading age of the children.

In relation to teachers' responses, a mix of focus groups and interviews was used as well as long and short form questionnaires about the project, as it was felt that teachers had a particularly rich view of the storytelling process. Teachers also assessed the impact of the project on curricular English and curricular Drama in particular speaking, listening and analysis objectives. Four of the seven teachers were interviewed at length in open non-directed sessions. The purpose of this was not to predict or skew teachers' perceptions.

Administration staff of axis: Ballymun answered short questionnaires about the aims of the project from their point of view. These were incorporated into the evaluation<sup>24</sup>

The evaluator acknowledges that his own perceptions may have coloured response to situations and that bias may indeed be present. However as this is a subjective response

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<sup>23</sup> Lincoln, Y.S., Guba E.G., (1985) Naturalistic inquiry. Beverly Hills, California. Sage Publications.

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix

to a subjective process, like any arts process, he has attempted to keep to parameters laid out in the earlier sections including the domains in order to focus and clarify the process.

All of the questionnaires and requests for permission were administered without the researcher being present. Copies of which are in the appendix section.

## **2.2 Ethics**

Permission slips were got from parents of children<sup>25</sup>. These were created by axis: Ballymun and administered by the teachers of the classes in question.

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<sup>25</sup> See Appendix

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Pupil Questionnaires

It is important to state that as the questionnaires had some open questions that these sections will reveal trends of preference rather than specific outcomes. However it is felt that these trends may be significant because they are self-selected as opposed to researcher suggested. In effect this was the respondent's own prioritised judgement.

The relationship with home is a key indicator to children's school success in particular parental involvement in children's' education. Where there is no dichotomy between children's experience and parental values then that child is deemed more likely to succeed in school.

In the case of pupils involved in TALES who responded to questionnaires 56% stated that parents were not involved whereas 24% of pupils stated that their parents did attend. Whilst a number of the respondents naturally expressed some nervousness at having parents present, the response was uniformly positive with those who did. The most common feeling that pupils expressed was that it made them happy. Other words used included

*It gave me confidence...*

*Cool - I liked it!*

*It encouriged me.*

*It made me proud.*

*It made me feel special.*

*Fantastic.*

*It made me proud of myself.*

*It made me feel brave.*

*It relaxed me*

For those whose parents did not attend the comments included that it made those pupils feel “*sad*” and “*a little dissapinted*”. It is noteworthy that more comments came from pupils whose parents did attend, indicating a confidence which the parent non attendees did not appear to exhibit. Clearly the value of parental attendance is an issue for children, and it appears that they do not express this unless their parents actually attend. It may be too high focus for pupils to appear to judge their parents due to absence. The correlation between those whose parents attended the axis: Ballymun celebrations and those pupils who preferred telling stories as opposed to listening were roughly half and half. There was not clear correlation between a parent attending and their child expressing a sense of preferring to tell rather than listen. The value of this is to recognise that when one is setting up such a programme to acknowledge that without a listener that a story is not heard. So that listening skills as well as telling skills might be focus of learning in the process. The notion of listening being passive as opposed to the telling being active is negated by comments which also affirm community among the respondents. Many children said that they enjoyed hearing their friends’ stories; the effect was dynamic and active, as was the listening. Such a dialectic approach is necessary for a healthy community where each individual has a need to

speak, listen and be heard actively. If one is not heard by one's parents and neighbourhood, it indicates that the school listening sessions are of importance, given the lower figures for parental turnout to the axis: Ballymun celebrations. Six pupils expressed "*going to the axis: Ballymun*" as being the Best thing about tales. As this was a superlative and self-prioritised statement it indicates that the celebration is certainly a high value for some pupils.

### **3.1.1 School community**

Of the  $n=66$  who responded to the questions as to whether pupils felt more included after TALES the response was very positive. There were 70% positive responses and 30% negative. The negative responses were tempered by nearly fifty per cent of pupils who stated that they "*already belong*". This is a credit to the work being done in schools around inclusion and one which TALES both benefits from and contributes to, though it is not the sole cause of such inclusion. Positive affirmation came in the shape of comments such as

*If I had to pick some class, I'd pick this.*

*No, I already belong...*

*You feel connected by stories...*

Perhaps this situation may be due to familiarity as pupils in the main were fifth class (11 years old) and had been together for 6-7 years. The experience of one person who did not feel included may focus future versions of the programme. His comment as to whether he felt included was ...

*No, because I am from another country.*

If there is even one child who feels in this way, can we say that the programme is inclusive? Perhaps it is an anomaly but there may be grounds for considering the value of inclusion and diversity over assimilation and similarity. As Ireland has a historic storytelling tradition, can it be flexible enough to hold world stories without harm to its own identity? Would the inclusion of a story from the country of the respondent above have created more inclusion or less? This is a question for the team of TALES in the interest of equity and validation of other cultures.

### ***3.1.2 Belonging to the neighbourhood community***

Community is based on many things including shared interests. The public ritual of the shared experience of storytelling can consolidate such interests in a positive way, underlining shared values as well as shared interests. This positive spin on community was sensed by the pupils.

In response to the statement *“I belong to Ballymun more after TALES”*, pupils were overwhelmingly positive about their neighbourhood. Of the responses 81% voted yes whereas 19% voted no or that they felt the same, as they affirmed that they were already part of Ballymun. A typical comment being *“I was born here”*.

Typical comments included:

*Yes, it felt like we were part of a community*

*Lots of schools were there so you got a connect*

*I was telling my story in front of people from Ballymun*

*Now, I want to read Ballymun books.*

The idea that one is consciously, rather than unconsciously, a member of the community can lead to positive spinoffs as the more one is invested in the culture of a community the more one is likely to want to maintain it. This may have implications and consequences for democratic participation.



Figure 3. Quote by Maria Montessori

Linked to the indicator of self-esteem is the *Best* thing and *Worst* thing about tales. The idea behind that question was to get at the pupils best feeling, idea or activity that made them want to repeat the process again or on the other hand the worst which would militate against repetition at all. It was necessary to get this information in a focussed and easily interpreted manner. Hence the use of simple superlatives like best and worst to focus and deliver the clearest answers.

The highest value expressed about TALES was the activity of listening to others tell stories, (25%) both the Artist storyteller and their class mates although 8% responded that the repetition was irritating. Telling stories (17%), to which is added sharing (4%) and the

celebration at the axis: Ballymun (12%) as a significant support for telling and listening. However it is clear from these figures that the pupils prefer the listening to the telling. The reasons are not complex, they enjoyed the storytellers art and also they enjoyed listening to their classmates tell stories. There was a sense that listening was not passive activity, that the ritual of shared storytelling may have been a shifting in the balance of teacher pupil relationship in who gets to tell the stories. As with children's play, pupils will gravitate to the powerful role- in this case the powerful role being the storyteller.

In terms of qualities that pupils enjoyed in the stories that they had heard, they enjoyed stories that were funny (13%) imaginative (12%) as well as creative and scary. The notion of a comic tale has a value for pupils; perhaps this is something to concentrate on, in order to balance may be the tendency to relate horror stories that children have at this age if left unstructured. It seems that the child may not be able to deal with the freedom and so gravitates towards impressing their listeners as opposed to telling a story that has a meaning beyond shock and horror. The implications of the storyteller artist may be to scaffold pupil's stories though giving a beginning and ending and asking pupils to come up with the missing piece. This short and small step may be appropriate to their age and stage of learning.

The worst thing that pupils cited in their response was by far the fact that the project ended (32%). The indication is that they wanted it to continue without a doubt. The next worst thing what happened for pupils was that they did not all get to the axis: Ballymun performance (18%) as storytellers. The idea of performance was scary for some but clearly others wanted participation on the big stage. However (12%) said that performing in front of their parents was the worst thing and conflated with those who were nervous this figure

was significant at 18%. There is a tension evident here in that a large minority of respondents want to perform and others who are nervous about it. However this doesn't follow that they do not *want* to perform. But if we accept that performance in axis: Ballymun is either desirable or scary for 35% then perhaps another layer of performance before axis: Ballymun might be desirable. A hosting by one school of another's work might be a way of providing the platform for telling in front of an outside audience before the big night, giving a sense of the bigger arena, without the problems associated with large numbers having to be seen on stage. It foregrounds the question as to what role axis: Ballymun should be taking in relation to the celebration. Should it be part of something bigger which includes workshops with storytellers with the stories forming part, though not all, of the celebration?

Some pupils found the waiting and repetition hard (12%) whilst 6 % asked for more actions to be part of the storytelling. This brings a philosophical question into the frame, as to the nature of storytelling. Is it a still activity where images are created in the mind of the listeners by words alone or is it a communion of words and actions on behalf of the storyteller, where the children both see and hear the story. Howard Gardner (Gardner 1985) would argue that pupils of this age have many styles of learning. Should TALES consider different approaches and styles or just one? No pupils asked that there be words only, whilst here was strong support for the storytelling itself, including the active performance of the teller.

A number stated that the worst thing was that stories were told through Irish. This may be disappointing, however it related to the nature of pupils response to the language. The implications go beyond the TALES Project and are also beyond the scope of this

evaluation. In the interests of transparency and authenticity it may be asked that how can the lán-Ghaeilge element be made more accessible for non lán-Ghaeilge pupils? Can axis: Ballymun provide more support for such intervention? Can the work in Gaeilge be integrated more with the curriculum? Is the purpose of TALES to inculcate storytelling skills, or storytelling skills *in Irish*? The politics of this aspect may affect some pupil's experience. Is it a matter of integration or separation of Gaeilge strand? If the decision is to integrate Gaeilge with English then support needs to be increased to maximise understanding of the stories for the majority of pupils. Anything that decreases the enjoyment of the TALES needs to be critically examined and addressed positively within the present framework. Clearly this would have resource implications.

### 3.1.3 Learning



Figure 4. Literacy word wall based on a pupil's story

*"When you keep telling a story it never gets forgot..."*

- Child respondent

There are many learnings that emerge from such a project, many of them complementary to the curriculum (NCCA 1999), which will be dealt within the teachers' response. What the children themselves identified as priority learning, in open response to the question "*What was the most important thing you learned in TALES?*" was to listen (32%). A significant number were conscious that the heritage was being passed on (13%). Whilst an equal number of response, (13%) thought that more expression and learning new stories was a priority. Many teachers also identified this as a key learning, as opposed to the visual culture that children experience outside school by emphasising the singularity of TALES emphasis on listening, the pupils were consciously aware that memory and sequencing skills were needed for the success of their storytelling. If one favours other more visual conventions such as image work or mime, these skills may not receive the attention and consistent application that they do presently in TALES. Any modification to the mediating of TALES would be wise to take this into account, given the impact on speaking and listening skill practice that the pupils consciously validate.

Other skills validated by pupils in order of priority included:

*Be confident /don't be shy*

*Make an effort*

*How to tell tales*

*Don't stop if you get something wrong*

*No fighting*

The pupils seem, by their answers, to be focusing on the process of storytelling and saying that the heritage and techniques were key learnings for them. As pupils appear to be largely concrete learners at this age, it may be valuable to have a visual framework of the stages through which they go through to become Storytellers themselves. Such rubrics are in use elsewhere and provide pupil, artist and teacher with a focus for formative assessment, as well as pupil self-assessment and peer assessment... Each or all of these approaches can be useful implemented, giving each person a view of the stages they have covered and how much further they need to go to achieve a level of mastery in Storytelling.<sup>26</sup>

The idea of not giving up was a significant value. Such a short term project can become a symbol or vision of longer term effort for pupils, if consciously inserted into the structures and approaches that take the project forward. To maximise the impact on this value, the project could include the idea of *stickability* into the themes and procedures of children's engagement e.g. that they are consciously made aware that taking this through to performance is their aim. However this needs balancing with resources and especially pupil numbers. A discussion worth having, perhaps with pupils themselves whose ideas may help the team, as pupils are most affected by the selection process through which choices are made about the Celebration Day.

### **3.1.4 Active citizenship**

#### "Did you make any decisions yourself during TALES?"

The idea of decision making about what is learned, how I learn when and with whom are core values of the EU memorandum on lifelong learning, mentioned earlier. As an open question this section could be further explored as the information received appeared to be

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<sup>26</sup> Rubrics used by Jack Zipes' *Neighbourhood Bridges* programme in Chicago may be available with permission.

somewhat general. However, the trends are positive. Reports indicate that only 11% said that there were no decisions made by them. The value of pupil decisions was core to the delivery of the project, clearly. However of these answers 37% were simple yes/no answers with no elaboration. Of the elaborated answers, the key value was “Coming up with a story” themselves (81%). This was expressed as a vote as to who would represent the class; smaller numbers said they voted on who told the tale in axis: Ballymun (6%) and 8% mentioned that they made a decision to tell tales in axis: Ballymun. The project could usefully develop mechanisms for self-criticism and self-assessment. The information could be used to inform pupils’ decisions about voting for their representative should this method be adopted. Pupils voting may then result in an informed decision based on facts, not favouritism or friendship groups.

### **3.1.5 Active telling versus passive listening.**

#### *“I enjoyed telling stories rather than listening to them. Why?”*

There were 53% in favour of telling stories and 47% in favour of listening to stories. This is close and may be interpreted as either the pupils enjoyed being passive and active in some equal measure. However, it also may mean that the listening is not actually a passive activity at all and that much can be learned from this. It is clear from pupils response that they see telling and listening as positive and active pursuits. Pupils enjoyed being listened to specifically for their own talents: “*Pupils listened to me*” that listening is good because “*you learn more stories*” that listening “*gives me ideas*” that they loved “*hearing others stories as well as their own*” this theme of mutuality appears regularly in the responses. This is part of the empathy so desired in social behavioural programmes. Clearly empathy for their friends is present in the answers that pupils gave. Other pupils talked about preferring

telling *“as it gave you a purpose”* that *“Telling makes you learn the story more”* and that telling is good because *“they have confidinsed”*(sic)

### **3.1.6 Correlations of activity versus passivity**

73% preferred sport and dance, and 27% preferred the arts. Of this the highest preference was for sporty listeners and lowest preference was for arty listeners. In the total combined arts and sports children 52% preferred to tell stories whereas 48% preferred to listen. Overall pupils preferred to tell stories according to these responses.

Those pupils who loved sport and dance were equally distributed in this value. Of a total of 49 pupils who cited sport as their main extracurricular activity and who expressed an opinion, 49% preferred to tell stories whereas (51%) preferred to listen. Initially this was surprising, but the reasons for listening were about belonging and identity. Again and again pupils cited that they loved listening to stories because *“I loved to hear my friends”* and a significant minority who thought the storytellers were better at telling stories and compared themselves unfavourably with them. If the project continues to favour listening as an activity the results should have positive impact on security, identity and belonging in the group. To avoid an introspective approach however, the telling could balance this need with a checking with an outside source which the storytelling provides. Without the storytelling section the pupils will be actively listening to peers which is a good skill; however there would be a concern that this might develop an inward looking pupil, who may become dependent. To increase the pupils’ independent storytelling skills as well as their listening skills would appear to be what pupils are asking for in their responses which are almost 50/50 in favour of listening versus telling. Active pupils are not more likely to be active storytellers. They are just as likely to prefer listening.

On the corollary, the non- sport (Drama, Art, Music, Reading) groups indicated that they were more interested in the telling (61%) than the listening (39%). Those groups may have had exposure to performative situations through their hobbies, so perhaps it is not surprising that they would prefer telling, due to their expressed interest in the arts. This sort of programme would seem to favour children of a more artistic interest, where a greater percentage prefers the telling as opposed to active listening.

### **3.1.7 Changes pupils would make**

#### *“What would you change if you were doing TALES again?”*

The greatest change pupils said they would make it that they would tell a different story (30%) or their own story (14%). In a six week programme there may not be time to allow for changes to be made. When combined (44%) this appears to be more significant at almost fifty per cent. Pupils seem to be saying that they want more autonomy and choice about the story they choose. This was the largest value in this section and seems to be saying that some consultation with pupils around preferences, procedures and process need to be taken on board TALES. This may ensure that TALES is answering the questions that pupils are asking in a way that includes their thoughts and ideas.

A number expressed the desire for the whole class to tell a story together. How practical this is in practice is a moot point. However with a different approach the work could become more choral and more inclusive of the talents of each class member.

Bhí grúpa den daonra nár theastaigh uathu scéalta a chloisteáil trí mheán na Gaeilge (11%). Is ceist fhealsúnach í seo, nach bhfuil faoi chúram an mheasúnaithe seo faoi láthair.

A group asked for “*More actions in the telling*”, which may direct the style of the project more towards Drama than storytelling. This is a philosophical point which the team might wisely address. It may be a case of balancing the need for telling as an experience as opposed to learning how to tell a story *in a traditional manner*. It may be that if TALES chooses to stay with current practices that a rebranding of the name to *Traditional Tales* might be useful; the emphasis then being unambiguously on the nature of the tradition itself as opposed to a modernist take on storytelling. This would address the children’s concern that heritage be maintained. Very good care would need to be taken that the needs of the children in this regards are met. How much choice in mediation of their story is acceptable? How much deviation from traditional methods is acceptable? Is there a standard approach and how flexible can TALES be is in regard to decisions that children might make about this? Decision-making, agency and democratic participation may be in tension with traditional methodologies. A dialogue between the two might be a useful way forward. That the project would be clear on this point will help when promoting TALES among its participants and other key stakeholders.



Figure 5. Pupils listening to storyteller, Jack Lynch, in action

### 3.2 Teachers' English Curriculum Questionnaire: Teachers' Views of Pupils' Learning

A ten point pre-TALES and post-TALES analysis of the impact that TALEs had on children's skill development of was drawn from the English Curriculum<sup>27</sup> and the Drama Curriculum<sup>28</sup> (NCCA 1999). These questionnaires were filled in by the class teachers in their own time. It is, in effect, the teacher's view of the pupils' learning.

In Curriculum English, the sections most relevant were:

1. Analysing characteristics of good stories.
2. Personal Social ,Emotional Learning and Diversity

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.curriculumonline.ie/en/Primary\\_School\\_Curriculum/Language/English/](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/en/Primary_School_Curriculum/Language/English/)

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.curriculumonline.ie/en/Primary\\_School\\_Curriculum/Arts\\_Education/Drama/](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/en/Primary_School_Curriculum/Arts_Education/Drama/)

The greater improvement was in being more creative, listening better, and responding to arguments. It could be argued that these are the softer skills which listening to stories might support. Whilst the least was in was in making decisions, predictions, comparing motives of characters and responding to higher order questioning. It may be that these skills, though enhanced somewhat in TALES, could be developed further through more active small group work, for example project work enhancing the TALES experience. Another area for such enhancement would be in the *active choosing* of the material by children from their own experience. This has implications training and resources.

Table 2. Analysis of the impact that TALES had on children’s development of English skills

	Before TALES	After TALES	Difference	% Increase
<b>Analysing characteristics of good stories</b>				
Discuss favourite moments/ important events or exciting characters in stories	7.50	8.25	0.75	10
Listen better	7.00	8.75	1.75	25
Decide what are the most important questions	6.50	7.75	1.25	19
Predict likely outcomes in stories	7.25	8.50	1.25	17
Compare characters' motives and consequences of actions between stories told	6.00	7.25	1.25	21
Be more creative (e.g. writing their own endings)	6.5	8.75	2.25	35
Respond to arguments/ alternatives proposed	6.25	7.75	1.50	24
Respond to higher order questioning	6.25	7.50	1.25	20
<b>Personal, Social, Emotional learning and Diversity</b>				
Make decisions about their learning	6.00	8.00	2.00	33
A more positive view of being in the group	6.25	8.50	2.25	36
Demonstrate greater tolerance of other's views	6.00	9.25	3.25	54
Give and take turns to others	6.00	9.00	3.00	50
Express appreciation for another's telling	6.25	8.50	2.25	36
Demonstrate more empathy in the group	6.50	7.50	1.00	15
Justify their own likes and dislikes	7.00	8.00	1.00	14
Demonstrate a more positive view of learning	7.25	8.00	0.75	10

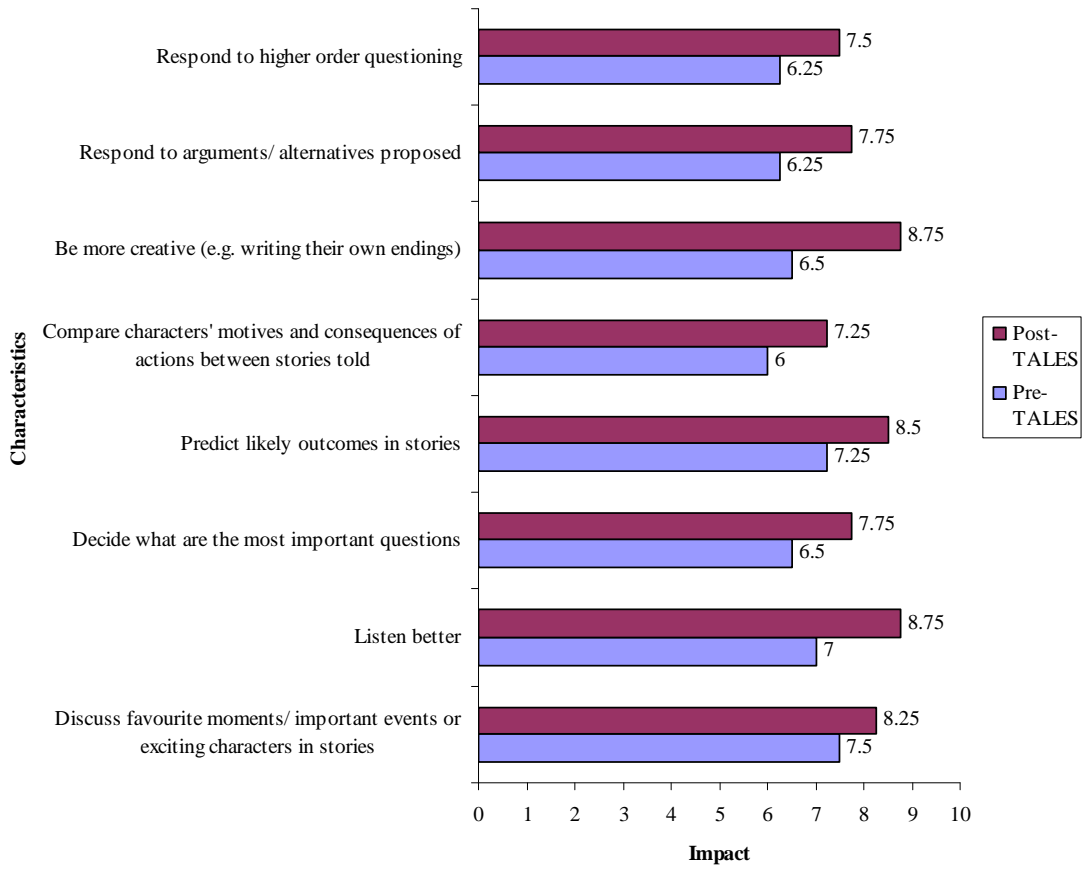


Figure 6. Analysing characteristics of good stories

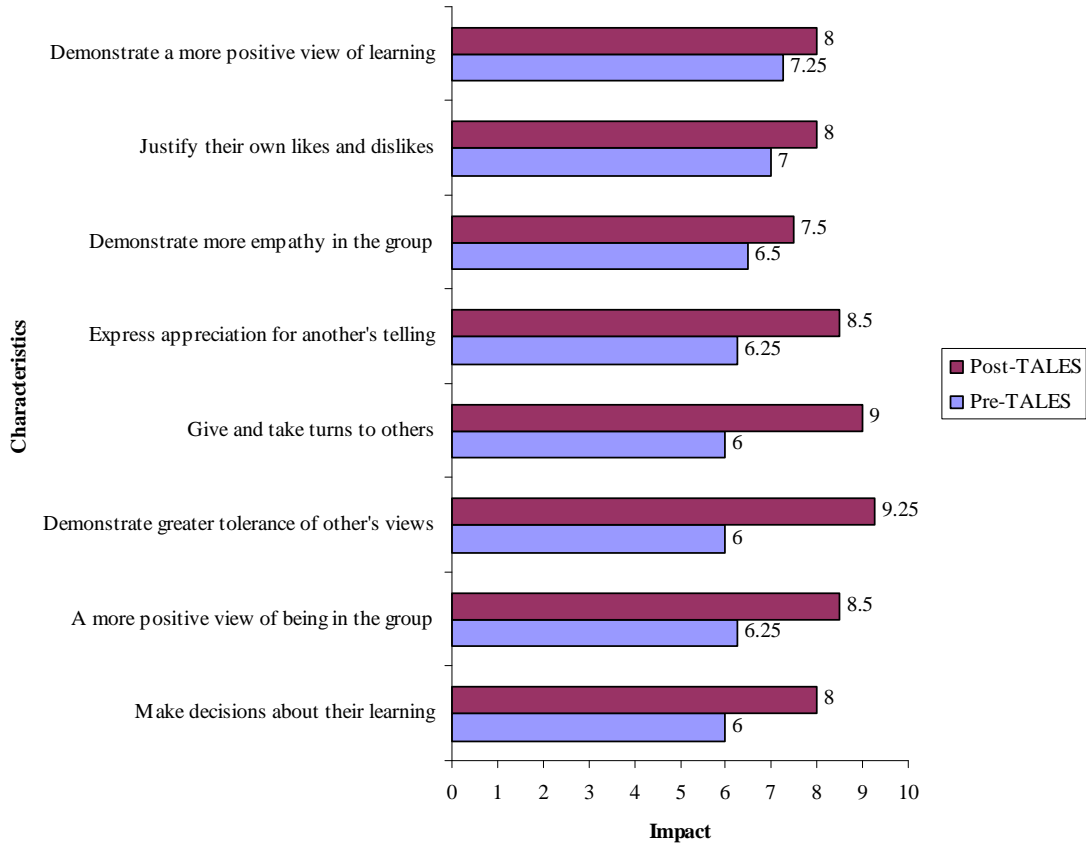


Figure 7. Personal, social, emotional learning and diversity

In the areas of Personal and Social learning the teachers' view of what the children learned in English seemed primarily to be a demonstration of children's tolerance of others' views. This has positive implications for self-esteem, empathy, inclusion and mutuality and ultimately learning potential, whilst the answers here indicate significant gains in making decisions about their own learning. Awareness of others and listening to their answers has implications for each of the domains, including community and citizenship.

One implication for the teacher's view of children's learning in TALEs is that teachers seem to be saying that children learn significant curricular material through TALEs. Whilst hard lines may not be helpful it is clear that the skills learned are both of the hard and soft

variety, cognitive and affective. The implications for TALES would be awareness for the team of opportunities for development in the lower scoring sections of the questionnaire in their planning, both cognitive and affective. This may involve deeper engagement by the class teacher in using TALES as a resource for learning, than heretofore.

### 3.3 Teacher Drama Questionnaire: Teachers' Views of Pupils' Learning in Drama

The questionnaire was sent to seven schools of which four replied. It was filled in by teachers in their own time. The questionnaire used the strands of the drama curriculum to clarify the information to make it easier to comprehend.

- Exploring and Making Drama
- Reflecting in Drama
- Cooperating and Communicating in Drama

However the more specific value of elements of TALES may be found in the themes extracted from the questionnaires which are laid out in accordance with the curriculum below.

Table 3. Overall average improvements in terms of the drama revised curriculum

<b>Strand Unit</b>	<b>Pre-TALES</b>	<b>Post-TALES</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Exploring and making drama	7.00	8.60	1.60
Reflecting on Drama	6.25	7.80	1.55
Cooperating and communicating in making drama	6.25	8.20	1.95

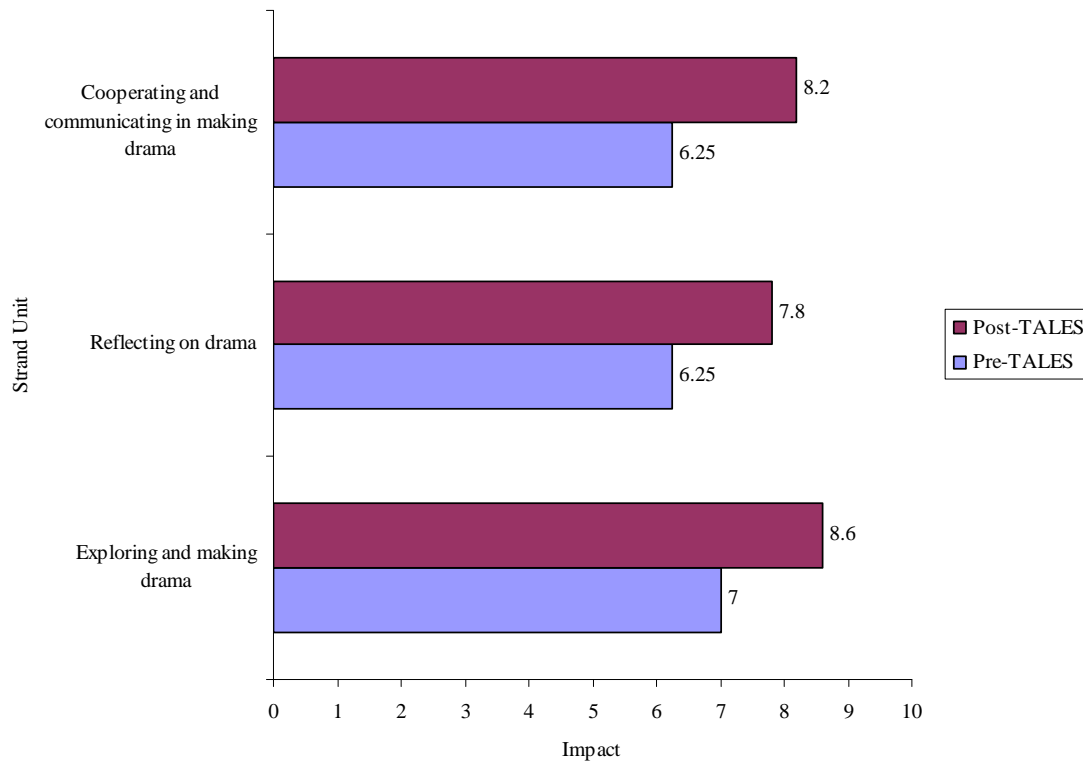


Figure 8. Overall average improvements in terms of the drama revised curriculum

But what produced the effects evident above, for the answer one needs to take a closer look and match the learning against the domains of enquiry. This has been done below. The effect is that the project seems to shine in areas that favour building a community. In this case due to its specific situation i.e. a learning community. Those areas are Citizenship, decision making, learning, and community, as well as an overlap with self-esteem and inclusion, which are necessary elements of a healthy community.

### 3.3.1 Strand unit: Exploring and making drama

Table 4. Improvement of elements in the strand unit of exploring and making drama

Strand Unit Element	Pre-TALES	Post-TALES
<b>Dramatic elements:</b> Use dialogue effectively in story	6.50	8.50
<b>Awareness of the body:</b> Using gestures, facial expressions	7.50	8.75

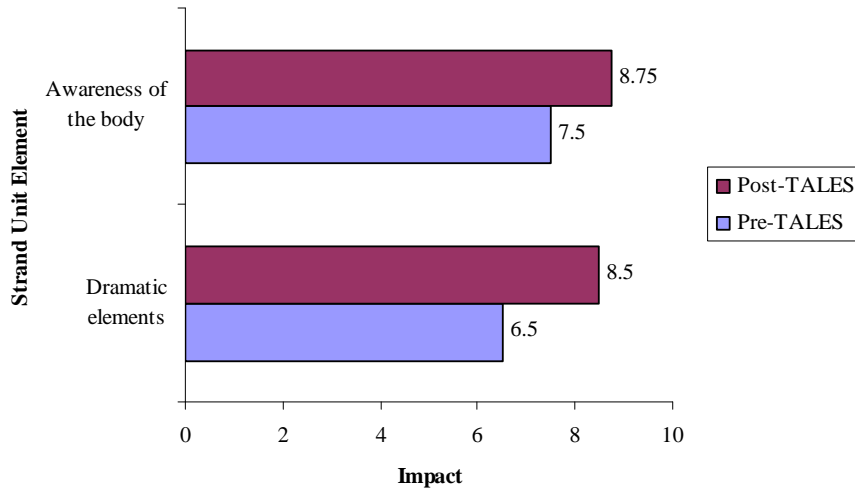


Figure 9. Improvement of elements in the strand unit of exploring and making drama

The positive effect of TALEs is evident in the increase in scores. The use of the body in a conscious way is an indicator of self-esteem. If a child does not feel good about himself the first sign is a turning inward to himself. Moreover, TALEs provided the opportunity to develop extroversion.

The use of the facial expression to illustrate a point in the story was also significantly enhanced. It may be less valuable to separate the elements of expression in such a short project. However if the project were of longer duration , elements such as pitch, pause, pace, tone, modulation and breath work could be built in to valuable effect.

### 3.3.2 Strand unit: Reflecting on Drama

Table 5. Improvement of elements in the strand unit of reflecting on drama

Strand Unit Element	Pre-TALES	Post-TALES
<b>Emotional Awareness:</b> Identifying motives of characters	5.25	7.50
<b>Emotional Awareness:</b> Elicit feelings of characters through questions	6.50	7.25
<b>Rationality:</b> Identify and describe consequences and implications of a characters action	7.00	8.75

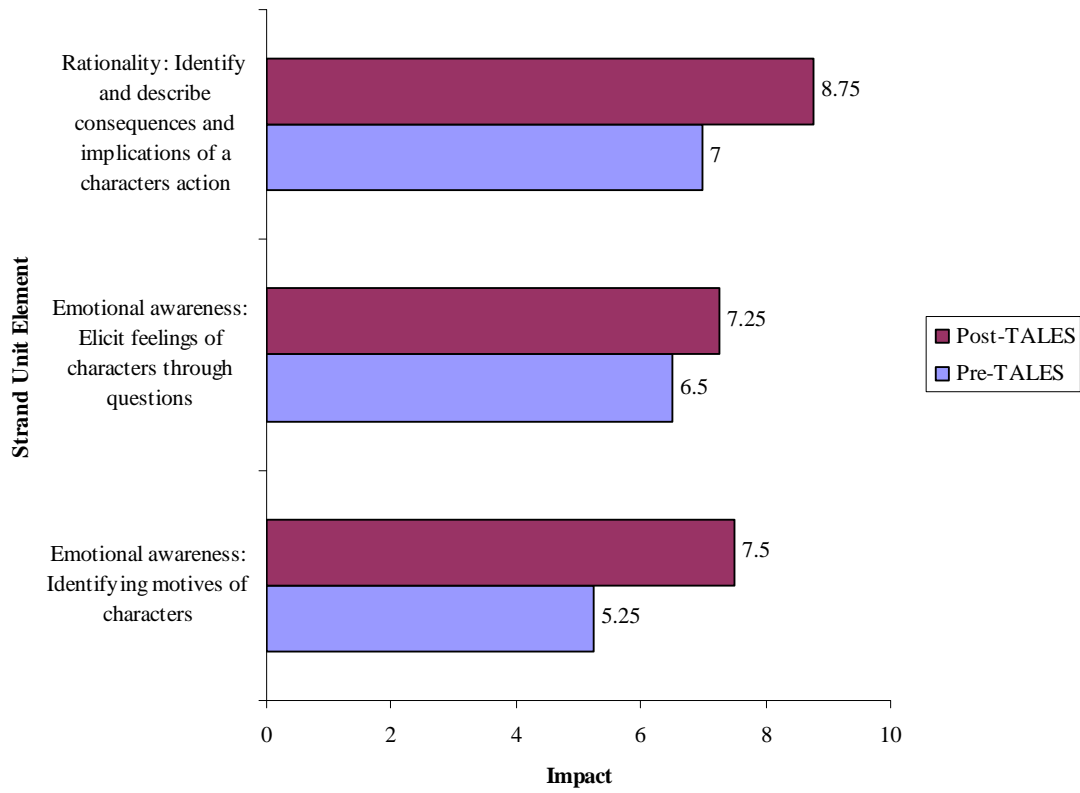


Figure 10. Improvement of elements in the strand unit of reflecting on drama

The areas of emotional awareness, identifying motive and eliciting feeling are valuable in themselves and also as transferable skills to other areas of learning. They support the decision making domain of this evaluation and the scores indicate a significant development in this area. Stories would benefit from inclusion of reflective phases on the implications and consequences for characters, as this has direct transfer to life. If children are to de-centre at all the first step is to see the implications and consequences of decisions as well as their effect on others. In turn this has indirect consequences for citizenship. Perhaps developmental and fun reflective responses between sessions would connect each event meaningfully, with benefits for continuity.

### 3.3.3 Strand unit: Cooperating and communicating in making drama

Table 6. Improvement of elements in the strand unit of co-operating and communicating in making drama

Strand Unit Element	Pre-TALES	Post-TALES
A more positive view of being in a group	6.25	8.5
Give and take turns in a group	6	8.5
Demonstrating empathy in a group	6.5	7.5

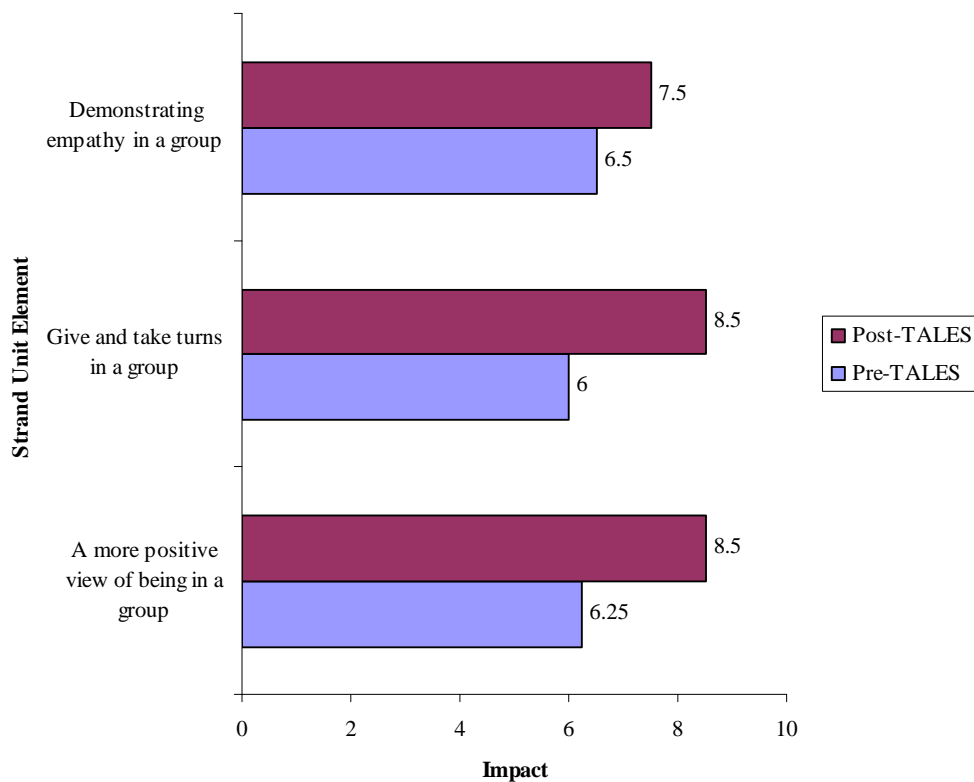


Figure 11. Improvement of elements in the strand unit of co-operating and communicating in making drama

The value of community and citizenship are strongly supported here with a focus on the group. Being a member of the class and demonstrating empathy for that class is a significant value. TALEs clearly develops this value of the curriculum. The benefit is clearly felt in each of the domains of the project; however it is particularly strong in being a member of *that* group. This has implications and consequence do for citizenship and community, with

positive knock on effects for learning, as this community (the school) is by definition, a learning community.

Overall the trend is that the TALES project had a positive impact on each of the domains especially in creation of a *conscious* learning community. Where learning about the heritage of stories is central and where pupils may make decisions about what they want to learn within those parameters.

### **3.4 Teacher Unstructured Interviews**

Five teachers agreed to be interviewed for between 20 mins and one hour depending on availability. After review of the interviews it appears that responses fall into four categories:

1. Preparation
2. Organisation
3. Content
4. Support

Some teachers seemed unclear about the primary focus of the project. Was it heritage, or story listening experience, or active pupil storytelling? If it is a *storytelling* project. This element should be foregrounded early on. Either that or the project might re-focus as a storytelling project where the children learn about the art, but not practise it to a great degree. However if the pupils are to learn the art (as opposed to *about* the art) then this has implications for timing, length, resources and process. In terms of timing, the sessions would need to be longer and more of them. In terms of, resources the use of the web could be useful added as a source of material. Stories may be uploaded for other schools and classes to see, with positive consequences for motivation. For example, this could become a

project with Skype stories being used to swap TALES between Irish and/or International schools.

### **3.4.1 Preparation**

Teachers were uniformly impressed with the artistry and skill of the two storytellers. All were congratulatory about the effect that the storytelling had on the young pupils of their classes. Moreover, teachers also felt that if TALES did not happen that the children would not receive such aural experience at home. (VMG). However teachers themselves felt somewhat in awe of the storytellers saying *“I am a back-up, the storyteller leads”* (HSB<sup>29</sup>) and *“Teacher has the necessary relationship which Aideen does not have. This helps her.”* (GBM<sup>30</sup>) so the roles that teachers see for themselves is located supporting the mediation of the curriculum rather than actualising it in regard to the storytelling element. Storyteller’s voice was important to teachers and was seen as *“a novelty”* and *“expert”* (VMG<sup>31</sup>) in his field and teachers felt that they did not have the skills to emulate what was done by the artists. This has implications for training of teachers to be storytellers, if confidence is not there.

Teachers thought that the curriculum objectives supplied by the TALES team helped them to understand more clearly the nature and value of TALES for their pupils. This in turn helped clarify purpose, roles and responsibilities. Unlike a one off art-in- education experience TALES needs to balance the aesthetic and curricular aims. This means that the work is seen less as an artistic *event* and more of a serialised process of art-in-education sessions. If this is the case the artist moves more towards the teacher’s realm in the

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<sup>29</sup> Holy Spirit Boys NS

<sup>30</sup> Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna

<sup>31</sup> Virgin Mary GNS

inclusion of a coherent through line between the sessions. This facilitates assessment by the artist of their own work. It also manages learning of the children, and expectations for the teacher. The team could usefully discuss what *learning* means for them, to produce a coherent theoretical foundation. If each member is clear as to what the philosophical underpinning is, then it may be more likely that this will follow through into practise.

### **3.4.2 Organisation**

The use of the curriculum has helped a lot to structure the sessions (GBM<sup>32</sup>). However it foregrounds the size and nature of the task of getting pupils from being in the role of listeners to tellers in such a short time. In Minneapolis, Jack Zipes takes one academic year (120 hours) with his groups to get pupils to the storytelling stage with a similar demographic. (Zipes, 2004)<sup>33</sup> however this may be beyond the capabilities of TALES. However, if the objective of having pupils tell their own story is to be met, the tension that is clearly there between the need for more time and lack of funds needs to be addressed. This can happen through extra funding, or more teacher directed work in the classroom and/ or use of ICT. The fear of “*not having them ready*” (HSB) would also be minimised with positive benefits.

The notion of *shared experience* was foregrounded in the idea of storytelling being a full class activity. Could there be space for *all* to tell their tale? Could class work as a group? (VMB) and could they do a whole class story? (VMB). Perhaps this more choral approach would have the benefit of full class participation in the telling at axis: Ballymun. One implication would be that the storytelling moves away from the single teller to a group telling, with a consequent link being broken to the tradition which is based on an experience

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<sup>32</sup> Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna

<sup>33</sup> Speaking Out: Storytelling and Creative Drama for Children (2004)

of solo virtuosity rather than group solidarity. There was awareness that the pupils might confuse storytelling with drama, however there were other teachers who felt that *“it’s all one curriculum- so why make distinctions? It’s the entire one”* (VMB) some teachers also felt that there should be more choice of range, variety and type of story, to include all interests especially boys.

Teachers felt that between 90 (VMG) and 120 (VMB) minutes weekly for 9-10 weeks was more appropriate to the aims of the project. This was based on the idea that the timetable is very full in these schools. If there were to be a shift to two hours then a lot more activities would need to be added to avoid *“sitting in a circle for 60 minutes and not speaking”* (HSB<sup>34</sup>). This ten week period might be bookended by two weeks structured introduction by the class teacher and followed at the end by a two week evaluation type project on what the class have learned, and where they might go next in their learning. This approach might suit a portfolio of learning, which can be a useful record for the pupil of what he wants to learn and what he has learned. In terms of personal self-directed learning this has potential as an approach, especially if decision making is included.

That a new story be told each week by the Storyteller was a value for teachers. More original stories were requested, and the feeling was it was best to avoid repetition of well-known stories such as Red Riding Hood. (VMB<sup>35</sup>) However the short time span was acknowledged as a constraint on novelty of content. A suggestion arose about having a story from a different continent each week with an Irish story at each end, to frame it as an Irish experience. This may answer the diversity concerns of teachers that the pupils needed to have their horizons broadened by tales from other cultures. If these tales could be

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<sup>34</sup> Holy Spirit BNS

<sup>35</sup> Virgin Mary BNS

thematized to focus on the six domains of the project: Self-esteem, Inclusion, Community Learning and citizenship, then teachers could pick up these themes and teach to them during the intervening periods. The TALES internet web-site has potential here as both a holder of the learning and a promoter of new directions for children to learn.

### **3.4.3 Content**

There was broad recognition from teachers that the stories were enjoyable to listen to. The intention was to provide a window on Irish tradition of storytelling. However, this tradition may not be alive in each child's home. So there is an element of introducing storytelling to these fifth class pupils for the first time. As the myths are already introduced to children in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class, it was a value that these would make a good starting point. However some children and many teachers felt that these were not novel enough and that world stories would complement the work done in class on stories in the past few years. It would add significance and focus if the storyteller-artists knew what stories had been covered prior to their visit. These could have been previously uploaded on the website, should this be desirable.

There was strong feeling that the stories should reflect the diversity of the audience in both content and approach, through small group work for instance. Group work was widely mentioned as "*giving all an opportunity*" (HSB) to participate. Such approaches were felt to be more child friendly as a methodology (HSB).

One teacher favoured integration and asked that if she were doing New Zealand that a myth from there would support the work. She would value a meeting with the Artist

*before* the storytelling begins. (GBM). The integration, if concurrent with the project would enrich both the art and education elements of the project in symbiotic relationship.

There was significant comment about the relationship between Drama and Storytelling. Some felt that there should be no expression because “*that is drama*” and that this experience should “*concentrate on voice*” and “*listening skills*”. The children “*did not like it, but accepted it*”. There was a natural feeling of disappointment then when at the axis: Ballymun show, these same pupils saw other pupils doing stories with actions. Perhaps the way out of this is to allow teachers to choose- stories with *or* without actions, or both, one of each, so class can get a contrast and comparison. This would have implications for length of the show – but it would allow tradition to speak to modernity in a dramatic way. For instance the pupils of GBM *chose* whether to tell in Irish or English. Such voting could be integrated at other stages of the process, with some planning. If children consciously choose *at significant stages* of the process, and take responsibility for that decision, this would seriously enrich the ownership and thus the impact of the project.

Teachers noted that Irish was a problem and that some support might alleviate this. A website dedicated to TALES with the translation of the final Gaeilge story into both languages would allow teachers to access the material in advance of the Celebration to ensure that pupils of their own classes were familiar with the language and content of the stories in Irish. This would make a valuable pre- TALES Celebration teaching tool. Alternatively if the MC at axis: Ballymun were to summarise the story in English, as it cannot be assumed that parents have Irish (VMG).

One teacher asked for a Storytelling Day in schools. This could initially be intra-school, developing then to inter-school as desired, with pupils telling stories to younger

classes, and choosing which classes they want to go to, if the idea of small groups was extended, then a suggestion that tellers might tell to small groups, as opposed to large classes at early stages, to boost confidence and get feedback. Pupils might also tell to small invited groups of parents who might be facilitated in giving positive feedback.

### **3.4.4 Support**

Resources to support teachers and pupils before, during and after the sessions were advised to maximise the impact of the live sessions. These included information, hard copy and online resources.

#### *3.4.4.1 Information*

The artist-storytellers plan was crucial to teachers' security and thus their support. There was a suggestion that there be a pack for *first time* TALES classes and teachers to bring them up to speed on expectations and objectives. This plan could be uploaded to TALES website. Pupils' feedback on their experience on the website forum would increase visibility with positive implications.

#### *3.4.4.2 Hard resources*

Teachers said that TALES complemented the oral strand of **First Steps** which "*is done by every school in Ballymun*". In this section pupils learn the typical layout of a story.

As preparation teachers might complete particular sections of **First Steps**, to provide a common base ground for all pupils in the project. The use of "**Chatterbox**", a card series of short improvisations is another suggestion that could help to bring shy children out of themselves and provide a basis is for critique of performative techniques, such as

projection, pausing, pace, all of which take valuable time, but the opportunity is there for the teacher to benefit from this integration of English with the storytelling.

#### *3.4.4.3 Soft resources*

A CD of a native Indian storyteller was provided one year which was used to provide continuity between sessions and was still being used in one school with other classes. Other teachers mentioned that their use of [www.storytellingonline.com](http://www.storytellingonline.com) was invaluable for reminding pupils of the elements of storytelling in the days between storytelling.

The idea of a website where stories could be uploaded in Irish and English was though most helpful again for retaining links in between the live sessions. The use of such support underlines the nature of acquisition of storytelling skills. Repetition may not be possible in the sessions due to time constraints. However the teacher can support the process hugely by playing a CD during the intervening periods between workshops, whilst choosing the elements that need most work. This is based on the fact that the teacher knows the pupils better than the storyteller. The storytellers could then work on the new elements including performative elements which are their forte, whereas the teacher could be the element of continuity, taking the story work done and integrate it into normal classwork. The website would be crucial information site for teachers to plan their work at least one month ahead. If teachers know what is expected of them and that it fulfils curriculum aims explicitly, then they are more likely to trust TALES, exploiting opportunities to their fullest potential. The recently adopted method of a teacher pitching to have their class included may clarify the value of TALES for the teacher's class if the application made this potential a feature.



Figure 12. Pupils listening to a story being told

### 3.5 Teachers Views on Support and Training<sup>36</sup>

Five out of seven teachers responded to the questionnaire which was voluntary and self-administered. These forms were filled out in advance of the interview with evaluator.

**Duration of TALES Project** 80% felt that one month was long enough whereas 20 % felt that one term was it being support justification to show evidence that TALES can be expanded, adding value to children's learning.

**Session length** 80% felt that one hour a week was enough whereas 20% felt hat 2 hours would be better. All teachers said that the weekly interval was perfect.

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<sup>36</sup> See appendix for copy of form used

**Workbook** 40% felt that *both* teacher and pupils should have workbooks. With 20% favouring teacher only and another 20% favouring pupils only. One respondent did not reply.

**Training and support** 40% felt that the teacher should be trained in storytelling, another 40% felt that TALEs should be left alone as it is and 20% expressed the opinion the artist should be trained in pedagogy. The implication for TALEs seem to be in the area of training teachers to work as storytellers in the classroom, with an equal and opposite amount in favour of no change. Add to this the 20% who favour training the artist in pedagogy and you have a preponderance in favour of the Artist being supported pedagogically whereas the teacher seems to favour keeping things as they are.

**Place of performance** Axis: Ballymun was favoured by 60% of the population whereas 40% favoured having the performance in a school. This may have implications for development of the performance side of TALEs, including an extra school layer of storytelling that may be formalised, if desired.

**Training for teachers** website support with stories on line received 40% positive response whereas a teacher training course received 20%. There was one no reply and the other 20% voted for no training whatsoever. It would seem from this that website support is valued by teachers over course training. However if a course were to be held, the overwhelming timing was for a summer course as opposed to extra courses after school.

**In terms of placing** 80% favoured having the course in their own / or another school whereas 20% favoured axis. However in interviews there was significant support for holding the course at axis, so these results are contingent and may not be fully reliable.

In summary then teachers seem to favour one hour a week with a workbook for teacher and pupils. Performance should be in axis: Ballymun though here was support for school performance too. Training if offered should be summer based in schools, preferably with recognition from the DES for days in lieu.

### 3.6 Artists' Interviews



Figure 13. Pupil telling his story to Aileen McBride, storyteller

Aileen Mc Bride and Jack Lynch, the two storytelling artists, were interviewed for approx. 40 mins each separately in axis: Ballymun. The interviews were open and the structure of the five domains was used as a thematic lens.

### **3.6.1 Self-esteem**

*“Children’s self-esteem improves through telling a story”* The self-esteem of the children was a key value as this project gave them a voice. That self-esteem seems to develop through the performative element in particular according to one, that children have an experience of *“enjoyment of performing; having a reaction to what you have done. This is something not normally noticed unlike Art or Music. That child who likes to talk is usually told to be quiet.”* The spoken arts have been a Cinderella of the classroom, perhaps, and TALES seeks to counteract that and add balance to the other art forms, with positive consequences stated one- *“The best feature is seeing their confidence grow”*.

### **3.6.2 Community**

That *“people in Ballymun struggle to say what they mean to say and it can sometimes come out as aggressive...due to lack of vocabulary”* The implication of this statement is that Ballymun children need more not less public speaking. This was a motivating factor for setting up TALES in the first place. More use of the **First steps** and **Chatterbox** as well as opportunities for show and tell is implied here. Not only that but the Dublin County Council request that TALES be extended this year to include schools outside Ballymun, may be an opportunity for pupils to meet challenges beyond their own area, with positive implications for public speaking. Being mindful that it is that *“the child is at the heart of TALES”*.

**Art-form:** *“I would want to partner the teacher... (to give children) ...more of a chance to build a relationship with the art-form”* The nature and value of such partnership has been discussed elsewhere in the document. The effectiveness of this partnership will to some extent depend on how TALES is perceived as inclusive, with implications for ownership. If

teachers felt that they do have an ownership stake the process, in partnership with the storyteller, children and axis, then they are more likely to buy in.

### **3.6.3 Heritage**

*"I can't tell a story I do not have a relationship with..."* The children need to find a story from their own heritage that they can tell. If that heritage is urban disadvantage this has implications for content and mediation which may not concur with ideas of traditional stories. However, can the structure be flexible enough to include new ways of telling that have not been heard of before? If they have to find their own authentic story, it is more likely to come from where they are at. TALES could do worse than start from where the pupils are at.

### **3.6.4 Learning**

*"TALES satisfies what the curriculum asks to be done for the whole year"* is a big added value to TALES and could be made more of through the website. Not only in English and Drama but in other areas of the curriculum-*"The layout of the TALES project does include integration"*. This may need to be exemplified and can be uploaded to the web site for future teachers to use. Teachers need to see that TALES does not take time *away from* other subjects; rather it provides a frame thought which the whole curriculum can be taught enjoyably and efficiently. Topic webs and integration exemplars can be uploaded to the website. To quote one storyteller- *"The whole curriculum can be taught through story"*. If history is the story of our nation, then it can be used in TALES, likewise other subjects.

### **3.6.5 Citizenship**

The notion of decision making for representation was a key feature. Pupils, it was felt, got the majority of the experience possible from TALEs *as a class group*. Then choosing a representative to tell a story on their behalf is a culmination of their efforts. However it was noted by teachers that after the voting, interest and focus was harder to maintain. To counteract this fall off, it may be timely to look at the role of the theatre performance in TALEs. Storytelling is an intimate communal ritual. If it is amplified too far then it may lose some of the very magic that makes it so attractive. How does the team manage this tension? Discussion needs to happen about the role of the theatre in TALEs. This is where smaller telling might happen in schools prior to axis: Ballymun celebration. The value of this would be to honour the intimate space that is the storytelling space. Think of a hearthside. How near one needs to be to really get the feeling of hearing a story. The more the team can replicate the intimacy of a fireside telling, the more successful TALEs may be.

### **3.6.6 Time**

Both artists said that pressure of time militated against good practise in the length of time for relationship building with pupils and the art-form. The pressure of moving from a storyteller mode to a story teacher /artist mode created pressures of expectation and the need to deliver was somewhat problematic for both the artist and the teachers. The result may have led to a focus on delivery of the known as opposed to an exploration of the unknown. It takes time to develop the skills initiated by the artist, including tone, phrasing, pausing. Moreover, if the practise of learning by rote is to be avoided, this also takes time, practise, rehearsal and debriefing. If the project moves too fast from the choosing stage to the performance stage it may militate against the whole group's experience as well as

acquiring the storytelling skills. There may be a concern that the experience might be more perfunctory than aesthetically meaningful in any nuanced way.

One way out of this is to expand the period to twelve weeks, with artists and teacher sitting down to plan together. The value of this would maximise curricular and artistic input, cohesion, co-curricular work and overall value especially in reflection on the process. Stories could be taken from a list (supplied by Artist and teacher) and worked on for style alone, or alternatively using TALEs as an integration implement, that the pupils would choose to write up a project theme or focus such as *China*, *Darwin* or *The Wright Brothers*, which would further enrich the experience for pupils. If these projects were displayed in school and then in axis:Ballymun and online as part of the TALEs it would be a further learning as pupils could present their work in short poster presentations at the Celebration Day. Exemplars of such work would be useful. It seems that the ideal time would be 8- 12 weeks, meeting once weekly for 1-2 hours, depending on the group size. If twelve weeks were chosen as a time span this could be divided up into two sections: the telling of a *known* story, provided by TALEs, and telling of an *unknown* story, provided by the pupils out of their integrated curri

It is key that teachers see this as not more paperwork but a focus for them to work with the pupils towards a useful learning goal. The implications for axis: Ballymun would be the need to provide a space for all children to present, as well as providing workshops on the day for children to attend freely. These could be series of one hour workshops provided by storytellers, dramatists and creative writers in axis: Ballymun on the celebration day. The idea to promote the notion that TALEs is not competitive, but collaborative providing a space where the quiet child might find and use her voice and the louder child learn to listen.

The diffusion of the telling into smaller groups would also remove the confusion between theatre and storytelling, and restore the location of stories to its more intimate space-in small groups. The provision of ICT support in the form of a web site may minimise cost helpfully.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1 Conclusions of Teachers

#### 4.1.1 *Planning and implementation*

1. All of the education results indicate significant development in TALES, the great change according to teachers was in listening to and responding to arguments as well as analysing and comparing stories for feeling and eliciting motive.
2. That a new layer of performance be instituted – between and among schools to maximise parental participation and prepare for the celebration, should this continue.
3. Support such as website, internet, boards, CD of stories and use of already set up channels of storytelling should be maximised, to keep the stories warm between visits, and allow teacher explore the idea of storying further.
4. Teachers expressed concern about moving from being a listening community to a telling community in such a short time. This theme runs throughout the questionnaires and interviews with teachers. Both the pressure on teachers to include TALES and the idea that more time is need to bring on the storytelling skills. Project work through Integration might bring the questions that arise from the work more central to class room activity.
5. Teachers also expressed the idea of more than one child telling a story. Small group presentations, as opposed to solos, were felt to work better in this environment, maximising group participation.
6. TALES should reflect the diversity of the group, in language and culture which has implications for timing and resources, especially in Irish.

#### 4.1.2 *Art form*

1. Teachers were impressed with the artistry and skill of storytellers. Teachers saw themselves as the holders of the space, with the artist providing the content.

Teacher is not the expert here -the artist is. However, a more nuanced balance may need to be struck between the artistic and curricular aims, with clear focus.

2. Teachers wondered if the pupils were learning storytelling or learning *about* storytelling. Should the pupils spend more time learning *how* to tell stories in TALES? Whatever choices are made will affect duration and content of such a programme. A more finely tuned balance in some areas may clarify the focus.

#### **4.1.3 Personal, social learning**

1. In personal and social learning the values were highly significant. In tolerance, giving and taking turns expressing appreciation for each other's telling. A more positive view of belonging to the groups was seen as important, as was being more creative.

#### **4.1.4 Decision making**

1. Decision making should be integrated into the programme to promote ownership of stories.
2. Making decisions about their own learning was a key focus according to teachers. Whilst there was a positive view of social interaction (highest at 54%), the increase in a positive view of learning was not as great at 10%. However this could be helped with more conscious framing that storytelling *is* learning.
3. Work needs to be done on prioritisation- deciding what the most important questions are in relation to a story. This is a key skill in decision making.
4. Under the values measured in the Drama curriculum it appears that the pupils improved in dialogue and expression whilst reflective moments built in the stories should add to the value of reflection. Such reflection is a prerequisite to decision making and learning.
5. Teachers noted that pupils should make decisions where possible and that the stories should consciously reflect the diversity of the groups. This has

implications for resources as the artist would need to meet the teachers in the class beforehand, to prepare and adjust the programme to that class's needs.

## **4.2 Children's Views**

### **4.2.1 *Self-esteem, inclusion, empathy***

1. Active Parental support for children develops self-esteem; this was evident from the length of children's responses. From the silence of those whose parents did not attend the opposite, by implication, may also be true. Parental support did not necessary create leaders (i.e. storytellers). Clear evidence that listening to one's peers created empathy.
2. Finishing TALES was the worst feeling. Pupils felt it should have continued for significantly longer time.

### **4.2.2 *Community and mutuality***

1. Pupils viewed *feeling included* as a major feature, though some felt that they already belonged.
2. Diversity was a feature with some newcomers not feeling included. To counteract an inward looking community it may be useful for schools to consider looking beyond Ballymun for schools to participate. This would create a sense of testing our community, in way which would validate other communities, not only their own.
3. Pupils' disappointment at not being chosen to tell stories might be addressed by having middle layer of telling. That before Celebration at axis: Ballymun that two schools might come together with parents and stage a smaller event with consequences for self-esteem and practising with an outside audience. Performance during school hours may suit parents better.

### **4.2.3 Learning**

1. Pupils' learning is enhanced in English, Critical Literacy and Drama. The embodied nature of the approach to authentic narrative should be developed in conjunction with children's views.
2. Learning goal setting and endurance can be enhanced through a short and significant project like TALES. Themes of stories maybe adapted to foster such values. The artist themes and teacher themes may be matched successfully, with positive outcomes.
3. Storytelling techniques were learned by pupils. Using rubrics already in use by other storytelling projects e.g. *Neighbourhood Bridges*, and others, may add value here.

### **4.2.4 Storytelling and performance**

1. Performance is a way of assessing children's learning.
2. Telling and listening are mutually dynamic and active. Time might be divided equally into two phases: Learning to listen, learning to tell. Storytelling may just not be quite accurate to describe the children's experience, nor is Storylistening. *Storying* may describe what children appear to value in TALES.
3. Pupils expressed an equal interest in telling as well as listening. This has implications for focus of TALES in terms of content. Pupils spoke of going for the horror moments to impress their audience in their stories. To avoid this, a more structured approach and some pre-work on-line by teacher and pupils might obviate this hurdle. If the team used the English *First Steps* programme as a support and the Drama curriculum for the elements of story, it would provide the structure that would maximise freedom within structure.
4. Pupils support the idea that actions should be used in the telling. The way a child tells a story differs from an adult in movement terms-there is usually more of it. To what extent moment should be part of this project is a discussion point. It may lead to conflict between tradition and modernity in how the story is told, however the participants in TALES are children, not adults, and need to have their voices heard as to how they authentically want to tell their stories. Half of

the children enjoyed the traditional approach and half enjoyed the modern. Where is the balance?

5. Going to and participation in axis: Ballymun celebration was the best fun. Bookend TALES with visit to axis at beginning to launch, then in middle to do workshop series with a range of story workers, to develop skills already flagged and finally for the showcase of stories at the finish.
6. If the pupils choose a new style of storytelling e.g. using visuals or a range of group sizes, would that be viewed as concurring with TALES?
7. To support children, greater use of the internet may save time and energy. Uploading stories, comments, homework (e.g. responses) etc., might add to the impact of TALES, with particular reference to the Irish language.

#### **4.2.5 Citizenship**

1. Choice gives freedom to be responsible. As much autonomy as possible may create better stories and better teaching outcomes. Decision making on the content and style of the story, as well as who might represent the children- and how -will dictate the pupils' ownership of the project. Which paradigm is used for storytelling (the listening or telling one) will have implications for the nature of the experience. The four stages of speaking, hearing, and listening and feedback might be a useful structure to consider for planning.
2. Are there other areas in which pupil decisions could be made? Questions to pupils about their topic might facilitate ownership of the stories they tell, in style and content.
3. An overview of TALES including layout, benefits and expectations, might be uploaded to the dedicated website for pupils to read in advance of TALES.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TALES 2011

### 5.1 Preparatory Work for TALES

1. Dissemination of findings should be made to Teachers, Principals, Funders and all team members to ensure coherence of planning.
2. The nature of the *partnership* will have important implications for the outcomes and value of the project. Consult with teachers and principals as to their understanding of partnership. Partnership agreements might be negotiated between axis: Ballymun and relevant key stake holders, to positive effect.
3. As part of advance planning, if the team were to ask children *what types of stories* do they want. Add decision making points at various moments to develop autonomy in the learner.
4. Clarify TALES *major aim*, with minor aims and objectives following from them.
5. Clarify the *similarities and differences* between curricular and artistic aims.
6. Refinement of the balance of time spent *listening* and *telling* would maximise outcomes. Suggested *session length* to be 120 minutes, including a half hour either side for briefing, debriefing and contingency. This may have financial implications which can be mitigated through use of website dedicated to TALES.
7. When children have no experience of the *Irish heritage of story*, it would support the purpose of TALES if historical work was learned before TALES starts. This could encompass the role of the Bard in Gaelic culture, nature and motifs of ancient stories, and use as political message carriers. Also, access to the 1937 Folklore Commissions Project of collected folklore in schools may be now available on line.

8. Explicit references, in planning documentation, to *English and Drama curricula* will consolidate learning in performance and language, including critical literacy. Integrate TALES into *cross-curricular project work in schools*. Suggest that axis: Ballymun might present these projects in axis on the celebration day. Also that the focus of pupil projects displayed should complement the themes of the story that they are telling.
9. Stories should reflect the *diversity* of the child groups, including newcomers. The Artist ensures that they themselves *know which stories* have been covered before the project begins, both that year and the year before.
10. According to feedback from children, the programme in its current form may not produce *storytellers* in significant numbers. The balance is fifty /fifty according to figures in favour of listening/telling. To create *storytellers*, more emphasis on the telling needs to be incorporated into the programme content. Two distinct phases- learning to listen and learning to tell need to be sandwiched with learning the structure of story so that an aesthetic order can be part of the learning. What is termed *The Writing Process* could be usefully used as an adjunct to this programme, perhaps prior to TALES, to facilitate understanding of the structure of stories for pupils. Also useful would be exposure to **First Steps** oral language section for appropriate year group. **Chatterbox** cards may be used as verbal support which teacher can use to concentrate on particular performative areas that need attention.
11. Different *styles of telling* which reflect the talents of the children may make it easier for children to buy into the process and facilitate different styles of learning, including kinaesthetic and interpersonal.
12. Develop the use of *assessment rubrics* that are in practise in storytelling projects in UK and USA.
13. Consult with the after school services e.g. CASPEr, and other *child agencies* to see if synergies and *sharing costs* can be effected in relation to training, costs, dissemination.

## 5.2 Programme Changes

1. TALES should happen over 12 weeks, or more. First week audit, followed by a balance of listening, story structure (*First Steps* and *Drama Curriculum*) and telling.
2. *Linking stories in theme* to the domains of Self-esteem, Inclusion, Community, Learning and Citizenship may strengthen both the artistic and curricular impact.
3. Diversity of audience indicates a need for cultural diversity of stories. Use a variety of stories of different genre, origin and purpose over the period.
4. TALES is a shared experience *as a group* so that *each* child and *every* child can learn and achieve. It is recommended that small group work be used as a principal methodology for children's practise. (Nancy Mellon, 2010.)
5. Define literacy as critical embodied literacy as opposed to functional literacy.
6. TALES should *start with the children where they are*, which means that TALES might usefully maximise performance and vocal skills children already have in terms of content, style and approach.
7. *Build in a discrete reflective phase* in story objectives, in terms of both curriculum and art. These reflections may be artistic –dialogue, monologue, *agallaimh beirte*, poems, or maps, drawings, songs, movement -not only descriptive writing.

## 5.3 Support

1. Schools may be interested in *connecting with other schools to tell tales*. Ways of using ICT might be sought to find an appropriate way forward in such partnerships North/South and East/West and also further afield. Synergies may be found with other agencies working in the area which may facilitate these and other mutual goals through fruitful partnerships.

2. Create a *pack for first time classes/teachers* to outline the benefits and expectations of TALEs, including support available in organisation, integration and cross-curricular learning.
3. *Support and training for teachers* as both storytellers themselves and also in as teachers wishing to maximise children's learning. Offer training to teachers during the summer in axis, with EPV days granted by DES. Offer *pedagogical skills to actors and storytellers* who want to work through these methods with children. Further research on what the need in schools is whether to train actors in pedagogy or training for teachers in storytelling arts.
4. Sample of *integration and cross curricular work* by pupils and teachers to be photographed and uploaded over time. This will produce a bank of reference material for future TALEs classes they start in the TALEs programme, this will avoid repetition of old stories which are already known.
5. In relation to *stories in Irish - that they might be uploaded in advance* so that children of other schools might read them and know the story content before they go to axis: Ballymun.
6. *Interactive technology* should be used prepare, organise, give feedback on TALEs. Create a workbook for teachers and pupils that is child friendly and closely linked to the stories. This may be on line. Moreover, ICT might facilitate connection to other schools nationally and internationally to share stories. Children can make stories using their phones or other recording apparatus. These stories, using ICT, may be uploaded to the dedicated TALEs website. TALEs website might also incorporate a forum, blog, feedback, home publishing of children's stories, the network is all supported by the common thread of TALEs. Support for the above may be available through Dr Theo Lynn, DCU Business School.
7. Support with a *CD of professionals reading examples of stories* to be given to each teacher as part of a pack. During that week the children may

experiment in telling these in a variety of approaches. This would save time for storyteller to concentrate on new knowledge. Whilst teacher can teach the English and Drama skills associated with storytelling. Though the storytelling is not Drama, those skills associated with drama are practised in this allied art form.

8. Create a storytelling day *in schools* as a second layer of performance. Where parents might see their children in less threatening environment to the children, during daylight hours, when babysitting might be easier to arrange.
9. If axis is being used as the focus of celebration, then it is suggested that all rooms be used to facilitate small *group experiences*, as well as the theatrical, on stage production. The reason for this is to do with traditional arts; the large theatrical gathering may militate against the very spirit of the principles that TALES espouses: traditional telling structures in small groups.
10. In relation to same, could the “edge” be softened by *a day of storytelling workshops* each repeated sequentially so that each participant has an experience of other methods and approaches, such as puppetry, mask, historical tales, etc? This may enrich their experience of TALES and could be a real concrete motivator for pupils to go forward. It would also give teachers a lot of new information and resources. This has resource implications clearly; however this model of mixed performance /workshops is in use at the National Student Drama festival in the UK.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1. Teachers' Drama Questionnaires**

**SECTION 1: MAKING STORIES. Please mark out of 10**

<b>TALES</b>	<b>Pupils can...</b>	<b>Before TALES</b>	<b>After TALES</b>	<b>If possible please supply an example as evidence for research. Use O/L if necessary</b>
<b>Connection elements of story</b>	Structure and sequencing of plot / narrative			
	Demonstrate an awareness of need for theme			
<b>Dramatic elements</b>	Use dialogue effectively in story			
<b>Emotional awareness</b>	Identify motive for actions of a character			
	Elicit feelings of characters through questions			
<b>Rationality</b>	Identify and describe consequences and implications of a character's actions			

**SECTION 2: PERFORMING STORIES. Please mark out of 10**

<b>Aspects of English Curriculum</b>	<b>Pupils are aware of /use...</b>	<b>Before TALES</b>	<b>After TALES</b>	<b>How do you know? Please give example(s) from your class here. Use O/L if necessary</b>
<b>Awareness of the body-</b> communicate- the pupils use of effective communication strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the importance of gesture</li> <li>• facial expression</li> <li>• eye contact</li> </ul>			
<b>Vocal skill</b> -Use of the voice to communicate ideas thoughts and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tone of voice</li> <li>• modulation / pace</li> <li>• clarity and audibility of speech</li> <li>• pausing</li> </ul>			
<b>Language Development</b> – use of words to express influence and persuade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocabulary</li> <li>• ability to describe characters/places</li> <li>• use of persuasive</li> </ul>			

	language to engage			
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**SECTION 3: RESPONDING TO STORIES. Please mark out of 10**

Aspects of English Curriculum	Pupils can....	Before TALES	After TALES	How do you know? Please give example(s) from your class here. Use O/L if necessary
<b>Analysing characteristics of good stories</b>	Discuss favourite moments /important events or exciting characters in stories			
	Listen better			
	Decide what are the most important questions			
	Predict likely outcomes in stories			
	Compare characters' motives and consequences of actions between stories told			
	Be more creative (e.g. writing their own endings)			
	Respond to arguments / alternatives proposed			
<b>Personal, Social, Emotional learning and Diversity</b>	Respond to higher order questioning			
	Make decisions about their learning			
	A more positive view of being in the group			
	Demonstrate greater tolerance of other's views			
	Give and take turns to others			
	Express appreciation for another's telling			
	Demonstrate more empathy in the group			
	Justify their own likes and dislikes			
Demonstrate a more positive view of learning				

Please use the other side of this paper for any useful additions you would like to make to your evaluations. Many thanks.  
Colm Hefferon December 2010

## Appendix 2. Teacher Questionnaire

### How can TALES be improved?



1. What was the important learning that you saw see in your class as a result of TALES. Please elaborate:  
Please use overleaf if necessary.
2. Please read the suggestions for improving TALES below: Please rank by preference from 1 to 3 in each of the five sections

		#		#		#
<b>Intervention Period</b>	One month long		One term long		One year long	
<b>Preferred session length</b>	One hour		Two hours		Three hours with break	
<b>Preferred session interval</b>	Fortnightly		Weekly		Monthly	
<b>Workbook</b>	For Pupils		For Teacher		For Both	
<b>Train</b>	Artist in pedagogy		Teacher in storytelling		Leave TALES as it is	
<b>Performance to...</b>	Class		School		Community In Axis	

3. What sort of training course intervention would be helpful to you to continue with TALES in the classroom? Please indicate.
4. Preferred timing of such a course: Rank preference 1 to 4
  - After school
  - Weekends
  - Summer course
  - Certified semester course in College
5. Preferred location of training : Rank preference 1 to 4
  - My own school or another school
  - College
  - Community hall
  - AXIS
6. What changes would you make to the TALES Programme to integrate it with your curriculum work?  
Use over leaf for this if desired.

### Appendix 3. Child Questionnaire

## So, what did you think of TALES?



1. What is the best thing about TALES?
2. What is the worst thing about TALES?
3. What was the most important thing you learned in TALES?
4. Your teacher was a great help; did you make any decisions yourself about what you were going to do in TALES?
5. What would you change if you were doing TALES again?
6. Did anyone from home attend the Storytelling at AXIS? Yes/No. If yes, how did that make you feel?
7. I belong more to Ballymun after TALES? Yes/No..... Why?
8. Do you feel that you belong to my class more after TALES? Yes/No
9. Which of these two statements below are true:  
*I enjoyed **telling** stories rather than listening to them. Yes/no Why?*
10. What hobby do you have outside school hours? E.g. sport, drama, art, dance, outdoors?

***Is there anything extra that we have not asked and you want to tell us, please does that here ..... [Continue overleaf if you need to]***

## Appendix 4. Consent Form

**Please complete and return to the school.**

### **Photography/Video Consent Form**

From 8<sup>th</sup> November to 16<sup>th</sup> December 2010, your child will be taking part in an **axis**: Ballymun arts-in-education project. During the project a photographer/film-maker will be coming to the school to take some pictures/to film to document the project for **axis**. This photographs/film may be used for the purposes of reports or publicity in newsletters, programmes, websites or public display at the end of the project by the **axis**.

Please indicate if you consent or not to your child being included in such documenting.

***This form must be returned in either case.***

***I consent***

***I do not consent***

Child's Name:

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Signed by parent or guardian:

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School

---

Teacher

---

Date

---

Please return this form to your child's teacher **before**  
Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

Thank you.



Aideen McBride Storyteller in TALES



Jack Lynch Storyteller in TALES

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### ***Evaluation***

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[http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/ArtistsSchools06\\_English.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/ArtistsSchools06_English.pdf)

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[http://www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/Reports/Bridges/docs/Neighborhood-Bridges\\_Report-8\\_2009-03-04.pdf](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/Reports/Bridges/docs/Neighborhood-Bridges_Report-8_2009-03-04.pdf)

Evaluation of Community Projects: Kellogg Foundation.  
<http://ww2.wkkf.org/default.aspx?tabid=75&CID=281&NID=61&LanguageID=>

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[http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/Arts\\_education\\_en\\_08.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/Arts_education_en_08.pdf)

### ***Classroom Resources***

[www.Storysack.com](http://www.Storysack.com) A large cloth bag containing a children's book and supporting materials to stimulate reading activities with children.

[www.bagbooks.org](http://www.bagbooks.org) Multisensory packs for children and adults with learning disabilities.

[www.storynet.org](http://www.storynet.org) Resources for story making

<http://www.storynet-advocacy.org/edu/resources-Web%20Sites.shtml> Story in school resources.