



Eleanor Taylor in *Coram Boy* rehearsals, York Theatre Royal

Want to engage your students in an extra-curricular activity that could see them benefit in all kinds of different areas? Jo Caird finds out all there is to know about Arts Award

Rewarding and awarding

Workshops in local primary schools, group theatre visits, costume design, sound and light performances, film-making – when it comes to the types of projects available for Arts Award candidates to explore, the list goes on and on. In fact, given that young people are free to build their Arts Award experience in more or less any way they like, the options are endless. So if you're looking for an accredited programme that will offer your students a taste of something a little different, this might well be the one for you.

Mission to help young people

Arts Award, which is managed and accredited by Trinity College London in association with Arts Council England, launched in 2005 with a mission to help young people between the ages of 11–25 deepen their engagement with the arts, develop creative skills, build on their leadership abilities and gain a national qualification. As of December 2011, a total of 57,499 young people have achieved an Arts Award at bronze, silver or gold level. They have been supported by 16,481 trained advisors at schools, culture sector organisations and other Arts Award centres across the country. Out of the 16,753 awards achieved over the

2010/2011 academic year, 14% were drama-focused (with another 44% in combined arts, a large proportion of which included drama).

Flexibility

What makes the programme so attractive to teachers and other arts education professionals is its flexibility. Joan Hardy, arts advisor and recently retired head of drama at Belper School in Derbyshire, pioneered Arts Award at the school, 'to give the students opportunities to work on projects that were more autonomous' than those available within the drama curriculum. She runs Arts Award in a mixed age, mixed ability after-school club, with bronze and silver award candidates working on individual, but often complementary projects.

Because Arts Award recognises candidates' personal development in the context of individual challenges, rather than according to the achievement of particular skill levels, the programme is suitable for candidates with a wide range of abilities, including students with special educational needs (SEN), gifted and talented students and those learning English as an additional language (EAL).

Accessible

Casey Powell is head of drama at Haggerston School in London, where she is arts advisor to a class of Year 9 students working towards

silver Arts Awards within curriculum time. Powell's mixed ability group are collaborating on a theatre-in-education project that forms part of the school's summer term transition programme for primary school students who



Paul Maven

Setting up Arts Award in your school

► Get the go ahead from your head of drama and senior management

You'll need their full support if students are going to get the most out of the programme. Decide on the most appropriate delivery approach, whether within the existing curriculum or as an extracurricular activity.

► Attend a training course to become an arts advisor

Training for the bronze and silver awards takes place over one day and costs £145 per person (an extra half-day top-up course costing £95 is required for the

gold award). Courses are offered regularly throughout the year around the country, or you can book in-house training at your school for groups of 6-15 people, which works out cheaper.

► Register

Register your school as an Arts Award centre via the programme's website. And make sure to register your students and order study materials from the Arts Award website.

► Get creative!

Let your students imaginations run wild!

will be starting at Haggerston the following autumn. This is only the first year of the silver award at Haggerston, though candidates have achieved bronze awards over the past three years at the school.

Powell has found Arts Award to be, 'very accessible because the evidence that candidates collect and collate in their portfolio could be in such a different range of forms. Students with SEN or EAL can have lots of pictures with a sentence underneath to explain what's happening or they can have a DVD of a performance. It really plays to their strengths, and because then they enjoy drama, that practical side of it works well for them. For the more able students, there isn't so much of a challenge for the portfolio side of things. For me it's about making sure that during the drama project that we do, they take more of a leadership role, so they might ring a primary

school or write the letter to arrange the visit to perform'.

Benefits

The number of young people, advisors and registered centres taking part in the programme increases year-on-year, but recent times have seen particularly exciting developments. Later this year, following a pilot scheme that ran between May and October 2011, the award is extending into primary schools with Discover and Explore, two new Arts Award levels will open to children from the age of seven. At the other end of the age spectrum, in 2010 the gold Arts Award was recognised on the UCAS Tariff with a weight of 35 points, enabling school leavers to include their gold Arts Award on their UCAS forms when applying to university.

But it's not just university applicants who may see benefits from taking part in the

programme. Joan Hardy supported two boys through their silver Arts Awards last year, and was delighted to see them accepted by their first choice of college to study creative technologies. 'Their silver really helped them to get in. They did a sound and light show – it was fantastic. I was there throughout the process and it still knocked me out', she says.

Advanced planning

Neither Hardy nor Casey Powell have a bad word to say about the programme, but both stress of the importance of advance planning and ensuring that candidates keep up-to-date with their portfolios throughout the year to avoid unnecessary stress before the moderation period. Other than that, the trick is simply to enjoy it, making the most of the enthusiasm with which students of all ages tackle creative projects for which they have a real passion. The only limit is your students' imagination. What are you waiting for?

www.artsaward.org.uk

Requirements for bronze, silver and gold Arts Awards

- **Bronze Arts Award** candidates will take part in an arts activity; attend one or arts event; research an arts hero or heroine; and share their skills by helping to run a workshop for example. As with the higher levels, students record their progress in a portfolio of work. The award takes around 60 hours to complete (some guided, some independent study) and carries a Level 1 national qualification accredited on the QCF.
- **Silver Arts Award** candidates will set themselves an arts challenge; review an arts event; research arts activities, training and jobs in their local area; and lead a workshop, alone or with a team, to share their skills. The award takes around 95 hours to complete and carries a Level 2 national qualification.
- **Gold Arts Award** candidates will gain experience of a new area of the arts and work collaboratively with another artist; get involved with the arts sector through training, volunteering or research; research and review high-quality arts events; research and form a view on an arts issue and present their findings; and plan and lead an arts project with a public outcome. The award takes around 150 hours to complete and carries a Level 3 national qualification and 35 UCAS Tariff points.

Belper School Arts Award centre

