

# Conclusions & Recommendations

## // “FILM GETS YOU THINKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE WORLD.”

This quote from a secondary school student participating in a Film Focus event encapsulates the work of our two-year action research project in many ways.

The world pertaining to Film Focus concerned film and media literacy and their place within school curricula and the wider mediated world. It related to revisions in Junior and Senior Cycle and supported wider learning in the youth sector and out of school. It referenced the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy but promoted a broader definition to encompass the creative field. Film Focus acknowledged the Arts Council Points of Alignment report on the Arts and Education and the lobbying work of Encountering-the-Arts. It looked to the creative industries report and its recommendations for education and training. It was delivered in tandem with the IFI Education programme and attracted participant researchers from the fields of education, the youth and community sector, and arts personnel.

### Mapping Exercise – the findings

Setting out to draft a national strategy for film education and young people, the initial mapping exercise revealed much exciting activity taking place around the country but the fact that not much of it was connected. Outside of specific curricular links such as English or Modern Languages, most of the activities reported were being delivered by singular teachers in a vacuum removed from any type of broader policy. What the teachers’ shared, along with an enthusiasm for film, was a recognition that both the engagement with film and media, and the collaborative learning environments which film encouraged, where ‘teamwork is real’ and in which students are ‘more motivated to learn’, were conducive to learner and teacher enjoyment. There was recognition too of the wider learning aspects, such as creative thinking or film literacy.

Along with the use of film for specific subject support, there was sufficient evidence of film activities in Transition Year and of filmmaking projects to confirm teachers’ interest in promoting creative and critical engagement with film – ‘to increase awareness that film is an artform’. The range of activities reported gave us a clear idea of how we might draw a cross-section of educational professionals together and elicit a number of modes of engagement from which the pilot projects would develop.

### The Pilot Projects

Positing an action research model, we invited participant educators to conceive and deliver pilot projects with support from the Film Focus team, either 1:1 or through the scheduled meetings. The projects yielded a host of ways of working with film. In evaluating, the facilitators outlined the challenges they encountered in realising new work over and above their regular school timetable. But, most significantly, they cited the positive outcomes for their subject and the wider educational landscape. The projects could:

- / Promote participatory, creative and active teaching and learning environments where the teacher was often facilitator
- / Enable students to bring ‘out of school’ media skills to classroom learning
- / Bolster written and oral literacy in L1 and L2 and English for EAL students
- / Foster media literacy skills which encouraged creative and critical engagement
- / Promote film as an art form and Irish film heritage
- / Highlight how film clubs can create out-of-school communities or motivate learning
- / Utilise film as a way into greater discussions of culture

All of the projects showed that a number of methodologies for classroom-based and wider film-centred engagement can yield myriad, immediately measurable positive effects. A series of practical filmmaking projects reinforced storytelling and visual literacy capacities through groupwork, as well as developing participants technological and aesthetic skills more easily than through traditional text-based learning. Such skills were also manifest in the Film Focus Gaming Camp project. It offered highly useful insights into gaming culture and a means

by which to observe young people as they learned through gameplay. The particular concern for boys' learning and skills' development identified in the Literacy Strategy finds certain relevance in this initiative as it capitalised on the popularity of interactive media, video games and online multiplayer environments, especially among boys.

### Film education – A Nationwide Commitment

Case Studies and Observations carried out for Film Focus echoed many of the findings of the pilot projects. Organisations profiled included the filmmaking association YIFM, Ireland's Young Filmmaker Competition, the annual Junior Galway Film Fleadh and the schools' programme of the Kerry Film Festival. These examples of successful engagements with film validate the position that, while film education takes on many forms, there is a distinct commitment to the field from facilitators across the arts, youth and education sectors; the task at hand, acknowledged by all involved, is to make the relevant policymakers from the fields of education and arts acknowledge and exploit this.

### The Literacy Debate & Curricular Reform

Film Focus findings have highlighted the urgent need to assert film and media literacy as a vital component of wider thinking around literacy across all levels as foregrounded by the DES Literacy Strategy. Equally, the recently proposed Framework for Junior Cycle provides an opportunity for the inclusion of media literacy as a Key Skill over and above the reference to ICT. Contrary to previous mindset, when film was regarded as stimulus for less-motivated students, Film Focus proves that this medium has application across the spectrum of learners' capabilities and interests.

In calling for specific inclusion of film and media literacy across all curricular reform, Film Focus acknowledges that curricula is already overcrowded and the fact that amid our current economic crisis, as often happens when systems have been deemed to fail, people are looking to education for solutions. One might well argue that this is not the job of education. But the fact of Ireland's growing creative industries, and a recognition Europe-wide that a commitment to a creative and critical education is vital for future economies, strengthens the

argument that film and media literacy should be recognised as central components of such an education. Film Focus confirms the fact that these components offer a way into curricula – including modern languages - that other more conventional methodologies may not.

### Learning Principles

The work of Film Focus acts as a point of departure for methods and approaches to film and moving image media that can pose engaging avenues for working with young people as aspects of their literacy, cultural, aesthetic, critical, participatory and creative development. All of these approaches are exploratory in nature. Across the Irish educational landscape, both in and out of school, the strategies to embrace these aspects can be established within the following principles:

#### Literacy Skillsets are Diverse

This needs to be reflected in the implementation of the Literacy Strategy which must fully address the essential nature of media literacy today in all its forms. Media Literacy must be acknowledged as the creative and critical capacity to negotiate the audiovisual and digital world.

#### Media Literacy is a Fundamental Entitlement for all

Media Literacy is an entitlement and a necessary part of civic participation with potential for learning opportunities across home, school and wider community. While the Broadcasting Act assigns a statutory responsibility for media literacy to BAI, this must be matched by resourcing to organisations capable of satisfying this responsibility. The planned Constitutional Referendum on Children's Rights should also include media literacy via the inalienable right to Education.

#### Media Literacy Inclusion is Necessary Across the Irish Educational Landscape

##### / In Primary and Early Learning Curricula

NCCA investigations into Language in the Primary School Curriculum, acknowledge the need for multiple literacies to be taught across curricula to all abilities. This needs to be implemented through CPD in delivering the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

✓ **In Proposed Junior Cycle Framework**

Media Literacy with particular reference to film to be embedded as Key Skill across the curricula as well as ICT, to incorporate the critical, cultural, participative, measurable and creative capacities inherent in media literacy

✓ **In Proposed Senior Cycle reform**

Media Literacy to be identified as a required aspect of the proposed foundational Key Skills necessary for completion of requirements at Senior Cycle

✓ **In EAL teaching and learning**

The potential of media literacy projects to facilitate EAL development should be exploited, where former knowledge of international film language can be used to develop new oral and written language skills

**Media Literacy as Key Skill in all Initial Teacher Education**

The commitment to overhaul teacher education combined with the fact of young people now entering the profession with significant competence in media literacy, provides ideal opportunity to fully exploit this competence through their teacher education and ongoing CPD.

**Film Offers a Way into Modern Languages & Related Cultures Through the Shared International Language of Film**

The commitment to address Modern Languages proficiencies at Senior Cycle opens an avenue for the development and strategic implementation of a film module for Modern Language curricula, including Chinese, following the model of IFI's French and German film projects.

**Arts Education Including Film are Fundamental Aspects of Our Development**

Education in the creative arts must not be regarded as something 'optional' or an aspect of vocational training. Government commitment to arts education must be matched with adequate resourcing, and an opening of dialogue between practitioners, funders and organisations to maximise resources and capitalise on expertise.

**Film is Art**

As an artform, film's potential to inspire creative, cultural and aesthetic development and its immediate relevance for young people further the case for it to be given full recognition in any reforms to the Senior Cycle Art curriculum.

**Irish Film & Moving Image Provide Unique Access to Cultural Heritage & to Indigenous Creative Industries**

The popularity of Irish film across all our Modes of Engagement confirm its significance for young peoples' cultural and creative development as well as equipping them for participation in future creative careers.

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# Conclusions & Recommendations > ACTIONS

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## Short Term

- > Develop a Short Course in Film to National Council for Curriculum and Assessment guidelines for proposed Framework for Junior Cycle
- > Pilot a Film Club for Junior Cycle across a number of platforms such as Video-on-Demand (VOD)
- > Work with the Encountering the Arts lobbying group to ensure the implementation of the proposed Charter for Arts Education
- > Consolidate film education networks nationwide
- > Contribute to raising the profile of Modern Languages through our film tours by forging new partnerships and exploring young audiences for Chinese language films

## Medium Term

- > Deliver a further research document on media education and media usage in Ireland among 12-13 year olds in conjunction with the BAI
- > Develop a Module for Continuing Professional Development for teachers in film and media literacy to support the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
- > Bring Irish film into the classroom through collaboration with IFB/BSÉ media hub
- > Explore the possibilities for a collaborative project in digital media and young people with The Ark





**EACH CHILD AND ADULT HAS THE  
OPPORTUNITY FOR CREATIVE  
EXPRESSION AND THE WILL AND  
THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE  
AT EVERY LEVEL AND IN EVERY WAY**