

## MEDIA RELEASE

22 March 2016

### Artists in the classroom add up for SA teachers

Artists are working alongside teachers in South Australian classrooms as part of an innovative program which encourages primary school students to take a more creative and physical approach to learning maths.

The Creative and Body Based Learning (CBL) program has been developed by Carclew, the Department of Education and Child Development, the University of South Australia, the University of Texas and Arts Rich Together and involves 11 professional artists working with teachers at nine metropolitan schools. The program has the capacity to engage 800 students at these schools.

Led by Assistant Professor Kathryn Dawson from The University of Texas at Austin who has overseen the establishment of a similar long term initiative in the US, the program aims to get students to apply a more creative approach to maths by training teachers in drama-based approach to learning.

The artists involved have been selected by Carclew and have backgrounds in areas such as theatre, visual arts, dance and a have demonstrated commitment to working in schools. They help produce lesson plans and bring them to life.

“Drama-based instruction, or CBL, is where artists and teachers come together to make learning more physical and engaging. It can be used in many ways, for example to explore a new concept or theme or check for knowledge,” Assistant Prof Dawson said.

“We know drama-based instruction generates and cultivates many cognitive skills, including creative decision making capabilities, critical thinking skills, and improves language and communication. It gets students away from their desk and learning with their body.”

Last year, a successful pilot program based on CBL, called Spotlight, was trialed in two SA schools. It received positive feedback from teachers, who reported a change in disengaged students’ attitudes towards maths and a faster uptake of mathematical language and concepts.

Carclew Chief Executive Tricia Walton, said her organisation is keen to advance drama-based instruction in SA and believes creativity is at the heart of all learning.

“If you have an environment where children can play, question, experiment, explore, create scenarios and explore different opportunities and it’s something across the state, then in 20 years’ time, we’ll have a state that’s outstanding,” Ms Walton said.

“These are the things that underpin innovation and this program is something we ultimately want to see implemented throughout the state.

“Using the whole body to learn in a creative and active way has been shown to improve interest in learning.

There is evidence from the research in Austin that critical success markers such as school attendance and completion are also improved.”

Schools taking part in the program, which will run throughout the year, include Alberton Primary School, Lonsdale Heights Primary, O’Sullivan’s Beach Primary, Modbury Primary, Christie Downs Primary, Hackham West Primary, Modbury West Primary, John Hartley Primary and Swallowcliffe Primary.

Alberton Primary School Principal Andrew Plastow said the program had provided teachers with simple but effective engagement tools to use with children and a host of other learning resources.

“In its infancy the program has certainly been helpful as an engagement tool and through observing some of the experiences first hand, the kinesthetic learning involved is sure to improve the retention of concepts and skills learned by the children,” Mr Plastow said.

“The benefit for the school in taking part has been the sharing from the teachers directly involved but it has also developed additional connections for the school and this connectivity is crucial in our ability to sustain the vast diversity of approaches to learning that we do.”

Modbury Primary School Year 5/6 teacher Katie Blyth said taking part in the pilot program last year and again this year has resulted in positive changes in students.

“Students are more enthusiastic with their learning in Maths and willing to share and discuss their learning, demonstrating a depth of understanding of mathematical concepts and their relevance to real world problem solving,” Mrs Blyth said.

“Teachers have been very willing to embrace new learning and take risks, sharing the teaching and learning process and developing understanding and cohesion across the school.”

Artist Eliza Lovell took part in the 2015 pilot program at Modbury Primary School, where she used the CBL method to teach students topics such as time, fractions and resonance. Eliza is bringing her expertise to three schools in 2016.

“People often think of maths and art as two very separate things, when in actual fact they’re closely aligned. Maths is a lot more creative than people believe and you apply a similar process to an arts practice and a maths practice,” she said.

“What I found last year was that the students were having so much fun, they didn’t realise they were doing maths. Their whole attitude towards it changed.”

**For further media information please contact:**

**Callie Watson**

**Michels Warren PR**

**ph: 08 8267 6888**

**email: [cwatson@micwar.com.au](mailto:cwatson@micwar.com.au)**