

INTRODUCING THE TEACHERS AS ART PRACTITIONERS PROJECT: A VISION OF CREATIVITY AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



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TAPs: Cultivating Creativity in Education

At the core of our school community is a deep commitment to fostering lifelong learning, well-being, collaboration, inclusivity and creativity. With these values in mind, the Teachers as Arts Practitioners (TAPs) Continued Professional Learning (CPL) Programme at Patana has been launched.

TAPs refers to teachers who engage in artistic practices either professionally or as a hobby, integrating their artistic pursuits outside the classroom into their teaching ethos and seeing both as complementary to their 'artist-teacher' identity. Much research demonstrates the invaluable impact that artists in schools have on students: current engagement in the arts fosters personal well-being, strengthens community connections and enriches pedagogical approaches.

Launched in May 2024, the TAPs Project is a whole-school programme designed to empower business and academic staff to embrace their creative hobbies or professional engagement in the arts. Through curated exhibitions, TAPs celebrates staff artistic talents, fostering creative practices and cross-disciplinary connections regardless of their role in the school community. Whether in writing, painting, performance, music or any form

of artistic expression, participants are encouraged to channel their passions into artistic outputs, driven by motivation and accountability.

Vision and Aims: Empowering Educators to Create

TAPs is built on four pillars - **creativity, craft, connection** and **community** that promotes sustainable artistic habits for personal and professional growth inside and outside the school environment.

The programme aims to:

- Cultivate creativity for well-being
- Nurture engagement in a craft
- Foster cross-discipline connections among colleagues
- Build community relationships through exhibitions
- Showcase staff talents locally and internationally
- Establish teachers as passionate experts in their craft and fields
- Share personal stories through research and conferences.

Currently, nearly 40 passionate staff are actively involved in creative projects, supporting one another in this vibrant, collaborative community.



Origins: Rooted in Groundbreaking Research

Originated in 2012 as a pioneering research project at Melbourne University by Associate Professor Dr. Wesley Imms and myself, the TAPs Project tracks the impact of artistic practice on well-being, school community connections and teaching performance.

Initially focused on visual arts teachers, TAPs has grown into an international platform embracing educators from all disciplines. Sustained by its supportive workshops and exhibitions, TAPs motivates teachers to maintain an active arts practise outside the classroom, proving that passionate teachers also actively 'do' and excel in their craft.

Findings from the project have contributed to global discussions of integrating creative practices in education through published peer-reviewed journals, international conferences and keynotes.

Championing Artistic Practices

As the TAPs Project Lead and Exhibition Curator, my goal is to empower the creative potential of business and academic staff who engage in artistic practice, providing a platform to explore their creative talents while enriching their professional development, enabling them to thrive as artists and educators.

As a passionate advocate in the transformative power of the arts to cultivate a sense of belonging within school environments, I am also a spoken word poet, author, artist and researcher into 'teaching and artistic practice.' In 2018, I delivered a TEDx Talk highlighting the value of embracing teachers' diverse

talents. I have seen how personal or professional engagement in a craft you are passionate about inspires innovative teaching approaches, artistic practice and well-being. I wanted to bring TAPs to Patana as the first international TAPs exhibition to nurture creative growth and motivate staff art-making through evidence-based research on the benefits of creative practice in schools.

Artistic Motivations: Research Insights and Reflections

As an action research, TAPs creatives participate in ongoing reflection through surveys, video interviews and exhibitions to inform professional development approaches.

Preliminary findings from the latest pre-exhibition survey reveal that over 66% of participants believe artistic production enhances teaching, promoting students' self-confidence, risk-taking, collaboration and inspiring innovative classroom approaches. Participants feel more connected to their passions and integrate creativity into lessons, boosting student engagement. Additionally, 60% would like to see greater support for utilising the arts for well-being in schools, 91% expressed a desire to maintain or begin a consistent art-making routine, and 86% wish to think more creatively to foster innovative practices at work. When asked about their ultimate goals in participating in the CPL programme, participants shared personal and professional aspirations, such as:

"To experiment, develop and be able to apply the artwork that we create to my professional work at school."





"To bring creativity back into my life and build routines where I make time to commit to art-making."

These insights highlight the clear benefits of creative programmes like TAPs on well-being and professional development.

Building Momentum: Fostering Creative Connections Through CPL Workshops

Over the course of the project, TAPs creatives participate in three 'Learning 4 Learners' workshops designed to spark intentions, foster connections, share inspirations, celebrate progress and support each other in achieving exhibition goals.

Workshop #1: Introduction to the TAPs CPL Programme

Our first workshop in May 2024 ignited creativity as participants shared their exhibition intentions and celebrated a rich variety of artistic practices—ranging from textiles, photography, painting, music, embroidery and creative writing to sculpture and filmmaking—while focusing on sustaining artistic production amidst busy schedules. Participants explored creative influences, brainstormed ideas and developed draft vision boards and initial action plans.

Workshop #2: Sharing Our Creative Journeys So Far

In our second workshop (September 2024), staff showcased their artworks in progress from the summer and reflected on how these experiences are influencing their professional practices. This dynamic atmosphere encouraged discussion of artist

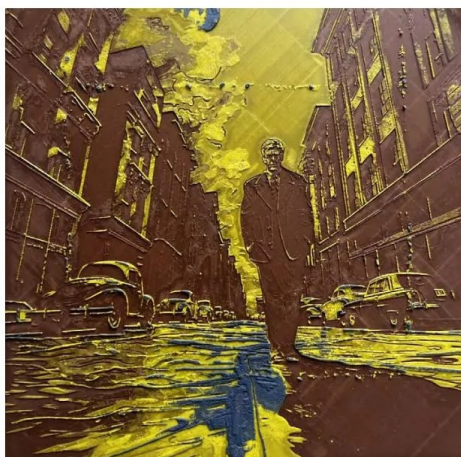
successes and challenges, whilst advancing towards exhibition goals and written artist statements, which explains their work and concept. It's inspiring to witness the vibrant exchange of ideas across departments and faculties.

Our third workshop in January celebrates our final creations, with participants sharing their artist statements and reflecting on their growth during the CPL programme, ahead of the exhibition launch!

Throughout, many participants have been enthusiastically sharing updates on experiments, triumphs and sources of inspiration on our MS Teams channel.

"Despite being busy, I enjoy connecting with other TAPs members, sharing our artwork and passions. The supportive environment encourages me to experiment and think outside the box. The feedback has improved my skills and boosted my confidence to explore new materials and styles." - **Arunee Sribhibhadh, Secondary Thai Teacher**

"Meeting with other like minded professionals has helped me 'bridge some gaps' within the HUGE Patana community - as a Year 3 teacher, we never really venture outside of our own little world, so it's been an amazing opportunity to meet some new faces! We all share the same urge to create, so it's fun to just get together!" - **Ian McDonald, Year 3 Class Teacher**



Sathita K.
15 September 2024 12:17 pm



From Inspiration to Creation: Artistic Practice in Progress

One of the most exciting aspects of TAPs is the diverse range of creative work emerging from the programme, which will culminate in an inaugural exhibition. The wider community will be invited to view these creations, spanning visual art, photography, filmmaking, creative writing and more, showcasing exploration, learning and sometimes stepping outside comfort zones.

"I have enjoyed the time to focus on my own creative work and it has been rewarding to share my ideas and progress with others. The final exhibition helps to keep focussed. I am sharing my progress with my classes, so they can see me going through the same steps and challenges as them." - **Ross Corker, Curriculum Leader Arts, Secondary Art Teacher**

"Over the ten years I have been sewing, I thought I was the only one happily practising the craft. When I met the other participants at TAPs, I got the idea that my fabric can reflect Thai tradition and identity, so I started to create items using Thai Fabrics. It's beautiful, unique and represents the Thai Heritage that I am very proud of." - **Sathita Kitcharoenthumrong, General Librarian, Secondary**

Patana Canvases: Inaugural Exhibition

We are thrilled to announce our inaugural International TAPs Exhibition, **"Patana Canvases: Unveiling the Artistic Practices of Our Community,"** running from **Wednesday, 29th January**

to Friday, 7th February 2025 at the **Exhibition Hall, Arts Centre**. The launch party will be held on **Friday, 31st January**.

This exciting event will feature a curated showcase of our staff's incredible artistic talents across mediums, reflecting their personal and professional journeys. Join us to celebrate creativity and enable artists the opportunity to present their work to the whole school community, along with a published exhibition catalogue that highlights their diverse inspirations and contributions.

Embracing the Transformative Power of the Arts

In its inaugural year, TAPs has not only inspired participants to create but also forged meaningful connections among like-minded creatives. What is truly rewarding is witnessing how art transcends barriers of language and culture, uniting individuals from diverse departments and backgrounds through the shared joy of creativity.

As we reflect, it's essential to consider how we can nurture artistic pursuits and further embed a dynamic culture of creativity and collaboration within our educational environment. We should explore how the power of arts can build a harmonious balance between teaching, work, art-making, and our individual lives. Through innovative ideas and shared experiences, we can unlock new pathways for growth as creatives, enhancing well-being and new connections.

You can stay updated on our project through the TAPs newsletter and school communication channels.

