



Impact Evaluation of Terrapin's Schools Touring Program

January 2022





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Patternmakers is a research agency specialising in culture, creativity and community. We believe in the power of insight to help good causes grow their impact. For any questions, please contact Tandi Palmer Williams, Managing Director on tandi@thepatternmakers.com.au. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

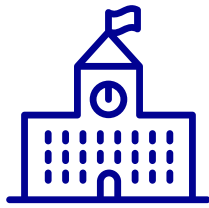
TERRAPIN SCHOOLS TOURING PROGRAM

Key Facts



158,952

student attendances at Terrapin school performances since 2005



85%

of Tasmanian primary and combined schools have participated in the program



94%

of teachers participating in the evaluation are satisfied with Terrapin overall



98%

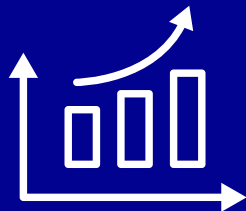
of 390 students reflecting on the program said they had positive experiences

2021 Access Program



19 out of 20

schools accepted the invitation to participate in the 2021 Access Program



4,261

additional students reached, enabled by support from Blundstone



80%

of students participating in the Access Program want to see another performance



100%

of teachers believe Terrapin improves student creative thinking, ability to express empathy and communication skills



Executive Summary

Background

This report documents an evaluation of Terrapin's schools touring program

For 40 years, Terrapin has toured new works to primary schools across Tasmania, bringing live puppet theatre to thousands of children.

In 2019, it commissioned an evaluation to understand its impact in Tasmanian schools and identify opportunities to continue improving the program for the benefit of students, teachers and the broader Tasmanian community.

Working with arts research agency Patternmakers, it identified two key research objectives:

- ▶ Understand the experiences of students, teachers and schools engaging with the schools touring program and how they may vary across different socio-economic environments
- ▶ Explore the value of puppet theatre in creating active citizens and the role that Terrapin's schools touring program plays in fostering Tasmanian creativity.

This findings are based on research with 390 students and 61 teachers

Patternmakers and Terrapin staff worked together to design the evaluation methodology, including student reflection worksheets, stakeholder interviews, analysis of bookings data and a survey of teachers.

A first, pilot phase of data collection was undertaken in 2019, and an interim report was prepared, highlighting several areas for further investigation.

The fieldwork was extended in 2021 to explore the impact of the program at a broader range of Tasmanian schools. It also investigated the extent to which a new Access Program, which helps overcome financial barriers to engagement for some schools, is delivering impacts for students, teachers and Tasmania's creative life.

Ethical approval for the project was provided by the University of Tasmania's Human Research Ethics Committee, and the Department of Education provided approval for fieldwork to be conducted in five primary schools.



Key findings

The program has enabled over 150,000 students to experience Tasmanian performing arts

Historical bookings data shows that Terrapin has performed to between 5,000 and 20,000 Tasmanian students each year, totalling 158,952 student attendances since 2005. The program has toured to 197 different schools, including around 85% of all primary and combined schools.

Survey data shows that the main motivation for teachers to book a Terrapin performance is to provide their students with the opportunity to experience a professional performing arts production. As one teacher noted,

'A lot of Tasmanian schools are in regional and remote areas and don't have access to the types of performances that Terrapin presents, so introducing students (at any age) to such performances is always valuable.'

Teachers also expressed their interest in exposing students to the state's own creators and stories. For some, they feel it allows young people to feel a sense of ownership over Terrapin and gain awareness of the possibilities for exploring a career in the arts.

Terrapin builds students' skills in communication and creative thinking

Teachers believe that Terrapin facilitates the development of a number of skills and capacities in students, as one teacher described, 'Literacy, expressive oral, body and facial language sensory connections, interesting language exposure.'

The vast majority of the 61 teachers responding to the survey report that Terrapin delivers on the arts curriculum, encouraging students to interpret artistic forms (97%), but also helps develop soft skills in students, such as respectful listening (93%).

Most teachers also agree that Terrapin encourages students to express their curiosity (96%), be open to new ideas (95%), and demonstrate creative thinking (92%), which are key skills in demand by employers and identified in grey literature as critical to the future of work.¹

¹ Lewis (2019) 'The Most In-Demand Hard and Soft Skills of 2019' <https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/trends-and-research/2018/the-most-in-demand-hard-and-soft-skills-of-2018>.



94% of teachers are satisfied and 90% are repeat bookers

Based on historical post-show survey data, half of teachers rated Terrapin performances as 10 out of 10, and 93% were positive overall. Similarly, new survey data collected for this evaluation reveals that 94% of teachers are satisfied with the program overall.

The majority of teachers who responded to the survey have seen more than one Terrapin performance (90%) — confirming a strong repeat booking rate.

Aspects of the experience that are highly valued by teachers include the professionalism of the actors (98% satisfied), the originality of the performance (98%) and the quality of the production (95%). Additionally, 80% of respondents believe that Terrapin makes Tasmania a better place to live.

While most teachers are satisfied with the level of student engagement during the performance (92% satisfied), results for one previous tour, 'You and Me and the Space Between' in 2016 which had fewer interactive or 'live' elements, was considered by some as less engaging. Opportunities for student interaction, including the post-show Q&A, are seen as highly beneficial and help students make meaning from their experiences.

Puppetry offers a unique medium for urgent conversations

While some teachers wonder at the level of comprehension by younger students, reflection worksheets collected from 390 students confirm that Terrapin productions prompt most students to think and talk about important topics. The 2019 production of 'Egg' sparked conversations about climate change and leadership, while the 2021 tour of 'Scaredy Cat' prompted students to think about bullying, mental health and overcoming fear.

Most teachers agree that Terrapin allows students to reflect on important issues in a safe way (90%). For instance, Terrapin's 2018 work 'A Not So Traditional Story' engaged a new generation of Tasmanian Aboriginal performing artists to renew, share and celebrate Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and identity. One person reflected, 'Wrapped up in a very entertaining and high-quality arts event, there were very strong messages. It had strong understandings for students about Tasmania's history, relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and what that means. It was using humour as a way to talk about subjects that can be hard, giving students a way in.'

In terms of future works, this evaluation confirms the importance of themes tackled in productions and even suggests a case for Terrapin to engage directly with young people to identify urgent conversations that are important to them.



Two-thirds of schools visited by Terrapin are disadvantaged, but very disadvantaged schools are more likely to miss out

17 According to the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA), 68% of schools visited by Terrapin from 2005 to 2019 were classified as disadvantaged or very disadvantaged (122 in total).

However, compared to the distribution of all Tasmanian schools, very disadvantaged schools were more likely to miss out, compared to advantaged and very advantaged schools. In addition, very advantaged schools booked a relatively higher number of performances.

Some teachers who hadn't experienced the Terrapin program recently shared that booking costs prevented their participation. This is considered particularly relevant for rural schools. One teacher mentioned, 'Whilst not in a rural school, I have taught in a number and cost is by far the biggest hurdle.'

A new Access Program helped overcome financial barriers for 19 schools, enabling an additional 4,000 students to participate

In 2021, Terrapin partnered with Blundstone on a new Access Program to extend the reach of the Scaredy Cat tour. Out of 20 schools invited to participate, and offered performances at no cost to the school, 19 accepted, confirming cost as a key barrier for disadvantaged schools in accessing Terrapin performances.

Six teachers responded to an online survey after the performance and generally shared gratitude for participating in the program. All 6 (100%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience and would recommend Terrapin. Some noted the benefits of having the tour come to their schools, which were located in some remote parts of the state.

The six teachers agreed that the experience provided a range of positive outcomes for students, including that it fosters curiosity and imagination, introduces performing arts concepts to students for the first time and broadens the range of possibilities for exploring future creative careers.



There are indications that students participating in the Access Program experienced even higher positive impacts

Data collected from students through reflection worksheets highlights the positive impact of the Access Program – and while the sample size is small, it suggests that in some ways the benefits for students may be even more profound than for the main schools touring program.

When reflecting on how they felt after seeing Scaredy Cat, the majority of Access Program students reported positive feelings (93%). Further, compared to other students participating in the evaluation in 2021, Access Program students were more likely to circle positive emotions, such as excited (62%, compared to 40%), funny (60%, compared to 48%), relaxed (44%, compared to 22%) and inspired (25%, compared to 9%).

Worksheet data reveals that despite the non-verbal quality of Scaredy Cat, it inspired students to contemplate ideas such as bravery and overcoming their fears.

Satisfaction among students is very high (98%) and 8 in 10 (80%) said they would like to see another Terrapin performance in future.

Conclusions

Continuing the Access Program could unlock even greater impacts

Overall, evidence suggests that Terrapin is playing an important role in Tasmania's creative life, allowing many students to experience the performing arts for the first time and delivering high-quality experiences to students across the state.

Data collected from both teachers and students confirms that puppetry is a captivating medium with a unique ability to present complex, sensitive topics in a non-threatening way, allowing young people to engage in urgent conversations.

There appears to be a strong case for further investment to ensure all Tasmanian children have equal opportunity to experience high-quality performances, and engage with urgent conversations in this unique way.

There is also an opportunity for Terrapin to adapt its productions and Teacher Notes for students with special needs, to ensure that access needs are addressed and all students can enjoy, and benefit from, performances.



The 2021 Access Program represents an important step in improving access to cultural experiences for disadvantaged Tasmanian students. With data suggesting that the experience delivers even greater benefits to participating schools, there is a compelling opportunity to continue the program in future years.

Theatre skills workshops can further the experience for students

Alongside continuing its work to broaden the reach of its touring program, there is also an opportunity for Terrapin to diversify its offerings and provide pathways to students to further their interest in performing arts.

Many teachers selected 'delivering theatre skills workshops for students' as the most important opportunity for Terrapin to explore in future (62%). As one teacher mentioned, 'I think it would be wonderful for the students to be able to learn some of the skills and have more time to talk about how the artists came to be doing what they are doing.'

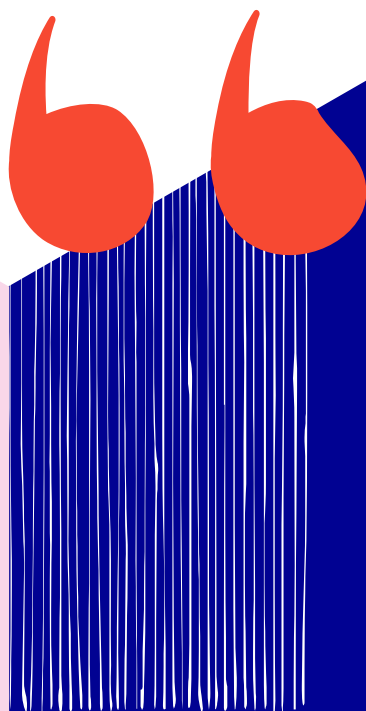
Some students also felt inspired to learn about the behind-the-scenes aspects of the production, sharing that they are curious about how puppets are made, and potential careers in acting.

As further impacts unfold, future research may shine a light on the ultimate community impact of the program

Terrapin appears to be uniquely placed to deliver public value through tackling topical issues, and to contribute to 'brand Tasmania' through the telling of unique and different stories.

This evaluation confirms the case for the company to be bold and ambitious in its schools touring work — and to engage directly with young people in identifying topics that they want to talk about. Formative experiences such as these have the power to inspire a new generation of creative arts workers, who are ready to tackle urgent issues.

As the ultimate community impact of the program unfolds in coming years, there is an opportunity for further research to explore the wider community impact of Terrapin, for instance gathering data from adults who experienced Terrapin's work as children, and from those who experience Terrapin's work in community settings.



'All Terrapin performances are professional, thought-provoking, funny and educational.

The creativity is extraordinary, and every performance never fails to entertain or demonstrate artistic creativity.

If you can make the teachers laugh as well, then it's a winner.'

Teacher

Terrapin teacher survey





1 Introduction

Background

About Terrapin

Operating for over 40 years, Terrapin is Australia's premier contemporary puppetry company, creating world-class visual theatre performances for young people and their families. Terrapin is the only professional contemporary theatre company in Tasmania and the largest employer of Tasmanian artists working in the creation and presentation of theatre.

Renowned for fusing puppetry with modern technology, Terrapin creates work for theatres and interactive installations for public spaces, telling important stories with humour and warmth.

In 2021, Terrapin was selected to join the National Performing Arts Framework, recognising the very company's high artistic quality and importance to Australia's cultural life.

Terrapin's schools touring program

As a core activity, each year Terrapin develops and premieres a new work to tour Tasmanian schools, providing students all across the State with high quality contemporary puppet theatre. In some parts of the state where no formal arts venues exist, a Terrapin show may be the first experience of live theatre for many children.

Terrapin believes that every child in Tasmania, no matter where they live, deserves a theatre experience equal to those living in large cities around the country.

Terrapin's strategic priorities

According to Terrapin's Strategic Plan 2020–2024, the company intends to explore beyond the borders of contemporary puppetry, engaging with the most urgent conversations of our time in works for children and families.

Over the four years, the company aims to:

- ▶ Undertake processes of sustained artistic exploration to make unique works of theatre of adaptable scale;



- ▶ Reach as many Tasmanians as possible, increasing the company's community audiences through the presentation of popular and accessible work in public space;
- ▶ Provide more opportunities for Tasmanian artists by building its presence and reputation in differentiated markets locally, nationally and internationally; and
- ▶ Increase its organisational capacity to deliver its vision by increasing and solidifying investment, diversifying income and increasing human resources.²

The opportunity for evaluation

Evaluation objectives

In 2019, Terrapin Puppet Theatre commissioned arts research agency Patternmakers to undertake an evaluation of its Schools Touring Program.

With the company celebrating its 40th year in 2021, it wanted to gather evidence about its impacts on Tasmanian schools, students and teachers.

Through this evaluation, Terrapin specifically aimed to:

- ▶ Explore the impact of Terrapin's Schools Touring Program on students, teachers and schools
- ▶ Analyse the particular effects of puppet theatre on creating active citizens
- ▶ Understand how the program impacts may vary across different socio-economic environments
- ▶ Evidence Terrapin's role in Tasmania's cultural imagination
- ▶ Gather insight about how to improve the program and identify opportunities.

Evaluation framework

Program logic or 'theory of change'

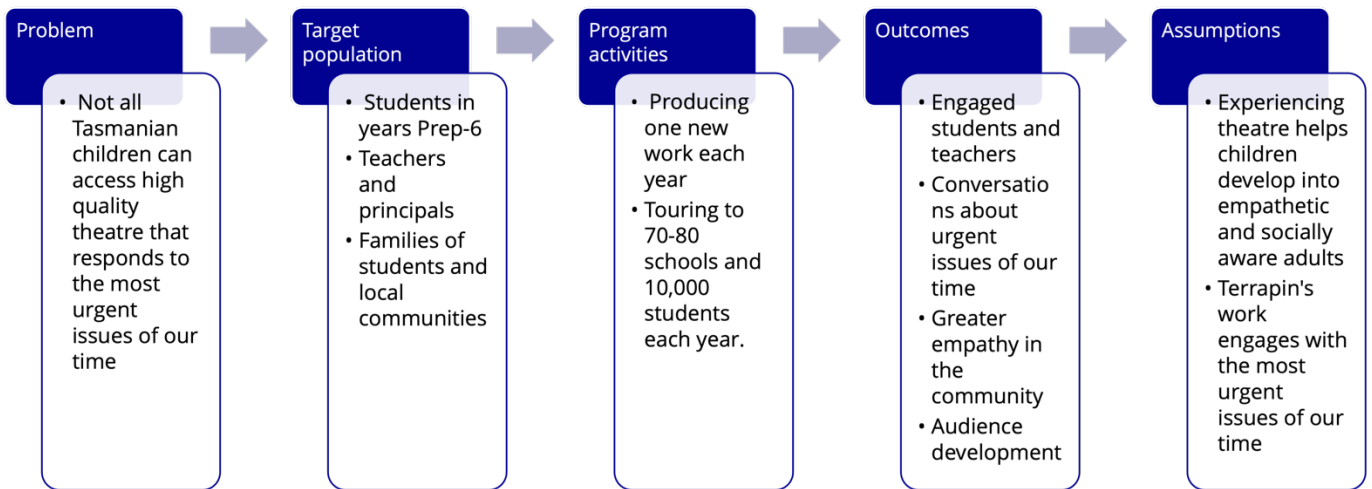
In 2019, a co-design workshop was held to establish a framework for the evaluation and ensure that decisions about the methodology were made in a manner that was appropriate for teachers, students and stakeholders.

² Terrapin Strategic Plan 2020–2024



Terrapin and Patternmakers explored a Program Logic model for the Schools Touring Program. Program logic and theory of change models are tools from the world of social policy, which aim to map the relationship between program activities and the intended outcomes of the program.

The summary points emerging from the discussion included the following:



Areas of enquiry

The key areas of enquiry for the evaluation were agreed (see below), along with an overall evaluation question: what is the impact of the Schools Touring Program on schools, teachers and students?

Areas of enquiry	Evaluation questions
Reach and accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How many students participate each year? ▶ What is the reach of the program across the State? ▶ How can the organisation help more schools become involved?



Areas of enquiry	Evaluation questions
<p>Student and teacher engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How engaged are students with Terrapin performances? ▶ What causes teachers to book Terrapin more than once? ▶ What does Terrapin offer that can't be accessed elsewhere?
<p>Impact on students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How do Terrapin performances impact student skills and interests? ▶ What factors drive that impact? Do they vary across different demographics and communities? ▶ To what extent should Terrapin meet curriculum-based learning outcomes?
<p>Tasmanian community impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What is the perception of Terrapin among different stakeholder groups? ▶ To what extent is Terrapin addressing community needs? ▶ How is Terrapin contributing to or sparking urgent conversations in the community? ▶ Is Terrapin's Schools Touring Program making Tasmania a better place?



Areas of enquiry	Evaluation questions
Future opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How might Terrapin pioneer new knowledge for others to learn from? ▶ Can evidence help to develop new partners and funders for the organisation, or increase support from partners such as the Department of Education (TAS)? ▶ How could Terrapin work better with community groups and partners? ▶ What further research could help Terrapin understand its ultimate impact in the Tasmanian community?

Methodology

Project phases

Patternmakers worked with Terrapin staff to administer the evaluation in two key phases:

- **Phase 1, involving:** Planning and co-design, pilot fieldwork and interim reporting ([Terrapin Impact Evaluation Interim Report](#))
- **Phase 2, involving:** Acquiring ethical approval and permission to conduct research in additional schools, fieldwork and final analysis and reporting.

Fieldwork – Phase 1

In 2019, data was collected from over 167 people through interviews, an observation and an online survey. Data from 270 past survey respondents was also analysed.

This included:

Qualitative research:

- ▶ 6 x Terrapin stakeholder interviews with:
 - Marcus Murphy, Terrapin, The20
 - Mel King, Terrapin



- David Sudmalis, Arts Tasmania
- Annette Downs, community arts leader
- Mary Harvey, Arts Centre Melbourne
- Jane Polley, Department of Education Tasmania
- ▶ 2 x teacher interviews with:
 - Andrew Cole, Flinders Island School
 - Rosemary Evenhuis, Mount Stuart Primary School
- ▶ Observation of 1 performance at Launceston Preparatory School and facilitation of a reflection worksheet exercise with 109 students.

Quantitative research & analysis:

- ▶ Analysis of bookings data from 2005 – 2019
- ▶ An online survey of 34 teachers participating in the 2019 program (a response rate of 8%)
- ▶ Analysis of 270 past post-show teacher survey responses.

Fieldwork – Phase 2

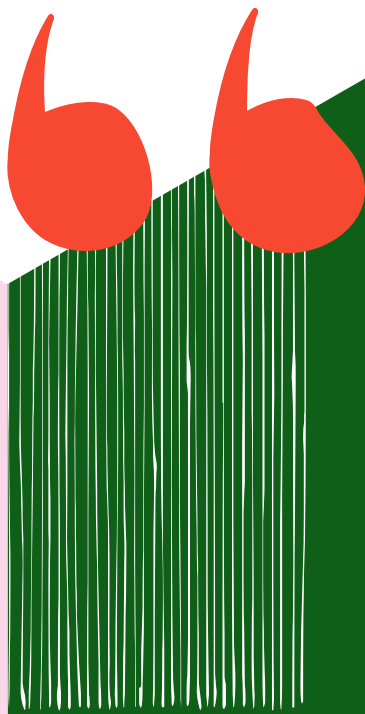
The objective of this phase was to expand the evaluation to hear from a larger number, and broader range, of students and teachers participating in the program.

As the research involved conducting research in Tasmanian government primary schools, the expanded reach of the project was subject to ethical approval from a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and permission from the Department of Education (DoE).

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Tasmania (UTas) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) on 25 August 2021. Departmental permission was granted on 7 September 2021.

Fieldwork in Phase 2 of the project included:

- ▶ Further survey administration, to collect quantitative data from a larger number of teachers, including 6 teachers participating in the 2021 Access Program
- ▶ 1 x interview with Terrapin staff
- ▶ 1 x group interview with the Scaredy Cat production cast and crew
- ▶ Collection of 281 additional student reflection worksheets from 5 primary schools.
- ▶ Further analysis of bookings data from 2005 – 2021.



We are a small school on an island and it is difficult for performers to come here, but Terrapin are always happy to, and present such wonderful productions.

Teacher
Terrapin teacher Survey





2 Reach and Access

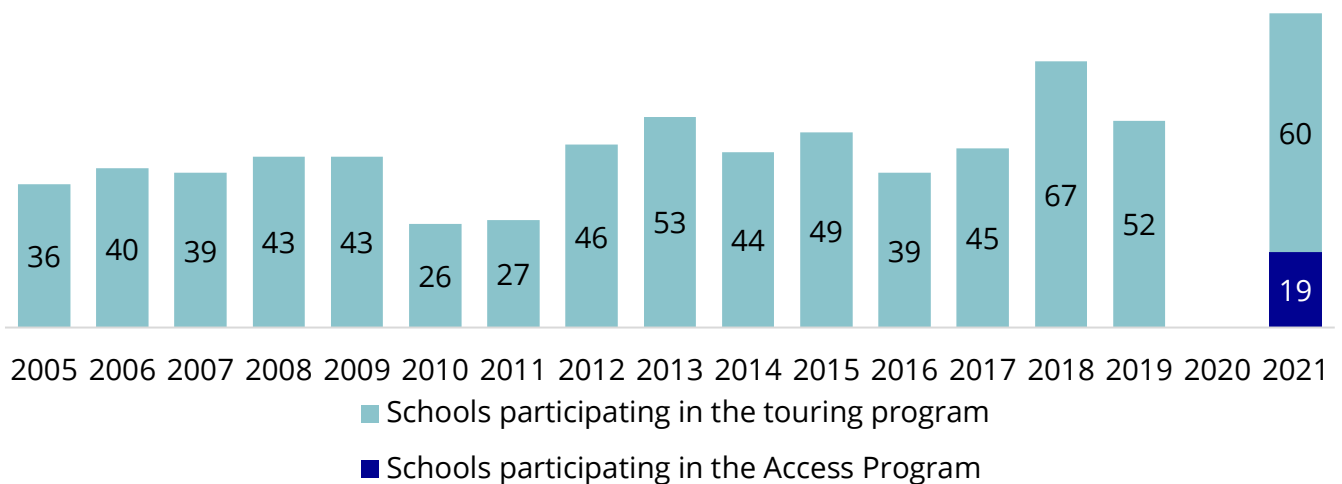
Schools participating

Terrapin has toured to 85% of Tasmanian primary schools since 2005

Historical bookings data from the Terrapin Schools Touring program was analysed to identify trends in participation between 2005 and 2021. Based on historical data from bookings made between 2005 and 2021, Terrapin has visited 197 schools, including 142 primary schools, 35 combined schools and 17 secondary schools. This represents 85% of all primary and combined schools, and 74% of all schools in Tasmania.³

Bookings data between 2005 and 2021 indicates that between 25 and 79 Tasmanian schools participated in the program each year. 2021 saw the program reach the largest number of schools in recent history, with an additional 19 schools able to participate due to Terrapin’s Access Program, supported by partner Blundstone (described later in this report).

Figure 1. Number of schools participating in the program from 2005 to present



³ Australian School Search 2015, ICSEA School Ranking in Tasmania, <http://house.speakingsame.com/topschool.php?type=3&sta=tas&year=0&filter=&suburb&page=1>.



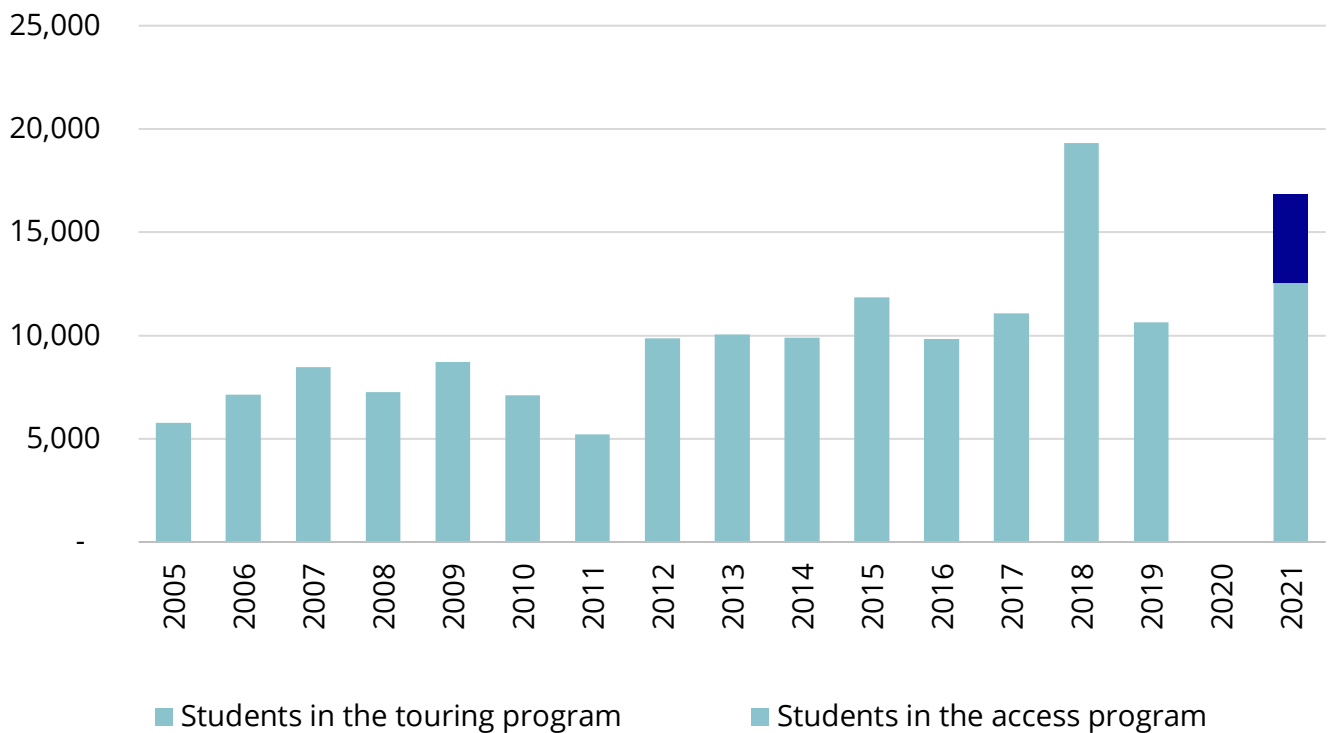
The program has delivered almost 160,000 professional theatre experiences for students since 2005

Between 5,000 and 20,000 students see a Terrapin production each year, reaching a total of 158,952 attendances since 2005.

Participation in the program peaked in 2018, when the company's production of *A Not So Traditional Story* reached over 19,309 students. This record level of participation can be in part attributed to the production's artistic success, which combined Terrapin's renowned skill with the voice of a new generation of Tasmanian Aboriginal performing artists, including Nathan Maynard, *The Season*. This unique production also secured additional funding, enabling Terrapin to reduce the price for schools to access the work.

Following a gap in touring during 2020, the program re-commenced in 2021 and reached 16,846 students, including 4,261 participating in the Access Program.

Figure 2. Number of attendances by students each year, 2005–2021





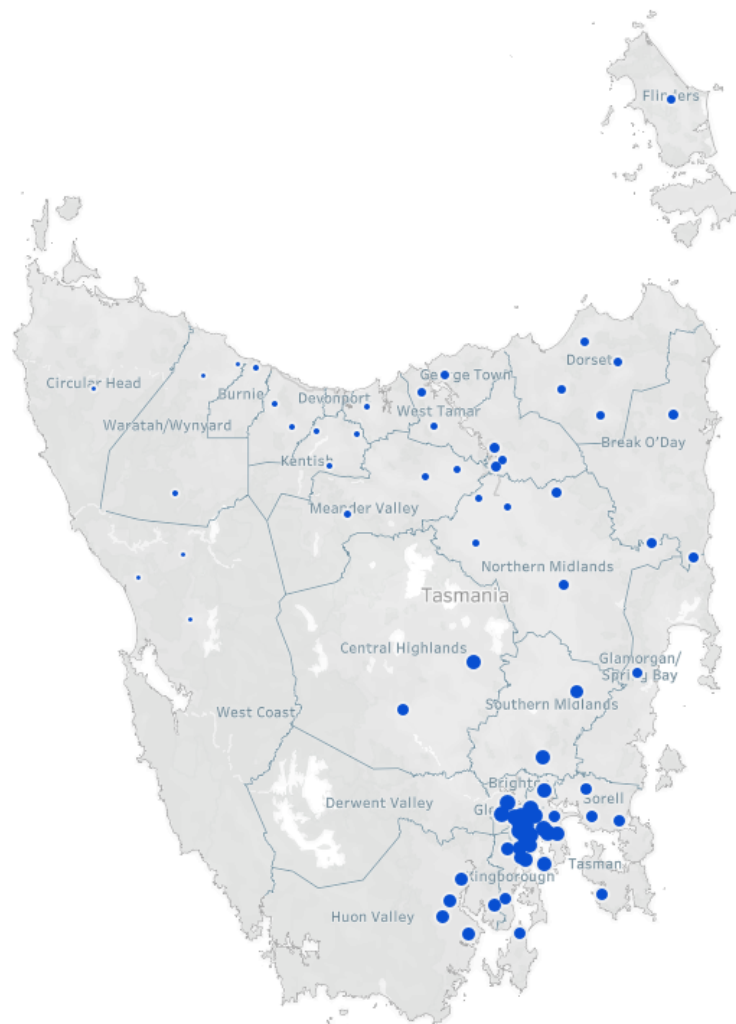
Remote schools are less likely to access performances

The map in Figure 3 displays the frequency of school visits per Tasmanian postcode during the period (2011 to 2019).

The size of each circle determines the frequency of bookings within that postcode, with larger circles indicating a higher frequency of visitation and smaller circles indicating a lower frequency of visitation.

Since 2011, the schools with a higher frequency of participation are located in Hobart, Launceston and Geeveston. Although Terrapin reaches a wide range of postcodes around Tasmania, schools located in remote parts of the State may not be accessing Terrapin productions as often, or at all.

Figure 3. Frequency of visits per post code, 2011–2021 (based on historical data)





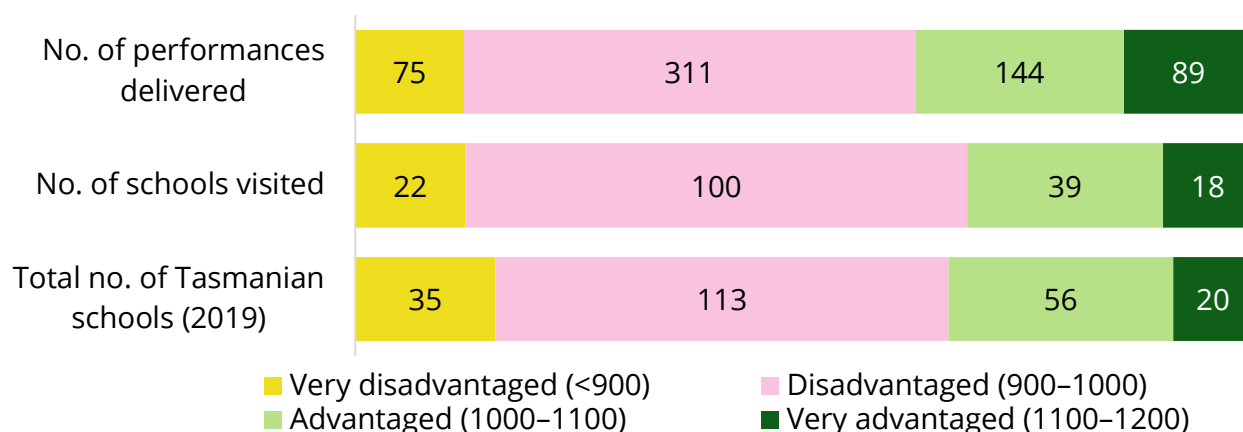
Terrapin is reaching many disadvantaged schools, but very disadvantaged schools are more likely to miss out

To understand the reach of the organisation into disadvantaged schools, Terrapin’s historical bookings data was analysed using the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).⁴ The distribution of schools visited, and number of performances are shown in the chart below, according to their 2019 ICSEA value: Very disadvantaged (below 900), Disadvantaged (900–1000), Advantaged (1000–1100) and Very advantaged (1100–1200).

Of the schools visited by Terrapin between 2005 and 2019, 68% were rated as disadvantaged or disadvantaged according to ICSEA rankings in 2019. However, when benchmarked with the total number of Tasmanian schools in each ICSEA category, it is clear that very disadvantaged schools are more likely to miss out on Terrapin tours. Furthermore, very advantaged schools are booking greater numbers of performances.

Figure 4 shows the ICSEA distribution of 179 schools visited by Terrapin (2005–2019), compared to the distribution of all Tasmanian schools, according to their ICSEA rating as of 2019. An additional 8 schools visited by Terrapin during the period were not assigned ICSEA rankings in 2019 and have been excluded from the charts.

Figure 4. Performances delivered, schools visited and total Tasmanian schools, by ICSEA category, 2005–2019



⁴ Created by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), ICSEA rankings correspond to the level socio-educational advantage, which take into account student-related factors and school-related factors. More information: https://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/About_icsea_2014.pdf.



This data confirms the opportunity for Terrapin to extend the reach of its tours into very disadvantaged schools and advocate for equity of access for all students to experience its work, regardless of their socio-educational background.

In 2021, a new Access Program worked to overcome financial barriers for disadvantaged schools

Terrapin partnered with Blundstone on a new Access Program to extend the reach of its 2021 tour of Scaredy Cat. Out of 20 schools invited to participate, and offered performances at no cost to the school, 19 accepted, confirming financial barriers to be the top factor preventing disadvantaged schools from accessing Terrapin performances.

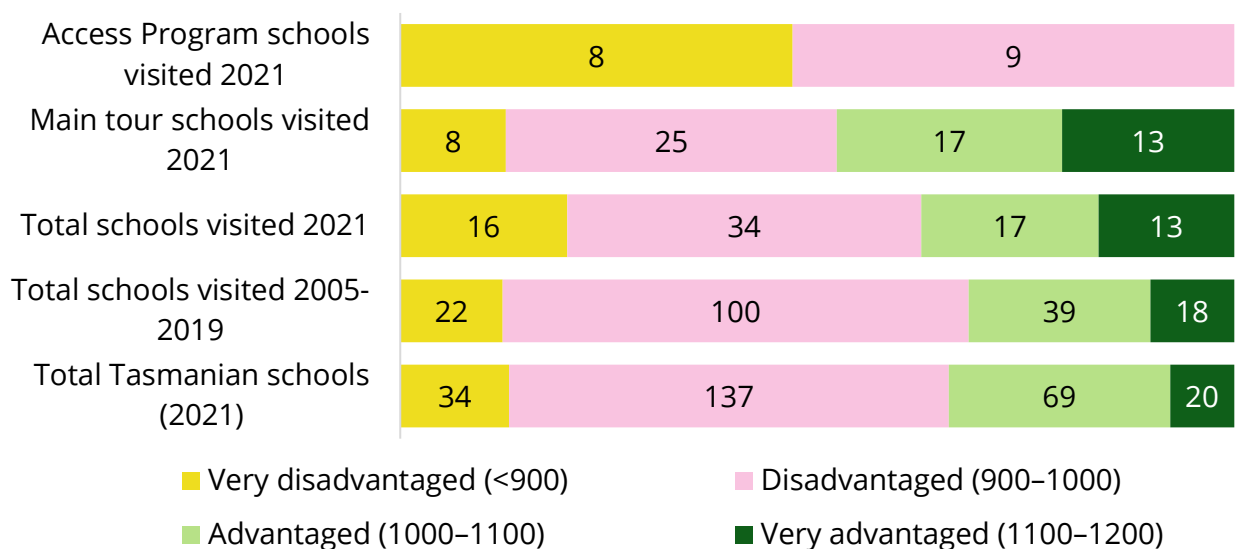
Of the 19 participating schools, 8 were classified as very disadvantaged in 2021 and 9 as disadvantaged (2 home school groups did not have ICSEA ratings).

As shown in Figure 5, the program enabled Terrapin to reach more disadvantaged schools in 2021, enabling an additional 4,000 students to participate.

However, overall disadvantaged schools remain slightly more likely to miss out, confirming the opportunity to continue addressing barriers to participation in future.

More details about the outcomes of the Access Program are included in a case study later in this report (Case study: Access Program).

Figure 5: Performances delivered, schools visited and total Tasmanian schools, by ICSEA category, 2005–2021





Motivations and awareness

Marketing and outreach to teachers are key to reaching more schools – and cost remains a key factor

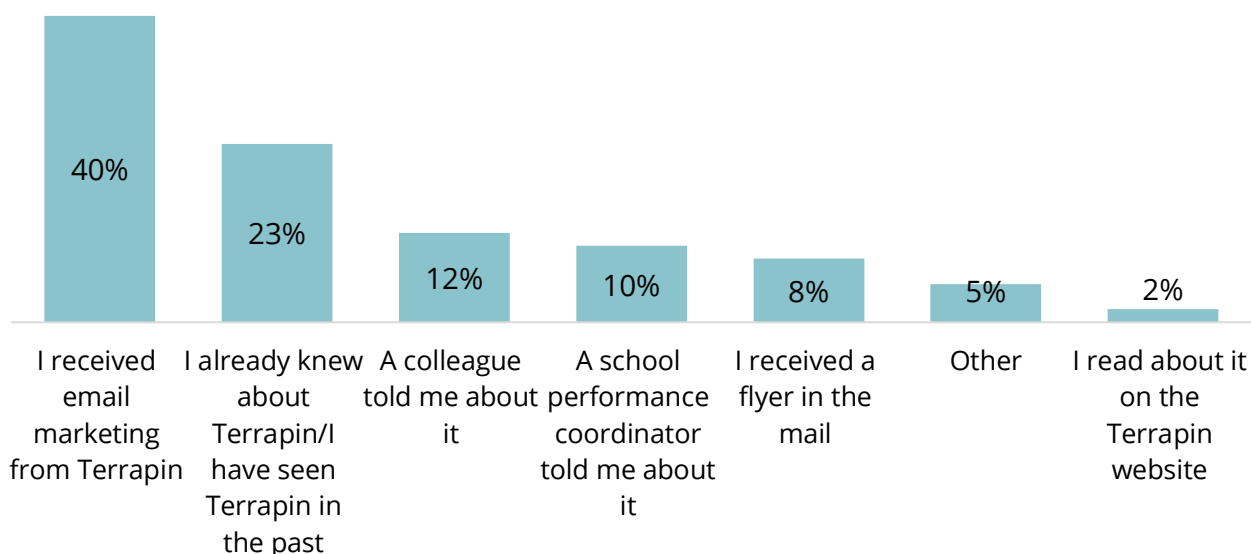
Teachers responding to the online survey were asked to share how they became aware of Terrapin’s school touring program from a list of options.

2 in 5 (40%) of teachers participating in the touring program said they heard about the program through email marketing from Terrapin, while one-quarter (23%) said they already knew about the program, or had seen a Terrapin performance in the past.

The majority of teachers who responded to the survey had seen more than one Terrapin performance (90%) — confirming a strong repeat booking rate. However, with most bookings coming from past participants, additional outreach may be required to reach new and lapsed schools.

Cost also appears to be a major barrier for some disadvantaged schools. One teacher explained, ‘Whilst not in a rural school, I have taught in a number and cost is by far the biggest hurdle’. The experience of the 2021 Access Program confirms that outreach, combined with financial support, has the power to significantly widen the reach of Terrapin’s work, and enable thousands more students to participate each year.

Figure 6. How did you first find out about the program? n=60





Teachers are motivated by the opportunity for students to experience performing arts

Teachers were invited to rank a range of factors that motivated them to participate in the performance, in order from least important to most important.

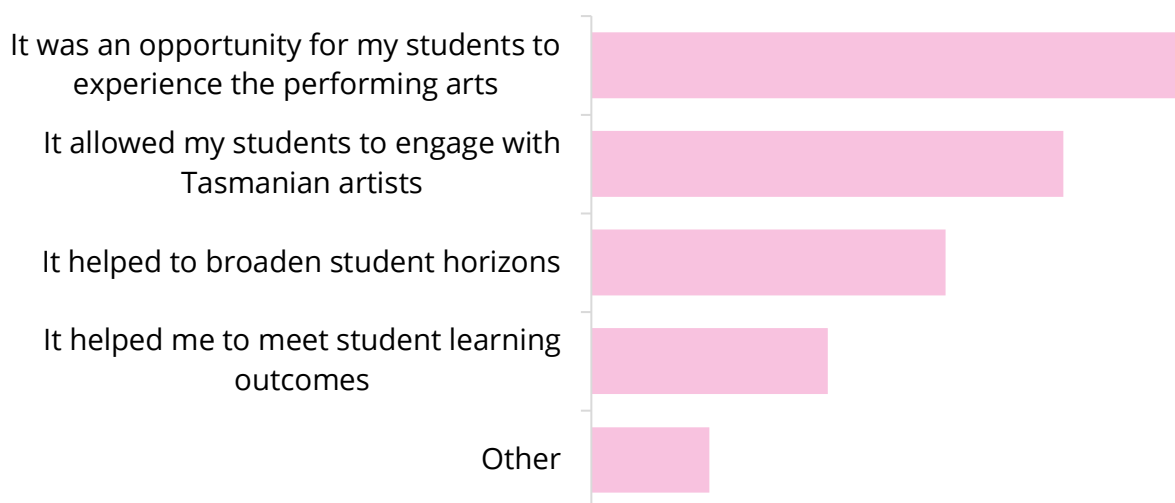
That Terrapin was an opportunity for their students to experience the performing arts was most often ranked as the number one motivator for teachers. This was followed by the fact that it allowed students to engage with Tasmanian artists, and that it helped broaden students' horizons.

Fewer teachers were motivated by the fact that the program helped them meet student learning outcomes.

Many survey respondents expressed that Terrapin provided a unique opportunity to expose children to the performing arts. As one teacher said, it 'Enable[s] students to experience performing arts they would not otherwise see'.

One teacher commented that, 'They are excellent - students need to be exposed to a range of performers and performances'.

Figure 7. What motivated you to choose this performance? (Please rank the opinions in order of importance). n=55





The program exposes children to Tasmanian stories and artists

Another key motivating factor is that Terrapin exposes Tasmanian students to Tasmanian work. One respondent shared that it's an 'opportunity to see outstanding puppetry and theatre and to learn that Terrapin is a Tasmanian company'. One teacher shared that,

'We are great supporters of Tasmanian arts and entertainment. Terrapin always presents delightful shows with unique story lines and brilliant presentation. Beautiful work, thank-you.'

Similarly, Terrapin was described as 'truly Tasmanian'.

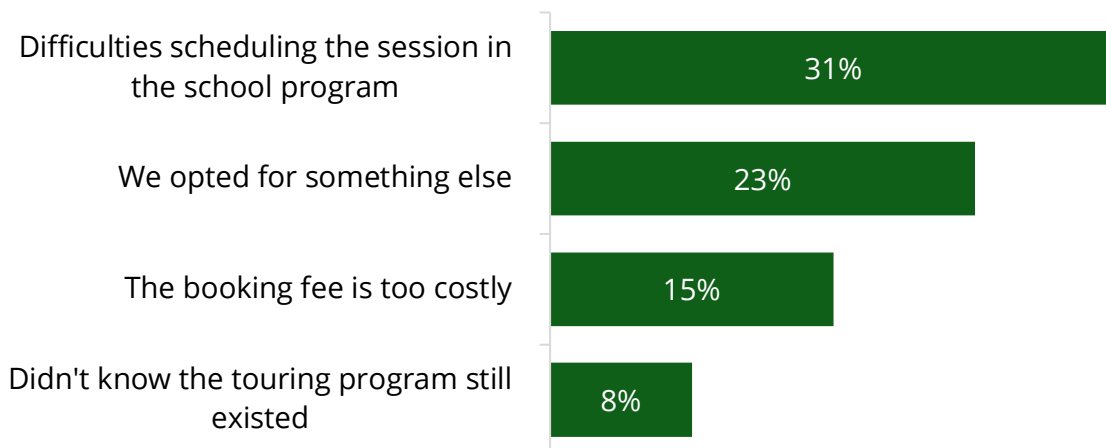
Teachers from lapsed schools mentioned difficulty in scheduling the performance

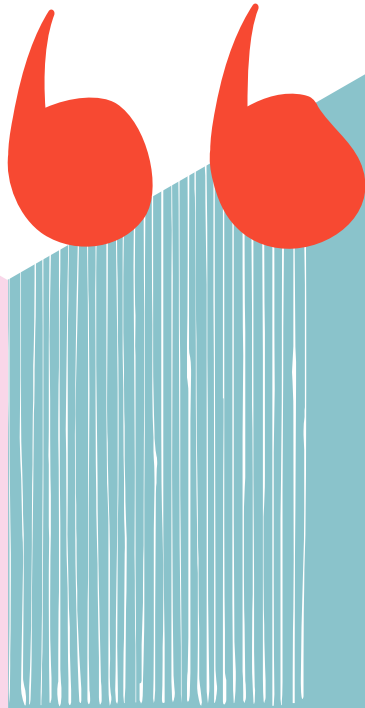
Teachers who hadn't booked a Terrapin performance in the twelve months prior to responding comprised a small proportion of the survey sample (13 teachers). This data should be interpreted with caution and may not represent all lapsed or non-participants in the program.

The most common barrier to participation among this segment was that they found difficulty in scheduling the incursion session within the school's program (31%).

One-quarter (23%) said that they opted for something else, and 15% found the booking costs prohibitive.

Figure 8. Please tell us why you haven't booked again recently. Select all that apply
n=13





'We are great supporters of Tasmanian arts and entertainment. Terrapin always presents delightful shows with unique story lines and brilliant presentation. Beautiful work, thank-you.'

Teacher

Terrapin teacher survey





3 Program experiences

Teacher experiences

94% are satisfied with the program and 93% would recommend it to other schools

Overall, almost all participating teachers are satisfied with the Terrapin School Touring Program. As the program delivers high quality performing arts experiences to students across Tasmania, teachers have demonstrated a generally positive view of the Terrapin School Touring Program.

9 in 10 teachers (93%) would recommend the Terrapin program to other schools.

Figure 9. Overall, how satisfied are you with the Terrapin program? n=61



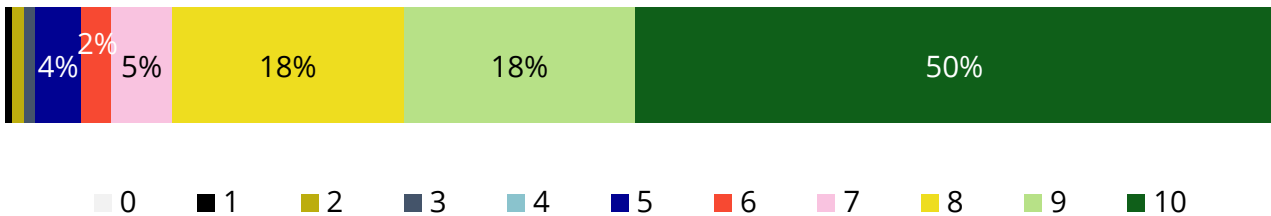
Terrapin has a track record of delivering quality performances to schools, with 93% of teachers positive about the standard

Post-show survey data from research conducted from 2015 to 2018 was aggregated to understand historic teacher experiences with the Terrapin program. During this time, half of all teachers (50%) in post-show surveys rated the standard of performance ten out of ten.

93% of teachers rated the performance positive overall (a score of 5 or higher) — confirming Terrapin’s proud history of delivering performances of the highest quality in schools.



Figure 10. How did you rate the standard of the performance? Rated from 0 (negative) to 10 (positive). (Aggregated for 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) n=271

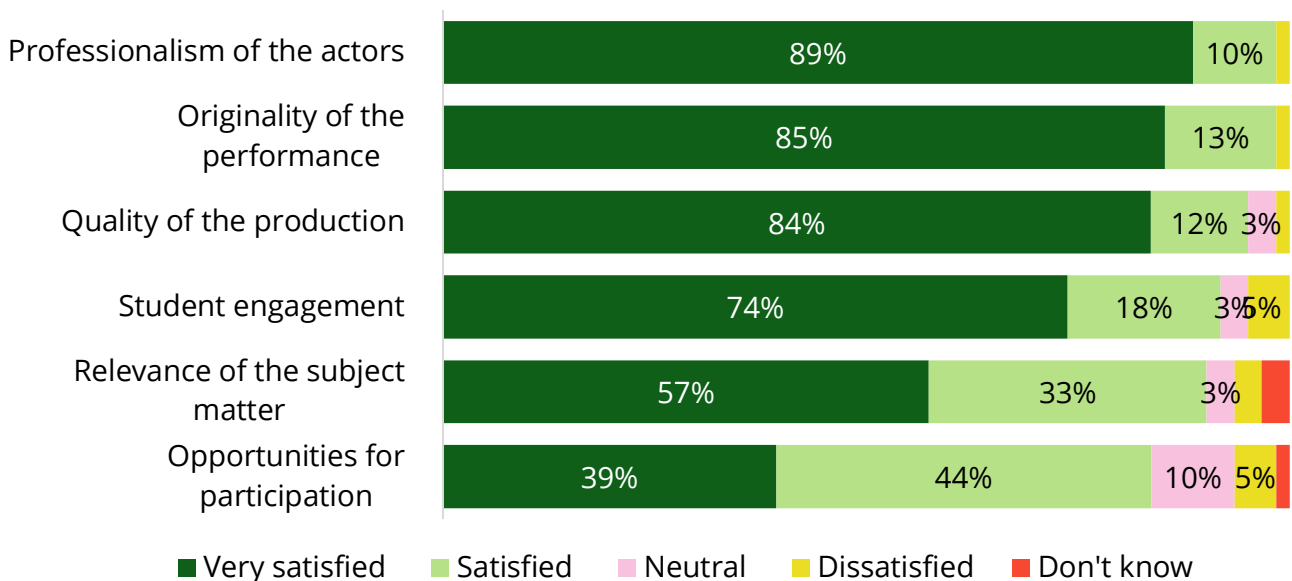


Teachers are very satisfied with most aspects of Terrapin’s recent productions

Reflecting on their most recent Terrapin experience, teachers are very satisfied with most aspects of the performance. The most highly rated attributes include the professionalism of the actors (89%), the originality of the performance (85%), the quality of the production (84%) and student engagement (74%).

Some teachers were slightly less inclined to say they were ‘very satisfied’ with the relevance of the performance’s subject matter (57%) and opportunities for participation (39%) — though the majority were at least somewhat satisfied.

Figure 11. Still thinking about this last experience with the Terrapin program, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the performance in terms of... n=61





One teacher said,

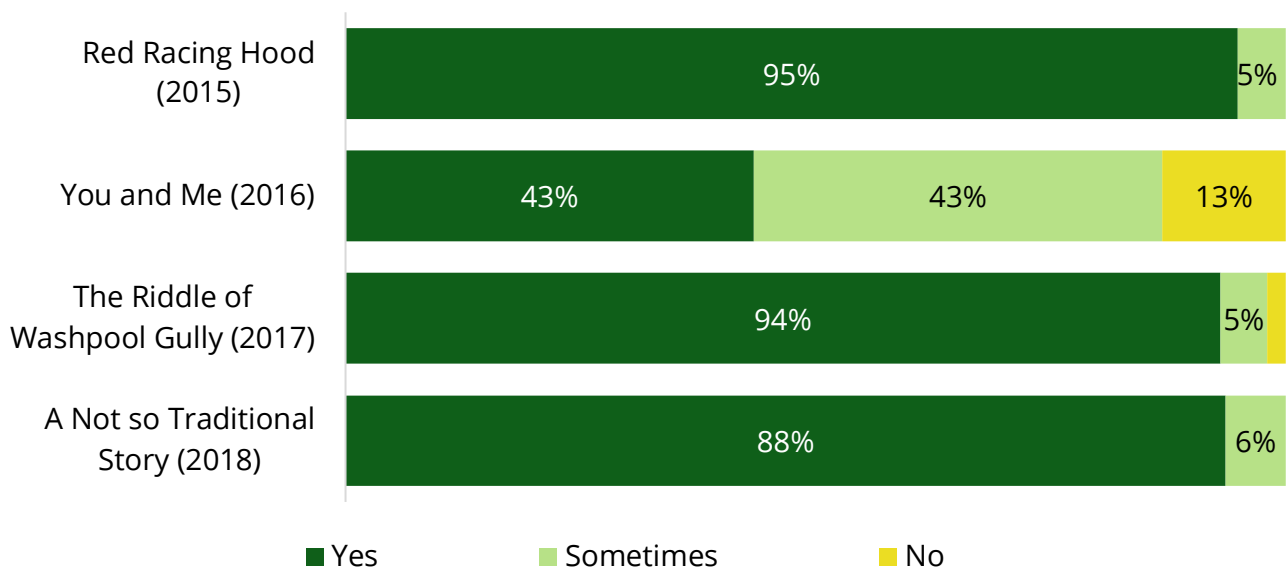
‘All Terrapin performances are professional, thought provoking, funny and educational. The creativity is extraordinary, and every performance never fails to entertain or demonstrate artistic creativity. If you can make the teachers laugh as well, then it's a winner.’

Teachers are aware that some Terrapin productions may be more engaging for students compared to others

Post-show survey data indicates that the majority of teachers find Terrapin performances engaging for students. In particular, Red Racing Hood (95%), The Riddle of Washpool Gully (94%) and A Not So Traditional Story (88%) were rated as a highly engaging.

You and Me in 2016 was rated as less engaging than other performances (43% yes and 43% sometimes). Artistic Director, Sam Routledge, attributes this to the production format, which relied on storytelling and projected text. Reflecting on the production, Sam noted that this performance proved successful in theatres, but was not dynamic enough for the school context.

Figure 12. Do you feel the performers engaged with your students during the performance? (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) n=276





2 in 3 teachers used Teacher Notes — with most using them before the performance

Teachers were asked about the extent to which the Teacher Notes resources were used, if at all, to supplement the performance. 2 in 3 teachers (67%) used the Teacher Notes, either before the performance (46%) or after the performance (28%).

Among the teachers who used the Teacher Notes, 95% are satisfied and 84% are very likely to recommend Terrapin to colleagues or contacts at other schools — suggesting that Teacher Notes may be contributing to overall positive experiences.

One-third (33%) didn't use the Teacher Notes at all, which presents an opportunity to investigate teachers' decision-making about whether to use or not use them. In turn, Terrapin could explore ways in which the Teacher Notes can create more value for teachers and students.

Student experiences

The program is delivering well for students and 98% of students enjoyed their experience

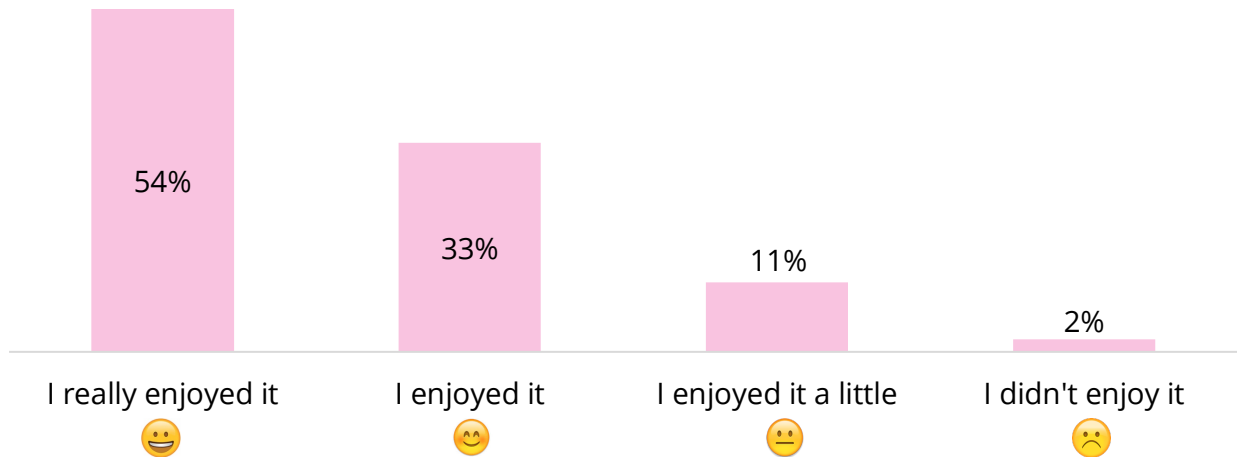
Following Terrapin's performance of Egg (in 2019) and Scaredy Cat (in 2021) at their school, a sample of 390 primary school students completed a short worksheet to reflect on their experiences. These worksheets were designed by Patternmakers with input from academics specialising in arts education in schools.

Almost all students (98%) said they enjoyed the performance, including 54% stating that they "really enjoyed it" and 33% stating that they "enjoyed it". 1 in 10 (11%) said they enjoyed it 'a little'.

When asked if they would like to see another Terrapin performance in future, three-quarters (77%) said they would, while one in five (19%) students responded with 'maybe'.



Figure 13. How much did you enjoy the performance? n=389



The majority of students report positive emotions when reflecting on Terrapin performances — though some also feel sad and thoughtful

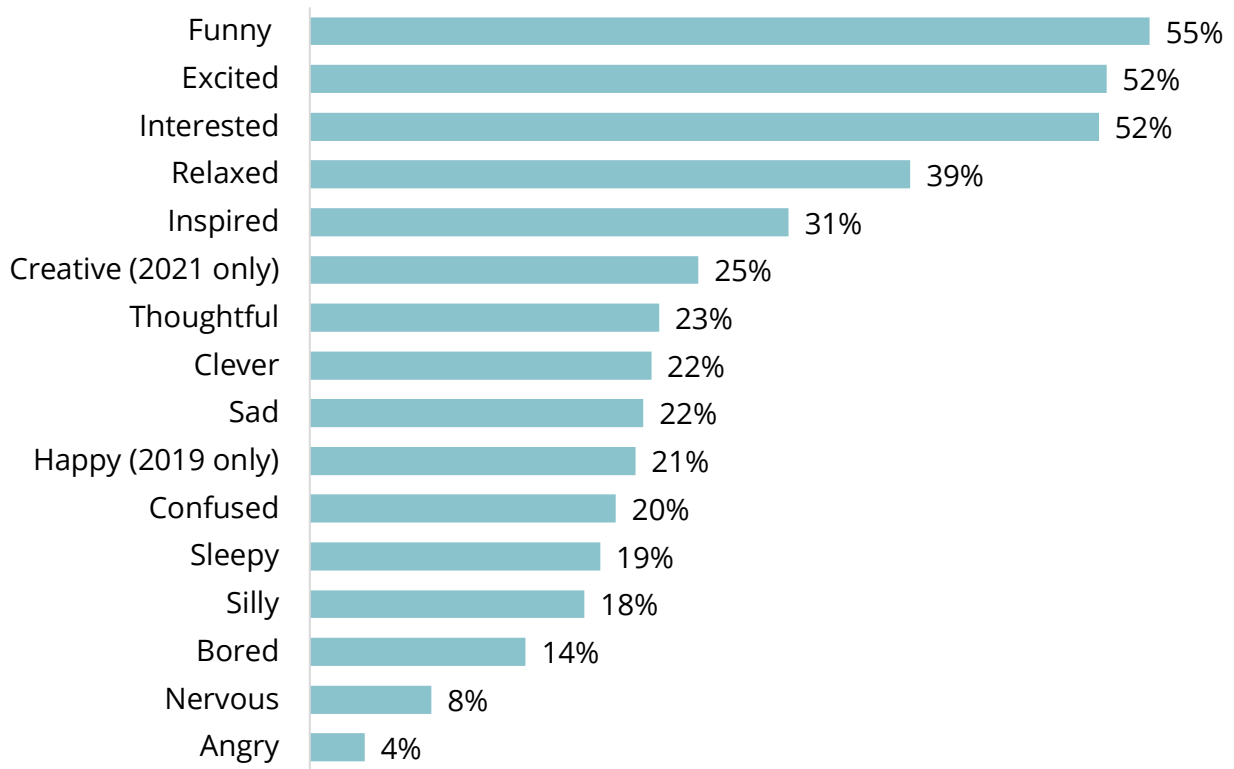
Students were asked about how they felt during the performance, invited to circle the words that applied to them. Overall, students generally experienced positive feelings during the performance, such as excited (52%), interested (52%) and inspired (31%).

Students who attended Egg in 2019 most often reported feeling happy (76%), interested (67%) and inspired (58%) — with 48% saying the performance was funny. Egg’s content (which tackled climate change and destruction of the earth’s resources) also incited an emotional response from students, as many students reported feeling sad (49%) during the performance.

Scaredy Cat in 2021 evoked a more mixed response from students. Most students reported positive feelings, such as excited (57%), interested (46%), relaxed (39%) and creative (35%). Smaller proportions felt clever (21%), inspired (21%) and thoughtful (19%). However, 1 in 5 students said they felt silly (22%), sleepy (22%) or confused (19%), possibly due to the fact that the play was non-verbal.



Figure 14. Colour in the feelings you had during the lesson. 2019 and 2021 student responses (n=390)



Students are captivated by the puppets, which allow them to connect with the characters

Students were asked to share what the best part of the performance was in their experience. Several students were curious about the creative use of props and objects, as one commented, 'The humour and props because the props were really interesting and unusual.'

Many students mentioned their appreciation for the puppets in particular, as one said, 'The puppets were amazing'. Another student shared, 'the puppets were very interesting and well made'.

After seeing Egg, many students expressed their affection for Ovo, sharing that the best part was 'Ovo because he was really cute' and 'I loved Ovo's puppet & character.'

Ovo inspired curiosity in one student: 'I liked the set and Ovo was my favourite character and I like how you made her, and I like how she was made of a lot of different animals.'



Similarly following Scaredy Cat several students expressed their admiration for the cat, for example, 'The cat... it was funny and cute' and, 'The cat... it had lots of detail.'

Some expressed their appreciation for the complexity of the characters, commenting,

'The cat being scary but then not... if it was scary there wouldn't be a proper performance.'

'The mice... they have a good and bad side.'

'The cat... it faced it's fear.'

It inspired students to think about important issues, confirming the special power of the productions

Students were asked to share what the performance made them think about. Egg appeared to help many students think about the environment, as one student said, 'It made me think about looking after our planet.' Others thought about 'Climate change', 'destroying planets' and 'Global warming!!!!'.

Some were able to relate it back to them and their families, saying things like, 'How we can reduce, reuse and recycle things and how nature is going.' Another child said, 'That we, as everyday people, take things for granted like fuel, gas and light'.

Scaredy Cat often prompted students to think about bravery and facing fears. Some said,

'How someone (cat) is scared but she found the confidence.'

'That you can overcome your fears.'

'How much stuff people do to face their fears.'

'How anything you put your mind to you can do.'

Others were inspired to consider ideas of friendship and connection with others, commenting,

'The cat and the mouse being friends at the end.'

'The lady and the cat being a family.'



Performances are inspiring feelings of empathy and compassion within children

Puppetry as an artform appears to evoke a sense of empathy in students. A common theme among students who attended Egg was the idea of being compassionate towards other people, animals and the planet.

For example, one student commented, 'It made me think about how Ovo is feeling'. Another pondered over 'how one action can change someone or their life in a big way'.

Other students contemplated 'being honest and kind' and 'care about animals'.

Similarly, one shared, 'No matter what you look like be nice always and respect them for who they are'.

Those who saw Scaredy Cat reflected on how characters might be feeling. On what the play made them think about, some said,

'How the cat felt sad - why?'

'How I would feel in that situation.'

'I felt sad for the cat because the mice were chasing him.'

'How do mice feel?'

'Not judging a book by its cover.'

The experience sparked students' curiosity about acting and live performance

Many students reflected on the acting, and the creation and use of puppets and set props after seeing the Terrapin performance. Some said they were inspired to learn more about live performance. One student commented,

'The performance made me think about how much effort it would have took to think about the storyline and make the set.'

Some students who attended Egg said they thought about 'What the props were made out of and the set also how they were made', while another mentioned 'how they made the puppets.'



Similarly, Scaredy Cat audience members queried, 'If I would make my own shows in the future', 'How hard it must be to remember everything' and 'What I could do with puppets.'

Others expressed an interest in exploring acting in future, as one said, '...I might like to be an actor when I grow up because it looked really fun.'

Most students had no suggestions for improvement — though some Egg attendees felt the story was confusing, or too long

In 2019, students were invited to share what they didn't enjoy about the performance. Several students who attended simply stated that they enjoyed it all, for example: 'There was nothing I didn't like' and 'I really enjoyed everything'.

Some students felt confused with the non-linear format of the story, as some students mentioned, 'It took me a little while to work out where they were up to in the story' and 'The confusion of going back and forth between past, present and future.'

Many students expressed that the performance was too long, as one student wrote, 'It was too long. They could make it shorter.'

Some students commonly expressed their sadness for when Ovo died, as some said, 'I didn't like the part when the Ovo died' and 'when Ovo died at the end'.

Scaredy Cat made students curious about non-verbal theatre and inspired creative ideas

In 2021, survey questions were slightly revised for Scaredy Cat — and instead asked students to list 'three things they would change about the performance'. Many students said they wouldn't change anything, as one said,

'Nothing...I loved it.'

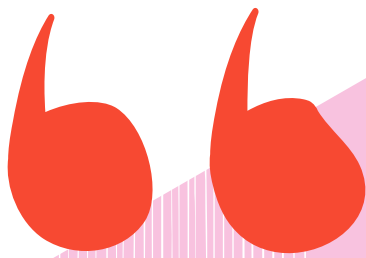
Some said they would like more typical aspects of a theatre experience, such as: 'more people', 'make it bigger', 'if the puppets talked', 'if the animals squeaked and meowed', and 'make the audience quiet'.

Others shared creative ideas for the narrative, such as: 'make the mice a bit quicker' or 'for the mice to not get caught', 'change 3 mice to 1 rat', 'make the mice jellyfish' or 'a dog could chase the cat.'



Some students questioned the role of the actors in a puppet show, and suggested things such as 'not showing the people as much' and 'try to keep the actors out of the way.'

However overall, few would change anything — and some expressed empathy for the puppet characters. Some said, 'I would change the cat from being a Scaredy Cat' and 'the cat was not so brave'. One wondered, 'how the cat must have been feeling — mice scare me.'



'The humour and props
because the props were really
interesting and unusual.'

**Student answer to 'What was the best part
about the show?'**

Post-show student worksheet





4 Areas of impact

Student impacts

Terrapin performances exhibit imagination and originality

During 2019-20 data collection, the teacher survey asked respondents to reflect on the artistic qualities of the last performance they saw, from a list of qualities identified by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries' (WA) Public Value Measurement Framework (PVWF).⁵ The framework uses standard metrics that aim to develop an understanding of how best to foster and measure artistic quality across different settings and art forms.

For this evaluation, teachers were asked to rate the performance in relation to artistic quality metrics. These include inquisitiveness, imagination, originality, risk, currency, authenticity, innovation and excellence.

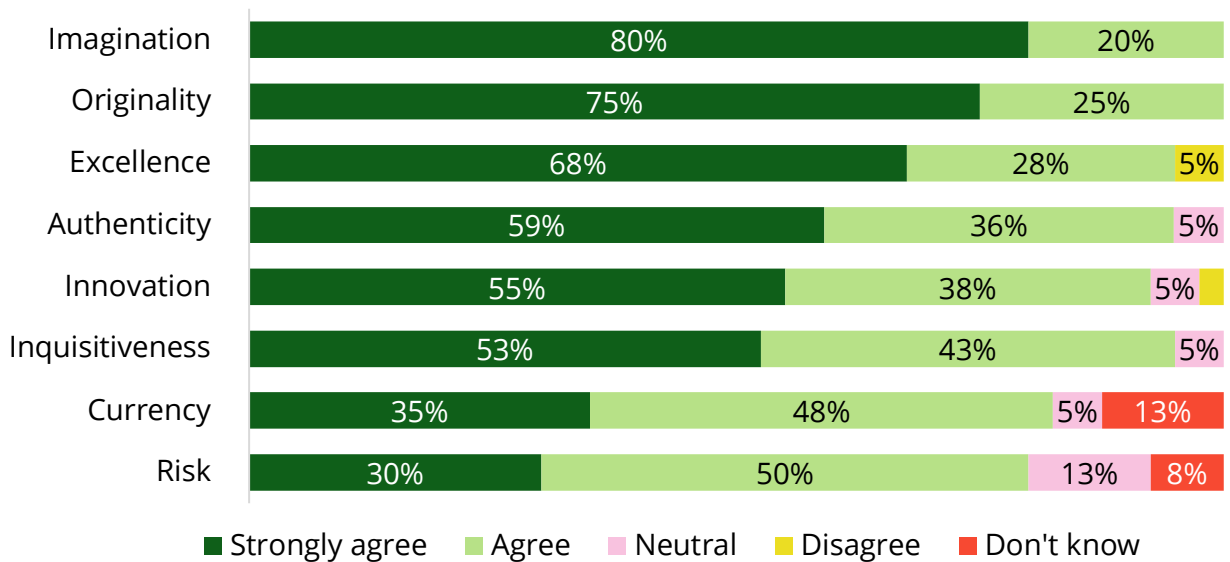
All respondents felt that the last performance they attended exhibited both imagination (80% strongly agree and 20% agree) and originality (75% strongly agree and 25% agree). The majority agreed that it achieved the range of other positive artistic outcomes.

Teachers felt less strongly that the performance exhibited risk (13% were neutral), which might suggest that the program helps students engage in the topics explored in a safe way.

⁵ Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries' (WA) Public Value Measurement Framework (PVWF), <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/culture-and-the-arts/research-hub/public-value>



Figure 15. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this particular production exhibited the following artistic qualities...? (2019-20 only) n=40



Teachers are impressed with Terrapin’s imaginative storytelling

Many teachers were impressed with the imaginative storytelling demonstrated in Terrapin’s work. As one teacher expressed,

‘It enables students to enter a creative world that is not linked to screens or media. It allows them to develop their imagination and to relate to story lines that are fresh and original.’

Another commended the way it allowed students to ‘[be] able to use their own imagination through the story telling.’ One teacher said it ‘demonstrates to students how imagination can be fulfilled by using different mediums — and often by using recycled materials.’

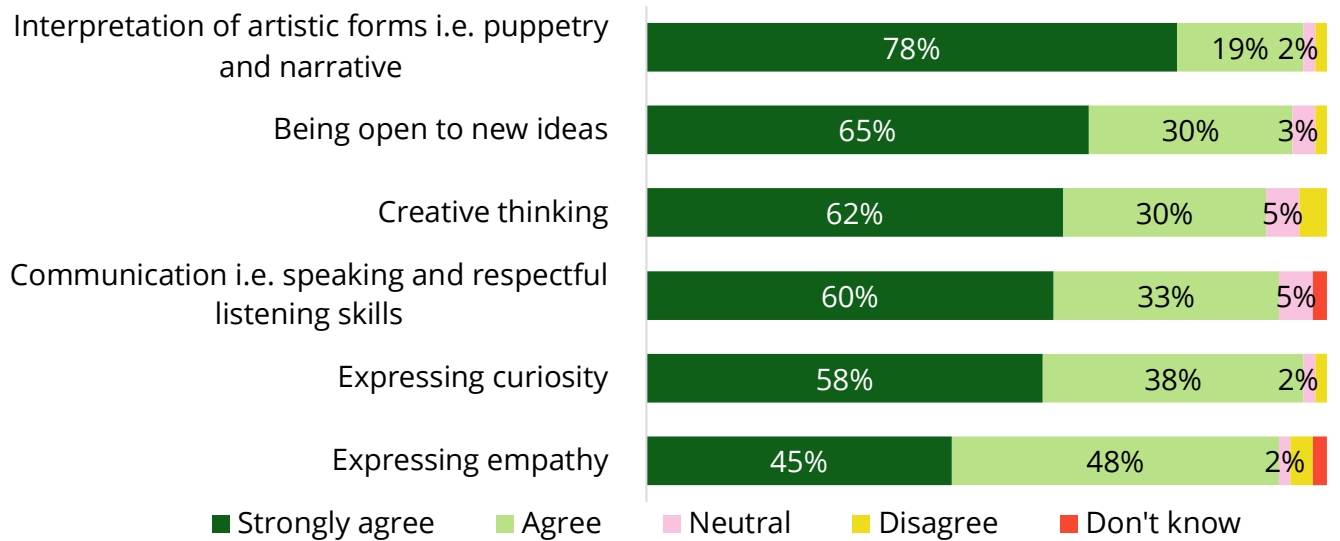
Terrapin allows students to better interpret artistic forms

Teachers were invited to share the extent to which they felt the program helped students develop a number of skills. The majority of teachers across 2019 and 2021 say they at least somewhat agree that the program helps students facilitate all the skills listed, with more than 90% agreeing with each statement. Teachers are most likely to ‘strongly agree’ that it facilitates students’ interpretation of artistic forms (78%) and openness to new ideas (65%).

Overall, the majority of teachers also agree that the production helped students to use creative thinking (92% agree or strongly agree), communication skills (93%), express their curiosity (96%) and express empathy (93%) — confirming the invaluable role that the program plays in facilitating a broad range of learning outcomes.



Figure 16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Terrapin production helped your students develop the following skills...? n=60



Students gain an appreciation and understanding for storytelling through puppetry

Teachers were invited to share what they believe students gain from their experience with Terrapin. Many teachers shared that they felt students gained an appreciation for the storytelling power of puppetry, challenging their assumptions about the artform. As one teacher stated, students can,

‘Learn about contemporary and innovative writing that is always part of the Terrapin experience. Imaginative use of staging, props, puppetry and theatricality broadens our students experience which can be transferred to other areas.’

Others agreed that students ‘Experience unique storytelling styles’ and ‘Puppetry [that is] different to what their perceptions of puppetry might be.’

For students who haven’t seen live performance, the program is introducing performing arts concepts

For some teachers, Terrapin is one of the only opportunities for students to experience the performing arts, and some view it as an introduction to artistic concepts and conventions. As one remarked,

‘Students at this age respond to colour and costume. It acquaints them with stage etiquette and protocol.’



Similarly, one teacher noted that 'It introduces them to performing arts and concepts that can be incorporated into the curriculum in a fun and interactive way.'

Another teacher highlighted language and communication skills, including: 'Literacy, expressive oral, body and facial language sensory connections, interesting language exposure.'

The program encourages students to reflect on important issues in a safe way

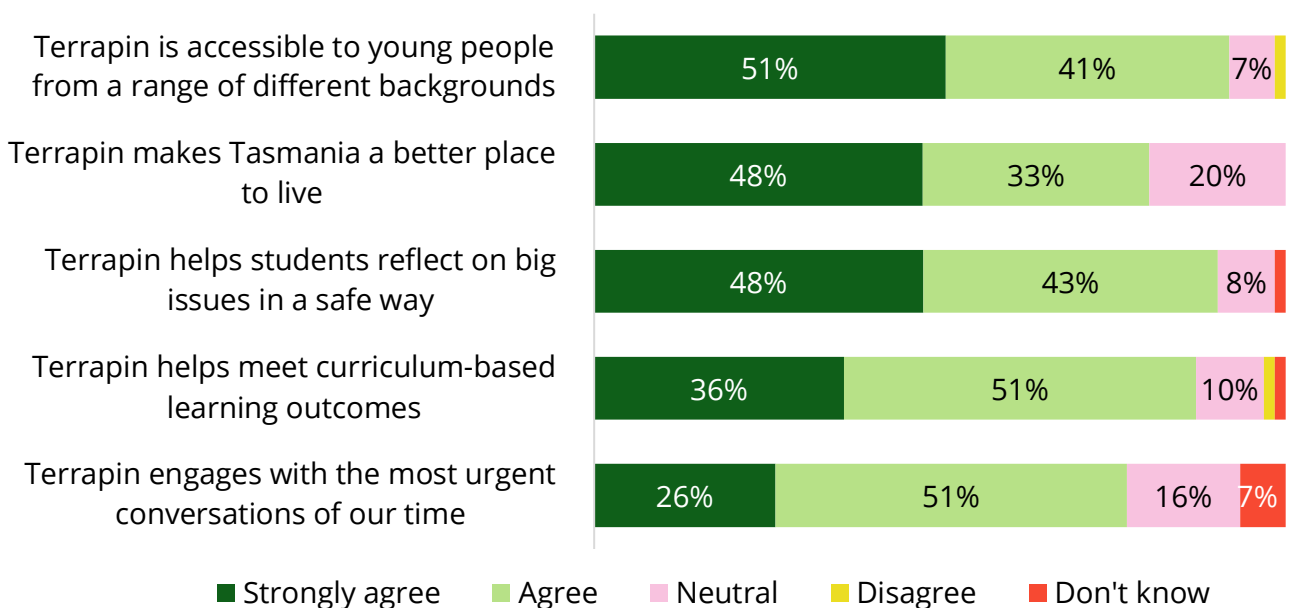
Survey respondents were asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements, in relation to the impact that Terrapin makes on students and the community.

9 in 10 teachers (90%) believe that Terrapin allows students to reflect on important issues in a safe way. Additionally, 80% of respondents believe that Terrapin makes Tasmania a better place to live — however one-fifth (20%) felt 'neutral' about this statement.

Similarly, 77% of respondents feel that Terrapin engages with the most urgent conversations of our time, and 16% felt 'neutral' about this statement.

9 in 10 (92%) feel that Terrapin is accessible to people from different backgrounds, and 87% agree that Terrapin helps meet curriculum learning outcomes.

Figure 17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Terrapin? n=61





Some teachers feel that the program enables students to confront unfamiliar topics by, as one mentioned, 'looking at a world outside of their usual experience'.

Another teacher shared a similar sentiment, commenting that Terrapin encouraged,

'Thought provoking insights, assumption re-sets, renewed energy, openness and understandings and perspectives.'

One stakeholder considers the program invaluable in exploring Tasmania's Indigenous history, and presenting challenging topics to students:

'Wrapped up in a very entertaining and high-quality arts event, there were very strong messages. It had strong understandings for students about Tasmania's history, relationships between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people and what that means.'

It was using humour as a way to talk about subjects that can be hard, giving students a way in. The show was very gentle and generous with its young audiences. It was not afraid to be truth-telling.'

A Not So Traditional Story exposed students to Tasmanian First Nations culture

A Not So Traditional Story, written by Palawa playwright Nathan Maynard explored Tasmania's colonial history from an Aboriginal perspective. One interviewee commented,

'[It was a] First Nations story told by First Nations artists, created by a First Nations team. There is a severe lack of work for young audiences by First Nations artists and about First Nations stories.'

Several post-show survey respondents expressed their acclamation for the fact that the performance exposed their students to a Tasmanian First Nations story. As one teacher shared,

'Every year Terrapin has something new to offer...the story, the puppetry, the props, the acting. This year it was great to have a Tasmanian Aboriginal story...'

One teacher commended A Not So Traditional Story for its relevance to the curriculum

Some teachers shared their appreciation for the performance's relevance to the learning curriculum. One mentioned that it was valued for both older and younger students, for different reasons:



'The older students were engaged and able to follow the story, making great connections with the work undertaken during the year through the English and History curriculums.

The younger students enjoyed the props, especially the masks. As expected, they struggled to fully understand the story being told and therefore, were "restless" at times.'

Getting the balance right for different ages is challenging, and Terrapin enables students to engage at different levels

While A Not So Traditional Story received generally positive feedback, some teachers questioned whether their students were fully comprehending the deeper messages of the production. As one post-show respondent said,

'The children really enjoyed the costumes, puppetry, characters and funny parts of the story. But I don't believe they understood the underlying message of the performance.'

However, others felt it was important not to over-simplify the themes, pointing out,

'The temptation is avoided to dumb down complexities in narrative. Terrapin is embracing of quite progressive concepts.'

Interaction with the performers is an invaluable part of the experience

One of the most valued aspects of the program is the interactivity between the performers and students, such as the 'chance to ask questions around set design etc.'

One survey respondent added that Terrapin 'enhance[s] the power of theatre as part of learning — positive influence in putting students at the centre by allowing them to respond.'

Value of puppetry

Teachers agree that puppet theatre enables students to enhance their creativity

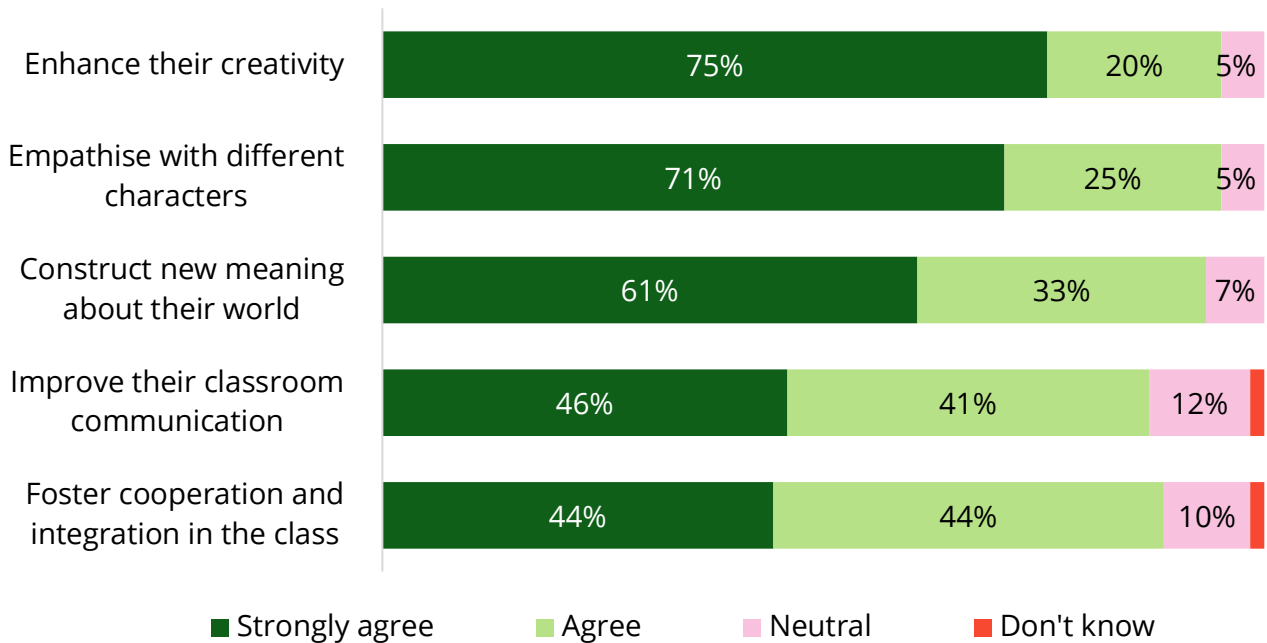
Survey respondents were asked to reflect on the particular value that puppet theatre, as an artform, holds for students. Respondents were able to rate their agreement with a number of aspects that have been aggregated from existing literature about the value of puppetry.



The majority of teachers feel that puppetry enables students to fulfill a wide range of outcomes, with 9 in 10 agreeing with each sentiment listed. Teachers were more likely to 'strongly agree' with the idea that puppetry enables students to enhance their creativity (75%) and empathise with different characters (71%).

Though overall, teachers also agree that it allows students to construct new meaning about their world (94% agree or strongly agree), improve their classroom communication skills (87%) and foster cooperation and integration in the classroom (89%).

Figure 18. To what extent do you agree or disagree that puppetry enables students to...? n=61



Puppetry is considered an engaging medium for discussing sensitive topics

When considering what students gain from experiencing puppet theatre, many respondents argued that this artform is an engaging medium for discussing sensitive topics. As one teacher commented,

'I believe all students should be exposed to many and varied theatre forms. Puppetry in particular is valuable as it can be a great teaching tool and an easy way to engage and hold the attention of younger students. It can certainly be used to deal with sensitive topics in a way that is not confronting.'



Another teacher shared a similar thought, arguing that puppetry is 'A powerful tool to help students gain understanding of important issues in a captivating performance.'

One teacher said that 'Terrapin offers original and real-world moral tales for our children in a whimsical and creative way that captures their imagination.'

Puppetry elicits a sense of awe and wonder for children

Many teachers value the sense of awe and wonder that puppetry elicits for children. One teacher shared their appreciation for this quality of the program:

'It instils wonder and a magical quality to the journey that is part of the show. The students are always fully engaged and enthralled with the puppets and the way the story is portrayed and unfolds. There is a whimsy and ethereal quality to the puppets and the storytellers. It is often an emotional journey for the students and the sense of wonder it elicits in the children is unbelievable.'

Another said of the puppets:

'They can be friendly and grotesque at same time: attracting, inviting... the right amount of ghoul sometimes for a young person to enjoy. Terrapin have a quality aesthetic dealing with difficult subject matter.'

Puppetry allows students to learn about and express empathy

Several teachers also mentioned the ability for puppetry to teach students about empathy in an engaging way, with one teacher arguing that the program is 'Invaluable. It stimulates [the students] to see, respond, empathise and thoroughly engage with what is presented.'

Another commented,

'Highly valued. Not only for delivering and sharing messages but in demonstrating the creativity. And turning simple objects into thinking and feeling entities.'

Children are given a voice through the medium of puppetry

One quality of puppetry that was shared among teachers is that the artform provides a platform for less confident students to have a voice. As one respondent commented,

'Invaluable...Using a puppet allows a child to have a voice. It can do things the child may not have the confidence to do. Creating puppets develops problem solving skills while allowing for artistic expression.'



Another expressed,

'It's wonderful, much like acting in drama in high school years, the shy kids can assume the persona of the character they are in charge of and finally find their 'voice' to express themselves.'

Teachers are inspired to build on the experience for students

Beyond student impacts, respondents were invited to share how their Terrapin experience has impacted them in their role as a teacher. Several people mentioned that the program inspired them to build on the program, and extend the experience for students.

One commented that Terrapin encouraged them in 'Furthering my interest in ensuring that students are able to appreciate and value the diversity of performance and cultural appreciation.' Another gained 'Motivation to explore creative making skills with students.'

One teacher commended the program for facilitating 'An enjoyable experience that can be used as either a set-up, supportive or end of unit item.'

Terrapin's impacts may be particularly heightened in disadvantaged communities, particularly in remote areas

The absence of quality arts experiences for students in remote and regional areas in Tasmania is felt by many teachers. Reflecting on this issue, several teachers expressed their appreciation for Terrapin in bringing arts and culture to their students through its incursion program. One teacher said it provides,

'Critical value. There is a disturbing decrease/non-existence of the arts in schools and in disadvantaged communities in particular access to anything rich in arts or cultural elements is almost absent completely. A much-needed component of huge value to help improve Tasmania's literacy!'

Another commended the fact that Terrapin is 'Exposing young children to quality theatre/performance, especially in rural/isolated areas' and one mentioned Terrapin's ability to 'Provide the opportunity for works of art to come to them, especially if in isolated areas.'



Another teacher shared a similar sentiment, commenting that,

'A lot of Tasmanian schools are in regional and remote areas so don't have access to the types of performances that Terrapin presents, so introducing students (at any age) to such performances is always valuable.'

These ideas are further explored overleaf in a case study of Terrapin's 2021 Access Program.



Case study: Access Program

Background

In 2021 Terrapin partnered with Blundstone on an Access Program to overcome barriers of disadvantage for Tasmanian students

After 40 years of in-school programming, Terrapin partnered with heritage company Blundstone to deliver a new Access Program. The goal of the partnership was to champion Tasmanian creativity by expanding the reach of Terrapin performances to disadvantaged schools across Tasmania.

Although the cost to participate in Terrapin's schools tour is not high, at \$5 per student, it can prevent many schools from participating. Each year thousands of Tasmanian students miss out on the opportunity to see a professional performance in their school.

In 2019, the interim evaluation report showed that although Terrapin reached 70% of all Tasmanian schools between 2005 and 2019, and 68% of the schools visited by Terrapin were classified as disadvantaged, very disadvantaged schools were more likely to miss out than advantaged schools.



Artistic Director Sam Routledge, artist Bella Young and Blundstone Co-CEO Adam Blake with Scaredy Cat



Outcomes

19 out of 20 invited schools agreed to take part — confirming cost as the main barrier to participating

With support from Blundstone, Terrapin analysed bookings and schools data to identify disadvantaged schools that had not booked to be part of the 2021 tour.

A total of 20 schools were contacted directly by Terrapin staff and invited to participate, and just one school approached by Terrapin declined to participate in the program, primarily due to scheduling conflicts in the school calendar.

This result confirms that for disadvantaged schools, cost is a key barrier to participating in the school touring program and when given the opportunity, most schools are eager to take part. As one teacher put it,

‘Price is the biggest barrier to participation. The Blundstone sponsorship meant access for our students.’

The Access Program enabled Terrapin to reach an extra 4,000 students across Tasmania

The Access Program meant that the Scaredy Cat production was able to extend the tour, reaching an additional 19 schools in October and November.

These schools were located in some of the most remote parts of the state, such as Forest and Sassafras.

Ultimately, this meant an additional 4,261 students could participate, bringing the total reach of the 2021 Scaredy Cat tour to 16,846 students, ranging from grade Prep to Year 6.

Student experiences

98% of students enjoyed the performance and 80% would like to see another Terrapin performance in future

Data collected through reflection worksheets from 215 Access Program students shows that 98% enjoyed the performance (from ‘a little’ to ‘really enjoyed it’) and 80% would like to see another Terrapin performance in the future.



When asked about what emotions they experienced during the performance, 2 in 3 students said the performance made them feel excited (62%) and that it was funny (60%). The majority of students also indicated positive feelings such as interested (48%), relaxed (44%), creative (36%) and inspired (25%).

The performance prompted students to think about bravery and overcoming their fears

A characteristic of Scaredy Cat is that the play is non-verbal, engaging the audience through lively and expressive puppetry accompanied by an original musical score.

The performance, which tackled concepts such as courage, bravery and facing fears, resonated strongly with students of all ages. When asked to share what the performance made them think about, some said,

'How someone (cat) is scared but she found the confidence.'

'That you can overcome your fears.'

'How much stuff people do to face their fears.'

'How anything you put your mind to you can do.'

Students expressed excitement at seeing a performance and experiencing puppetry

Students participating in the Access Program also expressed fascination with seeing a performance, and with the creativity involved in creating puppet show. When asked about what it made them think about, some students expressing things such as:

'If I would make my own shows in the future'

'How hard it must be to remember everything.'

'What I could do with puppets.'

Others expressed an interest in exploring acting in future, as one said, '...I might like to be an actor when I grow up because it looked really fun.'

One teacher said,

'It's not often primary students get to experience puppetry. Seeing these types of puppets and how they are creatively made using sustainable materials is exciting to students.'



One cast member shared their experiences performing at Access Program schools:

'The kids have been keen to swarm us. When we've been packing up [after the show], they just don't want to leave you. They're keen to see every little thing about how it works and why you're here. I think that's to do with the fact that they don't get many opportunities for this sort of exciting occasion, so they want to make the most of it.'

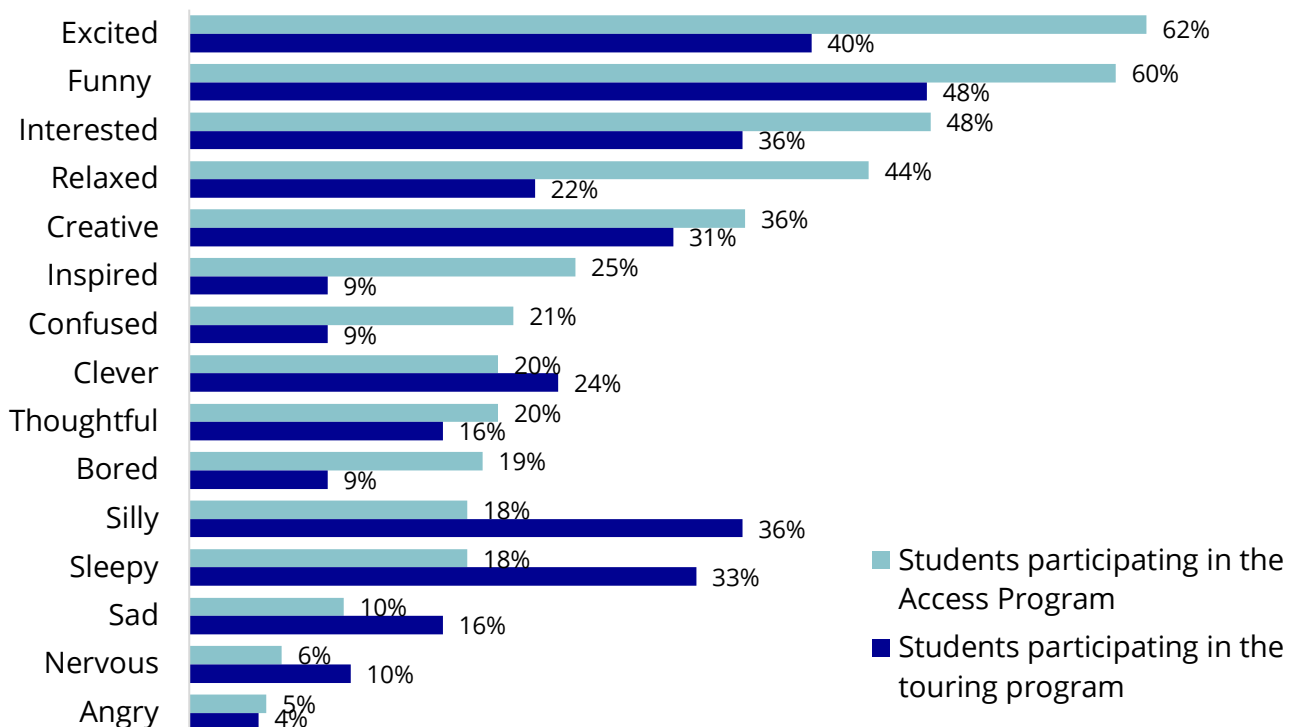
There are indications that students in the Access Program experienced even more positive outcomes than other students

Although there is only a small sample to analyse, there are indications that students participating in the Access Program experienced more positive outcomes than other students participating in the tour.

For instance, students participating through the Access Program were more likely to experience positive emotions, such as excited (62% vs 40%), funny (60% vs 48%), relaxed (44% vs 22%) and inspired (25% vs 9%).

Students in the Access Program were also less likely to circle some negative feelings such as silly (18% vs 36%), and sleepy (18% vs 33%), though they were more likely to say they felt confused (21% vs 9%) — possibly due to the nonverbal nature of the production.

Figure 19: Feelings circled by students in the access program (n=215) and in the touring program (n=67), 2021





Teacher experiences

The production helped start important conversations about friendship, self-expression and bravery

For one teacher, Scaredy Cat helped address the issue of mental health in her class in a way that felt safe for students. The production provided a springboard for talking about bullying and how it appears emotionally and physically.

Particularly for students experiencing disadvantage, the artists felt that this form of puppetry can provide a safe space for children to explore difficult topics. One explained,

'If scenes of violence in the play had been played by actors [it could be] triggering to watch someone be hit. But through the lens of a tiny, cute mouse going at a cat and laughing at it with a cartoon voice, it's not as intense.'

All teachers participating in the Access Program agreed that Terrapin allows students to reflect on important issues in a safe way (100%) — while 2 in 3 (67%) feel that Terrapin engages with the most urgent conversations of our time.

Teachers appreciate the benefits of participating in the tour — and 6 out of 6 would recommend Terrapin

Teacher feedback confirms the significant value of in-school performance incursions at access schools in particular — and often approached the Terrapin team to thank them after the show. One teacher said, 'I loved seeing our kids so engaged with the work.'

Reflecting on the value of incursion performances such as Terrapin, one teacher who participated in the Access Program said,

'[It] saves money for schools - no bus cost. Easier to coordinate in known setting - e.g. schedule and time appropriately with least disruption.'

They added that it 'caters for students who are less able to manage transition and engagement in unfamiliar settings.'

Satisfaction with all aspects of the program is very high — and teachers mentioned a range of positive outcomes

When rating their satisfaction with different aspects of the performance, all teachers participating in the access program supplied positive responses.



This was particularly prominent in responses to the originality of the performance (100% very satisfied), the professionalism of the actors (100% very satisfied) and the quality of the production (100% very satisfied). However all teachers rated other aspects highly as well, including student engagement (100% satisfied or very satisfied), opportunities for participation (100% satisfied or very satisfied) and the relevance of the subject matter (100% satisfied or very satisfied).

When asked to share what they think students gain from experiencing a Terrapin performance, teachers shared outcomes such as:

‘Creative response to storytelling.’

‘Witnessing creative professionals at their work.’

‘How to engage as a viewer.’

‘Modelling future opportunities.’

The majority of teachers (83%, or 5 respondents) who participated in the Access Program reported using the teacher notes when responding to the survey — a higher proportion than teachers in the general tour (67%). Half (50%) used the resource before the performance and 33% used it afterwards.

These results signal that these resources are a strong addition to the program and contribute to an overall positive experience for disadvantaged schools.

Impacts for Tasmanian creativity

The program is stimulating student curiosity and widening their view of creativity, arts and culture

Several teachers reflected on the fact that puppetry is exposing their students to a wider range of creative ideas and concepts and broadening their understanding of creativity, arts and culture.

On what skills they believe students in the Access Program developed, as a result of seeing the Terrapin performance, the majority felt positively about all aspects listed in the survey. In particular, teachers were most likely to ‘strongly agree’ that the program helped their students be open to new ideas (83%), express curiosity (83%) and interpret different artistic forms e.g. puppetry (67%).



Though teachers agreed that it also encouraged students to engage in creative thinking (100% agreed or strongly agreed), express empathy (100% agreed or strongly agreed) and develop communication skills (83% agree or strongly agree).

One said the program is 'Exposing students to different ways of learning' and 'Broadening our student's experience in the arts.'

Teachers believe that Terrapin's skill at puppetry has a particular benefit

Reflecting on the student outcomes of puppet theatre as an artform, teachers believe that it allows students to empathise with different characters (83% strongly agree) and enhance their creativity (83%).

All teachers in the Access Program said they agree or strongly agree that puppetry also enables students to construct new meaning about their world. One teacher said puppetry was powerful for the students to 'See every day spaces transformed into magical experiences' while another said its 'Highly valuable for students to experience a show and see the creative opportunities using puppetry.'

Another commented on the skill of the actors in fuelling the students' imaginations,

'Very valuable, the actors were almost invisible to the students which says a lot about their imagination at this age.'

One cast member said, 'Often there's a surprising element for [teachers] realising how much the kids really take it on and how much they love it and surprised by how engaged they are.'

The program is broadening student horizons and expanding their knowledge of career options in the arts

The program has illuminated the fact that after a Terrapin performance, students may be — for the first time — able to consider a career pathway in arts and creativity. One teacher said,

'For our students they don't often get to experience artistic performances such as these, exposure to art in all its forms is very important, so they are aware of what is out there and possible pathways for them in future.'

One of the artists described some of the things they believe students take away,

'They can see that these puppets were made by specialised professional puppet makers for this show... [The actors] have a performing arts background, the composer is a professional composer who wrote the music for this show — [they get] the idea that it's a professional team.'



Another teacher shared a similar sentiment, about what they believe is the role a Terrapin experience might play in student's later lives,

'We don't have a drama program in our school so I would hope this may inspire them to seek opportunities in drama in the future.'

Artist reflections

The Access Program was rewarding and inspiring for the artists too

Reflecting on their experiences on tour, members of the Scaredy Cat cast described performing at access schools as a uniquely rewarding experience. On what they've enjoyed the most about the Scaredy Cat tour, one said, 'I think access schools have been a really big winner for me.'

They described that often a performance would spark different reactions from students who have had more opportunities to experience performances. One said,

'Sometimes at the access schools, the audiences have a more unbridled emotional response... we've had like, sports-style chanting happen, we've had rhythmic clapping.'

For one cast member, it was a reminder that theatre doesn't have to have polite clapping. 'Anyone can watch it and have an emotional response – we can have fun', they said. Another performer added that 'loud and raucous' responses inspired them to engage with their audience in novel ways, commenting,

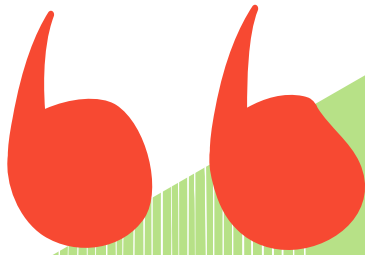
'When I play the cat puppet I feel like I even try to encourage some of it. Sometimes, there's this moment in the show where the cat is riling itself up and you'll get kids yelling "you can do it!". So you look at them with the puppet (nodding) like "yeah I can!"'

Overall the program highlights the power of overcoming barriers to cultural experiences

Performing to students in the access program has shed light on why Terrapin's work is important for children experiencing disadvantage. One cast member said,

'[Going to] the access schools, you're reminded again of the importance of theatre for young minds. A lot of the kids haven't seen theatre before or have had very minimal experiences...

They just thrive, and you see them really appreciate the time of us being there and us opening their world up to something so different.'



'A lot of Tasmanian schools are in regional and remote areas so don't have access to the types of performances that Terrapin presents, so introducing students (at any age) to such performances is always valuable.'

Teacher

Terrapin teacher survey





5 Opportunities

The Access Program has confirmed cost as the main barrier to participation among disadvantaged schools

The Access Program represents an important milestone in Terrapin's work to remove barriers to high quality arts experiences.

When providing suggestions for improving the program in future, many teachers in 2019 mentioned enabling access for students with limited financial means to participate in the program, as one said: 'More touring locally and lower costs please.'

Another teacher responded, 'Whilst not in a rural school, I have taught in a number and cost is by far the biggest hurdle'.

The 2021 Access Program confirms that where the cost barriers can be removed, the program can deliver powerful creative experiences to thousands more students. Impact can be unlocked. In fact, students and teachers participating in the access program reported even more positive experiences and impacts, confirming the value of this work.

There is opportunity for an integrated role in the curriculum — though there would be trade-offs for Terrapin

When offering suggestions for improvement, one stakeholder recommended an approach to school touring that integrates with the school curriculum, commenting,

'There's an inherent danger in touring to schools. It's not enough to tour once a year, it needs to be a multi-year approach to touring and re-touring, so you can set a foundation and build upon it over years. It needs to be regularly repeating and with a point of intersection between education and a quality arts company.'

They continued,

'Terrapin's cultural and artistic remit is equally comfortable in community, local, national and international spheres – and across a whole range of ages and prior experience of the arts. It's potent in that regard.'



Though another stakeholder also wondered about the trade-offs for the artistic focus of the organisation,

'How can Terrapin as an arts organisation be properly resourced to have a 40-week per year constant touring schedule, whilst it is able to have a national and international agenda at the same time. What would that look like? Does it dilute Terrapin if there is a fixed touring sub-ensemble with an education focus?'

The research confirms the value of theatre skills workshops, such as Shadow Play, for most schools

Teachers responding to the online survey were invited to share what they feel is the most important opportunity for Terrapin to pursue in future, from a list of options.

The majority of teachers said they would like to see skills workshops alongside the performance (62%) — confirming the importance of Terrapin's new workshop series to complement Scaredy Cat, Shadow Play.

Among other opportunities, two-fifths of teachers suggested increasing the opportunity for interaction with artists (43%) and one-third suggested increasing performances in community settings (33%).

Slightly smaller, though significant numbers prioritised offering discounted costs (25%), increasing the number of productions touring (25%), engaging with children to identify urgent issues (23%) and developing online teaching resources (23%).

Survey respondents were slightly less likely to prioritise expanding the touring schedule each year (20%).

In regard to theatre workshops, one teacher said,

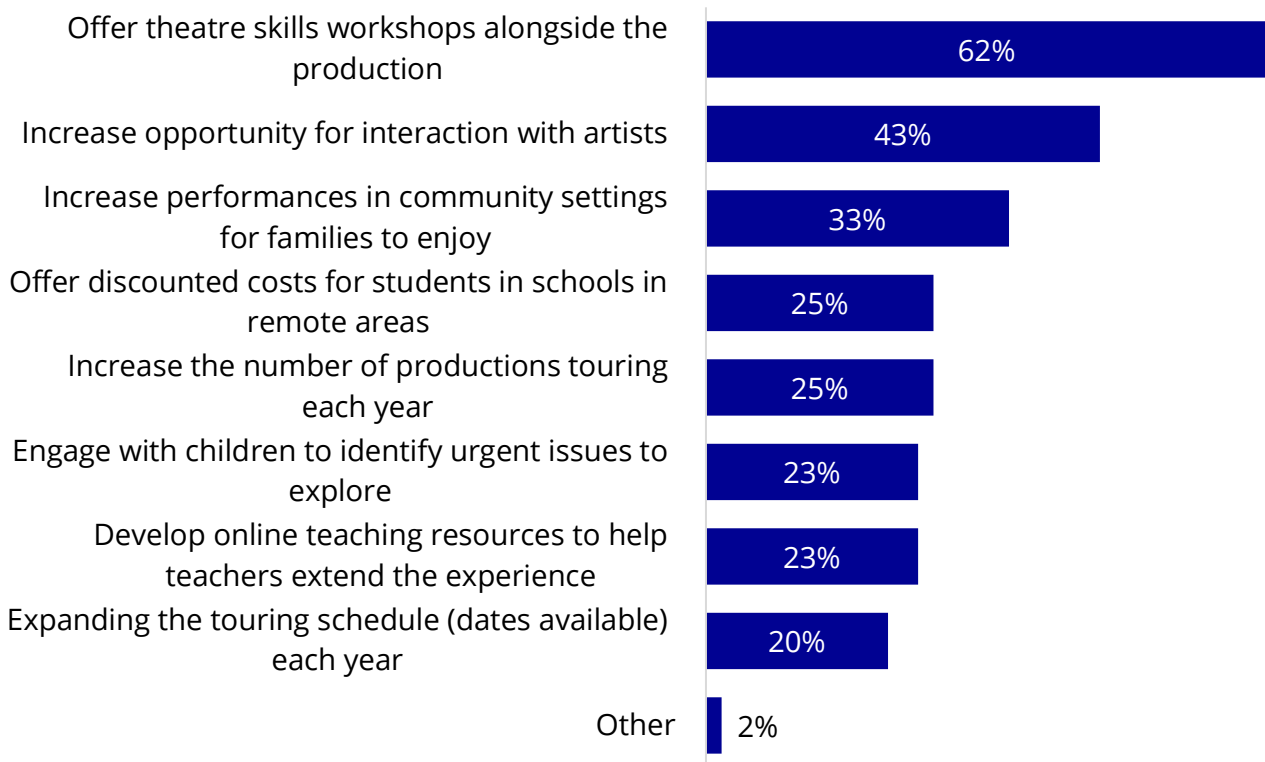
'I think it would be wonderful for the students to be able to learn some of the skills and have more time to talk about how the artists came to be doing what they are doing.'

Similarly, another suggested that workshops could extend the experience of participation, sharing,

'The children love being a part of the performance and it gives them an insight into performing as a career choice. Workshops would be another great way to get children involved.'



Figure 20. What do you see as the most important opportunities for Terrapin to improve the program in the future? Choose up to 3. n=60



Terrapin can build awareness about topical issues, helping guide children to becoming informed citizens

Several respondents also suggested more topical exploration of subjects that concern students. For example, one teacher recommended, 'Connecting to relevant and timely issues, such as mental health can be done through the magic of puppets.'

Another teacher advised, 'Environment is the other big one for all kids', while one recommended 'Issues that kids wrestle with like bullying, who they are and how they identify as individuals.'

Some teachers noted the unique power of Terrapin to develop awareness in students, leading to more informed decision making in their later lives. As one teacher commented,

'Continue to look at global/environmental issues that will impact the students' imagination and decision making.'



Another shared a similar sentiment, commenting: 'We particularly valued the Aboriginal perspective and that was valued by staff- also content strands from the curriculum. Environmental awareness.'

One teacher agreed, arguing that Terrapin encourages students to 'Think creatively on how to reuse and recycle and make conscious decisions about the welfare of the environment.'

One stakeholder recommended consulting with young people on important issues

For continuous improvement, it has been suggested that Terrapin consult with young people on issues that are important to them. One stakeholder shared that this was the key in ensuring the program remains relevant and engaging,

'Understand deeply what young audiences are thinking and what their capacity for stories are would make sense...From the target market, bring the kids in and actively. Listen to their feedback and respond'.

Another stakeholder agreed, recommending a two-way communication between Terrapin and its young audiences:

'Work for young people should be as important and dealing with hard subjects as adult theatre.'

Terrapin could go to the cohort that they want to serve, and talk to them to really incorporate student voice in their work, or reflect on what the voice is.'

However, one person argued: 'Kids aren't necessarily going to clearly and insightfully tell you what they want...You want to be surprised in the moment.'

Another shared a similar view,

'It's also nice to also bring things to kids that they haven't thought of. Going back to students and capturing that, what the students are saying.'

Adapting the program for students with access requirements will expand the impact of the program

Survey respondents and interviewees were also consulted to put forward suggestions for improving the program, or opportunities that Terrapin could pursue in the future.



Suggestions for improvement generally related to issues of access, and many advocated for increasing accessibility for schools and students who experience disadvantage.

When asked to share their reasons for not booking with Terrapin recently, one-third of survey respondents (31%) selected 'Other' reasons, which included the suitability of the performance for their students. As one teacher mentioned,

'The last performance was not suitable to engage a group of approximately 60 students with special needs.'

For some teachers, one aspect of the program that could be improved is accessibility for students with special needs. Another teacher suggested, 'Perhaps adapt the regular program to suit students with special needs.'

Others mentioned that they were not responsible for booking programs at their school, as some said,

'Not in charge of bookings'

'Senior staff decisions'

'Staff role not in this area'

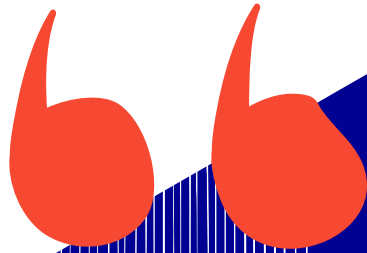
There is opportunity to further investigate the community impact of Terrapin

One Terrapin stakeholder advocated for further research into the community-wide impact of Terrapin and its School Touring Program. They said that Terrapin would:

'[Demonstrate the] impact in terms of civic citizenship: of investment and support of the arts sector...calibrating hard economics in terms of jobs and growth in terms of for-purpose: belonging, identify, social health and wellbeing. Output of quality arts production.'

They continued to contemplate the impact that Terrapin may have on Tasmanians who have participated in the program:

'It would be interesting to understand if – in the households of those adults – there is a normalisation of the arts. If they're not scared or intimidated by the arts... I don't think it's about a career – but a lifelong appreciation and engagement with the arts.'



'It's wonderful, much like acting in drama in high school years, the shy kids can assume the persona of the character they are in charge of and finally find their 'voice' to express themselves.'

Teacher

Terrapin teacher survey





Appendix

Survey respondent profile

Three quarters of respondents work public schools

61 teachers responded to the online survey, including 33 in 2019, 1 in 2020 and 27 in 2021. Of the 27 teachers responding in 2021, 6 respondents had participated in the Access Program in terms 3 and 4 of the year.

The majority of teachers (77%) responding to the survey were employed in a public school during their last Terrapin experience, 10% worked in a private independent school and 12% in a Catholic school. Just 2% (one respondent) said they worked in another type of school, which catered for students with special needs.

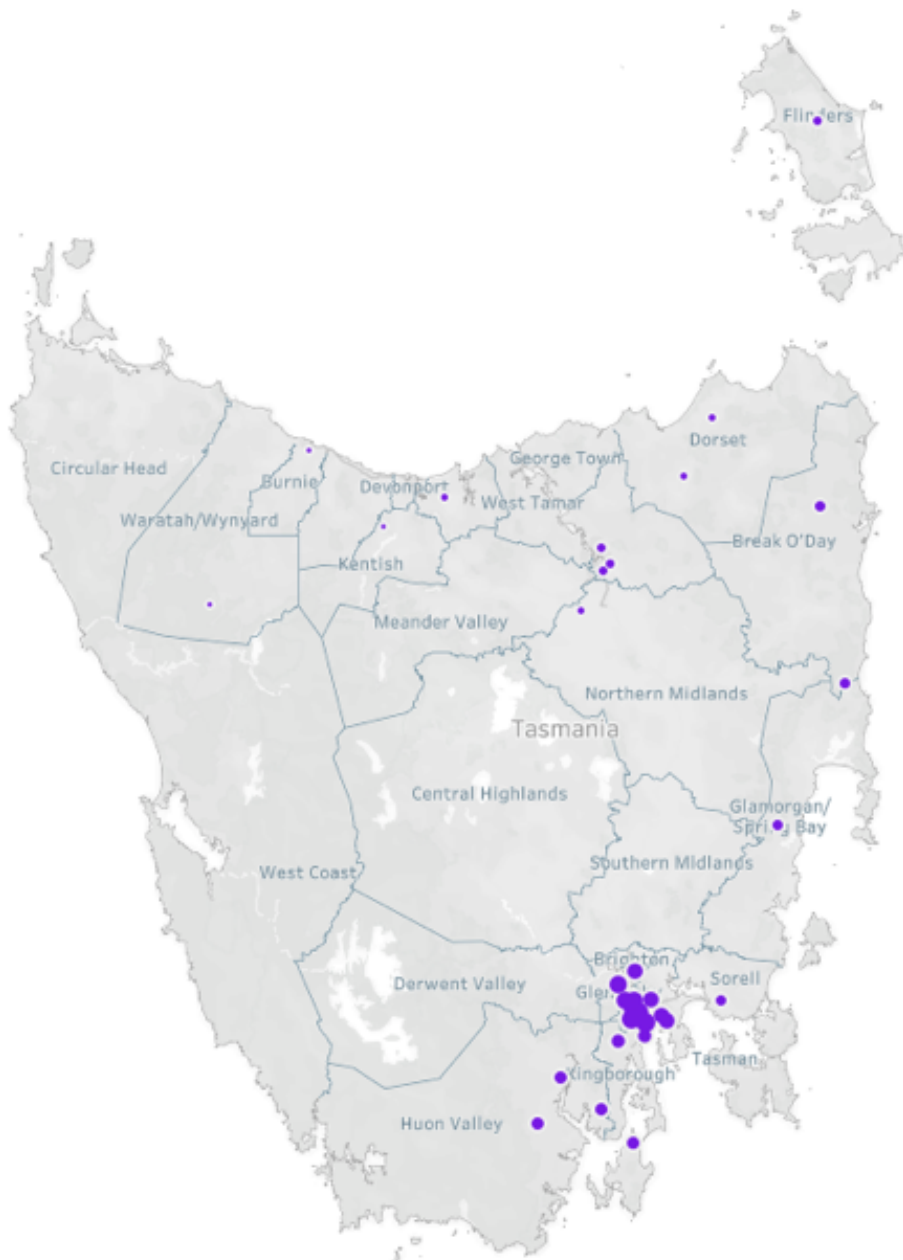
Historical bookings data from Terrapin also indicated that the majority of teachers participating in the program work in government (public) schools (72%). Following this are teachers from Catholic schools (15%) and private schools (14%).



The survey heard from teachers across Tasmania

Most teachers who responded to the survey were based in Hobart and its surrounding areas — though many were based across regional and remote areas in Tasmania.

Figure 21. In which postcode was your school located? n=61





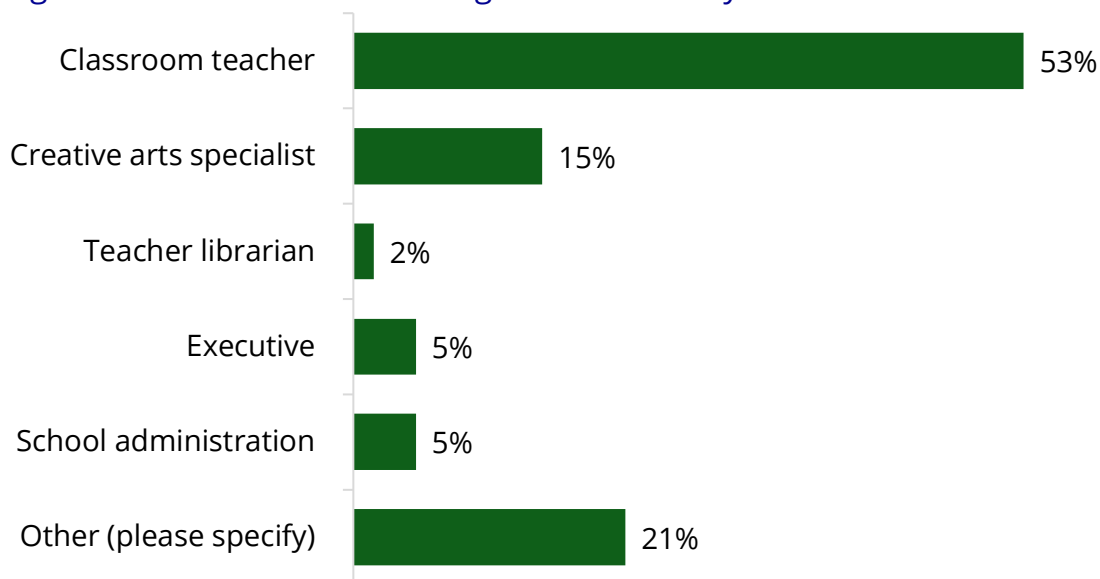
7 in 10 respondents have been teaching for over 15 years and more than half are classroom teachers

Respondents were asked how many years they have been involved in teaching, and 7 in 10 had been teaching for over 15 years (73%). The next most common tenure was 6-10 years, which comprised 12% of teachers.

The majority of survey respondents described themselves as general classroom teachers (53%). Small proportions were creative arts specialists (15%) and 14% were in school administration roles (5%). 1 in 5 21% of respondents described themselves as 'Other', which include roles such as principal, program coordinator and special education teacher.

Few teachers described themselves as a teacher librarian (2%) or school executive (5%).

Figure 22. Which of the following best describes you? n=61



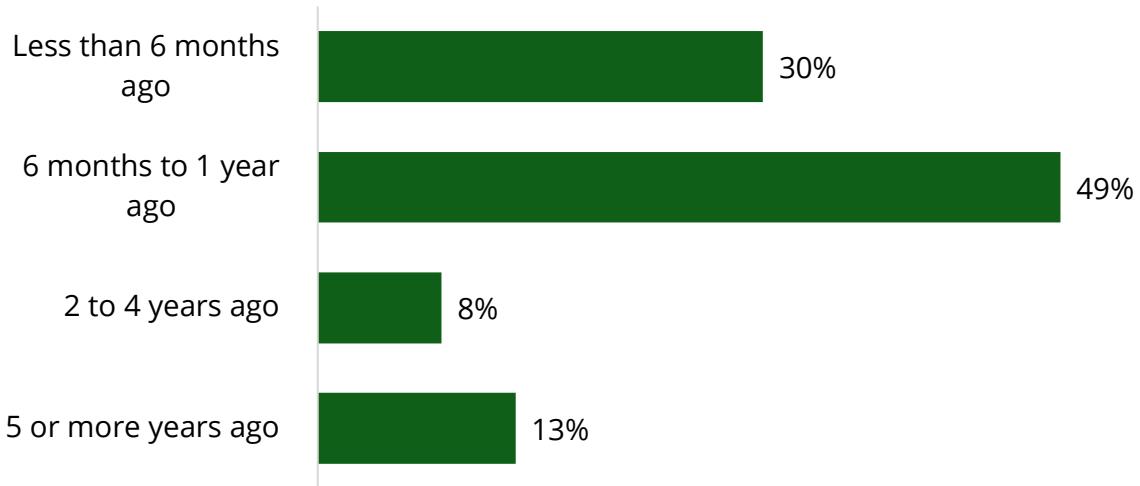
The majority of respondents have attended Terrapin show recently

The majority of teachers had seen a Terrapin performance within the year prior to responding to the online survey (79%), including one-third (30%) that saw a performance in the last six months.

Teachers who saw a performance five or more years ago represented 13% of survey respondents.

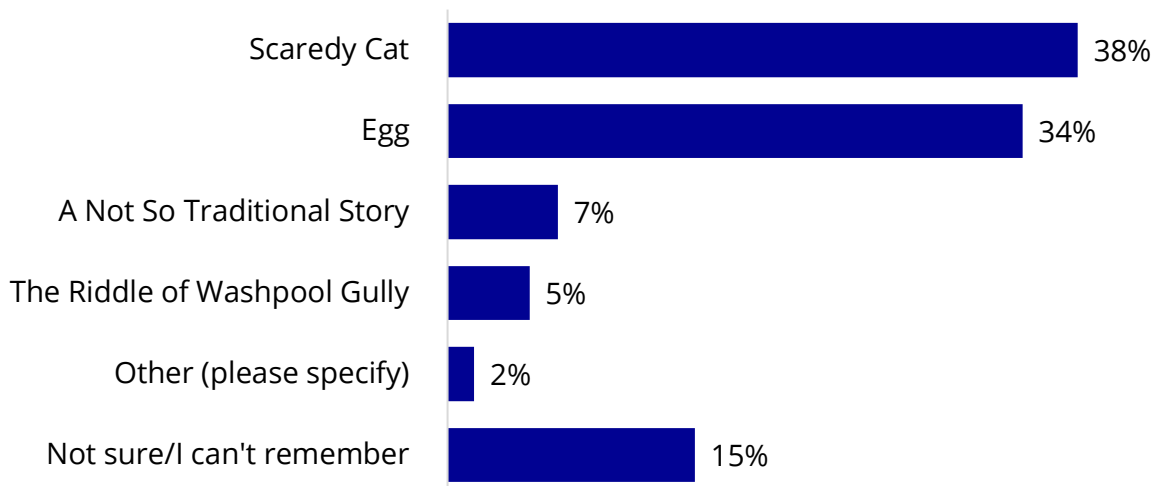


Figure 23. When did you last book a Terrapin performance? n=61



The majority of teachers stated that Scaredy Cat (38%) or Egg (34%) was the last Terrapin performance they attended suggesting that their experience was recent enough to elicit an engaged response.

Figure 24. What was the name of the production? n=61



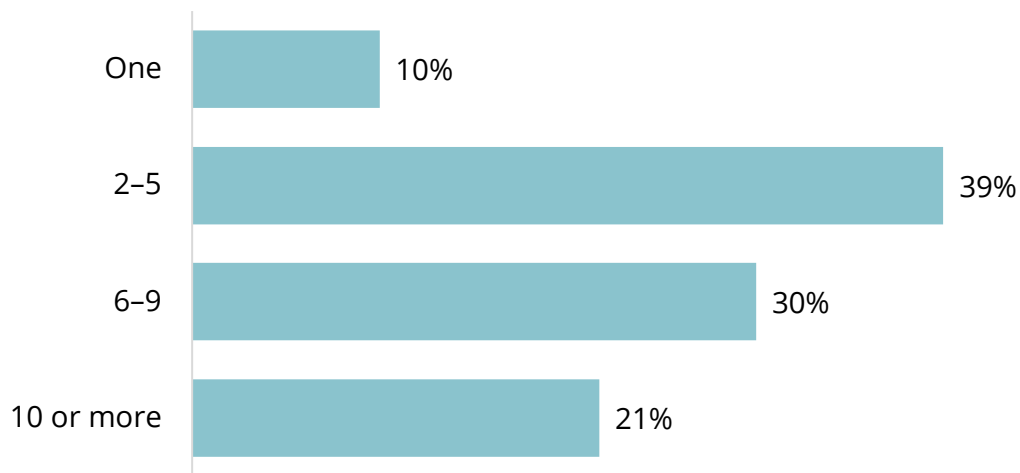


90% of teachers participated in the program more than once — and 1 in 5 have seen 10 or more performances

Most teachers said they have participated in more than one Terrapin incursion with the largest proportion having attended between two and five performances (39%).

This was closely followed by teachers who have seen between 6 and 9 performances (30%). One-fifth (21%) of respondents have seen 10 or more performances.

Figure 25. How many Terrapin performances have you experienced? n=61





We particularly valued the Aboriginal perspective and that was valued by staff- also content strands from the curriculum...

School administration staff
Terrapin teacher survey





Literature review

Introduction

Interest in creativity in schools is growing

The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) called upon Australian politicians to launch a research-based status review to assess how effectively the Australian Curriculum: The Arts has been integrated into Australian Schools.⁶

Speaking to ArtsHub, former officer of Arts Curriculum at the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACAA) stated that 'some schools are opting for off-the-shelf arts presented by external providers that do not actually align with the curriculum and who are misrepresenting the potential of rigorous arts education.'

Visual arts representative, Associate Professor Margaret Baguley, said the review was timely, as the world-renowned Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – which assesses the skills and knowledge of 15-year-olds globally in mathematics, science and reading – would also be assessing creative thinking in 2021.

'Creative thinking is a necessary competence for everyone, but particularly young people in an increasingly technologically driven and innovative society. We need to ensure Australian students are well prepared through their engagement with quality arts education for this international measure.'

Impact of performing arts on young people

Creative opportunities give disadvantaged young people a voice

A 2014 study was developed to evaluate how youth theatre companies in the U.S. are creating social issues-based theatre in original ways. The research was based in New York as it allowed the evaluation to focus on social issues affecting young people from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds.

⁶ ArtsHub 2019, Call for arts teaching review, 24 September, <https://www.artshub.com.au/education/news-article/news/arts-education/performing-arts-editor/call-for-arts-teaching-review-258852>



The research involved case studies, shadowing projects, observations of rehearsals and performances, interviews and participation in staff training projects. Over 20 organisations in New York city were visited.

Skapinker⁷ puts forward a number of recommendations for developing good practice in youth theatre workshops:

1. Afford young people with the top resources and match them to professionals in the sector where possible.
2. Provide opportunities for young people to hear their scripts being read aloud by professional actors. This is a rare and valuable learning experience for young playwrights.
3. Connect your young people to experts in the topics which interest them, for example, lawyers working on immigration or activists campaigning for gender equality.
4. Young people and professionals should work together and have equal status, roles and treatment in the rehearsal process. This provides the ideal co-learning environment where young participants feel empowered.
5. If the project is ongoing, stay connected with alumni in the long-term and into adulthood.
6. Young people should act as dramaturg (literary advisor) in works for young audiences. No-one else is so well equipped to tell you how your work will impact young audiences and how they will respond.
7. Be transparent about the social issues that are affecting you as an artist or activist and share these with young participants - bring your own humanity into the room!
8. Bring people together from a diversity of ages, communities and backgrounds. Empathy is a powerful tool of social engagement, and unusual ensembles often find new ways of addressing issues together.
9. Move from the personal scale to the global scale – begin a process by asking how an issue affects young people's own lives, and then contextualise this by looking at society or government locally and globally.
10. Be curious and continue to question yourself. As workshop practitioners, we don't have all of the answers – we can and should learn from our participants and from each workshop.

⁷ Skapinker, J. 2014, Engaging Young People with Social Issues through Devised Theatre and Dramaturgy, *Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship Report*.



Education and arts sector partnerships impact student engagement, social learning outcomes and creative skills

A research partnership between Arts Victoria (now Creative Victoria) and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) evaluated the impact of artists-in-residence and exposure-to-arts programs in 2009.

The evaluation was conducted in two stages: stage one identified existing research on the effectiveness of school/arts partnerships and the improvement of student outcomes. Stage two considered impacts of arts partnerships, their characteristics, the role of teachers, arts professionals and school leaders and the implications for future policy, programs and practice.

The evaluation drew on 150 hours of interviews and onsite observations, 390 surveys, 40 site visits and documentary analysis of artists-in-residence programs and other reports. Over 410 students, 50 teachers and other school leaders and 34 arts professionals participated in the evaluation. Students were aged between 10 and 16, with the majority of students aged 11.

The evaluation found that school/arts partnerships included in the study had a positive impact on student engagement, student voice, social learning, creative skills and arts-related knowledge and skills.

A common theme in the evaluation was the impact of the school/arts partnership program on the lives of its participants, and that this impact may in some circumstances not be measurable during or immediately after the program. This makes the case for conducting a longitudinal study of past participants to explore the impact of arts programs in young people's later lives.

Participating in arts workshops can increase self-esteem and confidence in young people

A 2006 UK study explored the impact of various art workshops including graffiti art, DJ skills, urban dance and mosaics on children aged 8–13. The study interpreted data from feedback boards, learning diaries, photo documentation, observation and interviews. The purpose of the study was to investigate the use of arts —with its focus on creativity, expression and identity — to promote health and wellbeing in community settings.⁸

⁸ South, J. 2006, Community arts for health: an evaluation of a district programme, *Health Education*, vol. 106, no.2, pp. 155–168.



Children were engaged and included as stakeholders in the development of a new community centre, where youth activities were planned and evaluated. The study revealed that participation in these activities improved young people's confidence in talking about important issues.

For example, young women in drama workshops were able to articulate their feelings and reflect on issues affecting their mental and sexual health — particularly in a safe, confidential environment.

Theatre education can positively affect behaviour, beliefs and changes in attitude

In 2007, an American intervention was implemented to identify and categorise a unique nutrition education strategy to promote healthy diets among Mexican-American youth. The study employed a quantitative pre- and post- intervention survey with a matched control group of 38 Mexican-American youth aged 8 to 12.⁹

The group participated in five daily sessions over four weeks, in which they created skits and discussed nutrition handouts. As a group they later developed and performed a play.

Results from the study demonstrate a 25% increase in knowledge of the intervention group, as well as changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours surrounding nutrition compared to the control group. For example, one quote from a participant included in the study is: 'I learned people could get diabetes. I had never heard of the word. I am aware of it now'.

Limitations of the study include the small sample size, and that no survey tool is named nor described.

Puppetry can be a satirical reflection of the times

According to Eruli and Lions, puppet theatre is 'a manifestation, a sign and a reflection of the historical, cultural and politician situation of a society at any given time'.¹⁰ Throughout the last two centuries, scholars note, puppetry has extended beyond the context of bourgeoisie

⁹ Colby, S.E. & Haldeman L. 2007, Peer-led theater as a nutrition education strategy, *Journal of Nutrition Education & Behavior*, vol. 39, pp.48-9

¹⁰ Eruli, E. & Lions, M. 2010, Society and Puppets – Social Applications of Puppetry, World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts, <https://wepa.unima.org/en/society-and-puppets-social-applications-of-puppetry/#:~:text=Like%20any%20art%20form%2C%20the,society%20at%20any%20given%20time>.



salons, to be experienced in public squares, villages and schools. Today, puppetry is applied in the work of theatre people, teachers, therapists and doctors.

The social, political and cultural implications of puppetry lie in its symbolic presentation, which demonstrates that they,

'... are not only the heroes of well-known local stories, but they also incorporate all the values and preconceptions (positive or negative) that helped cement feelings of identity and belonging to a whole community.'

Due to their strong symbolic traits, puppets have the ability to embody their audiences' moods, fears, worries and desires. Puppetry anchors itself to the current state of the world through humour and satire, allowing audiences to 'act out' these feelings.

The power of puppetry

Puppets arouse empathy and emotional engagement

'Puppets can be emotionally engaging characters, but our empathy may be rooted in the nature of the physical gestures they are able to make, which ultimately are always child-like.'

Trimingham draws on theories of cognitive neuroscience to explore the way in which puppetry provides insights into the nature of our own subjectivity. For the puppeteer, the effort of moving a puppet into positions that resemble an actual creature they are imitating draws upon sensory-motor memory. This arouses empathy through the lived body that animates it and the audience that watches. The more a puppeteer is able to embody 'real' movements and feelings, the better the performance¹¹. Empathy in this context is interactive, and involves the direct pairing or matching of the bodies of self and other.¹²

Puppetry can increase interest, attention and motivation in learning

'For hundreds of years puppets have been used as an important tool for transmitting knowledge and are located in the fine distinction between entertainment and learning. They

¹¹ Trimingham, M. 2011, 'How to think a puppet', *Forum Modernes Theater*, vol. 26, no.1, pp. 121-136.

¹² Thompson (ed) 2001, *Between Ourselves*, second person issues in the study of consciousness, Thorverton UK and Charlottesville USA, pp. 1-32.



have been recognized as an educational tool for their ability to integrate art, communication and persuasion'.¹³

A 2015 Israeli study used semi-structured interviews with mediators, to evaluate the use of puppets as a mediation tool for kindergarten children.

A puppet can be a useful tool in 'verifying children's understanding when they answer questions and participate in dialogue'. In the study, the puppet's ability to generate interest, attention and motivation in children was the most frequently mentioned contribution to children's learning among interviewees. Further, mediators feel that the use of puppets contribute to their own self-confidence and teaching manner, and that perceived themselves as more interesting and interactive for children.

The scholars highlight that these findings can contribute to demonstrating the effectiveness of puppets as a medium for mediation, especially in kindergarten and with special needs children.

Radical puppets can incite social change

'Imaginative radical puppetry permits us to break through what is considered as fixed views of self and the environment'.¹⁴

A 2009 article by U.S. arts education professor, Rikki Asher presents the results of a university-level art education course called Puppetry in Classrooms. The course implemented a curriculum based on 'radical puppetry', or puppets that have a social message. According to Asher, radical puppets 'encourage creative ideas that lead toward understanding global and environmental aspects of society'.

Puppetry is a well-established form of artistic expression in South Africa. A product of its colonial cultural heritage, puppetry is performed in both amateur theatre shows and extensive education campaigns.¹⁵

One South African study in 1991 evaluated the use of puppets in street theatre as an educational medium to attempt to reduce the spread of HIV infection. The puppet show

¹³ Remer, R. & Tzuriel, D. 2015, "I Teach Better with the Puppet" - Use of Puppet as a Mediating Tool in Kindergarten Education – an Evaluation, *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 356–365.

¹⁴ Asher, R., 2009, Radical puppets and the language of art, *Art Education*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp.6-12.

¹⁵ Kruger, M. 2008, Puppets in educational entertainment in South Africa: comments on a number of long-term projects, *South African Theatre Journal*, vol. 22, no.1, pp. 25–43.



underwent two phases of evaluation: the first involving content analysis of a video recording of the show. The second phase was a pre- and post-study of the impact on the audience at a series of live shows.¹⁶

Six people ages 15 to 45 were interviewed before the show and an unknown number were interviewed after the show. Interviews involved a questionnaire, with the post-show questionnaire including questions about the interviewees experience and satisfaction.

The evaluation showed that the puppet show made a significant contribution to knowledge and intended behaviour in the short term, but could be made more effective if incorporated into existing community-based programmes on HIV infection.

Puppets can facilitate learning for students with special needs, such as language difficulties

Studies find that the use of puppets in the classroom provide support for tactile learners¹⁷. This is true for both typical children and children with special needs.

Asher referred to Heidi Jacobs' Interdisciplinary Concept model when instructing students to produce and perform a puppet show that explored environmental issues. The four-step model includes: 1) Selecting a topic, 2) Brainstorming associations, 3) Formulating guiding questions for inquiry and 4) Designing and implementing activities. The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of this model, which aimed:

'...(1) to increase understanding of the process of puppetry, the materials, method and manner used to construct them and (2) to better equip teachers to develop art with a social message in their classrooms'

Puppets provide a safe means of expression for feelings and ideas. Children, for example, feel greater comfort towards the puppet than their teacher when expressing negative emotions¹⁸. Asher established that the use of puppets giant puppets facilitated self-expression for shy or withdrawn students, or ones that had limited language abilities.

¹⁶ Skinner, D., Metcalf C. A., Seager, J.R., De Swardt, J.S. & Lauscher, J. A. 1991, An evaluation of an education programme on HIV infection using puppetry and street theatre, *AIDS Care*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp.317-329

¹⁷ Reidmiller, S. 2008, *The benefits of puppet use as a strategy for teaching vocabulary at the secondary school level with students who have mixed learning disabilities*, retrieved from <http://www.puppetools.com/Reidmillerresearch.pdf>.

¹⁸ Quintero, B, S, 2011, *Puppetry and art education: a personal journey*, MA (Master of Arts) thesis, University of Iowa, 2011.



Quintero's thesis explored the use of puppetry arts in educational settings, with an aim to build skills in puppeteering, and to better teach children in puppetry art-making experiences. The research involved two stages: the first was writing, producing and performing puppet show, one interview with a professional puppeteer and conducting a desktop review of existing literature on the artform. The second phase involved teaching a two-week enrichment program to children aged seven to 8.

The study observed that the collaborative process of producing a puppet performance allowed children to take ownership and pride in their work, feel a sense of accomplishment and achieve team building and cooperation. In addition, preparing for the performance required students to think critically and problem solve.

Literature review conclusions

There is opportunity to explore how puppetry creates active and engaged citizens

Literature on puppetry demonstrates its ability to impact behaviour change, attitude-resets and student voice. The ability for puppets to arouse empathy can in turn make sensitive topics more approachable for children.

The use of puppetry in education and health-related contexts investigates short-term impacts of engaging with puppetry. As Terrapin aims to ignite urgent conversations, there is opportunity to investigate the long-term outcomes of participation in its school touring program, focusing on awareness of social, cultural and political issues and civic engagement.

Terrapin could benefit from delivering workshops or consultation projects that engage young people in issues that are important to them.

Evaluation of Terrapin can offer insights about the role of incursions for disadvantaged students

Research on the particular impact of performing arts incursions is scant, especially for schools and students that experience disadvantage. The majority of studies explore workshop and community-based projects, as well as short courses in theatre and arts education.

Terrapin could lead in demonstrating the impact of long-term engagement between arts companies and schools. As the majority of Terrapin's reach consists of disadvantaged schools



in rural and regional areas of Tasmania, strong evidence can be built around the particular outcome of visiting remote locations as a professional performing arts company.



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