

Dialogue with children about art

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Pre-conditions for the dialogue

To enter in a dialogue with children one must:

- Be clear on how to include children in a dialogue and to what extent the children's views will be taken into use.
- Take into account variables such as - time of day, the time frame for the dialogue and the relationship to the adults involved.
- Be prepared to help children use different methods to reveal their opinions, to listen sincerely to what the children have to say, lead the dialogue without judging, let the children ask questions, be able to put aside any adult agendas.
- Be prepared to involve parents and other relevant adults
- Create activities that are fun and varied so that children of all ages are motivated to join voluntarily
- Provide the involved children with feedback about the dialogue and the value of their participation.

The IAN model as a structure for dialogue with children and young people

Concert Norway's program council has experimented with an interview guide constructed according to the [IAN model](#). This allows input from reference groups of pupils to be compared with the reviews of the program council. In this context a short practical guide for interview preparation and an interview guide were prepared by Merete Solli and Catherine Jacobsen in Concerts Norway.

The frame of the interview:

- Agreement: always make sure to make arrangements with the teacher ahead. Set aside a measured amount of time (eg. 20 min) and a place to conduct the interview.
- Who: It's fine if the teacher has selected a representative sample of students in advance. Ask for a varied or randomly assembled group in order for the school not to present a group of the most intelligent and conscientious students. We want a cross-section of pupils. It should also be specified if you want to talk to students from the same grade or from different age groups.
- Group size: 3-5 is a good group size for a dialogue. If they are too many, some will be excluded. Larger groups have a natural dynamics towards consensus, and the social hierarchies of the school will become apparent. Smaller groups make it easier to for each student to express themselves, and often the input will be more varied and personal.

- **When:** you may want to make the interview not too long after the art experience, while students still have it fresh in their memory. Do not let the interview take place in the lunch hour, or after school. The session will then be perceived as compulsory and students will be less motivated to participate.
- **Where:** any location at school where the dialogue can take place in peace and quiet, while the students are in "school mode" as opposed to break mode (as they will be in eg. the play ground or cafeteria)
- **Length:** Not too long and not too short. It depends on what you want to ask and how many students participate. Half an hour max, and 10 minutes minimum.

How to ask the questions:

- **Journalistic approach:** no yes or no questions, be sure follow-up questions, get students to describe, explain why, deepen.
- **Educational approach:** make students feel safe, small talk a bit first, give a true representation of who you are and why you are there. Getting to know your students. Make them confident that they can say what they really think, not to "brag" or answer "clever". Avoid leading questions and questions directed at superficial values ("Did you like the show?"). Feel free to ask open-ended questions that provide space for in-depth discussions and own views.

Frame for dialogue based on the IAN model axes

"Intent"

Were the musicians interested in communicating with you as an audience? Did you get the feeling that the musicians played for you, or for themselves? (communication / commitment)

"Ability"

Were the musicians good at playing? (Musical skill)

(Note: this is difficult for learners of all ages to consider.) Did you feel that you got to know the musicians during the concert? (Communication skills)

"Necessity"

What was the point of the show? Do you think the concert was about something? (Thematic relevance) Why was this a concert for you? Do you think the concert is suitable for you and your friends? (Personal relevance)

Summary of axes

(Ex. "You have presented a picture of a concert with good musicians that did not quite reach you. Is that correct?")

(NB: It is possible to go directly to a comprehensive dialogue without defining the axes Intent, ability and necessity)

Comprehensive Dialogue

What do you think was the best part of the concert? (Begin the discussion on the basis of the strength of the concert)

Is there anything from the concert you remember particularly well? (the strongest impression)

Have you heard this kind of music before? (Expressive distance)

If you remember it:

- Can you describe how the concert began? (impression)
- What happened along the way? (Perception of concert form and drive)
- How did the concert end? (Perception of the concert form)

Was there anything in the concert you didn't like so well? (Perception of weaknesses)

In case of student involvement in concert:

What do you think about how you were involved in the concert (clap and sing along etc.)? (Perception of complicity)

Proposed changes

If you could change something about the concert, what would change? Why? How? (Proposals for adjustment)

Final assessment

Would you recommend this concert to other schools?