

Management Response from the Board of Fighting Words to:

DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre's Inclusive Systems and Inclusive Arts Education Key Principles: A Strategic Framework for *Fighting Words*' Poverty and Social Inclusion Commitments

“A Different Way of Being”

The report from DCU looking at the applicability of our creative writing model and approach for students experiencing educational disadvantage is welcomed. The work by Dr Una McCabe and Prof Paul Downes is greatly appreciated by all at Fighting Words.

The findings and recommendations were discussed by the board of Fighting Words, and the positive assessment on the relevance, applicability and the benefits of our creative education approaches across the principles from an arts and inclusion perspective, and the key principles for inclusive systems and arts education was noted.

The board members welcomed the recognition that the Fighting Words programme resonates with key principles, such as being strengths based, offering a holistic and differentiated approach, the equitable and inclusive environment, and the collaborative, participative and interdisciplinary model.

The organisation is particularly interested in the pointers and recommendations. The proposed additional focus on sustained partnerships, particularly at community level; holistic and trauma-informed approaches, nurturing young leaders, differentiated engagements with at-risk groups, strengthening intergeneration approaches, etc., all provide a solid set of directions. There are a range of practical and useful areas of emphasis in the findings, for example on training, co-teaching, sustained longer-term engagements, using different formats, multimodal storytelling, creative adaptability, supporting neurodiverse learners and those with disabilities, co-design of workshops, linguistic diversity, etc. These provide a valuable steer, and build on approaches and directions we are using, and all are in line with our values and priorities.

Implementing further activities in these areas is in line with our strategy, where we aim to broaden the mechanisms we can use to successfully identify and engage with children who are unable to otherwise access creative opportunities and the arts, and these recommendations are welcome and will be implemented progressively as part of our plans.

Regarding the focus on community engagement, and one-stop shops, a number of observations were made by the board. As a creative writing centre, the board members reflected on whether Fighting Words is best placed to function as a community group. Rather we should work with those groups that have the local relevance and links. The resources required for Fighting Words to scale our organisation at community level would be significant, and there was a concern for the board regarding potential mission creep, or a sense that Fighting Words and its creative writing activities should deliver a core response/intervention to address systemic poverty and exclusion at community level. We will focus on the further development of partnerships with community organisations, in response to this recommendation in the report.