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How do homeschoolers approach creative arts learning and how can they be supported? Developing a flexible framework for homeschool contexts

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Abstract

Research has identified that creative arts education in homeschooling contexts presents unique challenges. A range of factors contribute to this, including a dearth of home-education-specific support. As such, the development of supporting resources that target the unique needs and approaches of homeschooling parents has previously been recommended. This paper reports on part of a larger Design-Based Research project that consulted with up to 193 homeschooling families with the aim of developing such a support resource, one flexible enough to reflect the diversity of approaches across homeschooling contexts. The phase of the research reported here sought detailed insights into the processes that five families employed when planning and facilitating their children's arts learning. Through a series of three semi-structured interviews with each family, observations of arts learning episodes in action and arts artefact analysis, each family's approach to arts learning was mapped and analysed for insights into the processes that families employed when planning and actioning arts learning. The outcome of this phase of the project is

a suggested framework to support homeschoolers in facilitating arts learning, aiming to be suitable across a variety of pedagogical approaches.

KEYWORDS
authentic arts, creative arts, homeschooling, quality arts learning, sociocultural theory

Key insights

What is the main issue that the paper addresses?

Given both the growth of homeschooling and the extensively documented value of an arts education for children, this paper seeks a response to the question: how can homeschooling families be supported in facilitating creative arts learning?

What are the main insights that the paper provides?

Insights into arts learning processes from a variety of homeschooling families confirm that arts learning is heavily context dependent. A flexible model to support a range of pedagogical approaches that is intended to stimulate more intentional addressing of arts knowledge and skills is tested and refined through this research.

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on a portion of a larger research project in which I investigated the creative arts teaching and learning practices within Australia's homeschooling community. Throughout, I sought to understand how homeschoolers approached arts learning, the challenges they faced, and ultimately, how they might most effectively be supported to nurture their children's engagement with a range of creative arts disciplines. The aim of this specific phase of the project was the testing and refinement of a flexible framework to support quality arts learning across a range of pedagogical approaches.

The impetus for the project began with my experience as a tertiary arts educator who also homeschooled my two children for a period of 8 years (2005–2012). In Australia, 'The Arts' includes Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Drama, and this is largely similar, albeit with small variations, to many arts curricula around the world (Barton, 2019). My personal and professional convictions regarding the value of the Arts in a quality, holistic education prompted deep consideration of the nature of arts learning in my own educational practice with my children and raised questions regarding the nature of arts learning in other homeschooling contexts. An extensive search for research in this field proved unfruitful, identifying a gap in the literature regarding the nature of arts learning in homeschooling.

The value of the creative arts has been extensively explored in global studies and reports, demonstrating a positive impact on learning, and the development of fundamental skills such as critical and creative thinking, innovation, and personal and cultural understanding (Bamford, 2006; Seidel et al., 2009). However, the majority of existing arts education

research relates to school contexts, with little attention paid to the rapidly growing homeschooling population. Once considered the domain of eccentrics, hippies and religious fundamentalists, homeschooling has now gained significant attention as a viable 'third option' for the education of children alongside public and private schooling and has continued to see strong growth in many countries, spurred on even more prolifically following school closures during COVID-19 (Eggleston & Fields, 2021; Henley Averett, 2021). While the body of research into this phenomenon has likewise grown considerably, its focus has predominantly focused upon broader issues such as motivations, processes and impacts of homeschooling (Neuman & Guterman, 2017), and in contrast there exists a paucity of research regarding education in discreet subject areas, including the creative arts.

What the very small body of existing research to date does show is that arts learning within homeschooling is extensively reflective of contextual features, and typically emerges from the characteristics of individual family values, attributes and resources (Burke & Cleaver, 2019; Kesselring, 2004; Pitt, 2017). As such, it is typical for families to place much greater emphasis on personal interests than meeting externally imposed curriculum expectations by educational authorities (Burke & Cleaver, 2018; Witczak, 2017). It also shows that arts learning can present a number of limiting challenges, particularly when various artistic disciplines often require access to specialised tools or instruction (such as art and craft supplies, and musical instruments and tutelage), or collaborations with groups, such as group dance and drama opportunities (Burke, 2019; Pitt, 2017; Witczak, 2017). Further, families report a dearth of pedagogically sound support resources that are specifically designed for homeschooling, leading to recommendations that homeschool-specific support from arts educators be developed (Burke, 2019; Kesselring, 2004).

The research reported in this paper seeks to address this stated problem by developing a research-informed framework for learning design to support homeschoolers in facilitating arts learning. In an earlier phase of the project, a draft framework to support homeschooling families in designing arts learning was developed, derived from a synthesis of principles in research literature in homeschooling and arts education (Burke, 2016), coupled with findings from 193 homeschoolers regarding the challenges they experience (Burke, 2019). The purpose of the current phase of the research was to test the draft framework by asking homeschooling families to reflect on and make use of it over the course of a typical school year, which might then permit me to evaluate the framework in response to findings. The research for this phase of the project was guided by an overarching question: *how can homeschoolers be more effectively supported in facilitating quality arts learning?* This overarching question was guided by two key sub-questions:

- What are the processes that homeschooling families employ when planning and engaging in arts learning in homeschooling?
- Is the existing framework for supporting and guiding arts learning an effective support for homeschooling families?

The following literature review provides a brief insight into foundational understandings regarding homeschooling, and how these were used to develop the draft framework to support families in approaching arts education in their individual homes.

Literature and conceptual framework

Homeschooling is not only pedagogically distinct from traditional institutional learning, it is also pedagogically diverse: approaches to learning are as unique as the individual homes in which it occurs. This stems from a diverse array of philosophies, preferences for learning,

motivations for choosing to homeschool, and family and child characteristics (Carpenter & Gann, 2016; Neuman & Guterman, 2017). Pedagogical approaches therefore vary exceedingly and have often been described as representing a 'spectrum'. At one extreme are very structured approaches to learning, reminiscent of 'school at home', and at the other end are unstructured 'unschoolers', where children are trusted as 'natural born learners' and given greater agency in determining the learning focus and learning activities (English, 2015a). Such a polarised view, however, does not represent the reality of homeschooling for the majority of families, who sit somewhere between these extremes and whose approaches to living and learning together are much more nuanced (Croft, 2013; English, 2012). Rothermel (2003) suggests that an appropriate means to characterise homeschooling is to view it, 'first as a superficially homogenous group, secondly as diverse groups, thirdly as families and fourthly as individuals' (p. 74). This stratified approach acknowledges that similarities exist on broader levels, and that ultimately, the approach is as unique as individual families. As such, any resources designed for homeschooling contexts must necessarily be flexible and adaptable to a range of contexts.

Homeschooling as sociocultural practice

One such theory that has been repeatedly affirmed as a suitable means to navigate both the concept of homeschooling and the variety of pedagogical approaches within such a diverse group of educators is sociocultural/socioconstructivist theory (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Harding, 2011; Jackson, 2015; Neuman & Guterman, 2016). Approaching homeschooling as a form of sociocultural practice permits the many pedagogical approaches to children's learning to be understood as an outworking of individual family contexts. When understood as a form of sociocultural practice, homeschooled children are viewed as *cognitive apprentices* within the family's Community of Practice (Barratt-Peacock, 1997, 2003), where their learning is tailored to the unique needs of the child as intimately understood by the parent/carer who facilitates holistic learning through family conversation, role modelling, domestic occupation and engagement with the wider world (Barratt-Peacock, 1997, 2003). Whether families take a very structured approach to learning through prescriptive curricula or a more unstructured approach, learning still tends to occur through intentional learning experiences *and* daily living, providing continuity between the many private contexts of children and their 'schoolwork' (Jackson, 2009). As such, homeschooling is an outworking of individual family lifestyles, worldviews and values (Neuman & Guterman, 2016).

Arts education practices in homeschooling

Specific research into the arts teaching and learning practices in homeschooling is limited, and thus far has emerged from relatively localised studies. A range of commonly adopted educational activities or strategies are employed when approaching teaching and learning in the arts (Burke & Cleaver, 2018; Witczak, 2017), which are flexibly adopted and adapted according to the unique contextual features of each home, including:

- child-led or spontaneous learning—arts experiences are initiated through children's creative play, with provisions of time and resourcing from parents;
- resource-inspired learning—workbooks, texts and educational resources are sought and adapted to guide learning activities;
- outsourcing—private tutelage or community workshops and events are intentionally embraced as a means to further arts learning;

- collaboration—partnering with other homeschooling families to maximise and benefit from a variety of skills across knowledge domains; and
- arts integration—arts activities are intentionally integrated with wider learning across a range of traditional 'subjects' or life learning to express and explore broader knowledge domains.

The adoption of the above typical educational activities has been found to align closely with the wider use of educational strategies or activities used for other subject domains (Carpenter & Gann, 2016). However, while this similarity exists, Burke's (2019) Australian research identifies that parents often find arts learning a more challenging domain, based upon the unique nature of the arts, which often necessitates the use of specialised resources and knowledge and group collaborations (which are not always accessible). Additionally, time constraints have proven particularly challenging, with arts learning sometimes overlooked by busy homeschoolers in favour of more 'foundational' learning areas such as literacy and numeracy. Moreover, arts learning is significantly impacted by the parent/s' self-efficacy, and those lacking confidence tend to seek support from external sources that are noticeably lacking in the home education market (Burke & Cleaver, 2019). As such, attributes and limitations in individual homes have been found to significantly influence how families approach arts learning (Burke, 2019; Witczak, 2017).

While these findings help to form an emerging picture of how arts learning is approached and how context impacts upon this, little is yet understood about the *processes* of arts teaching and learning that emerge from the relationship between educational activities or strategies and the family's context. This insight is important in order to facilitate homeschool-specific support and is something this project aims to address.

Arts learning as sociocultural practice

Thus far, the literature suggests that homeschooling and arts learning within homeschooling can be understood as a form of sociocultural practice. Usefully, sociocultural theory has been promoted as a useful lens to also define quality approaches to arts education. A number of arts educators and researchers promote the notion that arts learning, when approached as a form of sociocultural practice, is a beneficial approach to engaging in 'best practice' (Dinham, 2020; Ewing, 2010).

The arts are considered an integral element of sociocultural practice by engaging learners with their cultural world, developing their understanding of their place within, and of, the social tools of their culture, as well as establishing literacy in the various ways of cultural meaning making (Bamford, 2006; Ewing, 2010). As such, not only is sociocultural theory a useful framework through which to understand homeschooling (and potentially, arts learning in homeschooling), it is also a helpful means to understand 'quality' arts teaching and learning practices in an 'evocative, rather than didactive' spirit (Dahlberg et al., 1999, p. 2). Through this lens, 'quality' arts learning, in the context of this project, was understood to represent what Dinham (2020) refers to as 'authentic arts'. Authentic arts stand in contrast to typically held views in which the arts are afforded less value than other subject areas and viewed as 'fun downtime'. Instead, authentic arts learning represents a genuine programme of learning that intentionally provides opportunities for learners to:

- engage in active, imaginative exploration and development of arts practices, including fundamental arts knowledge and skills relevant to different art forms;
- make and present artworks across a variety of art forms that expresses their ideas, imagination;

- reflect critically on their own art forms and those of artists; and
- connect to the wider world of arts practice by learning about artists from a range of cultures (Dinham, 2020).

An understanding of these concepts was considered foundational for this project in promoting quality approaches to the arts, and in determining how these concepts could be used to develop a framework for understanding and supporting a variety of homeschooling contexts.

Towards developing a support resource for homeschool arts learning

Earlier research has identified a call for homeschool-specific arts education support (Burke, 2019; Witczak, 2017); however the above literature highlights that any support resource for homeschooling must necessarily be flexible, allowing families to adapt it to their unique contexts. As such, a key recognition was that a static or prescriptive resource would be inadequate, and instead a framework for learning that might be more readily adapted and adopted was deemed appropriate. As such, a suggested flexible framework, called the Integrated Arts Framework (IAF), was developed (Figure 1). This draft framework (Figure 1) was developed in response to key findings regarding the challenges experienced by 193 Australian homeschoolers (Burke, 2019), in addition to a synthesis of existing guidelines, models and research literature across homeschooling, arts education and sociocultural theory. Key principles derived from the literature included:

- the importance of authentic creative arts activities and projects that were integrated with learning within the family's current sphere of interest;
- the importance of valuing the child's interests through permitting the child to negotiate the central focus of arts learning;
- the value of open-ended learning experiences that invited creativity and imagination; and

Discuss interests
- Parents negotiate arts-rich project theme or topic with children, based upon interests

Develop Project
- Based upon the selected theme or topic, parents and children develop a project idea

Link to Curriculum
- Parents use Curriculum scope and sequence documents to identify specific arts skills and knowledge that could be developed through the project

Develop Key Skills
- Time should be given to develop relevant arts skills, knowledge and/or literacies (potentially as identified in the curriculum)

Get Creative
- Parents allocate unhurried time for children to plan, develop and create an artwork or performance

Reflect on Learning
- Parents and children reflect upon the creative learning journey and seek ways to share the outcomes with others.
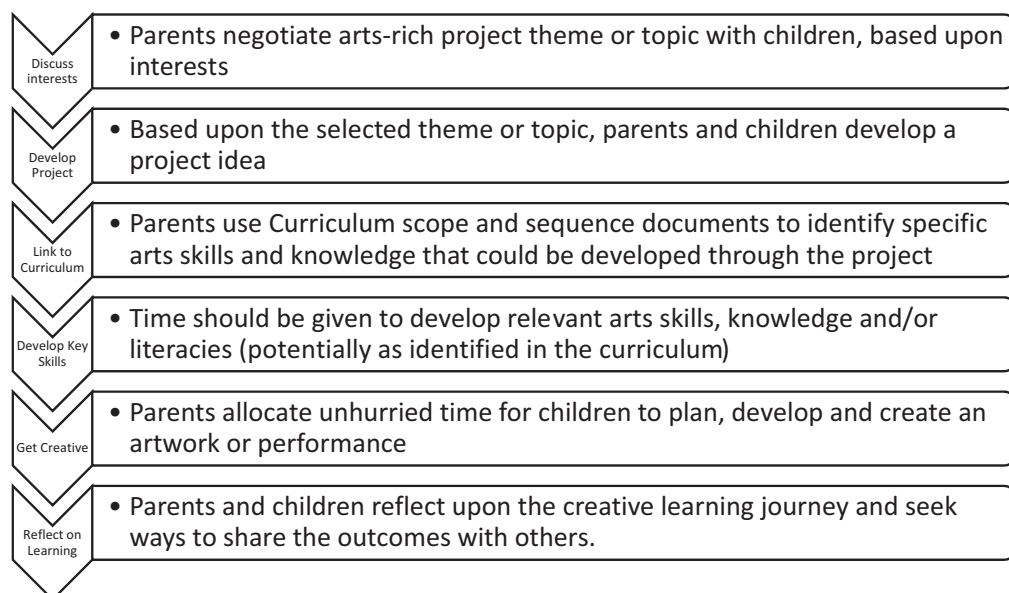
FIGURE 1 Integrated Arts Framework

- the scaffolding of key arts knowledge and skills that might promote a growing sense of confidence with the skills of various art forms.

Additionally, legislative requirements for homeschooling in Australia vary across all states and territories, although they typically require that families demonstrate how they will engage their children in each of the subjects or 'key learning areas' outlined in the state's version of the Australian Curriculum (the national standard used to develop curriculum across all sectors of schooling). As such, and in response to earlier findings that Australian families sought support for demonstrating curriculum alignment (Burke, 2016), it was recognised that connection to external curriculum relevant to the family's context may be a beneficial inclusion to a support framework.

The IAF represented a starting point for a support structure for homeschooling parents/carers to assist them in developing their own arts learning activities and projects that emerged from the sociocultural context of the family while equally supporting quality arts learning practices, with supporting reminders about how the curriculum might be used to support or focus this learning.

The above literature provides a brief summary of the key elements of research that form foundational understandings for this study and how this collectively contributed to the development of a draft framework to support parents in planning and facilitating 'quality' arts learning—the IAF. However, while the IAF had been developed from a synthesis of key literature, it remained untested and needed to be trialled in a variety of contexts that represented a range of pedagogical approaches along the homeschooling 'spectrum' to determine if it was actually reflective of a range of arts learning processes, or indeed, helpful to homeschooling parents. As such, further research was needed to understand if, and how, the framework might be helpful for parents/carers in stimulating a greater sense of confidence and competence in facilitating arts learning, and what modification it may require to better meet diverse pedagogical needs.
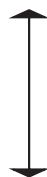
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The purpose of this research was to understand whether a framework for arts learning may prove useful in supporting a variety of homeschoolers when facilitating arts learning. This was achieved by investigating and mapping the *processes* homeschooling participants engaged in when planning and enacting arts teaching and learning, and importantly, whether these processes actually aligned with, or were effectively supported by, the IAF.

Five homeschooling families were selected for an in-depth investigation into their arts teaching and learning processes. Recruitment occurred via the final question in a survey for an earlier phase of the project ($n = 193$; see Burke, 2019), and selection of interview participants was determined based upon accessibility for interviews and observation, as well as a reasonably representational spread of a range of pedagogical approaches to homeschooling, which was identified through the survey. Targeting a range of pedagogical approaches was particularly important, given the challenges in developing a framework that might meet general homeschooling needs from a small range of contexts. The families chosen for participation, including the spread of their self-described approaches to homeschooling, are detailed in Table 1.

The IAF was made available to the participants, along with a range of supporting resources via a private website (Figure 2). Support resources included:

- descriptions and advice regarding the phases of the IAF;

TABLE 1 Pedagogical approaches of participating families

Participant pseudonym	Self-described approach to homeschooling	Level of structure
Twilight	Structured—desired adherence to curriculum	More
Natalie	Unit study—developed semi-structured, curriculum-aligned learning in negotiation with children's interests	
Grace	Predominantly structured (adapting existing resources to needs of children)	
Jean	Semi-structured/negotiated (adapting existing resources to interests/needs of children in consultation with children)	
Eve	Interest-led learning/natural learning	Less

- 'inspiration boosters,' for suggested ways of engaging with the different art forms that included brief explanations of potential activities and links to helpful online resources (scrutinised for educational rigour);
- a forum for participant communication; and
- a Project Gallery where participants could share examples of their arts practice for other members.

Participants engaged in the project over the course of a regular school year.

Families were encouraged to use the IAF and website resources to plan and facilitate arts learning, making use of these as much or little as they wanted. They were asked to keep a record of various arts learning projects and activities and invited to share these with other participants in the Project Gallery if happy to do so. Data for the investigation comprised:

- a series of 3h-long semi-structured interviews over the course of a year,
- submitted artefacts (examples of finished art projects and accompanying description of the process undertaken); and
- observations of three out of the five families engaging in an episode of arts learning of their choice (of the two other families, one child did not wish to be observed when the interview occurred and the other family was interviewed via Zoom owing to location, making observation impracticable).

Collectively, these data permitted insight into participants' *processual* approaches, the *processes* they engaged in when facilitating their children's arts learning, including the ways that they made use of existing resources when facilitating arts learning for their children. This investigation then enabled the creation of a 'map' for each participant that highlighted a general 'order of events' that each individual family undertook.

Data collection and analysis: The mapping process

The mapping process began after participants had access to the IAF and support website for 3 months. During each successive interview, participants were asked to describe their approach/es to arts teaching and learning, and this discussion evolved over the course of the year as participants made use of the IAF and supporting resources and were able to talk about arts projects they had been conducting through the year. The second interview was conducted with a copy of the IAF visible, and throughout, participants noted how their
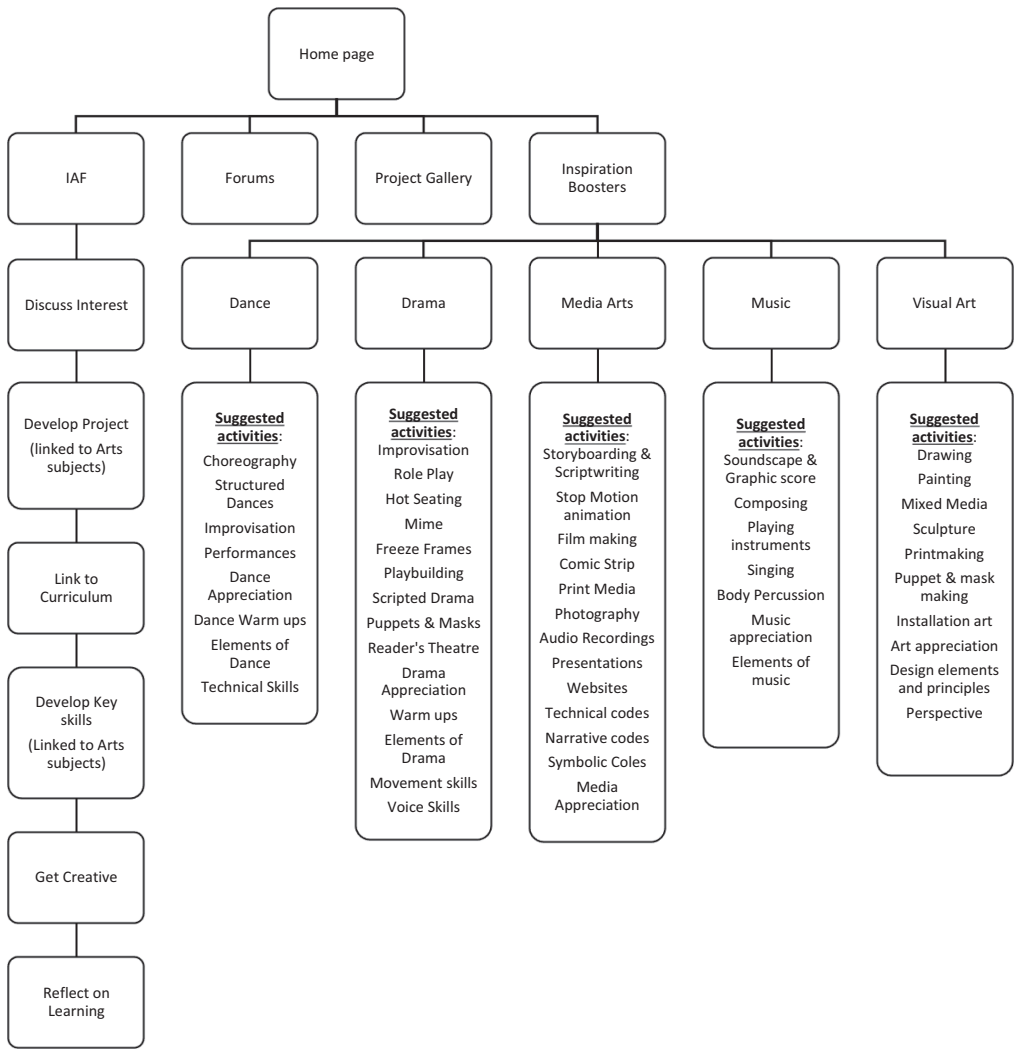
FIGURE 2 Site map of support website

usual approach aligned with, or differed from the process outlined in the framework. The final interview focused on proposed changes to the IAF in light of emerging findings, seeking participant insights and responses according to their own approach to arts learning. They also noted how the resources in the support website were used or not throughout the latter two interviews. As the discussion progressed we collectively began to create a general map or flow of events and impacting factors to summarise the approach taken.

Importantly, Argyris and Schön (1974) assert that a divide often exists between espoused theory and the enactment of this theory, also called 'theory-in-use'. Basically, people's intention for how they act (espoused theory) often differs from what actually occurs (theory in use), and in the context of this project, it was important to determine if the espoused theory of participants was actually reflective of their practice. Thus, in order to more richly understand the participants' theory-in-use, interview data were triangulated with observations of arts teaching and learning episodes and arts artefacts (accompanied by the parent/carer's written explanation of the learning process undertaken). Collectively, these data helped to provide a more comprehensive picture of each participant's actions, or 'theory-in-use',

which was presented back to the participants in latter interviews for further discussion, clarification and verification. The resulting maps for each interview participant consisted of a flow chart of the key processes or stages in their arts teaching and learning. Alongside the maps, written descriptions of each family's context and approach were also presented back to the participants for member checking to ensure accuracy and representational resonance (Hatch, 2002).

The data were analysed using inductive analysis, which requires a researcher to immerse themselves in the data, permitting the generation of explanations to make sense of the data as a whole. This involved a search for patterns of meaning, points of convergence, relationships and explanatory principles between datasets which might be used to develop more generalised insights (Cresswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002). The process began with my immersion in the data, which led to the identification of key issues, including commonalities, points of difference, silences and contradictions. My focus was also upon discovering new impressions that may develop into interpretations that could bring meaning to the data. Emerging thoughts were documented in a researcher journal and studied for salient interpretations, then data were re-read, coding instances where interpretations were supported or challenged, including whether interpretations were supported by data. Given my experience as a homeschooler, arts educator and curriculum designer, interpretive analysis was further considered cogent: it engages the researcher as an active participant in the analysis process through which their own interpretations, inferences, insights and conclusions form an additional layer of data to generate deeper insight into social situations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

FINDINGS

The maps and snapshot summaries of each participant's context and processual approach to arts learning are now presented. The summaries are intended to provide useful insights into the family's context, how this shaped their approach to arts learning, as well as their response to the IAF and how this was useful or otherwise. The language of the IAF was used to structure the maps where appropriate as a means to illustrate how and when various elements of the IAF were at work in each family's arts learning processes.

Twilight

Twilight was a sole parent who had been homeschooling her two upper Primary children for 2 years. She espoused a purposefully structured educational approach which she intended to align with the schooling system: 'I actually try to keep it parallel with what the school system is. Because I think that if at some point in time I can't keep homeschooling, I want them to be able to slot into the school system'. It was therefore unsurprising that Twilight noted her appreciation of the structure in the IAF:

> I like the structure … Like, with the Integrated Arts Framework, how it's saying, this is what is important, or necessary for children to learn according to the Australian Curriculum, whether you want to be home schooled or unschooled … I'm thinking this is really good, because it's going to give me an easy flow of steps, to accomplish what I want to do.

Interestingly, in spite of this espoused theory, progression through the three interviews and observation of arts learning in the house revealed the significant extent to which spontaneous creative activity often took place. This was largely due to the high degree of outsourcing to art,

music, dance and drama lessons/workshops in which her children participated. Twilight felt these outside experiences satisfactorily constituted the formal aspects of her children's arts learning in greater depth than the Australian curriculum stipulated. The learning from private lessons then naturally (and regularly) 'spilled over' into the home learning, where it was often extended by the children through spontaneous activity, as well as mandated daily practice (such as musical instrument practice). Importantly, the children's spontaneous activity was often supported or extended by Twilight through access to resources, access to internet searches for inspiration and tutorials, and family discussion through which ideas were often workshopped or extended. In a visual art learning experience observed, Twilight modelled a painting technique to her daughter when asked about a brush technique that had been previously researched online, demonstrating the ways that extension of arts skills was often implicit and occurred organically in response to questions from the children. As such, a number of the processes outlined in the IAF were not necessarily intentionally part of arts learning in this home. Instead, Twilight trusted that that the formalised learning through outsourced private lessons/community workshops developed the necessary competencies, and home became a place to celebrate, play and extend upon this. Thus, while Twilight espoused that she appreciated the structure and the simple and clear inclusion of curriculum links within it, her use of the IAF was observed more as a means of reassurance that her children were gaining a rich arts education that aligned with curriculum expectations and documenting this, rather than a planning tool for arts learning. This was evident, for example, in her submitted artefacts from a visual arts project in which she used the structure of the IAF to document and reflect on the project, including its curriculum connections. The map of Twilight's approach to arts learning is represented in Figure 3.

Natalie

Natalie had three children, all homeschooled: two in middle to senior years of secondary education and a third in lower primary. She described her approach as 'unit study', where she worked in conjunction with her children's interests to develop themed units of study in which she would 'try to incorporate all of the subjects … into that topic,' in a manner that aligned with her understanding of key content in the Australian and Ontario curricula (where the family had previously lived). As a Science graduate, Natalie identified that her approach

Discuss Interests/ Develop project ideas
- Spontaneous activity: Much of the arts engagement in the home sprang out of the children's spontaneous activity from the children finding resources and inspiration
- A supportive environment was key to this (access to Youtube tutorials, private lessons, encouragement etc)
- The children often conducted interest-led research, and prior to engagement in creative activity would usually bring the idea to their mum for discussion.

Get creative/Develop Key Skills
- Some development of key skills occured via discussion between parent and children at this point
- The development of arts skills was implicit, and not explicitly developed. It was assumed skill development would occur through purposeful activity
- Twilight encourages further exploration through encouragement, provision of resources etc.
- Deeper learning sometimes occurs through the children's emerging questions. (Eg. how to make the drawing look more realistic, or what the name of certain movements may be).

Connect to curriculum
- While espoused as a key driver of her homeschooling approach, this was not explicit with arts learning
- Curriculum connections were identified at the completion of a project more as a means of ensuring curriculum fulfilment.
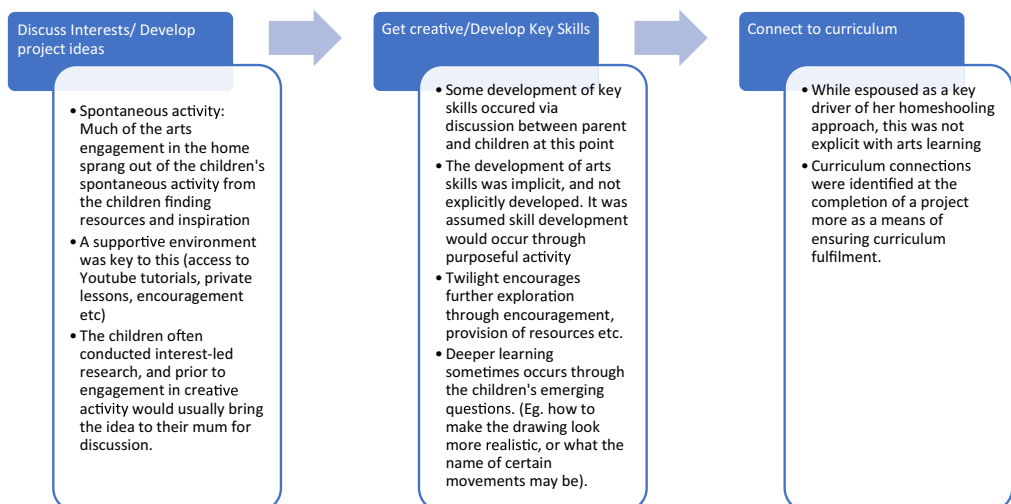
FIGURE 3   Twilight's map of arts learning processes [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

to the arts—in which she had little background experience—lacked depth. Prior to engaging as a participant in this research, she reflected that her approach to arts learning represented ongoing frustration and a sense of failure. However, as her time as a participant progressed, Natalie began to develop confidence and identify opportunities for deeper engagement, particularly in finding opportunities to extend arts-specific knowledge and skills. She began to make use of the IAF, appreciating its structure and 'step-by-step instructions'. Recalling a recent integrated Visual Arts and Science project with her youngest daughter (aged 7), where learning about the natural environment was expressed through print making, she stated,

> Instead of me going, okay go for it! We sat down and talked about the plan … we actually sat down and she told me, and I did a bit of an outline and then we got the bigger page and she worked out where she was going to put everything. [In the past] we would do nature prints, do painting; it was totally different to how I would go about it normally.

Of all participants, only Natalie really liked the overt structure of the IAF and this was evident in the mapping of her arts processes (Figure 4), which embedded aspects of each step of the framework, albeit in a more integrated fashion with key steps often occurring simultaneously. Natalie had espoused a very low level of confidence at the start of the project, and she acknowledged that she found the overt structure of the framework helpful not just in stimulating a more intentional approach to her daughter's arts learning, but importantly, in valuing what was already occurring: 'it has encouraged me to see what she is doing is valuable … Because it's not me, like "the arts" is not me … I think I still need more of a structured step-by-step sort of thing'.

Natalie's written overview of the nature-printing project also confirmed that she was developing confidence with deepening arts knowledge and skills. She wrote about exploring the 'rule of thirds', and the ways that she encouraged her daughter to reflect on the aesthetic result of the developing artwork. She further began to make direct links to the curriculum to help identify potential arts skills to intentionally develop. As such, a growth in her confidence over the course of the year was observed both in discussion, and in the depth of her arts explorations with her daughter.
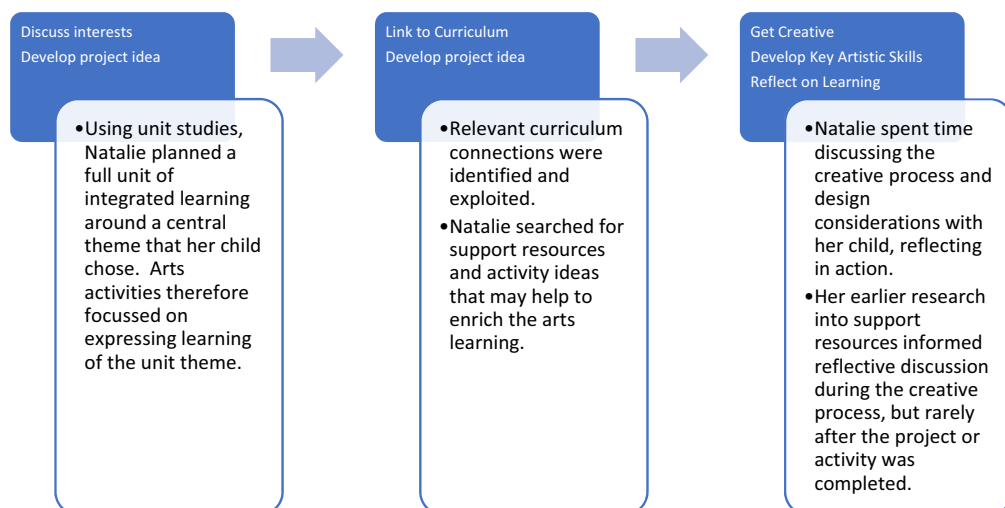

Discuss interests
Develop project idea

- Using unit studies, Natalie planned a full unit of integrated learning around a central theme that her child chose. Arts activities therefore focussed on expressing learning of the unit theme.

Link to Curriculum
Develop project idea

- Relevant curriculum connections were identified and exploited.
- Natalie searched for support resources and activity ideas that may help to enrich the arts learning.

Get Creative
Develop Key Artistic Skills
Reflect on Learning

- Natalie spent time discussing the creative process and design considerations with her child, reflecting in action.
- Her earlier research into support resources informed reflective discussion during the creative process, but rarely after the project or activity was completed.

FIGURE 4 Natalie's map of arts learning processes [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Grace

Grace homeschooled all three of her children, and had done for over 5 years, describing her approach as 'very structured' and 'very thorough'. Similar to many homeschoolers, Grace was a prolific researcher (Harding, 2011) and regularly spent time seeking resources and ideas for learning activities, while also attempting to align with the curriculum. Despite her espoused theory and focus on structure, ongoing discussion and observation of the arts artefacts from her children's arts learning helped to provide a fuller picture of a home where her children's interests were an important consideration of her educational approach in the arts. This was in part due to Grace's desire to facilitate an arts education that was personally meaningful to her children's wider learning:

> I just found that it makes more sense if art has some sort of meaning, so if we are doing a unit on something, then I will extend it and put like an arts component to it … So that's when it turns into more of like a unit study approach.

In line with her focus on meaningful learning and a desire to align with the curriculum, cross-curriculum links were evident in all of Grace's arts artefacts. For example, a Dance project was linked with Health and Physical Education and a Music project, in which the children created a graphic score of an Antarctica soundscape, was connected with Geography learning.

Regarding the IAF as a whole, Grace found it 'a good structure to look at and follow', and acknowledged that, since joining the project, she had used the IAF to stimulate elements of her arts learning, including more intentional reflection on learning. While Grace admitted that she really liked looking for examples to inspire her own approach to learning, she could see the value of a non-prescriptive framework for homeschooling families:

> if you go through the [IAF] steps it gives them a bit of a scaffold … Rather than go, 'I just want to copy', you eventually want them to be able to understand and interpret and come up with their own.

While she espoused a focus on the development of artistic knowledge and skills during arts projects, this was not necessarily explicit in the written explanation provided with her arte-facts. Often, arts-specific knowledge and skills were assumed to develop in the course of active engagement, rather than receiving an explicit focus (Figure 5).

Jean

Jean had homeschooled one of her two children for 1 year. As a 10-year-old child with level 1 autism, her son had not had positive experiences at school, but was flourish-ing and happy following the transition to homeschooling. Jean intentionally approached learning in a semi-structured manner, developing rich, longer-term projects in subject areas that harnessed her son's expressed interests while also 'keeping an eye on' the curriculum documents to help guide their focus, although this was not necessarily the primary concern.

Jean appreciated the ideas and reminders regarding important educational consider-ations that the IAF provided and used these ideas flexibly in an approach that put her son's love of learning at the centre, with curriculum as a distant secondary focus.
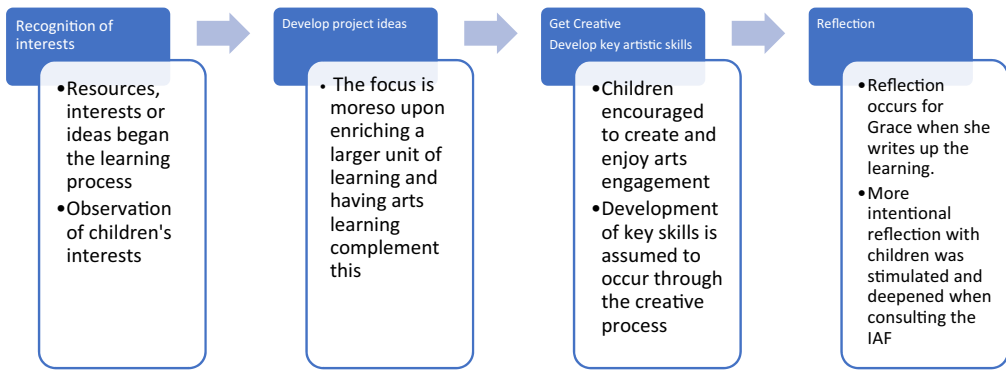
Recognition of interests	Develop project ideas	Get Creative Develop key artistic skills	Reflection
• Resources, interests or ideas began the learning process • Observation of children's interests	• The focus is moreso upon enriching a larger unit of learning and having arts learning complement this	• Children encouraged to create and enjoy arts engagement • Development of key skills is assumed to occur through the creative process	• Reflection occurs for Grace when she writes up the learning. • More intentional reflection with children was stimulated and deepened when consulting the IAF

FIGURE 5 Grace's map of arts learning processes [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

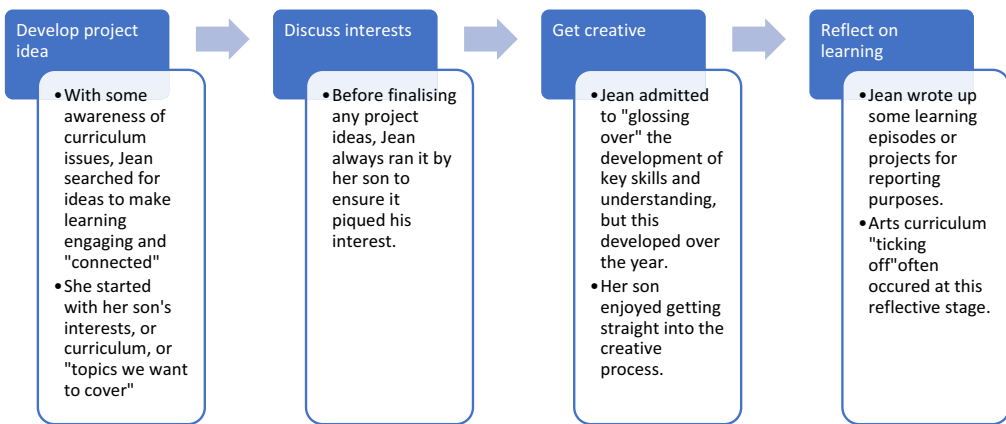| Develop project idea	Discuss interests	Get creative	Reflect on learning
• With some awareness of curriculum issues, Jean searched for ideas to make learning engaging and "connected" • She started with her son's interests, or curriculum, or "topics we want to cover"	• Before finalising any project ideas, Jean always ran it by her son to ensure it piqued his interest.	• Jean admitted to "glossing over" the development of key skills and understanding, but this developed over the year. • Her son enjoyed getting straight into the creative process.	• Jean wrote up some learning episodes or projects for reporting purposes. • Arts curriculum "ticking off" often occured at this reflective stage.

FIGURE 6 Jean's map of arts learning processes [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

> You know what? To be honest, [fulfilling the curriculum is] less significant to me, and I usually just go 'all right we've done it! Happy with that! What can I link that to?' Because I find you can almost talk your way around just about anything you can make it fit to. I think everything fits in some way. And it's a matter of describing how … I have not been able to not link it to at least one other point.

This was evident in a number of arts artefacts with written explanation that Jean contributed, with considerable curriculum connections identified at the completion of the rich learning projects her son created, such as a Greek myths video exploring Media Arts, Drama, Visual Art and History, where he designed and created costumes, props, and masks, and then performed, filmed and edited the final video. Jean also found the IAF useful as a prompt and 'a good opportunity to have a look and see if I'm missing an opportunity to link it (the arts project) with something else'. Further, she found the structure of the IAF helped to build her confidence that she was providing her son with a quality education (Figure 6):

> I think it's because I am fronting up at school (where her daughter still attended) every day with people going, 'Oh, so how is [homeschooling] going?' I need to know that I'm on it. It's going well and if I need to provide proof,—I know I do not need to, but—it helps build my confidence. I'm just that sort of person. I like to be structured.

Eve

Eve described her approach to homeschooling her two primary aged children and one pre-primary child as 'delight learning … interest-led learning,' and from observations and discussions, her approach aligned well with approaches known as 'natural learning' (English, 2015b). She valued the spontaneous creative activity of her three children and supported this extensively through the provision of resources and a culture of creativity, including as much time as the children wanted on various activities. As a trained teacher, practicing artist and homeschooler with over 5 years' experience, she also recognised the educational value of her children's spontaneous activity in her reporting for registration purposes through diligent written reflections and documentation which also helped her identify curriculum fulfilment.

> We create it (the arts project), and then probably as I'm reflecting, I'd look at the skills they were developing as well as the links to curriculum … half the time if you pour through the curriculum, you can find something to connect it to. There is always a way to connect it.

Eve's natural learning philosophy and deeply held conviction to develop her children's love of learning was reflected in her approach to arts learning. She initially espoused a decision to omit an explicit focus on artistic techniques and conceptual understanding. However, upon observation of an arts learning episode in action, a fuller picture emerged where her natural interactions with her children during the creative process included repeated spontaneous discussion of concepts related to the immediate and wider artistic world, and relevant artistic knowledge and understanding, based upon her experience as an educator and artist (Figure 7). Until I pointed this out to Eve, she had not been overtly aware of how impromptu conversations were a teaching tool she was employing.

While Eve's arts confidence meant she did not typically feel the need to use the IAF or supporting resources to plan and facilitate arts learning, she noted that it could be helpful as a reflective tool that then enriched future learning:

> I think perhaps if I was to use the Framework, it might be retrospectively to begin with for a few cool projects we have already done but I think I could really benefit
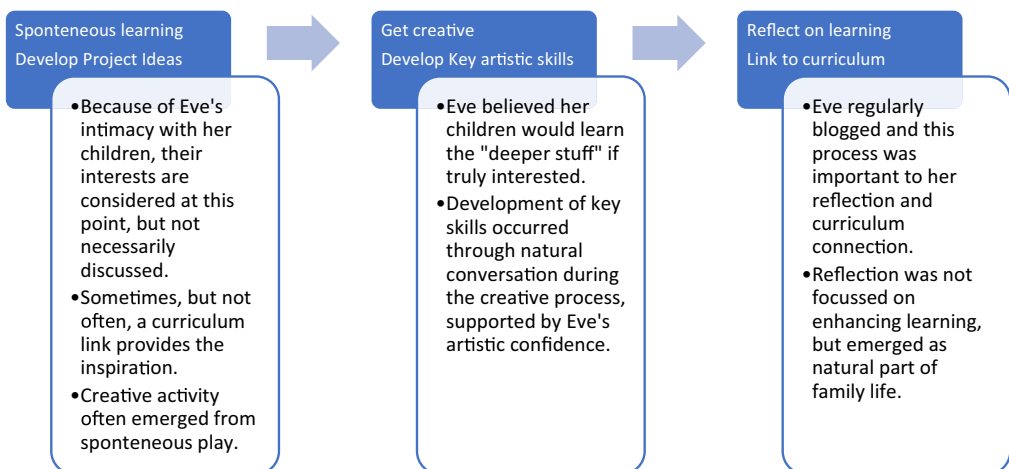

Spontaneous learning
Develop Project Ideas

- Because of Eve's intimacy with her children, their interests are considered at this point, but not necessarily discussed.
- Sometimes, but not often, a curriculum link provides the inspiration.
- Creative activity often emerged from spontaneous play.

Get creative
Develop Key artistic skills

- Eve believed her children would learn the "deeper stuff" if truly interested.
- Development of key skills occurred through natural conversation during the creative process, supported by Eve's artistic confidence.

Reflect on learning
Link to curriculum

- Eve regularly blogged and this process was important to her reflection and curriculum connection.
- Reflection was not focussed on enhancing learning, but emerged as natural part of family life.

FIGURE 7   Eve's map of arts learning processes [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

by using it regularly. It might help me find more relevant activities to our current learning topics.

DISCUSSION

The above maps that emerged from discussion, observation and analysis of arts artefacts revealed that participating families engaged in arts learning in unique ways that were heavily context dependent and therefore unique to each home environment. The insights from each family, the arts processes they engaged in, and how they made use of the IAF led to a more nuanced understanding regarding their respective engagement in arts learning processes and demonstrated that they all made use of the IAF in quite unique ways. This process led to a reconceptualisation of the IAF. What was immediately clear was the prescriptive and linear format of IAF was not adequately reflective of participant approaches. Even though a number of the families expressed that they found it helpful for the ways it prompted their thinking and supported their confidence when planning, facilitating or reflecting on and documenting arts learning experiences, none explicitly adhered to the framework's steps. I was particularly interested in comparing approaches according to the parents' espoused pedagogical approach in an attempt to gauge if the IAF was considered useful for a variety of educational approaches. Natalie, who espoused a structured approach, and explicitly appreciated the IAF for the ways it supported a lack of arts confidence, adapted the various steps to her preferred ways of working. Similarly, Grace and Jean, who took a flexible approach, found that they 'took inspiration' from the IAF, but again did so in a custom-building manner, overlooking some elements they felt unnecessary. Finally, Twilight (who espoused structure, but tended to reflect a much more spontaneous approach) and Eve (natural learning) saw the IAF more as a useful reflective tool that either helped them to value what they were already doing or reminded them of elements of arts learning that are important to make more explicit (such as taking time to develop arts knowledge and skills, or reflect more explicitly with the children during and after the creative process). As such, it was helpful to see that the framework was used flexibly according to each context and was found meaningful to each of the families for what they 'needed' or 'wanted' from it. However, the analysis process equally revealed a challenge: any framework for supporting arts learning in homeschool contexts needed to be able to be approached organically and flexibly, while simultaneously providing an adequate supporting structure for those who needed it, particularly if they lacked confidence.

In order to navigate this complex terrain and reconceptualise the IAF, I began with an identification of commonalities across participant approaches to arts teaching and learning. This then provided insight into more generalised descriptions of 'movements' across each of the families' approach, where they:

1. planned, sourced, or allowed a spontaneous idea to develop into arts activity or project; and
2. supported their children to engage in a creative process related to the arts activity/project.

Additionally, spurred by the provision of the IAF—in particular the 'Develop Key Skills' and 'Reflect on Learning' steps—most families indicated or demonstrated various actions where they:

3. enriched their children's arts-specific skills and understanding during arts projects; and
4. reflected in/on the learning.

It is important to note that most families visibly gave far less priority and explicit attention to these latter two movements, with most focus given to developing an interesting project that captured the child's interest and supporting their creative engagement. Most participants admitted that deepening arts knowledge and skills and reflection on the learning often occurred in a cursory manner, or implicitly through general conversation, rather than an explicit and intentional discussion. This, however, is still considered valuable, and a common dimension of homeschooling approaches, reminiscent of what Jackson (2015) refers to as spontaneous parent mediation in the form of verbal guidance. Thus, what was evident was that the provision of the IAF had proved an important prompt for most of the families to consider aspects of arts learning that could enhance the quality of their children's arts engagement, particularly (but not exclusively) for those with less confidence.

These four common arts learning processes identified through mapping a range of participants' approaches to arts learning were compared with the steps of the IAF (Table 2).

Notably, two of the phases in the IAF were not reflective of approaches used by all participants, and as such, these 'silences' required reconsideration as elements in a support framework. The IAF began with the phase: 'Discuss Interests', which focused upon parents/carers and children overtly discussing personal interests that could be explored through the arts. For most interviewees, discussion of interests rarely occurred as an intentional event, but occurred naturally and intuitively through everyday interactions, or 'domestic occupation and conversation' (Barratt-Peacock, 2003), informing implicit understanding of children's interests and needs. This indicated that a specific step to explicitly discuss interests in an arts framework was essentially superfluous, and that this stage of the IAF did not intuitively reflect the deeply nuanced understanding that homeschooling parents typically have of their child to inform learning (Carpenter & Gann, 2016).

A second element of the existing IAF was also not reflective of the approach taken by interview participants. The step 'Connect to Curriculum', was intended to help parents navigate and make meaningful connections to their relevant arts curriculum in the planning process. However, all participants acknowledged that meeting children's individual learning needs and interests was far more important to them than curriculum alignment. In keeping with previous research regarding educational approaches to homeschooling, engagement with state curriculum was heavily context dependent, based upon the parent/carer's educational philosophy and approach (Burke & Cleaver, 2019; Carpenter & Gann, 2016; Neuman & Guterman, 2017). Consideration of the state curriculum for participants occurred implicitly for some (as in a general idea of curriculum content informed some arts project planning) or after a project was completed (as families prepared documentation for reporting and registration and found ways their learning had aligned). This student-centred approach that prioritised student learning over curriculum alignment reinforced the widely held notion of a constructivist educational approach adopted by many homeschoolers (Neuman &

TABLE 2 Steps of the Integrated Arts Framework (IAF) compared with common arts learning processes in homeschooling participants

Steps of the IAF	Common arts learning processes in homeschooling participants
Discuss interests	–
Develop project	Develop the arts learning idea
Connect to curriculum	–
Develop key skills	Develop children's arts-specific skills and understanding during the project
Get creative	Engage in creative endeavour
Reflect on learning	Reflection on learning

Guterman, 2016), based on 'the need to facilitate a student-centred and interactive learning environment' (McAvoy, 2015, p. 75). It was evident that—for those for whom curriculum was important—it occurred in a much more embedded fashion and did not require a specific 'step' in the framework.

Based upon new understandings arising from the mapping process regarding the fluid, context-responsive approach that the participating families engaged in, the linear IAF was significantly reconceptualised. A more open and non-sequential approach was developed to reflect (and support) a variety of approaches to arts learning that might be flexibly adapted and implemented. Importantly, this revised model placed the child at the centre, which reflected the value of the child's interests and input in arts learning without being prescriptive as to the extent of this focus for homeschooling parents. Finally, the model included the four major processes of arts learning that were identified through analysis (Figure 8). As previously discussed, while two of these major processes were given less priority by the participants (Deepening Arts Learning and Reflection on Learning), their significance in stimulating more 'authentic' or quality arts learning (Dinham, 2020) was key in their inclusion in the revised framework. The extent to which individual families' arts engagements actually reflected 'quality' arts learning varied and will be the focus of a separate paper. However, in brief, this was still noted as an area that required further development for some, which might be enacted through additional supporting resources.

The revised framework was re-named the 'Guide to Arts across the Curriculum', which was considered more representative of its function and utility as flexible guide that might assist homeschoolers in designing learning tasks that engaged in 'quality' arts processes and were relevant to their context. Earlier research (Burke & Cleaver, 2018; Neuman & Guterman, 2016) demonstrates that homeschooling parents tend to source resources or opportunities for community outsourcing, particularly when lacking confidence. As such, supporting resources to help parents identify how to extend arts knowledge and skills specific to individual projects and reflective prompts were considered beneficial, most notably by the families who admitted a lack of confidence.

The revised framework was presented back to families, along with suggested supporting resources and examples of practice. Participants responded positively, noting how the framework sat well with their approach, while prompting them towards deeper learning processes. Grace's response to the revised framework aptly summarised the intent for this project, and why a framework, rather than a static set of arts resources, was considered a useful outcome for a range of homeschoolers:
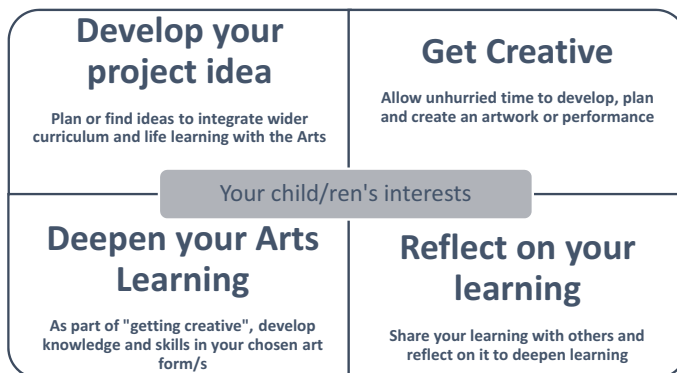

Develop your project idea
Plan or find ideas to integrate wider curriculum and life learning with the Arts

Get Creative
Allow unhurried time to develop, plan and create an artwork or performance

Your child/ren's interests

Deepen your Arts Learning
As part of "getting creative", develop knowledge and skills in your chosen art form/s

Reflect on your learning
Share your learning with others and reflect on it to deepen learning

FIGURE 8 Guide to arts across the curriculum—revised arts learning framework

> if you go through the [framework] steps it gives them a bit of a scaffold so that more things that are out there will become more accessible to them. So that if they are looking at blogs or things like that or reading material from the Board of Studies … more of that would be accessible … Rather than go, 'I just want to copy', you eventually want them to be able to understand and interpret and come up with their own … It's about … teaching us how to do it for ourselves, so that we can then go and apply it to any other learning situation in the future.

As such, the process of mapping arts learning processes of participant families not only contributed useful insights into how families from a range of pedagogical approaches on the home-schooling 'spectrum' engaged in arts learning, it also aided in the development of a framework of practice that might be used (and indeed was used during this project) to effectively guide the provision of flexible support resources to aid participating families in approaching arts learning with greater confidence, and with a stronger awareness of quality arts learning approaches that aimed to avoid tokenistic engagement.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented the process and outcomes of mapping participating families' approaches to arts learning, taking into consideration both espoused theory through interviews and theory-in-action through observation of arts learning and presentation of arts artefacts produced in the course of arts learning. The findings have confirmed earlier research regarding the relationship between contextual features of individual family environments and the choices of arts teaching and learning strategies utilised (Burke & Cleaver, 2018, 2019). This latest research builds upon these findings, offering insight into the processes that are adopted in actioning arts learning when a support framework is provided. Importantly, while the findings demonstrated significant differences of approach across participant families, it also revealed common—more generalised—processes that were universally employed. These included a tendency to give priority to:

- planning child-centred arts learning opportunities and/or building upon and supporting children's spontaneous arts learning; and
- supporting children's creativity when engaging in the arts learning experience through provision of resources, time, parental collaboration and other opportunities to support the creative process.

To a lesser extent, families also:

- enriched their children's arts-specific skills and understanding during arts projects through strategies such as online tutorials, outsourcing to private lessons or community workshops, or conversation based upon the parent's understanding; and
- reflected on the learning, either together with their child (usually through informal conversation) or individually as a parent when documenting learning (often for reporting purposes to regulatory bodies).

Identification of these commonalities helped to refine a suggested framework to promote quality arts learning in homeschool contexts, called the Guide to Arts Across the Curriculum (see Figure 8). By the end of the project, this was successfully used to prompt participating families regarding valuable dimensions of quality approaches to arts learning that may otherwise be overlooked or underdeveloped (such as taking time to develop arts-specific

knowledge and skill and responding to artworks to inspire and build aesthetic sensibilities). Beyond this, the framework also provided a suggested structure for the provision of support materials to aid parents in engaging effectively with these quality arts learning processes.

During the project, support materials for each dimension of the framework were made available and used flexibly according to family needs and interest. The Guide to Arts Across the Curriculum framework is thus offered as a suggested means of supporting homeschooling families—potentially by homeschool support services and advisory authorities—to support arts learning that aids parents not only in facilitating learning that is personally meaningful and grounded in their unique sociocultural context, but fulfils the hallmarks of quality arts learning by engaging families in the focused development of relevant skills and meaningful reflection. The framework may further be considered by distance education providers, although would need further refinement for the unique needs and approaches of this different context, where parents are not necessarily designing learning.

There are limitations to generalisations that can be made from this study. It was completed with a small group of participants across two Australian states, and while the participants represented a spread of pedagogical approaches, this does not guarantee that the findings are applicable more generally. As demonstrated through both the literature and the participant particularities in this study, homeschooling families do not represent a singular entity for whom a single 'fix' can be generated. Nonetheless, it was the intention of this study not to shy away from a recognised point of need, and the framework developed is offered as a starting point for a flexible approach that may prove helpful. More extensive mapping of a much larger number of homeschooling families, with an international span, is recommended. Further, while the participants in the study found the Guide to the Arts Across the Curriculum beneficial in supporting their arts learning, this occurred in a supportive environment, including an online community of practice with support resources. The relative success of the framework is recognised as tied to the support that accompanies its use, and as such, would need consideration in further studies. Finally, this research is limited in its scope, and has only addressed the process of developing a framework to support homeschooling families in understanding and potentially enacting hallmarks of quality, or 'authentic' (Dinham, 2020) arts learning. What is not addressed, and must necessarily be the topic of further research, is the extent to which the framework actually prompts and supports authentic arts processes in homeschooling contexts.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
There is no conflict of interest to report.

ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT
The research has been approved by and conducted in adherence with the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Committee: H14REA139.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Data available on request due to privacy/ethical restrictions

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