

If AccessArt Were A Boat

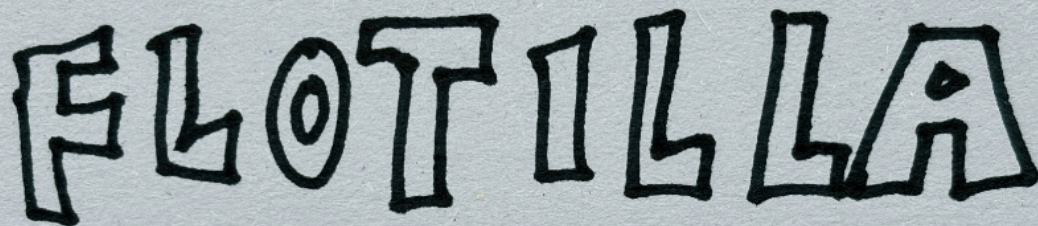
By [Paula Briggs](#)

Many away days are focused around PowerPoints and presentations, but at our latest away day in York AccessArt trustees and team members enjoyed a practical making session. We used boats and seascapes as metaphors to explore how AccessArt might best show up in the current climate and serve our arts education community...

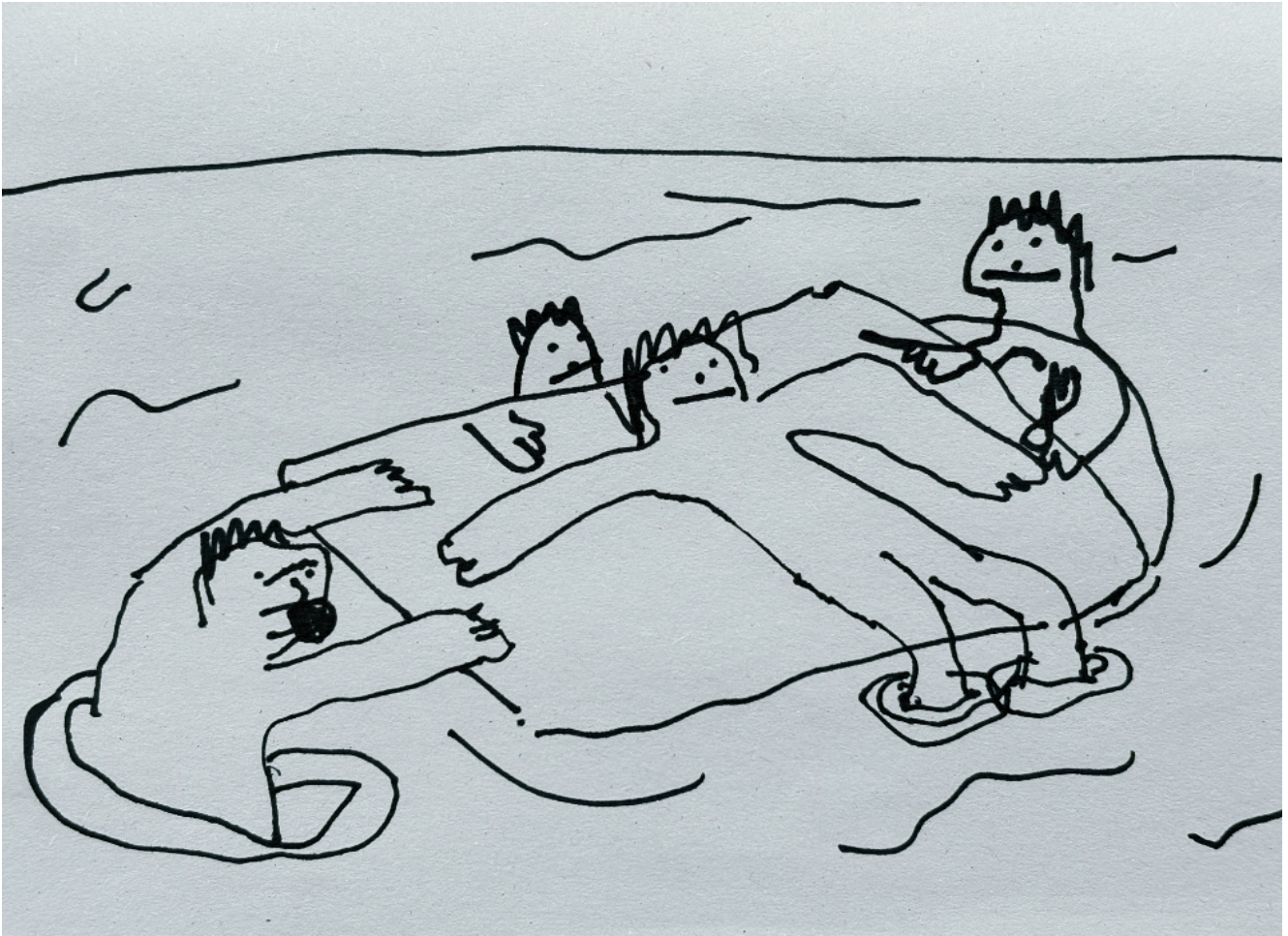


One of the things I love most about AccessArt is the extent to which our values are at the heart of how we think, act and make daily decisions. They shape the way we support one another as a team, the way we develop resources and opportunities, and the way we work with teachers, artists and educators. Beyond AccessArt, these core beliefs also describe how we can enable creativity to flourish as a community, whatever our setting or audience.

My role is at its most fulfilling when I can focus on the doing: the creative acts of making and sharing. Sometimes this involves envisioning new projects, working with artists, educators and team members to create new resources, or making new videos to share ideas and build understanding of pedagogy. At these times, it is easy to be guided by our core values, and the work feels productive.

The word "FLOTILLA" is written in a bold, hand-drawn, blocky font. The letters are thick and have a slightly irregular, sketchy quality. The 'O' is a simple circle, and the 'A' has a small dot in the center. The letters are black on a light gray background.

But over the past few years, and especially over the last few months, I have spent an increasing amount of time in what feels like fight mode. There are many reasons why the art education landscape is tough right now, and AccessArt, along with many others, has been campaigning long and hard, using our voice and expertise to try to put things right.



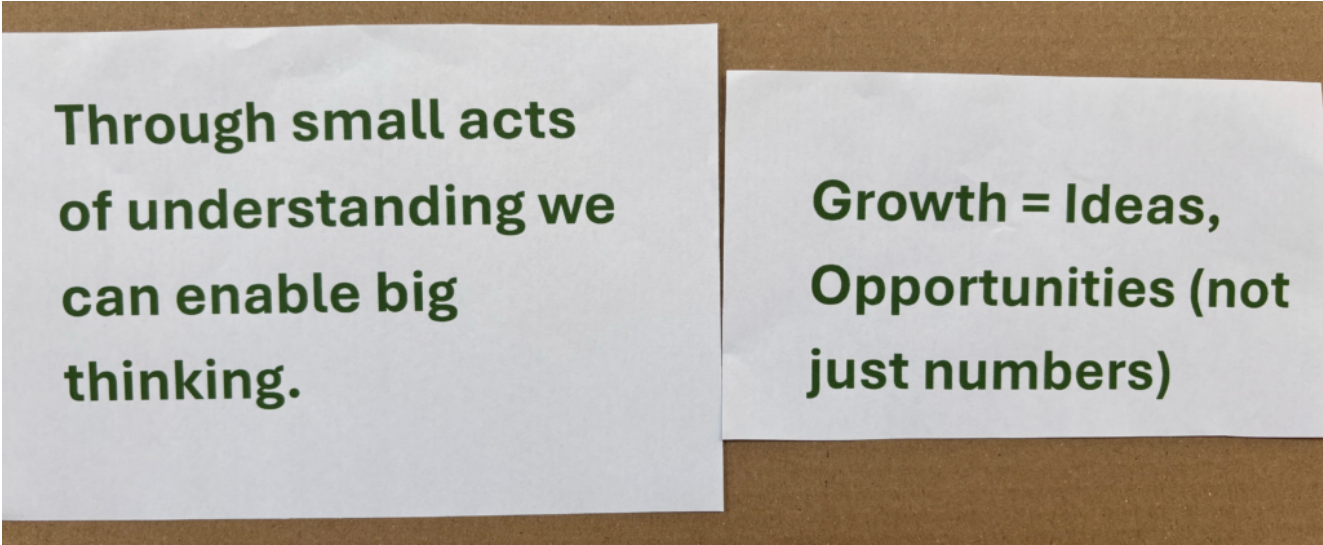
When we are identifying issues, campaigning and speaking out, it can feel as though we've shifted from a mode of productive creativity to one of constant vigilance and problem-solving. Watching for threats and seeking solutions is demanding, yet as both a Subject Association and a charity, we have a responsibility to advocate for and defend our subject. In those moments, our organisational values continue to guide everything we do, even if they become less visible.

Our away day in York was a reminder that, at the same time as we campaign and advocate from the top, we must also protect and enjoy the positive energy created when we act as a beacon on the

ground, providing a place of value-centred refuge, invention, creativity and hope for the arts education community.

AccessArt Trustees and members of our team used the metaphor of a boat at sea to explore how AccessArt can best navigate the current art education landscape. Together, we considered how our values might shape the boat's structure and character, how our team shows up as its crew, and how the challenges of the surrounding seascape present opportunities to realign with our vision and better serve the AccessArt community.

Our values and aspirations were at the centre of our thinking:



Through small acts
of understanding we
can enable big
thinking.

Growth = Ideas,
Opportunities (not
just numbers)

Reactive / Proactive

How can
we see every action
as a jewel?

How
can we be energised
by encounters with
those experiences
and ideas outside our
comfort zone?

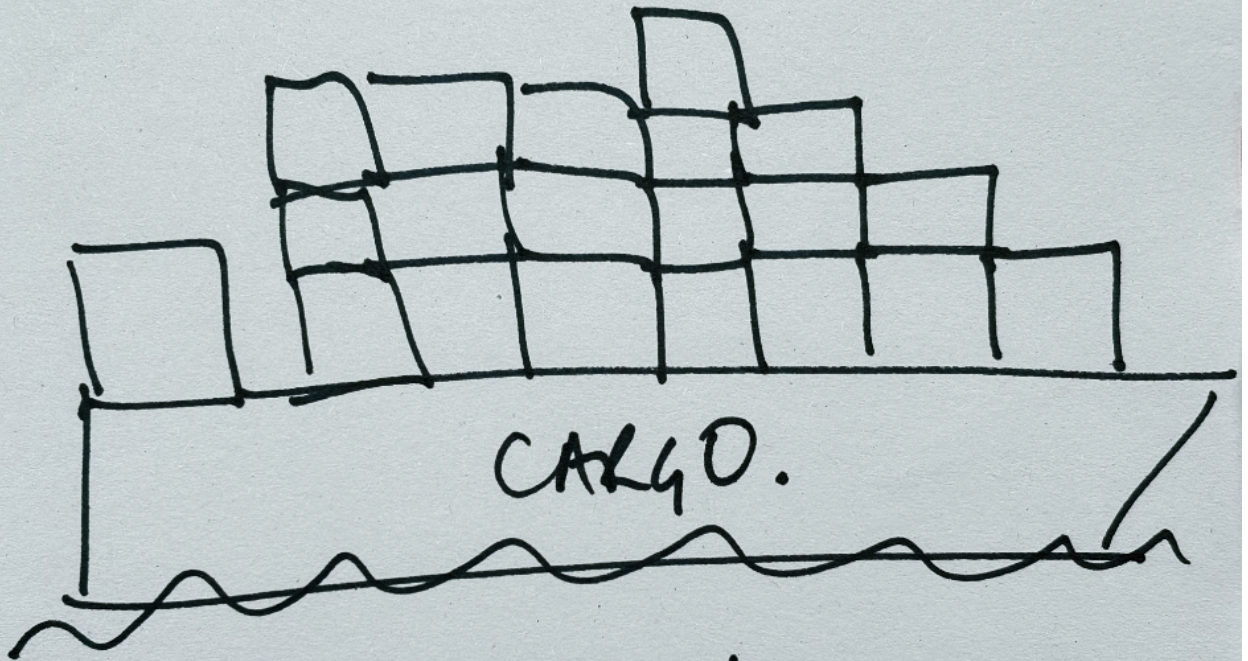
We asked ourselves metaphor-rich questions, for example:

- "If AccessArt is a boat, how do our values appear as structural, practical and necessary elements?"
- "What are we navigating by?"
- "What would a safe but ambitious passage look like?"
- "What should remain our north star?"
- "What is the weather doing around us?"
- "What is happening beneath the surface?"
- "What storms have we already weathered?"
- "What is changing with the tide?"
- "Which values keep us afloat?"

- “Which values protect the crew?”
- “Which values give us courage to enter open water?”
- “How do our values become useful in rough weather?”
- “Who is on deck?”
- “Who is watching the horizon?”
- “Who is tending the engine?”
- “Who is making sure the crew is nourished?”
- “Where do we need more hands?”
- “What skills are already aboard?”
- “What do we need from each other for the next part of the journey?”
- “Where is our harbour?”
- “What helps us recover after a storm?”
- “What are we carrying that is too heavy?”
- “What would sustainable speed feel like?”
- “How do we know when to pause?”

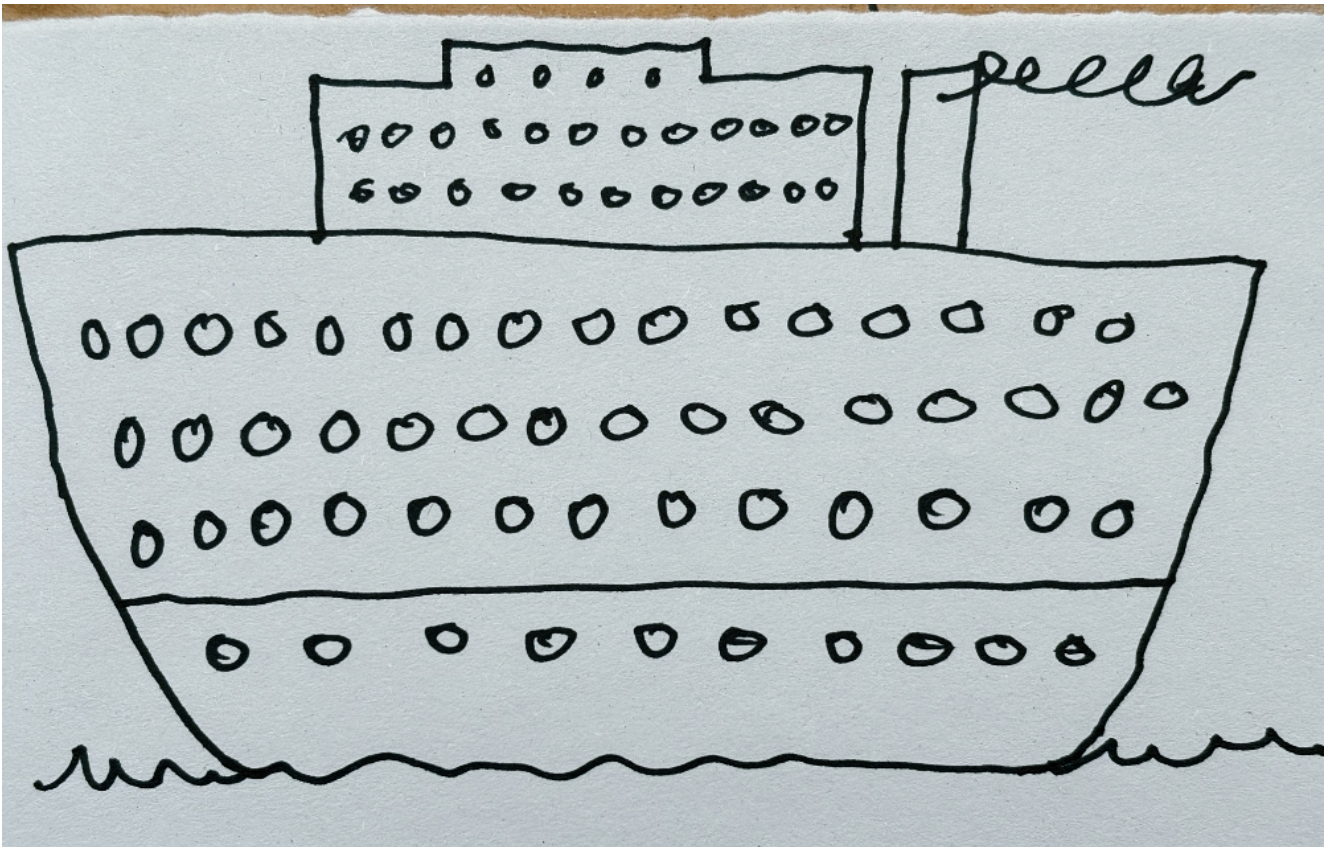
We each drew versions of the boat we would never want AccessArt to become. This helped us clarify and share what was important to us as individuals.

AccessArt would never become a cargo ship...

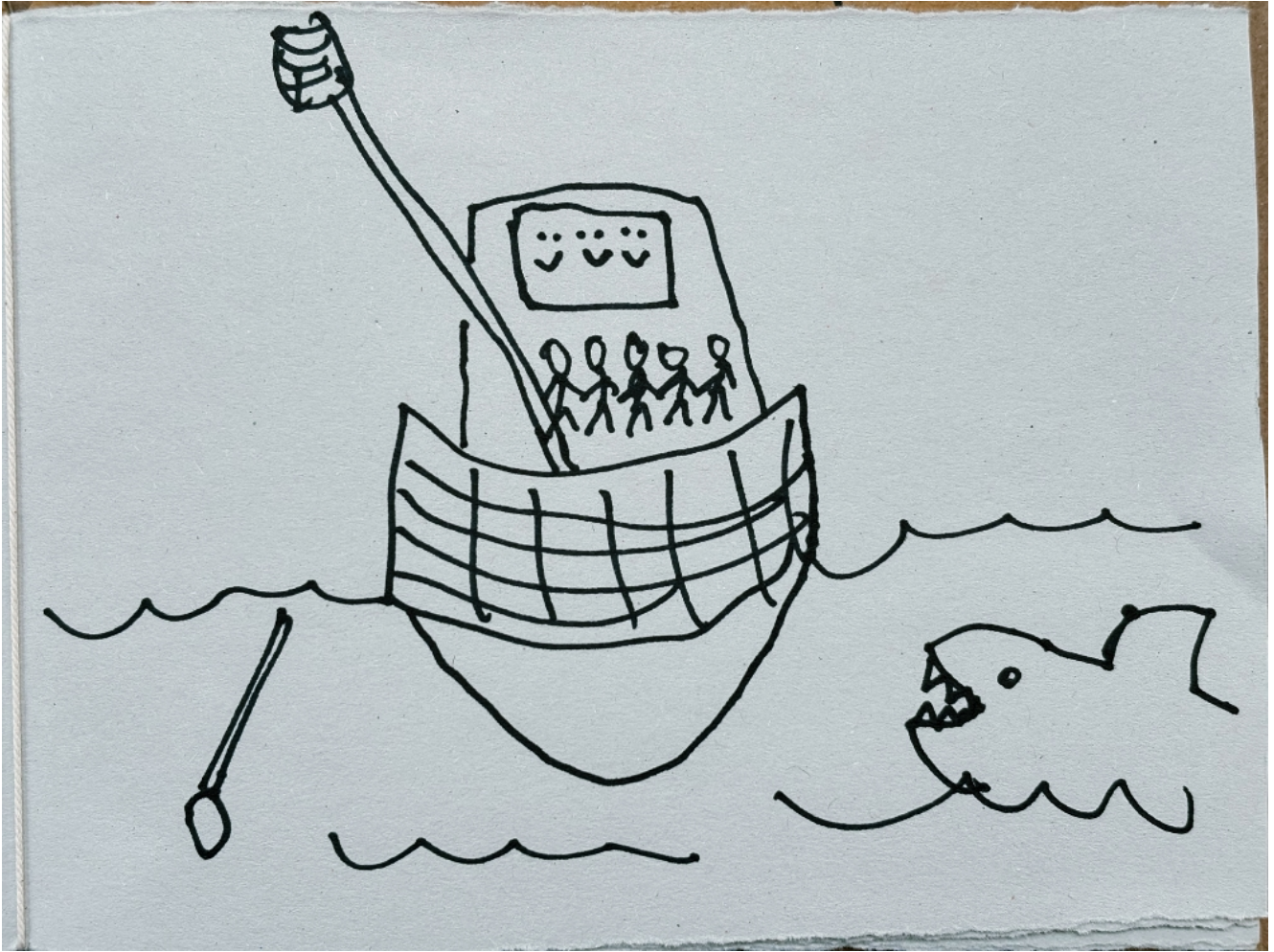


Maybe overloaded.
Affected by outside influence.

Or a cruise ship...

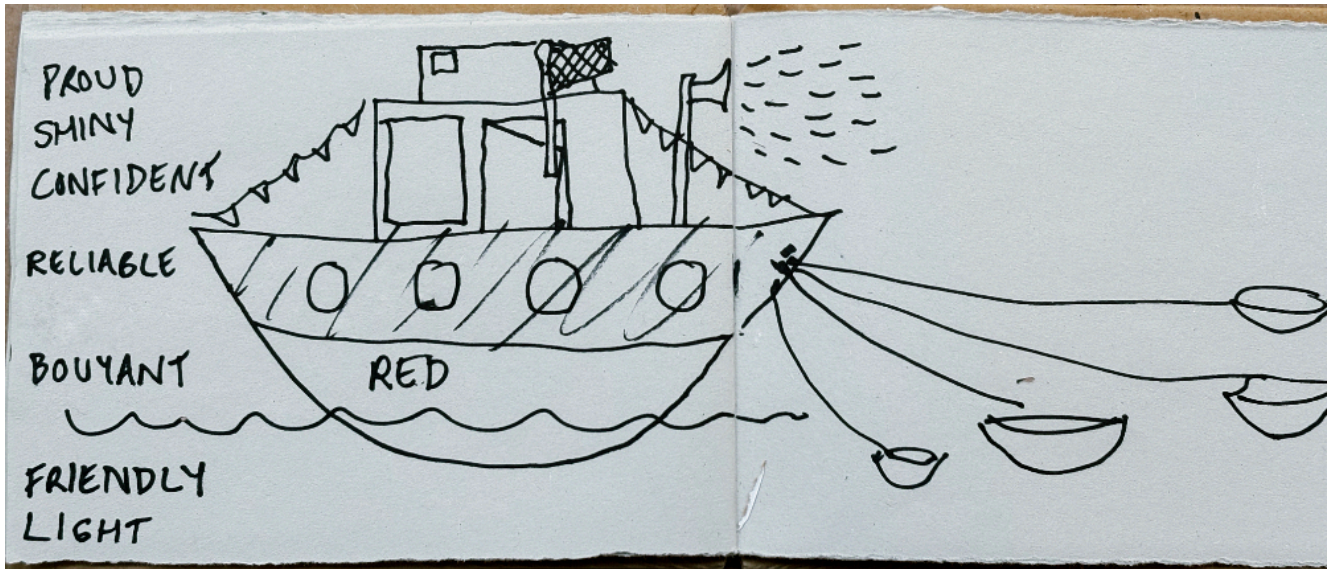


Or a work horse...



And then we drew pictures of boats which felt representative of the values and aspirations held by AccessArt.

A boat which is buoyant... sits high in the water. Solid, cared for, well kept. Has a sense of "holding" the occupants whilst being able to communicate to smaller boats that might follow....



A flotilla...



And then finally we worked as a team to construct a cardboard boat which felt representative of the

values we hold, and worthy of navigating the current art education seascape.





Thank you to the AccessArt Trustees and team members. These conversations are just the start and will continue over the coming months. I am always so grateful that AccessArt is made possible entirely by income from memberships. We receive no core or revenue grants; instead, every membership fee contributes to us being a self-sufficient arts organisation, bringing us great security and autonomy. Thank you to all our AccessArt members. We truly value your support and hope you feel inspired, enabled and connected.

This is a sample of a resource created by UK Charity AccessArt. We have over 1500 resources to help develop and inspire your creative thinking, practice and teaching.

AccessArt welcomes artists, educators, teachers and parents both in the UK and overseas.

We believe everyone has the right to be creative and by working together and sharing ideas we can enable everyone to reach their creative potential.