

East Sussex Enquiry Schools Programme 2009-10

Creative Partnerships is England's flagship creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills and aspirations of children across England. In July 2009, twelve schools in East Sussex were selected to join the year long Enquiry Schools programme. Each school was offered the opportunity to work with a creative professional to explore a chosen area of creative learning – defined here as an 'enquiry question' – the range of ideas and themes was impressive and their stories are summarised here.

Primary Schools

Blacklands Primary School



Blacklands Primary School

How can working on a large scale impact on children's attitude to learning and develop their creative skills?

Blacklands Primary School wanted to experiment with working on a larger scale and moving out of the classroom to use the local environment. They wanted to enthuse staff and children, improve children's ability to collaborate and develop both technical and questioning skills. Working with artist Becci Kenning, and a Year 4 class, each child started by using sketchbooks which increased confidence as they felt able to take risks without concern about assessment. They also used digital cameras to capture personal perspectives on their environment and created large-scale sculptures in the school grounds, working beyond usual confines of space and budget.

A final 'Gallery Night' encouraged many parents into the school grounds to view the illuminated sculptures - they were positive and enthusiastic about children's involvement. Outcomes include:

- Improved engagement, confidence and attitudes to learning
- Unexpectedly high quality photography and creative use of sketchbooks
- Increase in problem solving skills, risk taking and a willingness to lead

Crowhurst Church of England Primary School

How can we develop the speaking, listening and storytelling skills of Year 1 children, in particular through use of the outdoor environment?

The school wanted to explore how they could use elements of the grounds and local woodland to develop higher-level listening skills and build confidence in speaking. Before the project the children had found developing their own ideas for stories difficult. Working with storyteller Kevin Graal, they worked on building confidence in using language through making up stories, making music and exploring the outdoor environment. They listened to a storytelling session each week, based around the themes of the natural world. Connections between the stories and the natural world were made during excursions to the woods.



Crowhurst Church of England Primary School

Children's ideas were recorded and then shared and celebrated with the whole group in subsequent sessions. Outcomes include:

- Children developed confidence in themselves and their abilities
- Children generated original ideas for stories
- Huge progress for children with special needs eg: autistic child who opened up and began to take a delight in storytelling and books

Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School



Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School

How can creative approaches enable children to contribute to their learning development?

Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School wanted to explore creative processes and approaches that children use in their learning, with a particular focus on problem solving in maths, and build on children's abilities to reflect on their learning through learning journals and class discussions. The Year 4 class worked with artist Lulu Allison, investigating creative approaches to learning in maths with activities based on their 'Egyptians' theme and created large

scale containers based on Egyptian canopic jars. They were joined in this project by a University of Sussex researcher who looked at baseline attitudes to maths and problem solving and reviewed these at the end of the project. Outcomes include:

- Increased teacher confidence in enabling children to take the lead
- Overall increase in attainment in maths, with research findings demonstrating that girls in particular became significantly more positive in their attitudes to the subject
- Children were no longer afraid to show their workings out/methods and gained confidence in problem solving

Iford and Kingston Church of England Primary School

How can interaction with members of the UK's diverse communities help children in rural Sussex develop a sense of self?

The school wanted to develop children's awareness of cultural diversity. Working with documentary filmmaker Jaime Taylor, children explored basic filmmaking techniques, planned and then filmed a 'diversity day' in which they met members of different ethnic communities and exchanged ideas about their cultures. These exchanges, and children's reflections on them, were made into a short film which captured how attitudes had changed through the project. The film was shown to other pupils, parents, and a wider audience at the University of Sussex. Outcomes include:

- Children learnt new technical skills, improved collaboration and the value of mistakes in the learning process
- Teachers identified that children had learned how to appreciate differences between themselves, to listen to each other and work successfully and independently in small teams
- Creative filmmaking will become integral to school's learning pedagogy

Ocklynge Junior School



Ocklynge Junior School

What does 'good' look like in design and technology?

The project investigated peer, self and teacher assessment in design and technology. The school wanted children and teachers to be able to recognise 'what good looks like'. Working with product designer Rob Phillips, children worked through three phases: exploring everyday design, researching and identifying design flaws and taking a design solution into production. A key learning point was the benefit of producing an initial brief against which design can be assessed to measure success. Children took ownership of this and gained confidence, learning to evaluate their own and others' design without support; working in teams and understanding there are many ways of doing something. The project culminated in an exhibition at the Towner art museum at which children shared their learning with parents. Outcomes include:

- Teachers gained confidence and professional expertise, producing a toolkit for design and technology staff and offering CPD for other schools
- Children identified a real design challenge in the school, and designed an improved prototype coat peg
- Children gained awareness and appreciation of collaborative working and developed more sophisticated understanding of design and critical language



Parkland Junior School

How can the study of philosophy develop confidence through speaking and listening skills for Year 3 children?

Parkland Junior School wanted to promote an environment where children create and enquire into their own questions and 'learn how to learn' in the process. They aimed to improve the level of speaking and listening through enhancing children's ability to discuss the world around them, to encourage independence and respect for others' views. Visual artist Lulu Allison suggested developing a tent as the space for children to talk and discuss ideas with each other. The children adapted and decorated the tent and then set about exploring what they considered to be life's critical questions. They learned to listen with respect, to speak and to accept that there may not always be answers to their questions. Outcomes include:

- The tent has had a legacy ensuring that 'questioning' has become a part of school life
- Children are more confident and more articulate
- Children have been able to understand 'philosophy' as relevant to their own lives

Ticehurst and Flimwell Church of England Primary School

How can we encourage enthusiasm for scientific investigations by maximising the potential of the outdoor environment?

The school wanted to improve the quality of science teaching in Key Stage 2 and to raise standards, and wanted to make better use of the outdoor environment in science learning. Working with environmental scientists Jon Nash and David Ellis from local outdoor-clothing manufacturing company, Nikwax, they carried out a range of practical creative learning activities. Children from Years 5 and 6 engaged with life cycles of birds, animals and plants by constructing bird boxes, forcing bulbs at different rates, and investigating natural composting. They also explored the natural world with a digital microscope and created new outdoor learning environment resources. Activities were supplemented by visits to local scientific sites like Wilderness Wood and The Observatory Science Centre, Herstmonceux. Outcomes include:

- Children developed team working skills, gained confidence and ability to work as independent learners
- Creative practitioners from Nikwax have increased scope of community engagement and offered support in building outdoor science lab
- School's latest Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) results demonstrate standards have increased beyond anticipated levels

Willingdon Primary School

How can we best explore the use and impact of creative approaches to encourage an enthusiasm that engages Year 5 children in the learning of maths?

Willingdon Primary School aimed to improve standards and raise enthusiasm in maths through a more creative approach. Results had been static and the school wanted to increase excitement about maths by connecting concepts and skills in maths to real life situations. This also encouraged the development of cross-curricular skills. Working with filmmaker, Anita Makris, children planned a cookery show which involved budgeting, researching recipes, buying products, visits to a farm, cooking, measuring and timing. Children worked in teams to develop, produce and act in the cookery programme. Outcomes include:

- Noticeable impact on maths results
- Participating children have become mentors to their peers on future film projects at the school
- A short documentary style DVD of the cookery programme produced to capture the learning process, is now a tool for sharing with other children and teachers



Willingdon Primary School

Secondary Schools

Peacehaven Community School

How can we use creativity to facilitate independent enquiry and make connections across the whole curriculum?

Peacehaven Community School wanted a more independent enquiry-based approach to cross-curricular learning. Using narrative, storyteller David Avery worked alongside 20 Gifted and Talented Year 8 students on making more explicit connections between subjects. Students became 'wizards' - a team of research apprentices gathering evidence as they recorded what was happening. They created a mapping exercise to make connections between subjects, illustrating their learning and conceived the idea for a board game 'the portal'. The idea of the game is to take on the role of a famous character (eg: Shakespeare) and move between zones collecting themes and trying to link cross-curricular subjects by creating stories. Students were highly focused and confident and all had a part in the creative process of producing the prototype. Teachers, library staff and students test ran the game at InQbate, University of Sussex and students are now fundraising to make the game a reality. Outcomes include:

- Students gained confidence, increased motivation and independence - they believe they have a role to play in curriculum development
- Staff gained understanding of the need to make links explicit and do more to promote the new curriculum
- School will consult students more on future curriculum projects

Seaford Head Community College

How can we use the outside environment to increase the enjoyment of writing for our lower attaining students?

The project aimed to engage reluctant writers through using outside spaces as creative inspiration, developing their confidence to translate experiences into writing. Working with practitioner Iain Paxon, they used narrative techniques (storyboarding, lists, pictures, comic strips, photography and diaries) to investigate story development. On field trips, students staged scenes for individual photo stories and created a group magazine including these and written pieces. The project highlighted the need for students to have a space in which they can express themselves without being judged by external standards. They have continued to use 'free writing' and notebooks to record ideas, stories and experiences. Outcomes include:

- Students' confidence in writing increased; they learned to develop, refine and communicate new ideas, take risks and work in teams
- The creative practitioner developed better understanding of how his skills and practice can support needs of low ability students
- Students' voice was strong throughout from selection process to celebration day



Seaford Head Community College

Uckfield Community Technology College



Uckfield Community Technology College

How can collaborative working and modern engineering technologies inspire student pride, joy and a sense of ownership?

Uckfield Community Technology College wanted to explore cross-curricular collaborative learning in art and technology and to offer less motivated Year 9 students opportunities to take responsibility for new avenues of learning. Working with product engineer, Anna McConnell, students aimed to create a semi-permanent interactive installation to animate the college's public foyer space. They worked in teams to build different parts of the installation: welding, building electronic circuits, designing and making mounting blocks and creating the actual installation. The final piece was designed to be interactive, using motion sensors, so that when someone enters the foyer space, the installation begins to move. Outcomes include:

- Students were co-constructors of their learning - they took responsibility to sustain the task, demonstrated increased motivation and enjoyed collaborative working
- The installation created a 'buzz' around the college staff and community members
- Students gained creative and product design skills: using CAD/CAM, lathes, electronics, soldering and working with polypropylene

Hillcrest School

How can we initiate, establish and sustain independent learning in the classroom through creative practice?

As part of a whole school drive to encourage students to take more responsibility for their learning, the Head of Art chose to look at how creative processes facilitate independent learning. She wanted to create a model that could be transferred to other subject areas and with her Year 7 students selected photographer and filmmaker David Parker to work with them on an animation project. Working to an open brief, students worked either individually or in groups on short animations, all of which are now hosted on the school website. The level of decision making demanded of students was great. They had to decide on subject matter, treatment, production roles, soundtracks etc. The films were screened at the end of the project and students received positive feedback from staff and peers. The films can be viewed on the school website at: www.hillcrest.e-sussex.sch.uk/art/php
Outcomes include:

- Students took ownership of their own learning working both collaboratively and independently
- Developments in student's concentration, confidence and levels of enthusiasm.
- Teacher able to track and evaluate the independent learning process and will continue her research as part of her MA. She also led CPD for staff on independent learning



Hillcrest School

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