

West Sussex Enquiry Schools Programme 2009

Creative Partnerships is the government's flagship creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills and aspirations of children across England. Fifteen schools in West Sussex were selected to take part in the year-long Enquiry Schools Programme and were offered the opportunity to work with a creative professional to explore a chosen area of creative learning. The range of ideas and themes was impressive and their stories are summarised here.

Primary Schools

Arundel Church of England Primary School

How can we use our natural enjoyment of the outside environment to stimulate curiosity in maths with particular reference to problem solving?

Arundel CofE Primary worked with wood worker Joe Thompson to explore how they could use the children's natural enjoyment of the outside environment to stimulate curiosity in mathematics, particularly with reference to problem solving.

Work included planning, designing and making a maths trail using the outside environment of the school, with the main focus of problem solving in mathematics, using the stimulus of a visit to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum and their maths trail.

Children learnt to plan, refine and communicate their ideas in a variety of ways, be willing to work as individuals, pairs or groups and to talk about problems and solutions. As problem solving was a focus of maths in the school the children realised how it could be related to everyday situations and how it could be used in the outside environment.

Fernhurst Primary School

How can we use our outdoor environment as a tool to help the children and teaching staff to become more creative and reflective thinkers?

The Reception Class explored the grounds of their school with puppet maker and animator, Isobel Smith. They talked to her about the creatures and characters they imagined could live in their school grounds. Isobel took their ideas and working closely with their teacher developed Smokey, a small puppet animated by Isobel, who lived in their grounds. They discovered letters from Smokey's family, made maps, took part in challenges and created other imaginary friends for Smokey.

Children developed their stories, puppets, dialogue and plays inspired by outside space, which they could record in individual journals and through photographs and video. They worked with Isobel to learn new skills such as craft and puppet making, puppet animating and puppet shows. They discovered that by practicing these skills they could improve and help each other by feeding back their thoughts and opinions. The children began to see their outside space as a resource for ideas and discovery not just for playtime and games.

Fernhurst are now building an outside theatre space and plan to explore puppetry and learning throughout the school next summer.

Halsford Park Primary School

Can the use of song and composition raise standards in mathematics?

Musician and composer Mike Fry worked with twelve Year 6 children introducing skills and techniques used by music leaders. These children then worked with Mike leading small groups of Year 2 children in composition, lyric writing and performance.

Working with percussion instruments, the groups made instruments to build their own sounds. They explored drawing and painting

their compositions and linking notes and sounds to numbers, linking number bonds to the music they created. The Year 6 music leaders also worked with teaching staff, imparting their newly learnt music leading skills to teachers, creating music and teaching songs to the staff who are growing confidence in using song and sounds in classroom learning. The small groups all chose the pieces of music and songs they wished to share with family and friends at the end of the project.

The project built confidence, creative thinking, and a sense of responsibility and courage amongst the Year 6 children. Year 2 children maintained an enthusiasm for maths learning throughout, enjoying singing and using music and song building to help them with facts. They are now keen to sing and play as much as possible in all their learning.

Hassocks Infant School

How can we best develop creative thinking about shape and space using the school's outdoor environment?

Subtitled 'What did you expect to see?' Hassocks Infants' enquiry sought to surprise and delight their Year 1 class, working with visual artist Jo Coles. The partnership used a range of approaches such as 'No Rules,' that is, tackling a task without step-by-step instructions for success.

They developed a collaborative work ethos and explored shape and space in two and three-dimensions. Activities were designed



Hassocks Infant School

to inspire this learning such as: collecting and housing treasure; ‘sky-walking’; and making characters to play together in a scaled model of the outdoor area.

Outcomes include the design and installation of a series of outdoor sculptures that will be used for creative learning and play in the future. The creative space afforded by the enquiry project encouraged the teacher to explore her hidden drama skills to inspire the children. Headteacher Jeannie Hughes says, ‘Understanding of learning outside has taken a new angle that will influence practice across the school.’ The partnership continues into the future with Jo being engaged by the school to explore and develop more widely the work begun in the enquiry project.

Manor Field Primary School

How can creative approaches to home-school partnership be used to inspire young people’s involvement in learning?

Manor Field Primary School wanted to encourage more parental involvement in their student’s learning to develop better engagement and achievement in learning.

By working with visual artist Hannah Barker, the school looked at a variety of ways to encourage parents and students to learn together. This included making models of the family home and asking parents and other family members to share their own memories of school. The project included an open evening at the school where students could give their parents tours of the school, take part together in various arts activities, and have a say in the development of the new ‘family room’ at the school.

Hannah worked closely with a small group of parents who helped with the planning of the event, and who are now looking at becoming more involved in the school on a regular basis – with plans for developing a school magazine run by parents. The project helped students to identify with their school more fully and gave them the opportunity to share their school life with family members.



St Andrew’s Church of England Primary School

How can we develop inclusive creative outdoor spaces in the school that promote our distinctive ethos, are underpinned by Christian values and which celebrate our creative curriculum, providing exciting learning experiences for everyone?

Jill Parsons and Ade Lovejoy, environmental artists with a particular interest in the use of recycled materials engaged the whole school community in this project.

The students worked through a process of designing, planning and democratically selecting the ideas to be implemented. The chosen ideas were themed ‘Love’ and ‘Friendship’. The ‘Love’ space materialised as a dome construction made of recycled bicycle wheels, painted and decorated and interspersed with plants. The ‘Friendship’ space was realised as a large cob bench, which engaged staff and students in the ancient, messy business of making cob!

The school now plans to work with Jill and Ade on an ongoing basis to develop the outdoor spaces to realise fully the ‘Unity Gardens’ (representing eight Christian values) which the school community has been fundraising hard for. The school has formed an ongoing partnership with creative practitioners and has gained invaluable insight into the logistical demands and potential teaching and learning opportunities that the development of their outdoor learning environment entails.

Summerlea Community Primary School

Does performance poetry have a positive impact on children's language and communication skills?

Working with two poets, Jim Burke and Justin Coe, Summerlea explored the use of performance poetry and its effects on language and communication. This was a whole school project and the activity was focused in one week where all the school worked on poetry and creative writing, covering a huge array of topics. The project not only looked at what the children were writing, but also investigated how children present their writing and how they share personal opinions about their writing.

The project culminated in a poetry evening for parents and pupils, at which five professional poets, including Jim and Justin performed their own work. The opportunity for the children to perform the poems they had written encouraged them to take pride in their work and helped them to develop self-confidence with public speaking.

All staff were fully involved with this project and benefitted from the skills imparted by the poets. This project has been a big influence in the ongoing creative work of many of the pupils and staff.

Trafalgar Community Infants School

How can movement enable children to discover meaning in maths all around them?

The focus of this enquiry was to explore how movement can support the learning and development of new concepts in maths. Working in partnership with the lead teacher, dance practitioner Sarah Alexander developed a framework at the beginning of the project which was flexible to allow themes to be revised to ensure the best learning took place and to respond to the needs and suggestions of the children.

Trafalgar Community Infants School



Sarah developed a resource pack for the school that was distributed to all teaching staff as well as a 'number dance'. This involved the children creating the shapes of the numbers, from one to ten using their bodies. This was so successful that the school is considering taking this on as a routine that can be taught to all children coming into the school.

The children have developed their social and emotional skills, their confidence and motor skills, developing persistence and resilience. The children learnt how to think imaginatively and developed an appreciation of the work and ideas of their peers. Teachers were able to assess the children and their abilities in a way they wouldn't in the classroom and to see where the children were at with their learning. The school is hoping to continue working with Sarah to explore linking dance with other areas of the curriculum.

Whytemead First School

How can developing and using multi-sensory installations inspire young writers?

The school wanted to explore how multi-sensory installations could be used to include and inspire learners of widely varying abilities. They chose to work with multi-media artist David Parker, who uses video and animation to create thought provoking installations and experiences.

Sessions included the use of video and projection to explore the way that ideas are communicated and interpreted. Audio



recordings were also used to explore sounds creatively, for example distorting sounds, breaking down words into phonemes (the smallest possible unit in a language that is possible of conveying meaning). Sounds were then used creatively to inspire the children to produce 'writing' in a number of media, for example, experimenting with making letter shapes in sand and paint on light boxes, or writing with light on photosensitive paper.

Each activity enabled children to interpret the work of other children, with each iteration playing with constituent elements of writing skills and/or motivation (mark making, phoneme recognition and production, letter shape recognition and production, creation and communication of narrative). The project culminated in a celebration of the work, and was shown to other children and teachers in the school, and to parents.

Secondary Schools

Bognor Regis Community College

How can creative learning stimulate and raise the aspirations of Year 10 students?

Where will you be in the future? What do you dream of? A good job? Money? Success? Marriage? And do you feel comfortable telling people these hopes and dreams? These are the questions asked of

a partnership including a group of students who rarely draw attention to themselves.

The aim of extending horizons was undertaken with multimedia practitioner Annis Joslin who engaged with students to help them to draw out their self-expression and tell their own stories using photography and film-making.

A trip to London exploring the banks of the Thames was a key moment in the enquiry – a visit designed to open creative eyes and look afresh at the surroundings.

In shining a beam of attention on students who might otherwise 'pass under the radar' some extraordinary stories and talents came to light, celebrated in an exhibition event to mark the achievements of all involved. In many students, the new confidence that emerged to experiment in digital media has inspired wider engagement and participation beyond the project.

Sir Robert Woodard Academy (formerly Boundstone Community College)

How can film excite children to engage with the written word and improve literacy levels within a Year 7 group?

The school worked with filmmakers Compulsive Productions to improve standards in literacy within the school. A group of Year 7 students researched local and family history to create true and fictional stories that were filmed and shared with each other, the school and the wider community.

Students engaged with the written word using techniques such as script writing, researching and interviewing. They were given the responsibility to work with expensive recording equipment and part of their filming took place off site at a professionally resourced recording studio. They were treated as equals by the practitioners in this project and that made a big impact on how they engaged.

The students responded overwhelmingly that through this way of working they were able to learn more and in a way that was relevant and enjoyable to them. They felt that through acting out the characters they had researched they were able to connect to them and understand the subject far better than working from books. Teachers gained confidence approaching subjects in new ways, in turn developing new skills and relationships with students.

Shoreham Academy (formerly King's Manor Community College)

How can we boost the confidence and risk-taking of our high-achieving female mathematicians so that they can achieve their potential?

Shoreham Academy wanted to investigate creative ways of enabling a group of twelve Key Stage 3 female students to achieve their potential in maths. They had all been identified as very able in maths, yet they had low self-esteem and lacked confidence to reach their full potential.

By exploring maths through fashion, the girls were passionate about the project's ambition to make maths more relevant to their lives and dreams. Working with visual artist Lulu Allison, the girls used mathematical applications such as budgeting, measuring and patterning to create their own designs and clothes. They learnt new skills such as sketching, digital design, photography and painting and the project culminated in a large-scale mural in the maths department.



Shoreham Academy

The staff involved were very positive about the effects of the project. It was a great opportunity to work formally and informally, allowing the students to have ownership and leadership of a project. There is evidence that the profile of maths as a subject has improved throughout the school. Parts of the project are now embedded in maths schemes of work.

Steyping Grammar School

How far can we go to empower students to lead sustainable curriculum innovation through cross-curricular and collaborative approaches within school and involving the local community?

Steyping Grammar School worked with radio producer James Crawford, to explore how students' and teachers' understanding of personalised learning can be developed through the medium of internet radio.

From the start students were fully involved in the planning process. They discussed their different interests in production, reporting, presenting, researching, engineering, and performing to formulate their ideas for their radio project, SGS Radio. The School Improvement Plan includes student voice objectives and this project provided an excellent model to share across the whole school, and at county and national level. Objectives embedded in the targets for the school's second specialism in 'Applied Learning' have also been achieved through SGS Radio. SGS Radio is now available to students who would like to become involved after school and in their own time as part of the school's extended services provision.

The next step will be to open SGS Radio out to the wider community. The students identified that the radio project progressed their learning. The radio team has undoubtedly developed their self confidence, their Personal Learning and Thinking skills, their knowledge and their sense of responsibility to others.

Westergate Community School

How can we use creative learning to identify and enhance transferable skills in Year 8?

Working in partnership with visual artist Lulu Allison a group of students and teachers investigated the ways in which they could represent skills taught in Westergate's competency curriculum 'Learning to Learn.'

The students made pavement art, wall sculptures and installations. They created symbols to represent skills such as emotional awareness, information management and people skills, for example using weather symbols to describe emotional changes. The students looked at existing schemes of work to establish where learning skills could be further developed, and at other ways the curriculum subjects may relate to each other.

Communicating their ideas to senior members of the school's management team and contributing to the wider school has raised esteem in the student group. Displays around the school show transferable learning in departments. A system – a toolkit – has been created to be used by teachers and students that identifies and enhances transferable skills learning. The feeling is that this is the beginning of an initiative that can go on to have a bigger effect on others.

outset in the recruitment process through which Keiran Sheehan, a dance practitioner, was appointed to work on the project.

Through dance and experimentation with the use of props and multi-sensory stimuli (water, for example), Keiran led staff and students through an exploration of performance as a means to accessing story-telling and experiential learning. Keiran also worked with staff to develop the use of the sensory room more creatively for students with profound and moderate learning difficulties (PMLD) through drama techniques.

Part of the legacy of this project was the development of a 'toolkit of ideas' for teachers; a written record of techniques used during the project and suggestions as to how staff and students might develop these together. Two films have also been produced to document the project from the point of view of both student groups.

Special Schools

Fordwater Special School

How can we effectively deliver our curriculum and use our school environment more creatively through performing arts?

Fordwater is a special school with students with severe learning and physical disabilities. The Starfish Class (Key Stage 2) was identified as having real difficulty in working collaboratively and were chosen to work on this project. Students were involved from the

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