

### **Partnership example: Capital City Academy**

Capital City is a large secondary Academy based in the London Borough of Brent. It has sports and arts specialisms and has gained Sportsmark and Artsmark. The student body is above the national average in proportions of young people with a disability and special education needs, and English as an additional language. Ofsted rated the school as good in 2012.

### **Partnership aims and objectives**

Capital City Academy explored improving maths, literacy and science levels amongst a range of year groups though partnering with performing arts companies during its involvement in the three year Change School Programme (2008-11). The objectives across the three years included:

- To encourage students' independent learning, adventurous problem solving and enquiry techniques
- For students to practice peer learning and act as role models to other students, to share their experience and learning
- To give teachers more ideas on how to make lessons more interactive and to explore more creative approaches to subject matter. To explore cross-curricular possibilities
- For the school to explore appropriate creative teaching and learning strategies
- For students to develop voice; devising the workshops and feeding into the project structure
- To raise attainment levels in students who are borderline D/C grades and to further stretch gifted and talented students.
- To enhance the legacy of the project work by nurturing new teaching talent within the school

### **Project types**

2008/09: The partnership was between the school and Labyrinth Theatre. A cross-curricular project with Year 8 students to develop a science based drama project across 5 weeks. Subjects included Drama, PSHE, and Science. The main artform for the activity was theatre.

2009/10: The partnership was between the school and The Place. A cross-curricular project with Year 8 Gifted and Talented students to bring dance, movement and physical theatre into maths and science and to explore ways to stretch these students further. Subjects included dance, maths, PHSE and science. The main artform for the activity was dance.

2010/11: The partnership was between the school and Sketch Academy. A project with year 9 and 10 students and 14-19 Creative and Media Diploma students to develop literacy skills, risk taking, attainment and confidence through comedy sketch writing and performance. Subjects included drama and English. The main artforms for the activity were literature and theatre.

### **Significant project stages for partners**

- A Creative Agent worked with the school to identify an appropriate theme for the projects and potential partners, facilitated evaluation meetings and supported the completion of the paperwork and reports.
- Collaborative planning took place with subject departments' staff including the senior subject staff, creative partnerships coordinator, the creative practitioners and a select body of students.

- One maths and one science teacher was involved in the project sessions and reported back the outcomes to their department.
- Resources were created for teachers to use in class beyond the programme.
- Sharing events at the end of the projects supported peer learning opportunities.

## Outcomes from the three year programme

Teachers' outcomes:

- **Creative skills and confidence** The collaborative planning process with creative professionals enhanced the skills of the staff team. They saw how using different creative skills and methods could engage their students, particularly those that needed more support. Additionally, due to student motivation throughout the project duration, teachers became more confident to be experimental with new ways of delivering lessons. For example they gained more confidence in being able to incorporate drama techniques into classroom practice.
- **Cross-curricular objectives** The project also demonstrated to teachers how objectives across subject units and across subject areas can be brought together.

Students' outcomes:

- **Engagement and attainment** The school found that most English students went up a band, in some cases two bands. Peer learning impacted on student engagement and therefore attainment with many students moving up to 2 sublevels from 2/3 to 4/5 in science. Students also gained a realisation of the relevance and importance of subjects such as science. Teachers noted that lower ability students may also benefit through the approach of learning maths and science through dance.
- **Team skills** The project encouraged group work in gifted and talented students, where these students were often happier working alone. Working as a team broadened their experience and they felt more comfortable in group situations as a result.
- **Confidence** The teachers and practitioners felt the students grew in confidence through performing and acting in front of a camera.

Teachers and students' combined outcomes

- **Greater relationships** Both teachers and students noted that the projects had helped relationships develop between them.

Practitioners' outcomes:

- **New knowledge and methodologies** Practitioners learned different methods and techniques for building students' engagement through trial and error during the projects. They also learned how to apply their creative ideas within a school framework and balance expectations of teachers and students.

## The value of partnerships with the creative sector

- **New learning environments** Practitioners provided new working environments for the students to experience that were different to their classroom environments.
- **Challenge and experimentation** The school benefitted from working with an organisation which seeks to challenge itself and experiment with techniques.
- **Expertise** The practitioners were able to introduce appropriate professional language and effectively used relevant vocabulary and expertise when delivering sessions.
- **Additional support staff** The high ratio of practitioners meant that each student group could be allocated an adult to support them. The number of practitioners also

released the teachers to work with groups and particularly the students who really needed their help.

- **Engaging teachers** Through a strong relationship that developed with the creative practitioners, teachers were extensively involved in the planning process. Teachers were able to see clear links to the ideas they had developed together and they worked to ensure the most appropriate subject objectives were selected. Teachers were also given a role in the project and each week a different participating teacher delivered a short section of the workshop.
- **Emphasis on creativity** The project put creativity on the agenda at the school. New ideas were being generated as to how the school can build on the experience of Creative Partnerships.

### **Advice when undertaking new partnerships**

The school found that the first project in 2008/9 had been very successful in achieving the school's improvement objectives, however year 2 was less so – the benefit of a three year partnership programme such as that which was offered by Creative Partnerships is that schools can test different methods and approaches to education through creative working, risk taking and trial and error.

Additionally, in the first year the planning sessions had taken place with both subject teachers and students, however in year two the teachers and students felt that had they been more involved in planning their input would have supported a more appropriate development of the project.

The school and practitioners reflected on how the showcase of the dance performances became a distraction for the students towards the end of the project. In similar projects where an exhibition, sharing event or performance is planned as a final outcome, a greater balance between enhancing the learning in sessions and preparing for the show should be struck to avoid such possible distractions.

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