

Partnership example: Hillyfield Primary School

Hillyfield re-opened in 2012 as a large new academy for children aged 3 to 11 years old in the London borough of Waltham Forest. The school's last Ofsted inspection was in November 2006 and the school was rated outstanding. The school offers full-time child care in the Nursery and a range of extended services to parents. The information in this example is based on the school's development and partnership practices prior to it becoming an academy.

Partnership aims and objectives

Hillyfield Primary School's development priorities focussed on raising attainment and improving standards of speaking and listening, and reading and writing across the whole school. Throughout the Change School Programme (2008-11) the school explored developing more opportunities for speaking and listening in the classroom including debate, drama and philosophical enquiry, leading to an improvement in writing standards. The following objectives led the projects across the three years:

- For artists and teachers to work alongside each other to develop imaginative responses to curriculum topics and to develop sustainable working practices within the school culture.
- To explore a wider range of teaching and learning styles
- To increase children's confidence to talk, reflect, reason, develop and articulate their own ideas and develop an ability to think about their own learning
- To increase staff's risk taking and confidence to be less reliant on old methods and introduce more drama, speaking, creative writing and conversation techniques
- For the pupils to direct their own experience of creative learning through enthusiasm and motivation
- To give young people more vocabulary, adjectives, techniques and strategies to enhance their experience of writing.

Project types

2008/09: The partnership was between the school, SAPERE, an independent practitioner in poetry and visual art and a drama practitioner. A whole school project working with teachers from all years to incorporate Philosophy 4 Children, photography, drama and poetry into classroom learning across the curriculum. Subjects included art and design, citizenship, design technology, drama, English, geography, history, maths, PHSE and science. The main artforms for this activity were literature, theatre and visual arts.

2009/10: The partnership was between the school, SAPERE and Scarlet Theatre. A whole school drama, literacy and philosophy project involving two classes of pupils and staff leading and sharing the learning for the rest of the school. Subjects included drama, English, geography, and ICT. The main artforms for this activity were theatre, sound arts and film.

2010/11: The partnership was between the school, SAPERE, a poet and a drama practitioner. A whole school drama, literacy and philosophy project mixing research and practical work involving three classes of year 4 pupils and staff leading and sharing the learning for the rest of the school. Subjects included business, drama, English, and PHSE. The main artforms for this activity were literature and theatre.

Significant project stages for partners

- Young people were involved in originating and developing the enquiry questions. They also selected the practitioners in the final year.
- Involvement of creative partners from different disciplines in order to increase the range and variety of speaking and listening opportunities within the school's curriculum, and to support the staff in developing and expanding their creative cross-curricular approach.
- A Creative Agent and the practitioners took part in Learning Walks around the school to examine aspects of work in the school.
- A Planning Day was held early in the spring terms for the key staff and partners.
- A series of joint training sessions, INSETs and an accredited level 1 course in the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach were held for all staff, creative practitioners and the Creative Agent.
- A structure for using philosophical questioning was devised by the school and the practitioners. E.g. each year two classes were selected for pilot explorations, who then shared the learning across the school through INSET sessions and sharing events.
- A visit to an exemplar creative school in Newham, Gallions Primary school, for the practitioners, curriculum manager and coordinator of the project.
- Instigation of "No whiteboard week" where the school adopted a speaking and listening focus.
- Working with parents in the Parent Learning Council to explore their role within creative teaching and learning in the school.
- The Creative Agent assisted with all evaluative conversations as well as managing relationships, communications and any difficulties within the project. Additionally the Agent developed advocacy opportunities for the work such as the opportunity to show films on the big screen in Waltham Forest market.
- At the end of the programme the school planned to publish a book on the work created during the project.

Outcomes from the three year programme

School's outcomes:

- **Model of practice** The work raised questions around creating a sustainable model for coordinating partnerships with artists that can be more strategically linked to long term planning.
- **Learning from young people** Practitioners developed ways of stimulating pupils to consider how, when and where they learn that uncovered new information the school can build on. The philosophy practitioner developed recommendations from her findings from conversations with young people which the school can use in its action plans and in developing new approaches to teaching writing.
- **Teaching resources** Staff observed that their particular young people have a very narrow fund of stories to draw on. The book, which was to be published after the programme, was to act as the students' own Treasury of stories, poems, play scenes etc. incorporating stories that were generated by parents and carers.
- **Development of an ethos** The young people worked to co-construct and support a shift of ethos across SMT and the wider school which had a profound impact on the possibilities of how the school engages young people in writing.

Teachers' outcomes:

- **Accreditation and new skills** The teachers received accreditation in P4C level 1 facilitating philosophical enquiry. They reflected on how it has completely altered their

teaching and the majority are integrating the method both into their planning and their creative curriculum where possible. Staff also benefitted from the input of drama skills and photography and they can now use a wide range of questioning, roleplay and visual stimulus in classes. Staff were developing more drama CPD and looking at the use of props boxes and role work in lessons.

- **Cross-curricular practice** Staff gained greater confidence and greater understanding of ways of integrating drama across the whole curriculum as well as using drama as a stimulus into writing or other subject areas.

Students' outcomes:

- **Confidence and empowerment** Pupils were able to develop confidence in speaking, listening, and presenting ideas through the drama work. They also expressed a sense of empowerment gained from learning to form and express their own opinions within the P4C method. The projects developed a strong sense of pupil voice and co-construction of learning through which pupils gained the confidence to challenge the way the curriculum was structured and played a part in shaping the emphasis of their lessons.
- **Skills** Staff saw that the quality of pupils' language and questioning skills had improved through their ability to articulate philosophical thoughts and ideas, in addition to increased speaking and listening skills, observational skills, and team working skills. Pupils also developed skills in using technical equipment and drama techniques.
- **Learning** The school observed that the young people gained a better sense of story structures and learned about a variety of poetry structures. Additionally the pupils have been given the opportunity to learn about how they learn and feed this understanding into the development of teaching practice.

Practitioners:

- **Accreditation and new skills** The practitioners received accreditation in P4C level 1 facilitating philosophical enquiry which enhanced their understanding and skills and became central to their delivery.
- **New knowledge and methodologies** The practitioners also developed a cross-curricular/disciplinary approach to planning and delivery through combined thinking, planning and collaborating with each other to link P4C with artistic practice.
- **New research** The SAPERE practitioner developed various new lines of research and philosophical enquiry that will benefit her personal ongoing research.

The value of partnerships with the creative sector

- **Different perspectives** The practitioners shared a variety of new ideas, perspectives, techniques and working methods. The staff reflected on the positive input and new understanding gained through working with artists in the school, especially in creative learning as well as drama, poetry and photography.
- **Opportunities for research** The philosophy practitioner's research and observations unearthed an important enquiry for the school. She listened to young people and adults and reflected back the important truths to the school in order for it to shape best practice.

Advice when undertaking new partnerships

The Creative Partnerships coordinator and Creative Agent reflected that in order to sustain the development and follow through on findings staff could be engaged more deeply in both the planning of the work as well as in the sharing and handing on to other students and staff. Schools undertaking similar partnership projects may need to consider this in ensuring

sustainability of the outcomes. At times challenges in collaboration and organisation in an extremely busy school can mean it is a struggle to build in reflective practice. Partnerships would benefit from the school and the partners taking an open approach to discussing challenges in order to build on the positive learning and experiences taking place.
