

## **A New Direction Schools Forum, May 2014: Cultural Entitlement Notes from school discussions**

At the third Schools Forum event of 2014, teachers from schools across London gathered to discuss cultural entitlement. These notes summarise the schools' conversations.

Three key themes emerged around cultural entitlement for children and young people in schools.

### **1. The benefit of creating and maintaining a strong creative and cultural vision throughout the school**

Most of the teachers felt this was essential when trying to embed creative and cultural learning into all aspects of teaching. A strong vision had enabled some teachers to develop creative activities at the planning stages which in turn had encouraged deeper thinking about how these events could impact on school targets. It was agreed this was a much more effective and satisfying way of working rather than 'tagging' activities or trips onto the end of a scheme of work. Teachers also spoke of a greater confidence in delivering cultural and creative activities when they were developed in the early stages of planning.

### **2. The need to develop effective partnerships with arts organisations and practitioners.**

It was agreed that building long term personal relationships with artists/organisations was an effective way to develop creative projects that contained the depth and specific detail the schools required. Sustainable relationships with artists had also encouraged teachers to experiment in both the scale and ambition of projects. Several schools had been involved in pilot schemes of work with arts centres or theatres. All of these teachers felt that this had been extremely positive experience because of the high degree of flexibility, communication and co-planning that was required. In these particular instances the partner organisations had ensured there was plenty of time for students to evaluate the process, and feedback was used as a way to refine and develop the work. Being involved in pilot schemes or developing strong relationships with artists requires teachers to be proactive, ambitious and have the confidence to reject 'one size fits all' offers from various institutions.

### **3. Effective sharing of knowledge, skills and resource throughout the school**

Some schools felt that designating PPA time for sharing best practice in creative skills was particularly effective in raising the profile of arts and culture and increasing participation. Teachers also felt it was important to find the right tone and balance when sharing creative skills so that themes were not forced. Retaining the lightness and sense of fun that some creative activities and events require is important. The benefits of teachers also being able to cultivate their own creative interests outside of school was discussed as a way for teachers to connect with personal interests and passion that would ultimately feedback into lessons. Some schools also felt that it would be useful to explore the possibility of teachers opting out of whole school projects.

This would enable them to develop schemes of work that utilised and celebrated their own individual and niche creative talents. This could inspire teachers, enrich children's learning and broaden the mix and range of cultural offers available to children.

Top tips:

- Remember to check the online resources available from local or national arts organisations when planning schemes of work
- Inform national and local arts organisations that your school would be willing to be involved in pilot schemes of work relating to creativity and culture.
- Speak to other local schools about their experiences and recommendations relating to hiring and working with artists/arts organisations
- Develop a shared language within you school relating to cultural entitlement. The Arts Council's online resource 'From Policy to Partnership' ([http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication\\_archive/from-policy-to-partnership-developing-the-arts-in-schools/](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/from-policy-to-partnership-developing-the-arts-in-schools/)) is a useful starting point, even though it was produced some time ago.