

The New National Curriculum, Arts and Culture in Action

Afternoon workshop sessions: method outline and discussion summary

A New Direction's annual conference for schools took place on 16 October 2014 at the British Library. The afternoon's break-out sessions were active two hour workshops constructed around Edward de Bono's "The Provocation Technique". Together teachers explored how this method can be used as powerful creative tool when trying to come up with new and innovative ideas or addressing long-standing challenges. This exercise was run in four workshops each exploring a different theme; Communications, Digital, Literacy, Numeracy.

The Provocation Technique

- 1) Teachers were asked to think about creative projects that have worked really well around SUBJECT/THEME. These examples were placed on walls around the room.
- 2) Teachers were then asked to write about things they would like to try in the area of SUBJECT/THEME but haven't yet, then they had to turn this into a question e.g., 'Girls start to lose interest in maths in Year 5' becomes 'How do I keep Year 5 girls interested in maths?'
- 3) Teachers swapped tables with another group leaving the questions on the table for the new group to answer.
- 4) Each group had to try and find some approaches to answering at least two of the questions, perhaps using the resources posted around the room.
- 5) After fifteen minutes, the facilitator asked the groups to stop working and each group had to pick a 'provocation' from a hat. The provocation had to be applied to the ideas/solutions the teachers were discussing. Example of the 'provocations' include:
 - Reverse the idea, e.g. if you are teaching the children, they teach you, if you are going outside of the school, you stay in but still run it like a trip out including packed lunches and no timetable
 - Exaggeration – make it bigger or smaller
 - Suggest that some part of the activity falls outside its normal set up e.g. you mix age groups/classes or it runs on a weekend/afterhours/early morning
 - Change the timeframe of your idea to last 15 minutes or 5 weeks
 - Radically change the location of for the setting of your activity
 - Emphasize how the senses are used in this activity
 - Include movement into your activity or stillness/silence as a key component

- 6) The paired table groups were brought back together after another fifteen minutes of discussion, to share their ideas.
- 7) Time was given for teachers to work on their own to consider how they can implement the suggestions into lessons/schools,
- 8) Reflection
All of the groups were asked to consider:
 - What was the effect of the provocations?
Responses:
"It was a way to offer suggestions and solutions without feeling there was a lot of judgment".

"It encouraged me to come up with ideas I would never have thought of otherwise"
 - What is the role of provocation like this in the creative and teaching process?
"Encourages participants to go beyond their first idea which means whatever is suggested is likely to be more creative."

"It was easier to come up with 'riskier' ideas because we were given permission to challenge our thinking. It was a safe way to do this."

"It reminds me that we often have the same idea over and over again, this challenges that and disrupted my thinking".
 - How might you use this process again?
All the groups felt this exercise can be used with both teaching staff and students. Some suggestions were: *staff meetings about topic ideas, thinking about school trips and activities, creative writing exercises for children, student council meetings*

Exploring the curriculum through the arts.

Workshop outputs by theme – shared best practice from teachers.

1. Communication

Teachers shared activities relating to 'Communication' that have worked well in their schools. These include:

- Creating opportunities for dialogue

Getting children to fill an outline of their heads with images of their thoughts/feelings/interests and then talking about them

Creating a multi-sensory music and dance piece through peer advocacy and conversations between disabled and non-disabled children

Using the Big Draw to provide opportunities for parents and children to discuss the idea of process, rather than outcomes (www.thebigdraw.org/)

Take One Picture is a powerful way to encourage conversation across the whole school (www.takeonepicture.org/)

- Pupil voice

African drumming project encouraging non-verbal communication. Engages listening skills, eye contact

Arts Award project with a samba band, in which pupils are encouraged to become the band leader, using verbal/non-verbal communication to rehearse their peers.

ROH project, 'A Little Thing Called Life,' in which young people created an original piece of work. Time to explore and discuss was important.

- Questioning techniques

Students had to build their own enquiry into Greek sculptures. The teacher provides different pictures and students had to note the questions they had about the work. This gave students ownership of their enquiry.

2. Digital

Teachers shared 'digital' activities that have worked well in their schools. These include:

- Encouraging students to take responsibility for the digital life of the school

Students blogging about school trips, adding content to the school website and create or adding content to e-school newsletters, creating posters for school events and schools signs on Photoshop, adding content to the school Facebook and Twitter account and e-mailing homework.

- Embedding technology into other lesson e.g. using digital microphones to record students reading poetry which is then published on ULE, using tablets in lessons so students can take images of people/things that relate to a topic.

3. Literacy

Teachers shared activities relating to literacy that have worked well in their schools. These include:

- Using all of the arts to engage children in literacy on a regular basis

Drama - hot seating/teacher in role/acting out

Movement – tableaux and montage work, group movement work to create locations in stories e.g. forests, oceans, and cities

Art – drawing storyboards and story maps

Music – listening to music, children listen to a piece of music and let images come to mind. The children then write about this.

- Involving parents in reading activities

Inviting parents to story-telling evening with their children, setting parents reading 'homework' with their child, co-creating poems with parents, children actively collection 'family stories' from parents to create classroom projects.

- Whole School Activities

Creating large scale projects across the school including writing a school play, literature days (and nights for the parents), community opera programmes, creating immersive literary spaces within the school and even the playground, becoming a storytelling School

4. Numeracy

Teachers shared activities relating to literature that have worked well in their schools. These include:

- Linking Practical Activities to Numeracy
Engaging students in tasks such as jewelry making, dancing, singing, competitive activities and games with Lego to explore numeracy
- Using the Arts to Engage Children in Numeracy

Drama Setting up role play areas/scenarios that use maths, e.g.,
 cooking (measurement) and shopping (costs)

Music Creating songs to develop number facts and knowledge

Movement Physicalising shapes e.g. each group has to make a
 parallelogram or becoming human clocks

Art Drawing problems out or having a 'picture of the week' and asking ask
 children to think about numeracy connections

Several teachers asked for the 'Invent a Measuring System' exercise, which was created by Nimble Fish and can be downloaded at <http://tinyurl.com/ok8acyf>