

Creative partnership working:

What is the value of partnerships between the education and creative/cultural sectors?

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Introduction

Creative Partnerships, the UK government's schools creativity programme from 2002 to 2011, made a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning and the level of attainment and achievement in pupils due to the planning and establishment of robust working partnerships between schools and creative practitioners.¹ Following the programme's completion in July 2011, these questions remain: What lessons have we learned about partnership working? How can we articulate the value of mutually beneficial partnerships, for schools and for the creative sector in the achievement of shared and individual goals? And how do we maintain the momentum created in schools well beyond the now ceased Creative Partnerships programme and its connected funding structure?

This paper aims to explore the characteristics and values of partnership working between the education sector and creative and cultural organisations or practitioners. It presents a description of sample partnership processes and outcomes using a selection of ten of London's Creative Partnership schools as examples. It also considers the lessons learnt and offers guidance for schools embarking on effective partnerships. Finally it explores the value of schools working with creative practitioners going forward.

Defining partnerships

The nature, definition and scale of education partnership opportunities can be very broad and in order to discuss the characteristics of effective partnership working it is first necessary to understand some of the many different partners, situations and contexts.

Partnerships with external creative organisations and practitioners can include arts organisations with education remits (e.g. museums, galleries and theatres), artists, designers, historians, poets, actors, musicians, curators, archivists, film-makers, dancers, librarians, architects and digital arts practitioners with a shared interest in education. These partnerships could be short term or long term, and could be process-centred, encouraging creative teaching and learning and new relationships within and across the school such as cross-curricular collaborations through partnership project work, or they could be product focussed to help foster creativity and create a vibrant artistic school environment. They can also arise from a schools' desire to focus on community involvement; schools may actively seek out partners that can provide opportunities for connecting school-based creative opportunities with the surrounding community, or they may establish sponsorship and local relationships that could enable or support a school's future plans.² Through a partnership

¹ NFER, 2011, *The Impact of Creative Partnerships on Attainment and Attendance*.

(<http://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/the-impact-of-creative-partnerships-on-attainment-and-attendance-in-2008-9-and-2009-10>)

² CCE, 2008, *Creative Schools Development Framework*, (CSDF).

schools can also explore cross-phase inter and intra-school partnership work such as transition work between primary and secondary schools and KS3 and 4 for which creative practitioners could help run creative teaching and learning activities.

The contexts for education partnerships with the creative and cultural sector are varied and the benefits for schools, teachers, young people and practitioners can be broad. The decision to enter into partnerships can be both led by an individual school or be part of a wider scheme, developed by delivery organisations and local or national overarching agendas. In this next section we look at some of the government reports that have promoted partnerships with external creative practitioners.

Why are schools encouraged to work in partnership?

In 1998 the Department for Education and Employment and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport established the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE), chaired by Sir Ken Robinson to launch an inquiry on the state of the current provision of creative and cultural education for young people in the UK. The report *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* was published in 1999 and led to the government's decision to trial and eventually implement the national Creative Partnerships programme (2002-2011). This report recognised that creative and cultural education should be seen as equal to literacy and numeracy, and there needed to be equality of provision between arts, humanities and sciences and other major areas of education which could be supported by partnerships, specifically creative and cultural organisations and practitioners.³ The report stated that young people need and deserve quality creative and cultural education which plays a particular role in developing the skills and aptitudes needed for a rapidly changing world of work. They can also develop a sense of community purpose through a wide network of partnerships and shared enterprise.⁴ These 'creative' partnerships, which include but are not limited to museums, theatres, galleries and music companies, enrich the experiences of young people and support teaching and training, directly helping to raise educational standards.⁵

Much of the information in the report about the benefits of school partnerships is as relevant today as it was at the turn of the 21st Century when it was published. At the end of the Creative Partnerships Programme, Darren Henley's review of Music Education (published February 2011) and Cultural Education (published February 2012) took a similar view of the importance of partnerships in the provision of quality cultural education. Both Henley's reports called for meaningful long term partnerships between schools and music/cultural organisations and for a structure of local 'hubs' to manage the quality provision of music education, and eventually the provision of cultural education across a wider set of disciplines, through external practitioners. With many schools moving out of direct Local Authority funding to become Academies or Free Schools, Henley urged that schools seek out partnerships with external cultural education providers in their area in order that children

³ National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE), 1999, *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*. DFEE, P.14 (<http://sirkenrobinson.com/skr/pdf/allourfutures.pdf>)

⁴ NACCCE, 1999, P.64

⁵ NACCCE, 1999, P.139

and young people continue to be able to access a high standard of cultural education in their local areas throughout this period of change.⁶

Processes and outcomes of partnership work

Schools that took part in the Creative Partnerships programme were supported in the development and management of partnerships with creative practitioners who could help achieve schools' specific aims and interests. This provided schools with the opportunity to learn new creative processes from artists, creative professionals and cultural organisations that could benefit leadership, management, curriculum delivery and students' learning.

Now that the national programme has ended, schools may be experiencing less local support in being able to establish partnerships with creative professionals. To assist schools we have collated a list of significant stages within partnership development and project processes, taken from a selection of ten schools that were enrolled in the Creative Partnerships Change Schools programme in London. This information is compiled from project planning and evaluation documentation and takes into account lessons learned during the process. The advice is from the perspective of schools instigating the partnership process and it is hoped that schools can adopt and adapt these suggestions as necessary.

Schools that contributed to this research:

- Acton High School, London borough of Ealing
- Capital City Academy, London borough of Brent
- Chingford Foundation School, London borough of Waltham Forest
- Forest Hill School, London borough of Lewisham
- Hillyfield Primary School, London borough of Waltham Forest
- James Wolfe Primary School and Centre for the Deaf, London borough of Greenwich
- Kingsmead Primary School, London borough of Hackney
- New Woodlands School, London borough of Lewisham
- Phoenix School, London borough of Tower Hamlets
- Vale Resource Base, London borough of Haringey

Six steps and top tips to effective partnerships

1. Establishment of project goals

- Review the school development plan and relate the work to the school's aims, its specialisms and see this as an opportunity to explore school's schemes of work, codes and ethos.
- Develop enquiry questions to guide the project, aligning it with school priorities and supporting the identification of creative opportunities for more active learning across the curriculum.

⁶ Henley, D., 2012, *Cultural Education in England: An Independent Review by Darren Henley for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education*, P.9. DCMS and DfE.
http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Cultural_Education_report.pdf

2. Selection of creative practitioners

- Explore different opportunities to forge new external relationships within the creative sector.
- Select the creative practitioners according to the expertise they can offer the school in the light of the schools/pupils' needs. Consider the shared values and interests you may hold as partners.
- Involve students and/or school council in the selection process to enable greater collaboration and engagement with the students and to see how well the practitioners can communicate with and support the young people.
- Consider the involvement of a number of practitioners from different disciplines in order to increase the range of learning opportunities, support staff in expanding their cross-curricular approaches and explore a number of media and working methods linked to the school's objectives.
- Think about whether the school would benefit from a sustained relationship with one creative practitioner/organisation to undertake a number of creative projects, or whether it would benefit more from bringing in a succession of different practitioners for different projects.

3. Development of project idea

- Invite practitioners to observe lessons, attend Learning Walks and research school's schemes of work to learn about the school and meet the staff
- Involve teachers, practitioners and where possible students in the co-development of ideas to ensure that the project is integrated to meet the needs of the school.

4. Nurturing the partnership

- Commit time to understanding each others' priorities and plan the project and continue to revisit the aims throughout the project.
- Undertake joint planning with teachers and practitioners to ensure greater partnership, teacher buy-in and empowerment, learning objectives set by the staff, collaborative enquiry and cross sector learning.
- Hold joint training sessions for whole school staff and practitioners, introducing creative practices and sharing teaching methods and processes.
- Identify someone to take on the role of coordinator within the school and Creative Agent role, who can broker relationships with creative practitioners, plan the project strands, monitor progress and support the development of the partnership. The agent will also regularly consult with practitioners and the coordinator to ensure aims are being met.
- Involve students in the planning stages to feed into the project structure and broaden the relationship potential.
- Develop a creative team, teaching and learning council, learning communities etc. to support this work beyond the project length.
- Practitioners to develop a way of recording their process and session status in cases where multiple practitioners are working across the school. This allows them to learn how the other sessions are going and think about ways of connecting up the work.
- Keep artists' schedules flexible whilst at school so that they can meet with different teachers and work in a range of classes.

- Ensure reflective learning, evaluation and monitoring is in place so that there is an ongoing cycle of development for all partners.

5. Ensuring sustainability of creative achievements

- Staff and parent professional development. This could include workshops for parents to enable and encourage them to find out more about the projects and develop complementary activities at home. Also, teachers and students could share newly acquired skills through teacher INSETs and sharing events for parents and families.
- Take time after each creative session and /or after the project to reflect on the activities and explore the resources to develop ways in which these could be extended beyond the support of the practitioners.
- Consider the accreditation of the teachers, partners and young people, through CPD for adults, through the Arts Award scheme for young people and through alternative awards.

6. What outputs are possible through partnerships with creative practitioners?

- Resources, including lesson plans, props and useful materials for teachers to use in lessons
- Sharing, display, performance and talks for parents, students, teachers, schools' partners and other schools. Ensure the presentation is part of the process, not the main focus of the project.
- Documentary film of the project process used to present learning and ideas back to the school

Partnership outcomes

The outcomes and achievements of a partnership can vary greatly depending on the context and the aims of each individual project. From our selection of 10 Creative Partnerships schools, the outcomes of a three-year partnership programme ranged from the development of a school-wide ethos in creative teaching and learning to an increase in students' attainment and wellbeing. In each case the school developed a three-year programme of creative projects that would help support change as identified in the schools' priorities. In many cases the creation of new artistic content such as an artwork, film or performance was secondary to the developmental outcomes for the school, its staff and students. An overview of partnership outcomes from our selected schools are presented here.

Schools' outcomes

- **Greater relationships, opportunities for new collaboration and partnership experience:** Both Vale Resource Base, New Woodlands School and Acton High School developed long-term relationships with their practitioners which helped to develop a sense of trust in the partnership and maintain the momentum for change. Additionally Chingford Foundation School's partnership work with its feeder primary schools achieved stronger links and created a template for future partnership work. Forest Hill School also found that co-delivery and collaborative learning allowed teachers and senior leaders to work together beyond the project.

- **Development of a creative ethos and new curriculum delivery methods:** Kingsmead Primary, Hillyfield Primary and Chingford Foundation Schools each began to develop a greater sense of their goals and values regarding their creative teaching and learning practices and in the case of Hillyfield and Chingford, this included the involvement of young people in decisions about learning spaces and new approaches to teaching. Acton High School and Vale Resource Base also experimented with other ways of delivering the curriculum; Acton High explored different learning spaces, groupings and timescales for outcomes while Vale investigated the expansion of its curriculum into a more sensory one, befitting the specific educational needs of its students. For Phoenix School the programme offered a chance to pilot the introduction of accredited AQA courses and the Arts Award scheme for its pupils, indicating the school's commitment to a creative ethos.
- **New teaching resources:** Many schools in our selection developed resources that acted as a documentation of the process and could be used by teachers in classrooms. For Forest Hill School this was the development of a book of the ideas and lesson examples created by students and teachers. For New Woodlands School this was a set of simple and effective creative tools that staff could use themselves in the delivery of a range of creative practices and for James Wolfe Primary School and Centre for the Deaf the resources supported a framework for the school to be able to develop similar projects in the future.
- **New models of practice:** A number of schools found that the programme created a framework or model for similar project work and partnership practices. At Hillyfield Primary School the projects led to the school considering a more sustainable model for coordinating artists linked with the school's long term planning. Kingsmead Primary School found that the projects helped provide the school with a framework for continuing to develop creative learning in the future. Meanwhile Vale Resource Base found that their projects helped enhance the school's move towards a more pupil participatory model by ensuring greater choices for pupils.

Teachers' outcomes

- **Professional development and new creative skills:** Gaining skills, knowledge and competencies in creative practices and creative teaching was in most cases an overarching outcome of the partnership work with creative practitioners. For example Capital City Academy and Acton High School's teachers were able to observe how practitioners drew out students and shifted the focus of how they engage with a subject. At Chingford Foundation School teachers became more confident to be experimental in the way they delivered lessons and developed creative teaching methods, taking more risks and incorporating new arts and creative techniques into teaching subjects.
- **Experience in cross-curricular practice:** James Wolfe and Hillyfield Primary Schools and Capital City Academy used their creative projects to explore how objectives across subjects can be brought together to develop cross-curricular approaches. For Phoenix School, teachers were able to explore cross-curricular practice within the Expressive Arts department and across the rest of the curriculum. Forest Hill School experimented with partnering teachers from different departments to share ideas and spaces which in turn developed relationships amongst teaching staff.

- **Greater relationships with young people:** Schools that looked at collaborations between teachers and students, such as Capital City Academy and Kingsmead Primary School, noticed greater relationships developing. In the case of Kingsmead this relationship enabled a better understanding of students' different learning styles. At Chingford Academy the sharing of students' work on preferred learning styles at teacher Insets created the opportunity for teachers to learn from students about their educational needs, which led to teacher and student collaborations as a bi-product of the project.

Students' outcomes

- **Engagement, learning and attainment:** The learning of the students who participated in the project work was important in all of the examples. Some schools noticed a greater engagement in class and motivation for learning arising from the integration of creative teaching and learning methods and the presence of creative practitioners. In the cases of Capital City Academy, Kingsmead Primary School, James Wolfe Primary School and Forest Hill School, an increase in student attainment was attributed to this work.
- **New skills:** The partnerships with creative practitioners saw the development of a range of new skills in the students, from practical skills in sculpture, photography, film and dance to planning and managing performances and events. Many teachers noticed students using new language, listening skills, thinking skills and working in teams more effectively. Many of these latter skills benefitted students involved in the co-development of projects with teachers and practitioners; at Chingford Foundation School and Hillyfield Primary School students expressed a sense of empowerment and confidence gained from learning skills needed to articulate their own opinions, developing strong pupil voice. In addition, Phoenix School's verbal students acquired new language related to techniques within subject areas although there was significant evidence that communication skills were developed and improved across many students.
- **Emotional development and wellbeing:** Kingsmead Primary School and each of the selected special schools within the study (Vale Resource Base, Phoenix School and New Woodlands School) noticed that through the creative programmes their students were able to develop emotional literacy, self expression and a greater sense of wellbeing through imaginative play and sensory stimuli. For example, students were able to empathise with characters and explore personal issues through poetry and puppetry.
- **Awareness of opportunities outside school:** Through partnerships with creative professionals, schools have been able to give their students a taste of real opportunities and different career paths beyond school. For example, the projects at Acton High School were grounded in real social/employment contexts and situations outside of the classroom which provided new aspirations and purpose to the students' learning. Additionally, students at New Woodlands School were exposed to new career possibilities through working with filmmakers and theatre professionals.

Partners' outcomes

- **Sustainability of practice:** Many of the creative practitioners that worked in these schools found that they were enhancing or acquiring new experiences and

knowledge in creative teaching methods gained through co-development of ideas with teachers and observation in schools. This included refining different techniques for building students' engagement, attending accredited training courses alongside teachers and undertaking new research that would help the development and sustainability of their practices.

- **New relationships:** In many cases the partnership between creative practitioners and schools encouraged collaboration with teachers and in some cases new working relationships with practitioners of different disciplines. This provided practitioners with a new learning opportunity about partnership working and the importance of building meaningful relationships in the achievement of project aims.

Many of the outcomes experienced by this selection of Creative Partnerships schools reflect the research undertaken by NACCCE back in 1999. The NACCCE report recognised that benefits for schools that partner with the creative sector included the support of school-wide change, the development of a school's relationship with its local community and teachers' professional development, in addition to raising the attainment, achievement and opportunities for young people. The report suggested that creative projects delivered through partnerships can raise school morale by bringing staff together to work to shared goals, promoting collaboration in curriculum development and providing opportunities for cross-curricular links throughout the school. Additionally, the report stated that through sharing new skills, expertise and resources gained during a partnership with creative professionals, a school can develop and strengthen the relationships between schools in the same area through cross-phase or cross-disciplinary projects.⁷

The value of partnering with the creative and cultural sector

This paper aimed to explore and articulate the value of partnerships between schools and professionals from the creative and cultural sector. Through learning about the outcomes of 10 Creative Partnerships schools in London a number of values have emerged, set out here. It is hoped that this list encourages schools to continue to explore 'creative' partnership working.

Creative partners can bring the following 8 values to partnership with schools:

- **Expertise and resources:** Creative practitioners possess techniques, skills, qualities and new language and can help create new materials and teaching resources to support curriculum delivery.
- **Different learning environments and opportunities:** Partnerships with creative professionals can lead to learning beyond the classroom in different, inspiring and enjoyable contexts. Practitioners have access to different working environments and creative learning opportunities for students to experience that are different to their classroom environments.
- **Different perspectives, new approaches and research:** Creative practitioners often embrace challenge and experimentation. They can offer new perspectives on practices and processes, help embed creative, critical and reflective approaches and

⁷ NACCCE 1999, p141-144

offer creative methods and research opportunities that can be shared with other schools and the wider community.

- **Relevance to school context:** With clear project aims and established goals, creative practitioners can balance their skills and qualities with a commitment to collaborating with school staff to make projects relevant to the school context and accessible to all children.
- **Increased engagement within the school:** Projects can explore different themes supported by a framework of creative working. This can encourage greater curriculum engagement and motivation for learning amongst the teachers and pupils.
- **Exposure to new creative career opportunities:** As professionals the creative partners are effective role models for young people. Through experiencing a broad range of professions new ideas of working in the creative industries are opened up for students.
- **Long term, extended relationships:** For many schools it is important to form a long term relationship with partners, enabling trust and familiarity to develop so that the students could explore new and different creative approaches. Many creative practitioners value the opportunity to explore the creative outcomes possible through extended relationships.
- **Greater community relations:** Partnership work with creative practitioners can help create opportunities to open up a dialogue with a wider network of other schools, artists, families and local bodies, which can give way to future collaborative opportunities.

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December 2012