

Whole School Change

Outline

In the 2005/06 academic year four Creative Partnerships London East schools were awarded substantial funding awards to realise change in their schools. The London Multimedia Lab at the London School of Economics was commissioned to track the outcomes of the four projects measured against the Creative Partnerships DCMS Policy and Delivery Agreement. These findings are available in a summary report entitled 'Pathways to Value'. The rationale behind offering schools the opportunity to apply for funding for large-scale projects was to encourage accelerated change. This case study explores definitions of whole school change, how effective the projects were in supporting whole school change, and what changes were sustainable after the project was completed. The case study includes recommendations for other schools embarking on large-scale change projects.

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Hannah Wilmot

Creative Partnerships
London East and South Case Studies

 Creative Partnerships



Introduction

For the first time, in 2005/06, Creative Partnerships London East¹ offered its schools the opportunity to apply for funding for large-scale projects to support whole school change. Based on the strength of applications and agreed by an independent panel, four schools were awarded a substantial amount to support such projects. Each school planned a piece of work with a range of creative partners to explore and develop models, systems and structures to place creativity at the centre of their practice. Coordinators from the schools met on a regular basis with staff from Creative Partnerships London East and researchers from the London School of Economics and Political Science who were evaluating the projects.² All four schools had been involved with Creative Partnerships since 2002.

This case study examines how Creative Partnerships has contributed to whole school change in these four schools. It describes the projects supported during the 2005/06 academic year but draws on the schools' overall experience of working with Creative Partnerships. It outlines the motivation for change, the processes involved and identifies common learning. The study is based on interviews with the Creative Partnerships coordinators and/or senior managers of each school.



1. Creative Partnerships London East merged with Creative Partnerships London South in April 2006.

2. A research team from the London Multimedia Lab at the London School of Economics and Political Science was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the impact of the projects on young people, teachers and creative partners. The evaluation programme was entitled 'Pathways to Value' and the evaluation report can be downloaded from the A New Direction website from October 2008. (www.anewdirection.org.uk).

The Schools

Columbia is a large primary school in Tower Hamlets. The majority of pupils are from Muslim backgrounds and almost two-thirds are Bangladeshi. More than half the pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Ofsted recently reported, 'Columbia is a good and improving school. It now has a number of outstanding features because of the headteacher's relentless focus on improving its performance'. Ofsted also highlighted that 'links with... Creative Partnerships bring exceptional benefits to pupils' experience'. (Ofsted 2007)

Columbia adopted a whole school approach to its work with Creative Partnerships from the outset. Early projects included Carnival where the school took to the streets; Splash@Columbia that focused on poetry and animation; and Spotlight on Columbia that explored the attributes of the school through moving image.

Islington Arts & Media School (IAMS) is a smaller than average, mixed comprehensive school for 11-16 year olds with specialist performing arts and media status. The catchment area is socially and economically disadvantaged and about three-quarters of the students come from minority ethnic groups. The school opened as a fresh-start school in 1999 with GCSE pass rates (5+ A*-C) of 4%. In 2006, this had risen to 51%. The school was awarded Artsmark Gold in 2002. In 2004, Ofsted described the school as 'effective and rapidly improving' with 'outstanding leadership'.

Islington Arts & Media School's experience with Creative Partnerships has been informed by its involvement with London East's Preferred Learning Styles and Creativity action research programme³ and is characterised by cross-departmental projects. In 2004, for example, a writer from the Almeida Theatre worked with the science, English and humanities departments on a project about Darwinism. As a result, participating pupils achieved higher marks on the Darwin question in GCSE science than in the previous year.

3. A two-year programme (2003-2005) involving ten schools and a range of creative partners. A series of commentaries and reflections on the programme, written by the practitioners involved, are presented in Learning about Learning which can be downloaded from the A New Direction website from October 2008. (www.anewdirection.org.uk).

Stoke Newington is a large, mixed comprehensive school in Hackney with media arts and science status. Students come from a wide range of economic circumstances and cultural backgrounds. Ofsted judged Stoke Newington 'an outstanding school with a culture of high expectations. Close attention to making sure that all students do as well as they possibly can characterises the school's leadership and management at all levels...and the school is rightly proud of its specialist status and of the creative opportunities available to students'. (Ofsted 2007)

Stoke Newington has also taken a cross-curricular approach to Creative Partnerships projects with the most successful work being theme-based. In the first and third years, the school undertook successful, relatively small-scale projects involving music and media, and radio respectively. In the second year, the school worked with a digital arts organisation, SODA, on the Energy Project. This large-scale cross-departmental project resulted in a light and sound installation that snakes up the 100ft boiler house at the front of the school.

Stormont House is a mixed special school in Hackney for students with a complex range of special educational needs. Approximately 100 students aged 11-16 attend the school. There is a wide ethnic mix amongst the pupils who come from mainly disadvantaged backgrounds in nine London boroughs. Ofsted described the school as outstanding and reported that the 'head teacher provides excellent leadership which inspires innovation and creativity in all aspects of the school's work'. (Ofsted 2005)

Stormont House's two-year involvement in Creative Partnerships London East's Preferred Learning Styles and Creativity project was instrumental in the development of the headteacher's vision for the school. The school took the reflective nature of action research to heart and thorough self-evaluation continues to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and also, to quote headteacher Kevin McDonnell, 'where there is thirst for change'. Creative Partnerships projects have been designed to respond to weaknesses and to capitalise on 'thirst'.



The Projects

What do we mean by whole school change? Definitions given by individuals interviewed for this study included, 'a shift in ways of thinking and working'; when these new ways of thinking and working 'get into the bloodstream of the school and are not confined to particular lessons or projects'. Whole school change leads to a 'change in expectations and entitlement'. For these four schools, the change was about imbuing the organisation with creativity. In his book, *Out of Our Minds*, Ken Robinson observes:

'Developing a culture of creativity involves more than enthusing a small number of individuals. It means energising the whole organisation'.⁴

This is what these four schools set out to do.

Columbia Primary School

Between 2003 and 2005, Columbia Primary School had undertaken three whole-school projects. Although very successful, the Creative Partnerships coordinator and the headteacher recognised that all the projects had been fairly product-led and labour intensive. Staff had found the work involved in producing the 'Spotlight on Columbia' DVD, for example, 'too stressful when the curriculum is already overcrowded' reported Philippa Jordan, the Creative Partnerships coordinator. Inspired by discussions at Creative Partnerships coordinators' meetings, Philippa set out to plan a project that integrated creativity into all curriculum areas. This approach was endorsed by the headteacher, Mary Igoe, who had seized the opportunity presented in *Excellence and Enjoyment*⁵ 'to make our learning for deeper understanding rather than facts'.

Earlier projects had successfully included aspects of moving image media and so filmmaking was selected as the medium for the 2005/06 project. The focus was on process; film as a tool for learning not for producing polished products. The project aimed to embed film into the weekly, termly and yearly practice of the school and thereby deliver a more exciting and creative curriculum.

4. Robinson, Ken, *Out of Our Minds – Learning to be Creative*, Oxford: Capstone Publishing Ltd, 2001.

5. *Excellence and Enjoyment: a strategy for primary schools* Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

Three filmmakers worked with the school: two from independent production company Green Lions and freelance filmmaker, Savinder Bual. Collaboration between children, teachers and filmmakers determined the shape and form of each class' learning. The school had previously invested in two good cameras and all the necessary editing software so that pupils and teachers could be involved in all aspects of filmmaking. Creative partners ensured that children and teachers acquired the necessary skills in storyboarding, composition, editing and post-production.

The filmmakers worked intensively with the school during the spring term 2006 and a wide range of films were produced. With sustainability in mind, the filmmakers worked with the pupils and two teachers to produce a Filmmaking Toolkit for teachers to equip new members of staff with the skills and understanding to use film in the classroom.

Visiting the school a year after the end of the project it was evident that filmmaking is now embedded. Following the project, the school made a further investment to give each class its own small digital movie camera. Films are often shown in assemblies; on the week of the visit for this case study for example, a year 4 class had shown a film about thermal conductors. The coordinator described how earlier this year, she had supported a new year 2 teacher to make a class film on changing materials. 'Ice melting – well it lends itself to film. You don't want to just sit and watch it melt when the camera can do that for you' she explained. She believed that almost all teachers and pupils now see the camera as another tool in the classroom to be used whenever and however appropriate.

An unexpected benefit of filmmaking has been its use in assessment for learning. The headteacher explained how a teacher could make observations about an individual pupil's learning (how they learn and the stage of their learning) through choices the pupil makes in selecting and editing images and sound. In addition, staff used film to support the ongoing development of assessment for learning at the school during staff meetings. Film also supports pupils' self-assessment by allowing them to review the process as well as the products of their learning. This, together with filmmaking's strengths in promoting understanding and enhancing creativity, looks to have secured its future at Columbia.

Islington Arts & Media School

The school's commitment to arts and media was enshrined in its name when it opened in 1999. It was subsequently designated as an arts and media college in 2004 which gave official endorsement (and some additional funding) to extend its use of arts methodologies across the curriculum. Between 2003 and 2005, the school participated in Creative Partnership London East's Preferred Learning Styles and Creativity project. The cross-curricular project had clear benefits for learning, and whole school training on preferred learning styles and creativity left many teachers with the confidence to be innovative and creative in their teaching. Students became aware of how to use knowledge of their own learning style preferences to support their achievement. These experiences reinforced senior management's commitment to incorporate creativity across the curriculum as reflected in the School Development Plan.

Islington Arts & Media was a pilot school for the DfES initiative to deliver the key stage 3 curriculum in two years.⁶ In 2005/06 the school had its first year 9 cohort with no set curriculum. The school had the opportunity therefore to design an innovative and differentiated curriculum. The aim was to prepare students for progression to key stage 4. The curriculum was enhanced by pairing subjects in arts and media with humanities, and new schemes of work were delivered with a creative partner. The content of the module was set by humanities (based on topics from the GCSE syllabus) with the delivery and approach drawn from the relevant arts and media subject. Students spent eight lessons per week in these fused subjects and groups were rotated each half term. Teachers worked on paired delivery and at any time there were two 'floating' teachers who were encouraged to observe their peers.

6. The 2001 Green Paper Schools: Building on Success proposed a two-year key stage 3 pilot which was initiated in February 2003. The aims of the project were to increase the pace of learning and raise standards; enhance pupils' motivation and engagement; improve transfer between key stage 2 and key stage 3; increase curriculum flexibility.

The creative partners who worked at Islington Arts & Media School were the Brazilian Artists Network, artists Cezar Cornejo and Clare Burnett, East London Dance, the Royal British Society of Sculptors, SPACE Studios and Tricycle Theatre. Together with the teachers they designed and delivered five new schemes of work (each of 35 lessons). One example, Physical Justice, was a history and dance project that focused on crime and punishment. Students choreographed a piece based on their understanding of gang culture and crime statistics. The fused schemes of work piloted in 2005/06 were delivered again in 2006/07. Without Creative Partnerships funding the level of outside input was significantly reduced. Professional development in the first year, however, had raised levels of staff confidence and skills and the opportunity to team teach continues. The first year also allowed teachers to see where outside expertise was particularly beneficial and the school funded a limited programme of creative partners. This year for example, a capoeira artist worked with students studying Brazil in geography.

Stoke Newington

With hindsight, Helen Wood, the Creative Partnerships coordinator at Stoke Newington, recognised that the Energy Project in 2003/04 had marked a turning point for the school and prepared the ground for whole school change. The project involved all 240 students in year 8 and six subject areas. It was a highly ambitious project that created a degree of excited nervousness amongst staff. The finished product exceeded expectations and 'the lights' have become a source of pride (and some relief) for the whole school community. A degree of trust was established and staff who had not been involved in the project were keen to be involved in future creative projects. The light installation was badly damaged when the boiler house was struck by lightning in 2006 but the school recognised its value and committed the necessary finances to have it repaired. Helen commented that when this was raised at a staff meeting, no-one questioned the expense. This, she believed, demonstrated the staff's appreciation of the value of creativity to the whole school community.

In 2005/06 (following a smaller-scale radio project in 2004/05) the school was ready to take on another large-scale project. Helen Wood recognised that a theme-based project 'allowed staff to buy in at a level they are comfortable with...bringing people into the change process at their own pace'. A recent Ofsted report had been critical of the school's citizenship provision and so the theme of rights and responsibilities, based on the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child, was chosen. The school devised a multimedia project working primarily with creative partners, Somethin' Else, a cross-platform media production company. Somethin' Else were new to education work but keen to engage with young people. Helen was convinced that the broad range of industry expertise in the company would be invaluable for the school. She minimised any potential risk by drawing up guidelines for Somethin' Else covering everything from child protection to lesson planning.

The project involved 650 students, spanning five year groups across 13 subjects. Students produced a range of material including television and radio documentaries, films, animations and music compositions all housed in a student designed website. Year 10 ICT students were commissioned to design a website that they pitched to a selection panel and one website⁷ was chosen for development. Thirteen practitioners were involved working with students and also training and mentoring teachers. They provided bespoke support for staff: some individuals needed to find new ways to apply existing skills whilst others needed new skills. The skills and enthusiasm generated through Rights2Rights have carried through into 2006/07. Working with Somethin' Else for a second year, the school has involved 175 students and seven subjects in producing a website on health issues.⁸

Stormont House

Working with Creative Partnerships gave Stormont House the confidence to form a new, shared vision for the school that emphasises learning differences (as opposed to learning difficulties), creativity and a staff team who are reflective and continually learning. Committed to realising this vision, headteacher Kevin McDonnell recognised that a large-scale creative intervention could 'act as a catalyst for accelerated change'. The focus would be on placing creativity at the centre of teaching and learning. The idea was explored at a staff residential and areas identified where the desire for change could not be met within existing staff skills.

7. www.rights2rights.com

8. www.younghealthmatters.com



Whole school change is a process and not a destination and that part of this process is the need to revisit, reinforce and refresh areas covered in earlier years.

The key stage 3 curriculum was restructured to accommodate weekly creative afternoons based on the theme of the environment. Creative Partnerships supported activities in the spring term 2006 but the school felt a longer period was required to affect change and so found additional funding to extend the project into the summer term. Students and staff were given the opportunity to experience dance, digital photography, glass forming, filmmaking, sculpture and theatre skills. The creative partners involved were, Stephanie Gill, Photographer; Graham Johnston, Filmmaker; East-Side Educational Trust and Free Form.

From January to May, students experienced all the activities and in the final half term, selected their favourite and further developed their skills. A creativity showcase was presented to parents, carers and other guests at the end of term.

The key stage 3 curriculum reverted to its original format in September 2006 but new skills and understanding had been acquired that continue to influence teaching and learning at the school. The headteacher recently conducted an audit with staff to explore the lasting impact of the project on practice. Perhaps not surprisingly there was large variation between individuals and between different subject areas. The use of film as a tool for teaching, learning and assessment had increased significantly, for example, whilst the retention of digital photography skills was less than expected. In art however, students' increased interest and confidence in digital photography had moved work onto a more sophisticated level of image manipulation. There is evidence that theatre skills are being used more often and more confidently in a variety of lessons and the school continues to fund dance and film practitioners to work at the school.

Kevin McDonnell emphasised that whole school change is a process and not a destination and that part of this process is the need to revisit, reinforce and refresh areas covered in earlier years. The school's Creative Partnerships project this year, for example, set out to consolidate the experiences and lessons of the creative afternoons but was deliberately scaled down to a creativity week.

The Lessons

Creative Partnerships has supported whole school change in all four schools. What are the factors that have contributed to success? There was clear progression in the first three years of Creative Partnerships work at these schools and detailed analysis by the coordinator and senior managers of the schools' strengths and weaknesses. These resulted in a clear agenda for change and a readiness amongst staff and governors to try something new.

It is striking that the leadership of the headteacher is judged by Ofsted to be at least very good if not outstanding in all the schools. The schools' commitment to continuous improvement is also noted. All four headteachers are explicitly committed to creativity which features in all the School Development Plans. If the commitment already existed, what is it that Creative Partnerships has added? Senior representatives from the schools were very clear on this question. The projects had raised the profile of creativity and injected new energy and enthusiasm. Creative partners had provided invaluable professional development for staff and role models for pupils and students. The long-term nature of the relationship with Creative Partnerships had led to a level of trust (between the school and the Creative Partnerships London East and South team and internally in school) that encouraged risk taking and constructive reflection. The Creative Partnerships team had a sound understanding of the individual institutions and was able to provide links to appropriate and exciting practitioners. Cross-phase groups of teachers (in coordinators meetings or project groups for Pathways to Value or the Preferred Learning Styles and Creativity project) provide inspiration, constructive criticism and practical support.

All these factors contributed to the schools' ability to manage a successful change process. Change takes time and effort as Ken Robinson notes in *Out of Our Minds*:

'Cultural change is not linear and smooth, it is tumultuous, complex and drawn out, a convoluted process of change which can create many tensions and unresolved problems along the way'.

A number of common strategies were employed by these schools to ease the process. All the schools found the need to vary the scale of Creative Partnerships projects over the years. The Energy Project at Stoke Newington, for example, was followed by a smaller-scale project before the school embarked on Rights2Rights. One headteacher described the danger of trying to move forward too quickly, 'the relentless desire to improve the school has sometimes come close to being too much for some people to manage'.

All the schools had sustained partnerships with one or more creative partners over two or more years. The trust and understanding developed allowed a greater degree of risk-taking as the partnership progressed. The continued presence of the partner also increased opportunities to reinforce learning and embed change. There was a general recognition that finding the 'right' partner was crucial. For whole school change, the professional development of staff needs to be prioritised and creative partners must be happy to facilitate learning and share their expertise.

External support was a significant factor in the change process. Members of the Creative Partnerships team were highly valued for their support, guidance and expertise. Judy Gemmell, deputy headteacher at Islington Arts & Media commented, 'Creative Partnerships has helped us think about what we want to get out of things'. In thinking about the future, one headteacher reflected that the team's brokerage role, 'broader links and awareness of different pictures' would be missed by the school more than the funding. The time and opportunity to reflect constructively with people outside school added to individual's ability to see the need for change, formulate plans and solve problems.

The process versus product debate has been around as long as arts education. The role of high profile and high quality product in generating enthusiasm and pride has already been mentioned (the Energy Project at Stoke Newington for example). Other schools have placed a higher value on process, as one deputy head reflected, 'our product has not always been particularly wonderful but the process has been really special'. In all four schools however, there was a clear focus on process as the schools worked for whole school change.

The people interviewed for this case study were asked to translate their learning about whole school change into advice for other schools about to embark on a similar path. There was considerable overlap in their thoughts.

On Leadership:

- Be clear and honest about what you want to change and link this to a cycle of evaluation and review related to the Self Evaluation Form and School Development Plan.
- Ask 'why?' and 'what?' before 'how?' and 'when?'
- Ask 'how is this going to help the pupils/students learn and improve?' Demonstrate the benefits to staff and pupils/students.
- Give yourself time for reflection and time with critical friends.
- Keep looking for 'better' answers rather than the 'right' answer.
- Consult, consult, consult. Build the vision with the staff. Have the passion and share it.
- Get key individuals on board early.
- Take time to get everyone on board – use the 'wow factor': take everyone somewhere special or bring someone special into school.



On Planning:

- Don't give teachers extra work. Projects should address needs already identified.
- Make time for meticulous planning (think of everything that could go wrong and have a back-up plan).
- Ensure there is time for each teacher/partner pairing to plan and reflect together.
- Incorporate whole school Inset and individual professional development.
- Take the time to see how the project is going. Someone has to have the big picture.
- Evaluate and document – raise teachers' awareness of what data to capture.

On Partnership:

- Don't assume that everyone will see a creative partner in the classroom as a benefit.
- Select your creative partners with care; partners need to be facilitators and generous with their time, skills and expertise.
- Take time to build relationships based on mutual understanding of roles, responsibilities and expectations.
- Keep communicating with colleagues and partners.
- If you find a partner who 'clicks' with the school, keep them!

Looking to the future

Senior managers in these schools are convinced that creative teaching and learning has a positive and demonstrable impact on pupils' social skills, motivation and achievements. Through Creative Partnerships, this conviction has spread across the whole school community and has been recognised by Ofsted,

'The curriculum is extensively enriched through the school's Creative Partnerships, which contribute positively to pupils' social development... There is evidence that more innovative learning strategies are developing as the project impacts positively on the effectiveness of teaching'. (Islington Arts & Media School Ofsted report, 2004)

Three of the schools included in the case study were successful in achieving Creative Partnerships' Schools of Creativity status in April 2008. (Columbia Primary School, Islington Arts and Media School and Stoke Newington School). Such a designation will give them the responsibility of taking the change agenda into other schools which they are well placed to do. IAMS has already embarked on the next stage of their creative journey and is currently consulting on the proposal to become a Trust School with Creative Partnerships as the Trust partner. IAMS aspire to be a pathfinder school for the DCFS and a pioneer for Creative Partnerships.

These schools have embedded changes in many aspects of the organisation including ethos and values, curriculum content and organisation, pedagogical approaches, staff development, external partnerships and methods of assessment. Senior managers are determined to sustain these changes and continue to embrace creativity no matter what the future holds for Creative Partnerships. The signs for this are promising as many of the conditions for sustained change identified in a recent research monograph⁹ are evident,

'Long-term, relatively generalised change requires a combination of:

- local and regional autonomy
- support for teacher action and learning
- external support which provides new financial and intellectual resources as well as critical feedback
- a philosophy to which schools can sign up
- school staff involvement in important debates about change networks within which schools can share ideas and experiences'.

Hannah Wilmot

9. Thomson, Pat, *Whole School Change: A review of the literature*, London: Arts Council England, 2007.

In October 2008, the three London Creative Partnerships teams (London East and South, London North and London West) joined together to become **A New Direction**, a new independent organisation delivering Creative Partnerships' three new programme strands (Enquiry Schools, Change Schools and Schools of Creativity) in schools across the capital, and extending its reach to 21 London boroughs. The organisation is also looking to develop other strands of work outside of the Creative Partnerships programme. For more information about A New Direction visit the website – www.anewdirection.org.uk

A New Direction

Discover, 1 Bridge Terrace,
Stratford, London E15 4BG

info@anewdirection.org.uk
www.anewdirection.org.uk

Creative Partnerships London East and London South were established as two of the first sixteen Creative Partnerships areas in 2002. Delivering programmes with schools in Hackney, Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, they merged in April 2006 to form one Creative Partnerships area delivering a joint creative programme in those eight boroughs.

The programme placed creativity and imagination at the centre of teaching and learning, working across the whole school curriculum, and exploring different ways of working together and making meaningful change through long-term partnerships between educational institutions and creative individuals and organisations.

Compiled by: Angela Hall
and Yejide Adeoye

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Chris Cullingford
Stephanie Gill