

## A New Direction Schools' Forums 2015

### Engagement and the Art of Social Change

Our second schools forum of the year came shortly before the general election and focussed on how children and young people can engage with their local communities through the arts in school. Below are two project ideas generated by some of the teachers that participated in the forum.

#### KS1 project idea

The teachers working on this idea suggested that their project would be about 'the secret life of clothes'. This group chose to design a project around environmental awareness with a focus on understanding where things come from & where they go. So, for example teachers could ask students to observe what happens to rubbish and uncover where it goes. What happens at school, home and the local park. Someone from a local recycling plant could be invited in to speak. Extending this to KS2 could involve international links and research. Where do things come from? Children could map the journey of things that they own and people that have interacted with the item they are tracking.

For KS1, the local area is a great place to start in building up young people's sense of community and a good way of developing their understanding. Discussing the local community helps to combat student misconceptions as they can follow things through. The project would culminate in a fashion show made up of recycled fashion but which would enable the children to have thought about where all clothes come from. The fashion show would provide a way of illustrating an issue - so an issue would be turned into a costume or piece of fashion. This would have lots of cross-curricular links and would involve design process and technology.

#### KS3&4 project idea

The group focussing on designing a secondary school project decided to focus on the issue of social housing and redevelopment which is an issue that is frequently reported on by the media. Participants suggested that engaging students in some sort of social action or project would provide a positive outlet and a forum for them to explore the changes that could be affecting them. A project would enable the young people to have an opportunity to explore the pros and cons of redeveloping an area. Is the long term good a justification? A project of this nature would provide an ideal opportunity of engaging with local councillors and politicians. It would offer the chance for the school to support something that was student led and provide a way to engage students positively in social media and an opportunity for them to learn about how to use these in a positive way.

The discussion led to the highlighting of as many challenges as well as discussing the impact and empowerment that such a project would engender. The principal challenges are those that secondary teachers will be familiar with: the challenges of cross-curricular working and timetabling. This is particularly difficult for schools with a circular timetable. Student mobility is also a challenge - how could the school build and utilise what is available to the maximum benefit.

## Useful links:

### Secondary Phase

<http://www.stepuptoserve.org.uk/>

<http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/>

<http://bitetheballot.co.uk/>

<http://www.fixers.org.uk/>

### Primary Phase

<http://www.freethechildren.co.uk/>

<http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/page.php?327>