

# Creative Dynamics

An exploration of how creative practitioners can support the development of creative approaches to teaching and learning

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pupils



teachers

Putting  
**Creativity**  
at the heart  
of learning



creative  
practitioners



# Contents

<b>04</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>06</b>	<b>A Special Relationship</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Creative Practitioners as artisans of creativity and critical thinking</b>
<b>10</b>	1. The CP as the teacher's critical friend
<b>11</b>	2. Bringing the qualities of the creative dynamic to teachers
<b>12</b>	3. Challenging the status quo
<b>13</b>	4. A different approach to planning
<b>15</b>	5. Recognising the difference
<b>16</b>	6. Letting go, taking risks and coping with uncertainty
<b>17</b>	7. Identifying problems and finding solutions
<b>18</b>	8. Children and young people 'taking ownership' and 'making choices'
<b>20</b>	9. Creative questioning
<b>21</b>	10. Making links and seeing connections
<b>23</b>	11. Generating ideas
<b>23</b>	12. Teachers' values and the motivation to teach
<b>25</b>	13. Creativity is more than art
<b>27</b>	14. The art of reflection
<b>28</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>29</b>	i. How to get started: Setting up the partnership
<b>29</b>	ii. Selecting the creative practitioner/s
<b>30</b>	iii. Getting to know each other's worlds
<b>30</b>	iv. Developing professional trust
<b>30</b>	v. Establishing professional boundaries
<b>30</b>	vi. Time: the essential factor
<b>30</b>	vii. Professional reflection
<b>32</b>	viii. Project evaluation
<b>35</b>	ix. Assessing pupils' creative development
<b>39</b>	x. Sharing learning with others
<b>39</b>	<b>Additional useful references</b>
<b>40</b>	<b>Appendix A: The School Contexts</b>
<b>46</b>	<b>Appendix B: About the authors</b> Wallace Heim, Chris Kynch, Margaret Riches
<b>47</b>	<b>Acknowledgements</b> Training & Development Agency for Schools Schools and Creative Practitioners

# Introduction

Creative Futures Cumbria was originally established in 1992 as the charity 'Cumbria Arts in Education' (CAE). Its aim was to establish links between schools and artists to enable teachers to develop their professional skills and work and embed the arts and creative approaches to learning across the curriculum.

In 2008, Cumbria Arts in Education became the umbrella organisation for the Creative Partnership Cumbria programme. It began to work with 'creative practitioners' from a wider range of professional backgrounds and changed its name to 'Creative Futures Cumbria' to reflect these new developments.

Between Sept 2006 – Jan 2007 CAE was commissioned by Creative Partnerships, Cumbria to undertake a survey of Cumbrian teachers' professional development needs in relation to the development of the arts and creativity across the curriculum.

The sample involved 20% Cumbrian schools across the primary, secondary and special school sectors and included interviews and circulating questionnaires to Senior Managers, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Coordinators and Subject Leaders.

Most of the respondents indicated that in their view the most effective form of CPD was to learn by working with professional artists and creative practitioners within the school based context and through projects that had been planned and delivered collaboratively.

During 2007 Cumbria Arts in Education applied to the Training & Development Agency for Schools to run programmes across Cumbria. Teachers would be supported to develop creative approaches to teaching and learning and involve pupils in critical thinking and reflection, with the support of a creative practitioner working alongside them in the classroom.

Funding was allocated to support three different programmes which shared the same overall objectives, but targeted specific groups of teachers:

- i) Teachers in the early stages of their career, working in rural contexts.
- ii) Teachers in a school cluster which was working towards the introduction of the Creative and Media Diploma.
- iii) Teachers who were involved in teaching the revised Key Stage 3 curriculum where there was a requirement to introduce cross curricular dimensions such as creativity, critical thinking and environmental and global education.

The selection of the schools and the creative practitioners took place between January and March 2008 and the projects in schools commenced during the summer term.

In total the programmes involved sixteen schools and it became clear that there were generic factors that had affected the success of the projects. In particular, the role of the creative practitioner added a crucially significant 'creative dynamic' to the teachers' professional development and the impact on the pupils' learning opportunities.

The programmes shared several key features:

- i) They all began with an induction day where the creative practitioners met for the first time. They shared their understanding about what 'creative learning' and 'critical thinking' entailed. They began to learn more about each other's professional context and the programmes of work that were to be the focus of the projects on which they would work collaboratively.
- ii) The teachers and creative practitioners were encouraged to record highlights, challenges and 'key learning moments' as a 'personal learning log'/ reflective journal. This could be compiled in whatever format they preferred.
- iii) Teachers were provided with a total of seven funded 'non-contact days' and the creative practitioners with fifteen days on which to work on the programme. This was to ensure that the creative practitioners and the teachers would both have sufficient time to meet to prepare, plan and review the progress and outcomes of the project as well as time to work collaboratively in the classroom.

- iv) Teachers were advised to identify a group of pupils whose responses to the learning experiences and any new ways of working that the teachers and creative practitioners introduced could be 'tracked' in more detail.
- v) The overall evaluation and review of the projects was undertaken by two external evaluators who had a series of conversations with the teachers, the creative practitioners and representatives from the groups of pupils who the teachers were particularly 'monitoring'. To obtain more quantitative evidence about student perceptions some questionnaires were also circulated to the wider group.
- vi) A day was allocated to help the teachers and creative practitioners reflect on the learning that had taken place and consider dissemination strategies. The session was led by an external facilitator with expertise in developing leadership skills.

Further information about the context of the different programmes and the themes of the school projects can be found in Appendix A: The School Contexts.

The extensive material which was gathered from these three programmes has enabled Creative Futures Cumbria to prepare this 'tool kit'.

It aims to:

- explore the unique dynamics of the 'special relationship' between the creative practitioners and teachers, and how this can empower teachers to 'put creativity at the heart of learning'.
- identify the specific contribution that creative practitioners can make to these significant and often challenging developments.
- recommend the steps that can be taken by schools and teachers to maximise the opportunities that a partnership with a creative practitioner can bring.

Throughout this document the words of the creative practitioners, teachers and students who participated in the projects have been used to illustrate the value of these 'dynamic partnerships' for the development of creative learning.

# A Special Relationship

The value of creativity in the classroom for the student is well established. The challenge, however, of how to achieve this in existing educational settings remains. If the focus shifts slightly, and the learning in the classroom is seen as a whole process, encompassing everyone, then creativity must extend to the teaching experience as well. The unique and simple essence of the projects that were developed through this programme was to focus on the continuing professional development of the teachers, and enable them to explore the creative possibilities of their own teaching practice.

The programme enabled the teachers and creative practitioners to work alongside each other in the classroom where they could observe, over a period of several weeks, each other's practice and the reactions of the students with whom they were working. They had time to develop this 'special professional relationship' through the induction day when they were first introduced and subsequently in the time allocated for the collaborative preparation of the schemes of work/projects that they would be jointly implementing.

Non-contact time was also available for them to share their impressions of the learning outcomes of each session and consider what the next steps should be. Although in reality there were significant differences in the extent to which individual teachers were able to make use of this opportunity, it was evident that where a substantial amount of 'quality time' had been used for shared planning and reflection a strong professional bond of trust and mutual respect evolved between the teacher and their creative practitioner. This 'special relationship' enabled a climate of experimentation to develop within their classrooms and provided their pupils with a range of different creative learning opportunities.

At the beginning of the project some teachers were sceptical about what could be learnt from a professional who was not a 'trained teacher'. Some had doubts about the value of 'creativity' and what it might mean in practice. Others could see the value of the artistic expertise that the creative practitioner would bring to their teaching and were looking forward to 'learning another skill', but found it more difficult to appreciate that 'exploring the nature of the

creative process' was the purpose of this particular professional development opportunity rather than acquiring or developing a particular skill linked to a specific area of the arts.

'Creativity' is the new buzz-thing in teaching, the new fad. We're all going to have to do it. Here we go again. Now we have to be 'creative'. But I realised that it's not just that, it's not that cynical. This is a project to promote good learning.

Teacher, secondary school

Maintaining the focus on the teacher's professional development was the most challenging aspect of the programme. Some teachers had expectations, based on previous experiences of working with artists in residence, that they would be creating an 'end product' such as a 'ceramic for the wall' or the 'end of term drama production'.

The programme was resolutely a process rather than a guide for producing a product. It was not about a 'tool kit' of artistic activities to do in the classroom, or a training exercise. The projects that were developed in the schools focused on developing creative

learning and where a 'product' emerged it was the 'vehicle' rather than the 'goal' of the process. They were generally 'open-ended journeys' which were not predetermined by 'end products'. It was about bringing together a creative practitioner and a teacher to talk, try out new ideas, work and teach together.

The projects required the teachers to reflect on their own teaching practice. This shift from an orientation on students and the 'content driven' aspects of the curriculum was challenging and the creative practitioner's role was crucial in helping the teacher to open their minds to understanding the 'nature of creativity' and consider how they might cultivate creative approaches to teaching and learning in their own subject/school context.



When I started to see the project as a process, I didn't feel like we had to do things, and that allowed those 'light bulb' moments to happen. Fantastic!

Teacher, secondary school

She realised you don't have to be learning by rote, following a set curriculum path. She understood other ways of coming round a subject. You can get the same amount of learning, but it's different. It's enjoyable. It's exploring – different ways of looking at subjects and themes.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

I had to remind myself that the teacher was the project, and not just go in and deliver 'art' in partnership. This is more about letting him embrace his creative side, and for him to take on board what's involved practically and intellectually. You need to give him the tools to do it on his own.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

The difference with this project was how the focus shifted to the teacher. The delivery had to be different. You couldn't just parachute in to work with the students. I had to work with the teachers and come up with ideas of what to do. We didn't know what we were going to do. It was good to explore what we could do, to have the time and freedom to do that.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

The teacher's and the creative practitioner's collaborative work was not always a direct investigation of what creativity means and was not necessarily linked to an 'artistic activity'. Instead, it was about the 'experience of the creative process'. It was generally a more imaginative, experimental, risk-taking approach to teaching than the teacher had taken previously.

The special relationship between the creative practitioner and the teacher provided the foundation from which greater awareness grew and new experiences were developed.



What emerged for most of the teachers were significant insights into the role of creativity in teaching and learning. These perceptual shifts changed their ideas about how they wanted the pupils to learn. Often it brought about immediate and continuing changes to their professional practice.

You can get into habits, and move away from setting up new things. The experience re-motivates you, re-energises you. You start looking at your lessons and planning, seeing how you can bring something different into them. I'm trying to do more of that now, making it more of a priority. The students really enjoyed it. I want to get more people involved in different parts of the school.

Teacher, secondary school

Teachers and pupils from across the projects reported experiencing a sense of fun, enjoyment, enthusiasm and of there being 'a buzz' about the projects. Students were described as being 'fired up'.

From interviews and direct observation, it was seen that the students' self-esteem and confidence were improved. Most of the creative approaches that were used offered opportunities for learning through:

- imagination
- exploring ideas
- taking risks
- having control over their own learning



On occasions it was the creative practitioners who recognised the students' achievements and changes in attitude. They shared their observations with the teachers and enabled them to recognise the differences that they might otherwise have been overlooked. These incidents led the teachers concerned to question how 'creativity' can or should be assessed.

We weren't saying to them: 'You are going to learn to be creative.' That implies we're all going to do painting, and then they will be tested for their progress. Progress on what? What is it – creativity? We need better criteria for seeing it. Progress can be one student having a 'eureka' moment. And we had many, many of those.

Teacher, secondary school

The special relationship that the teachers had formed with the creative practitioners allowed them to accept the creative practitioners' observations of pupil behaviour and achievement. They began to realise that another perspective on pupils' achievement would provide valuable insights into their pupils' 'creative potential' which might challenge the ability indicators being provided through other more conventional means.

Significantly, there were indications that the development of creativity was especially motivating for already high-achieving students who particularly flourished in environments where they were invited to question, challenge and develop different approaches to solving problems or using new ideas. Some set up their own additional initiatives and found different ways to communicate what they had discovered or experienced to the rest of the school.

Some teachers expressed real surprise at what individual students and whole classes could do, both at primary and secondary levels. Generally they seemed to achieve higher levels of complex thinking, complex language use, critical thinking and problem-solving than the teachers had thought possible.

One secondary school group for example, who had not seemed 'exceptional' in any way, surprised their teachers by showing high levels of concentration, imagination and motivation. They exceeded their teachers' expectations by demonstrating that they were capable of understanding complex issues, were able to put forward rational arguments and consider different points of view.

Not all the individual projects could be considered 'highly successful'. The conditions in some schools did not allow the individual teachers as much flexibility as they would have liked. When it worked well, however, the process enhanced the teacher's confidence and willingness to try different ways of working. This had a direct impact on students by enlivening their interest in learning.

The changes for teachers might only be incremental, but this ground-level experience of 'other ways of teaching' can continue to be developed and become an established and long lasting part of teachers' practice. The creative practitioner's relationship with the teacher was a crucial dimension to this learning process.

The next section will explore how creative practitioners can be 'agents for change' by leading and supporting teachers in developing their own creativity, recognising the creative potential of their pupils and reflecting on their professional practice.





# Creative Practitioners as artisans of creativity and critical thinking

## 1. The creative practitioner as the teacher's 'critical friend'

The creative practitioner can guide the teacher through the creative process.

Although other sources of learning about creativity can be found by teachers, the creativity and critical thinking in the work and lives of creative practitioners enables them to support teachers directly in finding out what works for them and why. This can help teachers to see and deal with their fears and concerns.

Creative practitioners can demonstrate the effects of creative teaching for teachers and for their students. They bring in new activities and perspectives. Students regard them as being outside the school system. They are respected as persons of status, making students feel special, excited and appreciative.

Creative practitioners have practical skills and techniques valued by teachers. They also have, however, an understanding of creative and critical thinking processes because they are integral elements in their professional practice. This enables them to support teachers in:

- finding out what works and why
- maintaining their confidence when outcomes may be uncertain
- demonstrating the creative process.

## 2. Bringing the qualities of the creative dynamic to teachers

Each artistic discipline will have its own material and artistic dimensions, but it is the creative dynamic that is most important for the creative practitioner to bring to the teacher's practice.

These more general creative qualities include:

- *an ability to observe and listen, as well as make artistic products*

The teacher's learning is a large part of the creative practitioner's 'work'. The interaction between the teacher and the students needs to be listened to and observed from the outset.

- *an ability to experiment, to make mistakes, to follow tangents, wild ideas and hunches*

These are often associated with artistic creativity and a freedom from regulation or the necessity to produce results. These are learned and cultivated capabilities inherent to the creative process.

They are approaches to situations and problems which the creative practitioner can communicate and exemplify. Trying these strategies out themselves can develop teachers' confidence and ultimately influence how their students' creativity is fostered.

- *an ability to be comfortable with apparent 'idleness' and mess*

The creative processes are not smooth, orderly and continually productive. There may be periods where it appears that nothing is happening, or it seems chaotic, but these phases are essential for new thought, insights and plans.

The creative practitioner's familiarity with these phases can be translated to both the teacher's experience of her/his own creative processes and in the classroom, to an understanding of the student's creative processes.

It involves an ability to recognise and accept the times when 'nothing seems to be happening', or it has all become messy and out of order, as this is often a 'latent' time when 'new ideas' and 'critical thinking/reflection' are being 'internally processed'.

Creative practitioners can convey their experience with diverse and comprehensive approaches and an understanding of how emotions, perceptions, ideas and insights, risk-taking and critical thinking are intertwined.

In the projects where it worked well, the creative practitioner gave permission and support to both teachers and students to experiment, to get outside the classroom, to make mistakes, to take risks and to take time. These projects showed that the greatest shift in teacher understanding and the development of pupils' creative behaviour occurred when:

the *creative practitioner* had:

- a strong understanding of the creative process, as it applied to their own area of the arts and creative practice in general
- an ability to articulate and communicate this understanding
- an ability to keep focussed on these processes, rather than focussing on outcomes or products
- an ability to work with and communicate the creative process to students, making sure that their individual and collaborative contributions were recognised

the *teachers* were prepared to:

- take risks, venture into the unknown
- accept that the lesson, or the project might not absolutely match the developments that had originally been envisaged in their lesson plans or schemes of work
- recognise that the creative thinking and reflective process takes more time to develop than is often available within individually timetabled lessons.

**Creativity, it's like a sea. You've got to jump in and swim in it. You can't look at it. You've got to be in it. How do you swim in it? How does it affect you? Do you force your way against it? You need to jump in and go with it and work with it.**

*Creative practitioner, secondary school*

Creative practitioners were able to show how these approaches enable, enrich and enhance young people's 'academic' learning as well as raise their self esteem and sense of 'well-being'.

### 3. Challenging the 'status quo'

For most teachers, the starting point for reflecting on their creative practice was to find an area of their teaching practice that they felt was the 'most challenging' or seemed the 'riskiest' i.e. an aspect of their work that they had already decided that they wanted to improve or develop.

The teacher set the focus. The creative practitioner then worked with this, coming up with ways of addressing it through talking and planning with the teacher and bringing in new methods and approaches to the way in which it had previously been tackled.

For some teachers this was a step into the 'deep end'. It involved the creative practitioner taking the teacher out of their 'comfort zone' and often challenging the way that they were teaching or were planning to work.

**You feel you are giving a little bit of control to the students, providing an opportunity for them to have discussions and get excited and bounce ideas off each other and understanding...learning by doing that, even though you are outside the teacher's comfort zone. I saw it work.**

**Creative practitioner, secondary school**

The ways in which the creative practitioners challenged the teachers were not directly confrontational. The creative practitioner, instead, worked with the teacher, setting up situations and activities which would encourage the teacher to experiment, to address their reservations, and to develop different methods for teaching.

**I was feeding back on their teaching practice. That was useful, but on another level my role was to challenge, to set up a situation that was challenging to the teacher.**

**Creative practitioner, secondary school**

By trying it for themselves, teachers could see and practice new ways of working. They could see how the creative practitioner planned, took sideways views, delighted in unfamiliar and new situations and adapted and responded to the students' initiatives. When the teachers tried similar ways of working the creative practitioner was there to provide support.

**I was well outside my comfort zone. But it gave me confidence as a teacher. It does help if someone says 'it's fine to do that'.**

**Teacher, secondary school**

**We can give teachers the elements to rebel a little with, and then they can be more comfortable with doing something new.**

**Creative practitioner, secondary school**

As the project progressed, other dimensions to creativity evolved, e.g. responsiveness, improvisation and confidence. For most teachers, though, changing aspects of their own teaching approach and teaching style was fundamentally the greatest challenge.

The ethos of the project was based on a belief that teachers are already creative as individuals and that teaching and learning are highly creative activities. That initial focus on what teachers found risky or challenging was not meant critically, but rather as a door into finding ways to creatively address difficulties that mattered to the teacher.

The creative practitioners were instrumental in drawing out the teachers' own creativity and restoring their confidence in their own ability to respond to the students. They were the catalysts in this process of professional reflection and growth.

The project provided opportunities for the creative practitioners and teachers to plan and review together. This 'off timetable', 'non-contact' time was an essential ingredient for the development of the teachers' creative practice and helped to maintain the dynamics of the creative partnership between the teacher and the creative practitioner which stimulated the growth of the teachers' creative practice. The relationship with the creative practitioner, thus, drew on the innate creativity in each teacher: the vital ingredients to teacher practice.

**We tried to set aside plenty of time to talk. We talked and planned as much as we could...the teacher was even ringing me up asking to talk through things. We created the project together.**

**Creative practitioner, secondary school**

**To go into teaching, you have to be highly creative. Teachers are already very creative people. There's a creative beast in all good teachers trying to get out. But you also have other priorities. This project allowed teachers the time to be creative. It wasn't teaching them to be creative. It was helping them to be creative, giving them ideas, but most of all, giving them time. If anything would have helped the project, it's having more time for the teachers to be away from teaching.**

**Teacher, secondary school**

The teachers entered into the learning process themselves and their learning mirrored the process that the children/young people experienced. They became more open to 'new ideas'. It brought out curiosity, questioning, a desire to experiment, a willingness to fail and learn from mistakes, as well as recognition of when things went well.



### 4. A different approach to planning

Creative practitioners are often experts in designing an alternative, different, more open ended and flexible approach to planning and structure. They placed more emphasis on processes and collaboration, with scope for individual preferences and development. Creative practitioners often focused on using strategies to engage the pupils' interest and making sure that they were fully involved.

**One of the things I learned with the creative practitioner on our workshop day was how she visualises the ways she wants a final project to look. That involves thinking carefully about allocating jobs – not just for us, but for the students – who will be doing what, making sure everyone has a role, felt part of the activity, took ownership of it. I might have gone through the activity without doing that.**

**Teacher, secondary school**

Creative practitioners tend to believe that the present 'professional standards' for teachers make them wary or fearful of 'letting go' for more flexible, open planning and of giving ownership of their learning to children and young people.

**I think there is this big fear that if you don't plan out every five minutes, the lesson will be a disaster. And I think if you give them something as a starting point the class can begin to lead itself. And then creativity becomes part of the class.**

**Creative practitioner, primary school**

Creative practitioners can offer teachers a way forward by demonstrating that, rather than chaos, creative learning opens up developmental opportunities for children and young people.

**The way she has been taught to teach is to try to plan everything in advance. When I took that structure away – and she thought everything would fall apart – she now realises that if you take that structure or leave a very small framework, it doesn't fall apart and leaves a more interesting, vibrant class.**

**Creative practitioner, primary school**

## ... (4. A different approach to planning)

A simple strategy was used for the demonstration:

During the first lesson the teacher spent a lot of time talking. There were children putting their hands up to ask questions or say something, but because she continued to talk they put their hands down.

In the second lesson I said: 'I want you not to talk – we will put a picture on the wall and let them (the children) lead the class. And she panicked and said: 'What if there is silence?'

I said it will only stay silent for so long and actually it was very successful, and they all got involved.

I made sure that everybody got involved and that everybody spoke. They were asked to think about what they might speak about at the beginning and write something down.

Creative practitioner, primary school

Teachers were often surprised by the length of time that creative practitioners spent on planning and preparation, even though they were prepared to follow the creativity of the children/young people and accept that the work might develop in unexpected directions.

A lot of planning went into it. We complemented each other. (The creative practitioner) is adventurous and prepared to take risks, but it is really well planned. I like to think I'm well planned. We worked well together and I was happy for her to take control in the classroom. We worked as a team.

Teacher, secondary school



He [the teacher] would have had no insight into how much preparation you have to make, with the costs of materials and sourcing them. I don't think people outside the creative world understand how long it takes to prepare things and do things, and allow for enough time when pupils are working.

What he thought would take half an hour took twice as long. You learn all this through experience.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

There was also a different approach used by creative practitioners to longer term planning. The creative practitioners tended to use a formative approach where the responses of the students would inform the next stages of the programme. For some teachers this contrasted with the way that they had become used to planning several successive lessons in advance.

When we first met, (the teacher) was saying we'll do this the first lesson, this for second lesson and so on. I said it depends on what happens in the first lesson... we had an outline of maybe the first three lessons when we started. At the end of each day I was there we had a meeting to discuss what had happened and we adjusted plans accordingly for the next lesson. It was hard to know at any given point what (the students') reactions were going to be, how they would respond to different information.

Creative practitioner, primary school

## 5. Recognising the difference



As experiences of developing creative processes to demonstrate strategies, the projects provided examples of how creative practitioners could help teachers to understand how creativity and critical thinking worked. This facilitated teacher reflection, the development of creative approaches and the evaluation of the effects on pupil progress.

Before the projects started the teachers were required to identify a group of students that they would particularly observe. These could be 'high fliers', pupils with 'special needs', or the 'average students', i.e. those who may not present particular issues and whose individual needs, therefore, are not always addressed.

While the teaching and learning strategies employed during the programme would be used with the wider group, the 'targeted group of students' would be the 'barometer' on which the teacher would collect more detailed evidence of the learning outcomes. This strategy was designed to help the teachers more easily recognise when perceptual and attitudinal shifts were taking place.

Through their work alongside the teachers and with the pupils, the creative practitioners were also able to draw the teachers' attention to occasions where the emphasis on 'learning by doing' was helping students to 'think differently'.

Where teachers recognised that the changes in the teaching strategies that they used were making a 'real difference' to their pupils, it also helped to change their perception about their own role from that of 'curriculum deliverer/provider' to one of 'facilitating learning', and they began to think of teaching as a 'creative profession'.

Given the chance to devise creative projects for students, one secondary teacher excelled in coming up with ideas and plans, an explosion of possibilities, which was an aspect of teaching not available to her previously.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

We did dozens of simple things, different techniques for teaching. Then it hit me in the face. Teachers don't get this kind of training, this kind of experience on their teaching courses.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

The teacher was emphasising a structured lesson plan as a way of tackling a classroom of disaffected students. It just wasn't working. She was reluctant to put an object – a piece of sculpture, a drawing, a model, a tool – in front of the students and use maths or science to demonstrate it. Some students learn visually, kinaesthetically. I got her to use that, to get the students doing hands-on things, moving things around.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

Some of the things we did I felt nervous about in a science or maths lesson. It would have terrified me to do this on my own. But I found out that they do work. The students' responses showed me that. They were a disaffected group, but they came to the lessons. They even did the lessons. I could see their attitudes changing.

Teacher, secondary school

## 6. Letting go, taking risks and coping with uncertainty

Creative practitioners were able to convey the value of challenging boundaries and taking risks for teachers and for young people.

Their artistic experience and professional discipline has taught them the positive value of 'letting go', the necessity of taking risks and failing, and the benefit of continual review of how things work out.

The creative approach...involves a lot of collaboration – generating ideas, and not necessarily going straight to the solution. It is about generating ideas and also learning that life is about taking risks. And you are likely to learn far more when things don't go as you planned.

Creative practitioner

The context in which teachers were being asked to accept uncertainty was different to that of most creative practitioners.

A fear of 'losing control' in the classroom was associated for many teachers with the fears of losing 'authority' in relation to 'discipline' and also in relation to the 'ownership' of 'subject knowledge'.

A creative approach encourages an exploration of alternatives. It shows that there are other means for appraising ideas, work and solutions and that there may not be a 'right' or 'wrong' answer.

A perfectionism (in teachers) can affect the students. They can feel the pressure to do perfect work, to be perfect. But those expectations of a perfect project are not what this project was about. It was a case of letting go of that, and getting into the experience, getting into trying new things, and knowing it will be all right.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

The creative practitioner was also there for support, observation and balance, so that the teacher felt able to experiment, to do the risky thing.

Opening up to what, initially, seemed like a 'loss of control' conversely brought to most teachers a sense of greater pleasure and effectiveness in their teaching.

Teachers like to have it all planned out. Now, I don't work like that. You've got to have faith that it will all sort out in the end. (The teacher's) big thing was for him not to do the controlling. By the second session in the classroom, he stopped himself when he realised he was trying to keep control and said out loud: 'I've got to stop doing this, haven't I?'

Creative practitioner, secondary school

In most schools, the teachers engaged in 'team-teaching' with the creative practitioner. They shared the planning, delivery and review of the projects as two professionals. The dynamics of this 'creative partnership' provided support for the teachers and raised their confidence. This was especially true for newly qualified teachers who were still feeling uncertain about the degree to which they could introduce new ways of working into their practice. The partnership and the presence of the creative practitioner meant, moreover, that the teaching process itself had to become different, outside the routine, and in many cases, more creative and open to chance and the unexpected.

You teach how you've been taught to teach. Learning how to teach in the classroom is something very different. Having someone else there, getting someone else's point of view helps. It gives you more ideas, different experiences.

Teacher, secondary school

Contrary to expectations, bringing in more 'artistic' activities to other disciplines was not overly challenging. Instead, for many, it was liberating and for students extremely motivating.

Even in art classes, we're only doing one thing, painting or drawing. This is different. This is better.

Student, secondary school

Another important aspect of 'letting go' in the classroom is the teacher's willingness both to be seen to be learning and, also, to be open with the students about the aims and characteristics of creative learning.

Where there was more openness about the experimental nature of the partnership with the creative practitioner and the aims of creative learning, there was a receptivity and support from the students, which, in turn, reinforced the learning for the teachers.

For teachers, it may not be a good feeling to share their own learning with children. But they need to know that in the eyes of those children they will be transformed by doing that.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

## 7. Identifying problems and finding solutions

Creative practitioners offered practical support for projects to encourage the teachers to 'try something new'. They provided:

- resources such as collections of natural materials to stimulate the children's imagination and curiosity
- information about other resources to stimulate connective thinking
- ideas for external visits to studios, and workshops to show practical solutions to problems

The practical support offered by the creative practitioner encouraged the teachers to find ways to experiment by using strategies to enable them to provide a wider range of creative learning experiences.

Some teachers, for example, arranged to have longer teaching sessions by amalgamating lessons allocated to different subject areas.

Others explored the use of the resources in the wider community and took students 'off site'. With the support of their creative practitioner they found solutions to the hurdles that can now make the development and implementation of educational visits more challenging than they used to be. The positive learning outcomes and impact on student motivation convinced them of the educational value.

We had to creatively think around a problem with the minibus on one of the days out. Once we started thinking about it, thinking around a problem, (the teacher) could see how to come to a solution, how to get around a block. We could use that experience to think around other problems, work around them to get to other ideas.

Creative practitioner, secondary school



Creative practitioners demonstrated creative approaches to overcoming other challenges faced by teachers including:

- Inspiring children/ young people to do their 'homework':

One of the children that we have been keeping an eye on and monitoring, who never hands his homework in, did the homework when we were analysing each other's collage. And I asked them if they had enjoyed doing it, and he said 'yeah' and was very enthusiastic. If his homework is to do a drawing, he finds that quite hard. What he really enjoyed was analysing someone else's collage. Trying to work out what it meant, what it stood for. It has allowed some children to engage with 'art' in ways that they have never done before.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

- Helping children/young people appreciate the importance of 'routines' in helping them to access the next stages of learning:

Students, some 'drop outs', under the guidance of the creative practitioner, gain respect for self-discipline through the experience of what happens if 'warm up' routines for dance are not followed.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

- Exploring sensitive issues:

In the context of a drama lesson the creative practitioner helped young people explore the emotional challenges of how to represent a scene of violent rape.

The creative practitioner encouraged experimentation with images which, after experimentation, strongly conveyed layers of emotions and the underlying themes. The strategies used provided the teacher with powerful insights into how sensitive issues could be approached through drama.

Teacher, secondary school

These strategies generated unfamiliar levels of uncertainty which some teachers only found tolerable because their creative practitioner was available to support them. The 'new experiences' often resulted in the teachers developing the confidence to relinquish 'total control' and the demand for high levels of 'perfection' from their students and to take a more experimental approach where the outcomes could not be entirely predicted.

## 8. Children and young people 'taking ownership' & 'making choices'

Creative practitioners were firm advocates of getting young people actively involved from the earliest stages of a project including the planning:

If you get them onboard and working it out, planning, it is incredibly important. That is where they do the learning I think. First of all, they are much more enthusiastic about a project if they are involved from the beginning. They are much more interested if they are allowed some input. They are absolutely delighted if you take them up on their ideas and try them out. They learn so much more.

Creative practitioner, primary school

Similarly, creative practitioners can show teachers how to:

- facilitate critical appraisal for children and young people
- help them, the children and young people learn how to find out for themselves, rather than accept given 'wisdom' uncritically

We asked them to do a critique of the work of somebody who was not there. The following week they were critiquing my work. They were doing their own work and critiquing others. Bringing in this idea that it's okay to have your opinion and your own voice, there is no right or wrong answer with art. I'm making it a lot less scary, and making it easier to understand, making them realise you don't have to have a special formula, a special genius to do it, it is just understanding it a little bit better.

Creative practitioner, primary school

A teacher's practice and their students' learning are so intertwined that it can be difficult to separate them. The benefits of a partnership with a creative practitioner can often be detected more clearly from the responses of the students.

The evaluation of the programme included extensive interviews with students at different stages of their projects so that their views could be 'captured':

- at the beginning
- halfway through
- as the programme was coming to an end

Some aspects of their responses were consistent across the student range and at all stages of the programme. For example, high levels of enjoyment in learning were expressed and this seemed to be associated with:

- longer class sessions
- the variety of methods: doing more than one thing at a time i.e. making things, using more learning skills than just writing (this was particularly noted by the secondary school students)

There was a strong sense of appreciation at having discovered 'other ways to learn':

- the students were able to describe what they were doing and learning
- the way that they discussed the 'subject matter' was well informed, even when a number of different subject areas were being included through the same cross curricular theme

The reasons that the students gave for 'enjoying learning' were similar across the secondary schools. These included:

- having fun and being able to learn in plenty of time without having to rush
- just discussing things without having to constantly put your hands up
- mixing things up

In secondary schools it worked best when the students:

- had been informed or involved in decisions about the aims of the project (particularly when it involved different student groupings)
- were clear about the aims of the project and the way it linked with the curriculum subject/s
- had been provided with a description of what the project was about and the expectations of themselves and their role within it
- were invited to discuss how the project might be developed

For many of the teachers, the challenge to change their way of working was particularly evident when they considered letting students 'make choices' about what they wanted to do within the project and allowing them to 'take ownership' of the processes and the work done.

In many ways, the relationship between teacher and student was mirrored in the relationship between creative practitioner and teacher. The experience of that kind of collaborative partnership, when it

worked well, was a balance of letting go, taking risks and making choices. The creative practitioner, most often, provided the framework, the context in which the teacher could do something different, which meant that the students could also 'do something different'.

This difference created a more full and inclusive learning environment and, in most cases, produced exceptional results.

We had to involve students rather than come at them with a full set of stuff. We needed to hold our ideas lightly, and have back-up ideas if the students didn't come forward. But they did. We had to involve them in the process, and they are much more engaged if they are. It is more risky and scary, though.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

The students really developed in working with the creative practitioner. At first, I didn't think they would, but they really have. They have become more alive.

Teacher, secondary school

The project did not include criteria-based evaluations of student learning, but in many schools it was evident to teachers that:

- the enjoyment with the sessions and activities had led to higher levels of attention and engagement by the students
- the sessions sparked off many initiatives by students for further work
- the increased motivation and capacity for learning in these sessions were also affecting student learning overall because their enthusiasm was being transferred to other lessons/ aspects of the curriculum

Students responded well to 'not being told we were doing something wrong'. This opened doors for them: in their research, in their thinking and in their making.

It was obvious when observing the creative practitioners' approach to students – encouraging them, making the most of what the students were doing, showing them how they could make something better, 'going with' whatever idea the student was pursuing – that the students blossomed.

The students responded well to having some control over what they were doing.

When the mood and conditions were set for openness and experimentation, most of them responded extremely well.

Rolling out what creativity is and promoting creativity and critical thinking produced better problem-solving with the students. They were better independent learners. It's better than a culture of spoon-feeding students with 'facts you will learn'. When students become more confident learners, they will be better equipped to be better learners.

Teacher, secondary school

In most schools, there was a 'mosaic' of activities for students, many planned in an open-ended way. This allowed the students to demonstrate their capacity to manage their own learning. When it worked, students got on with things, each in their own way, and produced something significant for themselves and were keen to share their learning with others.

Giving young people independent choice: it is just giving them the space for them to understand they are in the driving seat. We are interested in their ideas...that is the most important thing, to create the time for it, and listen as opposed to direct where the conversation should go.

Teacher, primary school

The arguments and effectiveness of students having a 'voice' in the classroom are well documented in educational research. What this project and these partnerships offered was a direct experience of this which was positive for both students and teachers.



## 9. Creative Questioning

The creative practitioners demonstrated how questioning could be used to generate creative thinking.

With this project, it was better to keep asking questions than talk about creativity. Getting the students to ask questions, to keep asking questions – getting them to do it – those were the best lessons I've done. Everyone asks and answers a question. They all get involved. You can see the progression of everyone in the room. And, of course, OFSTED want that.

Teacher, secondary school

### Case Study

One creative practitioner, for example, showed how the use of questioning sparked ideas and challenges relating to an attempted boat rescue. All the children were involved in suggesting solutions and asking follow up questions.

As the drama unfolded, questioning was used to help the children consider possible solutions and how they might work collaboratively to meet the challenges of the situation. This process engaged the children in critical thinking because they were reflecting on the pros and cons of the different options before deciding what should happen next.

There were moments when all the children were involved in generating ideas and others said: 'That's great, let's do that!'

We started by asking:

How are we going to make this rowing boat row?

How can it look?

They came up with various ideas and we asked:

Which one are we going to choose?

Why is that the best?

Working in this way gets them to think in this kind of way as well.

When they saw that their idea was appreciated by rest of the group and acted on...every single one of them felt that what they did really counted.

Creative practitioner,  
primary school



## 10. Making links, seeing connections

Creative practitioners did not have the same reservations or concerns that some of the teachers had about working across subject 'boundaries'.

Using cross-subject links meant that themes could be explored by the students from various perspectives and their understanding developed by simultaneously employing a range of skills and information that was not restricted by working within the curriculum designated to a single subject.

Approaching the curriculum in this way might have seemed risky for teachers, but for the majority of students, even at secondary level, it seemed appropriate and sensible. Rather than this being a blurring of fields or perplexing, for many, it made sense. It was 'a relief'. 'We don't want to do just one thing.' was a comment that was often repeated by students.

The experiences of 'working across the curriculum' were diverse and the primary/secondary school contexts made a difference to the ways in which cross curricular approaches were implemented and the impacts that this had on the pupils' learning.

### In primary schools

The examples of cross curricular work in primary school projects below, illustrate how the learning process was gradually engaging the children in developing critical thinking.

1. Children making links, seeing connections, and finding out for themselves:

They drew a face (a portrait of themselves) and then turned it into a World War Two character. They morphed themselves into a character. There are a lot of accurate historical details in them: what they were flying, the clothes they were wearing. To get all that right they had to research them.

Creative practitioner, primary school

2. Children critically reviewing progress:

A critical approach: an ability to stand back and talk about what they have done (is developing). How to approach other people's work without being negative: that has been interesting, as has telling us how they would do the project in future, and designing a similar project to produce better results.

Creative practitioner, primary school

For the children, one benefit has been having this opportunity to think and to consider. And to have an opinion. That is a really important thing for me to get across to them, that their opinion is valid and that they should be able to speak about it. If somebody disagrees with them, they have had to be able to think about how they argue their case.

Teacher, primary school

### In secondary schools

In secondary schools, where subject boundaries are more firmly established and timetabled, a cross-curricular approach generally involved working:

- within the teacher's own subject area from multiple perspectives or
- with colleagues in other subject areas

Within one subject area a cross curricular approach worked well when:

- i) The creative practitioner and teacher provided a basis for the cross curricular work, presenting material and methods which were unexpected or surprising, and had a meaningful relation to the subject curriculum:

In a Year 8 geography class, the creative practitioner led by suggesting an area of interest for the students related to water, its usage and relevance locally and globally. This led to an investigation of water issues, which related back to the curriculum demands in ways which the students found focused, engaging and inspiring.

- ii) The students' own interests were allowed to direct their learning in ways which were related to, but were perhaps outside, the subject remit:

In a Year 8 history class, students were taken to the local museum and library to investigate the history of their town. The importance of manufacturing and trade became an area they wanted to explore, through science, through history, through narratives. Some students, taking their own initiative, photographed contemporary areas of the town with reference to its early history. The students used various new media technologies, and different resources; to present what they had discovered about their town. This approach involved them using a wider range of technical and research skills than was usually associated with their history lessons/projects.

## ... (10. Making links, seeing connections)

### Less can be more...

The range of information that teachers consider is essential for students to learn in the secondary school curriculum can make a cross curricular approach more difficult to implement when two or more subjects are being addressed.

In the example below, the hazards of trying to bring two curriculum areas together is clearly evident.

A science teacher and a music teacher devised workshops for students bringing both classes together.

The plan of activities focused on critical thinking in both areas, relating to how classifications are made between different kinds of knowledge and experience, an area of learning shared between both subjects, but approached differently.

There were clear indications that the students' critical thinking was challenged and improved by the tasks and that their collective working together was advanced.

But the workshops attempted to add everything from both subjects together, rather than formulate simpler tasks which could have had relevance to both. The abundance of curriculum content confused some students, and led to a diminishment of understanding and a less focused, less student-directed experience.

When the session was reviewed the following points were made:

- A greater level of planning was required to bring together a shared understanding of the content and purpose of the workshops to ensure that the experience was coherent for the students.
- The attempt to include too much diverse content was counter-productive; less might have been better and would probably have enabled a greater level of engagement by the students and more learning to have been achieved.
- It may have been more productive to focus on one aspect of the critical thinking or creative process, and not try to have too many diverse activities.

### Is creativity enough?

Six schools in the project were asked to incorporate material about environmental sustainability or global perspectives into their classes. Only two of the six managed this as fully as was anticipated from the project brief.

In the two successful projects the creative practitioner provided the impetus for looking at environmental sustainability in ways which could connect with the subject area, but were not necessarily derived from environmental science, geography or citizenship. The ability to think 'outside the subject box' opened the possibility for a cross-curricular experience that was, in both cases, highly imaginative and effective for the students.

These projects demonstrated that:

- The requirement of the revised Key Stage 3 national curriculum to integrate environmental and global issues as a cross curricular strand can work imaginatively and effectively for students.
- Having a creative practitioner with an interest in the subject, and willingness to experiment with ideas and activities that provoked and inspired the students, will enhance the learning opportunities and experience for the pupils.



## 11. Generating ideas

Creative practitioners provided numerous demonstrations of techniques to spark the generation of ideas from children/ young people.

The creative practitioner is my ideas artist, my ideas vendor. She would come out with great ideas, and we'd work on them together.

Teacher, secondary school

They (creative practitioners) started off by getting everybody as a group to draw a map of the school, and then what they got the group to do on that map was to put characters on it that could be real or fictional. And then what they got them to do was to tell them a little bit about these characters. From there came a story.

Now I've tried this approach in my art lesson about the Aztecs. I gave them each a huge piece of paper and told them to draw what they thought an Aztec village would look like. And then I got them to put gods and different things in it. Then I asked them what the gods' names were, what they were gods of, what they were doing there. This was used as the starting point for a story and developed into mask making.

Teacher, secondary school

Each team created a superhero. They had to discuss it and talk about what superpowers they would have... it was not too far-fetched although you could fly, or be invisible. It was like being able to talk your way out of trouble, how brilliant is that, you know it seems like having an open mind, because that allowed them to take another person's point of view...another superhero was up in the brain, just being able to use your brain to think through problems. It sounds very mundane but for these kids it is a view that is a total and utter gift.

Teacher, secondary school



## 12. Teachers' values, and the motivation to teach

Creative practitioners tend to value creativity very highly for the overall 'well being' of young people as well as their learning.

The importance of opening that creative area of mind is that it equips them for the future in being able to address tiny to big issues...being able to function in our society. The important thing for teachers it is that we have got so wrapped up in our national curriculum, which is a very prescriptive way of teaching: this is how it is, here is the information, and learn and move onto the next thing. It doesn't actually develop a child's enquiring mind. It quite often doesn't engage with their emotional intelligence. If you don't engage that creative process, or emotional intelligence, the worst-case is that you end with children growing into young people and adults and feeling that nothing can change. They are at that point of beginning to make sense of the world. If they can't discuss that, it is like not feeding a plant properly. You are going to get stunted growth.

Creative practitioner,  
primary school

Creative practitioners can help teachers to link their practice more strongly with their values and their motivation to teach. For some the 'input' of encouragement at a personal, professional level and the creative practitioners' enthusiasm reinvigorated the teachers and convinced them that teaching could be professionally rewarding and fun.

It was also evident that working with the creative practitioner motivated students to learn.

In one school, for example a group of young people were set the challenge to 'tour' the school to look for visual images which convey something significant about the school. The teacher had expressed concern that the students might not do the work and just see it as an opportunity to 'mess around'.

The students enthusiastically embarked on the task. They all returned to the classroom within the allotted time with the results of their completed 'survey' to report back to their peers.

During the review of the lesson the teacher expressed surprise at the extent to which the students had taken on and completed the activity in a 'purposeful manner' and the

### ... (12. Teachers' values, and the motivation to teach)

reflective quality of their comments on the images that they had selected.

In another school, following a drama session led by a creative practitioner, the teachers were impressed by the young people's ability to create mini dramas in the playground about events and challenges in their lives.

Less experienced teachers, looking to adopt creative approaches to learning, are especially likely to lack self-confidence in such techniques.

Working with a creative practitioner offers an opportunity for the teacher to:

- observe
- experiment
- use trial and error
- reflect
- receive feedback and discuss its implications
- gain confidence in becoming a facilitator of young people's creative learning.

Significantly, for some teachers in 'mid-career', the partnership was a chance for teachers to find ways to re-invigorate their teaching through the exploration of different practices with another professional. The process reminded these teachers of why they entered the profession and provided them with new directions they could take with their practice and retain their own motivation.

The experience re-motivates you, re-invigorates you. You start looking at your lessons and planning, seeing how you can bring something different into them. You get into habits, and move away from setting up new things. I'm trying to do more of that now, making it more of a priority to set up new things. The students really enjoyed it. I want to get more people involved in different parts of the school.

Teacher, secondary school

For some, the partnership with the creative practitioner starkly revealed, also, the mismatch between what teachers would like to do and what is actually possible within the realities of the school context and the curriculum constraints.

It underlined how:

- The restrictions posed by the curriculum structure were preventing the development of students creative potential in the broadest sense.
- The 'routine' mechanistic methods some teachers generally use to deliver the curriculum do not create the positive environment in which experimentation and creativity can flourish.

Even when, however, the shift towards teaching to engender creativity was small and could only be described as 'incremental', for those teachers it was enough for them to feel that they had achieved a real step change which they could maintain and develop in the longer term.

A renewed motivation for teaching also came through the support from other colleagues and the school as a whole. The project had required the teachers to disseminate the outcomes and processes that the programme had entailed to other colleagues. One of the positive outcomes was that for some teachers this meant that their profile and sense of 'self worth' within the school or the wider learning community was enhanced.

The success story in this for me is that I've always really enjoyed teaching, and got on with the students and got good results. I've always done 'creative' things in the classroom, but felt it was seen in a negative way in the school. The project gave me another kind of label in the school. It was nice to feel that the things I had always done were being promoted, were being seen as good.

Teacher, secondary school



### 13. Creativity is more than art...

Distinguishing between learning technical skills and creative learning approaches is important to the expectations teachers bring to working with a creative practitioner.

Being an artist means that you have a particular skill and talent in the area of your art. Being creative is a process by which you can address certain problems and find ways of solving those problems.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

Creative practitioners can use their deep and practical understanding to help teachers distinguish between 'art' (in terms of artistic expertise) and creative approaches to learning, through a greater understanding of what creativity means.

We spent quite a lot of time talking personally about our own lives, what interests us, how to define creativity. (She) says 'The problem is I don't think I am a creative person'. She talked about how she worked in the classroom, and I joked about it and said if you say you're not a creative person one more time I'm probably going to have to slap you. Because she's fantastic. She says 'I can't draw'. I said: 'No, no, no – that is an artistic skill. Nothing to do with creativity.'

Creative practitioner, secondary school

Conveying technical skills nevertheless may be seen as an important aspect of the creative practitioner role. Skills may be drawn from a wider range than traditional 'art'. Some teachers stated that the prime attraction of the projects was to acquire skills from creative practitioners to fill a 'skill deficit'.

One teacher in the early stages of her career, with a science background, acquired knowledge of physical drama techniques, while another learnt how to make shadow puppets and a secondary teacher learned digital editing skills.

In fostering skills in teachers, creative approaches may be demonstrated by creative practitioners. For example one teacher particularly wanted to learn new skills alongside and through the same process as the children because she felt it would enhance her understanding to know what the pupils might be experiencing when they were presented with new challenges.

The involvement of the teacher in the creative learning approach, however, can be uncomfortable:

They (creative practitioners) asked me to do it as well – 'Come on you can come and join us'. I'd already told him before that I'm really uncomfortable doing that sort of thing. But I went along with it. Because I couldn't ask them to do anything I wouldn't do myself.

Teacher, secondary school

In other cases, creative approaches to learning were demonstrated by a creative practitioner independently of any technical skills:

I said instead of taking a story, I would be particularly interested in creating a community story with the children. So we started very simply, just imagine you are going for a walk in a dark, dark, forest. That is all they had – and what has developed from this is an incredibly complex story. That has magic elements in it, as well as dealing with the natural world. They have worked out what are nocturnal animals, and you can follow that through a natural science. In terms of your PSE areas the story is very highly emotionally charged as well. An example is a fairy that gets banished by her mother to the forest and she has to stay there for a year. Then the mother dies so she can actually come back. It is also interesting to see how much engagement the children have, because this is the world they have created.

It demonstrates that this particular approach can open doors, and particularly for those who might be disengaged from the academic curriculum, because they don't see the connections.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

Another example showed how artwork could be made the subject of creative learning approaches for the pupil, with teacher observing:

We had five artworks for each table. I cut out slips of paper with the name of the artist, the age of the artist, the year the artwork was made and the theme of the work. The pupils matched them up. One girl in my group who used her powers of observation and deduction to work it out: 'I know it is not that one and not that one so we can discount those'.

With one portrait, trying to work out the age of the artist, she was saying things like: '...she has lots of wrinkles, but this is in Tudor times: they didn't live very long so they might have looked older'.

This was a real thought process to try to work out what the age of this artist was. They (pupils) haven't had that opportunity in any previous lessons really, to spend the time to use their powers of thought.

In the same group we also had one lad who is just guessing. But once the girl started coming up with these thought processes, the others latched on. It was as if someone had given them the key to try to work this out.

Creative practitioner, secondary school

## ... (13. Creativity is more than art...)

Teaching creatively involves bringing a creative approach and outlook to all aspects of teaching.

It can be embedded in, and inherent to, all aspects of teaching including planning, curriculum implementation across all subjects and working with colleagues in different contexts.

It doesn't necessarily involve 'artistic' activities or tasks. Teaching for creativity is more focused on the learning outcomes for the students. It means teaching in such a way that they are able to take creative approaches to learning and to the subject matter. It's not just about producing a piece of 'artwork'.

I'd always associated creativity with promoting critical thinking. I didn't necessarily associate creativity with artists. I associated it with scientists and thought of problem-solving as being highly creative, and that element of creativity was most exciting and innovative to me. I wanted to bring that to the department.

Teacher, secondary school

This is much more creative than anything we do in art. In art, all you ever do is one thing. You just have to copy what the teacher does. You're just repeating that one thing. Here, we get to do lots of things and we get to 'do what we want', 'follow our own ideas', 'bring things together'.

Student, secondary school

### Using 'art' as the gateway to learning

In another school, the making of artistic things led to presentations and discussions about issues linked to other subjects.

The 'art experience' became the vehicle or the 'gateway' for exploring aspects other areas of the curriculum.

The artistic activity did not take precedence over the subjects the students were investigating, but enabled them to contemplate, experiment, and explore the subject in a different way.



## 14. The art of reflection

The creative process should include 'stepping back' and reflecting on what has been done, how well it has worked, and on the creative process itself. It is about recognising those fruitful mistakes and 'ah-ha' moments from which one can learn.

Reflection is both an intuitive process and a critical one. It is not about conclusions, but about looking at the process from new perspectives. It can start with a recording of the immediate experience of the project, and then expand out to take a longer view. It can be a private activity for the teacher.

The creative practitioner can often provide the stimulus for reflection. As part of their professional practice, they can share with the teacher observations that they have made and also provide the teacher with novel and informative ways to reflect.

Reflection is something different to assessment. It's like the cyclical reflection in an artistic process – standing back and asking what is this? Is it good? What can I change? What should I leave the same? It is a critical process without being a final assessment, and it is integral to learning and to making a change in one's professional practice.

There are judgments to be made about reflection. At different times, it is useful to reflect without any guidelines, by looking at the process as openly as possible. At other times, it is useful to be looking at the process through a framework, whether familiar or new. It is important, though, to keep flexible about what is being reviewed.

### Why is this important?

Reflection draws out benefits of the project which may not be on its list of aims and objectives. These may be personal, or may be evidence of aspects of the project which were genuinely creative and unexpected.

Reflection can show the stages undergone, the passage of the project which can be lost in a summary report or evaluation.

It can show more than the outcomes. It can provide the teacher with something to return to, to explore again for new insights. It also validates the experience in a way which is personally meaningful.

Some forms of reflection can also express to others qualities of the experience that would not be represented in a report.

Examples of ways in which teachers and creative practitioners have recorded their reflections:

### Case Study

Although the teacher kept a record of lesson plans, a reflective journal was not made, but the creative practitioners kept photographs, memorabilia and notes.

Towards the end of the project, the creative practitioner assembled and printed an expanding card with the images and notes, in association with the teacher.

It was an example to the teacher of what he could easily do for himself, and was a vivid, concise reminder of the project he could show to others.



### Case Study

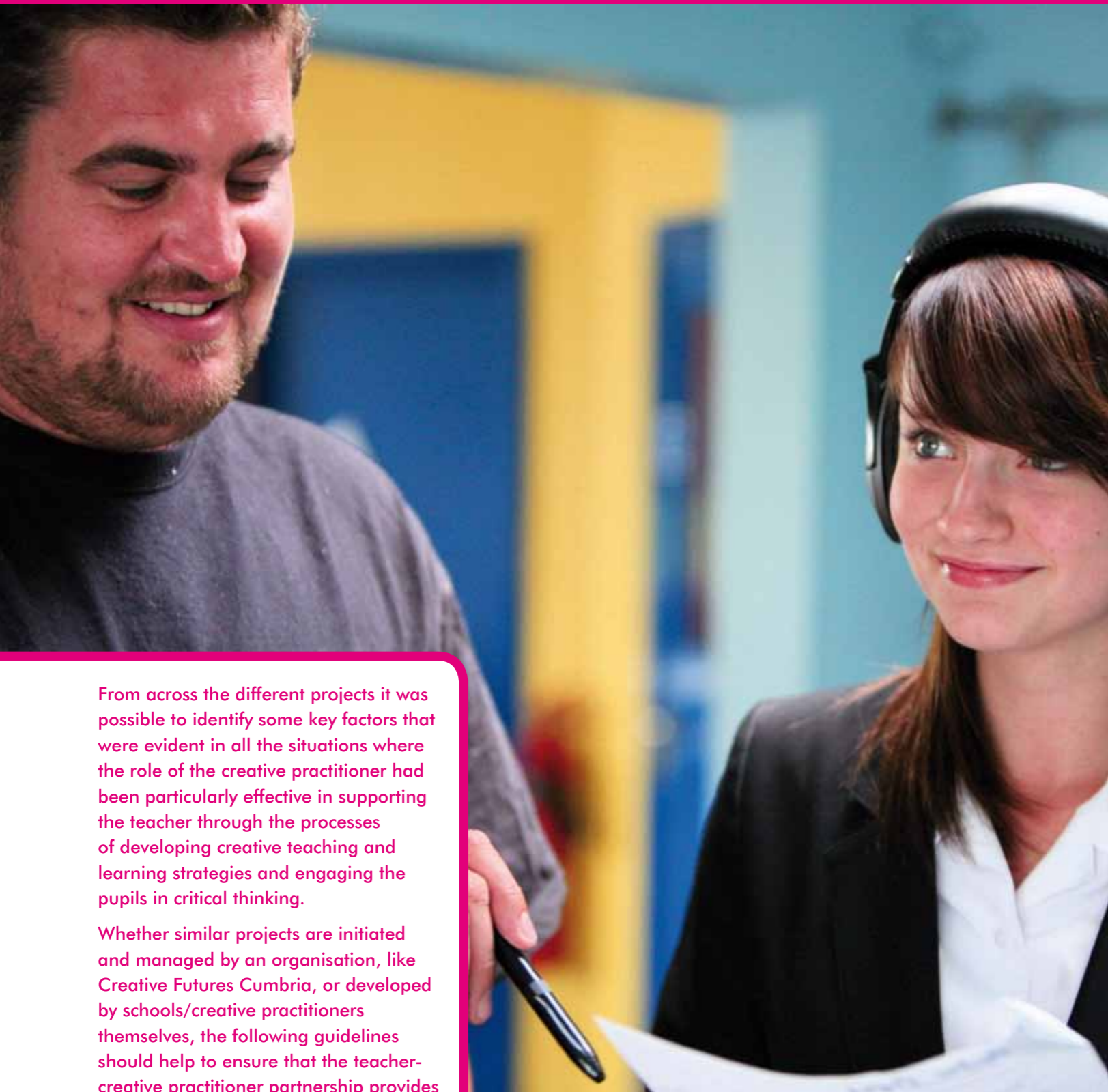
The teacher kept sketchy notes of what had been done in each class, but the creative practitioner had also observed and reflected on the process throughout.

Towards the end of the project, the creative practitioner offered a 'gift' to the teacher: a second-hand book on a subject the teacher was interested in.

Inside the book, the creative practitioner had interleaved envelopes in some of the chapters. Inside these were notes, her written observations about the stages of the project.

The teacher then added her own notes to these so that the book became a record of their shared observations, a reflection on the process that they had both experienced, and an imaginative and evocative artwork in itself.

# Recommendations



From across the different projects it was possible to identify some key factors that were evident in all the situations where the role of the creative practitioner had been particularly effective in supporting the teacher through the processes of developing creative teaching and learning strategies and engaging the pupils in critical thinking.

Whether similar projects are initiated and managed by an organisation, like Creative Futures Cumbria, or developed by schools/creative practitioners themselves, the following guidelines should help to ensure that the teacher-creative practitioner partnership provides an effective professional development experience for the teacher and ultimately enhances the learning opportunities for the pupils.

## i. How to get started: setting up the partnership

The pairing needs to be appropriate for the teacher's level of experience.

A teacher in the early-career stages of their career may need more support from a creative practitioner than that of a mid-career teacher who is likely to feel more secure in using basic class management strategies.

Where the development of creative learning strategies is the focus of the project/partnership the creative practitioner needs to be aware of the creative processes and approaches that are integral to their own professional practice and be prepared to demonstrate and articulate how these can be applied in the classroom/school context. This is more significant than the particular art-form that is their speciality.

Where creative practitioners will be supporting teachers in a secondary context they should have an interest in the subject area/issues that will be addressed during the project. The creative practitioner should be prepared to learn more about it from the teacher/other sources so that they can help the teacher develop the creative approach to the schemes of work/lessons from an informed perspective about the context in which the creative developments will be taking place.

The willingness and ability to work together needs to be strong. The 'chemistry' between creative practitioner and teacher needs to 'click'. Time should be made available for the creative practitioner to plan collaboratively and work out the professional frameworks and boundaries in which they will be working. This is an extremely important stage in developing this professional partnership. It is advisable to begin this process at **least half a term (six weeks)** before the joint delivery of the project commences.

The initial meetings should focus on establishing a shared understanding of what they perceive to be the key characteristics of 'creativity' and whether there are any particular aspects that the teacher would particularly like to develop, e.g.

- providing the pupils with the opportunities to make choices
- developing different approaches to questioning skills
- using cross curricular links to provide more rounded 'holistic' learning experiences

The time allocated to this 'introductory phase' will have cost implications in terms of the payment of fees to the creative practitioner for their time and travel and the non-contact time for teachers. These should be calculated and factored into the expenditure profile when the project proposal is initially drafted.

## ii) Selecting the creative practitioner

Checks should be carried out to ensure that the creative practitioner has recent CRB clearance and has personal indemnity/public liability insurance.

On the Creative Futures Cumbria website ([www.creativefuturescumbria.org](http://www.creativefuturescumbria.org)) there is an on-line directory of creative practitioners who already have:

- experience of working in school and community contexts and will be able to provide two satisfactory references
- recent CRB clearance
- public liability insurance

Earlyarts is a regional network which also has a database of artists with experience of working in early years settings. Information about the network can be found at [www.earlyarts.co.uk](http://www.earlyarts.co.uk)

Where the creative practitioner is providing support to the teacher to develop the creative elements of their practice rather than focusing on the provision of arts workshops, it may be advisable to consider appointing a creative practitioner who has previous experience of mentoring another less experienced artist / other creative professional, or been a mentee themselves. They are more likely to be aware of how they can support another professional colleague in adopting a positive response to 'change'.

### iii) Getting to know each other's worlds

During the introductory phase opportunities should be available for teachers and creative practitioners to observe each other at work.

- The creative practitioner will be able to plan and prepare with the teacher from a more informed perspective if there has been an opportunity to have participated in/observed a lesson/s that the teacher is leading prior to the commencement of the joint programme.
- It can be enlightening for the teacher to visit the creative practitioner's studio/workshop/gallery to be able to appreciate the challenges of their creative world.

### iv) Developing professional trust

An understanding about the need for professional confidentiality should be established so that the creative practitioner and teacher are aware that, unless pupils' safety is at risk, what is observed by the creative practitioner as the teacher explores and experiments with new/different teaching strategies is not shared with others, unless the teacher opts to do so.

### v) Establishing professional boundaries

The creative practitioner should not be responsible for the management of the pupils' behaviour or overall discipline.

The creative practitioner should be provided with documentation about the school's safeguarding policy and reporting procedures, but the creative practitioner must not be working alone with pupils and the overall responsibility for maintaining class/pupil discipline has to remain with the teacher/s, other school staff.

Risk assessments which need to be completed for specific project activities/off site visits should be prepared by the teacher with the support of the creative practitioner.

### vi) Time: the essential factor

Essential to the project is time. The project is about creativity, learning, change and experimentation, and there's no getting away from time being the necessary factor in all of those. It is also one of the most contentious and difficult factors to manage.

Time is needed for the teacher and creative practitioner to talk together, to plan, to explore alternatives, to teach, to reflect. The teacher, especially, needs time to be outside the routines of teaching in order to think again about their practice, as well as seeing how different methods and approaches work in the classroom.

#### *Timetabling flexibility*

Projects involving creative practitioners and the development of creative learning may involve:

- cross subject links where discussions with other colleagues or professionals need to be arranged
  - off site visits to investigate and gather resources
  - educational visits and off site learning opportunities for pupils
  - non-contact time for teachers to meet with the creative practitioner for planning, review and reflection will require considerable flexibility in terms of timetabling
- There will be advantages in:
- blocking/linking sessions so that pupils have longer periods to engage with the activities. This may also be more 'cost effective' in terms of the creative practitioner's involvement if the number of journeys to the school can be reduced.
  - arranging for the teacher to have non-contact time after a session to enable the teacher to review/plan and prepare for subsequent sessions in partnership with the creative practitioner.

### vii) Professional reflection

#### *How can teachers reflect on the creative process?*

There are no rules. Deciding on how to reflect on the creative process is itself a creative decision.

How to reflect on the process is something that the teacher and creative practitioner can work out for themselves individually and together. It can take many forms.

Trying different kinds of reflective practices is both creative in itself and a part of one's own critical thinking. The collection of research materials, lesson plans and meeting notes are valuable, but a reflection process is something different. Reflection can use any form that seems 'right'.

It may be:

- something that the teacher and creative practitioner work on together, or something that is private to the teacher.
- narratives or written notes, or it may be objects and mementos that spark a recollection. It needs however, to be in a form that is easy and evocative for the teacher.

It might include:

- a journal book
- recorded conversations or monologues
- sketches
- photographs
- scrap books
- maps
- poems
- notes
- a collection of significant objects that mark a stage in the process like stones or postcards.

Deciding on what is significant to record may be something the teacher and creative practitioner decide from the start, but these initial ideas may be superseded as new perspectives emerge.

Along with more sustained reflections, the moments of uncertainty and apprehension are important to mark, as are moments of dullness and idleness, frustrations and moments of excitement.

It is important that the reflective process is a formative, ongoing part of the project rather than only occurring at the end.

One's own learning as a teacher is central to the reflection, but also important are significant changes in the pupils' learning and behaviours, those moments when something surprising happens with a student and valuable insights are gained.

Some teachers have found a key questions framework to be a useful reflection tool:

What happened?

What inspired me?

What challenged me?

What else could I have done?

If it happened again, what would I do differently?

What will I do next?

What would I like to learn more about?

What additional support will I need?

With the pressures of teaching, it can be difficult to find the time to record reflections during the project, but conversations with the creative practitioner and colleagues can be part of this process.

There may be opportunities to record the key developments in the project together, or combine the observations in some way. Whatever evidence is gathered or noted it can become something that the teacher can return to, and a marker for the teacher's own learning process. It can be drawn on to share the learning experience with colleagues and provide evidence for the wider school about the project.



## viii) Project evaluation

The reflective process is integral to project evaluation, but reviewing the success of the project against the original criteria will also be useful for reporting and developmental purposes. The perspectives of all those involved should be gained for this purpose:

- the teacher
- the pupils
- the creative practitioner

As this project will be different from other more 'product led' programmes it will be more difficult to identify a clearly defined 'end point', but evidence that is gathered during the time that the creative practitioner is involved will help to inform subsequent developments.

The presence of the creative practitioner in the room should also provide opportunities to undertake some observation of pupils' reactions that can be more difficult to undertake when this support is not available.

Focusing on the responses of particular pupils will be useful and make the process more manageable.

Identify them at the beginning of the project and consider why they would be a significant group to focus on, e.g.

- Do they have special needs?
- Do you want to learn more about their creative abilities?
- Are they pupils who are usually difficult to engage?

Informal conversations with the 'pupil focus groups' at different stages of the project can provide 'formative' feedback.

Written evidence at the end of particular stages of the project/particular activities can also provide useful feedback provided it does not require lengthy responses.

Encouraging pupils to use post-it notes to record their impressions in short statements can be useful. Equally, discussing and recording their impressions in pairs/small groups where one pupil volunteers to 'scribe' can also be an effective means for them to exchange their views and actively participate in the evaluative process.

The 'four statement' framework below can even be used by relatively young children. A large, laminated version could be available in the classroom on which post it notes could be attached/or A4 sheets can be printed for pupils to individually complete.



Plan to have at least three conversations with the creative practitioner or exchange perceptions through other forms of communication, e.g. emails, in order to:

- Review what you have found particularly helpful about his/her role, what further types of support you might need from them or others.
- Ascertain what changes the creative practitioner has noticed.
- Establish how the creative practitioner envisages his/her role developing.

The following statements might be useful starting points:

I found it challenging when you...

I found it inspiring when you...

I feel I need you to...

### Evaluating Teacher Development:

Participation in programmes involving the development of creative learning with the support of a creative practitioner will contribute towards teachers achieving and maintaining some of the 'Core' and 'Post Threshold' Professional Standards.

The following check list could be used to self assess the specific professional standards which have been addressed.

Core and Post Threshold Professional Teaching Standards which could be addressed through the implementation of creative development learning programmes involving creative practitioners.

Relevant Professional Teaching Standards	Achieved by...
<b>Communicating and working with others:</b>	
<b>C.5.</b> Recognise and respect the contributions that colleagues*...can make to the development and well being of children and young people.	
<b>Personal Professional Development:</b>	
<b>C.8.</b> Have a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation; being prepared to adapt their practice where benefits and improvements are identified.	
<b>Teaching and Learning:</b>	
<b>C.10.</b> Have a good, up to date working knowledge and understanding of a range of teaching, learning and behaviour management strategies and know how to use and adapt them, including how to personalise learning to provide opportunities for all learners to achieve their potential.	
<b>Subjects and curriculum:</b>	
<b>C.15.</b> Have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects/curriculum areas and related pedagogy including: the contribution that their subjects/ curriculum areas can make to cross-curricular learning and recent relevant developments.	
<b>C.16.</b> Know and understand the relevant...non-statutory curricula and frameworks, including...other relevant initiatives across the age and ability range they teach.	
<b>Assessing monitoring and giving feedback:</b>	
<b>C.33.</b> Support and guide learners so that they can reflect on their learning, identify the progress they have made, set positive targets for improvement and become independent learners.	
<b>Reviewing Teaching and Learning:</b>	
<b>C.35.</b> Review the effectiveness of their teaching and its impact on learners' progress, attainment and well being, refining their approaches where necessary.	
<b>Team working and collaboration:</b>	
<b>C.41.</b> Ensure that colleagues* working with them are appropriately involved in supporting learning and understand the roles they are expected to fill.	

\* interpreted as 'professionals other than teachers'

Post Threshold	Achieved by...
<b>Frameworks:</b>	
P1: Contribute significantly, where appropriate to implementing workplace policies and practice and to promoting collective responsibilities for their implementation.	
P2. Have an extensive knowledge and understanding of how to use and adapt a range of teaching, learning and behaviour management strategies, including how to personalise learning and provide opportunities for all learners to achieve their potential.	
<b>Assessment and monitoring:</b>	
P3: Have an extensive knowledge and well informed understanding of the assessment requirements and arrangements for the subjects/curriculum areas they teach, including those related to public examinations and qualifications.	
<b>Subjects and curriculum:</b>	
P5: Have a more developed knowledge and understanding of their subjects/curriculum areas and related pedagogy including how learning progresses within them.	
<b>Professional skills:</b>	
P7: Be flexible, creative and adept at designing learning sequences within lessons and across lessons that are effectively and consistently well matched to learning objectives and the needs of learners and which integrate recent developments, including those relating to subject/curriculum knowledge.	
<b>Teaching:</b>	
P8. Have teaching skills which lead to learners achieving well relative to their prior attainment, making progress as good as, or better than, similar learners nationally.	
<b>#Team working and collaboration:</b>	
P10. Contribute to the professional development of colleagues through coaching and mentoring, demonstrating effective practice, and providing advice and feedback.	
<b>Date Reviewed:</b>	
<b>Comments / information to inform further development:</b>	

#P10. could only be addressed if the teacher had used his/her experience to disseminate and support the professional development of other colleagues.

## ix) Assessing pupils' creative development

As a result of using more creative approaches to teaching, progression should be evident in the pupils' creative skills and attributes. As the characteristics of 'creativity' are so diverse it has always been difficult to find ways to assess and record its development. Recently however two assessment frameworks have been developed:

### 1. The Creativity Wheel

This is a self assessment tool on which pupils (particularly Key Stage 2) can record different types of creative behaviour. It is designed to help pupils recognise when and how they have been creative. It also helps teachers to tailor their teaching towards pupil improvement, involvement and motivation, in addition to enabling individual, class and whole school self assessment of creativity and creative learning.

The *Creativity Wheel* was developed and written by Caroline Redmond as a resource pack by Creative Partnerships, Durham – Sunderland.

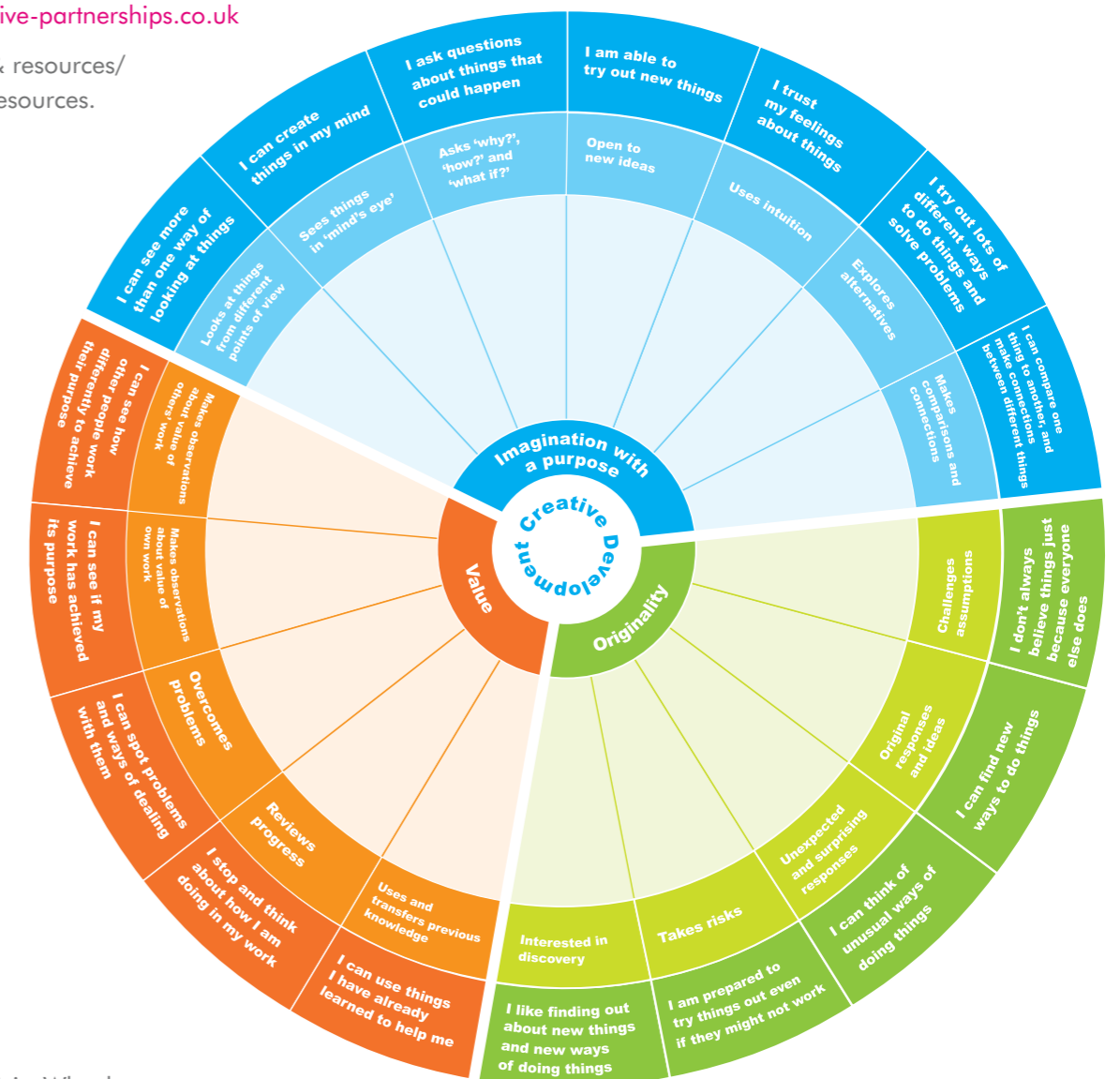
The pack includes additional supporting resources :

- frameworks for whole school development
- lesson outlines for introducing and using the Creativity Wheel over a 3-term period
- whiteboard resources
- a DVD of case studies illustrating how the Creativity Wheel can be used

The resources can be downloaded from the Creative Partnerships website:

[www.creative-partnerships.co.uk](http://www.creative-partnerships.co.uk)

research & resources/  
featured resources.



The Creativity Wheel

## 2. Creative Learning Assessment and Observation Frameworks

Sue Ellis and Myra Barrs (The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) worked with a group of primary school headteachers based in the Education Action Zone in North Lambeth, London, to develop assessment tools for creative learning which would help them observe and describe progress in creative learning in a systematic way.

The project and subsequent pilot focussed on the development and analysis of work in the creative arts.

With minor adaptations, these frameworks could be applied to the assessment of creative learning across and within all subject areas.

The project and assessment frameworks have been published in:

'Creative Learning' Edited by Julian Sefton-Green  
 Publ: Creative Partnerships & Arts Council England  
 Sept. 2008 ISBN: 978 0 7287 1413 7

Chapter 6: The Assessment of Creative Learning  
 Sue Ellis and Myra Barrs  
 The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE)

To download the publication go to:  
[www.creative-partnerships.com/research & resources/featured resources](http://www.creative-partnerships.com/research&resources/featuredresources)

Examples of what the teachers and researchers involved in the pilot said:

Creativity itself is a contested issue: attempts to pin down what it is, to arrive at some kind of quintessential definition, are more often than not hollow and unsatisfactory. The assessment of creativity is even more strongly contested – some people would say that it is neither possible nor desirable to assess creativity. We sympathise with this view – attempts to assess creativity in general are likely to run into the sand. But we also feel that it is both possible and potentially valuable to assess creative work and creative learning.

Sue Ellis & Myra Barrs

### The Assessment Scale

I could see what I was aiming for. It drew my attention to the different 'parts' of creativity. The scale has made me more aware of planning time for reflection, evaluation and commenting on others' work.

Teacher

### The Observational Framework

The CLA framework allows teachers space to record what they are noticing while children are working on a creative project. It asks questions like:

- In what ways are children able to take risks and experiment in their learning?
- Do they generate ideas, questions and make connections?
- Are there examples of responding to and commenting on their own and others' work?

The framework helps you to view children's learning through a different lens: 'the doing'. Listening to them as it happens, and the product 'done'. It's a more balanced approach than just assessing the outcome. You learn so much more about the child that you can use to help move them forward.

Teacher



### The Creative Learning Scale

Pupil:

Year:

Date:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Children play with creative materials and elements and use them to express feelings and ideas.	Children develop their imagination, exploring and investigating the possibilities within a creative medium. They choose different elements to create different effects.	Children work with increasing personal involvement, independence and creativity. They communicate ideas through a particular art form, combining different elements and using them expressively in a creative work.	Children develop creativity and imagination through engaging in increasingly complex artistic projects. They organise different elements, techniques and processes to realise their ideas and intentions in a particular art form	Children are increasingly conscious of the imaginative possibilities in a particular creative medium. They select and organise their material to express their ideas and intentions, making choices for different purposes and to create different effects.
They practise simple skills, exploring possibilities.	They expand their range of skills and begin to draw on and vary their use in appropriate ways.	They select and use skills and techniques appropriately with growing control.	They consolidate a growing range of skills and use them with increasing precision and control.	They use skills with precision, control and fluency, combining them appropriately and effectively.
Children begin to recognise and describe some creative effects.	Children recognise that different elements and processes are involved in a creative work.	Children discuss the way meanings can be conveyed in a particular medium.	Children discuss the ideas and approaches in creative work, relating it to context.	Children analyse how meanings are conveyed, with increasing critical awareness, drawing on their knowledge and understanding of an art form and using appropriate vocabulary.
They describe what they think and feel about their own and others' work.	They comment on differences in their own and others' work and suggest ways of improving it.	They identify similarities and differences between their own and others' work, commenting on intended effects. They adapt and improve their own work.	They evaluate and develop their work, commenting on how their intentions have been achieved.	They reflect on their learning and show awareness of purpose and context in refining and developing their own work.

Compiled from NC PoS Ats for PE/Dance, Music, Art, English/Drama, D&T  
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## An Observational Framework

Teacher:

Year:

Pupil:			
Creative Context:	Observation Date:	Observation Date:	Observation Date:
<b>1 Confidence, independence, enjoyment</b> eg developing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pleasure and enjoyment</li> <li>• engagement and focus</li> <li>• empathy and emotional involvement</li> <li>• self motivation</li> </ul>			
<b>2 Collaboration and communication</b> eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• works effectively in a team</li> <li>• contributes to discussion, makes suggestions</li> <li>• listens and responds to others</li> <li>• perseveres, overcomes problems</li> <li>• communicates and presents ideas</li> </ul>			
<b>3 Creativity</b> eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is imaginative and playful</li> <li>• generates ideas, questions and makes connections</li> <li>• risk-takes and experiments</li> <li>• expresses own creative ideas using a range of artistic elements</li> </ul>			
<b>4 Strategies and skills</b> eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifies issues and explores options</li> <li>• plans and develops a project</li> <li>• demonstrates a growing range of artistic/creative skills</li> <li>• uses appropriate subject specific skills with increasing control</li> </ul>			
<b>5 Knowledge and understanding</b> eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• awareness of different forms, styles, artistic and cultural traditions, creative techniques</li> <li>• uses subject specific knowledge and language with understanding</li> </ul>			
<b>6 Reflection and evaluation</b> eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responds to and comments on own and others' work</li> <li>• responds to artistic/creative experiences</li> <li>• analyses and constructively criticises work</li> <li>• reviews and evaluates own progress</li> </ul>			
<b>7 Areas for further development</b> You may need to refer to the NC PoS & ATs			

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## x) Sharing learning with others

Working with a creative practitioner is likely to evoke curiosity, interest and even 'envy' amongst colleagues.

Flexibility in timetabling and colleague's co-operation if the project may impact on their own routines, or students availability for lessons/other activities, will be easier to achieve if colleagues, particularly the Senior Management Team are aware of the objectives and needs of the project, well in advance.

Briefing colleagues about the project during the initial planning stage at a staff meeting can be a useful starting point.

It will be important to emphasise that the project will be 'process' rather than 'product' led.

During the planning phase identify who will be the 'significant' colleagues that should be informed/involved about the project's progress and outcomes.

Identify times and ways in which this information can be shared:

- staff/departmental meetings
- emails/e-bulletins
- newsletters
- [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)

Parents or carers may be interested to know about the aims of the project, the role of the creative practitioner in the process and the changes in teaching and learning approaches that their children may experience.

- There might be opportunities for the pupils to make presentations/display their work in assemblies on display boards, record their experiences in their own personal learning logs e.g. using the Creativity Wheel.

Next steps: During the project, think about who you will want to share your reflections with, the next steps you might feel you want to take and how those could be achieved.

- An immediate colleague in the same department or year group?
- A line manager?
- As part of the appraisal or professional review process?
- A colleague in another school/professional network?

## Additional useful references

*Artists in Schools: a review* (1999)  
Office for Standards in Education, London

*New Ground Lost Seeds*  
McCarthy, A. Ed 2009.  
Published in partnership with Dead Good Guides  
- especially pp6 - 7 'A new role for the artist?'

*All Our futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (1999)  
National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education Department for Education and Employment

'Creative Learning' Feb 2008 ed.  
Julian Sefton-Green  
See [www.creative-partnerships.com](http://www.creative-partnerships.com)

*Looking Inside Creative Learning : how to identify it, how to use it and the research behind it* (2009)  
Anni Raw publ. Cape UK  
[www.capeuk.org](http://www.capeuk.org)

*Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum: Final Report 2009* (Rose Review)  
Department for Children Schools and Families  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

*First findings: Policy, practice and progress: a review of creative learning 2002-4*  
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[www.creative-partnerships.com](http://www.creative-partnerships.com)

*Animating Literacy Inspiring Children's Learning Through Teacher and Artist Partnerships* (2005)  
Ed. Sue Ellis and Kimberly Safford  
Centre for Literacy in Primary Education  
[www.clpe.co.uk](http://www.clpe.co.uk)

*Providing the Best Guidance for artists and arts organisations on assessing the quality of activities for children and young people.*  
Arts Council England (2006)  
[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

# Appendix A: The School Contexts

A total of eighteen creative development projects were undertaken across sixteen different schools. Each school was involved with one of the following programme strands:

Developing creative teaching and learning strategies and critical thinking with teachers who were:

- i) In the early stages of their career in rural areas (7 teachers)
- ii) Preparing to introduce the Creative and Media Diploma :14 – 19 year olds (5 teachers)
- iii) Developing environmental and global educational dimensions within the revised Key Stage 3 curriculum (6 teachers)

Although the overall aims of each of the projects were basically the same, the challenges of the individual school and curriculum contexts and the professional experience of the teachers and creative practitioners determined the curriculum themes that were explored and produced different outcomes for the individual pupils and teachers involved.

## i) Teachers in the early stages of their career in rural schools

Most of these teachers were in their first or second year of teaching. Their background experience and maturity, however, varied substantially and this influenced their knowledge and understanding of creative processes.

- a) Being a parent, for example, seemed to provide a holistic orientation to learning and an appreciation of the significance of the background influences on each child's development.
- b) Prior work as a police officer working with disturbed children and finding creative approaches to allow them to express themselves had equipped one with an extensive appreciation of the value of developing young people's self confidence.
- c) Two of the teachers were particularly committed to helping young people develop a sense that learning could be 'fun' and the belief that this was important had influenced the learning environment that they had 'created' in their classrooms.
- d) All had experienced training which had emphasised the need to adhere to the national curriculum requirements and implement the

national literacy and numeracy strategies. They were equipped with the tools of micro-planning and classroom management, were concerned about the need to be able to demonstrate that they were 'good teachers' by their pupils achieving good SATs results. They felt that there was a pressure to 'conform' and alternative teaching and learning models were a 'frightening antithesis' to what they had come to believe was expected of them.

- e) Some teachers expressed an interest in developing their 'teaching skills' in particular curriculum areas even though they were also prepared to 'experiment' with using a cross curricular approach.

The schools were all based in the same geographical area. The group consisted of four primary schools, one junior and one secondary school, to which most pupils transferred in Year 7. One primary school was based in a market town, while the rest were located in villages. Although they were spread out across the countryside, the teachers were able to develop a useful professional network because they were all part of the same 'local' school cluster.

The four primary schools had less than one hundred pupils and limited staff. They taught mixed age classes. The need to adapt their lessons and schemes of work to address the needs of different age groups, meant that these teachers were experienced in using more flexible curriculum frameworks. They were interested in exploring how creative teaching and learning could be developed through cross curricular 'projects'. In addition some of the teachers were keen to focus on:

- developing children's self-confidence and speaking and listening skills
- engaging and maintaining the interest of boys in learning

The teacher from the secondary school was an art specialist. Timetabling constraints, the pressures of an exam orientated curriculum and scepticism from senior managers about the value of 'creative learning' and 'cross- subject links' limited the extent to which this teacher was able to extend her experience to work in partnership with colleagues from other subject areas.

The cross curricular projects undertaken across these schools included the following;

Age Range	Curriculum Areas	Project Focus and the Processes Involved	Outcomes
Key Stage 1	History Drama	The story of <i>Grace Darling</i> was interpreted through drama. The sea rescue was used to involve the children in 'problem solving' and taking on various 'roles'. Children were involved in discussing how their interpretation could be improved, and asking questions of each other the teacher and the creative practitioner. They were encouraged to make choices and take responsibility for their own decisions.	The children were enthusiastic and enjoyed the process. Cross curricular discussions and 'learning with understanding'. Enhanced speaking and listening skills. The teacher had expressed the wish to acquire develop her own techniques for teaching drama and felt that she could undertake this more confidently in the in future.
Key Stage 2	History Drama Art IT	<b>Second World War:</b> The children enjoyed finding out about the lives of ordinary civilians caught up in war: people with relatives/ friends on active service; armed forces etc. The process of morphing each child, using pictures, masks and narrative, writing letters and accounts, individual children researching on the internet, was ambitious but child led.	The freedom to take initiative and follow own ideas and purpose emerged strongly from this project.
Key Stage 2	History Drama Maths Science	<b>The Great Fire of London</b> was central to a variety of planned, but loosely structured learning opportunities. They 'relived' the Great Fire through drama, and explored the mathematical and scientific ideas which emerged. They were engaged in problem solving. A visit by a fire officer gave them the opportunity to ask questions and find out more from an 'expert'.	Children collaborated to find a way of dealing with non-cooperative boy. The teacher and creative practitioner focused on involving the children more with the planning and review to inform the development of the project. Within the overall project framework, the teacher adopted a 'step by step', approach to her lesson plans so that she could respond to the children's ideas and their observed development.
Key Stage 1	Science D&T	The project focused on <b>mini beasts</b> . The creative practitioner helped by collecting a range of resources, and a visitor brought live spiders, snakes etc, for the children to observe and learn more about. Construction problems around habitat and form, both with natural and classroom materials were explored.	Questioning was used to facilitate opportunities for learning both formally and informally. The excitement and enjoyment of the children was evident throughout the project. The teacher struggled to find time to accommodate reflection time because of an array of pressures, and a planned outing was not approved by the school. Nevertheless the teacher observed encouraging individual developments in the pilot children, and felt fortunate to have been given the opportunity to be part of the project.
Key Stage 1	Science English Art	The teacher introduced the project about <b>Light and Darkness</b> by using a tent in which light and dark items could be explored. A creative practitioner used collection of shadow puppets to introduce the children to concepts such as symbolic representation, texture, light effects, and the relationship between size of shadow and distance of puppet on the screen. Individual children created stories about a dark wood, The children made their own puppets, and a story was developed for an end of term production.	The outcomes in terms of imagination, complex language, concentration surprised the teacher. The children's enthusiasm, enjoyment, the engagement of previously hidden capabilities and understanding of relatively very advanced scientific concepts were among the outcomes of the project. This teacher was already committed to creative approaches, but the project offered further scope and understanding of the benefits for children and herself. The relationship between creative practitioner and teacher was very positive with a shared understanding of the need for holistic approaches to teaching young children to nourish their creative growth.
Key Stage 3	Art History	Exploring <b>Tudor identities</b> involved the students in examining historical paintings and portraits. The creative practitioner worked with the teacher to demonstrate how to involve the students in creating ideas, finding solutions to problems by analysing the images and making connections between artists and their work. The students worked both collaboratively and individually to examine the evidence and share their findings.	The project provided an opportunity for the teacher to see how a less tightly planned and more open ended approach enabled all the students to participate without loss of discipline or control of the class.

## ii) Preparing for the Creative and Media Diploma

The projects focused on developing cross departmental and subject links to prepare for the implementation requirements of the Creative and Media Diplomas which were to commence the following academic year in secondary schools in and around Carlisle.

Teachers wanted to develop creative teaching and learning strategies which would enhance the students' ability to work and learn more flexibly and recognise how they could transfer and apply the skills that they had learnt in one subject area to another learning context.

Issues of leadership, funding flows, relative school status, interdepartmental politics, and internal school change due to the merger of two schools to establish a new academy, impacted, to various extents, on the development and implementation of the projects across the four secondary schools that were involved.

All the teachers were experienced leaders in their subject specialism areas, but they were open to learning new approaches and some expressed a need for 'refreshment' and 're-motivation'. The relationship between teachers and creative practitioners during the project process had variable outcomes for the teachers' professional development. Some recognised the value and relevance in learning how to use more specialist 'technical' equipment, while others found it enlightening to adopt a more holistic approach to their teaching where the boundaries between subjects were 'merged'.

The numbers of students and classes involved also varied across the schools. Senior Management in one school insisted that a whole year group should participate in the sessions that were being led by a group of creative practitioners. In the other schools, where smaller numbers were involved, there were generally more opportunities for the teachers to 'experiment' with different creative teaching strategies, to observe how the students responded and to develop new perspectives about their abilities.

The projects included:

Age Range	Curriculum Areas	Project Focus and the Processes Involved	Outcomes
Post 16	Dance	<p>Contemporary dance for boys:</p> <p>The creative practitioner led the preparation, the warm up and the development of dance sequences within the sessions.</p> <p>An awareness of the need for self discipline and how this related to the world of work was promoted. The importance of self presentation, deportment, and 'creating a favourable impression' for job interviews was also emphasised.</p> <p>Their dance and interpersonal skills development was achieved through 'paired' sessions where students created their own dance sequences, selecting suitable music for the theme they had chosen to develop.</p>	<p>The students were engaged and motivated by the relevance of the sessions to the 'outside world'.</p> <p>Overall the students developed more confidence in their own abilities and being able to work with others. Some felt they would now be able to teach dance themselves.</p> <p>The teacher was already committed to a creative approach and chose to develop her 'teaching skills' by 'working alongside' the students.</p>
Key Stage 4	Drama	<p>Drama project : interactive story building activity, led by a small team of creative practitioners linked to a theatre company.</p> <p>The teachers and students were helped to explore the creative process. The large numbers of staff and students involved limited the extent to which this could be developed.</p>	<p>Most students seemed to enjoy their involvement in the process of developing the 'story'. Several demonstrated 'hidden talents' and gained status and respect among peers.</p> <p>Some of the teachers indicated that the strategies that were used to involve the students in 'imaginative enquiry' were transferable to other curriculum areas and that they would be interested in using them in the future.</p>
	Drama	<p>The creative practitioner and teacher worked together to explore complementary approaches that could enhance the approaches to drama that were currently being used. This included 'Philosophy for Children'. This preparatory phase encouraged the teacher to become more experimental in her approach. The creative practitioner led initial sessions, using drama, circle times and other approaches to stimulate young people to have ideas, question, connect, think of ways forward and explore the implications of alternative ideas.</p>	<p>At the beginning of the project the teacher felt 'undervalued'. Through the project and the partnership with the creative practitioner, the teacher regained her confidence and her enthusiasm for teaching. She successfully applied for promotion at a different school.</p>
	Drama and media	<p>Two creative practitioners with very different views of the process appropriate to the projects worked with teachers from separate departments. The complexity of the project required extensive opportunities for joint planning which were not always available.</p> <p>For the drama students, the active involvement with creating effects, developing images to convey meaning, solving problems and exploring alternative solutions was very stimulating and challenging.</p> <p>Media students worked on creating 'special effects', learning to use cameras and developing innovative audio effects. They also developed editing skills to increase the effectiveness of the drama.</p>	<p>As the abilities emerged one of the teacher noted that in some respects they were more 'able' than had been previously recognised. Teachers also began to realise that some of the students were bringing skills and experience that had been developed in activities with which they were involved 'outside school' which was not usually taken into account/evident in school lessons.</p> <p>Peer pressure disciplined behaviour and ensured that 'disengaged' students participated.</p>

## iii) Developing environmental and global educational dimensions within the revised Key Stage 3 curriculum

Although all the projects across the six schools explored the development of creative learning strategies and critical thinking, a lack of awareness of the learning opportunities that environmental/global themes could provide prevented some of the teachers significantly developing this aspect of the project in their curriculum areas.

Two teachers in particular, however, successfully addressed all the elements of the project brief and with the support of their creative practitioner developed exemplary teaching and learning experiences.

**Age range:** Key Stage 3: Year 8  
**Curriculum areas:** Geography  
**Project theme:** Exploring Water Issues

The partnership started with a day out of school for the teacher, visiting the creative practitioner's studio to begin planning for the project.

In answering the 'global dimension and sustainable development' remit, the creative practitioner took the lead, and focussed the project around water issues, which could be addressed from many perspectives, and align with the curriculum demands.

Together the creative practitioner and the teacher 'rehearsed' the initial student task of 'making a model of a toilet using waste plastics'. This allowed the creative practitioner and teacher an opportunity to gauge the amount of time that would be needed for the activity and the materials that would be required and to check the feasibility of the task.

Having done this, the teacher was confident that the students would be able to complete the activity and develop a sense of achievement and ownership of their design.

In discussion with the creative practitioner the teacher also explored when and how the students might be 'facilitated' through this process. The balance between students engaging with the task and 'freely' exploring different possibilities and teacher intervention/direction was an aspect of professional practice which the teacher wanted to explore.

As the project progressed there were times when plans were reviewed and adapted. The creative practitioner and the teacher developed a team-teaching approach, which was sufficiently planned

for the teacher to retain a sense of 'control' but opened enough to make it challenging for the students.

The creative practitioner was able to draw out the teacher's ability to 'go with' student learning, to adapt to students' ideas and changing situations. Not only did the creative practitioner provide 'tools' as ideas for things to do, but viable methods of how to work with students, individually and as a group on large and small scale activities.

The project started for the students with a field trip to the United Utilities installation and reservoir at Brockhole, Cumbria, where they learnt about the cycle of water treatment and supply.

At school, the students were divided into three groups to research different aspects of water supply. They then made presentations on their work to the group as a whole. As part of that research process, the creative practitioner set-up challenging activities for the students:

- i) designing and building a model of a toilet from plastic bottles and other plastic
- ii) they were shown the principles of drawing basic cartoons, and then were asked to design their own to illustrate clearly and concisely some of the global political and health issues of water provision and sanitation

From these initial activities, the students identified three particular areas that they wanted to investigate:

- i) how water is used in Britain.
- ii) how it is used in the wider industrialised world.
- iii) how a town receives and distributes its water supply

The students developed an installation on a stair landing of a bathtub filled with plastic bottles, and overhung with 'bubbles', plastic discs, with messages about local water use and bottled water.

They used card cut-outs of toilet seats on which to write statements, and hung these throughout the hallways.

To illustrate what happens about sanitation in newly-industrialising countries, they made a sculptural model of a 'flying toilet', an idea which has evolved from discovering that in countries without a sewerage infrastructure, plastic bags of human excrement are thrown out of windows onto the ground or nearby roof tops. Finally, a model was made of a local town and its water circulation.

Difficult issues to do with global inequalities,

'embedded water', sanitation and water wars were explored. The impact on the students' learning, level of interest, confidence, creativity and engagement with the subject was very high. They enjoyed being involved with investigating controversial issues. They were also very positive about being able to work for longer than usual on the activities as the usual timetable for their sessions had been suspended.

A number of students, have continued to independently research 'water issues' and have been involved with fund-raising for Water Aid. A lunchtime club on 'people and planet' which meets to explore environmental issues has been formed.

#### The students said:

I enjoyed:

- ...bringing in true facts and everyday activities and what actually happens.
- ...going on the trip to Brockhole and making the displays. Also the presentations and being able to give our opinions to people.
- ...making the toilets and our 'eco' presentation. I also enjoyed making our news reports.
- ...making the poo for our flying toilet display.
- ...doing the more creative things like making the bathtub.
- ...doing something different, e.g. making pieces of art. I also liked going on the trip. It was fun.
- ...working with my friends to help the less fortunate people in the world.
- ...doing something instead of talking about it.

#### The outcomes:

- The teacher developed renewed confidence and motivation.
- The possibility of 'losing control' that the teacher most feared, did not happen.
- The positive impact on the students of the creative approaches that were used has convinced the teacher that similar approaches should be introduced to other aspects of the geography curriculum.

#### The factors that helped to make the project successful:

- There was a high level of support from the school.
- The timetable was made flexible, allowing for days out and longer sessions with students.

- There was support from other teaching colleagues who could cover for the teacher on the off-timetable days.
- The creative practitioner provided most of the materials and tools for the projects, but there were also colleagues in the art department who also helped with the supply of these.
- The teacher, the creative practitioner and the students all took risks of some kind. They tested themselves and developed new ideas specifically for this project, which added to its vibrancy.
- There was a balance of fun, humour and art-making, which enabled the students to learn about a complex and serious issue.

**Age range:** Key Stage 3: Year 8  
**Curriculum areas:** Religious Education  
Citizenship  
**Project theme:** A sense of place

The teacher identified a 'loss of control' as one of the areas which felt risky, particularly an apprehension about taking students outside of the school.

The creative practitioner had a lot of experience of taking students on field trips so this support was reassuring to the teacher.

The aim of the project was to develop the students' sense of place and to raise their awareness of the 'wonder at the natural world'. Consideration of environmental issues was to be introduced, but it was anticipated that this would develop from the observations and concerns that the students would raise.

The creative practitioner and teacher developed a way of team teaching when in the classroom, with the creative practitioner often taking the lead. It was on the field trips and the days off-timetable, however, that the teacher was able to 'let go', enjoy the experimentation, enjoy conversations with students, and take interest and delight again in teaching and her own learning process.

#### The Process:

The field trips began with one to the nearby beach. The students discussed what that place meant to them. They wrote messages in the sand, collected stones and raised questions about the pollution of the shore by the refuse and litter that they could see.

Visiting a Roman Fort at Hardknott Pass and a valley farm at Wasdale in the Lake District, they learned about the timescales of geology; local history and political occupations; and the global economic influences on hill farming, in terms of the price of lambs and sheep wool.

A day's visit to Kurt Schwitters' Merz Barn being restored by Littoral in the Langdale Valley, Cumbria, opened up discussions about refugees, migrations, and expatriation while they created 'snake sticks' and collages in the artistic style of Schwitters.

'When we were at the Merz Barn, we were doing some really funky stuff, painting snake sticks and the boys started making giant collages all on their own. But it was all about refugees, and their role in today's society, and about Schwitters. How do people from other places come into our lives and how do they fit in our country. The students were coming up with their own ideas.'

(Creative practitioner, secondary school.)

These trips were complemented by work and research in the classroom, often in extended time periods. The activities included writing messages for future generations to be put into a bottle; taking photographs and making journals; writing their dreams for their life on postcards, which the creative practitioner posted back to them from a trip he was taking to India.

To conclude the project, the students mounted an exhibition to show the whole school and visitors the work that they had done.

#### What helped it work?

There were unexpected interruptions to the school beyond anyone's control, affecting the project's planning and schedule. Even so, the programme is a model of how a project can still work well when the conditions are not ideal.

Despite the interruptions, the organisation of the project was good, as was the school support.

The enthusiasm and willingness of the teacher to take on the risk was essential. So, too, was the creative practitioner's practical experience with field trips, and in activity organisation, which increased the teacher's confidence, and drew out her own creative methods of teaching.

## Appendix B: About the authors



### Wallace Heim

Wallace researches, teaches and writes about art and ecology, the field of art works and social practices that combine the arts, theatre and activism with ecological understanding and environmental sciences.

For evaluations, she specialises in projects that span the arts, environmental education and climate change, including 'Climate Change Explorer' for Helix Arts and Creative Futures Cumbria; 'Greenhouse Britain' for the Harrison Studios and the UK Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs; and 'Working in Public: Art, practice and policy' for Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University. Wallace evaluated the TDA projects about introducing Creativity, Critical Thinking and environmental and global education to the revised Key Stage 3 curriculum.

She holds a doctorate in Philosophy (Lancaster) and an MSc in Human Ecology (Edinburgh). She is a Co-Director of PublicSpace Ltd., a research communication company and has lived in Cumbria since 1997.



### Chris Kynch

As a Research Fellow at the University of Cumbria, Chris has evaluated a range of government initiatives in education in Cumbria, as well as managing several funded research projects in education, including action research with teachers and in rural schools. Chris evaluated the 'Teachers in the early stages of their career in rural schools' Training Development Agency (TDA) funded programme and the '14–19 Diploma in Creative and Media Studies' projects.

Chris's background is in maths and physics. She has a first degree in economics. After working in market research in industry, she gained a PGCE with distinction and was later awarded a masters degree with distinction in educational research.

Chris has a wide range of experience teaching and lecturing, including: head of department; adult and further education tutor and as a teaching fellow at Lancaster University. She has seen the motivating effects of introducing creative approaches to learning in the 'dismal science' of economics. More recently Chris has worked for thirteen years as a researcher, first in the NHS, then at St Martin's College — now the University of Cumbria.

A wide range of voluntary activities has also enabled Chris to see the potential of creative approaches to develop previously unrecognised capabilities and talents in individuals in the wider community.



### Margaret Riches

Margaret became Director of Cumbria Arts in Education in 2006. She has been proactive in expanding and developing its programmes so that the organisation now works with artists and other professionals who have a creative remit to their role. In April 2008, Cumbria Arts in Education became the host organisation for the current phase of the Creative Partnership Programme. In recognition of its broader remit the organisation changed its name to 'Creative Futures Cumbria'. Margaret was responsible for the overall management and co-ordination of the three TDA funded programmes.

Margaret began her professional career as a primary school teacher in 1971, working initially in Suffolk and then in Gateshead. Between 1991–2006 Margaret has undertaken various roles within the educational sector as:

- regional director of a national programme for the University of Warwick, to promote 5–14 year olds' economic awareness
- senior lecturer in geography and primary education at University College of St. Martin
- director of the South Tyneside Education Business Partnership
- school improvement officer for South Tyneside Local Authority, Children's Services

Margaret gained a doctorate in 2003 from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne for her research on the use of photographs to develop children's understanding of distant places. Previous to this, in 1993, she achieved a Masters in Education focusing on the 'Management of Curriculum Change'.

Throughout her career Margaret has maintained a personal interest in the arts and has promoted the development of partnerships between schools and creative professionals.

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St Aidan's School, Carlisle  
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St. Cuthbert's RC Primary School, Wigton  
Settlebeck High School, Sedburgh  
The Nelson Thomlinson School, Wigton  
The Queen Katherine School, Kendal  
Thomlinson Junior School, Wigton  
Trinity School, Carlisle  
Walney School, Walney Island, Barrow-in-Furness  
William Howard School, Brampton

### The Creative Practitioners:

Deborah Akam  
Roy Blackburn  
Adam Clarke  
Alan Fitzgerald  
Rob Fraser  
Ali McCaw  
Chris Madge  
Lucy Nicholson  
John Quinn  
Irene Sanderson  
Jac Scott  
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