

CASE STUDY: Supporting a cluster of schools to work together

Three Newham Primary Schools co-commission a literacy project

Partners

Central Park, Roman Road, and Brampton Primary Schools, Poet in the City, Stratford Circus Arts Centre, Fuel Theatre, Arcola Theatre, SoundSpark, East London Dance, Bow Arts

About the schools

Central Park, Roman Road, and Brampton Primary Schools neighbour each other in an economically and ethnically diverse area of Newham

The schools all have above the UK average number of students receiving pupil premium (27%)

This group of schools had established links as part of the 'Centre Plus Cluster'

The project



All three schools were identified as a focus for pilot activity due to their existing links, levels of engagement and appetite to co-create creative opportunities.

The Creative Schools broker played a critical role in catalysing the process of collaboration across these schools, working closely with headteachers and arts coordinators to support joint planning from the outset. The broker identified shared needs across the three schools, and worked with staff to plan a half term scheme of activity that culminated in a multi-art form celebration at Stratford Circus Arts Centre.

Teacher expertise was central to developing the projects. Collaborative planning sessions not only brought teachers together to strengthen links and share learning across the cluster, but also provided ways for the Creative Schools team to join up processes, spot connections, and maximise impacts. Project activity kicked off with 300 Y5 students taking part in an immersive performance by Fuel Theatre. Performances in each school acted as a moment of inspiration for staff and students, and provided a fantastic spring board into a term of exploring poetry and writing creatively.

Over the term, pupils in each school worked with Poet in the City to co-curate their own professional poetry show choosing the theme of 'Education' as the starting point.

The final performance, 'A Day of Dismay' brought teachers, student, and parents together for a spectacular performance that showcased student work over the term. The event featured interactive performances with professional poets Valerie Bloom, Rachel Pierce and Joshua Siegel, as well as the opportunity for student poets to share work from creative literacy projects in their school.

The need



The Creative Schools team worked closely with all three schools to identify shared needs and ambitions:

- All three schools were keen to inspire Y5 students to explore literacy creatively
- The schools were also keen to use creativity to strengthen links across staff and students in their cluster
- Creative Schools brokerage support provided valuable capacity to test new ways that the three schools could collaborate, co-commission and strengthen their commitment to creativity

Highlights included Central Park Primary school students performing work developed through a series of multi-art form workshops in which young people worked with artists to interpret the novel 'Journey to the River Sea' through a range of creative approaches, commissioned through Creative Schools brokerage. These included:

- Composing their own song inspired by 'Journey to the river Sea' with SoundSpark
- Performing theatrical tableaux with Arcola Theatre
- Choreographing an inspirational dance piece with East London Dance
- Creating an animated film with Bow Arts

Impacts

For students...

MORERAPS Poem
Composed by Y5 students

Education is a game
of pass the parcel

Bang! Goes the sound
of the school books

Students have very good looks

The students look up at the
teachers with dismay and
boredom

School is good, school is great
Excellent education ever
going

The school books cried
as we opened them

Education is like the sky

Inspiring creativity

"Meeting the poets was so cool! They are writing celebrities."
– *Primary School student*

"It really encouraged me to use poetry more"
– *Primary School student*

What did students enjoy the most about the 'Day of Dismay' event?

"When I got to see backstage." – *Primary School student*

"That poems are special like other things." – *Primary School student*

"The part meeting the poet and participating in everything! Thank you for letting us participate in the event!" – *Primary School student*

"I liked when we had to join in with the poets." – *Primary School student*

For the school...

Use of the brokerage resource to join up meetings and ideas across the cluster was more time efficient for teachers in individual schools. The ability to pool their funding also increased value and impact for the schools.

Pooling resources to maximise impact

As pilot schools, each of the three primaries received match funding of £1000 towards a creative project from Creative Schools. This investment was pooled to maximise the scale and impact of the creative opportunity for students. Investment leveraged an additional £5745 from school budgets into the projects – tripling the initial investment from Creative Schools.

Strengthening cluster links

Individual teachers benefited from sharing experiences, expertise and learning with neighbouring schools, particularly as each member of the cluster was at a different stage in terms of their existing use of arts programmes.

The Creative Schools broker supported the ambition to join up processes and build links by setting up a joint planning session early in the process. This enabled time for teachers from across the three schools to come together and plan activities across the term in a way that responded to the needs of the cluster as well as individual schools.

Making creative connections

Schools and organisations benefited from a single organisational contact reducing the admin burden on busy teachers.

The role of the Creative Schools broker within a process involving multiple schools and delivery partners ensured that the capacity was in place to spot creative connections across different projects and organisations – demonstrating a significant value in having an 'outside eye' to embed learning from creative activities into the classroom and create explicit links with the curriculum.