

## Making reading creative – Creative Partnerships and Libraries

### About Creative Partnerships

Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creativity project for schools and young people, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education and Skills.

Set up in 2003, it is now working with around 2500 schools and has made links with 7000 more throughout England focusing in areas of significant economic deprivation.

Creative Partnerships aims to:

- Nurture the creativity of young people, raising their aspirations and achievements
- Develop the abilities of teachers and their capacity to work with creative practitioners
- Transform schools' approaches to culture, creativity and partnership working; and
- Improve the skills, capacity and sustainability of the creative industries

It achieves its aims by unlocking the creativity of learners and educators, and developing creative approaches to teaching all aspects of the curriculum.

In a new report from Ofsted, inspectors say that the experience of working alongside creative practitioners helped pupils develop personal and social skills, encouraged them to be more risk-taking and had beneficial effect on their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

### Getting active around reading, libraries and schools

There is great untapped potential for schools, public libraries and writers to work together to inspire creative reading. Creative Partnerships and The Reading Agency worked with regional Creative Partnerships areas, public library and school library services on four action research projects. The project explored:

- The place of creative reading in young people's engagement with the arts and with the school curriculum
- How schools, public libraries and school library services can develop long lasting partnerships
- How working with libraries can help schools deliver the curriculum more creatively, and support creative learning

### About the Reading Agency

The Reading Agency is a charity with a mission to get more reading to more people, working through libraries and their partners. It is funded by Arts Council England. The agency runs national library programmes focused on creative reading, and brokers library partnerships with broadcasters and the booktrade. Museums, Libraries and Archives has funded development work with Creative Partnerships.

The Reading Agency's national programmes include:

- The Summer Reading Challenge - 98% of public libraries across England offer the Challenge for children aged 4-12 during the summer holiday period
- Chatterbooks – a network of child-led reading groups
- Fulfilling their Potential – a national programme focused on developing improved reading services in public libraries for 11-19 year olds

Reading, though often perceived as passive and receptive, is a creative activity in itself, and frequently an important element in other creative processes...forging better connections between schools and libraries is needed in order to release young people's creativity. *Creative Reading, John Holden, Demos*

### What did we learn?

Teachers have seen how the public library can be an innovative, active resource which helps them develop creative, independent learners

Schools and teachers worked with libraries in new ways and realised that libraries can create new approaches to engaging young people with reading

Creative practitioners can help library staff make the library's resources available to children and schools in creative ways

How creativity itself can be a starting point for developing partnerships

How different kinds of text - fiction, non-fiction, poetry, web-based, magazines - can be the springboard for a dynamic engagement with young people

A creative approach can bring books alive for children and young people with a range of learning styles

Many of the young people involved in the project had never visited a library before. Through visits with creative practitioners these barriers have been broken down. Young people have been using the libraries as a resource for writing poetry, dancing, designing a creative garden space for their new school...

*Heather Walton, co-director, Garden of Imagination Project, Creative Partnerships North & South Tyneside*

The children were fascinated at looking at the very old books and the visual nature of the art stack books....They were excited at seeing the books that the public didn't have access to. They felt special and have asked to see 'behind the scenes' each session. I think they have come away from each day feeling the library is an exciting labyrinth....

*Member of library staff, Bristol Libraries*

The openness of staff in embracing this new way of working has exploded in the library.

*Heather Walton, co-director, Garden of Imagination Project, Creative Partnerships North & South Tyneside*

[Libraries have a] Huge amount of knowledge, skills and resources, good will, energy, contacts, an open attitude and willingness to talk.

*Kim Tilbrook, Creative Partnerships, Bristol*

Libraries are more multi-purpose than I realised.... The librarians are a wonderful informed resource... our children can be aware of it [the Central Library] as an important building.

*Lucy Scott-Ashe, Headteacher, St Michael on the Mount School*

Our experience with this project has taught us that exposure to the wide range and depths of books and other resources is really the way to capture the imagination of both teachers and children, which is the surest way to develop their interest in reading.

*Jane Choules, Project lead in Bristol Libraries*

It was successful, fun and educational. The young people explored the theme of health and well-being in ways they may not have done so before. They were provided with opportunities to express themselves creatively rather than just passively receiving information.

*Sara-Jane Arbury, Spiel Unlimited. Creative practitioner on the Birmingham project*

## Case Studies

### Creating 'The Creepy Fun Brainteaser Tour' in Bristol



Students from Hareclive and St Michael on the Mount Primary Schools in Bristol have worked together to create a unique visual art trail in the city's Central Library, using the library's extensive collection of art books and the building's impressive architectural features as a stimulus for the trail.

Now children from schools across the city can access 'The Creepy Fun Brainteaser Tour' as part of a new menu of cultural opportunities available as part of the 'Catch!' scheme, which provides free transport during the school day to schools wanting to use cultural facilities in the city.

#### Key elements of the project:

- Commissioning Room 13, a group of young artists from Hareclive Primary School, as lead artists on the project
- The Librarian bringing alive the art collection, the Victorian architecture and ambience of Bristol Central Library through storytelling
- Students from two schools with no experience of working together, situated in different parts of the city, collaborating and producing a piece of work together.
- Library staff developing their confidence to involve young people as equal partners in the project.

The Bristol project shows the potential for young people to respond creatively to specialist collections held within public libraries.



### Making a Garden of Imagination in South Tyneside

The Building Schools for the Future programme brought together four existing primary schools (Cheviot Junior, Bamburgh Special Needs, Downhill Infants and Highfield Infants) on to a new campus. Inspired by work done in Paris, teachers, artists and library staff saw this as the ideal opportunity to create a Garden of Imagination.

Using the library's resources on gardens to inspire their thinking, the children created poems and artwork about how they wanted the garden to look, and explored the history of the site using local history resources. A Garden of Imagination exhibition of the children's artwork took place in the Central Library.

The Garden is now planted and shows how a library service can be an integral part of a creative and sustainable school programme

#### Key elements of the project:

- Recognition by teachers that use of the library and its resources have helped children develop as independent learners
- The library service's visits to schools - talking with children and teachers and producing 'tailored' book selections have proved very popular
- The library service showed that it is willing to take a risk, think creatively and deliver effectively

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## Case Studies

### Exploring Health Resources as a Stimulus for Creative Reading in Birmingham

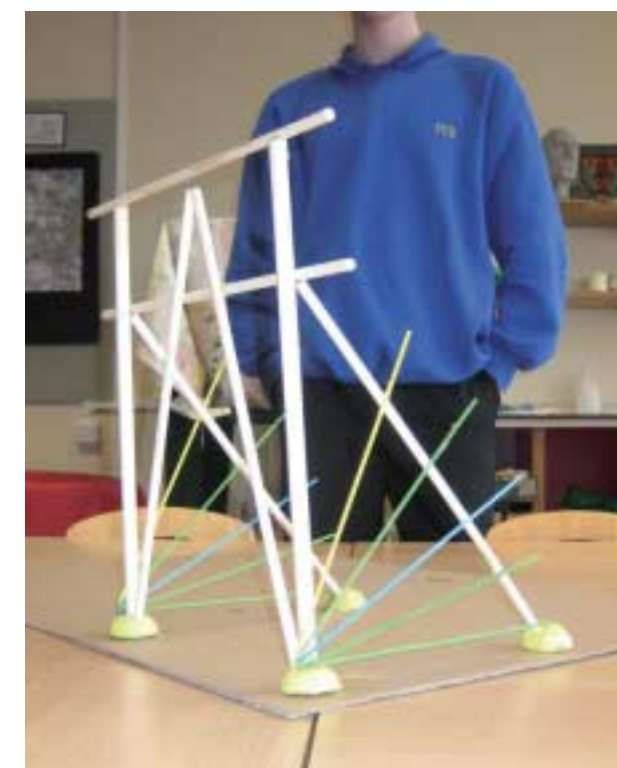
Young people from schools in the Sutton Coldfield and Erdington areas of Birmingham have been able to discuss issues around healthy living through a creative reading project. The project was the result of a partnership between the public and the schools library services in Birmingham, creative practitioners Spiel Unlimited and Creative Partnerships in Birmingham.

Students from 6 schools were encouraged to access a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books focused on health, self-esteem and personal well being through visits from staff from the schools library service. These were followed by slam poetry sessions facilitated by Spiel Unlimited which enabled young people to explore issues raised by the resources. Finally, to help young people to make the connection with the resources on offer at their local library, staff from Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Libraries invited the students taking part in the project to visit the library.

#### Key elements of the project:

- The schools library service were able to offer participating schools a wide range of stimulating health resources, which the students could use in class. Public libraries near the schools purchased additional health and well-being resources so that the students could follow up their personal information needs out of school hours.
- Using slam poetry enabled the students to explore creatively issues arising from the health resources

• Libraries have caring, knowledgeable staff keen to share their interests...They are the hubs of many communities and offer alternative learning sites. Most libraries are very open to new ideas and ways to engage young people.  
*Rob Elkington, Director, Creative Partnerships Birmingham*



### Rea-d-esigning the Library Space in Stockton

In an Extended School setting, Year 10 Art and Design GCSE students from two schools – The Norton School and Thornaby Community School – developed ideas, plans and models for a modernised teenage space in the public library. This was part of their coursework.

Working with Northern Architecture and Stockton Library Service, the young people: used art, design and fiction books as their initial inspiration to thinking about what a library is and how it could work, went on a research trip to Swiss Cottage Library and the Whitechapel Ideas Store, worked with Borders to get the 'bookshop experience', did peer reviews of their ideas and the perceptions of the libraries in their own schools; developed 3D models of their ideas and presented their designs at a showcase event at the Central Library. The library service is now looking at implementing the young people's ideas and a toolkit is being developed.

#### Key elements of the project:

- Working outside the constraints of the classroom and developing an informal atmosphere helped young people work and think more creatively
- Giving young people the opportunity to take responsibility shows that they come up with good ideas and express opinions maturely
- The generosity of young people! Although briefed to look at the young people's areas of the libraries they also offered positive and constructive designs and ideas on the general look and processes of the library