



creative schools

HIGHGATE
PRIMARY SCHOOL

CASE STUDY — TERM 2 & 3

TERM 2

creative schools

Visual Artist
Elaine Olsen

Teacher
Lauren Hay

School
Highgate Primary School

Year group
Year 6

In 2019, with support from the Department of Education and DLGSC, FORM partnered with 16 metropolitan and regional schools to deliver its Creative Schools program. FORM developed Creative Schools in partnership with *Creativity, Culture and Education* (CCE), an international foundation dedicated to unlocking the creativity of children and young people in and out of formal education, and *Hidden Giants*, an education consultancy agency supports schools to re-imagine their curriculum by placing 'disruptive', creative, and critical thinking at its heart.

Creative Schools Program aims to improve the learning outcomes of young Western Australians. It does so by activating creative learning strategies through the establishment of meaningful partnerships between teachers, creative (arts) practitioners and young people. The program is a valuable and imaginative addition to class and school strategies for raising attainment, improving well-being and supporting inclusion

Creative Schools engages with the participating school over a full academic year. In Term 1, the creative and teacher participate in an intensive Professional Development on Creative Learning. The program then partners each teacher with a creative practitioner to co-design and co-deliver these learning activities, which focus on a priority area of the curriculum as identified by the school and teacher (e.g. mathematics, HASS or science).

Teachers and Creatives co-facilitate a 90-minute sessions for students on a weekly basis in Terms 2 and 3. Each class has access to 16 weeks (24 hours) of direct engagement of the creatives with the students. Two classes from each school were selected to participate, a total of 32 classes in 2019. Term 4 is an opportunity to reflect on the program and FORM's independent researcher, evaluates outcomes.

This document describes the activities and outcomes across two terms of delivery: Term 2 and 3 (over 16 weeks). It also includes reflections from school leaders, teachers and students.

ACADEMIC YEAR 2019



TERM 1

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ARTISTS AND TEACHERS

Observation and diagnosis of student engagement in the classroom.
Planning time for teachers and artists



TERM 2

PROGRAM DELIVERY IN THE CLASSROOM

Creative Learning workshops per week for eight consecutive weeks



TERM 3

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Learning workshops per week for 8 consecutive weeks



TERM 4

REFLECTION AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

CURRICULUM FOCUS

Design and technology

Literacy

language, listening, communicating

Health

social and emotional in particular self-awareness, self-management and social awareness skills

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

DEVELOPING STUDENT INDEPENDENT THINKING SKILLS THROUGH GIVING STUDENTS AGENCY TO BECOME LEADERS OF THEIR OWN LEARNING.

The curricular aim of the term was to learn about the design and technology design thinking process through making board games with a focus on helping others.

In planning the sessions what was clear was the teacher's intention of allowing the students to lead the learning. The focus during the term was then about creating opportunities for the students to learn according to things that they liked doing.

I brought in my knowledge about systems thinking and applied this by helping students to see connections and to learn to understand problems first before working on solutions.

The students wrote down what excited them. They used their imagination when they were asked to self-organise into teams without speaking. This they did by employing body language and sign language. They were asked to write down some of the problems they encountered with the things they loved doing.

They demonstrated an excellent way of communicating without words by using sign language. Collaborating in teams they grouped their answers and came up with a number of categories that clustered their problems together. Butchers paper, post-it notes and textas were the main form of resources.





THE LEARNING PROCESS

A number of sessions were devoted to building team rapport and connection as a way of preparing students for better collaboration. This included fun activities like marshmallow challenges and empathy walks where students were paired up and asked to tell personal stories to one another. Building team cohesion involved writing down things about each other and what they thought was good about each other. The students were persistent in how they stayed with the uncertainty of learning new and different ways of doing and thinking.

The students learnt about how to define the problem. People usually jump straight away into finding solutions, rather than spend time understanding the problem. We helped the students to explore the problems they came up with in a number of ways.

Using a template they learnt to break the problem down further, and in so doing crafted their problem statements. They set about collecting data about their problem statements. This they did by interviewing each other as well as the teacher and myself. To help them understand how to do interviews, the teacher and I did a role play where we showed how to ask good questions and how to listen intently.

They learnt to dive even deeper into the problem when a team of coaches were brought into the classroom. Through targeted questioning and using post-it notes and butcher's paper the students were able to see more clearly how their problem related to other seemingly unrelated issues. Their level of inquisitiveness heightened during this process.

Part of my creative practice involves holding the space for creativity to emerge. To do this each session began with a circle check in process and ended with a circle check out process. The circles were important in giving each child a voice. The questions asked during the check-ins and check-outs helped to centre the students and to give them focus. These questions provided rich fodder in terms of the reflections that the students were offering back.

Each session also included a short mindfulness session, another technique for bringing the students into the space and grounding them before opening them up to imaginative and creative ways.

IMPACT OF LEARNING

Principal, Stephen Ivey: 'The impact on the teacher has been huge. The teacher told me that it's not about the process it's about the journey. She feels like she has a mentor and a coach in her Creative Practitioner and that has had a big impact.'

Deputy Principal, Mr Smith: The session [I attended] promoted rich learning and collaborating with the student. I liked the topics. There is a sense of calm and a sense of reflection in the Creative Schools sessions. Students are given permission to stop and think. It gives the teacher permission to take on a different mindset.'

This detailed process of working to the pace and needs of students was important to both the teacher and creative practitioner. We decided to extend the project to allow children time to fully investigate the rules, work hard on developing their collaborative skills and to allow time to refine, improve and produce quality work. The students practised journaling and so they became disciplined in bringing out their creative journals to record their reflections for how they were learning.

For this to be able to happen in a school environment, many different curriculum areas need to be used to collate and share time. This meant that timetables needed to be more flexible so that we could look at English or Media in a HASS timetable slot. Difficulties are also presented when specialist teachers provide for certain parts of the curriculum, restricting the amount of integration that can be achieved.

The teacher observed: 'I have a deeper understanding of the children. I feel different. I feel a shift in my thinking. As teachers we are used to asking questions in a certain way so we get the answers we want i.e. focused on the outcome rather than the process. I am learning to ask better questions of the students.'

During the course of the term a couple of unexpected things happened. The teacher felt so inspired by what she was experiencing through the creativity we were introducing that she felt compelled to re-create the physical layout of the class. From rows of industrial style seating arrangement she brought in colourful, bright and easy furniture, introduced fit balls and cushioned milk crates. Bland, rectangular tables were replaced with bar high tables and blob-shaped tables.

The creative practitioner noted: 'The opening up of the classroom as a physical space was an unexpected outcome, and one which has deeply resonated with the children. I sense that that opening up of physical space will also open up their minds and thinking, which of course is the whole intent of the Creative Schools Program.'

'Most profoundly perhaps, the reflections from the students show that a deeper level of learning is happening. Not only are they learning about the 5 creative habits, they are also discovering the importance of relationships and connection.'

'It is fascinating to note their expressions of happiness and comfort, a most unexpected occurrence to have emerged from the Program, and one that is perhaps the most rewarding for me. It seems as if they are learning essential life skills and the core elements of wellbeing.'

"We got on really well during the training, so I was so excited when I heard Elaine would be my creative."
(Lauren Hay, Teacher)

"She's made me think really deeply."
(Lauren Hay, Teacher)

"She questions really well. I don't think I'm that good at it. I need to learn just to question, to let the students be inquisitive; not just to question to get the right answer."
(Lauren Hay, Teacher)

Student Quotes

"We are learning to ask questions, getting to know more people you don't normally talk to, working in teams, making new friends."

"We are learning to use the five habits. It will help us work better in a group."

"It is extremely fun."

"It is calming. It lets you calm down and monitor yourself."

"We are learning questioning and interviewing, telling each other about ourselves."

"We are learning about other people."

"It is different to other lessons because we are being more in groups. You work a lot more with your peers."

"You get to have fun for two lessons each week."

"I am learning to use other people's ideas more."

"I have become more disciplined/ I have behaved more."

"I have become a bit more selfless. Before I usually thought of what's the benefit for me, but now I think about others before myself more ... not necessarily all the time, but more."

"I have become more collaborative."

"I feel more collaborative and inquisitive. I have become more creative."

"It's really helpful. Everyone in the class have noticed people are behaving better, using their imagination more, being more creative and working in a team more since Creative Schools started."

"In the beginning we found it really hard to work in teams. Then we started learning about the Creative Habits and we became better at listening to each other and working together."

"I am much more creative and I go through problems step-by-step now."

"I now understand it's not all about me and my ideas ... I can use other people's ideas too."

"One word: collaborative."

"We did lots of challenges."

"It is different to any other class."

TERM 3

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MAIN CURRICULUM FOCUS

Design and Technology - Environment, Health

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

Language, Literacy, Personal, Social and Community Health

Context (Brief summary of relevant information that may be useful for the reader, e.g. background information about the students, school, teacher or creative.)

This was a class of approximately 32 students comprising of children from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The teacher has been teaching for approximately 12 years. The creative practitioner has a background in innovation and creativity facilitation. She is also well versed in coaching practices.

WHAT WE DID

Project Overview:

The projects for this term were a continuation of the work that the students began in the previous term; how to get children to play more sports, and how to get people to eat less meat.

The focus of this term was to demonstrate what they have been learning during the creative sessions.

Help was given to guide them in developing their plans and they were given free choice in the way they would like to present their learnings. The ideas they came up with included a PowerPoint presentation, iMovie, a skit and stop motion animation.

How did we make the curriculum come alive?

By allowing the students to design their showcases and to use any medium of technology that they wished, the children chose the way they wanted to learn.

How did we make the Creative Habits of Mind come alive?

Collaboration was a key factor with teams of students working together to create their showpiece. Their imagination was brought to the fore in the way they came up with ideas and presented their knowledge. Persistence was a habit that they further developed as they came up against tension and conflict in the group.

How did we activate student voice and learner agency?

Journalling practises during each session was a technique used to allow students to reflect on what they had learnt. Student agency was evident when they were encouraged to voice some of their reflections.

Another practise that encouraged learner agency were the check-in and check-out circles at the start and end of each creative sessions. These included questions that invited curiosity, and mindfulness practises. The students came up with the questions themselves, and they themselves conducted the check-in and check-out processes.

Real evidence of student voice and learner agency was when the students were allowed to lead the final session of the term in front of a group of visitors. They carried out MC duties, conducted the mindfulness session, and introduced the visitors.

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT?

Students

Students naturally slipped into the routine of the creative practises. For example, taking the lead in the check-in and check-out circles and having their journals ready for writing reflections.

They collaborated more and showed initiative when working in teams and they developed better relationships and helped each other more.

They responded well to facilitate questioning that drew some of the quieter students out of their shell.

Learning seemed to be more enjoyable through the way they applied themselves to their projects, and through the way they were interacting with the creative practitioner.

Teacher

The teacher also naturally slipped into the routine of creativity. For example, checking in and checking out of the processes and doing reflections together with the creative practitioner.

She spent more time in facilitator mode, asked more questions, and learned things about her students that she wasn't aware of.

Creative

The creative practitioner learned to let go of preconceptions that she had about students and teachers. She gained a deeper understanding of the classroom situation which helped her to co-create richer lesson plans with the teacher. She developed a greater appreciation of the work of teachers and gained insights into how mindsets could be shifted by focussing on whole person development, which allows creativity to naturally emerge.

School

Students from other classes were aware that this class was having more fun learning. This was evident from a student that asked the creative practitioner if she would come to her class next year.

QUOTES

“I have noticed the change in their engagement with learning. They are becoming more motivated.” (Teacher)

“I have learnt to listen more and to ask my students better questions. I have learnt to make time to listen to my students’ needs. I have learnt so much from my Creative Practitioner.” (Teacher)

Students

In response to the question of what skills they had acquired and things they had learned about themselves through the creative sessions:

“How to listen to my team more; how to get involved and ask questions; I am very bossy.” (Student)

“Imaginative - if you’re not working well with someone, find ways that both of you work better; try to work better with people I don’t work well with.” (Student)





"I learnt to be a bit more open; how to think a bit more creatively; learn to communicate easier; I think a bit weirdly and come up with random ideas." (Student)

"Working together; trying to include others; I'm caring for other people." (Student)

"I'm trying to accept people's ideas." (Student)

"To use my mind more; to listen to people more." (Student)

"Creativity is a skill you can learn, not something you are born with." (Student)

"I learnt to never give up." (Student)

In response to the question of 'what were the positive things about having a creative practitioner/Elaine in your class, they said:

"You make lessons interesting." (Student)

"It's good to have visitors." (Student)

"They help you think outside the box." (Student)

"Learning to be a bit more open; learning things about friends in class." (Student)

"It's been more fun and exciting." (Student)

"We have fun and learning is enjoyable." (Student)

"They inspire me to be creative; they sort out problems and inspire people to be positive and creative." (Student)

"To be more creative than I thought I was." (Student)

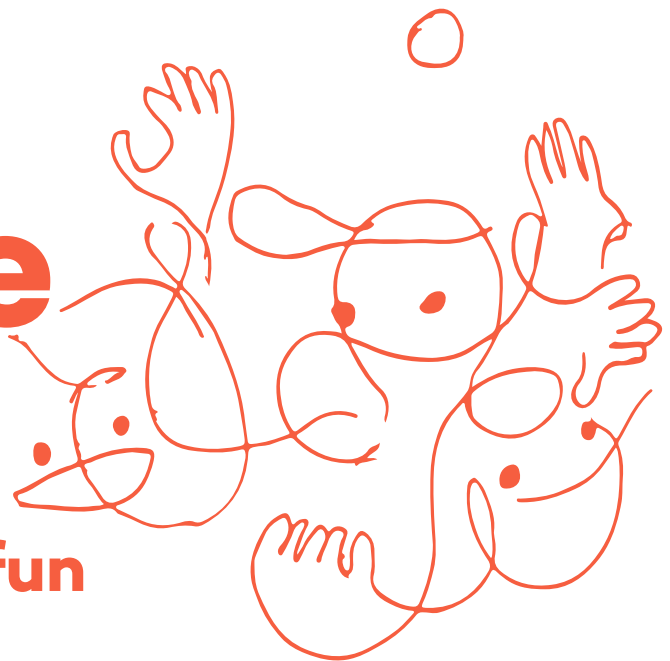
"Thank you so much for coming in and opening us up to new possibilities and how to be creative." (Student)

"Thank you Elaine. You helped me to become a better person. You helped me to work better with others." (Student)

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