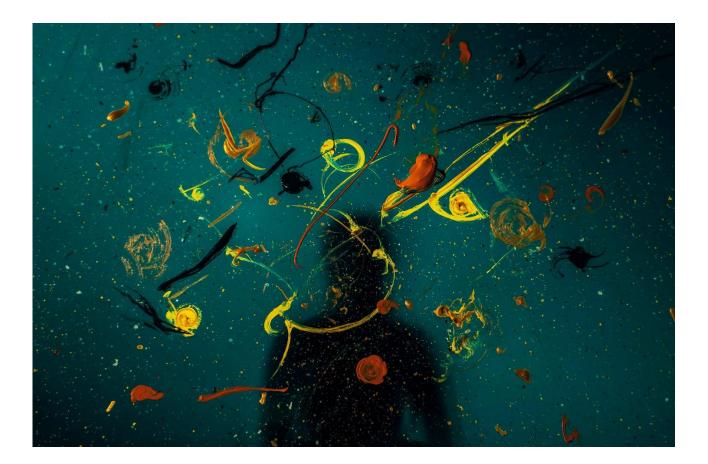# Creativity Collaboratives

YEAR 1 INTERIM REPORT 2022

Birmingham City University

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Contents

Introduction

The Arts Council England Creativity Collaborative programme seeks to build networks of schools to test innovative practices in teaching for creativity and share learnings to facilitate system-wide change. Working alongside existing school structures, teachers, and educators, the programme seeks to co-develop creative strategy and pedagogy, test out approaches to teaching and learning, and evaluate their impact on learners, schools and communities. The outcomes the Arts Council want to achieve with the fund are as follows:

1. Young people's creative capacity is nurtured, and personal, social and physical wellbeing and academic development is greatly enriched, reducing inequality across protected characteristics.
2. Career pathways are supported by skills developed through creative learning and thinking.
3. Teachers and school leaders are skilled and confident to teach with creativity and advocate for teaching for creativity pedagogies and practice across their networks.
4. Teaching for creativity is a whole school priority and practiced across the curriculum.
5. Schools integrate teaching for creativity across the curriculum including science, engineering and the arts.
6. The role of arts and culture in supporting teaching for creativity is understood, as are the conditions for establishing a culture of creativity in a school.
7. Schools work with a range of external partners including a university.

This interim report documents year one of the Billesley Primary School Creativity Collaborative. The report draws together findings from teachers, cultural organisations, the project lead, learners, and senior leadership. It offers insight into the successes and challenges of the Creativity Collaborative and concludes with recommendations for year 2.

Methodology

This evaluation is centred on exploring the impact of creative explorations during year one of the collaborative on teaching and learning. It has used qualitative, creative, and arts-based methods to explore perceptions and gather evidence from teachers, the project lead, cultural organisation representatives and senior leadership. Engaging in creative approaches to data collection allowed the researchers to build a rich picture of the leaps in knowledge and learning that can come from artistic work more than traditional methods alone. However, a key aspect of this approach was to not define what this method would be; but design it in response to practices developed throughout the year. Therefore, this methodological approach is flexible but allows us to reveal complex narratives around participation and impact without losing the rigour of more traditional approaches. This responsive approach to data collection will continue into years two and three.

Alongside these creative and arts-based methods, the research team also conducted a number of interviews and focus groups to gather perspectives, and conducted participant observations of sessions led by the cultural organisations.

The evaluation this year has included:

- Creative and reflective focus groups with adults and learners to explore pedagogical approaches, learner and teacher development, and educational outcomes.
- Semi-structured interviews with adult participants reflecting on their learning and the educational outcomes for pupil learners.
- Observation of sessions with Stan's Café and Open Theatre, with teaching as the focus. Specifically, exploring pedagogical practices and shared learning.
- Observations and participation in cultural organisation days.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was selected as it is an iterative approach to analysing data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Transcribing and analysing the data helped researchers make sense of participants' views, as well as their reasoning behind these perceptions. This approach helped delve 'beneath the surface' (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 174) and explore their viewpoints of the impact of creativity collaboratives.

Ethics

The evaluation was approved by Birmingham City University Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Ethics Committee. It was conducted in adherence with the British Education Research Association guidelines (BERA, 2018) on ethical practice in educational research. Participants were informed of the research objectives and aims via a consent and information form. The research respected autonomy, and the consent form noted that participants could withdraw from the evaluation at any time. The responses were carefully monitored so that any issues relating to diversity and equality could be addressed, however none were identified. All participant names have been anonymised and changed in this interim report.

Theory of Change

A Theory of Change was developed and produced collaboratively with the key partners at the outset of the project. This included teachers, creative and heritage organisations, the creative collaborative lead, and the Elliot Foundation executive board. To produce the theory of change, focus group meetings were held with each cohort. A focus group question schedule was developed, exploring key aspects including the issue the Creative Collaborative is aiming to tackle, the assumptions, the outcomes, impact, and change they hope to see over the three years. Focus group interviews allowed us to investigate their perceptions of creativity, what knowledge they come with into the project, their concerns, the changes to practice they hope to see, and where we might go. This Theory of Change was developed to help provide a roadmap for the project, and it is something for participants to both reflect on and discuss over the three years.

For this report we will present three key sections in the form of a table:

1. Research questions.
2. Activities, assumptions, and outcomes.
3. Short and long-term impact.

We shall then draw on the analysis from the interviews to highlight key themes from the focus group interviews.

The Research Question.

The project proposal outlined one main research question to be explored over the three years. However, during the Theory of Change interviews, other sub questions were identified by participants. These are shown below in the table below.

Main research question.

How can empowering teachers to develop creative pedagogies facilitate the environment in which learners are enabled to flourish and fulfil their creative potential?

Participants identified sub-questions.

1. How can working with creative practitioners enable teachers and learners to expand their understanding of their own creativities?
2. How can we re-think/re-imagine pedagogical practices to observe, value and acknowledge creativity/a range of creativities in the classroom?
3. How do learners engage in creative encounters and how is creativity activated in these encounters?
4. How can we give value to the affective (human and non-human) aspects of creativity? (Feelings, thoughts, memories, materials)
5. How does a creative learning encounter matter for a learner, how do teachers recognise this and, in doing so, how does this impact their approaches to teaching for creativity?
6. How, and in what ways, does creativity come to matter for teachers and learners?
7. What does teaching for creativity look like without criteria?
8. How can we respond differently/effectively to the different forms of creativity learners present? How does this expand our understanding of what creativity is?
9. What does a creative, localised curriculum look like?

These sub-questions link to the main research question in that they are all exploring the meaning, purpose, role, and assessment of creativity in the classroom. In years two and three of the project it will be interesting to see if any of these sub-questions become more prominent and taken forward as further potential area of investigation.

Activities, assumptions, and outcomes.

This table identifies the activities to be explored over the three years as set out at the beginning of the project. The research team identified these three years as a series of progressive interventions beginning with an exploration and investigative phase where teachers and schools were given the opportunity to expand their understanding of creativity. In year two this would progress into an implementation phase where the cultural organisation would work more closely with schools to start to develop collaborative programmes. Finally, in year three, this would extend and connect into the wider school, with deeper sharing across classes and academies to embed creativity across the curriculum. The Collaborative will hold a final dissemination event to share the learning more widely with other educators, professionals, and academics.

Activities	Assumptions	Outcomes
Although there are a number of activities planned in year one, the aim of the Creativity Collaborative is to offer space and time to discover and shape the programme as it unfolds. We do not see this programme as something that is 'done to' the Collaborative but 'shaped with'. Therefore, we see this theory of change as something that is adaptable, flexible, and creative. **Year One. Explore and Investigate:** A launch day in January 2022 that will bring together all the adult participants. Stan's Café and Open Theatre to develop a programme of work. The aim of these programmes will be for at least one class and teacher from each school to observe, experience, and consider new pedagogical approaches that give value to creativity.	Time allocated for the development of the Creative Collaboratives. To be clear on what the Collaborative is trying to achieve but also to remain flexible to allow for failure and the unexpected. The national curriculum and preconceived ideas of what should be taught and learnt. Class timetables. Education policy and the arts being undervalued. Different priorities between the schools and the creative partners and their understanding of creativity.	Meaningful collaboration between teachers, learners, and creative practitioners. Meaningful collaboration within and between the schools in the Elliot Foundation. Development of a localised curricular/local learning practices that values creativity. To recognise a range of creativities within the classroom and understand how to respond and develop them further. To give value to the affective aspects of creativity. All participants to be reflective in and on their creative development.

Teachers will engage with Walsall Art Gallery, the Black Country Museum, and the Walsall Leather Museum throughout the year. These will become creative thinking spaces away from the formal school environment. The Collaborative will engage with the school's locality, culture and heritage and consider how this can inform a localised creative curriculum. The Collaborative will aim to be open to the unexpected. The Collaborative will host regular half-termly reflective discussions to encourage ongoing questioning. This will continue to inform adaptations to the theory of change. This will be facilitated by Birmingham City University. Towards the end of the summer term, teachers will consider how their creative learning throughout the programme of work from year one will underpin their planning and reflections in year two. The Collaborative will consider how the work will be shared with partner schools in East Anglia. Throughout the year the Creativity Collaborative will reflect on how to recognise and give value to creative learning. At the end of year 1, the Collaborative will have identified key areas of strength and wider research questions to explore in more depth.	Assessment and performativity measures. The impact of COVID and new variants on the creativity collaborative. The need to be able to work and engage creatively online. That young people do not come with creative cultural capital prior to the project. Teachers are time poor and overworked. That teachers will engage in both the Durham Research and the research undertaken by Birmingham City University. Engagement of cultural and heritage partners. Seeing creativity as the domain of the arts. Teachers will enjoy the process and want to be involved. That this work will have legacy in the schools after the project has been completed.	To enter a process of collective discovery between adults and young people. To develop creative community connections between school, home, the local area and cultural and heritage organisations within the West Midland's and East Anglia. Young people to be confident expressing their creativity and for them to understand how it impacts their educational and personal development. To share learning with wider stakeholders through a creativity conference. To develop a creativity working group that promotes creativity across the Elliot Foundation Schools which includes young people and the local creative community.

Year Two. Implementation and Growth:

We intend to grow the network by including three schools from the East Anglian region and a new school to the Trust in Dudley. Teacher triads from the West Midlands will each mentor a school in East Anglia to support them in their creative development.

Programmes developed in year one will be implemented in year 2 in the schools. Schools in the West Midlands will continue to work with the cultural and heritage partners to develop their practice and reflect on creativity.

Year Three. Connect:

We will continue to evaluate our work and interrogate our research questions in depth for further opportunities to shape our practice. We also intend to take on an advocacy role and be contributing to and shaping national discussions on the impact of creativity in education.

At the end of years 2 and 3, we will host a conference and learning opportunities to review and adapt our practice as well as sharing what we have learned more widely.

Short-term and long-term impact.

The Theory of Change focus group interviews revealed participants perceptions of their aspirations for the short- and long-term impact they hoped the Creativity Collaborative would achieve. These will become measures over the three years, but also adapted and reflected upon to ensure they meet the direction of the creative process the Collaborative is taking.

The short- and long-term impacts were thematically coded into 9 areas:

1. Teacher professional development
2. Impact on young people
3. Teaching and learning
4. The impact of work on the Creativity Collaborative
5. Curriculum
6. Exploring the affective aspects of creativity
7. Understanding and recognising the creative process
8. Impact on the Elliot Foundation
9. A creative environment

These themes are presented in the table below.

Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Long term impact (beyond 2024)
Teacher Professional Development: To begin a process of re-thinking and re-imaging creativity in the classroom. Space and time to reflect on creativity. Explore new reflective processes that explore individual creativity and the impact on young people.	**Teacher Professional Development:** On-going re-thinking and re-imaging creativity in the classroom. Space and time to reflect on creativity. Develop new reflective processes that explore individual creativity and the impact on young people.	**Teacher Professional Development:** To embed a continuous process of re-thinking and re-imaging creativity in the classroom. Space and time to reflect on creativity. Implement new reflective processes that explore individual creativity and the impact on young people.	Expanding the creative collaborative more widely across the Elliot Foundation schools. A culture shift across the Elliot Foundation Academy Trust that places creativity at the centre of teaching and learning. Making creative connections with more cultural and heritage organisations in the West Midlands and East Anglia. School and academy trust wide creative practice CPD that is led by teachers and supported by senior leadership teams.
Young People: Engaging them in the creative learning journey. Work collaboratively with teachers and creative practitioners to explore definitions of creativity.	**Young People:** Involving them in making decisions regarding their creative learning journey. Work collaboratively with teachers and creative practitioners to help shape and implement definitions of creativity into the school's culture.	**Young People:** Evaluating their creative learning journey and how it impacts their educational and personal development. Work collaboratively with teachers and creative practitioners to continue to shape definitions of	

		creativity and its impact on school policy.	
To consider the cultural capital young people bring with them.	To work collaboratively with teachers and creative practitioners to explore new curricula that values the cultural capital they bring with them.	To develop collaboratively with teachers and creative practitioners to explore new curricula that values the cultural capital they bring with them.	
Explore a range of creativities.	Develop and understand their creativities.	Be able to express their creativities in a range of forms.	
Explore what it means to have a creative voice.	Empowering young people to develop a creative voice.	Young people have a creative voice.	
Teaching and Learning: Teachers will explore and develop a working definition of creativity. Teachers will explore and develop new creative pedagogical practices. Teachers explore the connections between creativity, school policy and the curriculum.	**Teaching and Learning:** Teachers will begin to implement their working definition of creativity. Teachers will implement creative pedagogical practices. Teachers develop new insights into creativity and explore their impact on school policies and the curriculum.	**Teaching and Learning:** Teachers will begin to connect their creativity definition with other teachers across the school and academy trust. Teachers will share and extend their creative pedagogical practice across the school and academy trust. Teachers will implement new creative approaches in the classroom, will help shape new school policies and the curriculum.	

Question and critique measurements of creativity, with the potential to develop new insights.	Develop and implement new measures of creativity.	Evaluate, share and connect new measures of creativity across the school and academy trust.	
The Creative Collaborative: Explore relations, dialogue and discourses that value creativity. Build trusting and creative spaces in which to explore creativity.	**The Creative Collaborative:** Develop relations, dialogue and discourses that value creativity. Develop trusting and creative spaces in which to explore creativity within the school environment and in the local area.	**The Creative Collaborative:** Extend relations, dialogue and discourses that value creativity with other external partners within the West Midlands and East Anglia. Extend the trusting and creative spaces in which to explore creativity to other spaces and places within the West Midlands and East Anglia.	
Curriculum: Debate the role, place, and space for creativity within the curriculum. Explore the school's locality and heritage and consider the implications for curriculum.	**Curriculum:** Develop understandings of creativity within the curriculum, its place and spaces for it to flourish within the school. Develop understandings of a localised curricula that values the school's locality and heritage.	**Curriculum:** Implement new understandings of creativity within the curriculum. Develop new localised curricula that includes and values the school's locality and heritage.	

Affective Aspects of Creativity: Teachers and young people explore the affective aspects of creativity (feelings, thoughts, memories, and materials). Teachers and learners will consider how these affective qualities can be given value in the classroom.	**Affective Aspects of Creativity:** Develop and implement affective aspects of creativity in the classroom (feelings, thoughts, memories, and materials). Explore ways these affective aspects of creativity can be observed and given value within the classroom.	**Affective Aspects of Creativity:** Connect the affective aspects of creativity to the curriculum developing new ways they can be observed and given value.	
Creative Process: Explore and investigate creative processes and consider the implications for creative pedagogies and practices.	**Creative Process:** Implement new creative processes and explore their impact.	**Creative Process:** Refine and connect these creative processes across the school and academy trust.	
Elliot Foundation Academy Trust: Teachers and learners are given the opportunity to develop their language, knowledge and understanding of creativity.	**Elliot Foundation Academy Trust:** Techers and learners begin to put this new language, knowledge and understanding of creativity into practice within the classroom. This work is shared regionally.	**Elliot Foundation Academy Trust:** The new language, knowledge and understanding of creativity is embedded within the Elliot Foundation trust schools. This work is shared nationally.	

Creative Environment:	Creative Environment:	Creative Environment:	
Re-imagine and consider the role of other educational environments where creativity can flourish.	Explore and experiment with new educational environments where creativity can flourish, including the local area, cultural and heritage sites.	Connect creative classroom environment with the community including local areas, cultural and heritage sites.	

Key findings from the focus group theory of change interviews

Definitions of Creativity

In the focus group interviews, researchers asked participants about their definitions of creativity. Interestingly, some participants stated that they could not define what creativity is:

> You can't define it. (Elliot Foundation SLT)

> When I was doing a curriculum evaluation framework, many felt quite cross that I'd missed it off. And there was a reason why I missed it off, because I think it has never properly been defined. Creativity is fun, but there isn't a structure or a sense of work that sits behind it. (Project Lead)

Other participants, however, identified key pedagogical approaches that they felt promote and develop creativity in the classroom. One teacher stated:

> I think creativity is thinking about the way that we are approaching what we're going to teach and thinking about if there's more effective ways that we could do it. Are there more engaging ways, are ways that we can get learners to retain that information better? But also, for the children, it's how they express themselves. (Teacher)

The varying different notions of creativity identified by the participants stimulated debate regarding changes to policy and definitions over the past thirty years. Starting with the work of Sir Ken Robinson, up to the Durham Commission 2019:

> It was 30 years ago, he [Ken Robinson] was saying all this, and you think why? Why has there not been significant change? And ultimately, it's because of what you've just said, which is if we're going to embrace change, we have to embrace uncertainty, and unknowing, and discovery, and what on earth. When we look at change, we want to plan and map it so that we feel comfortable with the change, rather than go into a room like we do and go. I don't know what's going to happen. But let's see and that's a very different mindset. And I think we're stuck in this mindset, even within our notions of change, making change making is good, but as long as it looks like this, this and this, we can't let it be unpredictable, because that will worry us so that in a way for me why things have not moved on, is because we live in a world where we have to measure and control everything. (Cultural organisation)

This quotation further highlights the need for the education sector to re-think creativity, and to embrace uncertainty and discovery. For this, they suggest that the Creativity Collaborative has to encourage new ways of thinking about creativity in the classroom and disrupt traditional and formulaic practices.

Disempowerment

Managerialism, performativity, and rigid assessment structures have all had detrimental impacts on the professionalisation of teachers. Since the 1990s, school education systems have been dominated by managerialism (Ball, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 2004) so much so that it is now a cultural pressure (Hallett & Meanwell, 2016), which structurally disempowers teachers in teaching (Anagnostopoulos, 2003). As a result, teachers can gradually lose power and autonomy in their pedagogical and curriculum choices as they become more subject to external control from the government, senior leaders, educational experts, and the

public (Smyth et al., 2000). This has great impact on the development of creativity in schools, which is often not prioritised, in favour of what has been termed 'academic rigor'. Within the interview these notions of disempowerment were expressed and felt needed to be addressed in the Collaborative:

> Teachers feel disempowered and lacking in purpose by the way they have to teach at present (Project Lead)

> I find there is this fear, you know, it's a justifiable fear, that is that fear of letting go control and it's that fear of perhaps looking silly or making a mistake, and particularly being observed making mistake and being observed by young people making a mistake. It's, it's, it's quite a big barrier. (Cultural organisation)

Professional development and the role of partnership

Creative partnerships facilitate links between schools and creative professionals, such as artists. There are many aims to these partnerships such as creating vibrant, ambitious and sustained cultural offering to learners. They also facilitate new pedagogical thinking and experimentation. Within the focus group interview, one cultural organisation recognised their role in helping school staff begin to work and think about creativity in new ways and the importance of their role in shaping these new perspectives:

> The teaching staff don't necessarily have the skills or the experience in delivering things in a creative way. That is what we do. We work in a unique, specific way that manages to engage all young people. (Cultural organisation)

However, many creative partnerships are short-term and do not have long-term impact on school curriculum. As this the Creative Collaborative project is three years in duration, there is time to develop and explore connections between schools and creative partners. In the interviews there were some suggestions as to how collaborations could progress beyond the short-term. These would involve collaborative planning, shared visions and expansion of the work into the wider community:

> Collaborative planning. So, team planning, planning together with creative organisations and other partners. Then taking that time partway through to pause and reflect and say is this really working? (Teacher)

> You've got a shared vision of what you're attempting to achieve (Cultural organisation)

> How is that knowledge shared with the wider community so that more people understand its purpose and value? (Teacher)

Educational Policy Change

Over the past 30 years there have been numerous policy changes impacting partnership work between schools and cultural organisations, as well as changes to the position and role of creativity. These constant changes have had impact on schools and teachers, as described by this teacher:

> When teachers hear the word 'change', sometimes they panic, because so many changes happen in education. You know, we're constantly evolving and reflecting and changing. You don't want people to see this as another thing. So, we need to

think carefully about how we share this with staff and how we make them part of the process, so they don't feel like it's just another change. (Teacher)

The Creativity Collaborative, therefore, needs to consider carefully how they implement change within the schools, how they integrate creativity into the curriculum and consider new ways of working. This has to be done in partnership with the wider schools and stem from the teachers. However, it was also recognised by the project lead that if policy is not challenged and notions of creativity not explored, then teaching and learning could become formulaic and non-responsive to learners' needs:

I think we're in danger at the moment of a tick list approach to what good teaching might look like. (Project Lead)

Performativity and assessment

Ball (2003: 216) states that:

Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement.

Issues of performativity and assessment continue to be problematic in schools today and often impact on creativity in the classroom due to a lack of understanding of how to assess it. A key part of moving beyond performativity and assessment agendas that overlook creativity is to begin to promote the unexpected in classrooms and offer space for exploration. This moves assessment and performativity away from pre-defined outcomes. This was noted by this participant:

…because we have to be open to unexpected outcomes and if we go in a room and predict what the outcomes will be, we either achieve those outcomes or we don't, we're not open to the possibility of going actually we thought this would happen but isn't amazing. Because this has happened. Something very different. So, we have to also be very open as to what the outcomes are. And not to be too predictive when we've got a general sense of what we might want to achieve. But to be that specific about we're going to achieve this miss sometimes in itself becomes an inhibiting factor in the process. That is an issue that in the context of working in schools, you know, working in an open-ended way. (Cultural organisation)

Changes needed in schools

Changes to both teaching and learning were explored within the interviews including the need to remove barriers to the fear of failure, school expectations of success, to stick to routines and practices and not trying something new and unpredictable, to allow time for discovery and space to reflect on hidden values in teaching, school and education policy:

I think that one thing across anything that we teach that, you know, some learners is the fear of failure, and kind of the willingness to try because of that learners are so scared of the expectations that are put on them that they don't have that confidence to fail. And that will be, and I think sometimes teachers are like that, as well. There are so many procedures and structures and routines and expectations within school

that for some teachers, there's a fear of failure as well and that the lack of confidence in doing a create something creatively and thinking outside the box. (Teacher)
We've always done it this way, the death of creativity. (Teacher)

To be a Creativity Collaborative, we're really going to have to start from the point of discovery together and in order to break boundaries of the possibilities of creativity within school. (Cultural organisation)
We need to unpick as well is their hidden hierarchy of value. (Cultural organisation)

Creative teaching and learning

As previously noted, definitions of creativity are complex and varied. There is a need, therefore, to consider what a more localised, school-specific notion of what 'creativity' is. Within the interviews, researchers asked participants to highlight key aspects of creative teaching and learning. The list below are the key facets identified. We will reflect on these throughout the project and see how they change and adapt over time:

- Critical thinkers (Teacher)
- Questioning the norm (Teacher)
- That constant questioning (Teacher)
- That teachers to not just accept things for face value…they [do not] just do things because that's what's been done. (Teacher)
- Inquisitiveness (Teacher)
- Enquiry/questioning (Teacher)
- Research skills (Teacher)
- Show curiosity (Elliot Foundation Lead)
- The ability to explore and not worry about failure (Teacher)
- The confidence to try, fail, evaluate those mistakes and persevere until you succeed. (Teacher)
- Failing and learning (Teacher)
- Flexibility/adaptability (Teacher)
- I think there's a connection there in this programme around developing leadership as well. And knowing what's possible and learning what's possible without being too fixed. (Cultural organisation)
- Innovation (Teacher)
- Imagination (Teacher)
- Bravery and that willingness to accept the unknown. (Cultural organisation)
- Recognising over forms of creativity, which often we don't recognise as teachers within the classroom. (Cultural organisation)
- Any behaviour is communication (Cultural organisation)
- Communication through materiality and bodily movements (Teacher)

Creative curriculum development

Alongside new definitions of creativity, the project will consider what impact creativity has across the curriculum. What is a 'creative curriculum'? was explored within the interviews. Questions were posed for further consideration through the project:

What's a 'creative curriculum'? What does that look like? Where does creativity fit alongside all of that? How does it work? How do the learners understand that? And what does it mean for their futures? (Teacher)

Some ideas were suggested as to what this might mean for curriculum:

Potential for doing something differently. (Elliot Foundation SLT)

It is not formulaic. (Elliot Foundation SLT)

A way of being successful in education that they might not have the opportunity to do within a rigid curriculum (Elliot Foundation SLT)
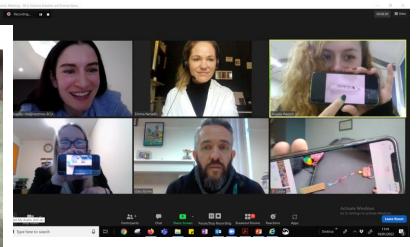
Representations of creativity at home and in school

In one of our first research meetings with teachers, we (the researchers) engaged in an online creative session which involved a range of creative activities. We began the session by thinking about the idea of becoming a Collaborative and what that means for our future work together. As the research methodology suggests, we want to work with participants in creative, playful and beyond human ways. We therefore asked the teachers to respond to a series of instructions that would help them consider the materials and matter they had around them in new and creative ways.

We asked the teachers to respond to these instructions:

- Make a zig zag
- Make something the length of your arm
- Make something to help you listen
- Make something that goes around
- Make something to hold close.
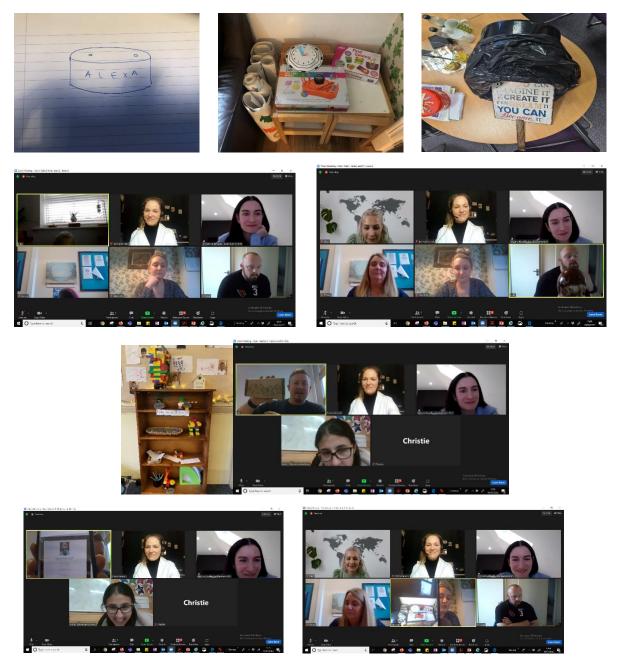- Make something that is the length of you

Following this warmup activity, we asked teachers to explore symbolic objects and artefacts around their home or school that represented creativity. Time was given for teachers to walk around to collect an object/artefact and/or take a picture.

Responses to this activity were personal and reflective. Teachers who placed emphasis on personal aspects of creativity chose items from their homes that had significance. These items were ether made by family members or heirlooms, giving some insight into the personal creative journeys they have had before embarking on this project. Other teachers, who were taking part in the session in school, drew on artefacts and items made by learners or plaques and posters promoting creativity. These symbolic objects and artefacts helped share stories of/about becoming a creative practitioner and facilitated the beginnings of collaborative working through insights into each other's schools and understandings of creativity. It is hoped that this activity can be repeated at the end of the project to see how these symbols of creativity have changed or developed.

Rivers of Influence

To further reflect on creative learning journeys from early childhood to adult life, we introduced an activity called 'River of Influence'. This activity is often used in counselling and educational research to mark critical incidents, often in periods of strain, beginnings, ending careers and turning points. 'Rivers of Influence' can help participants to represent, construct and reconstruct significant milestones or events in creative learning journeys. It also considers what we can learn from each other's experiences and how we can further reflect on our own assumptions underpinning perceptions and creative practices. This reflective tool offers insight into the richly multifaceted and highly complex relationships by which identities are built by individuals at particular points in their lives.

This session was held at Walsall Art Gallery, full ethical consent was sought prior to the activity and the right to withdraw also emphasised.

Introduction to Rivers of Influence

Participants were asked to draw a winding timeline or river with key turning points, critical incidents, or significant episodes. They were given 15 minutes to go somewhere in the gallery to sit quietly and reflect. The researcher asked them to:

1. Visualize their creative life as a winding river in which each bend in the river's path marks a critical moment.
2. Think back and reflect on key moments (positive and negative memories) that have influenced the direction of their creative and professional life. What are the first most significant memories, persons, events, or pivotal moments that they recall about their creative journey (or their development as a teacher, creative practitioner, artist, educator)?
3. Locate each important episode on a different bend along the length of a winding river where each bend represents a critical moment or turning point. Tell the story (or recall it in their mind) of this important episode. Label the episode (e.g., 'Singing with nursery,' 'Brownies' camps,' 'Terrible at clarinet, Grade 8,' 'Told at school to mime').
4. Go on mapping their recollections and chart the complete journey of their creative life (or their development as a teacher, creative practitioner, artist, educator) by recalling, listing, and labelling each critical incident on each bend.
5. Reflect on the whole picture and see what patterns start to emerge. Note where and when the watersheds, sudden swerves, turning points, currents, memorable moments, or marker events occur in their development.
6. This now becomes a navigable river representing a narrative of personal (and professional) significance that can, but does not necessarily have to, be sorted into a chronological sequence or an autobiographical timeline.
7. The purpose is not necessarily to rearrange the pieces, but rather to visualize and draw their own creative journey as a mighty winding river and to reflect upon what discoveries have marked their path (either as a creative learner, teacher, educator or artist). The technique of discovering emerging patterns of personal meaning within oneself and seeking and creating connections allows us to reflect upon the meanings of experiences in our past lives and potentially to set out on a new voyage.

This active process is emancipatory with no set definitions of what should be reflected upon. Like rivers, words started to flow as participants reflected on their experiences. Following a personal response, participants were asked to share one of their experiences with someone in the Collaborative, again seeking a space within the gallery for quiet talk and reflection.

They were asked to consider two questions:

1. What are the commonalities or differences in your experiences?
2. In what ways can we use the learning from this experience to inform the Creativity Collaborative?

Rivers of Influence: Findings

The activity illuminated some key aspects of participants' creative trajectories. These included:

- The role of key family figures in helping shape their perceptions of creativity. This often involved that key person spending time with them as children, facilitating creative practices and giving time to one-to-one interaction. One participant felt emotional about this memory and discussed how this early interaction shaped their career trajectory in later life.
- The cultural capital they gained throughout their childhood and early adulthood. For some, visits to galleries or museums were not part of their childhood but something sought in later life.
- Many of the participants described their early childhood, and the issues surrounding money to attend cultural events or transportation to cultural places. They reminisced about the creative activities they would engage in at home. One participant shared a story about a secret cupboard space in the home where they would be allowed to draw on the walls and let their creativity run free. Some other participants discussed the excitement of receiving colouring pens and colouring book.
- The role of the arts in shaping perceptions of creativity.
- Some participants discussed the role of teachers and parents in their choices for further study. For some, who had chosen arts-based subjects, discussion about future pathways for employment were had often with an undertone of questioning their reasoning for choosing the arts and what they would do in the future.
- Key teacher figures were discussed, often a couple of influential teachers who encouraged, motivated and gave direction.
- The role of school examinations in diverting attention away from creativity.
- For some, these experiences have been good where they have engaged in creative activities and projects which have had great influence on their pedagogy within the classroom.

Rivers of Influence: Conclusions

The activity enabled us to reflect on our beliefs about teaching and learning by identifying critical moments in our lives and exampling the strength of emotion attached to those moments. It also allowed time for reflecting on why and how our creative thinking has changed, by identifying patterns and particular sequences of events in our personal, teaching, development, or career paths. Furthermore, it helped us to examine what shapes us as a Creativity Collaborative; how bits of our lives, understanding and knowledge link together and allow us to talk; reflecting on our values, attitudes, beliefs, and multiple experiences that have meaning; finding out about, and sharing, what we know, feel, and think to create a respectful space for future work together.

We will further explore these rivers of influence in year three of the project where we will continue our 'rivers' including the last three years and explore the critical moments we have had on the Creativity Collaborative journey.

Observations

Stan's Café and Open Theatre are both cultural organisations that have been working in partnership with the school network throughout the project. Connected to the notion of *Year One: Explore and Investigate in the Theory of Change*, a series of school-based sessions were arranged which focused on sharing the cultural organisations' practice and building understanding with schools. This section provides an overview of the sessions and the key themes which came out of our observations.

The observations revealed six key findings:

1. Sessions introduced schools to a range of creative practices. Approaches based on inventing a racing tournament and non-verbal physical theatre positively impacted the development of creativities.
2. Sessions supported the development of creative processes including listening, failure, curiosity, playfulness, teamwork, observing, describing, improvisation, thinking divergently, interpreting, tuning in to others, and self-expression.
3. Sessions were collaborative and enabled a diverse range of creative interactions and ways of engaging between creative practitioners, learners, and teachers.
4. Creative practitioners' roles centred on building and sustaining momentum in the sessions. This included being in character throughout, being lively and engaging, modelling practice and acknowledging, and valuing learners' creative contributions.
5. Sessions gave value to the affective qualities of creativity with space to explore and be inspired by emotions, senses, objects and memories.
6. The environment (for example, the amount of space where sessions took place), impacted on participants' creative interactions.

Stan's Café Session Observations

Stan's Café shared their 'Grand Prix' session, an established model which they have run in other schools beyond this project. This was, therefore, an opportunity to share one example of how Stan's Café engages with schools. The session was 90 minutes long and was designed for one class per session. The sessions we observed were led by Stan's Café Associate Director, with support from Associate Artists. Learners were guided through the process of managing, participating, and competing in their own racing tournament on a Scalextric. Working in small groups, each team rotated across the roles of racer, commentator, and games marshal, enabling them to understand and experience what it means to run a successful racing tournament from a variety of angles. Once each team had an opportunity to race, scores were tallied, and the winning team was announced.

Before the tournament began, Stan's Café ran two warm-up activities which introduced learners to the world of racing and, in particular, the role of the commentator. Firstly, learners watched a famous Grand Prix clip featuring Schumacher and shared what they noticed. They focused on the types of describing words the commentator used as well as describing the clip in their own words. Secondly, the class played Humpty's Wall Game and commentated each contestant's round. Therefore, providing opportunities to further extend their commentator skills before their own school racing tournament began.

Working with creative practitioners to enable teachers and learners to expand their understanding of their own creativities

Enabling learners to be fully and continuously immersed in a racing tournament beyond the world of school was a priority for Stan's Café. The creative practitioners were invested in the tournament and expressed this creatively through improvisatory and lively interactions with the children, altogether creating a buzz and a sense of occasion. This created an environment which thrived on self-expression and fun, whereby trying out different personas was encouraged. Learners were given creative control and could take the tournament in different directions.

> Stan's Café present possibilities for learners to co-construct an imaginary world – the "[school] Grand Prix 2022!" – and be creative together. Stan's Cafe rarely break out of character and learners become attuned to this early on, experimenting with different personas and supporting their teammates. This is a key part of their practice – building and sustaining a new space that is different to school where young people get to put themselves in the shoes of adults/professional roles associated with racing.

In one school, Stan's Café were joined by a work experience student who is visually impaired. She shared her experience of this and reinforced the importance of language for bringing an event to life.

> Once the class has been shown the Schumacher video, [Associate Director] invites [work experience student] to discuss her lived experience of being visually impaired and the value of hearing commentary and rich descriptions to help her understanding. She mentions the importance of "careful use of words and language". The class are captivated by this and are taking it in.

This encounter between learners and a young creative who values commentary was a powerful source of inspiration for pupils ahead of them stepping into their own commentator roles.

Re-thinking and re-imagining pedagogical practices to observe, value and acknowledge a range of creativities in the classroom

The context of the session, a Grand Prix-inspired tournament, was unusual forming an ideal basis for re-thinking pedagogical practices in schools or key stages with more limited creative curricula. This was completely new ground for most of the teachers and children. As learners became increasingly familiar with this new space, and finding their place within the tournament, they gravitated towards different roles:

> Different learners required different interactions: some thoroughly enjoyed the noise, hustle and bustle, others wanted to take on quieter roles, such as counting and putting the cars back on the track or the timer.

This gave teachers an opportunity to note a range of creative interactions. However, the "creative chaos" observed by one of the researchers did raise the question of to what extent all types of creativities were noticed:

> The activity offered lots of different interactions but what was noted by the teachers? Were quieter interactions, such as non-verbal communication or engagement acknowledged? or did the louder more verbal young people's interactions get observed more? How do you notice all interactions in a session that is so exciting?

Engaging in creative encounters and activating creativity within creative encounters

Sessions enthused learners from the outset and having witnessed the dramatic Shumacher clip, they quickly became invested in creating an exciting and eventful tournament. As learners experimented with being a commentator during the pre-tournament activities, embodied creative responses became visible:

> You can see that a spark has been lit, as learners engage in the task in an embodied way crouching down to their partner and commentating, peering over to the game and quickly updating their partner.

The shift from the classroom to the hall, and the new creative encounters this afforded, developed creativities further:

> Intrigue is set out in the classroom…this then leads into movement into another room with the car race set up – this generates a different atmosphere and environment – one for play, excitement, leadership, teamwork and failure.

> Creativity on show in these sessions included: motivation, curiosity, playfulness and expression.

Creative encounters were collaborative, with a need to be responsive to other teammates and to pitch in to keep the tournament running.

Giving value to the affective (human and non-human) aspects of creativity (feelings, thoughts, memories, materials)

The exciting and competitive nature of the tournaments generated a range of emotions and commentators were encouraged to notice and describe affective dimensions:

> During the session, emotions were explored through the commentators recognising the drivers' experience. […] They were able to describe some of their peers' emotions: happy, scared.

> At one point, Stan's Café ask the commentators: "how do you think the team feel?". This gives value to feelings and the affective aspects of taking part in the session.

Watching the Grand Prix and using a Scalextric provoked memories and connections:

> Lots of the learners drew on their own experiences of having similar equipment at home or seeing cars on the television. They were sensitive to the materials and games on offer.

Teaching for creativity without criteria

While there were several rules during the session (for example, ensuring that all teammates got a turn to race), learners could choose which persona of racer, commentator, and games marshal they wanted to be:

> Learners have the creative freedom to participate in the different tournament roles how they wish. While the stages of the sessions are pre-planned and Stan's Café direct the learners into the different roles, they can take it forwards from there.

In the case of being a games marshal, this extended to thinking divergently and figuring out optimum ways to collect stray cars and place them back on the tracks, therefore developing new knowledge and understandings.

> Some marshals lay down on their fronts so they can monitor cars at eye level and be ready to rescue any rogue cars that go off the track! Others spin around on the floor and move around freely, processing and responding to the buzzy atmosphere in the session.

The novelty of taking part in a race and the ensuing uncertainty facilitated an ideal environment for developing children's creativity. They were responsible for constructing this special school event, being protagonists in the race and setting the scene as commentators.

> Learners begin to take over – countdowns, counting, timing, commentating.

> Stan's Café supported and empowered the learners during this process whereby every opinion was valued and acknowledged.

The openness of the sessions engendered differing emotions depending on age group, ranging from calm to more competitive:

> There was lots of creativity on show in the lesson that didn't have boundaries, but the early years classes seem to understand this and were calm in the session. This is very unlike the other year groups where competitiveness comes into the lesson.

Creative processes

The sessions developed a range of creative processes as noted during one observation here:

> Listening, failure, curiosity, playfulness, teamwork, observing, describing.

"Failure" could be attributed to moments such as cars falling off the Scalextric tracks, or there being only one winning team. This high-stakes, excitable atmosphere may explain why a small number of learners felt temporarily overwhelmed, something we noted in our observations as potential 'sensory overload'. This reinforced the importance of giving value to affective aspects of creativity (as mentioned above), supporting learners to feel more comfortable with failure through empathising with other drivers, celebrating small successes and being proud of all the teamwork that enabled the tournament to take place.

Ways of engaging

The variety of roles offered different ways of engaging. School phases appeared to impact this; early years participants' engagement was noted as 'calm, focused, all took turns' while older age groups were

> Excited, lively, loud, concentrating, encouraging their team members, helping one another.

Some of these engagements are captured here:

> There are different levels of engagement. Some learners are being tactical, and I overhear "slow and steady wins the race" (I think a young person is echoing Stan's Café who mentioned this earlier). Others are caught up in the excitement of the race and are captivated by this.

Engagement was also physical and was shaped by each role:

> There is lots of physical engagement, with young people cheering on their teammates and teams. Some of the children's body language becomes very formal when they are the marshals, like they are embodying this important role of keeping watch. One young person looks proud to be a stopwatch holder and they clearly are enjoying themselves with this role. "3, 2, 1 and we're off!" says one stopwatch holder.

Teacher and creative practitioner roles

The Stan's Café practitioners adopted the role of facilitator throughout the sessions, scaffolding learning and initiating interactions which developed creativity. This included motivating and encouraging the commentators:

> [Associate Artist] asks learners what words they would use to describe the race. They refer to the video they watched earlier with examples including "side by side", "slippery", and "wet tyres".

The creative practitioners support the process and prompt the children, e.g.

> - "What adjectives could you use?"
> - "Do you have anything else to add?"

Their roles also included building momentum and making the tournament as vivid and realistic as possible:

> [Associate Director] asks a marshal for the "final calculation" of laps and suggests that the lap keepers "whisper, whisper" to help build excitement and tension.

> [Associate Director] asks learners for "creative ways to describe this race. I want you guys to bring the energy."

> Stan's Café construct the world of the [school name] Grand Prix with dialogue such as:
>
> - "The atmosphere in the room is…"
> - "There's been a big crash!"
> - "Changeover!"
> - "3rd race of the day!"

Teachers were not involved in leading the sessions and were not given a specific role. In some cases, teachers observed; comforted learners who were struggling with the excitable atmosphere; and helped to put cars back on the track. For these learners, Stan's Café suggested that they could write a newspaper article about the tournament as an optional follow up task and some of them chose to do this.

Types of interactions

Interactions were frequently playful. This manifested in learners' choice of team names including "Golden Goats", which, as noted in an observation, 'the team proudly share while giggling'. Elsewhere, "Team Pogba" was chosen based on classmates' favourite football player. Interactions were also characterised by observation, teamwork, encouragement and competitiveness. This was channelled physically:

> There are lots of physical interactions with learners clapping their teammates, crowding around the track and sometimes leaning in really close to the cars. Very palpable excitement as everyone is compelled by the race.

As evidenced in various themes above, dialogue is promoted throughout the sessions, particularly in the commentator role. Learners model the creative practitioners' language or use their own describing words as a way of interacting with others.

The environment and its impact on creative interactions

One researcher noted:

> Movement from the classroom into the hall created suspense and new environment for activities.

In this case, and in other schools which moved into their hall for the main tournament, there was plenty of space enabling learners to fully embrace the different roles and have freedom to engage physically through jumping, cheering, clapping and testing different marshalling positions. In cases where the school hall was not available, creative interactions were more constrained such as this example in a school library:
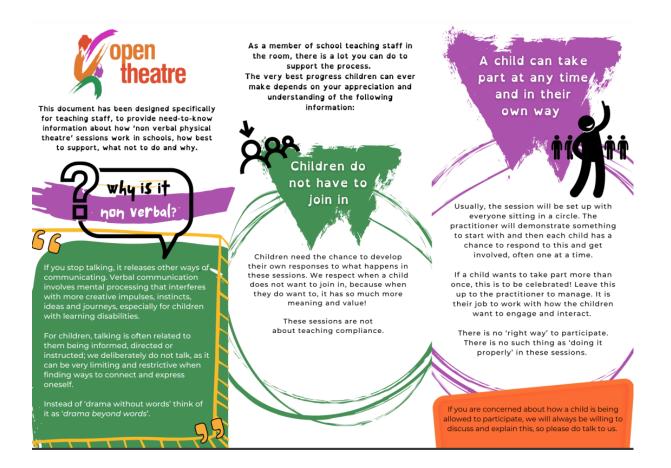
> Adding in the large racetrack means that the room is very cramped, and the learners only just fit around the racetrack. This means that they have less space for physical

interactions. Instead, the racers are repeatedly asked to sit with their backs against one of the bookcases unless they are racing. The racers can't resist getting closer to the track so have to keep moving back! Considering this, it is good that [Associate Artist] focuses on the commentators' creative dialogue as a key interaction.

So, Stan's Café adapted to this context and focused on interactions which were more appropriate for the setting.

Open Theatre Session Observations

Open Theatre specialise in non-verbal physical theatre and their taster sessions were an opportunity for schools to discover and experience this approach. Sessions were 45 minutes long and were also designed for up to one class per session. The sessions we observed were led by Open Theatre's Theatre Practitioner and Creative Coordinator, who was sometimes joined by one of Open Theatre's Assistant Theatre Practitioners. Schools received 'need-to-know' information (shown below) prior to the session. As it describes, practitioners demonstrate a series of actions and movements, sometimes using props such as scarfs and hats. Learners responded to these demonstrations using non-verbal communication, and conversely practitioners respond to the children. The sessions included music throughout, which set the tone for the different encounters between the practitioners, learners, and teachers.

This document has been designed specifically for teaching staff, to provide need-to-know information about how 'non verbal physical theatre' sessions work in schools, how best to support, what not to do and why.

why is it non verbal?

If you stop talking, it releases other ways of communicating. Verbal communication involves mental processing that interferes with more creative impulses, instincts, ideas and journeys, especially for children with learning disabilities.

For children, talking is often related to them being informed, directed or instructed; we deliberately do not talk, as it can be very limiting and restrictive when finding ways to connect and express oneself.

Instead of 'drama without words' think of it as 'drama beyond words'.

As a member of school teaching staff in the room, there is a lot you can do to support the process.
The very best progress children can ever make depends on your appreciation and understanding of the following information:

Children do not have to join in

Children need the chance to develop their own responses to what happens in these sessions. We respect when a child does not want to join in, because when they do want to, it has so much more meaning and value!

These sessions are not about teaching compliance.

A child can take part at any time and in their own way

Usually, the session will be set up with everyone sitting in a circle. The practitioner will demonstrate something to start with and then each child has a chance to respond to this and get involved, often one at a time.

If a child wants to take part more than once, this is to be celebrated! Leave this up to the practitioner to manage. It is their job to work with how the children want to engage and interact.

There is no 'right way' to participate. There is no such thing as 'doing it properly' in these sessions.

If you are concerned about how a child is being allowed to participate, we will always be willing to discuss and explain this, so please do talk to us.

Working with creative practitioners to enable teachers and learners to expand their understanding of their own creativities

Schools were unfamiliar with working non-verbally, this became a significant experience for learners and teachers, who had to step out of their comfort zones and learn to communicate in a new way. The creative practitioners were highly skilled in sharing and modelling this approach and in being able to create the foundations for teachers and learners to want to and feel able to participate non-verbally and expand their creative understandings. This

relied on Open Theatre building trust and being friendly and approachable, as can be seen in an interaction during the introductions:

> [Theatre Practitioner] jokes and says [to the learners] "well me and [Assistant Theatre Practitioner] are 12 and 13 years old!" This is very much at the heart of her interactions with the learners– playful, jokey and silly. I think this is quite important as it builds trust and sets a tone for what to expect from the rest of the session. [Theatre Practitioner] has a great energy and aura that the learners love and warm to very quickly.

Equally, practitioners helped participants to feel prepared and know what to expect:

> [Practitioners] establish some ground rules at the start of the session that help highlight what interactions will be like:
>
> - "We don't do any talking"
> - "We take it in turns"
> - "You don't have to join in"
>
> So, it is clear from the outset that communication is non-verbal and that pupils can get involved however they wish.

Re-thinking and re-imagining pedagogical practices to observe, value and acknowledge a range of creativities in the classroom

Being able to observe and value creativities based on physical gestures and embodied knowing required the creative practitioners and learners to become attuned to one another. There was a stillness in the room as participants got into the flow of the session and became increasingly immersed in communicating non-verbally.

> The session values really slowing down and taking in and sensing what is happening. Practices enable learners and practitioners to do joint sense-making together.

Knowledge was produced through movement and improvisation, disrupting pedagogical practices which rely on dialogue. Valuing and acknowledging children's ideas was important and resonated with Open Theatre's school guidance that there is no right or wrong way to participate.

> [Theatre practitioner] is great at acknowledging pupils' creative contributions through, for example, mirroring pupils, doing a variation on their movement or high fiving them.

Engaging in creative encounters and activating creativity within creative encounters

Through welcoming body language, demonstrations and the use of props, practitioners invited learners to participate in creative encounters with them or with their classmates. This activated curiosity as learners observed encounters and constructed their own meanings.

Learners brought different ideas and energies to their encounters and Open Theatre were able to build on this and give value to a range of interactions. In one case, a pupil was on the road to bad behaviour and was particularly physical in how they handled and shared the scarf with the practitioner:

> … pupil is quite mischievous and during the scarf sequence they push the boundaries, snatching the scarf off [Theatre Practitioner]. [Theatre Practitioner] goes with it and embraces the mischief!

The practitioner was able to mirror this energy and match the child's physicality, implicitly recognising and placing value on the encounter. Rather than shutting down communication and potentially making learners' behaviour worse, the practitioner trusted in the process and found a way to build on the pupil's energy to the advantage of the session.

Giving value to the affective (human and non-human) aspects of creativity (feelings, thoughts, memories, materials)

It was apparent that some learners found communicating non-verbally strange. This generated curiosity and intrigue, but it also created feelings of awkwardness and bemusement. Adopting a 'possibility thinking mindset', practitioners recognised and worked with these emotions, mirroring the mood and turning it into something interesting.

Materials and resources were used in creative ways and added to the sense of novelty and wonder in the space:

> The props [Theatre Practitioner] used (e.g. scarf, hats) took on a life of their own and were much more than just their usual purpose. Scarfs became invitations to skip, have a tug of war, build a sense of belonging, connect.

Teaching for creativity without criteria

While sequences and demonstrations were pre-planned, they were used as flexible frames and there were no criteria regarding how participants used their bodies and interacted. The uncertainty as to what would happen next promoted creative action, encouraging learners to think on their feet and be spontaneous. In one example, a learner with SEND, who was particularly shy at the beginning of the session, volunteered to take on the challenge of wearing as many hats as possible.

> As [Assistant Theatre Practitioner] passes the hat around, more pupils become willing to participate. This sequence is a real 'turnaround' moment for one child who previously didn't want to share their name or be too exposed. They gladly choose to sit on the chair and get involved with having hats placed on their head and they even help to pick the hats up off the floor. They are very good at this and even do a star jump while managing to keep their hats on!

The inclusive practice underpinning Open Theatre's approach, which promotes all forms of participation, meant that the learner had agency as to when and how they took part. The Assistant Theatre Practitioner, who had the role of figuring out and demonstrating poses which would make the participant's hats fall off, could sense that the child was enjoying being the hat-wearer and that they wanted to be challenged further. This led to the star jump, a bold and ambitious movement which matched the learner's energy and excitement. This was, therefore, an example of Open Theatre identifying, responding to and valuing emotions (see previous theme).

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Creative processes

Sessions involved several creative processes including improvisation, thinking divergently, working together, interpreting, tuning in to others and self-expression. Equally, the process was fun, with value placed on being silly and risk-taking. The joyful atmosphere positively impacted one teacher:

> At the end of the session, the class teacher mentions to me that her face is aching from smiling so much.

Ways of engaging

As the excerpts below describe, engagements included observing, laughing, and different types of physical encounters. Some learners enjoyed perceiving the practitioners as competitive or pretend enemies and would try to do something surprising or divergent to the practitioner, while others enjoyed mirroring the practitioners and responding in turn with a friendly gesture.

> Young people engage at different levels, from taking part in the games at the centre of the group to laughing from their chairs and adding to the collective buzz in the room. With self-expression encouraged so consistently, there is freedom to engage in the activities themselves in diverse ways, from doing star jumps during the hat challenge to skipping with or pulling the scarf away. The learners enjoy the to-and-fro with the practitioners, deciding whether they are friends or foes!

> One child says "no" in response to being invited to stand up, so [Theatre Practitioner] puts the scarf around his leg. The different levels of participation are visible.

Teacher and creative practitioner roles

Practitioners embodied and promoted Open Theatre's non-verbal physical theatre approach and their role involved conveying in real time, through their practice and interaction with others, that this approach was accessible to everyone. They initiated creative encounters and remained open to cues from the learners and potential opportunities to draw out learners' ideas and celebrate contributions. This required being flexible and conscious of the diverse needs in the room. This was explored further with the Theatre Practitioner after the session and their response to this is paraphrased below.

> With neurodivergent individuals [in reference to some of the child participants] they often have many things going on in their heads at once. So, being present requires "emptying" your mind as much as possible so that you can be physically there with the children. It's that mindfulness and awareness that you can only really feel once you've done it and you've practised it.

Therefore, the practitioner's role involved being as present as possible and letting go of any expectations for the session to allow space to fully notice learners' contributions. It is worth noting the practitioner's view that this state of being requires practise; Open Theatre normally work with schools over longer periods of time. It is possible this type of 'awareness', which connects with the idea of dialogic practice and fully engaging with others, will be developed further in years two and three of Creativity Collaboratives.

With reference to learners' participation, schools were guided to 'leave this up to the practitioner to manage'. Therefore, teachers did not lead the sessions and, in most cases, participated alongside their learners.

Types of interactions

Interactions were playful and physical with an ongoing interplay between the practitioners, learners, and props.

> Overall, the interactions are very playful and there is a spirit of making the experience as joyful, funny and imaginative as possible.

The environment and its impact on creative interactions

In contrast to the traditional classroom layout, chairs were placed in a circle format, creating space in the middle for creative encounters to unfold.

> [Theatre Practitioner] moved freely around the space and this was an important aspect as it meant pupils had to actively follow her and figure out and interpret her actions.

The environment was physical, but learners could choose how physical they personally wished to be. For instance, practitioners would tie props to learners' seats as a catalyst for a creative encounter in this location, rather than in the centre of the circle.

Music played an integral role throughout the sessions and set the tone for each demonstration enhancing the affective qualities of the encounters. In one example, a drone-based electronic track created a foreboding mood, complimenting a sequence based around avoiding the gaze of a scary character.

Cultural and Heritage Days

In year one, teachers and cultural organisations have been offered the opportunity to attend days at Walsall Art Gallery, Black Country Living Museum and Walsall Leather Museum. Each of these cultural institutions are part of the Creativity Collaborative partnership.

The aim of these days is to:

- Explore the potential of the museum/art gallery as spaces for learning.
- To take part in creative activities employed by the museums/art gallery.
- To consider the history of these institutions and their role in the communities they serve.
- To explore the potential for curriculum enrichment through working with the museum/art gallery.
- To think critically and develop their visual literacy and dialogic learning.
- To increase cultural awareness and local resources.
- To consider the museum/ art gallery as spaces of inspiration and creativity.

Further to these aims the museums and art gallery allowed teachers to consider the local history surrounding the schools. The museums and art gallery hold a variety of different collections that have great importance for the social identity of the areas in which their schools are located. In this respect, these spaces keep social memory alive and also offer different entry points into explorations of creativity that differ to classroom practice. Human interactions are different in these spaces, where, on a number of the visits, activities were delivered in unconventional or historically informed ways.

The museums and art gallery can also shape the collaborative perceptions of creativity. They can also have great influence on learners' perceptions. It is hoped, throughout the next two years, that teachers will bring cohorts of their pupils to the institutions. Furthermore, the

role of the project is to not see these institutions as spaces for extra-curricular learning; rather ones that can be integrated into curricula both in and outside school. Key aspects of the role of museums and art galleries include:

- They teach critical thinking, empathy, and other creative skills and dispositions.
- They can teach subject-specific content and skills.
- They can expand teachers, learners and young people's general world and local knowledge.
- They increase cultural capital; and in turn, school groups help museums reach non-traditional museum goers.

Teacher Focus Group Interviews

To explore teachers' perceptions of the impact of Creativity Collaborative in year one, a semi-structured focus group interview was conducted.

The focus group revealed 5 key findings:

1. Teachers reported having a better understanding of creativity.
2. Teachers were able to witness alternative, creative pedagogies to enhance their own practices.
3. Creative teaching and learning activities led to an increased engagement in boys' writing and learner behaviour.
4. Creative projects led learners, and teachers, to new experiences.
5. Teachers voiced that the cost of transport, distance of project venues, learner behaviour, and a focus on academic results are all potential barriers to doing school trips and engaging in creative activities.

Developing a better understanding of 'creativity'

Through being involved in the Creativity Collaboratives project, teachers felt that their understanding of creativity had developed. For those involved, this helped address some initial misunderstandings they had regarding creativities and creative pedagogy:

> I think the Creativity Collaborative is being very much about establishing what we mean by creativity. I think that's been really important … because there were initially some misunderstandings about this [and] to understand that we're talking about creative pedagogy. We're not talking about necessarily, we're not talking about creative art. (Teacher 1)

> I do think that that clarified it for me throughout this year as to what we meant by creativity. (Teacher 2)

> It's kind of confirmed that what we're doing is the right things that you know you should be doing with quite a creative school. (Teacher 3)

Developing the school 'offer'

For one teacher, the impact of being part of the project enabled them to reflect on the current school offer of creativity and what this might mean for the future.

> The impact for me this year is considering and really thinking, thinking forward, how that [creativity] can be part of the offer that [school's name] and what that might look like, and really what we want to get out of it. (Teacher 1)

Developing teaching practices

Teachers also considered the impact that being part of the project had on their own teaching practices. As a result, they reflected on their current, traditional modalities of teaching and how, through increased active-based and more child-centred activities, adaptations could be made to enhance creative experiences in the classroom. For one teacher (#4), there was

also the realisation that, after all, they were not as creative in their teaching practices as they originally thought.

> It has certainly made me consider that some of our teaching practice is quite traditional in the sense of a teacher stood at the front delivering an input and then learners capturing a lot of that on worksheets or in books. (Teacher 1)

> There's a really interesting way and different way of introducing writing to children. … I think sometimes having people coming in probably impacts your teaching a bit more because it shows you different ways that you can teach. (Teacher 2)

> So, with the Humpty Dumpty wall where they [the learners] had to like be blindfolded and talk to each other about what's happening, I was just thinking about guided reading sessions to kind of implement it for retrieval where, you know, they're doing that activity, but they're retrieving facts from it. (Teacher 3)

> Before this [the Creativity Collaboratives project], I thought I was quite creative and I, you know, my English has always been around my art, you know, knowledge and being quite creative. But actually, since doing this, I'm like, oh, actually, I'm not that creative. I'm a bit too safe. (Teacher 4)

Using creative and active methods to enhance learner engagement

From these teachers' perspectives, an important finding was that the inclusion of more creative and more active methods of teaching and learning led to an increase in learner engagement, particularly, but not limited to, for boys' writing.

> The way in which it [the project] was approached was such a creative and sort of method because … instantly our disengaged boys were very much hooked it with that [and using] collaborative opportunities that were helping each other. … Often when we [as teachers] do a piece of writing, the stimulus might be from a teacher reading a book. But to give them that physical experience and actually to really rehearse what it was that they were then going to write in the race report, which was really important for those boys. … I think it's things like that about how we hook them in the stimulus, the experience, the opportunity to gather language and knowledge before we're expecting a piece of writing, for example, out of them. That's something for us to really reflect on. (Teacher 1)

> As yet it hasn't made massive impact. … [However], it was good to see the engagement of the children, and particularly in the engagement of the shy learners and the learners that don't tend to get involved in things. And then again, the engagement of the boys into writing because staying with the Scalextric and the different [teaching] approach to it opened up my mind. … I like Stan's Café because it got the boys into writing, which never as you know, hardly ever happens, but it's something that I believe I could do. (Teacher 4)

> To watch the learners [where] they could join in regardless of their ability, whether they had a special need or anything like that, to be able to do that without using their voice. We saw some real like different sides of the learners coming out and learners that wouldn't normally have joined in, but they could because they didn't necessarily have to speak. (Teacher 2)

It was also noted that being part of the project helped, in one school context, improve learners' behaviour.

> Children's behaviour [in our setting] can be really, really quite poor. So, I always get scared to do stuff like that [the project] thinking: "God, it's just they're just gonna run around the hall and be an absolutely pain in the bum and it's gonna trash stuff." I didn't want certain learners to go in there. … But they didn't. … And I thought they would hate it, but they absolutely loved it. (Teacher 4)

One teacher reflected that, in all, being part of projects like these will help create positive, life-long memories of learning.

> And they remember this, it'll be memorable for, you know, years to come. They look back and kind of they won't remember what they wrote in their books or, you know, doing things for evidence's sake, but kind of being creative like this, it's creating lifelong memories for children. (Teacher 3)

Exposing learners, and teachers, to new experiences

Teachers commented that being part of the project exposed learners to new learning experiences in addition to the taught, school-based curriculum. Furthermore, one teacher also experienced something they had never done before.

> There was two BCU students with the standard type A people and one of them was blind. And for learners to have exposure to that because after she went, they had questions and we kind of had like, a mini psyche lesson about that. And they were really kind of, they're saying: "oh, look, she blind." But she was still like having a laugh and a joke with us. And she was still like, you know, being normal, if that's what you call it. It's small things like that, learners being exposed to. So, we had an interesting conversation about it afterwards. (Teacher 3)

Stan's Café … I just loved it, it was the kids still talk about it and they'll remember it.   … And the piece of writing we got after it. (Teacher 4)

> For me it was the Open Theatre one. … I think the open theatre one was just totally different to anything I've ever seen before. (Teacher 2)

Potential difficulties

Despite the clear benefits of being part of the Creativity Collaborates project, teachers also raised some potential issues of taking learners on trips. For them, these potential barriers included: the cost of transport; the distance of some of the venues compared to a school's location; the challenges, for some staff, of behaviour in out-of-classroom contexts and the impact this could have on learning; and the focus on 'academic' learning to secure learners' results in tests and examinations.

> It can be quite difficult at the moment because it's the practicalities of it, with the coach costs and things like that. So, it it's great to think that we want to keep taking them [the pupils] out to all these lovely places, but we tend to have to do stuff that's within walking distance or on buses and trains because of the costs that's the huge issue for our learners here. (Teacher 2)

> I have taken learners to the Black Country Museum before. And the way they present, and the live talks and things, it's just amazing [but] it's just a bit too far for us to go. But obviously we would then look at things that are closer and do similar things that we can get to. (Teacher 2)

I know, like the class I've got next year. I know, like taking them out of school trip would be difficult. So, the whole time I would be concentrating on the child's behaviour. And so, like, I've been lost with learning. The learning would go out the window sometimes because I'd be so bothered with their behaviour. If I talk more when they come into school, it is it's more relaxed for us. (Teacher 4)

When we take them [the learners] out into a different environment. There are lots of other elements that we're trying to manage and we're trying to control. (Teacher 1)

I think the challenge is in school at the moment are there's a big heavy focus on the academic side of things and I think results are everything at the moment. … I do think there's a danger that teachers will feel that they need to go down that route of academic that's we've got to get the results at the end of the year. I do think that's because of partly because of COVID. (Teacher 2)

The importance of creating time and space for thinking about creative pedagogies

One teacher commented that, in their setting, time and space was created for teachers involved in the project in order to reflect on their current mode of teaching and how more creative, and risk-taking, practices might be adopted.

It's more about mindset and space to think because the timetable is congested and workload is significant. One of the things that [name removed] has done this year is she's created space for us and she's created time for us, and it's really made me reflect on [that] there's so many things to do. [For example], like banging out some slides in a very traditional teaching style is what staff managed to do because there are so many other things [to do]. But it's thinking once the curriculum is a little bit more static and you've got those fundamentals and the foundations in place, it's then what happens next? … It's about giving staff a little bit of freedom, a little bit of time to think. How could that lesson be approached? OK. It's a geography lesson. What if you weren't in the classroom? What if you did go out onto the field? What if you did go out into the local community and almost giving staff that airspace and that air to take some risks. (Teacher 1)

Looking forwards

Towards the end of the interview, teachers were given the opportunity to consider what might be next in terms of the Creative Collaborations project delivery. For one teacher, meetings could be utilised better to encourage more collaboration for developing creativity.

So, creating opportunities or maybe instead of meeting where we all just sit down, and we brainstorm ideas or, you know, be creative together. That's our next step rather than be creative individually. (Teacher 3)

Another teacher suggested that consideration would be given into developing a shared language, at whole school level, to further enhance creative thinking and doing:

We've started to talk about whether there is a need for a framework or shared language around creative principles and pedagogies, and which I think would be interesting to explore further. … I think next year absolutely like sharing what's been understood and starting to develop shared common language in almost a framework in which we can allow staff to explore creative pedagogies would be a great next step. (Teacher 1)

Two teachers raised the prospect of delivering professional development and being a 'creativity mentor' for their school staff in developing creative awareness and thinking more 'out-of-the-box' with regards to teaching practices.

> I'm gonna copy that and do a staff meeting on it next year. So, I'm gonna copy what he did. … So, that's going to introduce that to the whole school. … It's out-of-the-box, so to speak, and be a little bit more brave. (Teacher 4)

> Could do CPD with staff to also gather their thoughts I think that's really important as well because they will have lots of their own thoughts about it. They might have thoughts about why they can't be like that all the time, but yeah, I think I think opening it up to the staff and asking them what they think, and [us] helping supporting people to plan, but not being the sounds of all knowledge. Because I don't think we are. I think it it's drawing on their strengths and expertise and skills as and knowledge as well and looking at what they're already doing that's going really well and what we can then develop even further. … it'd be nice to lead that … and then increase my knowledge so I'm more confident in delivering it as well. (Teacher 2)

The concept of rolling out creative activities experienced during the past year at whole school level was not supported by all, however. For one teacher, they felt that, within their context, further embedding at the class-level might be more appropriate before looking to develop alternative, creative pedagogies at whole school level.

> I don't think our curriculum is ready for a complete creative item for straight away whole school next year. So, I think I would like to run it as the pilot with one year group find they strengthen the floors and then in year three take it more to like a whole school approach and start embedding some of those pedagogies across school with the staff. (Teacher 1)

Cultural Organisation Interviews: Open Theatre

To explore the perceptions of cultural organisations, semi-structured interviews were conducted. These interviews offered insights into the processes and outcomes achieved in the sessions, teaching and learning and aspirations for year 2. The interview with Open Theatre revealed 8 key findings:

1. Physical theatre practice developed in special and alternative education settings translates to mainstream.
2. The sessions offered the teachers and learners the opportunity to explore non-verbal communication interactions.
3. The responses of the learners differed between age groups, with young learners being open to exploration of the body compared to older children.
4. What is considered disruption is challenged within the sessions and instead posed as children's offerings.
5. Observation in the session is crucial to understanding meaning and making pedagogical decisions about where to take the session next.
6. The notion of being ethically responsive to learners is central to Open Theatre's practice.
7. Backwards planning, as an alternative to planning based on outcome and objects pre-determined by the teacher/practitioner.
8. The role of the adult changes within the classroom to shared knowledge exchange between practitioner and children.

Working in Mainstream

A key change for Open Theatre is bringing their theatre practice into the mainstream setting. The sessions for the Creativity Collaborative schools enabled them to explore the potential of their practice beyond working with learners and young people with additional needs.

> It was my first time doing this practice with mainstream young people.

Learners' responses

As noted, taking this practice into mainstream is different for Open Theatre. In their observations they recognised some differences in the responses of learners in the Creativity Collaborative schools, compared to those of learners from special schools.

> The way we usually work is very free and it's improvised and it's led by the young people and that was exactly the same with these mainstream young people. But they're way they respond is very different. So, you can tell they've been told a lot more what to do. So then when you give them complete creative freedom, even to not to join in, they didn't want it. Because that's what I say at the start of the sessions. It was very interesting to see how the young people respond compared to a lot of the young people that we usually work with.

One key difference was the way the learners responded to improvision and freedom of choice. The theatre practitioner discussed how many learners held back at the beginning of the session and highlighted a few reasons for this. These included:

- Teacher expectations of behaviour;

- Giving learners a choice at the beginning of the session, which differs to typical approaches in the classroom where they are directed towards involvement;
- Difficulty in understanding improvision and being spontaneous; and
- Young people with additional needs taking on leadership roles.

Firstly, the practitioner stated differences between the schools, the dynamics of the classes, and age range of the children:

…it was different depending on each school we were in, interestingly. In the sessions it was either all or nothing, so one school had a very shy group, a reserved group or a really, really excitable group. And it seems like the leaders of the pupils set the pace. So, if some learners went: "No, we're not doing the warmup; that's not cool", a lot of them wouldn't joined in or if a lot of them joined in and had a great time than most of the other learners would join in.

The practitioner continued to give insight into the differences in age groups via this vignette about year 5 children:

I had a year five group that were very, very reserved. That none of them did dance, and none of them did movements. That's a question I ask at the beginning, if you've done any Theatre or dance or movement before, and there's all said no, they were all very sporty and they were in Year 5. We did a warm-up, which was OK, but it wasn't the most energetic. They weren't the most engaged with it. I think a little bit of embarrassment actually. I remember this group being particularly reserved and then when I got the scarf out to do the scarf dancing, a lot of young people wouldn't even grab hold of the scarf and it took me a while to get someone to engage. We just stood there with the scarf and looked at each other in different ways, and they're verbalizing 'I don't know what to do', 'what do you want me to do?' And I think that's really interesting. By the end of the session, all of the young people were joining in with something. It just took a lot more time.

They further explored this in comparison to younger year groups who were less self-conscious and inhibited:

The younger ones are already jumping off their chair and telling you what their names are and what their fish is called. And all of that stuff. So, you're going: "this is brilliant". And so that was more about controlling them to sit down and let someone else have a turn. Very energetic, very excitable. It just seems that the older they get, the more they've been told to behave.

The notion of 'told to behave' was recurrent in the interview. Behaviour is important to consider, especially in this Creativity Collaborative project where we are seeking to promote creative interactions and new understanding of creative processes. Behaviours typically seen as not conforming to appropriate interactions are instead challenged.

However, a turning point and transition for all the classes was the involvement of learners with additional needs, who began to lead and showed the other learners new ways of being and interacting:

Interestingly, my highlight has been if there have been young people with learning disabilities in the room, they haven't usually led before. I really love that they became the leaders in this at the start, when I'd go round and we'll be doing a verbal activity of saying what you like doing, a lot of the time the young people would talk for these learners with learning disabilities. So, they would say: "You like doing football,

don't you, Tom? And that's what Jason likes to do." And I'm like: "Oh, thank you." But then when we got started with the non-verbal work, it was actually the neurodiverse young people who started to interact and take the lead.

Creative disruption leading to new offers

The notion of disruption was an interesting facet explored within the interview. Disruption is typically seen as a word to describe dramatic events, sometimes one ending in disaster. However, within the interview 'disruption' was unpicked and instead describes a break in existing behaviours.

For the practitioner, the disruption signalled a departure from the normative behaviours and broke conventional ways of being within the classroom. Not only did disruption note a change in learners' behaviours, but also began to challenge institutional boundaries, breaking habits, new ways of looking at creativity, accepting that there are other ways of interacting and connecting:

Practitioner:	I think they felt like they needed more instruction because they're probably used to being told a lot more. You need to do this now, do this, then do that next. However, interestingly, a lot of them decided that they would disrupt. So, when they were given creative freedom, they would be disruptive. So not follow the pattern or the rule. They would steal or hide a prop. They probably thought I can do that because I am not going to be told off. And I've told the teachers not to get involved. I allowed them to be disruptive with permission.
Researcher:	How did you find that disruption? How did you manage it or reframe it?
Practitioner:	Well, I would see everything as an offer. So that's that young person's offer in the room, to be disruptive. So, I normally go with it for a short period of time as long as they're not interrupting their own creativity by doing that. If they're getting a loop or a pattern of it, then I'll tend to offer something else and go. It's more fun if we do it like this.
Researcher:	So, how does it become a creative disruption?
Practitioner:	Your communication with them is not to shut that down straight away. It's too work with it and try and direct it in in another way. If you're going to disrupt, fine, that's what you're giving here, that's what we've got to work with. I'd like you to get to a place where you can see creativity is more than just being disruptive. But let's work together to see if we can find that place. Let's see what we can do with it. Where? By engaging with that it becomes a two-way process between you and the child, we can move to a better creative place. So, it's a very non-judgmental process and I think mainstream are possibly more judgmental. I told the teachers not to say anything unless it was an absolute emergency. And they were like itching to be like, no, don't do that.

The role of the adult

We have seen throughout the findings of this interview the importance of the role of adults in the sessions. The Open Theatre practitioner equalises the space and environment for learners, working with them to develop practice. However, the practitioner has years of experience working in this way compared to teachers who are having to learn, or unlearn, existing behaviours and approaches. This requires teachers to consider new relations with learners. This was not always necessarily achieved in the 45-minute session, but some of the teachers did take part, join in, and explored their own creativity with the learners:

> Preconceptions about who the adult is in the room and what your relationship should be with them, which is either you obey the adult or you disobey the adult. That's in mainstream. In special school, although there's an awareness's, shall we say, of adults in the room there, their role in the room isn't as predetermined. So, if you go in as yourself, being a different kind of person to the other adults in the room, then the young people just go: "Ohh. OK, then let's go along with that." Then there's no questioning of the adult. And therefore, I should be either be obeying or disobeying. So those sorts of unspoken rules.

The role of the adult, therefore, needs to become more equalised, working with, exploring possibilities and new creative openings:

> …your response as a practitioner is to work with that energy and kind of shape it into a better place rather than countering. So, if you've got an energetic group, you don't say, please sit down and be quiet. You go: OK, there's a lot of energy in this room. What can I do physically that will calm the process down? Or if it's the opposite, it's a very quiet group: "How can I motivate these young people to be more energetic? Through what I do, not through what I say.

Taking time to observe

What is learning? and what is teaching? seem like straightforward questions. However, in order to move beyond superficial understandings, taking time to observe interactions not only with other humans, but resources or the environment for example, are important. In the interview, the Open Theatre practitioner illuminates their process of observation and how through looking at the non-verbal interaction they can consider the direction to take the session:

> We do a warm-up and then the warm-up is an opportunity for me to look. I know it's so well, I'm not thinking what I need to do. I'm just looking around this circle and seeing what's interesting and what people are doing. That person's doing it very energetically. And so, I'm just clocking in with those young people and basically figuring out what's my next step is subconsciously. What am I going to do next?

Critically, through these observations, the practitioner begins to make connection with the learners, making eye contact, copying their movements, noticing their interactions with the physical space, how they move and what those movements signal. All of these observations are part of the beginnings of creative connection:

> And then creativity becomes the most important thing after that. Once you've established connection you can then explore what their notion of creativity looks like and how you can work with that.

The practitioner describes this as a process of responsiveness:

> …being responsive to the young people.at the very start I'm just looking to get eye contact with the young people if they if they want to engage in eye contact with me and sometimes if they do the warm-up slightly differently, I'll start to copy them slightly differently. Just so we're making that connection across the space. But I'm also just looking to go: "Ohh, that's interesting that that young person isn't joining in. That person is sitting still. That person is almost leaping off their chair with excitement and usually."

Furthermore, it is an opportunity to explore class dynamics, personalities and preferences of the children:

> That's my opportunity sussing out the dynamics that already exist in the group in order to be able to work with them, rather than impose on them. Yeah. And that's really important. And I think a lot of those early things, like the warm-up, or the scarf dancing that we do. They are all ways to work those things out. We're doing an activity that we're asking the young people to join in with. But we're doing it in order to observe. The warmup and the scarf are to find out the individuality of every single child rather than the commonality.

Critically, the removal of words from these interactions allows the practitioner to observe more than what could be expressed by words and observe learners on an individual basis, for many learners, revealing more about their deeper perceptions than they could describe verbally:

> I ask, what's really going on in the room? Because the words aren't dominating the process, you're able to see what a child is really doing or feeling by watching a child rather than talking to a child and expecting a verbal response. Yeah, the words can sometimes be so unrepresentative of what's really going on, but you have to develop other ways of understanding what's really going on. So, shutting down words becomes a way of gaining a better understanding.

Using the body to communicate

Sessions held by Open Theatre are situated in a particular sociocultural context, that of the school classroom, and therefore relations within the learning environment are often mediated by the rules set out and afforded. Often this means interactions are constrained based on prescribed ways of being according to notion of good behaviour, good interaction and good communication through the verbal language. The environment of the classroom therefore affects learning. The emphasis on the linguistic aspects of classroom interaction, however, fail to account for the multiple semiotic modalities that help extend our understanding of the learning that takes place. Ruesch and Prestwood (1950) affirmed that the whole body can be looked upon as an instrument of communication. However, how often do educators consider the whole body and or other non-human aspects of the classroom space and their role in shaping learning? These questions were highlighted in the session with Open Theatre, where non-verbal communicative practice was exampled and challenged traditional ways of being in the classroom:

> The learners were a lot more rigid. They don't know how to use their bodies as well as the young people that we typically work with in special and alternative education. And I think that's because they probably spend a lot more time sat behind desks and being told to sit still.

The practitioner further explains the changes in recognising the body throughout schooling stating:

I think in many ways we, the older you get, the more we educate young people not to use their bodies except in fitness or sport. We don't educate people's bodies in that sense. And when you're 5 years old, it's much more difficult to contain than when you're 11 years old. So, the pressures to be normal in that sense, are greater and to behave and to be still and sit still. And all that kind of stuff in the education system is, and that's where we learn not to use our bodies and that's a lot of our work. It's about unpicking that and going use your body. That's exactly what we want them to do, and use it as a form of expression.

Non-verbal forms of communication within the classroom bring into play different biographies, histories, they can be transformative and creative, transcend difference, enabling people to communicate with whatever resources are available to them, rather than constraining them within prescribed limits of the linguistic. In the sessions with Open Theatre both learners and teachers were invited to consider that communication is not fixed, and that hierarchies of language that are deemed more valuable than others can be challenged. Learners and teachers were invited to let go on their inhibitions and explore their bodies in new ways:

So, when we got up to dance, a lot of young people, we usually work with know how to move. And actually, I'm amazed by their movements, whereas it actually took them a long time to let go, so they'd be more rigid at the start of the session and then towards the end of the session, they would be a lot more free. And that's why I said it would be interesting to work with these young people for a long period of time because by the time you just got into it, really, and they started to let go of those inhibitions.

This is further highlighted in this quote from the practitioner:

We then dance with a scarf… throughout that we're warming up. A lot of the time I worked without an assistant, so I was on my own so I didn't have anyone to demonstrate that with, so I would just offer the scarf to a young person and see what would happen. So, it took a little bit longer for them to get the idea of we're going to dance. We're going to move together. But there were a lot more rigid with their bodies. They won't let go of themselves as much. The younger ones more would let go more than the older ones.

These semiotic repertoires include aspects of communication not always thought of as 'language' such as gesture, posture, the way learners move on their seats, walk, stand, and sit, the way they tilt their head, the gaze of their eyes, the shrug of their shoulders, the movement of their hands and fingers, their smile or frown. It is this noticing of different form of interactions that allowed the teachers to see how non-verbal communicative approaches can both produce different knowledge, and produce knowledge differently (St. Pierre, 2011). As noted by the director of Open Theatre:

The body is the equalizer that enables us all to contribute equally to a process. So, the body becomes the process by which we are all engaged. Fundamentally, for us, creativity is locked into the body. It's not in the mind. It's hardly ever in the mind or shall we say, not in words, not in concepts, not in thought. It's positioned in the fullness of your body, and that impacts on your ability to learn academically, cognitively. It enables you to understand things better. That's a fundamental belief for us.

For Open Theatre these semiotic and non-verbal forms of communication are ultimately creative and should be recognised in any framework for recognising the creative process in all forms and contexts for education:

> I think for us stressing this practice has come from the creativity of young people with learning disabilities and that kind of belief. It's right for them. But this project is proving to us what we kind of intuitively felt, which is its, it's a universal creative practice. It's not limited to young people with learning disabilities.

Backwards planning

In traditional lesson planning, teachers often begin with looking at what needs to be taught. They plan lessons, choose activities, teach the material, and then give an assessment. Alternatively, a backward planning approach to curriculum design is preferred, by some, where the destination is designated before mapping the route to be taken. Often this entails knowing the curriculum standards, creating formative and summative assessments, and finally designing lessons that integrate these standards and assessments. This notion of backward planning differs greatly to that suggested by Open Theatre, who suggest a more reflective approach to planning, that is flexible, adaptable, fluid and responsive:

> Practitioner: One of the things we don't do is a lot of planning and that's a deliberate thing because you have to be so responsive to the young people in the room and how they're engaging… we go in to build a connection with each and every child. That's the primary motive. It's very simple on one level it means we don't have to spend a lot of time working out lesson plans. But we also what I used to like heartedly called do backwards planning.
>
> Researcher: What does backward planning look like?
>
> Practitioner: At the end of the session you reflect on what's happened and then work out what happened. So, I understand now that was what was going on rather than plan it in advance and so the approach is quite different, I think, to a conventional approach.

This reflection-in-action approach requires the teacher to analyse not only the ongoing teaching and learning processes but evaluate the effectiveness of an approach directly in and after the session. This reflection process allows them to self-assess the impact their approaches have had on learning, consider new ways of interacting which can improve the quality of learning, explore new ideas and take learning in a direction which has been facilitated by children's individual needs and aspirations. The backwards planning approach also enables the practitioner to change direction during the session and not rigidly prescribe outcomes or objectives. This practice differs greatly to many teachers planning processes which require set objectives and outcomes. As the practitioner stated:

> Reflection-in-action where you're doing something reflecting on it immediately and adapting what you'll do, constantly according to how it how the child responds to you.

Teacher development

Part of this project is to elicit teacher development to enable them to consider new understandings of creativity and re-form their perceptions and value of it. This year, through engagement with Open Theatre, teachers begun to consider and re-conceptualizing what creativity could look like in the classroom. This process is one of unlearning where their

preconceived ideas of what creativity is are challenged. The practitioner noted a discussion with one of the teachers about their new perceptions of classroom practice:

> One of the teachers said to me after a session in the staff room. "We just need to stop talking." She was like: "You achieved so much and you, you didn't talk once". And she was like: "I talk to them all of the time. I talk at them so much" and she was like: "It was so noticeable." She was like: "We just don't need to do that much talking."

Fullan (1993) suggests that ''change agentry'' is essential to the future development of our society and that all educators must be prepared to be effective agents of change. The way that teachers are trained, the way that schools are organised, the way that the educational hierarchy operates, and the way that education is treated by political decisionmakers results in a system that is more likely to retain the status quo than to change. But, unlearning is also a significant part of the process of inquiry, especially when teachers are trying to interrogate their own assumptions about creativity and its role within the classroom. The practitioner continued to investigate this and their reflections of teacher involvement and reactions to the sessions:

> That idea that you have to let go of your role as teacher and be a more authentic self in the room. I think it's really important and that's why some teachers find it quite challenging because they have so many. Prescribed ways of being in a room that they righty or wrongly think: "Oh, this is how I should be as a teacher." We're asking them to think that none of that applies. Just be yourself basically and discover who you are in the process. And yeah, can make some people feel quite vulnerable and out of depth and also that they'll lose control if they show a child who they really are in that sense. If they behave silly in a silly way or whatever, they're gonna undermine their authority. And all of these things are not. I mean they're valid things to be thinking about because they're there in the room with you. But I think we try to gain a child's respect by being who we are and not by pretending to be somebody else in that sense. And if that's the way we get the engagement is by saying, yeah, this is me.

The practitioner continued this line of thought by exploring the notion of unlocking mainstream:

> I feel like we are unlocking mainstream. Everything is micromanaged, every movement that the learners are doing. I think the talking thing is interesting as well because we have a very benevolent attitude to words and think they're the most amazing things, and they are. But there's so much we can't achieve without words. Words have a really bad effect in lots of ways. But teachers can use words to control and to think they're achieving things that they're not.

In order to work with teachers in the future the practitioner also needs time in the session to observe their behaviours and gauge where the teacher is at in term of letting go and being flexible to trusting the creative process. The most successful approaches are when the teacher remains and partakes in the session with the learners, being an example but also becoming vulnerable too:

> I always observe the teacher because I think: "Can I use you?" I always try and get the teacher involved. And so, I'm trying to work out by the beginning, do they join in the warm-up yes or no? Or do they think that they don't have to join it in? Or whether they let go and just go, I'm gonna let you do your thing. The teachers that are the best, which I did have quite a few of, to be honest, are the teachers that let you lead as another professional come in in but go with it, go with the young people, almost be a participant in the room with the young people and be silly it in front of that young

people, because then the young people think with Mrs/Sir doing it and they love to see that teacher do it. It's always great to see.

The learning

Although the session was only 45-minutes, learners were introduced to some important creative processes. Firstly, observing and communicating through their bodies, respecting ways of being in the classroom, and engaging with each other without words. These processes often created joy for the children, as highlighted by the practitioner:

> … they're learning, turn taking, they're learning respect, they're learning communication. They're learning how to participate with each other and treat each other like human beings. There's so much going on in there also raising their joy levels and that helps the health and well-being.

Observing this had impact on teachers, as noted by the practitioner:

> Sometimes it takes a while for them to understand these processes but once they did the teacher got emotional to be honest in some of the sessions cause they've never seen their young people do some of the stuff that they did in the session.

Year 2

Within the interview, the researcher explored the next steps for year two with the practitioner. The practitioner highlighted some key aspects that they would like to explore in year two including:

- Working with smaller groups;
- Working alongside the class teacher, sharing knowledge and expertise (this would provide helpful insight into Open Theatre's practice and allow the practitioner and teacher to reflect together);
- Offer teacher CPD to further explore the pedagogical and theoretical underpinning of Open Theatre's practices (offered to teachers within the school to share knowledge more widely. These sessions could offer opportunities for debate and questioning); and
- Establish long-term partnerships between the practitioner, teacher, and class, and to explore the impact over a longitudinal period of time.

These points are highlighted in the quotes below:

> I would want to work with half of the class, still 45-minute sessions. We normally do about five, 45-minute sessions a day, three in the morning, two in the afternoon. That's kind of on normal timetable.

> I would hope the teachers take on more of the role of an assistant in a room, so they start to work alongside me, demonstrating activities being actively engaged.

> CPD sessions where we work specifically just with the teachers and not young people. I think if you if you take that notion that you have to train teachers to be different people, then you have to train teachers to be different people, you have to have time to give them access to the work outside the context of working with the young people so that they discover things for themselves and that and also that process there, there will be questions. Why did you do that? What was going on there? Normally I'd have done this. So why? Why did you do that? All that kind of process of helping them unpick it? Not so that necessarily they understand it

intellectually, but they get the rationale. So, they're with it more and can understand it better.

Long-term work. It's really important to work with teachers on that level as well so that they witnessed it, they can see it happening, but you have to support them through.

…probably start with a little bit more work with the young people and then maybe at towards the first half term coming in and doing some CPD that builds on what they're they've observed. They've only had one session, they need a bit more time to observe the process and then reflect on it.

Looking forward: Wider integration and equalisation

In the interview, not only did Open Theatre consider the next steps for the project in year two, but also future thinking possibilities in year three and beyond. One aspect that is central to their work is the integration of learners with additional needs. A factor of this project is the exploration of their practice in mainstream and development more widely *beyond* working with those with additional needs. The practitioner states that, through their observations in mainstream, they have considered their work more broadly and how it has the power to be equalising. This is something they hope to explore further:

In terms of that equalizing process, one of the biggest conundrums for us as an organisation is that the young people, we work with do not integrate with other young people because of our segregated education systems. So, we are now beginning to see our practice as an integrative tool to enable young people with and without learning disabilities to understand each other better in exactly the same way. And we want as we go forward, we want to look at how we can foster better integration on that level.

Cultural Organisation Interviews: Stan's Café

The role of the session: Offering a starting point

Stan's Café utilised the opportunity to work with schools to exemplify and highlight their practice. The Scalextric session had already been developed in collaboration with one of the schools in the academy trust in a previous project, but it further offered the opportunity for Stan's Café to work in new school contexts and consider what new collaborations could be formed:

> The Scalextric sessions have been a, here we are, get to know you, energize the schools' session. It's a way to say we're about to arrive, we're Stan's Cafe we are coming.

> To explore new school contexts, new starting points or springboards.

Meeting the needs of the curriculum

The session was playful, exciting and created a fun atmosphere in the schools but within the session further core skills were also being developed, as described by one of the practitioners:

> We encourage speaking, listening and descriptive language. They are also interpreting... we look at many things in in the curriculum.

Within the hour-and-a-half session, Stan's Café bring the class on a journey and collectively they create a race:

> At the start, you work from nothing towards the end of that few hours you together as a group you've created something that didn't exist at the start of the day.

The race involved many activities for learners to participate in, including commentating, racing the cars, and counting the laps (see observation section for more information on the range of activities). These activities offered learners opportunities, some which would push them out of their comfort zone, to other learners who felt more confident:

> ...everybody gets a chance to everyone is involved … everyone has a job. The jobs have a wide range, so hopefully the students will find one thing within that that they are comfortable with, that they can shine at; they can engage with.

Teacher involvement and reaction

The session gave Stan's Café the opportunity to observe the reactions of teachers. In their observations they noted the apprehension of some teachers to this way of working, that might seem 'anarchic'. The term 'anarchic' used by the practitioner is interesting; the noise, excitement and physicality of the session may have seemed out of control. However, the session is carefully considered to involve creative processes that extend understanding of engagement and interaction beyond that of the traditional classroom:

> You can get reaction where teachers are very wary about losing control because it can be quite exciting and raucous for the children, and it can feel a little anarchic at times and between the points where we bring people back together to focus and the reaction of teachers to that can be oh my words. I'm letting go control of my

classroom. What am I going do? Are they going to expect this every day? What's this got to do with learning to the other extreme? Where teachers some say this is a brilliant way of getting learners to interact with each other, energizing them, bringing out their language skills. Engage in some creative thinking that we can springboard from for other activities. All that descriptive work, teamwork and the spectrum of reactions.

Differences between classes

Although Stan's Café had previously run this session, there were still surprises for the practitioners in the responses of the learners. This was particularly felt when working with nursery classes:

> We did the nursery this time round. I was thinking how this is never going to work. We had done a nursery session before and it had been quite tricky because, obviously, the sort of dexterity and the manual handling skills but actually they could answer questions, they helped to drive that session along a bit. However, when you don't get the kind of responses back, it's a harder, it's harder work. And so, to think: well, one of the afternoon sessions that learners were more reticent. And then you think, oh, maybe I pitched it wrong. But you know, I pitched it same this morning and it worked.

The resistance and difference between the nursery classes were also felt across the school and age ranges of the classes. It exemplifies that groups of learners have different dynamics that need to be accounted for and this should be considered in year two of the project:

> I think it's always that kind of when you're doing it in different year groups, different classes and one class, you know, even in one class in the same year can be very different, have a very different dynamic to the class in the next class and so.

Long-term creative transformation

Within the interview, practitioners discussed the centrality of long-term collaborations and how they are catalysts for change within schools. It gives practitioners, teachers, and schools the opportunity to explore creative processes, to test out approaches, take risks, and explore new possibilities:

> That kind of long-term collaboration …being part of that gradual transformation of you know working with the teachers changing their expectations of what is possible, taking risks.

Further to this, one of the practitioners noted the misunderstandings of creativity and partnership within a creative organisation:

> I think there is an assumption that as soon as we raise the use the word creativity, we're automatically talking about particular art forms in a particular way and coming in and teaching people particular techniques, showing people how to apply particular techniques in particular ways, and I'd and to be honest, useful those are, those sorts of interventions are, I don't think they're necessarily creative at all. In fact, they're not.

Instead, the practitioner highlighted the role of Collaborative projects is to explore with teachers and schools to new understandings and creative practices:

> ...it's more about a way of thinking and putting yourself in a position where you have to develop new thought. And then what you do with that then then deciding what to do with that thought?

It is not just schools that need to consider new creative outlooks and ways of working but the creative organisation to. The practitioner states that this is central to Stan's Café ways of working:

> as a company that's creative process is central to everything we do. So, we constantly put ourselves in positions where we're facing completely new questions and completely new ways of answering them. And if we're not in that situation, we make sure we are put ourselves in that situation in order to switch that creative thinking on. So, it's about encouraging that creativity.

Addressing school challenges and problems through collaborative creative practice

As discussed earlier, Stan's Café focus on problem-addressing and problem-solving. They work on a one-to-one basis exploring localised issues and challenges to help schools reconsider how to meet those issues via creative approaches. In the interview, they noted a number of starting questions that they ask schools when beginning a project. It is hoped that, at the start of year 2, they will be able to explore these questions with the schools and begin to consider how they can work with the schools:

> We say…we're going to address your problem in a different way.

> Can we tell you about this challenge we've got at our school and think about how we might address it? What challenges have you got your school that you might like to address? Are they curriculum-based challenges? Are they whole school to whole school challenges? Where are, where do they fit within your school improvement plan? Are they community-based challenges? What are they? And let's talk collaboratively, about how we might address them.

Part of this process is developing trust with the teachers and schools. The first year of the project has been a way for Stan's Café to begin to develop those relations with teachers and schools which they hope will lead into year two collaborations:

> These this these early steps are about establishing trust so that they can, they can be open about their challenges and trust in the way that we do things.

Short- and long-term aims and developing an eco-system

In the remaining two years of the project, Stan's Café discussed how they would like to take a longitudinal approach to school change but see the next two years as the basis in which to begin to make some changes and explore creativity in the classroom:

> I think that you are possibly a two-year programme you can make a start, ideally you want to work through with a child that goes all the way through the school. The child themselves experiencing the change, but the school going through that change in the lifetime of a child. I think that's the sort of time it takes to really change the culture of the school.

A key factor over the next two years will be to develop and promote cross school collaboration where, at the end of the Creativity Collaborative project, there is an 'eco-

system' of shared knowledge and understanding that can be distributed. Within this is further consideration as to the role of creative partners in helping meet school challenges, changing policy and perceptions of creative practices:

> Overall, one of our aims is to make sure that ecosystem is large enough so that bits of it can mature. So, it isn't we go into this school, and we do some work with them and then we have to start the whole process again by going into another school because the word is spreading and the schools are supporting each other in clusters, across their academy trust, which is one of the of the strengths of the creativity collaboratives that it's across such a large academy trust. As we're working with this collection of schools which will hopefully create that ecosystem.

Learner Focus Group Interviews

Stan's Café Session

Experiences of Stan's Café

At the beginning of the focus group interview, learners were asked to describe their emotions of the Stan's Café session. To support this, they were asked to choose 3 images (shown as emotions) from a collection of 31 which they felt best described their experience. **Table 1** shows the most common emotions identified by learners, the number of times it was picked out, and reasons given.

Emotion	Number of times picked out	Reason(s) given
Happy	3	- Because we got to ride the cars and do the remote. - Because our team won. - I was having fun doing it.
Excited	2	- I wanted to know who won [the Scalextric competition]. - Cuz it was really fun. I've never played with one of those [Scalextric] before.
Overjoyed	2	- I had a set like this [Scalextric] at home, so I practised on it before so I would do good. - When we was playing the cars instead of doing school work. It was a lot more fun than lessons. It was easy and entertaining.
Proud	2	- They said [the session organisers] I was a good sheriff. - When I was doing the commentating. Before, I was a bit nervous, but when I was doing it, I was good at it.

Table 1: Most common emotions identified by learners to describe the Stan's Café session.

In all, learners were highly complimentary of the session where the main activity (the Scalextric) was fun and entertaining and, for some, a new experience. One 'overjoyed' learner commented that it was something different to the usual schoolwork they would normally be doing. The competition element helped create a sense of excitement and happiness if they won. Two pupils voiced that the session made them feel 'proud'. For one learner, this emotion was caused through the giving of positive feedback from one of the session members. For another, although the commentating aspect of the session made them feel nervous, this was overcome, however, by being offered the opportunity to take part in this activity. On reflection, the learner thought it was something they were good at.

Emotion	Number of times picked out	Reason(s) given by the learner
Nervous	1	• I was nervous if I was going to win or not.
Brave	1	• I was brave when I spoke in the microphone. I did feel a bit nervous, but when everyone was doing it, I heard what they were saying. So, I knew what to say and I felt better when I knew what to say.
Shy	1	• Because we was with different classes and I was meeting people I've never met before.
Calm	1	• *No reason given.*

Table 2: Additional emotions identified by learners to describe the Stan's Café session.

Table 2 reveals different, and by comparison less frequently identified, types of emotions to those presented in **Table 1**. For example, although one 'excited' learner said that they felt this way because they wanted to know who would win the Scalextric competition (see **Table 1**), this anticipation made another learner feel somewhat 'nervous' (see **Table 2**). One pupil voiced that the session made them feel 'shy'; they were mixing with other learners from other classes they had not met before. The commentating activity was also raised by another learner. Previously, in **Table 1**, a pupil voiced on how they initially felt 'nervous', but later 'proud' because they had done the commentating activity. Similarly, another learner, although also feeling initially 'nervous', went on to feel 'brave'. For this young person, having the opportunity to listen to others commentate first was an important step in developing their confidence by participating in the activity.

Table 3 shows some negative emotions raised by the learners.

Emotion	Number of times picked out	Reason(s) given by the learner
Frustrated	1	• I didn't win.
Angry	1	• Somebody [another learner] was mean to [name removed].

Table 3: Negative emotions identified by some learners.

Although one learner identified that they felt 'happy' because their team won (see **Table 1**), another young person felt differently ('frustrated') because their team did not (see **Table 3**). They also went further to say that, in their view, there was some cheating going on among the teams so that certain peer groups sound win:

I kinda felt some people were cheating and wanted their friends to win. (Learner 1)

Surprisingly, one pupil stated that they felt 'angry' during this session. Upon further commentary, it was clear that this was not a reflection on the Stan's Café session; rather that a peer was "mean" to her friend.

Creating opportunities for learning

During the interview, learners commented on what they had learned from doing the Stan's Café activities. The quotations from two pupils below give an insight into their thinking processes of *how* they learned to control the Scalextric cars:

> I learned how to control it [the Scalextric car]. You can control it to make it go faster and slower when you need to. (Learner 2)

> If you went fast round certain areas your car would fall off the track, but if you slowed down then it wouldn't. (Learner 4)

Defining creativity

Learners defined what "creativity" meant to them. Overall, these pupils see creativity when they are using their imagination, when it is something different, and when it has never been encountered before by the learner.

Creativity is:

> using your imagination. (Learner 1)

> using your imagination to create things like robots. (Learner 2)

> using different ideas. (Learner 3)

> Doing things that have never been done before. (Learner 4)

Applying creativity

From giving their definitions of "creativity", learners were then asked to consider how they were engaged in creativity during the session. Again, the notion of doing something 'different' was raised as was the ability to work collaboratively in order to succeed in the task.

> When we was commentating it was very different. (Learner 1)

> I liked working in a team. … We would tell them [the other team members] easier ways to do things. That helped us win. (Learner 3)

To extend this, another learner reflected back on an earlier Humpty Dumpty activity and how that engaged them in creativity by allowing them to become curious.

> I was curious because [with the Humpty Dumpty activity] I wanted to see if it would fall or not. (Learner 4)

Open Theatre Session

Experiences of Open Theatre

At the beginning of the focus group interview, learners were asked to describe their emotions of the Open Theatre session. To support this, pupils were asked to choose 3 images (shown

as emotions) from a collection of 31 which they felt best described their experience. **Table 4** shows the most common emotions identified by learners, the number of times it was picked out, and reasons given.

Emotion	Number of times picked out	Reason(s) given by the learner
Excited	3	• It was really fun. • It was so fun. • Because I didn't know what was going to happen.
Happy	3	• I was really happy I participated. • I didn't know what was gonna happen. • I participated and it was really fun.
Curious	2	• I don't know what was going to happen. • I wanted to know what was happening like: "Oh my gosh, what's gonna happen."

Table 4: Most common emotions identified by learners to describe the Open Theatre session.

The interview revealed that learners clearly enjoyed the Open Theatre session and were pleased they participated. A recurring comment from some learners was that they were uncertain as to what was going to happen in the session. As **Table 4** shows, this caused a variety of different emotions from individuals including excitement, happiness, and curiousness. **Table 5** shows additional emotions identified by learners.

Emotion	Number of times picked out	Reason(s) given by the learner
Surprised	1	• When I saw Miss getting out the equipment from her bag I was like: "What we gonna do?"
Unsure	1	• First, I was like: "What's going on" and "I don't know what's gonna happen."
Brave	1	• When I got chosen to participate to pull the scarf. I participated.
Ready	1	• I was really confident that I participated and I was really happy.
Cheerful	1	• We don't normally do fun stuff like that at school.

Table 5: Additional emotions identified by learners to describe the Open Theatre session.

Table 5 shows three broad themes from the emotions identified: uncertainty; participation; and change. Some common emotions regarding learners not knowing what the session would entail were previously shown in **Table 4**. For other pupils, the notion of *not knowing* led them to feel 'surprised' and 'unsure' with what was going to happen. Participation was also shown previously in **Table 4**. For one young person, participating in the session's activities help them feel braver (see **Table 5**), particularly when they were chosen to

participate by the session's lead. It is worth mentioning that, during the interview, learners noted the fact that they had the choice as to whether they wanted to participate or not. All pupils in the interview remarked that they were glad they participated in the session. One learner voiced that they felt 'cheerful' because the Open Theatre session was a change to the fun activities they normally do during school hours.

Learners were asked to reflect on the *no talking* aspect of Open Theatre. A range of descriptions were given including weird, different, funny, and nice.

> It was a bit weird. It felt like it was a silent film. (Learner 2)

> I'm used to it. I don't talk a lot at home. But it was different to what we do at school. (Learner 3)

> It was funny cuz Miss was making us laugh and we was laughing inside [our heads]. It just felt nice and made me happy. (Learner 4)

The notion of the session being "fun", in particular, was helpful in creating a relaxing atmosphere:

> Miss showed us the funniness. It was so much fun and helped us relax. (Learner 1)

Music and movement

Learners commented on the music during the session and how it related to *no talking*. They observed and appreciated how the session lead would match her emotions to the music.

> The music helped show her expressions. She was reacting to the music. (Learner 2)

> The music spoke for her through movement. I thought that was really good. (Learner 4)

Defining creativity

Learners were asked to define what "creativity" meant to them. Overall, they feel creative when it is something new, when they are using their imagination, when they are thinking outside the box, when it is something different, and when they are engaged in experimentation.

Creativity is:

> to make new stuff and try something new. (Learner 1)

> using your imagination. (Learner 2)

> thinking outside the box and doing something different. (Learner 3)

> when sometimes something works and sometimes it doesn't. It's when you experiment. (Learner 4)

Applying creativity

From giving their definitions of "creativity", learners were then asked to consider a time when they were most creative. In their responses, learners largely commented that they have felt most creative in art lessons.

> In school with art marking a sculpture. (Learner 1)

> I drew a picture with lots of colours. (Learner 2)

> With watercolour paints. I painted a wonky house and it was one of my best pieces. (Learner 3)

> In my art lesson. I painted clouds, but I painted them differently to everyone else. I made little candy clouds because that's what I'd love to have. I used my imagination. (Learner 4)

Two learners also noted how they have been creative in other aspects of the school day. For example, creating instruments in a science lesson:

> Making instruments for science to make sounds. I made a guitar. (Learner 2)

as well as during social time:

> I make up most of the games me and my friends play. (Learner 3)

Based on learners' understanding that creativity is about doing something 'different' (see their definitions of "creativity" above), the young people considered the Open Theatre session as creative:

> It [The Open Theatre session] was creative because we used normal objects and we did something different with them. (Learner 1)

Cross-curricular creativity

As some learners had identified areas outside of art lessons when they felt they have been creative, they were asked to consider additional subjects. The young people voiced how they are given opportunities to draw, colour, and use their imagination in mathematics and English lessons.

> We have mathematical colouring. That's when we have to solve the times tables and it tells you what number the colour is. (Learner 2)

> In maths we've been learning about symmetry and we've been drawing lots of shapes with mirrors. (Learner 3)

> We also get to be creative in English, like we can write whatever we want. (Learner 4)

Conclusion

This conclusion will draw together the key themes from the evaluation activities in year one. They will be presented under four themes:

1. The role of working with cultural organisations to expand teachers' understanding of creativity and the creative process.
2. Exploring non-verbal and affective qualities of creativity.
3. Exploring creative processes with learners and the impact of this on their understanding of creativity.
4. Professional development for the cultural organisations.

The role of working with cultural organisations to expand teachers understanding of creativity and the creative process.

A key part of year one has been to try to expand the teachers' understanding of creativity. Teachers have been given the opportunity to have some insights into the ways that cultural organisations work through sessions provided in school by Open Theatre and Stan's Café as well as visits to local cultural organisations. These encounters have enabled them to re-consider how they work with cultural organisations and what impact this could have on learning, how collaborative working could enrich the curriculum and help develop a curriculum that is localised, as well as exampling new ways of exploring creative processes within the classroom.

In year one of the project, teachers have been through a series of processes helping them reconsider new outlooks of creativity. These include:

- Reflection time to reconsider significant milestones in their own personal and professional development, and how these experiences impact teaching and learning;
- Being encouraged to think about new creative approaches that could be developed in the classroom;
- Being offered the opportunity to take part in out-of-school cultural organisation days, and consider the impact of these different learning environments for the development of a creative and localised curriculum;
- Being given the opportunity to observe and take part in two sessions led by Open Theatre and Stan's Café giving insight into new forms of creative practice. In particular, the affective qualities of creativity and what this means for classroom practice. Observing these new practices has further given them the opportunity to reflect on the impact of these engagements on teaching and learning and what these affective qualities of creativity mean for future practice; and
- Being offered the opportunity to come together as a group of teachers and cultural organisations to begin to form relations across the collaborative.

Exploring non-verbal and affective qualities of creativity

Interactions within the classroom are multi-modal. Working with Open Theatre and Stan's Café has allowed teachers the opportunity to consider what these multi-modal creative ways of being within the classroom look like and how they could be furthered within their classrooms. Key aspects to these practices include the consideration of non-verbal, physical, and bodily communication and interaction; working with materials and artefacts;

and creating new spaces for learning. Furthermore, how these approaches open creative possibilities for many learners who find it difficult to engage in traditional classroom encounters.

Exploring creative processes with learners and the impact of this on their understanding of creativity

Across the two schools, learners shared similar views as to what "creativity" is. Some of their definitions included: using your imagination, doing something different, thinking outside the box, and being engaged in experimentation. Working with Stan's Café and Open Theatre allowed learners to engage in these creative practices, something which they all said they enjoyed. Within the school-based curriculum, some learners gave numerous examples of when they have been creative during art lessons but found it challenging to identify creativity in other subjects beyond drawing and colouring. This is something which can be supported by the work of Stan's Café and Open Theatre.

Professional development for the cultural organisations

Not only has year one impacted on teachers' professional practice, but also on those of the cultural organisations. All organisations have received insight into the needs of schools as well as developing new collaborations. For Open Theatre this has meant moving their practice, developed in special schools, into a mainstream setting and exploring the impact of this work on a wider and diverse range of learners. For Stan's Café, the opportunity to work in new schools has allowed them to consider their practice with new age ranges and the potential impact their work could have on a cluster of schools within an academy trust.

Arts Council England Outcomes: Reflections and next steps

As stated at the beginning of this report, the Arts Council England Creativity Collaborative programme seeks to build networks of schools to test innovative practices in teaching for creativity and share learnings to facilitate system-wide change. In order to do this, several outcomes have been identified.

In response to the outcomes set out by Arts Council England, this section offers a very brief summary of the progress made towards these in year 1, and highlights what the next steps might be considered for year two. For convenience and clarity, the outcomes are re-presented, and numbered, here, along with bullet-point summaries describing current progress.

1. Young people's creative capacity is nurtured, and personal, social and physical wellbeing and academic development is greatly enriched, reducing inequality across protected characteristics.
   - This will be developed and explored with learners in year 2.

2. Career pathways are supported by skills developed through creative learning and thinking.

3. Teachers and school leaders are skilled and confident to teach with creativity and advocate for teaching for creativity pedagogies and practice across their networks.
   - The notion of creativity was explored in year one but building confidence and understanding of pedagogy and practices that nurture creativity will be developed further in year 2.

4. Teaching for creativity is a whole school priority and practiced across the curriculum.
   - This will be developed in year 2 via more localised projects in schools.

5. Schools integrate teaching for creativity across the curriculum including science, engineering and the arts.

6. The role of arts and culture in supporting teaching for creativity is understood, as are the conditions for establishing a culture of creativity in a school.
   - This has been explored in year one and will be further development into year 2.

7. Schools work with a range of external partners including a university.
   - Partnership working has been central to year one. This will continue in year two via localised school-based projects. The research team at Birmingham City University will continue their evaluation into year two and provide feedback throughout the year to support progress and reflection.

Recommendations for Year 2

This report has shown the diverse range of activities undertaken in year 1 of the Creativity Collaboratives, and the ranges of impacts that these activities have had on the professional development on the teachers, cultural organisations, teaching and learning and learners. Through dialogue with the participants in this evaluation we have been able to unpick practice, teaching, and learning. To help plan and make further developments in year 2 we would like to highlight some areas for consideration and recommendations. These recommendations are offered as potential areas for consideration and are not definitive.

- To develop localised projects for each school and for these projects to be over a longitudinal period to allow creative processes to be explored and developed.
- For creative practitioners to provide teacher CPD as part of the localised projects to support the exploration and development of creative processes and practices.
- For teachers to document the development of these projects and the ways they impact teaching approaches, the learners, and the development of curriculum. This could be recorded through key evaluation processes such as photographic documentation, reflections and mapping exercises, as well as interviews.
- To consider and develop a localised academy trust definition of "creativity".
- To create a localised academy trust creativity framework that identifies key creative processes and everyday creativities. Furthermore, creating a framework that makes these processes accessible and observable for learners within the classroom so they can understand the learning involved at a deeper level. This framework should include and account for communication and creative meaning making beyond the verbal, considering affective qualities such as the body communication and or other non-human aspects of creativity.
- To further consider the role of cultural institutions (e.g. Walsall Art Gallery, Black Country Living Museum and Walsall Leather Museum) in shaping perceptions of creativity. How will these organisations be utilised to develop creativity in schools in year 2? How will their involvement help the development of a localised creative curriculum? How will their involvement help in the creation of an academy trust creativity framework?
- To consider what role learners play in shaping perceptions of creativity in school and across the academy trust.
- To offer more opportunities for teachers and cultural organisations to gather to discuss and reflect on their learning.
- To work and collaborate with teachers in aspects of creative planning, sharing a common vision for creativity, and expansion of creativity into the wider curriculum.
- To further involve senior leadership teams and the academy executive board to ensure longer-term, systemic creative change. This could be supported through specific training sessions led by Open Theatre and Stan's Café for senior leadership and executive teams as well as sharing of the work in year 2 by the teachers.
- To work with school leadership teams to implement change in schools on how to integrate creativity into the wider curriculum.
- To work with senior leaders and teachers in devising an understanding into the assessment of creativity in the classroom.
- To consider, at the end of year two, the place and role of creativity in school and academy trust policy.
- To consider exploring non-verbal and affective qualities of creativity. Do these affordances open up possibilities for new creative action?

- To support schools to further broaden learners' and teachers' understanding of creativity and how creative acts and processes can be experienced beyond the arts.

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