



Creativity Toolkit



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Introduction and Welcome

Welcome to the Elliot Foundation Creativity toolkit. Our aim is that the toolkit will support teachers in exploring ways to develop teaching for creativity in their classrooms. We also intend to support leaders and staff to promote a culture of creativity across their schools as well as more widely across our academy trust and beyond.

Our Creativity toolkit is the result of a three year programme as part of the Arts Council England Creativity Collaboratives pilot. We have worked as a network of schools in the West Midlands and East Anglia alongside creative partners, Stan's Cafe, Open Theatre and Sampad to explore creativity in teaching. The programme has been evaluated by Dr. Victoria Kinsella-Hadjinestoros at Birmingham City University to identify the features of creative teaching which have an impact on children's experiences and achievement in the classroom. We intend to challenge our definition of effective teaching and assessment in order to evaluate effectiveness through a focus on inclusion and innovation.

I first became interested in the importance of creativity in education several years ago, when I started my first headship in Birmingham. The school was in a tough area but families wanted their children to do well. A small group of children with challenging behaviour were visiting a nearby allotment to work on a gardening project and we weren't seeing any tangible outcomes or changes in practice as a result. We agreed it wasn't working. It wasn't working because it was seen as an add-on, something for a difficult group of boys to do while everyone else got on with 'proper work'. However, we had access to a talented artist practitioner and a small budget so we got to work on reshaping the programme and came up with our research question. How can we improve

standards in writing in Year 4 through creative teaching strategies? The result? A professional film, written and produced by the class through gardening and sensory experiences while on the allotment. Standards in writing soared and so began my own journey into developing creative practices not only as ways to engage children's interest in school but as the core element in driving school improvement. A commitment to the importance of creativity as a key factor not only in school improvement but also the environment in which we work has been a core principle in my work as a school leader. Making fundamental changes to our curricula and our pedagogy isn't easy. However, we now have a framework and a guide based on comprehensive research across our schools. It is up to us to be curious, to be open minded and see the impact of what we can do.

As you explore this toolkit, I encourage you to reflect on the following questions: **How can I develop my approaches to teaching for creativity? What pedagogical approaches could I use in the classroom? How can I recognise and give value to creativity? And how can we develop a culture of creativity in our school?**

By engaging with these questions and applying the toolkit's insights, I hope you will be inspired to foster creativity. Together, we can nurture environments where curiosity flourishes, and creativity becomes a driving factor for improvement and inclusion.

The Purpose of this Toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is to help teachers and learners develop their teaching for creativity and explore creative learning in the classroom.

It is relevant to those teaching across age ranges from Early Years up to Key Stage 2. It is intended to be used alongside the development of schemes of work (SoWs) and lesson plans (LPs) to address these questions:

- **How can I develop my approaches to teaching for creativity?**
- **What pedagogical approaches could I use in the classroom?**
- **How can I recognise and give value to creativity?**
- **How can we develop a culture of creativity in our school?**



Context

This toolkit was developed as a result of the Arts Council England Creativity Collaboratives' three-year programme, which ran from 2021 to 2024.

The programme responded to recommendations from the [Durham Commission on Creativity and Education](#). It sought to build networks of schools to test innovative practices in teaching for creativity, and to share learning to facilitate system-wide change. The programme also aimed to co-develop creative strategies and pedagogies, test out approaches to teaching and learning, and evaluate their impact on learners, schools, and communities. The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust West Midlands Creativity Collaborative was one of 8 projects run as part of the nationwide programme. The research question that guided our collaborative was:

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

In partnership with a range of organisations including Stan's Cafe, Open Theatre and SAMPAD, we investigated new pedagogical approaches and created a localised approach for developing creativity. In year one the collaborative focus was on exploring notions of creativity and setting up partnerships through taster sessions. In years two and three of the project, schools, teachers, and learners engaged in various activities through termly or longitudinal projects. Collaborating with creative practitioners, teachers and creative partners explored new pedagogies and perspectives on creativity. The evaluation of this work was conducted by researchers at Birmingham City University led by Dr Victoria Kinsella. If you would like to know more about the collaborative, please refer to year one, two and three evaluation reports.





Definitions of Creativity

Definitions of creativity are complex and varied. The Durham Commission defines creativity, creative thinking and teaching for creativity as:

- **Creativity:** The capacity to imagine, conceive, express, or make something that was not there before.
- **Creative thinking:** A process through which knowledge, intuition and skills are applied to imagine, express or make something novel or individual in its context. Creative thinking is present in all areas of life. It may appear spontaneous, but it can be underpinned by perseverance, experimentation, critical thinking and collaboration.
- **Teaching for creativity:** Explicitly using pedagogies and practices that cultivate creativity in young people.

Our collaborative developed individualised and localised notions of creativity to help us shape pedagogy and practice within our schools.



Key Data

Key data from years two and three are presented below.

Year Two:

- Teachers collaborated with Open Theatre and Stan's Cafe on short-term and long-term projects
- 82 staff members (including teachers, senior leadership, SENDCOs, HLTAs, and pastoral staff) engaged in classroom activities and reflection sessions
- 136 sessions were delivered across schools
- 1079 children (Reception to Year 6) participated, including 252 with SEND/SEMH and 577 Pupil Premium students

Year Three:

- Teachers collaborated with Open Theatre, Stan's Cafe, and SAMPAD on short-term and long-term projects
- 81 staff members (including teachers, senior leadership, SENDCOs, HLTAs, and pastoral staff) engaged in classroom activities and reflection sessions
- 188 sessions were delivered across schools
- 929 children (Nursery to Year Six) participated, including 260 with SEND/SEMH and 506 Pupil Premium students



The teachers who participated in the Creativity Collaboratives project said teaching for creativity is:

"about being open to ideas and having no fixed agenda."

"about modelling creative ideas and encouraging exploration and discovery in the children."

"about an inclusive approach; it's about looking at the whole child and what they bring, which is not necessarily defined by performative outcomes. It's teaching for the whole child; it's child centred."

"so central to provide opportunities which are inclusive, especially for those children who find it hard to access curriculum."

"about demonstrating curiosity and opening up the doors to children to widen their knowledge of the world around them."

"about creating an environment where young people feel safe, inspired, and open to discovering new things."

"about enabling children to make connections and discover new things."

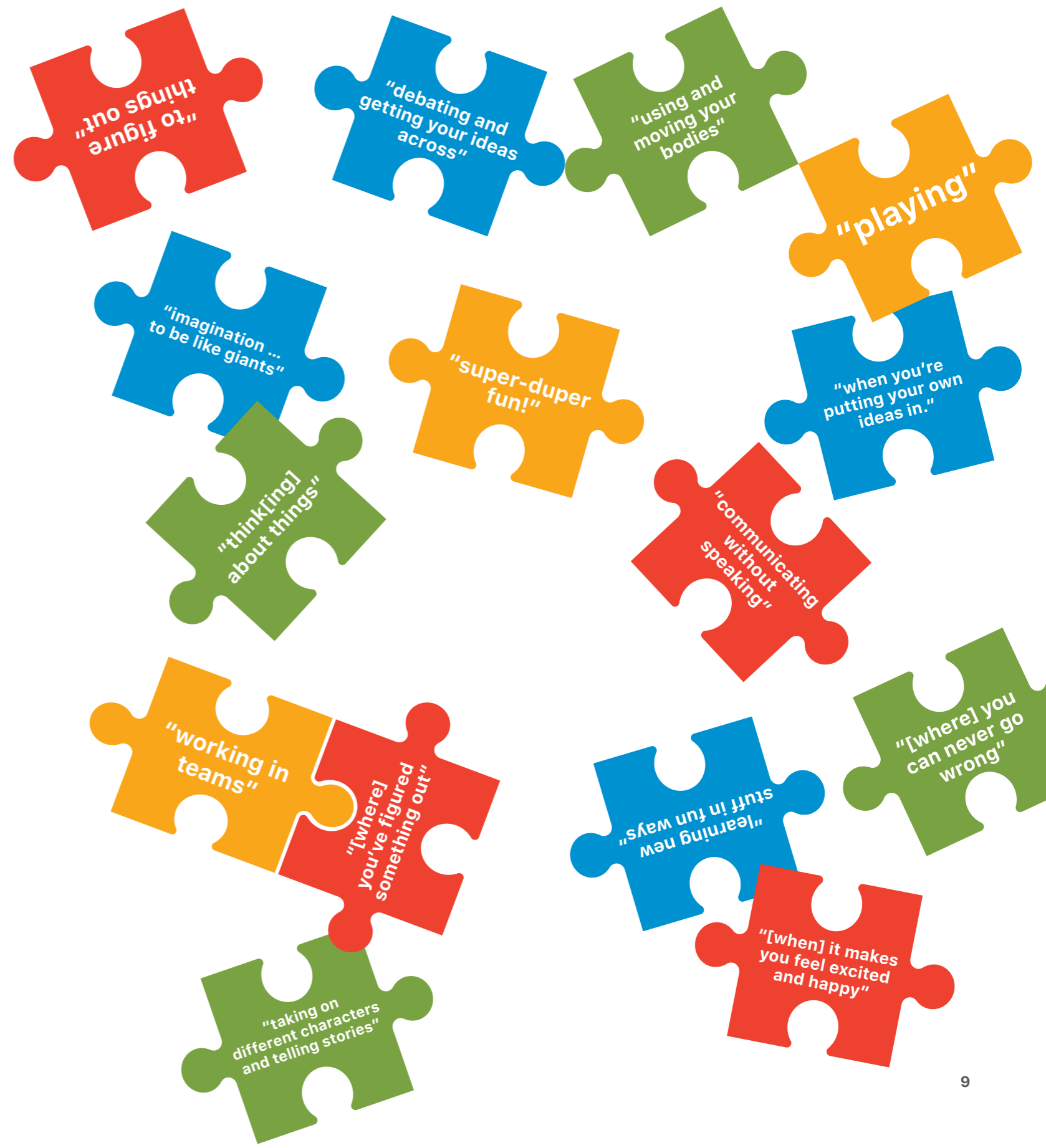
"recognising different forms of creativity, which often we don't recognise as teachers within the classroom."

"the confidence to try, fail, evaluate those mistakes and persevere until you succeed."

"about using diverse approaches best suited to the children to make sure they flourish."



The children said creative learning is:





Repertoires of Practice



Over the three years, we identified key pedagogical practices used by creative practitioners and teachers in the collaborative, which we have termed Repertoires of Practice (RoPs).

Through our research and collaboration with teachers and learners, we grouped these RoPs into six themes, each with its associated pedagogies, to enhance teaching for creativity.

These repertoires, shown in **Table 1**, are not meant to be explored all at once; but offer teachers the potential for selective use in the development of their SoW or LPs. They are offered here as a source of inspiration and to provoke new ideas and approaches. We hope that you will reflect and consider how you can integrate the RoPs into your SoW or LPs.

We suggest asking yourself these reflective questions:

- Which pedagogies from the RoPs resonates most with the needs of my learners?
- How can I adapt a repertoire of practice to fit the specific objectives and outcomes of an upcoming lesson?
- Could I involve learners in the selection of a RoP?
- What resources and support will I need to effectively implement this practice in my classroom?
- Can I identify a sequence of practices that could create a cohesive and progressive creative learning journey for my learners?
- What steps could I/we take to embed these practices into the long-term culture of my classroom or our school?

Repertoires of Practice	Description and examples
Affective 	<p>Engaging the Senses and Emotions: Practitioners engage learners in activities that are attentive to their feelings, personal stories or perceptions. This fosters a caring and supportive atmosphere.</p> <p>Gesture: Practitioners encourage visual gestures and facial expressions.</p> <p>Use Objects to Explore Emotions: Objects or artefacts become important prompts in the classroom. For example, a bird puppet or a toy snake evoke feelings such as fear, tension, humour, and enjoyment. These objects make it easier for learners to discuss, physically express, and explore their emotions in a safe and creative way.</p> <p>Creating Mood with Music and Movement: Practitioners carefully selected music or a range of physical movements. This includes crawling on the floor, crouching, pursing lips, dramatically staring, creeping around, striding, skipping, jumping, lying down, freezing, dancing, tapping and swaying.</p>
Adventurous 	<p>Embracing Uncertainty and Risk: Practitioners encourage learners to take creative risks and explore new ideas without worrying about making mistakes. They focus on the learning process rather than the final outcome, allowing learners to experiment and learn through discovery.</p> <p>Empowering Learners: Practitioners encourage learners to take the lead, make decisions, and pursue their interests. This shifts the traditional power dynamics, often meaning practitioners follow the learners' lead, creating a more collaborative and learner-centred environment.</p> <p>Fostering Imagination and Play: Practitioners incorporate games and short activities that build a sense of community, excitement, and fun in the classroom. Use open-ended 'what if' questions that spark curiosity and imaginative thinking without focusing on specific right or wrong answers.</p> <p>Encouraging Playfulness: Practitioners foster a playful atmosphere where learners feel free to explore and experiment.</p>

Repertoires of Practice	Description and examples
<p>Place, Space and Environment</p> 	<p>Transforming the Learning Environment: Practitioners change the classroom setup by rearranging desks to create open spaces that encourage collaborative engagement.</p> <p>Adapting Indoor and Outdoor Spaces: Lessons are often conducted in diverse settings such as school halls, libraries, breakout rooms, and local parks. Each space is adapted to suit the learning activities, whether it involves clearing furniture for physical activities, utilising open spaces, or creatively using what would be considered limited areas like hallways for interactive learning.</p>
<p>Inclusive and Ethical</p> 	<p>Valuing Diverse Forms of Communication: Practitioners recognise and give importance to various forms of communication through gestures and movements.</p> <p>Supporting Individual Creative Journeys: Practitioners embrace, respect and give value to learners' diverse perspectives, creating a culture of respect and inclusion.</p> <p>Non-Verbal Communication and Empathy: Practitioners use and give value to non-verbal cues like visual gestures, physical communication and facial expressions to ensure participation and understanding, regardless of verbal abilities. This promotes empathy and teaches learners to navigate interactions without relying solely on verbal instructions.</p> <p>Equitable Collaboration: Practitioners foster fair and just collaborative efforts where all learners have an equal opportunity to contribute.</p> <p>Valuing Cultural Diversity: In much of the work practitioners acknowledge and utilise learners' cultural experiences and differences to inform practices and support learning. This inclusive approach ensures that planning and activities resonate with and respect the backgrounds of all learners.</p>

Repertoires of Practice	Description and examples
<p>Slow and Reflective</p> 	<p>Encouraging Observation: Practitioners take a slower approach to progression where they promote a learning environment that values noticing details, dwelling on ideas, and slowing down the pace. This often involves embracing moments of silence and stillness to foster deeper reflection and understanding.</p> <p>Slow Pedagogy: They use a slow pedagogical approach that favours repetition and familiarity to gradually enhance learners' creative responses. This includes incorporating familiar warm-ups and gestures.</p> <p>Flexibility and Reflection: Practitioners maintain flexibility in pacing lessons and encourage reflective moments that allow for spontaneous adjustments. This openness to change can lead to unexpected but valuable learning experiences.</p> <p>Adopting a Reflexive Approach: Practitioners will continuously evaluate teaching practices through critical reflection. A brief reflection at the end of the lesson enables the practitioner to adjust their approaches based on insights and feedback to improve engagement.</p> <p>Balancing Structure and Openness: Practitioners have an overarching plan for learning whilst allowing the creative process to shape the final outcomes. This involves embracing uncertainty and being prepared to make spontaneous decisions that may diverge from initial lesson plans.</p>
<p>Partnership and collaboration</p> 	<p>Collaborating with Colleagues: Practitioners work closely with schools, teachers and teaching assistants to foster a collaborative environment. They encourage the adults in the classroom to explore and observe creativity in action, providing opportunities for them to engage in activities that challenge traditional teacher-student roles.</p> <p>Addressing School Challenges: Practitioners work with partner schools to identify and tackle specific educational challenges. For example, this could be a specific curriculum challenge or topic.</p> <p>Empowering Learners: Practitioners give agency to learners allowing them to contribute ideas and shape the direction of learning. This empowers learners to take ownership of their learning journey and promotes a collaborative classroom culture.</p>

Table 1: Repertoires of Practice (RoPs)

Observing and Valuing Creative Learning

In this section of the toolkit, we emphasise the importance of observing and acknowledging creative processes.

In combination with the analysis of the repertoires of practice, we also identified 36 creative processes. These are shown in **Figure 1**. These processes were explored alongside the repertoires of practice (RoPs), underscoring the importance of understanding and valuing the ways in which creativity unfolds.

When reflecting on learning within a lesson, consider whether any of the following creative processes were observed. Use these terms in the classroom to help learners understand and appreciate their creative journeys, providing

both verbal feedback and more formal written acknowledgment as appropriate. It is important to note that you do not need to acknowledge all these processes. You can be selective, perhaps observing and highlighting one or two processes at a time. These creative processes are powerful tools for the acknowledgment and assessment of learning, and even focusing on a few can significantly enhance learners' understanding. By identifying and valuing these processes, you can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of creativity among learners, helping them to recognise and build upon and develop their creativity.

We suggest asking yourself these reflective questions:

1. Which creative processes did I observe during the lesson?
2. Were there any unexpected creative processes that emerged?
3. In what ways did I acknowledge and celebrate learners' creative processes?
4. How did the learners build upon and develop their creativity after receiving feedback?



Analysis Playfulness Intuition
Experimentation Exploration Reflection
Refinement Improvisation Imagination
Risk-taking Expression Curiosity
Inquisitiveness Critical thinking
Independence Collaboration Teamwork
Self-regulation Observing Embodied
Sensory exploration Embracing
uncertainty Embracing challenges
Finding solutions Generating new ideas
Understanding diverse perspectives
Persistence Empathy Emotional
expression Physical expression
Communication Resilience Open-
mindedness Being responsive to others
Being adaptable Embracing discomfort

Figure 1: Creative processes

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