

# Enquiry Schools

## Case Study Slides

Project Name: Creative Partnerships

School: The Willows School and Early Years Centre

Local Authority: Milton Keynes

Creative Partner(s) Suzanne Oliver and Richard Frost

Creative Agent: Alistair Will

Year Group(s) / Young People involved: Reception- Early Years

Start Date: 5/1/09

End Date: 11/02/09

  
Creative Partnerships



Enquiry Question	Context	The Story	Impact on young people learning	Impact on teacher learning	Impact on creative partner learning	Impact on school	Learning from the work	Revisiting the Enquiry Question	Next steps
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How can we emphasise the value of shared reading experiences?

The original question was ‘does parental involvement improve children’s reading’ but after consultation with our Creative Agent it was deemed that the answer to this was obvious; yes it does! We then developed the question to be based around providing a wide range of shared reading experiences to all stakeholders in our school.

The area is a socially and economically deprived area of Milton Keynes. Reading is undervalued by many of the parents of the children and they also are unaware of what is considered a shared reading experience. We wanted to find new ways to develop shared reading experiences with parents to engage them and show them how important to their children’s learning it is.

We felt that parents needed to be taken away from books to take away the fear factor of reading with your child. We wanted to show them how reading with your child can take many forms and can be an enjoyable, quality experience to share with their child.

The Creative Partners were engaged to help show the teachers different ways to work with storytelling.



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Our school is constantly battling to improve parental involvement in all areas of school life. The children join our school with a low baseline and we work very hard to reach national standards by Year 2. Our School Improvement Plan includes the development of reading in our school and we feel parents are the key to raising standards. We wanted to show how wide a range of shared reading experience there actually are and how a book can be developed into a whole project. We targeted the Reception class of children, early in the year, to change parental attitudes to supporting their child's learning which will impact greatly as they move up through the school in the future. But due to being a very small school we felt a whole school project is also a must and aim to provide experiences the whole school can benefit from.

We decided to use the theme of Peter Pan to try in with the children's trip to Milton Keynes Theatre and this years pantomime. The project has extended into a whole library redevelopment and has been incorporated in the school's Development Plan.



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**Creative Practitioners:**

**Suzanne Oliver – Catalyst**

Suzanne had worked with our Children’s Centre and therefore had a good understanding of our parents and the huge task ahead by trying to engage hard to reach parents. I had also seen her work with children and felt she had a very good manner with them and a good understanding of teaching and learning.

**Richard Frost – local artist**

Richard was very enthusiastic and had some very interesting ideas on developing artistic skills with children.



Between them Suzanne and Richard brought together the creative skills of art, drama, music and storytelling. They also had good contacts to develop lasting links for the school with local arts centres.



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The children have really enjoyed the project and the theme of Peter Pan. They have taken real ownership over the library redevelopment and have involved their families heavily in its creation. They have also been very keen to take part in the activities including the drama work and have been able to get their parents to take part also. The children have been able to continue to experiment with different creative techniques and have really grabbed hold of the theme and taken it to real depth on all areas of their learning. The children were able to express their opinions of the library and see their decisions been valued and incorporated.



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Richard and Suzanne have learnt how important children's socio-cultural contexts are and how they effect everything they do.. They have also both improved their knowledge and understanding of the Early Years.



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Following the morning session in the library, Suzanne led a short session with the children to create a 'Lost Boys' song. What was particularly encouraging was that they made reference to the stories/adventures that they had experienced that morning in the library (completely unprompted).

Extract from Creative Partners Journal

The project has been very cross curricular and has shown positive impacts in all six areas of learning. The children have taken ownership and led the project as well as the adults and each adult has been able to include different expertise and skills to the project.



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The school now has a creative space which was designed with adults and children's views in mind and created by the parents. The school is pleased with the space and can now begin to think differently about how to use it and how to make their planning more creative.



Evaluating the old library



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The parents created the space and then joined the children in using it in new and exciting ways.



The children's favourite parts of the library



Discussing the library changes and future developments



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The project idea was very relevant for our setting supporting both the general school ethos and our school development plans. The importance of emphasising to parents different ways to share stories with their children. Professional language has developed, particularly for the class teachers who have discovered new drama and music techniques that can be used. The drama and music skills have been very interesting to observe and follow up in class. The organisation of the project caused difficulties as the space has not been finished in time for the project to take part in the space. The children are happy with the changes but i felt the overall impact of specialness was lost. Some sessions were chaotic in delivery and can be conducted in a normal classroom day with less problems. Relationship building and communication became very problematic as it appeared different schedules were being worked to. The Head Teacher became involved due to concerns and we began to set targets for each session which were often not achieved by all. In future Creative Partners will be encouraged to spend a normal day in class before the project begins i gain an understanding of the routines and necessary arrangements of a classroom.



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The outcome that has been the most surprising is just how much the parents have become involved and how keen they have been to develop this project into a whole library project! Their support has been very encouraging for other parents to see and hopefully these parents will continue this support as their children move up through the school.



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Evaluation comments by parents hung on the tree at the end of the project...

***'parents could be invited to join in after school clubs and use the library space'***

*'regular story sharing groups and time for just parents to access the library and resources'*

*'the library could be used as a space for parents to get together and make plans for the children... Also more picture son the walls to tie in with themes.'*

***'more parent-children to make decorations to be hung on the tree and using the space to have regular events where children can share their work with their parents'***

*'using the space for working with musical instruments'*

These comments show that the enquiry question was very relevant and also shows that the parents understand the importance of reading experiences and how reading experiences can be very wide and although based around stories may not involve a book at all times. The school is very pleased with this outcome.

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As a whole school we plan to continue with the library development and then revise timetables to give each class time to use it both as a library and a creative space. Next we will experiment with our newly learnt drama and music techniques and use the space for the children to take ownership and be creative. We will also continue the tree development as the seasons change and involve all children in its development.



Children's comments on the tree

