



partnerships for schools

This case study looks at the creative and enterprising partnerships entered into by Redcar Community College, which is working with cultural organisations and professionals to deliver innovative statutory learning and extended schools activities.

Key project information

School: Redcar Community College
Age range: 11-16
No. of students: 743
Location: Urban
School type: Foundation
Specialisms: Visual and Performing Arts
Free school meals: 30 per cent
Ofsted: Good, Spring 2007
Local authority: Redcar and Cleveland

Cultural organisations and professionals delivering statutory curriculum and extended schools activities

Summary

Redcar Community College exemplifies what can happen when a school and its Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are open to creative and enterprising partnerships. By working with cultural organisations and professionals the school is able to deliver innovative statutory learning and extended schools activity.

The SLT began this journey by identifying the learning styles of their students. They then worked to develop an offer which would creatively meet these styles and needs. Redcar harnessed the commitment and ingenuity of staff in order to initiate and respond to partnership opportunities in creative and enterprising ways.

This model is now embedded across the school. Staff use these approaches consistently and training in the model is part of the school's workforce development strategy. In the last three years the school has improved across the board with fewer exclusions, better attendance rates and much improved academic results.

Project description

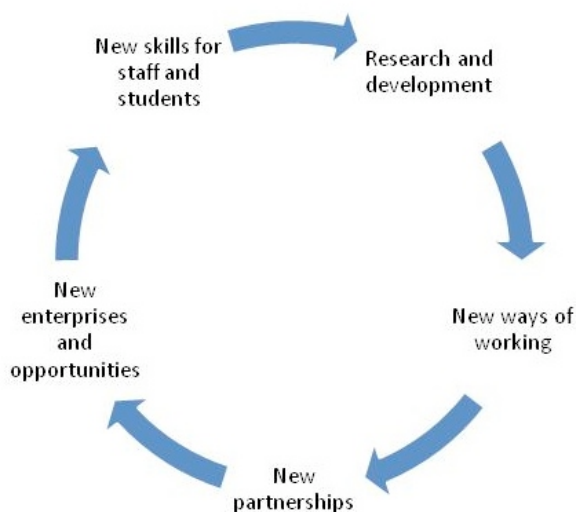
Redcar Community College is located in a catchment area of significant deprivation (10 wards in the bottom 10 per cent, two in the bottom six per cent). The school has seen dramatic improvements in attainment, rising from just 22 per cent A*-C GCSEs in 2006 to 54 per cent in 2008. This has been achieved through a combination of factors and approaches to curriculum development and pedagogy. The Redcar model has also led to positive impacts on aspiration and community cohesion.

Creativity is embedded within the curriculum, teaching styles and student practice. The school has built long term relationships with Creative Partnerships¹ (CP) and a local cultural organisation, Sage Gateshead². This has resulted in a substantial and significant impact on the way students learn and participate in creative activities throughout the curriculum. The school has engaged with a wide range of initiatives and gained national recognition, achieving specialist status in visual and performing arts in 2003, becoming a School of Creativity³ with

Cultural organisations and professionals delivering statutory curriculum and extended schools activities

Creative Partnerships in 2009, and now co-funding a Music Leader with the Sage Gateshead.

The process followed by Redcar Community College provides insights into embedding practice: research and development inform new ways of working, lead to new partnerships, enterprising opportunities and the gaining of new skills for staff and students alike.



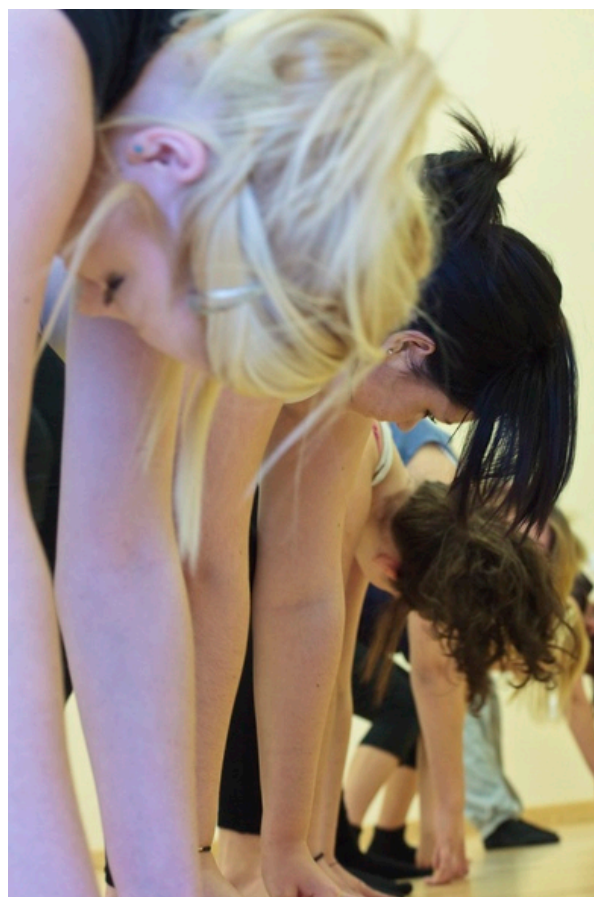
Assessing the situation in 2001, the SLT realised they needed to understand their students’ learning styles, in order to meet their needs and drive up attainment. The research showed that the majority of their students were kinaesthetic and visual learners. Staff chose to develop a creative and arts based curriculum, enabling students of all abilities to express themselves and build their self-esteem.

This initial decision led to the first project with CP, “because their vision of inspiring minds and achieving aligned perfectly with ours”, remembers Keith Neasham, Creative Consultant to the school (then Head of Performing Arts). The project centred on a research exchange with a Dutch college, where students explored what learning environments should provide in order for learners to gain skills suitable for a career in the creative industries. The partnership with CP and other arts and cultural organisations influenced the school’s decision to apply for specialist status in visual and performing arts and gave them the resolve to work through the process.

Keith Neasham, Creative Consultant at Redcar Community College, said: “When we decided

several years ago which specialism we would apply for, we decided that we wanted something that would develop our students’ creative, social and emotional skills as well as improve their academic performance and chances of employment. For that reason we chose working with the visual and performing arts as a way of developing the confidence and personal skills of our students.”

Redcar Community College has an innovative approach to Key Stage 3 delivery - Years 7, 8 and 9 co-create their own curriculum. This student engagement is facilitated by teams of staff working across departments and age groups to look at innovative teaching processes. For example, in maths, the team is currently working with artists and craftspeople, bringing together, art, design, maths, history and the techniques of replication. In geography, Year 8 has been working on a project about Japan and have been exploring the techniques of Japanese printmaking. Staff from the art department trained members of the geography department in printmaking and formed a team of two teachers and a technician to take the work forward.



Cultural organisations and professionals delivering statutory curriculum and extended schools activities

The school has found digital learning tools and virtual learning platforms are helpful in supporting their style of learning. ICT is used to embed creativity across the curriculum. For example, ICT is currently being used for an arts animation project, which prompts students to learn about storyboarding, editing and the whole process of filmmaking.

Keith Neasham added: "When we started to work with Creative Partnerships and went through the specialist status application process, we realised the importance of saying 'yes' to ideas and opportunities, because it changed perceptions about the school."

The school is always keen to work with organisations to develop their skills and explore the effect of teaching subjects in different ways. The Sage Gateshead has been a partner since 2004 and the school staff have particularly strong relationships with the youth and community team. Through CoMusica, the North East Youth Music Action Zone⁴, Redcar Community College was able to access funding for an out-of-school hours programme and research how students responded differently to activity delivered in and out of school.

Creative enterprise is seen as valuable learning tool. The school offers an incubation unit to a local micro-business to facilitate this. This is currently a printing and design workshop which offers a wide range of printing and garment decoration services. The owner has forged links with the school and is offering work placements to students. This will give them firsthand experience of both the technical aspects of printing, and involvement with all aspects of running a small business, from book-keeping all the way through to image design and marketing.

The school is building on these initial experiments by appointing a member of staff to focus on creative enterprise. They plan to work through existing local authority regeneration plans and open a retail outlet in the town centre selling photography, prints, hand-made glass and ceramics, all made by students. Equipping students for a different, non-manufacturing working life is essential in Redcar Community College, where the last steelworks closed in autumn 2009 with the loss of another 2,500 jobs.

The Sage Gateshead and Redcar Community College have now made a joint appointment of a Music Leader - a professional musician who is not classified as a teacher. They have structured an integrated music and learning team of both teachers and community musicians. The flexibility of this integrated team has allowed The Sage Gateshead and Redcar Community College to create a joined up music offer - timetabling the practitioner team for in-school classes and the music leader for out-of-school activities.

Both the Sage and Redcar feel that this approach helps to deliver the curriculum differently and has a positive benefit for the students. Young people are able to interact with successful practising musicians and develop a stronger awareness of the many different career pathways within the creative industries.

The overall goal for Redcar Community College is to raise standards so that they become an 'outstanding' college. They have shown that joined up, cohesive strategies for creativity can break down barriers relating to class and socio-economic backgrounds. The teaching team all want their students to know how they learn, and why they learn, so that pupils and students can begin to support their own learning. Furthermore, the school has discovered that innovation and creativity generates and attracts partnerships and funding in a self-supporting cycle.

Successes

- There are now ex-students returning to Redcar Community College as Youth Music Leaders (co-ordinated by The Sage Gateshead) who have been able to turn a talent and passion into employment.
- The college's successes have had a ripple effect upon the different communities it serves. Redcar is the local authority's only full service extended school and families, adult learners, primary and other secondary schools all benefit from the school's activities, some of which take place in a new £1.8m Arts Pavilion and fitness centre. These activities include; cookery courses, a parent survival programme, childcare provision, drugs awareness, health and well-being

Cultural organisations and professionals delivering statutory curriculum and extended schools activities

sessions, computer courses, study support, inter-agency drop in services, homework clubs, crafts, dance, Primary University and health promotion. Community groups and other agencies use the Centre for meetings and events.

- At the beginning of July 2009, the school was confirmed in Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council's BSF programme. There will be a combined new school for Redcar Community College and Kirkleatham Special School - around £24m in value, ensuring current and proposed specialisms of arts, physical and sensory and training can be developed to their full potential.

Conditions for success

- Make sure work is sustainable and that legacy has been considered from the outset. Initiatives or projects must be able to sustain their own momentum.
- Continuity of activity is essential, but repetition of the same thing year after year will not support creativity, progress or change.
- Staff development has to be integral to any project delivery.
- Don't impose creativity on the school, but allow ideas to flow from staff and students, creating ownership.
- Dissemination and sharing of new skills is important.

Key contacts

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References

1. Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills of young people across England. Creative Partnerships programmes foster innovative, long-term partnerships between schools and creative professionals to inspire young people, teachers and creative professionals to challenge how they work and experiment with new ideas.
2. Sage Gateshead is an international home for music and musical discovery, bringing about a widespread and long-term enrichment of the musical life of the North of England. Their inclusive approach enables their performance, learning and participation programmes to be inspired and supported by each other.
3. Schools of Creativity. This initiative from Creative Partnerships will enable a number of leading schools to engage in cutting-edge practice. They will develop innovative programmes with other schools and play a pivotal role in the strategic leadership of Creative Partnerships.
4. YMAZs aim to provide music-making activities to 0-18 year olds who might otherwise lack opportunity. In 2009, there are 22 YMAZs across England and Wales in areas of social need and deprivation.