



**partnerships for schools**  
building schools for the future

This case study looks at a student engagement project run by Hounslow's two City Learning Centres in their role to engage with and support local authority and school colleagues during the BSF and PCP programmes.

The I Dream of Learning (IDOL) competition not only successfully engaged young people in thinking about their school of the future, but has given two schools the opportunity to make their vision into reality.

### Key project information

**Local authority:** London Borough of Hounslow  
**BSF Wave:** 6a  
**BSF project cost:** c.£80m  
**PCP project cost:** £9.6m

## Student participation in technology and design decisions: from primary to secondary

### Project description

The I Dream of Learning (IDOL) competition supported Hounslow's BSF and PCP planning and consultation process and provided young people and schools with a forum in which ideas and designs could be shared. The winning schools (The Strand on the Green Junior School and Lampton School) will each get £30,000 to help make their design concepts reality. IDOL concept was established by Feltham City Learning Centre Manager Tony Peaty and Jo Armitage, e-learning coordinator, as an opportunity to give young people a voice in the design and decision making processes.

### Developing student voice

The competition was launched at a conference for lead teachers and heads in June 2008. This was a chance for teachers to really think about how the competition could be tailored to suit the needs of their individual school. Richard Weeks, the headteacher from Teddington High School in the neighbouring borough of Richmond, presented his experiences of developing experimental learning environments and Professor Mike Sharples from the University of Nottingham

delivered a keynote speech on how he envisaged classrooms would look and function in the future.

All young people in Hounslow's primary and secondary schools were given the opportunity to participate in the process. Schools were encouraged to form as many student teams of four as they could manage, but could only put one team forward for the competition. One school included a whole year group, while others had teams drawn from different year groups.

The IDOL team focused thinking into three simple questions from which the student teams could develop innovative approaches to using state-of-the-art technology and rethinking spaces in their existing schools:

1. Where do you learn best in your school?
2. What helps you to learn?
3. How would you like to learn in the future?

Tony Peaty explained that challenging and empowering young people to think about their learning environment is central to IDOL: "Don't sit back and wait for others to do unto you. Don't wait for others to tell you how you

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will be taught, or what technology you will use and in what environment you will do your learning.”

## Green Tech @ Strand

The Strand on the Green Junior School team was made up of Year 6 students who were chosen by deputy headteacher Ruth Woods because they were all good communicators and had complementing strengths in using technology, organisation design. The team visited the Feltham City Learning Centre in order to look at inspirational designs for learning environments from all over the world in a “Wacky Schools” presentation. They were also given their competition design brief in which their designs had to be clean, green and practical.

They made full use of the school’s existing virtual learning environment in order to share ideas and to help manage the project. They canvassed their fellow pupils by creating a survey to find out what they did and didn’t like about their school and used the internet to research inspirational uses of technology. The team chose to convert a ground floor room with doors opening out into an existing courtyard garden. The space is currently being underused as an art area due to its wedge shape and it was felt that together with the outside space, the room could accommodate the widest range of design ideas.

The team collated their ideas using mood boards before distilling their work into a PowerPoint presentation with sound clips entitled “Green Tech @ Strand”. Team member Aaron Jones taught himself how to use a Google SketchUp, a 3D software tool, which combines a tool-set with an intelligent drawing system, which enabled the team to overlay their design ideas onto Google Map images. Their final design incorporated the courtyard garden space and this software was used to project their vision for shade sails which would enable students to work outside.

All the submitted designs from the participating schools were uploaded to a bespoke BSF and PCP area of the Feltham City Learning Centre website. These were then independently judged on their vision and design. The primary and secondary elements of the competition were staggered and the winners were announced at two presentation events a couple of months apart. Each winning team member was also awarded a PSP for all their hard work. The primary school event was held in December 2008 at the Brentford City Learning Centre with the secondary school presentation held at the Watermans Art Theatre in March 2009.

## From vision to reality

Since winning the primary category, The Strand on the Green Junior School has expanded its team to include student representatives from all classes in Years 4, 5, and 6. Original team member Madeleine Jessop said that after winning they could “take more time to see what the best things to have in our room would be” as they “couldn’t have everything we had in the presentation because the room is too small.” The team also had to look again at the cost of some items in order to best utilise their budget.

The extended team visited the Victoria and Albert Museum with the City Learning Centre in conjunction with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) to help develop their design further. The focus of their visit was for the group to investigate further what they liked about light, texture and colour in order to pin down their final ideas.

The school has kept the local community informed at every stage through their regular newsletter and also held a community project meeting in September 2009 to introduce the next steps. Offers of help have come from the local community who want to get involved in the project in any way they can, from plumbing and electrical to help painting and gardening. “There is a real feeling that the community are on board and are doing it for themselves” said Tony Peaty.

Business partners are now coming on board, providing support and enabling the school to create their dream environment. The Feltham City Learning Centre team will also continue to provide advice and expertise to both The Strand on the Green and Lampton schools and their local communities in order for them to develop their ideas and also support them in their decision making as they enter the dialogue, procurement and training phases of their projects. As it is important that the original vision is not lost, both projects have to demonstrate that they are rigorously sticking to the student-led design ideas. The new learning environment at The Strand on the Green Junior School is due to open in March 2010.

## Once you start, you can’t stop

Although only two schools could move forward to develop their ideas into reality under IDOL, the use of student voice and the ongoing immersion in thinking about design has continued to be a part of Hounslow’s BSF consultation process. The Feltham City Learning Centre is working in partnership with Hounslow’s BSF project team to champion student voice and have prepared a compilation of the design ideas which were

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submitted for the competition to be used as part of the BSF procurement process.

There has been international interest in the IDOL competition and the team at the Feltham City Learning Centre have been in contact with education colleagues in Sweden and Holland. They also have plans to share ideas over the coming months through the National City Learning Centre network so that other local authorities and schools can see what

can be achieved through the engagement of learners.

Tony Peaty said: “We hope that schools and their students will see I Dream of Learning as a valuable activity which has a real sense of purpose and allows for a greater number and variety of stakeholders to become involved in effecting a real change in how we approach learning.”

## Top Tips

- **Preliminary work was commissioned from young people in Hounslow’s Gifted and Talented programme. An exhibition of their work on their initial ideas for learning environments was displayed at governors’ conferences and was also used as a springboard to get ideas flowing on the IDOL website.**
- **The process was more valuable than the outcome. Many schools which went through the process didn’t get around to entering a team – but have seen the benefits of engaging students as clients and designers as hugely rewarding.**
- **The IDOL competition has acted as a springboard and accessible way for Hounslow’s schools to engage their students directly as clients and designers in BSF and PCP.**

## Key contact

Tony Peaty, Feltham City Learning Centre Manager  
E: [tony.peaty@clcfeltham.co.uk](mailto:tony.peaty@clcfeltham.co.uk)

## Further information

Feltham City Learning Centre [www.clcfeltham.co.uk/index.html](http://www.clcfeltham.co.uk/index.html)  
IDOL [www.clcfeltham.co.uk/bsf\\_pcp/competition.html](http://www.clcfeltham.co.uk/bsf_pcp/competition.html)