

Case Study: Story Makers



Outline

Story Makers was a BBC Children in Need-funded project run in partnership with local primary schools, speech and language therapists, Fusion Arts, and an Integrative Arts Psychotherapist. It used the Museum collections and environment to stimulate children's capacity to think reflectively and dialogically, with the aim of enriching their speech and language skills.

Background

Working with local schools in areas of multiple deprivation within Oxford, Fusion Arts and teachers selected small groups of Key Stage 2 children with language support needs to take part in after-school sessions over a twelve-week period.

Each small group of children visited the Museum twice for two-hour sessions exploring the theme of 'Stones and Bones'. They then returned to school to use the inspiration from these sessions as a focus for their learning.

Audiences

Children with various language and communication support needs were selected from within the participating schools. As Story Makers they were encouraged to experience themselves in a new context as artists, creating, reflecting, improvising and sharing with the group. This aimed to create opportunities for participants to build self-confidence, capacity for emotional expression and to reduce individuals' isolation. The children were accompanied on their creative journey by Teaching Assistants, a Speech and Language Therapist and volunteers.

Aims

The Museum sessions encouraged a physical exploration of specimens and concepts, using material from the collections and the Museum's unique spaces to inspire creative communication. This deeply-felt experience was channelled into a mode of communication, a language portraying feeling through gesture and movement. The stories that emerged through artistic imagery



were then transcribed into narrative, dialogue and poetry, forms in which there was a meeting between Science and Art.

Delivery

During the sessions children physically explored specimens and concepts relating to the Zoology, Mineralogy and Geology collections by using oral and analytical skills, movement and craft. Through the direct experiencing of the Museum collections children engaged their creative selves, through direct feeling and sensory



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observation, using the hands, body and senses, engaging self-awareness, self-confidence and the sharing of experiences.

During the following weeks the children engaged in weekly sessions at school, developing stories, poems and art which were displayed in the Museum and celebrated when teachers, parents and important adults in the children's lives came together in the Museum.

“ Feedback on the difference it has made to the children involved was so encouraging. You should be really proud of the positive impact Story Makers has had.

Kieran Cox, Fusion Arts

Outcomes

Sharing new ideas in the group built confidence and self-belief, creating a playful, trusting and thoughtful atmosphere which was the foundation for new learning,

Story Makers was a collaboration between Fusion Arts, integrative arts and language therapist Helen Edwards, and BBC Children in Need.

curiosity and openness to new ideas. Through stories and poetry Story Makers built capacity to think reflectively and dialogically, enriching speech and language.

The project cemented stronger links between the schools and Fusion Arts and opened new avenues for using the collections creatively to support children's learning. Using the Museum's Community Case to display the children's stories and art gave other visitors a chance to understand how the Museum engages with learners.

Reflection

Partnering with an Arts organisation to support specific language and communication needs by blending science and art opened new methods for supporting this audience in their learning. We are hoping that we can re-run this project in future.



Project contacts

Kieran Cox, Fusion Arts
info@fusion-arts.org

Chris Jarvis, Museum of Natural History
chris.jarvis@oum.ox.ac.uk



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