

## **Reflections on REFLECT Creative Partnerships National co-mentoring programme**

Having applied and been accepted for a place on this programme, I was open-minded and curious as to how it would develop. I could never have imagined the impact it has had upon myself and the developments it has instigated for my school and beyond.

### **Personal impact**

- My co-mentor and I decided to maintain a sketchbook 'log' of our partnership. This has reawakened my own imaginative and creative skills and has been invaluable in providing opportunities for independent and shared reflection.
- Visits to my co-mentor's workplace and interaction with her curator colleagues, have enriched and inspired my creative vision in an environment completely different to my own place of work.
- My co-mentor's visit to my school, together with her questions and views, has given me a fresh perspective on aspects of school life and of myself as a leader.
- Visits we have shared to museums and an art gallery have stimulated discussion and reflection about ourselves and our work.
- Participating in Regional REFLECT meetings, sharing partnership experiences relating to both the creative and reflexive aspects of the programme, have been invaluable in broadening my knowledge and seeing new possibilities as an individual and as a leader.
- I am currently looking forward to meetings arranged with other creative partnerships within my group to visit their organisations. I am also keen to participate in creative workshops with my co-mentor as we challenge ourselves to learn new skills and techniques.

### **School impact**

- All Key Stage 2 pupils (212) have had an opportunity to pilot workshops organised by my co-mentor at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. The workshops have involved using work in the Gallery to explore various creative techniques, together with links to writing and drama. Pupils, parents, staff and myself provided feedback to my co-mentor as part of her evaluation of the content and delivery of the sessions.

- Follow-up lessons were planned for the school curriculum. These will continue to be developed.
- A meeting is shortly to take place involving our school's Maths co-ordinator, my co-mentor and self, to plan creative workshops to support aspects of the Maths curriculum. Similarly, Music workshops are being developed for KS1 pupils to pilot at the Gallery.
- Teachers from my school have attended twilight professional development workshops held at the Gallery and an inservice day is being planned for all staff in June.
- I have begun to research strategies to further nurture and promote creativity through the ethos and curriculum of our school.

### Wider impact

- Our linked secondary school is to apply for specialist college status for the expressive arts. I have already met with the headteacher and head of expressive arts to consider how the outcomes of the creative element of this co-mentoring partnership can be developed and supported through to secondary level. Two 'feeder' primary schools and two special schools are to be approached. Benefits for transition between primary and secondary school will be considered together with 11-16 links supported by input from the Learning and Interpretation Team at the Whitworth Art Gallery. A further meeting has been arranged to discuss the way forward.
- The Local authority has indicated that some funding (£2,000) may be available to support the work of my co-mentoring partnership. An interest was also expressed in my talking about the programme at the LA Headteachers' CPD conference.
- Similarly, as a result of an article in LI magazine about our co-mentoring partnership, a colleague from another Local Authority has asked to hear more about my experience of the programme, on behalf of his headteacher network.

The long term impact of my involvement in the REFLECT Creative Partnerships co-mentoring programme is yet to be seen, as the various strands that have emerged become more defined and developed. However, the personal benefits cannot be underestimated. At a time when the pressures of headship are legion, the inspiration and opportunities for reflexive practice have refreshed and motivated me as an individual and as a leader.

I am excited at the prospect of continuing this journey and curious to see how it will develop and extend in the future.

Whilst I will recommend REFLECT to all my headteacher colleagues, I have no doubt that this programme could be rolled out to benefit organisations in many other fields.

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