



The Sage
Gateshead

REFLECT

Creative Partnerships National
co-mentoring programme

Evaluation Report
Peter Renshaw



Creative Partnerships
exciting minds



Photo: Philip Vile. ©The Sage Gateshead

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Foreword

We are all born inventors.

We explore our universe omnivorously. Our imaginative capacities and thirst for understanding propel us to crawl, stand, talk, walkand to invent ingenious personal solutions to the challenges we face in that growing up. As pre-school children, all things being equal, we are effortlessly creative. Our unfettered powers of imagination inspire us to explore our universe through acting, building, singing, experimenting, dancing, composing, climbing, painting, telling stories...and asking questions.

It's through asking questions that we shape ourselves and our world. Asking questions, finding and applying answers and revising our questions in the light of that cycle is the very life-blood of scientific investigation, of philosophical enquiry, and of creative production. Human history is full of stories that chronicle the seismic impact of asking questions; both on the questioner and on their world. We've a patchy track record on this, often punishing bold questioners rather than encouraging their investigations; and yet we know that a population that asks questions and finds inventive answers survives in a changing context.

And asking questions leads us into conversation; and conversation to relationship; and relationship to community. And just as we are all born inventors, so we are all born expressive conversationalists. Verbal dialogue is just one of our means of communication. Exploring creative answers to questions leads us to the great plethora of expressive languages we communicate through, and to generating all that we know as our culture.

The power of the imagination, and the importance of questioning and conversation, have become devalued in our education system. Our pre-school inventors, constantly questioning the world around them and engaging in creative conversations, run the risk of being gradually silenced as they enter the more prescriptive world of the statutory education system. We urgently need to halt this process.

Creative Partnerships has played a catalytic role in posing a critical question - how do we re-focus our education system so that rather than stifling our childrens' natural imaginative and creative capacities, we nourish and nurture them? **REFLECT** offers one potential route to that end. The programme has powerfully demonstrated that the conditions in which creativity flourishes are the same for us all – adults and children – and that focused, creative conversation is an effective tool for generating those conditions.

The permission to ask questions, the space to explore a wide range of answers and the time to reflect on their meaning has led to some transformational innovations in both the individual practice of the participants and in their institutions. This learning has been of equal potency amongst practitioners working in education and those from the creative and cultural sector. It has inspired them to step into one another's domains; in the vanguard of a movement that calls for a complete re-positioning of creativity in children and young people's learning.

We're delighted to be sharing the outcomes of this pilot programme, and to welcome you into the **REFLECT** conversation.

Katherine Zeserson
Director of Learning and Participation
The Sage Gateshead



Acknowledgements

The success of **REFLECT** has been dependent on participants, management and supporting bodies working and communicating harmoniously together. With 'conversation' at the core of **REFLECT**, the evaluation has tried to ensure that it has listened to the many voices that have resonated throughout the programme. The contribution of the co-mentors through the Training and Gathering Days, and through their testimonies, interviews and case studies has not only been generous but also illuminating. Their commitment to cross-sector dialogue has raised many questions that will no doubt inform future developments in the rapidly growing area of collaborative practice. Both The Sage Gateshead's **REFLECT** team and Creative Partnerships have benefited immeasurably from the enthusiastic engagement of the co-mentors.

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It is hoped that the contribution of all these people will continue to guide future initiatives in the area of cross-sector co-mentoring.