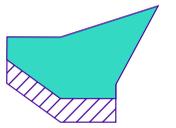


SCHOOL OF DREAMS



**DREAM
YOUR
SCHOOL**
UK

**Brighton
Spring 2017**

A collaborative day to imagine the future of learning

Hundreds of children in three European countries have come up with proposals for creating the perfect school.

It's almost always adults who come up with ideas about changing school — even though they are no longer at school and generally base their proposals on abstract ideas or specific adult concerns.

That's why the Evens Foundation launched the European 'Dream Your School' project, in which children themselves were encouraged to express their ideas about improving their school, or education in general.

The project was developed with three Evens Foundation partners: a21–Apprendre au 21ème Siècle (France), O N C A (UK) and CEO (Poland). Each partner ran workshops with schoolchildren to brainstorm and develop concrete proposals. They then organized public events where students and educa-

tion specialists discussed the proposals. Finally, the resulting ideas are being disseminated through a publication (this one in the UK, and its French and Polish equivalents) among policymakers and the broader public.

The project has both an educational and a political dimension, in that it promotes the growth and development of children, who learn how to take responsibility and develop their democratic and civic skills, and encourages policymakers to change education for the better.

This newspaper is dedicated to Dream Your School Brighton. A selection of proposals from the Polish and French projects is also included. The result is a fascinating overview of how European children 'dream their school'.

Next steps: to disseminate these great ideas, put them at the heart of public debate — and reinvent the school of tomorrow!



DYS participants learn about mindfulness with Dharma School Lotus class, Brighton 2017

credit: Charlotte Grob

Dream Your School Brighton

Persephone Pearl
Co-director, O N C A

Dream Your School Brighton took place at Brighton's Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts (ACCA) on February 27th 2017. It was an intergenerational co-created day to imagine the future of learning. Over 100 participants had fun, got inspired, gained new tools for teaching and learning, and generated a vibrant range of ideas with a diverse mix of young people and adults.

Supported by an experienced team of facilitators, participants spent the day sharing tools for learning and creativity, and generating new ideas for educational policy and practice. This intergenerational, interdisciplinary event engaged learners aged 6 and up, students and emerging educators, professional educators and people working in education policy, adults working with young people, parents, and others passionate or curious about good practice in learning and education.

The Brighton Dream Your School day generated many ideas and responses — some practical, some visionary, all possible. They fell into eight categories:

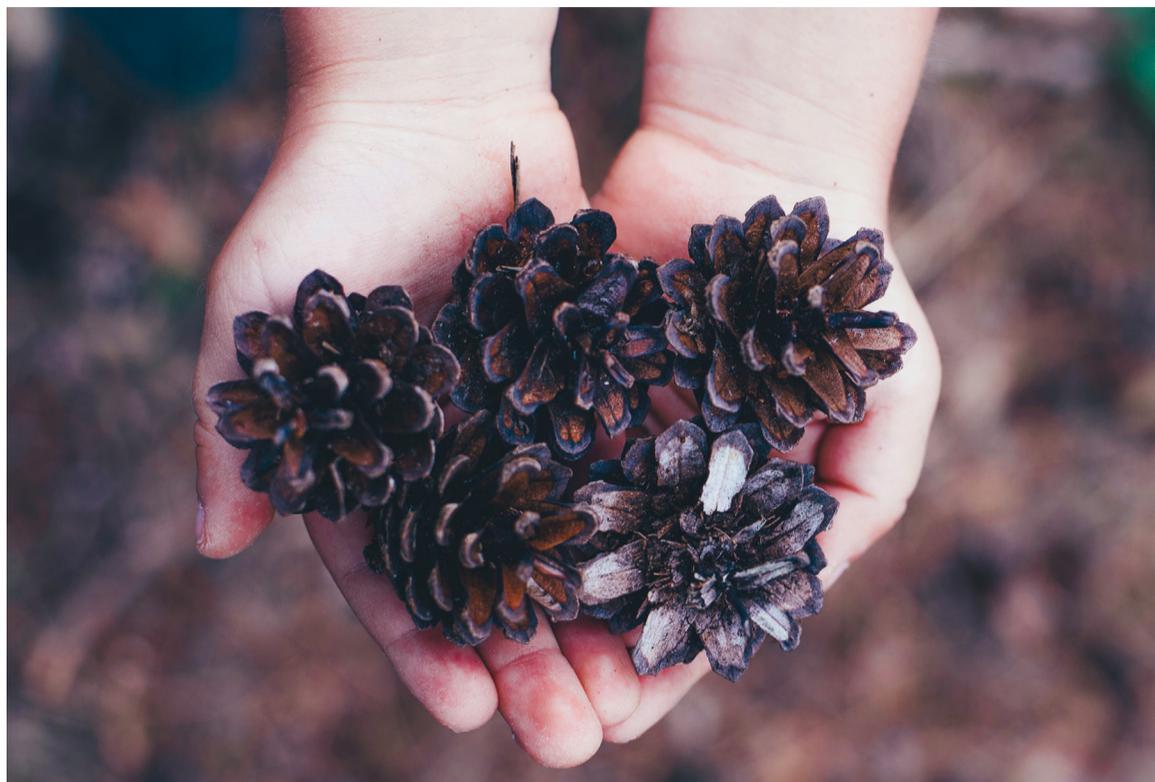
- 1. Connect with nature**
- 2. Learning through doing**
- 3. Creative/playful**
- 4. More autonomy**
- 5. Collaborative/intergenerational**
- 6. Reflective**
- 7. Process & needs-driven**

Read on to discover more!

Connect With Nature

Proposal 1: More educational time spent outdoors

We must focus on providing the next generation with meaningful interactions with nature



credit: Annie Spratt

Contact with the natural world improves wellbeing

The benefits of time outdoors are well-known, but structural barriers include: **financial constraints, safety concerns, class sizes, focus on literacy/numeracy targets and lack of suitable spaces at schools.**

Young people need time in nature if they are to value and feel connected to it. Climate change will shape their lives; nature education will support them to respond with resilience and imagination. We heard about West Rise School which has a marsh and water buffalo! Brighton's Elm Grove Primary lacks wild space, but uses the park next door for sports days and outdoor learning. Plymouth University has published a guide: 'Transforming Outdoor Learning in Schools'.

plymouth.ac.uk/research/oelresnet/transforming

Creating the environmental stewards of the future: A view from Maryland

Alistair Whitby
World Future Council

The link between our wellbeing and the environment is now beyond doubt.

Access to a healthy environment is vital for our physical and mental health. Swedish studies have shown improved cognitive abilities and more positive emotions after even brief spells in nature. Studies in several nations show that children's games are more creative in green places than in concrete playgrounds. Environmental experts such as Jonathon Porritt go even further to say that contact with the natural world is the fastest route to wellbeing we have.

This is all the more true for young people. Sadly children throughout the world are experiencing the adverse effects of living in degraded

environments while many 'western' countries have seen a remarkable collapse of children's engagement with nature, as described in Richard Louv's book *Last Child in the Woods*. In one generation, the proportion of children regularly playing in wild places in the UK has fallen from more than half to fewer than one in 10. In many countries we are witnessing the first generation of children largely growing up indoors, disconnected from the natural world.

How can we expect young people to lead the defence of nature if they have less and less to do with it? Put simply, we can't. You do not protect what you do not know.

Which brings us to the quiet revolution happening in Maryland. In 2011 it became the first US State to make environmental literacy a mandatory high-school graduation requirement, a policy which

earned the State the WFC's Future Policy Award in 2015. The innovative environmental literacy requirement pioneered in Maryland has helped secure the integration of environmental content in varied ways across the curriculum from Kindergarten through to graduation. It has also strengthened the cooperation between outdoor education providers and schools to ensure that every child has regular meaningful experiences in nature.

With its focus on hands-on outdoor learning, the policy offers a wide variety of benefits for students — enhancing engagement, raising test scores, and increasing wellbeing. As part of the curriculum, students regularly engage in wetland restoration efforts, tree planting and other local conservation activities. Maryland school kids test river pollution levels and relate their findings to surrounding land

use, identifying wildlife and plant species in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and conducting experiments to learn about the importance of oysters for water quality.

It's not hard to see why many of the proponents of this type of environmental education see a strong link between these education efforts and the improving state of the local environment which has seen a flurry of positive trends in recent years.

If we want to see the next generation tackle the climate and environmental challenges facing us, we must focus on providing them with meaningful interactions with nature, a good grounding on the fundamentals of sustainability and a high level of environmental literacy. Proven policies like those in Maryland offer ways forward.

Are slugs simply snails who have decided to go on holiday without their shells?

Go out and connect with the outdoors yourself through whatever means — gardening, bird watching, conservation volunteering, walking.

Outdoor learning – Exploring scientific thinking through the eyes of the child

Katie Scalan
Circle of Life Rediscovery

“Darwin noticed things that no-one else noticed and looked for things that other people couldn’t see”.

The outdoor session explored ideas around ‘tuning up’ our senses and powers of observation in nature; of listening to the sounds around us, observing closely and becoming child-like in our questioning...and so becoming true scientists, just like Darwin.

The outdoor environment provides a unique opportunity for children to explore, investigate and question, the ultimate science lab. Why is there a snail shell lying in the woods with no snail in it? Where did the snail go? Are slugs simply snails who have decided to go on holiday without their shells?

Why are there leaves growing on some trees in winter and not on others? Are the trees dead?

Why is there a collection of seedlings sprouting from the ground in one place, and not in any others?

Why is the sky grey today and not blue?

As adults/teachers/parents perhaps we already know the answers to these questions, but in this context that is entirely missing the point. The point here is not to spoon-feed these enquiring minds with ‘adult’ answers, but to enable the children to investigate, research and experiment for themselves. To lead their own learning and find their own unique ways to the answers. In this way, children take ownership of the subject matter, and of their learning. They feel in control, important — they are ‘proper’ scientists. Their minds are expanded and their self-esteem raised. It is a powerful experience to be given responsibility as a child, and this is something seriously lacking in today’s education system. Outdoor learning, in all its forms, is one way to address this.

Circle of Life Rediscovery is a Sussex-based community interest company offering outdoor learning experiences for adults, children, families and schools. Please visit circleofliferediscovery.com for more information.

[varndean.co.uk/
goats](http://varndean.co.uk/goats)

school21.org.uk/

credit: Eloise



The Great Outdoors



Slugs — snails on holiday?

credit: Chage Tang

Interview

Interview with Rob Sandercock, teacher at Dorothy Stringer School, Brighton

Why do you teach Environmental Science?

Growing up in rural Cornwall gave me a strong connection in the environment. My childhood and younger teenage years were spent outdoors. I am fascinated by our relationship with the natural world. It is an emotional rollercoaster, as every good news story is weighed down by numerous negative ones. When I see how our society today is so detached, I feel it is important for us to try and re-connect people with the very thing we all rely on for clean air and water, food and resources as well as mental health.

Do you encounter any barriers to doing this work?

I would say there is a general feeling in society that it is important we do something about this — but those that try to take positive action are often dismissed as a bit weird. The people in power are not interested, as they are voted in by us living in a society that is focused on our desires of consumerism and self-preservation. As long as the focus of our

society is on how to extract what we can from the natural world in order to have more than our neighbour, we will always struggle to make our story of environmental education mainstream. The natural world is sending its own messages and we are finally waking up to the fact we can’t keep taking and taking — but I fear we are pushing the systems to breaking point.

You and your colleague Dan Danahar won a PEA award in 2015 in recognition of your work in environmental education over the last 16 years. What advice do you have for classroom educators seeking to inspire young learners to engage with the living world?

Go out and connect with the outdoors yourself through whatever means — gardening, bird watching, conservation volunteering, walking. Then take students with you and show them what you enjoy. You cannot ‘teach’ children to connect with nature in the classroom — they need to experience it.

What is your vision for teaching and learning in the 21st century?

I would love to see outdoor education a compulsory part of the curriculum.

For schools with limited access to outdoor spaces, it is possible to transform indoor spaces or urban playgrounds into dens, changing people’s perceptions of the space and of their places in it. Integrating non-desk-based learning into the school timetable is fun!

Learning outdoors is learning through doing: We are inspired by the project-based approach modelled by School 21 in Stratford, and by projects such as Varndean School’s Goat Club which teaches participants responsibility, empathy and compassion through goat care.

Learning Through Doing

Proposal 2: More practical activities in education

If maths had been taught using cookery as a vehicle, I've no doubt I would have excelled at it.



Busy hands making borek, Brighton 2017

credit. Charlotte Grob

Cooking the Curriculum

Robin Van Creveld
communitychef.org.uk

I was honoured to be part of the Dream your School symposium. I was given the opportunity to facilitate cookery workshops with mixed groups of children and adults. In addition to working together to produce some fine food for all of the participants, we thought it would be a good environment to open up a broad dialogue about education.

Our first workshop was called Everyday Alchemy, and the focus was on bread making as a process that promotes wellbeing, builds confidence and teaches

functional skills. The group was a mix of keen university students and dynamic teens. They got stuck into the bread making tasks, and we had had a lively and emotive discussion about how schools don't really teach life skills like making bread. They left the workshop understanding the chemistry of yeast fermentation and how percentages in baking work. They were ebullient, and all fired up to make their own bread. The key thing I got from working with this group was the reiteration that my real role as a teacher is to encourage curiosity and impart the skills needed by students to think and learn for themselves.

The following workshop was on Cultural Synergy, exploring the notion that food can break down barriers and brings people closer together whilst expanding understandings of history, geography and culture. The

group were all students from a rural, quite conservative, secondary school. They were painfully shy and seemed to really struggle when asked for their opinions. While they seemed to enjoy the cookery, getting them to talk about their lives and their experience of education and multiculturalism was like pulling teeth! I realised that I had made all sorts of assumptions about how interested (rural) teenagers are in the world beyond the Weald.

The following session couldn't have been more of a contrast. Ironically, the theme for this one was Creating Harmony, exploring the health implications of diet and how cookery helps us to practically understand botany, biology and geography. This workshop was with a group of students facing complex emotional and behavioural challenges. The level of noise rose and

I struggled to get them to focus on the tasks I'd prepared. But in the end, the workshop start to flow, and those who took part really enjoyed the activity. One of the students perceptively pointed out that asking a teenager what they thought about healthy lifestyles was a bit like asking a old person what they thought of Grime and Grand Theft Auto.

Taking part in this symposium was thought provoking on several levels. Personally, I really struggled at school. I couldn't spell, my hand writing was illegible and I failed "remedial maths". I was told in no uncertain terms that I should set my future sights low so as to not be disappointed by life. For years, I limited myself because of the negative self-impressions instilled in me by my experience of school. In my late twenties, after six years of university study, I was diag-

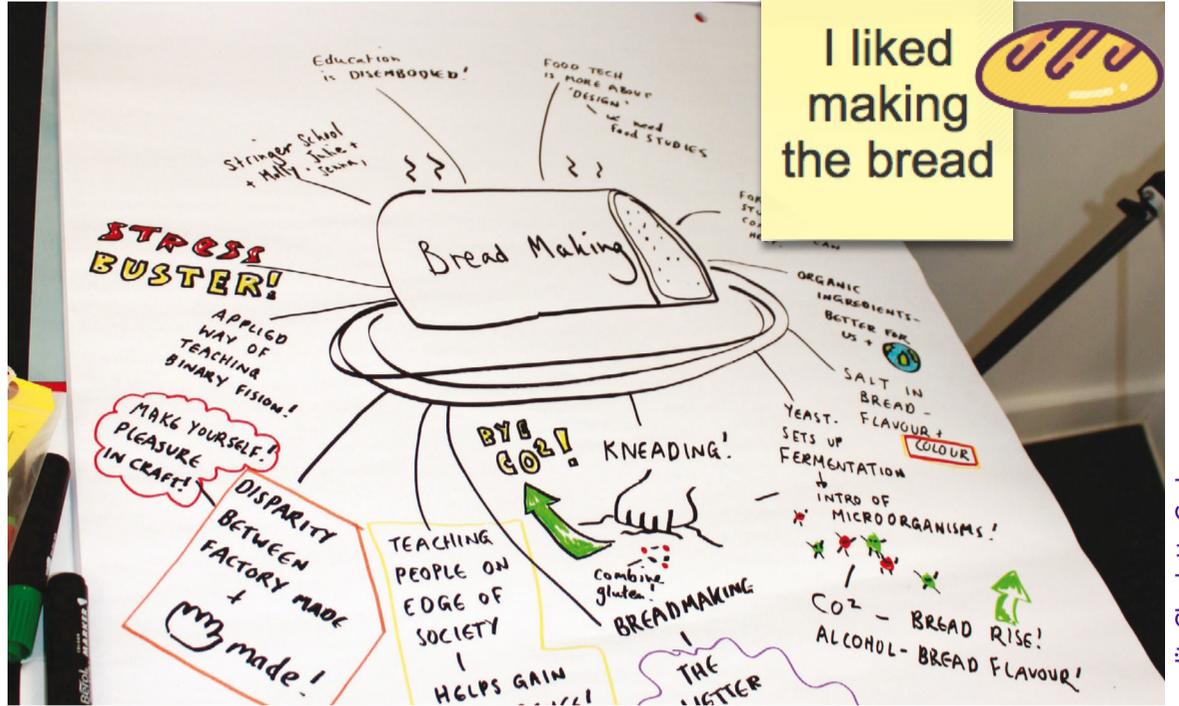
nosed dyslexic. Like many people with learning issues, my cognition, perception and learning style are unique, but given the right circumstances, practical examples and the right tools, I have no problem learning almost anything. At school maths was taught hypothetically as an abstract subject through the regurgitation of formulas, rules and sequences. It was this disembodied approach to a basic functional skill that alienated me from the subject. If maths had been taught using cookery as a vehicle, I've no doubt I would have excelled at it.

www.communitychef.org.uk



Robin shares his story and passion for cooking

credit: Nat Hough



Why and how to make bread

credit: Charlotte Grob



Participants cooking as a team

credit: Charlotte Grob



Delicious humous, tzatziki and pepper dips!

credit: Charlotte Grob



Robin shows participants how to make borek

credit: Charlotte Grob



Borek fresh out of the oven, just in time for lunch!

credit: Charlotte Grob

Creative / Playful

Proposal 3: More creativity & play in education

Bringing creativity into all aspects of the curriculum

The use of creative methods to engage with questions around learning and education was core to Dream Your School Brighton. Participants used techniques such as building their dream school from lego and plasticine, making nests to explore the idea of safe spaces, making zines as a way of describing and valuing lived experience, and group poetry writing to envision ideal learning environments.

A key theme of discussions was on how to promote and foster interdisciplinarity, collaborative approaches and dialogue on best practice. Network building, skills sharing and professional development events are key to this, and Brighton is fortunate in this respect in that it now boasts its own Local Educational Cultural Partnership (LCEP), Our Future City. This is a strategy, a network and a campaign that is 'de-

veloping a way of working that will address inequality and lack of opportunity in a systematic way. It will happen within cultural education, but most importantly also beyond it.' Our Future City's five goals (from www.ourfuturecity.org.uk) are:

1. Grow creativity

— Supporting children and young people to develop high-order creativity, thinking and behavioural skills

2. Improve wellbeing

— Realising the potential of culture to help them build resilience and improve their wellbeing

3. Develop digital skillfulness

— Encouraging competencies, behaviours and practices to enhance their lives

4. Enable routes into employment

— Growing a world-class creative learning environment with clear learning and employment pathways

5. Sustain collective action and impact

— Establishing a new civic alliance across professional fields and sectors.

FIRST Habitual listening — we hear what we think we know from past experience.

THIRD Open listening — questions are asked and answered. Sharing, discovering, smiling.

FINALLY Emergent listening — the awareness of a whole group becomes the source of whatever emerges.

SECOND Factual listening — observing and identifying what is right and responding accordingly.

FOURTH Creative listening — aware and receptive to what is happening

Music is your birthright

Keith Ellis

Movingsounds

It's not often that you have the time and the space to be with a group of 20 or so people to explore the depths of creativity. Thankfully, O N C A and many generous contributors created this space at the Dream Your School conference. The session I led was called Music is your Birthright, unlocking inspiration and learning through the power of music. One of the many cathedrals of creativity that the journey of music can take us to is the art of listening. In this session we looked at five levels of listening. This can be in everyday life as well as in music.

1. First there is **habitual listening**, where we are hearing what we think we know from past experience and not open to hearing anything new.

2. Next is **factual listening**, where we observe and identify what is right and respond accordingly but without any intention of dialogue.

3. Then there is **open listening**, where questions are asked and answered. Information is shared and newness is discov-

ered. Smiles start appearing and life is more fun.

4. Next is **creative listening**, where we withhold what we think we know and stay aware and receptive to what is happening, creating something new.

5. Finally there is **emergent listening**, when the awareness of a whole group becomes the source of whatever wants to emerge. Awareness comes from all the senses and from the web of connections of all the people in a group. In a musical context this means listening as one whole group to the sound of what wants to arise.

In the session, up until this point, I had been demonstrating the first four levels of listening with a volunteer and two percussion shakers, but when we explored emergent listening I sat back, took a deep breath and waited. We had dropped down through the levels of listening, so we were all ready and awake. Toes started tapping on the floor. This spread to a rumble, and from that a solid rhythm and movement simultaneously arose. Music flowed easily with smiles and a sense of relief that we aren't all isolated but can and do

create works of art together with a truly authentic beauty.

At the plenary at the end of the day, with delegates sharing their insights and inspiration, the group were asked spontaneously to step up on the stage and demonstrate some emergent listening. I had no idea what would happen and if it would work — there was only one way to find out. Ten people standing in a line facing the auditorium dropped into the space of emergent listening and enjoyed the moment of silence. A little ripple of electricity flowed through the group and a rhythm came out of nowhere — becoming stepping, tapping, clapping, moving and dancing. The music came into the room in that moment and then, in its own perfect time, resolved back to silence, never to be repeated quite like that again.

Music can teach us how to listen. What is more, it can teach us how to learn and how to remember we are all born effortlessly playful. This is a spark of genius which we all have, although it is often neglected and undervalued. But in today's world and in the future it is becoming the currency of success. So it is a wonderful thing that music and creativity is our birthright.

I liked
improvising.
It was fun
despite
different ages
:]

The first thing we did
was make some mis-
takes.

Improvisation in School

Jenny Haufek
Performing artist & teacher

Why should students learn improvisation in school?

What makes a good improv scene?

How can I become a better teacher?

And how come so many kids are leaving school with the creativity conditioned out of them?

These are some questions I'd like to begin to answer.

I was happy to attend the Dream Your School conference put on by O N C A. It was an opportunity for concerned adults and children to come together and discuss the future of our schools. It was also a creative conference. The space was held by the O N C A staff and workshop leaders. Participants followed their own interests through the day, and fed back their own thoughts and experiences, which helped to shape the conference itself. Dream Your School belonged to all of us, and we used it to produce several imaginative ideas.

What does this have to do with improv in schools?

A successful improv class is improvised, much like the conference. The facilita-

tor creates opportunities for skills to be used. I facilitated a successful improv workshop on the day. About 30 people attended. (Thank you, by the way, you were all awesome!) A lovely mixture of children and adults, teachers and students, parents and kids.

The first thing we did was make some mistakes. When you first start doing improv, you're nervous. In fact, I've been doing improv for several years, and I still get nervous. Most improvisers do. One thing that helps me is to make some mistakes straight away. So as a group, we played some games designed to make us slip up. We had to pass a clap this way, say a certain word at the right time, make sure we said "bang" when we passed a clap across the circle, and don't forget, you can't "ha" a "bang", but you can "kerching" a "bang". Anyway. Do this all quickly, and add more rules if it's too easy. Basically, people begin to fail. And a magical thing happens: we laugh! Why? Because we empathise. We see the struggle, and there is humour in it. We get rewarded with laughter when we fail. So now, we're laughing, and enjoying our mistakes, and we're feeling more relaxed. **First benefit of improv in schools: Improv helps us to celebrate our mistakes.**

Now, we can move on. Let's continue to stand in our big circle, but one of us will cross the circle and say some-

thing quite normal to the person across from us. "Hi sir, here's the coffee you ordered." What if the person you said this to now crosses the circle again, but this time they heighten the intensity of everything you did and said by 50%? That would require them to have really observed what you just offered them as you crossed the circle. They'd have to really listen. The beauty is that they wouldn't actually have to come up with anything on their own at this point. They'd just have to really notice all the little gifts given to them, and then accentuate these on their turn across the circle. As a group, we keep noticing and accentuating. More people add new offers: "Hello, the doctor will see you now." At this point, several people are crossing the circle, and no-one looks anything like the first person who started. It's all morphed, and some beautifully strange characters have now joined us. And it all began with someone noticing the details of someone else's offer. **Second benefit of improv in schools: Improv trains us to listen and notice other people's offers.**

At this point, I split everyone into pairs. I have them tell a story together, one piece at a time. Everytime someone adds another piece of the story, they say "yes, and..." So at this point, each person is agreeing to the last thing offered by their partner, and

adding something new to this idea. Where do the stories go? Everywhere! They are creative and detailed with beautiful specifics. No one knows where they are heading because they are collaborating on the journey. And because of this, they end up somewhere they never could have gotten to on their own. "Bring a brick, not a cathedral". The wise improv proverb! **Third benefit of improv in schools: Improv shows us that collaboration is more successful when we accept the idea of our partner/s and build on this idea with our own offer.** No one does all the work. It's often called "Yes, And".

Now people are collaborating creatively together. They are noticing and accepting each other's ideas, and building on them. They're making mistakes, saying surprising things, and laughing. Sounds like a good improv class. Let's make it more fun! I get them into groups of three. Now they are asked to imagine a door. They should open the door. By this, I mean one of them needs to reach out and mime opening a door. They can now all walk through and enter a new world, beyond the door. What do you see? One by one, they are meant to describe what they see. Just one thing at a time. Each time something is mentioned, the group is then free to interact with that new reality. "I see a purple Lamborghini," says the first.

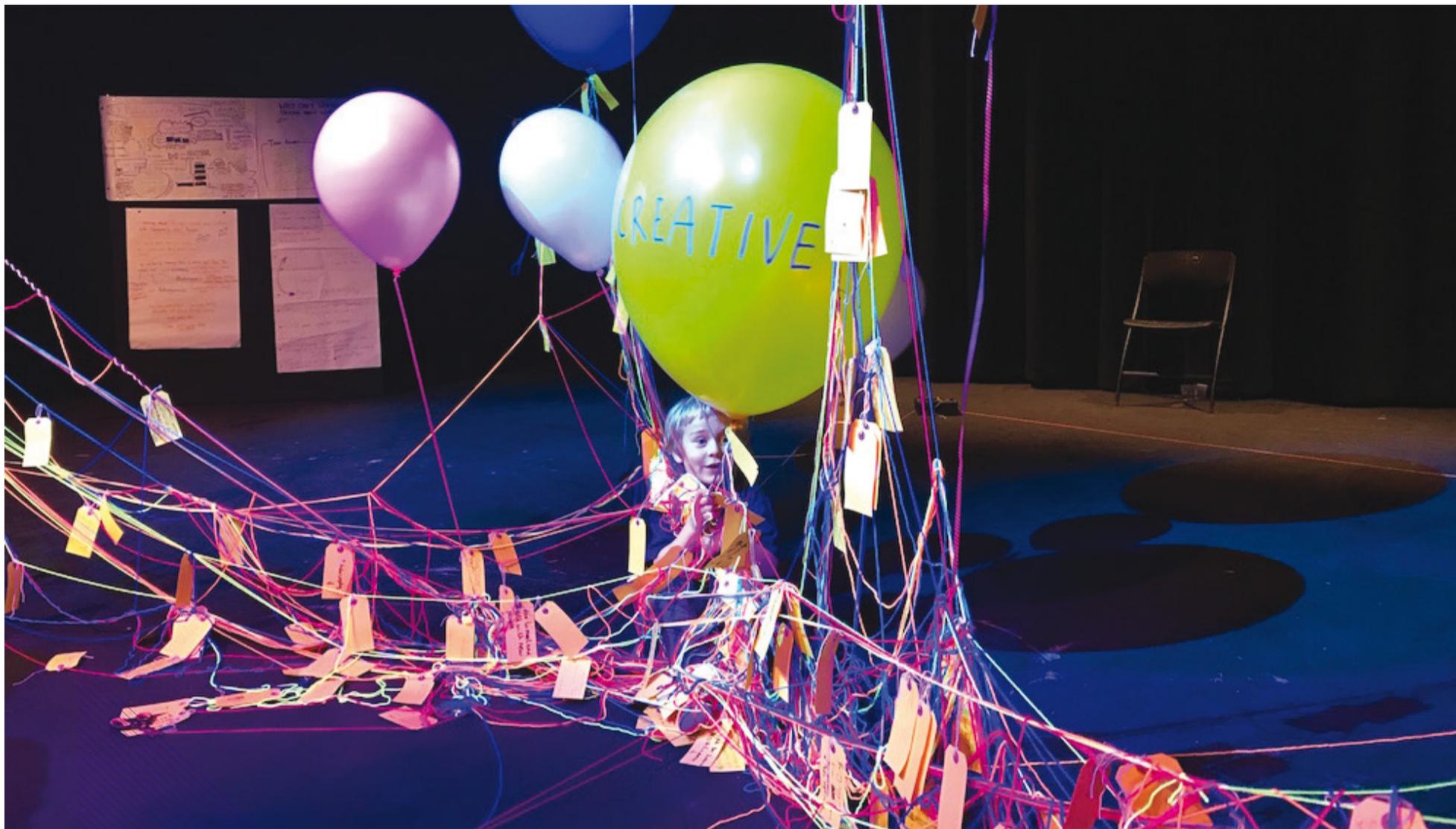
The second person yells, "Awesome, let's get in!" Everyone is now miming getting into the car.

The third person says, "Oh, look the keys are in the ignition!" Now, if they're committed and having fun, they'll probably start driving around the classroom. **Fourth benefit of improv in the classroom: Improv encourages us to commit to our shared collaborations. Improv is fun!**

There are more benefits. And perhaps, "Improv is fun" should have its own little pedestal. It is important to remember how much we learn when we play. Companies are complaining that students are graduating from our education systems without the ability to think creatively. Some kids are afraid to learn! They're afraid to make mistakes or to fail. This is what improv celebrates. You need to let go of the control that you think you need. Look at the other person in your improv scene, and listen to what they're offering. Add your own ideas to these. Commit! Improv has taught me so much about how to teach well. Now I strive to have my lessons behave like a good improv scene. I aim to listen, to observe, to "yes, and" my students. I want to commit to the exercise we're doing, and to enjoy our collaboration. But, yes, I make mistakes. I fail all the time, but that means I'm learning something.



credit: Nat Hough
Improv workshop, Brighton 2017



credit: Laura Coleman

Interacting with the Web of Ideas, DYS Brighton 2017

Web of Ideas

Sarah Bennett, MA Inclusive Arts Practice, University of Brighton

5 Giant Balloons + 10 Balls of Wool + 1000 Luggage tags + 100 Humans of all ages: One Web of Ideas.

Seeking a way to capture reflections on Dream Your School, an idea emerged for a web of ideas. Beginning simply with five giant helium balloons, throughout the day a living, moving form of interconnected reflections evolved.

As the day began, the event's 'Dreamers' were all given handfuls of bright yellow luggage tags and invited to use them to note reflections on the workshops, and later to comment specifically about their school of dreams. Each balloon represented a quality underpinning the day: **Creative, Compassionate, Curious, Collaborative** and **Child-Led**. Dreamers of all ages used wool to make connections between these qualities, and tied their luggage tag reflections onto the emerging web. From a simple beginning, a complex, dynamic, playful form grew on the stage, a bright visual reflection of the day's journey.

Dreamers young and old could witness the value of their contributions in developing the web, as their actions contributed to some-

thing bigger. The weighted balloons formed a framework to begin from, supporting and anchoring the web without rigidity. The balloons moved with the contributions, the responsive materiality of the structure allowing a new form to be co-produced. Each contribution changed the form's shape; each idea added weight. Dreamers could feel a sense of agency, working together with simple actions to create something beautiful, rapidly transforming a space that began as a bare black void.

The playful, joyful engagement from all ages was infectious, an intergenerational team of human spiders energetically weaving together. Moving under, over, around and through to make contributions, the web became a place to play, connect and

physically encounter one another. A space to voice experiences and hear the voices of others equally. The cheerful yet uniform luggage tags signalled an equal valuing of contributions, and simple, inclusive materials supported equal participation. Without preciousness of outcome or a pre-determined plan, Dreamers across generations were free to engage with the web however they wished.

Greater than the sum of its parts, perhaps the Web of Ideas serves as a rich metaphor for co-production. It began with aspirational qualities, a simple yet responsive framework that supported, without limiting, the emergence of a complex new form. Contributions were diverse, collaborative and validated by their visibility. Engagement was curious

and playful. It began with openness and possibility and could never have been created by one person alone.

Inclusive Arts Practice is a visual arts practice centred around collaboration on equal terms with diverse and marginalised groups. The practice is responsive with a focus on approaches that facilitate equality, choice and agency. Inclusive Arts practitioners seek to facilitate spaces where participants can be seen, heard and valued through artistic encounters and the production of high quality artwork.

Search online for Brighton MA Inclusive Arts Practice



credit: Felix Gonzales

The Web grows, DYS Brighton 2017



credit: Eloise Pontefract

Ideas coming together, DYS Brighton 2017

Brighton's Dream Your School Proposals

A key theme of Dream Your School was the need to include children in decisions that affect them. The Web of Ideas was an inclusive and egalitarian tool for learning from children and adults alike, with empowering potential for young people.

Read the proposals that Dream Your School participants contributed to the Web of Ideas.

1. Connect with Nature

- Access to outdoor space is a basic need that can be met through lessons exploring nature or the city
- Schools should be ecological places demonstrating how to live low impact and low carbon lifestyles
- Children and schools need to understand and be prepared for climate change

2. Learning Through Doing

- Education should be centred on practical learning – finding out about the world through experience and reflection, rather than exams
- Project-based learning
- Space to experiment
- Learners are whole beings with various intelligences

3. Creative/ Playful

- Schools need to be more creative, with more arts lessons and more creativity in assignments
- More interdisciplinary approaches (e.g. science & art/ drama & history/ maths & music)
- Make school a beautiful place to be, integrating creativity and art into children's lived experiences
- Schools should aim to be less pressurised environments, with children able to learn at their own pace
- PLAY MORE! Learn through play
- More games and op-

- Opportunities to play at break times
- Children's ideas include: Plasticine every day/ No writing or PE/ Double lunch/ Make school like Hogwarts/ Vending machines (non healthy)/ Be part of more projects like Dream Your School

4. More Autonomy

- Children should have more choice, and more opportunities for independent learning
- Education as personal investigation
- Encourage critical thinking and asking of questions
- Let us be curious!
- Teachers should also have more independence: let passionate teachers follow their creative ideas
- Let children have their say on what matters to them.

5. Collaborative

- Schools should foster collaborative approaches to learning
- Work more in groups
- Allow learners to move around freely
- Explore structures that don't rely on hierarchy
- More hugs and kindness
- Foster appreciation of everyone's differences
- Foster the art of conversation

- Smaller class sizes
- Listen to the children
- Have whole-school projects and work in mixed age groups
- See children as teachers as well as learners

6. Reflective

- Schools can be places where we engage with philosophical questions, critical thinking and ideas sharing
- Schools should invest in meditation and the arts, and foster lateral thinking and democratic processes
- Debate children's ideas in the classroom
- Teachers listen to pupils' ideas and value the wisdom and authenticity from children's lived experiences
- We need quiet spaces and noisy spaces
- Promote self-care and wellbeing of children
- Schools should be honest about their institutional strengths and weaknesses, modelling truthfulness and authenticity
- Schools should encourage questioning of inherited assumptions and norms about gender and disability

7. Process & Needs-Driven

- There should be less measuring and testing. Schools could focus on community learning, and reward effort rather than results
- Learning could be measured in many different ways, not just learning for exams and league table results
- Have a wider variety of lessons, determined in part by learners' interests
- Schools could build time for students and teachers to think and create into each day
- Teach the love of learning: each child should be taught in the ways that best suit them
- Optional learning: I choose when and what to attend
- Invitational learning: I can choose what I engage with when I am there
- More flexibility and discretion regarding days off school
- PSHE lessons should be more ambitious, focusing on things as broad and vital as mental health, empathy, climate resilience, environmental literacy, gender, decolonial thought and how to live well as citizens
- Bring more variety to forms of communication in schools: BSL needs to be part of National Curriculum



credit: Charlotte Grob

The Web is born! With facilitator Sarah Bennett, DYS Brighton

“Schools can be places where we engage with philosophical questions, critical thinking and ideas sharing.”

More autonomy

Proposal 4: Free choice for learners

Here there is space
to be,
dream,
and become.

Proposals urging for greater autonomy for learners and teachers fell broadly into two categories: ways to support teachers to follow their passions as educators, and ways to develop, listen to and celebrate learners' critical thinking, choice and independent enquiry. There were many calls for smaller class sizes.

Human Scale Education (HSE) offer guidance on human-scale approaches in mainstream classrooms.

hse.org.uk/home.html

Put People First

Clare Connelly
Teacher, Brighton & Hove
Pupil Referral Unit

The Pupil Referral Unit is full of people who don't fit the mainstream school system: a system that is huge and routinised and full of order, structure and, ultimately, judgement. The so-called comprehensive education – supposed to be “without selection” and provide an “entitlement curriculum” – is actually a streamed and selective institution that sifts young people into achievers and non-achievers from the get-go. And now they are made to sit linear GCSE exams that are cranky, old-fashioned and designed for weeding out the wheat from the chaff. Opportunities for disadvantaged students to rise beyond their allocated spot in the school-governed class system are few. Our PRU students are nearly all from that group of “underachievers” but with an added something else that's stopped working and fitting

in. They are the outcasts, and they feel it – all of the time.

At the Brighton & Hove Pupil Referral Unit we make toast and tea, and nurture their broken wills and dampened spirits. Nothing, however, fully compensates for the feeling that someone told them they were no longer welcome, and that they had to leave. We are in a privileged position in many respects, because we get to work with a small number of these students who need extra nurturing and understanding. Indeed we often say that they are actually in the “best place for them” but we can only offer them a few subjects and a slim chance of re-integration by the time they reach us in Year 10 and 11. It is, in the long run, not really good for them and can establish their bottom-rung status for good.

So what can we do? Try to make school a less judgemental and selective system; work with not just the educationally disad-

vantaged but the most socially disadvantaged. Highlight who they are and help them to have the best chance possible to succeed and move forward. It is often in these students' notes that they “refused to take off their coat” or used “inappropriate language”, then started to truant – and then got into bigger trouble. Why? Granted it's not always for the same reasons, but often it's because they felt that so many adults in the school were against them. The only time they seem to have warm memories is when someone cared and seemed to like them. They may have not followed the rules, but they aren't always capable of doing so. There are other factors beyond their control: poverty; parents who aren't coping; bereavements; abusive boyfriends; low self-esteem; poor literacy levels; ill parents; mental health issues; speech and language problems; anxiety. We need to get better at seeing the whole child

and being aware of the ones whose needs are greatest. The ones who are most likely in internal isolation or waiting outside the headteachers office. They are not just “naughty” and “disruptive”: more often than not, they are simply not managing. They need “love-bombing”, not suspensions and exclusions.

Dream Your School opened up possibilities. We saw that nothing needs to be the way it is now: from the buildings, to the curriculum, to the way lunch is served. We can change all of it. We can throw out the rule book and visualise our discussions with images; create maps and webs of ideas; use food to teach us about the world and how best to live in it; model our dreams in plasticine and work together, no matter what our advantages or disadvantages may be. Schools could be nurturing, loving and enriching. They could trade league tables for a truly energising person-centred curriculum for the future.



A participant expresses their desire for freedom in education, Brighton 2017

credit: Felix Gonzales



Participants mind-mapping their opinions, Brighton 2017

credit: Felix Gonzales



Proud selfie, Brighton 2017

credit: Gani Naylor

Child participation and autonomy: learning from Zanzibar

We hear a lot these days about the need to include children in decisions that affect them, but it's a real pleasure when there's a genuine commitment to participation that leads to positive real world impacts for young people.

Alistair Whitby
World Future Council

It's even more impressive when this commitment comes from a place with limited budgets and no shortage of alternative competing priorities. Such is the case in Zanzibar with its innovative Children's Act (2011).

The World Future Council recently spent a week in these semi-autonomous Tanzanian islands off Africa's east coast to see the effects of the law to secure child rights, participation and juvenile justice in action. While there, we talked to many youth representatives, UN agencies, social welfare officers and government representatives about their experiences of the law's impacts in their communities.

One groundbreaking feature that was trialled as part of the drafting process of the law was a community-level child participation scheme to find out what society's youngest members wanted to see included in the law. To make the process as child-friendly as possible, youth facilitators (16-18 year olds) were trained to take these listen-

ing workshops into villages, schools and Children's Councils across the islands. Over 500 children were consulted. Vulnerable groups including those living with HIV and disabilities were included. Children were informed about their rights and duties, and children's rights violations were discussed. Most importantly, the children's opinions and suggestions on topics ranging from reducing corporal punishment to effectively dealing with abuse were actually listened to. Schools across Zanzibar are trialling alternative forms of 'positive discipline' that take child wellbeing seriously.

As with all pioneering steps it's not always a smooth process. We heard from one of the UN staff that the day after one school banned corporal punishment, half the children turned up late for school! But this in turn opened up a lively discussion with the students about responsibilities as well as rights, and soon the problem was resolved. Through these interventions and the inclusive process of drafting the Children's Act, the law is credited with helping the wider community to

understand the importance of rights, and is producing a marked societal change in attitude towards children.

One of the great things we saw for ourselves in Zanzibar is how youth participation has blossomed into strong institutions that support and empower young people and give them a voice. Over 200 Children's Councils (for those up to the age of 14) and an active network of Youth Councils (ages 15-34) across Zanzibar work on strategies for access to justice, entrepreneurship, empowerment and ending deforestation. We met several passionate youth advocates who had come through the Children and Youth Councils and credited these groups with giving them new skills, opportunities and hope for the future.

In 2015 the World Future Council gave Zanzibar's Children's Act a Future Policy Award in recognition of these achievements as a proven policy solution helping to secure children's participation rights and to protect children.

We continue to explore how other countries can follow Zanzibar's lead on best practice in participation and child protection.



credit: Debora Tingley

"My dream school is a forest of parrots..."

Group Poems

These poems were co-authored by mixed age groups during a DYS Brighton session led by Kathy Ellwand

My dream school is a forest full of trees, with Tarzan as my teacher
I learn how to fly through bramble high
Jump and land with ease.
I know each plant, tree, animal as my friend,
My filling up and thrilling time will never end
And I smell fir trees to give my lungs fresh breath.
Fir trees stretch across the sea as far as I can see
I'm flying in the air, flying inside
I am free to be me
To love and live simply
And just BE.

My dream school is a forest of parrots
Drinking from the source of all existence
With freedom I fly, and take

to the sky
Spreading wings that touch the stars, there is no place too far
I land on colourful landscape with free spirit
To teach is to listen to our hearts
Gather feathers
More and more
They give us new wings and freedom
Not just for me
Wings for all

My dream school is a garden in springtime
Flowers are everywhere
Bumble bees enjoy the sun
I lie on the grass and become as one.
Sunbeams break open the seeds of change
All is possible on this golden plain.
Smell of flowers the wind carries into our noses
Full of joy.
Here there is space
To be, dream, and become.

Collaborative / intergenerational

Proposal 5: Shift schools away from hierarchy and towards collaboration

tiny.cc/changey-ourschool

The intergenerational, democratic approach of Dream Your School was one of the most exciting elements of the day.

System Change! All participants were learners, listening to each other. This strongly informed their proposals emerging from the day. The day and the approach were inspired by – and demonstrated some of – the qualities of **emergent systems** and the conditions for **system change**:

- People see themselves as part of an interconnected whole
- There is shared purpose and vision
- Feedback and collective learning drive adaptation
- Open trusting relationships enable effective dialogue
- All people are viewed as resourceful and bringing strengths
- Power is shared and equality of voice is actively promoted
- Decision-making is devolved
- Accountability is mutual
- Leadership is collaborative and promoted at every level.

(Source: Lankelly Chase)

Using next generation tech to embrace collaborative ways of capturing, sharing and building upon ideas

Luke Flegg

Co-creating a learning resource on pioneering education

At the Dream Your School event, I was capturing visual and multimedia notes of workshops throughout the day.

The purpose was to keep a record of the day (for reference, for sharing, teaching, learning and reflecting)

To have as a permanent, living document that anyone can add to, forever.

Why? Because when events end, they're over, and all too often, so are the conversations, the relationships and the beautiful things that started something exciting and new.

So here's the link to the board we made:

tiny.cc/DYS

Without even logging in, you

should not only be able to see everything we created on the day, but you should also be able to add comments anywhere you like.

- Ask questions
- Identify mistakes
- Suggest things
- Build upon ideas
- Respond to other peoples' comments

Picture 1 is the first section (exactly as you should see it) It shows the opening questions that framed the day plus some intentions for the day

The second and third images are notes from a presentation and workshop hosted by St Luke's school Philosophy Club.

It's also neat to be able to link to other websites and resources online.

Something like this isn't going to be looked at, used, or enjoyed without it being actively spread and interacted with. The tool itself isn't exciting until it's got content

in it which excites people (and they can see it's living and being used / added to).

I'm exploring taking this a step further and creating another public interactive resource – another living document which invites people to:

- Say what examples of pioneering schools / innovative education they'd like to see
- Share living examples (if there are any)
- Discuss any aspect of this (by adding comments)

To make this tool work, editors need to find time to respond to contributions from the public, find patterns, re-organise and tidy the board, so it keeps gathering more and more insight from teachers, students and other people interested in where there are examples of better learning and teaching more people could do with knowing about.

Decolonise Sussex

A vital democratic approach to learning is decolonial thinking. The **Decolonise Sussex** campaign is led by outgoing Sussex Uni Education Officer Savannah Sevenso, whose "How Can We Free Our Minds?" workshop with Natasha Mansley explored decolonial thinking.

Decolonial thinking and learning promotes understanding of social inequalities and how history and identity impact experiences. It actively works to deconstruct inequalities within society.

Learn more about the decolonial creative practice of DYS workshop leader and non-binary artist Jacob V Joyce at jacobvjoyce.com.

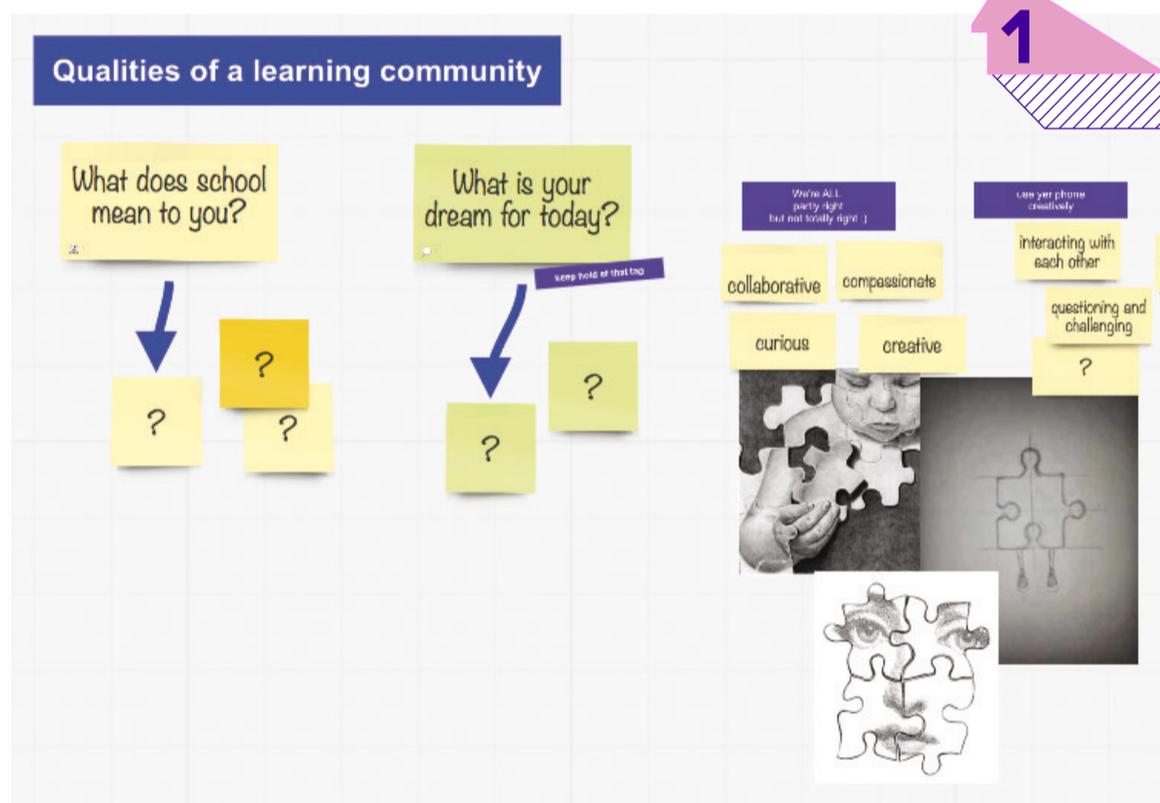
For more info on decolonial education in Sussex, go to sussexstudent.com/campaigns/decolonise-sussex



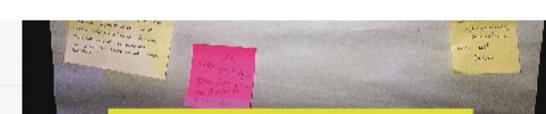
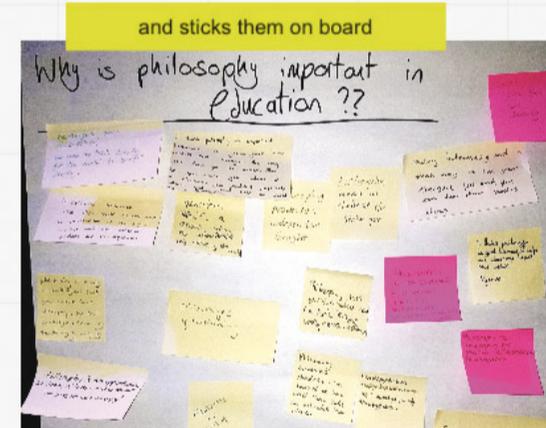
learning isn't about right & wrong, but rather open discussion

how can food help break down cultural barriers?

should you always do what your teacher says?



[everyone writes why they think philosophy is important in schools/ education]



The Dream Your School interactive board in action, DYS Brighton



Luke Flegg, the man behind the Board, DYS Brighton

Reflective

Proposal 6: Make space for deep listening and reflective practice in schools

Without questioning minds, we all lose.

Philosophy is a way of teaching your mind to think. Philosophy is the first knowledge of humans by questioning the world around them.

Philosophy and mindfulness for kids

There was much enthusiasm for the idea of schools embedding practices such as philosophy, mindfulness, democracy, peace studies, critical thinking, debate, deep listening in their curricula.

St Luke's Primary and Dharma School provide great examples of Brighton schools doing this: Dharma School Y5s led a mindfulness workshop; St Luke's led an exploration of children's philosophy.

'Wonderful! We need to think deeply for the world to benefit deeply.'

'Philosophy empowers children - I'm amazed at how well these kids can articulate their ideas.'

'Amazing - it combines all the different subjects in one.'

'Skills, empowerment and inclusivity.'

'Philosophy promotes independent thought.'

'Fantastic and engaging'

'Without questioning minds, we all lose.'

'Philosophy is a great way to understand and enjoy the world.'

'Philosophy is necessary for mental and emotional development.'

'Philosophy lets you share ideas about the topic without being offensive.'

'I think philosophy is good because it helps you decide what you want to learn in life and gets you ready for challenges ahead.'

'I think philosophy is good because it helps me clear my mind and relax.'

'Philosophy is for everyone. It is about thinking, questioning, discussing, sharing ideas.'

'Philosophy makes us challenge the status quo.'

'Ideas give you your identity.'

'Philosophy is a way of teaching your mind to think. Philosophy is the first knowledge of humans by questioning the world around them.'

'Philosophy helps your brain power and it releases your ideas.'

'I think philosophy is necessary because your ideas get stretched out as far as they can go, instead of staying in there alone.'

Questioning inherited assumptions about gender

Root Experience theatre company ran a workshop reflecting on assumptions and norms around binary identities and the gender roles of 'boys' and 'girls'. Woodside High School in London provides an example of best practice in terms of gender neutral language.



Dharma School teach mindfulness, DYS Brighton

credit: Felix Gonzales

What would you change about school?

Lottie Child

Co-founder of Wooden House School, on child-centred learning

This is an excerpt from Lottie's TEDx talk, 'What would you change about school?'

Children make meaning: they continually seek learning. They ask questions all the time, and these questions could be seen as theories. They're hypothesizing, you could say. They're strong, they're powerful, they're thinking. How can we as educators build on this energy? Why is there really only one model still of the way we do school? Why do we still teach to seated children so much of the time?

In the UK, we have a history of progressive pedagogy, starting with Su-

san Isaacs who pioneered child-centered education in the 1920s and 30s. It has a really big influence on the way we teach and the way we learn, but it hasn't influenced the way we do school at the moment, even though it seems charming to most educational theorists. Then, there's Reggio Emilia.

Reggio Emilia is a small city in northern Italy which birthed a kind of education which people call socio-constructivist. It's inspired by Lev Vygotsky.

The 'socio' bit is acknowledging that we make meaning in relationship to place and people. Constructivist means that children, and all of us, build on what we know. It's a very rigorous system. It uses project learning, so that we don't have to separate everything up into the curriculum. We can live and explore and make meaning

credit. Wooden House School



Wooden House School, Surrey

credit. Wooden House School



Wooden House School, Surrey

in the vital, connected way that we actually live our lives.

Being in this way is quite unsettling for adults, for us who were used to dividing things up, knowing things, measuring each other, but there is a safety net: the collective. Teachers work very carefully and very closely together in a non-hierarchical way with artists and pedagogues to consider very deeply the documentation of what the children are doing and saying. **They practise listening as a value.**

Listening means that you can't try to make the other into the same: we need difference. Reggio pedagogy includes looking at what the children are doing and trying to understand what they're doing by that, and thinking about how we can encourage them to develop their ideas and stay curious. How

do we make an environment that is so fascinating for children that they want to be deeply curious alongside us?

There's ongoing professional development, which means that teachers are seen as people who want to carry on learning and the whole project, the education, the projects, the school, everything is seen as research. We're learning. It doesn't have to be worked out, it doesn't have to be perfect, because we are, after all, talking about education. We're not necessarily talking about return on investment. We're talking about people. We're talking about singular people who are parts of a system. I would prefer that idea to individuality. We exist and grow in relationship.

Inspired by this, we've started a small school called **Wooden House** in Dorking.



Discussions of the students' proposals, DYS France

credit. Apprendre 21



Participants, DYS Poland

credit. Jolanta Mleczak

It's a Reggio-inspired part of a shift in education that looks at the whole child and the child's relationships with the world. Sightlines Initiative is supporting that change in the UK. The people of Reggio Emilia built their schools from the decimation of the Second World War. In the 1960s, when the mayor of Reggio Emilia was asked what prompted the city to adopt child-centered pedagogy, he said, "The experience of fascism has taught us that people who conform are dangerous, and we want to maintain a vision of children who can think for themselves." They started a new education from the rubble.

So what are we waiting for?

**FB – gardenand
forestscool**

Other DYS Events

Dream Your School France took place in Paris. Outcomes from the day fell into three themes:

1. Learning to live together (e.g. Share a meal with teachers once a month to talk about something other than classes);
2. Agency (e.g. Access to shared FabLabs; using brainstorming sessions at the start of the academic year to decide the school's learning focus; peer- and self-evaluation);
3. How to Learn? (e.g. Changing the marking system from grading to an emphasis on constructive advice from teacher to student).

Dream Your School Poland took place in Warsaw and participants agreed twelve "postulates" covering four areas:

1. Space (e.g. Outdoor spaces and spaces to relax),
2. Teaching and learning (e.g. Freedom of choice),
3. Human relationships (e.g. Democracy and inspiration)
4. Technologies (all materials easy to access online).

**evensfoundation.
be/programs/
peace-education/
dream-your-
school/**

Process & needs-driven

Proposal 7: Holistic education

This category of proposals focused on shifting schools' emphasis from academic attainment towards the all-round needs of whole people.

There was demand for 'optional' and 'invitational' learning (see page 9) – an approach that's modelled by the College for Self Managed Learning (CSML), and that was modelled throughout the DYS Brighton day. Other examples of process and needs-driven learning from DYS Brighton follow below:

CSML student Cocoa hosted a workshop called "How to turn boring office supplies into artwork". She reflected, "Everyone seemed to understand my thoughts on creativity and its role in schools: that it's something you can't teach but still

something everyone needs."

Many DYS participants felt that PSHE is potentially a radical, exciting area of learning: we heard about Sussex University's Role Models project, where undergraduates collaborate to hold space for KS3 students to explore issues around relationships, mental health, media, food and body image.

ARTICULATE ran a craft session exploring the idea of safe spaces through facilitated dialogue whilst making tiny nests from found materials.

The BSL workshop led by Deaf artists Louise Gibson and Parveen Dunlin with Lex Titterington was popular, with participants passionate about their experience of non-verbal communication, and calling for BSL to be integrated into the National Curriculum.

In her workshop for educa-

tors, Bridget McKenzie asked 'What are the small steps that can help learning organisations turn to face a critical future of planetary change and help young people thrive in a changing world?' This session was avidly welcomed by teachers keen for professional development opportunities focused on such crucial questions. Thelearningplanet.wordpress.com

Artists Felix Prater, Rachel Bennington and Katie Scanlan invited participants to take their creativity outdoors and explore play, curiosity and movement in the context of, and in response to, the elements.

Felix Gonzales supported young reporters documenting and responding to the day, and film maker Gani Naylor invited teenagers to discuss the pros and pitfalls of technology in schools.

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Julie Melia & the BHPRU team
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Graphic design by: Lekko Studio in Poland, & Nat Hough in London
Bridget McKenzie, educator
Our Future City, LCEP
Student volunteers Rosie,



Dreaming school with plasticine & lego, led by Ellie Liddell-Crewe

credit: Felix Gonzales



Sign language with Louise, Parveen & Lex, DYS Brighton

credit: Charlotte Grob



Making a murmuration with Felix Prater & José Canepa

credit: Gani Naylor

Eloise, Sahar and Elena
Workshop leaders: Sarah Bennett, Rachel Bennington, Jess Cheetham, Parveen Dunlin, Kathy Ellwand, Tricia Enns, Luke Flegg, Louise Gibson, Felix Gonzales, Jenny Haufek, Jacob V Joyce, Ellie Liddell Crewe, Simon

Magnus, Gani Naylor, Felix Prater, Katie Scanlan, Jen Staff, Lex Titterington, Robin van Creveld, Lynn Weddle

Event designed & run by O N C A team Clare Connolly, Keith Ellis, Carrina Gaffney & Persephone Pearl