



# creative schools

MERRIWA  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

CASE STUDY — TERM 2 & 3

## TERM 2

# creative schools

Visual Artist

**Andrea Tenger**

Teacher

**Sophie Perkins**

School

**Merriwa Primary School**

Year group

**Year 6**

In 2019, with support from the Department of Education and DLGSC, FORM partnered with 16 metropolitan and regional schools to deliver its Creative Schools program. FORM developed Creative Schools in partnership with *Creativity, Culture in Education* (CCE), an international foundation dedicated to unlocking the creativity of children and young people in and out of formal education, and *Hidden Giants*, an education consultancy agency supports schools to re-imagine their curriculum by placing 'disruptive', creative, and critical thinking at its heart.

Creative Schools Program aims to improve the learning outcomes of young Western Australians. It does so by activating creative learning strategies through the establishment of meaningful partnerships between teachers, creative (arts) practitioners and young people. The program is a valuable and imaginative addition to class and school strategies for raising attainment, improving well-being and supporting inclusion

Creative Schools engages with the participating school over a full academic year. In Term 1, the creative and teacher participate in an intensive Professional Development on Creative Learning. The program then partners each teacher with a creative practitioner to co-design and co-deliver these learning activities, which focus on a priority area of the curriculum as identified by the school and teacher (e.g. mathematics, HASS or science).

Teachers and Creatives co-facilitate a 90-minutes sessions for students on a weekly basis in Terms 2 and 3. Each class has access to 16 weeks (24 hours) of direct engagement of the creatives with the students. Two classes from each school were selected to participate, a total of 32 classes in 2019. Term 4 is an opportunity to reflect on the program and FORM's independent researcher, evaluates outcomes.

This document describes the activities and outcomes across two terms of delivery: Term 2 and 3 (over 16 weeks). It also includes reflections from school leaders, teachers and students.

## ACADEMIC YEAR 2019



### TERM 1

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ARTISTS AND TEACHERS

Observation and diagnosis of student engagement in the classroom.  
Planning time for teachers and artists



### TERM 2

#### PROGRAM DELIVERY IN THE CLASSROOM

Creative Learning workshops per week for eight consecutive weeks



### TERM 3

#### PROGRAM DELIVERY

Learning workshops per week for 8 consecutive weeks



### TERM 4

#### REFLECTION AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

## CURRICULUM FOCUS

### Literature

Literature & context: Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts. (ACELT1613)

Features of literary texts: Identify, describe and discuss similarities and differences between texts, including those by the same author or illustrator, and evaluate characteristics that define an author's individual style (ACELT1616)

### Literacy

Oral presentations: Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements for defined audiences and purposes, making appropriate choices for modality and emphasis. (ACELY1710)

## CROSS-CURRICULUM LINKS

### HASS knowledge and understanding

History: Australia as a nation: Stories of groups of people who migrated to Australia (including from one Asian country), the reasons they migrated (e.g. push-pull factors) and their contributions to society. (ACAHASSK136)

### HASS skills

Analysing: Identify different points of view/perspectives in information and/or data (e.g. analyse language, identify motives) (WAHASS57)

Communicating & Reflecting: Present findings, conclusions and/or arguments, appropriate to audience and purpose, in a range of communication forms (e.g. written, oral, visual, digital, tabular, graphic, maps) and using subject-specific terminology and concepts. (WAHASS61)

A focus on Critical & Creative Thinking: Reflect on their assumptions made, consider reasonable criticism and adjust their thinking if necessary. Apply knowledge gained from one context to another unrelated context and identify new meaning.

Personal and Social: Analyse factors that influence ability to self-regulate; devise and apply strategies to monitor own behavior and set realistic learning goals. Devise strategies and formulate plans to assist in the completion of challenging task and the maintenance of personal safety.

## CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

### The key learning goal was to:

Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts. (ACELT1613)

Before we began our sessions together, the students completed a baseline brainstorm task. This involved them, after listening to me read a text, making

connections between the text and themselves, the world and other texts. I then gave the students feedback on their responses and they set goals of the types of connections they hoped to make next time we repeated this task. At this point there were many students who were unable to make any connections. It appeared that they didn't understand what these 'connections' really meant.





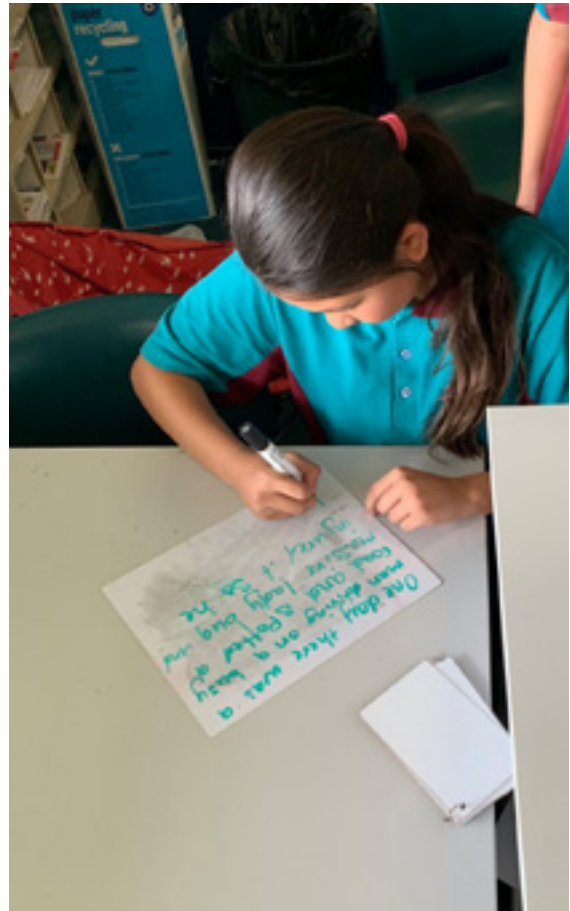
## THE LEARNING PROCESS

Class teacher Sophie Perkins thought the class could benefit from focusing on three of the five habits of mind; imaginative, disciplined and persistent. This class were prone to giving up easily when faced with a difficult task and found it challenging to be disciplined and improve on their work. They also found it difficult to make deep connections between their own lives and experiences and those of the people around them.

Each session followed a similar format which established a secure routine. Warm ups at the start of the session were an essential tool and allowed the students to practice the creative habits of mind in a variety of challenging, fun and physical ways.

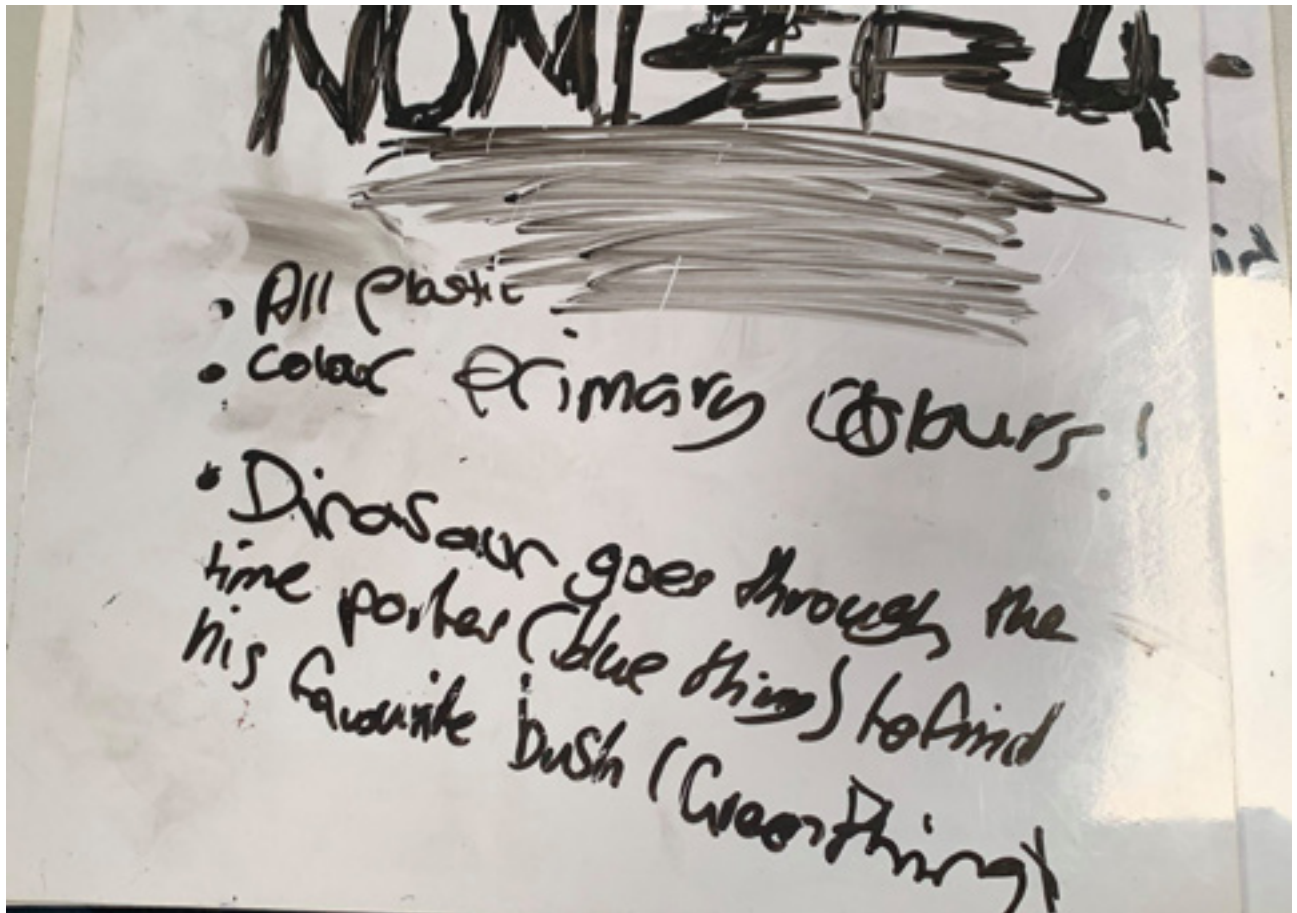
We began our term's work with a session dedicated to establishing what the Five Creative Habits of Mind are and created our own common language about the habits. We called them The Five Creative Super Powers and made a super-hero shield to show how well we currently used them. Many of the class confused discipline with punishment and were not able to describe a time when they had been persistent. They thought that because they liked working in a group it meant that they were experts at collaboration and that being imaginative meant that they were good at telling stories and drawing. The workshops aimed to challenge these assumptions over the course of the term. For example, we played a balloon game that required collaboration, persistence and discipline. The game was difficult, and we could not complete it. This experience of failure provided a meaningful opportunity to reflect on what being disciplined and persistent requires and the balloon game became a useful reflection tool.

Each student was given a random object and was asked to find one other person that they could connect their object to. Then find another pair and create a story theme that connects the four objects. Then share the theme. The class found this challenging at first. They did not trust their intuition and were not confident that what they had done was 'good enough.' Asking them to write their themes on whiteboards that could be easily erased, changed and adapted helped emphasize that the task was all about playing with possibilities.



We explored and investigated a migration story and made connections between our own experiences and those of author Anh Do. This was a relevant theme as many students in the class come from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The students watched a video; The Little Refugee read out loud by a Vietnamese man, and then wondered how Anh Do felt at various stages during his journey from Vietnamese refugee to school captain in Australia. They wrote these feelings on Post-It-Notes and then worked together to sort and then group them into five categories: lonely, brave, uncertain, happy, proud. The students then worked collaboratively to create a mixed media drawing to communicate these feelings.



## IMPACT OF LEARNING

There were opportunities to reflect critically on what happened during each session. It was important to identify which of the 'Five Creative Superpowers' we had practised. We used the same language as printed on the Creative Habits of Learning wheel poster e.g. Students said 'It was difficult to do the numbers game, but we stuck with it,' 'I used my intuition when I looked at the portrait.' Over time I noticed that the students found it easier to identify when they had practised being persistent, disciplined and imaginative. At the end of term, the students played the difficult balloon game again. It required collaboration, persistence and discipline. This time they were able to complete it!

I found that all kids improved in their ability to make connections to a text. The degree of improvement varied though even the weaker readers improved. Whether it was reducing their cognitive load, having these real hands on experiences they could refer to as a way to base their text level connections on I can't be certain but in some ways this is how it felt.







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**(Teacher, Sophie Perkins)**

"We are doing group work pairing up with my friend. I sometimes have to work with girls (I don't usually work with girls). Creative schools expands our imagination." (Student)

**"Other lessons are boring. I'm bored most of the time. Creative schools isn't boring. We get to draw and do games with different objects. We are learning new things." (Student)**

"I'm making better connections. Using my imagination." (Student)

"It suits more people. We work together. Drawing makes me feel happy. Everyone is cooperating with each other. It helps us to make friends in the class." (Student)

"It makes you like school more. It makes things like reading easier. You don't have to do so much reading. We still do lots of writing in Creative Schools but it's different to other writing lessons." (Student)

"I've learned to cooperate with others. I've learned to be nicer to people." (Student)

"Because I like drawing and thinking. It helps me get my mind off bad stuff. Its fun doing art and drawing in other lessons. You make connections. You don't just do writing you get to do other stuff." (Student)

"It's helpful for people who like to do creative stuff. I enjoy it. The activities are great. I like to draw self-portraits. I like how there is team work and collaboration. You slowly improve and focus more." (Student)

**"There is more activities. It's still doing work but it is fun for people who like to do activities. For the people who like poems and doing feelings and creative stuff its good for them." (Student)**

"I've learned about how good the stuff you do is. It's about how hard you try and if you care about the work you do. I'm starting to do more work together with people. I'm starting to feel more positive. I usually can't wait for Friday to happen. But now I can't wait for school." (Student)







## TERM 3

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## MAIN CURRICULUM FOCUS

### MATHS

Measurement and geometry

Using units of measurement: Connect volume and capacity and their units of measurement (ACMMG138)

## CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

### ENGLISH

#### Language

Sentence and clause level grammar; Investigate how complex sentences can be used in a variety of ways to elaborate, extend and explain ideas. (ACELA 1522)

#### Literature

Experimentation and adaption: Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts, for example, using imagery, sentence variation, metaphor and word choice (ACELT1800)

Creating literary texts: Create literary texts that adapt or combine aspects of texts students have experienced in innovative ways (ACELT1618)

#### Literacy

Listening and speaking interactions: Use interaction skills, varying conventions of spoken interactions such as voice volume, tone, pitch and pace, according to group size, formality of interaction and needs and expertise of the audience (ACELY1816)

Creating texts: Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience (ACELY1714)

## GENERAL CAPABILITIES

### Critical & Creative Thinking

Pose questions to clarify and interpret information and probe for causes and consequences

Analyse, condense and combine relevant information from multiple sources

Combine ideas in a variety of ways and from a range of sources to create new possibilities

Reflect on assumptions made, consider reasonable criticism and adjust their thinking if necessary.

### Personal & Social

Describe the influence that personal qualities and strengths have on their learning outcomes

Monitor their progress, seeking and responding to feedback from teachers to assist them in consolidating strengths and addressing weaknesses and fulfilling their potential

Analyse factors that influence ability to self-regulate; devise and apply strategies to monitor own behavior and set realistic learning goals.

Devise strategies and formulate plans to assist in the completion of challenging tasks and the maintenance of personal safety.

## CONTEXT

### About Merriwa Primary School

Merriwa Primary School is an Independent Public Primary School with a strong focus on academic achievement with priorities in literacy and numeracy. Its positive and challenging teaching programs allow all students to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to become confident independent learners. The school rates below average in the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage with 59% of its students in the lowest quarter (the lower the ICSEA value, the lower the level of educational advantage of students who go to this school.) Its student population is complex and varied; 31% have a language background other than English and 13% are Indigenous. It has a highly transient population, with an annual rate of around 30%.

### About maths

Mathematics is one of those subjects that students (and adults) love or hate; we think we are either good at maths or bad at it. The commonly used explicit teaching method involves the teacher demonstrating a set of rules or procedures used to solve a maths problem, the class then solve some maths problems together and then the students practice on their own. This method relies on the students remembering the rules and procedures and being able to apply them to new situations or problems.

A Creative Learning approach supports deep learning of mathematical concepts; the ideas, meanings and relationships. It encourages conceptual understanding which allows students to make connections between the procedure (how to solve a problem) and its significance (why it's solved that way). This helps them, when faced with a similar maths problem in the future, to use what they already know to solve it. It can help students see that maths is useful and meaningful outside of the classroom, and into everyday life.

## WHAT WE DID

Sophie and I wanted to design and deliver a series of learning activities that allowed the students to define volume and capacity. It included giving real examples of each, identifying connections between the two concepts and describing the difference between them as well.

The lesson planning was informed by student reflections from last term's Creative Schools work. The reflections told us that the students liked working in small groups and choosing who to work with, working in a space of their choice (outside, on the floor, in the common area) and to use and move their bodies when they are learning. Many of them are spatial and auditory-musical learners. They enjoy warm-up games and having their thoughts and feelings acknowledged both individually and in group settings. They also love performing and making art.

Each lesson followed a similar format which established a secure routine. Warm ups were an essential tool and allowed the students to practice the creative habits of mind and make connections with the learning content in a variety of challenging, fun and physical ways.

The inquiry-based lessons that followed allowed the students to utilise a variety of learning spaces in any way they chose. They were free to engage in the activities as much or as little as they liked and in any way they felt able. They worked in small groups most of the time.

One lesson asked, 'How many of you can fit into a cardboard fridge box?' and "How many breaths fill a balloon?" The students had to climb into a box and blow up balloons to find out. These tasks prompted questions and discussions about containers, how much they can hold (capacity) and how capacity is measured. A follow up lesson tested the students thinking about capacity by asking them to create a recipe for a superpower potion to fill a chosen container. The students were asked to work in small groups to develop a song about capacity to perform at the end of term to invited guests. Each group was to use the tune of a well-known nursery rhyme (Twinkle Twinkle Little Star or Mary Had A Little Lamb).

Similar inquiry-based lessons helped students to define volume and how it is measured, and the students were asked to add a verse to their capacity song but this time as a poem or rap. This was to highlight that there is a difference between capacity and volume.

To further reinforce the difference between capacity and volume we slowly and quietly drank from a juice box and noticed that the container's capacity did not change but the volume of juice inside it did.

To reinforce the concept of volume and test the students' definitions we read Archimedes Bath by Pamela Allen. We then made clay animals and then placed the same weight of clay in a jug of water and measured displacement in order to establish volume. We also made chocolate brownies and measured them.

There was continuous reflection throughout the lessons; formal and informal, group and individual. This gave the students some agency in the learning process and provided educators with valuable feedback that informed the next lesson(s).

It was important to identify which of the following Creative Habits of Learning were practised during the lessons:

**Inquisitive: exploring and investigating**

**Collaborative: cooperating appropriately**

**Persistent: sticking with difficulty, daring to be different and tolerating uncertainty**

**Disciplined: developing techniques, crafting and improving and reflecting critically**

**Imaginative: making connections**

In addition to helping students reflect on their learning journey the Creative Habits of Learning language was used, at times, to help them manage their personal behaviour too. "Are you cooperating appropriately?"

## WHAT WAS THE IMPACT?

### Students

The students created a two-verse song that included alliteration/rhyme/rhythm, that demonstrated students their understanding of volume, capacity and their connections. Students developed their songs over a period of time, crafting and improving them, practising, and reflecting critically. They then performed their songs to the class and special invited guests.

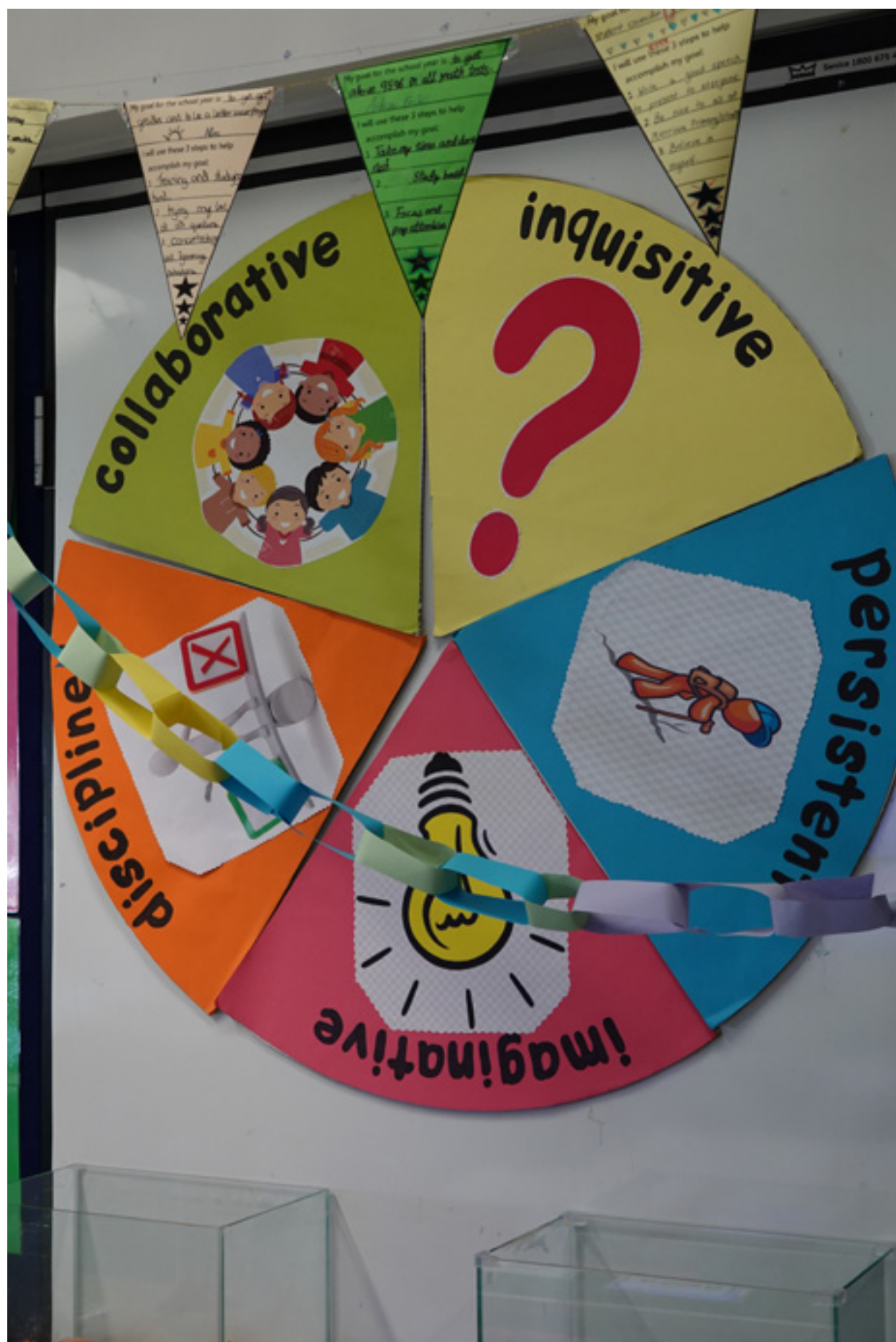
The students were able to describe their learning journey to the special invited guests. They were able to identify the Creative Habits of Learning and describe how they had been used using appropriate language in a meaningful way. They were also able to talk about how they have used some of these habits in other learning areas at times when the Creative was not there.

### Teacher

The inquiry-based activities and the focus on the Creative Habits of Learning gave the students an opportunity to participate in meaningful and authentic ways. These experiences became a powerful resource that I could refer the students back to during other lessons. The warm-ups were more than just fun 'games', and I was able to see their value on another level. I feel that being part of this process then gave me more confidence to justify doing this type of activity myself. To see these activities as more than games or ways to get kids moving was important for me because time is so precious in the class.

### Creative Practitioner

I initially found the task of teaching maths challenging. I was not sure I could communicate the concepts effectively. My first response was to stay comfortable, stick with my area of expertise and make connections and meaning by looking closely and then making sculptures or by exploring the concept of negative space via drawing. This would have been easy for me and fun for the students but would not have met the curriculum requirements which were specifically about connecting volume and capacity and their units of measurement. Setting this specific, immovable outcome and working closely with the teacher made the task less challenging. We were a good team. Sophie made sure that the knowledge was taught while I challenged her to teach it differently, to include the capabilities and to let her creativity and passion for teaching drive the lessons.







## QUOTES

**"They will remember these songs for the rest of their lives, every time they are faced with something about capacity or volume, they will remember their song and they'll know."**

**(Teacher and special guest at the Showcase)**

"I was amazed to see a student that is illiterate stand up in front of all of us and proudly sing a song about capacity and volume, a song that he had helped create, even though he can't read, he did it. And another student, who is usually very shy and reserved, who feels shame at being the centre of attention performed the song. What an incredible achievement on so many levels." (Principal and special guest at the Showcase)



**"Wait, what? This is maths? But I hate maths, I can't do maths...oh, but I can do this."** (Student)

"I realised that sometimes I should let other people contribute and get the credit, I can't always do it all myself." (Student)

**"It's fun and you don't even realise that you're learning anything and then suddenly you know about capacity and volume."** (Student)

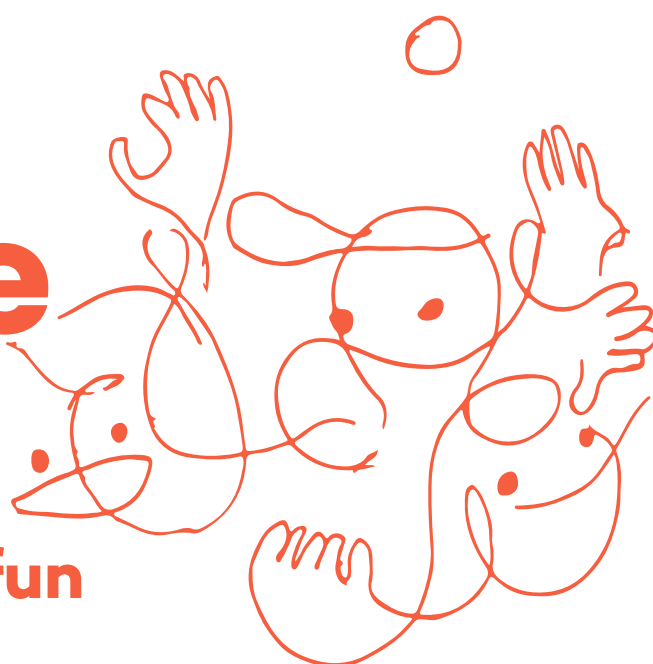
"These students are awesome, talented, magic – just like their Principal said they were." (Creative Practitioner)



**FORM.** creative  
learning

# creative schools

deep learning, hard fun



For further information please contact:

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building a state of creativity



Department of  
Education