

**creative
schools**

**MUNDARING
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**

CASE STUDY — TERM 2 & 3

TERM 2

creative schools

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Oral and Focus skills (Early Years Learning Framework)

CREATIVE HABITS:

Collaboration, imagination, inquisition, persistence and discipline.

Visual Artist - biological arts
Clarice Yuen

Teacher
Christine Nolan

School
Mundaring Christian College

Year group
Kindergarten



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 *Culture & Creativity 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

BIG QUESTION

How to get the students to stay focused and be grounded? How do we engage the disengaged students? How do we improve their oral language and develop their skills?

AREA OF CURRICULUM

Main focus: Oral language (communication); expand their vocabulary; and improve their focus.

THE ROLE OF THE CREATIVE HABITS PLAYED IN YOUR PROJECT.

From the beginning, I knew that as the creative practitioner, my role was to work closely with the teacher to collaborate and evaluate a new methodology for using arts strategies within the scope of curriculum areas. Together, we delivered innovative, authentic and challenging learning methods for children. I applied my skills and knowledge of Visual Arts (mainly painting and book making) and Biological Arts practices (gardening and biological image production) to help support the teacher to co-manage and adapt learning environments.

When the teacher, Christine Nolan and I first met at the school, I was astonished by the environment of the school up in the hills. It is rich in biodiversity, inspirational and countless discoveries awaited. To my eye, it is magical and adventurous environment. After Ms Nolan had introduced me to the playground, classroom and students we spent nearly two hours brainstorming, discussing and sharing our different philosophical approaches for the term. We concluded that the aim was to improve students' oral language and focus on building their skills.

In each face to face planning and reflection session, we covered the curriculum areas in depth both creatively and effectively. We designed all of our activities together to implement the five Creative Habits of Mind - collaborative, imaginative, inquisitive, persistence and disciplined. We had an advantage for cultivating students' curiosity and enthusiasm to learn as four years old students are naturally strong when it comes to imagination. Sometimes we focused on a specific creative habit or focused on an intended outcome. We paid attention to what the students' enjoyed. Each reflection took students engagement into consideration and this contributed

to the design of the next session.

DEEP LEARNING AND MAGICAL MOMENTS

Our first session (One Big Caterpillar) started off with the Creative Practitioner speaking to students in another language. Students were asked to respond to what she had demonstrated with her body and hand gestures and finally drawings millipedes and caterpillars. Students asked many questions. Then students were asked to move like caterpillars (in another language still). They understood completely and happily crawled around! The main activity was to ask students to walk like one big caterpillar in a line. Ms Nolan reflected: "The children soon discovered that without effective communication - stop, go, slow and fast, the rope joining them made it difficult and uncomfortable to walk." Students reflection and feedback was



captured in the floorbook at the end of the session.

Image: Students were getting ready to explore as one caterpillar! Image by Angela Croot (Teaching assistant) 2019

CURRICULUM LINKS: Outcome 4: children are confident and involved learners

CREATIVE HABITS:

Collaborative, persistent, inquisitive and imaginative

For our second session the Creative Practitioner prepared a bag with random objects and one daddy long leg spider inside. Students were asked to close their eyes, tell us an imaginative story when they

touched what was inside the bag. Here, not all students had the chance to express themselves. Then students were asked to express their tactile experience through drawings using simple charcoal next to the fire pit. Ms Nolan reflected: "The interesting thing was that not one drawing or idea was the same and the descriptive language was evident." All of



their drawings showed individual abstraction, mark making and imagination!

Image: Students touched a mystery bag in turns to guess what the objects were inside. Image by Christine Nolan 2019.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Outcome 4: children are confident and involved learners

CREATIVE HABITS:

Imagination, persistence, disciplined and inquisitive

After working with my teacher for two sessions, Ms Nolan became more open to our discussions, tolerating uncertainty, willing to take risks and allowing children to lead the learning.

At the same time, I also began to be more open minded, understanding, learning from both Ms Nolan and the students. In our planning for the third session, Ms Nolan introduced me the beautiful Black Cockatoo Reserve located just behind the school. I learnt so much from her knowledge of the reserve including the Jarrah trees, die back disease, Black Cockatoos, government rules and more.

In our third session, we used a story YOWIE - six guardians of different wild habitats. Students were asked to create

their own Yowie (using natural materials) to protect the reserve. We used natural materials like sticks and charcoal to make/draw things in the playground. Then students showed no hesitation in lining up to visit the reserve. We read out the story and asked students "What would you like to protect?" as Yowies. They all answered different things. I grabbed some stones from the footpath to make an arrow. There were discoveries, stacking stones, questions, talking,



guessing natural phenomenon and more. Through our making, we learnt so much from exploring this specific environment such as rocks and stones (geology) and local flora and fauna.

Image: Students were actively learning and collecting what they have found. The girl on the left created a piece of sculpture.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Outcome 2: children are connected with and contribute to their world

CREATIVE HABITS:

Imagination, disciplined, collaborative, inquisitive and persistent

For the fourth session we played the children's favourite chasing game. I prepared three boxes and hid them in the playground. Each box was filled with different materials, including organic, synthetic materials and a mixture of both. Students were asked to create something from what they found inside a box. Students climbed trees, made their own games, made a beast and fairy garden and much more. It was wonderful to observe high functioning nature of this classroom. In Forest's school pedagogy, it is believed that hands on learning "gives children the



opportunity to develop skills beyond the academic – including negotiation, resilience and independence.” (The conversation 2019). Later, I invited everyone to freely draw on the floorbook to create a collaborative drawing.

Image: A group of students used the prepared materials (gold leaves and wood) from the box to create an imaginary beast and fairy garden.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

CREATIVE HABITS:

Imagination, persistence, collaborative and disciplined

By the fifth session we passed a container around the circle containing a common house spider the Daddy Long Legs. Students showed great wonder and focus. Students took turns to come up with their own greetings to welcome the spider. One of the “disengaged” boys stayed, waited for his turn, used a magnifying glass to observe the spider and then asked “what’s its name?”. It was wonderful to observe the curiosity in these students.

We then moved like spiders to the beautiful Black Cockatoo Reserve. I had prepared boxes and placed them on the footpath in the reserve earlier that day. Each box consisted of a container with a daddy long legs spiders along with other random natural materials or recyclable objects. In one jar was a

pregnant spider with lots of eggs inside. A boy from the class who had expressed that he was scared of spiders became very attached to his spider in the jar. Other students showed empathy towards the pregnant spider.

One of the goals of the Creative Learning Program is to allow children to lead the learning. Students suggested we go on a bushwalk, which we did. Deep learning occurred within this highly creative learning space. Students used their magnifying glasses to discover things about the environment on the walk. Back in the classroom, students then drew freely and decorated the floorbook with leaves that were collected in the reserve.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Outcome 4: children are confident and involved learners

CREATIVE HABITS:

Imagination, persistence, collaboration, disciplined and inquisitive

Our sixth session was by far the most meaningful and magical one. The Creative Practitioner brought in two large cardboard boxes to facilitate a large collaborative painting. A number of garden snails were collected for this activity. We gently placed the snails on students’ palms. Some gave their snails names and they were fascinated with the tangible experience.



Two groups of students started painting by dipping the snails in natural food colouring. Students showed a great deal of empathy towards the snails. They were feeding them, making sure they weren't dropping them and generally observing them.

Images from our sixth session. (The bottom two were by Vanessa Bradley) 2019.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Outcome 1 & 4: children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect; children are confident and involved learners

CREATIVE HABITS:

Imagination, collaboration, disciplined, inquisitive and persistent

In our final session we explored the reserve through the game of a Nature scavenger hunt. The purpose was to stimulate them to discover and actively learn something new about the Black Cockatoo reserve.

We explored using our five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) through touching moss, discovering spider webs, paying attention to the signs, listening to the bird sounds, looking at the pattern of trees and bark, observing tall trees, tasting droplets of water and smelling tree resin.

One of the exciting finds at the end of the walk was the remains of an animal. The children were curious about what sort of animal it could be Was it a bird? (no feathers, it had fur on the ear). Was it a bandicoot? (no, the ear were too big). Could it be a rabbit ... the questioning and reasoning process was very evident amongst the children.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Outcome 2 & 4: children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment; children are confident and involved learners

CREATIVE HABITS: Imagination, collaboration, disciplined and inquisitive



QUOTES FROM THE TEACHER

"The children understood the purpose of the activity, that there are different ways to communicate and understand."

"I can see how it works. It's not about the outcome but the process."

"It does make them speak more."

"We naturally created a theme."

"This is one of the things about this school. We use the environment to connect with children."

"One thing unique about the kids. They get a lot out from our school environment."

"It is good to see that the student who was scared of spiders became so attached to it."

"Students really enjoyed the snails."

QUOTES FROM STUDENTS

"I draw what I feel."

"We are going for a bushwalk. We are going for a bushwalk!"

"Hello Spider. How are you feeling today?"

"I am feeding the snail!"

"Lets go!"

QUOTES FROM THE CREATIVE PRACTITIONER

"I see a full cycle of learning from one another - my teacher, students, myself and even living organisms in our session."

"A large number of four years old are very demanding for educators' creative energy. Many teachers and TA's often 'run out of fuel' because of their busy curriculums, parents interviews, markings and reports, etc. As the creative, I believe I can spark students' enthusiasm to help educators and offer another way of approaches and new ideas."

"Children often surprise adults with philosophical questions! It is amazing!"

"The children are so imaginative."





TERM 3

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CURRICULUM FOCUS

EYLF Outcome 2.4 children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment. Outcome 4 children are confident and involved learners.

Overall theme:

Growing things

Visual Artist - biological arts

Clarice Yuen

Teacher

Christine Nolan

School

Mundaring Christian College

Year group

Kindergarten



WHAT WE DID

How did you make the curriculum come alive?

The theme was 'Growing things' for the kindergarten class in Term 3 at Mundaring Christian College. For this particular theme, the teacher Christine Nolan and the Creative Practitioner discussed the key learning intention for the four year old students to be more confident and involved learners (Outcome 4), and to show respect for the environment (Outcome 2.4) from the EYLF curriculum. The focus was primarily growing plants with 18 energetic four year old students. We made the curriculum come alive by using living material (seeds) to spark their imagination. All of these co-designed activities were play-based to allow the children to become highly stimulated and engaged; to encourage curiosity, to express their creativity and to get their hands dirty both indoors and out in the environment. Most importantly, we enabled students to imagine, dream and create.

We used the book *Isabella's Garden* as the basis of the program from week three. For each session we incorporated a warm up activity, the main activity and reflection time. In each warm up activity, the Creative Practitioner read out *Isabella's Garden* and included creative games to engage the students with the story. These games included I Spy With My Little Eye, mystery seed bag, seed sprout, seed drawings, singing, dancing and more. We showed plant species that were mentioned from *Isabella's Garden* (thistledown and dream seed) and students enjoyed blowing the thistledown and were captivated by the dream seed's large size.

How did you make the Creative Habits of Mind come alive?

Each of the main activities directly referred to *Isabella's Garden*; students learnt to grow plants and understand the plants' basic needs to stay alive and they re-created each page of the book as the main activities for each session. These activities were also specifically targeted to implement the five Creative Habits of Mind for students to be collaborative, imaginative, disciplined, inquisitive and persistent.

Apart from co-designing authentic activities, we also highlighted the importance for students to improve collaboration skills with fellow students, and encouraged discipline through play in our creative sessions. Ms Nolan applied her teaching approach to tailor the learning for different students' needs

during the sessions while the Creative Practitioner applied her artistic approaches from her background in painting, book making and environmental art methods. We also looked at references from other visual artists, biological artists, environmental artists, Forest's school, Nature Play, Sci-Tech early childhood activities and curriculums from creative day care practitioners. In each session, we added class discussion on simple drawings for these five Creative Habits of Mind before our main activities. For instance, students would describe and be familiar with the concept of "working together" from a picture of five figures holding hands. By the end of term, most students could make links to what they had done around the Creative Habits of Mind.

We made good use of diverse materials for students to recreate their "garden." The school environment provided a plethora of natural resources for the children to be stimulated. Our hands-on activities included seed paper making, sand lightscapes, gardening, artist book making, sculpting with moldable materials, flying kites, folding bird beaks, imitating birds' behaviors and incorporating drawing and painting on large scale surfaces. Students' were physically, intellectually, emotionally, intellectually and socially engaged in the sessions.

How did you activate student voice?

Activating students' voice was at the core of each sessions. Deep learning moments came through either their individual or collaborative exploration or making. None of their creations such as sand drawing, seed drawing, or even the way that they drew and flew the kites were identical, and the photos capture the evidence of this. We also pushed ourselves to be flexible on time, so students could have more opportunities to explore and tolerate uncertainties rather than finishing a task. We had in-depth reflection weekly to improve the groups approach to creative activities. We listened to students' requests to co-design lessons and incorporated their ideas and suggestions into the lessons. We embraced students' random actions such as climbing trees, running off to get extra material, looking at bugs, describing their own drawings and more. We provided students with time for free play but also directed them towards meaningful learning experiences. Ms Nolan was good at encouraging students to come up with their own techniques and ideas, then she would assist them to develop them further.





THE IMPACT OF CREATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

“Through my participation in the Creative Schools Program, I have been able to reflect deeper on my practices as a classroom teacher in the early years. The early years promote the pedagogy of Inquiry Based Learning. The continual push-down of the academic curriculum over recent years has stifled a lot of creativity that was once the hallmark of teachers and children in these age groups. Having the Creative Practitioner working alongside me and my assistant has allowed me to explore some of this lost wonder and creativity. The children became very engaged with the smaller things; such as watching bugs and snails move and the amazing patterns they naturally make as they move. Free-form drawing, modelling, singing and movement, bush exploration, transient bush art, sculpture and challenging thinking were all evident throughout the experience. The children reflected on the learning and Creative Habits of Mind after every session. They enjoyed all of the sessions and looked forward to each exciting exploration and activity.” (Teacher)

“I have learnt A LOT from both my teacher and students themselves. Last term, I applied a lot of my own art practices while co-designing with my teacher. But this term, I researched something new for almost each session. I was constantly inspired by the conversations with the students. At the age of four, they are truly magical. Sometimes children’s questions are almost philosophical. Ms Nolan also taught me about educating student’s needs that I probably would never have known otherwise.” (Creative Practitioner)

“The impact of the students was huge. Students were excited about our sessions each week. Many of them gradually learnt how to match what we had done to the five Creative Habits of Mind. Some of the references that we applied significantly affected how the teacher and I dealt with their behaviors. I often enforced the attitude “everyone is equal and everyone is creative” in our sessions. The quiet students were encouraged to have a louder voice and sometimes I tested them to allow the quieter students to be the leaders.” (Creative Practitioner)

Quotes

“The challenges were huge!” (Teacher)

“They can climb on trees if they are able to climb down themselves.” (Teacher)

“The seeds are like babies” (Student)

“Purple is the color of magic.” (Student)

“I want to plant it.” (Student)

“Can we sing it again? Again?” (Student)

“We were flying kites together so we were working together!” (Student)

“We need to listen to the rules to play a full game!” (Student)

“We make space for rules!” (Student)

“Because its FUN!!” A student stood up and shouted out with so much excitement when I asked them what’s the difference to their normal classrooms.

“Because you do fun stuff!” Another student also replied.

“Can we fly a plane?” (Student)

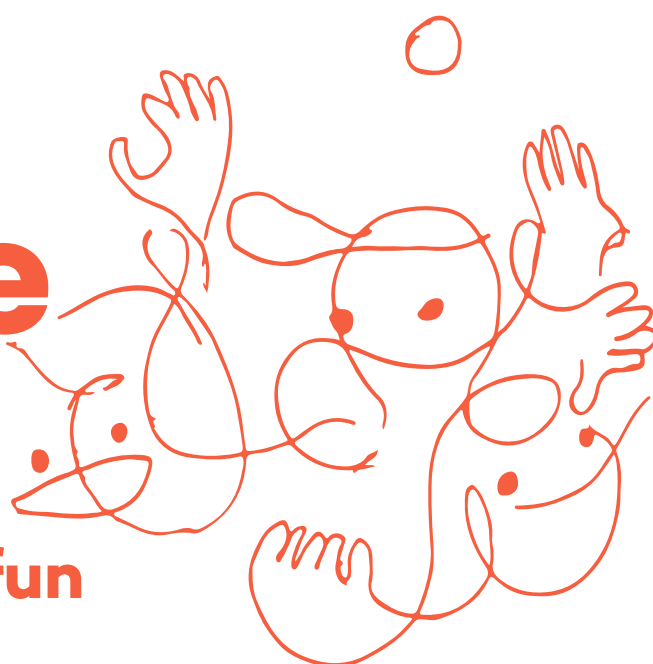
“Look! I know! We can hang them up here so they can fly!” (Student)

“This is something different!” (Parent)

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deep learning, hard fun



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