

Giving the power of animation

Creative Partnerships is the Government flagship creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills of young people across England, raising their aspirations and equipping them for their futures. Creative Partnerships is managed by Arts Council England and funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families. They now operate in 36 areas in England and are working intensively with over 2,400 schools across the country. At Creative Partnerships, they believe that working with creative professionals from many different art forms and disciplines helps develop creative thinking and wider abilities in young people. One of the art forms they tried is animation, via the Animated Learners programme.



Images courtesy of Creative Partnerships

The Animated Learners programme was developed in response to a very successful and enjoyable residency animator **David Bunting** took with **Stepney Primary School** last year through Creative Partnerships Hull, where he explored creative solutions to teaching and learning across the curriculum. "Creative Partnerships offered me the chance to go back to Stepney and explore practical techniques for staff and pupils to create animation in a classroom environment, in the hope of leaving a legacy in which teachers feel confident to use animation as a teaching aid," explained David. During the first project, David worked in classes on various animated films including highly successful productions on themes including William Wilberforce. The brilliance of the work attracted regional media in terms of BBC TV Look North, ITV Calendar News and Viking FM radio station as well as featuring in the work of the Wilberforce House Museum in Hull. It was clear that they had found a gold mine, both in terms of David Bunting himself and the nature of this medium in terms of learning and teaching within the primary school setting.

"Creative Partnerships Hull has been working with up to 30 partner schools in the Hull area between 2002 and the present day. Stepney Primary School has been a key partner school over this period. We have been so excited to see the amazing learning developments unfold over the course of the Animated Learners programme. We are very proud to have had a role in shaping and supporting what has been a highly impactful project that has opened up the power of animation to all," shared Tess Parker, Acting Creative Director, Hull. David Bunting continues, "One of the most exciting things

about animation is how expressive a medium it is for capturing your imagination. You can make a flipbook with nothing more than a pad of paper, a pencil and a spark of imagination!"

"In Animated Learners, I was searching for simple and affordable animation tools that all teachers, irrespective of their artistic or technical capabilities, could use in a classroom environment. We also had the added challenge of having to engage a full class or 30 or more children. I had tried education animation software in the past, but found it too often a poor cousin compared to traditional techniques such as cut outs and the humble flipbook. Flip Boom provided an incredibly accessible solution to that challenge. Using graphics tablets was an absolute prerequisite for me. I would never dream of drawing with a computer mouse and expecting children to draw with one for the sake of computer literacy was



the first thing to overcome. Together, Creative Partnerships and Stepney School invested in 15 Flip Boom licenses and 11 Wacom Bamboo tablets. The first challenge for me was to see how children could adjust to drawing with tablets. So the very first thing we did in each lesson was to open Microsoft Paint and doodle; drawing circles, lines and writing our names. Within ten minutes, the level of drawing children as young as 7 demonstrated on the computer went through the ceiling."

"In year 5, we gave each child the challenge to design their own cartoon car to perform in a kind of "Wacky Races" competition. We spent half a day producing designs with pencil, paper and colour markers and storyboarding comic ideas about how their cars would perform on a race track. Each child then drew their car using the drawing and painting tools in Flip Boom. We then looked at some of the animation features, and brought their cars to life. I always use flipbooks as an aid to introduce animation to children, flipping back and forth, slow and fast. Swapping flipbooks with your mates allows you to very quickly discover some of the secrets of animation in your hand. A couple of hours in, children were able to apply concepts of animation with Flip Boom and unleash their cartoon creativity. Through the week, they also

engaged in creative writing, creating scripts for their film and recorded a soundtrack with sound effects and dialogue with their teacher."

"What I love about Flip Boom is how incredibly fun and enjoyable it is to use. It is a very skilful combination of powerful features, set up in an inviting working space a child can easily use. In my experience, educational animation software has the tendency to limit what you can do creatively. Not so with Flip Boom. It is the closest piece of software I've come across that replicates the ease of creating a flipbook with a pad of paper on the computer. Plus you have the flexibility to copy and paste drawn elements from one frame to another or drawn freehand, one frame at a time. Professional animation tools, such as onion-skinning dramatically increased the quality of animation capable of being achieved and children have no problem in utilising them."

"Flip Boom can be used to explore numeracy and literacy games, turn caterpillars into butterflies, illustrate the water cycle - to the most ambitious of group films. Teachers don't need to worry about setting up a camera to capture animation. Flip Boom provides a simple all in one solution that is very practical in the classroom. And the great thing is that Stepney School now has a ready to use animation system in

Bringing animation to Stepney School has transformed the curriculum and pupils creativity. Children enjoyed learning through animation so much, they even asked if they could work through lunchtimes! Deborah shared further thought on the great impact animation had in her classroom: "For me, animation fits in well with schools like ours, who are forward thinking and innovative. We have recently changed our curriculum to a thematic skills based creative curriculum and are



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their ICT suite that can be accessed at the touch of a button and readily utilised to bring animation into classes."

Deborah Johnson, a teacher at Stepney School, worked closely with David and shared the following: "It's important that the children have immediacy from any work they do. Flip Boom allows the children to immediately see the effort they have put in. This is highly motivating for them to continue. Similarly Flip Boom makes it easy for children to keep all of their work together, it organises it for them, instead of them having to keep lots of pieces of paper everywhere. The children we are teaching now are forward thinking and respond well to anything with a screen attached to it! Flip Boom is one way of providing them with lifelong learning skills, that hopefully they will continue to build on throughout the rest of their school career and into adulthood."

Animation is one of the first cultural experiences children have, and applied it in the classroom has the power to make learning fun and memorable. Animation stretches the imagination and fosters a capacity to playfully explore the world using the creative arts, across the whole Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic spectrum. Cutting across all curriculum subjects, its potential for teaching, learning and kindling a life-long love of the arts is vast.

constantly looking for news and exciting ways of capturing the children's attention and developing their skills. Animation is truly cross-curricular and the links between subjects are genuine and not contrived in the least. Learning through animation makes sense for the children. The project my year five class was involved in included some science in a real-life context, as well as the benefits of the Literacy and I.C.T. objectives being covered. The opportunity for the children to collaborate together on projects is also invaluable in developing their personal and social skills. In line with the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, we can really say, with animation that we are preparing our children for the twenty first century, the technological age that they are going to be adults in. In my view the children in my class could have been in the workplace solving problems, discussing possibilities, agreeing on ways forward, working as a team, coming up with solutions, planning, etc. "

Pupils with English as a second language were able to shine creatively using the international language of animation. One 7 year old girl from Estonia enthusiastically drew 101 beautiful animated drawings of fireworks, using Flip Boom, in the space of an hour! The demand was so great, they had to set up a cartoon club. "On my final day, I asked all school children how many were going to keep on animating after I left. Every hand leapt up in the air!" concluded David. Creative Partnerships has certainly accomplished its mission at Stepney School and David has greatly contributed to make their pupils and teachers happier, more focused and more driven! Congratulations!