

Stratford City Education Project
Staging A Performance



A project for young people to create awareness of how to plan a theatre performance and increase awareness of opportunities in the arts and creative industries.

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Foreword – Stratford City Education Project

Stratford City Education Project aims to ensure all young people of Newham are informed of the regeneration employment opportunities in their borough. This will be done through young people accessing relevant learning resources, engaging with employers that will enhance their entrepreneurial flair and inspire them to fulfil their potential and so achieve economic well being.

The Stratford City Education project seeks to use the development of Stratford City to increase the awareness of young people of:

- The regeneration of Stratford, in particular Stratford City, the Olympic Village and the Olympic Park
- The future employment opportunities that will be created over the next 10 year, in particular in construction, retail and in the commercial sector
- Opportunities in the world of work and related careers
- Their own potential and economic well being

The key aims of the project are to:

- Involve key employers in developing a range of educational resources that are transferable across curriculum areas
- Embed these resources within the curriculum to enrich and inspire the learning experience of young people
- Raise self confidence and aspirations among young people

Godwin Junior School – Context

Godwin Junior School is a chosen partner with Stratford City Education Project to develop and pilot these curriculum resources and to encourage young people to explore opportunities and pathways in the world of work.

Godwin Junior School have chosen to produce a performance based on the circus theme. This show will be performed on July 22nd and July 23rd to parents and guests. The students will decorate the hall, plan the show, write the script, perform the show, plan the promotion, design adverts, design costumes, calculate profitability, write creative writing, and research history of the circus. This project is a cross curricular project that enables the young people to contextualise their learning within a project based brief. The young people are able to engage with areas of specific interest e.g. performing, and to allow them to specialise and develop strengths. The theme of the Circus was chosen as it linked to Stratford Circus, which is at the centre of the cultural quarter in Stratford. As part of the project the young people will go on a trip to Stratford Circus.

Project Aims

- (a) Enrich the learning experience of young people to achieve the highest possible standards
- (b) Engage young people in dialogue with outside businesses and agencies
- (c) Raise expectations and self confidence to seize the opportunities regeneration in Newham will bring.

Year 6 at Godwin Junior School are responsible for the planning and delivery of their final performance

Project Outcomes

- All students will be aware of Stratford City and understand where it is being built
- All students will contribute to the final circus performance in some way
- All students will increase their awareness of opportunities in the Arts
- Most students will understand employment pathways in the Arts
- Some students will be inspired to pursue a career in the Arts

Resource development is validated by Godwin teachers and tailored to their curriculum delivery. Godwin teachers developed curriculum resources for the different areas e.g. Numeracy, Literacy, ICT, Art, Design and Technology and PE. There was a continual discussion about the project between the teachers and between the teachers and the Stratford City Education Development Officer.

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Uptake Young people worked on a project with the Circus being the main theme so lessons were planned with this and the final performance as the focus. Learning was supplemented through a combination of facilitated work-related learning and workshops as well as visits which allowed the young people to familiarise themselves with opportunities in the Arts and Creative industries.

Wider dissemination through existing teacher networks, events and through websites such as NEBP, TES and Stratford City Education Project website. The final performance itself acts as a promotional tool for the project showcasing what the pupils have learnt. Additional primary schools in the London Borough of Newham and further afield can use the resource as stimulus material for similar projects.

Curriculum Links

Year 6 students were all given a summary sheet detailing what they would be doing in their last term at Godwin. The main theme for the term was the Circus with a culmination in the final performance at the end of the term. In other areas pupils used the Circus and the project as the basis for their learning, for details of these links please see below:

Literacy (Reading & Writing): The children read various play scripts from different authors. This led them to writing their own play scripts for the end of term Year 6 production.

Numeracy: Students learnt how to create a budget on a spreadsheet to calculate how much profit would be made from tickets sold for the Year 6 production. They also had to ensure that they had enough money for the set, props and costumes.

ICT: The children used ICT in many situations for this project including research, creating posters, leaflets, programmes and budgeting. They used their skills to work independently in small groups.

Art & Design & Technology: The children designed and made props and stage sets for the Year 6 production.

Music: The young people composed music for the Year 6 production using percussion instruments and a computer program.

PE: The young people practised and developed circus skills.

Introduction to the project

The project was launched with a Year 6 assembly by Ruth Lydall (SCEDO) focusing on Stratford City regeneration and introducing the circus project (for a copy of the assembly see the appendix) The Stratford City Education Development Officer spent the morning visiting the three year 6 classes and talking to them in more detail about the regeneration and changes that are taking place in Stratford. These visits gave the young people an opportunity to have any key questions answered and to engage with the regeneration process.

The young people worked collaboratively looking at ideas for the performance which they were able to amalgamate into a script for the production. Students completed an application form for different roles and auditioned for the play. The three main groups focused on the production, advertising and design and props and art work.

Input from Graphic Designer / Photographer

The advertising and design group had a visit from Jumiah, a local graphic designer / photographer who has worked with fashion magazines including Vogue and celebrities as well as developing materials for businesses. Jumiah gave the pupils a talk about his background and what he has done and then showed a Power Point presentation crammed full of tips on how to make a successful campaign.

The students said “He came with his agent and she gave us a booklet on how to do it which went through step by step how we could produce the professional materials”. This was a valuable opportunity to discuss work with them.

Jumiah also spoke to students about how he got into graphic design and his career so far— he spoke about developing an interest in photography, saving up for a course and building up his portfolio. This gave the young people an opportunity to see pathways into this industry.

Feedback from the students was positive. They said, “He told us about the stages of making the posters and tickets and banner; which colours work together and how to make it attractive by using different colours not just black and white”, “He was cool and his job sounded really exciting” and “I enjoyed finding out about how to make posters and I will use his ideas”.

After the success of the first session, the young people had some time to work on their materials. Before they sent out their materials or displayed them, they had a second session with Jumiah where he was able to give groups more practical advice on how to improve and to make a big impact. Jumiah was able to work with individual children, talking to them about refining their ideas and their work so that it was more effective and eye catching. This allowed the children to develop what they had produced and understand more about how important it is for work to be well presented so it is used as an effective communication technique. During this session, students were able to make their posters / tickets/ banner more commercially focused which increased their understanding of what is needed in a professional capacity.



Learning Circus Skills and Input from Performers

All of Year 6 were treated to a circus skills training day with two acrobats / acrobalancers from sosocircus. They got the students involved in lots of different tricks and balances as well as showing the students what they did. A lot of the pupils gained valuable experience and skills that they will use in the show. The couple alerted students to opportunities in the creative industries. They were both graduates from Circus Space, the only degree course in the UK that specialises in circus skills. They allowed pupils to make the connection between what they had done and the idea of working in the creative industries as a career. The young people really enjoyed the day.



Students practising the circus skills during the day. They will use these skills in the final performance. Also the day was an enjoyable way for them to think about opportunities in the creative and media industries.



During the day different students were given the responsibility to take photographs to use in promotional materials.

Performer Input

The whole of Year 6 spent a further day learning more circus skills including juggling. This was important for their show as they needed to make sure their skills were honed for the performances. In addition, the day gave them an opportunity to explore increasingly diverse opportunities in the creative and artistic sectors and to understand that these sectors offer a variety of interesting and stimulating careers. The workshops also developed the children's confidence as they were encouraged to try new things. A number of the activities involved the children working in pairs or groups, this helped to develop their skills in working with others and to realise how important it is to do this in everyday life, including at work.

By having input from professionals who work as performers young people were able to increase their knowledge of careers in the performing arts and their awareness of the avenues and pathways in such areas. A number of the young people expressed an interest in working in the performing arts and were able to realise that there are possibilities of working in this field in the future.

Newham is a borough that is well regarded for its Arts provision and the scope of this provision and opportunity will be significantly increased with the regeneration of Stratford City and the Olympics arriving in 2012. For instance, lots of performers will be required to stage shows and retain tourists in the target area during the games.

Stratford Circus Visit

The students' production was focused on the theatre and roles in the creative and media industries, predominantly created by the construction of Stratford City. Stratford Circus is a mixed use space in Stratford which is a focus of creative energies. It will be a key area that will be developed when Stratford City is built and can host a number of events for visitors to the city and the shopping centre further cementing the importance of Stratford as a visitor destination.

All the Year 6 pupils were taken on a trip to Stratford Circus where they spent the day learning about how the theatre and the building operated. The students were split into four groups wearing different coloured wrist bands working on a carousel of different activities. They found out about a number of key areas: Customer service, Events management and putting on an event, Putting on a production, Lighting and technical, and had a tour of the building. The students enjoyed the day. One said "It was the best trip I have ever been on".

The sessions were interactive and allowed all pupils to increase their awareness of job opportunities in creative and media. They were able to clearly see potential pathways as the people involved spoke about what they were doing and how they got their positions of employment. This helped inspire the children as they increased their knowledge of potential opportunities. At the end of the day, when they were asked if they would consider a career in the theatre or creative industries, more than half of them said yes.

The day also allowed the students to identify how they could transfer the learning about the theatre to their production and their roles e.g. those who would be front of house were able to pick up clearly what skills they needed and how they could develop them during the project. This enabled them to ensure the performance will be more professional.

This trip also allowed children to become more aware of their local area and the opportunities that it provides e.g. to become members of the drama club or to attend performances at Stratford Circus.

The students' feedback from the day included the following comments:

"We liked the tour and the layout of the building; it was really easy to find our way around and it all made sense".

"We enjoyed walking across the top of the theatre where the lights were".

"I enjoyed the dance by Charlene especially when it looked like she was spinning fire".

"I enjoyed the dance and when we were shown how the different lighting effects worked".

"I liked it when we went to the lighting room and saw how the technicians worked".

"I really liked the whole day, but I especially liked the fact that we went to places (e.g. backstage) that members of the public wouldn't usually be allowed to go".

"We really enjoyed watching the performance and all the lighting effects".

Bringing it to a close

The event was showcased to parents in the Year 5 & Year 6 assembly on the 16th July where the students gave a taster of what to expect.

The project was completed on 22nd and 23rd July 2008 with the final performance of the Year 6 show. The young people worked hard to produce the art work to promote the show, sold the tickets to friends and family, sent out invites and performed.

The final performances didn't fail to disappoint. The hall was decked out as a big top with student art work decorating the walls. Staff had worked extremely hard to make excellent costumes; some parents commented that they thought they had been hired as the quality was so high. The young people excelled themselves with their acting, singing, dancing and circus tricks to produce a fun and entertaining show.

Parents said that: "The production was really professional" and commented on "the workshops that the young people had attended on circus skills".

The day after the final production, the Stratford City Education Officer attended Godwin and presented all of the young people with their certificates. This allowed her to praise all the children for their excellent efforts and a final celebration of the project.

Final Thoughts

How enjoyable was the project?

The students engaged with the project and worked hard. They all played to their strengths and weaknesses, as well as learning new skills e.g. juggling. The project enabled the young people to increase their confidence and develop softer skills, such as team work, which are key to workplace success.

From speaking to the young people they were enthused by the project. The workshops with the performers were well received and one student declared the Stratford Circus trip as “the best day of my life”.

The key to the project was that all students had a part to play. The team relied on each other to complete their tasks and they all needed to work as one. This teamwork was the core of the project and the ability to work as one was a key success. The young people also developed additional skills which will be beneficial to their future careers e.g. meeting deadlines, supporting others, planning and organisation.

Any advice for teachers delivering the project?

This project could be used as a basis for any performance in a primary school, although is best for Key Stage 2. In KS1 some of the elements could be modified. This project could also be transferred to Key Stage 3.

It gives a good grounding and introduction to the Creative & Media Arts.

All young people need to be included in this project and clear roles defined at the beginning.

The Circus theme tied in with Stratford Circus, a local resource. It would be beneficial to use the local resources for other schools.

What would I do differently another time?

It would be good to create job profiles for a number of different careers in the creative and media arts and different pathways to further solidify their understanding of the industry and to use these to supplement the speakers who attended.

Student Photos



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