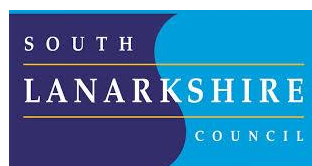


Bankhead: Disrupting Fairness and Equality

Creative approaches to learning and teaching



What we set out to do . . .

Hidden Giants was invited to work with Bankhead Primary, a school in Rutherglen on the outskirts of south Glasgow. The residency took place on Wednesday mornings over a three month period. We were asked by the Creative Learning team in South Lanarkshire Council to devise and deliver a creative learning project with the staff and pupils of the school. The parameters were broad which allowed huge scope for exploration and new discoveries.

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“he was making it
unfair to see if we
could handle it.”
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After an initial meeting with the SMT it was decided the project should focus on some key questions:

- What does a whole school approach look like?
- How do we support teachers to plan for creative learning?
- What does equality and fairness look like in the school?
- How can asking questions help nurture an interdisciplinary/creative mind-set?

What we delivered . . .

Over the course of three months Hidden Giants established a dialogue with pupils and staff through **acts of disruption and creative interventions**. These acts purposely set out to test the pupil's character whilst encouraging the teachers to embrace pupil voice and foster a curriculum as a lived-experience. Throughout the project Hidden Giants met the SMT, staff and parents through formal and informal meetings to ensure the process was transparent.

Each intervention influenced the next which ensured the residency was not fragmented and the school community could critically reflect on the weekly disruptions as a whole and not a series of unrelated tasks. The conversations in the playground and staffroom became rich with questions surrounding **fairness, equality, equity and character**. During the interventions very little information was given to the pupils into their purpose which encouraged them to ask questions and find their own meaning. Through this critical pedagogy the pupils made connections, became flexible and resilient to better understand what was happening.



The Creative Projects . . .

Disrupting the Playground

Hidden Giants established several corrupt systems at play/lunchtimes. Each week a different social grouping were rewarded for nothing other than being in that social grouping, i.e. girls, p5's, size 4 shoe pupils etc. Each week that social group was rewarded with something; chocolate, a party, a VIP area etc. The system was **blatantly unfair** but the reward was seductive as it contained a faint hope of working for them one day, i.e. do you tolerate inequality as long as there is hope? How many of the pupils would make a stance or would they be swept along by a critical mass of consumers?

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“I learned that people
are different but you
don't treat them
differently”
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What's in the box?

This experiment was designed to stretch teachers comfort zone by asking them to avoid planning and to prepare for the unknown. Key component of a creative process are the ability to deal with **uncertainty, identifying and solving problems, and managing risk**. Teachers were asked to carry a box with them for three days. In the box was an unknown stimulus. On the third morning the teachers opened the box with their class and had to design a day's learning in collaboration with the class.

Asking the teachers to respond to an unknown stimulus encouraged them to pay attention to what was present and work with it. There was nothing set: no success criteria, no learning intentions, no timetable, and no resources other than the ones at hand.



Over the course of the third day we witnessed some key creative skills being developed, both teachers and the pupils: **imagination, curiosity, resilience, discipline and collaboration**. Risk and failure was unavoidable. Importantly we stressed to the teachers that they would not be judged, critiqued or observed – they were free to design a learning experience that excited them and inspired their pupils.

The day culminated in a sharing of work. The entire school came together to celebrate how imaginative and creative the classes had been from so little. This experience began to liberate the teacher's mind-set allowing them to see the potential of building curriculum from what the pupils bring to the table.

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"He made things unfair –
so only certain people are
allowed things. He
showed us fair and unfair
scenarios. He wanted us
to understand what is fair
and unfair. He
encouraged everyone to
stand up for our rights.
We expressed our own
opinion."
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Show me the money

One morning Hidden Giants presented a task to the upper school:

Hidden Giants would give them £200 (in £1 coins) if they could all agree on one way of sharing it equally and fairly amongst the whole school community. They were given one hour to carry out the experiment.

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“to explore our reactions,
to teach us at emotions, to
let us speak up, he let us
act like adults, to explore
our stage of learning.”
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What emerged was a fascinating insight into several democratic (or not) approaches to **dividing a limited resource equally and fairly**. Each class found a different way to decide how to agree and several options of how to spend the money. There was disagreement, arguments, and resolution. The key component was the role of the adult (teacher) within the pupil led experiment. The teachers were encouraged to be **facilitators of learning** which meant they couldn't simply show them how to do

it or tell them the answer. In many ways this was impossible as there was no one right way to carry out the task or divide a limited resource.

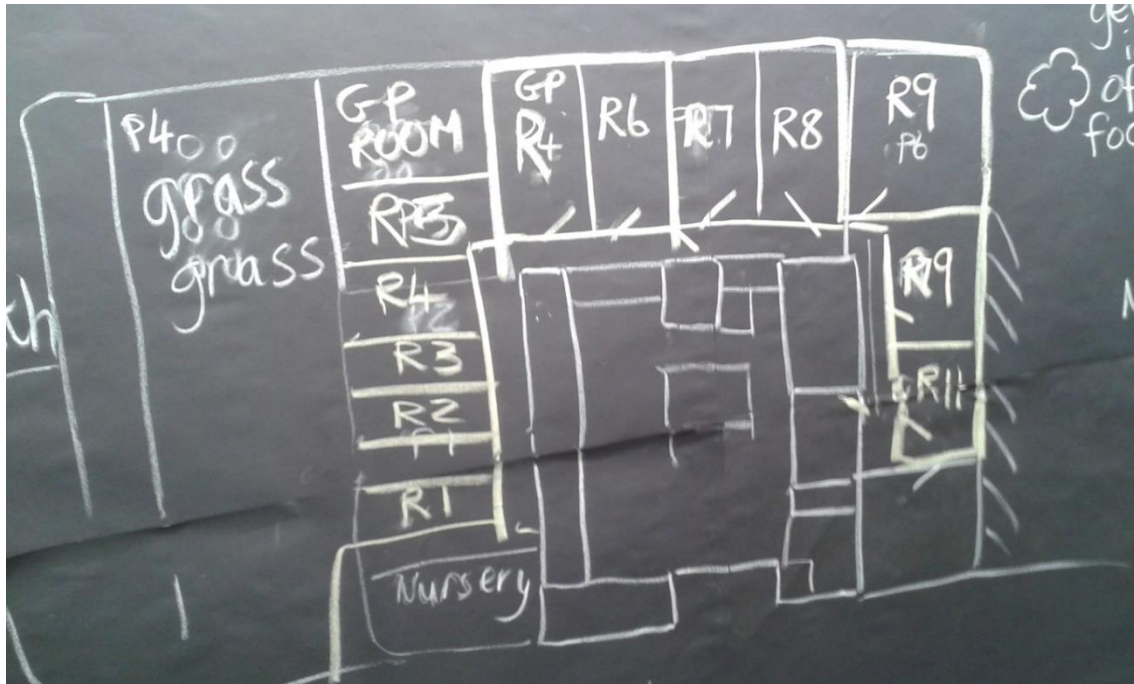
As the classes returned to the assembly hall there was incredible excitement to hear other classes ideas and then forming a system of how they could all choose one of the ways.



Dividing the Playground

The finally disruption of the residency involved a lure delivered by the Head Teacher to the entire school.

It seemed new research from the Scottish Government suggests children play better when they are divided into classes at break and lunchtime. Bankhead would be a pilot school to test this new research and fences were to be erected to ensure the classes stayed within their own area. The Head Teacher had decided to listen to pupil voice so wanted to consult with the pupils to explore fair and equal ways to divide the playground – should the p7 get more room as they are bigger, or do the p1's deserve more as they run about more?



In many ways this was a hugely difficult intervention as it asked **pupils to constructively challenge the hierarchy of a system they participate in**. Not only had the Head Teacher delivered the challenge it had appeared to come from the Scottish Government. The day witnessed pupils wrestle with the idea that adults might not know best and they could make decisions that were in opposition.

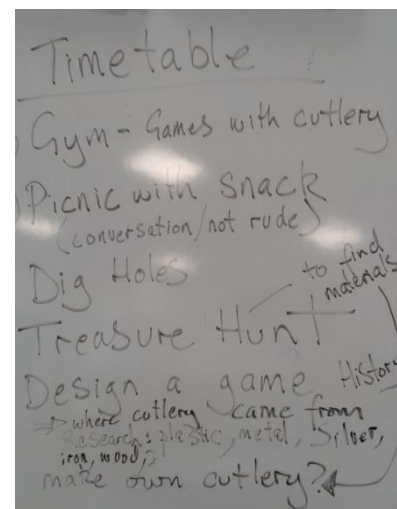
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"I learned that you have to stand up for what you want"
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This test of character saw classes **struggle, worry, become confused, angry, sad, and then resilient**. The realness of the day allowed them to draw on all their self-belief and confidence to begin to challenge the status quo through a process of asking critical and progressive questions. They realised that simply disagreeing with the system didn't help them - they had to problem solve to find solutions.

Each class presented a compromise but all were defiant in their belief that dividing the playground was simply wrong and would cause more problems. Pupil voice became activated and their teachers supported it by facilitating their process.

Conclusion and Thoughts . . .

The three month residency engaged the entire school community: pupils, teachers, and parents. This engagement did not take a traditional form but instead employed a process of creative interventions that encouraged pupils and staff to think about the identified themes of fairness and equality. Hidden Giants didn't deliver any 'workshops' or 'creative sessions'. Instead we **disrupted the norm** and in doing so we asked people to consider new approaches to teaching and learning. At no point did we show people 'how to be creative' or 'what creativity looks like' we simply provoked the school community to think differently by working within unknown contexts. Creativity emerges from individuals and is often not planned for other than the idea that a **change of mind-set unlocks innovative practise**.



During the intervention the pupils felt liberated to **'find their curriculum'** which inevitably leads to an interdisciplinary approach to learning. One class, during the box experiment, created an entire days learning on nothing other than a collection of plastic cutlery. They found science in the production of plastic, history in when cutlery was invented, art in how things are coloured, HWB through a social picnic, and PE through a series of outdoor cutlery games. The class designed an entire day in collaboration with their teacher. They were imaginative, motivated, had purpose and were **completely immersed in their learning**.

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"Fairness is very complicated"
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Throughout the residency the teachers witnessed learning that was not pre-planned but instead curriculum as a lived-experience. The DHT commented during a reflection session:

*The staff really felt the impact of your visits and thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience. They still talk about it regularly and much of their planning is directly influenced on what happened through your engagement. I did a board game design as a mini IDL with P3/4, the NQT spoke about the whole experience in her interview for class teacher, and I wrote about it in my assignment for my uni Into Headship qualification... Honestly, **a hugely positive experience with a lasting impact on the school!***

Throughout the project Hidden Giants spoke about the notion of creativity skills emerging from unplanned situations. Teachers began to see pupils using their imagination, problem solve, collaborate with others, be curious, and open-minded. The key component of the entire project was that **creativity was applied as a lived-experience**. We did not start with creativity it emerged through a process of challenging the status quo, asking questions and applying critical pedagogy.



This Hidden Giants residency was delivered by Paul Gorman. For more information on the company visit www.hiddengiants.org or follow @biggorman on twitter