

## What's in it?

The first chapter, **Day 1**, asks the most important question: what is creativity? This is followed by exploring what it means for you, your learners, your school and what it could look like in your classroom. **Day 2** is concerned with the development of creative ideas and developing a sense of curiosity in your learners. **Day 3** offers new teaching and learning approaches that encourage divergent thinking, which can lead to novel outcomes. It also explores how to manage this within the classroom. **Day 4** goes on to suggest some effective strategies for play and risk-taking and how this can be rewarded. **Day 5** discusses how creativity can be assessed and measured, and you will also contemplate the balance between structure, rules and creative freedom within the classroom. In light of this, **Day 6** reminds us of the importance of creativity for developing a creative community and the importance of interaction with others for developing social and cultural understandings. The final day, **Day 7**, sets out some useful techniques for evaluating creative teaching and learning which can be shared with the wider school community.

## How to use it

This book is designed to be read easily, simple to use, and easy to reference and relate directly to educational practice. Some of the scenarios may take you out of your comfort zone, but this is a creativity book after all! Some scenarios may make you question your own practice, amuse you, or be very familiar. Hopefully throughout the book you will consider new insights and be open to new possibilities. Ultimately this book aims to build your creative confidence so that you will go on to develop creativity in your learners.

Because we know time is limited, you will find towards the end of each chapter just one suggested strategy, out of the ones outlined, presented under the heading: *If you only try one thing from this chapter, try this.* We hope over time you will try as many strategies as possible and really explore what creativity means for you and your learners in the classroom. To help identify your next steps, each chapter ends with a checklist which enables you to note down what you have tried, what worked best for you and with whom you tried it.



## DAY 1: What is this creativity stuff?

It is often argued that the pressures teachers face to prepare learners for national tests and examinations inhibits the development of teaching and learning approaches that foster creativity. It is not surprising that in some schools and colleges the promotion and development of creativity is seen as an added extra. However, creativity need not be simply an additional component of teaching and learning, but should in fact be a main element and feature within your classroom.

Creativity is also not only the domain of the arts, but is important across the whole curriculum. Being creative within the curriculum and developing a broad range of knowledge, skills and understanding is central to lifelong learning. It is not just about 'outside the box' thinking but requires a range of domain-specific skills and knowledge which can be developed in all subjects. Something is not created from nothing, but involves some form of activity: mental and/or physical. This 'doing' involves a creative process which you can plan for.

Throughout this book we help you consider ways you can interpret creativity within your classroom in order to develop creative teaching, teaching for creativity and creative learning.

### Oi, where's the creativity gone?

As you have read in the introduction, creativity is described as an important element of education by politicians, industry experts, educationalists, teachers, and many others. Discussions around creativity have enabled researchers to distinguish between creative teaching, teaching for creativity and creative learning. This is all very well and good, but how is this fostered in your classroom? As practitioners and researchers ourselves,

we believe that this begins with us and the environments we create for our own creativity and our own learners. As the [NACCCE \(1999, p 90\)](#) report states: *'teachers cannot develop the creative abilities of their learners if their own creative abilities are suppressed!'* Today's strategies will help you ignite your own creativity and investigate spaces for learning.

### Today's strategies

#### ● Finding it right by you:

1. Finding your passion

#### ● A (head) space of your own:

2. Creative reflection
3. Creative journal

#### ● My classroom is cool:

4. Creative spaces

#### ● Recreate!:

5. Creative hangouts
6. Talk to a friend

#### ● Creative mash-up:

7. Creative partnerships

## Strategy: Finding it right by you

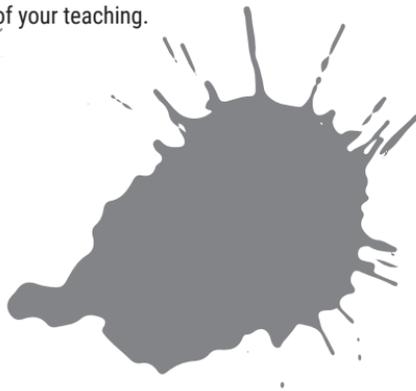
Creative learners need creative teachers. We can all too easily get bogged down by daily routines, planning, performativity and assessments. We forget that we bring with us a wealth of personal experiences that shape who we are as teachers. Many teachers have come with subject-specific knowledge and we all have personal interests and hobbies, all of which should be evident in the classroom.

### 1. Finding your passion

To begin to think about teaching creatively and using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting, you need to try to engage in the things that make you curious, things that motivate you and make you excited. This is an important part of good teaching which leads to meaningful learning. Learners' ability to be creative will be enhanced if you engage in your own creativity. If you are to nurture learners' creativity you must also become mindful of your own. Here are some ways in which you can reignite your own creativity and find your passions.

- **Revisit your own learning experiences. What did you enjoy? What had a profound effect on you and why? Which teachers inspired you? What subjects did you maintain interest in across your education and why was this? Consider how these can be translated into your classroom practices.**

- **What inspires you? Create a space within the classroom for your own 'teacher' creativity board or mind map. Establish a list of 'creative' advisers including, but not limited to: newsmakers, historical figures, celebrities or staff whose creative approaches you admire and enable you to pose the question: *What would they do?* Engage your learners in this board and use it as a starting point for lessons and class discussions. The learners will appreciate you opening up and sharing your interests with them.**
- **List the characteristics of creativity that are important for you and reflect on times when you felt you were expressing those characteristics.**
- **Compose an audit of your subject knowledge. You have individualistic skills, knowledge and understanding which shape your teaching and learning approaches. By exploring and reflecting on your audit you can open up new avenues, find gaps in knowledge, investigate your strengths and orientate your thinking about the nature of your teaching.**



## Strategy in action

A class comes into a classroom. The teacher takes the register, then tells the class what they are going to learn today, and the class copy this into their books. This is what they do every lesson in every class (except PE, where there are no books!).

How exciting a start to the lesson is this? How will it motivate the learners? Compare it with this. A class comes into a classroom. The teacher says:

“ *This is one of my favourite topics. I really enjoy doing this, because it’s exciting. I’m not going to tell you what you’re going to learn today, but I want you to tell me at the end what you have learned instead.* ”

The class then start to work, and the teacher takes the register as the class are working. During the course of the lesson she stops and says:

“ *Can you tell me please what we are learning?* ”

And then the class work a little longer. Again, the teacher stops, and this time says:

“ *Can you tell me now what you think I wanted you to learn today?* ”

At the end of the lesson the teacher allows enough time for discussion:

“ *Can you tell me please what you have learned today? In groups/pairs talk about what you have learned. Is this different from the person next to you?* ”

- What is different about this?
- Which start to the lesson has engaged the learners more?
- Can you do this?

### A Spot of Theory

*Csikszentmihalyi (1999) maintains that the teacher has a crucial influence on enhancing creativity in the classroom. Therefore, teachers must explore their own personal values, beliefs, attitudes and understandings of creativity, which are then shared with learners.*

## Strategy: A (head) space of your own

We know that a teacher's day is never boring; you never know what's around the corner when teaching. However, your mind needs a rest from the mundane routines, tasks and activity of teaching. It is important to make space for reflection, to find meaning and explore your own perceptions. As teachers it is often difficult to find time during the school day. But the ability to enjoy and make productive use of solitary moments can trigger creativity and help tap into your inner thoughts and ideas.

### 2. Creative reflection

You may find that your best creative thinking happens when you are not even aware: suddenly when singing along to your favourite song in the car you will have a great idea; you will be eating something and it will conjure up a memory. It is these moment of solitude that allow your mind to dip into your experiences, leading to creativity. Consider taking five minutes at the end of each day to reflect on the day and question your own creativity: In what ways have I been creative today? How could I have extended my learners' creativity?

### 3. Creative journal

The idea of *head-space* is an important one in teaching. 'Busy, busy, busy' is how we feel when we are in school. There is a tendency to think that this also needs to be the case all through our lives. The idea of a reflective journal may seem like yet another job, but it need not be. After all, we have all sorts of technology at our disposal; we can also use voice recorders on our phones to capture ideas, as well as writing ourselves notes and messages – so a 'journal' can be all sorts of things. We often ask our learners to have a 'rough book', so why don't we have one too?

Keep a reflective journal. Write, draw or take photographs documenting thoughts, memories, images of classroom teaching and learning, or anything else that excites your interest. This will allow you to observe, think through, reconstruct and understand more deeply your teaching processes and the learning of your learners. We like to think of this reflective journal as a recipe book. When you want to add a new ingredient you can pick up the journal and find something that might add a new flavour to the lesson!



## Strategy in action

In one busy primary school, the teacher has an old shoebox on her desk. This is her reflective journal. Every time she has an idea, a thought, or even something she just wants to remember she writes it on an odd scrap of paper, and drops it in the shoebox. At the end of the week she takes all her pieces of paper out, and decides which ones she wants to keep, and which to throw away. So, at the end of one particular week, after the learners have gone home, she empties the shoebox onto her desk, and finds, among everything else, these three notes:

- A. This lesson on poetry is really dragging, I need to find a way of making it more interesting next time.
- B. *Blue Suede Shoes*.
- C. What would happen if we did this lesson in the playground?

Now, suppose this was your reflective journal box! What would you do as a result of writing these things down? How would you go about changing teaching and learning activities with your learners? What help would you need to do something with these ideas?

The teacher decided to do some research on the song *Blue Suede Shoes* and found out that the song was inspired by a chance incident. During a dance, Carl Perkins, one of the writers, overheard a boy say to his partner 'Uh-uh, don't step on my suedes!' That night Perkins worked on a song inspired by this incident. The teacher used this as inspiration and asked her class in the next lesson to note down an incident on their way to school. They then wrote poems based on these chance happenings.

Which song, by which singer, would you have put in?

## A Spot of Theory

*Wallas (1926, pp 69–73) broke down the creative process into four stages; preparation; incubation; illumination and verification. Preparation involves using analytical skills to define a problem to investigate. The problem is then incubated while the individual takes a break and allows themselves some space. This space allows the individual to make associations. Lubart (2010, p 296) suggests that during this time 'the unconscious mind rejects most of the combinations as useless but occasionally finds a promising idea'. During illumination, the idea flourishes like an enlightenment. Verification then follows, where the individual evaluates and refines the creative idea.*

## Strategy: My classroom is cool

Many school and college buildings were built at a time when ideas about teaching and learning were very different from today. It is still very common for lessons to be divided into curriculum subjects, located in specified and closed-off locations around a school site. Sometimes this can create knowledge divisions. However, the whole curriculum can be approached through creativity, and some schools have experimented with bringing together more than one curriculum area into a single space, so as to promote it for both teaching and learning. But... take a moment and imagine what a very different classroom environment might look like. Close your eyes and picture it. What is in it? What does it sound like? How are people interacting? If money was no object, what would you like this classroom to look like?

### 4. Creative spaces

Now, go back to the classroom you actually have (sorry!). Make a short list of the different types of teaching and learning activities that you and your learners do in this space. For example, do you need places for both formal instructional classrooms and informal studio, workshop-based spaces? Do you need whole-class work, small-group work, or individual workspaces? You will know. We realise that you may not be in control of your space, so it is what you and the learners do in it that counts. If you can't be flexible with the space, can you be flexible with your approaches to teaching and learning? Creativity can also often be found in the unseen. Consider underused, or non-traditional learning environments such as the corners of rooms, hallways, cupboards or entryways. These are places where dreams often take us because they are 'hidden' or crossing places. In outdoor spaces, too, it is often the edges where learners gather and

socialise. Have a look at some of the following ideas and decide which one you will try out:

- **Independent work:** sometime learners need a 'cave space', a place free from distraction.
- **Collaboration:** are you able to arrange desks into 'pods' to allow for discussion?
- **See the whole school as a site for learning:** the library, hallways, entryways, courtyards and even offices can be potential learning spaces. Agree expectations about behaviour with Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) and with the learners for conduct in these spaces and try it with a class you trust. Once you get started thinking about this, the possibilities are endless!
- **Allow learners some ownership;** give them some say on how the classroom should be organised.
- **What is the furniture, especially the desks, used for? Are they needed?**
- **Think about smells, sounds, music, touch and light. Could you play music, can you change the lighting to create an atmosphere?**

You might also think of spaces for creativity, not just physically but virtually. Today, smartphones, computers and learning pads are all a feature of everyday life. Should we be utilising them to connect the communities of learning surrounding the classroom?

## Strategy in action

The learners enter the primary school classroom to find the desks already pushed to the corners. In the centre of the room is a large pile of empty cardboard boxes, along with materials such as scissors, different types of tape, pens, string and various types of paper.

The teacher writes the word *classroom* on the board and asks the learners to share their thoughts on the classroom environment and its design. He receives answers such as: *lots of desks facing the whiteboard, boring, hard chairs, lots of displays, colourful*. The learners give a range of answers but not one says *creative!*

He explains that they are going to reimagine the classroom space. He asks them to get into small groups and, using cardboard boxes, create a new classroom, like a Wendy house or playhouse. He gives them no practical instruction except to just imagine what the classroom would look like and what it would have in it.

At the end of the lesson he asks the learners to explain all the various elements they added into their playhouses. Some physical aspects they added included slides and swings, pic 'n' mix counters, DJ booths, coffee stations, sofas and beds. Although they might not be practical on a large scale, the teacher recognised that actually a lot of these elements could be achieved – and he was quite keen on the idea of pick 'n' mix and a bit of music!

Two weeks later, he enjoyed incorporating some of these suggestions into the classroom environment.

### A Spot of Theory

*Constructivist learning theory is based on the premise that learning occurs through active construction. Piaget wrote about assimilation, where new information is taken in by the learner, and accommodation, where existing things which are known are altered in some ways to accommodate the new information.*

*(Piaget and Cook, 1952)*

## Strategy: Recreate!

One of the best things about working in education is getting to work with interesting people. Despite what we have just said about time on your own, it is also important to surround yourself with people who will encourage you to explore possibilities. A social support network that will inspire 'out of the box' thinking and challenge your perspectives is a vital determinant of creativity. These groups can include colleagues, parents, learners, friends or others working in your professional field. Support from such people can help alleviate 'writer's block', instigate rule-breaking without sanctions or help reinforce your ideas.

### 5. Creative hangouts

Hanging out with other creative people is fun and exciting! You can set up creativity networks in a variety of ways. Try one of these:

- **Develop a creativity cluster of like-minded people and arrange termly meetings. This can include parents, learners and the wider community.**
- **Communicate your ideas or questions to a broader group via social media. Start a blog, use Twitter or Facebook. Sharing practice online with others allows you to extend your understanding of your subject, explore new possibilities for schemes of work and helps you to engage in critical discussions.**

### 6. Talk to a friend

Collaboration between teachers has become increasingly popular as a method of school improvement, creating a culture of shared practice. However, collaboration between teachers within schools can often be difficult due to time constraints. Engagement through reflection can therefore be predominately via formalised lesson observations, which we all know are stressful experiences.

However, a critical friendship can be very useful and productive for both parties to help explore creative teaching approaches. Do you have a colleague on the staff who is thinking about creativity too? Could you both try to organise spaces and times for cross-curricular activities? Can you experiment with the curriculum? Can programmes of study be devised collaboratively across both your classes and subjects?

These are just suggestions of things that could stimulate your discussions and potential ways in which your discussion could lead to something new in the classroom. But collaboration doesn't have to be formal. We know that teachers like a tea or coffee break! Try becoming a coffee shop philosopher by making a conscious effort to talk to other members of staff at break times or on playground duty. Or set up your own coffee morning and extend it to the wider school community. Just talking to others can help you to rethink familiar teaching and learning approaches.

## Strategy in action

It only takes a chance or brief encounter to spark a new idea.

● Read the following scenario and think about how you could apply this to your classroom.

Monday morning coffee break:

**Sarah: Morning! You ok? Get up to anything special over the weekend?**

**David: Morning, all good thanks. Didn't do a lot but my wife and I went geocaching which was fun!**

**Sarah: Geocaching?**

**David: Don't laugh... but it's like a big treasure hunt but with technology. You have these geocachers who hide containers filled with small gifts in all sorts of places. You upload the coordinates to the official website and then leave them for others to find. To find them you simply put the coordinates into your GPS on your phone and off you go. We went on a long walk finding all these small boxes in the most random places like walls and hidden in trees. It was really fun. You even get to swap treasure and leave something yourself!**

**Sarah (laughing): That wasn't what I was expecting but that sounds like fun! Right! I better get back to prep for my next lesson.**

It wasn't until Sarah was back in her classroom that she thought about the activity David was talking about. Could she use that idea for her history class? Could she and her learners explore the surrounding area and its history through geocaching? Could she link up with Jessica (the geography teacher) to do this?

**From:** Sarah@holycross.org.uk

**To:** David@holycross.org.uk; Jessica@holycross.org.uk

**Subject:** Geocaching lesson?

Hi David and Jessica,

David, its only now I thought about what you were talking about at break! Can we meet and talk about maybe planning a lesson where we can go geocaching? Jessica, it's like a big treasure hunt! Thought we could do a cross-subject lesson?

Can you both meet for 15 minutes after school to discuss the potential?

Best,

Sarah

### A Spot of Theory

*Koestler (1964) argued that a creative act is achieved by connecting dimensions of experience. Creative originality therefore does not originate from nothing, but a connection between past and present learning. The role of the teacher is to help learners identify these connections and apply them in new creative ways.*

## Strategy: Creative mash-up

Creative professionals can add energy into a school or classroom. They are adept at stimulating creative learning and teaching. Working with a creative professional can offer an alternative space where a community of practice can be developed. They can encourage engagement where you, the learners and the practitioner can work together to develop practice. This can reinvigorate teaching and learning approaches to creativity and develop new pedagogical discourses that could strengthen and challenge teaching and learning.

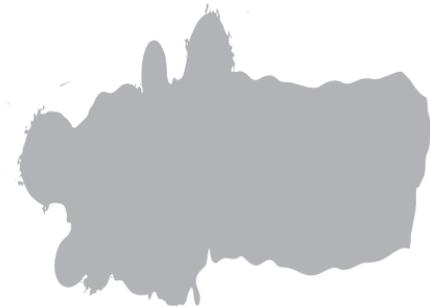
### 7. Creative partnerships

When we say *creative professional*, we don't mean they need to be a hipster artist with green hair! Who do you know in the community that you could invite to come in and do something with your classes? It doesn't have to be an artist (with or without green hair) but could be anyone who has something to offer. Are shops and businesses interested? Could you set up a 'scenario' with them where the learners have to solve a real-life problem that the business encounters? This not only makes connections with the wider community but also could make a significant contribution to school life. How often do we invite people into school, to work with us, to show and tell?

We have seen projects with gardeners, shopkeepers, police officers, librarians, and others from all walks of life whose presence in the classroom inspires the learners to work in different ways. Working with a creative professional can:

- Explore new approaches and open up new sites for learning such as museums, galleries, libraries, shops and supermarkets, gyms, offices, places of worship, etc.
- Enable teachers to step aside from curriculum constraints and open up new possibilities. Another adult on the scene can offer that helpful hand to try something new.
- Encourage you to go beyond the school walls, make connections with local communities and neighbourhoods, and allow learners to explore their locality.
- Open up new possibilities and offer an opportunity for continued professional development. A partnership is not a one way process, but a shared opportunity. The other adult can learn from you and the learners, and vice versa. This is about posing challenges to current approaches to teaching and learning.

Collaborative planning is crucial to this relationship. Time needs to be spent sharing objectives. This is about creating a shared language of creativity upon which you can base your partnership and teaching and learning.



## Strategy in action

In the school neighbourhood, a suburb of a large city, is an old church with a graveyard. The graveyard has become a popular spot for rough sleepers to spend the night, much to the consternation of the local residents. The vicar of the church is being put under pressure to solve the problem.

As a part of a Religious Education lesson, focusing on local issues, the vicar of the church in question comes into the secondary school to talk to the learners about the issues raised by this problem. This is a real problem, with ramifications for both the school and the local community. The learners need to see all sides of the problem, from the perspectives of the homeless, the church, the community, and the law; and understand the social issues relating to all of these.

The RE teacher discusses this one break time with the drama teacher, who sees it as an ideal chance for some role-play activity, with learners playing the part of the homeless, outraged citizens, churchgoers, the local police and so on. They generate a piece of devised theatre, which they then perform in assembly.

This one visit from the local vicar (a person who will often be more than happy to come into school) sparked off a whole range of real-world learning activities for these classes, which had important spin-offs across a range of subjects and knowledge domains.

### A Spot of Theory

*The potential of such collaborations to have a lasting effect on your practice depends greatly on the type of relationship developed. Hall et al (2007, p 617) identified that the most effective forms of collaboration are when pedagogical practices intertwine. This relies on 'teachers and [others] being willing to work together as partners, to respect one another's expertise and to give time to exploring theoretical standpoints and analysing learners' work'.*

**If you only try one thing from this chapter, try this\***

### Checklist

Use this to keep a record of what worked well for you and what didn't.

A strategy that works with one class may not work so well with another. Keeping a checklist helps you to work out what factors or learner characteristics call for one approach rather than another. There's a line at the bottom for you to add your own most frequently used strategy, if it's not already included in the list.

Strategy	Tried it with...	On ... (date)	It worked	It didn't work	Worth trying again?
<b>1. <u>Finding your passion!</u>*</b>					
2. Creative reflection					
3. Creative journal					
4. Creative spaces					
5. Creative hangouts					
6. Talk to a friend					
7. Creative partnerships					
Your own strategy?					