

praXis Creative Remedies Arts and Health Awards 2011 Application Form

About your project

Please provide us with background information about your project

Project title

Out of the Box - a mobile sensory experience

Tell us who your participants were, their age range and how many took part in your project

Workshop participants

Family learning group x 15 age 0-5

Reception class, primary school x 25 age 4-5

Special Educational Needs nursery x 10 age 2-5

Touring participants

Early years children – all abilities x 300+ ongoing age 3-5+

When did your project take place and how long did it run for?

Workshops – February – March 2011 – 9 workshop sessions

Project Commission – January – August 2011

Please tell us where your project took place (including postcode)

Wombourne Community Centre, WV5 9EZ
Barnfields Primary School, Stafford, ST17 4RD
Gateway SEN Nursery, Lichfield, WS13 7PH

Tell us who your project funders were and your total budget

Total budget 11,000
Staffordshire County Council 9,000
Family Learning 500
Explore Project 1,500

Project website or blog address (if applicable)

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/leisure/museumandgalleries/artsdev/Projects/explore/SensoryPlayResource.aspx>

(looking to update website address to shorter url)

What health issues was your project exploring?

Early Years creative / sensory development
Special Educational Needs

Sensory Impairment

What was the involvement of the participants in health issues prior to the project starting?

Special Educational Needs nursery - mixed abilities but more able group;
2 with cerebral palsy (1 mild, 1 severe)
3 with autism
2 delayed development

Family group/ school – specifics unknown – some communication and speech issues

Please give a brief description of your project (100 words max.)

One of the outcomes of our [Explore](#) project was the need for a new art multisensory art work to tour schools and community settings. We commissioned artists Mark Beeston and Ian Jones to create the work and deliver a series of creative workshops with early years children to explore how young children think, play learn and learn. The workshops informed the development of the final piece which is designed for touring purposes and to challenge and engage young audiences in a new and exciting way.

Please tell us about the creative activities that happened during your project, e.g. artists who were involved, artforms used, products made etc (100 words max.)

As part of the commission the artists ran creative workshops with a cross section of the groups where the final art work would be toured.

Workshops involved the creative and sensory exploration of various materials, sounds and smells with the children. The artists set up prototypes of what the final piece might be and explored and observed how the participants interacted with these and noted which elements they liked, disliked and what interested and engaged them the most.

The artists kept a visual and written account of the children's exploration and engagement within the workshops which were used to develop the final piece. They also noted teacher's, carer's and family member's responses and feedback which all helped to form their work.

Partnership

Evidence of useful partnership working on the project: how this worked, how it influenced the process and product, how it may have been used to address any problems etc.

Did you work with any partners on the project? Please tell us who these partners were

Staffordshire County Council Libraries – Family Learning
Wombourne Community Centre
Barnfields Primary School
Gateway SEN Nursery
Early Years advisor
Artists Beeston Jones

Please tell us how you identified the need to work with this partner and why this partnership was useful / beneficial / made a difference to your project (100 words max.)

Our collaboration with teachers, advisors, family members, SEN teachers and carers was pivotal in the development of an art work for the children that are essentially in their care. These partners have the expertise and experience of working with our target groups on a daily basis, they knew best how the children interacted in the workshops and what benefits and differences it made for them.

In some cases where the children couldn't speak for themselves, their feedback, observations, advice and input was of huge benefit.

Partners were also able to give us and the artists very practical advice on the touring aspect of the final piece; how it could fit into community spaces, how to best suit schools and educational settings where there would be multiple users and how to be accessible to children of all abilities.

Did this partnership influence the process and final outcome of your project? Please tell us how (100 words max.)

Yes (please see above). The project was very much a collaborative project and any advice, observations and input partners made were recorded by the artists and fed into the development of the commission.

Participation

Evidence that the beneficiaries were involved in the decision-making and development of the project.

Tell us how the participants were involved in your project, e.g. creative engagement, final outcome, advocacy etc. (100 words max.)

It was decided at the beginning that our target audiences would be encouraged to take part in a project where their creative interventions were capable of informing the development of the new commissioned art work.

Through play and exploration, participants made their own choices throughout the workshops about what objects they chose to interact with, how they interacted, whether they wanted to make sounds or assemble objects, and feel or touch materials. Their creative engagement informed what the final art work would be. The workshops were child-led, artists would set up incidental play opportunities which children chose to engage with or otherwise.

Tell us how these participants were involved in getting your project off the ground e.g. decision making and planning etc. (100 words max.)

The project grew out of the Explore project and is a direct result of the feedback and comments we received first time round. The Explore project toured three multisensory sculptures along with a resource package to education settings where participants with learning difficulties could benefit from their sensory nature and participate in hands on creative activities inspired by quality art work within their own setting.

One of the outcomes of this project was the need for a new touring art work which was purpose built for touring. We gained a lot of feedback during this project on what worked well or didn't work well with the current multisensory sculptures and what our practical considerations would be if developing a new piece and what visual or sensory elements should be considered.

Many of the decisions and planning choices were made at this stage.

Once your project was up and running how did the participants influence it? e.g. Did you change or adapt the project? If so, why? (100 words max.)

Artist Beeston Jones worked over a period of 9 weeks with 3 different groups on several occasions and their direction for development changed considerably from their original ideas. The idea was that the participants helped to shape the project from day one.

Once the artists had a core idea in mind, participant influences helped change modify and adapt their prototypes, for example; At the beginning of the project, the artists had included some musical chimes which had thought would be a great hit with the children, but after close observation, although it was an instant hit, it didn't keep the children engaged for a prolonged time and only had a limited effect, eventually this was taken out of the workshops and replaced with a more interactive musical model which worked better.

Learning and Reflection

Evidence that the people involved in the project have demonstrated a commitment to learning and reflection in their work and sharing what they have learnt through their experiences.

What were the outcomes of your project and what difference did your project make? (100 words max.)

The outcomes of the project were that we;

- engaged our target audience in high quality arts activities and encouraged creative practice and participation.
- produced innovative high quality new and exciting art work which is both accessible to the target audience and community settings.
- developed our resources for the Explore project by the addition of a new touring sensory experience for young children of all abilities.

The workshops were a great success and involved the children in a new and exciting way. Having artists coming to their space and work with them on such a personal level made a big difference to their day.

How did you know if this project was successful? (100 words max.)

A selection of the participants were invited to the launch of the new commission and instantly engaged with the final piece. They recognised many of the elements from the original workshops and the feedback we received from the teachers and carers involved was very positive.

We are currently touring Out of the Box to children centres across the county and are closely monitoring its impact while gathering feedback from venue staff, parents and carers through a comments book and evaluation forms.

Was there anything you would have done differently if you could do this project again? (100 words max.)

If we were to do the project again, I would perhaps look into raising more funds for the project, the budget was quite tight for the commission and there were elements in the design that we couldn't include because of lack of funds. I would also look at raising more money for touring the final piece to multiple venues. We would like to get it to as many places as possible where children can benefit but again this

takes up a lot of internal resources.

Additional comments and information

If you have any other comments, quotes or useful information about your project, please tell us here

Observations and Feedback

One teacher explained what a difference the 'echo tube' can make to children communicating with each other and being more vocal than normal and how it fits in with the 'Every Child a Talker Scheme – *Children were able to explore / find out at their level and as they felt comfortable.* – Teacher, Barnfields

Another teacher from the special needs school commented on how nice it was to see the children all playing together as they are normally quite segregated.

Comments

Excellent – enjoyed by all children who attended.

A child 'lost in the box'!! – The total absorption of a child that normally finds concentrating hard.

Thank you for the time put into making this so successful! It had maximum impact for children with minimum impact form staff at the school.

- Headteacher, Barnfields

Helped with learning about senses, encouraged children to role play and create dens!

- Teacher, Barnfields

It encouraged interaction with both adults and children and also encouraged speech and language.

Most of our children have communication difficulties and difficulty interacting, some children were far more animated than usual and others were more vocal.

- Teacher, Gateway, SEN nursery

Supporting material

Please provide up to six images from your project with your application form (not to exceed 1MB in total) Please number your images and tell us what they are here.

Out of the Box photographer Kate Beatty

Out of the Box 1, 2, 3 at the Just So Festival

Out of the Box 4 Barnfields Primary School students

Out of the Box 5, 6 Gateway/ Rocklands Special School students