



Educating for Creativity: Practical Activities



Suggested sequence

Many studies examining the effectiveness of CPD interventions have found that successful CPD is a long-term undertaking. Introducing a focus on creativity to your class will take time and sustained effort. We suggest that if you choose to make creativity a focus for a CPD programme in your school, then a group of colleagues should work together over the academic year to explore the implications of creative thinking as a way to improve outcomes for learners.

When the year is over, the group should identify priorities for sharing what has been learned. The group could then lead a second group of colleagues in incorporating aspects of creativity into classroom activities.

Such a CPD programme will need senior management to endorse it, and would benefit from a senior leader overseeing the process. The teacher must design learning experiences and activities within lessons effectively, as well as associated assessment tasks and mark schemes. Advanced planning takes time, so teachers need senior management to support the fact that they will need to have sufficient extra time as a recognised part of their CPD actions.

To begin:

- Begin by deciding who will be involved, starting with enthusiasts for creative thinking.
 - Ask the participants to review the full text of the PDF paper and the PowerPoint. Discuss the issues raised around implications for classroom practice. The exercises below can be used to help with this.
 - Come together as a group to discuss priorities for action.
 - Allocate individual participants specific fact-finding tasks. Ask them to report back to the group at the next meeting, perhaps using the further reading suggestions and online links as a starting point.
- Consider tracking experiences of creative thinking that pupils have already had. Might it be worth visiting feeder schools to gain a fuller picture?
 - After the initial meetings, the group need to agree on success parameters, and timeframes.
 - All participants should then undertake to review their schemes of work to identify one or more occasions that already feature creativity, or where they can adapt an existing activity to include creative thinking.
 - Working in pairs or in a group of three, participants should critique each other's plans as they prepare lessons, activities, and tasks that focus on creativity.
 - Later, the same groups can review what happened, suggest changes or note successes.
 - If colleagues are comfortable with it, and if facilities are available, some participants might choose to videotape lessons that feature opportunities for creative thinking and how to stimulate classes to engage in creative thinking. This may be daunting, but such exercises can be enormously helpful to the teacher and to observers.
 - Once a term, all participants should meet and pool their findings, reviewing their progress against the agreed goals.
 - At the end of the year, the group should meet and create a set of recommendations from their experiences. These should include how to:
 - create a whole-school focus on creativity; and
 - share their findings with colleagues.
 - These recommendations will form the basis for a report to SMT.

Exercises: The reflective professional

After reading *Educating for Creativity* and the PowerPoint presentation, participants can work through the exercises.

Generalised approaches to creativity are unlikely to work in fostering creative thinking in pupils. Creativity is domain specific, and often arises in response to the specific constraints of the subject in question. With this in mind, teachers need to ask themselves: What do I recognise and understand by creative thinking in the context of my own subject and classrooms?

Having a clear picture of what creativity and creative thinking look like will help the teacher to find opportunities to focus on creative responses in classroom activities.

These nine sample exercises examine various aspects of attitudes towards creativity. Rather than working through all of these at the same time, they can be used as a resource from which to draw at different stages during a CPD focus on creativity. The teacher can pick out individual questions to use to start a discussion, or find information that will form part of a planning exercise at departmental level.

Exercise 1: My understanding of creativity and creative thinking

Exercise 2: My own creativity

Exercise 3: Stimulating imagination

Exercise 4: Valuing creativity

Exercise 5: Famous names, landmarks, and breakthroughs

Exercise 6: Idea generation and evaluation

Exercise 7: Drafting questions

Exercise 8: Drafting an assessment task

Exercise 9: Using the Thinking Cards

Exercise 1: My understanding of creativity and creative thinking

<p>1</p>	<p>What do I understand by creativity in the context of the subject(s) I teach?</p> <p>Think of your main subject. Are there specific occasions when creative thinking is required, such as solving problems, interpreting information, or making a product? How would you sum up creativity within a typical subject context? Can you give examples of historical figures or famous names who are renowned for making landmark breakthroughs? Who are the most noted people associated with your subject? Who among them have inspired you?</p>
<p>Write your response here</p>	
<p>2a</p>	<p>What does creativity look like in my classroom/subject?</p> <p>a) How do I teach it?</p> <p>Think of a classroom activity that you do regularly. Which activities or topics do you use with your classes that feature a creative aspect? Identify at least one occasion when you introduce a topic and demonstrate how you want the class to respond to a task that you've set which requires some creative thinking.</p>
<p>Write your response here</p>	
<p>2b</p>	<p>What does creativity look like in my classroom/subject?</p> <p>b) In my pupils' responses, what do I hope to see?</p> <p>Again, think of a classroom activity that you do regularly. When do you ask for a response that requires creative thinking, imagination, resourcefulness, ingenuity, or originality that is personal to the pupil? What sort of things do you expect pupils to say and/or do? What will be in the work they produce that will demonstrate their creative thinking?</p>
<p>Write your response here</p>	
<p>3</p>	<p>How do I recognise creativity in my pupils' responses?</p> <p>Think of the range of responses that pupils typically give. When and where do you remember pupils being creative? Are there informal occasions, such as responses to off-the-cuff questions? Are there particular activities where they regularly come up with creative responses? Are there particular occasions when you expect to see creative responses and do you look out for them? How do you react to those responses? Do these interactions improve your rapport with your class, and if so, why?</p>
<p>Write your response here</p>	

Exercise 2: My own creativity

Do you think of yourself as creative? It's easy to underestimate the amount of creativity that we are required to have as professionals. You may not think of yourself as a creative individual, as we often dismiss our day-to-day small acts of creative thinking and decision making. Try this exercise to remember that even the smaller aspects of creative thinking count, and are important.

<p>1a</p>	<p>a) What do I do that is creative in my work life?</p> <p>Think of: planning schemes of work; drawing up lesson plans; making PowerPoints or other classroom materials; writing mark schemes; drafting test questions; carrying out demonstrations; preparing hand-outs; conversations and individual responses; providing advice and guidance; contributions to departmental meetings; support for colleagues; pastoral commitments; parents nights; classroom displays; and extracurricular clubs and societies. Once you get started you will have no shortages of examples.</p>
<p>Write your response here</p>	
<p>1b</p>	<p>b) What do I do that is creative in leisure pursuits?</p> <p>It's equally important to remember that as professionals, we need to recharge our batteries too. Leisure pursuits and activities are vital to maintaining the right work/life balance. Creative activities are often particularly effective in combating stress. Remember too that even simple things like choosing the location for a walk involve creative decision making. Don't discount the small things; instead, recognise them as aspects of your own creative thinking routines.</p>
<p>Write your response here</p>	
<p>2</p>	<p>Thinking of the continuum of creativity, are there occasions where I engage with choices towards the left of the continuum? What are these? Name at least three.</p> <p>Refer to the section 7a in the PDF Educating for Creativity: A Literature Review. Now list a few examples of occasions when you do small-scale creative things such as cooking a meal or redecorating a room.</p>
<p>Write your response here</p>	
<p>3</p>	<p>Are there any occasions when I do things more characteristic of moving towards the right of the continuum? Name one.</p> <p>Still with the continuum of creativity in mind, think of a time (work or leisure) when you produced something that you were proud of which involved you in thinking creatively.</p>
<p>Write your response here</p>	

Exercise 3: Stimulating imagination

1	<p>How do I motivate my class to enjoy my subject?</p> <p>We all want our classes to enjoy and be enthusiastic about learning. At times that can be difficult, but there are also favoured activities that can be used to reward classes following some of the more demanding topics. Are there particular activities you use to get classes going?</p>
Write your response here	
2	<p>How do I get my class to engage creatively with my subject?</p> <p>When pupils are really involved with their work, everyone's happy. What sort of things engage your classes and get them really involved in the subject? Are there certain types of activities that fire them up? What leads to a pupil being enthusiastic about your subject?</p>
Write your response here	
3	<p>What makes my pupils want to continue to engage with me/my subject?</p> <p>With pupil motivation, even the most enthusiastic have periods when their attention flags. What attracts the enthusiasts in your class, and what causes them to disengage? Is it all about the material you present, or is it also how you present it?</p>
Write your response here	
4	<p>What questions do I typically ask that invite pupils to engage in imaginative thinking?</p> <p>Think of a particular topic that you teach regularly. When do you ask pupils to speculate, invent or imagine?</p>
Write your response here	
5	<p>What stimulus material do I provide that feeds the imagination of my pupils.</p> <p>At some stage of lessons where you are introducing new content, you will use some of the following: illustrations, text, demonstrations, pictures, graphs, photos, videos, guest speakers, or other stimulus. How do you select these teaching materials and keep them fresh?</p>
Write your response here	

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6	When do I encourage pupils to seek out stimulus material for themselves? What do you expect pupils to find? How do you help pupils to become more discerning about finding and choosing stimulus material for themselves?
Write your response here	

Exercise 4: Valuing creativity

1	<p>Do my pupils know that I value creativity?</p> <p>How do you react to the unexpected answer, challenging question, or non-standard response? What do you tell classes about your expectations of them? Do you include creativity in your success criteria or mark schemes?</p>
Write your response here	
2	<p>How do I currently assess my pupils' creativity?</p> <p>Do you have an idea of what you expect to see in pupils' work that represents a creative response? Is it written down and communicated to classes as part of a mark scheme or assessment criteria? If you don't include consideration of creativity in assessments, how might you introduce it?</p>
Write your response here	
3	<p>How do I reward my pupils' creativity?</p> <p>Do you praise or award marks? Do you publicise creative work to the rest of the school by mounting displays in the classroom, in corridors or for special occasions such as parent's nights? Do you comment on creativity in reports or on homework?</p>
Write your response here	
4	<p>What do my pupils understand creativity to be in the context of my subject?</p> <p>What do you communicate to your classes about creativity? Do they know what you think about it, and could they describe what it looks like in the subject context? What examples of creativity do you show classes?</p>
Write your response here	

Exercise 5: Famous names, landmarks, and breakthroughs

1	<p>What examples do I use of: creative minds; new inventions; significant figures; important developments; innovative ideas; and big moments in the history of my subject.</p>
Write your response here	
2	<p>Which significant figures do I expect classes to recognise and know about at the end of this sequence of lessons; this term; this year.</p> <p>What do you want classes to remember about the examples you introduce them to? If a visitor to the class asked them to name a famous representative of the subject, how many could give them an example? How many could name more than one example?</p>
Write your response here	
3	<p>How do I illustrate how new ideas came about, and were put into practice?</p> <p>While teaching your subject, you will at some stage give an account of the history of the topics: when discoveries were made; when theories were formulated; or how early misconceptions were overturned. What do you do to explain the history of ideas and where they came from?</p>
Write your response here	
4	<p>How can I use these examples to focus on the meaning of creativity within the subject context?</p> <p>When you introduce examples of revolutionary thinkers, innovators or inventors, it can be a good time to consider their personal qualities such as tenacity, determination, and resilience as well as their creativity and inspiration.</p>
Write your response here	
5	<p>Who or what would be good examples to help pupils understand progress or breakthroughs in the subject?</p> <p>Are there any other examples of celebrated figures that would be useful to add? Does your current list have women and men? Do you cite current figures as well as historical ones? What's at the cutting edge of your subject, and do your classes know about it?</p>
Write your response here	

Exercise 6: Idea generation and evaluation

1	<p>Where can I find opportunities in my class for question-and-answer sessions that will help the whole class to generate ideas?</p> <p>Some topics and activities will be more suited to this kind of approach than others. When do you currently run Q&A sessions with classes? How often? How long do they last? How are they structured? How do you distribute questions? Are they mainly for checking comprehension?</p>
Write your response here	
2	<p>What topics/activities are suitable to use for idea generation?</p> <p>In your Q&A sessions, can you introduce topics or activities to stimulate ideas? Is there scope to add additional occasions?</p>
Write your response here	
3	<p>What criteria do I use to evaluate ideas as part of a problem-solving exercise?</p> <p>When demonstrating a route through a problem-solving exercise, illustrate how you are arriving at your course of action at each stage by 'thinking out loud'. This will show pupils the criteria to use when problem-solving.</p>
Write your response here	
4	<p>Can pupils say what those criteria are?</p> <p>This will show how much pupils have understood and retained. Once you have demonstrated a method, technique or procedure, you want the pupils to use it by applying it to fresh material. At first this might be imitative; later, classes will understand the method at a deeper level. If pupils can perform the method and also do the equivalent of thinking out loud as they do it, that's a strong indication that they have thoroughly grasped the new material. This is why having pupils show and explain to each other is a useful activity.</p>
Write your response here	

Exercise 7: Drafting questions

Try drafting a Q&A session to plan the questions and anticipate some of the likely responses you will get. What supplementary questions can you use to redirect pupil responses so they move towards the issues you want them to focus on? Plan these questions to use to draw out pupils responses when it's not clear what they mean.

Include the 'rules' for a Q&A session where you want imaginative responses but also want to cut short any pupils who trying to sabotage it by offering silly suggestions.

Topic

Leading questions

Expected responses

Supplementary questions to move ideas on

Can you tell us a bit more? What do you mean by that? Can you explain how that would work? Why do you say that? Give us an example of that.

Rules: acceptable and unacceptable responses

Exercise 8: Drafting an assessment task

Draft an assessment task based on an activity you use regularly with classes. The task should be a question that requires pupils to respond, using the subject content to arrive at a conclusion.

Write four success criteria based on the task description. The criteria will form the basis of a mark scheme for the task:

- Two of the success criteria should focus on the subject content you want to see pupils use in their response.
- One should focus on accuracy, spelling, punctuation and grammar, layout or presentation, as appropriate.
- The final success criterion should say what you will accept that counts as evidence of creativity in the pupils' responses.

Topic/Subject content

Title of task/Task description

Reword the task as a question

Success criteria

1. Subject content to be included a)

2. Subject content to be included b)

3. Focus on accuracy, spelling, punctuation and grammar, layout or presentation

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4. Aspect of creativity to be demonstrated in response

Note that this will not work for all tasks. Also, it is not always easy to tell until you try to draft success criteria whether or not the task will work as one that includes a focus on creativity. You may need to rework task ideas a few times.

Exercise 9: Using the Thinking Cards

The Thinking Cards are three sets of pre-prepared questions that you can use to prompt ideas with the pupils. The teacher can use them during the planning stage, and by pupils in class. They are particularly useful to break the deadlock when pupils are stuck and don't know how to proceed.

Packs of the Thinking Cards were distributed to all primary and post-primary schools in 2010. If you can't find them or you're working outside N. Ireland, you can download them from the CCEA website as part of the Think Pack¹ suite of resources. You can also access videos about the cards and a step-by-step guide for teachers on using the cards.

The cards work best when the teacher chooses a specific card or cards to use, and directs small groups (two or three) to work through the questions on the cards to come up with suggestions. Each group can use the same card(s) or be given their own card(s) to work with.

Each pack has ten cards for each of the five strands of the TS&PCs framework. Begin by looking at the *Being Creative* cards from each of the three packs. Choose two or three cards that chime with the ideas about creativity in your classroom that you've already been considering. It doesn't matter from which pack the card(s) you select are chosen, nor if they come from different packs.

Match the cards with activities that you already do with classes. Use the cards you've chosen as you work through the exercise on drafting questions. You might also review the *Self-Management* cards as you complete the exercise on drafting an assessment task. Refer to the step-by-step guide for further suggestions for using the Thinking Cards.

¹ www.nicurriculum.org.uk

