

# Performing Arts & CARNIVAL

in Initial Teacher Education  
and Schools: HEARTS project  
at Goldsmiths, University  
of London 2005-2006



# Performing Arts and Carnival in Initial Teacher Education and Schools: HEARTS project at Goldsmiths, University of London 2005-2006

HEARTS was conceived as a project to revitalise the arts in the experience of students in Higher Education preparing to become primary school teachers. Supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the National Endowment for Science, Technology & the Arts and the Teacher Training Agency, HEARTS funded HEIs to undertake year-long projects that would enrich the arts for their students and lead on to deeper change within institutions in the way new teachers are made ready for their professional role. In order to do this at Goldsmiths we proposed to document, research and develop our existing performing arts and carnival courses.

# Aims of the Goldsmiths HEARTS project

1. To enrich the arts experience of PGCE primary students by extending and refining the carnival and performing arts element of the primary PGCE programme as well as integrating this with other subject areas.
2. To enrich the arts experience of PGCE primary students by making stronger links between students experience of carnival and performing arts on the course and our partnership schools. To involve teachers in working alongside students and artists in the carnival arts workshops at college and in developing carnival and performing arts in school experience.
3. To involve students and teachers from selected partnership schools in documenting and reflecting on their own and their pupils' creativity using new media technologies. To create a visual record of their learning processes on the course in order to evaluate the impact of the carnival arts as a learning experience for students and for pupils in schools.
4. To work closely with selected partnership schools, who wish to develop their arts curriculum, and with local authority arts advisory staff, in order to develop a community of practice in relation to carnival arts in educational contexts.
5. To involve students and teachers in documenting and making accessible creative teaching strategies and materials developed on the course and by students and teachers in partnership schools.

# What did we do with HEARTS at Goldsmiths?

## THE CONTEXT IN COLLEGE

Goldsmiths mission statement focuses on creative and cultural processes and staff in the Department of Educational Studies are generally supportive of creative approaches and the fostering of critical and reflective skills in students. We also are mindful of our local culturally diverse communities and more widely in London, the most culturally and linguistically diverse city in the world. Our partnership schools are drawn from across London's communities but mainly from South London. However our student intake on the primary PGCE is drawn from all areas of the UK and although we have a significant number of students from ethnic minority backgrounds, many students have little or no experience of living and working in culturally diverse communities before coming to college. At interview many of them cite the attraction of learning from this exciting diversity as their reason for choosing Goldsmiths.

It is our responsibility to train teachers who will not only meet the professional standards but will also be able to 'think outside the box'. They will need to be creative in their teaching, in responding to pupils' diverse needs. In order to validate their pupils' diverse experiences teachers need to be reflective and sensitive in re-evaluating their own assumptions and values and respecting traditions other than their own. The arts have always provided a route into this kind of deep human exchange as was stressed in 'All Our Futures':

*"We have described contemporary cultures as dynamic and diverse. As a matter of urgency, education must help young people to understand these processes and engage with and respect cultural perspectives different from their own." (NACCE 1999)*

## THE CONTEXT IN SCHOOLS

Collaboration with teachers and senior managers in selected partnership schools and with advisory personnel within two LEA's was built into our project design.

As tutors working in partnership with schools we are very aware of the current pressures on students and teachers which tend to inhibit creativity. Of course we have not been alone in voicing concerns about an observable tendency for the curriculum to be narrowed. Yet it is our experience that children stand to gain so much from a rich arts based curriculum. During the course of the project year, in evaluating children's achievements and enjoyment through arts based learning, many teachers have voiced similar thoughts.

We always have worked closely with our partnership schools on a number of aspects of our course, so when we invited schools to apply to be part of the HEARTS project over 20 schools responded and we had difficulty selecting 5!



*Dance Workshop with Jackie Guy*



*Students parade as Guy Fawkes at Goldsmiths*

### **THE WIDER CONTEXT - CARNIVAL IN LONDON**

Notting Hill Carnival is now the biggest popular street festival in Europe. Since its inception in the 1960s it has developed as a major significant cultural event celebrating mainly the artistic traditions of Carnival in the Caribbean (particularly as developed in Trinidad and Tobago). The main creative energies that have contributed to the development of Carnival in the UK have come from Caribbean communities. More recently South American carnival traditions (particularly those developed in Brazil) have a significant presence in London carnivals. The educational potential of Carnival has long been recognised and the participation of schools has increased over the years. Both the Arts Council and the GLA have commissioned reports on carnival which have included education as a key feature. Increasingly carnival arts practitioners from within these historic cultural traditions are working in schools. It was therefore important that our partnership in developing our HEARTS project included some of these artists. Without their committed input the project would have been impossible.

### **THE PGCE COURSE ON PERFORMING ARTS AND CARNIVAL**

At Goldsmiths we have defended the place of a performing arts course and from 1998 we added a carnival arts experience. This proved very popular with students and was developed into a compulsory element of the PGCE course.

Recognising that we were building on already existing courses in carnival and performing arts our challenge was to improve the quality of students' experiences and embed them more centrally in the overall PGCE programme.

In the Autumn term all students are introduced to performing arts through a number of sessions on dance, music, drama and undertake a performance project. The skills they learn on this course prepare them for further development during the Carnival course and work in school. The Carnival course is an intensive short course, over a period of four weeks. The first week consists of an introductory lecture on the historical background, traditions and significance of Carnival, also highlighting the educational elements.

These are further explored during workshops with carnival artists in dance, performance poetry and calypso culminating in a whole day of Masquerade workshops and carnival performances. Groups of students make video recordings of their work during the course. Two follow up sessions take place in the second and fourth week to enable students to research and produce resources for future use in schools. They are also given the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences on the course through these follow up sessions and to make DVDs representing their responses.

# The three phases of the HEARTS project

## THE FIRST (AUTUMN) INVOLVED:

### A series of five seminars with our partners

The Project began by placing our planned developments of the PGCE course in a theoretical context with an exploration of the legacy of debate about the arts in education and about Carnival in education. Some seminars were led by artists, providing a valuable opportunity for shared thinking about their own work within schools and colleges and raising their status as partners in learning.

### Action planning with partner schools for future curriculum development

The five schools involved in our project at this point spent time with the HEARTS team and back in schools drawing up action plans for the development of Carnival and performing arts in their schools.

## THE SECOND PHASE (AUTUMN AND SPRING) INVOLVED:

### Bringing together the Carnival and PA courses

Some members of the HEARTS team and one of the artists worked across the two course units. Students were told that they would build on skills learnt in performing arts on their carnival course. The carnival was seen as providing a context for combining separate knowledge gained in dance, music, and drama sessions. The carnival artist taught the music sessions on both elements.

### Integration of carnival and performing arts across the ITT curriculum

- Taught sessions and directed activities linked to Carnival and PA took place in maths, English, science, early years, art, ICT, D&T, MFL. Students in ICT were prepared for their performing arts and carnival course through learning how to use digital media, video filming techniques and video editing. The students received a booklet of instructions about their filmmaking and a self selected group of filmmakers met with a member of the team to plan their filming. On the Carnival course we developed new approaches to students' use of digital video, including using video as a tool for reflective practice.
- The Design and Technology course tutor and the Art course tutor prepared a visual teaching resource linked to carnival, which was used on their respective taught sessions. On the carnival course some students chose to highlight design and technology in their follow up directed activities.
- MFL students were given directed activities on their carnival course specifically tailored to take account of MFL requirements. Some of their work was placed on the Intranet and hard copies were loaned to students in HEARTS schools for their school experience.



*Parent and child make an environmental statement through carnival*



*School carnival day  
'The Iron Man'*

## PREPARING NEW TEACHING RESOURCES - VISUAL RESOURCES

1. Steve Herne and Maggie Rogers created a PowerPoint slide show which explored the contribution of Art, Design and Technology to the Performing Arts and specifically to Carnival as a combined arts form. The show is made up mainly of photographs of practice drawn from Primary schools and Initial Teacher Education courses and is aimed at PGCE students to be viewed during either their Visual Arts or Design & Technology sessions. The slides and captions are designed to support a variety of tutors from different backgrounds to deliver a session relatively quickly. It aims to provide a stimulating introduction to cross-curricular potential and theoretical and practical aspects of the creative and design processes, and to trigger ideas for students' own group performances or carnival themes. The content includes references to the National Curriculum, a wide variety of cultural traditions, the carnival aspects of music, dance, and visual spectacle, examples of textiles, whole-school cross-curricular work around carnival, the subversion of traditional forms of theatre and the arts. Specific practices which fall within the scope of the performing arts such as costume, make-up, lighting, scenery & props, theatrical photography and graphic design for posters, programmes and publicity were identified. The slide show concludes with images illustrating stages of the design process flowing naturally within the creative buzz of an extended carnival workshop such as generating, developing and communicating ideas using sketches, designing and making using structures and joining techniques, testing out prototypes and adapting and finally presenting and celebrating.

2. A PowerPoint presentation was created by Celia Burgess-Macey for the introductory lecture on carnival. With a combination of words, images and music this explains for students the historical legacy of Caribbean style carnivals, containing as they do the fusion of West African (Nigeria and Ghana), European (Spain, France and Portugal), East Indian (Hindu Hosay festival) and Amerindian (Carib and Arawak) traditions, and also points out that carnival is not confined to one culture and is in a constant process of change and development.

Caribbean carnivals (the prototype for Notting Hill) are explored through examining the interrelated artistic practices of masquerade (costume mas), dance (more correctly called playing mas because it combines dance with dramatic enactment and representation of 'the other side of yourself'), kaiso or calypso (and its modern relatives soca, rapso, chutney, raggabingi) and steelband (the steel drum was invented in Trinidad as a direct response to the banning of the African drum under colonialism). The presentation shows how Caribbean Carnival historically, both in the Caribbean and in Notting Hill, has encapsulated the process of challenging the invisibility of



*Teacher discussing design ideas with Carlton Garcia*

certain people and ideas. The representational forms in carnival have frequently challenged the status quo. In Caribbean carnival European artistic norms and cultural hegemony are challenged, both through a process of mockery and a process of memory, of continuity with deeply embedded African ideals, spirituality and art. The presentation also includes examples of carnival arts practice within the curriculum of nursery and primary schools both in the UK and the Caribbean.

### **3. Outlines of artist workshops**

Material was written by the artists explaining both their artistic approach and the specific classroom practices involved in their workshops. These were useful to schools in the planning and resourcing of workshops.

### **4. Resources for teachers**

A booklet of Carnival resources and where to get hold of them. Materials from the Homerton scrap project. CD ROMs of images of carnivals around the world, of carnivals in schools. Resources accessed through the college intranets (community.gold and learn.gold).

### **THE THIRD PHASE (SUMMER) INVOLVED**

Artists, teachers from HEARTS schools and PGCE students planning and working together in partnership schools and the documentation and dissemination of practice.

### **KEY SUCCESSFUL FEATURES OF THE PROJECT:**

- 1.** The interaction between students and teachers and artists meeting and being creative together in college and subsequently in schools.
- 2.** We placed our work in a theoretical framework through the seminar series. All 5 HEARTS schools continued to participate in the project through the year. All attended the seminar series.
- 3.** All 5 link teachers from the initially selected schools participated in the carnival course alongside students during their school half term and on the following Fridays directed activities. Each teacher worked with a group of students helping them to create resources which would be of direct benefit to their own schools. Both teachers and students found this useful. Teachers felt empowered by being consulted by less experienced students and students welcomed teachers as a reality check especially when doing directed activities.
- 4.** Five teachers came into Goldsmiths for an afternoon of action planning with the HEARTS team. All subsequently developed action plans in school showing how they would develop the arts and carnival and integrate it with the curriculum.



*Intense concentration in dance workshop with Greta Mendez*

5. Two further schools with existing experience of carnival joined the project in the summer term and were able to contribute their experience of schools carnival and to benefit from discussion with HEARTS schools, with artists and to have artists working in their schools.

6. Workshops with artists were arranged in accordance with school choices and priorities. A new and distinctive feature was the ongoing opportunity HEARTS teachers and artists had to get to know each other and discuss how they would work together in schools before the artists' visits.

7. Most workshops were seen as wholly positive in their impact on children and staff. Teachers all joined in workshops alongside artists and often support staff and special needs teachers did also. Mutual respect established during the year meant that any differences in expectations between artists and teacher were resolved professionally.

8. From the outset we had stressed the importance of holding an actual carnival. Students and HEARTS teachers who experienced the carnival parade at college understood the important effect of this on their sense of achievement. All schools held successful carnival parades; all in the outdoors and in 6 out of 7 schools the children paraded round local streets, estates or park. These events often exceeded expectations particularly in terms of children's evident pride and enjoyment, parents' enthusiastic response and attendance and the often unexpected excitement experienced by staff, both teaching and non teaching. Several were reported in the local press.

9. LEA support for HEARTS schools was sought at the outset and the Southwark arts adviser contacted schools in that borough. Members of the advisory team attended all our seminars in the Autumn term and contributed to our theoretical discussions. The teacher from LEAN (Lewisham Education Arts Network) whose role is to bring artists and schools and communities together, attended a meeting with the HEARTS schools to talk about the support that is available for arts initiatives in Lewisham.

#### **IMPACT ON THE LEARNING OF STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND CHILDREN**

From our own observations, both in college and during school experience, of students' work, and from the written evaluations and interviews with students, artists and teachers we have identified a number of important themes.

##### **1. Developing pedagogical models - teaching and learning and arts based activities**

- The carnival and performing arts workshops were appreciated. Students especially commented on the excitement of hands on creativity, new discoveries about and collaborations with their fellow students and the



Collaboration



School carnival parade

sense of achievement when the performance took place.

*"I think it was really good working with lots of different people, I think the speed at which we had to get things done meant that people took risks and tried ideas out and it was amazing to me the calibre of the stuff that came out of it at the end."* (student)

Students and teachers commented extensively on how the carnival arts work and the workshops with artists had a positive impact on the engagement and enthusiasm of children, noticing in particular that children who do not normally concentrate well were able to work with increased concentration and for extended periods of time.

- Students and teachers identified the arts as an opportunity for a more principles based and flexible approach to teaching. They were generally positive about the opportunities for practical hands on activity and the opportunity to work collaboratively or independently according to the demands of the task and individual learning style/preference.

*"It was interesting to see how different groups approached it. In my group which was all women we spent the first hour sat around the table discussing and deciding and methodically planning how we were going to do the different bits and allocating roles and the group next door which was more men and children just got straight stuck in. The artist who was working with us thought this was very interesting the two different approaches. He wondered whether our group would get anything done but in fact our way worked for us, we stuck to our timing and that worked well."* (student)

- Freedom from normal constraints of classroom and paper and text-based work was welcomed. The fact that they were offered choices, what theme to use for their calypso, what dance to choreograph, what mas design to invent, what video or photo shot to take, what new spaces to work in, including the outdoors, the gym, the Hall and how to plan their own allocation of roles and use of time, made students feel in charge of their own learning to a greater extent than normal. They recognised that there was a need for direction and boundary setting.

*"I loved the calypso but I found it really hard working from scratch. I had nothing to go by. I found that hard because there were no boundaries."* (student)

Teachers also noticed that children responded well to new opportunities and new spaces, including the opportunity to take their carnival onto the streets.

- Some students would have appreciated more time, while others liked the adrenalin rush of creating something under pressure of





*I'm a dragon!*



*Dragon costume*

*Developing skills in D and T*



*in that it is recreative because the song already exists, but to write a song is to create it from nothing and the experience of creating from nothing except just an idea is very very enriching."*(artist)

- Teachers and students also noticed that the carnival workshops brought out individual and sometimes unexpected responses in their children.
- There was much evident enjoyment of the possibilities of self-expression through the performing arts, which included music, dance and dramatic performance.
- Children displayed great creativity in their thinking about the carnival themes and designs as well as in their physical and musical expression. Even children in the Foundation stage were able to envisage what their carnival costume should be like.
- The carnival supported the development of children's imagination and their ability to represent ideas through carnival and take on carnival characters, including dramatising inside their character.
- Both students and children in schools demonstrated considerable creativity in the area of design and technology. Long before the creation of costumes, masks and banners start to materialize the design process is already underway when children are engaged in making Mas as part of their Carnival. This process, what the Assessment of Performance Unit team for design and technology called 'the interaction of the mind and hand' (APU 1991), is evident at every stage of the Mas Camp, from selection of the initial themes through to the carnival parade.
- Carnival in schools provides pupils with a platform to 'think and intervene creatively', 'develop a range of ideas' and 'combine practical skills with an understanding of aesthetics', all important aspects of design and technology education (QCA 1999). In addition, children have the opportunity to work with a range of materials, fabric, paper card and 'smart' materials, such as Platizote, which can be formed using heat as well as shaped through stitching and gluing. Many of these materials will be reused from their original purpose, an opportunity to recycle and address education for sustainable development (ESD). A unique feature of the 'users and needs' of Carnival is that the 'product' will develop making skills simply through scale of size and production. Structures using withies and garden canes give rise to issues of strength and stability, which are dealt with within a real life situation.
- During the HEARTS project we observed student teachers



The challenge of scale



Parents and children in carnival on the streets

Students discuss construction with Shabaka Thompson



undergoing a design process in a way that is not possible during their short introductory course to design and technology. In the HEARTS schools children were also designing and making on a scale they had not experienced before. The costumes produced had to withstand the dynamic forces of dance during the parade, large structures had to have openings to prevent wind damage and above all, health and safety considerations were paramount.

- Most students and teachers recognised that creativity does not just locate in arts subjects. Design and technology, ICT, English and early years education were also quoted as subjects where students had been able to be creative. In some cases it was felt that you would have to smuggle the arts into the core curriculum e.g. via English by using performance poetry and composing calypso for example.
- Students were able to identify ways in which their own creativity had been increased through the course, especially by being challenged to engage with new and unfamiliar experiences. This was also related to moving out of a comfort zone.

### 3. Moving out of the comfort zone, taking risks and overcoming challenges

- For many students carnival involved moving out of their comfort zone—very few students had direct experience of it. Some students were quite scared about the idea of performance and exposure of their supposed inadequacies.

*“On the actual carnival day when we did our mas workshop we all wondered how on earth we will get this done and how on earth we would produce anything? Sometimes you come into a new experience with a negative attitude instead of thinking around how you can approach it.” (student)*

- The calypso artist had his own perspective on students’ responses to his calypso workshop that matched their own feedback.

*“Most people will happily sing you a song but very few actually want to write one. So when the students first get together you find them, you notice by their body language that some of them are quite anxiety ridden and they get, they sort of laugh and giggle nervously as they begin to interact about what they are doing. By the time the product is finished they are laughing with relaxation, which I think it is a combination of the achievement about which they feel quite proud, even though they are young adults they still feel as good as children do about ‘wow we’ve done that,’ and secondly from relief about having gone through this little circle of fire.”(artist)*

Teachers often faced huge organisational challenges involved in



'Under Da Sea' from above - PGCE student carnival



Jackie Guy talking to children

organising a school carnival. It involved taking risks working with artists and allowing their classrooms to be turned into mas camps, or in finding a safe space to hold a dance workshop. Most also took the risk of taking children onto the streets in costume for their carnival parade and in several cases this involved linking with other schools and in all cases with parents.

#### 4. Working with artists

- Students and teachers appreciated the opportunity to work with arts specialists and the fact that they learnt specialist skills. Students found the communication and teaching styles of artists refreshingly different from college tutors.

*"It was very refreshing to see how... because if you are a lecturer then you've been a teacher you've done a degree and you approach things in a certain way. Then someone comes in and approaches things differently, teaching what they know but they've not necessarily done a degree etc I can see well how that really works... it opens your mind. And it is inspiring to see somebody with that passion about what they are doing and enjoying it, it's infectious. And that must be the same for children."* (student)

*"I think it was good working with the artists because, and this is not a criticism of lecturers, but because they (artists) are actually doing the art day in day out as a living they were able to give us a sense of what it was like and to talk about what happened when they went into schools and for example the calypsonian showed us video examples of his work in schools which was really helpful."* (student)

- The workshop on Caribbean dance was initially seen as challenging (image above). For many students dance was said to be 'just not my thing' and many were self-conscious at the thought of dance performance especially dance that was in an unfamiliar cultural style to unfamiliar music (Caribbean dance-soca music). Yet for some the dance workshop was a transformative experience and called forth many superlatives. This was a new language students were encountering - the language of physically expressive dance. On the videos the result of the workshop and follow-up self-directed rehearsal can be seen in creative dance routines and in the engagement of students in dance performance for a purpose.
- Moving out of their comfort zones and experiencing success was positively correlated with creativity. This was supported by the communication and teaching style of the artists.

*"Because my personal approach is more about the creative imagination and it is about the participation. I find it is always very interesting because it is not just imitation but it is also to get the*



Carlton Garcia and children in mas workshop

*teachers to create or to use the material that I have given and to broaden it and that is manifested in its own way when they do their own project here at Goldsmiths. So I find it-the teaching is very interactive and it is very creative. I find that the teachers enjoy in particular what they did. I also tried to relate not just to the aesthetics but also the human side of it, what it does to people, particularly the students when they give themselves to it. So they learn not just the aesthetics of dance, but also the reason for doing it and the benefits that they get from it.” (artist)*

- All the schools requested dance workshops and these were seen as positive. One of the dance artists was a man and several teachers commented on the impact of the dance workshops on boys, especially black boys. The artist himself expressed himself strongly on this issue.

##### **5. Carnival arts as expression of culture and identity**

- Some students and teachers placed questions about identity as central to learning.

*“Carnival is a cultural event, which recognises the history, culture, traditions and values of diverse communities. This enables the children to take pride in their heritage, feel that it is included in the curriculum and valued by the school. This was an opportunity to develop an inclusive, relevant, multicultural curriculum.”(HEARTS teacher)*

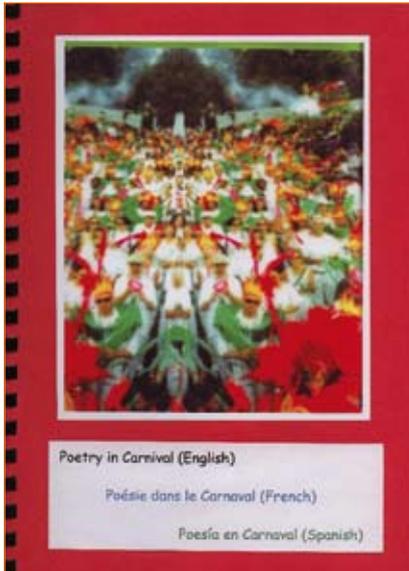
For some students this linked to questions about identity and their own previous educational experiences.

*“I think creativity is about who you are, that is where everybody’s creativity stems from and if you have a different cultural heritage it is going to be different. For me it is personally very interesting because my son is mixed race and he has less contact with that side, the Creole side, so I think for him that was really good. It was a real positive, powerful, creative image and it is not what he is used to. Creativity is culturally different.”(student)*

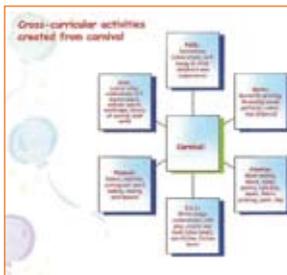
*“I think it is important for children to have the experience of working with a black artist coming in and making them... putting them on a pedestal and reflect an admiration for other people’s work.”(HEARTS teacher)*

- For some carnival was clearly seen as part of their heritage culture and for some it was seen as part of a new British culture, to be embraced as that.

*“Carnival is seeing culture in an artistic way through being involved in something not just reading it in a book.”(student)*



Poésie dans le Carnaval - book made by MFL students



Early years curriculum map from students planning

Students' children took part in the workshops



*"Nowadays we need to be more aware in planning creative and performing arts that we can't just draw on English culture-in fact there is no such thing as 'English' culture now you have to draw on all the influences on all the things that are influencing children and making them who they are. I mean when I came out of school I had no knowledge of any other culture. It wasn't seen as important but it is. You need to be aware... and it makes things so much more interesting and it is a more exciting way to execute the curriculum."*(student)

- For some students the identification of carnival with the Caribbean community was seen as problematic as they felt they were entering someone else's territory.

*"I had reservations about doing something that is very much rooted in what is generally Caribbean cultures when you are predominantly a white middle class bunch of people...As if we are playing in someone else's world."* (student)

- Questions also arose as to whether carnival was universal or specific artistic expression. Some felt it would be only be relevant if they were working in a school in an inner city area. This was not expressed openly to tutors but was picked up by fellow students. This range of views reflects the confusion that surrounds the whole question of multicultural education and what we mean by culturally inclusive practice.

## 6. The arts as a vehicle for cross-curricular learning

- This aspect was most easily appreciated by students and teachers in Foundation Stage, who felt they were able to link every area of learning into their arts project. Teachers in Foundation stage usually plan in a cross-curricular way.

*"Curriculum wise it has obviously spread across the curriculum. In all our short term planning for the last four weeks leading up to the Carnival a lot of it was based on Carnival so a lot of our group times were based on talking to the children about Carnival and reading stories that might relate and getting them to design their costumes. Music and movement sessions related to Carnival. So we've approached it in very much a cross-curricular way."*(HEARTS teacher)

- Those HEARTS teachers and heads who had taught prior to the introduction of the national curriculum, had a good understanding of the potential of arts based learning as cross curricular, and in some cases were implementing this approach in their schools, in some cases supported by new initiatives in the LEA. In all schools the cross curricular potential was explored to some degree. One teacher wrote in her evaluation



*Inclusion: every child can be involved in carnival*



*Carnival arts motivates children*

*PGCE students putting on costume*



*“The project has enabled us to develop a more inclusive and creative curriculum which enthuses and engages all pupils. It is essential that teachers can see how Carnival can be incorporated into their planning for the national curriculum. It should not be an add on or marginalised. Carnival is cross curricular and therefore can be linked to planning in a variety of creative ways. We discussed how Carnival could be integral in the curriculum planning for two weeks. We decided the theme would be stories and took the theme of Annancy the Spiderman. The theme was discussed with the children and they were asked for their ideas to give them some ownership of the work and planning. We made links with geography, history, literacy, design and technology and all the arts.” (HEARTS teacher)*

Students in their follow up activities thought carefully about links between different subjects through carnival, including Modern Foreign languages links.

- Cross curricular elements on the PGCE course were apparent to students but a more deliberate and visual mapping of the links in advance would have helped embed this in their learning.

*“It developed my creativity in terms of looking at the cross-curricular aspect seeing how you can do things in different ways with the arts link it in, because the week before when they were saying (subject tutors) we can do carnival topics for our directed activities that just felt odd, but afterwards it made a lot of sense.” (student)*

## **7. Inclusion through the arts**

- Students own children took part in practical sessions as the course coincided with school half term. The presence of several young children added considerably to the success of carnival activities as their enthusiasm was catching. It also prompted more than one student to reflect on different learning styles and the vexed question of differentiation

*“I don’t believe in streaming and carnival is something that is real differentiation because all children can be involved at whatever level. It is accessible to everyone at whatever level. It is one of the really good things about it. If you don’t like ability grouping then you’ve really got to think hard about how you can differentiate for all children. Every child could be involved at whatever level they feel comfortable with.” (student)*

*“I think it picks up on interests that they have but also it is something stimulating and exciting that they would learn because of their interest in it and also because it is so broad. It can help each child on some level to be creative. That would be my main goal. That every child would get something out of it, in other words it’s about inclusion.” (student)*

Artists and teachers commented extensively on this aspect of carnival arts.



Jackie Guy encouraging the boys



Dance workshop

Midnight Video Robber



*"Carnival provides opportunities for all pupils to achieve, including pupils with special educational needs. The excitement of carnival and all its art forms motivates the children, increases their confidence and encourages them to get involved. Carnival provides an opportunity to celebrate children's achievements. This was my experience working with the children on Carnival themes." (class teacher)*

Because of the diversity of activities that are included in carnival it covers very many learning styles and involves many collaborative activities so that all children without exception can be included at some level.

In one nursery school a teacher commented particularly on the inclusion of children who have English as an additional language and also of children with special needs.

*"I have one Vietnamese child in my class who has very little English yet but because this work is so visual it is easily explained and she can see what we are doing so it is an easy topic to do. Because with the presentation and the different activities you cover many different styles of learning, so differentiation is easy in that respect." (HEARTS teacher)*

### 8. Carnival and collaboration

One of the most challenging aspects of the carnival course is the fact that students have to work with each other because every part of the Carnival activities involves close collaboration and negotiation.

This problem solving necessitates that students pool their ideas in order to arrive at solutions. This can be a frustrating process involving clashes of personality and will. In schools also the Carnival work involves groups agreeing to work together.

This supports the development of children's personal and social skills particularly in relation to collaborating with others towards a shared end product. The reward is in the performance and both students and children experience the fruits of their efforts when they reach this point. Many students start with reservations about performing on the streets but most end up enjoying this aspect immensely. It is the same in schools.

### 9. Assessment of learning in the arts

PGCE students are very aware of the need to meet the standards for ITT and of the constant pressure during their short course. The assessment agenda seems to dominate some students' consciousness to a considerable extent.

- Mixed views were expressed on whether the carnival course should be 'assessed' like the performing arts course or not. Some students liked the sense of freedom from the pressure of constant standards



Making costume



Greta Mendez and girl expressing themselves

Parents in school making costumes



tracking, finding this allowed them creative release; others thought assessment would confer gravitas.

*"I think it was also helpful that they (artists) allowed us to focus on the process rather than on what we are going to be like as a teacher. They were just much more open to ideas."* (student)

It was felt by some students that because the course was not assessed completion of the reflective activities would not count for anything. A compromise has been agreed-students will need to include their reflections on their learning and their directed activity in their portfolios.

- Some students were surprised by the amount of learning for children during carnival activities.

*"I was surprised by that because I thought I would be introducing it as a completely new topic and that the children would not even know the word carnival, but then again last week as I was reviewing my practice I was interested to see how much they had learnt, and how much they were able to reflect and self-assess. When I asked them 'what has carnival meant to you?' one child told me about the dance workshop, in fact more than one talked about that, they told me about making their costumes, they told me about preparing and cooking food. They all remembered all the different experiences."* (student)

Some teachers noted that observations of children during carnival activities provided a broader picture of their achievements than would have been possible otherwise.

## 10. Reflexivity

- Directed time was allocated for students to do group directed activities, which helped them reflect on their learning and its application in schools. This process was been greatly helped by sophisticated uses of new media technologies and the production of DVDs and PowerPoint presentations. These show students reflecting with humour as well as with serious comment on their own learning in carnival workshops. There is a sense of deep playfulness in their encounters with the carnival experience.
- Each student group took a different approach to the filming of the processes of creating a carnival band. There were six groups of filmmakers who all took their role very seriously including in one case a student who symbolised his transition from City banker to PGCE student by painting his best suit with the slogan 'Midnight video robber'.
- The DVDs were subsequently widely used by students, HEARTS



Carnival day at school

teachers and artists to show to children in schools and to teachers at staff meetings.

- The experience of the course and on teaching practice prompted some very interesting reflection from students. The different learning styles on offer gave some students new ways to express themselves. In the following quote the student discusses experience of doing dance with children and identifies the potential of children exploring space through their bodies in dance.

*"I think the physical was very important because in this school we have a shared hall and it is used more as a thoroughfare and for lunch but the area is neglected as far as teaching is concerned. Nobody really feels ownership of it. So when the children did the dance workshops they were not used to having all this space to work in and at first they all stood next to each other, even the most confident children, so during the workshop they had the opportunity to think about the space and Greta explained to them that carnival is about having space and using the space and going outside to use that space. She also talked about being silent as well as making noise, so it was good that they had a chance to think about silence in this different space" (student).*

#### 11. Developing links with parents and the community outside the school

- Inclusion for children is also about including families. Several of the HEARTS schools used the opportunity presented by holding a carnival to extend and develop their relationships with community groups and parent groups as well as with other local schools in the locality. In both the nursery schools parents took part in carnival workshops helping to make costumes and banners. In all schools carnival provided an opportunity for family involvement in learning through parents sharing the responsibility for some activities for example making banners and cooking food.
- The impact of the carnival celebration and parade in streets and playground on children and families frequently exceeded expectations.

LEA support for HEARTS schools was sought at the outset and in one LEA the arts adviser contacted schools in that borough. Members of the arts advisory team from one LEA attended all our seminars in the Autumn term and contributed to our theoretical discussions. A teacher from an Education Arts Network whose role is to bring artists and schools and communities together, attended a meeting with the HEARTS schools to talk about the support that is available for arts initiatives. The teacher from a local museum also offered support.

# Conclusions

1. It was useful to come together as a small team within the Department in order to highlight one particular aspect of our work. The input from students and our partner artists and schools to the reflective process has considerably helped our evaluation and improved the quality of our course.
2. The performing arts and carnival course gave students a challenging and enjoyable experience in an art form they were unfamiliar with and encouraged them to take risks. There was evidence of great creativity and learning of both knowledge and skills and about group processes. This course has become a central and unique aspect of the students experience on PGCE at Goldsmiths.
3. The performing arts and carnival course has been successfully linked to many subject areas within ITT and this has resulted in improved coherence and quality of experiences for students.
4. Collaboration with artists and their input into the course and in schools considerably enhanced quality of learning for students and children. Artists welcomed the opportunity to come to planning meetings and to contribute to the development of thinking on the carnival arts in school. It was the first time we had the opportunity to reflect and plan with the artists and we and they learnt a lot from this process. It also greatly facilitated the work in schools as well as the development of artists' professionalism.
5. Schools from our partnership participating in HEARTS gave generously of their time and energy. Teachers attended our evening seminars and meetings and participated in our carnival course to work alongside students and to help them plan work in schools. They were committed to the HEARTS agenda and found the fact of being associated with it supportive of their teaching and professional development. All teachers provided us with evaluative feedback from their work with students, artists and children.
6. Involvement in HEARTS did influence the planning and teaching processes in schools. All schools produced action plans setting out the aims and focus of their work on HEARTS. No school dropped out and all had successful arts workshops and held carnival events which attracted much positive feedback from parents and local press.
7. ICT was used very effectively throughout the year to improve student learning, to make ICT a tool for reflecting on learning in the arts, to build ICT into the processes of evaluation. We were able to support teachers and students use of digital media to enhance

*Banner made by parent group*





*Collaboration with artists was the key*

their work with children and record their work in schools. Some teachers contributed extensively to this process. Recording of artists workshops in college and in schools helped artists reflect back on their work and on student learning. The input from college staff, artists, students and teachers has meant that we have been able to produce resources using new media technologies. We have created an Intranet resource and also one accessible by schools.

- 8.** Children's learning and achievement in schools was positively influenced by the collaboration with this project. The following aspects of learning were commented on:
- a.** enjoyment of the possibilities of self-expression through the performing arts, which included music, dance and dramatic performance
  - b.** the development of children's ability to communicate, including using multimodal forms of communication such as drawing, gesture and play
  - c.** ability to develop their learning over an extended period of time and to work towards an enjoyable end result – the carnival itself
  - d.** the nurturing of some children's self-esteem through working with the artists
  - e.** the holistic and integrated nature of learning through carnival which covers all subjects of the National curriculum and all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage
  - f.** the opportunity provided for practical and hands-on activities, developing children's skills and enabling different learning styles
  - g.** making connections with previous learning including learning from home e.g. music and dance
  - h.** the development of children's personal and social skills particularly in relation to collaborating with others towards a shared end product
  - i.** increased emotional involvement in their learning and ability to concentrate on activities
  - j.** the opportunity for children with special educational needs and English as an additional language to be fully included in the learning process
  - k.** the opportunity for family involvement in learning through parents working alongside their children and sharing responsibility and participating on the carnival day

Celia Burgess-Macey, Maggie Rogers, Steve Herne. May 2007

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Greta Mendez  
Shabaka Thompson

**HEARTS project schools**

Ann Bernadt Nursery, Southwark  
Brockley Primary School, Lewisham  
Holbeach Primary School, Lewisham  
Rockmount Primary School, Croydon  
Ronald Openshaw Nursery Centre, Newham  
St. James Hatcham, Lewisham  
Surrey Square Infant School, Southwark

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## Our Mission

We offer a transformative experience, generating knowledge and stimulating self discovery through creative, radical and intellectually rigorous thinking and practice.



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