

Evidence of Impact
Case Studies

**Creative Schools
Connects Children
to the Land**

**creative
schools**

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Creative Schools connects children to the land

Each year a variety of Creative Schools projects focus on activating creative learning approaches to enable young people to connect with, and develop a deeper understanding of sustainability and their local environment. By making sustainability concepts tangible, personal, and practical, FORM's Creative Schools often inspires a lifelong commitment to preserving the planet and making more informed, sustainable choices.

In addition, we have seen this year how partnership with a First Nations creative practitioner can be particularly impactful in empowering all children in the class to deepen their connection to the land and, in particular, helping First Nations class members strengthen their connection to their cultural heritage.

The three vignettes below celebrate how Creative Schools connects children to the land..

Working the land

The Year 4 students at **Willetton Primary School** explored the future of farming with creative practitioner, **Steph Reisch**, and teacher, **Bronwyn Mattock**. Steph explains: *"Children are the future: they need to start carving out the future."*

The team used creative ways to challenge the students to address real world problems and issues. They explored alternative food sources and a variety of challenges impacting the future of farming. Students were intentionally given limited instructions for challenge tasks so that they wouldn't lock themselves into specific solutions. For example, in one task students had to research and pitch for the use of different types of milk as an alternative to dairy: it led to everything from roach milk to whale or kangaroo milk being explored.

The students also gained the opportunity to get their hands dirty and connecting physically to the land by clearing an area of land on the school grounds and creating a vertical garden using recycled materials.

Teacher, Bronwyn Mattock, explains: *"The children were thrilled by the experience. They adored the chance to work outside and connect to nature. Even after Steph left, they continued making the whole space their own. They are planting more plants and have kept working in the garden."*

Student views

The value of the experience to connect them to the land is clear from student feedback:

“Creative Schools is one of my favourite things to do. It is a break from working all day and really fun. It is a little bit of working and it is definitely learning, but it is fun and learning.”

“Creative Schools is relaxing and frustrating and make you use your brain and learn a lot. It can be both relaxing and frustrating at the same time. It can be two things, because it doesn't feel stressful, but we do have to use our brains to think. We are learning to think more than we would usually think.”

“We did lessons around working as a team and did warm-ups focusing on the creative habits like persistence and collaboration and planning before you start.”

“In Creative Schools you have wild adventures and you get to know people. You get to know new people in Creative Schools lessons and you learn new things about people.”

“I am learning things like collaboration. We're also learning about science and technology and about humanities too.”

“I now love farming and I know quite a lot. I know how to handle plants and animals.”



A deep need to protect the environment

The Year 2 students at **Bayswater Primary School** explored sustainability in their local community with their teacher, **Darelle Seal**, and creative practitioner, **Claire Davenhall**. Inspired by the book “Somebody Swallowed Stanley” by Sarah Roberts, the students each designed their own sustainable bag (dubbed their Stanley bag) with the aim to sell it to their parents at their project showcase event to raise money for an environmental cause. The bag designs represented what the children wanted to preserve and protect.


Their research took them on environmental walks unearthing local storytelling, and connecting with country through dreamtime stories woven into the fabric of their learning. The children soon started to look at their community through different eyes. Creative practitioner Claire explains: *“They felt this deep need to protect the environment, which became a key theme in their weekly reflections.”*

Every single bag was sold at the showcase event and the children decided to donate the money to the preservation of the turtles at Environment House, a community environment centre situated in the wetlands within their local community. Teacher Darelle reported: *“I received so much positive feedback from parents and grandparents about the impact the program had on the children and their engagement with the local environment. The Creative Schools sessions were always the highlight of the children’s week.”*

Connecting to Noongar Boodja

At **Leda Primary School** the two Year 2 teachers, **Kendal McGuire** and **Natasha Milby** worked with two creative practitioners **Noelene Regan** and **Kaitlyn Elsegood**, to bring local and Indigenous history and geography to life for their students and enable them to connect to the land. Each week the creative practitioners swapped classes, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and expertise. The focal point was the History and Geography curriculum, where the Creative Schools team juxtaposed early settler history with Indigenous history, capitalising on the strengths of the two creative practitioners. Noelene, a proud Noongar woman, and Kaitlyn, a local history enthusiast, led the students on a captivating journey of exploration.






The immersive experience incorporated various hands-on activities, such as exploring Indigenous artefacts like middens and fossils, using traditional communication tools like message sticks and tin can telephones, and even a “Great Aussie Bake-Off” to explore cooking technology with damper versus scones. Local historical figures like Margaret Feilman, a town planner and architect in Kwinana, and Simon Gentle, a Ballardong Noongar man involved in building the roads laid out by Margaret Feilman, were introduced to overlay the First Nations perspective on local historical events. The team also delved into the significance of local landmarks, such as Chalk Hill, and Smirk Cottage. Throughout the children used hands-on creative arts activities to bring the local landmarks and historical figures to life.

The project extended beyond the classroom as the teachers and creative practitioners actively engaged with the local community. A parents’ open night showcased the children’s artworks, each piece accompanied by annotations explaining its significance. The artworks were subsequently displayed in the local public library, fostering a sense of pride and connection with the community. The teachers also discovered historical places in Kwinana they never knew, enriching their own understanding of the local area. Kendal reflected on the impact this had on her as an educator:

“We learnt so much from our creative practitioners. Their knowledge of the local area has been amazing, and they brought in so many connections, like contacting the local library and bringing in research on Margaret Feilman. We would have just learned about the curriculum topics and not made these wider community connections without the help of our creative practitioners.”

There is a high population of Noongar children in the class. Working with Noelene created opportunities for Indigenous culture to be celebrated in authentic ways. Natasha reflected: *“It was so good for me to see the pride in the Noongar children and how they carried themselves. They could teach the other children things about their culture. There was living history there.”*

The children embraced this opportunity for deep cultural learning. One student summed up the experience: *“Creative Schools is fun because you can make stuff and communicate with teachers about the olden days and about Noongar Boodja.”* For Noelene it was also an enriching experience working with these young people and helping them connect to place: *“You can see windows and mirrors when you work with them. You can see their pride in connecting to their local area and it connects to me personally. It is a beautiful way for my research to be able to make a contribution. As an Aboriginal person I am getting the value of seeing through the children’s eyes what it means to relate and connect to place. It is a continuation of my own research. I can see the pride of these children connecting to local area, connecting to place, connecting to me. It is powerful.”*



THE IMPACT OF CREATIVE SCHOOLS

Laura Motherway,
Strategic Creative Learning Manager,
FORM Building a State of Creativity,

with

Mathilda Joubert,
Director of Excellence and Innovation
Sheridan Institute of Higher Education,
Creative Schools Evaluator

For more information please contact:
learning@form.net.au



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