



South Gosforth First School

'Roots to grow and wings to fly'

South Gosforth First School Cultural Leadership Project

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'Developing Cultural Capital through Literacy and Mantle of the Expert'



**ENQUIRY BASED LEARNING &
CREATIVE APPROACHES**

(‘MANTLE OF THE EXPERT’)



As part of our learning journey at South Gosforth First School, we conclude many of our teaching units using an approach called 'Mantle of the Expert'.

'Mantle of the Expert' is an education approach that uses imaginary contexts to generate purposeful and engaging activities for learning.

The Project. What did we want to achieve?

The project was to investigate how 'culture capital' could promote and develop the literacy provision across school. The focus was around how cultural experiences could broaden the children's experiences, vocabulary and confidence in speaking and listening and writing skills.

We wanted to give the children a range of cultural experiences using external professionals but also using drama, art and creativity within the school community in order to challenge their limits and encourage literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum.

External companies had begun to engage with us in KS2 to develop a dance project (Dance City) and a drama project based on 'Diversity in our community' (Unfolding Theatre) and we had just begun to enquire into working with a choir (Voices of Virtue) across the whole school but we also wanted to develop a dramatic teaching tool, Mantle of the Expert, through the whole school (EYFS to Year 4) to encourage learning through the arts.

(This was one of two Cultural Leadership projects running alongside each other in school.)

Project aims:

- To develop cultural capital within the literacy curriculum as an inspiration and cross-curricular content tool.
- To use experiences as a stimulus for confident speaking and listening and writing skills across the whole school.
- To develop staff skills in understanding and developing the 'Mantle of the Expert' teaching strategy.
- To promote culture as an integral part of our curriculum offer at South Gosforth First School.

The journey ...



March 2021:

On starting the Cultural Leadership course, we began to think about the question, 'What is culture?' We looked at the curriculum and the 4 drivers of character, culture, creativity and challenge and began to question whether that was what we were delivering.

During a staff training day I got the opportunity to discuss this in more detail with the staff and they were cautious but receptive to trying to investigate and develop this concept. They were excited about the external professionals and the companies that would be working with some year groups but it was the Mantle of the Expert project that would involve all year groups and this was the area I decided to focus on in terms of my Literacy Co-ordinator role.

As a staff we decided to approach it with a real focus on confident and expressive speaking and listening as well as a focus on how it developed writing skills in a cross-curricular approach.

April 2021:

In April we had our first training session on the 'Mantle of the Expert' (MofE) approach. We managed to have this all together in a large space which was fantastic for staff morale as they could discuss the points made and link them to possible areas of their curriculum for the next term.

There were a few staff who were not initially keen on the idea but through the discussion they began to see how different themes and topics could be adapted into a MofE drama assessment to allow the children to apply skills and knowledge in an imaginative, but structured manner. After months of online training it was very clear that the benefits of working together as a team and being able to model things in person aided staff confidence considerably.

Training sessions two and three consolidated the learning and lots of ideas started to appear. Year 2 were chosen to do a 'pilot' MofE and they did this on the question, 'Should we do an exhibition for Christopher Columbus even if we think he wasn't always a nice person?' This was a huge success and Mr Adams played his role as the Museum Curator very seriously. The work produced was detailed and knowledgeable but where they excelled was the confidence and range of vocabulary they displayed in their debates.

During this month KS2 also began their projects which were helping with social, emotional and academic needs on the return to school after lockdown.

May 2021:

This month saw Year 4 have a go at MofE using their topic around the kingdom of Benin as the inspiration. It was a huge success and drew in staff from across the school, from Mrs Whitehouse as Miss Hetherington from the Museum Service to all staff playing the role of visitors to the pop-up museum.

Reception went to Dinosaur Island and had to become scientists on a "top secret mission!" Their mission was to protect the island and the creatures on it from being discovered. They created models of the island, investigated the best way to travel there and described what the animals on the island looked like.

June 2021:

In June, following an online drama production called "Down to Earth", Year 1 went to space training camp and became astronauts completing their NASA training. They investigated space equipment, learnt about life in Space and how to walk on the moon.

Year 3 are planning to complete a MofE based around their current topic of Ancient Egypt before the end of the school year.

CHALLENGE

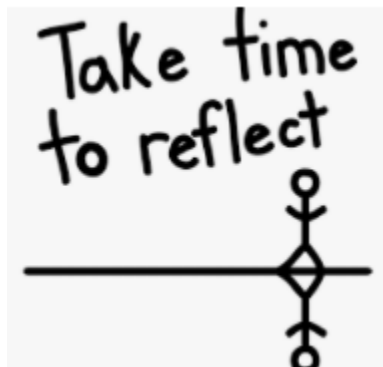
Challenges we faced along the way:

- Workload – We needed to be very careful this year that we were not adding to the stress that staff, children and their families were already under. We made sure that the MofE projects were part of the curriculum planning and that they were enjoyable, beneficial and positive experiences. We did this by offering support, advice and playing roles within the drama aspects of the events. This resulted in a great deal of positive feedback and the work was fantastic. The major positive was the speaking and listening though!
- Ideas and understanding of the MofE approach – This was tricky at first but teamwork and a little bit of trial and error has meant that staff are already discussing what they would do again, do differently or stay well away from.

Impact:



- Staff have already started planning ahead with similar type projects for next year's planning.
- We have started developing and identifying 'cultural capital' within our planning rather than adding it on.
- We think about it whenever we are thinking about anything school related.
- 'Mantle of the Expert' is the children's session of choice at the moment!
😊
- We have productions to deliver and watch in July – on a stage or in the hall we will still enjoy them. The children are fine with either.
- We have a school song that we are trying to learn and we cannot wait to share it with our whole community at every school event from now on.
- As a SLT we are trying to think even more about what it means to be a team and which of the nine influence strategies we use the most. We have got the staff thinking about that too.
- On a personal basis I have started to plan out difficult conversations in a much more organized and structured way.



Reflections on culture, leadership and learning:

The following are particular areas where I have considered my own practice carefully and shared this with colleagues so that they can too.

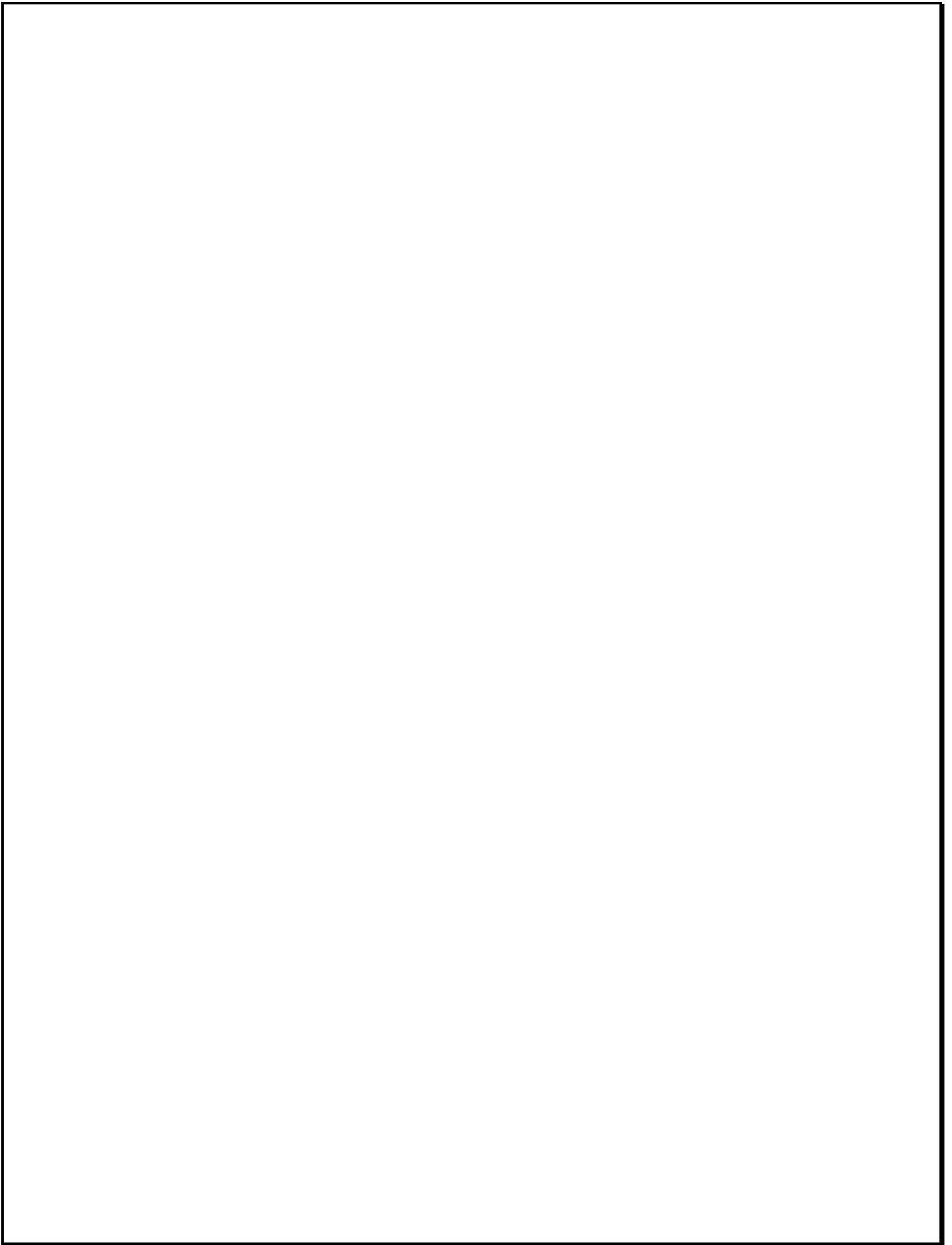
- Nine influence strategies
- Lewin's Change Management model
- Structuring difficult conversations

References to the Cultural Leadership program and related



research:

(References are linked to this course where full reference details are registered.)



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