barbican

Careers Rewired
Learning Resource & Case Studies

GUILDHALL SCHOOL

Aim of the project

Our *Careers Rewired* project brought together teachers, creative practitioners and employers to co-design a project-based learning programme that inspired Key Stage 4 students from three schools around career opportunities in the creative industries.

Partnering with leading employers from the creative industry, Mixcloud, Double M Films and Guildhall Live Events, we supported the development of new collaborative partnerships between schools and employers – the aim being to address significant skills shortages for creative industry jobs by providing clear careers information and skills guidance.

We worked with three schools: City of London Academy Highgate Hill, City of London Academy Islington and Sydney Russell School. Each school formed a partnership with one teacher, one artist facilitator, and one creative industry employer, and developed six practical workshops responding to the challenge of automation, what this means for the creative industries and why people should be employed over machines. The workshops explored creative, technical, educational and emotional skills – the 'fusion skills' needed for 21st century success.

During the project, students, artists, employers and teachers had the opportunity to visit the Barbican's *AI: More Than Human* exhibition, schools visited employers' workplaces, six co-devised and co-facilitated workshops took place in each school, and all partners attended a presentation day at the Barbican Centre.

About fusion skills

Careers Rewired sought to develop core fusion skills that employers are looking for, which the current curriculum isn't providing. Fusion skills can be defined as a mix of technical and creative skills that people will need to thrive in the ever-changing 21st century workplace. Listed below are the fusion skills rated most highly by employers according to the 2019 report *Transferable Skills in the Workplace*, commissioned by the City of London and written by Nesta:

Oral Communication / Presentation Skills	Collaboration / Teamwork	Initiative
Problem Solving	Organisational Skills	Adaptability / Flexibility
Independent Working / Autonomy	Written Communication	Critical Thinking
Resilience	Creativity	Analysis / Evaluation Skills

About the employers

Mixcloud: an online audio streaming platform that supports artists and creators to share their passions across every genre, taste and scene.

Double M Films: a production company based in London dedicated to making feel-good, high quality, independent film and drama for international audiences.

Guildhall Live Events: a department of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama specialising in creating immersive and interactive digital experiences.

Workplace visits formed an important part of *Careers Rewired*, allowing the students involved to see the workplace of their partner employer, learn about progression routes and directly engage with creative employers.

Introduction to case studies

Working to the same brief, each school, artist and employer partnership took a distinct approach to the project, making case studies rich and diverse.

Sydney Russell School translated the real-life practices and work scenarios of the creative industries into classroom activities. City of London Academy Highgate Hill put stories and knowledge of young people's career-related concerns into drama actions. City of London Academy Islington designed the whole programme around the project brief of whether humans should be employed over machines and narrated the results through theatre presentation.

Case studies from each school can be found on the following pages, written by the artist facilitators involved, detailing the fusion skills covered, the approach and the outcomes. The case studies are followed by a page with tips and reflections on this way of working, which we hope will be useful for anyone looking to emulate elements of the project.

Background

Fusion skills explored
Analysis & Evaluation
Problem Solving
Creativity
Critical Thinking
Teamwork
Communication

Our team
• Artist Facilitator – Torri Stewart (Creative Careers Specialist)
• Employer – Josh Thomas (Senior Creative Producer, Mixcloud)
• Teacher – Benedita Rangel (Design Technology Teacher, Sydney Russell School)
• Students – Thirteen Year 9 students from Sydney Russell School

Our approach
Our aim was to strongly connect our sessions to the workplace, and give students an exciting taste of careers they could pursue.

Each weekly session was built around just one of the six fusion skills we'd chosen. To help students understand things in a more tangible way, we paired each skill with a specific workplace task. With this as a base, each session was then designed with a clear, repeated structure.

We started with a short introduction, highlighting the overall point of the programme. We then focused on that week's specific skill – defining it, sharing tips, and putting it into practice with a workplace-based practical task. Finally, we related the skill (and task) to a real-world company role, illustrating why it's valuable to employers. With this delivery framework in place we needed to glue everything together and make it motivating and engaging for our students.

To motivate students we created a 'mission' that would live at the heart of the programme - "What would you do if you were in charge of Mixcloud's aim to connect with young people?" This 'mission' connected the sessions, and positioned the students as empowered contributors, instead of passive observers. The idea was that Mixcloud was asking for their opinions, and they would share them by exploring the competencies.

To make each session feel engaging we appealed to their love of digital experiences, presenting everything on screen in a fast-moving, stimulating way, and letting them participate via free online tools like Jamboard and Google Slides.

What we discovered
Our students loved the programme so much they asked for more when we finished – which we took as a great sign given we ran them after school hours! They remained highly engaged throughout and understood the point of the journey we'd been on. Importantly, they also understood how the skills we'd covered could be valuable for their career, whether or not they decided to work in a creative industry.

Teamwork & Creativity

Our sessions were linked together by the idea that the students were taking charge of a project at Mixcloud. This resulted in them creating a hypothetical event that would show Mixcloud what the world of today's teens is all about. Through two of the sessions we tasked them with deciding what subject matter the event would include, and how to publicise it with street advertising.

We tied the question of subject matter to the teamwork session, setting them up in smaller groups and getting them to decide what three teen passions should be the focus of the event. With a broad spectrum of interests, students had fun expressing their opinions and collaboratively agreeing on a shortlist.

In the creativity session we let our students loose on the design of a fly poster to publicise the event. Using Google's Jamboard, we let them create their own moodboards for the poster design. Free to express themselves as they wanted, they relished the chance to share their ideas with everyone on screen.

Communication

As this was our last session, we wanted to find an interesting way to finish the journey. After introducing the broader notion of 'communication skills', we discussed its value and looked at some tips. To put things into practice we encouraged the group to share their honest thoughts on the programme we'd delivered over the previous five weeks – no holds barred!

One of us sat at the front desk and asked the students one by one to come up to the front of the class and spend one minute telling us what they'd loved and what they'd liked less. This got them all excited as they knew they could be cheeky and put us on the spot.

Eager to give us their opinions, they didn't realise they were presenting their thoughts to the whole room. Also, the one minute time limit we'd put in place forced them to organise their thoughts and communicate efficiently. This ended up being a great way to get the quieter characters to enjoy being verbal.

Case Study 2

by Endy McKay

Fusion skills explored
Flexibility
Adaptability
Presentation Skills

Our team
• Artist Facilitator – Endy Mckay (Actress, Theatre Practitioner and Writer)
• Employer – Muireann Price (Producer, Double M Films)
• Teacher – Chris Jackson (Head of Drama, City of London Academy Highgate Hill)
• Students – Twenty-five Year 9 and 10 students from City of London Academy Highgate Hill

Our approach
City of London Academy Highgate Hill students did not attend the *AI: More Than Human* exhibition at the Barbican so the starting point was a meeting between the artist facilitator, teacher and industry employer. Much time was spent deciphering the skills that are needed within the creative industries, but yet often ignored within the classroom. It became apparent that it would also be important and worthwhile to ask the students themselves what they feel the gaps are in both their knowledge of the creative industries and their readiness for employment, and allow this to feed back into the structure and plan of the programme.

Each of the six sessions focused on a particular fusion skill or skills. Conversations were rooted in self-reflection e.g. "how did you respond to offering an idea?" and "when you felt uncomfortable, what behaviour did you default back to?" We also focussed on how the 'human skills' that we possess can be identified, honed and enjoyed.

What we discovered
Through collaborative exercises, the students learned the challenges of working together to achieve a creative aim. Students were encouraged to self-reflect and discover where they leaned towards when in a group dynamic. Through participation they could quickly identify if they led or followed, offered ideas, or held back and facilitated others' ideas.

It was discussed how none of these approaches were good or bad – they were skills that could be utilised as and when needed. Through shifting the focus away from 'stage and character' and placing it in a work setting they were able to start to see themselves with a degree of objectivity.

Adaptability / Flexibility

Students were split into small groups and given an envelope. Inside was a 'cheque' for £25,000 and a brief to pitch for a film. Each group had to agree on a concept and write a title, log line and synopsis.

After generating and writing their ideas they were given a curveball - they all had to swap their pitch with another group. The teams had to then pitch and present another's idea, as best they could, to the rest of the group.

This exercise allowed the students to experience the adaptability and flexibility needed when working within a small group on a creative idea. This was taken a step further with the swapping of pitches towards the end of the workshop, allowing students to experience having ownership of a creative idea and then having to pass that idea on to someone else to develop further and vice versa.

Presentation Skills

In the penultimate workshop, students were asked to summarise their learning and create a presentation performance about fusion skills. The students were split into smaller groups where they were given a small selection of skills and asked to imaginatively present their discoveries in an innovative way. The students were asked not to think about themselves but about their responsibility to communicate in a clear and engaging way.

This exercise work was then developed to become a presentation at the Barbican. The Artist Facilitator delivered a talk about the work they had covered and the students became a 'Living PowerPoint', demonstrating the skills to the audience.

This worked as very clear example of the difference of human versus digital presentation. The students used vocal range and projection, body language, eye contact, comedy, storytelling, unison, choral speaking and emotion – and their belief in their 'human' ability to communicate effectively was strengthened.

Case Study 3

by Youngsook Choi

Fusion skills explored
Critical Thinking
Collaboration
Creativity
Communication

Our team
• Artist Facilitators – Youngsook Choi and Pip Longson (Artists, RARA Collective)
• Employer – Claire Partington (Production Manager, Guildhall Live Events)
• Teacher – Aimee Kylie-Smith (Drama Teacher, City of London Academy Islington)
• Students – Eighteen Year 9 drama students from City of London Academy Islington

Our approach
This project was built around the exploration of the question put forward by the *Careers Rewired* brief: "why should we employ you over a machine?" Using this question to explore the potential of human-machine collaboration, participating students visited two immersive exhibitions as starter references: *AI: More Than Human* at the Barbican Centre and *Beasts of London* at the Museum of London. Back in the classroom, philosophical stimuli were used to ignite student debates on what makes us human, and what humanity's crucial roles and ethical responsibilities are to the machines we have created.

Critical debates stretched to engagement with theatre technologies and students were introduced to the concept of 'oddkin', a term coined by scientist and cultural activist Donna Haraway that proposes we move away from a human-centred approach and expand our kinship beyond blood ties and species. Using 'oddkin' as their inspiration, students were asked to build a caring relationship with technology or machines available in the drama classroom and to write future scenarios reflecting their relationships. Based on similar interests, four groups were formed and each group came up with a narrative that structured an 'oddkin trilogy' theatre piece.

What we discovered
Having been given an encouraging space for thinking and debating, students understood the power of questioning, expanding and diversifying existing ideas. They achieved the skill of critical thinking through increased confidence in speaking up, as well as empathy through listening to the views of others. Group work around technology and electric machines quickly engaged the creative energy of students as it gave them a sense of ownership over their choice of technological subject.

One workshop session was about asking students to take over the drama classroom, tinkering with the machines, props, and technologies as they wished. This process helped students to enthusiastically develop imaginative stories around their relationships with technologies. Combining all the stories, a theatre piece was devised which involved co-writing, voiceover recording and acting on stage. Group dynamics played a key part in this production stage. Students learnt how to deal with differing levels of cooperation and delivered their part as a team, overcoming any issues along the way.

Critical Thinking

The practical workshop programme with City of London Academy Islington opened with an intriguing way of introducing one another. Adopting the story behind the CAPTCHA system, everyone gave their name and a justifiable reason to verify them as a human or non-human. It naturally sparked a discussion on what makes us human, touching upon diverse angles such as human's biological features, emotional capacity and cultural heritage.
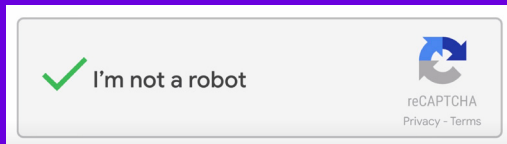
The second stimuli was the controversial question "can a parent be replaced by a robot?" Participants read a review of an episode of the TV series *Humans*, which depicts a young girl preferring a human synth over her own mother. Although the idea of parents being replaced by robots was generally rejected, this hot debate drew out exciting possibilities that highly advanced technologies can bring up in our future.
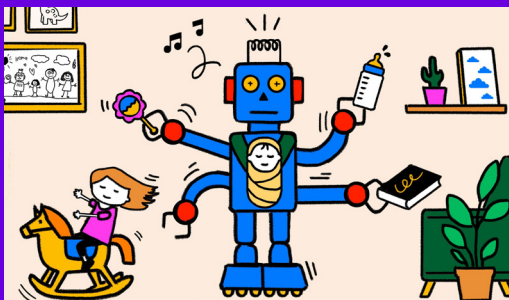

Illustration by Barbara Abbes, from *Quartz* article *'Will we lose our rights as parents once robots are better at raising our kids?'*

Through an intriguing and controversial series of discussions, students enhanced their critical thinking ability by assessing what they know and think is right, and negotiating different opinions to reach the best solutions.

Creative Collaboration

After critical debate around human-machine collaboration, students were tasked with developing a caring relationship with a machine or item of technology that could be found in their drama classroom. After exploring and playing with different options, students made a variety of choices including a cooling pan, table lamp, digital camcorder, ultraviolet light and stage lighting equipment. As caretaker, students even named their chosen item in order to adopt their machine as close kin.

The students' experience of developing a kinship with diverse technologies was extended to creating imaginative narratives in the context of transhuman theatre. Students briefly visited the concept of transhuman using two references: Theodore Sturgeon's sci-fi novel *More Than Human* and an episode of the TV series *Years and Years*, about a woman who undergoes an operation to become transhuman.

As a group, students co-produced remarkable stories where human-machine collaborations resolve human problems such as climate change and hatred and violence, with incorporated cautionary tales of danger when depending too much on technologies.

Through co-writing, co-producing, articulating four different stories into one final theatre piece and delivering it on stage together, students truly experienced the beauty of the collective creation process.

Project structure

1: Consultation with teachers, artists and employers.

2: Artists, employers and teachers visited the Barbican's *AI: More Than Human* exhibition, followed by two further planning meetings.

3: Teachers and artists designed six workshops for KS4 students focusing on fusion skills, with input from employers.

4: Students taking part in the workshops visited the Barbican *AI: More Than Human* exhibition.

5: The co-designed workshops were delivered in school, led by the artists and/or employers.

6: Students, teachers and artists visited the workplace of the employer they were partnered with to help bring the project to life.

7: Schools involved in the project took part in a presentation event at the Barbican which included a public speaking workshop, live pitching, and a Q&A.

8: Evaluation session with teachers, artists and employers following the culmination of the project.

Tips for running a similar project

- Allow enough time to confirm project dates before delivery, and allow a long delivery period.
- Schedule sessions that work for your particular school – within timetable or after school.
- Keep workshops practical and participatory to best engage students in the topic.
- Give the time and space to meet and build relationships with partners.
- Arts organisations are uniquely placed to facilitate/broker relationships across sectors – their understanding of teachers and employers can provide structures to support collaboration e.g. safeguarding, facilitation.

Further reading

Transferable Skills in the Workplace: Key findings from a survey of UK employers, City of London Corporation and Nesta (2019)

Skills for Londoners: A Skills and Adult Education Strategy for London, Mayor of London (2017)

Experimental Culture: A horizon scan for the arts and culture sector, Nesta (2018)

Work, Reimagined: 8 Must-Have Skills in the Age of AI, Accenture (2018)

Fusion Skills: Perspectives and Good Practice, Creative Skills Set (2013)

Social Mobility and the Skills Gap, Creative Industries Federation (2016)

STEAM Briefing, Cultural Learning Alliance and Nesta (2017)

The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030, Nesta (2017)

Defining Digital Skills, Nesta (2018)

Testimonials

"I became way more confident. I was always scared to talk to classmates, but this taught me team work"
Student, City of London Academy Islington

"I felt that the whole experience, from the exhibition – workshops – final presentation; was able to widen my students' horizons, challenge stereotypes and raise aspirations."
Benedita, Design Technology Teacher, Sydney Russell School

'It is a project that asks how we can make education even more responsive, creative and relevant to the creative industries – with young people at its heart."
Endy Mckay, Artist

"I've learned multiple skills but the one I learned the most was from communication where I gained a lot of confidence to speak out loud. What I enjoyed the most about this project that I felt included and interested."
Student, Sydney Russell School

"This project proved how far one critical question can take our imagination of the future, especially when it's explored in a collaborative endeavour."
Youngsook Choi, Artist

"I loved bringing the students into the Mixcloud office. They got a valued insight into the real work environment and asked really insightful questions."
Josh Thomas, Senior Creative Producer, Mixcloud

Have fun!

Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning
In 2009, the Barbican and Guildhall School joined forces to launch Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning, a creative alliance pioneering new models for creative and cultural learning across the art forms. Our mission, **Creative Skills for Life**, underpins all aspects of our work and approach in the design and delivery of meaningful and impactful learning experiences across three strategic pillars:

Education: supporting creativity in the classroom through arts-based learning programmes and tailored partnerships with schools and colleges, locally and nationally

Employability: delivering talent development and work-based learning programmes with and for young people looking to access higher education and break into the creative industries

Enrichment: producing participatory programmes for families and collaborating with charity and community organisations to create meaningful arts experiences that support the wellbeing of people of all ages and backgrounds

We deliver more than 40 programmes and events alongside 150 partners to over 22,000 participants every year. In order to achieve this, we build partnerships with teachers, artists, young people, schools and community organisations locally, nationally and internationally. At the heart of our work and practice is a commitment to people, partnership and place.

The Edge Foundation
Edge is an independent education foundation which through its projects, research, policy and campaign work, strives to make education relevant.

The world is changing fast – education needs to keep up. Edge believes that all young people need to be equipped with the skills that today's global, digital economy demands, through high quality training, a broad and balanced curriculum, interactive and engaging real world leaning and rich relationships between education and employers.

Edge gather evidence through research, trials and projects on the ground and use this to lead the debate around future policy and practice. For more information visit www.edge.co.uk.

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The Edge Foundation
Shaping the future of education

CITY OF LONDON

The City of London provides the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre