

Context

School location	George Stephenson High School, Killingworth, North Tyneside, North of England, UK
Details about students	Age range: 11-18 (Year 7-13) Approximate number on roll: 1200 (Dec 2019) Almost all pupils are White British with very few speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through Pupil Premium (UK assessment to identify the lowest income families) is average and the proportion of Special Educational Needs and Disability is below average.
School premises	1970s build with more recent extension; split into several ‘blocks’ some of which are freestanding buildings and others are attached by an interconnecting corridor (see photographs below). The school is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school for the UK.
School context	Town, sub-urban; larger than average sized secondary school.
Type of activity	Outdoor learning space design with emphasis on wellbeing
Stage in design process:	Planning



Tool used: Stories of Educational Spaces

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/cored/tools/ses/>

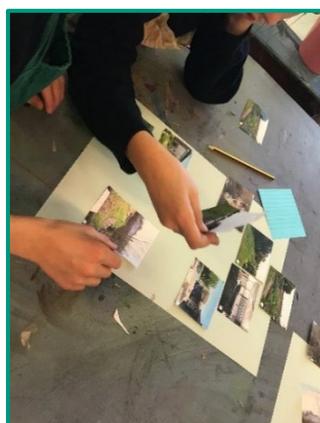
Rationale for activity and tool adopted

The Design Technology Curriculum Lead and the Design Technology Technician had, for many years, wanted to develop an overgrown space in front of the D/T building that could support aspects of the taught curriculum (including Photography, Textiles and Art), but could also be used as a space to support the wellbeing of both students and staff. In September 2021 when a new cohort of Year 7 students (aged 11) transitioned to the High School from their primary schools, the staff noticed a group of students that were struggling to cope with the new larger environment (physical and social). It was decided that a 'nurture' group would be created with students invited to take part in two creative after-school clubs: a gardening club and a pottery club. These clubs would be run by the Design Technician and would provide opportunities for the students to make friends and develop their social skills. The intention was to focus the activity of the two clubs on developing the outdoor space. 10 students were invited to take part in the first instance, on the understanding that additional students might want to join the clubs once they saw them in action.



Stage 1: Diamond Ranking

The first stage involved using the diamond ranking tool. Images of outdoor spaces were selected from the CoReD Diamond Ranking page image library and the students were asked to arrange these according to the question? 'What makes a good outdoor space?' (To read the full case study that describes the Diamond Ranking tool in use at George Stephenson High School go to <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/cored/case-studies/diamond-ranking/item/year-seven-transition/>)



Analysis of the DR activity identified that the students

The Diamond Ranking activity allowed the students to begin with a more general discussion about the type of outdoor spaces that they like, thereby providing them with ideas for stage 2 of the project. It was also a social activity where completion required them to talk to each other and voice opinions. The activity therefore supported the key aims of the clubs i.e. supporting wellbeing and the development of social skills; as well as starting the conversation about the improvement of the physical outdoor space.

Stage 2: Stories of educational Spaces (SES)

The second stage of the project involved focussing in more detail on the actual space that they would be planning and developing. This was referred to as an 'outdoor classroom'. For this stage they used the 'Stories of Educational Spaces' tool (SES). The aim was to encourage the students to think about how the space had been used in the past, how it was being used currently and how they would like to see it developed in future.

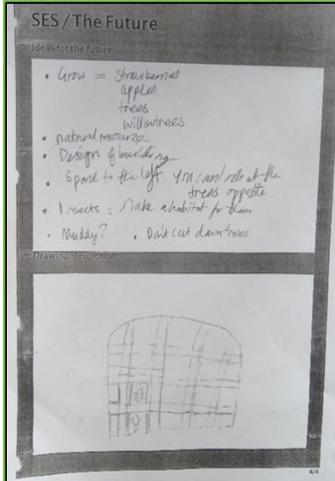
The students began by going outside to explore the space near the Design/Technology building. This included taking photographs of the space as it currently exists. At the same time they used the SES tool in its paper form to focus on the history. The latter proved to be challenging as the students did not know any of the history themselves. (See case study X



for an example of how this can be overcome). Instead the Design Technician told them some facts that she knew e.g. that a stone plinth had once supported a sculpture. This led to a discussion of the potential for the students to create their own sculpture as part of any new developments, something that would be possible in both the pottery and gardening club.

Back in the classroom the students were asked to think about the future development of the space and what they would like to see it used for as well as any design ideas. The students worked in small groups and then told the story of their space to the Design Technician, who recorded these on film

Story 1:



SES / The Future

Ideas for the future

- Grow = Strawberries, apples, peas, willow trees
- natural resources
- Design of building
- Space to the left of the trees opposite
- 1 meerkat: Make a habitat for them
- Muddy? • Daisies cut down trees

Drawn by [unclear]



'A greenhouse that's made out of glass, there would be insects and strawberries and more food. These bits are like the chairs and a deck. On top of the deck is a shelter for whenever there's bad weather and they can put it over and they can sit there.'

Story 2:



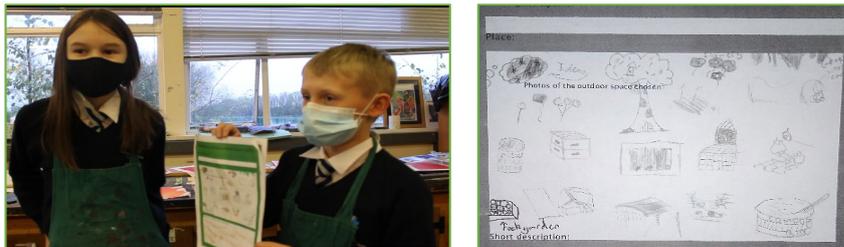
S1 'We have a gazebo in the top right area. We have a pond towards the concrete and then steps up to the gazebo and up to the picnic table, we're going to have hammocks in the gazebo...'

S2 '...and a picnic blanket underneath.. we would have art supplies on the picnic table'

S1 ' We would have a veg patch and a flower patch and in the pond we would have painted stones because we're doing painted stones next week for anti-bullying and I was thinking we could put them in there.

S1 'And the way we're going to get this, we're going to write a persuasive letter to [Head Teacher] and do a powerpoint and try and get what we can get with our budget.'

Story 3:



S3 ' This tree has apples'

S4 'and a bird house'

S3 'colourful flowers,'

S4 ' lots and lots of colourful flowers. This is a heater that people could go around whenever they feel cold in Winter or Autumn,'

S3 'and we have a compost bin'

S4 'and one that says, reduce, reuse and recycle,'

S3 'and we've put some seating in there

S4 'and that can be a learning space, for in summer for when it's like 100 degrees inside',(laughs)

S3 'and we also have a little bug hotel and a bee hive.'

S4 'This is a little herb garden for growing herbs and vegetables and here is roasting marshmallows and at the end of a term the students with the most positive points would get to roast marshmallows.'

S4 'And here's a little rock garden....'

S3 '...for our painted rocks and stuff. If we had to cut down a tree we would plant a new one.'

S4 'Yes definitely'.

These stories demonstrate not only the range of creative ideas that students have, but also their understanding of the need for the space to reflect their values and the values of the school. Thus they want to incorporate the stones being made for 'anti-bullying' week and create a place for students to be rewarded where they can roast marshmallows. The stories also show their genuine concern for the planet and the way they can contribute to this through having compost bins and using recycled materials.

Stage 3: Putting the planning into action

The clubs ran after school on two nights of the week during the autumn term 2021, then merged into one club focussed on developing the outside space in January 2022. The ideas that the students had come up with as part of SES activity were, according to the Design Technician, 'quite idealistic' and needed to be 'brought back down to earth' in terms of what would be achievable, but after completing it, they were all very enthusiastic. As Story 2 demonstrates this included writing to the Head Teacher to make the case for a 'budget'.

As a result of completing the SES tool, the students identified two strands of work going forward: a fund raising strand to enable them to purchase resources and a practical 'making and planting' strand.

Fund Raising

Early in December the students made Christmas wreaths from foraged and recycled materials, taking orders from school staff and through some of the Design Technician's networks. Over 50 were ordered at a price of £15. The donations were collected via a Crowdfunder page, with half of the sum raised going to the gardening club and half to a local foodbank charity.



[E mail to the Head Teacher and class teacher]

I'd like to thank all the pupils in the After School Club who raised a brilliant £110 from sales of Christmas Wreaths and a thank you to all staff and pupils who regularly donate food to The Bay Foodbank.

From April 2020 to March 2021 we helped to feed 7248 adults, 3269 children and 177 babies, so hopefully this demonstrates just how vital every donation is and how much we sincerely appreciate what we are given.

We could not exist without the generous donations from supporters such as yourself, so thank you for your co-operation in helping us feed people in our area who simply need assistance at difficult times. The money will be used to re-stock our shelves after an extremely busy Christmas period.

Kind Regards, Bay Food Bank



Making and planting

The students also began making plant pots from recycled materials in which to start growing their seeds (flowers and vegetables). The next step will be to make pots out of ceramic and fire them in the kiln. These will be used to pot on the established plants so they can be put outside and sold on a stall in the school playground. The latter is intended to support the social interaction of the students.



Next steps

Once the planting is established outside in the various made and recycled pots/containers, it is hoped that the Senior Leadership Team will allow the positioning of some outdoor furniture that all students can use either during break/lunch times or as an outdoor classroom. This has the potential to both build the space as a wellbeing garden, but also to enable those students who struggle to settle in the classroom, to spend some time outdoors to complete their work. The plants will be also be used as inspiration as part of another club (Art Club) and in the Photography, Textiles and Art lessons. There are many students taking these subjects who do not have access at home to the materials, subject matter and tools to enable them to produce their coursework, and the staff need to provide opportunities for this in school. Thus the plants can be photographed and provide the inspiration for printing, drawing and sculpting etc.

Outcomes so far

1. The Diamond Ranking (DR) and Stories of Educational Spaces (SES) tools worked successfully together to enable the students to start thinking about the type of outdoor spaces they like more generally, and then to focus on their current space and ideas for the future. The tasks required collaboration and talking, both of which were important for this particular group of students who were struggling with the transition to the High School. The history element of the SES tool was less successful for two reasons identified by the design technician. Firstly the club only runs for an hour after school and with limited time, she wanted the students to focus on the current space and ideas for the future. Secondly, the students did not know anything about the history of the outdoor spaces and the technician's knowledge was also limited. To be able to engage successfully with the history would require some initial research and/or

a person present with that knowledge. See case study xx for who these issues have been addressed in other schools.

2. The initial group of students responded enthusiastically and continue to participate in the club. Additional students are now also attending. There has been a significant impact on the confidence of all of the students which appears to be the result of the type of activities being undertaken, the relaxed environment and the relationships that are fostered between the students and the staff that run the club. Two students have particularly benefited:

One student who attends the club is a school refuser who will not attend lessons, despite the school trying to support her in a variety of ways. After being encouraged to attend Gardening Club, she has continued with this, with the staff noticing real improvements in her engagement with other people.

Another student is disaffected and has behaviour issues. He doesn't like school and has a poor attitude to his work. He came to the attention of the Design Technician when he mistakenly pulled out some of the plants that the gardening club had put outside. The Design Technician told him about the gardening club, which he now attends every week. When he is struggling in his lessons he will often come down to the Design Department and this is primarily down to the relationships that he has developed with the technician. Interestingly she experiences no behaviour issues with him.

3. The technician hopes that having flowers and vegetables outside and an attractive space, will encourage a change in attitude of the students across the school towards the upkeep and treatment of the outdoor spaces more generally. The example of the second student above would suggest that there is real potential for this to happen.

Next steps

For this project to have the impact envisaged at the outset when the staff first came across the CoReD tools and trialled them with the nurture group, it will be necessary for the Senior Leadership Team to give permission for the outdoor space by the D/T Department to be properly developed. Furniture (tables and chairs) already exists that could be placed outside which could be used at break/lunch times and also during lessons. The students have expressed a desire to pitch their ideas to the Head Teacher and this has the potential for them to experience real agency with respect to having ideas that they can then actually act upon.

Project website: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/cored/>



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