



## Case Study 6

# Create, Speak, Thrive: Bringing Words to Life – the evaluation

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### What did you aim to do with this project?

The University of Hertfordshire is evaluating the Create, Speak, Thrive project - a project that uses drama and storytelling to support language acquisition in primary school-aged children. The project pairs artists and teachers in the co-creation of creative pedagogies to trial and test in classrooms. The teachers and artists are supported to develop new skills through bespoke professional development, embedded reflection, and inquiry.

### What led you to this project?

The *Create, Speak, Thrive* project emerged through the work of the Royal Opera House Bridge who recognised a need in local primary schools for language acquisition support. They funded a pilot project to bring together artists and teachers in developing their skills, knowledge, and experience to embed drama and storytelling opportunities within the primary curriculum. A subsequent successful bid, submitted by Trestle Theatre Company, for Paul Hamlyn Foundation funding from the 5th round of The Teacher Development Fund, enabled the extension of this work to seven schools in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. The University of Hertfordshire led the evaluation of the pilot, and are evaluating the Create, Speak, Thrive project, this work is in progress.

### How were creative approaches used?

The evaluation of the Create, Speak, Thrive project draws on a creative activity, trialled in the pilot, to foster reflection within focus groups at the beginning, middle, and end of the project. Participants are asked to draw storyboard scenes to reflect their feelings at the different points, and to caption and speak to their image. To disseminate the Create, Speak, Thrive project, a film has been developed to showcase some co-constructed drama and storytelling approaches in practice, and enable teachers, artists, and children to share their experiences of them.

### Why did you take this approach?

Within the evaluation, the storyboard activity aligns well with the ethos of the Create, Speak, Thrive project as it allows for the combining of storytelling and narratives with pictures and words. We wanted this more visual approach to stimulate deeper reflection and offer a playful ending to the focus groups. The use of film as a dissemination output allows the embodied and creative nature of the drama and storytelling activities to be shared authentically, and enables viewers to envisage how the approaches can be used in classroom settings.

### What impact(s) or outcomes has using a creative approach had on the project?

The snapshot storyboard frames capture key elements of individual experience. While the question is relatively open, similar motifs often feature in the responses. The focus group participants make creative use of metaphor, which they share and discuss. The storyboard activity is a quick and easy prompt for reflection that has been integrated into other reflective activities in the Create, Speak, Thrive wider project. The dissemination films will stimulate interest in the project, providing an accessible overview that can be easily shared.

### Any brief reflections?

While some participants apologised for their artistic ability, the richness of the storyboard data goes beyond what we expected when we designed our initial pilot (see above). We have used the storyboard as one of a number of focus group activities; but such creative and visual data collection methods can easily stand alone.

### Additional or further reading

Year One Dissemination Video:  
<https://www.trestle.org.uk/create-speak-thrive-bringing-words-to-life>

Lillyman, S. & Bennett, C. (2012) 'Using storyboarding to gain appreciative reflection in the classroom.' *Reflective Practice*. 13(4) pp. 533-539.