

Illuminating Futures FAQ's

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1. What is Illuminating Futures?

'Illuminating Futures' is a two-year school improvement programme made possible through a co-investment between Curious Minds, the Blackpool Opportunity Area Partnership, Blackpool schools and other key agencies. The programme has been designed to extend, enhance and enable the Opportunity Area Essential Life Skills Programme (ELSP) to reclaim extra-curricular learning as a space where creativity, innovation and collaboration flourish. Ultimately the aim is to ensure creative and cultural learning has a firm place in local plans to improve educational, social and emotional outcomes for children, young people and families now and in the future.

The programme is being hosted by Blackpool Teaching School Alliance in partnership with Curious Minds. The Blackpool LCEP (Local Cultural Education Partnership) will act as the programme Steering Group.

2. How does Illuminating Futures connect with the Essential Life Skills Programme (ELSP)?

Through the ELSP every school in Blackpool has been offered extra funding by the Department for Education to provide opportunities for 5–18 year olds to engage in regular extra-curricular activities that develop their non-cognitive abilities, sometimes called ‘soft skills’.

Arts and culture have always been a key feature of extra-curricular activity, and there is lots of evidence to show that taking part in creative and cultural learning helps children and young people to develop essential life skills such as:

- Resilience
- Hard work, self-control, discipline, good time-keeping
- Self-confidence, leadership and team working
- Honesty, integrity and engaged citizenship
- Attitude, respect and empathy
- Curiosity, creativity and problem solving

Where arts and culture really excels is in developing CREATIVITY . . . the ability to use our imaginations and ingenuity to create something new or make things better. A survey conducted by IBM of 1,500 CEOs from 60 countries and 33 industries identifies creativity as the “most crucial factor for future success.” (IBM Survey 2010). It’s not surprising then that PISA have made creativity the focus for the 2021 Global Assessment.

Curious Minds would like to see as many schools as possible embedding high-quality creative and cultural learning experiences into their ELSP activity and wider extra-curricular offers.

Eight Blackpool schools have agreed to join Curious Minds’ SLiCE Fellowship. They will use some of their ELSP funding to match-fund arts and cultural activity to work in partnership with leading cultural partners and creative practitioners from across the region. These activities will be delivered as ‘action research’ projects and will be externally evaluated by teams of specially trained ‘young researchers’ working with professional evaluators.

Alongside these eight Action Research projects, Curious Minds and the Blackpool Teaching School Alliance will deliver a programme of creative CPDL for teachers, support staff and creative practitioners who are involved in the planning or delivery of cultural education or extra-curricular learning in Blackpool.

We will also co-ordinate a series of opportunities for children and young people from across the town’s schools to showcase their achievements, e.g., through performance and exhibition opportunities in professional venues.

This offer will be communicated to all Blackpool schools at the start of the Autumn term 2018.

3. What is The Cultural Education Challenge?

In its role as the Arts Council England appointed Bridge organisation, Curious Minds is leading the Cultural Education Challenge across the North West of England.

The Cultural Education Challenge is a call for the arts, culture and education sectors to work together in a local area to deliver a consistent and high-quality creative and cultural education for all children and young people.

The ambition is to be able to map a cultural journey, from birth to adulthood, for children living and learning in a particular place. For some this will lead into careers in the creative and cultural industries, providing the next generation of creatives and cultural entrepreneurs. For most it will forge a life-long love of art and culture, delivering the next generation of audiences, participants and active citizens.

A key aim of The Cultural Education Challenge is to drive up demand from those not currently engaging with culture. This is important because too many children and young people in Blackpool are still missing out on joyful and life-enhancing creative and cultural learning experiences that will help them to connect and make sense of the world and their place in it.

As well as providing opportunities for children and young people to discover, create, learn and have fun together, taking part in arts and culture is strongly associated with good health and wellbeing. There's considerable evidence of the positive impact that being culturally active has on reducing social exclusion and isolation, engagement in learning, attainment, employability, and creating opportunities to bring communities and families together.

4. How does The Cultural Education Challenge connect to Opportunity Area plans?

There is lots of synergy between The Cultural Education Challenge and the Opportunity Areas Programme. Both present a call to action to local government, education leaders and teachers, voluntary organisations and employers, to work in partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people. The shared aim is to ensure children and young people facing hardship and disadvantage can reach their full potential by having access to the same opportunities and support as their more affluent peers.

Creating equal access to a high quality cultural education is a crucial factor in driving social mobility. We know that children from low-income families are much less likely to live culture rich lives than their more affluent peers. At the same time, research from around the world tells us that children and young people who take part in arts and cultural activities at school are: three times more likely to get a degree, 20% more likely to vote as young adults, and twice as likely to volunteer (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017).

It's no accident that exclusive fee paying schools across the country place great emphasis on the quality and breadth of the cultural and creative experiences available to their students. Their leaders and parents understand how important these experiences are to ensuring young people are equipped with the essential life skills, experiences and social networks necessary for career success and a generally fulfilled life. The Cultural Education Challenge is an attempt to redress the balance by ensuring that all young people enter adulthood having experienced a rich cultural education.

5. What is an LCEP? Does Blackpool have one?

Curious Minds is working in partnership with the Blackpool Teaching School Alliance, Blackpool Council and The Grand Theater to establish a **Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP)** for Blackpool. Building on the excellent work of the Blackpool Culture Hub, this multi-sector partnership will bring together leaders from key organisations and initiatives across Blackpool to create a local plan for meeting 'The Cultural Education Challenge' and addressing local priorities.

The Blackpool LCEP will include representation from key strategic partnerships, including:

- Blackpool Teaching School Alliance
- Blackpool Grand Theatre
- Blackpool Council Arts Service
- Left Coast
- Blackpool Opportunity Area Partnership Board
- Curious Minds (North West Bridge Organisation)
- Better Start
- HeadStart
- Private & Community Providers
- Young People

The Blackpool LCEP, led by the Blackpool Teaching School Alliance, will act as the Steering Group for the Illuminating Futures programme.

6. Why does the programme focus on extra-curricular activity?

Through the ELSP, Blackpool schools have been given extra resource to develop their extra-curricular offers. Extra-curricular learning (or out of school hours learning) is an essential component of a broad and balanced curriculum. At its best, it becomes the experimental arm of the school day. A precious space where teachers can test out new theories of learning, new technologies and unusual partnerships. It provides a unique opportunity for teachers and support staff to be creative and develop more informal relationships with students, and for students to

develop their creativity, leadership skills, essential life-skills and have choice and voice in their learning.

Key to the success of any extra-curricular offer is that it isn't like school, that the learning is compelling, and that participation is voluntary. However, in recent times, new accountability measures and budgetary pressures have caused the extra-curricular space to become dominated by booster classes, one-to-one tuition and learning interventions. Teacher workload is such that many schools choose to bring in external agencies and organisations to deliver 'clubs' to avoid teachers having to get involved in the planning or delivery.

By co-investing in the Essential Life Skills Programme, Curious Minds and the Blackpool Teaching School Alliance can work with schools across Blackpool to carve out new ways for them to work collaboratively with artists and cultural organisations in the design and delivery of compelling out of school hours learning activities. We believe that making this happen is crucial to meeting the ambition of The Cultural Education Challenge, to ensure every child in Blackpool has the opportunity to explore their talents and achieve their creative potential.

7. What is SLiCE

The SLiCE (Specialist Leader in Cultural Education) is a year long CPDL programme for middle of senior leaders working in or on behalf of a Teaching School. The programme was established by Curious Minds in 2012 and since then over 40 North West teachers have trained as SLiCE Fellows.



The SLiCE training programme is focused on developing a teacher's capacity to strategically support cultural education in their own school and across the alliance or other school improvement network. During the training the SLiCE develops a close working relationship with at least one significant cultural organisation, designs and delivers training for other teachers, and undertakes a piece of teaching & learning related action research.

As part of the Illuminating Futures programme, Curious Minds is working in partnership with the Blackpool Teaching School Alliance to deliver a bespoke version of the SLiCE programme for Blackpool schools. The action research undertaken by the Blackpool SLiCE teachers will focus on how partnerships with arts and cultural organisations can enhance the delivery of extra-curricular learning programmes and/or multicultural understanding.

8. What is Creative Experiences and the Resilience Revolution?

Headstart delivered a pilot called Creative Experiences to three secondary schools in 2018. The Big Lottery Fund are investing over £10million to support building resilience in young people and Blackpool as a community. The new funding will enable the Headstart team to develop a whole town approach to resilience which they are calling the Resilience Revolution. The programme is inspired by The Resilience Framework originally developed by Professor Angie Hart and Derek Blincow with Helen Thomas in 2007.



9. How can we get involved?

To express an interest in getting involved in either the Illuminating Futures Programme or the Blackpool LCEP, please contact:

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