



A Place for Everything and Everything in its Place

“We have worked together to solve problems while we were building our house. My partner and I both had good ideas to try out.”

- Imogen

At Abbotsleigh, on the North Shore of Sydney, Year 1 students engaged in a deep learning project where students worked together to create a miniature town in their classroom, exploring and identifying the ways in which people interact and care for places and spaces. Importantly, the students had to ensure that the town met the needs and wants of the small people living within it. The project aimed at developing students’ geographical skills, tools and understanding through the lens of creativity.

The project was launched with **Henry’s Map** by David Elliot. Teachers opened discussions with their students around the concept of place and positional language. Time was spent exploring concepts in the real-life context of the school, focusing on mapping, aerial views and identifying 3D objects. The project was enriched in the initial stages through literature and integrated digital technologies. The students were then introduced to their Lego Minifigure and the concept of designing and building a home for them. The home the students created required them to demonstrate an understanding of scale.

Opportunities for learning partnerships were developed within the local community when students were visited by a local builder. COVID-19 forced teachers to think creatively too! When social distancing meant a visit to Wahroonga was impossible, they leveraged digital technology to deliver a virtual tour of the village.

One of the most exciting things has been the growth mindset shown by students during this project. They were able to stop and reflect on the progress of their creative thinking at milestone points in the project. Gallery walks and peer review meant that students were able to share with each other incidental problem-solving situations and ask for feedback and support from each other. Digital technologies allowed the girls to record their thinking in a much deeper way than their written capabilities allowed.

A key impact on teaching practice has been for teachers to embrace the role of facilitator for learning rather than that of the director. As the project deepened, teachers found that they were working as coaches with their students, posing problems in order to generate ideas.

As the town project developed, students regularly posed new questions related to what facilities their mini people might require. They were encouraged to consider the value of green spaces and the importance of light and sound on town life. The use of a time-lapse video enabled us to record the development of the town, and also provided a lasting visual representation of the developing creative thinking skills of our students.

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