



*Proceedings of
Abstracts*

**2010 Student
Research and Creative
Activities (SRCA)
Award**

The following is a collection of abstracts that West Chester University Students submitted to be considered for the 2010 SRCA Awards.

**WCU Research Day
4/13/2010**

West Chester University Research Day



April 13, 2010

Dear Student:

On behalf of Dr. Greg Weisenstein, President; Dr. Linda Lamwers, Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Dr. Matthew Bricketto, Vice President of Student Affairs, we would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to each of you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to submit a complete application for the 2010 Student Research & Creative Awards at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Please note that your continuing investments in scholarly work will continue to enhance the quality of your educational experiences here and beyond.

As you review the 20 abstracts contained in this publication, it is very clear that each of you is making us very proud. Please note that whether your individual and/or group application was one of the eleven selected for presentation on Research Day 2010 and receipt of cash award of five hundred dollars or not, you are one of the shining stars at WCU. We want you to know that research findings tell us that undergraduates who participate in serious scholarly and related activities, within and/or outside their university campuses, reported significant gains in independence, possess higher intrinsic motivation to learn, are very active participants and successful in subsequent courses taken after their initial engagement in research experiences, and develop strong desire and tremendous determination to pursue advanced degree programs (Kardash, 2000; Lopatto, 2004, & Russell, et al., 2007).

We wish you and your faculty mentors the very best in your scholarly growth.

Always the best that you can imagine and positively actualize.

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Reference:

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Research Day 2010

West Chester University of Pennsylvania

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2000-2010 Committee Members

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Special Appreciation to the following:

- a) Student Research & Creative Activities (SRCA) Committee members for their selfless dedication to serving WCU students.
- b) WCU faculty members who assisted in reviewing the applications submitted by student investigators.
- c) Staff of the Office of Sponsored Research for their tremendous efforts in collecting and collating the relevant information pertaining to the 2010 SRCA Awards.
- d) Provost Linda Lamwers for her continuing contributions of \$5,000 from her Office towards the SRCA Awards.

Title: An Overview of the “Plain Language” Campaign in Mexico City**Student Presenter(s): Gabriela Andrews****Department:** Languages and Cultures**Faculty Mentor: Maria Jose Cabrera**

This statement is for the purposes of applying for the Student Research & Creative Activities (SRCA) Awards, and it is requested for a study that I conducted from January 2010, until March 2010, in Mexico City. This research consists of written surveys designed for citizens and civil servants, in order to get quantitative data regarding the knowledge and effectiveness of “*Lenguaje ciudadano*”, a Plain Language campaign initiated in 2004 in Mexico. This study analyzed the communication between citizens and civil servants, as well as the written Spanish language used by the Federal Agencies in Mexico City. In addition, it provided a better perspective of the “*Lenguaje ciudadano*” campaign of 2004 in Mexico City, and measured the manner in which the government has been able to follow up in its initiative. The quantitative data gathered from the citizens was compared with the data derived from the civil servants, and provided important information that was used to determine the campaign’s overall effectiveness.

Title: Exploratory Geochemical Analysis of Soapstone from the Lower Susquehanna**Student Presenter(s): Susan Bachor****Department:** Anthropology**Faculty Mentor: Heather Wholey**

Soapstone, a metamorphic rock which is distinguished by its greenish-grey color and soapy feel, is found throughout the eastern Piedmont region of the United States. The stone was quarried and fashioned into vessels during the Transitional Archaic Period (ca. 4000-3000ya) throughout much of the Eastern Woodlands. Very little work has been done to classify each outcrop location as far as soapstone quality and chemical make-up. Despite its relative ubiquity, little is known about vessel function, raw material procurement technologies, or vessel distribution relative to outcrop locations. The handheld Innova XRF avenger (XRF) is an X-ray fluorescence tool used to examine the chemical composition of raw steatite collected from eight known outcrops within Lower Susquehanna Watershed and vessels from two collections. The X-ray fluorescence technology examines the chemical composition of a specimen without destruction. The chemical markers currently being investigated are potassium, calcium, chromium, manganese, iron, titanium, and nickel. Assortments of these elements are found in all the soapstone currently under investigation, yet apparently in different proportions. Data from the XRF were entered into scatter charts and analyzed for chemical patterns. These were compared to discover any trends that would indicate differences between locations. This study aims to discover signatures, based on chemical markers, which can be tied to general location within the lower Susquehanna Valley of Pennsylvania and Maryland. Ultimately this may enable investigators to trace steatite artifacts back to their quarries.

Title: Expression of Y-family Polymerase Expression in Zebrafish**Student Presenter(s): Elizabeth Barchi****Department:** Biology**Faculty Mentor: Erin Gestl**

Zebrafish (*Danio rerio*) is an excellent model for the study of basic biological processes such as DNA replication. They contain counterparts to all fifteen human polymerases. The expression of specialized polymerases eta and iota, which have been previously unexplored in zebrafish, was compared to the expression of replicative polymerase delta and repair polymerase beta as controls. RNA isolated from zebrafish of varying stages of development from 2 hours old to 3 years old was used and several sets of primers were designed to bind to specific areas on the gene. A combination of Reverse-Transcriptase PCR and Quantitative RTPCR was performed to visualize the time of polymerase gene expression in zebrafish development. Two interesting conclusions were drawn from the results. First, zebrafish have very high levels of polymerase eta. Secondly, polymerases iota and beta had increased levels of expression at later stages of zebrafish development. This data will help expand the use of zebrafish as an animal model for the study of DNA replication and repair as well as various human diseases, including cancer.

Title: Effect of a Creative Dance on Emotions in Economically Disadvantaged Preschoolers**Student Presenter(s): Laura Boyer****Department:** Psychology**Faculty Mentor: Ellie Brown**

Many children of poverty experience difficulties with school readiness and interpersonal relationships, yet some exhibit positivity, resilience, and self-regulation that lead to success in school and life. This study evaluated the effect of a creative dance intervention on the emotions of low-income preschoolers. Participants were 12 children enrolled in an arts-integrated, urban Head Start preschool. Mean age was 5 years, 2 months. Of participating children, 50% were female, 75% were African American, 8% Hispanic, 8% Asian, and 8% Caucasian. Child emotions were coded by independent observers using an adapted version of the AFFEX system. The research was a multiple time point, single variable, multiple measures between groups design. The difference of pre-session and post-session emotions indicated that the creative dance group positively increased happiness on three separate weeks. These results suggest that creative dance may help low-income preschoolers attain a positive emotional state, allowing them to make positive connections with their educational experiences.

Title: Historical Trends in Pond Abundance and Sediment Accumulation Rates

Student Presenter(s): Andrew Brainard

Department: Biology

Faculty Mentor: Winfield Fairchild

Ponds have increased more than 18-fold in the Brandywine watershed, southeastern Pennsylvania since 1937. These ponds reduce sediment loading to stream networks, also influencing pond longevity. We investigated how sediment characteristics vary within ponds as a function of depth and distance from shore, and how sediment accumulation rates vary among ponds as a consequence of differences in size, age, and drainage basin. Ten ponds representative in size of most ponds in the watershed were sampled during summer 2009. Five had influent headwater streams, and five had no surface inflows. Ten sediment cores were obtained from each pond, allowing for measurements of dry bulk density (dBD), organic matter (% OM), or % sand. Pond volume was determined using ArcView 3D Analyst, and used to compute total sediment volume, mass and organic matter storage. Within ponds, dBD, % OM, and % sand were all strongly intercorrelated ($p < 0.001$). Based on simple linear regressions, decreased dBD and sand content, and increased %OM, accompanied increasing distance from shore, and (to a lesser extent) increasing depth. Among ponds, total sediment volume, mass, and OM storage were all intercorrelated ($p < 0.001$). Older ponds with larger watersheds showed increased sediment volume, mass, and OM ($p < 0.001$). Area-specific sediment accumulation (SAR_{AS}; m³/ha/yr) declined with increasing pond size, however, and were significantly higher ($p = 0.029$) among ponds with stream inflows. Given our relatively high SAR_{AS} estimates and rapidly increasing pond densities, small ponds show an increasing potential to modify water quality within the Brandywine watershed.

Title: Historical Trends in Pond Abundance and Sediment Accumulation Rates

Student Presenter(s): Patrick Brown

Department: Pharmaceutical Development

Faculty Mentor: Richard Woodruff

In *Oncopeltus Fasciatus*, the uptake of yolk into the developing egg is started by a signaling molecule known as calmodulin (CaM). By using antagonists to block the steps in the hypothesized pathway, we determined the signaling cascade, started by CaM, that results in the uptake of yolk. Each chemical used is known to inhibit specific reactions. W-7 removes the ability of CaM to bind to other molecules. Neomycin does the same with PIP₂. U-73122 directly binds to Phospholipase-C (PL-C) to stop its activity. 2-APB blocks the release of Ca²⁺ by binding to IP₃ receptors. Ca²⁺ channels are blocked by two molecules, Verapamil and CdCl₂. Staurosporin and Calphostin inhibit the activity of Phosphokinase-C (PK-C). HAG binds directly to and inactivates DAG. By using these antagonists, it was found that CaM activates PL-C, PL-C then converts PIP₂ into IP₃ and DAG, IP₃ causes the release of Ca²⁺. DAG in conjunction with Ca²⁺ activate PK-C which is needed allow the uptake of yolk protein into the egg.

Title: From Theory to Pedagogy: Fostering Intrinsic Motivation in the High School English Classroom

Student Presenter(s): Katie Hallman

Department: English

Faculty Mentor: Mary Buckelew

Intrinsic motivation is a student's desire to gain knowledge as driven by personal interest and perceived value of the information. The goal of this research project was to explore the application of theories in real life settings, specifically the English classroom, and to identify and discuss strategies to foster intrinsic motivation. This idea was sparked by my experience as a soon-to-be student teacher wondering, "How can I get students to read, write, and retain information?" and fearing the inevitable student question, "What is the point of doing this?" These questions, however simplistic they initially appear, are the bane of educators in all discourses. Several theories regarding intrinsic motivation provide the basis of this project. According to the Self-Determination Theory, having choices and making decisions is intrinsically motivating (Eggen 327). Accordingly, Jim Banks writes, "Students are more highly motivated when the curriculum reflects their cultures, experiences, and perspectives" (67, Approaches). Using scholarly research, a primary source interview and observations, I have substantiated the application of several theories, and compiled a list of pedagogical strategies that can be used in English classrooms of all grade and achievement levels. Strategies such as allowing students choices, using humor and communication, facilitating connections to reading, assigning inquiry-guided writing assignments, and connecting to students' personal interests are a few select methods of fostering intrinsic motivation. While my research provided a number of answers to my initial inquiry, I realize that as teachers, we are life-long learners, and more questions and answers will come with experience.

Title: "I've immersed myself in the culture": Cultural Identity Development in White Women who are Romantically Involved with Hispanic Men

Student Presenter(s): Karly Moletteri

Department: Communication Studies

Faculty Mentor: Anita Foeman

This study examines the way white women understand their racial and cultural identity when they are romantically involved with Hispanic men. While there is extensive research on interracial dating, much of this research focuses on black-white couples. Additionally, there are many studies on whiteness, but most focus on the way whiteness functions and is sustained in society when whites are unaware of their racial identity and privilege. This study thus addresses several unanswered questions regarding the communication patterns of white women who are romantically involved with Hispanic men through the analysis of six qualitative interviews. Results highlight attempts to adopt their partners' cultural traditions, frequent attempts to downplay cultural differences, and a tendency to emphasize cultural difference only when it becomes beneficial in society to do so. Findings can contribute to theories of whiteness, identity development, and research on interracial relationships.

Title: Increased Positive Emotions and On-task Behavior Attributed to Arts-Enriched Head Start Preschool

Student Presenter(s): Kacey Sax and Blanca Velazquez

Department: Psychology

Faculty Mentor: Ellie Brown

Background: Previous research suggests that emotion-centered preventative interventions may be beneficial for children at risk for developing behavior, social and academic problems (Gottman et al., 1996). The rationale is that by teaching children to effectively regulate and manage their emotions, it may be possible to decrease these problems in high-risk populations. Arts-enriched programming may provide children with an alternate means of expressing their emotions (Lobo & Winsler, 2006), which may result in enhanced school readiness by addressing cognitive skills and social-emotional functioning. *Methodology:* The current researchers examined the effects of an arts-enriched Head Start preschool on emotion regulation in at-risk children (ages 3 to 5) in South Philadelphia. Trained researcher assistants independently coded observations of children's emotions and behaviors during arts classes (i.e., music, creative movement, and visual arts) as compared with traditional early learning classes. *Hypotheses:* The researchers hypothesized that children would experience greater positive emotions and on-task behavior during arts classes in comparison to traditional early learning classes. *Results:* Consistent with our hypotheses, results suggested that the arts-enriched preschool under study enhanced positive emotions and on-task behavior, skills which have been shown to improve overall school readiness in at-risk children (Trentacosta & Izard, 2007). *Implications:* The current results suggest the importance of implementing arts-enriched classes into Head Start programs that do not already include such curriculum.

Title: Biography of Sadie and Raymond Alexander

Student Presenter(s): Gabrielle Stitz

Department: History

Faculty Mentor: Charles Hardy III

During the research seminar of Pennsylvania history, I produced essays based on Sadie and Raymond Alexander, two trailblazing African Americans that dedicated the majority of their lives to the Philadelphia civil rights struggle. In creating these essays, I went through a intense research and writing process that aided me in creating a final product good enough for publication. This research seminar was my first real professional research exercise and taught me how to find information in places that most students have never looked before, such as the University of Pennsylvania archives. This experience has not only allowed me to grow as a writer, but has also better prepared me to become an educator in the near future. The work I produced cannot only be utilized as an educational resource, but it will also improve the general public's understanding of the civil rights struggle in Philadelphia from the 1920s through the 1950s.

Title: Religion as a Coping Mechanism for Stress

Student Presenter(s): Sage Sullivan

Department: Psychology

Faculty Mentor: Laura Verrekia

This paper explores the relationship between religion and stress. It was hypothesized that religious involvement would have a correlated relationship with lower stress levels, and consequently, that religious involvement serves as an adequate coping mechanism for relieving stress. The researcher used convenience sampling to gather participants from a target population of college students. The participants were split up into two groups, those who were religious (those defined as having participated in at least two hours of religious activity per week), and those who were not religious. Each group was then given a stress survey. It was found that the means of the two groups went in the predicted direction, as the mean stress test score of the religious group was lower than the stress score of the nonreligious group. The independent-samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference in the stress scores, $t(48) = -5.222, p < .05$. The results of the present study will be beneficial to many, and it will open the door for further research in regards to the relationship between religion and stress.

Title: Creating an Outdoor Classroom

Student Presenter(s): Erika Szonntag

Department: Biology

Faculty Mentor: Gerard Hertel

West Chester University is making every effort to be a leader in environmental sustainability. In April of 2009, the university's first outdoor classroom was established in the courtyard outside of Merion Hall. WCU's first outdoor classroom is a small area with picnic benches and a large variety of native flowers, shrubs, and small trees. Outdoor classrooms encourage active education and research; they cater to the sciences with actual ecosystems and species to study, serve as inspiration to the arts, and provide a natural, creative setting for the social sciences. Outdoor classrooms are a place to relax and do homework between classes and enjoy what nature has to offer, fostering an important appreciation for the outdoors in today's ecologically fragile world. WCU's first outdoor classroom was successful in creation and use, so faculty from several of the science departments and the Environmental Council would like to see more established throughout campus. "Creating an Outdoor Classroom" is a comprehensive guide which succinctly defines an outdoor classroom, the need for such outdoor spaces, and how to create and maintain them. The guide is easy to read and access so that anyone can start their own outdoor classroom or green space project, and is featured on WCU's sustainability website. Independent research on other schools' outdoor classrooms and the benefits of outdoor spaces in urbanized areas and personal experience with creating and maintaining the outdoor classroom were the project's foundations. A copy of the project is provided following the project narrative.

Title: Exploring the Effectiveness of Outpatient Therapy with Children with Mental Illness**Student Presenter(s): Bethany Arnold****Department:** Social Work**Faculty Mentor: Nadine Bean**

The purpose of the research was to explore the effectiveness of outpatient therapy over a two month time period with children ages 6 to 18 diagnosed with a mental illness at a mental health agency in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The research used a mixed design of quantitative and qualitative methods to report on the use of two scales. Five therapists participated in the study by administering the Outcome and Session Rating Scales to fourteen clients, who rated the scales during their weekly individual therapy sessions. Three participating therapists were interviewed to learn about their perceptions of using the scales in practice. The quantitative research found that age and primary diagnosis influenced treatment outcomes. Remarkably, about two thirds of the participants (64%) indicated an increase in overall functioning on the scales during the time of data collection, demonstrating that outpatient therapy was effective in decreasing their distress. The data also found that almost half of the participants (43%) reported concerns about the therapy session and relationship with their therapist during the data collection period. The three therapists that were interviewed reported a commitment to understanding clients and that they would like client feedback in the future. The therapists reported that the scales allowed for greater depth in therapy and that the scales increased their communication with clients. This research will be used by the mental health agency to learn about clients' feedback and could be used by other agencies or programs as a model for implementation of the two scales.

Title: Quality of Life and Psychosocial Needs of College Students with Disabilities**Student Presenter(s): Dalissy Jose****Department:** Social Work**Faculty Mentor: Nadine Bean**

The number of students with disabilities enrolling in four-year colleges is steadily increasing. Academic supports have been put in place, but little is being done to understand their social experiences and needs. This study investigated the quality of life of students with various disabilities at West Chester University. Quantitative data was collected via the use of the Quality of Life Inventory (QOLI). Qualitative data was collected utilizing individual interviews capturing personal accounts. Common themes found in the interviews included desire for acceptance, affiliation to an organization, denial of need for accommodations, confusion over future, and stories of resilience. The majority of students scored in the average range of overall quality of life on the QOLI; while a small percentage scored in the very low to low range. As an exploratory, mixed methodology approach, this study provided findings that may be useful in future services to students with disabilities and in future research. Social work and policy implications are also discussed.

Title: Meet me on the Sidewalk: Understanding the Bio-psycho-social-cultural Needs of Women in the Street-based Sex Industry

Student Presenter(s): Meg Panichelli

Department: Social Work

Faculty Mentor: Nadine Bean

This paper offers an analysis of the biological, psychological, social and cultural needs of street-based sex workers by looking at emotional labor performed on the job and using intersectionality theory as a framework. Street-based sex workers reveal accounts of their interactions with clients, police, and medical professionals. It is argued that the emotional labor of sex workers should be acknowledged as work, which requires skill and knowledge. Through the telling of their experiences, it can be suggested to social workers, social service, medical providers and law enforcement officials that services need to be more accessible and safe for sex workers. This is a feminist qualitative research project that values sex worker's experiences as strengths, skills and contributing to the production of knowledge.

Title: Student Knowledge of the Effects of Trauma on Mental Health

Student Presenter(s): Claudia Vogelsang, Kimberly Rosen, Amanda Snyder

Department: Social Work

Faculty Mentor: Claire Dente

The purpose is to assess these students' knowledge of traumatic events and mental health disorders. The research sought to identify if there is a need for more classroom instruction on the details of mental health or trauma. The results showed that most students only felt moderately knowledgeable on the topic of mental health and their classes only address mental health somewhat. It was concluded that it would be beneficial to have a greater focus on mental health in the curriculum so students would feel more comfortable and informed, especially when it comes to how trauma effects one's mental health.

Title: Action Research Project: A Self-Study Exploring the Emotional and Physical Benefits of Exercising**Student Presenter(s): Anna Zischkau****Department:** Higher Education/Post Counseling**Faculty Mentor: Kim Brown**

The U.S. Surgeon General, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American College of Sports Medicine recommend getting a minimum of thirty minutes of moderately intense physical activity most days of the week (Collins, 2007). A review of literature suggests even thirty minutes of moderately intense exercise three days of the week can improve overall fitness in healthy but sedentary adults (Thomson Reuters, 2007). Emerging from these findings, a subject self-study was developed to determine if increased levels of moderately intense exercise will improve emotional and physical health scores in a twenty-five-year-old female? Exercise levels were increased from once a week for thirty minutes to three days a week for thirty minutes. Moderately intense exercise is characterized by causing a slight but noticeable increase in heart rate and breathing (example-brisk walking). The emotional characteristics examined in this study are mood, stress, and cognitive functioning. The physical characteristics examined in this study are energy, sleep, and back pain. Intervention data were collected, and the intervention (moderately intense exercise for thirty minutes on three days of the week) demonstrated a significant positive effect on the dependent variables of mood and quality of sleep. Possible future studies could include a study to determine if greater levels of moderately intense exercise will yield greater health benefits for subjects similar to the one in this study, and a study to examine the long term effects of exercise on emotional and physical health factors potentially following subjects for a year or more.

Title: Danza Symbiotica: A Composer/Choreographer Project**Student Presenter: Daniel Lawson****Department:** Music Theory and Composition**Student Presenter: Malia Piazza****Department:** Secondary Education and Biology**Faculty Mentor: Robert Maggio**

The following chronicle details the context, process, and outcomes of an artistic collaborative activity founded by composer Daniel Lawson and choreographer Malia Piazza commencing in Spring 2009 at West Chester University. Inspired by their shared passion for both music and dance, they developed a new creative project to pair student composers with student choreographers from the College of Visual and Performing Arts with the goal of collaboratively conceptualizing and presenting original dance pieces in a concert entitled *Danza Symbiotica: A Composer/Choreographer Project*. Aspiring to compile a successful, groundbreaking concert, they designed and oversaw this interdisciplinary effort, in addition to contributing a collaborative piece of their own. In creating their piece, they utilized an innovative approach modeled after the method of the highly regarded and distinct partnership between composer John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham. Daniel and Malia's dedication to this exciting endeavor resulted in a revolutionary and unique showcase of collaborative art and proved to be an immense success. Due to such a positive outcome and response to *Danza Symbiotica*, they now plan to further develop the collaborative connection between them in making the project an annual event and collaborating on more dance pieces to be seen in the next year.

Title: A Taste of French Piano Music

Student Presenter(s): Jeffrey Slemmer

Department: M.M. Piano Pedagogy

Faculty Mentor: Patricia Powell

This project, *A Taste of French Piano Music*, is an anthology of French piano music at an intermediate to early advanced level. The purpose of the collection is to explore what makes French music stylistically French and to expand a piano students' awareness of repertoire other than that of well-known composers like Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. After surveying the works of several French composers from different musical eras, I chose eleven pieces that best represent the refinement and charm that epitomize the French style in different eras and categorized them according to which elements they most strongly conveyed. Along with stylistic descriptions of each piece are brief biographies of the composers with information written to appeal to intermediate/advanced students and give them insight into the composers' lives. There is a focus on style, and each piece has specific pedagogical implications meant to advance students' technical skill at the piano. My aim is for this anthology to spark students' interest in the French characteristics and inspire them to explore more pieces by French composers in their piano studies. I can test its effectiveness by teaching my own students these pieces and evaluate their success in playing, understanding, and enjoying the music. Piano teachers can use this repertoire as a valuable and effective tool in developing well-rounded and self-sufficient pianists while teaching an enjoyable set of musical gems.

Title: Bound Away: Story and Music written by Jennifer Smalinger

Student Presenter(s): Jennifer Smalinger

Department: M.M. Piano Pedagogy

Faculty Mentor: Patricia Powell

The purpose of this project was to compose a collection of original musical compositions that were connected to a story for the intermediate piano student to learn and perform. This combination of music and prose could be used within a classroom or a private studio to engage and motivate students to learn more difficult concepts. After researching collections of music at the same difficulty level, it was noted that there was a pedagogical opportunity to create such a unique collection of piano music written with a story. When piano students reach the intermediate level of playing, many students have difficulty expressing ideas in their performance as the music becomes more demanding and detailed. Students are introduced to new concepts in style, technique and form, and are challenged to place the music in context. "Bound Away" introduces these new concepts while placing the music into a context students can enjoy and relate to. Students are introduced to a story containing a character that is discovering life lessons and how to solve problems. As the story progresses, each piece of music also develops with the character, becoming more involved and detailed. The end result is that students will have been introduced to different styles of playing, techniques and forms in an engaging format. The completed project shows the possibility of connecting two different subjects, English and Music, in an imaginative way and how it can be used in the education world.