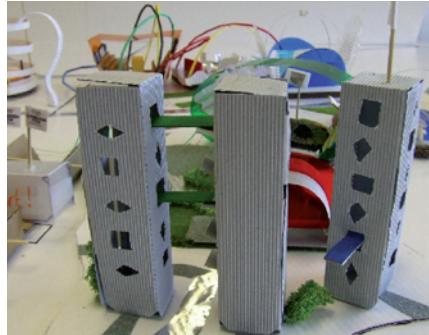


Bridging the Gap Case Study

Royal Docks Community School

March 2007



'I have changed some of my opinions that I had before. At first I didn't want the Olympics to come to London, I thought it was bad, but now I do' Pupil aged 13

Background

In early Spring 2007, a team of artists and an architect descended on The Royal Docks Community School as part of Bridging the Gap, an architecture and built environment education programme for schools. A total of 15 children took part in an intensive series of activities to create their own map of Newham and begin to develop a better understanding of their borough's geography, built environment and the dramatic changes proposed as part of the plans for the 2012 Olympic Games.

What the children did

The programme of activities was spread over two days and the same children attended both days.

Day 1

Introducing the area with Google Earth

Using Google Earth to zoom in on the school and its surroundings from outer space encouraged the children to introduce their neighbourhood to the visiting Bridging the Gap team and proved to be a great catalyst for wider discussion.

Film shows

Next, the team introduced 'the Olympics coming to Newham in 2012' as an overriding theme for the 2 day roadshow by viewing *Masterplan*, the London 2012 Olympic bid video to set the scene.

The children were invited to travel back in time to glimpse the docks in their working days in another film, *Neighbourhood 15 1946*. Revealing the historic industrial context of their neighbourhood, the class discussed the decline of the docks and this helped the team to explain why the area is now surrounded by brownfield sites.

Giant jigsaw map of Newham

To help children to explore their borough as a geographical and a civic space, Fundamental has developed a giant jigsaw map. The children are split into ‘developer’ teams and each team is given a piece of the giant jigsaw map to work on.

In primary schools this is a floor activity, carried out more slowly and with a lot of help from the team. Here, with Year 8 pupils, the jigsaw map was a much quicker table-top exercise to explore the Borough of Newham and to introduce our main task—modelling the Olympic Park. The results were very impressive.

Visit to Stratford

The team took the group on the Docklands Light Railway and the Jubilee line to Stratford. The group were given digital voice recorders to make a self initiated audio diary or record of their visit to Stratford. The children mainly interviewed each other with these but there were a few interesting opportunities where two girls interviewed an elderly lady at the station and later two boys interviewed Jonathan Edwards - ex Olympic athlete in a chance encounter at Holden Point!

A visit to the library to see the architectural model of the Olympic park and surrounding area caught their imagination and provided an inspiring insight into the task of building their own model of the whole Olympic park the following day.

Viewing gallery at Holden Point

Holden Point is the official viewing gallery of the Olympic site and has been widely used by International Olympic Committee board members, politicians and royal visitors over the years leading up to the 2012 bid and beyond. Basically it is a portacabin on top of a 21 storey sheltered housing tower block with a spectacular view.

In the viewing gallery, pupils fixed A2 acetate sheets on to the viewing windows, and sketched the outline of the panorama as it is now, including the London city skyline. The next step was to focus in on the massive Olympic and Stratford City construction site, which is still very empty. The team wanted to move beyond simply observing the site with the children, to help them grasp the vast scale and challenge of developing the Olympic park on the site. During their visit the pupils were also given a talk about the key Olympic site developments.

The exercise was very difficult and required much perseverance and support but the end results were both fascinating and rewarding. The team and their group also had lunch with a view!

Day 2

Modelling the Olympics

The afternoon began with a slide show of artists’ impressions of what the Olympic park and stadiums may look like. The class was then introduced to the huge task of 3D modelling five key Olympic stadiums on to a larger scale jigsaw base of the Olympic park itself. The class was split into five ‘design’ teams and each team was given a mini design brief for a different stadium: the main stadium, the aquatics centre, the velodrome, the Olympic village and the basketball and hockey stadium. Each design team first sketched their ideas and were encouraged to share their ideas with their members and evolve a common approach. They had to break down the tasks involved in building a detailed 3D model of their design and work together to produce and mount a model and surrounding landscape on the Olympic park jigsaw base. Working as a team in this way was extremely challenging for some of the children, and some later mentioned team work as one of the things they had learned.

Celebration

The children were encouraged to present their work to the whole class and various visitors including the headmaster and Newham's Design and Technology Curriculum advisor. We are currently working to have the model mounted on permanent display in the school.

What the children said

A total of 13 children filled out feedback forms and wrote their comments about what they had enjoyed and what they learned.

Enjoyment

All the children said they had enjoyed the experience, especially the visits to other parts of the borough. For many children this would be their first experience of learning about architecture and the built environment. We wanted them to see that these subjects can be fun and understand their relevance in their everyday lives. For these reasons, it was very important to us to know that the children had enjoyed themselves.

New experiences

All of the children said they had done something new with the Bridging the Gap team, with six pupils saying they had tried lots of new things. As with enjoyment, we also felt that it was important that the children would see learning about architecture and the built environment as an opportunity to experience something new.

Over half of the children in the group said that when they went outside their school as part of the activity, they noticed something new about their local built environment. These were mainly buildings or construction work linked to the development of the Olympic site.

Learning

Clearly a two day programme can only cover so much. We hoped that the programme would make the children curious to learn more in the future. All of the children felt that they would like to learn more about the local area and also about the Olympics. Slightly more children were keen to learn lots about the Olympics, than about the area.

More information

Bridging the Gap is devised and delivered by Fundamental Architectural Inclusion, a specialist architecture and built environment education organisation based in Newham, that seeks ways for communities to genuinely participate in the planning and development process of regeneration in their neighbourhoods. Bridging the Gap is the first 2012 Games architecture and built environment education programme, and is funded by Newham council.

Fundamental
Architectural Inclusion

For more information contact:

Jane Leighton, Programme Manager

t: 020 8471 7929

e: jane@fundamental.uk.net

or visit www.fundamental.uk.net/bridgingthegap