

CASE STUDY OF YOUNG VOICES AFTER SCHOOL WORK

This particular after school group is held each Monday and as stated in our service profile the children who attend our group are those from the BME community who live in the west end of Newcastle. The children who attend our after school group are often lacking in confidence or self esteem therefore we try and use activities that will encourage children to participate in a group without feeling embarrassed or uneasy and where they are comfortable enough to do so.

In 2006 the dance company Gem Arts approached us and offered us the chance to get the children involved in workshops to learn Bollywood dancing. We took it to the school who, like ourselves were really interested in the children getting involved and thought it would be a good way of raising confidence levels, therefore the idea was put forward to the children. We explained that somebody would be coming in to teach Bollywood dancing for 6 weeks and this would commence on November 13th.

Initially we got mixed feelings, some of the children were very excited and were really enthusiastic about doing something like this. However on the other hand some children were very apprehensive and were not sure that they would be able to participate. After a little encouragement from Young Voices staff, those children agreed that they would come along but would prefer to watch rather than do the actual dance workshop with the tutor. The following week we started with the workshops and we were pleased to see that all children gave it a go and joined in which was a positive outcome.

The children who started in the group carried on coming to the dance workshop every Monday and really worked hard with the dance tutor to get the steps correct. Their motivation and energy levels rose over the six weeks as they became more confident with what they were doing and therefore enjoyed it more and more. The tutor had an excellent rapport with the children and they were very good at listening and following her lead. When she thought the children were ready she would ask them to have a go at the dancing on their own. Young Voices staff believe this helped the children's confidence enormously as it provided the opportunity to overcome shyness and gain a sense of achievement. The dance tutor would always praise the group and offer advice if she thought the children needed it. This helped the children to develop their skills and advance on what they were already doing.

Over the six-week period the children greatly improved and both school and Young Voices staff have seen their confidence levels and self-esteem grow. On the last session the children performed the dance on their own in front of the tutor and a Young Voices staff member which was a huge step for these children. They also took turns to dance on their own in front of the group, using the moves they had learnt. This is something we never thought the children would be able to do and were very proud of what they have achieved.

Overall we feel the dancing was an extremely positive experience and the children were each able to get something out of it. The children enjoyed working with the dance tutor and were dedicated to learning a new dance but at the same time had a lot of fun as the workshops were clearly designed to promote learning in a fun way.

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