



spud & yam

Irish & Caribbean song & stories

Spud & Yam.....THE 'GETTING ON' PROJECT REPORT

Context

Five primary schools in a Networked Learning Community in the London Borough of Merton – Garden; Lonesome Primary; St Marks; Stanford; and William Morris – were involved in the Getting On project. The project was based around arts activities run by the Spud & Yam (AKA Storyteller/musicians Kate Corkery and Winston Nzinga.)

- The Getting On Project aimed, within the schools, to:
- promote racial harmony
- encourage positive relationships amongst diverse groups
- promote children's positive self esteem
- increase children's self confidence
- strengthen cross-curricular links between the arts within and across the schools

and, between the schools, to

- promote and facilitate collaborative learning by enabling schools to be part of a collaborative project that would be beyond their means if working alone
- be pupil centred
- build confidence and self esteem for adults and children
- engage with the Local Authority through the PHSE Consultant Leader who would provide input and evaluation.

Activities

One class in each school was chosen, according to identification of need, as a focus for a project involving story, music and song, art and poetry. Each of the classes would ultimately perform or display their work to their own school, to the other four schools in the Networked Learning Community, and to a wider audience at the Wimbledon Theatre in Wimbledon. They would be rewarded not only with certificates, but with affirmation from their peers and others.

The following are examples of the work carried out:

- Producing a newspaper with a title headline "Be What You Want to Be!", in which the children wrote purposefully for a real audience about their project.
- Using fabric embroidery, collage and a variety of media to produce a tapestry. This reflected the uniqueness of the school community, but with a shared focus that resulted in a cornucopia of colour and life.
- An exploration of proverbs and wise sayings through dramatic role-play and experimentation with words, sounds and rhythms. One example was a parody of the TV talent show The X Factor, in which children produced their own sketches reinforcing the importance of positive behaviour.

- Setting wise sayings and traditional proverbs to music, using the rhythm of African Drums alongside children's own claps and melodies.
- Boys producing dance to funky, modern and motivating rhythms, challenging any stereotype of dance being for girls only, while losing no street credibility.

Impact

The following outcomes were identified:

- An evaluation exercise across the five schools, conducted by a PHSE Consultant Leader from Merton LA, identified considerable impact on those involved. The statistical evidence of a positive effect on pupils included 60% experiencing a
- marked increase in **self-esteem**.
- Children in the project felt their work and ideas were valued and were able to discuss the consequences of their actions within the safety of dramatic role-play. Children spoke of their improved **confidence** in themselves and their work. One of the teachers spoke about her increased confidence and awareness of the importance of creativity in the curriculum.
- As well as the **cross-curricular links** identified at the start of the project – between music, drama, literacy and art – children's ideas were explored through PHSE, design and technology, ICT and science.
- A class teacher spoke about the spin-off benefit of **improved relationships with parents** of children involved in the project. Some children produced work at home to complement that done in school.

The children's conclusion

All children interviewed said that they had enjoyed the project. To the question 'What did you learn?' the children's responses included the following:

- 'Working together as a team'
- 'When someone's stuck, give them a helping hand'
- 'Don't follow bullies'
- 'There is no "I" in team'
- 'Don't pick on small people'
- 'How to use commas and full stops'
- 'Sometimes life isn't fair'
- 'To try my best'
- 'How to get on more, and better'

The schools have produced a DVD of the show at the Polka Theatre which will serve a permanent reminder for the children – as if they needed one – of this valuable learning experience.