

Enhancing Engagement and Confidence Through Dance Within Specialised Secondary Schools

Case Study 3: Selly Oak Trust School

Introduction

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) often experience limited access to inclusive physical activities whether it's in school or out in the community. Recognising this gap, Sport Birmingham partnered with FABRIC to deliver a targeted 6-week dance programme within 4 local specialised secondary schools. The initiative aimed to promote physical activity within their students, increase teacher confidence in delivering movement sessions and raise awareness of the role dance can play in specialised educational settings.

Background

Selly Oak Trust School applied to be one of the 4 schools chosen for this project. The school's head of PE highlighted that they currently do not offer dance within their PE curriculum as well as their students struggling with low confidence. They wanted to utilise the sessions to introduce dance to the students and showcase the benefits of dance. The sessions were intended to develop the students' social skills whilst enabling them to express their feelings and emotions in a number of different ways.



Programme Structure

Sport Birmingham and FABRIC hired two dance tutors, Holly Jones and Hollie Johnston. The focus was on contemporary style sessions to taking place every Thursday afternoon with two groups of 12-15 young people from varying age ranges and abilities. The provision was on-going for 6 weeks with the aim of introducing dance into the curriculum as well as supporting the students with their wellbeing and self-esteem.

Initial Challenges

In the first session, the dance tutors had a group of boys who were reluctant to participate; as this was the first time dance had been introduced into the school. The staff were unsure of the suitability of the class taking part in the session. They were unsure which class to choose to take part. In the following few weeks, the students started to become more open minded, excited for the sessions and with a willingness to learn. There were a few sessions where the students were very excited which meant that they were struggling to concentrate or follow activity instructions which lead to the environment becoming noisy, overstimulating and unstructured.



Progress and Development

After the first session, Hollie and Holly did not face any challenges with getting the students engaged and instilling fun into the sessions. Every week the students came in with a positive mindset, excited and ready to dance. Once Holly and Hollie had started to understand the students boundaries, preferences and way of learning they were able to understand how to structure their sessions and how much time to spend on each activity before the students started disconnecting from the music and the choreography.

Outcomes

Through this project, Sport Birmingham and FABRIC wanted to have a positive impact on the young people's overall physical activity levels as well as providing access opportunities for young people with SEND. We found that the sessions at Selly Oak Trust supported their students to more feel confident, self-aware and happy within themselves. The sessions also supported the building of routine into the day. The teachers also highlighted how having their students interact with people who are external to the school helped support their social and familiarisation skills. Going forward, Selly Oak Trust SEN Special school are looking at integrating dance into their curriculum whilst also continuing their relationship with FABRIC dance tutors.



To find out more information of how you can get involved with FABRIC, please email Becky Bailey, Director of Engagement - becky@fabric.dance