

National Coalition

NCBI

Building Institute

London

**Building
Community
Cohesion**

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Deptford Green School

**Introduction to Student Leadership Workshop –
12th July 2010 and 27 September 2010**

***Venue: The Moonshot Centre, Fordham Park, Angus
Street, New Cross, London SE14 6LU and***

***Deptford Green School, Amersham Vale, New Cross,
London, SE14 6LQ***

Drop down day for - Year 9 (age 13/14)

A morning session from 9.00 to 11.00 and 11.15 to 12.15

The students participating on the activities were made up of a mixture of 237 boys/girls and 227boys/girls from year 9 (age 13/14). The young people identified as mainly white, black and Chinese/Asians. These identity groups were of equal proportions and meant that in addition to work on racial identities, we were able, later on in the workshop to do some specific work on identities also.

Workshop Aims

The workshop aimed to achieve a number of desirable outcomes for the young people:

1. an awareness of their leadership qualities
2. a better understanding of compassion towards other



students

3. to recognise that we are not all perfect and all of us can benefit from support and genuine camaraderie
4. to identifying potential leadership that would transcend into a positive role at school and that of student ambassador amongst peers
5. eligibility for key leadership roles; ideas to support personal application to become a Student Leader in the school

The workshop activities we explored with the young people were:

Ups/ Downs - exploring the complexity of identities and experiences we all hold.

First Thoughts - stereotyping and how this gets played out in our everyday lives.

Behaviours contract – new behaviours based on first thoughts learning.

Caucus Groups - groups sharing positive information about their identity and experiences.

Leadership responsibilities and Reflection page – student to write down their emerging thoughts based on the key learning to date from the workshop and why they should be a Student Leader.

Closing - verbal comments/feedback by students about the whole learning experience

1 Up's Downs activity.

This activity allowed the young people to explore their identity complexities and helped them remember they are not alone, particularly with the complexities of identities and upbringing experiences that existed amongst them

The young people said they enjoyed this activity, it felt good to be appreciated and celebrated for who they really are. They felt they were not placed in the narrow baskets of boys/girls; black/white but rather attention to the whole person was considered also. Those who found themselves as the only person standing for particular identities said they found it special to be alone in the whole school to be standing.

Ups/down made a valuable contribution to the self esteem and well being of the young people. They said they felt strengthened and encouraged from doing the activity.

“I can do anything.”; “Everybody has something that is wrong with them”; “Other people are going through stuff, you're not alone”; “People help you through everything.”

Our learning for future projects, particularly when working with such a large group, is to make the ups/down activity shorter, punchier and to ensure a public address system is available for use.

2 Behaviour contracts

We worked with the young people to look at their attitudes and how they can change behaviours towards each other. The young people enjoyed working on this activity because they realised the benefit of seeking improvement to their peer relationships. They quickly identified some new behaviours for the year group as a whole.

These include:

- 1 Not being rude to each other people.
- 2 Thinking positive, not negative.
- 3 Respect for one another
- 4 Setting a good example
- 5 Communicating better with each other
- 6 Be a positive role model
- 7 Respect your elders.
- 8 Encouraging people by telling them positive things about themselves



9 Stop squabbling and conflicting with each other

Working on behaviours went well. The young people saw the investment from getting this right for themselves. Their awareness and expressions about the activity, will go some way towards preventing adverse behaviours.

Our learning for future projects and how we can speed up the process is to break into class groups sooner to give the young people greater focus to this activity.

3 Caucus/ Identity Groups

What I love about being a particular identity. We worked with 9 different groups of students looking as their various and varied identities. The students found this exercise particularly special as they have not had an opportunity to focus on who they are. The usual assumptions they experienced are people regarding all young people as one homogenous group. The opportunity to be together in specific groups enabled the young people to delight in their identities and was good for encouragement and morale. The groups they worked in were and some of the positive identity factors are shown below.

What I love about being.....

<p>Mixed Race</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Their hair 2 Colour of skin 3 Different cultures 4 Inherited stuff from different cultures 5 Mixed up style/different way 6 Different languages 7 Nice facial features(eye lashes eye brows) 	<p>Chinese</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Yellow 2 Eyes 3 Chinese new year 4 Martial Arts 5 Karaoke 6 Language 7 Culture 8 Medicine
<p>Muslim</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Protective of their women. 2 Covering will prevent rape as skin is not on display. 3 Not having sex before marriage. 4 Come to prayers five times a day. 5 Speak to Allah daily. 6 Respect by all religions 	<p>Boys</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Athletic and sporty 2 Becoming a man 3 Intelligent 4 over protective 5 Strong Determination 6 Caring 7 Confident
<p>Girls</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Independent 2 Intelligence 3 The ability to multitask 4 Reproduction 5 Standing up for our rights eg voting 6 Playing games that boys play 7 Our femininity 	<p>Black</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Different colours and shades 2 Culture, privileges and leaderships 3 Role Models e.g.: Rosa Parks Martin, Luther King. 4 Music e.g: Bashment & gospel. 5 Fashion e.g. Looks and shapes 6 Languages 7 Black people are everywhere
<p>Asian</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Good at maths. 2 Hard worker 3 Money 4 Bamboo sticks 5 Rice-Chou 6 My language 7 Nature and country 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Clothing Design 9 Creative 10 Smart / Intelligent 11 Natural-No make up 12 Religion: Buddhist, Christianity, Islam. 13 Photogenic 14 Technology 15 Asian Freestyle

<p>White</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 We are proud of our culture. 2 We have a Royal family 3 We have adaptable style, We can dye our hair 4 There are many types of white people eg Scottish, Irish, Australian, American, Canadian and white African 5 We have a variety of religions 6 We have freckles 7 Intelligence and education 8 We have had great artist's 	<p>Christian/Buddhist</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having the same faith as my parents 2. Sharing the faith with others 3. Guidance for doing good 4. Guidance for making decisions 5. Forgiveness I being able to start again 6. Assurance of life after death
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Our future learning for this activity was about allowing the young people more time to celebrate their rich identities. The opportunities for them to work together like this are rare and proved so enjoyable they did not want to stop and regroup.

4 School Leaders

One of the objectives from the workshop was NCBI identifying young people as potential leaders. What would we notice in the young people that perhaps the teachers had not seen? Some young people came forward and directly volunteered themselves into desirable leadership roles. We absolutely welcomed that as we considered that some of them could not, would not, have expressed themselves in the same way to a teacher. This has a lot to do with NCBI being strangers and the type of work we were doing with them that allowed them expression outside constraint and not directly related to the usual curriculum objectives.

We recognised some of the young people with leadership potential were outspoken, attentive, and responding well to questions. They demonstrated keenness for a leadership position. In one scenario we were seeking support to move materials to another area, all the young people ran off except one who stayed and offered to help. Others acted as interpreters for peers both in terms of language challenges and understanding of what we were trying to teach them.

Other attributes include:

1. Lively and serious, participating well and responding to instructions.
2. Good at taking a lead and influencing others to engage.

3. Fairly quiet and thoughtful, pleasant and getting on well with others.
4. Seemed not to be adversely influenced by what was going on around him.
5. Took himself away from a fellow student who consistently messed about physically so that he could participate. Gave honest answers when questioned about his behaviours in the process.
6. Enthusiastic, open, friendly, intelligent. Suggested a contract item "be more confident when talking to different people".
7. Interested, friendly, strong, thoughtful, asking questions, confident
8. Positive attitude - said he learnt how to work with people and also supportive of an ESOL student.
9. Awareness that some of the issues impacted directly on males.
10. Not afraid to ask questions. Took the time to work out what she wanted to say despite pressure to hurry up.
11. Attentive and vocally involved in decision making during commitments activity.
12. Demonstrated maturity, patience, listening skills, quiet intervention, confidence in negotiation between adults and young people.

5 Overall Feedback from the workshop as a measure of success.

The overall feedback from the workshop was good. The young people found it fun and enjoyed that we focused on them, who they really are as individuals. In a year group of over 237 students personal identity is a real luxury and the school is less able to focus on them. A number of young people found the learning process thoughtful, enabling them to reflect on themselves as individuals. The workshop also informed them about their peers, likes and dislikes and the issues that challenge them.

The workshop added to the prevent agenda as some young people who found themselves in conflict could now get a better understanding why that conflict exist for them and/or the other person they are in conflict with. Young people often spoke about not being alone with a problem and thus breaking the isolation and subsequent anger that a perceived unique problem could throw up. One of the key things assisting the process that contributed to breaking down barriers was the opportunity to also work with different form groups. Some young people only experience their peers in the playground where, as previously stated, being 'hard' is a given behaviour. Seeing a softer, emotional, thinking side to another person was of significant benefit to them. "Enjoyed working with other form groups". "Everyone has a problem and you shouldn't be ashamed to say or show it"; "It made me not feel alone".



The workshop also assisted the development of care and compassion in some young people.

The projected environment of school creates a rigid exterior with the assumptions that most young people have to tough out experiences and therefore have no space for empathy and kindness. The workshop was a direct contradiction to this way of thinking/being and allowed honest expression of feelings, both personal and towards other students. The learning experience from this enabled some young people to gain an awareness of emotional intelligence and to recognise an emotional range beyond laughter and anger. "Everyone's different and actually cares about each other".

With the learning of emotions and awareness that their peers also experience life challenges the young people were able to be more respectful and considerate to each other. "Respect people and their views" "Learning about where others are from and that we are all different".

In addition, a number of young people had good experiences learning about their teachers. They realised the human side of their teachers, that they are adults, some of them with similar histories to their own. This increase respect for the teachers broke the isolation for some young people and has created an outlet for others. "It's good to see a different side of our teachers".

Learning about other young people religion from a personal perspective was also a big hit for the young people. Religious education sometimes consists of factual dialogue devoid of the human interaction from peers. They found the experience and love of religion from the perspective of peers fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable because it related to the individuals personal experience. Those who worked on religion also did so without embarrassment, shame or remorse. This contradicted many of the stereotype responses that general society attributes to religions. "It was fun to learn about religion".

The workshop sought to teach the young people practical skills. One aspect was about listening. We gave them tools to listen effectively with advice not to slow down the steps that could likely lead to conflict. The young people had lots of questions about this and it was clear they were keen for the learning experience. We were aware that young people have issues around managing conflict and this workshop reinforced not enough is being done to help them prevent emerging conflicts. "People are the same and different in ways and there is always someone to talk to" "Everyone was open about who they were".

NCBI seek to make every workshop fun for all participants. We recognise that all individuals learn and retain information better from a place of enjoyment.

6 Some of the other learning comments from the young people were:

- 1 I had a good experience and feel more of a young adult.
- 2 Worked with others and gained more confidence.
- 3 Gained more experience of social awareness and other people's culture and identity.
- 4 Right to speak: to talk about ourselves and to hear about other people.
- 5 Having my say and with an open mind to speak out about issues
- 6 Finding out I'm not alone in what I go through. I'm not alone in any problem
- 7 We each have others stuff at home as part of our background.
- 8 That in a way everyone is the same in their own way.
- 9 Being confident and it was educational.
- 10 It was energetic.
- 11 Found out I was proud to be a Christian
- 12 It was fun
- 13 I loved what I love about being black.
- 14 Finding out things I have in common with other people. (Ups' Downs).
- 15 Learning different things about my race
- 16 It was something different, productive and thought provoking
- 17 Learnt more about my religion



7 Conclusions

The school was very pleased with the work we did. They valued the approach and content of the work and that the workshop was well structured, enabling and engaging for the young people. The

young people gained significantly from the workshop and the learning experience was unique and cathartic. They agreed that the young people learned a lot about themselves and their environment.

The school have asked us to consider a parents workshop as a follow up procedure. This will enable the parents to have a better understanding of their children and the issues impacting on them and could enhance their relationship with the effect of keeping the young people away from peers, gangs and violent activities.

As NCBI we found the experience positive and enriching for the young people. Yet again we contradicted the stereotype that says 'young people (especially boys) don't do emotions'. As NCBI we are clear that this can only be true where those young people are not given the opportunity to show and express themselves in a real genuine way.

From the beginning with the Ups/down questions, especially the ones geared toward the young people experiences, they engaged; saw the value, connections and impact towards themselves.

This experience was met with reflective thought, acknowledgement of things that are hard (for them and others) and laughter, where appropriate. Many of the student's comments related to how they gained strength and support from their beliefs. The whole experience, albeit serious in its outcomes, was fun.

The teachers in the room also participated in the exercises and this enabled the young people to see them as normal people. It would also remind both teachers and young people that their current experiences are not new. That teacher's, as young people, also experienced life's issues.

One of the teachers remarked that she had discovered things about the pupils she may not otherwise have discovered. These discoveries will enable the teacher to build and have better, stronger and more considerate relationships with the young people. In addition, it has opened up space for further discussions about what can be achieved in future sessions across the school.

8 Next steps by the school

In our discussions about next steps the school was enthusiastic about the prospects for going forward. The work/scope included:

1. Class tutors plus form leaders to discuss behaviour contracts monthly in class
2. Follow up work with an identified group of 36 students over 4 morning sessions to enhance their leadership skills
3. Consider one to one or group mentoring for some students. Note – this is not dependant on being selected as a student leader
4. Share the information with staff
5. Celebration of each identity group in assembly
6. Class discussions and celebration of each identity group
7. Consider what is useful to use as murals on the wall
8. Consider 'pride' as a pre-workshop homework activity
9. To consider sharing the behaviour contracts with parents too
10. To consider holding parents workshops at the school



Royston John
NCBI Director
December 2010