



EMERGENCY
EXIT ARTS

A2 Summer School Project Report

Transitions 23rd – 27th August 2010

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1. Overview

Funded by Thomas Tallis and Kidbrooke Secondary Schools, Emergency Exit Arts has run the A2 summer school successfully and with much positive feedback for the last 5 years. As in previous years, EEA ran a week's Summer School in making, performance and music with this year's theme being that of recycling: *Transforming everyday items and sounds into something remarkable.*

The aim of the A2 Summer School is to engage Years 6 and 7 who are either starting at Kidbrooke or Thomas Tallis Secondary School, or who started at these schools last year. While developing the artistic skills of the students, the project aims to ease the transition between primary and secondary school through a creative learning experience. It should acclimatise those starting secondary school to new surroundings and experiences by giving them the chance to meet other young people in the same situation, as well as some of the staff who teach at the schools.

This project resulted in a sharing of work with family and friends at Kidbrooke School on the final day of the workshops. Those participating, along with their families, also had the opportunity to be part of the spectacular international Mayor's Thames Festival Night Carnival on 12th September 2010 on the South Bank.



“An excellent project that helps children make a smooth transition from primary school to secondary school. My son’s older siblings were jealous as this did not happen in their school.” (Parent of participant)

2. Pre-project development

2.1 Project aims for 2010

- To engage the participants in a creative learning experience during the summer holidays at which the young people can learn new skills while meeting new students and teachers at their prospective schools
- To introduce a Youth Consultancy program to the A2 Summer School Scheme
- To document the process and project outcomes through a blog website which allows participants to add their thoughts, look at footage of the workshops and open discussions with other participants about the project
- To promote recycling by using various pieces of rubbish to make drum kits costumes and puppets. To show the creative and useful potential of everything we usually throw away
- To encourage self-confidence, develop communication and group working skills through working together in creative activities
- To build on the participant's creative skills by working with professional arts practitioners
- To enthuse the participants and their families about taking part in the Mayor's Thames Festival; which provides a national showcase for their work and the opportunity to be part of an internationally renowned event in central London.



*“Very clear objectives. They were fulfilled in a way which was responsive to the groups.”
(Facilitator)*

2.2 Alternative recruitment strategy

In previous years the summer school was open to all local schools and focused on the general transition for that age group. With the funding coming directly from Thomas Tallis and Kidbrooke, our Partners decided that this year participants should be about to start, or already attending, the two aforementioned schools.

The recruitment process also differed this year, as there was an application process to aid the selection. Our Partners thought that this would encourage more committed participants and increase participation in the Mayor's Thames Festival. A £20 nominal fee was also requested to help with project costs and to discourage parents and guardians from using the summer school as free childcare during the summer holidays.

Recruitment for the project proved a bit more difficult than in previous years. Our Youth Consultants helped determine that this could have been due to the new application process. They felt they might not have applied for the summer school in case they were not selected and therefore felt a sense of failure.

Two other possible causes could have been the limitation in terms of which school the potential participants could derive from, and secondly, the newly introduced fee. This was later withdrawn and those who had paid it were refunded in case it had affected anyone's motivation to sign up.

In an attempt to increase numbers EEA printed out over 150 posters and put them in shops, surgeries and takeaways around the area between the two schools. A second letter was also sent out to all prospective students a week before the summer school.

The final figure for participants who applied and attended the Summer School was 29.

"The children seemed really motivated" (Parent of participant)

2.3 Youth Consultancy

Emergency Exit Arts encouraged both Kidbrooke and Thomas Tallis to enroll several Youth Consultants to be involved in the planning process and the delivery of the project. These young people were all aged between 14 and 16 and had participated in the Summer School previously.

They were invited to a planning meeting on the 20th July 2010 to discuss the ideas and structure of the Summer School along with EEA's workshop facilitators, Project Managers and the Head of Arts from Kidbrooke School.

In the Youth Consultancy session, everyone explored the creative aspects of recycling materials by making a hat using bottle tops, plastic bags etc. Using this as a stimulus we then discussed the following points:

- The recruitment process – enrolling young people in the summer school
- The structure of the week's workshops

This process was beneficial for all involved as the youth consultants provided useful insight into what they've found enjoyable in the past and what would have put them off applying this year. They also helped formulate ideas as to what activities we should include and when's best to introduce these activities.



"As a mentor I was able to make a lot of creative suggestions which then became part of the course"
(Youth Consultant)

The structure for the summer school was very much influenced by these young adults. During the course of the week, we thought each participant could choose which 'tribe' they would join for a focused session on their favourite activity – whether it was making, music or performance. The facilitators initially thought the participants could be divided into these groups in the first morning of the workshop week. However the Youth Consultants advised that this should happen at the end of the first day after each participant has had a chance to experience each activity and to then make an informed decision. They also thought that delaying this division would help the participants choose the tribe because of the activity rather than joining the group that their friend wanted to join, due to lack of confidence that most people experience at the beginning of the workshop.

This advice was taken on board when finalising the plan for the week's workshops. This also encouraged the Youth Consultants to feel a real sense of ownership over the project.



*"I liked the use of peer mentors (older children) supporting the young ones"
(Parent of participant)*

3. Project Delivery

3.1 Facilitators

Emergency Exit Arts employed six professional artistic practitioners to facilitate the project along with the support from teachers at Kidbrooke and Thomas Tallis.

Alex Evans – Lead Facilitator

Alex has led the delivery and development of the A2 Summer School project over the last five years. He is a professional artist and theatre-maker with a wealth of experience in youth, inclusive and community arts. His works as a freelance facilitator and director has seen him work with many London based arts organisations such as Emergency Exit Arts, London Bubble, Lyric Hammersmith and Creative Partnerships; delivering projects as diverse as street theatre, puppetry, spectacle and site-specific arts.

Nick Cattermole	– Professional Musician and Facilitator
Natasha Cossey	– Professional Artist and Facilitator
Russell Thoburn	– Professional Artist and Facilitator
Rebecca Totorra	– Performer and Facilitator
Frankie Dixie	– Performer, Artist and Teacher



“[The facilitators] were very enthusiastic and were also trying to make everything better than it is already” (Participant)

The teachers from Kidbrooke and Thomas Tallis, along with the Youth Consultants were invited along to an Inset Day the day before the workshops started. This inset day allowed all those helping deliver the project to prepare for the arrival of the participants the following day:

- They decorated the workshop space with colorful pieces made out of recycling to inspire and excite the young people when they arrived.
- The recycled materials that had been accumulated over the previous months were sorted and separated ready for use.
- The artists were able to show the teachers how to make the costumes and puppets that would be made during the workshops so they could properly support in the facilitation.
- They also had the chance to collaboratively finalise all plans and ideas for the structure of the workshops.



“The planning was very thorough and it was great having young people involved. I think the summer school really delivered on its objectives.” (Head of Arts, Thomas Tallis)

3.1 Participants

The project engaged 29 participants of different ethnicities from the Kidbrooke area. The majority of those who attended were 11 years old and there was an equal mix of girls and boys.

To encourage a supportive and creative atmosphere, the participants were asked what rules and regulations they would like to choose, in order to promote a safe and pleasant environment in which they would enjoy working. By making the decision theirs, they felt more compelled to adhere to these rules and it was openly discussed by all how these rules would benefit everybody.

Several of the participants had learning difficulties and various behavioral disorders. EEA's facilitators have a lot of experience in working with young people with disabilities. This meant those participants who required it, were given the extra support they needed to take part in the activities. All facilitators promoted a very inclusive environment, which allowed every young person to enjoy and fully feel part of the creative experience.



***“The group gelled very early on and on the whole treated each other with respect and kindness – so were able to create a lot of work”
(Head of Arts at Kidbrooke and Facilitator)***

3.3 Workshop process

The Theme

*Set in 2075 when the land is scorched and the skies are darkened
and all resources have been ravaged, three tribes live on...
Battling through this gloomy world they recycle materials from long ago
to bring colourful and spectacular entertainment to all...*

- The Making Tribe** Scavenge materials to create dynamic giant puppets and extreme costumes!
- The Music Tribe** Create your own instruments, sound tracks and invent music that is out of this world!
- The Performance Tribe** Devise innovative street performance using dance and drama to wow audiences along the South Bank!

(Excerpt from invite letter to Years 6 and 7 at Kidbrooke and Thomas Tallis)

Dividing the groups into tribes allowed the participants to focus one artistic skill of choice and to take the time to really improve their skills in this area. However this focused time was only in two hour slots which meant the participants were encouraged to experiment with other artistic forms throughout the day, at which they might not be so confident. The facilitators felt this was an important aspect of the summer school structure as it promoted risk taking and helped the students develop a wide range of skills.



*"I enjoyed it so much I'd like to come back and help others have the same experience."
(Participant)*

Interactive social games

Every day the facilitators started the day with some fun games that helped focus attention on the tasks ahead while introducing a wide variety of performative techniques. It also helped the group bond as they were continually encouraged to play and work with new people.

Making workshops

During the making workshops the participants designed and made two kinetic giant puppets that were made out of plastic bottles, plastic bags, takeaway cartons, bottle tops, rubber tubes and other rubbish. These were mounted on shopping trolleys and had the capacity to move their arms, head and jaw, which were animated by the young people. They also painted, cut out and glued tribal costumes which the participants designed.



"I now have better art skills and new dance moves" (Participant)

Music workshops

The participants made a percussive rig out of cake tins, saucepans and other rubbish. They experimented with what sounds you can produce out of various objects and made some unusual instruments including trumpets made from plastic piping and balloons. The objects were mounted onto a wooden structure that they put on a trolley. The young people were then taught different rhythms and beats on the collaboratively-made drum kit and trumpets.



Performance workshops

All participants took part in dance workshops throughout the week. Those participants that chose to focus on performance were encouraged to really think about the characters that would live in this imaginary world; what they would do for fun; what they would eat; how they would travel etc. Using these characters and this information they experimented with acting and reacting to each other and brought interactive performance to the sharing of work on the last day. They also focused on dance and became the leaders for the choreography for the rest of the group.

*"I really enjoyed coming and had fun making, dancing and playing instruments"
(Participant)*

3.4 Documenting the process

Emergency Exit Arts created a blog site for the A2 Arts Summer School:

<http://transformation2010.tumblr.com>

On this blog site participants had the chance to view and comment on uploaded images and videos from the workshops as they went along. They could also involve their family and friends by showing them the site and it allowed them to feel a real sense of ownership over the project.

3.5 Sharing of work

On the final day of the summer school, friends and families were invited along to a sharing of work in the afternoon. They had a picnic with everyone who participated and then helped finish making the costumes and puppets with the young people. Siblings also had the opportunity to make costumes or hats for themselves which made the whole family feel really involved in the project. It also gave them an opportunity to witness the sort of work their child had experienced during the week.

The finale for the project involved each tribe showing what they had made or done during the week. Alex explained what the process for the week had been and the families had a chance to see the dance, music, performance and costumes that had been created.

Families and young people alike left the A2 Summer School 2010 feeling very enthusiastic and proud about what they had just experienced and were looking forward to showcasing their work at the Mayor's Thames Festival.



“What an amazing visual record of what was clearly such a successful event - I look forward to seeing these sights and sounds in the festival. Wow!” (Blogger)

*“It was great to be able to follow the developments via the website”
(Parent of participant)*

4. Outcomes

4.1 Mayor's Thames Festival

25 participants and their families took part in the Mayor's Thames Festival Night Carnival. The Night Carnival has become the highlight of the Thames Festival and is a colourful parade of dancers, costumed performers, musicians, floats and puppets.

The A2 Summer School participants and families joined the Street Arts Academy and Emergency Exit Art's famous robot made from wheely bins, in a really vibrant and animated section of the parade. They wore the costumes they made during the summer school; had their faces painted; and performed in front of thousands of onlookers. The Making Tribe animated the puppets they'd created and the Performance Tribe interacted with the audience and performed their dance routine. The Music Tribe provided the music for parade by playing rhythms and beats on the percussive rigs and playing the balloon trumpets they'd made.

The audience really enjoyed the different performative aspects that the A2 Summer School participants brought to the parade and the young people had the chance to showcase their work with their families in a really exciting event in central London.



"It was a fantastic experience for the whole family. Lovely to see all the creative work from the summer school come together in a spectacular performance"
(Parent of participant)

4.2 Youth Development

- **Personal and social development**

When asked if the Summer School helped develop their self-confidence, all the participants circled *“a lot”*.

Through promoting collaboration, listening skills, group work and positive relationship building, activities were designed to build confidence whilst challenging the young people to support one another’s ideas and opinions and creative exploration.

This is a very important aspect of the summer school and is a key element in terms of easing the transition from primary into secondary school.

- **New arts and performance skills**

Participants were introduced to a variety of performance techniques and making skills. They were also asked to devise and design which gave them a real sense of creative ownership over the project.



“It was great for him to have the opportunity to try new things and push the boundaries” (Parent of participant)

- **Peer mentoring and youth leadership**

All participants and facilitators thought the Youth Consultancy program worked very well and was very beneficial for all involved. The Youth Consultants really helped shape the summer school and provided useful insight into what activities they thought would work and which they would enjoy. It also benefited the participants by providing good role models and was a good way to bridge the gap between the young people and the adults.

For the Youth Consultants it was an opportunity to develop their facilitation skills, learning through participating in the planning sessions, the workshops and the sharing as they worked along the creative practitioners. They transformed the skills that they have developed as a participant in previous summer schools, into tangible, marketable skills that will impact upon their future employment potential.

- **A sense of community in the public realm**

By performing at the Mayor's Thames Festival, the participants had the opportunity to take part in an amazing event with their families. There was a real sense of community as they showcased their work and represented the borough of Kidbrooke at this National event. Parents also had the chance to meet the parents of other children who will be attending the same secondary schools as their child.



“It was more personalized with a feeling of belonging. Especially when people asked where the kids are from” (Parent of participant)

4. Conclusions and evaluation

4.1 Partners and facilitators feedback

Partners and facilitators alike thought the A2 Summer School was a big success. They agreed it had really helped develop participant's social skills and confidence and that it had encouraged them and the participants to take creative risks. It was thought that cultural engagement was one of the strongest elements of the summer school and that the workshops developed participants' wider experiences. It helped broaden their horizons and their imaginations.

In terms of suggestions for improving, one practitioner thought that it would have been good for the youth consultants to stay at the end of the day for a debrief, particularly when their ideas had been incorporated into the workshop. And another person thought it might be good to develop the potential for young people leading the learning or taking even greater responsibility for coordinating aspects of the work. However, the general conclusion was that the summer school had a great creative process for the young people.

Comments from the evaluation forms:

"As usual participants came with a form of creativity in mind that they wanted to pursue, but left with many more ideas and inputs"

"There was a constant reflection on process and collaboration"

"Strong social element, soft skills and group work"

"This year so much was achieved because the group worked well right from the beginning."

"I feel like we delivered an exciting and innovative program which has a lot of choice for the participants."

"Youth consultancy was a brilliant idea"

"The summer school helped develop a lot of students confidence"

"Young people were required to collaborate in a fun environment and encouraged to resolve minor conflicts"

“I loved the invention and making something out of nothing aspect of the summer school”

“Everyone was up for a bit of everything even if they’d never done it before or felt nervous”

“It’s a celebration of creativity with a focus and a goal”

4.2 Participants feedback

Feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive. All of them listed the project and the workshop leaders as *very good* or *excellent* and all the outcome indicators were positive.

When asked what they thought of their workshop leaders they all circled ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ and said they felt very supported by them. They all thought they were fun and friendly and full of energy

They all learnt new skills and they said they would like to participate in a project like this again. They listed the things they had found most useful or enjoyable about the summer school:

- Meeting new people
- Developing new arts and performance skills
- Building self confidence
- Feeling better about moving from primary to secondary school
- Working with recycled materials
- Working with professional artists and performers.

Some suggestions for improving the summer school were:

“Building better stuff”

“Make a greater variety of instruments”

“Less hours”

“More art. More creative activities.”

“Longer lunchtime”

“To see more people”

“Not doing so much dancing”

However 70% of the participants said that it couldn’t be improved as it is great as it is.

Comments from the participants’ evaluation forms:

“I think all of it [has helped my self confidence] because I made friends with people going to Tallis”

"It gave me lots more ideas"

"It helped me talk to new people"

"The dance helped [my self confidence] the most"

"I have improved my reaction because we played *SPLAT*"

"I liked the way [the facilitators] communicated with me"

"Everyone's friendly. Best summer school ever. I want to come again. Learnt a lot"

"[What helped my self confidence was] making things and older children (mentors) helping me.

"Its so much fun"

"I loved it!"



"[The project] was very exciting. [The facilitators] really modeled the creative process for the young people" (Head of Arts, Thomas Tallis)