

Good idea – Chinese New Year Celebration

The student liaison officer of Cambridge Regional College won a Faith and Belief Initiative grant to put on a number of events to bring students together, including a Chinese New Year celebration.

What was your project?

Chinese New Year: Year of the Horse 2014. Learners from across the college were invited to engage with the cultural and spiritual elements of the Chinese through a number of entertaining activities.

How did you ensure students were involved in the development of your project?

- Learners from the international school planned and developed the activities that were presented and delivered on the day. The key coordinator and information point was a Chinese national who is working within the college.
- All activities were learner driven with Chinese nationals both participating in activities and manning activity stalls. (calligraphy, dumpling making, Origami, Chinese New Year symbols discussion).
- One activity was specifically popular (Karaoke) Chinese national learners quickly filling spaces to perform in front of their peers.
- English Nationals both participated in the table top Cultural activities and watched the Karaoke.

What impact did this project have on students you work with and within your students' union or college?

Students were given an opportunity to engage with a culture and religion that is

different from the standard English tradition.

Even though CRC is a multinational, diverse campus it is not common for ethnic groups to engage with each other.

During the Chinese New Year celebrations the students that attended were both English and Chinese nationals on courses at the college. The mix of these 2 groups brought about a variety of responses in both groups.

English learners recognised and accommodated the difference in social etiquette, food options and cultural dynamics (sitting in rows not circles with friends, language and manner of verbal interactions, interaction with technology in everyday social interactions).

Tutors who booked their English national groups into the activity did so with the thought that these young people would be undertaking world business and therefore will be working with a diversity of cultures.

This was an opportunity in a safe environment to participate in an activity that showcases and celebrates diversity and difference with unity.

What lessons did you learn in delivering the project that might be useful to other students' unions?

- Pre learning information or sessions about a non English culture (language, history, religion, beliefs) would have been useful prior to the English learner's engagement in the activity.
- It was evident that some English national learners were unprepared for the cultural exchange, however, their tutor did not stay with them to support their experimentation with the activities. Tutors remaining with the groups encourages learners to participate more fully in activities therefore some learners experience may have been altered by this.

Do you have any feedback from participants at your event?

- The tutor from the construction lads who attended stated that the lads had a difficult time at the event, the Chinese learners sat in chairs which were in a line and watched the Karaoke, applauding wildly at all the entertainers whether they were good or not. The tutor stated that the lad felt this was infantile and would not engage in the activity.
- Article in CRC Staff Bulletin: Dear all, As you know, The 2014 Chinese New Year Party was held last Friday in the Student's Lounge. Roughly, 170 students (both international and local) attended the event and from the feedback that I have received really enjoyed themselves. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to say that without your help and support this event wouldn't have been possible and to say a big "thank you" to everyone involved.

Sincerely Yours Gavin Tan (M.G. Tan) International Officer
Cambridge Regional College

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