

Good idea – Christmas celebrations

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 Christmas celebration.

What was your project?

Christmas in the Lounge - this project was designed to give learners from all faculties an opportunity to join up together and enjoy traditional Northern European and Christian activities in a non-formal setting.

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

The Christmas in the lounge project was developed through the ideas of Learner Voice Conference notes and Q&A from April 2013. The CRC SU EC was also involved through ideas and discussion. The Events Management learners from the Arts department also added this project to their discussion circles for ideas and activities.

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

- The Christmas Carol singing used traditional Methodist hymns alongside current young people's songs with modern words.
- Nativity photo shoot activity was used by learners who were both Christian and non-Christian.
- Environmentally friendly Christmas paper printing and decorating was undertaken with great enjoyment by Christians of all denominations and non-Christians alike.

- Santa hat photo shoot was also engaged with by all religious groups involved in the project.
- Children of the world wish tree was engaged with by a limited number of learners who sent Christmas wishes to other learners and children around the world.

Were there any other outcomes from the project?

The Response to the Children around the World display was varied for learners. Some learners did not engage with the display at all. Some read the display, however, did not comment either verbally or on the cards provided.

Some learners (lads especially) talked about both the numbers of children involved in particular activities (Child soldiers, children out of school), however, did not use the cards provided. Some learners (girls particularly) write standard Christmas wishes which suggested a lack of personal reflection about their current circumstances and those of other children in the world.

Finally, there was a group of young women (events Management) who wrote statements that suggested deep reflection on the needs and living circumstances of children in developing or non-developed countries.

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

This activity was fun for learners which was seasonal, fitted with the current advertising, media and shop generated festive themes. However, the activities gave learners the ability to participate in fun, simple and enjoyable activities that were low tech, environmentally friendly and socially engaging.

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

- Simple, group activities that do not specifically use technology are still enjoyed by both young, mainstream 16-18 year olds, those with disabilities and 19+.
- IpadS that are used with multiple groups require supervision at all times.
- Linking all activities to other SU projects being undertaken (fairtrade hot chocolate, tea, coffee, sugar were given as refreshment. Foods that were provided are traditional Northern European thus exposing learners to international foods, traditions and destinations. Landfill and traditional Christmas wrapping paper was discussed when introducing make your own paper and take it home. Waste was recycled as per the CRC Green Waste Management Plan within the college. e-Cards via ipads were available with the comments that this reduced landfill . Unopened leftover food was donated to learners who will receive Christmas Hampers from the Health & Welfare Department. Opened food was donated to the 'Youth Experiencing Hope' Club for their weekly meeting.

Do you have any feedback from participants at your event?

- The majority of participants thanked the organisers for a enjoyable, fun and exciting event.
- Tutors were booking learners in with the idea that the groups were deserving of a break after working very hard and getting assignments in and now being able to both enjoy and take part in fun activities as a reward to hard work.
- The majority of learners wanted group photos with their friends and tutors.
- A large number of e-cards were sent to friends and family.
- 2 groups emailed their elfyourself to the tutor group.
- E-cards were sent by the majority of learners to their tutor groups.

Linking all activities to other SU projects being undertaken e.g. using Fairtrade refreshments, talking about Christmas wrapping, landfill and recycling was useful.