

Adventure in the art world Multicultural children's activity day

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Abstract

Students at the Korpilahti Unit of Humanities Polytechnic in central Finland planned and organised a multicultural activity day, "Adventure in the Art World", for children of different ethnic backgrounds in the town of Jyväskylä on 18th October 2002. The activity day "Adventure in the Art World" was carried out in the Jyväskylä Art Museum. The target group of the event was kindergarten children, aged between 3 and 5 years, of Finnish and immigrant or refugee background.

The partners involved in the project included 12 Humanities Polytechnic students, the Jyväskylä Art Museum and children from kindergartens in Jyväskylä, including children from two multicultural kindergartens.

Humanities Polytechnic students were responsible for the planning and organisation of the entire event. The modules completed by work placement during the project were the following: Cultural Life cycle, Tools for Cultural Production and Public Relations.

The aim of the activities was to provide children from different cultural backgrounds with a chance to meet each other and work together in workshops. Children were encouraged to react to works of art, talk about them and discuss the associations that art created in them. The project promoted equal opportunities for children of both Finnish and other ethnic backgrounds to participate in the activities of "Adventure in the Art World".

The event "Adventure in the Art World" was very successful, attracting 240 children and adults and receiving positive feedback from all participants involved: children, adults and kindergarten teachers. The staff of the art museum was satisfied with the cooperation and contribution provided by the polytechnic students during the project. Representatives of the art museum have expressed their hope to continue cooperation with Humanities Polytechnic in the future.

Aims

The project had several aims, including the following: Firstly it aimed to organise a multicultural activity day for children from different ethnic backgrounds in an art museum in Jyväskylä. In addition works of art and a variety of workshops were used to inspire children to create their own works of art and different cultural objects. The children were also encouraged to react to works of art, talk about them and present the associations art created in them. Furthermore the event aimed at providing

children from different cultural backgrounds with a chance to meet each other and work together in workshops. Finally the event aimed to acquaint children with an art museum.

Contents

The children were offered several opportunities to experience and react to works of art. They were given the opportunity to look, touch and listen, play games and create their own works of art.

The workshops organised included the following:

1. Every child was personally welcomed to the exhibition by a guide dressed as a magpie.
2. Paintings and drawings
 - Items to be touched with blindfolded eyes
 - Items to be smelt
 - Old items and toys
3. Playing traditional Finnish games
4. Story telling
5. Round-the-world-trip
6. Making handicraft

Children were encouraged to interact, to talk about the associations the works of art brought to them and present their own comments on the objects.

Finnish and immigrant children had a chance to meet each other and work in the same workshops. The visit to the art museum and the workshops were pleasant and inspiring and full of new encounters for children at several levels.

Best practice

The Humanities Polytechnic students made an effort to plan and realise the event.

All the partners involved in the project agreed on the fact that it was a good idea to choose an art museum as a meeting place for children of different backgrounds. Both the works of art that were on display and workshops inviting children to activity created a special atmosphere and environment. It was easy for children to approach works of art with the help of Humanities Polytechnic students and participate in different activities that interested them.

As many as 240 children and adults participated in “Adventure in the Art World”, while only 150 were originally expected. An effort was made to inform the public about the event. Invitations were sent to all the kindergartens in Jyväskylä, including three multicultural kindergartens of the latter two participated. Information about the event was also delivered to supermarkets, museums and health centres. Likewise advertisements were published in local and provincial papers. Press releases were sent to radio and television stations.

The multicultural children’s activity day “Adventure in the Art World” received wide publicity: a radio programme about the event was made and national television, TV2, covered the event in its news report.

Feedback

The success and failure of reaching the objectives were monitored in several ways. Both children and organisers were asked to give feedback and evaluation on the event. For the evaluation both questionnaires and observations were used. In addition the Humanities Polytechnic students wrote a learning diary about the event.

Children gave their feedback by attaching a feather on a big magpie, if they were happy with the adventure. More than one hundred feathers were counted at the end of the event. Adults filled in a questionnaire and were asked to evaluate the event. The feedback received from adults was very positive.

The personnel of the art museum was satisfied with the cooperation and contribution provided by the Humanities Polytechnic students during the project. According to them the students showed expertise in working with children and they were able to approach the children both as groups and individually. Representatives of the art museum have expressed their hope to continue cooperation with Humanities Polytechnic in the future.

Evaluation

The project promoted equal opportunities for children of Finnish and other ethnic backgrounds by enabling them to participate in “Adventure in the Art World”.

The event, “Adventure in the Art World” was very successful. It attracted a total of 240 children and adults. The event received positive feedback from all participants: children, adults and kindergarten teachers.

Service

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