

Case study

Harristown Multilingual Project

Details

What:

The Harristown Multilingual Project was a series of drama and dance workshops, with media and visual art components with a group of culturally diverse students of the Harristown State High School Intensive English Centre. Workshops were run by professional artists from Toowoomba's Empire Theatre Youth Arts.

The arts activities focused on drawing out the students' experiences of coming to Australia. With English as their second language, the project sought to develop students' confidence in allowing them to become part of their school and the broader local community.

The students were able to experience a different way of learning with the arts-led program and developed skills that can be used across the curriculum and into their lives outside the school environment.

A final performance night was arranged for the public to share in the stories and experiences of the culturally diverse students within the school.

Due to the success of the project and the relationships established, Harristown SHS will continue to engage with Empire Theatre on future projects.

When:

July 2015 – April 2016

Where:

Harristown State High School - Toowoomba



Workshop with students. Photograph by Optikal Bloc.

Key stats:

- Number of activities: 7
- Number of students: 251
- Number of artists: 6

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$20,000 – Artist in Residence Fund

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Links:

<http://vimeo.com/147405869>

<http://vimeo.com/152486731>

Outcomes

- The students, teachers and artists involved in the project experienced a strong sense of satisfaction and achievement in what was created. The students demonstrated great confidence in sharing their stories with the wider community.
- Student skills in listening, speaking and expression showed improvement throughout the course of the program. The students themselves commented on these improvements.
- The project has created and cemented ties between Harristown State High School and the arts community in Toowoomba, particularly the Empire Theatre. Future projects will emerge as a result of the work completed.
- The filming of the project enabled real stories to be heard by others. It captured a time of transition for the participating students, enabling others to hear, see and feel the challenges facing these young people as they become part of the Australian community. For the students involved it has captured a moment in time in their young lives that they can look back on with a sense of achievement.



Final performance. Photograph by Optikal Bloc.

Learnings and reflections

The project leaders identified the importance of relationships in the success of the project:

There was clearly a need for and a power derived from building relationships with the students so that they felt trust and a growing sense of confidence in themselves and their teachers.

Already having an established relationship with artists, Ari Palani and Jeanette Wedmaier, made collaborating on the project stress free. The students' familiarity with Ari from previous work made this project an extension of what had already been established.

The artists involved in this project were very comfortable working with students whose first language is not English and quickly built relationships of trust with their groups of students.