

Case study

Bridge Two Project

Details

What:

The *Bridge Two Project* was an innovative partnership between the Blue Roo Theatre Company and Clifford Park Special School. Together they devised a performance showcasing the performing skills of the Clifford Park Special School Interactions Learning Cohort students. Over 22 weeks the project engaged students with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who were socially isolated. Twenty percent of the students were also Indigenous.

In collaboration with the students and teachers the artists created a story that was relevant to the students' curriculum. The talents of each individual student were explored in their response to sound and music. They also explored choreography for wheel chair dancing, open string strumming for the guitar, chorus work and percussion playing.

The project culminated in a public performance at the Artworx space at the University of Southern Queensland.

When:

January to June 2016

Where:

Toowoomba



Clifford Park Special School - Interactions Learning Cohort students. Photo: Blue Roo Theatre Co Inc.

Key stats:

- 2 artists
- 25 students
- 20 educators

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$20,000 – Artist in Residence Program

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Links:

www.bluerootheatre.org.au

Outcomes

- The students in this cohort are significantly non-verbal. The arts team were able to show students' abilities in a different way and demonstrate learning had occurred.
- There were personal growth and wellbeing outcomes for each student. This included reduced anxiety and improved self-esteem and confidence. This added confidence from the project will hopefully translate to ongoing positivity in day to day living.
- Many of the students in this group had never been to a theatre before as a member of an audience let alone perform on stage to a full house. The pleasure of the students sharing their performance with their audience was clear and family and friends saw their loved one in a totally different light.
- The project evolved from a collaboration to a theatre collective. All the teachers and most of the teacher aides took part in the performance.
- The educators learned strategies and techniques that they will continue to use. For example the circle work built students' capacity in focus, complicity, communication, imagination, rhythm and stage discipline.



Clifford Park Special School - Interactions Learning Cohort students. Photo: Blue Roo Theatre Co Inc.

Learnings and Reflections

Mutual respect and the strength of the partnership were identified as elements of the success of this project:

The partnership with Blue Roo Theatre Company and Clifford Park Special School worked extremely well. This was due to the combination of experience, respect of professional disciplines and a shared complicity to showcase the students in positive surroundings.

In reflection it is critical to build a strong relationship with the school. It is important to note that Blue Roo was a guest of Clifford Park and were invited in. Respect of the place of learning is an initial starting point for guests.

Meetings with the head and the five teachers of the cohort took place before the interaction with the students. Blue Roo shared a potential vision of the project and the teachers shared their knowledge of their class of students and a candid and frank discussion followed. It is important to highlight that routine is critical in every school and perhaps more so in a special school. For some students it is the only routine in their lives. A suggested timetable for the drama project of each Wednesday was shaped together with the teachers. It was critical to the success of the project that Blue Roo worked within the frame of the timetable.

The success was also due to combining the weekly action plan with the professional development and collaboration offered by the project rather than separating out these two processes.