**Limitless Best Practice Guide**

**Project: Under the Sea**

1. **Outline the parameters of the workshop**

**Age range of participants**

7-9 years old

**Length of workshop**

Group 1 - 30mins, Group 2 - 45mins

**Setting/host for the workshop**

The selected school is called Isobel Mair School which located in Newton Mearns. This is a new relationship for RCS and the practitioners.

**Number of creative practitioners**

3 creative practitioners (2 facilitators, 1 musician)

**Number of participants**

Group 1- 8 participants, Group 2- 16 participants

**Relationship with participants, was it new, had you worked together before?**

New relationship with participants

**Overview of their place on the spectrum (verbal/non verbal)**

Group 1- Class Lewis is made up of students on the severe end of the spectrum. They tend not to communicate verbally but rather through Macaton and other visual signals like sign cards and gesture. Three carers accompany the class of 8 and their teacher.

Group 2- Within classes Staffa and Jura there were students on with ASD and other pupils with other conditions like Down Syndrome. The level of Autism ranged from moderate to severe, with some pupils communicating through visual languages such as signs and Macaton, however the majority were able to communicate verbally. Two carers accompanied the class teacher for the 16 children.

**Who from the host did you collaborate with in the design or delivery of the workshop**

We endeavoured to collaborate with the host school and had an initial meeting before the project. However, the staff at Isobel Mair School were keen to hand us full ownership over the project’s planning. Despite us asking for their input, Deputy Head Nick Crossan trusted our instincts and gave us a certain level of freedom.

1. **Dos and Don’ts**

**Planning:**

* You and your plan must be flexible and responsive to direction of the group.
* Prepare a clear, considered and varied bank of activities and exercises to use at your disposal. However, be prepared to adapt these and change direction during the workshop. Have more in your toolbox than you might need (you can never have too much to work with).
* Don’t be afraid to take your time during exercises and expand certain aspects.
* A quiet atmosphere doesn’t mean unresponsive.
* Provide the class with as much information as possible prior to the workshops. What will you be doing? Who will be there? Etc. Try to be specific and avoid uncomfortable surprises. If possible, offer this information in a way that is a part of the drama world you are introducing i.e. aesthetic.
* Take guidance from your host on the workshop’s time period. For these specific groups, 30-45 minutes is a considerable amount of time.
* Memorise your plan prior to the workshop, avoid bringing in notebooks, workshop plans, clipboards etc.
* Take the classes daily/weekly routine into consideration.

**The Practitioners:**

* Have a clear understanding of everyone’s roles and purposes within the workshop. What do you offer as a unit? What specialist skills do you offer as an individual? How do you collaborate and function as a team in this space?

**The Physical Space:**

* Do check the conditions of the room and how you control or adapt the environment.
* Be aware of what you have made available in the space, and how those stimuli are revealed and introduced to the workshop environment and the drama (nothing is untouchable).

**Communication:**

* Do at least one site visit prior to the project. It’s important to have a level of familiarity between yourself, the group(s), the staff and the venue.
* Don’t be afraid to ask for what you need, i.e. resources, space choice, additional support.
* Know the correct language used in relation to the pupils and have a prior understanding of their needs.
* Have a brief understanding of the host school and their practices and ethos.
* Always keep a clear line of communication between the practitioners and the staff during workshop time. Make sure you check in with each other when working in smaller groups or individually. Don’t be afraid to be straight forward with what you need to support yourself and the pupil.
* Make sure everything you bring into the space is necessary to the drama world and isn’t a precious object to you.
* Make sure everything you involve is safe, clean, robust and non-toxic. Sensory exploration is crucial for children with ASD.
* Create an environment that has lots of opportunities to explore, but isn’t overwhelming. Set and objects involved in the workshop must be able to move and be interacted with independently by participants.
* Use soft and gentle elements, i.e. sound, light, texture.

**Support Staff / Carers:**

* Be sure to involve staff and carers as much as possible, however be clear of their role within the drama environment.
* Don’t be afraid to ask staff and carers for clarification, but do remain a confident and independent tutor.
* The staff might not have a clear prior understanding of a drama environment; others’ doubt might be present so remain patient and confident in your ideas, skills and approach. They are an expert in this specific environment, you are an expert in your field and craft.
* Acknowledge the close and specific relationships the staff have established with individuals, give time for the dynamic to change on your introduction.

**Content:**

* Use musical aspects as an engagement tool if the skills of your group permit.
* Don’t underestimate the abilities of your group; give them challenges.
* Allow your content to support both moments for one-to-one interaction and moments for the group to explore as a unit.
* Create content that utilises the physical environment you’ve created.
* Offer content that is age and ability appropriate based on your knowledge of the group.
1. **A final summary**

Key pieces of advice for other practitioners:

1. Don’t be tentative; be confident in taking risks.

2. Have plans A, B and C (and understand these are subject to change).

3. Relax, be human and enjoy yourself.

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