

Teacher report back

Week 1.

The 'getting to know you exercise' in the beginning certainly eased any fears if there were any amongst the children! This was the ideal start to the programme for when the serious business got under way the children were relaxed and ready for action.

The warming up exercises to the music gave the children a feel for Spanish dancing.

It was interesting to note how some children battled with the clapping of hands and at the same time tapping their feet - but they soon managed to master this skill. When they managed to master the skill, their faces broke out in huge grins. What a boost to self-esteem! This indicates that this type of dancing is so beneficial to help develop co-ordination.

The enjoyment was clearly visible on their faces and they were soon allowing their bodies to move with the music. I was also taken aback by the sheer concentration and focus of the children - they were totally swept off their feet!

They did not realize how hard they were actually working because they were having so much fun! They all mentioned how they looked forward to their next session and this enthusiasm was clearly shown at the next session when they had remembered the steps and some had reported that they had practices on their own! That is definite proof of enjoyment!

I really feel that if this type of dancing was introduced into the school curriculum, the concentration levels of the learners would improve! What gets into the muscles, gets into the minds!

Week 2

You can see by the way the children rush to the hall that they are enjoying the lessons. When they do their dancing, I feel as though I am being drawn into their dance just by their involvement, enthusiasm and movement.

I am amazed to hear their input and thoughts about the dancing - they are so open about their feelings.

When the group were split into two groups - they did not realize at first that the clappers had to work just as hard at focusing as the dancers. Some battled with this. This was quite an intense workout!

Only when I tried one of the stepping movements did I realize how difficult it was to remember and to master - this made me even more impressed with how the children have coped and done so well!

I am so amazed to see how some of the learners who have experienced learning a difficulty in class but here in dancing, have actually excelled! Wow what a boost to their self-esteem!

Firstly, I was impressed at how keen and willing they were to volunteer to dance in the small groups and then how the 'spectators' encouraged and helped the dancers by giving hand signals ~ true teamwork.

Lovely to see that all are participating fully in the lessons even if they are battling to master some of the movements! Again - their self confidence has grown!

The vocal involvement really stirred them up!

Week 3.

This form of dancing for learners is such a good exercise/regime for the whole body. **Physically** – the movements can be quite demanding and tiring – and the sessions have shown that some of the children are not ‘fit’ and not so agile – this quite scary for their age – they tend to lead such sedentary lives nowadays! – **Mentally**- the thinking, recalling and memorizing.

It has been so apparent that some learners have seldom been involved in an exercise/routine where free movement of their bodies is encouraged, and therefore are very stiff in their execution of the dance steps. Creative thought in some learners has just not been developed. They are in a rut!! No deviation from a set path.

Whereas some of the children thoroughly enjoyed the chance to break free and experiment with their own ideas. Lovely to see how they encouraged one another.

One boy really attracted my attention – Zothaba.

Zothaba does not always feature academically and his physical build restricts his success on the sports field. He then tends to seek attention in other ways normally in a negative way and therefore is often in trouble.

During the free creative period, he focused and was doing some amazing rhythmic steps with arm movements as well. He has a natural way in his dancing. When asked to show his steps his grin stretched from ear to ear – what a positive boost to his self esteem!

The children were really excited to learn the new steps and clearly showed their joy and self satisfaction when they had mastered them.

Week 4

This session was the cherry on top of the cake for me!

The children are so much more confident. They come out after a dancing period oozing confidence and as one learner mentioned, this confidence has overflowed into other lessons.

One good aspect that has definitely developed is the support for one another. This support was visibly shown when the group of girls, who battle to remember the full routine, performed. At one stage they had lost the sequence and at that moment the group of boys sitting on the side joined in with the clappers, and this encouraged the girls to continue and they were able to complete the dance. This spontaneous action brought a lump into my throat, I was really touched.

The comments from the children show how much they have learnt and gained. The comment "the dancing has allowed the inner person to come out" really sums up the true value of the lessons.

I am so pleased that the dancing session did eventually get under way for I can see how these children have benefited and have gained so much. A big thank you to you Linda for your perseverance and determination - you have brought into the Grade 7's fun enjoyment and most important factor:- you can work hard and still have fun!