

Summary Report

FIRHOUSE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SOCIAL INCLUSION FILM PROJECT

a participatory arts and film documentary project
exploring issues of importance to young people from new
communities

September 2010 – January 2011



Report compiled and written by Victoria Durrer, Youth Arts Coordinator, South Dublin County Council



Office of the Minister for Integration
Oifig an Aire Lánpháirtíochta



*Project Funded by the Office of the Minister for Integration and South Dublin County Council's Social Inclusion Unit, Community Services Department
Project led by South Dublin County Council's Arts Office and Supported by the Arts Council, Dodder Valley Partnership, POBAL, RAPID, and the Dormant Accounts Board*

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Funding from the Office of the Minister for Integration and South Dublin County Council's Social Inclusion Unit, Community Services Department, allowed for 23 transition year video production students in Firhouse Community College to work over a 15 week period with filmmakers Shane Hogan and Tom Burke of Areaman Productions and editor Richard Gibb of Blink Media to create two films that considered issues concerning the integration of young people from new communities. More specifically, the two films created, entitled 'Animal Testing Centre' and 'New Kids on the Block' took a



"I liked interviewing people and learning about their stories"

Student

creative approach and involved exploring the changing perceptions of Ireland shared by young people from new communities since arriving into the Country. In addition, the films explored feelings related to integration within a school and youth-focused community in particular. The films won awards in 2011. 'Animal Testing Centre' and 'New Kids on the Block' were both presented with Social Inclusion Awards by South Dublin County Council's Social Inclusion Unit. 'Animal Testing Centre' also won Special Mention for ages 14 – 18 in NOISE Flicks Youth Film Festival.

The project was managed by South Dublin County Council's Arts Office in conjunction with Karen Scally, video production and arts teacher at Firhouse Community College. In addition to the funding provided by the Office of the Minister for Integration and South Dublin County Council's Social Inclusion Unit, the use of film equipment funded by POBAL, RAPID, Dodder Valley Partnership, the Dorman Accounts Board and South Dublin County Council's Arts Office was made available to the project in addition to staff time for management of the project and additional funding support for the filmmakers facilitating the creative process.

Firhouse Community College is a non-selective, co-educational and multi-denominational school with students from over 30 different countries attending.

RATIONALE:

The rationale for establishing such a project with South Dublin County Council's Arts Office and Firhouse Community College and including the involvement of Areaman Productions and Blink Media were centred on previous arts and creative work carried out in the school. Previous projects carried out with students were seen to address social issues related to individual and community identity. The funding was a perfect

match for the diverse student population of the school as well as the social issues concerning these students coupled with a growing interest from teachers and students to become involved with arts projects with professionals.

Details related to project rationale for individual parties are listed below:

The school

- To explore issues related to new communities within the school
- To explore the experiences of students from new communities within the school
- To explore the experiences of students as members of new communities within Ireland
- To experience a new approach on the video production module and learn different ways to communicate filmmaking skills
- To gain new motivation and enthusiasm for the module through working with professional filmmakers
- To assist students in producing video footage that they have good control over, that portrays their ideas and that they are satisfied with what they complete
- To have an opportunity to be more flexible on locations films are shot in through having another person involved in the project
- To gain experience with working with new types of film equipment

South Dublin County Council

- To provide funding for a project that would promote integration amongst young people from new communities together with their peers
- To provide opportunities for professional development for both teacher and artist
- To provide students the opportunity to work with a professional filmmaker
- To promote other filmmaking opportunities to young people
- To provide an opportunity for young people to explore social issues of importance to them via the creative process

Creative Facilitators

- To gain experience in assisting students to develop a documentary based on an issue of importance to them
- To gain experience teaching practically; seeing improvement among participants; gain experience working with and teaching a younger group of students
- To gain further experience working within a different type of school setting (secondary school) and exposure to new ideas from enthusiastic students

OVERALL PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- To utilise the creative medium of documentary filmmaking in order to
 - Provide young people with an opportunity to explore and capture issues related to new communities within the school

- Provide young people with an opportunity to explore and capture the experiences of students from new communities within the school
- Provide young people with an opportunity to explore and capture the experiences of students as members of new communities within Ireland
- To assist the teacher in seeing another approach to the film module and to learn different ways to communicate filmmaking skills
- For the students and teacher to gain new motivation and enthusiasm for the module through working with a filmmaker
- To assist students in producing video footage that they have good control over, that portrays their ideas and that they are satisfied with what they complete
- To have an opportunity to be more flexible on locations films are shot in through having another person involved in the project
- To gain experience (Teacher and students) with working with new types of film equipment
- To provide opportunities for professional development for both teacher and artist
- To provide students the opportunity to work with a professional filmmaker
- To promote other filmmaking opportunities to young people

TIMEFRAME:

Project development: March - September 2010

Project delivery: September – December 2010, 14 weeks

Project Showcase/Film Screening: January 2011

Delivery methods consisted of exploration of the theme of social inclusion, presentations on documentary filmmaking, screening of documentary film previews and hands-on activities. Each session had lecture/discussion and hands-on activity.



“I liked the fact that it was something different than what we’ve ever done in any classes. It was also a great challenge for me and I learned a lot.”

Student

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Monitoring and evaluation of the project was carried out by South Dublin County Council's Youth Arts Coordinator.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES:

- To assess the learning gained by students in filmmaking
- To assess the level of enjoyment had by students in filmmaking
- To assess awareness of other opportunities in film by students
- To investigate the experience of professional development had by teacher and artists
- To assess awareness of social inclusion and integration issues by students

METHOD

The methodology employed for this evaluation included a number of approaches in order to strengthen the validity of the findings. Approaches included observation, interviews and questionnaires. 1 focus group discussion will be held with the students at the final screening of the films to gather their reflections on the project upon completion.

Direct observation was taken as an approach, which involves attending a workshop or workshops. This method allows for the evaluator to gain an understanding of workshop delivery as well as the interaction occurring and relationships developing between students, teacher and facilitators.

In addition, students were asked to complete brief questionnaires before the start of the project to assess their expectations and interest levels. Questionnaires were also completed by students at the mid-point of the project to assess learning and areas for possible improvement on project delivery.

Regular meetings were scheduled with the teacher and artists involved in delivering the project in order to assess learning and needs of the students as well as the appropriateness of structures in place for project delivery.

Below is a summary of the methods undertaken:

- Observation of each workshop delivered for the project
- Questionnaires with young people (2 different times)
- Regular meetings with artists and teacher (4)
- Interview/discussion with both artist and teacher at conclusion of project (to be carried out)
- Focus group activity with young people at conclusion of project (to be carried out)

FINDINGS

Young people involved in the project gained exposure to and new skills in filmmaking. It should be noted that the idea to focus on the experiences of young people from new communities as the overt topic of the film 'New Kids on the Block' came from the students themselves. While social inclusion was introduced as a discussion point for students in generating ideas for their films,

the ideas selected by the students were their own. The film 'Animal Testing Centre', while not overtly concentrating on integration, takes a creative approach to the examination of students as 'animals' within the school, a 'testing centre'. The ways in which students interact with one another in the school environment was chosen as a topic to explore. Further discussion around these issues will be carried out during the final focus group meeting with students in January 2011.



"...it allowed me to see a detailed view of how the film industry works and how the crew are responsible for a finished film."

Student

Below is a summary of findings from the project focusing on youth experiences and the experiences of teachers and artists.

YOUTH EXPERIENCE:

- Students exhibited great sensitivity when approaching their peers to discuss issues such as integration and new communities
- Students learned about the experiences their fellow students from new communities have in Ireland
- Students were provided an opportunity to express their own ideas
- Students feel they have gained a lot of learning regarding important issues to consider when filming: sound, white balance and focus
- Many students felt they worked well together as a team and learned new ways in which to work as a team
- Some students feel they have gained new skills in interviewing and an awareness of the importance of interview styles
- Hands-on work with the equipment has been a highlight for all the students, but most students wish they had more hands-on time with the equipment
- A few students have a greater understanding of documentary overall
- Many students are interested in applying what they have learned into their own documentaries and want to make sure they are good films
- Students were able to work well in a team and appeared to enjoy doing so

- Students shared and took up responsibility for the filming days well
- There was some disappointment about not being able to shoot the film off the school premises, this was due to one of the film locations becoming unavailable
- Some students would have liked more time to develop their documentary ideas
- All students seemed to have had fun on the project

TEACHER AND ARTIST EXPERIENCE:

- Communication between teacher and artists was felt to be good. All involved found the project to be well organized and enjoyable
- Professional development was gained by all involved. The teacher gained new awareness of technical points in filmmaking and the filmmakers involved gained new skills in teaching for a younger audience
- The artists involved gained experience in teaching and working with young people
- The project provided a new opportunity in which artists and teachers could work and learn from young people
- 23 students was a very large group to work with on a film project, and it was a challenge for the filmmakers to share knowledge of filmmaking with such a large group. However teachers and filmmakers did an incredible job at creating a strong structure in which to work with the students. Hands-on work was coupled with presentations in a way where all students got to try to work with the cameras. Dividing the class into two film crews also allowed students to gain more direct experience in filmmaking
- Ensuring a balance of technical skills with theory was challenging, however observation of sessions and the resulting film shoot sessions with students demonstrated that much was achieved in how the module was delivered.
- Arrangements for hire of film equipment were a challenge. Filmmakers were solely responsible for picking up and returning equipment from South Dublin County Council for each weekly session. Sharing responsibility with the teacher may need to be considered for future projects in order to lessen the burden and ensure that the equipment is still made available for use by other groups.

LEARNING:

Below is some learning gained from the project that may be applied to future work.

- The project has demonstrated that documentary filmmaking is a strong medium in which to explore issues of integration in a creative, informal, fun and relaxed manner
- As the students from the project wish to screen the films created not only within the school but also in wider local and national youth film festivals, documentary filmmaking can be perceived as a strong medium the experiences of young people from new communities can be shared widely. There is an opportunity to use not only the process of youth-made films as a learning experience centered

on integration, but also the finished film itself as a starting point for exploring the issues of integration

- Documentary filmmaking is a strong medium in which to explore, capture and record the experiences of young people from new communities
- While the structure of the project was strong, 23 students is a large group with which to work on a film project. A smaller group would have allowed for more hands-on work in filmmaking. That said, the structure developed for this particular project is applicable for other groups of similar size. The opportunities presented through this project provided students with a 'taste' for filmmaking and information on how to access other opportunities existing in filmmaking outside the school
- While the balance of hands-on work with introduction to styles of documentary was good, more learning on idea development, research, preparation, and interviewing was needed. The time frame of the project affected preparation time, however, a heavy amount of focus was placed on technical learning over documentary/idea learning

Upon screening of the film in January 2011, additional findings and reflections gathered from students, teachers and artist will be added to this report.



"I liked everything in the course, it was very fun, the equipment was cool and high tech, the people were very friendly. I loved filming day. I thought we worked well together."

Student