

Morris Federation – Education Case Study

Education Case Study:	The creation and development of a sword dance club and tournament - Larks Hill Sword Squad
Name:	Sally Smith
Age ranges, location & date(s) taught:	
<p>Ages 7-11, school Years 3-6 (Key Stage 2) Pontefract, West Yorkshire From 2007 to 2012</p>	
Funding (if any)	
<p>School club money paid for 2 sets of swords Parents contributed for coach transport (as they would a school trip) or supported by driving their own children. Parents/club money bought kit/t-shirts I had my own set of hose pipes for teaching beginners</p>	
How and why did you start?	
<p>I was a Year 6 teacher at Larks Hill Community Primary School in Pontefract. All teachers had to run at least one after school club (I ended up doing lots!) I thought children would like doing rapper dancing as I'd already taught it in one-off lessons or clubs at other schools so offered that as a club.</p> <p>These things are very easy to start when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have knowledge of how to teach and dance a tradition • You are a teacher at the school so can usually have freedom to run clubs • You have some equipment to get going <p>It's even better if you can find others who are already or would like to start similar in another school. Then you can make links, go to events together or make your own event.</p>	
What were your goals and how well were they achieved?	
<p>My informal goals in my head were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for children to have a go at something new • do something active • have fun! • learn more about their traditions • discover the benefits of being in a team • performance experience • meeting children from other schools/areas • see where it leads us... <p>The club took off from the very first moment. There was a core of about 10 or more girls (yes, I'm afraid all girls although the boys did love it when I did it as part of normal PE lessons)</p> <p>We started with using lengths of hosepipe, an idea I'd created previously from needing something bendy but strong to teach sword dancing safely to a lot of children at once. We then progressed onto swords. Everyone learned a form of the Newbiggin dance which is great for beginners. They were also able to put their own ideas into things such as the beginning and ends of the dance, creating a team name and a kit. For music I used a CD with something exciting and often used a particular track by the band Bedlam which had infectious energy</p>	

which spilled into the dances and performance.

Early on, I introduced the idea of a performance, firstly in front of the school in an assembly and then school events and local events. This gave them something to work towards and by 2008 we were able to take part in a town event, the Dancing England Rapper tournament and the International Sword Spectacular in York alongside an adult UK team and a team from the USA.

Some Highlights:

2008 appeared as a news item on Calendar local TV news and in local press

2008 performing at Dancing England Rapper Tournament in Liverpool

2008 Dancing at the International Sword Spectacular in York with a team from the USA, including school visits.

2008-2011 Four Inter-school rapper championships sponsored by the Demon Barbers

https://www.the-nut.net/articles/demon_barber_chmshp2008.php

<http://www.thedemonbarbers.co.uk/inter-school-rapper-sword-championships-2011/>

At the end of the teaching, was the teaching passed on, or was there any other type of continuation?

Older girls taught younger girls and some became quite proficient but at Primary age, unless there's someone to continue at secondary school, it will finish.

Once I had left the school after over ten years there, the sword dancing stopped.

Health and Safety

1. The golden rule in rapper dancing is 'Never Let Go!' this is paramount when using real swords. Make sure this is ingrained in all the children do.
2. Start children on hosepipes and move to real swords with an adult closely supervising their use until you are happy that they can use them safely.
3. Have first aid provision in place – the highest risk is being hit on the head with a low or 'twanging' sword. The school will have procedures for head injuries and parents will need to be informed if this happens. If you choose to teach tumbling, the falling on the head is a serious risk consideration.
4. The RFU have created some great resources on concussion including this video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gfD-JFf9s>
5. If introducing tumbling over the swords I introduced this in stages.
 - a. Me holding onto the child (along with their 'tumbling post' team mates) so they didn't fall
 - b. Both 'posts' holding the tumblers hand whilst on their shoulder.
 - c. At Primary ages I always kept the rule of the tumbler leaving go of their swords in order to staying holding securely in the tumble.

NB: Some people do use mat underneath which can help but can also give a false sense of security to the tumbler meaning 'it's OK to fall'.

6. Only attempt tumbling if you feel confident – alternatives are adding a forward roll or a held jump or a cartwheel.
7. Involve children in a risk assessment of a standard dance and any new activity so that they understand the issues.

Curriculum Links

- History: a local history study/an element of: a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066
- KS 1,2 & 3 PE: dance (compulsory element)
- Music: *'appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians'*
Children can also be involved in actually playing for the dance too and can include calling-on songs making singing a part of it.
- English: Spoken language and drama (because of the spoken and introductions elements)
'They should have opportunities to improvise, devise and script drama for one another and a range of

audiences, as well as to rehearse, refine, share and respond thoughtfully to drama and theatre performances.'

This could be built on to do research and a presentation on sword dancing.

- RSHE: teamwork, resilience, cultural development, healthy lifestyle.

Useful document:

https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Dance_Education_Governors_Trustees_0.pdf

Special Needs Provision

- This is a physical activity and adjustment may need to be made for inclusion of a physical disability e.g making a set wider and adapting to include a wheelchair user taking into consideration making it safe for ankles/legs of others. Some children may need adapted swords/hosepipes if they have trouble gripping as this is the golden rule 'never let go'.
- Adapt the choice of figures for what children can manage.
- Sometimes children benefit from similar needs being grouped together in the same team.
- You may need additional adults – or even one for each team.
- Children that might not manage a whole dance can do some of the dance as a 6-piece and also find a role as a character.

Useful document:

<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13804/1/physicaleducationpe.pdf>

Lessons learned & advice to others

- Consider Health and Safety. Don't let it scare you but take it seriously and actively include the children.
- Make sure the children have ownership of the thing you are doing. Let them choose their team names, kit and create new figures with your guidance. Bits of kit can be picked up cheaply from discount stores.
- Be loose on 'tradition' it's a living thing and I'd rather children enjoy doing sword dancing or morris with jazz hands than not do it at all. It's got to be fun and relevant for them even though you can teach 'golden rules' and how it has been done in the past. Use great music, even if recorded music.
- Have a logo for the team. T-shirts make it a real 'thing'.
- Give them chances to perform at local events, school events, festivals etc to give it purpose.
- Get the parents involved in the travelling to performing etc and let them know how well their children are doing. I used to do termly newsletters.
- Tell the local press about it and provide school news.
- Make links with others doing similar whether that be in real life or on zoom and even overseas!

Photo

Please add a photo or other resources to go with the case study.

Pontefract & Castleford Thursday March 27 2008

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Sword dance glory

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Sword dance glory

TALENTED youngsters who are linked with swords, and an announcer who is like a ring-master, wowed seasoned sword dancers at a national competition in Liverpool.

A team of sword dancers from years seven to 11 at Larks Hill Junior and Infant School were awarded best under 18 team this weekend – having only started dancing in January.

Year six teacher Sally Atkinson, who has been a sword dancer since she was a child, introduced classes this year and says she's been impressed by the girls' talent.

She said: "They were the only school team there and were the talk of the competition. Everyone kept telling me that they have lots of potential."

Sword dancing is a traditional English dance particular to the north.

Miss Atkinson said: "It's a fast and furious dance with five people

who are linked with swords, and an announcer who is like a ring-master.

"The dancing is quite difficult to do, especially for children because the swords are made from sprung steel and are hard to bend so it's usually not until you're a teenager before you become confident at it.

"The girls had a brilliant time and a really keen to enter the competition in 2009."





Declaration

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Submission

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