

DT Club Review – Unit 2 Part E

The DT Club for year 7's was a great success. We had a large number of people sign up so we had to split them into two groups of 12, running one in one term and the other the term after. The girls were all very keen to get started and despite a couple of no-shows and the odd absence, the group were generally consistent in showing up each week and clearly enjoyed the club greatly. Over the course of about 10-12 weeks, the participants were successful in designing and making plywood boxes with acrylic lids featuring a design of their choice, having only a half an hour session per week.

The most enjoyable part of running this club was getting to know the year 7's and getting to teach them things they were genuinely interested to know. Part of the reason all three of us enjoyed running the club was because we all wished we had had the option of a DT club when we were in year 7, and I love how popular the club was. Year 7's are really good fun to teach and as well as looking up to us, we developed great relationships with them and got to know them fairly well over the course of the club.

The most challenging thing was probably that the first group we had all knew each other well and were very rowdy as a result. I got very good at getting their attention by the end of the club, mainly due to my ability to raise my voice way beyond what is expected of me! Nonetheless, trying to teach young girls how to be careful with hand saws and the like becomes very difficult when they aren't listening to you or are messing around and we did have to make it clear to them on several occasions that if they continued to mess around, they would not be allowed back. This isn't something any of us wanted to do, or that any of us enjoyed doing, but it became necessary to ensure the safety of the other members of the club. As well as this, we were the founders of this club so there was no one with prior experience to give us advice or help us like we have done with the new Lower 6 girls this year who are running the club alongside us.

The public sharing at fresher's fair at the beginning of this year was more of a success than we could ever have imagined. As well as the posters from last year, we also made a sandwich board this year which we took turns wearing and walking around shouting over the noise at year 7's to get them to sign up to the club! Everyone was impressed with what the year 7's had made the year before and many of the older girls wanted to sign up to the club too. The leadership skills involved to pull this off included encouraging the new girls to join the club, being able to articulate clearly what the club entails to large groups and what the girls would learn and gain from it and drawing from our own experience of DT and our love of the subject to encourage people to want to take part. We also spoke to a lot of the teachers and older students about the club, and received a lot of praise for what we had put together. Overall we had 50 girls sign up to the club which, despite being amazing, meant we had to send a lot away. See pictures of this sharing in the photo section of the page.

The feedback from the two groups we had was generally positive, and all of them were keen to take their projects home to show their parents. Any negative feedback we got was usually during the club itself rather than after, but it was very minimal and consisted of complaints that something was too hard, or that they weren't allowed to use the glue themselves. The gluing situation is not something we can change, but we have done our best to make sure the girls don't make their designs too complicated and have told them if we think they are going to struggle to realise their design.

Running this club has taught me a lot about leadership. I have learnt that although it is important to maintain discipline, it needs to be done without coming across like a teacher, because although the year 7's are young, they aren't young enough to know that you aren't a teacher and that you shouldn't be treating them like a student. I have also learnt that it is very important with this age group that they like to be treated as adults and that treating them like children will only cause complaining. Leadership is also not

all about making sure they are doing what they're told, it is also important to establish a good relationship with the participants, because if they respect you as a person as well as the leader of the club, it makes running the club a lot easier.

Communication was key for this club to work efficiently. With three of us running the club and all circulating around the same group of children, it became clear early on that we had to agree a method of doing things and we had to be aware of what others were saying. For example, one girl wasn't sure what to do, so one of the other girls running the club showed her how to do it. When I went over to her a few minutes later, I could see an easier way to achieve what she was doing so I explained it to her. A while later I went back to see she had gone back to how she was doing it before, and it turned out that my friend and I had different methods of doing something and hadn't discussed this beforehand so kept changing what this girl was doing to match how we would do it. We soon found out what each of our key strengths were and by the start of the second group we were able to get the girl the correct help from whichever of the three of us had the most experience with the area.

Although planning is important, when we started this club we had no idea how quickly the girls would work, what problems they would encounter and what they would find particularly easy or difficult. As everyone naturally works at a different speed, it became hard to keep everyone at the same level of progress throughout the club and it was only when they had multiple things they could choose to do that everyone maintained a similar level of progress. Therefore we have had to adapt our plan to each group as it varies all the time. It is important to have a plan, but it would have been detrimental to the club and the projects if we had been completely set on sticking to the plan, and the work would not have reached the level it did.

Despite being quite far from my overall art form of technical theatre, this has taught me a lot about prop making in particular. I have realised that regardless of the skill sets of a group of people, if they are all trying to make the same thing, there will never be two that are the same. I have also learnt that it can be hard to teach people a skill such as making in wood or acrylic, as it is something that doesn't come naturally to some people. However, the quality of the work produced by the girls who came to the club has shown me that you can do anything if you put your mind to it and work hard, whether you have experience in it or not.

Next time I would run the club with smaller groups of people, because it means you can spend more time with each individual rather than having to spread your time making sure everyone gets seen and is ok. I would also encourage the participants to design lids that they can make rather than needing our help cutting out their designs.