

Take your partner

Cawley Lane Parents' Group



Background to the group, where did they meet, who they are, ethnicity, gender, how many were in the group and how the group got started?

The Cawley Lane Parents' Group are an existing group run by a Community Development Worker based at Cawley Lane School, where they meet on a weekly basis. The Cawley Lane group are unusual in that they have communication difficulties due to English being their second language. The group is made up of 12 Asian ladies varying in age from their early 20s to their 50s and they all have children or grandchildren at Cawley Lane.

What was the course called and why was it chosen? How long did the course last?

The original project was a partnership with the school, so, over a six week period, the group met for four sessions in Heckmondwike library and for two sessions at the school. At the end of the six weeks, the group was disappointed to be finishing, so it has been continued as a monthly session.

The course they took part in was a branch of The Reading Agency's "Six Book Challenge". This is an initiative aimed at promoting reading to people who can read, but feel they don't have the time, motivation or confidence. Despite the obvious communication difficulties (limited abilities to speak, read or understand English) it was felt that the group would still be able to complete the challenge, they would just read very simple books.

What did they do?

The first session included an introduction to the library, including a tour, joining up each group member to the library and the opportunity to choose some books. The project was then explained to the group and they were given their reading diaries. Each week, the group took part in either a craft activity (felt making, book making) or a reading and writing activity or word game. Every session also included time to return their books, choose some more, write them in their reading diaries and to spend some time reading with the staff and members of the group who had more advanced reading skills.

**How did it work?**

In addition to two members of library staff running the sessions, the community worker (who runs the parents' group) is bilingual and is able to translate elements of the session when required. Some of the group members have more advanced English than others, so the ladies sometimes pair up and help each other.

Was it successful? What worked well?

Although all staff involved, both at the library and the school, have been passionate, the group has really excelled due to the enthusiasm of the ladies who attend. The group members have all improved in their reading ability and general confidence. One lady in particular has developed a greater self-belief.

The final session was run as a celebration event at Cawley Lane School. Another group of learners who had finished their course shared the event. Each group member had prepared some home-cooked traditional Asian food, which served as a talking point as the group had to use English to explain the food to the library staff.

At the end of the celebration, the certificates were handed out for the successful completion of the Six Book Challenge. The certificates validated the hard work that the ladies had put in and gave them a sense of pride.

Were there any other partners involved?

It was a partnership event between The Reading Agency, Kirklees Libraries (with the group based in Heckmondwike Library) and Cawley Lane School.

Can the group be sustained? If so, how?

Due to staffing levels, the group cannot be run on a weekly basis, but now runs as a monthly session. Close links with the school are maintained and the group are encouraged to come to the library in between monthly meetings.

Did anything surprise you?

The level of enthusiasm the ladies demonstrated and the lack of inhibition they demonstrated in reading very basic books with the library staff, were refreshing and encouraging to see. There were concerns that they may have felt embarrassed about reading books for young children but this was not a problem. The group were proud to have achieved as much as they had.

What did you learn?

The staff have had their eyes opened to the positive difference that can be made by running a group such as this one. Lessons were learnt about how to use activities to create a relaxed environment so educational elements can be successfully incorporated.

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