

Inspiration:

Evaluation Workshop

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A Creative & Participatory Evaluation Workshop for Facilitators and Youth Leaders Working with Young People

Introduction

Evaluation of process, progress and outcomes is a vital part of any youth work, and should occur as an ongoing activity throughout any project.

A final evaluation class at the end of a project, play/production or typical 10-week term is also very necessary as a reflection for

everyone on what they have learned. Not just does it provide participants and facilitator alike an opportunity for learning, it also provides a kind of closure before moving on to the next project or term.

I use workshops similar to the one set out here (or sections of it) throughout the year because they provide the groups I work with and myself the space and opportunity to reflect on the work, an important chance for participants to 'know that they are learning, and how' – and for us all to acknowledge the journey we have been on together and the work done.

Working creatively and with the active participation of young people, as described, is also more liberating, and more fun, than an evaluation session of 'talking heads'.

Development

You can use a 'continuum' exercise as a good follow-up to this. In that case, the facilitator reads out a number of statements and participants decide whether they 'strongly agree' 'strongly disagree' or would locate themselves somewhere in between on the continuum. Participants then take up positions in the room to represent this, such as those who strongly agree moving to the right hand side of the room (or the end of a line), and those who 'strongly disagree' going to the other side of the room, or the other end of the line.

The facilitator can prepare statements such as:

- The time allowed for the project/play was too short;
- I liked that we had to sing during this project;
- I liked that we got to write our own material this time.

The participants must be prepared to justify the position they take up, as the facilitator does 'spot questioning' of different people on different statements. The young people can also alter their positions on reflection, of course; this is all part of the learning and evaluation exercise.

The results of evaluation sessions are important feedback for facilitators/youth leaders to take on board (and young people are very likely to notice, and take a dim view of it, if little of what they say is taken on board in subsequent projects/plays/group work).



Leish's interest in theatre as a child was confined to school productions and involvement in the local Comhaltas. After leaving school this interest took a back seat as she went on to study European Studies at UL in Limerick. Thirty years ago Leish rediscovered her passion for theatre and studied with the Leinster School of Music and Drama, Griffith College, Dublin. Leish began working in many schools throughout Kildare and Wicklow in the 90's all the time furthering her knowledge by undertaking courses in all aspects of theatre and arts in the community.

She is the founding Artistic Director of Griese Youth Theatre where the approach is very much a holistic one, nurturing both the artistic and social development of the young person. The Youth Theatre (named after the local river) began in July 1999 in the Meeting House in Ballitore village as a week long art and drama workshop. It followed a proposal put to Kildare County Council Library Services and Action South Kildare by Leish and Artist Jacques Candelay to provide a complimentary learning experience to local young people through the medium of art and drama. The group has now over 100 members aged 6 to 20 divided into Junior Griese and Griese Youth Theatre and offers weekly drama workshops. Other activities include workshops in scriptwriting, dance, art, yoga, participation in street theatre, local festivals, programmes with other youth theatres, training for young leaders, Youth Initiative projects and Youth Exchanges. GYT have performed both nationally and abroad and have been fortunate to work with many of Ireland's leading theatre practitioners.

Exercise	Instructions	Formation/Energy
<p>Introductions in the Third Person</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<p>Participants walk freely around the space making friendly eye contact as they pass each other.</p> <p>The facilitator then invites them to shake a hand, still making eye contact. Ask participants to hold onto a hand until they can find/ reach for another hand. They cannot release a hand until they find another one.</p> <p>Participants break apart and are invited to walk freely around the space. On a hand clap from the facilitator, participants stop to talk to another participant - introducing themselves as a favourite aunt, teacher, grandparent or friend would introduce them. (For example, participant 'Lucy' introduces herself as follows: "This is Lucy, she's really good at sport, she is kind to animals, loves music, etc.")</p> <p>On a hand clap the young people move on; on another hand clap, they meet another participant, and so on.</p>	<p><i>Focus on the eyes. Have eyes for each other.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage participants not to lose eye contact on the hand shake, not to release a hand until they have a hand.</i></p> <p><i>Note: this gets noisy.</i></p> <p><i>Invite feedback from the group.</i></p> <p><i>Consider the importance of eye contact.</i></p> <p><i>Was it easier to talk about yourself from someone else's point of view?</i></p> <p><i>Are we reluctant to recognise our own talents?</i></p>

<p>Trust walk</p>	<p>Participants find a partner. One identifies as A and one as B.</p> <p>A's close their eyes. B's position themselves behind A's with their hands on the A's shoulders.</p> <p>The facilitator explains that A keeps their eyes closed and, when B releases their hand, A walks forward. If the B sees any danger for A, they place their hands on A's shoulders for STOP. They tap on the right shoulder to turn right and tap on the left shoulder to go left.</p> <p>When the B's releases the A's hands, A's can walk forward.</p>	<p><i>This is strictly a no-talking exercise.</i></p> <p><i>Ask for feedback after it from the group:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Was it easier to look around your partner or walk with your eyes closed?</i> - <i>Was there a sense of freedom in walking with your eyes closed?</i> - <i>How important is a sense of trust in a group?</i>
<p>Image /tableau and 'Thought Track'</p>	<p>In groups of 3 or 4, the young people make an image (a tableau or frozen image) of a memorable moment from the project/term. Groups work largely on their own, the facilitator just checking in with them.</p> <p>Each group presents their tableau in turn. The facilitator can then 'Thought Track' by tapping each person in any given tableau on the shoulder and asking for a word, sentence or sound that captures what they are thinking.</p>	<p><i>When it comes to viewing pieces as a group, ask participants in the audience (all the groups not getting into shape at that moment) to close or cover their eyes until the performing group has taken up its position. This creates an element of surprise.</i></p> <p><i>Invite feedback from the participants:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What worked during the project, and what did not?</i> - <i>What could we do differently next time?</i>

Birthdays on a Chair

Ask each participant to get a chair and then all of them to place these close together in a straight line. Each person stands on a chair.

When everyone is standing on a chair, the facilitator explains that they must line up in order of birthdays – BUT without speaking. (Participants can mime and use gestures, use fingers to count out numbers, etc. They cannot speak or mouth words.)

The person whose birthday is earliest in the year (most likely in January) must be at the start of the line. Someone whose birthday is in December will be at the end. Within months, participants must also have the dates in chronological order, so 8 January lines up before 25 January and so forth.

Now here's the real challenge: the young people have to help each other move along the chairs WITHOUT putting a foot on the ground. If it happens that someone does, they go back to the start and begin again.

When participants have finished the exercise, when they are satisfied that they have it correct, ask each participant to state their birthday aloud and make any necessary adjustments in the order of the line.

Make sure the chairs you plan to use have a strong base and are not too light.

Introduce a bit of drama as people are moving along the line, by giving prompts such as:

- 'Watch out, you are on the edge of a cliff'
- 'Don't look down, alligators in the water'

The participants quickly realise that they have to work together to achieve the result: that things won't work if they all move together.

Insist that it is a non-speaking exercise.

Talk about birthdays, giving and receiving gifts, before leading into the next exercise.

Miming Gifts

As facilitator, prepare a list of the young people's names in advance. Cut into strips.

Ask the group to get into pairs. Each pair is given one person's name. They do not disclose that person's name to the rest of the group. They are instructed to think about an individual skill that person has, which was evident throughout the project/ group work.

Each pair must prepare a mime/image that seeks to illustrate the identity of the person whose name they got through the skill they have identified (John always turned up; Susan had good energy; Hannah learned lines well; etc.)

Each pair performs and the audience guesses who it is they are representing.

The facilitator acknowledges that person and reinforces what they brought to the project/group work/play, with a round of applause to follow for each participant.

It is important that the facilitator and youth leaders go around to each pair and get a preview of the mime before the showing, in order to ensure that the focus is on positive feedback.

Making Gifts (/Finding Gifts)

Materials needed:

Coloured paper, paper plates, markers, art materials, Pritt stick, scissors.
Items from the groups prop box.
(The more varied the art materials the better.)

The facilitator asks the group to get into pairs and gives them the name of another participant (or it could be the same as in the last exercise).

Ask each pair to make a 'gift' for the named person. They attach the name strip to the gift.

The gift represents two areas in which that person excels and one area that needs to be worked on. ("Fionn always knows his lines and listens to other people. It would be good if he projected his voice.")

If you have an uneven number of participants, one pair might have to make two 'gifts'.

Encourage that the art work can be as abstract as you like. For example, a person with good energy could be represented by a drawing/model of a motorbike.

Again, the facilitator needs to closely monitor the content of the work to ensure that nobody hears negative remarks about themselves.

It is a good idea to also make a gift for anyone in the project/group who is absent on this occasion.

(You could do this exercise using props or objects in the space/classroom if you do not have access to art materials or time for art work. For example, a diary might represent someone being organised. Participants will probably not be able to take the 'gifts' home, however.)

<p>Skills Bank</p> <p><u>Materials needed:</u> Flip chart sheets. Markers.</p>	<p>The Facilitator prepares some large flip chart sheets and draws 3 columns with the headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Skills I know I have.</i> - <i>Skills other people say I have.</i> - <i>Skills I'd like to have.</i> <p>The sheets are put on the wall, or the class broken into large groups, and the participants fill in the columns. The participants work together in groups of 4/5 to fill in the columns and to provide discussion around the idea of skills. The finished sheets can then be put on the wall and remain there for the project.</p>	<p><i>This can be useful as a reference and jumping off point for the next project, play or term's work. It is also a good way for the facilitator to find out what talents their members have but may not be forthcoming about.</i></p> <p><i>Generally the participants will remind each other what they are good at!</i></p>
<p>Good luck</p> <p><u>Materials:</u> A4 sheets Masking tape Markers</p> <p>Passing the pulse</p>	<p>Each participant attaches a sheet of paper to the back of another.</p> <p>Each participant writes a good wish on the back of each person, so everyone eventually ends up with good wishes from everyone in the group or class.</p> <p>Participants sit around in a circle with their eyes closed. The facilitator begins 'passing the pulse' by gently squeezing the hand of the person beside them; that person passes it on, then the next person in turn does likewise, until the pulse has been passed around the circle.</p>	<p><i>Encourage that everyone gets around to everyone else and writes something even if it's only 'good luck'.</i></p> <p><i>This exercise is similar to the end of school writing on shirts.</i></p> <p><i>It's is a nice wind down and connects everyone together.</i></p>