

Leading it... Our way!



Arts participation and leadership
with young people
with learning difficulties.



Started on
Mickey Mouse
club.

Scribed
by
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BRITNEY SPEARS

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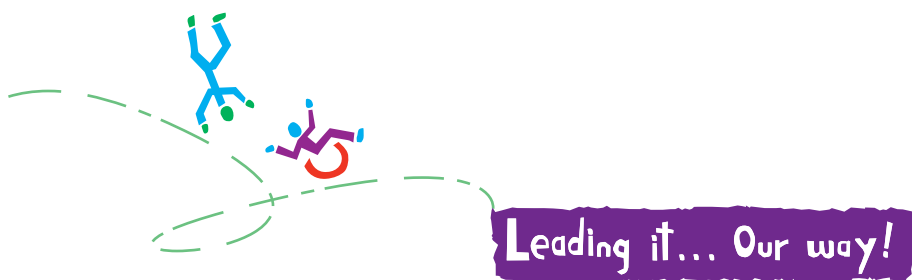
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Contents:

What's in this guide

| | |
|----|---|
| 3 | Background to “Leading it . . . Our Way” |
| 4 | About the Friday Group, DIY’s outreach team |
| 5 | About how we work |
| 6 | Meet the members of the Friday Group |
| 8 | Introduction to Bronze Arts Award |
| 9 | Bronze Part A: Exploring the Arts as a Participant |
| 11 | Bronze Part B: Exploring the Arts as an Audience Member |
| 13 | Bronze Part C: Researching Arts Heroes and Heroines |
| 15 | Bronze Part D: Sharing Arts Skills with Others |
| 16 | Introduction to Silver Arts Award |
| 17 | Silver Unit 1: Developing Arts Practice |
| 19 | Silver Unit 2: Supervised Arts Leadership |
| 20 | What people have said about “Leading it . . . Our Way”. |
| 21 | Want to find out more? Contact details. |
| 21 | Thanks |





Background to Leading it... Our way!

Why did we write this guide?

This guide is based on ideas and examples gained through DIY Theatre Company's "Leading it Our Way" programme, which began in 2011.

We want to share and develop good practice with others working with young people with learning difficulties.

It is not offered as a 'How to do Arts Award' guide, but rather a way of sharing a few of the ideas and activities which have worked well for us.

We hope you find some of our approaches useful in developing your own projects.

What is DIY Theatre Company?

DIY is an established Theatre Company of adults with learning difficulties based in Salford, Greater Manchester. The Company has been creating entertaining, accessible and thought-provoking theatre since 1994.

Some of the members of DIY wanted to work with young people with learning difficulties to share their experiences of

the arts and help others gain a sense of achievement. So an outreach team was created which became DIY's 'Friday Group'.

The Friday Group Lead it ... their way!

With funding from the BIG Lottery 'Reaching Communities' Programme, DIY's Friday Group were able to implement and develop the "Leading it Our Way" project. This was all about opening up new opportunities for young people with learning difficulties to:-

- Achieve an Arts Award
- Gain leadership skills and experiences
- Develop life skills such as communication and decision-making
- Increase confidence
- Evidence and celebrate achievements

We have used the Arts Award because it is designed to be inclusive. It is flexible and accessible and the learners don't have to be confident readers or writers to achieve a nationally recognised qualification.

Leading it... Our way!

About the Friday Group

The Friday group meets weekly and is made up of DIY members who are skilled in running workshops.

Members of the Friday Group worked with Education Officer Jenny Harris to co-facilitate a range of projects with young people. We worked in partnership with youth organisations, schools and colleges using the frameworks of Bronze and Silver Arts Award.



About how we work

Creative planning and evaluation:

DIY plans and evaluates in a practical way, building on and adapting the games and exercises that members are familiar with through their involvement in the theatre company.

Shared Leadership:

When DIY devises shows together, we work as a team so when the Friday Group delivers workshops leadership is shared, based on our different strengths; some people are good at talking, others are good at demonstrating, others are good at working one-to-one.

Embodied Leadership:

Members of DIY Theatre Company have developed their skills over a number of years. We've learnt by watching and doing, so our leadership is mainly by showing and demonstrating. Some of us are not very confident speakers, but it doesn't stop us being good leaders.

The Domino Effect:

We're helping other people with learning difficulties to develop their leadership skills. It's a domino effect because in Silver Arts Award, for example, we support young people to be able to lead others and they then develop the leadership skills of another group of young people.



Meet the members of the Friday Group



Tracey

I like the key game, which is my favourite. It feels good when I get the game right.



Joan

I did workshops at a school. The best part was that I liked the children who I worked with. I enjoy myself when I am leading.

It's nice working with children. The teacher was nice too.



Joanne

I enjoy being in the Friday group and being part of the team.

We all stick together and we all work together.

Sandra

I like helping the students by gluing photos into their portfolios.



Cathy

I am sometimes the leader. It makes me proud.

I like to be the leader. People have to watch me so that they feel comfortable.



Angela

I've learnt to use the camera more. To keep a record. It's important for the evidence.

I like helping the students with their portfolios - it gets them thinking.

Anna

I help to run workshops. We all sit round together. We do filming.

I led the mirror game.



Rob

I am glad we started the Friday group. Fridays give us time to plan properly. I get a lot out of it. I like knowing we've helped a young person, made a difference to their lives.

It's not about what you can't do but what you can do.

Leading it... Our way!

Bronze Arts Award

Through Bronze Arts Award, young people develop their enjoyment of the arts as a participant and as an audience member. They research an artist who they like and start to share their arts skills with others.

The Bronze Arts Award has one unit split into four parts – A, B, C and D. It assesses young people at Level 1 standard in art form knowledge and understanding, creativity and communication.



Drama is a great way of encouraging creativity and imagination because there is no right or wrong way to do it.

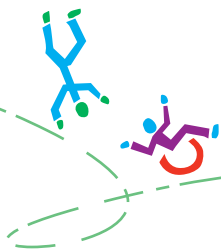


At Ladywood School in Bolton, DIY worked with a range of props to engage learners. DIY members led 'Pass the Prop' where participants use a prop to pretend it is something else. The prop can be used in any way, so one young person pretended it was a wheel and a hat, whereas another felt its texture. Everyone's contribution was accepted and no-one's ideas were judged.

Once the group was familiar with this game, we layered the activity by introducing games which built on their imaginations and mime work and demonstrated development of learners' skills. For example, we played 'What's in the Box?', where an empty box was passed around the circle and people pretended to take something out. Learners took out a spider, lipstick and candyfloss amongst other things!

We introduced 'Freeze Frames' using the theme of hobbies. We asked small groups of learners to freeze as if a camera had just snapped them and then we asked the group, "What do you see?" - an open ended question that does not have a right or wrong answer. These freeze frames were photographed and developed by adding words and sounds and bringing them to life.

Photos and DVD footage stimulated memories of the work, allowed learners to take ownership of what they'd been doing and evidenced development of young peoples' arts skills. Comments and speech bubbles were added to photos and staff also scribed comments.



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Working with props and costumes before and after a performance encourages young people to actively express their personal responses.



For the review section of their Arts Award, the group at Lancasterian School watched DIY Theatre Company perform their show 'Ellie's Story' - a play that explored communication and relationships.

Before the performance, DIY led a workshop, which introduced themes, props and costumes from the play that the young people would then be able to recognise in the performance.

After the show, we asked the audience "What did you see?" and "What did you hear?" Their answers helped us to find out what resonated for them and their responses were recorded using written words and video. We invited them to draw or write which music they liked and where they listened to music, and they came onto the stage and pinned these responses onto a washing line, which was part of the set.

After the show, pupils worked in small groups to create a frozen picture using props and costumes to show what they remembered and liked about the performance. They then added movement and lines from the play. Frozen pictures provided a physical and visual way of remembering and sharing their reviews.



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Using creative activities to collect and share research makes this section much more accessible and appropriate for young people with learning difficulties.



We introduced the idea of artists to pupils at New Park School in Eccles by doing an exercise called 'Round the Body'. One person lay down on a large piece of paper and another person drew around the outline of their body. The group then filled this outline with artists they knew. This was an active exercise which opened up conversations about actors, singers and different art forms.

Each young person created a shoebox as a very personal and visual way to research their arts hero or heroine. The young people decorated the outside of their boxes with images, facts and words relating to their chosen artist. Then inside the boxes they stored a range of evidence gathered during their research including pictures, writing, images, drawings and CD covers.

The boxes were very individual. One young person made a felt mask of Jim Carey, another person made a gun and some fake money to fit with Daniel Craig and the Bond movies, another person recreated Justin Bieber CD covers and put in facts about his life.

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BRONZE **PART D:** Sharing Arts Skills with Others

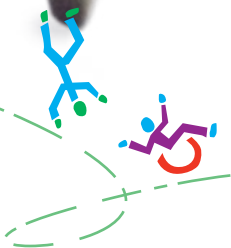
Drama games develop a range of leadership skills including taking the space, communicating clearly and being in charge.



At Oakfield School in Wigan, we played the mirror game where people took turns to be the leader. This started with hands but then included other parts of the body and traveling. People took turns to be the leader and whoever was the leader wore a hat.

This game required the young people to be very focused. It involved both watching others and being watched which are both important aspects of leadership and opened up a conversation about what makes a good leader.

Towards the end of the project we recapped activities DIY members had introduced during the project using props from some of these games as prompts. Each of the young people chose a prop to use for their own game and practiced their game in groups of three until they felt confident to work with the whole group. After each person had introduced their own game, the group gave them verbal feedback and each young person thought about how they might improve their leading before having another go.



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Silver Arts Award

For Silver Arts Award young people develop their creative and leadership skills. Unit 1 focuses on the development of the young person as an artist whereas Unit 2 is about development of the young person as a leader.

Silver Arts Award assesses young people at Level 2 standard in art form knowledge and understanding, creativity, planning and review and communication.



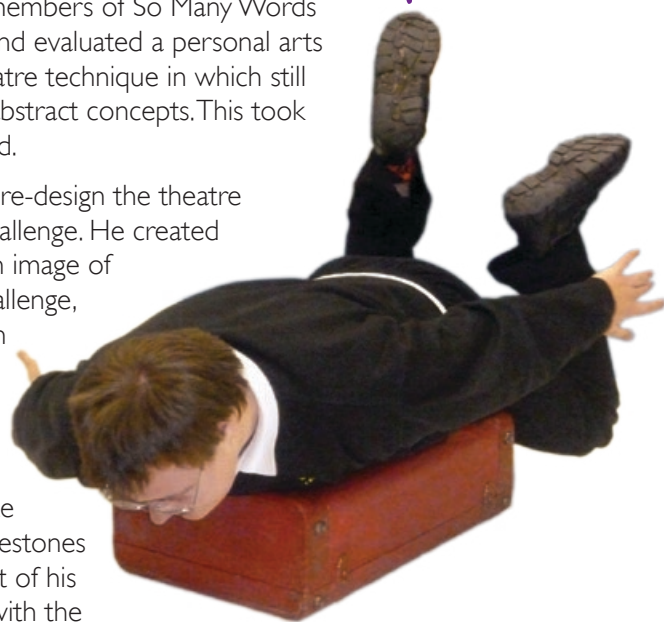


Visual timelines offer an accessible way of supporting young people with learning difficulties to take ownership of their own journeys.



For Parts A and B of Unit 1, members of So Many Words Theatre Company planned and evaluated a personal arts challenge using an image theatre technique in which still images are used to explore abstract concepts. This took place over a six month period.

One young person chose to re-design the theatre company's logo as his arts challenge. He created a visual timeline by making an image of himself at the start of the challenge, learning to develop his design skills and another image at the end of the challenge showing the group the new design. The next stage of his project planning was to create images of the targets and milestones he planned to achieve as part of his challenge including working with the artistic director to generate ideas, considering which colours to use, experimenting with photographs and showing his draft design to the group for feedback and comments. He used image theatre to explore what he thought the most difficult aspects of the challenge would be and how he would try to overcome these difficulties.



This participatory approach to drawing up and managing his action plan meant that the young person took ownership of his challenge and could identify his strengths and weaknesses and see what steps he needed to take to achieve his challenge.

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Theatre is all about listening to others, taking turns, communicating and reflecting – key skills which are relevant and transferable to leadership projects.



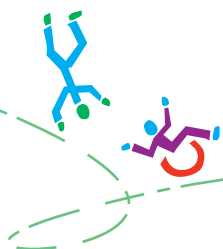
At Eccles College, DIY worked with a group of five learners over a six-month period to develop a leadership project.

We started by exploring what leadership looks like using image theatre to create pictures of what leading is and could be. Group members commented on the images and documented their ideas in images and words.

The Silver group planned, organised and evaluated drama workshops with their college peers who were doing a Bronze Arts Award. This peer mentoring gave both groups the opportunity to work towards a qualification, as well as providing inspiration to younger learners. Having chosen the theme of mobile phones, the Silver group planned the content and tried out ideas to see which worked best. Group members gave feedback and support to each other before finalising the workshop and running it with the Bronze group.

Each young person took specific responsibility for one part of the workshop. One person led a sound and action warm-up game linked to the theme, one led the main activity which included creating a short scene about phones and peoples' feelings about them and one was responsible for all the aspects of organisation including health and safety and the resources needed. At the end of the workshop, they gathered feedback in small groups – based on key questions that had been planned beforehand.

Workshops were documented with photos, DVD footage and written planning notes. These were used as evidence in the portfolios and also as a memory aid when unpicking and documenting the learning. The Silver group watched the DVD footage, gave each-other feedback and reflected on their own contributions, before running the workshops again, trying to improve on aspects of their leadership skills.



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What people have said about "Leading it...Our way"

I feel more confident to use drama now having seen how it is done. The group now have a better understanding of what leadership means as a result of doing activities that demonstrated leadership in action.

Tim Jones, Teacher – Lancasterian School.

Writing isn't appropriate for everyone in the group - it was good to see evidencing in different ways. Peer review and group work was great.

Jamie Patterson, Artistic Director
– So Many Words Theatre Company.

You might know what you want to say in your head but the words won't come out. But your body always knows how to show it. It's natural!

Peter Pamphlett, Actor
– So Many Words Theatre Company.

To me it's about seeing how successful we can be. If we don't push ourselves then we're not going to learn so much. Silver has been challenging but really good!

Pam Bates, Actor
– So Many Words Theatre Company.

I feel I have learnt to take the time to listen.

I have learnt to have the confidence to go first and lead.

Ange Chadwick – DIY member.

At the end of the project, the growth was unbelievable and the achievement was massive. The whole group has grown in confidence and self-esteem.

Clare Alderson, Teacher – Oakfield High School and College.



DIY's devised performances and educational projects challenge stereotypes, promote inclusion and celebrate creativity.

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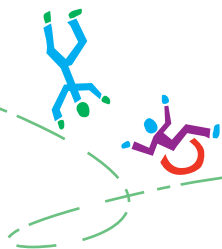
Arts Award is designed to be inclusive. Young people with learning difficulties can take part at any level, as long as they are committed to participating in the arts, improving their skills and building transferrable skills such as leadership and team working.

To find out more visit:- www.artsaward.org.uk

Thanks

DIY wishes to thank all of the staff and students at the following organisations which have worked in partnership with DIY as part of our **“Leading It...Our Way”** programme:

- Lancasterian School
- So Many Words Theatre Company
- Irlam & Caddishead Youth Group
- Ladywood School
- New Park High School
- Heaton School
- Oakfield High School and College
- Eccles College
- Elms Bank Specialist Arts College



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