

Please note:

The 'What works for women?' website provides examples of ongoing initiatives in the UK that have been successful at increasing physical activity among women and girls by addressing the barriers that can prevent them from taking part. This case study has been obtained from their website at www.whatworksforwomen.org.uk

Akademi's 'Moving Sites'

Description of the scheme

- Akademi is a south-east Asian dance organisation with an education and community programme.
- During the 03/04 academic year Akademi worked with Barking and Dagenham Council's School Sports Coordinators (SSCs) to provide dance classes as an alternative to PE to young Asian girls in two secondary schools as part of its *Moving Sites* project: taking Asian dance to outer London boroughs.
- *Moving Sites* incorporated the development and delivery of South Asian dance participatory activities within a broad range of education and community settings in the boroughs of Brent, Ealing and Barking and Dagenham.

Good practice directly related to barriers overcome

Ethnic diversity

Akademi meets the needs of a specific ethnic group who are less likely to participate in physical activity. Classes and performances accommodate cultural needs such as fasting during Ramadan.

Time

Classes and practice sessions are held immediately after school hours so that they are easy to join in.

Personal safety

Taking the service to the schools was key: girls didn't want to travel to another school and felt more comfortable in their own environment. Transport to other venues for outside performances is provided. Classes are girls-only with the blinds pulled down to prevent boys watching.

Body consciousness

Girls are very proud of their traditional dress, which they will buy themselves for public performances. Otherwise they wear tracksuits and T-shirts for after-school practice sessions.

Financial

There is no cost to the participants.

Other elements of good practice

- A needs assessment/audit was undertaken in schools as part of the SSC scheme to respond to the needs of the local school population.
- One teacher works with the SSC two days a week to undergo training and organise curriculum PE. The teacher also encourages other teachers to go on courses, and develop and organise activities in their own schools.

- Each school develops an action plan to meet its own needs, based on the audit.
- The aim is to build a 'dance leaders' award so that teachers and girls can acquire skills to mentor girls in primary schools, act as volunteers and help to ensure the sustainability of the scheme.
- There is also the opportunity for public performances: in 2004 the schools performed twice, including an appearance at a Black History Month Festival.
- The borough of Barking has a dance inspector, which means it is very proactive in incorporating dance into the curriculum.
- Schools work in clusters which can learn from one another: primary schools have very little PE expertise so teachers on release from secondary schools also work with primary schools.
- Another of Akademi's projects, Escapade, performed during August 2003, broke down stereotypical barriers by using Asian women skateboarders during the 'spectacular outdoor performance' on the South Bank.

Issues identified

- It was a problem getting parents to give their consent because sessions were not seen as academic. Asian parents tend to prioritise academic qualifications.
- There is no recognised qualification, but the Arts Council is piloting an arts accreditation for young people.
- Although both Akademi and the SSC coordinators scheme are funded exclusively, funds are still needed to run *Moving Sites* activities and cover equipment costs.
- Akademi aims to work in boroughs and groups where there is a lack of accessible participatory arts activity, and where Akademi is seeking to redress this.

Marketing and communication

- Akademi has a very attractive web site.
- One school appeared on Carlton TV.

Funding and partnerships

- The SSC scheme is government funded which includes teachers' supply cover for training. Long term funding allows a solid base to be built.
- Lottery funding paid for Akademi's services, plus equipment and coach hire.
- Akademi itself receives funding from international donors such as the European Social Fund; plus the Department for International Development, the Arts Council and the Bridge House Estates Trust.
- Akademi's funding means that it can offer subsidised rates for its education and community work.
- Akademi works with a wide range of organisations to plan and deliver its education and community projects, including local education authorities, arts centres, Primary Care Trusts and Youth Zones.

Project 'champion'

Clare Clarke, the SSC for Barking and Dagenham, audited all the schools to find out what they wanted. She found out about Akademi through the dance advisory team in the borough, and put in a bid for Big Lottery funds (previously New Opportunity Fund) to pay for the activity.

For further information

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