Development Champions: Nick Gillard

Bio

Name & Type: Nick Gillard (SGO) and Countess Wear Community Primary School
Location: Exeter and Mid Devon
Impact Award Category: Development Champions
Term: Autumn

Summary of Activity

The School Games Organiser Nick Gillard was looking to find additional opportunities for young people at Countess Wear Community Primary School to be physical active on a daily basis outside of the traditional periods such as during lunch breaks and PE lessons.

He identified with the PE lead an opportunity to factor physical activity into other curriculum areas and use it as a way to engage with young people at the school, both in terms of their study and keeping them active.

To do so they used the Year 5/6 chosen text War Horse and developed physical activity related to specific sections of the book. For example, to reflect the horse Joey becoming an army horse, the children were asked to come up with their own march.

Eight stations were set-up in the playground, each delivered with a link to certain parts of the book which occurred in chronological order. A member of staff oversaw each carousel activity, with their role being to ensure the young people understood the meaning behind each physical activity.

The activity took place over an hour during literacy class and preceded the scheme of literary work. The same activity was then held again at the end of the unit of work to solidify learning

Impact on Young People

The children not only received the benefits that come from physical activity, but also had a better understanding or recalled knowledge of War Horse following the activity.

This is evidenced by the fact attainment levels in the young people drastically improved. According to staff they were able to recall what happened in the playground as a result of the event and use that as a learning point when they reached that milestone in the book.

Dave Pickering, teacher at Countess Wear Community School, said: “Like any school, if you bring something new in it can be tricky since you’re not quite sure how the children are going to react… and they’ve taken to it, they’re really enjoying it”.

Key Learnings

When asked, Nick said his key learnings for this piece of activity was ensuring a member of staff or adult was at each station to remind the students, the context of why they are taking part in each physical activity. He also mentioned that using a carousel format proved beneficial as the children were able to revisit different stations to ask more questions about the book as well as take part in the activity again.

How this could be replicated across the network

The work that Nick and the PE lead have developed is a really innovative way to help the school adopt active lessons and should help to create a new 'norm' across the school. This is something that can be repurposed for any school.

Although the book in this case was War Horse, this activity - with some outside the box thinking - could potentially be repurposed for any literature within the curriculum.

Nick said: “It was great to receive the news of being short listed for the Development Champion award. During the application, it was really good to take the time to reflect on the good practice which was developed. As an SGO, we are so often focused on what’s next, we don’t take the time to celebrate the impact we have had and this piece of work allowed for me to look back and realise I had taken myself out of my comfort zone in order to upskill myself and the young people involved with the event”.