Southend Adult Community College: Walk like an Egyptian - A new reflection

Summary

Southend Adult Community College hosts a regular Middle Eastern and Egyptian dance class for all ages and abilities. For a performing art such as dance, learning and self-review aids such as mirrors are essential for improving technique and attainment.

The Egyptian Dance course is very popular with many students enrolled. Therefore, sessions need to take place in a large hall within the college. Through inspired innovation and improvisation, the class now have an extremely useful reflective teaching aid using cameras and projectors.

About

Southend Adult Community College is the Borough’s only provider of Adult Education. It offers over 800 part-time courses, 300 of which lead to a nationally recognised qualification. The college is a lead provider of Skills for Life (The Basic Skills Agency estimates that around 211,000 adults (16-65 year olds) in Essex have poor literacy skills, whilst 207,000 adults in Essex are estimated to have poor numeracy skills (from www.lsc.gov.uk)). SACC is also active in out-reach community projects, including ‘Family Projects’ with Schools and providing basic skills to ex-offenders as part of ‘On the Right Track’

The challenge

The Middle Eastern and Egyptian Dance course at Southend Adult Community College is very popular amongst adult learners. It offers students the chance to improve fitness, flexibility and co-ordination whilst having fun at the same time. Each lesson is held in a big hall within the college. When the course began, there were no mirrors in the hall, which in turn made learning Egyptian dance harder.
The Middle Eastern and Egyptian Dance course is very popular amongst adult learners

Carol Blackwell, the tutor, felt that it was essential for the students to be able to learn moves and techniques through self-review. Unfortunately the cost of the purchasing and installing mirrors in the hall was far too great and non-resourceful. Therefore, a re-think was required.

The activity

Initially Carol set up a video camera with the output feeding straight into a television. Although this enabled the learners to see themselves practice, the camera could only focus on one area of the room, so as and when a student moved out of shot, they would not be able to see themselves. Secondly, the screen was not large enough for the whole class and lastly, the image on the screen was the reverse of a true reflection.

After various discussions involving the technical department at the college, a simple, innovative and cost-effective idea was implemented. The set up consists of:

2 x digital video recorders
2 x digital image projectors
Two digital video recorders are placed facing the class at both sides of the hall. The image recorded through the cameras are then fed into two projectors respectively. The projectors have a built-in facility to reverse the image. Then the two reverse images are projected onto the large white wall at the front of the hall and merged to create a mirror effect.

**The outcomes**

The class now have an interactive mirror which they can use for self review. As well as providing and effective aid for teaching, the learners also benefit. The screen size can be altered through the projector and camera angles can adjusted to suit the size of the class. Furthermore, using recording equipment (although not always recorded) offers the learners the chance to playback and analyse their technique.

**The impact**

This simple and innovative idea has saved the college money, but ultimately it has helped improve learner responsiveness and attainment. One learner commented:

“It’s very helpful...” and “you can see your body shape compared with others in the class you can then see if you are doing the right thing”

Another student remarked:

“ I think it is absolutely vital to have any mirror like this, particularly when your learning dance....”

Southend Adult Community College has illustrated how technology can be used in different ways by all sectors including performing arts.

**Useful links**

[http://www.southend-adult.ac.uk/](http://www.southend-adult.ac.uk/)

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