

St Pauls RC Primary School

Yate, Bristol

PROUD TO BE FILIPINOS



As a follow on from the EMAS conference in 2010 where we attended a workshop about the involvement of EAL parents in after school activities, we decided to try to set up our own 'After School Club.' At the same time we were contacted by the Extended Schools Team and were offered a small grant to help us.

Initially we were unsure which group of EAL children to choose and although it was tempting to open the club to all EAL children and their parents, we realised that this could result in too many participants. Eventually we decided to focus on those families from the Philippines since this is the largest ethnic minority group we have in school.

The aims of the project were:

- ▶ to give the EAL parents more confidence in coming into school and communicating with teachers
- ▶ improve the English speaking and understanding of these parents as well as their children
- ▶ to explore and celebrate their country of origin
- ▶ to teach the rest of the pupils in the school about the Philippines and its culture and traditions

The club ran one evening a week from 3.30 pm to 4.30pm. We sent out invites stressing that children must be accompanied by at least one parent. We waited anxiously at the start of the first session to see if anyone would turn up and were amazed when parents and children arrived eager and enthusiastic but with a rather apprehensive and unsure look on their faces!

The initial task for each family was to make a project book depicting life in the Philippines and the initial session was spent brainstorming ideas. The families went off to carry out research in the school library and in the ICT suite.



The following week we were amazed to see yet more families arrive and those who had been the previous week had brought with them Filipino artefacts to show along with completed research that they had done at home.

As the weeks progressed the club grew and flourished. All the Filipino children in the school attended and parents rearranged their working shifts to attend. On weeks when certain parents could not make it other parents willingly volunteered to be responsible for the other children. The atmosphere was incredible with design and technology workshops, painting areas and computer researching going on in different areas of the school. There was a sense of excitement at the prospect of being allowed to show off their country with an intense sense of pride and the club helpers thoroughly enjoyed listening to the stories about life in the Philippines!

After the first few weeks we noticed that the numbers were steadily growing. Many children brought both mum and dad with them and it was interesting to see that dads were just as happy to attend as mums. As the weeks went by, older siblings from secondary schools began to come too and then on weeks when certain children were not able to attend we noticed that the parents were attending without their child!

By the end of the weeks model houses had been built, maps created, drawings completed and projects written. Work was continued at home with updates being given each session.



The school initially displayed the artefacts, models and projects in a central area of the school which again made the parents and children extremely proud. By the end of the project we had so much quality work completed that we set up an extra display in the school entrance area.

The final 2 weeks of the club were spent preparing the children to give a presentation about the Philippines to the whole school. Again the parents were really enthusiastic, offering suggestions and bringing in artefacts. They all wanted to participate in the presentation one way or another whether it be leading the children in singing, waving the Filipino flag during the National anthem or organising the music and slides. The presentation was a huge success, all the children participated in speaking, singing and dancing a traditional folk dance from the Philippines. All the children and some of the parents wore traditional Filipino dress. The presentation was the talk of the school for many weeks to come with the pupils asking the Filipino children questions about life in the Philippines.



The parents suggested that we all have a party at the end in order to celebrate. The families brought traditional Filipino food with them and all school staff were invited. The teachers, teaching assistants, caretaker and cleaners all attended and tried out the massive selection of delicious Filipino food and everyone had a great time.

All in all the club was a huge success. It brought the Filipino community to the forefront of the school. We all learnt such a lot about life and traditions in the Philippines. Some of the Filipino children were born in England and it was fantastic to see them learning about their country of origin but the most impressive thing was the enthusiasm of both children and parents and the obvious but understandable pride they have in their own country.

And after the club, would we recommend that you go on holiday to the Philippines?

YOU BET!!

