

Submission
No 132

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Organisation: Shopfront Theatre for Young People Co-op Ltd

Date received: 8/08/2014

Partially Confidential

Thank you for taking the time to support the Home Educating community by making a submission to the Select Inquiry into Home schooling in NSW.

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Position: General Manager
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1) How long have you / your organisation been working with the Home Educating community?

Shopfront has been co-ordinating with the Home Educating community on drama workshops since the beginning of 2012.

2) What kinds of activities have you / your organisation been involved in with the Home Educating community?

Shopfront runs a weekly performance and art workshop for Home Educated students between the ages of 8-12 years.

3) What comments would you make about Home Educated kids in your workshops/classes? (Behaviour, learning capabilities, learning styles etc)

Lucy Watson

They are generally extremely well behaved so long as they are engaged. The classes get hectic because they all have so many creative ideas and so much energy. But they are usually working on the task at hand. They generally learn best when they have creative control, at least to a certain extent. The main thing that seems to switch them off is a sense of being asked to blindly follow a formula. They have a very strong grasp of concepts and ideas and philosophies, we often end up discussing what we are working on at a surprisingly deep level. They are also incredibly good at lateral thinking. Many of the kids are highly capable with practical skills like crafting objects in a range of materials. They are all confident in language, though verbal and written expression is not everyone's strongest field. They all have highly developed imaginations and creative skills. More than many artists I have met.

Alison Bennett

They are in general, extremely open and brimming with ideas. They do not block their own imaginations and are extremely articulate. Their range of interests is extraordinarily broad and they are generally non-judgemental of others.

4) How do you find the interaction amongst Home Educated kids?

Lucy Watson

The kids I work with have done a lot of socialising with young people and adults - they are quite confident but also have a strong sense of their own beliefs and interests. Sometimes they will choose their own reflections and company over attempting to change themselves to fit in with a group. I find they are very accepting of difference, and much less likely to exclude others than other groups of the same age that have been in normal schooling. With each other they are usually very open, and have learnt how to accommodate each other's individuality. As they are growing up there are more annoyances and changing needs, and this process of learning how to accommodate is an ongoing process. This is something that is often evident in the classes, as it takes such a high level of negotiation skills to collectively devise a performance.

Alison Bennett

Very easy and open. They interact as you might expect brothers and sisters to interact. They are very caring of each other but do not hesitate to express irritability or frustration as it arrives. They are very playful with each other.

Amanda Foote

Over the past two and a half years, several young people who started out in the Homeschool group have transitioned to other Shopfront workshops which include young people from mainstream schooling. We have had no issues with their socialisation with other young people in these groups.

5) How do you find the interaction of Home Educated kids with yourself (and / or your instructors)

Lucy Watson

Tend to find they are less responsive to direct requests they don't see the point in than other groups. But if you talk to them about why you're doing what you're doing they are very responsive, and very generous in using their creativity and resourcefulness to help. I found that there is less of a sense of separation between them and adults, less of a sense that they are just meant to sit back and take direction. This is not to say that they don't accept authority from adults when necessary, more that they assume more responsibility to be active thinking entities along with others. Often if there is a clash in the group or something that is a problem, everyone will try to help and contribute ideas for resolution. I have noticed that they will even sometimes come back to the problem later in the class, or the next week, with ideas.

Alison Bennett

They are very respectful without the normal restraints of formalism. They expect a shared creative experience as opposed to a teacher/student relationship and I find this interaction very pleasant.

Amanda Foote

As a manager I interact with the students outside of their classroom, when completing evaluations and feedback sessions, at the beginning and end of class and so on. The students are generally very comfortable speaking with myself and other Shopfront staff, it seems they feel more of a contemporary with us than the traditional child/adult interaction. They are always very respectful and well mannered.

6) Are there any further comments you'd like to make about your experience with the Home Educating community?

Amanda Foote

Our experience with the Home Educating Community has been very positive.

is the volunteer parent who organises the group and communicates with the participants, and she is always very organised and efficient.

When issues arise and the other Homeschool parents are willing and open to communicate, and we often hold open feedback sessions with both parents and children present and participating in the conversation. Shopfront is a Co-operative, and we aim to be truly youth-led. We undertake consultation sessions with our members both regarding their own classes and wider issues affecting the co-operative. The Homeschool community is active in this consultation, and there are usually representatives at things such as our AGM.

We would be happy to support the Home Educating Community in any way possible.