

Action 3:30 project: Teaching assistants. School 8; TA 1

[Start of recording]

INT: First off, just, can you tell me how you felt about participating in a research project?

RES: Quite excited. I've not been involved in a research project before, so I was quite intrigued how it all kind of panned out. Yeah, quite excited to join in.

INT: Okay. Lovely! So overall what have your experiences of it been?

RES: I think for me it was really useful [deleted for anonymity]

INT: [deleted for anonymity]?

RES: [deleted for anonymity].

INT: Oh fantastic!

RES: [deleted for anonymity]. I've really enjoyed, I think just the main part of it is one; the relationship that we've got with a core group of children is just really fantastic. And the other, I think would be the skills I've used, I'm now using in my day to day PE lessons.

INT: Right.

RES: And am not fazed now, because I cover the PPA now, I cover teachers every afternoon, and I cover the class. So if they say you're doing PE today I'll look at their plans and think, I can do something more with that. Yeah, so it's been positive.

INT: Okay I've given you a bit more. Oh actually I think there's some questions on that later, so we might come back to that actually. Yeah, thank you. All right, so starting from the beginning actually, the training course, how did you find that?

RES: Brilliant! Really, really brilliant. [trainer name] was fantastic; he just made everything ... he was just so enthusiastic, and I don't think you ever felt intimidated because we didn't quite realise for the first training session, although they said to wear relaxed clothes or comfortable clothes, and we kind of both went with the joggers and trainers on. We didn't quite realise we were going to have to be as physical as we were.

INT: Right.

RES: And that took us by surprise on the first session.

INT: Was it you with the children?

RES: Yes, we were with the children, yes, complete role play, and so to begin with that was a little bit difficult, but once we got into it, and every week that we went along, I think we got to know the people more, so you are less inhibited, and it was just really good.

INT: Okay.

RES: Really informative.

INT: Fantastic. So that was obviously a big thumbs up for [trainer name]?

RES: Definitely. Yeah.

INT: And then the content of the course each week, was it relevant, and was the pace appropriate do you think?

RES: Yes. I think at the end, we rushed through quite a few of the lessons. We didn't get to do all of the lessons. But, there were so many of them, there was no way he could have. So, I think what he did was picked out some really important bits, and they've all been appropriate to the sessions that we've covered, and they've all been appropriate to like say putting into PE lessons as well.

INT: Yes. That's really good, a bit of extra. So the fact that it kind of missed some bits, you didn't get to cover them all, did that matter or was that something you were able to do in your own time?

RES: No, it didn't matter by then because where at the end, he kind of went through a handful of the remaining lessons, he would just pick out a few pointers and we had just a few minutes on each one. Because we'd had the background to it, and because we had already gone through some lessons on how to adapt lessons, we were able to see where he was going with each of those and how we could adapt them ourselves anyway, so no, it didn't matter.

INT: Okay. Right. Brilliant! And then you had a mid intervention booster session sort of training, was that useful and well timed?

- RES: I think definitely well timed. I think it's a very tiring thing to do 40 sessions, it's been quite exhausting with the working day in school and then staying twice a week to do that. So just as we might have been starting to ebb a little bit, we went back to the intervention session and it really kind of perked us up again and got us ready for the next, the next half. So yeah, it was very, yeah ...
- INT: Ready to press on. Great. All right. Yeah, I can imagine sort of 40, it's quite a big ...
- RES: It's a lot, yeah.
- INT: All right. The duration of each session, did you find that appropriate? That is the training, that is.
- RES: For the training, yes, because that was a whole morning, I think by lunchtime, that was probably enough physical stuff for us to be doing.
- INT: Interesting. Brill. Okay. How did you find it? Managing the time you had to take out of your work here to do the training?
- RES: I'm really lucky because school have been really supportive of the whole Action:330 and especially our head teacher because he really does promote sport and being healthy. Because he has been really supportive, it's been easy for me to take that time. If I'd said I needed a morning out, everybody has accepted it. I've never had to feel worried that I was out of class. Yeah, I would have found it very difficult if it had been in the afternoons, just because of the way my job runs, but the mornings, for me, that fine to do that, yeah.
- INT: Great okay. Any challenges you experienced with the training? Anything that perhaps didn't go quite so well?
- RES: With the training, well, I think, just the only thing that sticks out in my mind on speaking to [TA name] is, really made us, it was a challenge at first, but we kind of felt as though we were back in our childhood ourselves and neither of us were very sporty and neither of us were confident with PE, so going back to do that all over sudden, we were, these children who were, and when we were picking and sometimes [TA name] and I were picked near the end, and you have that kind of ... no ...
- INT: [unclear-00:06:15]

RES: It does. And you have that kind of little feeling, so that was really good because although it was a challenge to begin with, we could really use that then in the sessions because it reminded you just how that feels, so we needed to be inclusive. So yeah, I don't think that anything was a challenge with the training; I just loved all of the training. I really did.

INT: Great, okay. That really interesting about being picked.

RES: Oh it really is ...

INT: The fear.

RES: I keep looking over there and I keep seeing children peer through the door.

INT: Thinking what's going on? And you had a big manual, the training resource which you took away, was that? Did you use it much?

RES: Yes, and we use it every time we do one of the sessions and again I use it at PE lessons as well, so yeah, it's glued to me.

INT: Fantastic! And then, how useful was each session plan? Did you manage to stick to each session or do you go off pist a bit?

RES: We did go off. We would normally pick, the lesson plan seemed to be too much in there for us to always cover, so we would normally pick a beginning and an end, a skill and a game, and that would be our session, really, as opposed to two skill and then two different games. We'd have a skill, a game, and then we'd push it a little bit further, and that would normally be our session, so we definitely picked from it, used it all, but I just adapted it to timing for us.

INT: Okay. That sounds like it's got a bit of flexibility so you can kind of ...

RES: Yeah, and [trainer name] gave us the confidence to do that. He said this was just a plan, and I know a few people that say on the training, they were finding, it was a lot to cram into one. I think [trainer name]'s obviously so much more experienced, he can just move it so much quicker, which I think we would do in time, but when you've first seen that plan, you're a little bit slower with it, and I think a bit more apprehensive with it, so yeah, but we did use it, we followed it.

INT: Fantastic! So moving on to a bit more about the project and how the children were involved. So the aim of the project was to motivate the children, and it says here, to use the Action:330 philosophy. What did you think of Action:330 philosophy?

RES: As in for them to be, for it to be sort of autonomous?

INT: Yes.

RES: Yes. I think we have had maybe two or three real success stories with three, yeah a good, it's got to be a good three children who have really embraced that and these children would not do any kind of sport. So I think that was always in the back of our head that we weren't forcing them and if ever they did seem to not enjoy something, we did always (as in us - [TA name] and I) we did kind of say, they're not enjoying it, do they seem like they want to do this, and if they didn't, we would pull back. And then, try and adapt it so that they were, were always choosing how to proceed with the sessions.

INT: Okay.

RES: So it was always in the back of our mind, the ethos of it.

INT: That's great. And then it says here as well, what were your experiences of using for the motivational techniques?

RES: They were really good. And again, a cross over, we can use those techniques in school as well and just in general conversations with children. So that was really helpful to have that, I think again that came in the training at the right time as well, because we had an idea of how the lessons go, and then to have that, just to remind ourselves of how we need to be with the children. It was really good.

INT: Good. Okay. Super.

RES: We've not been very negative yet.

INT: No. Picked the right one!

RES: [laughs]

INT: All right. Brilliant! So what did you think about the sports equipment provided? And was it enough to cover all the sessions?

RES: I think that we would have done more of some of the equipment. It's been so popular that we do have to keep having assemblies and asking our head teacher to remind the children that this equipment is ours for this group. They keep going to the cupboard and taking it because they want to play with it and they have cupboards where they can collect equipment to play at playtime and lunch time.

INT: So it has been shared round?

RES: Yes, because it might get broken at lunch time or playtime, if it's not quite supervised. The children in the Action:330 group do get quite kind of possessive of it, and they're not happy it's being used. So ...

INT: They're like policing the playground.

RES: They do literally police the playground, and if they see a pink ball, they know it's ours, or one of the little yellow balls. Yeah, I couldn't believe how expensive sports was when we were going through to order it. I think if, in hindsight, if we were to do it again, we would probably order less of some of the things and more of the other. It's was good choice of equipment; I don't know if we necessarily picked everything right. But we've managed because we've got a good stock in school anyway.

INT: Oh, so you use some other bits and bobs that you had as well.

RES: Yes. Oh yeah.

INT: Okay. So now that you have delivered the Action:330 Club, what things do you think worked well with the project?

RES: I think the understanding like say of getting the children to want to be doing the sport, I think some of the children petered off because they didn't like most of the multi-sports part of it, and some children just have their own interest, and if it's football or if it's cricket, and because they do that outside the school, they didn't really see the benefits of coming to do the multi-sports. But on the whole it would be the relationships we've got with the children, the few success stories that we have definitely got, and all the skills that we've got from it.

INT: OK. Great! So in quite a few schools, there was a quite noticeable drop in the attendance as the club went on. Was that a problem here? Did attendance drop?

RES: Yes it did. At first ... within the first few weeks we knew that although there were close to 30 chosen to begin with, that we never had more than 20 come, just because

days that we ended up putting them on, and the different things that those children do, maybe it could be a sibling has to go somewhere, so parents say that they can't come. So just simply to do with the days, some of them couldn't come. And it did ... we had a couple of friendship issues which put a couple of people off; we tried to resolve them and you can only resolve it so much. So that stopped a couple of people coming. And again I think because it's such a long commitment, such a big commitment, I think that's why we tailed off a little bit. Although the ones that we've got coming just still want to keep coming, and I think that kind of core group of about 12-13 children do want to still keep coming all the time, which is really nice.

INT: Actually how does that compare to some other after school clubs, you get in terms of numbers? Is that ...

RES: Ours can be quite varied. We've got La Crosse, and that's a new after school club and that's really popular. And they will have a good 25, but then we've got other clubs, one of them's net ball, and sometimes we may just see 4 of them out there or 5. So I think often it does depend on what time of the term it is as well. Because so much goes on in the school term, that often children have got so many other commitments as well. Now whether that changes with other schools in different areas, but I think our area is one of those areas where they are quite busy, the children, and quite supportive families, and they do a lot. So whether that would cross over to other schools, I don't know.

INT: Possibly. Okay. Yeah. That's an interesting point. Okay, so obviously, the timing and the different days didn't, perhaps had an effect, and the duration – did that as well ...

RES: I think that it, I think the twice a week for the 40 sessions was a huge commitment for a lot of them and half way through, I think a few of them just thought, I've been coming now for quite a while, whereas they're used to doing an after school club for a term ...

INT: One term, yeah.

RES: And that's it. And then possibly the teacher may do it again at the end of the year, so they might get to do it twice a year. So I think that had an impact, just the duration.

INT: So is it rare to have things in the two consecutive terms?

RES: Yes, we do that a couple of clubs, but just my opinion on it would be, the children, those clubs that are successful, are sports that children would be, you are really into that kind of sport. We've got a big track running club which our head teacher runs, and those children really, they get involved in different school competitions and there's a track events going on with inter-school competitions, so they're really into it. And again, the who want to do football, just want to do football, and the same with La Crosse. So they know what they're getting, and it's because they enjoy that. So I think that's why probably why sometimes they didn't always want to come to the Action:330; they didn't know if they were going to do netball or football or which ever.

INT: Yeah, okay that is interesting, thank you. So actually just a fairly direct question, do you think, how big an effect do you think SATs on year six's attendance?

RES: Oh, quite a bit. Because for one they're just so tired in that lead up. That last term where they lead up to their, they're pushed really quite hard in school, and then although it doesn't matter how much you tell them that it doesn't make a difference when they go to senior school, it really isn't used. It really doesn't make a difference. Parents don't necessarily understand that, and they want their children to be here, so again I think they're pushed at home and it's just that mental ... you know, they're just kind of really exhausted.

INT: Oh, bless them.

RES: So yeah, and then straight after SATs, I think often they then kind of just drop everything as well because they do lots of parties and they do lots of things in school, and it relaxes, so I think both terms either side can affect.

INT: Okay. Is there anything you think we could do to improve or retain attendance in the club?

RES: I think just for, half way through when our attendance started to drop, I called all of the children together, all 30 of them, and I asked them to all come in assembly time, whether they had ever attended or not, to find out why people were starting to drop off. And I had a little questionnaire, and got them to talk in groups. And I think the thing that we came up with was, some of again, simply days, they would never be able to do it, there was always going to be a handful that couldn't. The others was quite interesting, that they ... because they didn't feel it had been sold as a multi-sports club, I think that was the thing that I got out of it most. It was like they, they

were told you were going to have a lot of equipment, and again the ethos of the club is, you can choose where this goes, and you're going to be able to have some say on how the after school club runs.

INT: Okay.

RES: And all of that is true. But I think in their 10 and 11 year old minds, they're thinking we just got loaded with equipment, and it's a youth club, and we can just go and hang out and play, whatever we want. And that's, just for our school, that's how they felt. So when they came along and were, well we are having to direct. Although it's their choice of how the actual game leads on, we're directing what game we're doing and the length of time etc., so that would be the reason for I think.

INT: OK. So what impact do you think that Action:330 had on the children who signed up?

RES: I think really positive. The ones that have tailed off have done so for their reasons, but the ones who continue coming, just the relationships they've built up with each other, and [TA name] and I knew a few of them were in the infants, and we've seen them go through. But you lose touch with them, and they kind of come up to you and put their arm round you, and come up in the day, what are we going to do later. Yeah, and I don't know, they're just really friendly with us again, and we've just got that relationship with these older children that we wouldn't necessarily always have. So that's the most positive I think, and the fact that some of them are, one of them is just joining in on sporting activities, is just amazing, especially for two and three or them.

INT: Yeah.

RES: So other teachers have said they can see more of a confidence for these children.

INT: In the other classes, just throughout the day?

RES: Yes. And one child in particular who's not long been at our school, has had huge social difficulties, friendship-making, a tough home life and she would often be just hanging around after school in parks with nothing to do. And now she has thrown herself into the club, she comes, she asked if she could come, she wasn't one of the ones who wore the belt at the beginning, and she is there every week, and so again she is another success story.

INT: Made a bit of a difference.

RES: Yes. It really has.

INT: And so as well as her and some other ones, it has made a big difference in their attitude towards physical activity, do you think?

RES: Yeah, they've been giving it a go. I think that's the thing that we probably have got out of a couple of them. No, they're not particularly skilled as other children, and they can see that. They don't have the confidence and they won't give it a go, and they'll do anything to get out of doing it. Whereas now, at the beginning we'd asked them to give it a go, and it would be a sulky face, or they'd hang back, and now they are taking a bit more of a leadership role, "can we do it like this?" and they are offering suggestions so at least they can join in themselves, which is really good.

INT: That's good to hear. Okay. Brill. So yeah, I think that's their physical activity attitudes. And then you said about obviously their social aspects, as well, that they were ... in their friend groups or ...

RES: Yeah. There was a couple of friendship issues and that did have a really negative effect for a while, and one of the girls doesn't come as much now. And it is a shame because I think she needs it but for the others, it has probably helped them.

INT: Right.

RES: If we were going to continue which we will do next year, she is in year 5, we will definitely try and get her to come along. Yeah, we will, we'll try and push her to come along, just to ... I know she would want to, but I think she kind of realises that she may have been in the eye of the storm. So we'll figure out how to get round that for next year.

INT: But for the others, they made new friends and?

RES: Yeah, and the mix between year six and year five was not happening at all right up until at least half way through; they would not mix. And if we needed them to get into groups, often we would have to choose to begin with, because they wouldn't mix themselves. And they have now started to mix, and started to talk to each other, which is really positive.

INT: That's nice.

RES: Yeah, it wouldn't have happened at all before then.

INT: That's good. Okay, and actually you sort of mentioned about the effect it had on your relationship with the children?

RES: Oh yeah, it's brilliant, it really is. We are having a party next week so they, so yeah.

INT: It's quite nice.

RES: Balloons and party food.

INT: Any excuse. Fab okay. Are there any things you feel that didn't work with the project, or perhaps any negative effects the project had on the school?

RES: No, not on the school. They are pretty good. Even with certain lessons we'll kind of stream to children that are used to coming and going freely; they're quite independent – we always try and get them to be quite independent, so they are happy to come down to the club so no, not for the school.

INT: And the project itself?

RES: No. I think just the duration, I think twice a week for so long, I think for some of the children, I know for me, I think I found that, that was my only challenge.

INT: Okay. Brill. A question about behaviour, how did you feel the behaviour of the children was overall?

RES: Perfect. We don't have any behaviour issues, apart from the few friendships groups, and that's something that they're going to face all the time. They'd never be rude to us at all. And to be honest they were never rude to each other. Just some of them want to take charge, and they don't quite understand that other children don't want them to take charge; they want them join in. No, we never had any behaviour issues.

INT: Fab. That's refreshing.

RES: They're quite a well-behaved school on the whole, yeah.

INT: Brilliant, so actually my next question is redundant, do you think there is anything the Action:330 team could have done to help with behaviour problems. You didn't even have to ...

RES: No, I think the only ...

INT: Did you have to contact any of them about that?

RES: Oh no. No. Both [TA name] and I are quite confident if there were any behaviour issues, both of us are quite confident. Yeah, we both have sort of classes of 30, so we wouldn't have been fazed at all by that. I think the only thing we would possibly have done if we'd have carried on going a little bit longer, I said to [TA name], that because these ... this one girl, and you know, a couple of them were having friendships problems, it was dragging the others down and they were getting a little bit negative, and a bit less enthusiastic, so I had said you know, maybe we could ask [trainer name] to get one of the ... I think he has people volunteering or that he's training, and we have thought about getting one of those in, just to put a real boost in there.

INT: OK, yeah.

RES: But that would have been the only thing we'd have called on.

INT: Okay. But as it was, you didn't need that.

RES: No.

INT: All right. Lovely! So thinking about, how has participating in Action:330 had an impact on you? So thinking about your knowledge and the skills and confidence that you've gained from it?

RES: Massively, because just because of the nature of my job, because I teach a different classes every afternoon, often it could be any kind of subject, so because they know that I have done this course now, and I think they know that I'm quite happy now, if they say ... you know, a year ago, if they'd have said you're doing PE, I'd have had a feeling of dread, and now I'm quite excited if they say PE, because straight away they show me the plan, I get the, the Action:330 book out, and I completely adapt it ready for action. As long as the objectives are still the same, to match the curriculum. I will take that and use that. So confidence wise, a lot of cross over into teaching. And also I think confidence in just running a club because although I've been involved in some smaller clubs, gardening club and things, to do a club with so many children and for it to be physical, it quite a bit ask. So I wouldn't be fazed at all now if I had to do something similar again. So yeah, I think it's been really positive.

INT: Fab. Okay. Are there any plans to use your new skills? Any sort of future clubs or carrying this on?

RES: Yes, we are. We're going to again for PE, they know they can use me for PE. And secondly we're going to carry the club on in September, but what we've decided is we're going to do it once a week, and we're going to do it every other term. We're also getting in one of the other lady's said she might help, so we're going to see if she wants to come along to some as well, just to give us some ideas of what we do. So if ever one of us is off, or just not able to make one of the sessions, we've got a second person there that knows all about it. So yeah, we're definitely going to carry it on. Yeah.

INT: Lovely. Okay. What was your experience with working with another TA to deliver the clubs that worked well between you?

RES: Yeah, really well. I used to work with [TA name] a number of years ago, but where we are in different parts of the school now, we don't really work together now. So that was really nice to come back and work with her again, and I think we are quite similar in the way we look at things, but one of us could always tell if the other one had had a particularly tiring day, and the other one would normally take the lead a little bit more. So I think because we get on so well as well, we were able to do that really well.

INT: Okay.

RES: In fact it was always reassuring to know. We did run it sometimes on our own, if one of us wasn't able to do the club, which is only rare, but on the few occasions, and we both definitely enjoyed it when there were two of us.

INT: Cool. Nearly there. So just a question on, how did you find the visits by the Action:330 staff? So when they were in, I think they collected information didn't they, on enjoyment and exertion. Yeah, how was that?

RES: Yeah, fine. It was nice to ... it was always [staff name] for us. So it was nice to see her every two weeks. And she's just lovely anyway, [staff name]. So she's really easy to talk to, and the few times we did have a couple of questions about, I think we could just always know that we could mention to her, oh God, you know, today was touch, because they just didn't want to do this, or the person was in this mood, she was kind of always there just to listen, it was nothing that needed to be done, but it was nice being able to tell somebody else. So it was good to see her come in.

INT: OK. Super! Is there anything you think we could do to improve the project? So possibly things to think about are recruiting children and the data collection part and the actual after school club?

RES: The recruiting, we kind of just wondered just because year six, they've got this kind of hormonal edge to them, they are moody, and we know they're going to be moody, so we kind of thought because you're wanting to get children to really choose sport or activity for themselves, maybe to grab them that year earlier sort of year four / five, because while they're still that little bit more open to suggestion and they're not as worried to look a bit silly in front of their friends and again the hormones just aren't there. And they haven't got the SATs or senior school, we had a girl in there yesterday in floods of tears because she has got her tutor group for senior school, and that affected her for the whole of the session because she is really unhappy; she's got no friends with her. So we just felt year six was possibly a year too much, we thought four / five, and I think that is what we will probably do next year. The recruiting, I think will definitely sell it to them, that it is a multi-sports, so that they know right from the off that we are going to do lots of different activities. But the children we're going to leave it open to, and we're going to get children to choose if they want to come.

INT: Okay.

RES: Just because of their choosing to come, then they want to be there. But there are also children that we really think it would benefit, so [TA name] and I are going to speak to their teachers and see if we can speak to them and really have a little chat.

INT: Target them.

RES: Yeah, really try and target them in some way. We don't know how yet. But we know that's what we are going to do, yeah, just socially or physically, one or the other, we think that would be great for them.

INT: OK. That's really interesting, fab. That's it on this one. That must be brilliant. I don't know if there is anything else you want to add, at all to any of this?

RES: No, I don't think so, it's just been, it's been really great, I think the only thing I've found tricky is just the sort of doing it straight from school twice a week has been hard if I've got books to mark. I know I need to do that in my lunch time, so I get ... you don't really think of the impact, you just think oh it's an hour after school, but the impact is for your lunch time, your ... you do anyway, but more so marking in your

lunch hour. And then after school you might need to take things home with you, or you've got to come in early to finish off something, I can't tidy a classroom for the teacher the next morning, so it's had more of an impact than I actually imagined it would. But I still wouldn't have not done it.

INT: Because yes, sort of more benefits.

RES: Yeah. It's had definitely more benefits than negatives. It's been hard, but it's been worth it.

INT: Alright. Thank you. So kind of a quick fire ones, I don't know actually if we'll ... to be honest I think we've actually covered all of those. Yeah, I think we'll leave it there.

RES: Okay.

INT: That's brilliant. Thank you.

[End of Recording]