



Southampton PRU Project Research Report

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Managed by Hampshire Dance and supported by
Creative Partnerships Southampton and Isle of Wight

Dansync is a Dance Partners South East consortium and South East Dance
project.



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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Key Findings

The following points are a summary of significant observations and findings of the research, and are referred to in more depth in the body of the report. In following the development of the project the research has found that:

- Appreciable and observable personal and social developments were recorded in individual young people who attended dance sessions with some consistency.
- Both the environment and the client group meant that there was likely to be a high degree of unpredictability in relation to young people's attendance, behaviour, and group dynamics. This unpredictability was often as a result of the impact of the young peoples' outside lives on their learning experience. The dance artist's ability to understand this, respond sensitively and adapt appropriately was crucial to the success of the project.
- Those young people who were seen to especially participate and benefit were often a surprise, even to staff that know the pupils well.
- The project offered benefits to young people that are transferable into other parts of the curriculum. It opened new avenues into fields of learning that can offer alternatives to young people for whom the academic does not appeal.
- It also offered opportunities for young people to experience real achievement and success, thereby increasing self esteem and self-confidence.
- Amongst project partners there was a growing appreciation of the timescale required for this kind of project, and a shared understanding that it is worth investing in. The foundations that are now established offer a good base from which to now develop further work.
- There is also an appreciation of the 'soft' and therefore less tangible gains and developments.
- Partnership working has been a positive learning process and again provides a solid foundation for further work.

1.2 Recommendations

The recommendations come from the research process and findings, and, vitally, from those involved in the co-ordination and delivery of the project. As such they are unlikely to present a 'surprise', and a number of them have already been taken on board by the project, and incorporated into the next stages of development. Some however, may be both more difficult to take on and to deliver. It remains the role of the research to try to present areas that may either be seen as potential opportunities or issues for the future development of the work.

- The project needs dedicated, consistent, and enthusiastic staff on board.

- One key contact in the host organisation is vital.
- There is a need to build in better communication and feedback between those directly involved with the project, particularly as it expands.
- Attaching training and accreditation possibilities for young people to the project would be an important outcome for participants, host and funders.
- Greater incorporation into and interaction with the curriculum would be beneficial.
- More integration with other art forms will increase the ability to engage more young people, and offer greater potential for taking the creative aspects of the project forward.
- Staff learning has occurred informally during the project, however would benefit from greater focus in the next phase. This in turn will enhance other benefits and encourage learning and practice to filter into other areas of the school experience.
- There is a need to plan for the dissemination of learning from the project. This will further the development of this model of practice utilising arts based activity to provide means for creating greater social inclusivity, through engaging young people who are outside mainstream education.

2. Introduction – background to the project

The Melbourne Centre PRU project came about as a result of a number of strands of work and funding opportunities coming together at one time. While Hampshire Dance were looking to expand the reach of their work specifically into working with young people deemed 'at risk' of social exclusion, Creative Partnerships began operations in Southampton in April 2004, and were looking to support exciting and creative projects with educational links.

Hampshire Dance had previously been involved in the Creative Dance Apprenticeships (CDA) programme¹ - an initiative encouraging dance activity with young people at risk, spearheaded by South East Dance National Dance Agency. Hampshire Dance had been a partner on the Advisory Group for the programme in Portsmouth, which meant involvement in bringing the project together. Through this links were further developed with South East Dance and with the dance practitioner. It was also significant in furthering Hampshire Dance's interest in this direction of dance-based work.

2.1 How was the PRU identified?

Following the closure of The Gantry, Southampton's Arts Centre, Hampshire Dance was approached to lead a dance development project in the city, funded by the residual income from the venue. The Gantry's Board of

¹ Dansync was initiated in 2003 as Creative Dance Apprenticeships (CDA). It was renamed Dansync in 2005.

Trustees agreed to support a project aimed at young people, which would act as a legacy from the work of the venue.

Hampshire Dance hosted Ludus Dance Company in residence for one week in November 2004. The residency was based across Southampton and involved young people accessed through educational outreach work in mainstream secondary schools, FE colleges, HE institutions, youth clubs, community centres, and the Pupil Referral Unit.

The project involved identifying two groups of young people 'at risk' who would continue with regular dance sessions after the one-week residency - one of which was Southampton PRU.

The Melbourne Centre's interest in pursuing dance work, along with Hampshire Dance's desire to develop dance provision for 'at risk' young people, and the launch of Creative Partnerships in Southampton dovetailed neatly, with the result being the start of street/hip-hop dance sessions for young people in the PRU coordinated by Hampshire Dance and funded by Creative Partnerships Southampton and Isle of Wight.

This project is clearly situated within a wider body of work, which utilises arts mediums in targeting work with young people experiencing the effects of various forms of social exclusion. Examples of this type of project, and the evidence base of their efficacy in engaging 'at risk' young people are growing. This is, not surprisingly, synonymous with increasing interest in this type of arts based intervention. It should also be noted that through its positive engagement with marginalised young people, this type of work is able to respond to a number of current governmental agendas, across departments.

3. Aims and Objectives of the project

3.1 Initial aims

In the initial outline of the 'Street Dance Project' produced by Hampshire Dance, the aims developed jointly with the Centre were listed as:

- Encourage maximum participant attendance from young people in the sessions
- Develop achievement and skills in dance and/or music
- Promote self-esteem, co-operation and decision-making abilities
- Improve levels of health and fitness
- Nurture a sense of aspiration for continued participation in dance and the arts
- Develop the understanding of staff in the planning, supporting and evaluation of dance and arts-related projects.

3.2 Creative Partnerships priorities

Creative Partnerships had a number of particular reasons for interest in the project, however these were not prescriptive, but were instead informed by the desire to support the project in order to see what its effects or outcomes might be.

Their prime interests included:

- The timeframe. Creative Partnerships prefer to support projects that are longer term, with the attitude that they are then likely to have a greater and more long lasting impact on practice within the host organisation.
- Seeing positive changes become embedded in the culture of a school or other organisation, and that this change is something that filters through the organisation from bottom to top.
- An interest in how dance “could motivate young people in the PRU” and in learning from the experience of the practitioner involved.
- An interest in what unexpected outcomes might arise from the project.

Broadly the Creative Partnerships programme is one which views the process as important, and regards this dynamic as a reciprocal exchange involving three main agents: young people and parents; schools and teachers; local partners and professionals.

The project dovetails neatly with a number of the outcomes detailed in the Creative Partnerships Aims and Objectives (outlined in their Policy and Delivery Agreement 2004-06).

These include the following:

- Working with schools and young people, particularly those that are disadvantaged in their access to cultural and creative activities.
- Increasing schools’ (students and teachers) access to experience of broad range of cultural and creative activities.
- Supporting and developing schools capacity to embed cultural and creative practices “across and beyond the formal curriculum”.
- Enhancing young peoples’ educational experiences, through increased engagement, participation, learning, and development.
- Increasing the ability of cultural and creative sectors to work in educational settings.
- Developing mutually beneficial and cross sectoral networks of organisations and agencies.
- Increasing both value and efficacy through, where appropriate, developing work that draws on other government funding streams.
- The significant role that research can play – particularly through learning and dissemination of good practice and successful projects.
- Involving teachers and young people in consulting with them on delivery.

Creative Partnerships also place importance on the longevity of their projects, through recognition that the kinds of outcomes they are focused on necessitate the investment of time and resources, before fruition. The next

stage of the research will need to refer to these “potential longer-term outcomes”, and look at ways in which the project may be seen to have wider impacts.

While there are project aims, these are not easily laid out or neatly summarised. This is for two reasons: firstly the three partners each have different interests in the project, resulting from different agendas; secondly the project has up until now being essentially flexible, and so aims have not been tightly pinned down. As the project has progressed understanding between the partner organisations has increased, along with an understanding of the potential of the project. This means that common aims are now being agreed upon, with a more unified vision of the direction of the work in the year ahead. In the next stages outlined in section 9 the report will pull out some of the emerging collaborative aims, which reflect the increasing focus and sense of direction building within the project.

3.3 Government Agendas

As well as organisational priorities there are also wider governmental agendas that the project needs to make reference to.

The DfES have produced an outcomes framework ‘Every Child Matters’, that covers services for children and young people relating to health, care, education, training, preparation for employment, and social development. Aims, underlined by targets indicators, and inspection criteria, are grouped into five main areas; ‘Be Healthy’, ‘Stay Safe’, ‘Enjoy & Achieve’, ‘Make a Positive Contribution’, ‘Achieve Economic Well-Being’. While these categories seem extremely broad, the more detailed breakdown of each is more useful. Provision aimed at young people is becoming increasingly aware of the need to be viewed within this framework. Therefore this report will aim to highlight areas of benefit that directly relate to outcomes within any of the above five areas.

4. Description of the project

The project began with a pilot stage, which ran for six weeks between November – December 2004. This was a useful period of time for the partners to explore the logistics of running dance sessions within the Melbourne Centre, and for the dance practitioner to get to know both the young people and staff.

The project then recommenced in February 2005, with the addition of a research strand. At this point a series of ten sessions were programmed, four leading up to Easter and then six after Easter. After securing further funding this was later extended, so that it continued up until the summer holiday break, thereby operating in the same way as other elements in the school curriculum (i.e. regular rather than ‘one off’).

After the pilot it was decided to run two sessions consecutively, along the lines of gender division as opposed to age. This therefore crossed the year 10 and 11 year groupings. It was intimated at this stage that options would remain open for bringing the groups together at a later point if this was deemed appropriate. This has not yet happened but remains a future possibility.

The dance tutor began visiting the Centre on a Wednesday (in addition to the Friday dance sessions), to attend other programmed lessons such as music technology. The broad aim of this was summarised by the dance tutor as “students and myself developing a closer relationship and trust, leading to them becoming more confident and willing to join in”. She recorded that, “joining them on regular Wednesday mornings has definitely improved the relationship between us”:

- They are less wary of me.
- The atmosphere is relaxed.
- We have the same interest in hip hop culture and all that it entails.
- They are respectful towards me.
- They are interested in me and my interests.
- I have become more relaxed and settled in their company.
- I feel more equal because I’m joining in the lesson and learning with them.
- I am beginning to understand their strengths and weaknesses.

This seemed to be both appreciated and accommodated by staff, and the tutor clearly felt it was positive in that it built her relationships with the young people more rapidly. She felt that she got to know different aspects of them, commenting that, “they are allowing me to see a side of them that I do not see in the dance sessions”. She mentions two young people who are the most hesitant in dancing, yet she finds that both have obvious musical interests and talents. This supports the idea of expanding the activity to include other arts forms (e.g. music) thereby increasing the appeal to a wider group of young people.

5. Research Aims and Methodology

5.1 Aims

The broad objective of the research is to evaluate the project in an ongoing manner, thereby establishing a model for dance based inclusion work with young people in a PRU setting. The research is intended to be of practical use for both Hampshire Dance and the Melbourne Centre, through charting what works, why, and what might be improved upon. It is hoped that the research element will therefore be able to support the argument for further programmes of work. This is part of a wider current agenda to explore how and why “the arts are so successful at building confidence and self esteem and re-engaging pupils in the learning process” (E. Hirst & D. Robertshaw, *Breaking the Cycle of Failure* 2003).

Within this the research has a number of specific aims. These are:

- To assess the impact of involvement in the project on the young people participating.
- To look at the ways in which it is able to adapt to individual learning styles and behaviours.
- To examine any differences in engagement and participation, relating to gender difference.
- To look at how the partnership between the host and delivery agencies has operated, and how this has affected the organisation and rolling out of the project.

5.2 Methodology

The approach to this project builds on work carried out on several earlier projects, led by Professor Helen Thomas at the Centre on the Body and Performance, Goldsmiths College (see bibliography).

The approach adopted is that of Participative Action Research (PAR). This means that the researcher is involved in the sessions, as opposed to taking on an observational role that removes itself from the activity. This seems the most efficacious method, as it is only through full and ongoing involvement that an in-depth understanding of both the activity and those involved, can be drawn. It is important for the researcher to build relationships with those involved, which then provide a basis for utilising a range of research techniques.

PAR has a variety of tools available to it, and how these are deployed is essentially flexible, and need to be responsive to those in whom it is interested. The research has set out to gather information in a number of ways, with the premise that some methods are likely to produce richer data than others. Through using a number of methods simultaneously, it is hoped that layers of material will be superimposed, thereby building a 'thick' or detailed account of the project, that incorporates the range of views and experiences of it, from all those involved.

The following research practices are being utilised and planned for:

- Weekly research diary observations
- Dance practitioner records
- Attendance records
- Questionnaire for young people
- Informal interviews with relevant staff
- Interview with Dance Director at Hampshire Dance
- Interview with dance artist
- Regular feedback sessions with staff
- Available PRU records and information on students
- Other literature on arts and inclusion
- Viewing photographic and video material
- Reference to written material outlining initial project ideas and aims
- Two case studies of students involved (1 male, 1 female)

Of the above aims for research data, the following should be noted:

- A total of three staff at the Centre were interviewed.
- Questionnaires were carried with some of the young people administered by a member of staff. They were however done with the girls but not the boys.
- Feedback with staff was irregular and informal.
- The additional information given by the PRU was either through talking with staff, or from sheets which asked staff to list personality characteristics for each participant.
- An additional interview was undertaken with a representative from Creative Partnerships.
- The dance artist additionally evaluated her attendance in lessons at the Centre on Wednesdays.

Overall the researcher's weekly observations, coupled with the practitioner's weekly records formed the foundation of the research material, which other pieces of data then enhanced or added detail to. The researcher attended the centre a total of 14 times. Two sessions were cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. There were also two meetings of all those involved during the programme of delivery.

The research findings, drawn from the data collected, are referenced throughout this report, rather than being concentrated in a single section. However a summary is found in section 1.

6. Partners

6.1 Partner Agencies

This project has relied on a collaboration of the skills and resources of three agencies, who have had differing roles:

Hampshire Dance Project management, responsible for co-ordination. Engaging dance artist and researcher, and supporting their roles within the project.

Melbourne Centre Host organisation with responsibility for centre staff, young people and venue.

Creative Partnerships Resourcing, supporting, and monitoring project.

The aims of the project in relation to delivery were outlined in section 3. However they do not include one of the foundation elements of this project, which has been the development of the partnership through combined involvement in delivery. It should be noted that in projects of this kind the solidity and co-operability of the partnership are the keystone to either overall success or failure. This style of working is also notorious for bringing out tensions and organisational divergence. Balloch and Taylor (Partnership

Working, 2001) write that a number of research studies have found that “a clarity of expectations is essential to the success of partnerships”. This clarity of expectations requires some grounding in an understanding of the different strengths and resources of the other partners, and therefore of their role within the project. Overall the research has been impressed by the propensity of the partners to recognise the value and benefits of the other, through acknowledgement of their different areas of expertise.

This relationship has had moments of difficulty, for example involving communication, but has so far been typified by the openness of those involved to resolve arising issues, and the focus on a commitment to the project itself. The partnership has noticeably developed as understanding and trust has built both organisationally and individually. This is not to say that there was an initial mistrust, but that those involved needed time to get to grips with both the aims of the project, and the practical organisational details. The research believes that the partnership is now sufficiently developed to be able to jointly take the project forward, increasing its potential to produce beneficial outcomes for its participants. To date it has shown the ability to face issues and to find solutions to these that are satisfactory to all those involved. The obvious mutual benefit of the project’s success to both partners is clearly a good motivation.

Both Hampshire Dance and the Melbourne Centre appear to have regarded the project so far as a learning process, and have seemed keen to take real learning from it. This attitude has been a vital one, as instead of expectations that the partnership would immediately function smoothly, there has been the view that this is something that is negotiated and developed in an ongoing way.

6.2 Staff

There has been a number of staff involved to varying degrees with the project. For some this has meant an organisational role, whilst others have either regularly, or occasionally, been present at the sessions. Some staff sit in on sessions, and others actually join in with the activity, which is often visibly appreciated by the young people. It also breaks down the feeling of having and audience and therefore being observed, which can be important particularly in the early stages when the young people are taking personal risks simply by taking part.

The dance artist encourages staff to join in, and feels that it actively supports the work. Some of the most successful sessions have involved not only staff who have been actively involved, but also those who have attended regularly and built some appreciation of the work going on. It therefore seems preferable to have a small number of staff assigned to the sessions on a regular basis. The staff participation and support is also vital in that they have well-established relationships with the young people, and their knowledge in this area is a real asset to the dance artist. The artist essentially needs to concentrate on dance activity rather than managing behaviour, and here again staff participation is vital. The preference for small numbers of active staff who maintain involvement with the project for its duration, is in keeping

with findings from both the Epsom and Portsmouth research projects (see bibliography). The experience of the project from the perspective of the practitioner also supports there being a nominated person (gatekeeper) who becomes the main point of contact. This worked well in the early stages of the project, however the member of staff that took this on left, and the responsibility was not then transferred to another single person.

Other than the dance artist and researcher, staff at Hampshire Dance have taken a more 'hands off' approach than those at the Centre. They have however been quickly responsive to difficulties, and have maintained lines of communication. They have also been instrumental in arranging collaborative meetings where project progress is discussed, and future directions are agreed upon.

The main issue for staff seems to have been one of communication. This is not because a lack of willingness but because there haven't been clear enough systems in place for this, with particular individuals assigned responsibility for communication both internally and externally. While this may need to take place on more than one level (i.e. organisationally and strategically), it must be ensured that all those involved are kept abreast of relevant information. One useful tool might be a contact list giving numbers and emails of all those involved as well as stating their role within the project.

7. Participants

"Because of the complexities of modern society, children can reach physical adulthood before many of them are capable of functioning well in adult social roles. The disjunction between physical capabilities and socially approved independence and power, and the concurrent status ambiguities, can be stressful for the self-image of the adolescent."²

7.1 Who are they?

The participants have all been young people attending the Melbourne Centre PRU in Southampton. They have consisted of mixed groups of year 10's and 11's, with both young men and young women involved. During the period the research has followed the project, a total of 7 girls and 9 boys (totalling 16) have been observed taking part in sessions. Of these before the Easter break there was a consistent core group of 4 girls and 3 boys. After the Easter break the year 11's left, and some year 9's were introduced to the sessions, which affected the established continuum. In looking at the project as a whole, the best way of viewing this is as one programme for the first cohort that culminated with a performance at Easter. The project then continued with an introductory period in the summer term, where some of the young people from

² L.B. Hendry, J Shucksmith, J.G. Love & A. Glendinning, *Young People's Leisure and Lifestyles*, 1993

the previous sessions were brought together with new participants. It is these two groups who will continue with the sessions in the autumn term.

Participation in the dance sessions was voluntary. However once an individual had ‘signed up’ to the session they were encouraged to both attend and to take part. One of the biggest difficulties was however a lack of individual and group continuity due to the irregular attendance at the Centre by many of those involved.

When the research inquired as to which individuals might be the most appropriate to present as participant case studies, there was no single answer. A number of individual participants were put forward as having particularly benefited from the sessions, and notably as having surprised staff at their involvement and achievements.

Luke	Age 15	Year 10		
<i>Staff Descriptions –</i>				
Easily distracted	Musically able	Articulate		Sensitive
Mature and silly	Complex	Thoughtful		Easily led
GCSE capable	Sociable	Independent		Show’s off
Powerful self image	Willing to have a go	Silly		
Likes to impress other peers				
<p>Luke is physically big, slightly overweight, and ‘macho’ in his self-image. His physical activity level is usually such that he gets red faced and sweats, as he would playing a sport. It was not predicted that he would be either so capable or interested in the dance sessions.</p> <p>In the third session the research observed Luke attending. There was the possibility that he might be disruptive, as he had been during the breakfast bingo session earlier, where he had picked on and provoked another student. However the research recorded that he was ‘very focused’ and that the session overall was ‘dynamic, highly energetic, and enjoyable’. The three boys in the session worked really well together and were supportive of each other. There were no instances of negativity or ‘piss taking’ at all, although the session could have provided ample material for this. The dance artist offered tasters of different styles including popping, locking, and boogaloo. Luke is particularly adept at ‘waves’.</p> <p>During the sessions he showed himself to be confident, able to take on challenges and risks, able to make mistakes, good at working with peers, well co-ordinated with strong musical appreciation, and often a ring leader and motivator of others. He was rarely a negative influence, and was usually very willing to participate. However there was a period of a few weeks when he was very obviously deeply affected by events in his life outside of the school (hospitalisation following an accidental drugs overdose), and his moods dipped and were frequently changeable. One of the other participants was witness to this and therefore also affected by the experience. It was very difficult to work with Luke constructively during this time. For example the first</p>				

session after this incident the boys sat with their feet up on chairs, caps down and hoods up. At previous sessions Luke would have been the one who had broken down the invisible barrier between sitting / standing and observing / participating, but not this time.

7.2 Gender Issues

The research noted that while the boys were socially more 'reachable' in terms of the activity they were often harder to motivate. It is possible that this was because of the nature of the activity and its historical and cultural associations as being 'for girls rather than boys'. The artist purposefully never used the term 'dance' during sessions, but said 'hip-hop' instead. Interestingly in the session in the summer term when a young breakdancer (male) was invited to work alongside the hip-hop artist (female), gender reticence was quickly broken down, as the activity immediately displayed itself as physical, male orientated, and involving a public challenge. While some of the young men responded to this, others spectated rather than participated. It seemed that this was due to the very public nature of the display, plus the level of aptitude and risk involved.

The dance artist felt strongly that the sessions should continue to be separated into 'boys' and 'girls'. Her experience of both this project at the beginning, and other projects where this has not been the case, have all reinforced this view. She has found that both groups of young people are far less comfortable participating in dance activity in mixed groups. However she still feels that the ideal would be for both to be able to work together, but that this is something that could only happen with further work and confidence building, and then only if deemed appropriate.

One member of staff said that she felt that the division of the young people along lines of gender was "essential". She went on to comment that she feels "sorry that it is, but if you ask the young people themselves that's what they want". She gave a number of reasons for this. Firstly she said that "they don't want ridicule", and there was sexual and physical connotations and embarrassment around this type of activity. With particular reference to the group of girls the teacher stated "they like their own space" and that through giving them this and the dance sessions they feel they are getting "special treatment", which they are likely to respond positively to. Lastly she stressed the importance of consulting the young people themselves, particularly if issues such as the gender divide arise.

Hampshire Dance expressed a particular interest in this issue, and in the research exploring it in more detail. There was an awareness that it was already perceived as an issue at the Centre before the onset of the project, and that the young people simply wouldn't dance in front of each other. They also wanted to know more about any differences in attitudes between the boys and girls to the activity.

Overall the research observations support the views of the dance artist and the Centre staff given above. That is the sessions work in part because they

are separated into two distinct gender groups. There were times when it was obvious that the participants got some pleasure from this (for example in one session when the boys repeatedly insisted that the girls leave as it was their turn). These kinds of examples also demonstrated the unwillingness the young people had to dancing in front of one another. While this was the case with the sessions, where there was an emphasis on learning, with room to practice and to make mistakes, there was a breakthrough in terms of the performance. It was a real achievement that a number of the girls performed publicly, although it should also be noted that none of the boys did. The girls therefore performed for a mixed audience, however were still a distinct gender group themselves. They were able to do this because of the effort and practise that had gone into their performance, by both themselves and the staff, and because of the mixture of seriousness and glamour that this was given. This is exemplified by the hired costumes they wore which they liked, and which helped them transform for their performance.

There were distinct differences in the approach to the weekly sessions by the two groups. The dance artist was particularly aware of this, and both commented on it as well as adapting her approach to each group as a result. She noted that as gender groups they favoured particular styles, for example the boys particularly liked ‘popping’, while the girls tended to opt for smoother pop video influenced moves. Energy and engagement was also markedly different between the two groups. While the boys were often harder to motivate initially, when they participated they usually did so in a ‘high energy’ way, and were keen to work together. The girls entered into the activity of dance more easily (on the surface), however displayed less physical commitment, and placed less importance on working as a group. This was however contradicted by their obvious satisfaction in working together for the performance.

Katy	Age 15	Year 10
<i>Staff Descriptions –</i>		
Needy	Gentle	Lacks social graces
Good heart	Loud	Bullied
Silly	Courageous	Loves to Dance
Loves to be part of the team		Likes to complete tasks
Powerful sense of right / wrong		Has a great smile
<p>Katy described herself as “blonde, funny, and loud” on the questionnaire. She is friendly, smiley, and approachable, but also shows signs of shyness and low self-esteem. This is also quickly apparent when talking with her. She is ‘girly’ in her appearance and comportment.</p> <p>At the first session attended by the researcher it was noted that she “seemed to have a lot of energy, and while she tries, she also displays physical self-consciousness”. This was very obvious when watching Katy, most especially through the ‘smallness’ of her moves. It was as if she was keeping herself and expressions small and contained rather than fully letting them out, probably due to a lack of confidence. It also seemed that in another environment Katy</p>		

would not have participated, but that she needed to feel safe, relaxed, unobserved and not 'on the spot'. She also liked dancing with others, and often wanted to go over a sequence that she knew really well rather than learning something new.

Katy was one of the participants that staff particularly mentioned in relation to development within the project. There was both pleasure and surprise expressed at her achievements, which were exemplified through her involvement in the performance of 'Grease', the Easter school show. Staff said that even a few months earlier Katy would not have performed in this public way. Importantly it was noticed that her involvement meant her inclusion in the wider group of girls, whereas she was usually an outsider or on the fringes. One member of staff commented "Katy was *in*". They treated her much better than usual. Katy really looked forward to it. It gave her a lot more confidence."

7.3 Questionnaires

This format was used as a straightforward way of getting some sense of how the participants felt about the dance sessions. It was designed to be simple, and to allow for either answers of one word, or for longer responses. The questionnaire began with a table about self-perception, which is loosely modelled on magazine type personal questionnaires.

These were complete by a member of staff talking with three of the core group of five girls, while two completed the forms themselves (See appendix 1). It should be noted that this group are generally assured in expressing how they feel about things, and that because the forms were completed by either themselves or a teacher that they trust, they were as unpressurised as possible in giving whatever answer they wanted.

Of these 5 only one (no. 6) expressed negativity about the dance sessions, while also saying that she hadn't done dance before and wouldn't want to again. In the classes she was very obviously the least interested in the activity, but instead was the most involved and confident in the drama aspects of the performance.

In response to how each of the other five said they felt before and after the session they gave the following answers:

	<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>
1	Scared	Happy
2	Depends on what time of day the dance takes place	Worn out, happy about learning new things
3	I don't know whether I want to join in	Good
4	Nervous, unsure	Happier
5	OK	Good, high

The styles of music and dance they listed as collectively liking were: hip-hop, R & B, break dancing, hardcore, clubland, drum & bass, garage, and disco dance. R & B was the most frequently cited style. This is important in that the

styles of music and dance in the sessions are able to draw on those that they already know of and relate to. Through being culturally accessible and appealing to them they are more easily encouraged to participate. The dance artist showed sensitivity to this and usually got the young people to select the music, and bring in their own choices. She also encouraged them to express their own styles of movement, and gave positive responses to this through incorporating these into developing new sequences. In this way the participants began to develop their roles within the sessions, and instead of simply following the artist's lead, were able to participate more fully through choreography.

It should be noted that the impact of the sessions taking place at different times of day was observed by both staff and the dance artist. In the summer term it was therefore shifted to a later morning slot rather than taking place first thing. In the autumn the preference was to programme it in an afternoon. The research will continue to observe the impact of this. There is evidence to support the theory that time of day preferences for learning change according to age, with only 40% of secondary age students being morning learners (www.geocities.com/educationplace).

What made you want to come....

- 1 Its good and interesting
- 2 To learn new moves

- 3 Part of school gender group
- 4 Came with a friend
- 5 I love dancing
- 6 Something to do

Like / Dislike

- No
- Not really any dislikes
- Explained very well how to do the dances

- Some of the moves
- Embarrassing
- People not doing it with me
- It's boring

These answers display a wide range of difference and individuality in their responses. However overall the reasons for attending seem to rely on interest in the specific activity, coupled with importance of peer participation and group involvement. It might be useful to conduct the same questionnaire with the boys during the autumn term and see if there are any significant differences in their responses, particularly concerning their reactions to 'dance', and their reasons for participating.

The last question asked respondents "how do you see yourself in five years time?" The researcher has used this question a number of times on other questionnaires, and within other projects. The answers stood out against these starkly in their limited aspiration and non-specificity. While it is important not to assume any concrete conclusions from this, it suggests that for most of them to 'be working' is an aspiration, but that they have no clear picture of what it is they want to do. One answer (form no. 6) did however state "not a hip hop dancer". The individual in the group considered most academic said "hopefully still in college or a job", while another who has a recognised singing talent replied "not working – singer?" If, for the majority of students at the Centre, their educational experiences already mean they are unlikely to gain

numerous GCSE's, then opportunities in arts fields may for some offer viable alternative routes into personal and career development.

8. Learning and Outcomes

8.1 Positive Experiences

One of the members of staff who was involved with the project said, "at first I thought it was a great idea, the young people getting what they want.....and then I was disappointed by the take up". She then said she realised when watching the performances that it wasn't about the 'masses' getting involved but was instead about what individuals got out of it. She felt strongly that the project had been beneficial for many of the young people involved and that she has seen 'individuals blossom'. She also felt that they would have had positive experiences through the work that they will remember and therefore will take with them.

The Darts report ³ which followed a similar arts based project delivered within a PRU, details how they map "the instances of disruptive or violent behaviours and levels of engagement through the sessions", with the aim of gaining a better understanding of what exactly causes changes in individual's behaviours. The staff working at the Melbourne Centre and the dance artist view the young people, their participation in a session, and therefore the success of delivery in a similar though less formalised way. Through their knowledge of the young people as individuals, and particularly their kinds of behaviour, staff are able to assess positive reactions, participation, and genuine achievement. This presents a clear argument for the recording of 'soft outcomes' (qualitative) alongside more tangible (quantitative) outcomes, such as numbers of participants. It is through the knowledge and experience of staff that developments such as a young person smiling, expressing an opinion, or dancing in a session for the first time, can really be measured. These kinds of steps could either be missed by someone who did not have established relationships with the young people, or might be considered meaningless with a different client group. One example is when one of the young women danced, who for a long time wouldn't join in the dancing, though she actively watched. One of her teachers also noted that she seemed very focused, whereas in most other lessons she has a notable lack of sustained concentration.

With young people like those attending the Centre, the starting point for looking at involvement must be set initially at a low level. Therefore attendance is the first plus, and if a young person isn't actively disruptive this is also a positive sign. 'Breaking the Cycle of Failure' details an extremely useful Engagement Matrix, which is reproduced in full below. (see Table 1).

It might be useful to utilise the matrix (or an adapted version of it) during the next stage of the project. This could involved recording observations on each young participating at the end of each session, and therefore over time

³ E. Hirst & D. Robertshaw, Breaking the Cycle of Failure, 2003

building up data that can be examined for any clear progression. It would also be useful to build on understandings of both the individuals and the group dynamics, and of how the interplay of these impacts on the successes of the activity.

Getting a group of young people to participate in dance, where this involves learning and therefore risk taking, is neither easy nor straightforward. This is made more difficult when those involved have developed a resistance to education, and have multiple issues that create barriers for them. There were times during the project, and particular sessions when these difficulties were apparent, and others when those involved came out of the sessions on a 'high'. Given this, that five out of six of the core group of six of the young women said that they would like to continue attending the dance sessions if they were given the option, must be regarded as key evidence of success. Importantly it points to the fact that despite (and maybe because of) some of the difficulties, the overriding experience for those involved was a positive one that they were keen to continue.

Table 1

1	2	3	4	5
Disengagement Disaffection	Curiosity	Involvement	Acceptance	Success
The point where the pupils start, manifesting a range of negative behaviours:	The point of first participation. Curiosity is a pre-requisite of learning. The arts engender curiosity because the outcome is unknown:	The stage when participation progresses to active participation:	The stage when young people 'relax' into the process and accept all of its challenges:	The stage when young people are 'affected' by their achievement:
Lack of interest	Watch	Respond to instruction	Initiate ideas and tasks	Accept praise
Make negative comments	Listen	Copy	Suggest improvements	Make positive statements about own work
Undermine work of others	Ask questions	Get hands busy	Accept feedback	Practise skills
Disrupt and distract others	Experiment	Discuss process and outcomes	Offer advice	Strive for improvement
Exhibit violent behaviour	Dip in and out	Co-operative and collaborate	Complete tasks	Show work to others privately
Withdraw and refuse attention	Show interest	Engage in group work	Receive comments from peers	Celebrate work privately
Irrelevant talk	Ask for instruction or demonstration	Stay on task	Learn new skills	Welcome praise
Short concentration span	Comment positively on the work of others	Show restraint under duress	Meet new challenges	Experience pride and self belief

Make assumptions of failure	Have a go but destroy outcome	Relate own experiences	Commit	Comment positively on the work of others
Avoid answering questions	Listen	Bring materials or examples to sessions	Take tasks away from the project	Accept criticism
Deny responsibility for own actions	Ask questions	Talk about the activity outside the session	Communicate with artists beyond tasks	Reflect
Destroy work				Have aspirations
Become involved in others disputes				
Walk out of session				

8.2 Learning Styles

The research has been interested in the ways in which different people learn, based upon the idea of us all having different or preferred learning styles. These can be both inherent and learnt. They are based upon a sensory preference for receiving information and are usually divided into three main styles:

- A. Kinaesthetic – including touch and movement
- B. Auditory
- C. Visual – including linguistic and spatial

It should be noted that while an individual may have a preference, each style is not exclusive. It is seen as good practice to enable development within the preferred learning style and then movement towards developing the others, thus widening learning abilities. In relation to the dance sessions, the activity seems obviously and immediately kinaesthetic in nature. However it also comprises elements of the two other main methods through the expertise of the dance artist. In the sessions observed the teaching methods incorporated auditory instruction, and visual display to be copied by participants. Repetition was also frequently used in order to embed the learning. At other times the artist says she purposely using non-verbal teaching methods. She is particularly conscious of the young people’s attention and is continually finding ways of capturing this, for example working either facing them or with her back to them, and switching between different dance styles some of which are more gendered.

The importance of the activity which involves movement in an untypical learning environment (i.e. not classroom / desk based) seems particularly relevant to young people who are excluded from mainstream education. It provides ways in which they are both able to be physical, move in and out of concentration, and learn in different ways, particularly kinaesthetic, which maybe less provided for in other parts of the curriculum.

“Traditionally in schools the visual and auditory learners have been well catered for but those with a strong kinaesthetic preference, who learn by

action and body movement have been neglected, particularly when they move from primary to secondary.”⁴

Research has also pointed to younger children starting school as primarily kinaesthetic learners, becoming more tactile, and then gradually developing first auditory skills, and then visual skills. The inevitable question follows of what is it that is being learnt during the activity itself and what skills are being developed that are transferable into other areas of learning and of life?

The Literacy Trust defines a bodily or kinaesthetic intelligence as “expertise in using the whole body to express ideas and feelings”. They list the skills this involved as:

- Co-ordination
- Balance
- Dexterity
- Flexibility
- Strength
- Speed

While these are all physical abilities, there are also a number of other benefits that have been observed by the researcher, staff and dance artist, in those who have participated in the sessions. These include:

- Experiences of success and achievement
- Working in a group
- Peer support and approval
- Communication
- Participation in leading / directing the activity
- Public performance
- Movement memory
- Focus and concentration
- Listening to direction
- Facing challenges
- Creativity
- Self expression

As one member of staff commented, “For our pupils (self expression) has been particularly stunted, only in anger and violence. Now they are successful at something positive”.

The research has begun to look at learning styles for several reasons. Firstly there seems to be increasing acknowledgement that mainstream education relies heavily on auditory and visual teaching methods. This therefore suggests that individuals who either have not sufficiently developed these modes of learning, or who strongly favour an alternative learning style, are likely to find the educational experience more difficult. The research observed the ways in which the artist used varying methods, thereby appealing across

⁴ Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic (VAK) Learning Styles, Villiers Park Educational Trust

the spectrum of learning styles. It has also begun to record ways in which the young people involved are learning through the sessions. Ideally the research would like to continue to develop this strand of enquiry, which would include greater detail about the educational backgrounds and learning styles of all the young people participating.

8.3 Teaching Practice

The street dance project exemplifies a desire within the school to offer an increasingly wide range of opportunities and experiences to its students. It was described as enrichment to our curriculum". One member of staff pointed out that the opportunity of being involved in this type of special activity is something many of their students haven't been offered before. They commented that in mainstream schools this kind of thing is seen as a treat or a reward for good behaviour, and therefore these young people are likely to have been excluded from participating.

The performance was a good example of how projects such as this can produce visible achievements, that are showcased for appreciation by others. In the performance the dance was combined with a number of other elements (drama, art, IT, music) to good effect. This allowed for input from a wider range of young people, and encouraged the use of a range of skills.

One member of staff at the Centre said that she felt incorporating the dance activity into other areas such as drama really helped. It involved collaborative cross-curricular work that was both successful and enjoyable. There were felt to be real advantages for teaching practice, in this type of project.

Another staff member said that the experience of the dance activity and specifically the performance "gives me the confidence to plan more and bigger projects". She feels that there is now a team who will take this kind of work in the school forward, again pointing to positive outcomes from the work to date. There was also the opinion that things the young people learnt in the session would be transferred to other sessions, thereby also benefiting staff. However one teacher said that the young people needed to be helped to recognise their achievements and to "link these into other fields". Other areas mentioned by staff included: drama; sports; sex education / health (PHSE); art; music; IT.

The dance artist felt that the consistent involvement and support of members of staff in the session was really helpful. Their knowledge of the young people, their assistance when necessary in dealing with difficult behaviour, and their ability to create enthusiasm and enjoyment were all crucial.

Interestingly one of the teachers said to the dance artist, "you are the only other person I see teach". This is striking in the way it illustrates how teachers are usually isolated in their practice, and focused on teaching their own specialist subject. Therefore projects such as this offer real opportunities for joint working and the cross fertilisation of ideas and practices. The research should look at this more closely over the next stage of the project.

8.4 Every Child Matters

The project naturally dovetails with a number of the aims outlined in the 'Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework'. Below are listed four of the five main headings, and a summary of what it is about this project specifically that meets some of the targets, indicators and inspection criteria:

- ✓ **Be Healthy** – Encourages physical health through activity. Encourages mental and emotional health through creative self-expression.
- ✓ **Enjoy and Achieve** – Encourages personal development and enhances educational experiences. Offers real experiences of achievement and success.
- ✓ **Make a Positive Contribution** – Offers social and personal development opportunities. Positively encourages social responsibility through group work, and participation in relevant decision-making. Reinforces positive behaviour while discouraging anti-social behaviour.
- ✓ **Achieve Economic Well-Being** – Opens up avenues of opportunities outside the statutory curriculum, notably in the arts fields. Develops personal and social skills that are transferable to other fields, and useful for training and work situations.

The further development of the project, particularly in the widening of its range of arts activities, plus the possibility of accreditation, will mean that it has greater ability to meet a range of DfES criteria. Staff were aware of both the Every Child Matters agenda, and the increasing necessity of regarding and recording learning outcomes within broader terms than the purely academic.

9. What next?

9.1 Project Direction

Some of what is recorded below has already been taken on board by the project team, and is progressing as the next stage is rolled out. In meetings that took place at the end of the summer term there was both common agreement and enthusiasm expressed by the partners about the ways in which the project should develop. There are obvious challenges ahead in that the next stage will involve an expansion in scope, and therefore require careful management. However it would seem that some of the groundwork that has already been done by the partners, proffers a solid launch pad for this. If the project continues to adopt an approach that is open, flexible, and regards the process as essentially one of learning, then this will allow room for both positive outcomes and for elements that may be regarded as less successful.

The following summarises some of the ideas and plans for the next phase of the work:

- Expanding to incorporate a wider range of art forms – music, graffiti, film, and IT.
- Exciting potential.
- Bringing together range of artists and professionals.
- Sharing learning between practitioners.

- Possibilities for accreditation.
- Dissemination of model of working.
- Consolidating partnership.
- Ensuring good working practice through formalising systems for communication and clarifying roles. There will be a greater necessity for this with the project expanding and becoming more complex.
- Staff INSET training.
- Including the new intake of young people (year 10's) alongside those already established. Possibilities for peer leadership.
- Agree a broad set of aims for the next stage.
- Agree a number of methods for monitoring progress and responsibility for these.

The above could form the basis for reviewing the project next year. It would also need to continue to focus on the benefits of the project to the young people involved, as this is obviously the primary objective. The issue which has not yet been grappled with is the need to begin to think now about follow on work, i.e. where a young person might go with this beyond the life or scope of the project. Can the project offer access into other avenue and opportunities? Hopefully ideas about this as well as real possibilities will arise during the next phase.

9.2 Research Element

It is recommended that the research continues to follow the project over the next phase. It could however feasibly do this in a less intensive way. With regular (bi-monthly or monthly) attendance contact would be maintained, and progress charted. However this would also rely on information from those involved on the ground, both the artist and Centre staff. This could follow a simple diary type record of each session, and include details of those attending, group work, individual's behaviour and participation levels, etc. While maintaining some consistency in the research approach, it would also handover some of the responsibility for this to those participating, including staff, artists and young people.

10. Appendices

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Appendix II Questionnaire



First Name.....Age.....

Ethnicity.....

M/F.....

How would you describe yourself –?
(With 1 being low, 3 average, and 5 high)

A	Healthy	1	2	3	4	5
B	Fit	1	2	3	4	5
C	Confident	1	2	3	4	5
D	Sociable / Friendly	1	2	3	4	5
E	Active	1	2	3	4	5
D	Motivated	1	2	3	4	5

1. Can you give 3 (or more) words to describe yourself?

2. What would you say are your main interests?

3. Have you done any dance before?

4. What kinds of dance and music do you like?

5. What made you want come to this session?

6. Are there any things you particularly like / or dislike about the dance sessions?

7. How do you feel before you come to the class?

8. How do you feel at the end of the class?

9. If you had the choice of doing more hip hop dance sessions would you say 'yes' or 'no'?

10. How do you see yourself in five years time?

Thank you for your time

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