

5-25-2017

Dancing at my Desk: Examining the Foundations of a Non-Profit Dance Education Organization

Caeli Koizumi

Loyola Marymount University, ckoizumi@lion.lmu.edu

Recommended Citation

Koizumi, Caeli, "Dancing at my Desk: Examining the Foundations of a Non-Profit Dance Education Organization" (2017). *Grants & Fellowships*. 24.

<http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/honors-grants-and-fellowships/24>

This Honors Summer Research Fellowship is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors Program at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Grants & Fellowships by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

Dancing at my Desk:

Examining the Foundations of a Non-Profit Dance Education Organization

Caeli Koizumi

The purpose of this project is to examine and analyze the prevalence, efficacy and methods of implementation of Arts Integration in Southern California. Though various organizations in Orange County and the greater Los Angeles area exist in various forms to bring dance to underprivileged communities, few exist with a direct focus on Arts Integration. Arts integration that utilizes dance is proven to improve students' physical, cognitive and emotional abilities. Despite this evidence, the use of dance in classroom settings is uncommon. Through interviews and observations with three distinct dance education programs throughout Los Angeles and Orange County, I will gather data regarding the process of starting a non-profit organization, the administrative necessities for maintaining a dance education program as well as effective methods of Arts Integration curriculum implementation in the dance classes. Through a comprehensive internship with one of the programs, I will study the inner-workings of the program over an extended period of application. The data gathered from each program will develop my understanding of both curriculum-based research and organization building research, though each program may differ in the amount of each type of research they offer. My study will also follow existing Arts Integration opportunities in Southern California to better understand how a new, unique non-profit will draw and connect with existing resources. I will analyze the data collected to select the most effective administrative and pedagogical practices for the foundations of, *Dancing at My Desk*, a new Arts Integration program in Southern California.

Introduction

Movement is in everything we do; people wave to each other in their neighborhoods, turn around when someone calls their name and weave in and out of each other on a busy street. In dance, these various movements are categorized as port de bras, direction change and pathways, which are all foundational elements of dance. Dance and movement are essential in the development of physical and mental function in human beings, yet the availability of dance is extremely limited especially for students in underprivileged communities. Various programs throughout Southern California have emerged that offer dance classes to students with limited to no access to dance. Some of these programs vary depending on if they occur in school or after school, provide technical dance classes or Arts Integration on a smaller scale, and take place on a permanent or temporary basis. Yet, research has shown that no permanent non-profit organization that specifically provides an Arts Integration program exists in the Southern California region. Arts Integration refers to the combination of a visual or performing art, in this case dance, with a core curriculum subject to provide equal understanding of the selected disciplines. The use of dance for Arts Integration curriculum has been proven to elicit cognitive, physical and emotional progress in students despite the lack of availability of programs to implement this style of learning. Students in low-income communities are even less likely to ever experience this method of teaching and learning. Thus, the next step in the development of a program of this magnitude is to study existing programs that either provide pure dance classes on a permanent basis or temporary dance integration programs. My examination will evaluate effective teaching practices as well as the administrative necessities for establishing and maintaining *Dancing at my Desk*, the new Arts Integration non-profit organization.

Related Work and Motivation

Organizations throughout Southern California have worked for years to bring the art of dance to underprivileged communities. The Gabriella Foundation, founded in 1999, has developed two programs that have implemented dance as a stronghold in the community. These programs, *everybody dance!* and the Gabriella Charter School serve over 2,000 students with the purpose of transforming "...the lives of underserved youth in Los Angeles through high-quality dance instruction."¹ The classes provided by these programs, however, are more focused on dance technique. ESCAPE (Equitable Science Curriculum for Integrating Arts in Public Education), in partnership with Segerstrom Center for the Arts, University of California Irvine and the OC Department of Education, is an ongoing research study that aims to develop and implement STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) curriculum integrated with dance in various high-need Southern California school districts over the course of several years.² Not only will this project produce effective curriculum for Arts Integration of STEM and dance content, but it will also provide a model for efficient methods of improving teacher and student achievement.³ Yet, this project will only be able to reach students for a limited time and specifically focuses on STEM content rather than all of the core curriculum subjects. Similarly to ESCAPE, dancers from the Aman Folk Ensemble taught workshops in schools and community settings that focused on connecting social studies and folk dance, though they did include some other subjects in their curriculum such as English Language Arts and Science.⁴ Since the company closed in 2004, some former company members continued under the name Aman Dance Educators and they work on a smaller, independent basis, which consequently limits the

¹ "The Gabriella Foundation: About Us," The Gabriella Foundation, accessed December 31, 2016, <http://www.gabri.org/mission>.

² "Equitable Science Curriculum for Integrating Arts in Public Education," UCI School of Education, accessed December 31, 2016, <http://www.education.uci.edu/research/escape.php>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dawn Dyson, Aman Educator, Aman Educator Background, January 6, 2017.

program's reach.⁵

Arts Integration is a pedagogical method that not only improves physical abilities and comprehension of the material at hand, but also develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This method of teaching also addresses multiple intelligences of learning. Teaching professional, Kelly Mancini Becker, explains that students that lack skills in reading and writing struggle with their understanding of other subjects yet by allowing them to learn kinesthetically through Arts integration, they are able to communicate and express themselves as well as solve problems that they would not have been able to while sitting behind a desk.⁶ Despite the efficacy of Arts Integration, it is still considered an unconventional method of teaching and uncommon in schools. Leonard, Hellenbrand and McShane-Hellenbrand explain that:

A focus on dance education is not the norm...however, with the development of the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, the emphasis on arts curriculum and standards has become inextricably and inherently intertwined with the broader call for rigorous academic standards and disciplinary integration, such as evidenced by the implementation of Common Core State Standards.⁷

Thus, it is crucial for students to experience this style of learning especially those in underprivileged communities. The first step in affording students the opportunity to engage in Arts Integration is through an organization developed specifically for the purpose of expanding this method of teaching. From the development and implementation of *Dancing at my Desk*, it is possible for Arts Integration to affect a larger demographic and be established as a more widely-used form of teaching.

Despite its prestige as an epicenter for the arts, the greater LA region, including Orange

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kelly M. Becker, "Dancing through the School Day: How Dance Catapults Learning in Elementary Education," *Journal Of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 84 (2013): 6-7.

⁷ Alison E. Leonard, Leah Hellenbrand, and Karen McShane-Hellenbrand, "Leading by Design: A Collaborative and Creative Leadership Framework for Dance Integration in P-12 Schools," *Journal of Dance Education* 14 (2014): 89.

County, does not possess an organization that specifically focuses on Arts Integration courses in dance with all the core subjects to underprivileged students. The Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. has a program that provides Arts Integration of all subjects to partner schools that have selected to have a school-wide focus on the arts.⁸ Due to its global recognition as an arts metropolis, Los Angeles should also offer an organization based in Arts Integration for high-risk and high-needs communities. By examining selected existing programs in Southern California, I will develop a deeper understanding of what is available in the community and the best ways to serve the community. Other programs in Southern California exist in service of Arts Integration, but it is not possible to study all of them at this point in my research. These programs include, but are not limited to:

The Wooden Floor

Dancing Classrooms

The Music Center & the Los Angeles County Performing Arts Center

Inner City Arts

Invert/ED

Though these programs are pivotal in the promotion of Southern California dance education, they differ in regards to their approach as well as scope. For example, some of these programs focus on providing dance as well as computer skills classes to instill a strong sense of discipline whereas others provide teaching artists only for short residency workshops that last several weeks. *Dancing at my Desk* aims to provide a permanent program that covers a wide range of interdisciplinary curriculum, that is constantly evolving and expanding.

⁸ “Change Education Through the Arts (CETA)”, The Kennedy Center ArtsEdge, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/how-to/series/arts-integration/changing-education-through-the-arts>.

It is necessary to remain in LA for the summer to continue research with one of the selected programs to enhance my experience in working at a non-profit dance education organization. The purpose of the project is to create an organization that serves the needs of the Southern California region, thus, by remaining in LA, I will develop an understanding of the community's needs while continuing my study of effective pedagogical practices and administrative responsibilities. I intend to serve this community at large and thus, I must immerse myself in the community.

Methods

To explore the process of implementation and the methods of maintaining a new, unique dance education organization, I will begin with an in-depth interview process to gather information from administration and faculty of three distinct, dance education programs in Southern California. I will also observe several of the classes held by each organization to analyze the integration of their mission statement and goals "in the field", particularly regarding lesson plan structure and classroom management techniques. The second stage of my research will take place in the form of a summer internship with the Gabriella Foundation, one of the organizations from the previous stage of research, which will allow me to observe and teach in their summer dance program. I selected an internship with this organization because of its structure as a charter school and an after school program so I can experience how their techniques in both environments translate to the summer program. The Gabriella Foundation is approximately fifteen miles away from Loyola Marymount University, a much shorter commute compared to the other programs in my research. This is also the only program of the three selected that has developed an extensive summer program.

During my internship, I will observe classes, act as a teaching assistant and shadow

members of the administration in their work. It is necessary to take part in an extended, immersive experience with this organization to better understand the day to day workings of a dance education program. The internship will take place in Los Angeles during the summer of 2017. I will also hold a part-time internship with the Loyola Marymount University Department of Dance under the supervision of Carol Jones, the senior administrative coordinator. This will provide a more generalized view of the duties of running a large-scale dance program. Combined with what I will gather regarding the most effective methods to suit arts integration curriculum, what I determine from this process will assist in the creation of a mission statement and goals as well as curriculum for *Dancing at my Desk*.

My commute on average will be approximately thirty miles total per day from Loyola Marymount University to the Gabriella Foundation. Three days per week will be spent at the Gabriella Foundation and two days will be with the LMU Dance Program. Based on research of housing options closer to the Gabriella Foundation, I have concluded that LMU summer housing is a much more affordable option. The cost of housing on-campus includes utilities, which is not the case with a possible temporary apartment near the Gabriella Foundation. Rent on average is approximately \$1000 near the foundation, which does not include utilities. Also, due to the lack of availability of housing near the Gabriella location itself, I would need to add the commute from the temporary apartment to the Gabriella Foundation, which would increase the cost of mileage. By living on-campus I will be able to walk to the LMU Dance Program internship and only commute three days per week whereas a temporary apartment closer to the Gabriella Foundation will include a short commute to that location as well as the commute to LMU. In addition to its economic and environmental benefits, on-campus housing at LMU will place me closer to my research base, which will allow me to meet with my mentor more often and access

other necessary research materials.

Expected Results

The expected results of this project include a presentation of the first stage of research at the 2017 Undergraduate Research Symposium, a paper detailing the entire process and conclusions of the project as well as a website for *Dancing at My Desk*. The website will include a mission statement for the organization as well as example lesson plans that would be utilized in the organization and an example of what the schedule of classes would look like. Part of this project's culmination will also include possible resources that could be utilized for funding as well as an overview of the necessary administrative and faculty positions that would need to be fulfilled. Upon its completion, this project will lay out the foundations for *Dancing at My Desk*, the non-profit organization for high-risk communities in LA that focuses on Arts Integration.

The first stage of the non-profit will mimic the structure of the Kennedy Center and the Segerstrom Center for the Arts, which hold contracts with different schools. For the first few years of *Dancing at my Desk*, teaching artists will hold extended workshops at various schools in need and that desire to host the program. During this phase, the organization will also partner with certain schools or family centers in the surrounding neighborhoods to host more permanent after school Arts Integration classes. Once *Dancing at My Desk* has grown in the demographic it reaches and solidified the administrative and financial portion of the organization, the next step is to establish a facility dedicated to the goals and curriculum of the non-profit. As the organization progresses, more facilities will be put in place in various locations to increase access to the *Dancing at my Desk* programs.

Conclusion

The use of dance as a form of outreach for the community and the integration of dance

with the various core curriculum areas have both been present in the field for a number of years. Yet, Southern California does not possess a combination of both of the concepts that serves the population on a holistic or permanent basis. To achieve this goal, research must begin with uncovering the necessities for building the foundations of an organization of this magnitude and honing the pedagogical techniques that will result in the best teacher and student achievement for the organization. *Dancing at My Desk* could be the start of a program that not only brings the physical and cognitive influence of dance to children in need, but also the joy of it. By participating in an immersive internship to better my understanding of both the administrative and pedagogical sides of starting and maintaining this organization, I will be able to move forward drastically with *Dancing at My Desk*.

Bibliography

Becker, Kelly Mancini. "Dancing through the School Day: How Dance Catapults Learning in Elementary Education." *Journal Of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 84, no. 3 (January 1, 2013): 6-8. *ERIC*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 9, 2015).

The Gabriella Foundation. "The Gabriella Foundation: About Us." Accessed December 31, 2016, <http://www.gabri.org/mission>.

The Kennedy Center ArtsEdge. "Change Education Through the Arts (CETA)." Accessed December 31, 2016. <https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/how-to/series/arts-integration/changing-education-through-the-arts>.

Leonard, Alison E., Leah Hellenbrand, and Karen McShane-Hellenbrand. "Leading by Design: A Collaborative and Creative Leadership Framework for Dance Integration in P-12 Schools." *Journal Of Dance Education* 14, no. 3 (January 1, 2014): 87-94. *ERIC*, EBSCOhost (accessed December 31, 2016).

UCI School of Education. "Equitable Science Curriculum for Integrating Arts in Public Education." Accessed December 31, 2016. <http://www.education.uci.edu/research/escape.php>.