

TRACES OF MOTION: MAKING THE LEARNING VISIBLE IN  
CREATIVE DANCE EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

What is the learning that happens in creative dance in an elementary school setting? Can pedagogical documentation, inspired by the educators of Reggio Emilia, make this learning visible to the various stakeholders in education? This research project investigated the learning for both teachers and students in four elementary school settings in the Province of Ontario, Canada. Four expert dance educators, who were also generalist classroom teachers, were videotaped and photographed while teaching creative dance classes. Afterwards, these teachers were interviewed while watching the video documentation. From these interviews, the researcher's observations, field notes, and photographs, moments of perceived learning were proposed via pedagogical documentation panels. The words and pictures of students and teachers were placed on panels and these were used to provoke further dialogue in the form of one-on-one interviews, small group, or whole class discussions. All of the interviews and specific moments from the video documentation were transcribed and, along with the photographs and students' work samples, comprised a data collection. The data set from each setting was analyzed against itself and against the data from other settings in a constant comparative method. Meanings emerged through an ongoing process of coding and identifying and classifying the data into themes (and subthemes). The findings suggest that in creative dance classes students are learning to develop an awareness of their dancing selves, an intersubjectivity as they engage in collaborative creative processes and discover the interconnectedness of dance as a language of learning. Teachers are learning their unique role as facilitators in creative dance classes and are acquiring an ability to witness thinking bodies. The methodology of pedagogical documentation is able to make the learning visible in creative dance classes because it provokes students and teachers to revisit and reflect on their learning and to confront issues that arose in the creative process. Although creative dance offers a unique form of learning, that is, learning with the body, it must confront the hidden curriculum in education with respect to the body, and overcome its own status as a null curriculum in education.

### **Dedications Page**

This dissertation is dedicated to all those teacher and students who have contributed to the information we know about creative dance education. Over the past twenty years of teaching creative dance, I have been greatly influenced by the works of creative dance education pioneers Mary Joyce, Joyce Boorman, and many more. The pictures of students in these books have continually inspired me as documentation of students deeply engaged in using their bodies to create. I have also been inspired by the incredibly dedicated creative dance teachers and leaders in Ontario schools including our dear friend Andre Gravelijn who died quite unexpectedly this past fall, but who inspired all of us with his dedication to the arts and humanity. It is equally dedicated to my mother Audrey Richard who has always influenced me as a teacher, and who (like the Reggio educators), enacts a pedagogy of listening, allowing her students and children to discover themselves.

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## Introduction

*We only believe those thoughts which have been conceived  
not in the brain but in the whole body.<sup>1</sup> W.B. Yeats*

The current status of dance in Ontario schools is tenuous at best. Perhaps this reflects the status of dance in the consciousness of the general public. My master's research (2009) indicates that generalist teachers see dance as yet another *add-on* to an already overburdened curriculum; thus they fail to see the incredible potential for creative dance as a form of embodied learning. Generalist teachers don't see themselves as artists, let alone dancers, and therefore don't feel comfortable teaching dance (Richard, 2009). For the most part, generalist teachers (and I believe the general public) have a very narrow view of what dance education entails: the teacher stands at the front and demonstrates a dance (e.g. The Macarena), which the students learn and repeat. In this teacher-directed model of dance instruction there is little room for the creative process or the development of the students' personal voices as outlined in the current Arts document (Ministry of Education, 2009). From my experiences conducting numerous workshops for pre-service and in-service teachers and teaching an additional qualification course for teachers, even those teachers considered *specialist* dance educators (those with a background in dance) are more comfortable with a teacher-directed model, as this is the way they were educated in the studio dance system. Most of the stakeholders in education have very little knowledge of *creative dance*, defined by Sue Stinson (1988) as "an art form that is based on natural movement rather than

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<sup>1</sup> Yeats qtd. in Leavy, 2009, p. 198.

MacDonald (1991) as “bodily actions that express inner thoughts and feelings and enhance those thoughts and feelings” (p. 434).

How can we change the image of dance as a *soft* (Hanna, 1999) subject so it can take its place in the curriculum alongside mathematics, science, and language? Stinson (2005b) suggests that the education system needs dance far more than dance needs the education system. I agree in part. I believe that education needs a rich form of embodied learning, but I recognize that dance, as an art form, requires a larger public awareness which could be found embedded in our public education system. “Without dance education, out of which flow dancers and dance audiences, the field of dance is in jeopardy” (Hanna, 1999, p. 184).

Although dance has been a subject in the Ontario curricula for almost fourteen years, there seems to be very little creative dance taking place in schools. In order to address this issue, we could look to places where dance is successfully embraced as an important site of embodied learning and find a means to animate these learning episodes for others in education. But how can we animate dance, as such an ephemeral art form? Recently, early childhood dance scholars (Sansom, 2011) and proponents of creative learning (Craft, Cremin & Burnard, 2008a) have begun to recognize the alignment between the principles and values of the Reggio schools with those of creative dance education and creative learning in general.

When I was introduced to the practices of the Reggio Emilia schools in a graduate course in education, I immediately recognized the incredible potential in their approach to education in order to support the way we teach dance in Ontario Schools.

This approach is based on the municipal system of 46 infant-toddler centres for children (birth to age 6) owned and operated by the City of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy since the 1960s. Initiated by parent cooperatives after World War II, it was fostered by master educator Loris Malaguzzi until his death in 1994 (Wien, 2008, p. 2). The cornerstone of the Reggio approach is an *image of the child* as a protagonist in her/his own learning, “rich in resources, strong, and competent” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 114). At the heart of their approach to education are six principles: relationality, reciprocity, collaboration, beauty and delight, differences, and intersubjectivity (Rinaldi, 2001a). Their big ideas include the concepts of children as citizens with full participation in society, children as creators of culture for others, the school as a living organism, the interconnectedness of all living things, and specific pedagogical processes (Wien 2008, course lecture).

The Reggio schools utilize the graphic arts as a means of representing children’s knowledge about the world. On a study tour (March 2011), I had a chance to visit three Reggio schools, including the Choreia School, which places a specific emphasis on learning through the body. One pedagoga recognized that the Reggio educators still see dance and music as arts disciplines that need to be *taught*, and unlike their views on the graphic languages (visual arts), the Reggio educators do not feel confident enough in these languages (personal conversation with Pedagoga Elena Giacomini). Although the Reggio educators are just beginning to document the use of dance as a language in their schools (Filippini, Vecchi & Guidici, 2008), their use of the visual art languages of painting, drawing and sculpting, provide a basis for using dance as a language of

learning and tool for meaning-making. Their approach suggests that we could allow the students to express their theories and ideas using dance by supporting their practical knowledge of this “new” medium with information about the elements of dance and how they could manipulate the elements to suit their own creative purposes.

The Reggio educators use a poem written by their founder Loris Malaguzzi, “No way. The Hundred *is* there,” as a foundation for their educational practices, which encourages students to utilize more than one hundred expressive, communicative, and cognitive *languages* (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998, p. 3). In Reggio, education is a communal and a constructivist activity based on the traditions of progressive education (Dewey and Bruner), the constructivist psychologists (Piaget and Vygotsky), systems theory (Bateson), as well as Italian left-reform politics and intellectual traditions (Ciari and Rodari). Loris Malaguzzi was influenced by the popular schools of France, the laboratory school of John Dewey in America, as well as the movement of cooperative education led by Bruno Ciari, which sought to liberate the energy and capacities of the whole child in education (Malaguzzi, 1998).

In addition to their hundred languages of learning, their pedagogical processes include: collaboration, the environment as a third teacher, ateliers and atelieristas, *progettazione* (encounters and provocations with long-term projects) and *pedagogical documentation*, which is the methodology used for this current research. The Reggio educators see learning as an open-ended spiral where all stakeholders are encouraged to visit and revisit, observe and re-observe, consider and re-consider. The Reggio educators

refuse the term *model* for their approach to education, preferring instead to use the terms *project* or *experience* (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998).

In a second Reggio graduate course, I engaged with the Reggio-inspired process of *pedagogical documentation* as a method of qualitative research. As students, we engaged with artifacts from our own lives that represented significant moments of learning and created *echo-objects* utilizing various graphic arts languages (drawing, painting, and sculpting in clay or wire). We used pedagogical documentation as a form of qualitative research to answer the question: What is learning? What do we mean by learning in this case? What are the sets of relationships involved in this particular learning? The results were both empowering and emotional for almost everyone involved. For many, there was anxiety around working in the various visual arts languages, but there were also incredible layers of meaning unearthed as we heard our thoughts dictated back to us by our partners, forcing us to interact with our own theories about learning and to confront them.

In the summer of 2011, I had the opportunity to teach a Dance and the Child course and engage with adult students from a variety of faculties including nursing, social work, early childhood education, and environmental studies. My experiences with non-dance teachers certainly reminded me of Hanna's (1999) words. "Dance education is a manifold tapestry that can meet many of the needs of our nation's youth" (p. 184). As I work with in-service teachers and teacher candidates in professional development experiences in creative dance, I recognize many of these same themes as well as the empowerment and emotional connections felt in our Reggio graduate course on

pedagogical documentation. As teachers reconnect with themselves and their bodies as instruments of expression and symbolization, they tend to recognize the incredible empathy and bodily, emotional, and psychological connection required for this type of learning. “Acknowledging our own bodies as teachers could alter the way our students’ bodies are appreciated in the learning process, something that is inevitable when teaching dance or engaged in movement or dance experiences” (Sansom, 2011, p. 58). Embedded within this work are theories of creativity, learning, psychology, and embodiment, but also matters of social justice and humanity. My documentation practices throughout the courses with dance teachers and non-dance teachers provoked many in-depth discussions about dance and creativity in these students’ lives, in their cultures, and in their education. As a result, I saw great potential in using pedagogical documentation as a qualitative research method in the curriculum area of creative dance in order to help teachers, and in turn, their students, engage with the many layers of learning about themselves, others, and the world as they use their bodies to express themselves and construct meaning.

For the past decade, I have been finding ways to advocate for dance as: *a way of knowing our world* (Ministry of Education, 2009), as a way of *naming the world* (Greene, 1995), and in Reggio Emilia terms, as *a language of learning* (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998). I have created pieces of documentation of learning within dance in education for a variety of audiences; my intention was to create documentation so that stakeholders in education might begin to realize and recognize what creative dance education is, and perhaps what it is not. I now realize that much of my previous

documentation was of the *products* of creation, but fell short of animating the learning involved in the process of creation, both for teachers and students. Dance, I believe, is already seen by many as prepackaged entertainment, as a product to be seen, consumed, and then discarded. With my past documentation practices, focused solely on the *products* of dance creation, I unwittingly supported these theories about dance as disposable in education and in society. As Malaguzzi (1998) warns, “Creativity becomes more visible when adults try to be more attentive to the cognitive processes of children than to the results they achieve in various fields of doing and understanding” (p. 77). Unlike end products, pedagogical documentation allows for a *re-enactment* of the creative processes and events (Nimmo, 1998, p. 307).

In order to *make the learning visible* within dance education, I needed to find a means to document the *processes* of creation and the rich layers of learning embedded within; I hope that this would allow teachers their own engagements with the creative process and allow them and their students to re-witness their own personal myths about creativity as well as the body in learning. Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation might help animate the learning in creative dance, and as Hanna (1999, p. 59) recognizes, dance as a rich resource for embodied knowledge and transformation has been *underutilized* in our educational reforms. Researchers such as Sapon-Shevin (2009) see the incredible potential for the body as a site of learning:

If bodies were fully integrated, accepted and valued in education, then students would be taught the language of bodies. They would be encouraged to move their bodies during the day in a variety of settings. They would be taught to talk

about their feelings, paying careful attention to what was happening for them internally and externally as well. Bodies would be respected as an important source of information and knowledge. (p. 177)

Making visible the many profound moments of bodily learning within a creative dance setting might help to broaden definitions of *education* and *learning*. Snowber recognizes dance as a unique site for learning about ourselves and our world: “Dance allows a relationship to develop between the outer world and our bodies...our bodies experience things first, via our physical interaction with the world; therefore, there are kinds of data that our bodies experience before our minds” (qtd. in Leavy, 2009, p. 188). In this present study using the methodology of pedagogical documentation I hoped to animate the intersubjective space between teachers and their students and uncover the learning that was taking place for both teachers and their students, as teachers facilitated creative dance classes. In the process, I hoped to illuminate pedagogical documentation as a form of teacher research that teachers could bring to their classrooms. The Reggio Emilians recognize that documentation can be a powerful tool for advocacy and for creating dialogue with the public: “Real examples of documented learning offer the public a more particular knowledge that empowers and provokes them to reflect, question and rethink or reconstruct the image of the child and the rights of the child to quality education” (Forman & Fyfe, 1998, p. 256). The World Alliance For Arts Education (WAAE), in their *Seoul Agenda* (2010) suggests all children have a right to arts education.



Arts education has an important role to play in the constructive transformation of education systems that are struggling to meet the needs of learners in a rapidly changing world characterized by remarkable advances in technology on the one hand and intractable social and cultural injustices on the other. (p. 2)

This dissertation seeks to animate the rich embodied learning in creative dance but also to introduce pedagogical documentation as a new form of research in creative dance education. In the following chapters, I will analyze the concept of creative dance as an art form in the elementary school curriculum, from both an historical and current perspective. A historical perspective reveals that Canada (and Ontario) was once a world leader in creative dance education. An examination of our current dance curriculum will allow us to see the dance curriculum as an important site of embodied learning. I will also engage with concepts of learning and creativity within the context of dance education as well as education as a whole. In comparing theories of learning and creativity in dance education, I will posit a need for new forms of qualitative research in dance education. Finally, I will explore the Reggio-inspired qualitative research method of pedagogical documentation in greater depth, comparing it to other forms of qualitative research and practices in dance education research. This review of the literature will uncover current thoughts about the learning in creative dance education and will demonstrate my research methodology as novel to the field.

## Chapter One: Creative Dance in Education

Ontario schools have had a relatively non-committal relationship with creative dance education. However, in Canada, and certainly in the Province of Ontario, we are not exceptional in our current lack of support for dance in the curriculum. At the recent Summit of the World Dance Alliance and Dance and the Child International (daCi) in Taipei, Taiwan (Summer 2012), representatives from around the world shared their frustrations regarding the marginal status of dance education in their own countries. In some, dance is culturally embedded and so it takes place naturally within the curriculum with little support. There are also many countries still struggling with the notion of students developing a personal voice in dance or even the notion of a place for dance as an art form in the curriculum.<sup>2</sup> It is not enough to have a well-crafted curriculum; we have to have teachers, parents, and a society that understand what type of dance education we are discussing and why it is valuable. Dance as an embodied way of knowing the world and, as a language of learning, is not well understood in Ontario classrooms. In reviewing the literature on dance in education, I recognized the need to include sources from beyond the last ten years in order to animate the existence of repeating themes of marginalization of dance as a subject and then to suggest the need for ways of moving beyond these recurring themes. In the following section, I will review creative dance education historically through the Ontario and Canadian perspective.

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<sup>2</sup> In many jurisdictions (including some Canadian provinces) dance is embedded within the curriculum as a unit in the physical education curriculum and taught by physical education teachers.

## History of creative dance in Ontario education

Many teachers, myself included, wonder where creative dance education came from: how did it suddenly become a *new* subject in our 1998 elementary Arts curriculum? Few stakeholders in education realize that creative dance actually appeared in Ontario elementary schools over fifty years ago. Ontario teachers and their students were first introduced to creative dance education in the 1950s through two physical education curriculum publications: *Physical Education for Primary Schools* (Ontario Department of Education, 1955) and *Physical Education for Junior Schools* (Ontario Department of Education, 1959). This second document contained Canada's first creative dance curriculum, pedagogically based on the work of Rudolf Laban.<sup>3</sup>

Creative dance education had existed in some post-secondary education in Toronto as early as 1901. The School of Expression, which later became The Margaret Eaton School, was founded by Emma Scott Raff and aspired "to educate young women to enter the teaching profession as dramatic arts specialists and physical educators" (Warner, 2002, p. 145). Creative dance at the school was inspired by the work of Mary Wigman as well as Dalcroze<sup>4</sup> Eurhythmics (p. 146). In 1941, the school was amalgamated into the Department of Physical and Health Education at the University of Toronto (Warner, 2002), and it was there that creative dance education courses for

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<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Laban was a Hungarian-born movement scientist who later worked in Germany and moved to England during WW II. He developed a codified system of analyzing movement. This system has been widely adopted as the basis for dance curricula in education systems throughout the world, although Laban himself never used the term curriculum.

<sup>4</sup> Emile Jacques Dalcroze was a Swiss musician who developed a system for teaching music through movement that he called Eurhythmics. He trained many dancers including Mary Wigman (Hanna, 1999, p. 54).

teachers began in the 1950s. Unfortunately, the Ontario Ministry of Education did not recognize the teaching credentials of the early graduates from the Margaret Eaton School, and so it was fifty years before creative dance would officially appear in Ontario public education.

Vallance (1989) recognizes the influence of both the British as well as the American educational modern dance roots for shaping our Canadian educational dance scene. In the United States, Margaret H'Doubler, a professor of physical education at the University of Wisconsin, established the first dance degree program at an American university in 1926. H'Doubler influenced modern dance pioneer dancer-choreographers such as Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham, and Doris Humphrey, but another one of her disciples was dance educator Dorothy Harris who would later teach and work with Joyce Boorman at the University of Alberta. Together they would work to bring creative dance appreciation and understanding to a much larger community (University of Alberta Website). Another of the important pioneers of dance education in the United States was Virginia Tanner. Her work on the Creative Dance Program as part of the Modern Dance Department at the University of Utah has influenced countless generations of dance educators, including Joyce Boorman who received her master's degree at the University of Utah and Mary-Elizabeth Manley who has taught dance pedagogy in York University's Dance Department for over thirty-five years.

In England, educational dance began with the *1909 Syllabus of Physical Training*, which was the first document to associate dance with physical education (Gulbenkian Report, 1980, p. 193). Beginning in the 1940s, the work of Rudolf Laban and his

disciple Lisa Ullmann at the *Art of Movement Studio* (in Manchester and later Addlestone, England) was profoundly influential in British educational dance. It was their work that helped to establish dance departments in many Colleges of Education in Britain (Laban Art of Movement Guild, 1970). This work culminated in the publication of Laban's *Modern Educational Dance* (1948), which remains one of the major works influencing our current dance education curricula. Two of the many disciples of Laban and Ullman who studied at the Art of Movement studio before they immigrated to Canada were Joyce Boorman and Rose Hill, and both had a profound influence on the status of dance in education in this country.

A vast network of British, Canadian, and American dance educators developed with the Ontario Physical Education Summer Courses from 1955 through 1968. Many physical educators who had emigrated from England taught in these courses, actively exploring a new way of teaching physical education that included creative dance. These courses were deeply influenced by pioneers such as Sheila Stanley from the Toronto Teacher's College, and Rose Hill from the University of Toronto and later McMaster University (Vallance, 1989).

Interestingly, in February and March 1964, there was a series of five fifteen-minute radio broadcasts presented by the Ontario Department of Education and CBC radio. Teachers could tune in to CBC radio on Thursday mornings from 11:00 to 11:15 a.m. and their class could be coached through a series of creative dance and gymnastics type activities with themes like body awareness and the body in space (Ontario Department of Education, 1964).

In 1965, a special committee of the Canadian Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (CAHPER) was formed at the University of New Brunswick in order to design and strengthen current dance programs and improve the caliber of dance in education (daCi, 1979, p. 106). The committee consisted of elementary and secondary educators from across the country, working to develop a national dance policy. By the end of the sixties, the committee was providing and supporting local, provincial, and national workshops.

Throughout the 1970s creative dance education continued to flourish as a result of a network of over 500 dance educators from across the country, who were members of the CAHPER Dance Committee (Boorman, 1979, p. 106). The early 1970s saw an explosion of book and film resources for teachers of educational dance, produced by university educators from across the country. Vallance (1989) recognizes the importance of the abundant resources produced at this time, stating, "The development of visual resources for dance has had immeasurable implications for education. Until the development of educationally accessible film and video, dance existed in a relative desert of resources in contrast to music and painting arts" (p. 12). Joyce Boorman, by this time living in Canada, published three books: *Creative Dance in the First Three Grades* (1969), *Creative Dance in Grades Four to Six* (1971), and *Dance and Language Experiences with Children* (1973). These books offered teachers a very explicit and thorough approach to teaching creative dance and also the means to integrate dance with other subject areas such as language arts, science and social studies.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the CAHPER dance committee also began advocacy work, publishing two position papers: *Dance in Canadian Education* and *Creative Modern Dance at the Elementary School Level*. These position papers included important statements about the status of dance in Canadian education including this statement of position:

While accepting the heritage and value of all styles of dance and encouraging participation in these forms, the Dance committee is committed to the belief that creative modern dance should be the primary dance form taught from early childhood through post-secondary education. (Dance Committee of CAHPER, 1976a, p. 3)

The committee also outlined specific beliefs they held about providing learning experiences in dance for children, including the following.

- The teaching of dance should be based on an understanding of the children's individual needs and characteristics, current learning theories, and the understanding of dance itself.
- Each school should have teachers who are qualified and able to include dance experiences for all children in the school.
- Each school should have a unity of purpose and program with regard to dance experiences offered to the children each year.
- The teacher should provide opportunities for the children to create their own dances, learn dances, observe dance performances, and be involved in dance related and integrated arts activities.

- The teacher should be aware that the process of evolving the dance is of prime importance.
- Through the integration of subject matter, the teacher should provide the opportunities for the dance experience to contribute to other learning areas (Dance Committee of CAHPER, 1976b, pp. 4-5)

Towards the end of the 1970s, the work of the CAHPER dance committee culminated in the creation of an international conference on dance education for children. The conference, titled, *Dance and the Child: Spectator, Creator, Performer*, was held in July 1978 at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. The chairman of the conference was Joyce Boorman, and she reiterated the need to “remove the aloneness and isolation felt by so many people in relation to dance and the child.” (Boorman, 1979, p. iv). As a result of this conference, the international association, daCi (Dance and the Child International) was formed with an aim to:

promote the growth and development of dance for children and young people on an international basis...A further aim is to organize a conference at least every three years for children, young people, educators, artists, and researchers to come together to share and collaborate about the opportunities and needs for children and young people in dance. (daCi handbook, 2003, p. 1)

Since this first conference in Edmonton, conferences have been held in Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, New Zealand, the United States, The Netherlands, Canada, Brazil, Jamaica, and most recently in Taiwan in July 2012.



Through conversations with several of these pioneers in creative dance education, I have come to realize that the funding cuts of the 1980s, the focus on computer technology, the retirement of many dance education pioneers, and finally, the lack of support for dance in physical education from the dance community itself,<sup>5</sup> saw dance education almost disappear from the Ontario curriculum from the early 1980s to the early 1990s. As educators began to embrace Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences theory, dance education began to re-emerge in light of the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence proposed. In 1991, Ontario introduced *Dance in the Intermediate/Senior Grades* (Ministry of Education), a publication that seemed more like a compilation of ideas about dance rather than a curriculum. Van Gyn and O'Neil (1991) state that a "lack of preparation and lack of resources were the two factors most often cited as the reason for not teaching creative dance" (p. 309). Fortin (1991) muses, "Although legislation requiring dance education has existed for 10 years, the current reality is far from the picture drawn in the official documents and the future is not very promising" (p. 90).

In the 1998 Ontario Arts curriculum for the elementary grades, dance re-emerged, now recognized as an art form, rather than a strand of physical education. Although it was a last-minute addition (wedged in alongside drama and forced to share the same learning expectations at the elementary level), dance was back in our curriculum.<sup>6</sup> The latest version of the Ministry of Education Arts Document (2009) establishes dance on

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<sup>5</sup> The theme of the 1980 Canada Dance Festival was *dance education*, and yet most of these major players involved in dance education were not even invited because they worked in physical education. This chasm between the dance world and phys-ed continues as dance courses fight for sections and space within the secondary schools, and elementary phys-ed teachers begrudgingly teach dance (as fitness) in their classes.

<sup>6</sup> At the inaugural meeting of the CODE Dance Subcommittee (April 2012) Jane Deluzio explained this came about due to an emergency fax campaign from a small group of dance advocates led by herself.

its own, as one of the four arts strands with its own set of expectations. This curriculum also contains sixty pages of front matter which outlines a perspective for arts education based on *social constructivist* learning theories (p. 37), with an emphasis on the *creative process* (p. 20), the critical analysis process (p. 24), and students' development of a *personal voice* (p. 5).

In the past few years, the Ontario Ministry of Education has attempted to support the in-servicing of this curriculum with two major multi-million dollar projects. The subject associations for each of the arts were given a quarter of a million dollars to create resources (units and lessons) in each of the arts. The Council of Ontario Dance and Drama Educators (CODE) was given half a million dollars to create print-based resources for dance and drama.

As a reviewer for the dance resources created for the elementary panel, I witnessed many of the teacher-writers struggle with the concept of *creative dance* in the curriculum. Some wanted to write units on Michael Jackson dances and other popular culture forms. I encouraged these writers to look deeply at the new arts curriculum and the concepts of creativity embedded within it. These resources were created and have been available on the CODE website<sup>7</sup> for a few years. However, I wonder if generalist teachers, without an awareness of the elements of creative dance, without a knowledge of what it looks like, even know how to begin to *read* these resources and unpack the rich learning available in creative dance.

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<sup>7</sup> These resources are available to non-members on the CODE website. ([www.code.on.ca](http://www.code.on.ca))

As well, Curriculum Services Canada (CSC) was hired by the ministry to create a series of webcast videos to demonstrate exemplary practices and highlight exemplary teachers within each of the arts. A series of sixty 10-15 minute *webcast videos* has been created representative of the five art forms: visual arts, dance, drama, music and media arts.<sup>8</sup> I worked as the dance consultant for these videos and admit that finding exemplary teachers in creative dance education was not an easy task. The assignment was made even more difficult with the strict parameters; finding teachers who represented school boards across the province and who demonstrated the cultural diversity of our province needed to be found. It seems that, since the resources and professional development for creative dance education are centered in the Greater Toronto area, most creative dance education is occurring in this area.

These webcasts focus on highlighting exemplary teaching, and I think, in terms of creative dance, they will help teachers understand what it looks like. However, I'm not sure the videos will explicitly animate the learning taking place or help teachers unpack the meanings behind creative dance education. I believe, for many generalist teachers, teaching creative dance requires a huge leap of faith in order for them to engage as facilitators of creativity.

### **The tensions in creative dance education for teachers**

For many generalist teachers, creative dance education remains an enigma: these teachers look to the *real* dancers for some idea of what creative dance is and how to teach it. But for studio-trained dancers, creative dance is equally elusive, because they

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<sup>8</sup> These videos may be viewed at <[www.curriculum.org/arts](http://www.curriculum.org/arts)>.

have had very few experiences as dance students where they were allowed to create. Joyce (1973) recognizes the feeling of insecurity that teachers have, stating, “Many good dancers fail at creative dance teaching because they are not sure of the goal. They are used to physical goals such as teaching the class to do a combination of steps” (p. 12). Koff (2000) differentiates between dance education and dance training, the former being focused on “the development of self-expression and interpretation through motion with self-knowledge as its aim” and the latter on “mastery and future performance” (p. 27). In many Ontario schools where dance is actually occurring, it is very often a replication of teacher-directed studio dance training (i.e. jazz dance, ballroom dance, video-inspired dances such as Britney Spears routines). Current dance education research recognizes that a *performative culture* is indeed stifling creativity (Chappell, Craft, Rolfe & Jobbins, 2009). Educators at the Choreia Infant Toddler Center<sup>9</sup> in Reggio Emilia seem to recognize the dichotomy between the world of dance studios and creative dance when they ask, “Is a body something to train, or to listen to and know? Is it a competitive body with abilities to conquer or a body rich in cognitive, emotional and expressive potentialities?” (Cavazzoni, Pini, Porani & Renieri, 2007, p. 4). These Italian educators recognize dance (movement) as a way of knowing and naming the world, as one of the many languages of learning.

When I visited the Choreia school in Reggio Emilia on a Canadian study tour in April 2011, I experienced the commitment of these educators to the body first-hand. Everywhere, there were pictures and paintings of the body—both of the young students

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<sup>9</sup> This center is unique to Reggio schools in that it employs both an atelierista (Barbara Pini) and a teacher (Francesca Porani) with backgrounds in movement and dance.

and of professional dancers. I remember ascending to the second floor and witnessing drawings on acetate of bodies *flying* through the stairwell. The pedagoga at the school explained that the name Choreia means choral dance. Their school started with an intentional focus on body movement and therefore attracted teachers, pedagogas, and an atelierista with an ability to *see* this aspect of learning. Provocations for movement were evident in the space: music played, sheer fabric hung from the ceiling flowing in the breeze; there were mirrors and spotlights shining onto the floor. There were articles posted on visual artists such as Alexander Calder with pictures of his wire sculptures (mobiles). It was evident that, in this particular Reggio school, there was an infinite respect for the possibilities of learning through body movement.

In Ontario, in my view, there is a knowledge gap with respect to the body in education, and I believe this gap poses one of the main issues for creative dance education in our schools. As Sansom (2011) says,

Given that the body is essential to dance...recognizing how bodies are viewed and treated in education from a historical, social, political and cultural perspective is crucial...the tendency in education or schooling to eliminate the body (and thus the whole person) from teaching and learning experiences requires examination. (p. 39)

Although our new resources (lesson and unit plans and videos) will help, I believe true understanding comes from doing, from being engaged in the process of creative dance. This must begin with preservice teachers in the Faculties of Education and be continued throughout the teaching profession for inservice teachers. But who is preparing

elementary educators to teach creative dance? At the recent National Roundtable for Teacher Education in the Arts (NRTEA) in Ottawa (May 2011, 2012), it was recognized that, “In Ontario...where Ministry of Education policy requires that all the arts be taught in elementary schools, only one (of 16) faculty of education provides any separate programming in dance” (NRTEA notes). In addition, this programming is not for primary-junior candidates, those teaching the youngest members of our educational community. Then, how do we develop an understanding of dance from the very beginning of public education (as outlined in the arts curriculum) if teachers remain uninformed? It must be noted that, even at York University where dance is taught to Faculty of Education teacher candidates (intermediate/senior)<sup>10</sup> by a professor from the Dance Department in the Faculty of Fine Arts, there is really very little overlap between the Faculty of Education and the Dance Department, although recently there have been attempts to encourage more dance students to enter the Faculty of Education. Having more generalist teachers with a dance background is merely the beginning step for increasing the scope of dance education in schools. Risner (2007) recognizes that at Wayne State University, with an eighty-year history of educating K-12 dance educators, they have seen very little “significant increase in dance education programs in the nations’ (USA) schools” (p. 17).

For in-service teachers, we currently have very little *embodied* professional development (that is, where teachers actually experience creative dance) on offer for

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<sup>10</sup> There is currently no course at York University offered specifically for primary-junior teacher candidates in the area of creative dance education. There is a course in integrating the arts with the social studies but students in these courses often receive only a three-hour workshop in teaching creative dance in elementary schools.

teachers wanting to learn about teaching dance within the school system. Up until recently, there has only been one additional qualification course offered regularly (through York University) in the province, which serves teachers from kindergarten to grade 12; unfortunately, it is not always taught by someone with an expertise in creative dance education.<sup>11</sup> Here in Ontario, while we are just beginning to re-develop a community of creative dance practitioners, there is a constant tension between the language of creative dance and that of the pop culture dances and dance forms from the studio dance system.

Recently, the superintendent of one large urban school board promoted a *So, you think you can dance?* type of board-wide competition in order to support dance education in schools. But this begs the question: must dance be associated with competition in order for it to be considered a subject in schools? As Sansom (2011) suggests, “Unless dance is viewed as a viable process of learning within education (and not just to showcase events or socials), dance becomes doomed to live out an existence in the shadows” (p. 38). Many educators think the end goal is seeing students moving, period, hence the popularity of The Macarena and dance used for Daily Physical Activity (DPA) in order to raise heart rates. One school board has even released a series of posters for teachers that show *chair aerobics*—students sitting in their chairs executing a series of aerobic activities such as flutter kicks, marching on the spot, lunges, and knee tucks. The goal to have students active, yet confined to their chairs seems antithetical

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<sup>11</sup> This course is often taught by someone aligned with a dance-fitness *method*, and they subsequently sell their dance-fitness classes to teachers and their students. This potentially places dance (viewed as an art form in our curriculum) back into the auspices of the physical education curriculum with little focus on creating or embodied learning.

when, as MacDonald (1991) reports, “Children respond to creative dance with an intensity, concentration, ownership and enthusiasm” not normally witnessed in most educational activities (p. 438).

### **Broader perspectives on creative dance education**

Creative dance, as a form of artistic expression and as another language of learning, is just beginning to emerge in school systems around the world. Dance-based researcher practitioners such as Cancienne and Snowber (2009) recognize the body as a site of knowledge. The Choreia educators in Reggio claim, “the language of the body enriches knowledge” and they “consider the body of children as the bearer of multiple aspects of knowledge and possibilities for learning” (Cavazonni et al., 2007, pp. 2-3). But, as Sansom (2011) suggests, “There is a form of resistance to anything bodily in education...from a Western perspective, culture and society (and therefore education) are traditionally accustomed to using visual and aural senses as dominant ways to perceive the world” (pp. 40-41). Sansom further suggests that dance, when viewed as a “critical approach to knowing,” provides insight into the human condition offering an “awareness of consciousness to deconstruct certain constructions of knowledge and ideologies brought about through power and domination” (p. 43).

Dance should never be a surprise language of learning for teachers. If we accept Malaguzzi’s (1998) argument that “teachers must learn to teach nothing to children except what children can learn themselves” (p. 73), then dance is perhaps one of the most obvious languages of learning, one that children know from infancy. Sheets-Johnstone (2011) views movement as our collective mother tongue: “Movement is first



of all the mode by which we make sense of our own bodies and by which we first come to understand the world” (p. xxv). Sheets-Johnstone describes a “corporeal apprenticeship” in which “we were apprentices of our own bodies” (p. 195). It is by listening with our body in a never-ending process of becoming kinesthetically attuned that we learn the language of the body. “In infants, we see that all movement makes use of the whole body; hunger, delight, and fear are expressed through total body involvement...” (Stinson, 1988, p. 12). Evolutionarily speaking, humans no doubt danced or used gestural language before they spoke using words. Sheets-Johnstone (2011) refuses to accept movement as a stepping-stone to the development of verbal language but instead sees movement “as the fundamental backbone of an infant’s—and an adult’s knowledge of its surrounding world” (p. 433). She views language as “post kinetic” rather than movement as pre-verbal (p. 438). In fact, “movement as a means of expression and communication is known equally to animals and to Man” (Lange, 1975, p.48). Stinson (2004) sees the body as a repository of our experiences and memories—in this sense, a smaller version of our world, and, therefore, an important site for understanding its meaning (p. 160). In analyzing children’s gestures and movements the Choreia educators recognized *kinetic melodies* that they feel “were born with life itself, with the heartbeat and rhythm of the body,” and in making connections to neuroscience, they recognize the possibility that the mind, including thoughts, language, and memories, is actually formed, over time, by the movements of the body (Cavazzoni et al., p. 3).

Much of what we have learned through our bodies from infancy is subsumed when we are adults, by our reliance on other knowledge and ways of knowing. In

schools, we tend to foreground the verbal and written forms of knowledge and ignore the body as a site of knowledge. The work of Polanyi (1966), with respect to the tacit dimension of knowledge, might be of use here. Polanyi (1966) says, “we know more than we can tell” (p. 4) and suggests, “our body is the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge, whether intellectual or practical” (p. 15). Polanyi (1966) explains that, in discussing the performance of a certain skill (distal act), we attend to the achievement of that skill alone, even though the skill involves a whole series of muscular acts working in combination (proximal acts) (pp. 10-11). Although we no longer attend to these “elementary acts,” they remain part of our tacit knowledge. “We are aware of the proximal term of an act of tacit knowledge in the appearance of its distal term” (p. 11). When we access the body as a site of learning and meaning-making, the tacit dimension of our bodily knowledge can emerge and we can re-discover what our body knows. We often are surprised by what our body knows that we cannot tell.

Children develop movement patterns and an understanding of non-verbal forms of communication before any other language of expression, but somehow, through the process of education, nonverbal communication is disregarded, especially in North America. If dance learning could progress without obstruction, perhaps students in grade eight would naturally create “dance pieces to respond to issues that are personally meaningful to them” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 148).

### **Unpacking our newest curriculum document**

Our current elementary dance curriculum is contained within the newest Arts curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2009). This new document contains four strands (dance, drama, music, and visual arts) and within each, there are three sub-strands: creating and presenting; reflecting, responding and analyzing; and exploring form and cultural contexts. The philosophy behind this new dance document aligns with what Smith-Autard (2002) defines as a Midway Model for *dance as art* in education, although it rests more towards the creative end of the spectrum. This model, which she first proposed in 1976, was developed based on the previous work of Redfern, Laban and H'Doubler. It represents an amalgamation of the professional model (dance training) and the educational model (free dance).

In the midway model there is an equal emphasis on:

- process and product;
- creativity, imagination, individuality, and the acquisition of knowledge of theatre dance;
- feelings and training;
- movement principles and stylized techniques; and
- problem solving and directed teaching.

These factors contribute to an overall emphasis on artistic and aesthetic, as well as cultural education (Smith Autard, 2002, pp. 5-27).

The front matter for this curriculum document explains how “the arts provide a natural vehicle through which students can explore and express themselves and through

which they can discover and explore the world around them” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 3). The front matter pertains to all four of the arts strands but also addresses each strand specifically. The dance curriculum “is intended to help students to develop an understanding and appreciation of dance, as well as the ability to create works using the elements and the choreographic forms of the discipline” (p. 14). It suggests students should be exposed to a variety of dance performances by “local, multicultural and professional Canadian artists both within and outside the school” (p. 15). The curriculum also recommends that students at the elementary level should *not* be given instruction in formal dance techniques (e.g. ballet, jazz, modern) but rather should be developing personal movement vocabularies in order to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. It suggests that within the dance strand, there should be learning *in* dance (aesthetic experiences, creative engagement, skill development, knowledge about the elements, experiences that connect the sensory, affective and kinesthetic domain with the cognitive domain), learning *about* dance (analysis, criticism, appreciation, and dance literacy) as well as learning *through* dance (integration with other subject areas) (pp. 5-6). It is my understanding that, although these different types of learning can be categorized separately, in the actual lived experience of creative dance, there is a great deal of overlap among them. In the next section, I will expand on the curricular definitions of the elements of dance in order to develop some perspective on the concepts inherent in creative dance.

## Elements of dance

Our curriculum outlines five overall elements of dance (body, space, time, energy, and relationships) that are related to Laban's original<sup>12</sup> movement themes. The elements are the vocabulary that we can use to build sentences and paragraphs in order to say something in dance. A discussion of the elements provides an overview of the *potential* learning in creative dance. When dance educators simply teach students dances, it is akin to writing teachers having students copy out other people's essays—they may learn something about writing an essay but do not have the tools to create their own.

**body.** The first element is the *body*. Within the curriculum document, body includes an emphasis on *body awareness*, that is, where one body is in relation to other bodies and objects in space. It also includes an awareness of the various *body zones* (e.g. upper and lower body, right side and left side), and *body parts* (e.g. arms, legs, fingers, toes), and how each one can move both independently and in conjunction with the other. There is an emphasis on *body shapes* (e.g. bent or angular, twisted, curved, straight, or stretched) and body movements, both *locomotor* (moving through space), e.g. running, galloping, skipping, leaping, and *non-locomotor* (not moving through space), e.g. swinging, spinning, jumping on the spot. The element of *body* also includes the concept of *body bases*, i.e. using various parts of one's body as the base for one's shapes, to support one's shapes (Ministry of Education, 2009).

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<sup>12</sup> Laban originally described effort elements as "attitudes of the moving person towards the motion factors, Weight, Space, Time and Flow" (1948, p. 8). He outlined sixteen basic movement themes (1948, p. 29) that relate to our present elements.

In my experiences, both students and teachers enjoy solving movement problems created from the element of *body*. Can you make an overall bent shape with your whole body? Can that shape wiggle? Can it melt? Can you create a shape-action phrase that includes grow, leap, jump, turn, and crouch? As Stinson (1995) states about shape making:

Dancers, however, know that *shape* is not only about what something looks like on the outside, but what it feels like on the inside. We make shapes on the outside by what we do with our bones and muscles on the inside; internal forming creates external form. It is this internal sensing of oneself in stillness and in motion that turns what would otherwise be standing or sitting, walking or running, into *dancing*. (p. 43)

The kinesthetic sense—an awareness of the body's movement, comes from the nervous system, i.e. nerve endings in the joints and muscles (Stinson, 1988, p. 2), and it is usually tied to the visual sense, but this sensibility can even work when the eyes are closed. "If the kinesthetic sense is acute it even allows us to feel motion we see others doing; we can actually feel the tightness in a worried friend or feel a stretch in our own bodies as we watch a basketball player reach toward the basket" (Stinson, 1988, pp. 2-3).

The exploration of bodily actions allows students to develop a more thorough understanding of the body as it moves. MacDonald (1991) believes that "creative dance can help children reach their full potential, for it encourages the development of the whole child by involving the child physically, emotionally, intellectually, and thus

enhancing creative exploration and facilitating emotional expression” (p. 436). Sansom (2011) offers:

If given the time and the place to explore, through a guided kinesthetic awareness, the young child can begin to develop a deeper inner sensing of the body beyond that of identifying parts of the body and what skills the body can perform. Experience dancing using a heightened kinesthetic attentiveness provides the prospects for discerning or sensing something of being whole or in touch with one’s self at a deeper or more aesthetic level. (p. 84)

A dancer’s body is her/his instrument; it is the medium through which dancers express symbolic understanding. Engelsrud (1988) recognizes that, although a dancer’s instrument is her/his body, “the body can never be an instrument like other instruments—it cannot be reduced to an object, without limiting life, feeling and sensing” (p. 93).

Many dance researchers (Vallance, 1989; Engelsrud, 1988, Antilla, 1991, 2008; Sheets-Johnstone, 2011) have argued against the notion of Cartesian dualism—the separation of the mind and body. Engelsrud (1988) argues, “dancing requires concentration of the whole person as a minded body, not a mind in command of something separable, called body” (p. 93). Vallance (1989) sees Laban’s movement analysis as a means for understanding the body as a self in a state of becoming: “The self is viewed as body, as being and as existence with a feeling for the yet-to-be aspect of bodily being” (p. 34). I argue that it is this realization of the body as a self in a state becoming, not merely the awareness of the various body parts and how they move, that begins to ground our current dance curriculum as an important way of knowing our world.

**space.** The second element is *space*. As dance educators, we often begin with an attempt to delineate *personal space*, the space around our body (in Laban terms, our kinesphere) from *shared space* (general space). According to Vallance (1989), space “is considered by some to be the last but most essential frontier of children’s dance education and it requires educators to rethink spatial meaning and content” (p. 35). The Reggio Educators, who view the environment as a third teacher, wonder aloud in *Dialogue with Places*, “What are the relationships between the architecture characteristics of the space and the children’s explorations?” (Filippini, Vecchi & Giudici, 2008, p. 19). When walking through the crowded streets of a major city, one realizes that there are many adult bodies still developing this awareness of space. Space also includes the concepts of level (high, medium, and low), direction (backwards, forwards, sideways) and positional language such as above, below, beside, behind, inside, and outside.

Laban developed an entire series of exercises based on geometric shapes: cube, octahedron, dodecahedron and icosahedron (Newlove & Dalby, 2004, p. 24). These exercises are used to explore all the components of the kinesphere. The exercises we use with young children tend to be less formal but still explore the components of their kinesphere. Can you make a bent shape with your arms above you? Can you make it below you or beside you?

Newlove and Dalby (2004) suggest other dimensions to spatial understanding that include the *living space* as well as the *inner space* of movement:



We need space to be able to move and when we do our bodies displace space.

When we take a step we push some space out of the way and, as we do so, space fills where we have just stood. As well as this, motion in space exists within us.

Whilst the human body lives, it breathes; the heart and pulse have rhythms and the blood circulates. These movements are proof of life. (p.112)

Louis (2002) sees the space that surrounds dancers as their canvas and the space within as a means of giving texture and quality to their individual movements (p. 4). Sansom (2011) discusses an *internal sensing* of oneself while Stinson (2002) says, “Dance is not what we do but how we do it. It’s a state of consciousness involving full engagement and awareness attending to the inside” (p. 158). Mary Wigman (1966), in her *Letter to a Young Dancer*, offers yet another explanation of this *consciousness* of space: “The spatial relationships do not tolerate any narrow-minded limitations. They demand a spiritual expansion in the degree in which the danced gesture strives for faraway space” (p. 109). Wigman (1966) and Vallance (1989) both describe an *imagined space* that exists within the dancer, beyond the boundaries of the actual body in space. When students describe themselves (and I have felt it myself) as “flying through space,” it is a description of this imagined space.

**time.** The third element is *time*.<sup>13</sup> Within our curriculum, time is directly related to the musical concepts of *tempo* (fast and slow), *duration*, *rhythm* (even or uneven), acceleration, and deceleration, but also includes concepts such as stillness and moving

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<sup>13</sup> For Laban, the concept of time was embedded in the element of effort, but, in our current curriculum it is considered a separate element.

with or without music. Students enjoy the challenges of gaining control over their bodies when moving both fast and slow (although slow tends to be a greater challenge for them).

Newlove and Dalby (2004) recognize that, at one point, time and space were considered separate entities, but in fact are inextricably linked (p. 115). According to Rutledge (2000), “We tend to organize time...in the beginning clocks ticked, chimed and sang on regular intervals and we may have had a sense of time that was linked to sound. Now, we SEE time on digital clocks!” (p. 139). Vallance (1989) describes an *internal time*, something that goes beyond *clock-time*. She recognizes, “dance, like music, as an *art of time* where the beats, precisions, transitions, accents, even the stillness may be counted” (p. 40). She suggests, like Wigman (1966), that, in the need to count, sometimes we forget to listen to one another—to our own personal quality of time that informs our movements (we have our own unique rhythm and phrasing)—but somehow, we must engage with the *inner time* of the bodies with whom we are dancing (Vallance, 1989, p. 40). Rutledge (2000) discusses an ability to listen with our whole body, not just our ears and suggests, “moving rhythmically may be a means to connect ourselves to the outside world...internal rhythms such as heartbeat and breath may attune us subconsciously to outside beat and rhythms” (p. 138). Louis (2002) offers that time in creative dance “can range from the pulse of a heartbeat, to the most exciting syncopations, to the denial of time altogether” (p. 4).

**energy.** The fourth element is *energy*. “Energy itself is not visible; in movement, it is experienced internally and the results are then seen” (Reedy, 2003, p. 27). This element is also sometimes referred to as *force* and relates to what Laban (1948)

originally termed as *effort*, the energies or force utilized in movement through the factors of weight, space, time, and flow (p. 12). Laban (1948) described each factor in terms of contrasts: weight can be light or strong (firm); space can be direct or flexible; time can be sudden or sustained; and flow can be bound or free. Through combinations of these various contrasting factors, Laban (1948) described eight basic effort actions: pressing, flicking, wringing, dabbing, slashing, gliding, thrusting, and floating (p. 34). These combinations of factors also speak to the quality of movements: effervescent (flick and dab), soothing (float and glide), energetic (thrust and slash), and powerful (press and wring). We use these basic effort actions to explore compositional studies with our students but also to submerge them in an oral language of dance, so they can describe their own movements and the movement of others using a common language (Joyce, 1973) and develop a *dance literacy* (Van Gyn & O'Neil, 1988).

Van Gyn and O'Neil (1988) suggest that the development of dance literacy is a staged process that first begins with students developing a movement vocabulary out of their everyday (i.e. functional) movement. We see this with the spontaneous dance creations of very young children. The next step is the use of this everyday movement to interpret imagery proposed by the teacher or coming from their own ideas. As Joyce (1973) suggests, at this stage the teacher must be very careful about the use of imagery. There is a big difference between asking students to "move like a cat" and asking students to think about the many qualities of cat movement. The first can easily lead to pantomime, i.e. acting like a cat, and one general clichéd idea of cat movement. The second proposal opens up the possibilities and provokes students to think about the

many ways in which a cat moves: crawls, slinks, darts, flicks, pounces, rolls, and/or shivers. Once students have had many opportunities to explore how they can use movement to represent imagery (their own or the teacher's provocations), they can begin to use this information to communicate larger concepts. This is the final stage in which students can begin to use their movement vocabulary with intentionality "to convey a message by way of action to the observer" (Van Gyn & O'Neil, 1988, p. 315). These three stages are both linear and cyclical: as students develop the desire to express a larger concept, they must return to exploring their own movement vocabulary, expanding it and looking for new means of expressing certain images or ideas. Once they have reached the third stage, they are constantly revisiting the first two stages for new ideas.

Newlove and Dalby (2004) suggest that we each have our own personal characteristic manner of moving, or ways that we like to move. Sansom (2011) discusses a *kinesthetic voice* and equates it with a sense of *agency* for young students (p. 85). Vislocky (2002) recognizes, "there is such a thing as an individual creative movement style. To find it requires work, with reason and purpose" (p. 57). She also avers that the goal of creative dance classes as encouraging one not to get stuck in stereotypical patterns of movement, but to continue exploring in order to eventually find one's personal voice. Tortora (2006) recognizes that each individual develops her/his own unique, non-verbal movement style that is created by a combination of qualitative elements (p. 11). Even more, this style can be witnessed by the "trained eye," what she calls a *way of seeing* approach, in the manner that a teacher can begin to develop the

ability to recognize a child in her/his peripheral vision simply from her/his body language. According to Tortora, this perceptive ability can develop in adults and allows the teacher to get to know her/his students on a deeper level (p. 18).

One of the most exciting ideas about the new dance curriculum is the idea of helping students discover their *personal voice* in order to animate their ideas and thoughts through their expressive bodies. The development of this personal voice is related to the development of a *self* in relation to others and the world, as a *self* that is becoming. Our bodies must interact with other bodies in order to learn<sup>14</sup> because learning is not something that happens inside our heads but rather in our interaction with others and their thoughts and bodies in a sociocultural context (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 23).

**relationship.** The final dance element is *relationship*. These relationships include dancers to *objects*, dancers to *each other* in partners, trios, and groups, wherein they are engaged in activities such as meeting, parting, spatial relationships and groupings as well as emotional relationships. This element parallels one of the six principles of the Reggio educators. Malaguzzi (1998) believes, “there is no possibility of existing without relationships. Relationship is a necessity of life” (p. 287). The newest curriculum offers teacher prompts as provocations for relationship-building in student group creations: “What formations could you use to show racism, e.g. one dancer separates from the group” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 148).

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<sup>14</sup> This relates to the Reggio concept of *relationality*; we learn in our interactions with others.

Relationship can be seen in shadowing or mirroring a child's actions. Hoeye (2002) suggests that the "challenge for the leader is to step out into an unpredictable flow of events and to respond to it by assembling and communicating streams of information and instructions that combine the variables of direction, velocity and duration" (p. 66). The follower, on the other hand, must control his or her own impulses in order to become an effective movement instrument for the leader (pp. 66-67). Tortora (2006) describes the act of following a child's lead as a window into understanding the child through her/his movement repertoire, creating relationship between the leader and the follower (p. 16). However, instead of passively following however (i.e. disengaging), they must actively engage in the art of listening with her/his whole body. "For many people, this highly focused state of attention is an absorbing experience—very often described as euphoric. This euphoric quality is related to the mental concentration of play and flow" (Hoeye, 2002, p. 67).

Vallance (1989) suggests that there exists another important relationship, one to the *situation-context*, that is, the social context of creating dance: Participants in dance movement share time and space in a moving interpretation of their ideas and in so doing they alternately free and bind themselves to one another...it is a demanding process (p. 42). These ideas directly correspond to social constructivist theories of learning, such as those of the Reggio educators, who believe it is impossible to separate cognition from its sociocultural context (New, 1998, p. 264).

As I witness students working in groups in the context of elementary schools, and as I witness teachers working in groups in professional development opportunities, I

have become increasingly aware of the power of all the elements of dance, but especially the element of relationships, in the social context. There is something very significant in this type of social learning. Borrowing from my knowledge of the Reggio schools and their principles of *relationality* and *reciprocity*, I believe this dance element needs to be more thoroughly examined in Ontario schools as a site of learning.

#### **Four central ideas**

There are four central ideas to the new arts (dance) curriculum: developing creativity, communicating, understanding culture, and making connections (p. 6). These ideas point to what many scholars have emphasized as crucial to the development of creativity in our modern world: the ability to put together ideas in novel ways, to understand cultures and empathize with people from around the globe, and to communicate and share these ideas. These are not just *dance* or even *arts* concepts but, rather, concepts of everyday living and a possible support to our survival for the future. The emphasis is on posing the right questions and inquiry, rather than finding the right answers or correct product. The curriculum warns teachers, “The atmosphere they create for learning affects the nature of the learning itself” (Ministry of Education, p. 19). It is perhaps this atmosphere that Robinson is talking about when he discusses the *sensitivity* with which we must approach the development of creativity in education (2001, p. 3). We know that students are driven to learn when they are emotionally engaged and that this often happens when they are using their bodies. As Hanna (1979) suggests, “In dance, affective and cognitive communication are intertwined” (p. 67). Dance movement that mimics certain affective behaviours may allow students to experience these

symbolically but without the lasting effects (p. 68). In this sense, dance can function as a sort of 'playing with' affect and can lead to *altered states of consciousness*, including a *healthy fatigue* (p. 68-69). Creative dance also offers students the opportunity to be impulsive and to counteract the "weariness of conformity" (p. 69). "The power of dance lies in its cognitive-sensori-motor and aesthetic capability to create moods and as sense of situation for performer and spectator alike" (Hanna, 1979, p. 65).

Students are very keenly aware of a truly *authentic* arts experience, in which they are allowed to discover their own answers, versus one in which the teacher claims to encourage personal discovery but has a preconceived notion of the product she/he is expecting. Some teachers have solved this by engaging students in the process of creating assessment criteria (i.e. in our dances we will have three shapes, three levels, at least two different facings, we will engage our whole body, including our face and hands, and we will include one accent). This type of assessment encourages students to name their challenges, discover their own problems, and think about their creative process in a truly metacognitive manner. I would challenge every teacher to add to each and every rubric a separate outcome or objective, that is, *surprise yourself*, go beyond what you think you are capable of, go beyond what is asked for and discover.

Our curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2009) states: "The arts offer students unique opportunities to engage in imaginative and innovative thought and action and to develop the ability to communicate and represent their thoughts, feelings and ideas..." (p. 3). The curriculum recognizes that the arts offer alternative modes of expression (p. 5). It suggests, "The creative process is to be integrated with the use of the



critical analysis process” and sees that “all children have the ability to be creative” (p. 19). It outlines eight steps of the creative process: challenging and inspiring; imagining and generating; planning and focusing; exploring and experimenting; producing preliminary work; revising and refining; presenting, performing, and sharing; and reflecting and evaluating. All these steps are intersected by the concept of feedback (from both teacher and peers) and reflection (p. 20). The document outlines the responsibilities for both the student and teacher in each of these steps (pp. 21-22).

The document suggests that students “need to be guided” through the stages of the critical analysis process in order “to develop and express an informed response” to artworks (p. 23). The stages include:

- initial reaction,
- description,
- analysis, and interpretation, and
- expression of an informed point of view.

The final three stages also involve the consideration of a cultural context. The development of both the creative and critical analysis process is an exciting prospect for schools. As the document suggests, “Creativity involves the invention and assimilation of new thinking and its integration with existing knowledge” (p. 19). The arts are lenses through which students can view their world, they are not “created in a vacuum; they reflect the personal, social and historical contexts of the artists” (p. 27). Teachers are also reminded that learning to analyze works should not take precedence over creating works of art but, instead complement the creative process.

In order to understand how the arts and development of the creative process might be able to transform education, I believe we must first understand the interaction of learning theories and the concept of creativity. It seems that not all stakeholders in education share the same definition of creativity. In this next chapter, I will address a series of questions about learning and creativity in arts education. What is learning? What is creativity? How do teachers and their students view these two concepts, and how do these perceptions play out in the place we call education? How do all of these concepts influence the inclusion of dance education (and all the arts) in our schools?

## Chapter Two: Learning in Creative Dance Education

### What is learning in creative dance education?

If our goal is to make learning visible in creative dance education, then we must be able to define *learning*—but this is a very difficult concept to define. What does learning look like? What range of meanings do we actually bring to the term *learning* when we discuss creative dance in schools? What are the specific types of learning *in*, *about*, and *through* creative dance, and how do we recognize them in order to document them? There is great irony in the fact that, overall, learning is a terribly “under-theorized word” in the field of education (Wien, 2010, lecture notes). Likewise, in dance, research on children’s creativity and learning in the curriculum is unusual (Blumenfeld-Jones & Liang, 2007; Kaufman & Baer, 2008). Stinson (2005a) urges:

We must become better at identifying what students are actually learning in dance and describing how well they are learning it...Understanding what students are actually learning not only gives us ammunition for advocacy, but it also allows us to further our own thinking about what is worth knowing in dance and why. (p. 220)

In order to discuss learning in creative dance, we must be able to look at learning in general, learning in specific dance situations, and also learning in creative situations. Koff (2000) differentiates between dance education and dance training, but many dance educators prefer to describe dance education in schools as *age-appropriate* dance instead of creative dance. With the emphasis on creativity and the creative process in Ontario’s elementary and secondary curriculum, I think it is important to recognize and investigate

creative dance as an entity, that is, dance experiences where students create dances. How is learning different in creative dance? If creative dance is about the students' creative process, teachers might be wondering, "How can I assess creative dance? How can I tell what they learned if I don't know what I've taught?"

Over the last decade, there has been an unprecedented amount of research into creativity in education (Craft, Cremin, & Burnard, 2008a), but what do creativity theories have to say about dance education? An important concept that connects creativity to learning has begun to emerge in England, described as *creative learning*, which is separate from both *creative teaching* and *teaching for creativity* (Craft, Cremin, Burnard & Chappell, 2008b). There are even researchers (Chappell, 2006, 2007) looking specifically at creative learning in the domain of dance education. Groups of researchers from around the world are currently attempting to refine their definitions of creative learning as well as determine means to document it (Feldman, 2008). These studies are still in their infancy but are informed by social constructivist models of meaning-making (Martin, 2008). Craft et al. (2008a) recognize that documenting creative learning "is a question of international resonance, particularly in relation to the Italian pre-schools of Reggio Emilia" (p. xxii).

In this next section, I will explore creativity theories and the most recent findings from research into creative learning, specifically in dance education. I will also connect this research on creative learning in dance to the larger fields of embodied and collaborative learning. Since the Reggio Emilia schools seem to have provided an

inspiration for these creativity researchers, I will begin by briefly introducing the Reggio views on learning and creativity.

### **Learning and creativity in the Reggio Emilia approach**

For Reggio educators, *learning* is represented by *theories*, a provisional system of concepts, strategies and actions about how something works (Krechevsky, 2001, p. 247). They uncover differences between education as *learning* and education as *teaching*. Education involves an ongoing discovery of who we (both teacher and student) are (self), and what we value. This develops in an active engagement with others and our world, as we learn to develop and negotiate our theories about the world and how it works (Rinaldi, 2001a). This echoes what Freire (2000) and Greene (1995) have called an ability to *name our world*, which is an ability to re-create our world consistently through dialogue with others.

This difference between education as *learning* and education as *teaching* complicates the relationship between teachers and their students. Reggio educators separate the concept of *formation* (formazione) from education—they do not feel that they are forming or molding children. For them, the purpose of education is to create citizens of the world, not workers for the future,<sup>15</sup> and so their pedagogy, their values, and their practices all reflect this purpose. Strozzi (2001) explains this, quoting Jerome Bruner: “School is not a preparation for life, it is part of life” (p. 77).

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<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, in the 1998 version of the Ontario curriculum documents, the emphasis was on preparing students for the workforce, whereas in the newest versions there has been a shift to creating well-rounded citizens. There is, however, an increasing emphasis on *employability skills* and *innovation skills* permeating the education system (Conference Board of Canada).

Malaguzzi (1998) does not consider creativity sacred or extraordinary but “something rather as likely to emerge from daily experience” (p. 75). It is important to mention, before we look at specific aspects of creativity, that the Reggio educators view the work of creativity theorists with “much caution and reflection” (Malaguzzi 1998, p. 75). In this next section, I will explore the views of creativity researchers to see how they may be placed in dialogue with those of the Reggio educators and how Ontario teachers view learning and creativity in the arts.

### **Creativity theories and tensions for teachers**

*“Why are the arts avoided by every teacher I encounter?”*

This important question comes from one of my Faculty of Education students. Why would teachers actively avoid the arts (especially dance), and is the answer related to a misunderstanding about creativity? As seen in the last chapter, the newest arts curriculum document focuses on creativity in all the art forms. In fact, there are sixty pages of front matter extolling creativity and the creative process. This emphasis on creativity relates well to the Reggio educators’ hundred languages of learning—these educators seem to know and understand something about the arts that eludes teachers in Ontario schools. Is it possible that many Ontario teachers are afraid of the arts because of their inexperience with creativity? In a curriculum overrun by standards (outcomes, goals, levels), it may be difficult for teachers to actually engage with creativity as a concept, but is there something more to this than simply the tensions created by an outcomes-based curriculum? Is there something about creativity and imagination, as concepts in themselves that produces tension for teachers? Do they consider themselves

creative? Do they consider teaching a creative act? How do these teachers engage with creative acts in their classroom? What is the relationship between learning and creativity? To even attempt to answer these questions we must first look to a definition of creativity.

### **Creativity**

*“We want to enter the realm of creativity... Therefore let us lower our voices and listen to the pulse beat of our heart, to the whisper and murmur of our own blood which is the sound of this space.” (Wigman, 1966, p. 12)*

Robert Sternberg, in the *Handbook of Creativity* (1999), recognizes that “few resources have been invested in the study of creativity, relative to its importance both to the field of psychology and to the world” (p. 12), and I would add education to that list. Creativity in the Oxford dictionary refers to *bringing into existence*. This definition implies three components: an agent of creation, a product of this creation, and a process of creation (Sternberg, 1999). The following definition is an amalgamation of definitions outlined by Rothenberg and Hausman (1976), Ochse (1990), Csikszentmihalyi (1996), Gardner (1999), and Sternberg (1999). For these researchers, creativity involves bringing *something* (act, idea, or product) into being that is *original* (new, unexpected) and also *valuable* (useful, appropriate) to society. A creative person, therefore, is someone who solves problems, creates products, or asks new questions that changes a domain, or establishes a new domain, rendering these changes valuable to society. These researchers focus on what is called *big ‘C’ creativity*, i.e. creative genius.

In terms of the novelty of creative acts, Robinson (2001) suggests that creativity can be original on many levels: personal (to the person alone), social (to the community),

and historical (to the world) (p. 116). Greene (1995) expands on this idea when she contends that creativity in education might mean something that is original to the specific student, in that she/he is taking steps she/he has not been *taught* to take. For Csikszentmihalyi (1996), the creative process begins with complications:

with a sense that there is a puzzle somewhere, or a task to be accomplished.

Perhaps something is not right, somewhere there is a conflict, a tension, a need to be satisfied... Without such a felt tension that attracts the psychic energy of the person, there is no need for a new response. Therefore, without a stimulus of this sort, the creative process is unlikely to start. (p. 95)

Csikszentmihalyi recognizes the difference between what he terms *presented* problems (i.e. those presented to the students by the teacher) and *discovered* problems, i.e. those discovered by the students themselves, through their interaction with the world, and suggests that it is these discovered ones that are the real site of learning (p. 97).

Robinson (2001) recognizes, however, that it is not enough for students to be working on creative solutions to these problems in their minds:

Creative processes are rooted in imaginative thought, in envisaging new possibilities. But creativity goes further. Imagination can be an entirely private process of internal consciousness.... Private imaginings have no impact in the public world at all. Creativity does.... Whatever the task, creativity is not just an internal mental process: it involves action. In a sense, it is *applied imagination* [emphasis added]. (p. 115)



Robinson (2001) refocuses the definition of creativity from products to processes, allowing for an alternate definition of creativity: “imaginative processes with outcomes that are original and of value” (p. 118). The emphasis on the processes of creativity over the products is an important distinction, especially for education, and is the main focus in the current arts curriculum document.

Robinson (2001) believes that part of the creative process is helping students to discover their own medium, because “discovering the right medium is often a tidal moment in the creative life of the individual...Creativity can be suppressed by the wrong medium” (p. 129). I would agree. Students are exposed to many mediums in schools and the arts are simply another language; within the arts, there are many more languages still. It is through exposure to many diverse mediums that one discovers one’s own, be it dance or poetry or cooking. Stinson has even postulated that perhaps the real purpose of education is to help students find their medium so that they can live a fulfilling life:

We [should] not limit our thinking to what schools are now, but consider what they might be, and that one major purpose of schooling might be, should be, learning how to live a meaningful, satisfying human life—what some people call *happiness*. (Stinson, 2005b, p. 83)

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) discusses a similar concept in his theory of *flow*. He believes, “the most important message we can learn from creative people [is] how to find purpose and enjoyment in the chaos of existence” (p. 20). He has outlined the characteristics of certain optimal experiences, in which people seem to be completely enjoying what they are doing, with little extrinsic reward. These characteristics outline what

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) calls *flow*.

- There are clear goals every step of the way.
- There is immediate feedback to one's actions.
- There is a balance between challenges and skills.
- Action and awareness are merged.
- Distractions are excluded from consciousness.
- There is no worry of failure.
- Self-consciousness disappears.
- The sense of time becomes distorted.
- The activity becomes auto-telic. (p. 111-112)

In my experiences, working with students in creative dance, I have observed what when they are using their bodies to express themselves and working with others to shape their ideas, they could spend hours, sweating and rehearsing and refining their creations. These, to me, are examples of what Csikszentmihalyi calls *flow*, and I have witnessed this phenomenon first-hand.

A current trend in education is a focus on metacognition, that is, knowing about one's knowing. If creativity involves the processes of the imagination in action with the world, or applied imagination, as Robinson (2001) suggests, is it possible to nurture this process in schools? Reggio educators describe their teaching as a *pedagogy of relationships and listening*, which, for them, is a metaphor for having the ability and openness to listen and be listened to, with all the senses (Rinaldi, 2001b). It involves a

deep awareness and a suspension of judgments. They view the hundred languages of children as essential tools for learning to listen with all our senses:

The ability to shift (from one kind of intelligence to another, from one language to another) is not only a potential within the mind of each individual but also involves the tendency to shift across (to interact among) many minds. We enrich our knowledge and our subjectivity thanks to this predisposition to welcoming the representations and theories of others—that is, listening to others and being open to them. (Rinaldi, 2001b, p. 81)

Greene (1995) recognizes the inherent problem in education in which teaching itself becomes a myth, as our students simply accommodate us by imitating what we say and memorizing our jargon. Greene (1995) offers ethical insights into the value of creativity and imaginative processes in that they are important in the development of empathy, which she expresses so eloquently as “becoming a friend of someone else’s mind” (p. 38). For Robinson (2001), imagination means seeing “in the mind’s eye,” (p.115) and it is “through imagination we can call to mind people, events, feelings and experiences that are not present here and now” (p. 115).

Greene (1995) stresses that imagination is equally important for teachers and students, suggesting that teachers without imagination may lack empathy. This is especially important for envisioning alternative possibilities for one’s own self, as a self *in the becoming*, and also for the development of communities, which, in turn, are also *in the becoming*.

Therefore, our transformative pedagogies must relate both to existing conditions and to something we are trying to bring into being, something that goes beyond a present situation....One of teachers' shared interests ought to be in finding alternatives to templates and schemata that overwhelm primordial landscapes. Another ought to be creating a civilization that can tolerate the potency of desire, the thrust of diverse energies, the vitality of play, and the intention to transform. (Greene, 1995, pp. 51-52)

Unfortunately, many teachers admit to not having an imagination, not being creative, or not feeling like artists themselves.<sup>16</sup> Robinson (2001) understands there are many misconceptions about creativity. Some teachers feel that creativity is something that some people have and others do not. Robinson reminds us that creativity "takes many forms, it draws from many different capacities and we all have different creative capabilities" (p. 111).

It seems that there is specific learning for both the teacher and the student in creative practices. The learning involved in creativity is learning to discover and to solve one's own problems. The teacher must be careful to allow this to occur, that is, to develop a habit of listening. It also involves learning about empathy—living in a world with others. It is these views that have led the British researchers to define an important connection between creativity and learning—the concept of *creative learning*.

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<sup>16</sup> My MA thesis *Finding the Key to Dance in Elementary Schools: A study of the current state of dance education in one Ontario school board* (Richard, 2009), revealed that many teachers feel that they cannot teach dance because they themselves are not dancers and do not feel like artists. They want someone else to teach dance for them, because they feel *less than* creative.

## Creative learning

Several recent publications including *Creative Learning 3-11 and how we document it* (Craft, Cremin & Burnard, 2008), *The Routledge international handbook of creative learning* (Sefton-Green, Thomson & Bresler, 2011), *Researching creative learning: Methods & issues* (Thomson & Sefton-Green, 2011) and *Close Encounters: Dance partners for creativity* (Chappell, Rolfe, Craft & Jobbins, 2011) outline the development of the concept of *creative learning*. Craft recognizes, “where learning is understood as the construction of meaning, the distinctions between creativity and learning are very fine” (Craft et al., 2008a, p. xxi). These researchers recognize that the focus of their work has been on *little ‘c’ creativity*, or everyday creativity, a more egalitarian approach to the study of creativity, which argues that all students (and teachers) can be creative, not just those deemed *talented* (Craft et al., 2008b, p. 66). Spendlove and Wyse (2008) recognize the *Creative Partnerships*<sup>17</sup> initiative in England as an inspiration for this research. Creative Partnerships define creative learning as “any learning that develops our capacity to be creative” (qtd in Spendlove & Wyse, 2008, p. 11). This definition is continuously evolving with new research. Spendlove & Wyse (2005) define creative learning as “learning which leads to new or original thinking which is accepted by appropriate observers as being of value” (qtd. in Spendlove & Wyse, 2008, p. 12). Craft, Grainger, Burnard, and Chappell provide a further definition:

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<sup>17</sup> This initiative was driven by the *All Our Futures* (1999) report of the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE), with the aim to “provide school children across England with the opportunity to develop creativity in learning and to take part in cultural activities of the highest quality” (Creative Partnerships, 2005 qtd in Spendlove & Wyse, 2008, p. 11).

Significant imaginative achievement as evidenced in the creation of new knowledge as determined by the imaginative insight of the person or persons responsible and judged by appropriate observers to be both original and of value as situated in different domain contexts. (qtd. in Spendlove & Wyse, 2008, p. 15)

This definition recognizes that creative learning is domain specific. Kaufman and Baer (2008) remind us that the focus in the United States of “raising test scores on divergent thinking tests” does not necessarily mean that creativity has transferred to other domains (p. 28). Many of the creative learning activities in elementary schools are making an assumption of transfer, so teachers have not been concerned with the types of activities they use to lead to creative learning (p. 30). What are the domain specific elements of creative learning present in creative dance?

**creative learning in dance education.** Chappell (2007) began to question the assumptions about creativity in creative dance with children while she was the program manager for the Laban<sup>18</sup> Education and Community Programme (p. 28). Her dissertation research involved case studies of the dance education practices of three dance-teacher-artists in the Laban programme. The research sites included short-term projects at two primary schools and an ongoing community class at the Laban Institute itself. Her conceptual framework explores two dimensions within the creative learning domain of dance: *people* and *processes*. Analysis under the people dimension revealed two overall elements, those that were *foundational* to the creative process: fuelling (stimulating

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<sup>18</sup> The Laban Institute is the leading institution for dance artist training in England. It also provides dance projects, workshops, teacher development, and courses across the country (Chappell, 2008a, p. 92) <[www.laban.org/labane/education](http://www.laban.org/labane/education)>.

curiosity and an openness to the unusual), and an embodied way of knowing (sensing, seeing, thinking, using a thinking body-mind, and whole self awareness) (2007, p. 36); and elements concerned with *relationships*, i.e. viewing creativity as individual, collaborative and communal. Chappell (2007) grounds her conceptualizing in *reciprocity*, which (similar to the Reggio Emilians) she sees as an ability to understand and respond to others' "perceptions, ideas and ways of doing things" (p. 36).

Her analysis of the *process* dimension of the study's framework revealed four key elements to creative learning in dance:

- *immersion in being the dance* (closely connected to embodiment);
- an emphasis on *physical and dramatic imagination*;
- *the inter-relationship of generating and honing-in-on* original ideas; and
- the ability to *capture* ideas using *intuition* grounded in aesthetic awareness. (p. 36)

Chappell (2008a) recognizes how these dance-specific elements interact well with Craft et al.'s definition of creative learning (previous page), because they include the creation of *new knowledge*, in the interaction with others, that is *domain specific* (pp. 84-85):

Within dance education, aesthetic knowledge in tandem with 'embodied knowing' was highly valued. This was grounded in being able to sense movement from within—kinaesthetic or physical awareness—and the ability to 'think physically,' which meant that children were able to make meaning physically to interpret and create movement. It also required an understanding of

the 'whole self-awareness,' 'a sense of their own personal physical self...of being...inhabiting your body.' (Chappell, 2008a, p. 85)

But the learning in creative dance education for the students must somehow be supported with learning for the teacher. What do teachers need to know in order to teach creative dance?

**the teacher's role in learning in creative dance.** Chappell (2008a) recognizes that the teachers in her study were knowledgeable of Smith-Autard's *midway model* of the art of dance in education, which emphasizes a balance between technique and expression in dance education. These teachers facilitated creative learning by encouraging children to merge *personal/collective voice* with *craft/compositional knowledge* (p. 86). In practice, this occurred because teachers were balancing strategies within three different areas: the creative source coming from either inside or outside the student, the teacher's level of involvement, and the level of responsibility sharing for planned creative activities (pp. 87-89). Chappell (2008a), like the Reggio educators, views this balancing act as crucial to developing dialogue between teachers and learners who have an *informed aesthetic understanding*, and she also offers, similar to Greene (1995), the concept of *relative originality*, in that the outcomes of creativity might be considered original relative to the peer group rather than the domain of dance as a whole (p. 91).

Chappell's work illuminates the long-standing debate in dance education between dance as an expression of feelings (expressionism) and dance as a form (formalism). Wigman (1966) discusses these concepts as *two circles of tension* that



attract and penetrate one another: a certain creative readiness, i.e. an image, and the will to take the image and transform it into something that has form (p. 12). Like Chappell, Vallance (1989) sees the merging of these two concepts as vitally important in order for students to find personal voice.

The language of movement is now shared between teachers and children and the teaching and learning of a meaningful movement vocabulary is able to grow side by side with the creative form in the context of specific themes and a dialogical teaching methodology. This allows children to reveal themselves, to be recognized, to be respected, to be educated. (p. 45)

Vallance (1989) also recognizes that dance's "dual role as a language of action and expression has not been clarified for educators and often results in its misuse and abuse in the educational setting" (p. 29). Press and Warburton (2007) would agree, seeing dance teachers' views "about the nature of creativity, and the effects of such beliefs on young dancers' activities...[as] an important but neglected area of research on creativity in dance" (p. 1284).

Reflecting on her own work as a teacher of dance educators, Stinson (2002) recognizes her work as that of an artist, and most especially an improvisational one (p.160). She cites Jensen's notion that assessment strategies "too often focus on what is easily measured, which is usually trivial" (2005a, p. 220). She stresses that educators must become more equipped to identify what students are actually learning in dance classes because, "What students perceive they are learning is not always what teachers think they are teaching" (2005a, p. 220).

Chappell's work on the creative learning in dance education places an emphasis on two major areas of study that overlap with the learning concepts in creative dance: embodiment (embodied learning), and collaboration (empathy). In this next section, I will elaborate on the research in each of these areas.

### **Embodied learning**

The Reggio educators from the Choreia School (Cavazzoni et al., 2007) consider children's bodies as bearers of knowledge and important sites for learning. They also suggest that the mind has been created over time by the movement of the body. Sheets-Johnstone (2011) emphasizes thinking with the body. The Root-Bernsteins (2000) describe *kinesthetic thinking*. Theories of critical and feminist pedagogies also support the concept of an *embodied knowledge* (Bresler, 2004; Shapiro, 2008; Antilla, 2008), which challenges us to consider a meld of the brain and body (see also chapter one). Sansom (2008) recognizes that a humanitarian approach to living must come through an understanding of the body, because our life experiences are housed within our bodies (p. 212). Sansom (2008) further recognizes that many of her Faculty of Education students are skeptical of the concept of using the body as a site of learning and expression, because they did not experience this in their own education. Shapiro (2008) offers: "The body knows and re-members even in the silences of our lives" (p. 253). She sees dance as a language that is far more visceral than cerebral, providing "a raw, embodied way of capturing human experience" and at the same time harnessing the playfulness of a child (p. 254).

Davidson (2004) examined the status of embodied knowledge in arts education and describes three distinct bodies: individual, social, and political. The individual body involves the way students use their bodies to construct knowledge and how their bodies hold knowledge as “a somatic artifact;” the social body involves the roles we play in society and how these are read on our bodies by others; and the political body has to do with how schools, teachers, and principals control the bodies of children, in other words, bodies under surveillance (pp. 199-200). Davidson (2004) witnessed very little actual embodied knowledge in arts education in the school settings she observed. “The range and depth of experience was severely restricted by the space and times in which it was offered” (p. 204). She recognized the phenomenon that most arts experiences were taught by specialist teachers with a cart, travelling between classrooms, while the regular classroom teacher was on her/his planning time. Davidson (2004) described this as arts education in *borrowed spaces*, on *borrowed time*, and with *borrowed participants* (p. 201). Davidson (2004) suggests, “By virtue of the fact that the arts are placed within the disembodied framework of knowledge that dominates schools, the capacity for the arts to support an embodied framework of knowledge must be compromised to some extent” (p. 197). For teachers, students, and all those involved in education, an awareness of the everyday movements of the body can contribute to a more holistic interpretation of lives lived. It seems that embodied learning is a possibility in arts education and specifically dance education, but perhaps the education system itself may not be receptive to the possibilities because of constraints of time and space.

### **Individual, collaborative and communal creativity**

Chappell's (2008b) extended analysis of the learning in creative dance experiences places even more emphasis on the relationships and reciprocity involved in creative dance experiences. Chappell (2008b) discusses "mediating individual, collaborative and communal creativity... towards humanizing creativity" (p. 7), and recognizes an over-emphasis on individual creativity in education, as a result of "western cultural blindness" (p. 7). She postulates a "humane framework...guided by compassion, empathy, alleviation of difficulty and some reference to a shared value system" (p. 8). At the center of her framework are the teacher and the child in a non-hierarchical relationship, as the teachers recognized they are learning from the students as well (p. 9). Overall, the students experienced a sense of communal creativity in the creative dance experiences because of the *shared ownership* and the development of *group movement identities* (p. 12). Chappell (2008b) conceives all of these experiences as leading to what she calls a humanizing creativity, because the activities were focused on the body, the students were using their bodies for thinking, and were developing an awareness of their whole self. The students were also embracing conflict as part of their creative experiences because they were not attempting to bury difference, but in fact accept and deal with it. Finally, the fact that the students' creative voices were being developed in groups (from individual voices) and these groups contained representatives from many sub-cultures (different social and cultural groupings) means that: "These interrelated communities are like webbed nets, stretching and connecting across 'official' institutions and influencing children, learning and creativity in an emergent way" (p. 16).

Chappell's (2008b) findings echo Greene's (1995) emphasis on empathy and the role of creativity in understanding others in an attempt to name our world. There is an emphasis on creativity for social good but not without the necessary conflicts and tensions inherent in the creative process.

### **An overview of the elements of creative learning in dance education**

Along with Chappell (2006, 2007), many dance researchers have discussed the possible learning in creative dance (Hanna, 1979; Cone & Cone, 2005; Brehm & McNett, 2008; Gilbert, 1996). A compilation of this literature suggests that through creative dance students are learning: to enhance movement skills—strength, flexibility, cardio respiratory endurance and balance; to develop their imagination and creativity; to engage the senses; to interconnect with other subject areas (including other arts) and life; to stimulate critical and embodied thinking skills; to establish basic communicative motor skills and expression; to increase dance literacy (dance as a language); to know themselves (self), others, and their world; and to develop individual and groups skills for community building.

In my experiences with teachers and their students, creative dance offers a place of transformation, an animation of the intersubjective space in which teachers recognize themselves and their students as agents of creativity. Making evident, through the process of pedagogical documentation, both the learned myths about creativity and dance as well as the actual, everyday creative acts of our students and teachers, in an embodied form of learning, could open up a domain of learning seldom recognized.

### **Chapter Three: Pedagogical Documentation**

This chapter will provide an overview of pedagogical documentation as a methodology for making learning visible. I will begin with a look at the Reggio Emilia approach to documentation that includes the concept of provisional theories and traces of learning. I will discuss a brief history of pedagogical documentation in the context of Ontario schools and its connection to other forms of research, especially in relation to dance education. I will also provide some information about my own experiences with pedagogical documentation.

#### **What is pedagogical documentation?**

Pedagogical documentation, for Reggio educators (Rinaldi, 2001b; Rubizzi, 2001; Forman & Fyfe, 1998), is the practice of attentively studying and actively recording the process of a student's learning, which involves their knowledge, understanding, thinking, communication, and application in a given social context (with an eye to values and cultures), and animating this process of learning for others. These others might include the students themselves, other educators, parents, siblings, and the community at large. Documentation might take place in a variety of formats including note-taking, photography, audio recording, video recording, samples of students' work, as well as written reflections on the learning experience encountered. It is an interactive process, which asks a great deal of the documenter—intense awareness, openness and attentiveness within the learning situation, and active and sustained reflection afterwards.

The Reggio educators have used documentation practices from the beginning of their approach, but the actual term *pedagogical documentation* was first introduced by

Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999) in order to identify this very specific form of documentation from other forms utilized by teachers (Wien, 2008, p. 9). Dahlberg et al. (1999) propose pedagogical documentation “as a tool for reflecting on pedagogical practice and as a means for constructing an ethical relationship to ourselves, to the Other and the world”—they describe this as the *ethics of an encounter* (p. 145). Recently, creative learning scholars (Craft, Cremin & Burnard, 2008a) and dance education scholars (Sansom, 2011) have begun to recognize the importance of pedagogical documentation as a tool for capturing the complexities of creative acts in dance education. As a researcher, I recognize a strong affinity between the arts discipline of creative dance and the methodology of pedagogical documentation, as tools for questioning the dominant domains of educational practice. Sansom (2011) believes, “The practice of dance can be inscribed with the ethics of an encounter, where learning fosters recognition of relationships and a deep respect for otherness encompassing both connectedness and difference” (p. 140). Dahlberg et al. (1999) recognize pedagogical documentation as a means of reflecting on pedagogical practice in order to “expand our social horizon and construct another relationship to life, work and creativity” (p. 144). Thus, the arts discipline of creative dance and the research methodology of pedagogical documentation are each capable of building a reflective practice.

### **Pedagogical documentation in the Reggio Emilia approach**

The Reggio educators believe that pedagogical documentation plays a vital role in establishing the school as a place for meaning-making for both children and teachers. According to Rinaldi (2001b), “We cannot live without meaning; that would preclude

any sense of identity, any hope, any future... The search for the meaning of life and of the self in life, is born with the child and is desired by the child” (p. 79). This search for meaning begins with the Reggio Emilians’ *image of the child* and is supported by their *pedagogy of relationships and listening*, which involves listening, with all the senses to patterns that connect us to others and the world, in order to appreciate and respect our similarities and differences (Rinaldi, 2001b, pp. 79-80). At the same time, this pedagogy is not about finding definitive answers but developing more questions. A pedagogy of listening involves unhurried time, doubt, and uncertainty, as well as a willingness to accept change (p. 81).

Unlike the normative practices of pedagogical *observations* that focus on observing children in order to classify and categorize them, pedagogical documentation is about seeing and understanding “what the child is capable of without any predetermined framework of expectations and norms” (Dahlberg et al., 1999, p. 146). Forman and Fyfe (1998) see documentation as an integral component of negotiated learning, “a dynamic system of causes, effects, and counter effects” (p. 240). The three main components include design, documentation, and discourse:

When teachers document children’s work and use this documentation as part of their instruction with the children, the net result is a change in the image of their role as teacher, a change from teaching children to studying children and by studying children, learning with children. (p. 240)

The Reggio educators themselves have utilized pedagogical documentation to share the movement theories and choreographic ideas of children in their book, *Dialogue*



*with places* (Filippini, Vecchi, & Giudici, 2008). This book outlines projects created by children, parents, and teachers for the newly constructed Loris Malaguzzi International Center. The research questions outlined for these projects include:

What kind of relationships and “dialogues” do the children establish with a new and unexpected place? How do the architectural characteristics of the space support the children’s explorations? What are the relationships between the architectural characteristics of the space and the children’s explorations? (p. 19)

The book outlines a project created by teachers and students at the Robinson School in Reggio Emilia, entitled “Notes for a choreography,” which includes pictures of the students’ explorations in the Malaguzzi center, their graphic arts reflections on these explorations, as well as the teachers’ interpretations. The documentation panels show traces of the students’ plans for running games between the columns, which also show “special kinds of running,” the development of codes for their various languages of running (which they bring together in a catalogue), as well as the students’ theories about choreography and images of their final choreographic project (p. 69).

Another project, created by the five and six-year-old students at the Choreia Toddler Center and Preschool, is called “Figures in motion.”

In the dialogue with the doorways, the language of the body and its suspension in continuous variations of shapes give the children and teachers the opportunity to interpret a body in motion and in relationship with the space. The movement expresses the individuality of a body that is communicative and creative, that interprets reality and is able to give sense and meaning to experience. (p. 92)

In *Dialogue with places*, the Reggio educators have provided some insight into how pedagogues can utilize the research methodology of pedagogical documentation to make visible the ideas and theories children have about movement and choreography.

Pedagogical documentation as a research methodology aligns well with our current Ontario Arts policy document (Ministry of Education, 2009), which offers four big ideas for arts education: creativity, communication, understanding culture, and making connections. The arts document also places great emphasis on the creative and critical analysis process and it stresses the connections between the cognitive (thoughts) and the affective (feelings) through aesthetics and embodied learning, that is, using the body to learn (Ministry, 2009). Creative dance education is concerned with facilitating students (as individuals and in relational groups) to make connections to other curricular areas, and to use the language of the body to express theories, ideas, and feelings. Creative dance melds well with pedagogical documentation, because, as Rinaldi (2001b) reminds us, pedagogical documentation “takes the individual out of anonymity” and makes visible and legitimate their theories about learning and life (p. 81).

### **Provisional theories and traces of learning**

The Reggio educators aver that pedagogical documentation offers them a chance to make visible the theories of children but also to develop their own interpretive theories as pedagogues. They emphasize, however, that these are *provisional* theories that are constantly re-worked and re-visited by the students themselves and by those who read and interact with the documentation. Rinaldi (2001b) describes documentation as a narrative form, “because it offers those who document and those who read the

documentation an opportunity for reflection and learning” (p. 86). Dahlberg et al. (1999) recognize, that from a postmodern perspective, pedagogical documentation does not offer an undisputable reality but instead provides a social construction of the events being documented. The documentation cannot be separated from the documenter because what she/he has documented is “selective, partial and contextual” (p. 147). It is what Taguchi (2010) calls a *constructed cut* (p. 64). According to Dahlberg et al. (1999), what the documenter chooses to document reveals as much about themselves as it does about the context they are documenting: “When we document we are co-constructors of children’s lives...the documentation tells us something about how we have constructed the child, as well as ourselves as pedagogues” (p. 147). As they attest, “What we document represents a choice, a choice among many other choices, a choice in which pedagogues themselves are participating. Likewise, that which you do not choose is also a choice” (p. 147). Rinaldi (2001b) believes this inherent bias gives the documentation quality because, through its *incompleteness*, it offers a trace of the personal and deep introspection on the part of the pedagogue. “When you try to offer others not what you know, but the boundaries of your knowledge; that is, your limits which derive from the fact that the *object* being narrated is a process and a path of research” (p. 87).

Pedagogical documentation interacts well with creative dance education, because the products of creative dance education (i.e. dances created by students) and their meaning are not necessarily apparent to the teacher, nor is the learning that has happened within the process of creation. Unlike the answers on a math test, there is not one correct answer to a movement problem or provocation. Teachers must observe, interact, and

listen to their students in order to discover both the learning and the meaning behind the movement–meanings that are often quite profound. Similar to the examples of graphic arts languages seen in the pedagogical documentation from the Reggio schools, creative dance education, as an embodied form of learning, often reveals important theories about students’ relationship to others and the world–theories that are in a constant state of flux, as students are in a constant state of *becoming*. The Reggio educators view pedagogical documentation as a process of “reciprocal learning” for all the stakeholders in education, because “traces” of the learning can be observed, interpreted, and documented to share childrens’ learning, as well as teachers’ own professional learning and growth, with all the various stakeholders, including the parents and public (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121). “Sharing documentation is in fact making visible the culture of childhood both inside and outside the school to become a participant in a true act of exchange and democracy” (p. 122).

Pedagogical documentation offers both teacher and student the opportunity “of taking control of [their] own thinking and practice” and creating *counter-discourses* (Dahlberg et al., 1999, p. 153). Because documentation is a tangible form (the traces of learning are present in the panels which include pictures and transcriptions of actual conversations as well as interpretive text from the pedagogue), it allows for constant revisiting and reconstruction of the original learning event–*a spiral process* “which allows for taking multiple perspectives, for looping between self-reflection and dialogue, for passing between the language of one’s professional community (theories and practical wisdom) and one’s personal passions, emotions, intuitions and experiences”

(Dahlberg et al., 1999, p. 154). Used in conjunction with creative dance education, I believe it also allows teachers to confront the biases and assumptions about dance education inherent in the professional education community—assumptions about control of children’s bodies and minds, assumptions about assessment and evaluation, and assumptions about what learning looks like. Sansom (2011) believes there is a “tendency in education and schooling to eliminate the body (and thus the whole person) from the teaching and learning experience,” and this separation of the mind and body leaves the body outside of education and “dishonors bodily experiences or the personal lives of students. The corollary is that education or schooling can be seen as form of dehumanization” (p. 39). Dahlberg et al. (1999) see pedagogical documentation as a *narrative of self-reflexivity*, in which we define and re-define ourselves through our choices and our relationship to the dominant discourses in education (p. 147). It is through pedagogical documentation that we can begin to “unmask—identify and visualize—the dominant discursive regimes which exercise power on and through us” (p. 152). In the domain of creative dance education, I believe these dominant discourses are held within the bodies (a minded body) of both teachers and students—discourses around creativity, dance, and the body in education. As Sansom (2011) warns us, “The privilege of academic performance that concentrates on mental acuties believed to exist only in the mind equates to learning which is devoid of affective ways of knowing, kinesthetic intelligence, and the significance of social interaction” (p. 39). In order to further develop and understand the connections between pedagogical documentation and creative dance, it may be helpful to see how educators outside of Reggio Emilia have

provided a lens for looking at the processes and the types of learning involved in creative and imaginative acts.

### **History and context in Ontario elementary schools**

Wien, Guyevskey and Berdoussis (2011) discuss experiences with teachers in Ontario schools working with Reggio-inspired approaches, including pedagogical documentation. Wien et al. (2011) describes the process that, in her experience, Canadian early childhood educators suffer through in learning to document (p. 8). Wien defines pedagogical documentation as both “teacher research into children’s thinking and feeling and a design process for invention of curriculum in a specific context” (Wien et al., 2011, p. 2). She recognizes the narrative quality of documentation as “the teachers’ story of the movement of children’s understanding,” but, like Rinaldi, she recognizes the ephemeral quality of such stories; these are “traces” of learning (Wien et al., 2011, p. 3). Like the Reggio educators who emphasize a teacher’s uncertainty in knowing, Wien offers pedagogical documentation as a form of *wonder* for teachers “to inquire with grace into some temporary state of mind and feeling in children” (Wien et al., 2011, p. 4).

Wien also argues that documentation is a design process, both in terms of an emergent curriculum (Wien, 2008) as well as graphic design (Wien et al., 2011, p. 5). As teachers listen carefully and collaborate on interpretation of students’ learning, they begin to design further learning experiences. The very process of learning in Reggio schools is based on graphically representing the ideas and theories of the children. This process of graphic representation follows through in pedagogical documentation, in

which there is an emphasis on aesthetically representing children's learning in a manner that can easily be read and interpreted by many stakeholders in education, most importantly the children and their parents (Wien et al., 2011, pp. 5-7).

This process is quite demanding for teachers, as it asks them to consider their own theories about learning. To create documentation in order to share it with others, teachers must decide on a question or focus and then generate data that speaks to this research question. The data is then analyzed in terms of both teaching and learning, and then choices are made about a design layout that communicates the research to others. Pedagogical documentation involves an intense engagement, what some have called *attentive listening*, allowing the participants' thoughts and ideas to emerge, asking questions to gain clarity and to draw forth the participants' ideas.

### **Connections to other forms of qualitative research**

Pedagogical documentation as a type of qualitative research method finds precedence in the *portraiture* of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis (1997). Through ongoing interactive interviews, these researchers create written portraits of their participants. In *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) offers us a definition of *portraiture* that is directly in line with our goals of pedagogical documentation:

Portraiture is a method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics and subtlety of human experience and organizational life. Portraitists seek to record and interpret the perspectives and experiences of the people they are studying,

documenting their voices and visions—their authority, knowledge and wisdom. (p. xv)

Lawrence-Lightfoot recognizes that a portrait is created through interaction with the subject and must be placed within its social and cultural context. Like pedagogical documentation, which Wien describes as a “landscape to read and interpret, a vehicle for intersubjectivity” (Wien et al., 2011, p. 21), portraiture demands what Heshusius calls a *participatory consciousness* or what Wong describes as *dialogic engagements* (Heshusius & Wong qtd. in Wien et al., 2011).

Like portraiture, the researcher using pedagogical documentation begins with perceptions and extends beyond to interpretations. Through revisiting their interpretations with the participants, and then revising, the interpretations become collaborative. Wien recognizes that, “If we can hold off on making interpretations until our perception and our questions have had a chance to grow, the interpretations are greatly enriched...” (Wien et al., 2011, p. 26). Pedagogical documentation is a multi-layered methodology that shares many ideals with other forms of qualitative research, such as portraiture. I will next explore how dance education researchers have utilized similar research methods in their attempts to define experiences in creative dance education.

### **Precedence in dance education research**

While bringing Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation to dance education is new, there is a rich history of dance education research that utilizes similar approaches: Stinson (1985), Kipling-Brown and Wernikowski (1991), Bond and Stinson



(2000/2001, 2007), Buck (2003), Antilla (2003, 2007) and Chappell (2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b), Nielson (2003, 2009). Stinson (1985) says that her dance education practice (like the practices of pedagogical documentation) focuses on “listening to each of the children—their words and their movement—and trying to be with them, trying to be aware of both [her] actions and the children’s responses to them” (p. 222-223). She admits that she is “less interested in predicting and controlling their learning than ... in respecting them and entering into the adventure of learning with them” (p. 222-223). Stinson (1985) further suggests that the goal of creative dance educators is not to shape students’ behaviour but to inspire “children’s capacity to create their own knowledge, their own dances, their own lives in the context of the knowledge of others” (p. 224). Stinson’s values in dance education parallel the Reggio educators’ *pedagogy of listening*.

In her paper *Research as art: New directions for dance educators*, that she delivered at the 1985 daCi conference in New Zealand, Stinson calls for more “legitimate and rigorous ways to pursue research that will allow us to function in both an artistic and scholarly manner as we attempt to understand and live in a world that includes dance and children” (p. 235). She offers four main qualitative research areas for exploration in dance education: *phenomenology* (in order to understand the perspectives of the participants); *biography and autobiography* (to determine what dance *is* for other teachers and children); *ethnography* (to gather both objective and subjective data); and *art criticism* (to develop a poetic language, metaphor, and educational critiques). Pedagogical documentation, as a multi-faceted form of qualitative research, intersects with all four of these areas, especially when applied to creative dance education research.

It provides an opportunity for myself as a researcher to make visible the unique perspectives of a specific group of educators and their students interacting in the aesthetic realm of dance.

The Dance and the Child International (daCi) conferences have provided a rich crucible for this type of research, as witnessed in many of the conference papers found in the daCi proceedings.<sup>19</sup> Antilla (2007) asks, “[Who] is the subject of dance education—the child, the teacher or the art of dance?” but also recognizes that the daCi constitution “raises an expectation of placing the child into the position of subject” (p. 866). Over the years many studies presented at daCi conferences have attempted to answer that question, providing perspectives from both the children and the educators involved in dance education. Vallance’s (1991) paper, *Conversations with children: Prompting pedagogical text* (based on her 1989 dissertation *Collegial Conversations*), outlines an interpretative methodology similar to pedagogical documentation in that data is revisited with both educators and their students. Kipling-Brown and Wernikowski (1991), inspired by the daCi declaration (1982) that “the views and dance interests of the child should be revealed and respected” (p. 4), outline a three-part study in which they examined children’s verbal responses to creative dance. Through interviews, they uncovered themes of ownership, freedom, involvement, and purposefulness. Buck (2003) conducted an interpretive study of primary teachers’ perspectives of their teaching practices and their own relationships to dance. Nielson (2003) interpreted video-recordings and interviews with children in a search for the *aesthetic moments*

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<sup>19</sup> These proceedings may be accessed electronically from the daCi Reader on the daCi website <[www.daCi.org](http://www.daCi.org)>.

children have while creating dance. Nielson (2003) describes aesthetic moments as “intense moments when a child radiates a special presence, a deep concentration and absorbedness in creating significant form” (p. 131). Nielson (2009) has developed a multi-modal approach to interviewing children about these aesthetic moments in dance classes. She recognizes that “neither children nor adults are readily able to verbalize embodied experiences” (2009, p. 83). This difficulty in translating aesthetic experiences into verbal language is reiterated by Bannon and Sanderson (2000) and Oliver (2000). Nielson’s (2009) approach to interviewing children about “significant moments” emphasizes non-verbal communication including drawing, revisiting the moment through physical explanations, “how it feels,” and eventually (with the help of the interviewer) finding a word to describe the sensation. The word may be a colour or a sound word. Sounds may first be explored through musical instruments. Eventually, children draw two pictures: what it looked like to do the movement and also what it felt like. Nielson (2009) describes this interview process as a “touching dialogue” (p. 91). She suggests:

If an educational system is to take seriously the fact that the body is an extremely important resource for learning and developing then children must learn to be aware of their own and others’ experiences and to communicate what they sense, see and feel in a bodily-based language. (2009, p. 91)

Perhaps the studies most closely related to the methodology of pedagogical documentation have been those conducted by Bond and Stinson.

Bond and Stinson (2000/2001; 2007) are conducting an ongoing meta-study of 700 children, looking for evidence of the “nature and meaning of young people’s experiences in dance” (2000/2001, p. 53). They have broken down their data into three phases, examining three specific themes encountered in their work. Phase one (2000/2001) examined “young people’s experiences of the superordinary in dance.” Phase two (2007) related “young people’s experiences of effort and engagement in dance.” Part three (still awaiting analysis) will relate “young people’s notions of relationships to others and the environment” (Bond & Stinson, 2007). Their work is driven by the observation that “very little is known about how young students experience the educational activities designed by adults or construct meaning from them” (2000/2001, p. 52). They are committed to bringing young people’s “voices into professional discourse” (2007, p. 156). Their methodology involves re-examing data from past studies (their own and others’) in a search for “original material consisting of words and images of young people” (2000/2001, p. 54). Similar to Reggio pedagogical documentation, theirs is a multimodal approach, including “videotaped classes, notes from on-site observations, conversations with children, and children’s drawing about dance with captions spoken to their teachers” (2000/2001, p. 53).

Bond and Stinson recognize that there is a difficulty in expressing the meanings of dance through words and, like the Reggio educators believe that, “because it is constantly in the process of creation, meaning is always partial” (2007, p. 157). They acknowledge themselves as “both creators and discoverers of meaning” and admit to making choices in interpreted data based on a search for a range of experiences and

aesthetics, that is, using data they found vivid and engaging (2007, p. 157). As well, their work goes beyond description to interpretations of the data, including phenomenologically based *essence descriptions*, which are poetic representations of a collection of children's thoughts or words.

The work of Stinson and Bond offers incredible insight for other dance educators into the children's world of dance: their feelings, thoughts, ideas, and perceptions. One of the limitations they recognize in their work is their role as interpreters of children's thoughts. "We can never know if the young people whose words and images we have examined would agree with our interpretation" (2000/2001, p. 55). This is where pedagogical documentation as a form of qualitative research offers insights, as I indicate below.

For Reggio educators an important part of the process of documentation is *re-visiting* the documentation with the students,

which enables reading, revisiting, and assessment in time and in space, and these actions become an integral part of the knowledge-building process.

Documentation can alter learning from an epistemological point of view....It seems to be essential for metacognitive processes. (Rinaldi, 2001b, p. 84)

Rinaldi (2001b) hypothesizes that memory, triggered by re-cognition and reflecting on the data while in process, is an important part of "the learning and identity-forming process" (p. 84). She also recognizes the importance, for the documenter, of interacting "with the action itself, with that which is revealed, defined, and perceived as truly significant, as the experience unfolds," but she warns that, unlike positivist notions of

research, that in this case, “Doubt and uncertainty permeate the context; they are part of the *documenter’s context*...It lies in the space between the predictable and the unexpected” (2001b, p. 85). Since documentation “is itself interpretation,” it allows for further interpretation, as a *narrative form*, which includes “both interpersonal and intrapersonal communication,” because it provokes the reader to carry out her/his own process of reflection and therefore learning (Rinaldi, 2001b, p. 86).

### **Personal experiences with documentation and creative dance education**

In dance in education, we seem to be searching for “a corporeal way of knowing, a different way of seeing, questioning and challenging” (Cancienne & Snowber, 2009, p. 205). I wonder how the process of pedagogical documentation, if embraced by teachers, might be utilized to animate the rich learning that is taking place while using the body as a site of creation. I also wonder how the pedagogical documentation processes might allow this learning to be shared and discussed.

It seems that pedagogical documentation is, itself, a rich site of learning, one that stirs emotions and one that invites engagement in the process of meaning-making. I have shared an example of my past documentation (of the products of dance) with many teachers during workshops and the AQ course, as well as with ministry and faculty members. This documentation piece is a video created with two classes of grade five students at a school that was scheduled to close. The students decided to create site-specific dance pieces in order to document their experiences in and around their school. The theme of the piece is belonging. As educators watch the video, there is a palpable emotional connection witnessing students dance for, and as, themselves, i.e. using their

own personal voices. Cancienne believes that “what we experience when watching a dance performance affects the intricate balance of our bodies and those around us” (qtd. in Leavy, 2009, p. 204).

Although it is a time-consuming and frustrating process to learn, I believe that applying this process to creative dance education in Ontario schools will help to make visible the rich, embodied learning taking place in classrooms where creative dance is embraced as language and a way of knowing. This has the potential to contribute to the state of dance education in this province and also to the art of teaching and education as a whole.

## **Chapter Four: Method**

The previous chapters reviewed the relevant literature with respect to creative dance education in an elementary school environment. This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology that I have developed in order to investigate the learning for both the student and the teacher in creative dance classes. In order to make the learning visible in creative dance education, I focused on the in-school work of four expert creative dance education teachers and their students. I observed each teacher four or five times, videotaping the classroom experiences and taking still photos. I interviewed the teachers afterwards (usually the same day) while watching the video of the class experience. These observations took place over several weeks for each teacher (except for one in Northern Ontario where I was there for one week). In that time, I created documentation panels (2 - 4 per site) as ideas and theories began to emerge out of the collected data. These panels included the words of the students and teachers as well as still photographs of perceived moments of learning. Based on these panels, interviews were conducted with students in each site in order to dig deeper into their theories about what they were learning in creative dance classes. After the data generation process was complete, I spent several months analyzing the data from each teacher and her students.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods used in developing my process of pedagogical documentation. There are seven sections to this chapter. I first outline an overall structure, which includes an overview of pedagogical documentation. The second section describes the process of negotiating entry, including the process of



selecting the teachers, schools, and classes involved in the research and the ethics involved. The third section introduces each teacher participant and her context, classroom, and school. The fourth section outlines the data-generating process including the use of video, still photos, audio, the interview process, the creation of field notes and transcriptions as well as documentation panels and the final exhibit. The fifth section focuses on data management and analysis, including the various (digital and analog) means of storing data, and the process of coding and sorting data into manageable sets. The sixth section provides a reflection on the methods used, including the limitations of the study. The final section discusses the exhibition of pedagogical documentation panels that I have created in order to share this research with the public.

### **Overall structure**

My choice of the qualitative research method of pedagogical documentation was guided by several assumptions. The meaning in creative dance education was going to be personal meaning for individual teachers and students, and I required an approach that would truly listen to and retain these personal meanings while at the same time reveal larger themes. In attempting to look for significant moments of learning in a creative dance experience, I needed to define for myself what I meant by learning. For this purpose, I borrowed from Craft et al.'s (qtd. in Chappell, 2008a) definition of creative learning and tailored it specifically for creative dance. For me, in this study, creative learning in dance involves:

Imaginative events evidenced by new ways of thinking (e.g. thinking with the body) and judged by creative dance teachers (experts) to be valuable in the context of a creative dance class.

In this sense, I was looking for moments of change, where a student or teacher's way of thinking about a particular concept changed within the context of (or as a result of) a creative dance class. Borrowing from Katz and Chard (2000), I recognized these moments might involve shifts in their knowledge, skills, dispositions, or feelings. For the teachers, these were sometimes learning events that had happened in past creative dance experiences that they were recounting as a result of their current experiences. This evidence made itself visible through verbal language, i.e., participants articulated with words a shift in their way of thinking. It also made itself visible in the embodied experiences of the participants, i.e., as a researcher, I recognized (or the participants recognized while watching video) a shift in their physical being (an opening or closing of the body, a moment of stillness, a pause, a change in their general movement patterns, a breath, a gesture, or facial expression).

In reporting on the cognitive processes, an attempt was made to avoid what Bannon (2004) terms an "over reliance on the use of language as a source of meaning" (p. 38). There was an emphasis on many languages of learning (body, graphic, written), as well as on discovering those moments for which there is no apparent language of description (Smith-Autard, 2002). I have witnessed, on many occasions, when working with students creating their own dances, moments of palpable emotions that defy description. I was on the look out for what Nielsen (2003) has referred to as *aesthetic*

*moments*, that is, “intense moments where a child radiates a special presence, a deep concentration and absorbedness in creating significant form” (p. 1).

Within group work, it was also important to capture the voices of those students who were present and fully involved in an embodied sense but remained somewhat silent in terms of verbal communication. There were a few students in each site who remained silent observer-participants for much of the process but later, in discussions around the pedagogical documentation panels, offered extremely succinct and carefully considered observations. In-depth reflections and meaning-making from these silent group members were also uncovered in journal entries. It was important for me to retrace and document the body language and unspoken truths of their experiences in the group work in order to paint a picture of the many possibilities for what engagement might look like in a creative dance experience. While focus was on individual learning (for both teachers and students), it was also on the manner in which children encounter each other’s thinking in group work and how they make their thinking clear to the others in their group. In some cases, this included non-verbal communication skills such as demonstrating a movement or a shape or something as subtle as the gentle turn of a head or an inhalation. It was important that these forms of communication were documented in order to recognize their value.

I realized that the learning within dance education is not always immediately recognizable at the conscious verbal level: as Polanyi (1966) suggested, “We know more than we can tell,” and so I required a methodology that would allow revisiting of the learning and reconnecting the participants to their learning. In a sense, I was attempting

to create *snapshot* portraits of these four sites of creative dance learning. Borrowing from the portraiture work of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997), my intention was to assure that my pedagogical documentation demonstrated “symptoms of the aesthetic” (p. 25), by including expressive content “through thoughtful attention to each aesthetic aspect as well as to the relationships among them” (p. 29). Like these researchers, I hoped to create a dialogue between the reader, and myself in which we could co-construct meaning from the documentation panels (p. 29). Because these panels resulted from my interpretations of a series of co-constructed relationships, that is, between the students and teachers themselves and with the world of creative dance, between the participants and myself, and between the data and myself, it was important that this process of co-construction followed through in the dissemination of the data. Also, I wanted to use pedagogical documentation, because it is a methodology that, although perhaps unfamiliar to most Ontario teachers, is a form of teacher research that could be modeled and used in classrooms beyond this particular study.

Chappell (2006) suggested that an interpretive qualitative methodology was most effective for studying the learning in creative dance, because creative dance is such an unknown phenomenon (p. 71). Bannon (2004) argued the necessity for dance educators to engage creatively in the many possibilities of methodology and means for dissemination of dance education research (p. 26). She specifically argued for the use of *phenomenological reflection* which

deals with attempts to grasp the “essential” meaning of a phenomenon. It is the determination to explore inherent meaning that presents added complexity to the

process of research. By affecting a more direct contact with the present experience, the essence of the experience as a multidimensional and multilayered phenomenon is emphasized. (p. 31)

Pedagogical documentation offered a unique chance to validate interpretations by revisiting them with the participants. The teachers and students were involved at all stages of the data generation process in terms of gaining feedback. Through cycles of analysis, there has been a continuous dialogue between the researcher and participants. As Forman and Fyfe (1998) discussed,

[R]evisiting is more than remembering...[it is a] return to a place of significance for the purpose of reestablishing friendly relations and establishing new relations...The past is reconstructed from the new perspectives of the present. You look for patterns to create meaning and for connections that were not obvious while you were resident in the experience. (p. 248)

In this research experience, I have developed a dialogic rapport with the participants in order to, as Leavy (2009) recommends, “collaborate with them and embark on weighty and unpredictable emotional as well as intellectual processes” (p. 7). It has been enlightening to witness how engaged and interested in their own learning students and teachers can become when someone is documenting their learning and turning them toward their learning for further reflection.

As outlined in Chapter 3, pedagogical documentation involved studying and actively recording the process of a student’s learning and animating this process for others. It took many forms and involved many processes including photography,

videotaping, audio recording, interviewing, collecting samples of students' work, as well as writing reflections. As Forman and Fyfe (1998) indicated, pedagogical documentation essentially changes the role of the teacher from teaching children to studying their learning processes. In trying to make the learning visible in creative dance education, pedagogical documentation provided a means for "taking the individual out of anonymity and [making] visible and legitimate their theories about learning and life" (Rinaldi, 2001b, p. 81). In this research study, I also wondered if it is possible that pedagogical documentation could take creative dance out of anonymity.

The Reggio educators emphasized that pedagogical documentation could make visible the theories of children but also develop their own interpretive theories as pedagogues. However, these are *provisional* theories that are constantly re-worked and re-visited by the students and teachers themselves and by those who read and interact with the documentation. Dahlberg et al. (1999) recognized that pedagogical documentation does not offer a definitive reality but, instead, a social construction of the events, that is, the documenter cannot be separated from the documentation because what they have documented is "selective, partial and contextual" (p. 147). The Reggio educators viewed pedagogical documentation as a process of "reciprocal learning," because "traces" of the children's learning as well as teachers' own professional learning and growth could be shared with the various stakeholders in education, including the parents and public (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121).

As Rinaldi (2001c) reminded us, documentation is *visible traces* of learning and is not only concerned with the learning that happened in a particular moment, but also

the possible learning that will continue to happen as a result of that documented moment (p. 150). This implied a constant moving or shifting of perspectives and theories about an event in the past that interacts with the present and is affected by it. Rinaldi (2001c) believed, “what we actually have to document (and therefore bring into existence) was the ‘emotionally moving’ sense of the search for the meaning of life that children and adults undertake together” (p. 150). Taguchi (2010) believed we choose pedagogical documentation as a methodology to intentionally *complicate* “what we know about our practices, to put ourselves in motion to be in the process of change and invention, not knowing the end state” (p. 91).

### **Negotiating entry**

#### **Approaching the teachers**

In attempting to make the learning visible in creative dance education in elementary schools, I required teachers who were experts in this field. I drew on my understanding and experiences in the dance education community to find these teachers. From my experiences as a consultant on a webcast project for the Ministry of Education, I had a list of teachers from various school boards who had various levels of teaching experience. From this list, I approached four teachers from four different school boards and grades. From another experience with the beginning stages of a mentoring project (which never materialized) at York University, I found a fifth teacher and approached her. I approached each teacher with an initial email outlining my research project (focus and methodology) to determine if they would be interested in becoming a participant in

my research project. I followed up their questions or concerns with a phone conversation or personal meeting.

I required teachers with a thorough understanding of the dance strand of the Arts document. I required teachers who had experience teaching creative dance in elementary school settings and who were currently doing so (or had access to a class of students). I was also hoping to find teachers who had some interest in dance education research, creativity research, or pedagogical documentation as a form of research. If I was asking teachers to donate their valuable time, I wanted them to be genuinely interested in the research. I was looking for teachers who were spread across various grades of the elementary panel, with at least two sites within early childhood (a requirement for my graduate diploma in early childhood education). I was hoping to find teachers at various locations around the province and was also hoping to find teachers with various years of experience as teachers, but with a minimum of five years.

In the end, one of the five teachers suddenly received a new position as an instructional leader and was unable to participate in the research study. Another of the teachers (who was also six months pregnant) suddenly switched grade levels, mid-term, from grade three to grade five because of reorganization in her school. I tried to find an alternative participant, because I was concerned about the stress of her being pregnant and teaching a new grade. However, she insisted that she wanted to be involved and so we re-scheduled her participation for later in the term. In one case, the teacher was on maternity leave and graciously volunteered to come back into the school to teach a creative dance class, because she was genuinely interested in the learning that happens



in these situations. Another teacher arranged to teach the grade-three class creative dance in exchange for the grade three teacher teaching visual arts lessons to her kindergarten students.

After each of the teachers had agreed to participate, I sent a letter (hard copy) to each of their principals of their schools outlining the project and asking for the principal's consent to include each teacher and her particular class. Each teacher also approached her principal to ask permission to be involved in this research project, before I approached the principal. In the case of one participant, who was an itinerant dance teacher on a maternity leave, she arranged with the principal to go into a kindergarten classroom in one of her regular schools. In one school, a personal meeting was arranged between the teacher, the principal, and myself in order to discuss the project and any concerns.

### **Ethics processes**

The relationship between researcher and participants begins with a consideration of the ethics of the research experience. In terms of ethics, I was considering informed participant consent (from teachers and parents/caregivers of all children involved), protecting participants from harm, constant debriefing and monitoring of the participants' experiences, and the right to withdraw from the research study at any time. A full explanation of the research process was provided to the participants prior to their participation. Teachers, parents, and students were informed that there were no perceived risks to participating in this research and that they would benefit from reflecting on and re-visiting their own learning and, for teachers, that of their students.

**Criminal reference check**

I followed the code of conduct for research in each of the four school boards including criminal reference checking procedures. Since the research was to be conducted with school-age students, I was required to obtain a Vulnerable Persons Screening as well as a Criminal Reference Check for each of the four school boards before entering the field research sites. This process took four months.

**Consent letters**

Permission from all parties was sought in the following manner:

(See Appendix A for sample letters.)

- Permission was gained from the Ethics Review committee of each of the four school boards through their external review process.
- Each dance teacher received an introductory letter/email outlining the goals of the research and the time commitment. This was followed-up by a personal meeting or phone call to discuss the project or invite participation. They were each asked to sign an informed consent form (including the two teachers, i.e., kindergarten and grade three, who were participant/observers) if they agreed to volunteer. (An example of the introductory letter and consent form is included in Appendix A.)
- An introductory letter was sent to the principal of each school outlining the goals of the research, the time commitment of both the teacher and her students, and the potential benefits of this research to the education

community. Permission was obtained from them either by phone call, email, or a personal meeting.

- In each site, all student participants took home a letter that contained an information sheet and an informed consent form. On the first day of research, each student was asked to give her/his personal verbal assent (See script in Appendix A) to participate in this research and they (those who had consent to be photographed) had their picture taken as part of that process so I could familiarize myself with their names.

In the informed consent letters, I asked for separate permission: to use participants' words from our conversations, written reflections, and other sample work, and to take photos and video of participants at work during this project. I also asked separately for permission to use this data in four ways: for research purposes only (i.e., the writing of my dissertation); shared at the Faculty of Education; shared with other interested adults in the community; and included in conference presentations, journal articles, books, or book chapters. It was made clear to the participants that our conversations would be audio-taped and transcribed, so that we could recall what we had said in order to revisit our theories. It was also explained that these materials—bits of conversations, samples of written work, photo images—would be developed into documentation panels (see samples in the appendix) to be shared with participants and with other teachers, at the Faculty of Education, and with other interested adults in the education community.

### **Untraceability**

Since the methodology and the presentation of data involved videotape and still images, as well as some attributed comments on documentation panels, research participants were asked to give written informed consent to use their first names in all of the above. For those participants who did not wish to be attributed and preferred to remain anonymous, pseudonyms were created. The participants either provided their own pseudonyms, or the researcher created one for them. A list of these pseudonyms was kept in a separate binder from my field notes and transcriptions. In all cases, the research aimed for *untraceability*, in that the names of schools and school boards were not used and only the first name of participants who agreed to be attributed was used. The nature of this type of research (pedagogical documentation) made it difficult to ensure complete confidentiality. The parents of ten children requested that the images of their child not be used in either photos or video. Other parents requested that their child's data be used only for research purposes and not shared with various interested parties or in publications. These requests have been honoured throughout the investigation.

As documentation panels were produced in each setting throughout the research, teachers and students had the opportunity to interact with the panels and to be a part of individual, small group, or whole class discussions. Participants, therefore, gained some understanding of the process of Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation and how this form of documentation could help to share the learning process with other stakeholders in education. It was explained to the participants that the data (words,

images, samples of work) were to be held in the public space of the classroom and the university and would not be confidential, or locked away (although the raw data would be stored on an external hard drive for two years) but rather shared within the educational community. All participants and their parents/caregivers were given a chance to view the final documentation panels prior to the exhibition going public. The ethics for this study were enacted through a series of human participants' research protocols as outlined by York University's Ethics Review Board and the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Ethics guidelines.

### **Participants**

#### **Context**

This research was conducted in four elementary school classrooms, within large urban settings, from four different school boards in the province of Ontario. The research took place during the regular school day in creative dance education classes (in regular classrooms, portables, gymnasiums, and a dance studio) as well as with teachers outside of the regular school day (interviews and reflection time). I met with each teacher and her class at least four times for forty-five minutes to an hour (it varied depending on the timetable) for the creative dance class and an hour to an hour-and-a-half for the interview/reflection.

Participants included four generalist elementary school teachers (who are also creative dance specialists) and their students (14 kindergarten, 19 grade three, 25 grade five, and 27 grade six students). Only one student was denied consent to participate in any form. The specific teachers chosen for this study included one teacher with her own

class, one teacher who teaches dance classes on rotary, one teacher who is an itinerant dance teacher in many schools, and one teacher who was conducting a trade-off workshop in creative dance for her colleague's students in exchange for workshops in visual arts for her own students. This meant that two teachers were working with students with whom they were not familiar. This factor was weighed against their expertise as creative dance teachers and deemed less important. In order to unearth the learning in the art form of creative dance, it was important that I was able to find sites where this was the form of learning being observed, what some researchers have called *theoretical representativeness* (Chappell, 2006). In the following section, I will discuss each teacher participant separately in the order in which the research project was undertaken.

#### **Emily (kindergarten)**

Emily is an itinerant dance teacher travelling between schools in a school board in northern Ontario that includes both urban and rural settings. She is currently on maternity leave but agreed to come in for a week and teach in one of her regular kindergarten (junior and senior) settings, where she is familiar with the students. This setting is a Reggio-inspired early learning program in which the classroom teacher is in the process of learning to use pedagogical documentation. The students were more familiar with the process of documentation in this setting. All of the students in this setting were given consent to participate in this research.

Emily is in her fifth year of teaching for this board and began as a regular classroom teacher. Prior to teaching for this board, she taught junior and senior

kindergarten for two years at a private school in an International Baccalaureate Program. In her current board, the itinerant dance position was created for her, when the need for dance teachers became apparent with the 2009 Arts document. As this is a half-time position, she sometimes has her own classroom as well or teaches drama, physical education, or visual arts. She also still teaches several classes a week in a studio setting, both ballet for teenagers, and creative dance for young children. Teaching the creative dance class resulted from her looking for, but being unable to find, a creative dance class for her own three-year-old son. Emily spent many years training in a variety of dance styles including modern, jazz, and ballet. She attended summer master classes with professional dancers from all across Canada and the United States, and learned pieces from the repertoire of many renowned dance artists including José Limón, David Earle, Antony Tudor, and Christopher House. She attended several different universities, including the prestigious Bennington College, in order to further her dance training.

Emily admitted that she came to dance teaching by accident. She was on the supply teacher list (on a letter of permission) and was hired to teach “really challenging kids at a high school,” where she got “bitten by the teaching bug.” She earned her Bachelor of Education and began teaching eight years ago. When she was first hired to the board, she became the dance and drama contact person at her school and she began to conduct workshops for other teachers, a practice which she continues today. She has recently finished her Masters degree with a focus on creative dance experiences for children in early childhood settings.

**Brooke (grade five)**

The next setting was Brooke's grade five class. As previously mentioned, Brooke was six months pregnant and had been moved to this class as a result of re-organization, earlier in the fall. Her classroom was a portable, and the students stacked the desks to one side when they did creative dance classes. There was a small group of students in Brooke's class who were not allowed to be photographed or videotaped. For this reason, the portable was sectioned off, and an area was designated for these students with the video camera aimed in the opposite direction.

Brooke trained and performed for many years as a highland dancer. Her mother had been a highland dancer and she followed in her footsteps. She also studied jazz, ballet, and modern dance. She recognized that her real passion was highland dancing, but it was looked down upon by other dancers who said, "That's not real dancing, it's cultural dancing." In high school she became more involved with theatre and gave up dancing. She studied theatre in university and was accepted into the Faculty of Education where she received her Intermediate Senior qualifications. She began teaching eight years ago in a regional arts program, but quickly realized that her dance and theatre training had not prepared her for dance and drama education. She took additional qualification (AQ) courses in dance and drama, and it "shifted her thinking radically." She recognized that the information she received in the AQ courses helped her to change her entire program and also made her a happier teacher. She has taught intermediate (grade 6-8) drama and dance on rotary; this is her first year with her own class and teaching grade five. She has continued to build on the foundation from her AQ courses



and has worked for the Ministry of Education writing dance curriculum, advocating for the inclusion of the creative process and “taking the word technique out of the elementary dance curriculum.” She is also heavily involved with the provincial subject association for dance.

**Eva (grade six)**

Eva teaches dance in a specialized arts program in a junior school in south western Ontario. She teaches in a specialized dance studio, complete with wooden floors and mirrors. Her students have three fifty-minute dance classes a week. A small group of girls in Eva’s class study dance in private studios outside of school.

Eva is the most experienced teacher of the four. She has taught at her current school for just over twenty years and presently teaches the grade six, seven, and eight dance classes. She is a graduate of a degree dance program. After graduating from university, she taught ballet and creative dance at a private dance studio for four years. At this time, she started developing a program for teaching creative dance based on action words (which she expanded from the work of Joyce Boorman), and has since created a number of resources (in English and French) for teachers. She has been writing curriculum and conducting workshops in creative dance for her board for the past fifteen years. She is a member of the National Dance Educators Organization in the United States<sup>20</sup> and has presented at and participated in a number of their conference events i.e., workshops and master classes. She has also written curriculum and taught workshops for the provincial dance subject association. Eva is an important leader in the field of dance

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<sup>20</sup> Canada does not have a national association that includes dance educators who teach in public schools.

education in schools and has sought to build bridges between the studio dance system and the school system. She has co-founded an organization in her city to bring together studio dance teachers and in-school dance educators. She runs an annual showcase of local dance education programs in honour of one young student. Proceeds from the showcase go towards funding scholarships for students studying dance at the post-secondary level.

**Alorani (grade three)**

Alorani is a kindergarten teacher in an inner city urban setting. Because of her prior experience as a creative dance teacher, she often conducts workshops in her school for other teachers and their students. As previously discussed, she arranged for this research study to provide a workshop for her colleague's grade three class in exchange for visual arts workshops for her kindergarten students. This was a form of professional development exchange arranged between the two teachers. The grade three classroom was an extra large classroom in a renovated section of this old school. As there was a small group of students who could not be videotaped or photographed, the classroom was sectioned off so that these students were working in one area of the classroom outside the frame of the video camera.

This is Alorani's tenth year of teaching, and, in that time, she has taught at four different downtown schools (all primary grades). Her first teaching assignment with the board was in a downtown alternative school. Alorani came to dance as a competitive rhythmic gymnast (balls, hoops, rope). She enjoyed the physicality of gymnastics but not the competition. She saw a performance by a children's modern dance company and was

inspired to audition. She auditioned, but had no previous dance training, and so she was asked to take a year of ballet classes before she was able to join the company. She admitted that ballet was not her favourite style of dance, and she rebelled against the ballet stereotypes, cutting her hair short and putting cover-up on her lips. She had to do the Royal Academy of Dance exams, and she admitted that the *rigour* was useful but she did not enjoy wearing pointe shoes. She spent five years (13 to 18) dancing with the children's dance company as a teenager and began assistant teaching while she was a company member. She also spent a number of years teaching outdoor education (paddling trips in the bush) and soccer.

She auditioned for a post-secondary modern dance training school and was accepted but turned it down to go to university. At university, where she studied medical anthropology and international development, she danced with an on-campus contemporary dance ensemble, which included dancers from many different disciplines (hip hop, jazz, tap). While dancing with this company for four years, she had the opportunity to expand her repertoire to include jazz, ballet, and musical theatre. It was in this dance company that she started to choreograph in modern dance with non-modern trained dancers. She did her Bachelor of Education in a specialized equity and urban diversity program. When she graduated from university, she started a site-specific dance collective with a couple of friends. Their company performed in dance fringe festivals in parks and in large warehouse spaces. She continues to take evening dance classes in a variety of styles of dance. She has also worked with the provincial subject association,

writing curriculum, and has conducted workshops for generalist elementary teachers, both at her schools and for the board.

### **Researched and researcher**

My role as a researcher in this study was to generate the data and also to interpret the actions and dialogue of the participants. My role as an interpreter was informed by my experiences with the creative process as a professional dancer, director, and choreographer. I also draw on over twenty years of teaching experiences in elementary education and, more specifically, fifteen years as a dance education specialist (Artist in Education and private arts consultant) in over one hundred schools. I have spent many years interacting with and observing children create dances, and it is this perspective that I bring to my observations of these four expert creative dance teachers and their students.

I have been working with Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation for the past two years and had the pleasure of attending a study tour to Reggio Emilia (April 2011) to witness their pedagogical documentation practices first hand. As an advocate for creative dance and pedagogical documentation, I believe in the transformational powers of both. At the same time, I remained open and discovered evidence of learning that was quite unexpected—private thoughts emerging in public as a result of the documentation practices.

It was important to attempt to place myself in the role of learner in addition to researcher at each of the sites, leaving my own personal preconceptions outside of the classroom. By taking up this dual role, I was in a position to view these experiences in creative dance education through the perspectives of these teachers and their students.

As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997) advise, I was there listening not *to* a voice, but *for* a voice, for the narrative that could be captured in the exact words and the nuances of the actions and body language of the participants (p. 99). For this reason, it was important for me to initially keep my voice as silent as possible and become a witness alongside the proceedings. There were also moments, later in the process, of constructing a narrative, in which I realized that I needed to participate more fully in order to uncover possible hidden perspectives. At these moments, as I shared some of my developing theories with the participants, I invited them to become co-interpreters. This type of an approach was most useful when we were looking at documentation panels and revisiting moments of learning. At all points in the process, I strove to make sure that my voice did not overwhelm the voices of the participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p. 105).

As much as I am an advocate for creative dance education in schools and believe it to be a transformational experience for many children, I also realize that dance is not necessarily a positive experience for all students. For some children, dance is an uncomfortable and unsettling experience—like math for some children, language arts for others. As documenters, “we have the capacity to highlight or silence” the voice of particular children (Cheeseman & Robinson, 2006, p. 197). It was important for me not to silence the voice of children who found creative dance a *difficult* subject area by relying solely on the voices of students for whom it was a transformational experience. Coming to terms with the incongruities in data on a daily basis in the field, I found

myself enacting what Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis term “a dance of vigilance and improvisation” (p. 43).

It must also be noted that my presence in these sites did have an effect on the behaviour and actions of the participants. It was almost impossible to “limit the impact of the researcher” (Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006, p. 153). With each cycle of interviews with the expert teachers, as they reflected on their own and their students’ learning as well as their personal philosophies of teaching, there was a corresponding effect on their teaching practice. As they made certain reflective discoveries, I would see changes in their teaching style or a change in their awareness of certain students’ actions. I also noticed changes in the engagement and interest of the students in their experiences of learning with the presence of each new documentation panel. A few students, in particular, remarked that my presence (as a researcher) had “raised the level” of interest in learning in their classroom. Once students were shown video documentation, they were more aware of the video camera’s presence, and the really young children became fascinated with how the video camera worked. When the grade three children drew pictures in their journals, I appeared in almost every one, with my camera, at the back of



Figure 1: Kindergarten students Grace & McKayla investigate the video camera

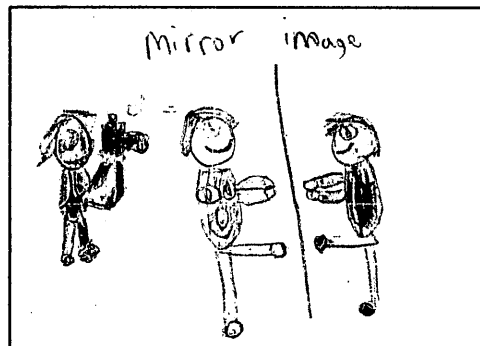


Figure 2: Grade 3 student Neveathan’s journal reflection

the  
room.

The methodology of pedagogical documentation influenced the type of learning and reflection that happened within each classroom, for all participants. In all situations, I strove to make sure participants were comfortable with my presence. “We want the actors to feel our attention, our deep engagement, and our challenge—and we want people to leave the encounters feeling safe and whole” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997, p. 141).

### **Data-generating processes**

Once negotiation of entry was complete, that is, once the four teachers agreed to participate and all consent forms for teachers and students were signed and collected, I began a cycle of visits to each classroom. I visited each teacher four or five times for approximately 45 minutes to one hour. I videotaped and took still photos of particular moments in the learning experience. Later the same day or the following day, I conducted an interview with the teacher that involved watching the video footage from the class and asking her to reflect on the learning she witnessed for herself and her students. After each visit, I wrote fieldnotes (an average of 8-10 pages per visit) that also included my own personal reflections on the research experience as well as my interpretations of particular moments. I transcribed the teacher interview, which took, on average, three times as long as the interview. For this reason, I attempted to keep our interview time focused and my video documentation centered on particular moments of learning. I reviewed both the field notes and the transcriptions and began to analyze and code the data in order to prepare for the next visit. When I returned to the class, I brought documentation panels that included pieces of data, for example, the words of the

teacher and students, as well as still photographs that included particular emerging themes that I wished to investigate further. On these visits, I observed and videotaped and took still photos of the class but also interviewed particular students in order to re-visit certain moments with them.

The series of four or five visits to each classroom allowed me ample time to generate data and witness an evolution in the creative process in each of the four classrooms. It also allowed me to gain confidence in my ability to document. My reflections on my very first day of research indicate some self-consciousness:

This is the first day of my research. I am feeling a mix of excitement and trepidation. It now feels so long ago that I proposed this research (8 months), and I wonder if I still have present all the thoughts and questions as I proposed them. I wonder if I have enough information to actually interpret the experiences and the teaching that I am about to witness. I want to honour the work and the lived experiences of the participants and yet how can I prevent myself from feeling overwhelmed by this mountain of data that I am about to collect? (Field Notes)

The 19 visits took three months to complete and generated approximately 13 hours of video footage, 15 hours of audio interviews, 400 pages of notes and transcripts, 800 still photos, and 250 student work samples and journal entries.

### **Still photos**

On average, I took 40 still photos per classroom visit. Teachers and their students were photographed using a Canon EOS Rebel T3i Digital SLR camera, which was hand held. These digital photographs were stored on a special hard drive containing all the data for this research project. The process of taking pictures evolved out of my immersion in each of the sites. I was guided by my definition of creative learning—I was looking for moments of shifts in thinking which might include knowledge, skills,



dispositions, or feelings, and which might make themselves known via verbal or physical responses. I drew on my twenty-odd years as a dance educator to trust that these moments would surface for me as a result of my ability to sense palpable moments of learning in creative dance classes. At first, I was taking photographs somewhat randomly, searching for moments of learning. As the process evolved, I gained a greater sense of when and where something was happening or about to happen. Some of these moments were serendipitous—I was there, actively listening at just the right moment to capture something. There were also many moments when I found myself behind the wrong instrument to capture a particular moment, e.g., a moment when I wished that I had been using the video camera instead of the still camera in order to capture words or a moving image and vice versa. Still camera shots were taken as I travelled through the class capturing moments of learning, trying to remain as unobtrusive as possible. Over time, the student participants habituated to the presence of the camera and eventually seemed to forget it was there. Still photos were invaluable for capturing moments of learning that could later be supplemented using descriptive field notes. I amassed 175 photos of Emily and the kindergarten students, 164 photos of Brooke and the grade five students, 205 photos of Eva and the grade six students, and 256 photos of Alorani and the grade three students. What was interesting in my last site was that, although the catalogue of still photo data was rich, I think I began to panic towards the end of the data generation process, thinking “I’d better get more data while I have the chance.” I had to remind myself to trust the data that I had collected.

## **Video**

I generated an average of 38 minutes of video per visit. Not all of this video was focused video as I often left the video camera running as I took still photos. Participants were videotaped using a Canon Vixia HV40 mini DV digital cassette recorder.

Videotaping was not without its problems. In my second visit to Emily and the kindergarten students, the cassette would not record (and I did not have a back-up cassette with me), and so I had to rely on still photos, audio recording, and in-depth note taking for that session. For all subsequent sessions, I ensured that I had a back-up cassette. The mini DV cassettes were stored in a locked filing cabinet, named and indexed with the initials of the teacher participants and dates of the visit. The video camera was set up on a tripod in a corner of the classroom that seemed the least obtrusive, and (in some cases) allowed a space behind or out of camera-sight lines for those participants who were not allowed to be video recorded or photographed. This arrangement still allowed the voices of these students to be recorded and the researcher kept notes on these 'disembodied voices' in order to attribute their comments. At times, the video camera also travelled from group to group in order to capture the work of a specific group of children or the teacher's interaction with a group. In these cases, the video camera was hand held. Also, in these cases, the researcher held the camera lower in order to be as unobtrusive as possible and not place added pressure on the participants who were being recorded. Similar to my experiences with the still photography, after the first visit, most students habituated to the video camera and forgot about it.

Video recording allowed me to capture specific moments of movement and also pedagogy within a creative dance class. As I watched the video documentation with the teachers, I realized that asking teachers to watch themselves teaching on video was an interesting provocation. Wien (1991), influenced by Yinger, suggests that video data allows a teacher to “step outside her lived experience and see it from a new perspective...It does not replicate what she lived. She both reacts to herself as a stranger (seeing herself from the outside), and is intimately connected to every move that ‘stranger’ makes” (pp. 60-61). Because these video-taped moments were pieces of data in addition to the observations and reflections that I had made, and because I was asking the teachers to reflect on these past experiences as a present observer providing even more data, there was a certain triangulation of data which occurred and that added validity to the data set.

### **Interviews with teachers**

The data set included close to thirteen hours of teacher interviews and two hours of student interviews, which amounted to almost 200 pages of interview transcripts. The video-recorded creative dance sessions were played back to participating teachers, and they were interviewed and invited to discuss their observations and perceptions of these classes in order to reveal their theories about the learning in creative dance education for both themselves and their students. Because I had let the video camera run the whole class, and because the teacher often had only a limited time for interviewing (usually less than an hour), we sometimes fast-forwarded over sections of the videotape where the participants were out of frame or it was unclear what was happening. There were

also occasions in these interviews where we reflected on the graphic work and written reflections of students, especially the work that appeared on the documentation panels. The researcher asked questions about specific moments on the videotape or in the work samples, but, for the most part, the shared discussion was driven by the teacher's observation and perceptions of what she was seeing on the video. The interviews with teachers (and students) were audiotaped using an Olympus WS-600S Digital Voice Recorder. I held the recorder for student interviews and asked the teachers to hold it for their interviews, so that they could turn it off and on when they might want to respond to something we viewed on the video, pausing the video while we discussed a particular moment of learning. My intention was to be *listening attentively* to these teachers, allowing them to express their ideas and observations without interference from my own ideas.

Bannon (2004) offered some insight for interviews in which "the primary aim is to get participants to express their thoughts during the process of engagement with a task" (p. 31). She adapted a method from Perkins (1981) that I, in turn, adapted for participant interviews in this study. This method offers strategies of process to the participants when being interviewed:

- Stop the video whenever you want. I may also stop the video at times.
- Say whatever comes to your mind. Don't hold back any ideas, guesses, feelings, or theories.
- Speak as *telegraphically* as you want, that is, don't worry about complete sentences.
- Don't over explain, analyze, or justify your thoughts; just allow thoughts to come.

- Don't worry about past events but stick to the moments of learning you are currently witnessing on the video or are currently having as you revisit these learning situations. (Perkins qtd in Bannon, 2004, p. 31)

Although I followed this format for the interviews, there were occasions, especially in the first interview in each site, where the teacher began to deviate from the focus of the research, for example, themes of advocacy for dance education, frustration over time tabling, or lack of appreciation for the arts. In these cases, I was required to bring us back to the research questions and focus the interview.

The purpose of these interviews was to reflect on the embodied teaching and learning embedded in the creative dance classes. As Bannon (2004) argues, "Unraveling the complexity of these experiences may be better done through retrospective reporting" (p. 32) or what the Reggio educators call *revisiting*. The teacher and I, as collaborators, focused on the "stuff of understanding i.e. ideas, theories, hypotheses, feelings, experiments, deductions, notions of cause and effect, imagination, intuitions, performances and the relationship of experience, skill, knowledge, and insight—cognitive processes involved in coming to know something" (Seidel, 2001, p. 307).

In the teacher interviews (while watching the videos), there was a focus on the teachers' observation of the students' learning but also on their own teaching and learning. In Reggio schools, the focus of documentation is usually on the children's learning, but there are occasions when the focus shifts to the teachers' learning. These instances provide an "opportunity for each teacher to know herself better, to appreciate her own positive traits, and to identify those competencies that need to be developed or strengthened" (Rubizzi, 2001, p. 101). In these contexts, as previously discussed, I was a

researcher but also a collaborator in the meaning-making process, inviting the participants to collaborate with me in sharing their perceptions and making interpretations of the learning involved in creative dance education. It was my hope that watching themselves teach would provoke them to reflect on their teaching in each situation.

Moments from the video recordings, still images of the learning experiences, and written reflections were placed on documentation panels for revisiting the learning experiences with the participants. This allowed for what some researchers have called *asking back* (Oakley, 1981) or *talking back* (Schon, 1983). In each case, the documentation panels provided a starting point or “prompting text” (Vallance, 1989) for the next phase of the research. They provided a *recent memory* of our most current theories (both teachers and students) about learning in creative dance. As Rubizzi (2001) offered, with this approach, the teacher “gets used to proceeding by searching for meaning” (p. 101).

### **Interviews with students**

Throughout the 19 site visits, there were occasions when I interviewed students individually, in small groups, or as a whole class about particular moments of learning that I had witnessed and, perhaps, that had appeared on a documentation panel. For these interviews with students, I usually used a photo or a segment of video as a prompting text. When I showed four-year-old Jordyn the picture of himself smiling while he was leading the group and asked him what he was doing, he responded, “Turning around.” When I provoked him to look at his face in the picture and see what he saw, he

responded, "I like to turn around." In some cases, we reflected as a group on something that had been quoted on the documentation panel. For instance, the grade five students were really articulate in their responses to Tammy's idea that dance "represents your inner self and the actions your body can do." This comment provoked an entire discussion around dance and the self and what it feels like to dance.

### **Field notes**

I created word-processed field notes after each visit (on average 8-10 pages per visit) based on my hand-written fieldnotes taken on the fly, in the classroom setting. I created these more extensive notes in order to record the process as well as my experiences, emotions, and reflections on the experiences. As well, the creation of these notes included layered revisiting of them in order to account for myself in the process. I also transcribed relevant sections from the video recordings (on average 5-10 minutes in total per video, with time code references in minutes and seconds, in order to reference exact locations), that is, sections of dialogue from both the teacher and students, as well as significant moments of non-verbal communication or dancing that spoke directly to the emerging themes.

### **Data analysis and interpretation process**

Analysis was carried out inductively, in that I was listening for themes throughout the data-gathering process and allowing the emerging themes to influence and direct my data gathering. Like Chappell (2006), I was working at the level of micro-theory building, in that I was conducting research with a small group of specialist dance

teachers' understandings of the learning inherent in creative dance classes in specific elementary school settings.

I recognized this meaning-making process as an *iterative process* rather than a linear one (Leavy, 2009, p. 10). As Bannon (2004) argues, "The journey is complex, departing at times from any sense of linearity, but ultimately aiming towards the creation of a coherent document of the experience" (p. 26). Over the four or five visits, there were many cycles of data collection and analysis. This involved an "immersion in the data" (Chappell, 2007, p. 32). Meaning emerged through an ongoing process of coding, labeling themes, and identifying and classifying data into these themes (and subthemes), while constantly re-engaging and interrelating concepts, creating hypotheses, and theories about the learning involved in creative dance education. The Reggio educators recognize the process of pedagogical documentation is a spiral that weaves together observations, interpretations and the documentation (Rinaldi, 2001b, p. 84).

As the learning situations and data were analyzed and themes began to emerge, various forms of pedagogical documentation (panels and videos) mock-ups or storyboards were constructed. These materials were shared, and discussed with the participants, as well as with other educators engaged in the practice of pedagogical documentation. They included a series of visual images and text that attempted to begin to tell the learning story. Documentation panels are akin to a visual essay, which progress, not with a series of captions but via a meaningful synthesis of the material presented, what Vecchi has described as the construction of "the script of a film that will come later" (qtd. in Rubizzi, 2001, p. 103).



As themes emerged at each site, I began to sort through the data to look for patterns across the data, what Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997) call *repetitive refrains* (p. 193), to see if there were consistent themes appearing within and across the sites. These thematic patterns were then used to transform the themes into categories, and each category was given a working definition (a set of properties) against which further data could be classified.

I concentrated on repeated readings of the data in order to listen for different voices each time—the voice of the student, the voice of the teacher, and my own voice. This last included what appeared in my research field notes and observations and how my views converged or diverged from those of the participants at particular moments in the data. I also listened for those moments when a voice diverged from the emergent themes—what Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis (1997) refer to as *anomalies*: “Unlike quantitative researchers who isolate the outliers, the qualitative researcher makes use of the anomalies, learning important lessons by looking outside the trend” (p. 192).

As Chappell (2007) reiterates, this study has not attempted to “consider every potential aspect of the interaction between people and process” (p. 31) within the domain of creative dance education in Ontario schools. It has been up to the researcher to make choices about the most salient themes and which learning stories represent these themes. Bannon (2004) argues that while she uses the voice of the participants in her written documents, “It is through her interpretation that the participants come to be

heard” (p. 28). In this present study, it will be through my interpretations that learning in creative dance education is made visible.

### **Data collections**

The storage retrieval system that I developed for the initial data management had three main components. I used a large binder to house one complete set of the chronological data, (fieldnotes, interview transcriptions, and hard copies of scanned images or work samples) as well as a list of emerging themes from each site. The binder was separated into four sections, one for each teacher participant. In this binder, I also included a set of pictures of each student group labeled with first names (pseudonyms for one group) and their level of consent to participate e.g. only words, only work samples, etc. From this complete set of data, I created separate data collections (one for each teacher participant) that combined data from the interviews with the teacher as well as students, the video transcriptions, photos, students’ written and/or graphic work. Because pedagogical documentation allows for the revisiting of particular moments of learning, it produced a layered effect in the data based on an initial event. It was important for me to gather all the layers that emerged from a particular moment to see the overall scope of the learning. It was this set of data collections that was later used for final coding purposes. The third component was a copy of this set of data collections that were partitioned and used for sorting games in order to determine which units of data seemed to belong together.

### **Starting coding and analysis**

In reviewing the fieldnotes and transcripts immediately after each visit, I began to label sections of data with properties such as empathy, tactile, praise, kinesthetic awareness, performing, body language, self-consciousness, class management, space (see the appendix for a complete list of these properties). I also highlighted portions of the transcripts that provided some evidence for these initial codes; in that way, I was able to keep the data set intact. This initial coding was a bit scattered in terms of the research questions but, eventually, became more focused as I began to recognize information that was beyond the scope of this study. For example, in the kindergarten classroom, there was some evidence of the effects of popular culture and the hypersexualization of the body in dance in popular media. Although this was a valid concern and raised important questions about the role of dance outside the classroom, it was not directly related to the learning occurring in a creative dance experience. Eventually, the codes being used sorted themselves into three types of coding categories related specifically to the research questions: learning for the student, learning for the teacher, and examples of how pedagogical documentation (as a research methodology) is specifically useful for animating these moments of learning. This last category was difficult to decipher because I was using pedagogical documentation as a research methodology; all the findings came about because of the method. I decided to try to separate out particular moments of learning that I believed might have only surfaced because of pedagogical documentation, that is, might not have emerged with a different form of research.

### **Creating data collections**

As previously stated, it was from the complete set of data that I began to bring together data collections for each teacher. These data collections brought together all the data about a particular moment of learning or its evolution. Because I was able to revisit a particular moment with a student or teacher, this data unit included the original text of the moment (captured on video) or a photo along with the original text, as well as the student's or teacher's reaction to that moment, my observations and interpretations of that moment, as well as the participants' reactions to my interpretations. This made the data set very rich, because it included the voice of the teacher, the student, and my own voice as well as photos and work samples. This also allowed for a *triangulation* of the data because I was able to "weave together the threads of data converging from a variety of sources" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p. 193).

It was from these data collections that I was able to compile collections of data units or bits, that is, "freestanding portions of data that make sense even when separated from their data gathering context" (Kirby et al., 2006, p. 225), for each of the sites. I did not include data that resulted from digressions on the part of the teacher or data that were beyond the scope of this particular research study, such as the state of education as a whole, the role of social media in the hypersexualization of or perceptions of dance. The information within each data unit was labeled with the initials of the participating teacher as well as the date in order to find the data in its original context. Each data unit was given a name that was usually derived from a *resonant metaphor*, i.e. "words or phrases that resonate with meaning and symbolism," or at least from the voice of the

participants, that is, “the language of the insiders” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, pp. 198-221), in an attempt to stay “close to the data” (Kirby et al., 2006). It was this set of data that I began to use to find codes, which developed into themes and eventually categories.

I began to test out themes by looking at one possible theme (one example of learning) and testing it against the entire set of data. I began the process with an assertion that evolved out of the kindergarten’s experiences with making shapes. I suggested that the students were learning that the shapes they were making with their bodies could be named. As I searched through the entire set of data looking for evidence of this theme, I also began looking for disconfirming evidence, evidence that contradicted the assertion. In this case, there were many instances when students were able to label and discuss a particular body shape in terms of its name, for example, a bent or twisted shape, a tunnel shape, a sad shape. However, there were equally as many instances of shapes that students could not name, because that was beyond the scope of their language usage. I had to give up on an attempt to try to convince myself (and the reader) that this assertion was valid and move on to other assertions. It was this systematic attempt at trying to develop mini-theories and searching the entire data set for evidence of the theory (as well as disconfirming evidence) that allowed me to develop more specific theories. Some initial theories that I had to give up on included: students were learning about the elements of dance (too general), and students were learning to name their world (too difficult to prove). One initial theory that stayed with the data

analysis was the notion that students already knew a lot about the elements of dance before they came to school.

I had developed a whole list of theories/themes that felt fairly solid and defensible. It was at this point that I tried to find a means to place these sets of themes into a framework. Through my literature review, I had become very familiar with Craft's structure for creative learning, used by Chappell (2006) to frame her research on creative learning in dance education. This framework separated the learning into two dimensions: people and processes. I attempted to fit my results into this existing framework, which was fairly easy to do but did not necessarily come directly out of my interpretation of the data.

I re-considered my approach and tried something suggested by my supervisor. I began taking the partitioned pieces of data from the data collections and sorted them into categories (without labeling the categories), in order to see which pieces of evidence seemed to belong together. In this way, I could see which pieces of data seemed to fit easily into categories, which seemed to belong to several categories, and which did not seem to fit into any categories. This allowed me to see how the themes shifted with the participants or age groups. It also forced me to make choices about the data based on intuition. For example, for three teachers there was an important focus on class management but one teacher didn't even mention it. She was also the teacher with the most experience.

From this process, I was able to see the common properties in each pile of data units and see which piles were too small and needed to be combined with others or were



After presenting this first set of panels, I interviewed individual kindergarten students and pairs of students using single photographs (or a small series of photographs), as the panels seemed to overwhelm them. It was using this process that enabled me to capture and delve deeper into the learning in particular moments for individual students and partnerships. These interviews allowed me to determine if the interpretations of particular moments of learning, made by the teacher and myself, were valid and in line with the students' own experiences of these moments.

For the grade five students, the first panel included their theories about definitions of creative dance and what they found challenging about it. The panel also included pictures from their bodystorming of shapes that showed inclusion and exclusion. As they entered the portable and saw the panels, they were at first more concerned if their words or pictures were on the panel. As we shared quotations from their journal entries, the grade five students applauded and cheered each other's ideas. I realized, that oftentimes, the students' written thoughts are not shared with anyone but the teacher. I also recognized that it made students aware that we, as adults, were interested in their thoughts and valued their contributions to this research. It was from this panel that a huge discussion evolved, which included the themes of learning to read and use body language, feeling safe in dance class (i.e. performing in front of your peers), and the affective realm of dance. At the end of this class, the students continued to reflect in their journals about these themes. This first panel generated a whole collection of data around themes that were further developed in their group discussion.



They continued to evolve their theories about the learning in dance throughout their journal entries.

The introduction of each new panel produced a new set of data in response to the words and images on the panel. With this process, layers began to develop in the documentation. Once I had interviewed students about a particular moment, the transcript (or at least a portion of the transcript) began to appear with the photograph. Each of these particular moments became evidence for a particular theme or sub-theme. The most salient pieces of evidence would be utilized in the final panels for my dissertation exhibit, in which I presented all the themes. The final panels for the exhibit each included several themes, and so only one or two pieces of evidence were used for each one. The panels went through a judicious editing process, so that only the exact required information was present on each panel.

Once the final panels were created I shared them with the four teachers and their students, and asked the teachers to review Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the dissertation to make sure they were comfortable with the findings and the way their voices had been captured. The following are excerpts from the feedback I received from each teacher.

Eva:

We, in the trenches of Dance Education, have been attempting for years to make people see the value of our work. Here, in your dissertation, you are making the learning visible. You are finally doing what we all wished could be done and I thank you for it.

If we, by including creative dance education in our school systems, can provide an environment for learning where students are engaged, mindful, empathetic, content and relaxed with focus (like beautiful Jennifer) then we have done them the greatest service for their, and our, present and future.

Alorani:

Being asked questions, as you did, deepened my thinking. This thinking and reflecting was then used to infuse my teaching for the following session. We expect this higher order thinking of our students, and we should equally expect it of ourselves.

As no doubt is your intention, your dissertation sparks so much thinking and feeling in me, and makes we want to dialogue and move all day on Monday with my students.

Brooke:

You know how much I value dance, but often things are moving so quickly and you're so in the moment that you don't always get a chance to realize how powerful some of these experiences are for the students, or how much of a transformation of thinking is happening.

Emily:

You have accomplished that most difficult of tasks - capturing the ephemerality of dance. It's a bit like putting fireflies in a jar. You have brought us into the somatic magic of creative dance as experienced through the eyes of children and teachers and has been able to make the learning explicit for people outside of dance who might have previously dismissed it. I'm delighted that I was able to be a small part of the process.

### **Limitations**

Pedagogical documentation as a methodology requires a considerable amount of time and presence in the learning context. As previously mentioned, there was a limited amount of interaction time between myself and the teachers and students in this research project. Although I was able to capture what I consider many significant moments of learning, because I was not present in their classrooms throughout the rest of their learning day, I was unable to capture random events that may have emerged as a result of the creative dance classes and the documentation process. It should also be noted that not all student subjects were comfortable with dancing or using their bodies to learn, and I would have liked to have investigated these students' experiences in more depth.

Since this research concerns examining the learning within a creative dance education context, and I have already mentioned the limited pool of teachers who embrace creative dance, I restricted my selection of participants to teachers who have an understanding of and experience in teaching creative dance, and all participants were recruited from a known pool of dance teachers with whom I have worked in some capacity in the past several years. In this sense, the participants were also limited to a selection of teachers genuinely interested in creative dance and my research questions in particular. In the findings and discussion chapter that follows, I have tried to include examples of disconfirming evidence of certain themes where possible.

Since this study is an attempt to explore the possibilities for pedagogical documentation as a methodology for making the learning visible in creative dance education, there was a vast range of potential themes that may have been uncovered. It was not possible to explore all of these uncovered themes in depth. But, instead, my analysis represents a *percolation* (Kirby et al.) of all the data that was gathered from these four sites. My data includes learning for the student and for the teacher.

### **The exhibition**

As part of my dissertation, I wished to present an exhibit of documentation panels of the findings from my research in order to share with the various stakeholders in education. This was part of an effort to determine how pedagogical documentation could help make the learning visible in creative dance. This exhibit was constructed as a touring exhibit of panels on banner stands that could easily be transported to various locations. Documentation panels were created to align with the themes as they emerged

from the research. The overall design of the exhibit was inspired by Taguchi's (2010) concepts of the movements created by pedagogical documentation. At the center of the exhibit was a circle of panels (created on double-sides banner stands 36" by 74"). This circle represented the circular movements created by pedagogical documentation, i.e. those movements that cause one to slow down and dwell on moments of learning and think deeply about them. Six double-sided panels created the circle (four in each half circle, standing back to back), and visitors had the opportunity to walk around and through the circle. This meant that viewers were provoked to dance their way through

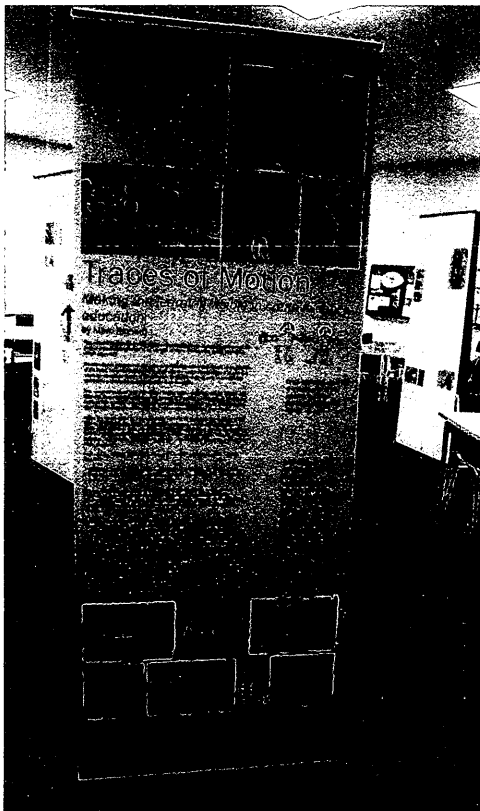


Figure 4: First panel from the exhibit

the exhibit. These panels contained the data that spoke to the learning of both the students and the teachers. Each panel contained one or two subthemes that pertained to the learning for the teacher and the students.

On one side of the exhibit, posted on the wall, were a row of eight panels (30" by 40") that represented the horizontal movements, the fast movements that inspire imaginative thought.

These panels contained the data that specifically emerged as a result of the methodology of pedagogical documentation. Along with the

panels, there was a projection on one wall of the

gallery allowing for moving images of children's embodied learning in creative dance.

Because these three entities were separate, they could also be used separately for separate purposes. At times, I could use only the circle of banner stands if I were presenting to parents. I could also use only the panels on pedagogical documentation if I were presenting a workshop to teachers on pedagogical documentation.

This last chapter has outlined the methodology for this project and my interpretation of pedagogical documentation. In the next chapter I will present the overall findings of this research project.

### **Chapter Five: Findings (Student learning)**

The purpose of this dissertation was to research whether or not pedagogical documentation could make the learning visible in creative dance education for both teachers and their students. In making the learning visible, I also hope to reposition creative dance as an essential entity in education. Through these findings and discussion chapters (Chapters 5-7), I plan to make the case that pedagogical documentation is indeed an extremely effective research method for uncovering the learning in creative dance. In the context of this study, I have defined learning by adapting Craft et al.'s (2006) definition of creative learning: imaginative events evidenced by new processes of thinking and judged by creative dance teachers to be valuable in the context of a creative dance class. As suggested by Katz and Chard (2000), these new processes of thinking might manifest themselves in changes in knowledge, skills, dispositions, or feelings (pp. 21-47). In attempting to make the learning visible, I have examined the practices of four creative dance teacher specialists (who are also generalist teachers) and the experiences of their students using pedagogical documentation as a qualitative research methodology.

The findings and discussion in the next three chapters focus on the overall themes clustered around the research questions as outlined earlier. The themes are presented such that one builds upon the other. It is important to note that these themes do not reflect an attempt to include every possible instance of learning embedded in these contexts but, instead, they represent the most salient themes that emerged from the data. Learning for the student is considered separately from learning for the teacher to give clarity to the discussion. These two types of learning are also separated from learning

made visible specifically by the methodology of pedagogical documentation. In reality, all three of these learning contexts overlap and are deeply interconnected.

Based on the research questions, the main thematic categories are outlined below.

What is the range of learning that happens within a creative dance education experience?

The students are learning:

- an awareness of their dancing self
- intersubjectivity
- a collaborative creative process
- dance as a language of learning

The teachers are learning:

- their role in creative dance education
- to witness thinking bodies

How can the qualitative research method of pedagogical documentation allow teachers and students to see the learning in creative dance education?

Pedagogical documentation provokes the students and teachers to:

- revisit and reflect
- confront issues

The following three chapters present the findings under each of these major themes.

Discussion of the findings, in relation to the literature, is presented at the end of each chapter.

### **What are the students learning in creative dance education?**

In creative dance classes, the students are learning to create dances themselves, but so much more as well. They are learning to rediscover themselves as dancers, to connect and interact with others, to collaborate, and to use dance as a language for learning across the curriculum.

#### **An awareness of the dancing self**

Borrowed from Press (2002), the term “dancing self” represents the reconnection of students to their original movement instincts that began in infancy. It became apparent, as the older students discussed their experiences with creative dance, that they remembered dancing when they were very young but had lost some of their freedom to move as they grew older. If we consider movement one of their early languages of learning (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011) and their bodies their original selves, then a reconnection to their own movement “voices” represents a reconnection to their former dancing self. Many students started these creative dance classes with a belief that dancing was something that people were trained to do and, if one didn’t study dancing after school, one was not really a *dancer*. In the process of these creative dance classes, I witnessed many of these students change their opinion. There was one grade five student who claimed that dancing released her “inner self” and another who claimed to discover a part of herself “she didn’t know she had.” It should be noted that at least three of the classes of students in this study (kindergarten, grade three, and grade five) had little previous experience with creative dance in school, but it seemed to take very little time (often one or two classes) for them to rediscover themselves as dancers. Once students



were given permission to move, their tacit knowledge of dance seemed to emerge quickly. This section outlines the students' re-discovery of a movement voice that lay dormant inside them. It also demonstrates the multi-sensory nature of dance as students begin to sense with their bodies and feel emotions as a result of their experiences.

**to re-discover their tacit knowledge of the elements of dance.** This theme was found across all four sites and included 27 units of data. This theme refers to the rich knowledge about the elements of dance (body, space, energy, relationship, and time) that students hold within themselves without awareness. As Polanyi (1966) notes, "We know more than we can tell" (p. 4). The language of the body is one of the first languages that children experience, but this language becomes suppressed in education. I use the term dance language, like Hanna (1999), to represent dance as a mode of perceiving the world and through which we can learn and communicate. The notion of dance literacy will be addressed later in this chapter. The results showed that the language of the body can be rediscovered and further developed via creative dance education classes. Alorani said, "The elements of dance are fairly human...you have, without any adult showing you, a whole breadth of movement vocabulary that you didn't even know existed, because, day to day, the range of what you do with your body is a fraction of what could be done." At one point, the grade six students reflected on their formative creative movement experiences recognizing they knew a lot about dancing well before they came to school. "It's sort of like when we were kids...loads of us probably danced around the kitchen...that's when you're the most creative" (Bertha). However, even the kindergarten students seemed to experience some initial disconnect between their

original dancing selves and their current role as kindergarten students, as shown in the following example.

Emily initiated an experience with the four and five-year old kindergarten students in which they were making *shapes* (which falls under the dance element of body shapes). Emily asked, “What do we know about shapes?” The students at first relied on using their fingers and arms to make geometric shapes that they had learned in school.

Kassity: I can make a diamond.

Tristan: I can make a circle.

Aven: I can make a turtle.

Emily: Is a turtle a shape? (Aven nods yes.)

Emily was excited by Aven’s response, thinking it might lead the kindergarten students to thinking beyond the geometric definition of shape—beyond school-based knowledge. With a bit of prompting from Emily “Can you make shapes with another part of your body?” the students were instantly exploring a variety of whole-body shapes.



Figure 5: Kassity (kindergarten) doesn't have a name for this shape



Figure 6: Isabelle (kindergarten) calls this a tunnel shape

Emily described this moment as “giving them permission” to use the tools their bodies already knew but hadn’t yet been invited to use in school. The students were also opening up to the creative act, because they were becoming aware that in creative dance they were not just trying to re-create shapes that they already knew (circles, triangles, etc.) but were allowed to create *new* shapes—shapes that they did not yet have a name for (see Kassity above) and shapes perhaps that they had never consciously made with their body.

During the grade five students’ first experiences with bodystorming (bodystorming is a physical form of brainstorming), their teacher Brooke recognized that they were already discussing dance in terms of the elements without prompting and



Figures 7-9: Tammy (grade 5) bodystorming

becoming more aware of what they were capable of doing.

Tammy wrote in her journal that day:

We saw dance means more than twirling and spinning and moving to some beat, it represents your inner self and the actions your body can do.

Her comments and pictures were put on a documentation panel. When interviewed about what she meant by inner self she said, "You know that you can do more than you're doing already, so you just let it all out." Tammy was referring to her *tacit knowledge* about dance that she had discovered—her body could do things that she wasn't consciously aware of. This idea was later reiterated in an interview with three other grade five students

Jennifer: I learned that my body can do some things that you never really expected, and, if you just let it do stuff on its own, it just does things that you wouldn't expect.

Sebastien: I could run and do sports, but I never thought that I could do dance. I never thought about putting my body through all these shapes and all different levels and how I use my space.

Ahad: I thought there was a certain limit to the positions that you could go with your body, which there is, but while we were doing that [creative dance] I kind of raised the limit.

When asked about Tammy's theory, that dance represents your inner self, Ahad added, "It's dancing from your heart...like passion coming from your heart." Sebastien interpreted Tammy's theory as "dance what you're feeling, who you are...dance your way." These students seemed to recognize an important internal connection to dance.

Some data disconfirmed this theme, as a few grade five students wrote in their journals that dance felt unnatural. Jennifer originally wrote, "We go against our natural instincts," and Sydney wrote, "Dance is really hard. I think it is confusing because we don't have enough experience." Even Tammy remained somewhat skeptical: "We had to make an emotion not using our faces, only our body...[which] I thought was ironic because our face is attached to our heads." These comments do not necessarily mean that

dance was not part of their tacit knowledge. When interviewed about her previous dance experiences, Jennifer admitted that she used to dance around as a child “but it didn’t really mean anything.” Sydney’s comment about lack of experience is important—students recognized that they had not been given the time to re-discover their knowledge of the elements of dance. For these grade five students, who had more experiences with drama than dance, it required several classes to overcome misgivings about using their body to express their ideas without words or “acting it out.”

Brooke explained that one of the issues with creative dance is the concept of creativity itself. Within a classroom setting, “Students are programmed even at this young age that there is a right or wrong answer.” Some of the grade five students mentioned in their journals that they were afraid of getting the wrong answer. Brooke also mentioned that because of the confinements of desk and chairs in school, “They’re educated out of wanting to move.” In all four research settings, it was apparent that sufficient time was a necessary component for the release of this tacit knowledge.

**to see themselves as a dancer and develop their personal movement voice.** For many students, creative dance offered a chance to develop what the arts curriculum calls a *personal voice* in dance (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5). It also provided those students who have trained in dance with a new way of experiencing the artform. Dance education is very different than dance training. In creative dance, students are encouraged to develop new ways of expressing themselves using their bodies, rather than relying on dance steps from their previous dance training. One grade six student (Sara), who takes dance outside of school, commented, “You’re learning how to move

your body in different ways, you're doing things with everyday movement, and it really changes how you dance." I saw this theme across the four sites, and it was included in 34 units of data. Sometimes, being able to see themselves as a dancer was connected to gender, as dance in our North American society is still very gendered, i.e. a feminized art form (Risner, 2009). There were very few boys in this research project who took dance classes outside of school (those that did trained mostly in cultural dances, e.g. Tamil dance). Interestingly, it was often the boys who didn't see themselves as dancers who seemed to excel in discovering a personal movement voice in creative dance classes. As Alorani said, "The boys are standing out for me as movers."

In the grade five class, a transformation took place for some students who had no previous dance experience. This data was revealed in our dialogues, written personal reflections, and also in their physical work. Three of the students developed more trust in their personal voice as dancers. These three students worked together in a flocking group (a form of dance improvisation where there is one leader and several followers) and were able to fully engage in the experience and feel comfortable performing in front of their peers. I interviewed these three students on our last day together:

Marc: Is there something you felt you learned about yourself when you were doing this creative dance?

Ahad: I mean at first I thought (for me) it was all about sports and all about running and stuff, and I never realized I had a thing for creative dance.

Sebastien: Yeah, I learned that I could actually move...like before I was like "I can't dance, I can't dance" but then I started moving and doing all that stuff we were doing in class.

Jennifer: For me, I sort of felt like I unlocked a piece of myself that I didn't know that I had. I used to always hate dancing because I never really knew what to do; I would just follow what my dad did, and my dad is a lot better than I am.



Figures 10-12: Jennifer as the leader in flocking

Observing Jennifer in her flocking experience, I noted, “This is a very different Jennifer than the one we saw at the beginning of the week, who seemed to think that dance was not natural. The look on her face is one of contentment and relaxation combined with complete focus.” All three students began this unit in dance not seeing themselves as dancers, but realized that they actually had a personal movement voice with which they could create. They transformed into thinking of themselves as dancers through the experience.

Rinaldo, a very quiet and shy grade six boy who had no previous dance training, came to life through dance. As Eva explained, “He has just progressed so much in wanting to express himself through movement. He is able to get what he feels inside to be on the outside.” Eva also believed that, because he has had no previous experience, “nothing to pull from,” he was able to create beautifully with his body. Eva said, “He is able to use his body like a paint brush.” Rinaldo’s classmates (especially other boys) saw

him as someone who could do interesting things with his body. Rinaldo's friend Albert drew the picture below of Rinaldo's stall.

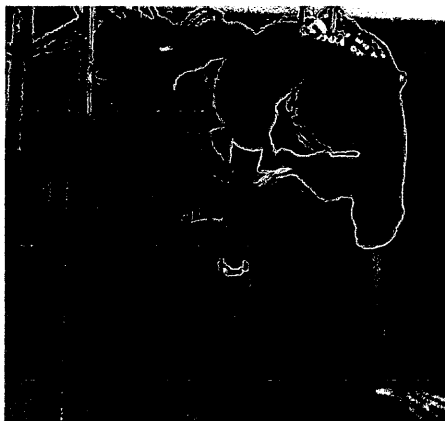


Figure 13: Rinaldo's stall

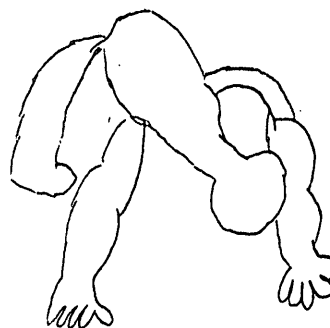


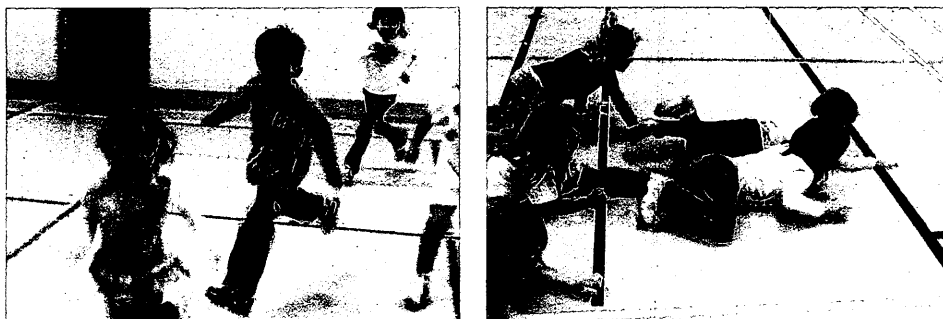
Figure 14: Albert's drawing of Rinaldo's stall

In this picture, Rinaldo explained to me, he was trying to find an earth shape for the beginning of his poetry—"something that is uneven and low down." He was able to do a hip-hop step called a *stall* in which his body could freeze, almost suspended in the air but low to the ground. The two girls in his group encouraged him to do a stall for this initial shape, but he resisted this notion because he was trying to find a way to change it, to make it unique, to make it his own, different than a regular stall. It was interesting that, although Rinaldo truly appeared to be developing a personal voice, he commented in his reflections that he was good "because other members in my group take dance." Interestingly, Rinaldo didn't necessarily consider himself as good a dancer as the girls in his group. One of Rinaldo's group members, Bertha, commented that Rinaldo "comes up with more ideas that aren't necessarily like the dance that we've taken, but they're good and it works and we feel good [doing them]." But Rinaldo didn't recognize his original contributions as being as valid as the recycled dance steps the girls offered. To



him, it was those students (all girls in this particular grade six class) who took dance outside of school who were the “real” dancers. Interestingly, on many days when I interviewed Eva over her lunch break in the dance studio, I noticed that it was boys who were coming into the studio for extra practice, to develop their dances and their personal voice.

**to sense their body in space.** This theme represents an unspoken truth in creative dance classes—the students were developing an external awareness of their body in space connected to an inner awareness of what their body was doing in connection to itself, other bodies, and objects, (i.e. a physical, or kinesthetic awareness). Very few students and teachers discussed it, but, as I worked through the images of students in creative dance classes, I recognized many examples of this theme (24 units of data). I became aware of this theme when Emily mentioned it in an interview. There was one day when the kindergarten students were sitting on the carpet, and Charlie hit himself in the eye and then in the ear, and Emily recognized that one of the things these students were doing in creative dance was “developing an awareness of their own physicality—where you begin and where you end.” With even more dance experiences, this sense of their body extended further as they became more aware of what their body looked like to others and how they could intentionally show certain shapes or emotions with their bodies that would be recognizable to others.



Figures 15 & 16: The kindergarten students explore space together

The kindergarten students loved to explore the open space of the gymnasium with their bodies. They would follow each other and try to fill the space. Although some students did not always watch where they were going and collisions occurred, they were learning to become aware of their own body in relationship to other bodies in space. They were also developing an inside awareness of what their body shapes looked like on the outside.

When Emily prompted the kindergarten students to make whole body shapes, Tristan explored making bridges, including one with his leg straight up in the air.



Figure 17 & 18: Tristan makes a bridge shape while McKayla and Jamie explore a downward dog shape

Tristan had a well-developed kinesthetic awareness—he knew what his body was capable of doing and where his body parts were in space. Behind Tristan, McKayla and Jamie were exploring a downward dog shape. When asked what the shape was called, McKayla responded, “A McKayla triangle.” She was aware that her whole body shape was triangular in nature.

On the first day, Alorani had the grade three students explore moving from various parts of their bodies, i.e. moving from their elbows, knees, chin, and back. The students giggled and laughed as they explored their bodies, sensing what it felt like to move in these new ways. They were also able to move around each other’s bodies safely.



Figures 19-22: The grade three students explore movement using various body parts.

In terms of connecting their inner awareness to their outer awareness, when Brooke asked the grade five students to find ways of expressing emotions with their whole bodies but with limited facial expression, many of them found it difficult at first

(as Tammy previously mentioned) but eventually found ways of feeling the emotion on the inside and discovering the way it could be expressed on the outside. They wrote about these experiences in their journals. Zariah wrote, “I used low levels. I wasn’t really symmetrical because I was showing how to be afraid.” Sarah wrote, “Happy was very open and relaxed, sad was small tight and unbalanced, surprised was very sharp and fast, and angry was rough, hard and loud.” Nethmi wrote about her shape for angry, “I was sort of leaning forward and my hands were in fists and ready to burst as if my hands were rockets.” These grade five students were learning to recognize and express a



Figure 23: Ahad bodystorming



Figure 24: Rinaldo and Perry explore body relationships in space

specific emotion through their bodies, and they could sense what their bodies were doing, and what they looked like on the outside. In his journal Ahad recognized, “It’s harder to show people how you’re feeling...without facial expression.” Brooke, in encouraging them not to use their faces, provoked them to become more aware of the expressive capabilities of their whole body and the elements of dance to express emotions.

Eva’s grade six class, by far the most experienced in creative dance, were experts at using their bodies to express ideas and emotions. They were very aware of what their bodies were doing in space and using body shapes, relationships between bodies in space, and action words to express their ideas.

**to reflect on affective experiences in dance.** As much as the students were learning to express feelings with their bodies, they were also learning that dance can elicit an emotional response in themselves and others. There were 31 units of data for this theme. This theme could be seen in many of the pictures of students when engaged in creative dance—they had huge smiles on their faces. Many students wrote about or spoke of a sense of relaxation or calm that came over them in creative dance classes. Some described a freedom or a deep connection. Some even used the word *flow* to describe these experiences that seemed to be self-motivating and personal. These experiences of high engagement seem to relate to Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) theory of flow. Emily described how she constantly witnessed these flow experiences with children. Stinson (1988) recognized that dance as an art form can connect with both the body and the spirit. As I witnessed these students' experience creative dance, I saw many moments of this deep connection to their inner sensations—their spirits.

As the kindergarten students interacted with the scarves, especially in the gym where they had more space, they seemed to show a sense of flow.



Figures 25 & 26: Kindergarten students seem to be experiencing flow



Many of the grade three students wrote in their journals that dancing felt *good* or *great* or *I love to dance!* In an interview Gowtham, who does Tamil dance outside of school, spoke of creative dance class as a different type of experience for him:



When I'm doing a Tamil dance, I feel nervous, because a lot of people are looking...and here, especially [doing] the bamboo dance or mirroring, I feel calm.

Figures 27 & 28: Habib's drawing of him and Gowtham doing mirrors and the pair in action



Figure 29: Zain bodystorming

Brooke recognized that, although the grade five students are "definitely a little crazier when they get up out of their desks," in the periods following creative dance, when they are doing work at their desks, "they are calmer." Zain wrote in his journal about a sense of freedom.

I thought it was fun when we got to move and do any action we want but I actually felt very free. I really learned a lot today about our emotions. Surprisingly creative dance is when you express something. So I thought it was an awesome day.

When I interviewed the grade six students about how creative dance feels, there was a unanimous agreement that it was relaxing and stress relieving.



Figure 30: Elizabeth doing warm ups

Elizabeth: I think...you dance how your body feels as if nobody is watching you.

Marc: Why do you think that's important?

Elizabeth: Because you're not judging yourself, you're not being hard on yourself. Say you're having a really bad day and you come to dance class and you can just let all your stress out through dance.

It should be noted that not all affective experiences were positive ones in these creative dance classes. In the grade five class, for example, the students constantly made comments that reflected their lack of experience with dance and also their fear of open-ended activities. In her journal, Tammy wrote, "I feel scared when I lead because [I am] afraid I'll do something wrong." Zariah wrote, "It made me feel nervous because as the follower I had to copy what the leader was doing."

The rediscovery of their dancing self involved an awareness of their tacit knowledge of dance, a development of their personal voice, and learning to view themselves as dancers, sensing their body in space (outward sensations) as well as the affective outcomes (inner feelings) caused by dance.

### **Intersubjectivity**

Bruner (1996) describes intersubjectivity as, "Mutually figuring out what others have in mind" (p. 161). Understanding another's thinking requires an empathic relationship. Relationship is a key concept in creative dance and is in fact one of the

elements of dance, and so creative dance classes naturally provide opportunity for the exploration of relationships and intersubjectivity. Because creative dance involves bodies working in close proximity to one another in a confined space, there is an immediate need to be aware of other bodies. But, more than this, in these classes there was a deepening awareness of self and other, as students were following and leading each other through space. As well, since the creative dance class offers one of the few opportunities in schools where children's bodies are encouraged to interact and actually touch in the name of learning, students were learning that touch is a way to communicate. Students were also learning to read the body language of their peers, recognizing that bodies could communicate emotions and much more.

**to lead and follow, which builds empathy.** This theme was found across all four sites (especially with younger students) and in many different types of experiences in creative dance, e.g. activities such as follow the leader, mirroring, and flocking. It was found in 51 units of data. Because these creative dance experiences involved individual, partner, small group, and whole class work, there were many instances when students took turns leading and following. This inter-relationship seems to be based on a deepening awareness of self and empathy for the other. Empathy in creative dance class is what dance therapists have termed *kinesthetic empathy* or *empathic mirroring* (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2009), a tool for understanding the experiences of another person. Leading and following was first observed as the kindergarten students played follow-the-leader in the gymnasium.



Emily and I noticed that the four and five-year-old kindergarten students loved to play follow-the-leader. Jordyn, a four-year-old who rarely participated in any of the more structured activities throughout the week, really enjoyed the exercises where he was engaged in leading and following. Emily said, “ He is just so happy. He is totally delighted by the whole thing. I think we love when people do our ideas. So I think it’s a powerful moment for kids where everybody’s doing what they suggested.”



Figures 31 & 32: Jordyn leads the kindergarten students in the gymnasium

I showed Jordyn these pictures and asked him what he was doing.

Jordyn: Turning around.

Marc: Look at your face: What do you notice about your face?

Jordyn: I like to turn around.

Marc: Were you leading the group?

Jordyn: Around in circles.

In another instance, Jordyn was equally focused on following his partner McKayla, as she interpreted a pathway based on a squiggly line.

While working with the grade three class, Alorani suggested that in *mirroring*, “You’re kind of forced to take on someone else’s vocabulary and someone else’s body [language]...that maybe you’ve never moved [in this way].”



Figures 33 & 34: Krit and Jessica engage in partner mirrors

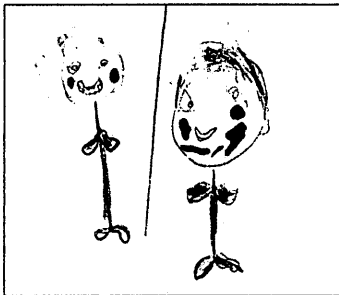


Figure 35: Krit's journal picture of him and Jessica doing mirrors

Krit and Jessica were extremely focused on following each other in the mirror exercise. Krit drew this picture of himself and Jessica “dancing face to face” in his journal. He commented later that he really had to concentrate on his partner and wrote, “I love dancing!” He also included a line of symmetry in this picture in order to demonstrate the math concept of mirroring.



Figure 36: Sebastien and Zain doing partner mirrors

Brooke saw mirroring as an *intimate* experience for her grade five students, because they rarely experienced this type of face-to-to face contact with a partner. As Brooke hypothesized, the experience excites them, saying, “Oh my gosh, I’m moving and somebody is following me exactly.”



Figure 37: Iqra and Sydney doing partner mirrors

I observed Iqra and Sydney doing mirrors. I noted that Sydney is such an interesting mover, while Iqra often seems self-conscious and tended to rely on talking rather than using her body. While working on mirrors there was a change. The focus

from this partnership was profound—they were absolutely quiet. It was the first time I had seen Iqra not talking while she was working. She seemed to give over to Sydney's vocabulary of movement, while trusting her and giving her the respect of her concentration.

There were similar intense feelings for the grade three and five students in their experience of *flocking*, in which four of them were moving in unison following one leader. Alorani noted that there is safety, beauty, and trust in this exercise. Safety is established because there is no eye contact (unlike mirroring, it is less intimate), and beauty is created because you are moving in unison, and this provides a beautiful zen-like quality much like Tai-chi. This experience also involved trust—as leader, your back is to the group and you must trust your group to follow you and not make fun of your ideas. Alorani believed that this exercise builds community:

I think a class that does this on a weekly basis would be closer. I mean, there is no one left behind, there is no one left out, there is no one not here. Of course, I don't know the inner workings of what some of them are thinking – how awkward, how strange. I'm not suggesting this is free of something, but my feeling is that they all feel okay...to varying degrees.

Many of the grade five students in Brooke's class wrote in their journal that flocking was calming or relaxing. Most of them also described an experience of sensing or being completely aware of themselves and the *other*.



Figure 38: Four grade five students flocking

When I'm flocking I feel like there are some people trying to be me or I want to be like them (Camille).

For almost all of them, there was an acute awareness of the responsibility of leading (which was difficult for some).

When flocking, it's hard to be the leader, because it's hard to think about what to do next (Matthew).

To lead is like to do something someone can copy and you have to know what you want to do (Zariah).

Students were also aware of the enjoyment of following someone else:

Flocking made me feel happy, because you get to experience [what] your partner or group is doing. I liked being the follower, because I get to learn new steps, levels, or space. It feels relaxing because you just go with the flow (Rashi).

I feel like I'm floating in midair. I think it's harder to be a follower than a leader, because it's hard to follow because other people do things better than some people. When you're the leader, you have to trust your group to follow you (Nethmi).

It made me feel happy. I like being the follower, because you can see everyone else's ideas (Mariam).

Some also enjoyed the *power* of leading:

Flocking let's u [sic] be calm and express your feelings. I liked being the leader cause it was easier and you didn't have to look what the other person's doing and it felt like you had a little power at the same time (Zain).

For both the grade three and grade five classes I observed, these initial experiences with mirroring were profound—there was an instant sense of connection to their partner and an intense, almost hypnotic, focus to the exercise. In leading and following, as well as the mirroring and flocking activities, students had to be so completely aware of and in tune with the leader's movements, the leader's body, that they were seemingly taking on their leader's body language. There was a non-verbal communication that was happening throughout, which kept the students completely engaged, almost mesmerized. In mirroring, while watching their partner follow them, they saw their own movement mirrored back, and they learned what was easy and what was difficult for their partner to do. In flocking, they had to be aware of how their own movement was affecting their group but without seeing them. They had to develop a sense of how their group was coping by sensing their connectedness, although often group members would use verbal cues, e.g. "You're going too fast.". They were expanding empathy as an understanding of the other through their connected movement.

**to communicate through touch.** This theme represented the unique learning opportunity creative dance classes offer in school—a chance to learn how to use touch to communicate with another person with a sense of care and also to communicate how you want to be touched in return. This theme is related to intersubjectivity as well as reciprocity and was mainly present in the early learning kindergarten site and the grade six classroom because these were the only two sites where the students actually touched each other. But it was quite prevalent throughout these two sites and could be found in 20 units of data.



Figure 39-41: Tristan teaches Isabelle how to touch him gently

The first evidence of this theme I observed was with four-year-olds Tristan and Isabelle. As they were working on creating statues with each other's bodies, I witnessed Isabelle roughly handling Tristan, who resisted Isabelle's touch by backing away from her and swatting her hands away from his body. The teacher intervened at this point reminding them, "It's a soft shape." Isabelle replied, "I don't know how to make a soft shape." Tristan suddenly began to touch the side of his cheek very gently with his hand. It looked almost as if he was petting himself, gently. The teacher gasped, "That was nice!" and Isabelle carefully observed Tristan's actions. She gently put her two hands on Tristan's hand, and he continued to touch his face with her hands on his. It was as if Tristan were teaching Isabelle how to touch him. Isabelle, who seemed genuinely interested in learning about this concept, reached forward almost as if she were blind, allowing her body to learn this message from Tristan about soft touch—this sensation, or quality of softness. It seemed a remarkable moment of learning about touch, trust, and empathy. When I showed Tristan these pictures, he recalled the incident as a moment in which they "were doing gentle things." Emily believed this moment in the creative dance class

was teaching empathy, because these students were having a physical dialogue about what was appropriate touch, and it gave “the toucher” some feeling for the impact of contact with another.

I observed that the grade six students, who were clearly the most experienced in creative dance and had developed such a comfort level with their bodies and the bodies of others. They touched each other, picked each other up, and swung each other around. These students are in their early adolescence and have very few of the physical discomforts that I witness with so many children their age.

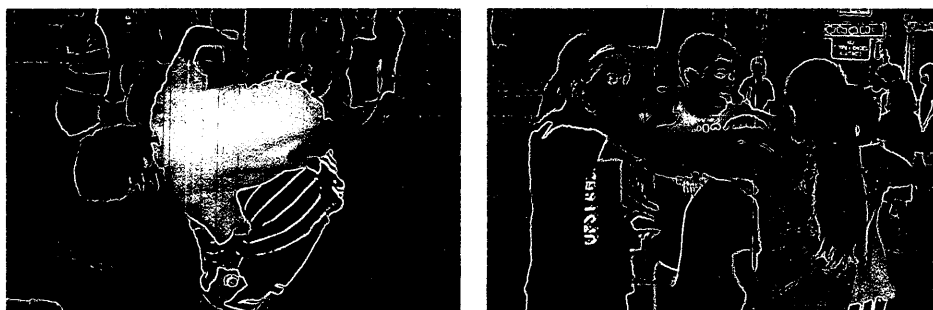


Figure 42 & 43: The grade six students touch while creating dances together

It seems that their extensive experience with creative dance has made them much more comfortable with themselves, their bodies, and interacting with the opposite sex in their physical world. When I asked these grade six students about these experiences and their comfort level with touching each other's bodies, they recognized that being within each other's “space bubbles” is quite natural for them. It also coincides with the type of authentic creative dancing they have been exposed to both in and outside of school. They recognized that professional dance artists interact and touch each other's bodies in order to communicate their message in dance. They saw it as a natural part of the art

form. They also recognized that they are self-aware enough to state when they are not comfortable.



Figure 44 & 45: Margie's group tries a lift with Laura but switches to Jake S.

Margie: I know in our dance we were going to do a lift with Laura, but she didn't feel comfortable with them [the boys] holding her...so we did it with Jake S. instead because he didn't care. In our experience...if it feels weird...we change it.

This ability to articulate their comfort level was echoed by other students.

Rinaldo: In our dance, we were planning on doing a lift, but we called it off because we weren't comfortable.

Sara: In our class we're all very close...so we're not afraid to tell someone that we're uncomfortable, that we need to try something else.

As one student stated, "We're closer, we become a family," and their teacher Eva reiterated, "They become like brothers and sisters because...they are just all over each other, they have to be honest and they take risks with each other." These students have had more experiences in creative dance than most grade six students. Because they are at a specialized arts school, they have had dance on their timetable three times a week since grade four. Eva, their teacher, attributes much of their comfort level with their bodies to their experiences in dance class. Eva reflected that these students have a different way of knowing the world—they would find it odd to step into another grade six class where they had never had the opportunity to touch anyone else.



**to read body language.** When brought to a conscious level, this ability to read bodies can be developed further. In all, there were 17 units of data about the students learning to *read* other bodies. The kindergarten students were learning to read and name the shapes they were making with their bodies. Through the pictures and documentation panels, the students were discovering how they could re-read and revisit their own experiences in creative dance. As already mentioned, Jordyn, one of the youngest kindergarten students, read the smile on his face in the picture where he was leading the group. The grade three students were reading their bodies in documentation panel pictures and reminded of those dance experiences and how they felt. As Serina said, “When I looked at the picture of the name dance, it reminds me I felt shy—I chose jumping because it was a smaller movement.”

It was the grade five class that really seemed to place an important focus on learning to read bodies as they were working on the theme of “inclusion and exclusion.” During one discussion about the definition of dance provoked by a documentation panel, Sebastian and Ahad brought forward the concept of *body language*. These two boys had quite an intense discussion in the think/pair/share session and were obviously thinking deeply about the topic. They noticed that this was information that was missing from the documentation panel. This discussion provoked an exercise in which the students were each given a picture of one of the shapes they had made and were asked to describe what they saw in the picture, in essence to *read* and describe the body language of the person in the picture. The grade five students described these following images in words.



Figure 46: Camille's shape

This has the atmosphere of being sad. The kind of shape Camille has is curled up and tight so it was a low level. The message that I get is that she is being excluded and feels hurt on the inside so she feels that she wants to hide from the world and to hide from the people who excluded her. (Jennifer)

The shape is small and tight. I think Camille was scared because she has a closed body and a tight shape. The shape of the pose looks like a tight circle. (Iqra)



Figure 47: Sebastien's shape

Medium  
Curled Up  
Exclusion  
Facing Downwards  
It shows that he's being excluded (Celina)

This work seemed to connect their tacit knowledge about bodies and body language to their creative dance discussions. Jennifer provided this feedback about a moment that stood out for her from one improvisational *flocking* exercise.

I found that Sydney went down and sort of just kept turning, and instead of doing more different things, she kept going down and down...but it also touched my heart, because it felt like she was trying to make the world not notice her. That's sort of what I do I like curling up and hiding so that the world doesn't notice me, and I don't want to hurt anymore.

This learning to read each other's bodies seemed to connect to a sense of empathy, realizing that these bodies are conveying emotions and an inner world that they can relate to when they look for it. It also provoked them to make connections to their own

body language and affective world. Brooke admitted that this is such an important type of literacy because often times people get into conflicts because they are misreading other people's bodies or don't recognize what their own body is saying to other people.

Eva recognized that "bodies communicate whether we want them to or not." Learning to read bodies is something her grade six students are doing all the time, but creative dance class helps them become better at reading bodies. Eva stressed the need for a safe environment in the creative dance class, "because they read stuff that may not be intended to be what it reads to be at times." Because they are constantly giving feedback on each other's creations and each other's bodies as the medium in these creations, they become more aware of how to read bodies and what their own bodies are



Figure 48: Grade six students in a feedback session

saying. "They watch, they respond, they talk, they question...they have to." As Eva explained, this learning to read bodies comes out of the creative process for her students; it may transfer into the world outside the dance studio, but they hone

their skills during feedback sessions with their peers.

Intersubjectivity involved learning empathy through leading and following; it also involved learning to communicate through touch and learning to read the body language of themselves and their peers and to use this to develop their expressive skills as dancers and choreographers.

### **Collaborative Creative Processes**

One of the themes that developed alongside intersubjectivity was the idea that creative dance could be collaborative—students could work alongside others to create dances. This counteracts an emphasis on individual creativity in our schools and allows us to witness what students are learning from one another while working in partners and groups. Through the process of learning to create with others, the students also learn valuable social skills such as listening to others, patience, co-operation, and building collaborative relationships. Because students were sometimes being asked to work with mixed gender partners and groups, they were also learning to build important relationships with members of the opposite sex. For some students, collaboration with group members (learning to listen to the ideas of others and have their own ideas heard) was the most difficult learning that took place. As we've learned from the Reggio educators and the concepts of social constructivism, the learning that takes place within a group is an important type of learning. Malaguzzi tells us that a group has an "autonomous capacity to educate" (1998, p. 69). The students in this present study were learning to include each other's ideas and combine their ideas in order to come up with original ideas. They were also learning to empathize with each other in terms of having to perform their works-in-progress in front of one another—they were learning empathic audience skills.

**to work in partnerships and groups to build their social skills.** This theme was evident across all four sites and was found in 53 units of data. This theme involved students' ability to work in a partnership or in a group, sharing ideas both physically and verbally and recognizing that others have something to contribute, i.e. listening to and respecting the ideas of others. It also involved overcoming personal obstacles that might get in the way of their ability to work with people who are different than they are—there was a focus on celebrating differences. This was first observed in the kindergarten setting.

Emily re-introduced the sculpture activity on the second day, asking the kindergarten students to imagine making their partner into a sculpture. Ivy and Jamie



Figures 49 & 50: Jamie and Ivy working on statues

worked very gently and quietly. As they worked to create sculptures, they took turns, barely saying anything, their communication almost non-verbal.

Marc: Do you remember what you were doing?

Ivy: Yes. It was Jamie's turn, then it was my turn.

Marc: You two were making really hard shapes.

Jamie: I was doing ballet.

Marc: You were doing ballet?

Ivy: Yeah, and she (Jamie) was trying to hold steady like me because I can hold it steady on one foot.

Marc: Now Jamie, why did Ivy have her hands there, what was she doing?

Jamie: She was holding me.

Ivy: In case you fall on your head.

Although, as an outsider, I recognized that they worked well together, when interviewed, they discussed a history of social interactions that they had to overcome to arrive at this point in working together. Jamie thought she

was doing ballet (because she was making balanced shapes), and Ivy recognized that Jamie needed her help to hold these shapes still. There was an interdependence established in this relationship.

Alorani introduced an exercise with the grade three students that specifically asked students to create physical relationships with their partners' body in space. They were to create a shape within their partner's *negative space*, i.e. they weren't touching.



Figures 51 & 52: Alorani demonstrates a body-spatial relationship exercise

Alorani said:

I wanted them to have to look at the shape next to them and situate themselves in relation to that person without doing the same shape, to have a sense of contrast or difference or relating in some way and having to observe [their body shape] moved into that empty space.



Figures 53 & 54: Two groups of students working in the body-spatial relationship exercise

Students had varying levels of comfort with this exercise and some discomfort seemed to be related specifically to girls and boys working together. The challenges of working with the opposite sex were also evident with the older children.



Figure 55: Bertha, Edith, and Rinaldo  
bodystorming on the first day

As I watched a group of three grade six students on the first day of class, I noticed that the two girls were talking mainly to each other, and although they were directing comments to Rinaldo (the one boy), they weren't actively listening to his ideas or waiting for a response.

The girls were having a two-way conversation as they tried out *steps*.

Edith: I could fall. (She falls to the ground.)

Bertha: I could catch you. You know how you fall back. (Edith falls backwards into her arms. Rinaldo observes and then makes an offer without speaking, indicating by holding out his arms perhaps that she could fall to him as well. The two girls eventually notice him and listen.)

Rinaldo: And then, we could turn her and put her down.

This group was very interesting because Edith and Bertha just kept talking and putting out ideas, and Rinaldo couldn't find a way to add his ideas, although he seemed to want to. He was just looking for a break in their conversation to try to get his ideas heard.

Two days later, when I showed them the video documentation from their first class together (Edith was absent), Bertha was mortified. She kept saying, "We were so mean." She instantly recognized that they had not been listening to him or allowing him to say anything. She described it as giving him the "talk to the hand" body language. She was upset by this. Later, Edith remembered how they realized they were "being bossy" and inside their heads they were thinking, "We need to just shut up [and ask] Rinaldo what do you think?" But they struggled with it. Rinaldo also reflected, "I wasn't saying much. I was the only guy there, and the girls were getting along so well, so I felt like an outsider. I was just waiting to see what the girls were going to come up with." He said

that next time he would speak up in order to let his ideas be heard. There were a number of incidents like this one in this grade six class, where they were learning to build their communication skills with the opposite sex.

Eva (their teacher) realized that working in *mixed gender groups* is tough for grade six students because this is where the gender separation begins to show. She thinks, however, that it helps them to socialize because they are creating together.

The guys have their shorts and t-shirts on, and the girls are in their t-shirts and sweats and dance pants and they're touching and moving and growing and shaping, so for sure it helps socializing... We don't get the cliques, we don't get the pockets of groups of friends, because they're always working with someone else.

She believes that it not only helps their communication but also helps them support each other as human beings because they are taking risks together. She recognizes that bringing together a variety of ideas and people as one of the main benefits of the arts: "We celebrate differences, that's innate [sic] in the arts." The grade six students added their own ideas about what social skills they were learning:

Greg: You can't only do what you want, you have to also listen to what other people want.

Daisy: Bringing in other people's ideas is hard sometimes, especially if they're not listening to your ideas. When you get older, you need to learn it's not always about you—other people's ideas are just as good.

Ellena: I think you learn patience and co-operation...you need to listen to other people ideas...you can mix up your own with other people's ideas.

Eva noticed that Greg recognized, upon reflection, that he had been pushing his ideas on his group more than he was listening to their ideas. She recognizes that offering the chance to reflect on their group work is important in her classes.



**to work in partnerships and groups to generate new ideas.** This theme was present across all the sites as students worked with partners or groups. There were 20 units of data to support this theme. It involved trusting the ideas of others and being open to combining and developing ideas in order to generate novel ideas as a group. This theme was revealed when students would explore options and allow their ideas to be challenged or changed, in order to make connections between other ideas and their current situation. It is these skills that are necessary for working with the creative process. The kindergarten children demonstrated this element when they made statues and developed movements from the shape cards, and the grade three students when they created shapes in each others' negative space. This theme was most prevalent in the grade six class, because they spent all their dance time working in groups in the creative process.

There was one group of grade six students who really struggled through the process of creation, because, as Eva said, "They have a lot of explaining to do for each other just because of the nature of who's in that group. There are a lot of people [in that group] who just don't understand each other." I witnessed this group getting started, and one person was clearly in charge (Sara) with another friend listening to her and supporting her ideas (Sophie). Another member of the group (Greg) had a lot of ideas but struggled to articulate his ideas. The other two members (Walter and Louise) remained silent.



They rode their waves to the beaches  
then broke loose and dashed for the shore

Figure 56: Their poetry source  
(Day, 1991)

Figure 57: Sara and Greg work to understand one another

Their initial brainstorming session indicated this dynamic:

Sara: So if one of us were like this, using a body level...(Sophie copies her shape, on all fours. The two of them, look in the mirror and try out various movements they can do from this shape. They are not hearing what Greg is saying.)

Greg: We could skip....don't you think we could skip? (He gets Sara's attention.) Like on the waves, until we get to the shore.

Sara: Except we don't want to (She gets up and indicates a skipping movement, almost making fun of his idea.)

Greg: That's not what I'm saying...

Sophie: (smiling at him) We're supposed to be using our body movement.

Greg: Something should pull us. Stephen, I'll stand on you and I can ride you.

Sara: No. Stephen can....



At this moment, I walked away from the group, but it seems Sara was able to combine her idea with Greg's idea, to come up with Walter riding them for their initial image. Greg at first seemed skeptical but then joined in.

Figures 58 & 59: The group works on an initial image for "riding the waves"



Figure 60: Greg shows his idea

Later on in their process, Greg called Eva over to intervene because he had an idea but couldn't seem to explain it clearly enough for his group to listen to or try. Eva convinced the rest of the group to allow Greg to take over for a few minutes so that he could show his idea.

As Eva explained,

Their expression was “dashed for the shore,” so he wanted it to be a pathway that was an interesting pathway, showing that the water moves as you're dashing through it. Originally, they did it straight across but he wasn't happy with that. He said, “No, I don't want to do it that way.” They were having trouble understanding him, so that's when I said, “Place them, you take a minute and you be in charge and you place them so they can experience what it is.” So, that's what he did and they got it.

Later, when I interviewed this group around the documentation panel, Greg explained that this idea had come to him from a football drill he knew, but he had changed it to include the legs splashing up like water.

I was amazed as I watched them work through their group dynamics and pre-conceived notions of one another. As Eva said:

There's a lot going on, and even though there are five people and five viewpoints they are still managing to be successful in actually creating something and even though they are struggling, they are recognizing that struggle, and they are just trying to work within it. Each one of them has an issue that's difficult to work with because of their personalities, and they know that but they're not giving up... They're exhausted, it's hard work, but they're just plowing through it; it's amazing because it's a very difficult thing to do—for anybody.

**to embrace components of the creative process.** Throughout all sites, there was evidence of the creative process in varying degrees (over 61 units of data). One of the most prevalent of the eight components of the creative process, as outlined in the Ministry Arts document (2009), was that of *exploration and experimentation*. Since creative dance was very new to three of the sites that I witnessed, this focus on exploration and experimentation makes sense. I was fascinated to watch the students develop their creative dance skills throughout stages of the creative process, which is in fact not linear but cyclical and unpredictable.

The creative process, as outlined in the Ministry arts document, involves eight stages that interact in a cyclical fashion with feedback (from teacher and peers) at the center of the process (as noted on page 41). I will first show an example of the exploration and experimentation stage with the kindergarten students in order to demonstrate how Emily challenged and inspired them. I will then illustrate how the grade six students explored the entire creative process.



Figure 61: Kindergarten students explore with their scarves

As Emily handed out scarves to the kindergarten students on the first day, they immediately began to explore the tactile and see-through nature of these new materials. Almost all the children tried placing the scarf over their heads. The students instantly said, “You can see through it!”

Emily explained this behavior:

It's like when you first give them any material, when you first give them paint, when you give them clay, there is sort of a play period. There is that free *exploration* period with the scarves where you just want to go crazy. It's fun. They just wanted to see what they could do.

Emily started to direct them to move with their scarves using guided questions, (challenging and inspiring):

Can you dance with curved lines?  
Can you paint the room with curvy lines?

The students instantly responded to this idea—it interrupted whatever they were doing.

They explored moving their scarves in curved shapes. They enjoyed making circles with their scarves in the air.



Figures 62 & 63: Tristan and Fiona explore the gym space

As soon as they entered the gym, most students took off with wild bursts of energy and included their scarves in this action. Tristan ran full tilt with his scarf over his head. Fiona swirled her scarf all around her, exploring what happened

when her scarf caught the air as she moved. She also explored the scarf, using two hands, twisting it around her body and over her head, including the space behind her. She explored all the space around her body—her entire kinesphere (in Laban's terms). It seemed as if she were exploring how she could keep her movement going in a single

arching line—similar to single line drawings on paper. On their fourth day with the scarves, the kindergarten students once again continued their exploration, as seen below.



Figures 64-66: The kindergarten students continue their exploration



It was in Eva's grade six class where I witnessed all the components of the creative process, as students created dances in groups based on lines of poetry that she had given them. Eva inspired them with the poetry but also challenged them: "I want you think about the *actions* that you find in the words or in the groups of words that are



Figure 67: One grade six group bodystorming

put together in the poetry." As Eva handed out the strips of poetry, the groups began to imagine and generate ideas, while helping to focus one another on the task. They quickly started bodystorming (physical brainstorming)—suggesting movements and playing with movement ideas from the lines of poetry:

*Gentle fleet-footed, leaping with the light, once tree  
spirits, restless for flight. (Day, 1991)*

One group worked on spirits and trees. They explored and experimented with movement.

The three girls interpreted trees blowing in the breeze; Margie and Daisy were beside



Figure 68: Their first explorations

Laura, holding onto her arms and swaying as a group. The two boys, Jake S and Jake H, were running in circles around the group of girls pretending to be spirits. What was fascinating was how quickly they were able to translate these words into movement, which happened within minutes of receiving their poetry.



Figure 69: Eva gives the group feedback

Eva recalls their first teacher feedback:

There is the word “spirits” in their poem...so they went to a lift that they knew. So I went over to them, and I said, “I want you to think of something new. We’ve seen that before. It doesn’t mean anything. You want to mean something with what you do.”



Figure 70: The girls explore ballet positions

After this initial *feedback*, the group returned to *exploring* and *experimenting*, but the girls seemed to be stuck in the world of ballet—there was a series of “pas de chat” type jumps and arms in third position arabesque. The boys began to get silly, and, although they tried to offer suggestions to the

girls, the more they suggested, the more the girls retreated to ballet.

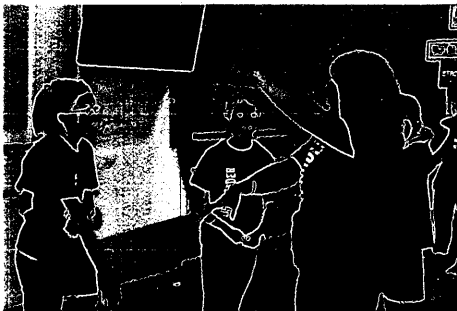


Figure 71: Eva provides feedback

It was at this point that Eva intervened once again with further feedback:

Eva: Where is the ballet coming from?  
Where in the poem does it say to do ballet?

Jake S: "Once restless trees"...there is no ballet, it's not ballet!

(Eva shows them the poem.)

Eva: We need to be in our bodies. We don't need steps. We don't need turnout. We don't need any of that. So forget all the ballet stuff.

Margie: Are we allowed to keep some of it?

Eva: It depends on what it is: if there is no other way to do it except a ballet step.

(After their teacher leaves, the girls gather as a group, and then the boys come over to them.)

Daisy: How about you guys come up with something?

Jake S: Okay, we've got this! (He then starts acting silly and singing and the girls look to each other with a look of exasperation. Jake H stands off to the side observing.)

The group entered a dark period in their creativity process, where they struggled with group dynamics and pre-conceived notions of each other. The girls believed they knew more about dance than the boys, and the boys deferred to acting silly because they felt somewhat *less than*. With intervention and discussions via documentation (watching video of their process and reflecting on pictures), they were back on track and creating together again.

They worked on a lift. They seemed to have a definite plan about the type of lift that they were trying to accomplish. A big change from the previous day was that they



were actually working together (boys and girls), collaborating to get this lift happening.

This lift sequence brought them closer together in terms of their collaboration.



Figures 72-75: The group develops a lift using Jack S

This group had now produced some *preliminary work*, and they were ready to present it to their teacher and peers for feedback. Jake H announced before they started, “It’s not quite finished, but we’ll show you what we have.” The feedback that they received from their peers was constructive:

Louise: I thought it was really cool...At first, before you read the poem I thought it was about sleeping.

Eva: (speaking to the creation group) I want you to think about that and hold onto that thought for a little bit...that she thought the poetry was about sleeping...so hold onto that.

Elizabeth: My favourite part was...when people were lying on Margie...like Louise said, she thought of sleeping...and I sort of thought it was about hibernation at first, like they were going to sleep.

Eva: (she hears Jake S say something under his breath) What did you just say?

Jake S: We’re not done...and it needs improvements to make it not sleepy-like.

Eva: Rereads their poem, “leaping, delight, tree spirits, restless”...yeah, I think you might want to revisit that.

Daisy: Since this is trees (tree spirits), we were starting on the ground, and we're seeds and we're growing into a tree and swaying in the wind, and they were spirits.

Eva: So *you* know that, but obviously it's not translating as well as you want so see what else you can do.

Sara: When they were small and got up, I thought they were slow, so I think that it was like sleeping but since it's slow it does give the true effect of growing, so I think their dance does fit with what they were trying to say.

Eva: So, you don't want them to change it too much. Remember when we talked about the elements of dance...So hang onto what the essence is, what Sara is saying... You're talking about tempo in the elements and energy...so they can deal with that.

From this feedback, the group was able to return to work, revising and refining their creation. This overview of the creative process, over three days of working, is merely a tiny glimpse into the process experienced with creative dance.

**to overcome the fear of performing their ideas for others.** This theme appeared across all sites, from kindergarten to grade six, in 14 different units. Unlike visual arts where your artwork is something outside of you and you can hang it on a wall, in dance the art is you, your body, and so you have to learn to present yourself to others in order to present your art and your ideas. This theme involves overcoming the self-consciousness of being looked at while presenting to others and perhaps of having your ideas rejected or criticized. Although dancing can be enjoyable, performing in front of our peers can be stressful, even for four-year-olds. It also involves learning to become empathic audience members. The first evidence of this theme was seen with the kindergartens.

Emily provoked the kindergarten students with shape/pathway cards asking, "What kind of dancing goes with this card?"



Figures 76 & 77: Grace, McKayla and Tristan explore a zig-zag. They created many variations on this shape that they put together into a performance. This trio was very comfortable performing in front of their peers.

For Noah and Charlie, who had a squiggle card, it was a different experience. With their card, at first Noah explored an arm movement while Charlie explored a floor pattern and then the two of them ended up on the floor moving like snakes.

When the trio of MacKayla, Tristan, and Grace performed their interpretation of the zig-zag card, Grace took the lead, and the three of



Figures 78: Noah and Charlie explore the squiggle card

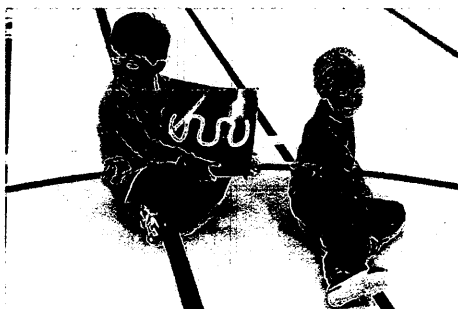


Figure 79: Noah and Charlie reluctant to share.

When Emily brought them back to the circle and asked them to share what they had been working on with their partner, both Noah and Charlie were reluctant. Charlie actually went into a sort of fetal position. In comparison to their

exploration with each other, the request that they share their movement ideas now seemed to be teacher-sanctioned work. When Charlie and Noah did present their work, it suddenly seemed contrived. They were following instructions, but it was less “natural” and less enjoyable for them. They didn’t seem to *own* it as much as when they were exploring freely. All of a sudden, it seemed like a school experience—something to “get through.” They were fine with the exploration stage of the creative process but not the presentation stage.

When Emily reflected on this moment while watching the videotape she noted, “It was sort of traumatic for Charlie, I made him do it.” Charlie did all sorts of really interesting things, but, as soon as there was a focus on him, as soon as all eyes were watching him, he froze. Emily had another experience like this with Charlie on the last day. When asked to present his drawing to the class, he froze and went into a fetal position once again. Emily reflected on this:

I think there is something about doing things in your own little world. I think we all remember being kids in our own imagination, our own space, and, all of a sudden, the adults trespass in it. [He thinks] maybe it [my idea] isn’t so great, it’s not an adult experience...It’s something I’m enjoying on my own. There may be some of that going on.

In Alorani’s grade three class, Gowtham explained to me, in an interview based on this picture, that he was learning to ignore the laughing of his classmates as he demonstrated with the teacher.



Figure 80: Gowtham helps Alorani demonstrate an exercise

Marc: How did it feel this morning when Miss Hahn asked you to demonstrate with her?  
 Gowtham: Weird.  
 Marc: Why?  
 Gowtham: Because I never did it before.  
 Marc: Did it feel weird because you were doing it with a teacher?  
 Gowtham: Yeah.  
 Marc: What did you think of that experience, did you learn something?  
 Gowtham: To not listen to the other people laughing.  
 Marc: Other people were laughing?  
 Gowtham: Yeah, they were.  
 Marc: How did it feel when people were laughing at you?  
 Gowtham: It doesn't really bother me.

This was one of the skills involved in learning to perform physically in front of others—not to worry about what others were thinking. Some students even described being able to discern the various types of laughter they could hear coming from the audience when they were presenting. This was a major theme in the grade five class, in which many of the members were self conscious when performing in front of others.

In Brooke's grade five class, there was one child whom she described as a bodily-kinesthetic learner. According to Brooke, Christos loved to dance. However, he had trouble with social interactions and worried deeply about not being accepted by his peers. On the second visit, I brought in a documentation panel, and, as a group, we read people's perceptions of creative dance and looked at the pictures from the day before. Sebastian and Ahad had just finished speaking about how they thought dance was "expression using your body language." Then Brooke asked if there were any other thoughts about creative dance.



Figure 81: Christos bodystorming

Christos: Try not to get laughed at and just go with the flow.

Brooke: Why would you get laughed at?

Christos: Well if you're doing funny dancing.

(Lots of his classmates giggle. I hear someone say, "Well, don't do stupid things!")

Brooke: Well, if it was supposed to be funny, would you want people to laugh at you?

Christos: It depends, if it's in a good way or if it's in a bad way.

In this statement, Christos recognized different types of

laughter—supportive and judgmental. Christos seemed to be

making a plea to the group for empathy. He seemed to be saying

that he loved to dance and make funny shapes, but he was worried about being laughed

at, and being laughed at in a non-supportive way makes him self-conscious. It's

interesting that he did not shy away from his vulnerability. He was doing some teaching

here. This conversation spoke directly to the grade five class' current social studies

theme of inclusion and exclusion. When I interviewed him later, Christos said:

It [performing] makes a lot of people nervous...because there is a little bit of pressure that makes you think, 'Oh my god, if I get laughed at, I'm going to get so embarrassed and I won't know what to do.'

Brooke discussed this incident later in an interview and commented that she was really

proud of him for bringing this forward. Almost immediately after Christos spoke, his

friend Rhea said, "It's like you're showing how you feel to other people...When I dance

in front of other people, I get scared too, because you never know if they are going to

laugh at you." This prompted an entire class discussion about performing in front of

others and the risk-taking involved. They all seemed to feel the same way—they were

nervous about performing in front of their peers. Brooke saw this as an opportunity to

challenge them. "We need to be aware of that and be a really supportive audience, because we know what it feels like to get up there and be a little bit nervous... so we need to work on ourselves not just as performers but as audience members too." Brooke recognized that it is very difficult to separate the social worry from risk-taking.

I witnessed that even the really experienced grade six students were self-conscious when it was time to present their ideas to their peers. I asked Eva about this performance anxiety. She said, "I think that's just the nature of the age and what's going on with their friends. Performing is the point of dance, communicating a message. You have to *see* it." Eva seemed to recognize that, no matter how much practice students have with performing, the pressure of performing in front of their peers remains.

Collaborative creative processes involved developing students' social skills as they worked with others to create dances, coordinating ideas that came from several people, working through the process of creativity, and developing risk-taking skills as performers and empathy skills as audience members.

### **Dance as a language of learning**

This theme offers dance as a curriculum area that connects with other curriculum areas. If we believe that movement is an early language of learning, then, when students are allowed to use their bodies in creative dance classes for problem-solving, creating, and communicating, it makes sense that many connections will be made to other educational domains. Perhaps, many school-based concepts can be felt in the body first and then become attached to the words (oral or written) used to describe the concept. Dance as a language of learning is used here not just as a means of expressing the thinking that is happening in the minds of children, but also the thinking that is happening in their bodies. Like the Reggio Emilians, I see dance as one of the hundred languages of children (Edwards et al., 1998)—an expressive physical language through which children can communicate and symbolize their own ideas, understandings, feelings, and theories about the world around them. In the following results, I will outline how children in this study seemed to be developing their dance literacy, using their bodies for thinking, connecting through dance to other areas in the curriculum, and shifting between dance and other modes of representation.

**to become dance literate.** Dance literacy involves the practical knowledge of the movement language of dance, i.e. the elements of body, space, time, energy, and relationships, and the use of this language to translate images, concepts, and ideas into dances—communicating in dance. Dance also interconnects with written and verbal language, because students use the descriptive language of movement concepts learned



in dance classes to build their everyday vocabulary and knowledge in other subject areas.

There were 60 units of data that provided evidence for this theme.



Figure 82: Fiona and the kindergarten students explore body shapes

I saw the kindergarten students developing their dance *literacy* in their creative dance classes as the vocabulary of shapes, levels, directions, and positional language that actually came out of the process of *doing* these concepts with their bodies. Emily said, “There is a huge piece about schema, where kids that have these [creative dance] experiences, their vocabulary grows so they have a lot more to bring to whatever else they’re going to do, more diverse experiences.” As Emily provoked them with guiding questions such as, “Can you show me a statue with just curvy lines?”, she believed they were internalizing these concepts (e.g. curvy) and relating what it felt like on the inside to what it looked like on other students, and to what she, as the teacher, was calling it. She did this by constantly giving them feedback to let them know what their shapes looked like. She was naming the shape and helping to put things into context for them.

Brooke recognized that for her grade five students (similar to the kindergarten class), dance *literacy* evolved out of the process of creating dance. She discovered that her students had a lot of tacit knowledge about dance stating, “They hadn’t experienced it enough to be able to define or explain it.” By the second day of making shapes and discussing them, she was surprised to see “the awareness starting.”

She noticed:

Sebastian made some comment about the horizontal and vertical...I think Victoria said something about size...stretching it out from large to small...I even heard somebody say something about open and closed and that's the first time I've ever started to hear that language... Before, it was just about getting them to move and explore the movements and not actually focusing their thinking about what their body was doing but just getting them up and moving because they hadn't had a lot of experience just moving. So I don't know if it was that they were actually reflecting as they were doing as opposed to just doing and then reflecting after.

What was interesting, after this experience when Brooke was coaching, was that, suddenly, the students were discussing their shapes in terms of the elements of dance—the words of dance began to emerge in terms of space, direction, effort (comfortable or not comfortable), and relationship to other shapes. It was at the end of this day that

Vallari wrote in her journal:



Figure 83: Vallari body storming

Dance can be with or without music (like miming). Dance is like passion. Dance can be funny or serious. Dance can be cheerful or furious. Dance can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. When you dance, you can do any shape. Dance can show love or broken hearts. Dance can be at a high, medium or low level. Dance can be horizontal or vertical. Dance is feelings. Dance can express all of your thoughts.

Vallari seemed to have a sense of the possibilities for dance as a language even though she had had only a few experiences with creative dance. She was discussing dance not only in terms of its elements but also in terms of affective meaning, recognizing that dance can express both thoughts and feelings.

The grade six students were asked to discover the movement or action possibilities within their lines of poetry. How can I show this with my body? How can I

get this out of my head and into my body? I witnessed sophisticated dance literacy as these students worked through the creative process. For example, I observed their



Figure 84: Jane and Nicole present their idea for shadow and light

teacher, Eva, giving feedback as Jane and Nicole presented their idea for shadow and light. Jane was on the ground and Nicole was standing and they were turning their bodies doing a sort of 90-degree version of flipping. A creative idea, but according

to Eva, too literal and not sophisticated enough. Eva reread the phrase from the poem and suggested that they put the two ideas together asking: “What kind of image or feeling do you get from shadow and light—that idea together?”

Nicole: Like warm on one side and cold on the other?

Eva: Do you want to look (at the action cards) or do you want to talk, think, try?

Jane: Well, warm’s like flowing and cold is stiff.

Eva: So, if it’s a “rippling dance of shadow and light,” go with that idea.

Eva left them to discover and they instantly started bodystorming and watching each other’s ideas. I was able to witness this small moment (in one class there are probably a hundred such moments) of Eva scaffolding their complex thinking and developing dance literacy.

The grade six students recognized that this type of embodied learning “connects to a lot of stuff that you wouldn’t think it connects to. Like if you’re writing something in literacy about movements and feelings, it helps if you can feel it in your body.” Eva said she believes creative dance literacy increases her students’ brain development, because they are “making the abstract into concrete” as they translate an idea, concept, or image into a dance.

She stated:

There is a depth of understanding there that you don't get any other way. To understand the world you have to understand the layers...and this gets at layers. They do the transfer too...They go up to another class, and they're reading or they're writing...They make that transfer...They don't just take things on surface value, they go into the depth, because they've been used to doing that.

**to think with their bodies.** This theme was found across all sites and present in 37 units of data. Creative dance provokes students to use their bodies for thinking and for solving problems. Whether they are asked to make a bent shape with their arms or a symmetrical shape with their whole body, they must think and move. The kindergarten children held their scarves in a certain way to explore a certain movement, and the grade five students developed shapes to represent the emotions found in the topic of inclusion and exclusion. Brooke explained that "The depth of their thinking after having the movement experiences is way more than any other subject I've seen...I think there is something about embodying it first that gives them deeper thinking." Brooke also recognized the cognitive importance of movement experiences, saying that "It's pretty high level thinking to have kids represent a concept [through dance]." As Alorani began her work with the grade three class, she advised them they would be thinking in *new ways*—they would be showing rather than telling.

Alorani initiated an activity with the grade three students in which they were working with a partner to suspend two thin bamboo poles between their two index fingers. She explained to me that the activity is "like mirroring but an extension in that it forces you to keep that distance and forces you to be attentive and focused."

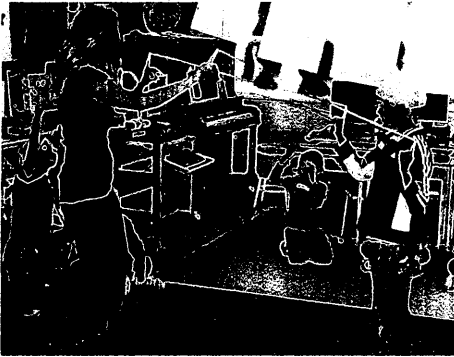


Figure 85: Alorani introduces the bamboo poles exercise

It asked the students to work as a team but also helped to extend their communication, as Alorani said, “because it’s something tangible. If the partners are not aware of their connection to each other, their pole drops.” When I interviewed Mahim (in stripes) about this photograph, he explained his theory about how he and his partner

Raven were able to keep their poles up:



Figure 86: Raven and Mahim’s bamboo pole dance

We had to keep it tight like this ....do you know what tight is? (He demonstrates by pushing his index finger into mine.) We had to keep it tight...if we loosen it, it will fall down.

Another partnership, Habib and Gowtham, had two theories that they had developed for keeping their poles up: first, they decided to use their thumbs because, according to Habib, thumbs

“have a larger surface area” and, second, they closed their eyes.

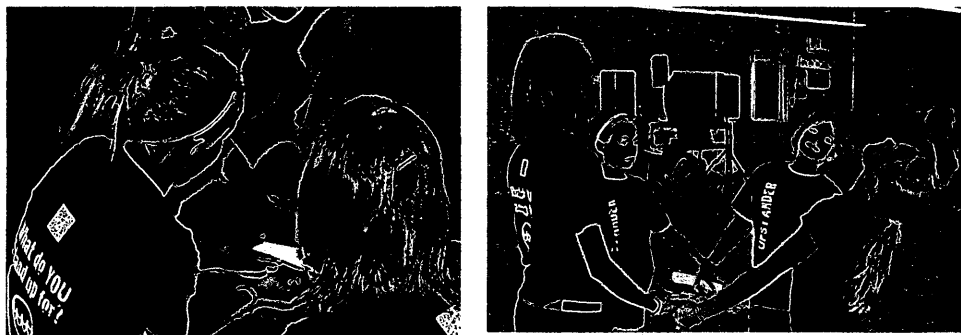


Figure 87 & 88: Habib and Gowtham closed their eyes for their bamboo dance

According to Habib, this made him feel “more calm.” Gowtham closed his eyes because he wanted to “concentrate,” and it made him feel “quiet,” because he was “not thinking about the noise but thinking about his hands and holding the bamboo sticks and not letting go.” Habib articulated his own theory about the process of partnered embodied knowing:

I think we were taking knowledge from our brains. I was taking [knowledge] from Gowtham’s brain saying “Go right, go left,” and he was taking knowledge from my brain saying, “What do you mean, go left?”

Another piece of evidence of students thinking with their bodies came from the grade six class and their ability to translate poetry into dance. When I questioned Eva about her grade six students’ advanced abilities to use movement as a language, she admitted that, as creative dance teachers, they trained them that way—to think as they move. “We call it *bodystorming*. Show me. Try it. Get up and move. So it’s second nature to them.” Eva believes, “a lot of people make the mistake of just assuming, unless it’s verbal or written, there’s nothing happening.”



Figures 89 & 90: Natalie, Jane, Linda & Nicole bodystorming.

It was remarkable to witness the level of bodily thinking that was happening with these grade sixes—they were learning to quickly sketch out physical interpretations of images

and ideas from two lines of poetry. Within moments of reading their poem, the four girls in this group (Natalie, Jane, Linda, Nicole) were bodystorming actions that conveyed a “rippling dance of shadow and light” (Day, 1991).

The grade six students also recognized that what they do in creative dance class is a different way of learning; as Margie said, “It gives you a different mindset.” She recognized that they were learning, but it didn’t ever feel like learning because it was so much fun. Rinaldo described creative dance as “a dancing way to brainstorm.” Greg said, “If there are a lot of ideas rushing through your brain,” creative dance allows you not only to get them out but “It just calms you down a little bit and it focuses you.”

These students had a highly developed ability to think with their bodies, and they related it to their experiences in creative dance. As their teacher Eva claimed, in other subjects, when students are sitting in desks, the teachers don’t really see the extent of these children’s thinking. In creative dance, she said that she really gets to witness their thinking because she can see it in their bodies: “The history of our learning is in our body.”

**to use dance to understand other disciplines of learning.** There were 26 units of data that provided evidence for this theme. This theme represents all the learning that is taking place in creative dance classes that is not specifically just about learning in dance but also learning in other subject areas such as drama, science, math, language, geography, and health. This represents the learning *through* dance portion of the curriculum, i.e. what students are learning about other subjects through creative dance. There are connections between dance and drama (for the really young children all the

arts are inter-related). For the older children, it was also learning about the difference between drama and dance. As seen in the section on dance literacy, it involves learning to translate words, ideas, and concepts into actions using everyday movements. Learning to abstract movement is a skill that develops over time, as students experience the artform of creative dance. Other curricular connections that emerged from the findings included those of dance to science and geography. The first place where I witnessed connection to science was with one of the four-year-old students experimenting with his scarf.



Figure 91: Charlie and his scarf

This picture was taken on the second day that kindergarten student Charlie focused on throwing his scarf in the air and watching it descend. On the first day, he was scrunching the scarf into a ball and throwing it up and watching it fall. On this day, his experimentation was different—he had a new theory, perhaps inspired by the concept of *soft* that they were exploring. He laid out the scarf very carefully and specifically on the ground and threw it up from two corners. This time it seemed to suspend in the air and then gently float down. He watched this action very intently. Emily recognized, “He did the same thing yesterday, but, today, it was more sophisticated, it had to be spread out in a certain way.” I showed Charlie this picture of himself as I interviewed him.

Marc: Do you remember that? What were you doing?

Charlie: When you have the scarf and you throw it up it floats down slowly because it's *lighter* and when its all in a big ball, it comes down faster because it's *heavier*.



From this interview, it seemed that Charlie had developed his own theories about how a scarf floats down, and the differences when the scarf is in a ball versus when it is spread out. This experimenting involved his body and a prop, and he was developing quite sophisticated theories around gravity, surface area, and air resistance. It is, in fact, an informal physics activity and is an example of how other disciplines such as science can become integrated with creative dance.

For the very young children, exploration with scarves went back and forth between dramatic play and dance play. Ivy and Jamie placed the scarves over their heads,



Figures 92 - 95: The kindergarten children explore with the scarves for the first time

Ben used his scarf as a cape, Tristan tied his around his waist, and Ivy became some sort of creature under the veil of her scarf.

Another instance of dance's intersection with other curriculum areas was found in a lesson on movement maps with Alorani and the grade three students. Alorani began with a focus question. "What is a map for? When do you use a map?" Serina replied, "It helps you figure out where to go." This was the launching point for a sophisticated lesson that involved mapping, physically following a map, notating a dance pathway, and later adding elements to the map.

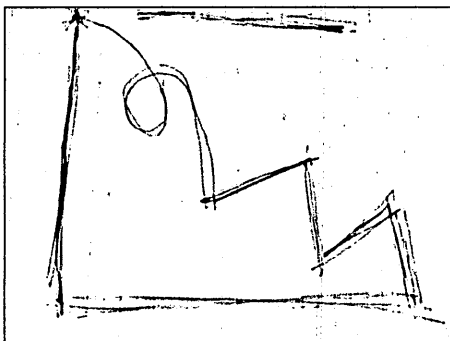


Figure 96 & 97: Alorani demonstrates how to construct a movement map

The students began by creating a movement map on a piece of paper. They were instructed to have a clear starting point

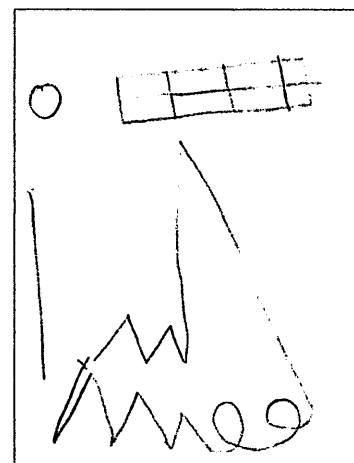
marked by an X (which would also be their ending point) and to include details about the borders of the classroom in order to orient themselves in space. Alorani next asked the students to show their map physically by walking through space and to end up back at their starting point. Alorani explained the idea behind this exercise:

So for me it's the idea of linking the two-dimensional to three-dimensional. As they're getting to move their bodies through space, I think it helps direct them with clarity as to where they're going to go and the fact that they create their own [map]. Eventually the idea would be that you pass your movement map to someone else and see if they could follow it.

I interviewed Habib about his experiences with his movement map:



That's where you start! (He points at the x.) That's (the straight line) the edge of the classroom and then you go straight, like that, like that, like that, like that...It's mostly spikes and then at the end...I made circles and then another (set of spikes) ...then back to the beginning. (The circle is the clock and the rectangle is the shelf unit at the front of the classroom.)



Figures 98 & 99: Habib following his map and his movement map

The next day, Alorani asked them to review their pathway using their map and then to put their map down and see if they could use their *body memory* to remember their pathway. Some students recognized their map was too complicated to remember so they simplified it. This editing stage is an important part of the creative process. The next step involved learning a partner's map by following them. The last portion of this movement map exercise had students adding various steps to their movement pathway. When they returned from their new movement map exploration, Alorani asked them what they had added to their map.

Krit: I added a turn, a jump.

Serina: I turned.

Lilly: I jumped, I spun, I fell, I turned.

Alorani: I noticed Lilly was spinning right in between Raven and I there, which was this beautiful turning, turning...

Raven: It was a whirlpool.

The next stage in this process would have required students to notate on their maps these steps that they added to their pathways, but, unfortunately, this was our last class together. This notation of pathways and steps provides a further form of dance literacy because students can communicate their movement ideas to someone else and have them follow.

Creative dance classes seemed to offer an opportunity for the integration of subjects in a way that was meaningful to the students. These interconnections often came from the students themselves, and so they were engaged in their own learning and using their bodies as a tool from which to learn.

**to shift from one mode of representation into another.** I saw evidence of this theme across all the sites. There were 34 units of data for this theme. This theme speaks

to integrated learning within the arts, such as translating from dance into visual arts and visual arts into dance. There is something important that happens as students are asked to translate ideas or concepts from one artistic medium into another—they show an ability to clarify ideas that were amorphous. They also open up to new possibilities. In some cases, this translation becomes a form of notation they can use to remember a dance, and, in other cases, it can become an interpretation of the dance in a different medium.

While working with the kindergarten students, Emily brought in some

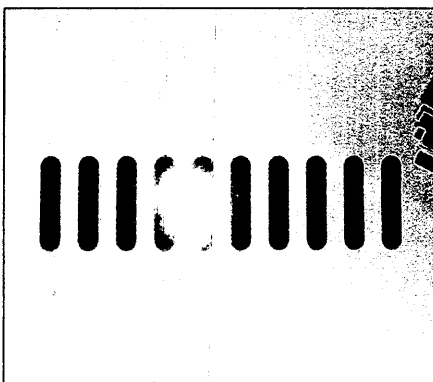


Figure 100: Isabelle's shape card.

shape/symbol cards for the students to interpret.

Emily asked, "What kind of dancing goes with this

card?" Using the card to the left, Isabelle was

exploring a pathway in space (a sort of dentil pattern

like on the top of a castle) in which she took a step

up, then sideways, then backwards and then

sideways. It seemed as if she were exploring the

physical pathway she would be making in order to get around these short dashes. She seemed to be translating a bird's-eye view of an obstacle course into a pathway for her body.

Emily used this experience with the symbol/shape cards to provoke the kindergarten students to create their own cards based on something they had done that week. McKayla drew "a map of her steps." I noticed that, after she had finished her drawing, she was standing at the carpet, looking at her picture, and dancing. These steps appeared to be very intricate. When a teacher asked her what she was doing, she replied,

“This is a step map and it helps me remember the steps and where to go to.”

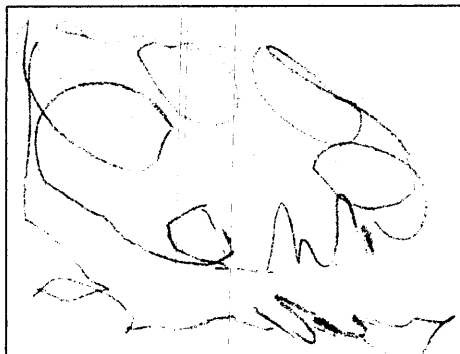


Figure 101: McKayla's step map

Emily also encountered McKayla and her map:

Emily asked, “What is this?” and McKayla said:

“This is a twirl, this is walking, and this is a turn.” It’s almost one continuous line, and she was tracing it with her finger, “and you go this way and you go that way.” When she came up to present, she said, “It’s a step map, it’s a map of my steps.”

This shift into the domain of mapping was another form of dance notation, but, in this case, it was initiated by four-year-old McKayla as an attempt to show what she had done so she could remember it.

On our second last visit, I left the grade five students with some information on artist Alexander Calder and his wire sculptures as well as various colours of wire. It was my gift to them for participation in the study. I was also interested to see how they might use the wire to interpret their dances of inclusion and exclusion. Some students used the

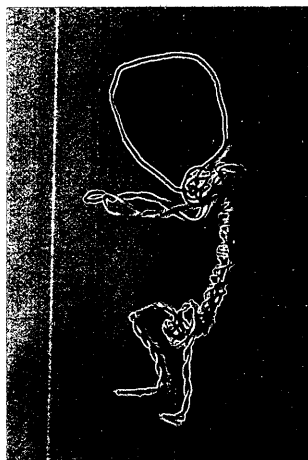


Figure 102 & 103: Matthew's sculpture and the picture he was interpreting

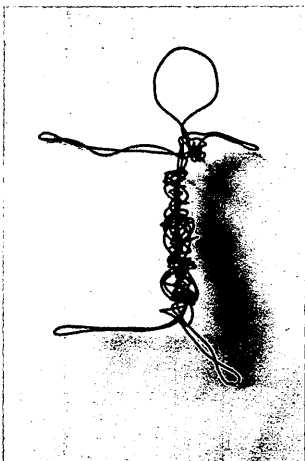
wire sculpture as another medium to represent shapes they had made in their dances.

This is Sebastien crouched over. It looked like a closed shape, a “being excluded” shape, because it was small and closed.

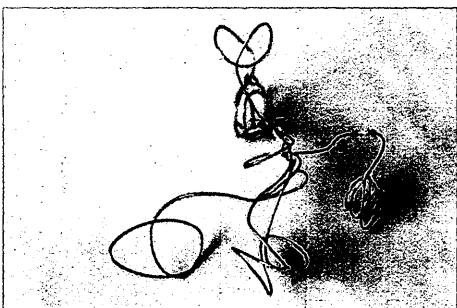
Other students used the wire sculpture to build on the shapes they had created physically

with their bodies, and then to abstract the concept of these

bodily shapes into abstract constructions of bodies, through the wire sculpture, as Sydney did in the following examples.



This is someone lying on the ground like I was and they're making a star. They feel like they're in the air because they are always getting included in everything...so they feel like a star. (Sydney)



This one is like the person doesn't know what is happening—they don't know what's going on in the world. They're being excluded so they just walk around the block and they see people doing stuff. (Sydney)

Figures 104 & 105: Sydney's wire sculpture

As a further step towards integrating the curriculum, during one feedback session with the grade six students, instead of responding verbally to the dances they were seeing, they were asked to respond through visual arts sketches. Here are several different visual art responses to the dance group working on the poem:

*Gentle fleet-footed, leaping with the light, once tree spirits, restless for flight. (Day, 1991)*

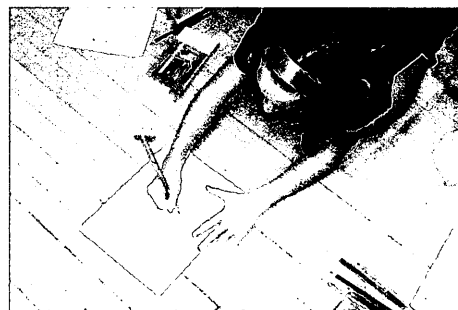
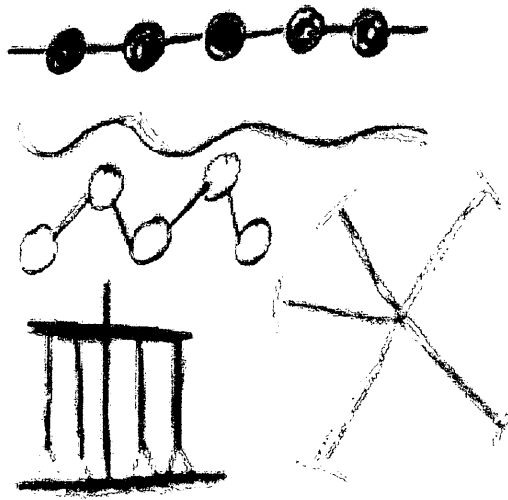
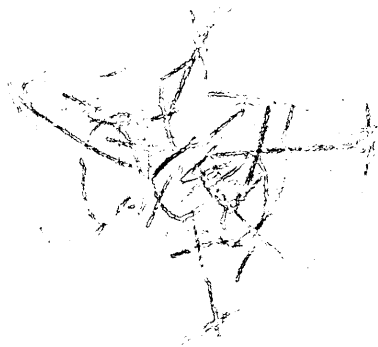


Figure 106: Louise sketching her responses



Figures 107-109: Nicole's sketches of the dance group and the group at work



Figures 110 & 111: Rachel's sketch of the same group and the group presenting



Figure 112 & 113: Sally's sketch of the same group and the group presenting



For something as fleeting and ethereal as dance, these moments of shifting from one domain to another allow for, at least, a trace of the event. It may be in the form of notation such as McKayla's movement map, or the dashed card that could trigger Isabelle's movement response, or the quickly sketched responses by the grade six students. I infer that these transitions are an outward sign of the internal brain connections that are being established as students use their bodies in creative activities. In these grade six visual arts responses, I could see evidence of their interpretations of the dances they had witnessed. This included pathways in space, the spatial relationships, as well as the qualities of the movements employed in each of the dances: these ideas came out in the type of shapes, lines and colours used in their graphic arts responses.



## **Discussion**

The purpose of this section is to discuss the findings of this study in terms of what the students are learning in creative dance classes and in relationship to the current literature on creative dance education. As introduced in the first three chapters of this dissertation, this literature involves research on dance, education, and creativity. The discussion will follow the same headings as the findings.

### **Their dancing self**

The students in this study seemed to be developing an awareness of their dancing selves, as they rediscovered their tacit knowledge of the elements, began to see themselves as dancers, embraced their personal movement voices, developed a sense of their bodies in space, and became aware of their reflective responses to affective outcomes of creative dance experiences. In many cases, the students were demonstrating knowledge of the elements of dance with very little scaffolding from the teacher. The kindergarten students had a wealth of movement vocabulary that Emily was helping them name and use to create dances. As they interacted with their scarves and created shapes with their bodies in space, we witnessed their tacit knowledge. The grade five students, in particular, seemed to recognize that they had a lot of knowledge about dance that they didn't know they had. In only a few classes, they re-connected to this knowledge. The grade six students, because of their extensive dance experience in school, could use the dance elements to create dances intentionally.

The findings in this chapter echo Press' (2002) belief that everyone knows how to dance but they don't necessarily know that they do. Press (2002) uses the dancing self

as a metaphor for someone “who feels vitally alive and creatively engaged in the world...a creative individual, supported by society and its educational enterprises” (p. 15). The findings of this chapter suggest that dance is a part of our tacit knowledge but remains dormant until provoked or we are “given permission” to use this knowledge in school. Grade five student Jennifer seemed to discover a dancing self, something “she didn’t know she had.” Grade five student Tammy even discussed an “inner self” while other students interpreted dance as coming from the heart. These students were tapping into a part of themselves that they either had forgotten over time or didn’t realize they were allowed to use in school—their bodies. As Stinson (1988) says, “The body is the first self we know, awareness of our bodies is an important aspect of knowing ourselves” (p. 4). Polanyi (1966) says, “Our body is the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge” (p. 15). These students suggested that, when we become disconnected from our bodies, we seem to have lost a part of our selves.

**tacit knowledge.** As one grade six student mentioned, she had felt the most creative when she was young, dancing around the kitchen table. Sheets-Johnstone (2011) argues, “Movement is our mother tongue...[It is] first of all the mode by which we make sense of our own bodies and by which we first come to understand the world” (p. xxv). As witnessed by the students in this study, the movement in creative dance experiences is everyday movement; it is natural and familiar (Stinson, 1988; Brehm & McNett, 2008). This type of everyday movement used as a language of learning in creative dance classes, re-connects us to our original *mother tongue*. It also connects to the self, because it is a direct product of ourself—our body and our movement that we have generated over

time. Echoing what Alorani (grade three teacher) said, “The elements of dance are fairly human,” Hanna (1979) writes, “Dance is human thought and behavior performed by the human body” (pp. 3-5). Because creative dance provides students with an opportunity to “dance how they feel” and in their own way, it provides some insight for students (and adults) into how the students are experiencing the world around them. Polanyi (1966) says that by becoming more aware of how our body participates in our perceptions, we can “throw light on the bodily roots of all thought including man’s highest creative powers” (p. 15).

**personal voice.** Connected to the students’ discovery of their tacit knowledge of the elements of dance is the concept that everyone has her/his own distinct way of moving—their own personal movement voice. It was apparent that many of the students in this study were learning to develop their own way of moving and using movement to express themselves and their ideas. From kindergarten student Tristan showing his variations on a bridge shape to Rinaldo’s attempt to find a new version of a stall, they were developing their own movement vocabulary. Each of the teachers in this study were trying to elicit the students’ own movement voices to empower them to develop dance as another language of learning. Chappell (2006) found a “physically inhabited self” as “the most complex layer of physical thinking” (p. 116), and it was through this self that students could give personal voice.

The grade five students, and especially Jennifer (who at first considered herself a non-dancer), developed a sense of personal voice and agency throughout the five dance classes. It was remarkable to witness her comfort level in leading flocking on the last

day. For the grade six students who were trained in dance (all girls), although there was tension for some of them as their teacher challenged their use of specific dance styles, such as ballet, it was an exciting tension as they were provoked to move beyond what they already knew to something creative—their own voice and ideas. As Vislocky (2002) reminds us, with trained dancers, it requires purposeful work in order to discover this personal voice, as it is easy to become “stuck” in movement patterns: “The creative work of these dancers will reflect the style in which they have been drilled” (p. 56). Vislocky (2002) recognizes improvisation as an essential teaching tool for discovering a personal voice in dance. In the current study, the development of personal voice also came about through improvisation, or what the teachers called *bodystorming* (a physical form of brainstorming). Sheets-Johnstone (2011) refers to dance improvisation as “thinking in movement,” which she relates to the work of jazz musicians in a jam session. I posit that this concept is also at the root of the development of a personal voice in creative dance. Snowber suggests that dance improvisation releases multiple dimensions of the self. This current study revealed that pedagogical documentation of the improvisation in creative dance classes can unmask these multiple selves, including a student’s dancing self (qtd. in Leavy, 2009).

**a sense of the body in space.** It was clear from the sheer amount of moving that happened in each classroom, and the few safety concerns that arose that students were learning to reconnect to their dancing self and to sense their bodies in space. But sensing their bodies in space also relates specifically to Stinson’s (1995) delineation between dancing and regular movement, i.e. dancing implies an “internal sensing of oneself in

stillness and in motion” (p. 43). This was apparent with kindergarten student Tristan, who seemed to have a highly developed sense of what his body was doing in space and what it looked like to others. Tristan had what Sansom (2011) describes as a “heightened kinesthetic attentiveness” (p. 84). This speaks to an embodied way of knowing that seems to be at the centre of young children’s perceptions of the world—they know and experience the world physically. As seen in the grade five class, as students get older and spend more time behind desks, this way of knowing the world can become dormant. But this kinesthetic sense or attentiveness is necessary in order to express movement ideas intentionally and to read other bodies. The students in this current study were developing a connection between what they saw, and how it felt. Chappell (2006) found this same relationship between *seeing* (or a visual way of knowing) as well as *sensing* (which she related to somatics).

**affective outcomes.** Some grade five students mentioned a connection to a world inside themselves. This connecting of the inner sensing to the world outside the child seemed to help them discover themselves holistically, because they became more aware that internal feelings, thoughts, and theories could have outward physical manifestations. Creative dance experiences seem to offer a development of the whole child, because the child becomes one with her/his body (Vallance, 1989; MacDonald, 1991; Sansom, 2011) developing a *whole-self awareness* (Chappell, 2008). As MacDonald (1991) says, creative dance involves the child “physically, emotionally and intellectually” (p. 436). Bond and Stinson (2000/2001) found “a sense of personal synthesis” in children’s experiences of dance (p.70). Hanna (1979) suggests that dance has the capacity to

engage students fully and to alter states of consciousness, because it creates a relationship between the affective and the cognitive domains of communication (p. 66-67).

There were many moments in this study when I witnessed students deeply engaged within the affective experiences that creative dance classes offer. Most times, the students were smiling and enjoying themselves. Sometimes, the students' eyes were closed, as they attempted to concentrate, and, sometimes, their brows were furrowed and their bodies tense as they attempted to solve a creative dance problem. There were also experiences of shyness and fear, but for most students, these creative dance classes were positive experiences. The kindergarten children and grade three students looked exhilarated and overjoyed. On reflection, most students found the creative dance classes calming and relaxing. These findings relate to Stinson's (1988) *aesthetic experiences*—how students experienced total involvement and deep connections—and also to Bond and Stinson's (2000-2001) notion of *bodily resonance*, which ranged “from high intensity excitement to feelings of relaxation and tranquility” (p. 56). They are also connected to Nielson's (2003) *aesthetic moments*, “intense moments when a child radiates a special presence, a deep concentration and absorbedness in creating a significant form” (p. 391). As one views the pictorial evidence in these results, one can see these moments of special presence. As Zain expressed in his journal, he found a sense of freedom. Bond and Stinson (2000/2001) found this theme of freedom present for students from early childhood to adolescence (p. 60). These experiences also relate to Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) theory of flow, because they become “autotelic,” i.e. they are self-rewarding and

motivating. In fact, several of the students wrote about an experience of flow in their journals. The grade six students, working in their groups, seemed to find a balance between the challenges of the exercise (creating dances in groups from two lines of poetry) with their skills. They worked continuously, each period, until they exhausted themselves. Hanna (1979) discusses this as a *healthy fatigue* (p. 68-69). One morning they came into class and instantly became so engrossed in their group work that Eva didn't want to interrupt them to do a warm-up activity. The students were clearly engaged and motivated by creative dance experiences that seemed to allow students to re-engage with bodies. However, as we saw with even the youngest kindergarten students (the four-years-olds had been in school for one month), schooling itself seems to override access to some of these bodily perceptions of the world. The students needed to be given permission to use their bodies in school.

**permission.** When Emily asked the kindergarten students, "Can you make shapes with another part of your body?" she provoked them to extend concept of shape to include their whole body. Of course, these kindergarten students knew how to make shapes with their whole body, but, in this instant, Emily challenged their notions of shape in school learning by giving them permission to do something different. Emily's actions relate to Chappell's (2007) *foundations for creativity*, which involves teachers *fuelling* the students, preparing them for creative work as well as working to build an *openness to the unusual*, but it goes beyond this. As Emily said, the kindergarten students "already know something about the way school and adults work," and so Emily had to overcome their perceptions of the way they were expected to behave in a school

classroom. Brooke (the grade five teacher) explained that, in school, “They’re educated out of wanting to move.” Alorani said, “We’re conditioned to move through school in a certain way. At each point, there is a ‘this is what sitting looks like, this is what standing looks like, this is what a line looks like, this is what it looks like to be ready.’” Tobin (1997) notes a whole set of unwritten body rules that young children learn through educational settings. As Sansom (2011) explains, “Within the educational environs, the body is prone to being controlled and constrained so much that it gradually becomes a non-essential item in the learning process” (p. 56). As seen in the results of this study, part of accessing this tacit knowledge of dance and the dancing self requires teachers to overcome the hidden curriculum of school—the body is not to be used to learn but to be kept under control and still.

Related to this control of the body learned in school is the control of the body learned outside of school, in dance studios. In order to discover a personal voice and their dancing self, many young dancers also have to overcome the hidden curriculum of dance studio training and dance technique, which emphasizes conformity and control and a finite number of dance steps. As Eva recognized, the studio dancers “think they’re doing something wrong if they don’t use their technique.” Unlike dance teachers who teach other styles of dance, Stinson (1985) notes that the role of creative dance educators is not to control behaviour but to develop “children’s capacity to create their own knowledge, their own dances, their own lives in the context of knowledge of the other” (p. 224). Dance education, as opposed to dance training, seems to allow all students access to their personal tacit knowledge of movement.



An overall re-connection to their dancing self seemed to come about because of a re-connection to their body and their own personal movement, and this seemed to bring about some sense of whole-self awareness. In order for this to occur, teachers needed to overcome the students' pre-conceived notions of the body in school and of dance as a specified number of steps which the teacher would teach them.

### **Intersubjectivity**

Intersubjectivity involved a leading and following of each other's actions, and in some cases, it involved direct touch with another. This theme also included an ability to read the body language of another person (or themselves) in order to begin to use this understanding with intentionality in their dance creations and to provide feedback to their peers.

From the "follow-the-leader" games of the kindergarten students to the more complex and intimate mirroring and flocking of the grade three and five students, to the group creations of the grade six students, leading and following seemed to provide an opportunity to learn about *the other*. There was definitely something powerful about leading and following for all ages of students in this study, as they discovered the cause-and-effect relationship in this activity. As Alorani explained, by following someone you are forced to take on someone else's vocabulary. The grade five students recognized (and some feared) the responsibility of leading the group in flocking. Alorani encapsulated this experience as one that invites safety, beauty, and trust because everyone is involved, they're respecting themselves and one another; it builds

community. As Shapiro (2009) suggests, “In learning to represent the world as they experience it, they become better able to see themselves in others” (p. 196).

Dance movement therapists describe experiences such as mirroring or flocking in terms of *kinesthetic empathy* or *empathic mirroring*, as tools for understanding the experience of another (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2009, p. 43). Tortora (2006) says that when an adult follows a child’s lead, they are offered an opportunity to understand that child, on a deeper level, through their movement repertoire. I suspect the same happens when the experience is between two children. Brehm and McNett (2008) recognize that, in these powerful situations, both leader and follower are learning to be sensitive observers. Vallance (1989) believes dancers working in partners or groups “alternately free and bind themselves to one another,” a demanding process that is also enjoyable (p. 42). Antilla (2008) sees dialogue in dance as “a prelinguistic, bodily and concrete happening that streams from one body to another” (p. 162). These types of joyous, but demanding, experiences for the children in this present study relate once again to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) experiences of *flow*. Hoeye (2002) describes these leading and following experiences as euphoric and relates them to “the mental concentration of play and flow” (p. 67). As Press (2002) suggests, engagement “requires not just the experience of self, but the desire and will to interact with and to be affected by the other” (p. 158). Press (2002) sees the intersubjectivity between dancing bodies as a “breathing, living entity that has its own creative forces” (p. 176). When watching the students interact while following and leading, mirroring and flocking, there appeared to be this entity which enveloped the experience—a complete awareness of the self and other

leading to empathy. As noted earlier, Greene (1995) says that imaginative experiences involve “becoming a friend of someone else’s mind, with the wonderful power to return to that person a sense of wholeness” (p. 38).

**reading bodies.** An ability to learn to read bodies is perhaps one of the most essential outcomes of creative dance classes. This seems to be something we take for granted as human beings, part of our tacit knowledge, that we develop an ability to understand someone by reading the language of her/his body. In education, we overutilize the verbal and the written, and we tend to ignore the physical body. Students such as Ahad and Sebastien recognized the importance of body language, but they rarely have a chance to discuss it. This seemed like such a novel event for these grade five students. These grade five students made really clear connections to body language, dance, and their theme of inclusion and exclusion.

Sheets-Johnstone (2011) discusses a “corporeal turn,” whereby we switch from using verbal language to focusing on the language of movement coming from the body (p. xix). The grade five students really enjoyed discussing the theme of inclusion and exclusion, and they had many interesting things to say about it. However, it remained a topic disconnected from their personal lived experiences until they began discussing body language. By learning that they had the ability to read bodies, they may have expanded their perceptions in order to be able to know each other better, to know their world better, and to understand this topic through their bodies. Creative dance experiences may have allowed these grade five students to rediscover their tacit knowledge of the body and as Sheets-Johnstone (2011) discusses, their first mode of

thinking, i.e., thinking in movement. With more creative dance experiences, this way of knowing the world could become even more finely tuned.

Brehm and McNett (2008), who emphasize creative dance as a means of learning to communicate, recognize that, although facial expressions and gestures can add meaning to spoken language, body language can also reveal underlying contradictions to the verbal communication: “Movement may communicate where words fail, and creative dance keeps this channel of communication alive” (p. 21). This was a very important concept for these grade five students, where students such as Iqra over-compensated for her bodily discomfort by speaking continuously. Brehm and McNett (2008) suggest that when verbal language is removed from communication, body language becomes paramount.

**touch and communication.** Tristan and Isabelle taught us the important lesson that learning to communicate through touch, with a sense of care, can begin in kindergarten. With the grade six students, we see that this learning can become well developed with extended creative dance experiences. But students must be given the opportunity to learn these valuable lessons. The small moment between Tristan and Isabelle helps to animate an important educational theory—social constructivism. Students are wonderful teachers, and there are many lessons being taught by students in creative dance classes. In this case, Tristan was teaching Isabelle how he wanted to be touched. The day before, I had witnessed Isabelle being roughly handled by Kassity. Isabelle’s response, at the time, had been to run away and avoid the rough touch.

Perhaps, with this new lesson from Tristan, her response the next time might be different. Perhaps she would, in turn, pass on this lesson of “how to touch gently” to Kassity.

Somehow, when students enter school, a principal lesson is that the body is something to be kept still and under control. Students are constantly reminded to keep their hands to themselves or to keep their hands folded in their laps. There is an important emphasis on *no touch* in our schools, but when do students actually learn how to touch with a sense of care and empathy? If teachers adhere to a strict “no touch” policy, when is it that students learn to touch each other with respect? Students should learn that touch (like any form of communication) does not exist on two extremes, *good touch* and *bad touch*, but across a whole range of communicative possibilities. Witness the recent experiences in one Ontario school where students held a “hug-in,” protesting the school’s policy on touch (Belgrave, 2012). These students had been “verbally warned” for consoling a friend with a hug, because the school had a strict no-touch policy, outlined by the motto “no shoving, no loving.” From this example, we see that, too often, touch becomes equated with either violence or sex. This no-touch policy, which developed out of adults’ uneasiness with their own bodies and uneasiness with the sensory pleasure involved in children’s play, leads to feelings of isolation and separation among students (Tobin, 1997; Sapon-Shevin, 2009). Without an opportunity to learn the many possibilities for touch and using our bodies as tools for communication, bodies are relegated to become sites for competition and struggle rather than care and support (Sapon-Shevin, 2009), or, worse, bodies become eliminated from education altogether and schools become a site for de-humanization (Sansom, 2011).

Sapon-Shevin (2009) says, that if we wish to help students make connections and see their responsibilities to one another as human beings, we must allow them to re-learn to touch and be touched in schools (p. 169):

We have created a vicious circle; we are so nervous about inappropriate touch that we fail to touch children, and this lack of touch leads to ever-increasing aggressive and antisocial behavior, which is responded to punitively and sometimes even with physical punishment. (p. 176)

The grade six students, clearly demonstrating their comfort level with the concept of touch, provide an important lesson for educators on what can happen when students are afforded the responsibility of touch and learning to touch with care.

In her doctoral dissertation, *Handle with care*, Collen (2002) recognizes that dance teachers can mentor touch, allowing their students to learn how to touch and be touched in a form of tactile dialogue that helps them build relationships. If we allow children to learn lessons about touch from one another, rather than intervening and setting “no touch” policies, children will develop that awareness of, and respect for, the *other*, in context with the other.

Every child who is touched lovingly, kindly, safely and respectfully carries that memory in her body. ...And every classroom in which children and teachers are allowed to be fully and completely human—embodied—allowed to cry, hug, dance, move, touch, connect, brings us closer to a world in which all humans are connected and peaceful as well. (Sapon-Shevin, 2009, p. 183)

Learning to communicate through touch is an important learning found in creative dance classes.

The intersubjectivity found in creative dance classes seems to provide students with important lessons about empathy, self and other, creating relationships, and using the body and touch to communicate with others. Many of these lessons are lacking from education as a whole (including recess and play time), because of the general lack of respect for the body in schools, but they seem to be essential in creative dance education.

### **Collaborative Creativity**

Collaborative creativity seems to be a major component of creative dance classes, as students are creating with others, getting feedback from others, and presenting in front of others. As students collaborate, they are forced to deal with a whole set of tensions, because they are using their bodies to communicate, combine their ideas in order to come up with new ideas, present their embodied ideas to their peers, and work with members of the opposite sex (which brings in a another level of conflict).

**physical collaboration.** Creative dance classes offer a unique opportunity to collaborate on physical ideas; as Bresler (2004) suggests, dance is “highly collaborative, where bodily interactions are central to communication and creation” (p. 128).

Although there is a need to explain ideas to others verbally, Rinaldo (grade six) suggests, “It’s important to let a person show, not just say, what they want to do...because what they say may not be what they actually want to do.” Giguere (2011) calls this hybrid form of communication, where students combine verbal dialogue with demonstration, *active discussion* (p. 10). These creative dance classes seem to offer students a chance to

find many different means to explain and share their ideas. Because it is physical and there is a chance for instantaneous aesthetic feedback, i.e. it looks or feels right or not, the rewards seem to be intrinsic for these students. It is the desire to create something together that provokes them to listen, to argue, and to compromise, i.e. to develop the social skills required to work in a group.

**performance skills.** One of the greatest challenges of creative dance, for many students, is the act of performing in front of others. This is a rich learning experience embedded within creative dance classes. It involves such trust and vulnerability on the part of the performer to put themselves forward as the art, i.e. the body as both the instrument and the canvas. As the students explained, when performing, your senses become so finely tuned that you can perceive the difference between an audience laughing at you and with you. Performing in a creative dance class allows an opportunity to showcase your own personal voice, because there is no correct answer. It also asks that you present yourself (your body) with these ideas. It offers students an opportunity to learn to trust their physical ideas, e.g. to make “funny shapes,” and to know that their uniqueness is encouraged.

As much as movement is our first language of learning, much of that early movement learning was not necessarily about performing for others (or at least we weren't aware of the fact that we were performing). As children, we spend time in our own fantasy movement worlds that are private. For some of the kindergarten children, this idea of having to perform their personal thoughts was overwhelming. For others, who were perhaps more gregarious (Tristan, Grace, McKayla), it was not a problem. It is



interesting that the pressure to perform in front of peers was felt from some of the kindergarten students but also from the grade six students who have had so much experience performing in front of one another. Part of a collaborative creative process is learning to trust others and developing the courage to put your embodied ideas forward and present them in front of your peers. The act of performing or presenting their ideas in front of others, especially without written or verbal communication, is an important life skill and one that students don't get to explore very often in school settings. In a world of disembodied voices and ideas, where people interact mainly through cyberspace, the interaction and presentation of real bodies, in real time and real space, is an important concept. Creative dance allows students to learn to become comfortable in their actual bodies and to value each other as unique individuals with unique ways of moving.

**gender and social skills.** The grade six students in this study recognized that experiences in mixed gender groups "makes a relationship outside of dance easier." It seems that forcing students to deal with differences in opinion, ideas, and gender in the creative process develops their collaborative skills, as they compromise, listen to one another, argue, and overcome obstacles in order to create an end product. Eva recognized that grade six is when gender issues really start to surface, so forcing boys and girls to work together seems to be an important provocation that allows these students to address their pre-conceived notions of one another and dance. The grade six girls said the boys "seem like they don't care," while the boys recognized, "We didn't want to get in a fight with the girls so we just went along with what the girls wanted to

do.” Eva, their teacher, said, “The girls have pre-conceived notions of the boys and the boys know it, so they function that way.”

Warburton (2009) recognizes that research into female-male peer relationships in dance education would be a worthy area for investigation, stating, “Membership in peer groups is one of the most powerful forces during childhood and adolescence. The successful formation and navigation of interpersonal relationships with peers is a process central to adolescent development in all cultures” (p. 147). There is currently no dance education research on this phenomenon. However, this present study offers some insight into the importance of these types of relationships and how they can develop in a creative dance milieu.

**collaborative creativity.** The student experiences in this study (especially that of the grade six students) point to the importance of opportunities for collaborative creativity. Chappell (2006) suggests that there is an assumption in much of the dance education research that creativity is conceived as individual. Chappell (2006) speaks of the importance of a balance between individual and collaborative creativity, i.e. “shared purpose and shared responsibility for a joint creative outcome” (p. 126). Like the students in this study, who said they have become more like a family through creative dance classes, Chappell (2006) discusses a *communal creativity*, which she likens to John-Steiner’s “family collaboration,” which emphasizes overall shared objectives by a class, shifting roles, and a sense of group belonging. Much of the creative dynamic for the grade six students involved respect for each other’s creative work, as well as learning from and giving feedback to one another. Eva also believed that her students, working in

mixed gender groups, were learning to support each other “as human beings,” since they were learning to celebrate differences.

Chappell (2008b) conceives of a *humanizing creativity* found within the context of creative dance classes. Humanizing, because creativity in this context involves whole self-awareness and is centered in the body—“the very place of being human” (p. 16). The grade six students demonstrated Chappell’s (2008b) humanity in how they embraced conflict—“we like to argue,” and how they moved beyond the notion that all creative dance experiences are simply fun (p. 16). As Malaguzzi (1998) says, “The most favourable situation for creativity seems to be interpersonal exchange, with negotiations of conflicts and comparison of ideas and actions being the decisive elements” (p. 76). The Reggio educators recognize that a group situation “helps to develop many of the characteristics of intelligence: argumentation and explaining, negotiation, the capacity to consider multiple possibilities of the same problem, and the ability to use other points of view as a resource” (Vecchi, 2001, p. 165). The grade six students in this study recognized the intensity of this type of work and the need to take breaks in order to refresh themselves and allow their ideas to incubate. It is interesting that the grade six students described these creative dance experiences as calming and relaxing. Is it because this tension-filled work was centered in the body—their original site of problem solving?

Giguere (2011) reported on the importance of small group environments in dance education for enhancing cognitive development. It was the social nature of the small group that proved significant because of its collaborative nature. Her study reported

improvements in communication and social and problem solving skills via small group dance interactions. Malaguzzi (1998) discusses how the small group approach, based on a system of relations, “best reveals how a classroom is composed of independent individuals as well as subgroups and alliances with different affinities and skills,” and this system of relations “has in and of itself a virtually autonomous capacity to educate” (p. 69). As Mardell, Otami, and Turner (2008) point out, the children in the Reggio Emilio schools have very sophisticated metacognitive skills when it comes to collaboration and creative learning: “they have advanced understanding of how groups work and how groups help them to learn” (p. 115). As Rinaldi (2001b) says, “Sociality is not taught to children: they are social beings. Our task is to support them and live their sociality with them...Not only does the individual child learn how to learn, but the group becomes conscious of itself as a *teaching place*” (p. 82). I would say that Eva’s grade six students, because of their group work experiences with creative dance, also enjoy advanced metacognitive skills and understandings about learning in groups. As Malaguzzi (1998) recognized, “The group forms a special entity tied together through exchange and conversation, reliant on its own way of thinking, communicating and acting” (p. 69).

The type of social skills these students were developing in a collaborative creative process overlaps considerably with what the website of The Conference Board of Canada (2013) calls *employability skills*, namely, “skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work—whether on your own or as part of a team” ([www.conferenceboard.ca/education](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/education)). These skills include *teamwork skills*, such as

working with others, while participating in projects and tasks and *innovation skills*, which “you need to contribute to an organizations’ innovation performance—to produce new and improved products, processes and services.” Innovation skills include working within the dynamics of a group, being open-minded, respecting and supporting the ideas of others, and listening and asking questions in order to understand (www.conferenceboard.ca/education). Although I recognize the connections, like the Reggio Emilians, I don’t believe that the objective of education is to prepare students for work. School is a part of life and, as such, should allow students to develop life skills.

In these creative dance classes, the students were learning important lessons about what it means to collaborate with others in the creative process. This meant listening, sharing, arguing, combining ideas, and respecting each other for their differences in ideas and gender. This learning happened within the partnerships and small groups, but also amongst the whole class as they learned to perform their ideas for each other, be respectful audience members, and give constructive and timely feedback as modeled by their teachers.

### **Dance as a language of learning**

Dance is a language of learning with a vocabulary based on the elements of dance; students can become literate in dance as a language. Because the language of dance is embodied knowledge, it allows the students to express their knowledge about many subjects through their bodies. As a language of learning, dance does seem to connect, as Stinson (1988) suggests, to the mind, body, and spirit. The grade six students certainly recognized it as a “unique way of learning” that “didn’t really feel like learning” because

it was also “fun.” Body movement and thinking with the body allows students to develop and connect knowledge in many subject areas across the curriculum, but also to their lives, because the first site of learning was their body. For the very young students, these interconnections (e.g. Charlie and his scarf) are discovered, naturally, through play-based experiences. For older students, creative dance allows them to re-connect their original play-based movement learning with other subjects in even more complex ways.

The experiences of the students in this study provide evidence for Hanna’s (1979) definition of dance as a language of communication and learning, and one with both intrinsic and extrinsic meaning. From those with little experience to the most experienced (grade six students), the children were able to demonstrate that they could use dance as an expressive form of thinking with the body. Many students and teachers in this study also recognized that dance seemed to access something special on the “inside,” while, at the same time, showing something externally.

Hanna (1979) suggests that the human beings’ ability to use dance as a language, i.e. as a symbol system, comes as a result of our ability for *cross modal perception*—our ability to utilize and exchange information between different sensory modalities (p. 59). As Hanna (1979) says, because “symbols are at a distance (in relative terms) in time, space, and affect from what they represent,” the more ways in which one can perceive a certain unit of information and store that information, the greater chance one has of recalling that information and abstracting the information (p. 58-60). In this study, we saw the students developing a visual and sensory awareness of each other and their own

bodies in space. We witnessed a tactile sensibility as they interacted with props, the floor, and other bodies. We saw them listen to the rhythms they made. We saw their deepening kinesthetic sense and their experiences of empathy, as they interacted with other bodies. Hanna (1979) also recognizes that there is a difference between cognitively understanding dance as a language (i.e. having a knowledge of the grammar of dance) and being able to utilize the language in creation and performance.

**dance literacy.** In order to intentionally express complex ideas from other subject areas through movement, students need opportunities to explore and express with their bodies. As students developed their dance literacy, they learned to connect words with actions such as the meaning of certain physical concepts such as over, under, beside, and between. As Stinson (1988) says, “words, which are abstract symbols, gain meaning only through experience with what the symbol stands for” (p. 7). To begin with, the kindergarten students explored the concept of bent shapes and then making shapes at different levels. Stinson (1988) suggests that as the movement becomes more internalized and they allow the words to become symbols for the movement, the movement disappears, at least externally. With the grade three students, Alorani recognized, when she introduced action words they knew these words well, and they had an internalized understanding of these words—instantly doing the actions associated with the words. Stinson (1988) says that, as children get older, they can discuss movement concepts without doing them, but the original movement connections exist internally if only as “a slight degree of muscular tension” (p. 6). But how does one develop students’ movement vocabulary so that they can use it as a language of learning?

As Van Gyn and O'Neil (1988) suggest, and as witnessed in this study, developing dance literacy is a process that begins with developing movement vocabulary (movements based on action words). The next step is to use this movement vocabulary to interpret imagery proposed by the teacher or coming from a students' own ideas. Finally, students are able to use all of this information to communicate larger concepts. It is in this final stage where students begin to use movement intentionally "to convey a message by way of the action to the observer" (Van Gyn & O'Neil, 1988, p. 315).

As witnessed in the kindergarten classroom, the students were developing their movement vocabulary through guided exploration. As Emily helped them "name" what they were doing, the students were internalizing the movement concepts. At this stage, "The major challenge to the teacher is making the students aware of how they are moving and to make those automatic movements clear and purposeful so they can be used in a dance context" (Van Gyn & O'Neil, 1988, p. 315). With the grade three students, Alorani was helping the students build a repertoire of movement vocabulary. This began with moving from various body parts and moving in different shapes and on different levels, and it developed to the more complicated concept of *qualities* of movement, which Alorani recognized was easier to understand when felt in the body. As suggested earlier, movement becomes dance, used as a language, when children become aware of using it symbolically. Van Gyn and O'Neil say that the first two parts of the process (developing movement vocabulary and interpreting imagery) help to "avoid pantomiming and literal representation of the external stimulus and promotes individualizing of the movement response" (p. 316).



When the grade five students began to explore shapes, levels, tempos, and qualities of movement that demonstrated inclusion and exclusion, they were attempting to use dance language to express images or ideas intentionally; however, they struggled with pantomime and cliché because of their lack of previous experiences in creative dance. As Sydney said, “We don’t have enough experience.” It seems that this was one of their first experiences with dance as a strand in the arts curriculum, and so they were missing the disciplinary grounding as outlined by Van Gyn and O’Neil (1988). They hadn’t had sufficient movement experiences from which they could enjoy developing their own material: “Active involvement in the movement is fundamental to the control of movement, to the understanding of the possibilities in movement and to the development of the feeling of sheer joy just from the experience of movement” (Van Gyn & O’Neil, 1988, p. 315). These grade five students had not developed enough personal movement vocabulary nor the ability to use this vocabulary to interpret imagery or ideas. They were stuck in the world of drama and pantomime, i.e. “acting it out.” As Lindqvist (2001) suggests, for young children, arts learning is *syncretistic*: to them dance and drama are almost the same concept. Time and experience is required to develop the language of dance separate from the language of drama. Van Gyn and O’Neil (1988) also suggest there is a certain order to be followed in developing dance literacy: “If students are introduced to imagery in dance, in the context that the imagery is the stimulus for action, before they are familiar with the action vocabulary of dance, the result is either very stereotypic movement or mime” (p. 314). This is not to say that the teacher cannot use imagery to guide, shape, or draw attention to children’s movement responses, but, in this

first stage, the focus is on the action rather than the image. We witnessed Brooke attempting to return to this earlier step and build some of this movement vocabulary and imagery interpretation as the students were attempting to express specific emotions, using their bodies and not their faces.

Although they struggled in their physical work with pantomime and cliché, the grade five students' development of dance literacy was apparent in their journal writing, because they had more experiences expressing themselves in written and verbal language than the language of dance. Vallari expressed, in her journal, her awareness of dance as a language that could convey many things, including her thoughts and feelings. She just hadn't developed enough movement vocabulary to become comfortable and to use dance fully as a language with which to communicate.

As in the language experiences witnessed in the grade six classes, Van Gyn and O'Neil (1988) suggest that creative dance classes offer many opportunities for the development of written language including the notation systems seen in the kindergarten (McKayla), grade three, and grade six classes. I disagree with Lindqvist's (2001) assertion that dance needs to be translated into words for it to be intelligible. In this study, the students at various ages were able to make meaning from their movements, and other students were able to make meaning by reading student bodies in space. In education, the written and verbal words are emphasized far more than the language of the body as a means for communication. But as Sheets-Johnstone (2011) says,

Thinking in movement is different not in degree but in kind from thinking in words. Words are not sharper tools, more precise instruments by which to think

about dynamics, by which to hone our sense of space, time, energy, causality or 'agentivity.' (p. 502)

Dance can be used as a language to express important concepts in education, but dance, as a tool for learning and communication, requires time on the curricular timetable for us to witness dance-literate students and teachers.

Unlike the grade five students, the grade six students had a much more developed movement vocabulary from which to draw with three dance classes a week over three years. Eva believed that these students were able to work intentionally, and were not aware of their rich dance literacy. As Eva says, they are able to work from instinct, but "the instinct has to come from a whole series of events that have led up to that...being prepared with a vocabulary of creative dance actions, pathways, understanding the elements of dance, having explored different tempos." These grade six students were certainly able to create from imagery, what Van Gyn and O'Neil (1988) call "an internal representation in response to an external stimulus" (p. 314). Although they still struggled with cliché in moments, the teacher's role was to challenge these preconceptions, as witnessed with Nicole and Jane. As Van Gyn and O'Neil recognize, the goal for this stage in creative dance "is the understanding that dance can reflect the images that the students as composers and performers have about external events, objects and associated thoughts and feelings and that dance itself can evoke images in the observer" (p. 314). Eva recognized that these grade six students' poetry-based dances were able to "speak to an audience." The students recognized that this dance literacy, this physical understanding of concepts, transfers into their work in other subjects, such as writing.

**cross-disciplinary learning.** The students in this study made many connections through creative dance classes to curriculum areas beyond dance. We have already seen that dance and drama were clearly related for many students, but four-year-old Charlie demonstrated how dance and science were related, as he explored the use of gravity and air resistance with his scarf. McKayla and the grade three students made connections between dance and geography as they created movement maps—these maps became a form of dance notation, but they also explored how they could translate from three-dimensional space into two-dimensional space. The grade six students were translating lines of poetry into dance while working in small groups. As seen in the documentation, this was a very complex process, especially when their teacher pushed them past cliché and their first ideas to develop even richer, more complex ways of thinking about the movement possibilities in their poetry. As Eva explained, through process-revealed type presentations at assemblies, other teachers and students were beginning to recognize this complex thinking. When students read their poetry and then did the dances, other teachers said, “I saw that, I saw the waves, I saw the foam rising.” They had begun to open their eyes to the depth of learning and to see the connections to other subjects.

**shifting modalities.** The movement maps and poetry also demonstrated connections among various modes of representation. The students, from kindergarten to grade six, recognized that it was possible to show their dances through drawing but also to dance visual images such as the dashes and squiggles interpreted by the kindergarten children. These students were becoming, as Reedy (2003) explains, *multilingual*, which results “when a teacher offers children opportunities to explore, develop, and redefine

their understanding of the world through as many media as possible” (p. 2). The Reggio educators recognize that this ability to “shift from one kind of intelligence, from one language of learning to another” is possible for all children, and enriches their ability to recognize and see the theories and interpretations of others, because they speak these many languages of learning (Rinaldi, 2001b, p. 81).

The results of this study suggest that it is possible for students to know dance as another important language of learning in our schools. Students made connections, using their thinking body in dance, to many other curriculum areas. However, in order for this type of interconnection to take place, dance needs a regular time on the curricular timetable, and this requires teachers (and all the stakeholders in education) to value dance (and the body) as a site of learning.

This chapter presented the learning for students in terms of re-connecting to their dancing self, intersubjectivity, collaborative creativity, and dance as an interconnected language of learning. We see that the teachers were, in each case reciprocally involved in this learning as facilitators. The next chapter discusses what specifically the teachers were learning in these creative dance experiences.

## **Chapter Six: Findings (Teacher Learning)**

### **What is the teacher learning in creative dance education?**

This chapter will outline the findings related to the teachers' learning in creative dance classes and discuss them in terms of the current literature on teaching creative dance in schools. Unlike in other types of dance teaching (dance training), the role of the teacher in creative dance classes is that of a facilitator of learning, helping students to discover their own creative potential. The findings for the teachers are summarized in the first section, which is followed by a discussion of the findings in relationship to the relevant literature.

### **The teacher is learning a new student-teacher relationship**

The results of this study seem to indicate that creative dance classes offer teachers a novel teaching and learning experience compared both to other areas of the curriculum and to their own dance learning experiences in a studio dance setting. Teachers are learning to develop structures for learning and to negotiate space and time for dance in overcrowded schools and an overcrowded curriculum. All the teachers in this study recognized that they were also learning to become facilitators of learning via creative dance. Through participation in the creative process with their students, they were seen as learners themselves—not the adult with all the correct answers. Instead, they were a person with questions—to inspire and provoke the development of students' personal voices. Throughout this process, the teachers recognized that, in creative dance classes, a different type of student-teacher relationship was established, one in which they were co-constructing meaning.

**to become a facilitator of learning.** All of the teachers in this research study discussed their role as facilitators in creative dance. There was evidence of this learning in 53 units of data. All talked about struggling with how much to lead (to teach directly) and how much to follow the lead of the students. They discussed this dilemma under various sub-headings: teacher-directed activities, management, coaching, coaxing, negotiating, scaffolding, giving up control, modeling, and giving feedback (this will be discussed further in Chapter 7). This theme connects to teachers helping students discover their tacit knowledge in dance but also helping to make this tacit knowledge conscious for the students. In order for students to be able to create dances with intention, students first need to be consciously aware of what they are capable of doing with their bodies. This often begins with the process of bodystorming (physical improvisation), followed by constant feedback, observations, and reflections. Through this process, students begin to develop an understanding of what their own personal movement looks like and means to others as well as to themselves, so they can begin to use this dance literacy to communicate a specific message.

Emily worked with the kindergarten students to create a class dance using the scarves. She gathered the students in a circle in the center of the gym and explained that they would create a dance together. Emily asked, "How should we start our dance?"

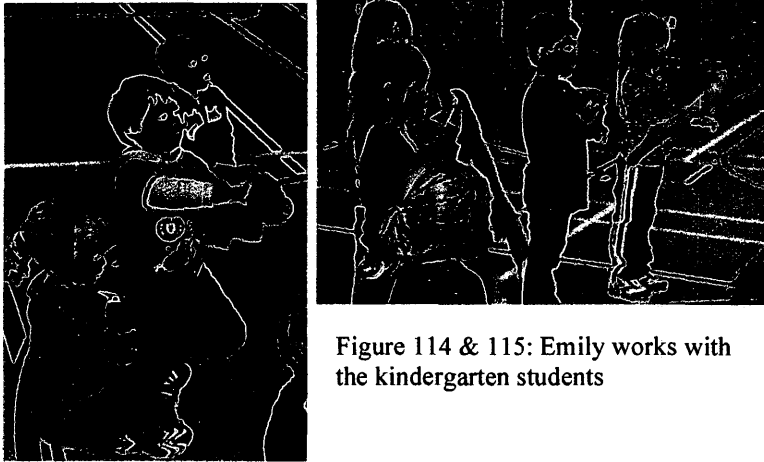


Figure 114 & 115: Emily works with the kindergarten students

Tristan D offered a twirling motion with his scarf in between his hands (rolling like in patty cake).

Emily went with this idea.

This became the first

movement in their group scarf dance. Emily asked, “What should happen next?” The students decided to make circles with their scarves for the next section of their dance.

Emily suggested that they should stand for this part. She reviewed the first two parts of the dance. Emily suggested that they should twirl using the other hand next. Explaining her teaching strategies, she stated:

Yes, I am directing them, but at the same time, they are doing all these movements. They’re swinging it around, they’re galloping...I’m naming it and I’m putting it in a dance context...I’m sort of pushing the envelope with them. I’m sort of getting them to somehow see the material of their body as material for dance as opposed to presenting them with material. They have material, they know the material already, they are familiar with the material. They’re not familiar with seeing the material as something with which to make a dance.

While working with the grade three students, Alorani said that she believes it’s imperative for the teacher to be a participant in the creative dance class, so that the students have an opportunity to see her as a learner too. She recognized, “As kids get older, more and more the teacher is behind a desk, the students are *learning* and the teacher *teaches*. So I think breaking down the divide sends a really amazing message to the students that we’re all learning this together.”





On her first day with these grade three students Alorani began with a name game dance.

We're going to go around the circle and I'd like you to say your name ...and move with your name. After I do my name and movement, you're all going to do it...in *unison*. I'm going to start...and then Emmanuel's going to be ready next. We're going to go all the way around the circle.

They did this name game dance twice. Each time, she



Figures 116 & 117: Alorani facilitates a name game dance

encouraged them to make their movements bigger and say their names louder and clearer and she gave them feedback. "So a really impressive difference between the first time and the second time. It got bigger, it got livelier, it got riskier." As

in most Ontario classrooms, these grade three students had spent a minimal amount of time on dance, and so it took a bit of time to really get them using their bodies. It required a bit of provoking their imagination, and then they "took off." As Alorani reflected, "The wackier or sillier it gets, the more opportunity to (within reason) explore range. So people were on the floor and really jumping."

Eva, the grade six teacher, admitted, even after twenty years of teaching creative dance, facilitating dance is complex, because you are facilitating a multi-layered experience. "I find it's really good to just question. I find a lot of teachers want to give them the answer." In creative dance, we are talking about a different type of



Figure 118: Eva observes a group's creative process, ready to give feedback

student-teacher relationship. As Eva explained, “You’re a facilitator in the vast explanation of the word—you put it out there and basically you say very little, you let it happen.” She knows that this type of learning is challenging for teachers and students, offering:

They [the students] keep saying to me, “This is hard,” and I say, “That’s good, don’t expect it to be easy.” You don’t want to be at the same level all the time, you want to grow, and in order to grow, you have to work on something challenging and work with it, and I say, “Don’t be worried if it’s hard.”

What I observed in Eva’s classroom is that groups consistently asked their teacher to come and watch their dance and give them feedback. They seemed to know not to ask Eva to give them answers and were excited to work with the feedback (usually in the form of questions) they received. They seemed hungry to share and learn throughout the process. I did not see one incident of *attitude*, once they had been given something else to think about by their teacher. They seemed to enjoy the challenge of problem solving, editing, and refining their creations. Eva also recognized her struggle to be this same type of teacher in other subjects, and realized that her students see her as the same person with the same set of educational values when teaching other subjects.

**to establish structures for participation.** In each classroom setting, there were certain routines or rituals that the teacher realized were important to establish in order to create a safe and productive space for facilitating creative dance. There were 20 units of data as evidence for this theme. This involved how the teachers and students transitioned

the types of spaces they were working in, into spaces for dance, e.g. pushing the desks back. It also involved the types of groupings they used (individual, partners, groups, whole class) and the formations for these (circles, personal space bubbles). For the kindergarten students, Emily introduced the concept of personal space (a space where they were not touching anyone or anything) on the first day. She also introduced the concept of a freeze dance in which they would freeze, in a shape on her signal.



Figure 119: Alorani begins each class with a variation on the circle dance

Alorani recognized that, by grade three, students are usually not sitting in circles anymore as they did in kindergarten classes. As the students are either sitting in desks or on the carpet, facing the teacher, she wanted to start each class with some circle time. During the first class, they did

the name game dance in a circle, and, each day after that, there was a particular focus to their circle time. Alorani said, “I think there’s something egalitarian about a circle, that we can all see each other. I’m not at the front.”

Another ritual that Alorani established was *moments of stillness* between each activity. She would often say to the students, “Take a moment of stillness to yourself.” Alorani recognized that this is similar to alignment and that it is influenced by her classical training in ballet; in this form you typically do an exercise on one side of the body and then come back to stillness, center your alignment, and then you would repeat the exercise on the other side of the body. I saw that, each day as she came in to teach these grade three students, after teaching her kindergarten students, she took a moment

of stillness before she began. She admitted that it was something she had to remind herself to do and remind herself to be aware of for her students. “There are a lot of transitions for kids at school, tons of transitions, and I think, as adults, we often are unaware, or we just forget about the transitions.” Dorothy, the classroom teacher, who was observing Alorani teaching these classes said, “It gives them a sense that something important is about to happen. Because if you’re doing karate...there are rituals you do before you begin, before you enter the space.” It is like a moment of preparation.

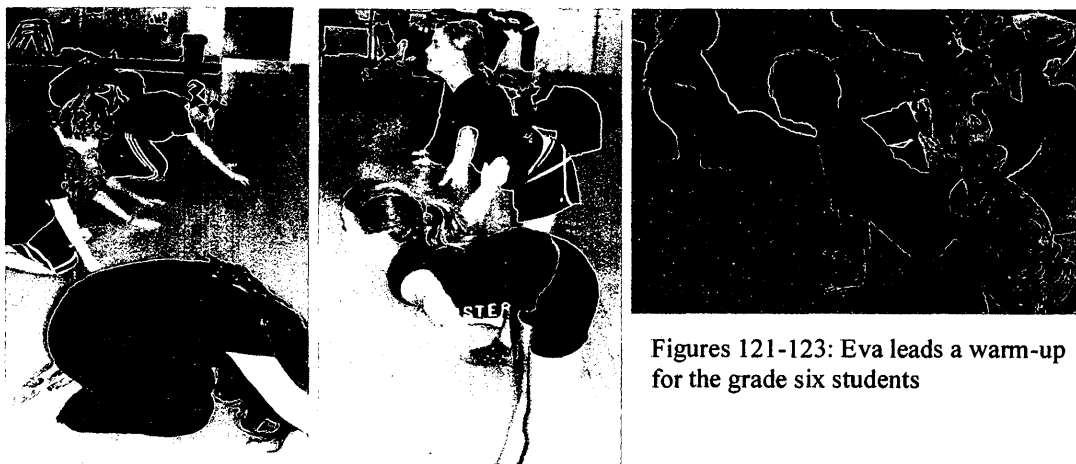


Figure 120: Neveathan’s neutral position

One of these transition rituals asked students to return to a *neutral position*, i.e. a coming back to standing with nothing going on in your body. Alorani described this to the grade three students. “As a performer, this is an important position, to stand in *nothing* before we move.” Alorani pointed out Neveathan’s “gorgeous neutrality.” I noticed, for many of them, neutral is actually quite erect but also stiff and tense (like Neveathan in the picture), but this is the beginning of their learning about neutral.

As Brooke reflected on her experiences with her grade five students, she also recognized the need for such routines. Talking out loud, she considered how, after they move their desks, she could get her students to sit in a circle (but has not yet done that). In the dance classes I witnessed, she used items like a seed shaker to get their attention, and she also used music in transitions. She recognized that sitting in a circle or doing a physical warm-up or game provided an important starting point for creative dance.

Eva started every grade six class with a teacher-led physical warm-up. She saw this as an important time to help the students make a transition from their previous classes. She also used this time for stretching and alignment exercises that included yoga poses such as downward dog and cobra.



Figures 121-123: Eva leads a warm-up for the grade six students

**to negotiate the interaction between space and the containment of school.**

This theme was most prevalent in the three sites where the teachers were teaching in a classroom setting. There were 17 units of data for this theme. Interestingly, it did not appear in the grade six data, a site where they have a large dance studio with a wooden floor and mirrors. This theme relates to the students' interaction with space in terms of their creativity and the development of their movement vocabulary and movement imaginations. The types of spaces in which the students were experiencing creative dance had a profound effect on the types of movement that came out of their bodies. It also relates to the typical experiences of the body in a school setting, a body that is controlled and kept still. The teacher's role in these settings became that of a

provocateur. How do you provoke the students to move in a confined space, in which they are normally not allowed to move or use their bodies creatively?

Working with the kindergarten children in both the gym and the classroom prompted Emily to recognize that space is a provocation for movement. In the classroom, where they worked in between tables and chairs and in behind shelves, their movement was stilted. When these four-and-five-year-olds entered the gym, they would run around



Figure 124 & 125: Ivy finds space to dance and students explore the gym

chasing each other, physically and vocally exploring the size of the space. They seemed free and completely engaged in this activity, although they tended to run and

not watch where they were going and collisions often occurred.

Emily reflected on the changes in space between the classroom and the gym:

I think kids, even in daycare, absorb lots of information about *what school is* ...and how we lay out the room. I mean, if space itself is a provocation, you look at the way kids react when they go into a gym, they automatically start to run; I mean the space itself provokes movement. The space in a classroom provokes a whole different type of movement.

Emily explained from her experience that a dance studio, which is still an open space, but a space that is a bit more specialized for dance, with less echo and perhaps a wooden floor so the students can go barefoot, tended to provoke kids to that *magic* place (quoting Sue Stinson). She said that they make “that little flip into dance.” She believed

that most classroom settings tend to work against that possibility, partly because of the architecture and lack of open space but also because of *what school is*. Emily acknowledged, “Kids have certain behaviours they associate with being in a classroom, such as listening behaviours.”

Brooke was teaching dance to her grade five class in a portable by pushing the desks back against the walls. She observed that this particular group of students, “have a hard time when they don’t have the enclosed structure of the desks.” She interpreted



Figure 126: The grade five students danced in a portable.

their behavior, “Oh my gosh, I’m up and moving, and I don’t even care what you’re saying.” She believed the physical change in the classroom provoked them to want to move. She recognized that, for many, there is this discombobulation, because in a creative dance class, they aren’t

always facing front, and they can’t always see the teacher or the board. “It’s not their experience to be flat out on the ground (in school).” As a result, she said she experienced a sort of chaos in her portable with the children in creative dance class, which she seemed to take in stride, because, afterwards, when back in their desks following dance, the students were calmer and more focused. She explained that using their body to learn is “higher stakes” for these children, because they are not handing in their understanding on a piece of paper but, in fact, have to let their teachers and their classmates see their understanding on their body. As Brooke said, “I think that’s scary for a lot of them...even though they like moving.” It seems that space interacts with movement as a

provocation for dance, but the culture of containment and emphasis on paper and pencil tasks in school inhibits movement and exploration of space, because students are inculturated into knowing that their bodies should not be moving in school, i.e. that movement is not associated with learning.

**to allow students unhurried time so movement can transform into dance.**

This theme was seen across the entire set of data (14 data units in total). The more experience and time the students were given in creative dance to explore and create, the richer were the developments. Eva's grade six students had more trust in their bodies and in their ability to create in small groups than I had ever experienced.

Emily viewed the kindergarten children's experience in the gym with the scarves as the beginning of a type of *flow* experience. She saw the children moving and creating

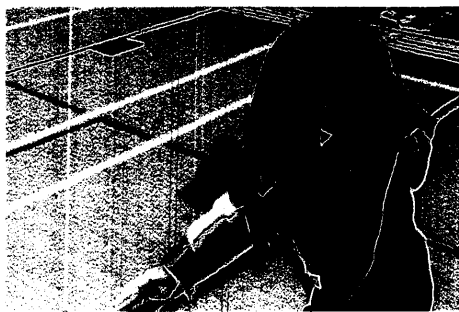


Figure 127: Tristan enjoys the time to explore with his scarf and space.

movement, like in the Reggio book *Dialogue with Places* (Filippini, Vecchi & Giudici, 2008) and she acknowledged that what happened in the book was a flow experience; then, after a lot of exploration time, the teachers needed to provoke the students with something else. "I think the time piece is

critical. I don't think we get it [flow] often because we don't give it the time. I think that's true of everything in education." She said that she believes time for creative dance is, generally, too limited in education. She also shared some recent experiences, in early learning settings, where there was time given; and she observed that the teachers "would start to see dance in places, like on the playground, where kids would, all of a sudden, be



making sculptures in the snow with each other spontaneously. It sort of took on a life of its own, way beyond the scripted part of the classroom.” When I observed the kindergarten students and the amount of time they spent simply exploring with their scarves in space, I realized that this was exactly what they were telling us: they needed the unhurried time to play, to explore, and to thoroughly investigate the scarves, but also their bodies in space.

Alorani spent the first periods with the grade three students encouraging an exploration with their bodies in space. She facilitated their explorations by giving unhurried time, because she recognized that, unlike other subjects such as math, you are rarely given the time to explore with your body in school. She said,

I can see why giggling happens, because it’s so rare. For me this is fantastic. Giggling is “my body has never done this before.” There was a sense of exhilaration from the students as they explored their bodies in space.



Figures 128-130: Edmund, Soraya & Beauty giggle as they explore moving

### **To witness thinking bodies**

This theme corresponds to the students using their bodies for thinking and the teacher recognizing that movement can mean engagement. The teachers in this study recognized that part of their own learning is to recognize when students are using their bodies for thinking or communicating. It requires the development of a different type of awareness, in order to witness these moments when students are responding with their bodies or using their bodies to develop solutions to a problem. It can even be extended to include the teachers' ability to read the body language of students as they are working in other subjects, in order to understand their level of comprehension.

**to read bodies, which helps to build attentiveness to their students.** All four teachers recognized that they have become more proficient in the skill of reading bodies as they teach creative dance. There were 16 units of data related to this theme. All four were either strangers or fairly new to teaching the children they were teaching, and yet they quickly became familiar with the students through creative dance experiences. I found, as well, watching these students create with their bodies, that I got to know them in only four or five visits. Eva said that she believes creative dance teachers "pick up things about kids on another level," a more internal level that other teachers don't get to witness.

Alorani said she believes that she is much more in tune with the students because of her experiences with them in creative dance. "I think because it's visceral, because you're in it." As a facilitator of creative dance, you are more aware of what is happening around you as you observe students. She said,



Figure 131: Alorani participates with the grade three students

If I'm not moving with my kids, it's easy for me to have a whole day and not have a sense of how a child's doing emotionally let's say—because I haven't looked at them. To be honest, you can have a day and not look at someone all day. I think that's possible with twenty kids, where you've felt that you've looked at them but you didn't really [see them].

She also said that, with paper-and-pencil activities, you end up looking at the paper and not the child to check their understanding, so it's a lot easier to get a feeling for how a child is doing in a creative dance class, because you're looking at their body (at them) to see the work, to see their understanding.



Figure 132: Brooke discusses Iqra's dance with her

Brooke discussed the fact that she can read her students' body language and gestural language even more since she has experienced them as dancers. She can see on their bodies when they understand a math solution and when they don't. She can see on their bodies when they are working through a problem on their own and shouldn't be interrupted. She thinks that if

teachers “took more time to recognize and pick up on kid's body language...we could head off a lot of issues around kid's understanding of material.”

This is an important tool for teachers and requires much further investigation. Without a knowledge of the particular child and her/his personal way of moving, there can be mis-reading of a student's body language, which can lead to misunderstandings and uninformed assessments of the student's learning.

**to recognize students who are thinking and communicating with their bodies.**

This theme relates to those students whom we discovered thrived on using their bodies for learning. There were 30 units of data for this theme. Creative dance experiences allowed certain children in a class to excel in a way that they did not in other subject areas. It seemed that the combination of having to solve problems and articulate ideas with their body, which is unique to this subject area, engaged particular students. Statistically, we know that boys have higher activity levels. Many teachers, however, believe that creative dance is not something that boys will enjoy, because (like much of the general public) they see dance as *feminized*. As all of the teachers in this research study and I recognized, the boys were often just as engaged, if not more engaged, than the girls.



Figure 133: Tristan's drawing of his dance—cars and trucks

With the kindergarten students, this theme of thinking and communicating with the body became evident when Tristan was asked to explain his drawing about what he had done in creative dance. When I asked Tristan about his drawing, he explained that it was cars and trucks, and it wasn't really clear what it had to do with the creative dance experiences I had witnessed.



Figure 134 & 135: Tristan shows his embodied knowledge

When he struggled to explain it to the group, Emily suggested that he *show* the group what he meant with his body. Tristan spent the next few minutes executing a series of bridge-type shapes on the carpet. He did about eight or ten shapes in a row, changing arms and leg positions and balancing...He introduced each one with “like this.” It was quite amazing to witness—this boy seemed to be so aware of his body and what it could do. He seemed to have an endless series of shapes that he could do with his body. He probably could have

continued for another five minutes, just showing these challenging balanced shapes that he could execute with his body. For Tristan, the activity of drawing was disconnected to what he knew he could do with his body. He could show his embodied knowledge, but he could not yet talk about it or put it down in graphic form. If Emily had relied on his drawing or words, she would not have witnessed the embodied knowledge Tristan possesses.

Alorani believed that, in this grade three class, the boys were less inhibited and more comfortable with their bodies than the girls. “I think, at this age, the girls are a little more cautious with their bodies.” She thought that it might be the fact that we, as a society, are a bit more careful with our consideration of girl’s bodies. “I think seeing a

girl doing moves that are a bit more assertive or aggressive and strong might be uncomfortable for some.”

In each class in this study, there was a least one boy who really stood out above all the children as an interesting mover. Dorothy, the grade three’s classroom teacher, was really surprised when she saw Krit in creative dance class:



Figure 136: Krit bodystorming.

I was really surprised to see how good at dance he is. He just loves it, and he is so confident and he just moves so well. Because in class, he has some speech (problems)...his articulation is not super...but he’s just a different boy when he’s dancing.

This teacher experienced this boy in a new way, in a different language of learning. She recognized in him a skill set beyond what she had previously seen in school. I hear this a lot with generalist teachers watching their students in creative dance class—there is a newfound respect for certain students, because they see competence in a different language of learning. They are no longer *the problem child* but, instead, a child with skills in a different area, one that was previously untapped.

Alorani discussed the fact that, for many of the students in this class who are English language learners, these experiences allowed them to thrive, because there was less reliance on the verbal experience of learning and more emphasis on the body. She admitted to not really knowing which students were English language learners and also discussed the engagement that comes from the physical challenges of creative dance. Her ideas seemed to relate to Cziksentmihalyi’s theory of *flow*: “I think if something’s

too easy, then you're not going to get inspiring stuff. If it's way too challenging for the vast majority of the kids, it's just going to be frustrating. So, like any skill, there has to be some differentiation." She recognizes that there is a wide range of personal experiences in creative dance. Some students are feeling awkward and uncomfortable,



Figure 137: Mahim balancing on one leg.

and others are ready to just "break out." According to Alorani some of the students are thinking, "Just give me ten more things to grab onto so that I can move bigger, faster, sharper, go!" She believes there should be an emphasis on participation and success for all, but there should also be room for something that is really quite challenging physically (like balancing on various body parts as Mahim in this picture). I could see that, particularly for a few of them, doing some things that are physically challenging keeps them fully engaged.

The teachers in this study recognized they were learning to become facilitators of learning but also witnesses to learning that was deep and visceral. The next section provides a discussion of these findings on the learning for the teacher in relation to the relevant research on dance education as presented in the first three chapters of this dissertation.

## Discussion

The purpose of this section is to discuss the findings in this chapter, with respect to what the teachers are learning in creative dance classes and in relationship to the current literature on creative dance education. Based on these findings, the teachers are learning a new student-teacher relationship in which their role is a facilitator of learning: they are learning to establish structures for participation in order to counter pre-conceived notions of the body in school, and, perhaps most importantly, they are learning to witness bodies in the process of thinking.

*One is constantly in the process of becoming a teacher, it is a journey rather than a destination.* (Stinson, 2005a, p. 228)

### A new teaching role

**facilitators.** Each of these teachers looked at her role in teaching creative dance education as a journey of discovery. Creative dance classes seem to offer teachers an interesting opportunity to hone their skills as facilitators of learning. In order to develop creative thinking and students' personal movement voices, the teachers in this study found ways to provoke the students with questions, rather than providing answers. As Greene (1995) says,

Made aware of ourselves as questioners, as meaning makers, as persons engaged in constructing and reconstructing realities with those around us, we may communicate to students the notion that reality is multiple perspectives and that the construction of it is never complete, that there is always more. (p. 131)



Emily used a whole variety of open-ended questions to develop students' movement vocabulary. All four of the teachers mentioned questioning strategies as important to facilitating creative dance. Eva was adamant that teachers not give students the answers but learn to question. Alorani believed it was important for teachers to participate in these dance classes, so that students saw the teacher as a learner. It seems that creative dance, even though it is currently a little known in many Ontario schools, does offer important insight for teachers about learning to teach. If teaching is about attentively listening to the students and allowing them to express their ideas and theories, then the creative dance classes have exceptional potential as a site of teacher professional development. If we want to engage students holistically and encourage them to utilize their life history in their learning, what could be better than allowing students to use their bodies, as Eva says, the very site of their history of learning.

**student-teacher relationship.** All of the teachers recognized that this type of teaching was unique, because they were not providing students with solutions but allowing students to discover problems and their own answers to these problems. They were also not looking for one correct answer but multiple voices from their students. This approach is similar to the Reggio Emilians: as Malaguzzi (1998) says, "It is obvious that between learning and teaching, we honor the first" (p. 82). He makes it clear that they do not ostracize teaching in their approach but, instead, "stand aside for a while and leave room for learning," and, through careful observation of children and what they do, "Perhaps teaching will be different than before" (p. 82). Eva recognized she spent a lot of time observing: "You say very little, you let it happen." She saw this as

a different type of student-teacher relationship, one based in reciprocity, where the student and teacher are learning from one another. Katz (1998) recognizes that the Reggio approach alters “the content of the relationship between adults and children,” because it is “focused on the work itself, rather than mainly on routines or the children’s performance on academic tasks. Adults’ and children’s minds meet on matters of interest to both of them” (pp. 36-37). In all four settings in this present study, I witnessed teachers who were keenly interested in the work of creative dance and seeing what students would create within a guided structure—they were listening for the students’ voices to emerge in the work.

Many researchers have discussed this role of the creative dance educator as a facilitator of learning (Stinson, 1988; 2002; Antilla, 2000, 2003; Sansom, 2011; Cone & Cone, 2005), and the presence of a unique student-teacher relationship (Hanna, 1999; Antilla, 2007). In any creative endeavor, a teacher’s role must allow for the student’s voice to emerge, but, at the same time, as witnessed in this study, the need to create a structure for the students to learn must be recognized; as Sansom (2011) admits, there are things that need to be taught. In order for students to develop their tacit knowledge of dance into a language that they can consciously use to create dances, the teacher must provide some basic instruction on form. This becomes a balancing act for teachers in terms of how much to model or give the students, and how much to let them discover. Eva allowed students to discover their own problems and then to discover solutions together, interjecting with feedback only when needed. In some cases, this meant provoking them past cliché choices, and, in others, it meant negotiating within social

groups so that all members were being heard. Much of creative dance teaching is about movement problems. As Csikszentmihalyi (1996) says, it is the discovered problems, like Charlie and his scarf, that are the real site of learning. Finding this balance in creative dance classes was first described by Smith-Autard (2002) in her *midway model* of the art of dance in education. Chappell (2008a) describes teachers merging students' *personal/collective voice with craft/compositional knowledge* (p. 86). Sansom (2011) describes this balancing act as a process of negotiation of pedagogical agency (pp. 45-47). The dilemma of how much teacher direction should be given in a child-centered approach to teaching creative dance is an important question among dance researchers, especially in early childhood settings. Sansom (2011) suggests *multiple and emergent approaches*: "If giving children the freedom to choose to make decisions is truly valued, it is necessary to provide them [the students] with the opportunities to explore and experiment with their own ideas and to share and develop ideas with others" (p. 86). Like Emily, who said, "If you don't manage it, it just disintegrates," Sansom (2011) recognizes that, if we wait for the creative dance experience to be freely discovered, it may result in no experiences in dance, because the students may have little exposure to this language of learning. This was Emily's dilemma in the Reggio-inspired early childhood setting—how could she provide an open-ended experience, a provocation, without "teaching," in order to allow the students to see dance as a possible language of learning?

In the Reggio Emilia schools, where the graphic arts are used as additional languages of learning (but not taught as discrete subjects), Katz (1998) says the

pedagogista or atelierista provides some guidance and direction, as to how to use the tools or materials, i.e. some technique. However, this is grounded in the principles of the medium in order to allow the children to discover how to use the medium to express themselves (p. 35). This aligns with what the teachers in this study were doing with dance. The material the students were using was their everyday movement vocabulary. As Emily said, “They have the material, they know the material already, they’re not familiar with seeing the material as something with which to make a dance.” Each teacher in this study worked on increasing the students’ dance literacy, their movement capacities, and conscious knowledge of the elements, so that they could use the language of dance to communicate.

When Emily was observing what the kindergarten students were doing with their scarves and using these ideas to construct a whole-class dance, she was enacting what Mouritsen (qtd. in Antilla, 2007) referred to as *practiced spontaneity*, whereby the teacher selects what the children do spontaneously and incorporates that into their whole-class creations. At the same time, Emily was naming what the children were doing, thereby building the students’ dance literacy (Van Gyn & O’Neil, 1988). Chappell (2006) recognized, like Emily, that one of the teachers in her study “raised the children’s awareness of the movement sensations...using a combination of descriptive imagery, descriptions of body parts and sensations” (p. 109). While helping students to become aware of what they are doing with their bodies builds their dance literacy, it also related to *somatics*, which Stinson (2004) describes as “a way of perceiving oneself from

the inside out, where one is aware of feelings, movement and intentions, rather than looking objectively from the outside in” (p. 2).

**creativity.** These teachers were provoking their students to investigate learning steps that had not been precisely ordered or controlled by the teacher. As Greene (1995) suggests, “To teach, a least in one dimension, is to provide persons with the knacks and know-how they need to teach themselves” (p. 14). This allows students to engage their imaginations and to be inventive, “Not in the sense that no other pupil has ever done this before...but in the sense that the teacher has not taught his pupil to take precisely that step...” (p. 14). Eva challenged the dance-trained students to go beyond what they had already been given as dance steps, encouraging them to experiment with their thinking in order to discover their own personal movement voices.

**listening.** Eva recognized that her role was to listen and ask questions, and she witnessed in the video documentation that she remained very quiet throughout. One of the teachers in Chappell’s (2006) study expressed this important need to let the students “do it physically in a silence, in a space” (p. 113). Eva’s philosophy aligns with the Reggio educators’ *pedagogy of listening*, because, as I watched Eva (and the other teachers in this study) listening to their students, listening was indeed a metaphor for “openness and sensitivity to listen and be listened to—listening not just with the ears, but with all our senses” (Rinaldi, 2001b, p. 80). This listening was also filled with doubt, uncertainty, and a suspension of judgments and prejudices (Rinaldo, 2001b, p. 81). Eva saw this as facilitating a complex experience—one with many layers. The teachers didn’t know the answers to these movement problems; they couldn’t advise the students on

exactly what they should do, but they could provide more questions so as to allow the students to discover their own solutions and, in the process, allow the students' own personal voices to emerge. This was especially true with Brooke and the grade five students, who seemed very concerned with having the correct answers. Creative dance classes seemed to provoke these students to think beyond a single correct answer and open up to the possibilities of multiple answers, with their voices included. As Eva recognized, her ongoing goal is to transfer this student-teacher relationship she has discovered in creative dance classes, into other subjects that she teaches, in order to provoke students to recognize that there is not always a single correct answer or one way to find an answer.

**attentiveness.** What seems to be most important, especially in early childhood settings, is the attentiveness of the adults to the possibilities for creative dance and embodied experiences within an educational setting. It requires adults with *dance antennae* who can recognize dance, movement, or thinking with the body when it occurs, and then to encourage it as a language of learning. It requires teachers who recognize the body as a site of learning. All of these teachers recognized that they were learning to help their students open up to the possibilities of dance. As Alorani explained to her students on the first day, "This is going to be a different type of learning." Sansom (2011) recognizes, "Acknowledging our own bodies as teachers could alter the way our students' bodies are appreciated in the learning process" (p. 58). Sapon-Shevin (2009) has discovered that she has been able to teach social-justice issues far better through the body, than through discussion. "This teaching has shifted my students' learning but also

altered my relationship with my students. By my being an embodied teacher, they have become embodied students” (p. 181). As Eva said, this type of learning in creative dance “gets at the layers,” and, unlike other teachers, she gets to see her students thinking, because she sees it in their bodies. Alorani also mentioned the importance of being able to look at her students’ bodies for their understanding rather than relying on looking at a piece of paper. As Sansom (2011) reminds us, “Dance has the potential to reach yet another level of knowing through a deepened visceral engagement that connects to the senses and an inner understanding of the human condition” (p. 49).

**establishing structures.** As three of these classes were new to creative dance education, the question arises, “how were the teachers preparing the students to participate in creative dance?” Emily spoke of personal space and space bubbles, Alorani had students begin each class with a circle, which she described as “egalitarian.” She also created moments of stillness with an emphasis on the transitions between exercises and a return to *neutral position*. Eva began each class with a teacher-led warm-up that included stretching and yoga positions with a focus on alignment. Most creative dance educators place an emphasis on developing structures for students in creative dance classes in order to support the students’ creative work (Boorman, 1969, 1971, 1973; Stinson, 1988; Cone & Cone, 2005). However, a part of establishing structures involved overcoming the inherent structure of school itself. Teachers had to overcome the constraints of space and time.

**space.** In Reggio’s *Dialogue with Places*, the researchers ask, “What are the relationships between the architectural characteristics of the space and the children’s

exploration?" (Filippini, Vecchi & Giudici, 2008, p. 19). The teachers in this present study seemed to suggest that they are profound. Emily witnessed a definitive shift in the kindergarten students' movement exploration from the classroom to the gymnasium. Eva discussed her frustration with the fact that her studio used to have curtains to cover the mirrors but they were removed and so now the mirrors are always there. Eva's grade six students were looking in the mirror for information that they might be better off receiving internally, using their *kinesthetic sense*, i.e. an internal sensing of what their bodies look like in space. What about the other classrooms that were not specifically set up for dance education? If, as the Reggio educators believe, the environment of the classroom is another teacher (Gandini, 1998, p. 177), then, what is it that the children in these classrooms are learning from their environment? Almost all the children in these three classrooms responded dramatically to the shifts in their classroom when opened up for creative dance classes. One grade three student, Habib, excitedly informed me, "We might be able to keep our classroom this way, forever!" The space provided a provocation for them to move, and to use their bodies for learning, but in all three settings, the teacher and I witnessed a reluctance by the students to use their bodies to move and to create. As their teachers observed, these classrooms were settings where the students were used to confining their body's motions. Taguchi (2011) says, "all spaces and certainly pedagogical spaces call upon us and demand specific ways of sitting or moving, talking or socializing with different affective forces and intensities" (p. 5). They had learned how to sit and how to stand and how to have their legs crossed and their hands in their laps, not touching anybody else. For the grade five students, the desks and



chairs provided a contained space for them. Brooke recognized their reactions to the open space. Interestingly, for these grade five students, pushing the desks back seemed to be as overwhelming as the gym was for the kindergarten students. There seems to be prior learning that needs to be overcome, in terms of what these students have learned about the school setting, in order for them to be open to learning with their bodies in their classrooms.

**time.** I wonder if the students in the three classroom settings have had enough time with this new environment in order to develop this newfound relationship to their internal and external space. Have they had enough time with creative dance for it 'to take on a life of its own' and be considered a viable language of learning? As we see in the findings, many of the experiences where students are beginning to find an experience of flow are cut short. Alorani recognized that the giggling responses of the grade three students represented, "My body has never done this before," and she witnessed their experiences as a "sense of exhilaration...as they explored their bodies in space." As Greenman (qtd. in Gandini, 1998, p. 169) suggests:

An environment is a living, changing system. More than the physical space, it includes the way time is structured and the roles we are expected to play. It conditions how we feel, think, and behave; and it dramatically affects the quality of our lives. The environment either works for us or against us as we conduct our lives. (p. 5)

In her study, Davidson (2004) recognized, "the use of movement often feels like a tap being turned on and then quickly off again" (p. 207). She acknowledged that there

is too little time to develop the technical skills in the arts disciplines in order to apply them to express oneself with freedom (p. 208). All three of the teachers in the classroom settings recognized that time played an important factor in students developing their awareness of themselves as dancers. Without the time to develop a dance literacy, based on an intentional use of their own everyday movement combined with compositional knowledge, the learning in creative dance can be shallow and disconnected.

Overall, the teachers were learning that their role in creative dance classes was to facilitate learning. They seemed to be first of all a provocateur—finding means to provoke students to move in a space in which they are not used to moving, their classroom. Once students are moving, the teacher's role is to allow unhurried time for students to build their dance literacy by helping them name the emerging elements of dance that are part of their tacit knowledge. In developing their dance literacy, the teacher must find a balance between developing the students' own voices and the knowledge needed for composing a dance. The teacher facilitates the development of this compositional knowledge by doing some direct teaching, but also by asking questions. This involves a different type of student-teacher relationship, and it is via this relationship that teachers are able to witness new ways of thinking.

### **Witnessing thinking bodies**

As a physical language of learning, dance offers opportunities for students to solve problems and communicate through their bodies. This allows all students to use their bodies but also creates an important opportunity for those students who struggle to express themselves in written or oral language. The teacher can witness these children's

thinking processes through their bodies. As Stinson (1988) says, “Dance sessions give the sensitive teacher an opportunity to see and relate to children in a new way, to become aware of particular qualities in individual children that may ordinarily be hidden” (p. 7).

**reading bodies.** In this study, all of the teachers mentioned that teaching creative dance allowed her to read the body language of her students, even beyond dance classes and allowed her to get to know her students faster and deeper. As Alorani recognized, creative dance classes were more visceral experiences for her as a teacher, and she really *saw* the student, because she was looking at her/his thinking bodies rather than a piece of paper. Brooke recognized that this awareness transfers into other subject areas and that she can read students’ level of understanding or processing in their bodies. Eva believes, “Other teachers don’t really see the extent of these children’s thinking,” but, in creative dance class, she does, because she can see it in their bodies. Tortora (2006) discusses this as *a way of seeing*, i.e. an ontological shift for teachers that can become an epistemological shift for both they and their students. Understanding the language of the body and being able to read students allows teachers to access information about students that may not be available verbally or in writing.

**gender.** The examples from the findings indicate a close link between gender and thinking with the body. All of the teachers in this study recognized at least one boy in their classes that stood out or excelled in dance, using his body for thinking, creating, and communicating. Teachers explained how they experienced these boys in a new way in creative dance class, because they witnessed a competence with using their bodies and

making connections not apparent in other subjects. Dance, however, remains a gendered artform and many teachers assume that boys will be resistant to dance education because “dance is for girls.” As Risner (2008) says, “Girls often grow up with dance as a taken-for-granted activity of childhood” (p. 94). It is not the same for boys. “The Western European cultural paradigm situates dance as primarily a female artform” (p. 94). Creative dance classes offer a refreshing in-the-body curriculum that is engaging for those who like to be active; and we know that, in general, boys like to be active.

Some researchers have recognized specific gender differences in young children’s movement vocabulary. Bond (1994) discovered clear gender differences in primary students’ approach to dance creation and in the qualities of their movement. The boys utilized more explosive actions and were influenced by each other, while girls showed more individuality in their work and were lighter and delicate. These gendered stereotypes were prevalent in the earliest dance education resources, such as Carroll and Lofthouse’s (1969), *Creative Dance for Boys*.

Tough, rugged, strenuous activities are usually regarded as essential ingredients of work in physical education with men and boys...On the whole people think that strong powerful action is manly, and, in view of this prevailing attitude in our society, it seems sensible to use situations in which strenuous activity is involved as a starting point for any new work in movement with boys. (p. 14)

In this current study, while there were some differences in the qualities of movement between genders, it just seemed as if the boys were more interesting dancers. These findings suggest that boys, especially those who have no prior experiences of dance

training and therefore fewer pre-conceived notions of what dance should look like, tend to have an easier time finding a personal voice and taking risks in creative dance classes. I did not witness many gendered stereotypes, e.g. aggressive movements by the boys. This may be because teachers such as Alorani demonstrated many non-gender-stereotyped-movements, i.e. she intentionally didn't "dance like a girl." Although our approaches to gender-equitable dance education may have evolved, I wonder if our prevailing attitudes have. Is dance still seen as feminized in education, and does that relate to its lowly status in the curriculum?

In these classes, mixed-gender groups seemed like important sites to dispel some of the dominant discourses around gender in dance education (Sansom, 2011). As Bond (1994) found in her study, the gender divisions in this current study became less obvious as students worked in mixed groups. This was true with the grade six students in this present study, whom we have already seen, worked well to create new ideas by combining suggestions from all members of their group. This resulted in a great variety of qualities of movement in their creations. We also saw that the students would challenge each other on pre-conceived or stereotypical movement that did not support their creative objectives, as Jake H said, "Trees don't stand in third position!"

It is clear that there are gender stereotypes with respect to dance in society. Television programs, such as *So You Think You Can Dance*, have exposed the public to a great variety of non-western dance forms and shown men as important contributors and participants in dance. But these programs also perpetuate stereotypes about qualities of movement. I have heard the judges ask men to dance "more masculine," but I have

never once heard a judge ask a woman to dance “less masculine,” or “more feminine.” It seems that men are welcome in dance, as long as they don’t appear to be feminine.

Risner (2009) suggests these reactions are a result of “narrow definitions of masculinity, heterosexist justifications for males in dance, and internalized homophobia in the field” (p. 57). As Sansom (2011) and Bond (1994) suggest, it is important that we help students to unpack these *dehumanizing discourses* around gender in our dance education classes. Creative dance classes, in which students are working in mixed-gender groups to create dances, might offer an important provocation for students, their teachers, and even their parents and the general public (if these dances are shown to the public), to consider dominant discourses about gender and dance and movement in general. As Risner (2009) suggests, “Dance education may serve as an important means for disrupting dominant cultural assumptions about acceptable ways of moving” (p. 64).

The teachers in this study were learning to develop a new type of student-teacher relationship and to continue that relationship into other subject areas. They were learning to facilitate learning with the body through questioning strategies, listening, and being attentive. Teachers were also learning to witness thinking bodies. In particular, each teacher recognized a particular boy in her class who stood out in creative dance because of his ability to think with his body. This provided an opportunity to re-image these male students as rich and competent. In the next chapter, I will look specifically at the findings that seemed to emerge as a result of the research methodology of pedagogical documentation.

## **Chapter Seven: Findings (Pedagogical Documentation)**

### **What does pedagogical documentation offer as a methodology?**

From Chapter 3 (literature on pedagogical documentation) and Chapter 4 (methods) of this dissertation, we see that Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation offers a complex approach to making learning visible. From Chapters 5 and 6, we can see that pedagogical documentation offers important insight into the learning in creative dance education. As I analyzed the data in this study, I recognized many instances of learning that were uncovered specifically because of this approach to research that allowed the participants to revisit and reflect on particular moments of learning. Students were able to reflect on emerging theories (both their own and those of their peers). They also reflected on problems they encountered in their group work and revisited their solutions. Through video documentation, the teachers had an opportunity to see moments they hadn't witnessed in the context of the classes, which also allowed them to focus on individual students. For both teacher and students, pedagogical documentation uncovered underlying pre-conceived notions about dance and gender that provoked rich discussions. It also allowed teachers to re-consider pedagogical issues, emotional climate, and engagement in their classes. As a methodology, pedagogical documentation seems to have a unique ability to uncover types of learning that might otherwise remain hidden or dormant.

### **Pedagogical documentation allows teachers and students to revisit and reflect**

One of the most salient themes of this project was the opportunity for these four teachers to revisit and reflect upon their teaching and learning and discuss these

reflections with another dance educator (myself). Each of the teachers said they enjoyed this aspect of the project, because they rarely get the opportunity to pause and think about their teaching. The students also enjoyed the chance to revisit and reflect on their learning. They were always excited when a new documentation panel appeared, looking for their pictures or words and those of their friends. In the grade five and six classes, students clapped and cheered when comments were read from the documentation panels. They showed great respect for each other's theories about their learning. One grade five student (Jennifer) commented that my research on their learning in creative dance "raised the level" of learning in their class because it caused a "chain reaction," whereby the students built on each other's ideas (movement, verbal, written). The opportunity, through video, still photo, or written comment, to re-think about specific moments in their creative dance classes allowed students to embrace learning as a process, much like the creative process. Because documentation gave value to what they were doing, it provoked them to think deeply about their learning.

**allows students to revisit and reflect on their experiences in creative dance and connect them to their lives.** There were 65 units of data across all the sites for this theory. This theme addresses the role of pedagogical documentation both as a research methodology and as a physical entity. Showing students video footage or panels with pictures and text provoked them to revisit their experience, reflecting on and relating it to their present views. As the kindergarten children watched themselves on video or saw pictures of themselves and their classmates, they would repeat movements or make observations. Isabelle (watching Fiona on the video) said, "It's hard to go up and down



fast. Fiona did it!” The grade six students enjoyed video documentation of their process and were open to sharing self-evaluations. Margie said, “I think we were just wasting time there” and Louise said, “I notice I wasn’t really doing anything, just listening.”



As the grade three students responded to pictures of themselves in their journals, it triggered memories of the emotions they were feeling at the time.

Serina (second from the left) remembered how she felt on the first day of dance class:

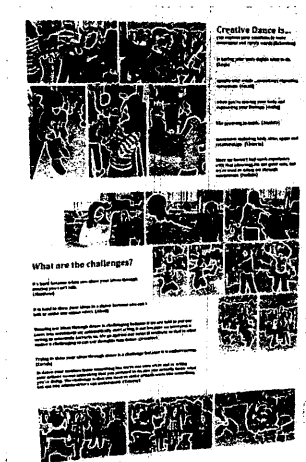


When I look at the pictures of the Name Dance it reminded me I felt shy...I chose jumping because it is a small movement.  
(Journal Response)

The pictures on the documentation panel provided a specific moment to which students might connect and respond, allowing them to revisit that moment

and make some connections to their current state of being. It provoked Serina to question, “Am I still feeling shy? What have I learned about dance and about myself since that moment?”

Providing the grade five students with ideas from each other’s journals on the documentation panel, i.e. ideas they might not hear otherwise, elicited an entire debate about the difference between dance and drama, and it provoked them to try to define creative dance. Sebastian recognized that this discussion “was fun because everyone was listening and clapping.



Figures 140 & 141: A documentation panel and Camille and Aleena discuss ideas

The rich discussion that followed forced the students to grapple with their own theories about dance and those of their peers, and it led to a collective theory that

dance has something to do with *body language*.

Body language is using different emotions (Zaria).

Mostly, its like you're letting out your feelings. Like you know—in the symphony they're playing and they're letting out their feelings. Like when you're dancing, you're letting out all your feelings (Vallari).

Responses to this discussion carried over into their journal entries at the end of the day.

What I wanted to say about Victoria's speech was that when you dance, you have the right to dance freely, move to your own beat, to do any kind of movement you want (Aisha—Journal Response).

Brooke recognized that documentation gave *value* to what they are doing. She thinks that because we were interested in their thoughts about creative dance, it gave value not only to creative dance but also to their thoughts in general. She interpreted their inner monologue as:

You actually want to know what I'm thinking, you think it's important? You wanna know why I'm doing these things? Wow, this is important, here's this guy, and he's in university, and he wants to know what I'm thinking.

Pedagogical documentation seemed to provoke students to become interested in their own learning, because we were interested.

**allows the teacher to reflect on moments they missed in the creative process.**

All four of the teachers reflected on the pedagogical documentation (both video and documentation panels), as a chance to see things they had missed. There were 85 data units that spoke to this theme. Emily saw documentation as looking through another lens:

There were lots of things that I didn't notice in the moment, because my attention was somewhere else, because it was happening behind me or it was happening just out of my eyesight and I wasn't seeing it. You only really see the things that you see...you can't see everything that's going on in the room. I always notice things that I didn't see in the moment. That's one of the great things about it [pedagogical documentation], because *it gives you that other eye in the room...* these things that you don't normally see.

Alorani saw, through documentation, that learning is happening everywhere:

I think often *it's where you're not looking that the stuff is happening*—it's symbolic of life...we all miss huge parts of what's going on with people...so definitely there have been some “aha” moments with those [things] I would have missed otherwise.

Brooke focused on the retrospective quality that documentation provides:

It gives you a chance to look back on the class as a whole and reflect on what was happening. Sometimes, in the moment you can't see the whole class, so it's nice to get a chance to see who's really engaged. It's also helpful to be able to see myself and what I say and do and how I react to what students are doing. I also think having time to reflect after the fact is very helpful, meaning that it's nice to be able to go back and watch the class from the beginning when you already know how the class ends, because *you pick up on things that might not make sense or seem important in the moment.*

Eva liked the fact that it allowed her to see more of the stages of the creative process for all the groups:

It's interesting for me to watch the stages, because I don't get a chance always because, if I'm with one group, I don't get a chance always to see what else is going on.

**allows the teacher to focus and reflect on individual students.** Watching the videotape of their teaching allowed these teachers to look at specific students and reflect on them as individuals, especially when they witnessed moments they hadn't seen. There were a total of 26 units of data that provided evidence for this theme. Pedagogical documentation also allowed the teachers to stand back and see how these individual students fit into the larger group and how the group was working, that is, how these individuals were affected by the group and how they affected the group. It allowed them to see how certain voices could get lost in the cacophony of group learning.

On the very first day, Emily asked the kindergarten students about shapes:

Aven: I can make a turtle.

Emily: Is a turtle a shape?

(Aven nods yes.)

Emily focused on Aven's comment while watching the video:

It was interesting when she said, "turtle," because I was trying to use that as a moment when we could get into talking about unconventional shapes. I thought that it was an interesting thing to think—Is a turtle a shape? But there were so many of them saying, "I have this shape, I have this shape," that it kind of got lost pretty quickly. But she did think a turtle was a shape!



Figure 142: Habib bodystorming

Alorani reflected on Habib and his style of moving.

Although she had noticed it while she was teaching, the video gave her a chance to really focus on him as an individual and see what it was that he was doing.

I can imagine Habib there...I would love to be his mirroring partner...for him to take me to movements that my body has not done, even though I've danced for a long time. His whole physicality is not my norm.

While watching the video, Brooke was able to focus on grade-five-student

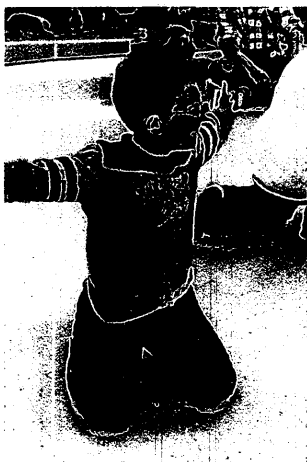


Figure 143: Christos bodystorming

Christos and his issues around inclusion:

I think this topic is very personal for him. I think it's a really hard situation for him because I think he really likes to move, and I think he's really self conscious to move because he doesn't want to get laughed at. I think it was a really telling comment, even the fact that he said it, I think, "Good for him for saying" and then a few seconds later everyone chimes in and Rhea says, "Yeah, it's really hard to get up and perform."

This video documentation allowed Brooke to revisit this moment (a moment that had gone by fairly quickly in the classroom), and to really consider exactly what Christos was saying and how brave he was being in that moment. She was also able to listen to Rhea and her ability to bring the problem forward to the group with a sense of empathy and understanding.

We have seen how Eva was able to focus on certain individuals in her grade six class, such as Greg (from the "dashed to the shore" group). As she revisits her experiences with him on the video, she reflected:

I would love to know what he sees in his head. It's a tough process, but he's getting better...this is so good for him. I actually said that to him today, "Aren't you lucky that you're here [dance class], because you get to work in this way and learn how to take someone's idea, accept that idea, try it..learn how to listen."

Eva seemed to re-affirm for herself that the learning in creative dance classes is a special opportunity for those students who struggle in other parts of the curriculum.

**Pedagogical documentation provokes teachers and students to consider and confront issues**

There were issues that surfaced in the creative dance education classes that I believe surfaced specifically as a result of pedagogical documentation practices. As already seen, there were issues with respect to learning how to communicate through touch that emerged with the kindergarten students. There were issues around defining what creative dance is and how it is different from drama in the grade five class. For the grade six students, who had the most experience with creative dance, and were working in mixed-gender groups, the issue centered on gender and social issues as well as stereotypes and pre-conceived notions of dance and gender.

**helps students reflect on problems in their groups and provokes them to confront these problems.** As seen in Chapter 5, this theme was most prevalent in the grade-six classroom. There were 12 units of data that provided evidence for this theme and the deep engagement with group social problems. The biggest problem that surfaced with the grade six students was gender, while working in mixed-gender groups to create dances. The one all-girl group struggled with dance literacy and trying to find novelty in their creative work, rather than relying on dance steps they already knew. The five mixed-gender groups all struggled with gender, the difficulty of listening to one another, and their differing qualities of dance movement.

On the second day, I brought in a documentation panel and asked the group who had struggled with too much ballet about two photographs:

Marc: Now, I witnessed this moment because I was videotaping, and I noticed this was a dark period in your creative process. How did you get out of that and how did you move on?

Jake S: Well, we haven't moved on yet. (We all laugh.)

Margie: Well, we're trying to get new ideas and ideas from them [the boys].

Marc: Now, I can't help but notice that there is a "boys" and "girls," or "us and them" thing happening in this group. Did you notice that?

All: Yeah. (They laugh.)

Marc: So, how are you going to get past that?

Laura: Well, we could use both of our ideas...

Margie: It's hard because we have completely different ideas.

Marc: So, how do you get it together? Jake H, what do you think?

Jake H: We should take both our ideas and figure out the similarities or combine both our ideas.

Jake S: We have to morph them together...

Jake H: Because creative dance doesn't have to be just one thing and another thing, it can be two things mixed in together.

Jake S: Actually, it has to be many things, because, in creative dance...you can use stuff from everywhere.

Eva believed that the documentation photographs had provoked a timely discussion:

What's really interesting is that they rarely get a chance to discuss it with each other. I mean, had you not brought them over, they would have eventually moved on, but that was really succinct. You asked them a question, they had to come up with an answer, and they had to realize they hadn't moved on, they were stuck and that they had two different ideas. They kind of know that, and they were trying to just wait until that wave ended and they could just move forward without talking about it.

On our third day, we sat down as a group and watched some documentation (video footage) from the first day of class, and the students got a chance to respond to what they saw and what they thought they had learned from watching themselves. Like the really young kids, they enjoyed watching themselves and were intrigued by the movements that they were watching. Afterwards, we had a discussion with each group. As we revisited the group that was doing too much ballet, the students in this group reflected on this experience and how they had worked through their issues.

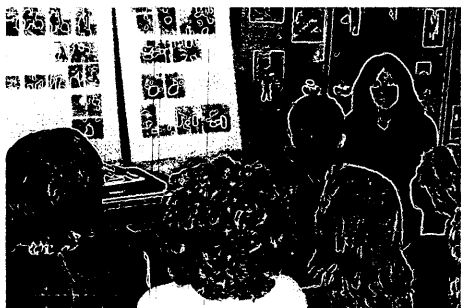


Figure 144: Eva discusses with a group after watching video documentation.

Daisy: After we realized we were doing too many dance [ballet] moves we tried to ask them [the boys] for ideas. Jake S kept saying, "Let's do leaps, let's do leaps!"

Eva: So, is it a manner of how they [the boys] communicate to you?

Daisy: Yes.

Eva: Jake, what have you learned by that?

Jake S: Be a little less silly.

A student from another group, Rylie, had an important insight for this group:

When I was watching it [video] I noticed that whenever Jake S would try to say stuff, those two [Daisy & Laura] would go to ballet. The boys would say, "Listen to this," and the girls would just start dancing, doing the *pas de chat*....

Rylie recognized that the girls were ignoring the boys and retreating into ballet. This prompted Bertha to admit something about her group. Bertha had seen video documentation of their first day and discovered that she and Edith had really not included Rinaldo in any of their discussions:

Bertha: That happened in our group a lot. Like when Rinaldo was alone.



Marc: Was Rinaldo alone?

Bertha: I mean when he was the only guy. When Percy came, we actually started working on our dance....and once Percy came Rinaldo was more... [open to sharing his ideas].

During a subsequent whole group discussion, in which we were investigating this theme of gender in dance, we questioned the boys about their lack of participation.

Marc: Rinaldo, do you remember what was happening for you in the first couple of days?

Rinaldo: I wasn't saying much. I was the only guy there, and the girls were getting along well, so I felt like an outsider.

Marc: Did you feel like you had something to contribute?

Rinaldo: I was just waiting to see what the girls were going to come up with for the dance.

Pedagogical documentation created this *cycle of repeated revisits* on this problem of gender relationships in this grade six class. It constantly brought the underlying problem to the surface and asked these students to confront the problem and discuss it.

**provokes participants to question pre-conceived notions about dance, gender, and education.** Although there was some evidence of these pre-conceived notions with the kindergarten children (i.e. at one point Tristan complained he didn't want to do *ballet* with his two girl partners when they wanted him to hold their hands), there is no specific evidence that Tristan's comment was specifically tied to gender. In the grade three class, many of the boys were more experienced dancers than the girls: Gowtham discussed Tamil dancing and Mahid discussed his experiences as an award-winning dancer in India. There were 19 units of data, mostly from the grade sixes, where their pre-conceived notions of dance and gender were revealed through discussions

provoked by the documentation panels. This theme also highlights one of the biggest assumptions about dance in education—that it is like studio-based dancing, i.e. dance styles such as ballet, tap, and jazz. But creative dance education is very different from dance training. How do studio-trained dancers cope with the concept of creative dance education in which they are being asked to create something new, which they have not done before? How do the students with no dance training (many of them boys), see themselves and their ability to contribute to a creative dance experience?



Figure 145: Rinaldo and his initial group (Bertha & Edith) creating the second day

Rinaldo wrote in his reflection piece:

I am good, especially in this group, because other members in my group take dance.

This comment, when placed on a documentation panel, provoked an intense debate about the difference between dance in school and dance outside of school and whether those students (all

girls in this class), who took dance outside of school, were at an advantage compared to those students who do not. It was Margie (who takes dance outside of school and whose



Figure 146: Margie offers her opinion to the group.

mother owns a dance studio) who was extremely succinct on the subject:

I think that for some people it can be easier if you take dance outside of school, but in other cases it's harder...because you might get stuck on a script, like what you've done in ballet class...and if you don't, you have more of a free mind so you can think and let your mind go.

Eva was surprised by the remarks that surfaced as a result of the documentation and ensuing discussion. She said she believes Rinaldo was trying to say, “Studio trained dancers have more of a vocabulary—they are used to moving,” but she added, “The vocabulary that they have is rooted in a particular *style*.”

Another example of these preconceived notions about dance was revealed in Albert’s reflection. In answer to the question: “What’s the hardest part of the creative dance class?” he wrote, “Dancing good like other students.”

In our interview, Eva was noticeably upset by this comment from Albert:



Figure 147: Albert reading the documentation panel.

I was really intrigued, we were talking about the fact that we need to stop to ask them about what they’re thinking...I didn’t have a clue that Albert didn’t think he was as capable as the other kids, because Albert’s a very confident guy, an athlete. He’s completely comfortable with his body and moving, and, to me, he’s one of the leaders and a strong one, but to make that comment that a challenge is to dance as good as the other kids is really interesting to me.

Eva recognized that these moments (there were many of these moments with this grade six class) made her realize she needs to ask them what they’re thinking more often.

It says they still think it’s about the product, what it *looks* like... For me, what I see him doing is transforming his ideas into movement. If it doesn’t look like what he thinks dance [should] look like, then he thinks it’s not good enough. Maybe he thinks that someone who looks like they’re doing a dance step...that that is better than attempting all these fabulous, creative things—which is what he does! Because he’s not afraid to try and throw his body around in space, which I think is fantastic. But maybe he just doesn’t realize that *that* is dance.

It may have been that pedagogical documentation was getting at what they didn’t realize they were thinking, their tacit knowledge, and engaged the class in debates about their

pre-conceived notions of themselves and dance. I think documentation was able to get at these issues, because it put their ideas in the public arena of the classroom (they're not hidden away in a journal entry on the teacher's desk), and provoked a discussion and reflection. It allowed the students to revisit not only their own but other students' theories about gender and dance.

**provokes teachers to consider the emotional climate of their classrooms.** As seen in Chapter 6, pedagogical documentation provoked teachers to consider pedagogical issues, such as classroom management and finding the balance between modeling and allowing students to discover their dances. Emotional climate extends beyond pedagogical issues and was something that three of the teachers discussed at various points throughout their interviews. It included information about creating a safe environment, awareness of the emotional status of the students, and touching. It appeared in merely 5 units of data but was an extremely poignant theme. It brings to mind the concept of psychological or emotional safety, as well as physical safety in educational settings.

Emily and I were watching the videotape of her demonstrating statues with Tristan A. He was not very keen on making her into a statue. This prompted her to reflect on the concept of touch in schools:

Should you touch the kids and should they touch each other? I know on some level that it is an issue, but I also think that it is a bit of a red herring. I think that people get overly anxious about it. I have a hard time with the idea that we would never touch kids. I think that's kooky. I just think it would make the classroom a very bizarre place...I think it just removes something from school being like a normal extension of human life.

Provoked by this moment, Emily articulated an important concept—school is not a preparation for life but is part of life, and so touch should be included.

Brooke discussed the idea of creating a *safe environment* for her students. She realized that, with her grade five students, some of their issues with creativity and dance are



Figure 148: Aleena, Tammy, Sebastien, Christos, and Jennifer work in a group

that they don't yet feel safe expressing themselves with their bodies in front of their peers, and they are still afraid of coming up with the wrong answer. They also try to control everything with verbal expression—they talk and avoid using their bodies.

In this picture, from the grade five students' first day working in groups, Aleena tried to tell her group members exactly what to do, and we can see from their body language, that they were neither engaged nor happy. Aleena believed that group work involved one person telling her ideas. She hadn't yet conceived the sharing of ideas in a bodily fashion (bodystorming). She tried to generate the one idea she had in her mind, which she felt was the right answer. As Brooke reflected on this moment, she thought it was about feeling safe and finding the right answer:

I think it's so hard to separate that social piece, that taking risks, and understanding there is no wrong answer and it's not just them (as individuals), it's the class understanding and being accepting of the fact that we might make mistakes or we might have answers that work or don't work to varying degrees.

For Brooke, the idea of safety with their bodies was tied in with safety in education in general, and with the willingness to take risks and make mistakes. In creative dance, this is a huge theme because there is rarely ever a *right* answer. This open-ended answer

format seems to be scary for the students but also for the generalist teacher who question—how will I evaluate this if there isn't a *right* answer?

FAILURE IS AN  
IMPORTANT PART  
OF CREATIVITY.

Figure 149: Sign on Eva's studio door

As seen by the sign posted on her studio door, Eva also recognized the notion of safety and made sure her students knew that failure was an option in her classroom—that taking risks might involve some failure.

**allows the teacher to see that movement can mean engagement.** As we viewed the videotaped lessons with the teachers, there were some interesting revelations about students' movement during instructions. Sometimes, what appeared to be disruptive behavior and lack of focus, when the teacher was on the *inside* of the lesson, was interpreted very differently when looking at it from the *outside*. There were only 10 units of evidence to support this theme, but its relationship to reading bodies and recognizing other types of learners makes it important.

As we watched some video documentation with the kindergarten students, they gave Emily and me a lesson in movement as a sign of engagement. They were watching



Figure 150: Jamie and Charlie respond to video documentation

the section of the Brain Dance that involves touch (tactile), and so they were watching their images pat themselves:

Jamie: (Points at Charlie and at the screen as if to say, "That's you!")

Charlie: (Pats Jamie on the back.)



Figure 151: Jamie and Charlie respond to video documentation

Jamie: (Pats Charlie on the back, then on the head, while he pats her on the stomach.)

It was Emily who spotted this behaviour.

“Remember we were saying they respond with movement?” I had asked these students if they remembered what they were doing and this is when

they started patting each other. She admits that she didn’t see this at the time, but by watching the video she recognized what they were doing:

So they weren’t talking to you about it, but they were *doing* it, they were repeating it, with each other. If they were saying it verbally we would say, “Yeah, they’re expanding it...” It’s not as easy to somehow recognize when they’re [doing it physically]. So, it is an extension, right? Because there is no articulation to go with it, I think, really, it’s easy to not notice it. We want them to respond verbally.

This moment reminded me not to foreground verbal responses over the potentially more subtle physical responses in this research on creative dance. Too often in education, we are asking for verbal or written responses to demonstrate students’ understanding.

However, this moment reminded me that we need to look with different eyes, to see also their embodied understanding. These two students seem to be extending the warm-up exercise they were watching into the present realm and responding physically to it. In this sense, the video became a provocation for remembering what they had done and a continuation of the exercise in the present context.

These non-verbal responses, which we viewed on the video, allowed Emily to make an observation in her lesson the next day. “Isabelle has something to say, but she’s saying it with her body. Can you show us, Isabelle?”

(Isabelle is moving her arms up and down in bent shapes.)  
 Emily: So you did this yesterday? (Isabelle nods.)

It's important for us to become aware of these responses; otherwise, we might miss evidence of students using this hidden language—the language of movement. It seemed that, for Emily, watching the video from the previous day's documentation made her more aware of these non-verbal responses that students make, and she was, in turn, trying to share this knowledge with the students.



Figure 152: Habib and Emmanuel move with the directions

As we watched the videotape of Alorani's first lesson with the grade three students, she observed: "These two guys [Emmanuel and Habib] are responding to almost everything as I did it." She recognized that she was not aware of this fact at the time but could see it on the video documentation. Both she and their classroom teacher, Dorothy, were wondering out loud about these students' engagement and focus on the task. Are they moving to get attention or to be disruptive?

"The fact that one of them was putting his hand up right away. I feel that they were both highly engaged. I think, in fact, they are not doing it for me, they are just responding." Both teachers recognized that Habib was making very intelligent comments throughout the exercise. He seemed completely engaged all the time, and so engaged that he had to instantly involve his body, rather than waiting. Dorothy suggested that the next time Alorani should wait for these two boys to stop moving before she gives instructions, but she also posed a question, "Or, do think it's okay for them to move?" Alorani responded:



It would be good if you could track it to see if they're on track. I know they might not work for everybody. There might be people who have an expectation that the person next to me has to be still for this moment, or needs to stop repeating, but I think, for me, as long as I feel that they're not derailing or not just being silly or asking for ten times more attention than other kids, I'm okay with it.

Dorothy recognized that, for Habib, it was his enthusiasm coming out, and he's like that in the classroom as well. Alorani recognized that some students might not be able to hear the instructions if they are moving, but, for others, it might actually help to lock in the instructions because they are *physicalizing* them. There is a "body memory—they might embody it." Alorani explained:

I don't think stillness is an indicator of cognitive function or engagement at all. I am convinced. I think, as a teacher, there is this myth that if my class doesn't look a certain way, then I don't have control over them and therefore I'm not effective. (I fall into this too, absolutely.) So you go in and hope that your class is as still as possible, because that means they're engaged. But I think some kids just learn to be still, because they know they're going to be reprimanded if they're not. I don't think it increases engagement.

## Discussion

This section will consider the results from this chapter in relation to the current literature with respect to pedagogical documentation. Pedagogical documentation has been a very important methodology in this study for animating the learning that is happening for students and teachers in creative dance classes. None of the teachers or students in this study had experience with pedagogical documentation prior to this project. These initial experiences suggest that the teachers enjoyed the documentation process and saw the possibilities for it as a tool in their own teaching and advocacy work. It gave value to the learning, provoked deep thinking, and helped reveal learning as a process. They saw documentation as another teacher in the room providing another perspective or lens by which to look at the teaching situation. It humbled them in a way and brought their role into greater perspective when they realized that some of the most important and pervasive moments in their classrooms were ones they had missed. It made them wonder how many of these moments we must miss, how many important moments of learning are happening just outside our range of vision?

**perspective.** Perhaps it was the distance that one could achieve while watching video documentation, that seemed to allow these teachers to gain perspective on individual students and these students' moments of learning, as well as their own learning as teachers. Attempting to take in all that is happening around you as you're teaching is a very difficult thing, and many important moments go by quickly. Video documentation allowed these teachers to revisit these moments and reflect deeply. It allowed the teacher to see more of what was going on in the classroom, and it provided

some feedback as to where you might need to go next because it unearths pre-conceived notions or even new ideas that hadn't yet been *taught*. Watching the video documentation of their dance classes was like having a completely different experience of those classes, and it helped the teachers realize that they couldn't possibly take in everything that was going on, as an insider. As Wien (1991) suggests, "The teacher both reacts to herself as a stranger (seeing herself from the outside) and is intimately connected to every move the stranger makes" (pp. 60-61). Pedagogical documentation allows teachers to revisit and reflect on moments of learning in the creative dance classes.

**value.** For the students, pedagogical documentation seemed to let them know that we valued them as learners and that we were interested in their theories. As Rinaldi (2001b) says, one of the primary tasks of documentation "is to ensure listening and being listened to" (p. 83). The students in this study showed great respect for each other's ideas as they appeared on the documentation panels, perhaps because the adults in the room had shown an interest in these ideas. It seemed to cause, as Jennifer said, "a chain reaction" that provoked them to think deeply about their learning. Documentation allowed these students to reflect metacognitively (Rinaldi, 2001b, p. 84) about their own process of learning and also, as the Reggio educators suggest, on how other students learn (Krechevsky & Mardell, 2001, p. 290). There were many moments in the documentation that we would have liked to have investigated further, but there was not time. Time is the big concern for pedagogical documentation as a research methodology, but the rich results suggest it is time worth taking.

**memory.** As Taguchi (2010) suggests, we choose pedagogical documentation because it *intentionally complicates* what we know about our practices (p. 91). For the students and teachers in this study, pedagogical documentation provided what the Reggio educators call a *collective memory* (Krechevsky & Mardell, 2001, p. 289). It made them think about things that might have remained hidden but were made public. Because these were their thoughts it offered them a curriculum from their peers. I believe that pedagogical documentation not only made visible specific moments of learning but also, as Rinaldi (2001c) says, made it open to the “possibilities,” possible interpretations, multiple dialogues among children and adults (p. 150).

**individuals.** Pedagogical documentation allowed teachers to focus on individual students and their personal voice as dancers. Listening to students “takes the individual out of anonymity” and gives them visibility (Rinaldi, 2001a, p. 81). Alorani recognized, while watching Habib on video, how interesting he is as a mover. For other individual students, documentation provided a greater focus on the affective domain within the social milieu that dance education seems to emphasize. The ability to take the individual child and consider her/his perspective is a very difficult task while teaching because you’re inside the process. It’s impossible to see all the interrelationships. You miss some of the dialogue and the subtle body messages conveyed among students and between yourself and the students. Documentation, and especially video documentation, allows, if not a complete picture, a more thorough story of what the experience was for the individual student. Brooke noticed Christos’ bravery when he said, “to go with the flow and try not to get laughed at.” Inside the moment, she hadn’t noticed how Christos

captured the class's attention and how they listened to him. Brooke was moved by this moment. It was such a perfect example of social constructivism at work. The themes were embedded and connected to their own personal experiences as Christos, and then Rhea, provoked their classmates with the facts—they were feeling excluded. As Forman and Fyfe (1998) say, documentation provides “a change from teaching children to studying children and by studying children, learning with children” (p. 240). By studying the series of dialogues with these students from the video documentation, Brooke was able to witness these two students teaching the others about inclusion and exclusion.

**group processes.** We saw that, in addition to feedback about individual students, the documentation provides the students and teachers with concrete evidence of their group processes, and provokes them to unravel problems, because there is a pictorial trail of the interrelationships that led to the problem. This process is like a forensics of social problem solving. As Rinaldi (1998) says, “Pedagogical documentation is in fact making visible the culture of childhood both inside and outside the school” (p. 122). Because students saw their actions re-enacted in the documentation, they couldn't deny or avoid their actions and therefore didn't waste time backpedaling— they needed to move forward to solve their problems, and they actually seemed to enjoy it. The Reggio educators recognize that their goal is to facilitate learning but not “to make it smooth and easy, but rather stimulate it by making problems more complex, involving and arousing” (Edwards, 1998, p. 185).

One of the major issues that surfaced with the grade six students was that of gender. Because we were able to keep coming back (i.e. a cycle of repeated visits) to the question of gender and how the boys and girls were working together, by the end of the creative process, they had a chance to reflect on their skills in this area.

Pedagogical documentation helped to surface what was occupying their minds and their honest perceptions of themselves as dancers. Bringing these to the surface allowed the teachers to work on the big ideas about dance and gender. Recall Albert, whom Eva perceived as a confident leader in dance, saw himself as “less than” a dancer compared to other students. These perceptions were important information for the teacher possibly unnoticed without the provocations of the documentation panels. It forced the teachers, as Eva said, “to ask what they’re thinking” and to get at the students’ perceptions. Eva recognized that she was overwhelmed that Albert didn’t consider his creative work as valuable as the pre-learned steps.

Eva reflected on her own emotional state while teaching: “You’d think I was crazy, there is so much going on and I just remain so calm.” As Brooke and Emily discussed, there are issues of physical and emotional safety with respect to touch and personal space, but Brooke also brought up the idea of psychological safety. Creative dance education must feel like an overwhelming and uncertain place for students, who are looking to give the teacher the right answer or the answer they think the teacher is seeking. As seen from the sign in Eva’s classroom, failure is an important part of creativity. In order to discover new ideas, you need to take risks, and some of them won’t work. But in an education system so focused on all students achieving a level 4,

and giving exemplars of level 4 work, how can we expect students to take risks and risk failure? Creative dance is also scary for students who are used to submitting answers on paper. When the answers need to be seen on your body, everyone is watching your body and there is more than one correct answer—this flies in the face of traditional schooling and methods of assessment.

**engagement.** Pedagogical documentation allowed these teachers to have an important dialogue about the myth of engagement—does stillness mean they're listening and movement mean they're not? Is it possible that some students need to move in order to process what they're hearing? If our bodies can hold knowledge, it is possible that moving during instructions helps certain students to hold this information in their bodies as body memories. It seems, from the results, that movement can mean engagement.

As Dahlberg (1999) suggests, pedagogical documentation as a *narrative of self-reflexivity* offers both the teacher and the student the opportunity to define and re-define themselves through their choices and their relationship to the dominant discourses in education (p. 147). It also allows them the opportunity “of taking control of one’s thinking and practice and creating counter-discourses” (p. 153). In this case, pedagogical documentation allowed us to see that kindergarten students will continue to express their physical learning, especially when their physical knowledge surpasses their verbal expression. Likewise, for the two grade three students, Habib and Emmanuel, pedagogical documentation allowed us to see how they were instantly expressing and processing their movement knowledge during instructions. What might otherwise be perceived as intentionally disruptive behavior was recognized as engagement, as a result

of our chance to re-visit it on the video. This begs us to consider all moments of teaching and learning in our classroom, for as Alorani says, stillness is not “necessarily an indication of cognitive function.”

Throughout this chapter, we see that pedagogical documentation as a research methodology provokes teachers and students to think deeply about their learning. This includes pre-conceived notions, as well as current learning about dance, bodies in education, gender, and social skills. It provides the teacher with an opportunity for professional development because she reconsiders her own pedagogy. For all participants, it provoked questions regarding the dominant discourses in education.



### **Concluding Remarks and Implications**

The purpose of this study was to determine if Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation could make the learning visible in creative dance classes, in order to help reposition dance as an essential discipline in education. The findings indicate that pedagogical documentation as a research methodology can, indeed, make the learning visible for both the teacher and her/his students. Pedagogical documentation, as a recursive form of methodology, allows students and teachers to revisit and reflect on their learning, giving it value, but it also results in new learning and the uncovering of learning which lay dormant. There are several salient themes about this learning in creative dance education that have emerged from this dissertation study. The first is the possibility for bodily thinking in creative dance education that is enjoyable for students and can extend to the entire curriculum. The second is learning about empathy and collaboration. The third is the importance of creativity in education. The final theme is the development of a new student-teacher relationship, one based on reciprocity, in which both are learning from one another about the process of learning.

#### **Pedagogical Documentation**

**The learning process.** The process of pedagogical documentation adds another dimension to the learning process for both the teacher and her students. For the teacher, it seems like another eye in the room that allows her to see moments she would not have witnessed otherwise. It also humbles her, as she recognizes that she can't see everything while immersed in the learning experience. Teachers learn a great deal about the learning journey in creative dance from the process of pedagogical documentation. They

learn that stillness during an activity can mean processing and that movement during instructions can mean engagement. For the students, documentation panels provide a memory of learning experiences that may otherwise go unnoticed. When their comments and pictures are made public, it provokes a respect for ideas and rich conversations, and it results in the development of a peer curriculum. Documentation seems to teach the students that we (as adults) value their ideas, and so they place more value on their own ideas and, in turn, shared more of their ideas publicly.

### **Bodily Thinking**

This is, perhaps, one of the most important ideas to emerge in this study—we can use our bodies for thinking and learning. As Sansom (2011) suggests, there is a tendency to “eliminate the body (and thus, the whole person) from the teaching and learning experience” in schools (p. 39). Creative dance education permits the body to be present.

**tacit knowledge.** Through pedagogical documentation, the students seem to realize that they all know more about dance than they had believed. Once they are given permission to use their bodies and to move in the classroom in ways they had not previously, they discover a whole other part of themselves that they didn’t realize existed. As Jennifer said, “I unlocked a piece of myself that I didn’t know that I had.” Some students describe this as an inner self that has been lost and is now found. Movement, because it comes from the body, seems to be deeply connected to our self. This finding seems to suggest that schooling uncovers only a portion of the students’ potential and leaves untapped the rich possibility for learning with their bodies. This is related to our image of the child. If we believe that the child (and the child’s body) is to

be controlled and managed, then those are the results of education—children who learn to be controlled (not necessarily to control themselves). If, however, we believe that the body is an important site of learning for all, from early childhood to adult, then we can unlock a whole history of learning that is contained within the body. As Alorani said, “The elements of dance are fairly human,” and, through the use of the elements students can demonstrate how they are experiencing the world. This gives teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in education greater insight into the inner world of the student and her/his perceptions of the outer world. In an era when bullying and teen suicide occur frequently, a pedagogical process that can give insight into students’ perceptions seems like a moral imperative.

**personal voice.** As researchers (Sansom, 2011; Bond, 1994) suggest, schooling can be a form of de-humanization. Even the kindergarten students in this study (after only one month of school) knew something about the confinement of the body. It took some encouragement from Emily to provoke them to use their whole bodies and to make shapes that they could not yet name, i.e. shapes that they knew how to make but that were not taught in school. The kindergarten students needed to overcome the conditioning of school in order to allow the body to become something essential (Sansom, 2011) in the learning process. In Ontario, a brand new Early Learning Kindergarten Program (Ministry of Education, 2011), that emphasizes play-based learning, might provide some basis for the re-discovery of the body in education. But teachers must find the provocations for students to recognize dance and creative movement as a viable language of learning in these settings. This will require teachers

willing to shift their way of seeing the body in education—not as something to be controlled but welcomed as a site for, and repository of, learning.

**gender.** The boys seemed to stand out as creative movers in all four classes across this study. Through the process of pedagogical documentation, we are able to place a focus on these boys as individual learners and uncover a more thorough story of their perceptions of themselves as dancers. Perhaps this occurs because they have an untrained movement voice (very few boys in this study trained in dance outside of school), the physical capacity (they know their bodies and are willing to take risks with them), and also the intrinsic motivation to want to move when given the chance. But dance as an art form is still very gendered in society. Even those boys who really love to dance, e.g. Christos, are afraid they will be made fun of by their peers.

Through pedagogical documentation, we are able to unearth many of the deeply rooted perceptions of dance as gendered. Boys such as Albert and Rinaldo, whom Eva perceived as excellent creative dancers with unique movement voices, saw themselves as “less than.” As Eva recognized, documentation allowed us to see what they were *really* thinking. Many teachers and many parents assume that boys will dislike dance: the opposite is true. It is possible that creative dance education in public schools could change some of our cultural myths about gender and provoke the general public to see dance as a gender-neutral form of art.

**inner and outer awareness.** Four- and five-year old kindergarten students know what their bodies look like from the outside: they can have both an inner and outer awareness of the shapes they are making. Older students develop an ability to use this

awareness of their bodies in space, i.e. using shapes and levels, to communicate ideas and emotions. Part of this awareness results from a more specific focus on reading the bodies of their peers, and using this knowledge on their own bodies. This is part of their tacit knowledge—they know when a body looks happy or sad, but they rarely get a chance to discuss it. Jennifer described a moment in Sydney's improvisation that she recognized in herself: "curling up and hiding so that the world doesn't notice me." These creative dance experiences are empathic, because students are recognizing connections between their own experiences of the world, and the experiences of their peers. This connection of the inner and outer worlds of children allows them to discover themselves and their peers holistically—mind, body, and spirit.

**affect.** In addition to expressing emotions in an abstract sense, dance also has affective results. It seems to calm and relax the participants (both teachers and students), even within the chaos and tension that results from the creative process and working with partners and groups. On video, the teachers in this study were surprised to see how calm they remained in the midst of the creative chaos that surrounded them. The students were often exhausted i.e. Hanna's (1979) *healthy fatigue*, because they were so completely engaged and internally motivated to move. There were many instances like Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) flow experience throughout the findings. These experiences were *autotelic*—where students were highly engaged and time seemed to stand still, because their skills matched the challenge that they were encountering. How many experiences in education provide such deep engagement?

**dance as a language of learning.** Creative dance is a language of communication and learning, but it requires time in education for students to re-discover and use it. Although Malaguzzi recognized dance as one of the hundred languages of learning in the Reggio schools, it only occasionally appears in their publications. According to Hanna (1979), it is the interaction of different sensory modalities (p. 59) that makes dance so effective as a language. In order to use the language of dance to communicate ideas and theories, students need plenty of experiences in which to develop their own vocabulary of movement. If students are rushed through the process of developing a vocabulary, their use of dance as a language will be filled with clichéd movements that look more like pantomime than dance. The full results of this process of developing dance literacy could be seen with the grade six students, who had three years of creative dance classes. These students were able to use the language of dance with intention and were able to respond quickly and respectfully when Eva, their teacher, challenged moments of cliché. It is a complex process that requires full investment in the language of dance and the creative process, i.e. trying to say something in a new way.

**shifting modalities.** The notation system developed by kindergarten student McKayla, as a map of her steps, demonstrates that students can readily shift back and forth between languages of learning. Unlike Lindqvist's (2001) suggestion, dance does not need to be translated into words in order for it to be intelligible. In fact, thinking with the body (dance) can express in ways that words fail. The grade six students did recognize that what they learn in creative dance classes transfers into other subjects,

because they can use their embodied knowledge to articulate concepts in a more differentiated way.

### **Empathy and Collaboration**

**intersubjectivity.** The relationship between the self and other is apparent in the connections between bodies in space. Leading and following activities and flocking provide students with opportunities to become fully aware of other bodies and the difference between their body language and that of their peers. As leaders, the students feel the need to “be interesting” and to come up with *new* movement, which can make them nervous. Yet overall there is a zen-like quality in both mirroring and flocking, combined with an intense focus. What other types of school-based experiences require this? When are students able to share being *in charge* and when do they have an opportunity to *improvise*? As Alorani explained, these experiences “build community,” because there is a sense of safety, beauty, and trust. The students are working in unison, they are improvising, but someone is always looking out for leading the group, for taking that responsibility. Intersubjectivity seems to exist as a powerful *pre-linguistic* (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011) force that allows students to connect their own deeply-rooted embodied knowledge to that of their peers, and in doing so, helps build a community of learners with a newly discovered awareness of themselves in relation to each other.

**touch.** The findings in this study seem to indicate that education needs to entrust students with the responsibility of teaching each other about touching with a sense of care. Instead of a blanket no-touch policy, stemming from adult policy makers’ lack of comfort with bodies and mistrust of the energy released from using their bodies, why not

allow them to learn from one another? A no-touch policy seems antithetical to learning about the relationship between self and other. It may also promote more violent and anti-social behaviours, because students are not learning the lessons of empathy involved in touching one another. The kindergarten students demonstrated their abilities as teachers of touch, while the grade six students provided an example of the long-term effects of being allowed to touch—they described themselves as a family, fully able to articulate when they were uncomfortable.

**collaboration.** There is something so personal and vulnerable, and yet natural about using our bodies to learn; when we place our bodies in relationship to other bodies and the embodied ideas of others, exciting things happen. Collaboration, as experienced in creative dance classes, builds the students' social skills. The group teaches them to listen and respect the ideas of others and negotiate (and argue) with others. It also forces them to have *active discussions* (Giguere, 2011), because many of their physical ideas cannot be explained through verbal language alone.

The collaborative group processes provoke them to overcome their pre-conceived notions of one another as dancers and human beings. They are learning to celebrate differences. This is especially important in developing collaborative relationships with members of the opposite sex. As the grade six students identified, mixed-gender group work helps their relationships outside of school. Eva recognized that she witnesses fewer cliques and that the students become more like a family as a result of these vulnerable *thinking-body*-based collaborations. Taking risks together, with their bodies, helps them support each other as human beings.



## **Creativity**

**creative process.** These collaborative experiences provide an opportunity for the students to learn how to negotiate and synthesize ideas coming from many people, including the timely feedback they receive from their teacher and peers. The teacher is learning to give just the right amount and type of feedback to provoke, without giving students the answer. All of this is a part of the creative process, which is not linear, because one does not (in fact one cannot) know exactly where one is going. It is an intense process, filled with tensions, and it is exhausting but rewarding because the results are creative—they are something never seen before. The creativity and collaboration that students are learning in creative dance classes support the development of skills for employability and innovation, but more importantly, life skills about what it means to be human.

### **A new student-teacher relationship**

**facilitators of learning.** All of the teachers in the study recognize that teaching creative dance classes has been (and continues to be) a journey of discovery, as they facilitate children's creativity. They develop their tolerance for messiness and unpredictability—a very different experience than simply teaching children a dance. This form of dance pedagogy creates a unique type of teacher-student relationship that involves reciprocity—the students and teacher are learning from one another. The teacher is learning to give up control and become better at asking open-ended questions, rather than giving answers. This pedagogy develops teachers' observation and listening skills. The students are learning to discover their own problems and solve them in multiple

ways. There is a negotiation of pedagogical agency (Sansom, 2011) that constantly takes place between the student and the teacher.

**witness thinking bodies.** Teachers recognize that, in creative dance classes, they are able to witness thinking with the body. They also recognize their developing ability to read the bodies of their students in dance class and in other subjects. This allows them to get to know their students faster and deeper. Being able to read the bodies of their students, and their students' bodily thinking provokes a pedagogical shift. In addition to looking at a piece of paper to assess students' understanding, they can look to her/his body. It allows both teachers and students to see dance as a way of knowing the world and a way for the teachers to know their students.

### **Moving forward**

Is creative dance education just another add-on to an already over-burdened curriculum (Richard, 2009), or is it a potential form of embodied creative thinking? Is it possible that creative dance, in combination with pedagogical documentation, can challenge the dominant discourses in education that see learning as merely located in the mind and on paper? As Bresler (2004) says:

The discussion about the place of dance in public education relates to the larger question of educational mission and goals. In a submissive school choreography we note children holding themselves with heads bowed, shoulders up, shuffling steps. A different choreography expands, lengthens, opens up. The physical, the cognitive and the expressive are intertwined. (p. 148)

This study offers Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation as a methodology for making the learning visible in creative dance education. Pedagogical documentation also provides us with some much-needed advocacy for creative dance education. The results of this study suggest that dance, as a strand in the Arts curriculum, needs to be re-positioned in education from a subject on the periphery to an essential language of learning. The World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE) suggests that we must “affirm arts education as the foundation for balanced, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and social development of children, youth and life-long learners” (Seoul Agenda). Greene (1995) argues that we must tap into the “full range of human intelligences,” enabling students to have a number of different languages, not just verbal or mathematical (p. 58).

Our classrooms ought to be nurturing and thoughtful and just all at once; they ought to pulsate with multiple conceptions of what it is to be human and alive. They ought to resound with the voices of articulate young people in dialogue always incomplete because there is always more to be discovered and more to be said. We must want our students to achieve friendship as each one stirs to wide-awakeness, to imaginative actions, and to renewed consciousness of possibility. (Greene, 1995, p. 43)

I believe that creative dance education does contribute to this ‘wide-awakeness’ and this consciousness of possibility, mostly because it is centered in the body, a site of learning that is mostly ignored in education. When bodies are fully integrated into education, creative dance may be seen as a rich source of information about self, other, and the world, all in a state of becoming. Creative dance might challenge the dominant discourses in education by transforming our common practices from those of control, evaluation, and compliance to those of discovery, expression, creativity, collaboration, and humanity.

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## Appendix A

Dear teacher,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at York University. As part of my doctoral research work, I wish to invite you to participate in a teacher research project. I wish to investigate the learning embedded within creative dance education for both yourself and your students. I am also investigating pedagogical documentation as a form of research in order to make the learning visible in creative dance.

We will be meeting approximately five times for a total involvement of approximately 12.5 hours, although it might last a little longer or shorter depending on what develops. I will videotape you teaching a one-hour creative dance class and then interview you (approximately 1.5 hours) while we watch the videotape. These interviews will be audio recorded. You will be engaged in normal activities around creative dance education, and there are no known risks to your participation. The primary reason for this project is to further my own understanding of the learning processes involved in creative dance education for teachers and their students.

I ask your permission to use your words from our conversations, your written reflections, and other sample work, and to take photos and video of you at work during this project. Conversations will be audio-taped and transcribed, so we can recall what we said. These materials – bits of conversations, samples of written work, photo images and video – will be developed into documentation panels to be shared with you and with other teachers. These panels may also be shared in the context of the Faculty of Education and with other interested adults in the education community. I will also be writing a dissertation and creating a mini-exhibit and ask your permission to use your words, writings, and other products, or copies of these and some photo and video, should they be appropriate, to share in my paper and presentation. This research may also lead to conference presentations, journal articles and book chapters and I will ask your permission to utilize this data to share with the academic community in this manner.

The data (words, still images, video images, samples of work) is held in the public space of the classroom and the university and is not confidential; it is not locked away but, rather, shared within the educational community. It will be kept for two years following my dissertation presentation and then destroyed. As the documentation panels and video will include images and actual names, I ask your permission to use your first name only in my paper, in order to recognize and honour your work. If you prefer I will replace your actual name with a pseudonym of your choice. All participants (students, teachers and parents) will be given the opportunity to preview the final exhibit panels and video in advance of the public presentation and to withdraw permission for further public display of all or some of their images at that time if desired.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any questions or choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the nature of your relationship with York University either now or in the future.

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Mark Richard, PhD candidate in Education, at the Faculty of Education, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, M3J 1P3, by telephone at York University (416)-736-5914 or by email at marc66@yorku.ca. This research has been reviewed and approved by the PDSB's External Research Screening Committee and the Human Participants in Research Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact Ms. Alison Collins-Mrakas, Manager, Research Ethics, Office of Research Ethics (5<sup>th</sup> Floor York Research Tower, York University, telephone (416)-736-5914 or email acollins@yorku.ca or you may contact the Graduate Programme in Education at (416)-736-5018.

Sincerely,  
 Marc Richard  
 PhD Candidate (ABD)  
 Faculty of Education  
 York University

\_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Consent

I have consented to participate in this research about creative dance education. I have understood the nature of the project and wish to participate in the following manner (please check):

	Yes	No
Words	—	—
Still Photos	—	—
Video Footage	—	—
Work Samples/Reflections	—	—

I give permission for the above data to be used for (please check):

- Research purposes only
- Shared within the Faculty of Education
- Shared with other interested adults in the community
- Included in conference presentations, journal articles, books or book chapters

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I have consented to participate in this research about creative dance education. I have understood the nature of the project and wish to participate with the understanding that my name will not be used and my words and written work will not be attributed to me. I prefer a pseudonym be used.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggested pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_



Dear parent or guardian,

As a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at York University I wish to invite your child to participate in a project about creative dance education in schools. Alorani Martin who is an exemplary creative dance teacher will be working with your child's class. I wish to investigate and document the learning within creative dance for both your child and your child's teacher. Please sign the attached form in order for your child to participate in this study.

We will meet approximately five times for about an hour in your child's classroom, although it might last a little longer or shorter depending on the children's interest. Your child will be involved in creative dance classes and there are no known risks to his or her participation. This work will not interrupt regular classroom activities and only those children who have consent and agree to participate will be videotaped.

I ask your permission to use your child's words from our discussions, drawings of their dance experiences and to take photos and video of your child at work in creative dance. Our discussions will be recorded, so that I can write out what we said. These materials - bits of conversations, samples of their work, photo images and video tape - will be used to write my paper and to create display panels to be shared with people in the education community. This research may also lead to presentations at conferences, articles or book chapters and I ask your permission to use the data in this way. All participants will have a chance to see the final display panels before they are displayed in public and will have the chance to withdraw permission to use any material.

As the display panels and my paper will include your child's photos and actual name, I ask your permission to use his or her first name only in order to recognize their work. If you prefer, I will replace their actual name with a 'made-up' name of your choice. All participation in this study is completely voluntary and your child may refuse to answer any questions or choose to stop participating at any time. Their decision not to volunteer will not affect your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Mark Richard, PhD candidate in Education, at the Faculty of Education, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, M3J 1P3, by telephone at (416) 736-5018 or by email at marc66@yorku.ca. This research has been reviewed and approved by the External Research Review Committee and the Human Participants in Research Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact Ms. Alison Collins-Mrakas, Manager, The Office of Research Ethics (5<sup>th</sup> Floor, York Research Tower), York University (telephone (416)-736-5914 or email acollins@yorku.ca or you may contact the Graduate Programme in Education at (416)-736-5018.

Sincerely,  
Marc Richard  
PhD Candidate (ABD), Faculty of Education, York University

\_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Consent

I prefer to have my child's first name used to honour their work. (circle one) yes no

I prefer a 'made-up' name be used for my child. (circle one) yes no

Suggested name \_\_\_\_\_

I understand the nature of this project and give permission for my child (print child's name)

\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this research about creative dance education

in the following manner:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Words	___	___
Still Photos	___	___
Video Footage	___	___
Work Samples	___	___

I give permission for the above data to be used for (please check):

\_\_\_ For writing my paper only

\_\_\_ To be included in the mini-exhibit of display panels and shared in public

\_\_\_ Shared at conference presentations, in journal articles or books

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Verbal Assent Form

**Date:**

**Title of Study:** Creative Dance Education: Making the Learning Visible

**Investigator (Introduce myself as the researcher):**

I will say my name and explain that I am a graduate student at York University. I will explain I am doing a major project about learning in dance in schools.

**Why am I (Marc) doing this study?**

I am doing this study because I want to find out about the learning in dance in schools.

**What will I ask you to do?**

I will observe and at times, videotape you in creative dance class. Later I might ask you questions about your learning. After each meeting I will go away and think about your learning and what we talked about and think of more questions to ask you the next time we meet. At the end I will write down all the ideas we came up with in a paper and give that paper to your teacher to read.

**Are there good things and bad things about this study?**

This study will be good because it will help me and other teachers to understand the learning in creative dance classes.

**What if you have questions about the study?**

If you have any questions about this project, I will give you my phone number and you, or your parent/guardian can call me and ask me about them.

**Can you decide if you want to be in this study?**

You can decide if you want to be in this study. You can also decide if you don't want to be in the study. No one will be upset if you don't want to be in the study. And you can agree to be in the study now, but change your mind at any time.

**Ask verbally if he/she consents to participate in the study.**

I was present when \_\_\_\_\_ had this form read to him/her and gave verbal assent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Person who obtained assent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/Signature of the child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Appendix B - The Exhibit

## Sample pedagogical documentation panels

**to re-discover their tacit knowledge of the elements of dance**

*we know more than we can tell*

The language of the body is one of the first languages that children learn but somehow this language becomes lost in education. This theme addresses the notion that this language of the body can be rediscovered via creative dance education classes. Students in this study discovered that they knew a lot more than they thought about dance.

**the grade five students**

After this first experience with creating personal bodies, we discovered that the students were not only learning to create their own bodies, but they were also learning to create their own space. This was a new experience for them. They were not only learning to create their own bodies, but they were also learning to create their own space. This was a new experience for them.

**body relationship time**

**to see themselves as dancers and develop their personal movement voice**

This theme addresses the dilemma in schools around perceptions of prior experience in dance. For many students who don't take dance outside of school, creative dance offers them a chance to develop what the arts curriculum calls a personal voice through dance. It also provides those students who have experienced dance training, with a new way of experiencing dance i.e. dance education.

**the grade five students**

For me, I sort of felt like I unlocked a place of myself that I didn't know that I had.

**the grade six students**

It was a really good experience. I was able to express myself in a way that I never could before. I was able to express myself in a way that I never could before.

**to become a facilitator of learning**

All four teachers in this research study discussed this theme - their role as a facilitator in creative dance classes. This theme connects to teachers helping students discover their tacit knowledge and personal voice in dance. I think this theme captures something about the difficulty in the relationship between creative dance (or any creative act) and traditional schooling practices. Emily discussed the fact that even four year olds "know something about school and about how school and adults work."

The role of creative dance education is not to control behaviour but develop children's capacity to develop their own knowledge and voice.

**to sense their body in space**

This theme represents the unspoken truth in creative dance classes - the students are developing an internal awareness of their body in space connected to an inner awareness of what their body is doing in relationship to itself and other bodies and objects.

**to reflect on affective experiences in dance**

As much as the students were learning to express feelings with their bodies, they were also learning that dance can elicit an emotional response in themselves and others. Many students wrote about or spoke of a sense of relaxation or calm that came over them in creative dance classes. Some described a freedom or a deep connection. Some even used the word *flow* to describe these experiences that seemed to be self-motivating and personal. These experiences of high engagement relate to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) theory of *flow*.

**the kindergarten students**

**the grade three students**

**the grade five students**

**to negotiate the interaction between space and the containment of school**

This theme relates to the student's interaction with space in terms of their creativity and the development of their movement vocabulary. The types of spaces in which they were experiencing creative dance had a profound effect on the types of movement that came out of their bodies. The culture of containment and emphasis on paper and pencil tasks in school inhibits movement and exploration of space, because students are led to believe that their bodies should not move in schools.

**Emily**

The atmosphere was creative for learning. The nature of learning is to be happy. It is to be happy. It is to be happy.