

Effect of a one-week-dance-project on the social interaction between students and teachers in a public school

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Introduction

Growing up I had the opportunity to experience dance from an early age on and kept on it until now. Through my current work as a dance teacher in different dance schools I could observe what positive impact dance can have on a group dynamic and each individual child in the studio. Furthermore I experienced a few single cases where parents were telling me about how their child is being bullied in school and does not feel safe with their teacher. In all those cases after a few months I received messages full of than fullness for what I did for their children. That is when I realized that we should shed more light on our public schools. For two years I had the chance of chaperoning two autistic children in an elementary school in Biel. During that time the idea of implementing dance as a subject into the school system became more and more of an urgency and a task I wanted to pursue in my future profession. Through my observations I could see how well children reacted to movement and how it can build bridges between them no matter what language they spoke or where they came from.

Summary

The social interaction between teachers and students in public schools has not yet been researched enough. In todays schools we have a large variety of cultural and social backgrounds. And even if students and teachers come from the same Background their learning and social behavior differs from one to another. The aim of this study is to show the positive effect dance can have on the social interaction between students and teachers. Four elementary classes (two first grade and two second grade classes) consisting of 19-20 students in each class and 7 teachers were part in the project week. 43 students filled out a questionnaire regarding their social interaction in school and their attitude towards dance. Additionally one class wrote short feedbacks about the dance week. Through video footage the children were observed in their behavior during their big break. 4 teachers took part in a



I was born in Biel-Bienne in 1988. At a young age I discovered my passion for dance. After graduating from high school I continued my education in New York in a wide variety of dance styles. After half a year I began my three-year training as a stage dancer at danceworks in Berlin. This was followed by half a year in Israel, thanks to the Dance Journey program of the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company and an intensive workshop "The March" in Senegal.

I have been back in Switzerland for five years now, where I pass on my dance knowledge to children and adults. I am also involved in various dance projects in Switzerland, Hamburg and Berlin. In August 2018 I also completed the MAS program in Dance Science at the University of Berne.

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feedback round after the project. The questionnaire and the student's feedback showed a significant difference in their social interaction with the other classes. Children found new friends and liked working with their peers much better after the project week. Children mingled more between classes and chatted with their teachers more often during breaks. Teachers were positively surprised about the student's performances and are convinced that dance had a positive effect on their students. However they don't feel competent enough to teach dance themselves. This study suggests that dance is a valuable subject for today's schools. Students and teachers can profit from the positive effect dance has on their social interaction in daily school life.

Results

The result from this study suggests that through one week of dancing together their ability to feel empathy and more connected to their peers was fostered.

In general the children really liked the fact that for one week they could only dance and craft. Mostly they appreciated the change of schedule and that they had the opportunity to be in different classrooms with other students. Most of the children, it did not matter the gender, liked dancing but were annoyed by those children who were singing too loud or not dancing the choreography as instructed. One child reported in detail on how he found new friends since they were mixed up. One boy was a bit sad that for a whole week he could not be with his class teacher.

The teachers appreciated the change of schedule during that one week. For them it felt good to work with students from the other classes. Furthermore they reported that certain students were behaving differently in a positive way after the project week. Children who were always looking for fights channeled their energy into dancing and crafting instead of fighting. One teacher (female, 50 years old) said: „They were so concentrated on memorizing the dance and song that they forgot about issues they had regarding other students.“ Some students who were considered as difficult did surprise them with their performance. A teacher (female, 32 years old) said: „I did not know that S. is such a good dancer and on top of that he also seemed to have liked what he was doing!“ Even though the project week felt like a big success to them they were both exhausted and happy at the same time.

Conclusion

In conclusion I can say that dance did have an impact on the students and teachers social interaction. Even though it was a short intervention of only one week a change could be seen in the behavior amongst the students and an overall more joyous atmosphere within the classes that were part of the dance project. Although the relationship between teachers and students was not affected as much the teachers gave a positive feedback on their students changed behavior towards each other.

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