

# PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION: A MODEL FOR CONFIDENT PARTICIPATION

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# Overview

1. Literature Review
2. Key Themes
3. Research Project
4. Findings
5. Application



“...by participating in the arts, students’ personal well being is enhanced.” (MoE, 2007)



- Researcher Assertion: *due to the nature and characteristics of vision impairment ... performing arts have additional social significance.*

# Literature Review

## 5 Specific Areas:

1. Drama
2. Dance
3. Music
4. Value of Integrating all three disciplines
5. Value of 'performance'

## 2 Key Themes:

1. Performing arts as a means for developing **intrapersonal awareness.**
2. Performing arts as a means for developing **interpersonal awareness**

# Drama



# Drama: social skills/abilities

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## Theme 1: Intrapersonal

- Drama/Dramatic Playing
  - ▣ “Process of creation”
  - ▣ “Intention to be”
  - ▣ Role play - direct experience

## Theme 2: Interpersonal

- Theatre/Performance Mode
  - ▣ “ritual that requires an audience”
  - ▣ “Intention to communicate to an audience”

# Dance



# Dance: social acceptance

## Theme 1: Intrapersonal

- Body Awareness
- Spatial Awareness
- Movement Potential

## Theme 2: Interpersonal

- Greater level of comfort with ones own body
- Freer, relaxed, natural movement
- Socially acceptable movement



# Music



# Music : social value

## Theme 1: Intrapersonal

- Development of personal qualities – the 6 C's: confidence, character, commitment, connection, competence, contribution
- Personal identity development

## Theme 2: Interpersonal

- Communication via music
- Social “Valorisation”

# Value of Integrating all three disciplines



- Gestalt principles: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts
- Each person's contribution is valued, and vital with the 'whole'.
- Ability to make links between disciplines.

# Value of 'Performance'



- Performing requires us to make personal judgments in action.
- Performance give the performer power.
- Performance has an element of responsibility.
- Performance has an element of risk.

Performing Arts Discipline	Theme 1: Intrapersonal awareness	Theme 2: Interpersonal awareness	Combined value of theme 1 & 2
Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facial gesture</li> <li>• Body movement</li> </ul>	Social skills/abilities
Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body awareness</li> <li>• Spatial awareness</li> <li>• Movement potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freer, relaxed, natural movement</li> </ul>	Social acceptance
Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 6 C's</li> <li>• Identity development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social opportunities</li> <li>• Something to share</li> </ul>	Social value
Integrated context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gestalt principles of wholeness</li> <li>• Links between disciplines</li> <li>• Individual contribution is valued</li> </ul>		
Performance context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-evaluation – personal judgments in action</li> <li>• Risk</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Power</li> </ul>		

# Research Project



- Explore current perceptions of BLENNZ students and teachers, as they engage in performing arts learning activities at high school, in a NZ context.
- Include:
  - ▣ Perceived personal and/or social benefits gained from participation
  - ▣ Perceived challenges to participation, specifically related to vision impairment

# Methodology



- Action Research: Reflect, Plan, Act, Observe
- Questionnaires: X2 Student & Teacher
- Potential Participants = students with VI, currently pursuing study at high school level in one or more performing arts disciplines, *and* support staff/teachers that attend performing arts classes with them.

# Questionnaire content



- Students:

- Behaviour/Experience questions: regularity of classes, types of activities, most enjoyable activities, preference for group or solo work, challenges experienced, levels of support received.
- Knowledge questions: types of skills
- Opinion/Value questions: personal perception of confidence level, reason for participating, perceived value of participation, personal and/or social benefits from participation.



# Questionnaire content



## □ Teachers:

- ▣ Behaviour/Experience questions: regularity of classes, types of activities, most and least successful activities, strategies employed by students to overcome challenges, support provided or recommended.
- ▣ Opinion/Value questions: perception re. value to student, personal and/or social benefits gained

# Results



- 50 questionnaires (25 per participant group)
- 60% response rate
- Analysis of questionnaires

# Key Finding #1 (for researched population)



Participation in PA was found to support intrapersonal and interpersonal (social) development.

- ▣ Performing arts students were exposed to wider social opportunities through active interaction with other members of the class, thus creating an environment in which to learn and rehearse social skills.
- ▣ I can “relate to others better” ... “I’m good at it and it makes me feel happy ... it makes me feel proud” ...I’m more funny, outgoing, less blind”...”I’ve made more friends” ...

# Key Finding #2



Students experienced most success and felt most confident when engaged in practical/performance activities.

- ▣ The practical nature was deemed valuable because I could compete on a “more even basis” ...”more even playing field”
- ▣ It took the focus away from visual learning, allowing for more creativity without my “vision impairment encroaching on it”

# Key Finding #3

Success in PA led to achievement and positive self-concept including confidence.

- ▣ students:

confidence, relaxation, enjoyment

- ▣ teachers:

increased confidence,

self-esteem,

self-discipline,

self-management



# Key Finding #4

Students experienced least success and felt least confident when engaged in written tasks that required access to information.

- ▣ 50% students:  
difficulty accessing written  
material +  
least confident (42.8%)
- ▣ teachers:  
students experienced  
least success



# Key Finding #5

Challenges to participation were identified to be of a personal/individual nature, and/or related to the characteristics of VI.

- ▣ Personality differences
- ▣ Accessing written information
- ▣ Navigation on a performance stage



# Implication #1

Students with VI do develop intrapersonally and interpersonally from participation in PA activities.

- ▣ This should have a bearing on programme design.





# Implication #2

Students generally experienced most enjoyment and most success when engaged in practical/performance related activities. Practical activities create opportunities to engage with a wide range of people.

Practical activities should be encouraged and promoted. Success leads to positive self-concepts, motivation to learn and engage with others further (theory of skill acquisition).



# Implication #3



- Challenges related to developmental characteristics of VI can manifest themselves as barriers to participation and have direct impact on individual confidence levels
  - ▣ Questions re. quality inclusive education practices at individual schools
  - ▣ Need to be addressed individually and collectively

# Limitations



- ❑ Small number
- ❑ Students and support teachers – not actual PA subject teacher
- ❑ Anonymous responses – teacher and student responses = not matched.
- ❑ Targeted students already involved in PA indicating keen interest and/or level of competence.

# Key Elements of Intervention Design



- ❑ Content guided by Expanded Core Curriculum with a focus on personal and social development.
- ❑ Include adapted activities from National Curriculum.
- ❑ Opportunity to explore all PA disciplines (dance, drama, music).
- ❑ Flexible programme with potential to adapt to meet individual student needs.
- ❑ Collaborative work between teachers and students
- ❑ Self efficacy: appropriate performance opportunities, inclusion of role models, positive affirmation, and careful planning.

# Application of Findings



- Pilot Performing Arts Immersion Course:
  - ▣ Key competencies: Thinking & Relating to Others
  - ▣ ECC: Social Skills
- 7 day Residential programme during school holidays
- 22 Students (including 3x student reps, 5x blind & 17 LV)
- Workshops
- Electives
- Performance

# Dance Workshops



- *How music and tempo affect how we dance*
- *Increased awareness of how our body functions and moves when we dance*
- *Considerations for when we perform*
- *The role dance plays in social situations*
- *Self-management, contribution and participation, problem solving and social skills.*

# Drama Workshops



- *The stage*
- *Basic acting techniques*
- *Script reading and audition skill*
- *Voice projection*
- *Breathing techniques and characterisation*
- *Improvisation and preparation for a performance*
- *Respect for others, trust, negotiation and problem-solving.*

# Music Workshops



- *How music works - explore the elements of music through practical activities.*
- *Thinking about the particular aspect being explored & evaluating how it influences the music*
- *Basic music skills to support participation in other music settings*
- *Active, cooperative participation*
- *Exploration of contemporary genres*



# Staff Feedback



- Students clearly worked cooperatively and some developed a greater awareness of other students needs and adjusted their behaviours to suit.
- All of the students were observed taking risks in performing, and in interacting with new people.
- Students were involved in the creative process so had to draw upon their knowledge and ideas to plan and produce the final product – rather than being told what/how to do it.
- Being able to create and develop something with others with a common understanding as yourself, gave them confidence to give it a go. There was not that pressure of I'm different – student rep.

# Student Feedback

- The course was valuable to me: Strongly agree X10, agree X8 (no elaboration as to how provided here)
- “I’ve learnt ... stage skills and drama skills, improvisation, how to set up mics, how to act and project my voice, how to control the volume of my voice, different music genres, how to direct.”
- Some students returned home and changed their school electives as a result of the course.
- *Unfortunately the evaluation form didn’t reflect the 2 key themes. This needs greater consideration for future planning.*

THANK-YOU 😊

