

Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education

Cultural Partner Case Study 2015/16	
Cultural Organisation and SLICE Lead	Sarah Jane Lockwood: Ludus Dance
SLICE Fellow and Partner School	Anne Dyer: Dowdales School
Action Research Question	<i>"How far and in what ways can you evidence the impact on your organisation of working with a SLICE fellow and their teaching school alliance?"</i>
Other Partners	
Dates of Project	May 2016 – June 2016

Background of cultural organisation

Ludus Dance has been developing opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to take part in, create, and watch dance since 1975. From an exciting and fun studio programme offering a wide range of dance classes in Lancaster to support for professional dance artists, we have a reputation for excellence and a renowned ethos that 'dance is for everyone'. Our charity takes the lead to inspire and generate high quality dance projects in Lancaster, Lancashire and across the North West of England, working together with community groups, schools, colleges and universities, local authorities and other arts partners. We champion dance for young people and offer the experience that is essential for inspiring the next generation of dance artists.



Project Summary

Anne Dyer from Dowdales School was interested in creating a project that would tackle two key areas; improving literacy levels at KS3 and supporting students transitioning from KS2 – KS3. Recent changes to the curriculum mean that it is no longer a requirement that learners see live theatre/dance and there seems to be more and more 'red tape' creating barriers for teachers who wish to take children out of school to see live work. Ludus Dance were therefore interested in creating a project that would make high quality live theatre accessible to young people; creating affordable, low budget work which could tour schools out of the back of a car.

Ludus Dance believes that access to live theatre is essential to inspire and raise the aspirations of young people. We believed that seeing literature animated through live performance could help support understanding, helping young people empathise with the characters and engage with themes in the text. We created a flexible scheme of work to which was adaptable for ks2 a/ks3 learners, to support practical exploration of two texts: In Dulce Est Decorum Et and Shakespeare's Henry V. Both texts deal with the theme of war in very different ways – with one text celebrating the glory of war, whilst the other text is about the harsh realities of war. The scheme of work guided teachers through a process of devising a new piece of work that would be performed as part of a celebratory sharing at the end of the project. Freelance artist and performer Josh Hawkins was contracted to deliver two workshops; one to inspire and kick start the project in week one, one workshop to support choreography and structuring of the working in week four. Additionally Ludus Dance commissioned Gary Clarke to work with artists Josh Hawkins and Anthony Briggs to create an original duet to animate and explore the texts.

Impacts and Outcomes

- Young people clearly demonstrated understanding of key themes, character and ideas presented in very challenged sections of literature. This was evidenced through highly expressive and emotive performances.
- The final event raised awareness of the value of utilising dance as a valuable means for experiential and kinesthetic exploration of other areas of the curriculum. Parents, invited guests and members of senior management all attended the final sharing event. It was commented that some parents who came to see the performance had never set foot in the school before.
- Successful partnership with Dowdales School – In many respects the project was easy to deliver. This was because Anne Dyer at Dowdales School was very active, communication was clear and the project duties were equally divided. Each partner had very clear roles and responsibilities. Ludus Dance managed the workshops, scheme of work and professional commission; Dowdales School managed the research, liaised with schools and the final event.
- Created employment for three freelance artists.
- Developed a performance and workshop package that is relevant, affordable and can be toured with minimum resource.
- Raised awareness of the Ludus Dance's work.

Next steps and futures

- Market the workshops/performance package to schools across the North West. Explore ways to tailor the package to schools individual needs and budgets. Increase access to live performance.
 - Continue to develop relationship with Dowdales/Anne Dyer and seek opportunities to collaborate in future.
 - Complete documentary style film/case study to raise awareness of the work.
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Quotes

I just wanted to take the time to say thank you for the role Ludus Dance played in the SLICE project as our cultural partner. These projects are so valuable for our students on so many levels; although it may be difficult to quantify the specific improvement in literacy over the weeks the project has taken place, I feel that the benefits will be long term and sustained. For me these benefits come in many different forms.

As an ex-head of English, line-manager to English, and as a teacher of English the benefits to me are obvious. In this project we had year 4, year 5 and year 7 students quoting from Shakespeare and Wilfred Owen's poem with real understanding. These students will forever have the confidence to be able to deal with Shakespearean vocabulary and poems with difficult and obscure images – they will no longer be fazed by Literature. They understand how writers use language to create powerful emotive images. This is a skill they need to be able to tackle both GCSE English Literature and Language; especially under the heightened new specifications. They will no longer be fazed by high level Language; in fact they will embrace and enjoy it! They have discovered how it feels to read high level lyrical text and understand its meaning and its power.

However, it is not just about Literature it is also about confidence and forming strong opinions. I have had the pleasure of working at Dowdales School for 15 years and we have always embraced the power of the Arts and this has made an obvious contribution to our students' English grades. To achieve high grades in English they need to write in an opinionated manner and with confidence; for many of them to do this their confidence needs to have been built up for years and they often take on a persona to show strong opinions. In addition, our students' speaking and listening grades have always been high and the Arts has had an obvious impact here – they are well rehearsed in sharing their work and giving constructive feedback to each other. This project has worked with students who, may in the past, have tried to opt out of extra-curricular activities in the Arts – so it has given them a head start with the confidence and skills they need to succeed. The only proof you need for this is the fact that they stood and performed in front of an audience last night. This confidence obviously is not just about English it pervades everything we do and therefore will have a positive effect on everything we do. Without this project these students may have never taken part in extra-curricular – they were targeted specifically and they will now have a greater experience during their lives at Dowdales.

I also think that the project has given our students positive male role models (who embrace the Arts) and this is something that we are always looking to foster. It will have given the students the power to dare to believe that they can be someone just like Josh and Anthony. The dream that they can go anywhere, be anyone and do anything. Aspirations are a key area that we are continuing to work on with our disadvantaged students.

Lastly, the project will have helped foster parental engagement with the school (another area we have targeted to improve for the disadvantaged students). It is sometimes hard for parents who themselves have had a difficult experience of school to come into school. Some of these parents will have not come through our doors before as they are parents of Year 4 and Year 5 and they were amazed at how welcoming the school felt (a completely different environment from when they were at school) we will reap the benefit of this for years.

Emma J Aubrey, Deputy Headteacher, Dowdales School
