

A philosophy of teaching: Katie Green, February 2011

Clear communication is essential in effectively managing participation projects. Every situation is different, and every project will require a specific set of considerations, but I believe in and will always endeavour to uphold these general principles (which are given here in no particular order):

- As a professional dance artist, I want to **provide access for all individuals** to take part in dance activities of all kinds.
- I want the dance activities I facilitate to **promote enjoyment of dance** and to **nurture the creativity of the individuals taking part**.
- I believe in empowering individuals: it is my task as a teacher/facilitator to **enable participants to locate, put into practice and take confidence in their own creativity / creative decision-making, not to dictate to them how and why they should move**. Where appropriate, I may offer teacher-led activities alongside more independent tasks, but I favour a group-centred model of leadership (becoming more leader-centred where it is necessary e.g. to develop the skills of a group, to challenge a group that is ready to progress to a higher level, or as a group-management strategy).
- In order to **encourage the participants' confidence in their movement**, I will use a range of strategies including:
 - clear description or demonstration of a movement task
 - the addition of rhythmic, dynamic direction
 - suggesting imagery that might support a movement idea
 - making a careful choice about the subject matter for a creative task
 - setting tasks that can be carried out individually or in smaller or larger groups
 - asking questions in order to ensure the participants' understanding of their material
 - describing the 'journey' or overall shape/structure of a phrase of movement or longer dance piece, a particular class or a series of classes, clarifying the particular importance of each stage (and sharing the process of creating this overall structure with the participants where it is appropriate)
- I have experienced the benefits of **careful preparation for and structuring of dance participation activities** e.g.
 - being clear about key principles or the aims of a particular activity
 - be prepared to accomplish things over time
 - layering up information so there are links to be made throughout a workshop and throughout a series of workshops
 - creating a safe environment by putting in place clear codes of behaviour where necessary
- Learning from experience and thoughtful preparation enables me to be more ready for the possibility that I might need to **make ongoing changes to modify the content of a dance activity based on the particular needs of a group**. I am very open to doing this where

appropriate, and will encourage participants to question what they are doing and to make suggestions to ensure they are taking ownership over what they are learning.

- I believe in **challenging participants and setting high standards** for the work I do with a range of individuals. As an example of this, I think it is important for dance participation activities to include a range of performance opportunities (e.g. small sharings within a workshop, in-school assemblies or end of project performances in professional venues for example). Working towards performance gives individuals the opportunity to, for example:
 - meet high expectations
 - experience the rehearsal process, developing their work through repetition and evolution of their ideas
 - develop their performance quality and therefore their self-confidence
 - work with a range of movement qualities and dynamics
 - develop focus, control, discipline
 - celebrate a sense of achievement, and take pride in their work
 - demonstrate a (new) skill (to an audience of peers, teachers, friends and families)
 - develop the skills necessary for working in a group
 - experience performance, therefore potentially encouraging them to be excited by seeing and participating in performances in the future
 - see and feed back on each other's work
 - develop creative and choreographic skills and knowledge of dance specialist vocabulary
- All the dance participation activities I facilitate will **integrate opportunities for feedback**, and that includes the participants feeding back on each other's work, as well as me offering feedback where appropriate. This feedback can take a range of forms, including discussion, writing, drawing, collage or mural-making, photography and film.
- I believe it is essential to **establish a good working rapport** with the individuals in any dance session in order for those individuals to feel free to create their best work. I will be as honest and open as possible with the participants and encourage them to do the same. Through managing a safe, enjoyable working environment that is structured but always open to change I aspire to nurturing the participants' respect, for each other and for me. As a result of this respect, I expect them to engage fully and to feed back thoughtfully and sensitively on what takes place in each session.
- This management of a safe and respectful working environment also extends beyond the activity of the studio and into any spaces in which the project management of a dance opportunity may take place. Throughout any participation project, I will **remain sensitive to the needs of any partner organisations**, and I will take the time to communicate clearly with those partners, keeping them informed about the progress of the project.