

Youth Dance: Towards Best Practice

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First Edition

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This is the first edition of "Youth Dance: Towards Best Practice". It has been published online to facilitate regular updates. The document has been designed with a margin wide enough for printing and binding. The design also allows the printing of single sections if required.

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Dance Ireland

Dance Ireland is a multi-faceted resource organisation dedicated to providing training programmes and practical supports which respond to the needs of the professional dance artist, while increasing the public's involvement with dance at all levels.

Established in 1989, Dance Ireland is an all Ireland membership organisation made up of dancers, choreographers, teachers, students, dance and arts organisations, and dance enthusiasts. Our work reflects the diversity of dance practices in Ireland today, and our programmes operate at local, national and international levels.

Dance Ireland also manages DanceHouse, a purpose-built, state-of-the-art dance rehearsal venue, located in the heart of Dublin's north-east inner city. DanceHouse is at the heart of Dance Ireland activities, as well as being a home for professional dance artists and the wider dance community. In addition to hosting a comprehensive artistic programme of professional classes, seminars, workshops, residencies and performances and a fully-equipped artists' resource room, DanceHouse offers a range of evening classes to cater to the interests and needs of the general public.

Publications:

Dance Ireland News – monthly magazine

E-bulletin – fortnightly edition

A Guide to Independent Choreographers and Dance Companies (1st edition) 2007

For further information on Dance Ireland and DanceHouse programme of activities:

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to give Youth Dance providers and funders a shared understanding of 'best practice' in Youth Dance.

This guide does not tell you how to deliver Youth Dance, but offers advice on following best practice. The intention was to create a comprehensive, but accessible reference document. As such, it is suitable for anyone who wants to maintain best practice in their youth dance activities.

The term 'Youth Dance' is used to describe a range of dance activities delivered to young people. This guide sets out a critical framework that identifies the different types of youth dance and best practice within each sector. The framework can be used for planning, delivering and evaluating Youth Dance projects.

Following best practice guidelines ensures that Youth Dance maintains:

- Artistic Integrity
- Sustainability and Accountability
- Public and Private Value

By commissioning this resource document, Dance Ireland have demonstrated their ongoing commitment to the development of Youth Dance in Ireland.

This document consists of two sections. The first section offers a general analysis of best practice in youth dance. The second section looks at specific types (modalities) of Youth Dance and highlights best practice in each area.

The modalities may not apply to everyone. If you are unsure what modality your practice lies within (or across) read the overviews of the modalities first. It is advisable to read through all the modalities to give your practice context, and reveal potential avenues of development.

Youth Dance

Ideology of Youth Dance

More than 'arts practice', youth dance refers to an ideology of engaging young people in dance practice. Based on the premise that the arts can be used as a 'powerful tool of change', youth dance seeks to address:

- Career Choice
- Lifestyle
- Creativity and Artistry
- Life Skills
- Intervention

Career Choice:

Youth Dance is a viable career route for employment as a professional dance artist. There are two routes through which this can be achieved:

A 'formal' route that involves studying dance techniques and performance in private dance schools, colleges and institutions. A consistent progression and assessment through formalised syllabi equips the student with the practical skills necessary for a career in dance.

An 'informal' route, by engaging in community based projects and local, regional or national youth dance companies. This informal, applied education may be supplemented with formalised learning before progressing into a dance career.

Lifestyle:

Youth dance offers an alternative, creative form of physical exercise. The dance group or class can also facilitate a new social setting for participants to engage in. Engaging in the arts increases cultural awareness and understanding. It exposes young people to other cultural practices and facilitates dialogue within diverse communities. Participating in the arts can lead to a greater appreciation of the value

of arts within society.

Creativity and Artistry:

Youth dance facilitates, and encourages creative and artistic expression. Participants develop their own skills, and learn to value the artistic endeavour of others. By engaging with the art form directly and with professional support, young people can discover their potential as dance artists.

Life Skills:

The development of transferable Life Skills through Youth Dance can encourage the young person to broaden their experiences and have the confidence to try new things. For example; creative and technical activities can promote literacy and numeracy. Other skills, such as problem-solving and decision-making, can also be acquired and applied in wider contexts.

Intervention:

Intervention is where the arts are used as an agent for social or personal change. Youth Dance projects can address specific social and cultural issues within a community and have a transformative effect. It is possible for this 'effect' (positive change) to have an impact beyond the intended scope of a project. Arts intervention recognises that in addressing the individual's needs and requirements, it is possible to address the wider needs of a society.

Content

Each modality of Youth Dance draws on different aspects of youth dance ideology to inform the design, delivery and evaluation of content. Youth Dance can utilise any form of dance practice; creative, formal, social, communal or therapeutic. The aims and objectives of the project, or the expertise of the facilitator inform the selection of dance practice and content.

In youth dance, all content is delivered with the aim of providing:

- Accessibility and relevance
- Positive and active participation

Consulting young people from the outset of project planning (upstream intervention) can help providers to gauge the most appropriate form or content for specific groups. Asking about their interests outside dance can help identify complimentary movement practices they may find enjoyable or rewarding.

In Youth Dance; Creative Dance, 'Ethnic' or Street/Hip Hop are the most common dance forms used. This is because they are perceived to be accessible, or culturally relevant to the participants. However, whilst relevance may encourage interest and participation, only providing activities that are relevant may be isolating. Reinforcing stereotypes of young peoples interests can limit their routes of progression and acceptance within the community.

Young people can identify with many different dance forms. Street Dance and Hip Hop, are simply the most visible in contemporary media. However, other dance practices are becoming increasingly visible; for example, contemporary, ballet and dancesport. The appearance of these dance forms in movies and music videos has increased their popularity and perceived relevance to young people.

Ethnic dance forms are often used as a means to reconnect ethnic minorities with their 'genetic' cultural identity. The sharing of these practices can create a space for participants and the wider community to engage in an open cultural dialogue. When taught outside their ethnic context, these dance forms can provide an alternative cultural and artistic experience through dance.

Creative dance offers a dance experience, without imposing the rigours of technical training. It provides young people the opportunity to express themselves creatively, regardless of prior experience.

Beginner level dance 'technique' provides a simple route into dance practice through learning basic movement vocabulary and performance principles. Clear progression throughout the course encourages participants to become interested, and involved in their own development.

Where appropriate, encourage and develop excellence in technique and performance skills. Engaging with dance in this manner creates an appreciation of dance as 'arts for their own sake'. The outcomes of this approach are two-fold. Firstly the participants will be perceived as 'dance artists' rather than 'young dancers'. Secondly, such an approach helps to maintain artistic integrity and personal interest when teaching and making dance works.

Encourage young people to participate in activities that are outside their immediate experience. Offering activities that are accessible, yet challenging will impact beyond the project, and contribute to their personal and social development.

Safe Practice

Safe practice in Youth Dance is protecting both participants **and** providers from harm. It is achieved through the implementation (and regular auditing) of clear policies and procedures.

The key policies to have in place are:

- Health and Safety
- Child Protection
- Safe Touch
- Recruitment and Training

Where appropriate, these documents should be made available to artists, clients and partners. It is essential that everyone involved in a Youth Dance project (artists, administrators, partners, participants, parent/guardians etc.) understands their responsibilities and obligations.

Ensure that all documentation is clearly laid out and simple to follow.

Health and Safety

Providing a safe environment for dance activities is absolutely necessary. Issues of health and safety should be considered in the planning stages of any project and consistently addressed throughout. Establishing good practices in Health and Safety from the outset of a project will contribute to the well-being of participants and ensure confidence in the providers or deliverers.

Risk Assessment:

A risk assessment is an evaluation of the possible Risks and Hazards of a project. This may relate to location, facilities, participants, duration or any other significant factor that may impede the safety of those involved in the project. For example, a

concrete floor is not 'fit' for dancing on. An appropriate remedial action would be to lay a temporary/touring dance floor. In other cases it may be necessary to find an alternative venue. Always conduct a risk assessment prior to the beginning of any project.

Continually review and assess all risks throughout the project.

When undertaking Risk Assessments:

- Consider the practical details of the project (space, number of participants, facilities)
- Assess the likelihood of risks or hazards occurring (injuries, accidents, security)
- Consider how this might impact on project delivery (cancellation, well-being of participants and staff)
- Take appropriate actions to minimise these risks or hazards (alternative space, remove obstacles, ensure security)
- Set up procedures for dealing with possible risks, their impact and outcomes (attendance registers, policies, procedures, fire and safety, counsellor)

In general you should ensure that all participants and their parents/guardians understand the nature of the project and the activities involved. Make sure that the relevant staff are aware of any specific medical needs or conditions of participants.

Where possible undertake first aid training and keep your certification current. A qualified first aider and first aid kit should be available at all times, and easily located. Emergency contact details for participants' parents/guardians should always be available in case of emergency.

Arrange adequate supervision and support. It is important to comply with the recommended ratios of staff numbers to participants. All staff assisting or leading should be clear about their roles and responsibilities. Challenge any strangers who appear during activities and ask them to identify themselves. Do not allow them to remain unless officially cleared.

Best Practice in Health and Safety:

- Conduct risk assessments.
- Take necessary actions to minimise risk.
- Deliver appropriate activities in appropriate spaces.
- Consider the welfare of staff and participants at all times.
- Have adequate insurance cover for all venues, activities and staff.

Child Protection

All artists, companies and organisations working in Youth Dance must have a Child Protection Policy. The policy is not just a moral statement, but also a set of rules and procedures concerning the welfare of the young people in your care.

A child protection policy should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the project.

A child protection policy should include:

- A Code of Behaviour for staff and participants.
- A designated child protection officer.
- Procedures for dealing with disclosure or allegations of abuse.
- Data protection procedures (participant confidentiality).
- Incident/Accident reporting procedures.
- Recruitment and training policies.

Due to the variety of contexts in which Youth Dance is delivered, the required depth/breadth of the child protection policy is variable. If you are working within a host organisation ensure your policy matches their basic requirements. Take the time to familiarise yourself with their procedures for dealing with disclosures or allegations of abuse.

Never deliver a project without having a suitable child protection policy in place. If the policy of the host organisation is lacking (or unavailable) implement your own. If you

implement your own policy ensure that clients, colleagues, participants (and their parents / guardians), are informed. Have paper, and electronic versions of your policy available for review and distribution.

If you suspect that a young person in your care is a victim of abuse, inform the designated child protection officer immediately. DO NOT become involved in the situation yourself. NEVER promise to keep a 'secret' for a young person in your care. DO NOT ask a young person questions regarding suspected or disclosed abuse. It is always the Child Protection officer's responsibility to deal with such issues.

Best Practice in Child Protection:

- Every artist, company and provider must have a Child Protection Policy.
- Ensure all policies / procedures are documented, implemented and audited.
- Comply with child protection and behavioural policies of host organisations.
- Review and renew child protection policies regularly.
- Keep up to date with relevant legislation and training requirements.

Safe Touch

Physical contact is central to dance pedagogy as most teaching methods employ 'touch' to guide the learning experience. A teacher may draw attention to alignment, or adjust position using touch. Participants in a workshop could learn how to support or manipulate each other's bodies in a creative process via touch. In all situations, it is essential that everybody involved is aware of the purpose of physical contact and is comfortable with its use.

Ensure that all physical contact in youth dance is appropriate and only used where necessary. Participants and their parents/guardians should be made aware that touch is part of the learning process but they can 'opt out' if they wish.

Consider the following points when planning and delivering activities:

- Use alternative means of instruction before touch (verbal, imagery etc.).
- Consider the appropriateness of proximity in activities.
- Always seek permission before touching.
- Explain how and why you are using touch.
- Is the touch appropriate, consider circumstances/context/reaction.
- Recognise discomfort, and act appropriately.
- Contact should be direct - purposeful and non-lingering.
- All instances of touch should have a learning outcome.

Only use touch to promote learning. At all times ensure a secure and trusting environment by respecting the needs of the individual. Judge each situation as it occurs; a participant may be happy to receive physical corrections one day, but not the next.

Best Practice in Safe Touch:

- Appropriate use.
- Make intentions clear.
- Seek permission.
- Ensure a learning outcome.

Recruitment and Training

It is essential to assess the suitability of artists and support staff working with young people. Conduct appropriate background checks where available, and follow up on references before allowing anyone to deliver. Depending on your country of residence, there are different means of vetting potential employees, artists or volunteers.

Ensure that recruitment material and job specifications are transparent. Employees should be fully aware of what their jobs entail and what support they will receive. Employers should provide employees with a contract (that complies with employment laws) before the commencement of delivery. Contracts that offer some job security (e.g. ongoing, fixed term) can help retain staff and encourage a commitment to the project.

It is important that artists and companies working in Youth Dance are confident and secure in their practice. Continued professional development can help artists and companies maintain, refine and expand their skill base. Regular 'team meetings' will enable artists to feedback on progress, and share skills/advice they have learned during delivery.

To ensure a positive working environment:

- Consider the well being of artists in the design of a project.
- Hold regular team meetings.
- Where possible, provide access to professional development opportunities.
- Put in place appropriate procedures for registering complaints and grievances.

Best Practice in Recruitment and Training:

- Employ appropriate artists.
- Develop a positive and safe working environment.
- Provide further training where necessary.

Background check procedures

Republic of Ireland:

The Garda Central Vetting Unit will conduct background checks for organisations registered with their service. These checks will be made against records held by the

Garda Siochana and appropriate agencies. Garda vetting has recently been made available to a wider public, however there are still many restrictions on accessing this service.

An organisation wishing to register with the Garda Central Vetting Unit, must be in a position to submit 250 to 300 individual checks per annum. If they do not meet this amount in one year, they are removed from the service. The organisation must also designate an authorised signatory who will have responsibility for communication with the unit. The Garda Central Vetting Unit will consult with organisations regarding their needs on a case by case situation. Local Garda checks are no longer available.

Northern Ireland:

The Protection of Children (Northern Ireland) Service [POC (NI)] will conduct checks on potential employees for 'regulated' positions. A regulated position is one which involves the care and supervision of children. Those persons who supervise regulated employees are also considered to be in regulated positions. This applies to paid or voluntary work.

The POC (NI) service checks potential employees against information held on the Disqualified from Working with Children List and information held by the Criminal Records Office and the Child Care Policy Directorate. Organisations wishing to use this service must first register with POC (NI). The criteria for registration includes the implementation of a Child Protection Policy and the nomination of officers to liaise with the POC (NI) service.

Further information is available from the Department for Health, Social Service and Public Safety (www.dhsspsni.gov.uk). The Volunteer Development Agency, Northern Ireland has published detailed resources and simple guides to the service. These are available to download from their website (www.volunteering-ni.org).

Scotland:

Disclosure Scotland will conduct checks on potential employees or volunteers for 'child care' positions. These are positions that involve the caring for, training or

supervising of children. They also include positions involving unsupervised contact with children and the management of persons in such positions. The disclosure service will carry out searches against the Scottish Criminal History System (CHS) and the UK wide Police National Computer (PNC).

There are three levels of disclosure available: Basic, Standard and Enhanced. Anyone can apply for a basic disclosure online at www.disclosurescotland.co.uk. These are sent directly to the individuals who apply. For child care positions, candidates must apply for an Enhanced Disclosure. These must be applied for through registered organisations and signed by a designated countersignatory. Free enhanced disclosures are available for volunteers and volunteer organisations through the Central Registered Body in Scotland (www.crbs.org.uk) which is operated by Volunteer Development Scotland.

England and Wales:

The Criminal Records Bureau provides a disclosure service for England and Wales. These checks are conducted against information held on the Police National Computer, local police authorities and relevant lists held by the government and their agencies. There are two levels of disclosure available: Standard and Enhanced. It is necessary to conduct an Enhanced disclosure check for positions that involve the sole care and supervision or training of children, or the management of such employees.

The Criminal Records Bureau website has detailed information on application procedures for individuals and organisations. It includes a search facility for designated umbrella organisations registered with the service. There are also simple guides and videos about the service available to view or download from the CRB website (www.crb.gov.uk)

Planning and Administration

As Youth dance projects can take many different forms, it is vital that you plan thoroughly. Allow sufficient time to communicate and co-ordinate with all parties involved in planning and delivery. Project evaluation and staff training requirements should also be taken into account. Ensure that adequate administrative support is in place for the duration of the project.

It is important to plan your entrance and exit strategies before project delivery begins. Consider how you will introduce the project to the participants and prepare them to engage in it. What happens when the project finishes; are there any options for ongoing, participant led activities? How will you deal with participants who have made strong emotional ties to the project?

Proposal

Context: What is the intention, purpose or context of your project?

Goals: What will you achieve; what do you hope to achieve?

Methodology: How will you achieve your intended goals?

Partnerships: What partners could support the project financially, artistically, etc?

Personnel: What are the staffing requirements of the project?

Planning

Outline: Produce a project plan and make it available to all partners and personnel involved.

Identify: Who is this project for, where will it take place? How will you access the target audience/participants?

Outcomes: What are the primary aims, objectives and expected outcomes? Do partners have specific goals to achieve? Are project goals context specific and realistic?

Strategy: Document short, medium and long-term goals for the project. How do these goals relate to your strategy as a youth dance provider?

Format: Choose the most appropriate method of delivery. Be aware of any special requirements from partners or within the target participant group.

Budget

Specify: Document all financial details. Consider income, expenditure, materials and fees.

Set aside: Have a contingency fund for unexpected expenses and emergencies.

Fundraise: Seek appropriate partners; are there any public or private funds available for your project?

Comply: Read the terms and conditions of funding agreements and ensure compliance.

Audit: Seek advice when necessary; employ the services of an accountant or financial expert.

Contracts

Responsibilities: Document the responsibilities of all partners in a contract: Agree terms and conditions of support.

Job descriptions: Have clear, legal contracts for employment of artists. Include length of contract, roles and responsibilities, details of payment. Ensure all parties are aware of their obligations and rights.

Transparency: Ensure transparency in recruitment policies and promote equal opportunities in employment.

Copyright: Consider issues of ownership and copyright. Who owns material created (e.g. artistic works, education packs etc.)? In what circumstances can it be reproduced?

Communication

Frequency: Keep updated: Liaise regularly with artistic team, clients and administration.

Access: Artists working off-site should have a central point of contact. Ensure they have sufficient support (on and off-site) available at all time.

Feedback: Hold regular update meetings, produce progress reports and discuss ongoing requirements of the project. Collect feedback from staff **and** participants.

Safe practice

Assess: Conduct risk assessments of venues: Make sure there are adequate facilities.

Accessibility: Are activities appropriate to age group, ability and location (etc.)?

Protect: Implement child protection policies and procedures: Have policy document available to all partners, personnel, participants and their parents/guardians.

Review: Regularly audit all policies and procedures. Are assessment or incident sheets being properly documented? In regularly used venues, is vigilance being maintained? Has a change of staff or contact details affected your 'emergency' communication network?

Documentation and Marketing

The documentation of a project (recording what happened) is useful for evaluation, future proposals, participant 'mementoes' and marketing purposes. Sometimes the main documentation of a project will be the intended outcome e.g. a videodance DVD. Other, indirect forms of documentation can include photography (participant or professional), video diaries, journals and scrapbooks, or formal reports.

When selecting or creating documentation for marketing, consider the intended purpose. What is appropriate to potential participants may be unsuitable for the media, funding bodies or theatre audiences.

Developing audiences for youth dance performances can be difficult. Evaluate how and where you use the term 'Youth Dance' in your advertising. If your intention is to attract a mainstream dance audience they may find the term off-putting. In such instances promote the participants as dance artists in their own right rather than 'young dancers'. Where appropriate highlight the dance work and members of the production team such as the choreographer or composer.

When documenting and marketing a Youth Dance project always consider:

Privacy: Do not disclose any personal or identifiable information about the young people involved in a project. Always seek consent prior to publishing text or imagery relating to their experiences.

Clarity: Always ensure that the details of the project location, duration, and motivation are clear on advertisements. Detail any costs that may be involved and the provision of assisted places if available. Include contact information for further enquiries. Any imagery used should be appropriate to the project description.

Visibility: Advertise projects and performances through poster campaigns, arts listings, or send information directly to youth organisations. Consider how best to attract the target participants. This may mean visiting a school or youth group to discuss the project in person. Ensure that advertisements and press releases are appropriate to the target participants or audience.

Consistency: It is possible to deliver contradicting information when dealing with multiple forms of advertising. Make sure that all information released is consistent.

Portrayal: How best can you describe the project? Information should be newsworthy, not sensationalised. Advertising 'bad kids come good' stories does not necessarily portray the positive aspects of a project. How will this effect the perception of the young people involved in activities?

Advocacy: Discuss the merits of the project. Consider how young people can be involved in promoting activities and sharing their experiences. Any article relating to Youth Dance should encourage engagement, discussion and debate of Youth Arts practice.

Delivery

Selecting a suitable delivery format requires understanding, a projects aims, goals and constraints. Will the focus be Learning & Experiencing, Performance & Sharing, or both. What is the most appropriate number of participants, duration, and location?

Learning & Experiencing

Learning: acquiring skill or knowledge via direct transmission and engagement with techniques and processes

Experiencing: acquiring skill or knowledge by engaging in process, observing methods or encountering concepts

Delivery formats:

Class: a structured period of engagement, usually part of a series. Classes involve a gathering of individuals for experiential, social or learning purposes.

Workshop: a single period of experiential engagement. Artists demonstrate and share their skills and methods of practice with the participants.

Intensive: a focused engagement in a particular art form. This usually occurs over a number of days or weeks. The focus will be on learning and acquiring skills and techniques, or the development of performance/sharing activities.

Master class: an in depth lesson with a 'master' of a particular art form. Master classes involve the sharing of skills, techniques and methods, in order to develop a depth of practice in the art form.

Ensure that individual session plans and outcomes are documented. This should take the form of lesson plans and evaluations alongside a general project outline or curriculum. With the exception of the educational sector, this documentation should be brief and concise. The intention is to facilitate an ongoing evaluation of delivery content rather than the teaching per se.

Performance & Sharing

Performance: a Formal display of a completed artistic work. It usually takes place in dedicated performance spaces, e.g. proscenium/studio theatre or concert hall. In a performance there is a certain degree of excellence, virtuosity, skill and engagement with the concept or art form expected.

Sharing: an Informal display of skills and learning; or of progress in the development of a concept or artistic work. In Youth Dance, the focus is usually on accomplishment, and providing a 'safe' environment for participants to show virtuosity, collaboration and engagement with the concept or art form. Informal sharings can occur in the delivery venue, or other spaces such as a multi purpose hall, a studio or theatre.

Delivery formats:

Concert: Concert performances and sharings occur in dedicated performance spaces. The work is 'staged', formally presented and transferable between similar spaces.

Site specific: A site specific is a performance or sharing in a specified location, other than proscenium/studio theatre. The concept of the work is generally developed around the location, environment or adaptable spaces.

Media based: Media based performance and sharing outcomes may take the form of: video, photography, multimedia (CD/DVD, website), or audio (described performances, interviews).

Duration

Youth Dance projects can be:

- **Short Term:** single class up to two months
- **Medium Term:** two months up to a year
- **Long Term:** one to 3 years
- **Ongoing:** indefinitely

The contact hours in delivery may contrast with the overall project duration. For example, a project may be on-going but involve the delivery of short-term workshops or master classes. It is important to distinguish duration in terms of 'strategic project planning' from its context within the format of delivery. All project formats must ensure consistency of delivery over all durations.

Location

Youth Dance projects can take place:

- On-site (own venue)
- Off-site (other venue)

Depending on the nature of the project, it may be appropriate to locate delivery in performance venues (theatres, concert halls etc.) or intermediate venues (Community halls, youth centres, schools).

Consider the context of the project when choosing a delivery location. There may be specific requirements regarding access or locality. For example, site specific work sometimes requires access to unusual spaces. A project dealing with conflict resolution between groups may require a neutral delivery location.

Participation

Be aware of the staff to participant ratio when delivering Youth Dance projects. Ensure that you meet the requirements of the delivery context (ethical or legal). For example, when working with National Youth Federation (Ireland) affiliated groups the ratio should be: one leader per eight participants, plus one other adult 'on site'.

In the absence of such guidelines, take appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of participants and staff. There should always be a point of contact within the vicinity of the activity/project delivery location. This person should be able to support the group leader with any enquiries, incidents or other issues that may arise.

Enquire as to availability of support staff when delivering 'off site'. It is important not to assume that clients/venues will have adequate personnel available. Make sure that artists and participants will be appropriately supported. It may be necessary to provide your own assistance.

Across the different modalities (types) of youth dance, staff / participant ratios vary widely. In the educational sector it is not uncommon to see 1:30 ratios (staff:pupil). It is important to ensure that the lesson content is arranged in a manner that minimises risk. Subdividing a class into smaller groups or arranging students into 'lines' (so you can see everybody) are useful solutions.

Where suitable and feasible consider 'team teaching' or employing assistants to help deliver activities. Take into account the capabilities of staff and participants when deciding on an appropriate ratio. Bear in mind that ratios of 1:1 or 1:2 may be intimidating for participants unfamiliar with close supervision.

Youth Company or Youth Group?

Although the terms 'company' and 'group' are used interchangeably in youth dance, this document makes a clear distinction between the two formats. Each has different characteristics that inform how a project is delivered and planned.

Youth Dance Company

Exclusivity: Participants audition for membership.

Excellence: Regular company class with an equal emphasis on training and performance skills. Technical and expressive virtuosity is encouraged.

Professionalism: As a preparation for the professional dance industry, participants are expected to show professional behaviour, commitment and enthusiasm for the project.

Repertory: Participants work with (external) professional choreographers to create and re-mount dance works. A youth dance company should be able to present an evening length performance event.

Touring: Youth dance companies will ideally undertake a small scale tour. This may take the form of a shared platform schedule.

Youth Dance Group

Participatory: Groups do not audition but expect a commitment to consistent participation.

Experiential: The emphasis is on positive experiences through participation. Technical skills acquired are considered secondary to the overall aims of the group.

Collaborative: Participants usually have a significant amount of creative input and authorship.

Collective: Youth dance groups will usually share evening length performance platforms with other groups

Specialist skills

In certain instances practitioners wishing to deliver youth dance may require professional accreditation or context specific training. Such requirements are usually made when the delivery involves young people who are at risk of exclusion from youth dance praxis. Contexts in which specialist training and accreditation are required include:

Youth Dance and Disability: dance provision for young people with learning and/or physical disabilities.

Dance and Youth Justice: dance as 'arts intervention' for potential and convicted young offenders.

Therapeutic Youth Dance: dance 'therapy' to address the mental health and well being of young people.

It is important to recognise that the young people within these contexts are capable of engaging in dance activities. What places them at risk of exclusion is the lack of pedagogic skills / professional accreditation of the practitioners. Specialist training not only supports safe practice, but facilitates artistic integrity when delivering in such contexts.

In situations where specific training is not a requirement, be sure practitioners are confident in their skills. Introductory workshops from practitioners already delivering in the area may help alleviate fears. Where possible seek out professional training in

the required area, even if accreditation is not available or feasible.

For experienced practitioners, advanced training or refresher courses can help keep skills current. Consider feeding back information gathered on such courses through peer sharing.

In instances where delivery takes place within a dedicated institution or facility, an orientation should be always undertaken before commencement of delivery.

Given the wide range of specialist contexts in which youth dance may be delivered it is essential you seek specialist advice. Such recommendations are outside the scope of this document.

Best Practice in Youth Dance delivery

In choosing a delivery format it is important to consider the duration, location and participant numbers of the project. How best can the aims and objectives of a project be facilitated?

Choose appropriate delivery format

Consider duration: How long will the project be? Will there be short, medium or long- term engagement?

Assess context: What prior dance experience do the participants have? What are their expectations of achievement?

Analyse skills base: What skills do you have to share? How best can you achieve your aims and objectives?

Prepare effectively

Entrance strategy: Instigate communication with clients/participants in advance of delivery. Are all parties aware of the purpose and nature of activities?

Plan activities: Document lesson/session plans. Consider timetables and availability of participants **and** staff.

Prepare materials: What do you need to conduct the activities? Who will supply equipment and materials?

Conduct a risk assessment: Visit venue(s) before a project begins and put in place appropriate action plans.

Ensure suitable content

Consider purpose: Is the project about 'learning' or 'sharing'? Does the content reflect these objectives?

Ensure accessibility: Consider the abilities and experience of participants. Will they be capable of engaging with material?

Select appropriate material: It should be challenging but achievable. Does it fulfil the young peoples expectations?

Deliver appropriately

Be prepared: Arrive early to organise space, equipment and materials. Supporting staff should be in place and informed of the session plan.

Ensure safe practice: Make all persons present aware of any risks and hazards. Participants and staff must follow best practice when using touch.

Communicate effectively: Do all participants understand what you are asking them to do? Encourage them to ask questions if they are unsure.

Be consistent: How will you maintain interest and participation? Deal with behavioural issues consistently.

Be inclusive: Are all participants involved? If you need to differentiate be sensitive but transparent.

Evaluate continuously

Assess response: How are participants reacting to activities? Do you need to adjust your approach?

Encourage feedback: Where appropriate, discuss content and any issues that may arise openly with participants.

Document outcomes: Write a brief overview of each session noting achievements and missed goals. Remember to include the participants responses.

Review regularly: In on-going projects, establish a regular time to 'touch base' and informally assess the project. It may be necessary to refocus delivery as the activities progress.

Have an exit strategy

Conclude activities: Ensure participants have achieved objectives. Are they aware of what have they accomplished?

Assess impact: What were the outcomes of the project; were there any unexpected results? How have activities affected the participants?

Follow up: How can participants continue with their learning? Have any issues arisen since conclusion of activities?

Gather documentation: Compile evidence and testimonies for evaluation and marketing purposes.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a means of reviewing the successes and failures of a Youth Dance project. It involves an analysis of the aims and objectives of a project (motivation) and its structure (location, duration and participation). Evaluation also examines how a project is realised (planning, delivery, content) assessing its outcomes and affect within and beyond the context of delivery.

Effective evaluation requires on-going assessment and review during all stages of a project. An evaluation should:

- Document outcomes (positive and negative).
- Assess structure, sustainability and value.
- Review policies and procedures.
- Make recommendations for development.
- Assess best practice compliance.

Remember to make use of qualitative and quantitative evaluative methods.

Quantitative

Assessing measurable information (participants, attendance, retention).

- Questionnaires / Feedback forms.
- Administrative auditing.

Qualitative

Assessing 'rich' information (subjective, experiential feedback).

- Questionnaires/Feedback forms.
- Interviews.

- Observation & Field study.
- Group discussions.

Internal Evaluation

Internal evaluations are undertaken by staff of the organisation delivering a project. This is the most common form of Youth Dance project evaluation. Assessment tools include questionnaires, feedback (participants, staff, partner organisations), and administrative reviews/reports.

Advantages

- Intimate understanding of the aims and objectives.
- Less expensive than external evaluation.
- Familiarity with personnel and participants.

Disadvantages

- May lack objectivity and depth.
- May not consider issues that fall outside original remit.
- Multiple responsibilities can lead to incomplete reports.

External Evaluation

The most appropriate means to assess youth dance is by external evaluation. This allows for more objective study, particularly in medium to long-term, or ongoing projects. Engaging suitably qualified and experienced researchers to undertake this task is important, especially in considering the specialised nature of some practices. This method may draw attention to issues or outcomes that would not be otherwise noticed by persons closely involved.

Advantages

- Objectivity and depth.
- Clear perspective and expertise.
- Does not interrupt function of company/group.
- Specified time-scale.

Disadvantages

- Increased Financial Cost to project.
- Requires extra resources and administration.
- Requires a pool of evaluators to prevent over-familiarity.

Practitioner Self Evaluation

It is essential for independent youth dance practitioners to evaluate their practice and methodologies. Self Evaluation may not provide an insight to the project as a whole. However, it will encourage the continued development of professional and delivery specific skills. Self-evaluation can be undertaken through various means:

- Administrative review (lesson plans, organisation etc.).
- Questionnaires for participants (at various times during delivery duration).
- Retrospective analysis of aims, objectives and outcomes (expected and unexpected).

Questions to consider in Youth Dance Evaluation

Planning

- How effective was the planning?
- Did you achieve aims and objectives?

- What were the outcomes of the project (expected and unexpected)?
- Did you struggle with any aspects of delivering the project.

Communication

- Was there clear and regular communication between project staff?
- How effectively did staff communicate with participants?
- Were funding bodies and partners kept up to date with project developments?
- How effectively was the project marketed?

Delivery

- What challenges were faced in delivering the project?
- Was there any break in continuity?
- How did participants respond to the material?
- Consider the progression, development and achievements of participants.
- Which approaches to delivery were successful or unsuccessful, and why?

Personal

- What are your limitations and preferences in delivering Youth Dance?
- Consider your skills and abilities, what requires further development?
- What specialist skills could and should you share with colleagues?

Youth Dance Modalities

Each of the Youth Dance modalities (types) are presented in the following format :

- **What is [...]** : Definition and overview of ideology, format of delivery, and typical duration.
- **Context** : Motivations, methodologies, requirements (etc.) specific to the modality.
- **Best Practice** : Guidelines for adhering to best practice in planning, delivery and content.

Youth Dance (Out) Reach

What is Youth Dance (Out) Reach:

(Out) Reach connects the professional artistic community with the wider population, beyond the performance environment. It involves the extension of professional practice through the sharing of skills, techniques and processes for the benefit of both the providers and the participants.

(Out) Reach is provided by professional dance artists and companies; local authorities or community groups.

Ideology

- Lifestyle
- Life Skills
- Creativity and Artistry
- Intervention

Format

- Professional performance
- Shared performance platforms
- Master classes
- Workshops

Duration

- Short term
- Medium term

(Out) Reach in context:

The term **(Out) Reach** refers to Reach **and** Outreach activities:

- **Reach:** activities delivered to existing audiences for dance/arts.
- **Outreach:** activities designed to develop interest/participation in dance.

It is important to distinguish between Reach and Outreach activities when planning and delivering a project. Examine your artistic and strategic intentions to identify the target audience and how potential audiences may be reached. Outreach often requires engaging in activities outside your primary remit. Reach is delivering the activities that are your primary focus.

(Out) Reach plays a central role in the development of the professional dance industry. Many young people have their first dance experience in (Out) reach activities. The benefits of Youth Dance (Out) Reach for providers and practitioners include:

- Dance development
- Audience development
- Marketing
- Employment opportunities
- Professional development

Dance development

Youth Dance (Out) Reach can develop interest, awareness and participation in local and regional dance activities. The promotion of dance as a social and artistic activity, can lead to increased financial investment in the arts. Arts activities supported by a community deliver public and private value. When arts practices are sustainable, artistic freedom and development thrives.

Audience development

Audience development is raising interest in dance performances, thereby increasing audience numbers and revenue. Many dance companies rely on income from performances to fund activities and to match-fund project investments.

(Out) Reach activities for audience development include: master classes, education packs/workshops, choreographic and repertory workshops. By participating in these activities young people become familiar with a company and its artistic vision. This encourages the participants (and their families) to attend future performances and activities.

Marketing

Taster days, holiday schools and short courses can be used to market medium to long term dance projects. The intention is to gauge potential interest in new provision, or increase existing participation. Direct marketing (via experience) can be more effective than mailshots and poster campaigns. It is important that (Out) Reach activities delivered in this context are carefully designed. A negative experience may discourage potential participants and their peers.

Employment opportunities

The requirement for (Out) Reach work by funding bodies has had a significant impact on the dance sector. The increasing number of Outreach and Education Officers indicates that (Out) Reach is becoming a central aspect of mainstream dance. As (Out) Reach may be delivered by, or on behalf of a provider, it can become a regular source of employment for freelance practitioners.

By offering a broader professional experience, (Out) Reach work can allow dance artists to develop their careers. For example, artists delivering Outreach and Education projects may develop skills that help them transfer to specialist roles.

Professional development

Youth Dance (Out) Reach activities are not exclusively delivered to young people. Organisations and individuals with a high level of expertise can provide training for other youth dance practitioners. Knowledge transfer (sharing key skills and information) helps develop and maintain high quality Youth Dance practice. Mentoring, peer learning, specialist training and conferences all contribute to the sharing and innovating process.

Delivering professional development training may also lead to increased interest in your artistic work. For example, leading a workshop on the Lindy Hop could lead to choreographic commissions or master classes.

Due to the nature of Youth Dance, new skills and specialist knowledge will always be in demand. For the full time dance practitioner, continued professional development is the most efficient way to gain new skills.

Best Practice:

Best practice in Youth Dance (Out) Reach enables the sharing of skills and practices in a safe and supportive environment. It encourages appreciation of artistic endeavour and positive engagement with dance activities. (Out) Reach allows the benefits of dance practice to be experienced by a wider audience. Best practice ensures continued interest and engagement.

Planning

Plan your project appropriately: Is your project Reach or Outreach? Are there specific themes that need to be addressed? Document all details in a project outline or plan.

Effective communication: Liaise regularly with client/partners prior to and throughout the project. Seek confirmation on all points of engagement. What is expected of you **and** the project?

Have a detailed budget: Who is supplying materials? Will these be included in the costing of a project? Consider the artists' fees; are travel expenses included?

Entrance and Exit strategy: Are participants familiar with your work? It may be necessary to send information before the project begins. How will you maintain your new audience? It may be appropriate to arrange follow up activities.

Delivery

Be prepared: How many participants will be in your group? Do you have sufficient support? Ensure (where relevant) that there are enough materials for every person.

Deliver appropriately: What is the most effective way to achieve your aims and objectives? Consider the context of the project. How long will you be working with the group? Are there any social or cultural issues you need to be aware of?

Communicate effectively: Be consistent and maintain interest. Do participants understand what you are asking of them? Consider the different levels of ability in the group.

Practice safely: Ensure a safe and secure environment. What have you done to minimise risks and hazards? Continuously review risk assessments and liaise with appropriate on-site staff. Is the content suitable for venue conditions?

Content

Consider appropriateness: What is the target age group for your work? What is the prior experience of participants (if any)? Consider if content appropriately conveys the aims and objectives of the project.

Target your audience: Content should satisfy the curiosity and expectations of participants. Is it engaging? Does it encourage further inquiry and interest? As necessary, allow time and space for content to have an affect.

Be inclusive: Encourage all participants to engage with the content. It may be necessary to differentiate, adapting material to differing abilities. Ensure this is done transparently, without prejudice or discrimination.

Ensure safe practice: How will you prepare participants for physical activity? Be sure they are aware of how to safely execute movement material.

Community Youth Dance (Out) Reach

What is Community Youth Dance:

Community Youth Dance is instigated by, and delivered within a 'local' community. With an emphasis on 'positive participation', community youth dance is used to address specific socio-cultural issues. The intention is to engage both young people (reach / participation) and the wider community (outreach / audience) in a 'cultural' dialogue.

In the absence of local skills and practice, community youth dance may be 'seeded' externally. Whilst such actions are essentially (Out) Reach, the long term goal is to develop an indigenous practice. As such Community Youth Dance can be considered a special form of (Out) Reach as it undertakes reach and outreach activities. The key difference is the emphasis on locality and positive participation.

Professional dance artists and companies, local authorities, institutions, community groups or skilled members of the community can provide community Youth Dance.

Ideology

- Lifeskills
- Lifestyle
- Intervention

Format

- Classes
- Workshops
- Performance groups

Duration

- Short term
- Medium term
- Long term
- Ongoing

Community Youth Dance in context:

Community Youth Dance is a special form of (Out) Reach and shares many of its features and benefits. With a preference for upstream intervention, Community Youth Dance projects are context specific. Common uses of youth dance in the community setting include:

- **Positive Participation:** e.g. community contribution and engagement, access to the arts, inclusion.
- **Cultural Cohesion:** e.g. race relations and 'respect' for society.
- **Personal and Social Development:** e.g. sex education, healthy living, avoiding bullying, life skills.

The open, collaborative nature of community dance projects facilitates a supportive, 'safe' environment, where social and personal issues can be addressed informally. Relevance, accessibility and enjoyment are central to this participant centred approach. However, offering experiences outside of the participant's normal activities may help increase awareness and understanding of wider socio-cultural issues. Activities that are challenging (but achievable) can help to develop a sense of achievement and progression.

Local authorities and County Councils may have a policy for the support or provision of community dance activities within their administrative area. There are various models of partnership and funding structures that enable these activities to be delivered:

- Dancer in residence
- Direct provision
- Contracted Companies
- Grant-aid funding

Dancer in residence

An individual artist is commissioned to engage in, and encourage dance practice for a specific period within the community. As well as developing their own practice, the artist may provide community classes, workshops or performance projects. If no specific aims and objectives for the residency have been set, a 'general' artistic contribution to the community is expected.

Direct Provision

The local authority provides dance activities through direct employment of dance artists and co-ordinators. Classes and workshops (etc.) are funded, organised and administered by the council. Aims, objectives and strategic plans will reflect the perceived needs of the local area and socio-cultural targets set by the government.

Contracted Companies

A professional dance company is contracted to provide classes and workshops to schools and communities. The dance company will be responsible for the administration and delivery of the project, subject to the contractual prerequisites. Projects may be short, medium, or long term; strategic planning is undertaken in consultation with both partners and the community.

Grant-aid funding

Youth and community groups propose their own projects and seek funding from their local authority. The community group may be expected to raise a specific amount of funds that the council will then 'match fund'. Options to raise funds include charitable

foundations, 'community' schemes, local businesses and participant fees. Match funding encourages self sufficiency and local involvement within community arts that makes these projects economically sustainable.

Best practice:

Best Practice in Community Youth Dance is based on the impact or public value of a project: access, opportunity, consistency and development. It is when dance nourishes and educates young people, encouraging them to become involved with their community and their own personal development.

To ensure best practice, providers must consider how to enable participation, introductory access, cultural cohesion and personal and social development through dance. They must put in place the strategies to achieve these goals. A short term project can have long term affects in a community.

Planning

Have a clear project plan: It may be appropriate to consult with target participants before outlining aims and objectives. What will their expectations be? How can you prepare for any unexpected outcomes?

Have a detailed budget: Consider the financial implications on participants. Have a contingency fund for transportation, or a bursary scheme to encourage attendance.

Ensure safe practice: Are there any local issues that may affect the security of your venue? Conduct a thorough risk assessment and be prepared for any problems that may arise. Liaise with group leaders regarding codes of behaviour to ensure consistency.

Have entrance and exit strategies: Ensure participants know what to expect throughout the project. If this is the only regular youth activity, what will happen to the group if (or when) it ends? Be sure that any positive outcomes are not immediately lost on completion of the project.

Delivery

Be prepared: Arrive early and have all materials prepared. Who is responsible for opening and closing the venue? Attendance may not be consistent. Either plan the project around this or require continuous attendance for participation.

Communicate effectively: Some participants may have difficulty with language, literacy or numeracy. Ensure all participants understand what you are asking of them. How will you deal with these issues?

Have sufficient support: Always have a group leader present. Consider group size; do you need extra delivery support? Make sure that you can deal with the individual **and** the group. Expect the unexpected.

Practice safely: In the community setting circumstances can change from week to week. Carry out regular risk assessments on the working space. Ensure that on-site staff are aware of your needs. Be aware of local events that may have an impact on your delivery. How will you deal with children left unaccompanied at the end of sessions?

Content

Ensure appropriate content: Consider the experience and abilities of the participants. It should be challenging, yet accessible. Are there any cultural or religious observations that you need to take into account?

Communicate effectively: Demonstrate material as necessary. Be patient and support participants where required. How will you deal with 'touch' during activities? Consider alternative methods of instruction.

Be inclusive: adjust tasks to the differing abilities of participants. Certain individuals may be (or feel) isolated due to cultural or social issues. Encourage participation through positive assertion.

Ensure safe practice: Are participants sufficiently prepared for physical activity? Those unfamiliar with dance may need to be made aware of the risks of injury throughout. Is there enough space for travelling movements? Are there any obstacles that participants need to be made aware of?

Youth Dance Education

What is Youth Dance Education:

Youth Dance Education is the delivery of dance within curricular, and extra-curricular education. In the educational setting, dance forms part of a wider cultural education strategy.

Youth Dance Education is provided by schools and colleges; professional dance artists and companies.

Ideology

- Creativity and Artistry
- Life Skills
- Intervention

Format

- Classes
- Workshops
- Intensives

Duration

- Short term
- Medium term
- Long term
- Ongoing

Youth Dance Education in context:

The purpose of Youth Dance Education is:

- **To support the National Curriculum:** e.g. physical education, dance studies, cross-curricular studies.
- **To encourage cultural and artistic development:** e.g. Life skills, intervention, engagement with the arts.
- **To provide an alternative form of physical exercise:** e.g. health education, supplementary activities.

There are two models of Youth dance in the education system:

- Education Through Dance
- Dance In Education

Education Through Dance

Education Through Dance is when the national curriculum is supported by the use of dance. This may occur through cross-curricular programmes or in the provision of extra-curricular activities. Education through dance provides a cultural education and develops transferable skills. Schemes such as after school clubs or art programmes work towards providing a positive educational experience for the students. The development of expressive and creative skills is the main emphasis within education through dance. Participants are encouraged to apply these skills to other areas of study and their everyday lives.

Education Through Dance is funded by a school or its partners. In the absence of suitably experienced teachers, dance companies or independent dance practitioners usually provide the activities. Either party may instigate projects; for example, a dance company may approach a school with an outreach project based on their current artistic work. Other school based projects, such as the Schools Completion Programme (Republic of Ireland), may actively engage an artist to provide classes or workshops as part of their remit.

Dance In Education

Dance In Education is the study of dance through a formalised curriculum. In primary and secondary schools this mainly occurs through Physical Education and only accounts for a small percentage of the syllabus. It is a compulsory element of the National Curriculum. Dance in Education also includes the study of dance as an examinable subject (Dance Studies). The content of the curriculum varies depending on the examination board, however most include practical, historical and theoretical studies. Students who take this subject will most likely have a prior interest and training in dance and will choose to study dance at school to progress their knowledge and experience.

PE teachers are given a basic training in creative dance in order to fulfil the curriculum criteria. However, their experience is often limited, with minimal continued professional development. Dance Studies is usually taught by qualified dance teachers or PE teachers with a dance specialism. If these skills are not readily available, an independent teacher or artist may be employed to provide these classes.

Best Practice:

Best practice in Youth Dance Education is encouraging participation, developing audiences and enhancing the visibility of dance practice among young people. It should provide a means to pursue dance as a career through a high quality physical and academic education in dance.

The health benefits associated with dancing are well documented. As an form of exercise, dance can provide a positive participatory experience. In line with the National Curriculum, Youth Dance in the education system should contribute to the young person's social and personal development and as such, take into account cultural and artistic endeavour.

Planning

Be organised: Have appropriate documentation, including lesson plans, outlines etc. prepared in advance. Are there any resources that need to be located or collated? What support material will students require?

Communicate effectively: Are you entirely familiar with the topic/subject area? Liaise regularly with staff or subject teachers, as appropriate to ensure a thorough understanding of what's expected. Arrange update meetings as necessary

Assess risks: are there any other curricular or extra curricular activities that may interfere with attendance or delivery? If project is after school hours, who will supervise any students left uncollected?

Entrance and Exit strategy: Will teachers be introducing topic material in other classes? Ensure they have any extra information required. How can students apply learning achieved in project to other areas of study?

Delivery

Be prepared: Set up for the activity in advance, have any equipment required tested and checked as necessary. Ensure that there are no issues with timetables. Do you have access to all the resources required for the project?

Have sufficient support: Is this project cross curricular? Do you need the support of specialised tutors? School groups/classes can involve large numbers of students. Encourage teachers to remain on-site and assist as necessary.

Deliver appropriately: Is the activity appropriate to the age or level of study of the students? How will you encourage participation? Be aware of the behavioural policies of the school or college.

Practice safely: Are you aware of fire and emergency procedures? Always know where to go and who to contact if any issues arise. Ensure familiarity with child protection policies.

Content

Ensure relevance: Does the content communicate information relevant to the subject area? How will you connect activities with the students further learning?

Communicate clearly: Use a variety of instruction methods. Demonstrate when necessary and be clear in what you are asking participants to do.

Be inclusive: Encourage positive participation. Are there any cultural or religious observations you need to consider? Ensure all participants are capable of achieving in the activity.

Ensure safe practice: Always prepare students for physical activity. Are they wearing appropriate clothing? If during school hours, consider how activity content may impact on the rest of their day.

(Pre) Vocational Youth Dance

What is (Pre) Vocational Youth Dance:

(Pre) Vocational Youth Dance is a means of educating young people in the skills and techniques required to pursue a career in dance. It involves focused and specific engagement with the participants to develop and progress their learning.

(Pre) Vocational Youth Dance is provided by Institutions, private dance schools, local authorities and professional dance artists and companies.

Ideology

- Creativity and Artistry
- Career Choice

Format

- Class
- Workshops
- Master classes
- Intensives
- Professional Performance
- Shared Performance platforms

Duration

- Short term
- Medium term
- Long term
- Ongoing

(Pre) Vocational Youth Dance in context:

(Pre) Vocational refers to both Pre-vocational and Vocational dance training:

- **Pre-vocational:** dance training as a route to Vocational training.
- **Vocational:** Dance training in preparation for a career in dance.

Pre-vocational

In the youth dance setting, pre-vocational training is delivered through private dance schools, 'holiday' schools, intensive residencies, associate programmes and Youth Dance companies. These schemes exist as a supplement to regular provision and cover most dance forms.

'Holiday' schools can be provided privately through registered teachers, by performance companies or as part of local authority arts provision. Intensive residencies and associate programmes are usually delivered as (out) reach and education activities by professional dance company. Entry to these courses is based on pre-requisite levels of experience and training.

Pre-vocational youth dance companies offer members the opportunity to experience professional practice (devising, rehearsing, performing). A high level of commitment is required as most companies are part-time. Youth Dance companies should complement and enhance their members ongoing dance training from other providers.

Vocational

Vocational training involves preparing students for careers in the professional dance sector. Attention is paid to technical, creative and performance skills with an emphasis on virtuosity. Vocational training can begin as early as 16 years old, but students under 18 years should continue their formal academic studies. Vocational dance training is traditionally provided by conservatoires and institutions with validated (partner university), or certified (national education) courses.

Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in dance are normally considered to be vocational training. The key requirement is a depth and breadth of curriculum in both practical and contextual studies.

Best Practice:

Best practice in (Pre) Vocational Youth Dance is providing a consistent and progressive artistic education that can lead to a professional career. It should encourage the development of practical, theoretical and critical skills in dance that show versatility and a depth of knowledge.

Planning

Plan effectively: Is project pre-vocational or vocational? Consider participation, duration and location. Draw up a clear project plan.

Have sufficient support: Have a co-ordinator to oversee the organisation and development of the project. Assemble a team of experienced administrators and artists. In residential courses ensure pastoral care is provided by suitably qualified staff.

Consider budget: How much will participants be required to contribute to training fees? Are there any public or private funding schemes that could support the project, or the participants?

Entrance and Exit strategy: What prior training and experience do you expect of participants? Will you audition? Consider how you can ensure continuity of training when project is complete.

Delivery

Deliver appropriately: Employ fully trained and qualified artists and teachers. How can you ensure consistency, continuity and progression in delivery? Consider the overall development of the young dancer.

Teaching Support: Where appropriate, teaching staff should be supported by assistants. Such roles allow student teachers to be mentored and gain valuable teaching experience.

Communicate clearly: Be consistent in your approach. How are students progressing? It may be necessary to adjust activities to ensure progression.

Ensure safe practice: Locate activities in appropriate spaces. Assess risks and hazards continuously. Do you have an appropriate child protection policy?

Content

Ensure appropriateness: Content should encourage high quality, technical and aesthetic engagement with dance practice. What activities will ensure the development of the young dancer in the form?

Communicate effectively: Remember that different forms of dance require different methods of instruction. How will you engage and encourage participants?

Ensure progression: Focus on individuals as well as the group. Be sure you are catering to all abilities. How will you support the ongoing development of the dancers through the syllabus?

Practice safely: Are all participants capable of executing material? Ensure there is adequate space for travelling and jumping movements.

Youth Dance Provision

What is Youth Dance Provision:

Youth Dance Provision is dance delivery in the private or social sector that focuses on the learning of dance skills and development of artistry. There is an expected progression over the duration of engagement, which can be assessed through the achievement of practical objectives.

Private dance schools, professional dance artists and companies, local authorities and institutions provide Youth Dance Provision.

Ideology

- Creativity and Artistry
- Life Skills
- Lifestyle

Format

- Class
- Workshops
- Master classes
- Intensives
- Shared Performance platforms

Duration

- Medium term
- Long term
- Ongoing

Youth Dance Provision in context:

Youth Dance Provision within the private and social sectors provides introductory access to dance, and continued training and development in the form. The context of delivery is dependent on the individual aims and objectives of the different providers. However, common factors in all situations are consistency and continuity of provision. Participants are expected to show some progression in terms of skills and abilities.

Private sector

Private dance schools are usually run by individuals who have trained with and been accredited by a professional dance association. As teachers, they may be registered with certain associations or examination bodies. These organisations regulate learning (and teaching) through the use of set syllabi, examinations, awards and medals. The schools are run as private businesses, supported and maintained through student fees, and income from performance activities and fundraising.

Social sector

Youth Dance Provision in the social sector may result from a perceived need for specific training and artistic education in dance. A local authority may find it appropriate to instigate and support provision as part of its arts strategy. Although provision may be subsidised, there will usually be a fee to participate. Fees help to cover project expenses, and can encourage continuity of attendance. For public value, subsidised provision must be sustainable.

Professional dance companies and institutions also deliver Provision. They may be obliged to undertake such activities as a requirement of their funding agreements. These activities are usually independent of the overall creative or artistic goals of the provider.

Provision not only nurtures 'raw talent' but provides a sustainable infrastructure for the employment of professional dance artists and teachers. Regulation (via professional teaching associations), alongside the expected skills progression of participants, requires continual professional development. Youth Dance Provision creates opportunities for work experience, professional development and career enhancement.

Best Practice:

Best practice in Youth Dance Provision is enabling a high quality, consistent engagement in dance. It may encourage excellence and virtuosity in technical, and performance skills where appropriate. Best practice ensures progression and development of the young person within the dance form and encourages the continued professional development of the deliverer.

Planning

Sustainability: The longer duration of engagement requires advanced planning in all areas. How will you ensure continuity in the project? Will it be sustainable?

Consider budget: How much will the participants fees be? Are there any other funding options available, research private and public resources. Is the project financially viable?

Assess risks: Consider the security of the venue. How will you supervise the arrival and departure of participants? Draw up an appropriate child protection policy.

Entrance and Exit strategies: How will you ensure accessibility in your project? What age will participants begin their training? How will you facilitate continuity or application of learning when they have left the school/project?

Delivery

Deliver appropriately: Ensure level of practice is accessible for participants. Are you sufficiently trained to deliver the content? How will you arrange your class timetable?

Have sufficient support: Consider how you will deal with large groups. Ensure you have enough assistance in delivering the project. Are there any specially trained teachers who may contribute to the project?

Be consistent: Ensure continuity of delivery. Be consistent in the quality of teaching. Keep skills updated through continued professional development.

Ensure safe practice: Conduct regular risk assessments. Is the delivery location suited to the practice? How can you ensure the safety and security of participants?

Content

Ensure appropriateness: Is the material accessible for the participants? Are the technical requirements of the examination bodies fulfilled?

Communicate effectively: Ensure participants understand what you are asking of them. Be clear with instructions and demonstrate when necessary. Do they understand the progression of technical material?

Be inclusive: There will be differing levels of ability in every group. Be sure that all participants are catered for. Which differentiation techniques or approaches can you use?

Practice safely: Have you considered issues of 'safe touch' when teaching? Are participants sufficiently prepared for physical activity? Ensure correct technique at all times.

Further Reading

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