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Proposal Title: Documenting the learning in Creative Dance Education

Description:

What is the learning that happens in creative dance in an elementary school setting? Can pedagogical documentation, inspired by the educators of Reggio Emilia, make this learning visible to the various stakeholders in education? This research project investigated the learning for both teachers and students in four elementary school settings. Four expert dance educators, who were also generalist classroom teachers, were videotaped and photographed while teaching creative dance classes. Afterwards, these teachers were interviewed while watching the video documentation. From these interviews, the researcher's observations, field notes, and photographs, moments of perceived learning were proposed via pedagogical documentation panels. The words and pictures of students and teachers were placed on panels and these were used to provoke further dialogue in the form of one-on-one interviews, small group, or whole class discussions. All of the interviews and specific moments from the video documentation were transcribed and, along with the photographs and students' work samples, comprised a data collection. The data set from each setting was analyzed against itself and against the data from other settings in a constant comparative method. Meanings emerged through an ongoing process of coding and identifying and classifying the data into themes (and subthemes). The findings suggest that in creative dance classes students are learning to develop an awareness of their dancing selves, an intersubjectivity as they engage in collaborative creative processes and discover the interconnectedness of dance as a language of learning. Teachers are learning their unique role as facilitators in creative dance classes and are acquiring an ability to witness thinking bodies. The methodology of pedagogical documentation is able to make the learning visible in creative dance classes because it provokes students and teachers to revisit and reflect on their learning and to confront issues that arose in the creative process.