Sharing Dance:

A Participatory Action Research Project in Online Community Dance Education

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Participatory Action Research espouses large goals, not easily achievable. Working across boundaries of academia and other worlds requires cultivation of mutual understanding and respect, sensitivity to differences in organizational cultures and goals, networking and sharing information, recognizing and strengthening individual and group capacities, questioning priorities, formulating questions so as to foster change and not simply to 'explain' what is, and, not surprisingly, dealing with diverse perspectives.

Kindon, Pain and Kesby [1]

Introduction

As a dance and movement workshop leader for over five years I have seen the benefits that dance education offers students first hand. While on tour across Northern Ontario with the Cree language opera *Pimooteewin: The Journey*, I had the opportunity to share creative dance workshops with students living in remote locations. These students had limited access to dance education and most schools I visited had no integrated dance curriculum. I found this surprising since the inclusion of dance in Ontario public schools is a requirement. Dance was incorporated into the 1993 Common Curriculum and the 1998 Ontario Curriculum (Ministry of Education). Many teachers I spoke with while on tour mentioned they did not have access to high quality, free dance education materials, and did not feel comfortable teaching the subject. This experience drew me to develop an applied research project with Canada's National Ballet School's (CNBS) community outreach initiative, Sharing Dance. Unlike other online dance education organizations, such as the Council for Ontario Dance and Drama Educators

[1] *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting People, Participation and Place.*

(CODE) that works on a subscription model, Sharing Dance offers teachers easy access to dance education materials for free, potentially overcoming location and socio-economic obstacles.

In the development of this project I drew on Participatory Action Research Methodology and the RSVP Cycles, as developed by Lawrence and Anna Halprin with Jim Burns. Although Participatory Action Research is inherently challenging, I approached this project with the strong belief that through collaboration and co-operation I could participate in the construction of knowledge and foster change. My community partners at CNBS are experts in the field of dance education and I believed that the school's organizational culture would facilitate a successful collaboration. I began my research with the Ballet School's online community dance education program, Sharing Dance, in the fall of 2012.

Initially, I performed a case study of the various elements that make up Sharing Dance, Canada's only fully funded, free-to-use, online community dance education program. Through this observation period, which took place from October to December of 2012, I developed a professional and personal rapport with the co-managers of community engagement, Laurel Toto and Ashleigh Powell. Together we identified some of the key challenges facing Sharing Dance. However, I was not satisfied with simply describing the community outreach program's strengths, challenges, and weaknesses. Instead, I argued, we should work together to create a project that could address these issues and foster positive change. From my experience working as an artistic collaborator professionally, I knew that integrating the Sharing Dance team members' diverse perspectives during this research process would be challenging. However, I felt up to the task and worked with Laurel and Ashleigh to develop a Participatory Action Research project.

This paper is an account of our journey. Unfortunately the original plan, an action research project entitled The Desk Dance Challenge, had to be abandoned before completion. Deriving information primarily from the design and implementation of The Desk Dance Challenge was our intended goal. When we terminated The Challenge, the Sharing Dance team and I expanded the scope of my research to include the entire Sharing Dance program. Through this broader exploration of Sharing Dance, it became clear that the program's online format presents unique challenges, worthy of closer examination and analysis.

In the conclusion of this paper, I present a number of strategies for Sharing Dance to consider going forward. These recommendations are based on my experiences and observations throughout the research process, and are in keeping with the reality of CNBS' organizational culture and goals. Ultimately, the Sharing Dance team and I were able to reflect on our experiences with The Desk Dance Challenge, examine other elements that make up the Sharing Dance program, and outline strategies to foster positive change for Sharing Dance in the future.

Methodology

My approach as an integrated researcher in this project was informed by collaborative inquiry and group-implemented research methods, as found in Participatory Action Research and the RSVP (Resources, Score, "Valuaction", Performance) Cycles. Collaborative inquiry frequently draws from Participatory Action Research methodology (Gershon 2008) and dance researchers have often incorporated these methods into their studies (Allen 2012; Dyer and Löytönen 2012; Mason 2009). The notion of learning from experience through frequent cycles of reflection and action is a central element found in collaborative inquiry practices (Dyer and Löytönen 123). This cyclical, self-reflexive approach to action research is echoed in the RSVP Cycles methodology. Developed by dancer, choreographer, and teacher, Anna Halprin, with her husband, landscape architect, Lawrence Halprin, the RSVP Cycles provides collaborative inquiry and community-based action research with a methodological approach that is rooted in creativity, transparency, open communication, and self-reflection (Halprin and Burns 26-29).

In this paper, I draw primarily from material gathered through qualitative data collection methods over a ten-month period. I attempt to highlight the importance of collaborative and interactive qualitative research methodologies in the field of dance education. As dance scholar Fiona Bannon explains, "making decisions about what method/s to use will ultimately direct the engagement with any study, beyond the purely mechanistic operation of the research and towards the ... issues that define its purpose" (25).

I employ an auto-ethnographic style of reporting, emphasizing the collaborative nature of the research process by acknowledging, highlighting, and honoring

participant contributions. As Participatory Action Research requires the researcher and community partners to work collaboratively over a substantial period of time, I rely not only on formal interviews, but also on free-flowing conversations and participant observation conducted over the course of the research process. I often draw on anecdotal and situational examples from the Sharing Dance team and other collaborators. I also include edited versions of my personal journal entries, written throughout The Desk Dance Challenge's lifespan. In order to provide context for my recommendations to improve Sharing Dance's reach and online discoverability, I draw on detailed interviews with digital media strategists from Toronto-based digital media agency, Innovate By Day.

As collaborative inquiry is shaped by the relationship between the researcher and the community partners, it was important for me to build a solid rapport with the Sharing Dance team members. Laurel and Ashleigh were my key collaborators in The Desk Dance Challenge's conception and content development. Jackie Perez, CNBS' social media coordinator, and Joanna Gertler, the school's director of marketing and communications, were my key collaborators in terms of The Challenge's implementation and marketing. I also spoke with the new director of strategic initiatives, John Dalrymple, who will be overseeing Sharing Dance's trajectory for the 2013-2014 school year. After we canceled The Challenge, these collaborators worked with me to explore the broader Sharing Dance program in varying capacities. This change of direction was influenced by our methodological approach, which reflected the non-static reality of the research process, while promoting participation, feedback, and open communication for all involved (Halprin and Burns 28).

Dance and arts education scholars, such as Becky Dyer and T. Löytönen, have explored the researcher's role in this type of inquiry, focusing on how facilitators, like

myself, might "enhance community-building to support participants in meaningful learning practices and growth" (122). While I acted as a member of the Sharing Dance team throughout the process, I tried to maintain a perspective that was removed from CNBS' structure in order to have the freedom to identify the needs of the community and question current practices. In Participatory Action Research, community members and facilitators collaborate in research that supports "personal growth, group solidarity, and social action" (Schensul, Berg and Williamson 102), and I tried to keep this in mind – with varying degrees of success – throughout the process.

It is important to note that often in Participatory Action Research, researchers and community members differ in terms of values, class backgrounds, and theoretical perspectives. In the case of this project, however, these elements were very much in line. My background as a professional dance and theatre performer and educator allowed me to share a common vocabulary, knowledge base, and outlook with the Sharing Dance team. In spite of these similarities though, it still took time for the Sharing Dance team to trust me fully. My goal as a researcher was to ensure that PAR methodology strengthened our collaboration throughout the process. The RSVP Cycles approach helped me work toward this goal, keeping my motives transparent and our lines of communication as open as possible.

In the early 1960's, Anna and Lawrence Halprin developed the RSVP Cycles – a reimagined approach to artistic production, design, planning, and performance creation. Central to this methodology were the concepts of honesty, collaborative input, and self-reflexivity (Wasserman 44). Their Take Part workshops, designed to facilitate community input and incorporate it into urban design projects, allowed them to refine the RSVP Cycles to accommodate the "fluidity and flexibility of a world in motion" (Halprin 1961 47). In order to work with Sharing Dance to develop new strategies and

strengthen the program as a whole, I employed the RSVP Cycles model to foster a successful partnership. As is reflected in most successful collaborative inquiry processes, creating meaningful partnerships with community members allows researchers to support group capacities and ultimately help foster change.

Anna, Lawrence, and their collaborator Jim Burns, outline the importance of implementing a research model that encourages input, facilitates group decision-making, and promotes interaction. The RSVP Cycles model is "participatory and cyclical rather than hierarchal and linear; it emphasizes ongoingness [sic] and process" rather than "sequence and goal attainment" (Halprin and Burns 26). This self-reflexive approach proved very useful when our original plan for The Desk Dance Challenge had to be revised.

The RSVP Cycles model identifies four major aspects of the collaborative process, which operate non-sequentially: Resources, Scores, "Valuaction", and Performance. By employing this holistic, three-dimensional approach to our collaborative inquiry process, the Sharing Dance team and I were able to adapt our plans as the project unfolded. Resources for this project included all materials, equipment, and components that allowed us to execute our plan – as well as the feelings, agendas, and objectives of every person participating. Ultimately, the feelings and agendas of the various players became integral in the evolution of the project. Taking stock of our resources at the onset allowed us to initially identify discrepancies between each Sharing Dance team member's vision for the future of the program, and their perceptions of Sharing Dance's state prior to the commencement of the process. Later on, I was able to situate everyone's opinions on how to move forward after cancelling The Desk Dance Challenge, and incorporate the team's goals for the research project, to come up with a new plan.

Scores allow all participants to be involved, by making the process visible. A score of the original project outline can be found in Appendix I, and a revised version of the project in Appendix II. As was the case for our project, scores are not set in stone and are subject to change. Although the initial score was outlined and agreed upon, I felt that the use of scores for this particular project was not as valuable as face-to-face interaction and discussion. The Sharing Dance team communicated best when we were in the same room, able to move and talk in person to express ourselves. A visual representation of the project did not add to the clarity of our discussions, although I found it useful in tracking our progress.

"Valuaction" encourages collaborators to consider feedback and implement new actions. The "valuaction" approach became integral as the process unfolded, informing how we, as co-creators of knowledge, reviewed ongoing developments, allowing the plan to evolve and change. Throughout the process I listened to my collaborators at CNBS and proposed changes based on their comments and concerns. Ultimately, a lack of feedback from the teaching community during The Desk Dance Challenge phase of the process forced us to implement a new course of action.

Performance can be understood, in the most basic terms, as the enactment of the research. Because we developed and agreed upon a score at the beginning of the process, we thought that our performance would not be improvised upon. However, by adapting our performance, our project did not end when The Desk Dance Challenge was cancelled and we were able to improvise a different course of action. This improvised performance – allowing research to evolve organically - is typical when applying the RSVP Cycles approach (Schechner 200).

Participatory Action Research methodology and the RSVP Cycles made up the framework of our applied research project, allowing each team member to influence

what happened and how it happened (Halprin and Burns 27- 32). Although these methodological approaches call for open communication and transparent actions, it would be false to claim that our channels of communication remained open and our performances transparent at all times. The reality of this type of research process is messy and often difficult. However, through the messiness, we drew on our methodological approaches to cycle back at each step, reflect on our progress, and adapt our plan going forward. Ultimately, this created an environment for us to collaboratively develop appropriate and implementable strategies to strengthen the Sharing Dance program for the future.

Classroom Dance Education and Sharing Dance

While the impact of dance education is a focus of many academic journals (*Journal of Dance Education; Journal of Dance Research; Arts Education Policy Review*) and has been studied by the Ontario Arts Council (1997), many classroom dance programs rely on hiring external specialists to deliver dance education material (Richard 98). The success of this model rests on having dance professionals act as workshop leaders, coming into classrooms to teach dance to students. CNBS sends Teacher Training candidates to three public schools in the Greater Toronto Area to conduct such workshops. During these lessons, classroom teachers are often encouraged to participate with their students, but it is the workshop leader who guides the dance activities.

If CNBS had the resources to send dance professionals to every school across the country they would, as the team feels it is the optimal way to deliver dance education to students. Through this approach they do not often meet resistance from teachers and school boards. It is, however, impossible to reach every school across the country in person. CNBS designed the online Sharing Dance program as an alternative. Ashleigh explained her approach to the creation and implementation of Sharing Dance during one of our initial conversations: "it is important to remember that personal contact is something that you can't recreate virtually, but the opportunity we have using technology allows us to reach more students," and this reach "is well beyond what we would be able to do if we did not use the Internet."

In addition to the digital platform, Sharing Dance employs an alternate delivery model for classroom dance education. Sharing Dance provides resources and materials online, which can be accessed through the website. The video and written material aims

to empower junior level classroom teachers to teach dance to their students directly. This is to be done without employing dance professionals to lead the activities. Using the materials, Laurel and Ashleigh explain, teachers should be able to incorporate dance into their everyday schedules – from employing movement activities to explain math concepts, to teaching cardio-intensive routines in physical education.

The Sharing Dance team is quick to point out that this integrated approach can have many positive impacts on students – especially those who are not conventional learners. While some dance educators strongly advocate for this integrated approach, others are concerned that it may lead policy makers to eliminate discipline-based dance classes in schools altogether (Koff and Warner 142). Regardless of policy implications, though, the Sharing Dance team feels that creative dance integration is a win-win, allowing teachers to address different learning modalities in their classrooms *while* meeting arts curriculum expectations. Many advocates of integrated arts education, or Differentiated Learning, use Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences as the basis of their research (Campbell 1992; S. Garber 2007; Gilbert 2006; Standford 2003). Dance is most often seen to address Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, which can be understood as a person's ability to "transform visual imagery and heard directives into movement" (S. Garber 17), yet the Sharing Dance team believes that *every* type of Intelligence can be developed and nurtured through dance and movement.

Although Sharing Dance's focus is on an Ontario and Canadian market respectively, the website is not geo-blocked and can be accessed worldwide. Membership is free and the sign up process takes minimal time. As members, teachers can engage with dance materials in two main sections. The Routines section offers users numerous instructional videos that break down six original dances. This section, which

is the more successful of the two based on levels of engagement, focuses on delivering short routines, which one can learn directly from online videos.

Sharing Dance targets classroom teachers primarily through the website's Resources section. The materials are designed to help teachers provide students with a dance experience similar to what they might encounter during a workshop with a dance professional. Ontario curriculum tie-ins documents are available on the website for some activities. The Resources section provides material specifically designed for the classroom, such as creative dance activities, choreography projects, and dance notation exercises. These materials encourage classroom teachers to take ownership in the implementation of creative dance in their classrooms and teach it themselves, without relying on classroom media – which may not be available. Both the Routines and Resources sections contain material that teachers can use to implement dance education modules in their classrooms without a workshop leader present.

While dance has been shown to be a valuable base for curriculum integration, without access to training in creative dance, classroom teachers often feel unable to impart the knowledge that the discipline of dance can offer through creative dance activities (Koff and Warner 144). The subject of dance is often intimidating to teachers. I spoke with Jessica Abraham, a junior-level generalist teacher who has taught in the public school system and currently works at a private school in Ontario. Jessica has no formal dance training and has relied in the past on workshop leaders to teach students performance-based modules. She put her reluctance to teach dance as follows:

> Unless you, as a teacher, are comfortable and familiar and energetic and enthusiastic about what you're teaching, the kids are not going to buy into it. I don't feel that I would be able to deliver any kind of successful dance program

without serious dance preparation and training. So I think that that is the biggest obstacle - you are putting yourself out there and if you are not comfortable, it is pretty intimidating.

Dance education researcher, Mark Richard quotes a teacher from the Halton District School Board as saying "I think it's a matter of teaching people [teachers] that they can [teach dance] ... to dispense with the notion that they need to be a specialist ... that's half the battle right there" (qtd. in Richard 96). According to Laurel and Ashleigh, this attitude among teachers is very common. Laurel explains, "More and more generalist teachers are afraid of dance due to a lack of training. We provide segments in our Resources section to show teachers that with a little training and knowledge they can teach creative movement ... as they would any subject." However, reluctant teachers are not likely to seek out this type of material, even if it is available on Sharing Dance for free.

The Sharing Dance team knows that this reluctance from teachers needs to be addressed and that strategies to overcome this obstacle must be incorporated into any successful online dance education program. The implications of an online content delivery system for dance education are significant in potentially overcoming issues of accessibility due to location and socio-economic barriers. However, possibly due to the generally negative attitude classroom teachers have toward dance, the area of dance education has not been widely digitized. This is not in line with the professional dance world, which often utilizes technological elements in teaching, performance, and choreography (Risner and Anderson 113). Dance performance can be accessed on many media platforms including broadcast television, YouTube, Vimeo channels, Twitter feeds, blogs, vlogs, and smart phone applications (Anderson 21-24). There are

numerous examples of video and Internet channels created and maintained by dance organizations internationally, yet dance education materials, including podcast interviews with dance educators, classroom dance lesson plans, and instructional videos, are surprisingly lacking online (Warburton 117). With dance education in general being met with resistance from classroom teachers, and Sharing Dance's online model breaking new ground in this field, we felt that a critical examination of the programs' strengths and weaknesses would be useful in developing a strategy for future success.

In order to provide a foundation for our critical collaborative inquiry, the Sharing Dance team and I developed a series of questions to address: What are the challenges that Sharing Dance faces in terms of communication models and content delivery methods? What are some possible solutions to these challenges? How can Sharing Dance maximize its online discoverability? What is the program's level of community engagement and how can it be increased over time? These questions focused our intention during the initial design of The Desk Dance Challenge, and later the evolution of the project to include a critical examination of the entire Sharing Dance program.

The Desk Dance Challenge: Design

In December of 2012, I worked with Laurel and Ashleigh to develop The Desk Dance Challenge. In the following two sections, I describe our journey – from conception to termination of the project. Developing the Resources section was Sharing Dance's focus for 2012-2013. Laurel and Ashleigh felt that the Resources section could be better leveraged to encourage teachers to incorporate creative dance into their regular class schedules. Disseminating easily accessible material to be used as a springboard to spark teachers' imaginations was therefore an important component of this project. My hope for The Desk Dance Challenge was to integrate the Sharing Dance team's diverse perspectives and skills into the research process, and gather teachers' experiences from across the province. This qualitative study would then be well situated to educate and influence the future of the program, rooted in the reality of CNBS' organizational culture and the educational system (Izumi 141). During a conversation in late November 2012, Laurel, Ashleigh, and I discussed two specific challenges facing Sharing Dance.

Firstly, when a dance specialist conducts a workshop series in a classroom, feedback to students is immediate and workshop leaders can adjust exercises to meet the needs of the students in real time. This leads to increased student participation. However, when dance education material is disseminated online, and classroom teachers are responsible to deliver dance content to students directly, or use instructional videos as a virtual workshop leader, students seem less likely to participate fully. Ashleigh mentioned that teachers often feel uncomfortable teaching a routine to their students because they do not feel like "expert dancers" – a perception that can be reinforced by critical students. Classroom management then becomes an

issue and students do not participate. This resonated with my experiences as a dance workshop leader. Students often asked me about my career as a professional performer. This "expertise" garnered the students' respect and they would often be more willing to participate in the dance activities after I had listed my "qualifications". Therefore it was important for us to leverage an activity that empowered students to participate without relying on teachers being "experts".

The second challenge that faces the online dance education model is rooted in an issue more common to digital content distribution in general. From a practical perspective, it is difficult to ascertain how, why, and to what extent people are using the program material - unless they post a performance video or reach out to the organization through a social media outlet, such as Facebook, to share a detailed experience. Sharing Dance does not have access to any software to track the number of hits their webpages receive, and there is no direct incentive for users to give feedback about the material – especially for the Resources section, since there are often no performance components to the exercises. This lack of consistent user feedback makes it challenging for the Sharing Dance team to have an accurate picture of the program's successes and weaknesses.

Laurel, Ashleigh, and I discussed the design and implementation of possible strategies to better meet the needs of the educational community. We agreed that interactivity and feedback loops were necessary. According to the 2013 Canadian Media Production Association research study, "Discoverability: Strategies for Canada's Digital Content Producers in a Global Online Marketplace", authentic and frequent communication with community members over multiple digital platforms, is "more valuable than any paid marketing effort" (CMPA 4). Therefore the formation of an engaged, online community is vital to ensure Sharing Dance's future success. Although

an e-newsletter goes out to Sharing Dance members every month, updating the community of new materials and routines, the team was unsure how many teachers were using the program's material regularly. Laurel and Ashleigh also wanted to provide users with the opportunity to discuss experiences and challenges when implementing Sharing Dance activities.

Laurel, Ashleigh, and I confidently felt that these obstacles could be overcome. By creating a focused and dedicated initiative with built-in feedback loops for participants, we believed that we could get Sharing Dance teacher-feedback, and thus begin to cultivate a more active and engaged online community. The Desk Dance Challenge was developed with the following goals:

- Leverage an activity that does not require the teachers to be dance "experts".
- Obtain feedback from teachers and/or students about their experiences teaching a specific creative dance exercise from the Resources section.
- Make the online experience of Sharing Dance a dialogue between teachers, students, and CNBS.

Sharing Dance's newest collaborative choreography exercise Create Your Own Desk Dance, designed for the Resources section, was an ideal activity on which to focus our research. In our planning phase, Ashleigh expressed her hope that by presenting creative dance materials, like Create Your Own Desk Dance, to teachers online in a straightforward, user-friendly manner, teachers would stop regarding dance as a specialized art form and think of it more as a "usable tool to get students invested in classroom activities." Laurel spoke of creating activities that presented, "creative dance as an activity that stems from movement and principles that are common to all of us,"

leading teachers to become less afraid of including dance in their classes. Choosing a specific exercise allowed us to create a microcosm of the larger Sharing Dance program.

As an exercise designed by the Sharing Dance team to help classroom teachers fulfill the requirements of the DPA (Daily Physical Activity) as mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education with dance, Create Your Own Desk Dance directs junior level students and their teachers to collaboratively create short, site specific dance pieces in twenty minute intervals over a couple of weeks, while sitting at their desks. Through collaborative choreography projects students learn to incorporate elements of narrative, emotion, and imagination into their movement vocabularies by exploring the use of patterns, movement opposites such as slow/fast and smooth/sharp, and composition tools such as pauses, freezes, levels, and direction changes (Reynolds 7-8). The Sharing Dance team developed support material for the Create Your Own Desk Dance activity, including a downloadable .PDF file entitled "Create Your Own Desk Dance lesson plans". This document outlines a step-by-step approach for teachers to guide their students to work in small groups and generate original movement sequences that are combined to produce a complete dance routine.

Even though it is generally held that creating dance movement is the foundation of all dance, choreography generation is not usually targeted by dance education (Brooks Schmitz 1). The type of collaborative choreography in groups outlined in the Create Your Own Desk Dance activity has been shown to be effective in generating original choreography in a way that is not threatening or overly complicated for teachers (Reynolds 7-9). The activity, therefore, has tangible benefits to students that the Sharing Dance team believed would be enticing to teachers. For these reasons, the Create Your Own Desk Dance activity was ideally suited for our research.

The Sharing Dance team member's work commitments and other scheduled events at CNBS meant that I was only able to meet with the entire community outreach team once. We routinely corresponded via email and phone, and I met with members in person individually or in pairs. The other participant group, which had not yet been determined, was our target demographic – the Ontario junior teacher population. I shared my hope with the Sharing Dance team to have a dozen teachers participate in The Desk Dance Challenge. Laurel and Ashleigh thought that twelve was possible, but wanted to make sure that I would have enough data to use if we only ended up with six. I assured Laurel and Ashleigh that as long as each Sharing Dance team member and participating classroom teacher engaged in the process as collaborators we would generate enough material. After all, mutual learning and knowledge co-construction were my primary focuses, regardless of whether we had six or sixty teachers participating.

The Desk Dance Challenge, as originally developed and agreed upon by the Sharing Dance team and myself, had numerous steps which included the design and creation of The Desk Dance Challenge tab online; the development and interpretation of teacher feedback from online evaluative questionnaires; the collaborative creation of a short dance film based on classroom video submissions; and the writing of a reflection paper critically analyzing the process. Each step was to be conducted in cooperation with the Sharing Dance team and would be reevaluated by my research supervisor, the Sharing Dance team, and myself throughout the process and at the completion. Changes in the design and implementation were to be made to reflect lessons learned in previous steps, as the dynamic process of research unfolded. Here is our original plan:

Through the Sharing Dance website, program members and teachers from across the province will be encouraged to participate in collaboratively creating original Desk Dance routines with their students. A promotional strategy will be designed and implemented with the CNBS communication department. Upon signing up, teachers will be directed to an online consent form and a short online questionnaire to assess their previous exposure to dance education and collaborative choreography. The Desk Dance Challenge online materials will be provided by Sharing Dance in the Resources section of the website. These instructional videos, blog posts, lesson plans, and written guides will clearly outline each step of the Create Your Own Desk Dance activity.

Teachers will be encouraged to collaboratively create an original Desk Dance with their students using the materials provided, rehearse the dance, and film their final product. Once filmed, teachers will be instructed to upload their class' Desk Dance to their computer and email a private link of the video file to info@sharingdance.ca. At no time will Sharing Dance expect or encourage a class' Desk Dance to be uploaded to the Internet publically. Teachers will then complete a second online evaluative questionnaire, reflecting on their experiences with the activity, examining the artistic and educational impacts.

With the assistance of CNBS' Teacher Training Program students, the Sharing Dance team and I will review all of the submitted films, noting similarities, and recurring themes in the works. We will then set parts of the submitted Desk Dance choreographies, as created by the schoolteachers and students, on young professional dancers and dance students. This choreographic work will be put

through a dance dramaturgical process and a short dance piece will emerge. The final piece of choreography will incorporate elements from all submitted Desk Dance videos with the goal of embodying both the choreography elements and the process as conveyed through the questionnaires. I will then film this final product, edit the footage, to produce a dance film. This dance film will be posted on the Sharing Dance website. The film will be presented online and it will be explained that the choreography is an amalgam of movements created by junior level students (not presented in the video). All participating junior school students and teachers will be encouraged to view the dance film online. Teachers will then complete a final evaluative questionnaire, reflecting on their classes' experiences seeing parts of their choreography in the dance film.

I will write a paper critically analyzing the process. This paper will trace our experiences designing and conducting this applied research project. While this paper will be academic in nature, it is my intention that the research be presented and disseminated to all participants in understandable language. As two final products will emerge - the dance film and the paper – certain participants and members of the public may choose to engage with one or both of the products in order to explore the project and examine the outcomes for The Desk Dance Challenge in a manner that is both meaningful and appropriate.

The Desk Dance Challenge: Implementation

The successful implementation of this plan depended on open communication and co-operation between the Sharing Dance team and myself. Our project design was also predicated on the assumption that Sharing Dance had a small, but dedicated online community of teachers interested in using the material. Unfortunately, a seamless collaborative relationship did not develop between the Sharing Dance team and myself, and the difficulties we faced in recruiting teachers were ultimately insurmountable. The Desk Dance Challenge was terminated before completion.

Throughout this process it became apparent that The Desk Dance Challenge was not a primary focus for the Sharing Dance team members. This fact was in no way a reflection of the team members' dedication to the project, but rather the result of an overly busy term at CNBS and seemingly unstoppable scope-creep from the organization's other large-scale projects. I did, at times, feel neglected when my emails to schedule meetings or ask questions went unanswered. However, this break down in communication was not the only reason that The Challenge did not succeed. Many factors – both internal and external – contributed to our difficulties in recruiting teachers, and Sharing Dance's online community was not as robust as the team assumed.

As I present the project's rollout in the following historical reflection, I present edited excerpts from my journal, outlining our journey. While The Desk Dance Challenge was originally titled The Desk Dance Initiative, I have changed the title of the project for the sake of consistency and clarity in these entries.

December 1, 2012

The proposal for The Desk Dance Challenge is almost complete and I am looking

forward to nailing down some of the finer details with Laurel and Ashleigh at our meeting later this week. In addition to scope and timeline, I will outline our roles in this project. By working with Sharing Dance I am acting as a researcher. While I believe that The Desk Dance Challenge has the potential to impact students positively, my primary role is not to critique the dance education material that Sharing Dance produces. Rather, I will be a collaborator and co-producer of knowledge and will be acting as an advisor in terms of how to create and analyze the project's online feedback loops, the promotional strategy, and the roll out. I will also be acting as a filmmaker for the second stage of the project, working with CNBS Teacher Training Program students and other young dancers. Ultimately, Laurel and Ashleigh will generate the primary goals of the project. What do they want to focus on? How do they envision the project rolling out? What are the project's intended outcomes? These are the questions we need to answer.

December 5, 2012

My meeting with Laurel and Ashleigh went well today, and we have agreed upon a project design in order to go ahead with The Desk Dance Challenge! We had a great conversation about our project's focus and we clarified its scope. Initially we were hoping to get feedback from students, in addition to teachers, but many elements including the project's timeline, ethics review protocols from school boards across Ontario, and data collection tools, forced us to narrow the scope of our project and focus primarily on teachers' experiences. I spoke with the Ryerson Ethics Review Council about the project this morning and they explained that if we have teachers complete "evaluative questionnaires" online about their experiences through Sharing Dance, we will be exempt from the School Board's ethics review process – as we will not actually be in schools conducting research. This made sense to Laurel and Ashleigh.

The project will be presented to the public as a Sharing Dance initiative with Ryerson University, as I will be observing and reporting on the process.

The Desk Dance Challenge is designed to empower teachers *and* students to become movers and creators, so it is unfortunate that we cannot talk to students directly to get their feedback. I am concerned that by keeping the teachers in control of the feedback, we may get skewed results. Teachers might feel compelled to be overly enthusiastic in their "evaluative questionnaires" or only recount the stories of the students who enjoyed the experience, depending on the teachers' expectations and biases.

By having access to students, we would be able to learn if the exercise was executed collaboratively, whether or not the students enjoyed it, and how the teachers were able to impart the intended educational and artistic impacts (such as critical thinking skills, creativity and freedom of expression, group work, etc.). However, going into schools first hand or talking to students directly presents a number of problems. The Toronto District School Board's Ethics Review Process – one of our main participating school boards – can take up to four months to complete. This timeline is prohibitively long and we are therefore unable to reach students directly. But teachers are, after all, the classroom gatekeepers. By focusing the scope of The Desk Dance Challenge on teachers' experiences, we feel that we will gather the kind of information needed to increase the likelihood of other teachers engaging with Sharing Dance material in the future. Laurel and Ashleigh believe that classroom teachers have to be comfortable with the Sharing Dance material, or else they will not teach it. This belief is reinforced by many dance education researchers including Mark Richard in his thesis "Finding the key to dance in elementary schools: A study of the current status of dance

education in one Ontario school board" (2007). In the conclusion of his detailed ethnographic study, Richard summarizes his findings:

> It is very clear that the barriers to dance education in elementary schools are the teachers; their perception of dance, of themselves as dancers (and artists), and their perceptions of the curriculum ... Teachers have very limited personal views of what dance is, and they don't seem to understand the concept of creative dance." (97-98)

Therefore, gathering teacher feedback about what works and what does not in the Create Your Own Desk Dance activity will be our primary goal.

January 3, 2013

As I wait for Ethics Approval from Ryerson University, I have been following the Ontario teachers' labour dispute closely. Students in Ontario are returning to class on Monday, and it is very possible that teachers will not resume coaching sports and supervising other extracurricular activities. Ontario passed an anti-strike legislation, known as Bill 115, last September. This legislation affects teachers' rights to collective bargaining, their wages, and the number of sick days they are allocated. Public elementary school teachers conducted a number of one-day strikes in December in protest of this new legislation. Although The Desk Dance Challenge is not technically an extra curricular activity (as it is designed to be done in the classroom during class time), I am concerned that the climate of a "work-to-rule" situation might negatively impact the recruitment numbers for our project. Laurel and Ashleigh told me that it will be challenging to recruit teachers under normal circumstances. According to an article

today in the *Globe and Mail*, the teachers' union and school board leaders stated that the "discord between the government and teachers will continue" into this year (Howlett and Mahoney). This is clearly out of our control, but I can't help but worry.

January 30, 2013

It is the end of January. We have been unable to move forward with our project this month as we wait for Ethics Approval. I submitted an Ethics Review Application to Ryerson University for The Desk Dance Challenge on December 14, 2012, and received a request to clarify some elements of the proposal on January 20th. I took the reviewers' comments into consideration and completed the required edits. We now have Ethics Approval from the Ryerson University and can begin our project in earnest. I knew that working with children and teachers would pose a number of challenges, but I thought that our project design, which was created to accommodate some of the more obvious issues, would have received approval more quickly. I was informed that due to the Winter Holidays, the turnaround time for applications was longer than usual. Regardless, we now have approval to go ahead with our project.

We are still concerned about the Ontario teacher's labour dispute. Teachers' unions have apparently asked their members to stop supervising extracurricular activities. We are all wondering how this will affect our recruitment process.

February 6, 2013

Today I had a very useful meeting with the entire outreach team at CNBS. It was difficult to schedule a time when everyone was available, but we were able to piggyback the meeting onto the end of another event. Although I have been in contact and in conversation with Laurel and Ashleigh since December, designing and

organizing The Challenge, I had not formally met the rest of the Sharing Dance team. The team is made up of seven people: Laurel and Ashleigh, the co-managers; Joanna, the director of marketing and communications; Jackie, the social media coordinator; and Danielle, Amy, and Stephanie, junior-level administrative support staff. We sat down for 90 minutes to discuss the parameters of the project and to figure out how The Desk Dance Challenge would live on the Sharing Dance website. We also explored our promotion plan for The Challenge and who would be responsible for which aspects.

Joanna proposed that we put The Challenge on the Sharing Dance blog, instead of in the Resources section, as she did not want it to be confused with normal Sharing Dance material. This became a point of discussion. I felt that because The Desk Dance Challenge is being presented to teachers as a Sharing Dance initiative, it seemed unwise and possibly confusing to separate it so entirely. Joanna presented a good point about keeping The Challenge distinct from the other resources on the website and I agreed that it was important for teachers to know that they are not obligated to participate in The Challenge, even if they want to use the Create Your Own Desk Dance resources. On the flip side, teachers who visit the Sharing Dance Resources section may be interested in The Challenge and could miss the opportunity if it was not presented there.

We did not completely resolve our disagreement, but decided that I would meet with Jackie one-on-one to determine the best way to present The Challenge online. We also briefly talked about the work-to-rule situation, and the general consensus was that since The Desk Dance Challenge is a classroom activity, there should not be a problem.

February 7, 2013

In retrospect, the dynamic of yesterday's meeting was a little strained. I wonder if, perhaps, I should have presented a comprehensive outline of The Challenge to the

group. I did my best to bring everyone up to speed, and I used the score to go through the timeline and outline the process, but I would have distributed a summary of the goals of the project if I had been made aware of the lack of communication. I assumed that the rest of the team was informed about the larger objectives for the project via Laurel and/or Ashleigh – but it appears that there was a lack of communication between Laurel, Ashleigh, and myself, and the rest of the team.

Hopefully going forward we can remedy this – but I am wary of stepping on anyone's toes. Laurel and Ashleigh manage the Sharing Dance team. I have been acting as a consultant and research partner with them, but I am not the project manager in terms of the content. However, as we continue down this journey, our roles with the project are becoming less specific. I seem to be taking on more responsibility. Laurel and Ashleigh are very busy with their other duties. Jackie and I have been given the "go ahead" to get The Desk Dance Challenge live by next week at the latest. Only three months to go before the video submission deadline!

February 10, 2013

Today, I sent the finalized evaluative questionnaires developed with Laurel and Ashleigh to the Sharing Dance team for feedback and Laurel said we are "good to go". We decided to use the Ryerson survey software, Opinio, to host the questionnaires, rather than Survey Monkey, as the Ryerson software allows us to include consent forms. Sharing Dance will have access to all of the raw responses, of course. The Ballet School video department is assembling an instructional video of a grade 4 class at a local school executing the Create Your Own Desk Dance activity in their classroom. The video will show the students collaboratively choreographing an original Desk Dance. It is being shot as a short documentary so that teachers can watch the process and emulate

it themselves in their classrooms. The video will be edited and ready for upload by the end of this week.

February 12, 2013

The first draft of the Create Your Own Desk Dance video is ready for approval. In it Ashleigh, acting as the classroom teacher, does not dance. This was done intentionally to show generalist teachers that they do not have to learn a complex routine – or even dance – in order to lead the exercise. In the video, Ashley divides the students into groups of four and hands out eight cards to each group. The students remain at their desks throughout the exercise. Each group gets four number cards (reading 4, 8, 12, or 16) and four body part cards (head, lips, feet, hips, shoulders, fingers, etc.) Ashleigh then guides the students through an activity to develop a series of movements, based on the body part cards, for a number of counts on the number cards. The teacher has each group teach the other students their portion of the dance. Everyone counts aloud. The different sections are connected and … a Desk Dance is born. I think that it is very important to have this video completed before we launch The Challenge. It will allow teachers to see how easily the activity plays out.

February 13, 2013

The name of the project itself was changed today. Jackie and I decided the initiative needed to sound more fun and approachable, so we renamed it The Desk Dance Challenge, instead of The Desk Dance Initiative. Jackie and I co-wrote the promotional copy for The Desk Dance Challenge tab. We set up the tab directly in the Resources section and it is is distinct in order to avoid the confusion Joanna was worried about. We vetted this through Laurel and Ashleigh and got approval. Finally,

we wrote a draft of the promotional email to teachers and the blurb to be included in the Sharing Dance e-newsletter.

February 14, 2013

We launched The Desk Dance Challenge on the Sharing Dance website today! Everything is posted – the link to the initial questionnaire is live, The Desk Dance Challenge tab has been created and hosts the Create Your Own Desk Dance video, and the instructional lesson plan .PDF documents are available. We sent out an e-notice announcing The Challenge to Sharing Dance subscribers this morning. We also promoted The Challenge on the Sharing Dance Facebook Page and made a Facebook Event to invite teachers to participate – although the Sharing Dance Page does not have many "likes" and the reach will most likely not be wide through this platform. I asked my teacher friends to circulate the information to their teacher friends. I also reached out to a contact at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) who will distribute the material to teachers she thinks might be interested – but she warned me that many schools are pressuring their teachers to not participate in anything that is even "sort of extra-curricular". Although it is illegal for schools to stop teachers from volunteering their time, she reinforced my worry that the climate of the schools right now is not conducive to teacher recruitment for The Desk Dance Challenge.

We are, however, going to persevere. I am shooting a short video introducing The Challenge to teachers next Friday (the first day that Jackie has time in her schedule) and I am going to be featured in it – a nice way to use my on-camera skills – because no one else has any extra time. Right now the Introduction video's script is written as copy under The Desk Dance Challenge tab on the Resources page. I am now going to re-jig

the promotional email that will go out to teachers and personal contacts, and memorize a script for the Introduction video (the Ballet School does not have a teleprompter).

Monday, February 18

I sent Jackie the final draft of the promotional email today, which Sharing Dance team members can use to invite their contacts to participate. Laurel and Ashleigh have found that this direct outreach is often the best way to get teachers interested. I would have preferred to have the Intro video made and posted before this push, but I have to remember that everyone on the outreach team has a million other jobs to do and that they are prioritizing as best they can. This week is not only Reading Week for Ryerson and York, but also Spring Break for the Ballet School – so some of the staff are away for a part or all of the week. Thus, all of the emails and promotional correspondence will go out next week.

Friday, February 22, 2013

I showed up at the Ballet School this afternoon to shoot, edit, and post the video. Jackie – who also does a lot of the videography work for the outreach team – and I arrived to the studio space where we were shooting. I was excited to get started. Jackie then informed me that the Principal of the students featured in the Create Your Own Desk Dance video demanded to have the video removed from the Sharing Dance website. The Principal was apparently not made aware that the video was going to be posted online.

I am not in control of the Resources section content or the execution of media policy at CNBS, but I provided a Sample Media Release form to the Ballet School for the Sharing Dance website (Appendix III). Jackie and Ashleigh told me that the students in

the video had media release forms signed by their parents/guardians. I was also under the assumption that the classroom teacher and School Principal were informed that the video was being made for the Sharing Dance website. It is Sharing Dance's responsibility to ensure that the school properly vets any educational materials they produce.

We are therefore in a situation where we do not have the authority to post the instructional video. In fact, the only Desk Dance Challenge videos that we can use on the Sharing Dance website are the ones that feature myself (in the Introduction video we were shooting) and Ashleigh (in an additional video where she teaches a complete dance routine at a desk – to be used as an example). Both of these videos can be found at http://www.sharingdance.ca/Resources.aspx. They are, however, not particularly useful for inexperienced teachers trying to make up their own dance with their students. The co-managers had not informed me directly that this event had transpired the day before, and I am still waiting to hear from them about our next steps.

Monday, February 25, 2013

I had not heard any further information from Laurel and Ashleigh regarding the issue over the weekend. I decided to send an email on Monday to Laurel and Ashleigh to get to the bottom of it:

> *Hi ladies,*
>
> *I hope you are having a good start to your week!*
>
> *While I was at CNBS shooting The Desk Dance Challenge Introduction video on Friday, Jackie let me know that you had to take down the "Create Your Own Desk Dance" instructional video from the Sharing Dance website. She told me that you may be able to re-post it, depending on the school's policy vis-à-vis YouTube. Do you know when we*

will find out the school's final decision? I would very much like to send out promotional emails early this week to our personal contacts and the teachers we discussed – but it does seem unwise to promote The Challenge without having an instructional video online. If we are unable to re-post the "Create Your Own Desk Dance" video, is there any way to shoot a short video that goes through the lesson plans without the students (based on the .PDF document) so that teachers have a video resource to watch? I can help as much as needed on this front. I suppose that this would have to be done sooner rather than later as we are slowly running out of time for The Challenge. Let me know your thoughts, as I look forward to working this out.

Thanks!

Julia

March 1, 2013

In the end, we were not able to secure permission from the school in question to post the "Create Your Own Desk Dance" instructional video and it was never re-posted on The Desk Dance Challenge tab. Laurel told me during a telephone conversation that she was going to speak to the school's Principal as soon as possible to try to straighten out the situation, but she was unable to do so in a timely fashion due to scheduling conflicts. When Laurel was able to talk with the School Principal, the Principal explained that because of the "work-to-rule" situation, the school could not allow the video to be uploaded. This seemed unclear to me, but Laurel did not divulge any more details, so we will have to more forward without the video. Laurel and Ashleigh also informed me that they do not have time to shoot a replacement video and they did not take me up on my offer to help produce one. The Sharing Dance team members are stretched between many different tasks. They wish they had more time to devote to The

Challenge, and to Sharing Dance in general, but are too busy.

In the future it will be important for the team to decide whether they are going to go through a school board, or be autonomous. Trying to use students from the Toronto District School Board without going through the proper channels caused delays, extra work, and wasted the team members' precious time. Streamlining the process would help the team spend more time creating and uploading content throughout the year, and less time dealing with video logistics and media releases.

Regardless, now we do not have an instructional video to train teachers how to implement the Create Your Own Desk Dance activity. We do have the Introduction video explaining the project as a whole and a .PDF document with lesson plans. We included information about The Desk Dance Challenge in the Sharing Dance March e-newsletter and we emailed promotional materials to teacher contacts. I am, however, worried that there is not enough easily sharable instructional material available to teachers online.

March 3, 2013

Apparently, the teachers' ongoing labour dispute is continuing to have an effect on our recruitment process. Laurel, Ashleigh, and I did not initially worry because the union bosses only spoke in the media about "taking after-school activities off the table for the next two years" (Aubry), and The Desk Dance Challenge is designed to be completed during class time, fulfilling the requirements of the DPA. In late February teachers agreed to resume extracurricular supervision – at least in theory, by leaving the decision up to individual teachers. We were excited by this news, hoping that the recruitment process would become easier if the general school environment was more relaxed, and teachers would begin to reach out to Sharing Dance about The Challenge.

However, as time goes by and we reach out to more contacts and talk to teachers, we are getting a sense that regardless of whether or not our Challenge is an extracurricular activity, the climate in schools is not conducive to doing *anything* extra. I had read the following quote from Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario president Peter Giuliani in January: "Under no circumstances will it be business as usual" (qtd in. Aubry), and I guess we should have taken heed.

All of the Sharing Dance team members tell me that they have met similar resistance when they reached out to their contacts. I wonder – although I have not found a diplomatic way to convey this to the Sharing Dance team yet – if there are other factors inhibiting our recruitment process just as much as the labour dispute. We have received no unprompted interest or inquiries from the online community. I am beginning to think that the online Sharing Dance community is smaller and less engaged than the team believes. Surely, if there was an engaged community we would have received at least one inquiry. I do not want to ignore the impact that the labour dispute has had on our recruitment process, but I also do not want to place the blame entirely on the "work-to-rule" and ignore the other potential factors.

March 6, 2013

Although the team and I were able to reach out to teachers outside of Ontario– one in Quebec and one in Australia – who are interested in participating, without a core of Ontario teachers, Sharing Dance will not collect the amount or type of data needed to foster change. So far, no one has signed up and not a single teacher has contacted us for more information. Thus, I can only assume that Sharing Dance does not have much online traffic. I will follow-up with Jackie about the site's analytics. I thought that the Sharing Dance online community was small, based on my conversations with Laurel

and Ashleigh, but had not imagined that it was completely non-engaged. Regardless of The Challenge's outcome, we will need to address this lack of online engagement.

March 14, 2013

For most students and teachers in Ontario, March break is almost over. Ontario has a new Minister of Education, Liz Sandals, and there is talk that the ban on extracurricular activities will end soon. What will this mean for The Desk Dance Challenge? Even if the labour dispute is resolved, is there a community interested in getting involved? We are all starting to doubt it.

March 23, 2013

We still have no participants for The Desk Dance Challenge. We are all disheartened. Is it entirely the fault of the teachers' labour dispute? No. We now agree that the Sharing Dance online community is not engaged – although Laurel is very strong in her belief that the labour dispute is a primary factor in our lack of recruitment. It will be interesting to research some possible solutions to the overall lack of engagement.

April 15, 2013

It is mid April and CNBS has been consumed by hosting an international festival, Assemblée Internationale, for the last two weeks. I have not been able to meet or even talk with either Ashleigh or Laurel. I created a reminder email as a .PDF document for the Sharing Dance team to send to their contacts, and asked Joanna and Jackie to continue promoting The Challenge throughout this time, but they have been side tracked. As the due date (April 29 – International Dance Day) for Desk Dance Challenge

submissions approaches, we still have no Ontario teachers participating. In fact, we have no participants at all. No teacher had completed the first questionnaire, and there are only nine days left. For the first time, I have allowed myself to think that The Challenge might, in fact, completely fail. I feel gutted. I believe that while the teachers' labour dispute had a profound effect on the recruitment process of our personal contacts, we need to take into account that nobody reached out to Sharing Dance without prompting – even from outside of Ontario. We have only been in contact with teachers who we know personally. I am starting to see a larger issue here. How many Canadian teachers know Sharing Dance exists?

April 27, 2013

I sent the following email to Laurel and Ashleigh, as it became clear that The Desk Dance Challenge was not going to go forward. I tried my best to remain positive.

Hi Laurel and Ashleigh,

How are you all? I hope you are surviving AI [Assemblee Internationale] madness!

In terms of The Desk Dance Challenge, I have not received any indication from anyone that there are any teachers who have confirmed to do the activity. Nor have we received any video files. As you know, many of our contacts in Ontario felt unable to participate because of "work-to-rule", and now that that is resolved, there is very little time for them to actually schedule and do the activity.

So, we have two choices at this point. Firstly, we can extend the deadline and see if we can push the activity to teachers again – but I would need your help to do this and I know that CNBS is crazy busy right now. The other option is to cancel The Desk Dance Challenge due to lack of participants. Jackie could take down the tab and leave The Desk Dance Routine information on the Resources page.

Unless I hear otherwise, I will go ahead with the second option and assume that we will not continue with The Desk Dance Challenge. Don't worry; this is all part of the joy of community based research projects!

Many many many thanks!

Julia

May 1, 2013

I spoke with Laurel today on the phone and she agreed that The Desk Dance Challenge had little chance of succeeding even if we extended the timeline. Unfortunately, the issues that we encountered proved to be too challenging to surmount. We had a solid plan, a great product, a decent promotional strategy, and (in the beginning) the right support material, yet, nobody responded. This also means that we will not be creating The Ultimate Desk Dance Film. I will therefore not have the opportunity to act as a filmmaker for the third stage of the project, working with CNBS Teacher Training Program students and other young dancers. I was looking forward to that phase – but I am determined to work with the Sharing Dance team to come up with new strategies so that when the teachers are not "working-to-rule" Sharing Dance will be positioned to serve the community.

May 5, 2013

Why did The Desk Dance Challenge fail? Ultimately the Sharing Dance online community is not engaged and the material is not highly discoverable. Yes, the climate was unfortunate and Ontario teachers who might have participated felt unable to do so due to the "work-to-rule" situation, but I do not believe that is the only (or even the primary) reason. If Sharing Dance had an active, thriving online community of teachers,

we certainly would have received (at least) a few unprompted inquiries. Due to our poor outcome, it is clear to me that a broader exploration of online content delivery, social media engagement, online community management, and digital content discoverability, is key. I will, therefore, interview experts in the field of digital media strategy on how this type of program could succeed in the future.

May 8, 2013

While The Desk Dance Challenge focused on exploring one aspect of Sharing Dance's Resources section, expanding my analysis of the program to include the Routines section may shed more light on Sharing Dance as a whole. I have scheduled a meeting with Jackie to discuss the Routines section – as she manages and maintains this element of the program. A CNBS flash mob event, based on the newest Sharing Dance Tribal Fusion routine, is scheduled to occur in June 2013. I am looking forward to learning more about this aspect of Sharing Dance and exploring why the Sharing Dance team feels the Routines section is currently more successful than the Resources section.

The Routines Section

When Sharing Dance was first created, the team focused on the Routines section and developed content designed to act as a virtual workshop leader. An eclectic mix of dance routines is available in Sharing Dance's Routines section. As dance education scholar Mark Richard asserts, "Generalist teachers need to see the product of dance education before they are willing to steal time from other curricular areas to teach it" (99). Having students learn a routine and perform it provides teachers with a clear objective. The genres of routine available in the Routines section range from Bollywood and Hip Hop, to Tribal Fusion and Jazz. Lili Steer, a grade 5/6 teacher from Beaumont Heights Junior Middle School, used these online instructional videos to teach choreography to students. Steer explains in a series of video interviews available on the Sharing Dance website, that even though she has no formal dance training, she was able to get her students involved and interested in dance by using the instructional routine vidèos (Case Study Part 1). Ms. Steer's experience is an inspiring example of how a teacher can use the Routines section in the classroom. However, it is important to note that Ms. Steer did not discover the videos online. Laurel and Ashleigh explained that Ms. Steer's daughter was an Associates Program student at CNBS and that is how she found out about the video material.

The online videos in the Routines section break down each routine step-by-step, and choreographers count out movements to music. Sharing Dance's goal with this section is to provide Sharing Dance members with a set of videos that can be used to learn the routines. With students following along to a television screen or computer monitor, a classroom teacher can act as an observer and focus on classroom behaviour management, while students learn directly from the video. This standard communication model of *sender (Sharing Dance) – message (routine choreography) – receiver*

(students) does not require classroom teachers to teach the material directly, potentially reducing some of the resistance dance education faces. Many dance education researchers claim that making dance available through classroom media like this, has the potential to improve the overall teaching of dance in the classroom, by reaching digitally-native students in a way they understand (Oliver 112). However, this is not how the Routines section material is currently being used. In fact, these videos have primarily become support material for CNBS "flash mob" events.

Although this is how the Sharing Dance team described these performance events, the term "flash mob" in this context is slightly problematic. John H. Muse explores flash mobs in detail in his paper, *Flash Mobs and the Diffusion of Audience*:

> A horde of strangers – typically but not exclusively young and middle-class – coalesce suddenly in public, wearing everyday clothes so as to blend into the anonymous urban environment. Without warning, the participants break into a coordinated and ostensibly useless activity for a short time, be it a choreographed musical number, a moment of riotous applause, or a battle of Jedi knights. Then, as suddenly and inexplicably as they arrived, they disperse into the throng. At the live performance they take no credit and offer no explanation. But they almost invariably film themselves, paying particular attention to capture the reactions from surprised passersby, and later distribute the video online. (Muse 10)

CNBS events are not traditional flash mobs. The participants are not strangers, as they are most often part of the Ballet School community. Participants attend rehearsals in person at the Ballet School studios, or in their classrooms with a Ballet School dance

specialist, to practice for the large-scale, site-specific performance events. In almost all cases, the Sharing Dance Routines section videos are used as tools to practice at home or after school, not as the primary vehicles to learn the dance routines. For this year's CNBS flash mob event at Nathan Phillip's Square, the participants were made up of Associate Program Adult Ballet students, Associate Program Youth students, Teaching Training Program students, 80 students from Beaumont Heights Junior School, and 20 students from John Ross Robertson Public School. The Sharing Dance and CNBS e-newsletters are used to promote the event and engage participants – therefore most participants have a previous relationship with the Ballet School. Both Beaumont Heights Junior School and John Ross Robertson Public School had Ballet School dance specialists conduct workshops in person prior to the event. Jackie explains:

> For [junior] schools that take part in an NBS [CNBS] flash mob, an outreach dance teacher from CNBS visits the classes and teaches the routines to the students, in person. Then the classroom teachers get their students to practice with the online Sharing Dance Routines section instructional videos. The videos are used as support material. It is rare for a school or community group not connected to CNBS' community to find and use the videos online.

One aspect of a conventional flash mob that CNBS adheres to is the production and distribution of a performance video online. As Muse points out, these videos often capture the audience's reactions watching the routine (10). Videos of all the past flash mob events can be found on YouTube on the NBS-ENB channel. 2010's "I Feel it All" flash mob has over 180,000 views and had over 100 participants. Last year's flash mob video for a Bollywood routine has over 14,000 views on the NBS-ENB channel. The high

quality YouTube videos are filmed professionally with three cameras. To a certain extent, they act as an advertisement for CNBS as community partners and are hopefully incentives for community members to participate in future events. One comment posted under the Bollywood video reads:

> What a great city Toronto is. Where else can 250 people get free Bollywood dance lessons courtesy of The National Ballet [School] and then perform for a celebration of dance! (Canoecarrier 1 year ago)

However, I noticed that many of the NBS-ENB YouTube flash mob videos are missing links to Sharing Dance in their descriptions. Community members who are interested in accessing the routines are therefore required to find Sharing Dance via CNBS' website. Linking the NBS-ENB YouTube channel to the Sharing Dance Routines section would be an easy way to help direct more users to the Sharing Dance website. Jackie acknowledges that this is a problem, pointing out, "If we [NBS] are not talking about Sharing Dance, how can we expect anyone else to?" Sharing Dance also has a YouTube channel and posts all of the Ballet School's flash mobs, as well as any other groups who have used the Sharing Dance routines, although the views are much lower than those on the NBS-ENB channel. In an interview, digital media strategist, Deborah Day, sat down with me to discuss the importance of the YouTube videos in terms of reaching the Sharing Dance audience:

> YouTube channel views are very important for this type of program – one that is partially video-based. Everything has to be linked back to the Sharing Dance brand. The NBS-ENB channel should link to the Sharing Dance page. Any

> videos posted by independent third party groups dancing the Sharing Dance routines should link back to the Sharing Dance channel and page. Otherwise, the views are kind of useless. You're not actually maximizing the program's potential reach.

There is currently no strategy for Sharing Dance to brand any videos posted by third parties. Although it is not frequent, there have been groups with no prior relationship to the Ballet School who have found and learned the routines directly from the online videos. These groups often stage their own performance events and upload the videos to YouTube – which is how Sharing Dance learns of them. Last year, for example, a hospital in the Toronto Area performed Sharing Dance's Bollywood routine as a flash mob for their annual staff appreciation picnic. A group from South Africa did a version of the "Crabbuckit" routine. In both cases, the participants learned the routines directly from the Sharing Dance online videos. Jackie remembered her surprise in finding these performances online saying, "We had no idea anyone in South Africa was using our routines!" I asked Jackie if she had any quantitative data on who is viewing and using the Routines videos. She explained that Sharing Dance does not have access to the analytics for the website. The original funder for the program, The Ministry of Heritage, is the only party with access to the site's analytics, and despite attempts, Sharing Dance has been unable to retrieve the passwords.

Throughout our conversations about the Routines section, I found it difficult to differentiate between the CNBS community outreach initiatives and Sharing Dance – especially as they relate to the flash mob events. Jackie often spoke of both programs as one and the same. The distinction, she said, is difficult to pinpoint:

> At the end of the day, Sharing Dance *is* CNBS' outreach initiative. NBS' [CNBS'] community outreach projects almost always go through Sharing Dance. But, if Sharing Dance is its own vehicle, then shouldn't it have its own team? For me, it's a little shady. When I write the content for the Sharing Dance website, I always write as Sharing Dance, not as CNBS. For example, on June 5th [2013], CNBS performed a Sharing Dance routine as a flash mob event in Nathan Phillips Square. On the Sharing Dance website, I made a video playlist and wrote 'Check it out! CNBS did this event'. But really, we're both CNBS *and* Sharing Dance. There are no official *Sharing Dance* flash mob events. Sharing Dance is a website that hosts the routines, but we feature CNBS events more often than not – because we are, in essence, the same organization. So, making the distinction clear to the public between Sharing Dance and CNBS is hard.

While Laurel and Ashleigh see the Routines section as successful, they do acknowledge that the section imparts participants with only some of the possible artistic and educational impacts that dance has to offer. In fact, says Laurel, this relates to a larger issue currently facing dance education in Canada. Laurel describes an ongoing debate amongst educators on where dance should live in the curriculum: as a component of Physical Education, or as an autonomous subject as part of the Arts. When discussing the new Ontario curriculum, which will be implemented next year (2013-2014), Laurel explains,

> I know the Physical Education people are pushing to get dance back into Phys Ed. In some ways it is a step backwards. But, considering that generalist teachers are not doing much dance – even though dance is in the curriculum –

maybe it would get better attended to this way.

Ashleigh adds that she is "happy for dance to live anywhere that people do it. It doesn't matter who provides it – Gym teachers, Art teachers – as long as it happens." This shift means that physical education teachers could use the Routines section videos in schools more consistently. However, both Laurel and Ashleigh realize that regardless of where dance falls into the curriculum, Sharing Dance needs to be on teachers' radars. If no one knows about the program, no one will use it.

Online Strategies for the Future

According to the 2013 Canadian Media Production Association (CMPA) research study, "Discoverability: Strategies for Canada's Digital Content Producers in a Global Online Marketplace", the online space is a densely populated environment. The sheer number of websites, programs, videos, and organizations vying for the public's attention can make it hard to stand out. This could not be truer for a program like Sharing Dance, which faces challenges of discoverability – or *find-ability* – and community engagement. The CMPA report outlines the most effective marketing techniques for online discoverability of digital properties in order of importance as follows: Social media, search optimization techniques, digital ad campaigns, and grassroots stunts – such as CNBS' flash mob events. Traditional marketing is touted as the least important strategy (CMPA 4). This CMPA research suggests that if you want a digital property discovered online, the marketing should also be conducted online. But, is this the best course of action for Sharing Dance?

Online trends and social media marketing strategies are constantly changing. It is, therefore, difficult to find up-to-date research in this area. With this in mind, I interviewed two experts in the field to get their current take on Internet discoverability as it relates specifically to Sharing Dance. Deborah Day and Amy Weinstein, two social and digital media strategists from Innovate By Day – a digital media agency based in Toronto, Ontario, offered their insight into the challenges facing Sharing Dance. I began by asking their take on the CMPA report, which claims that the identification and early engagement of influencers, and frequent communication with fans and community over multiple platforms, are some of the key elements of any online campaign. It goes on to state that "the power of social networks such as Facebook, Linked In, Twitter, and Pinterest is changing the way people connect, and, for content creators, changing the

way people find and consume content" (CMPA 4-9).

Deborah explains that, while this information is important to consider and integrate into future strategies, Sharing Dance first needs to focus on understanding its target audience. Sharing Dance should therefore concentrate on discovering the needs of classroom teachers and how to create offerings that fulfill those needs directly. This seems like a straightforward first step toward creating an engaged Sharing Dance community, but Sharing Dance has not yet done a large-scale research initiative with teachers. A focus group with teachers is essential, continues Deborah, so that Sharing Dance can figure out how its dance education resources save teachers time. As Laurel and Ashleigh note, teachers are short on time and want to use tools that are easy, straightforward, and effective. Sharing Dance is aware that this research is vital to ensure the future success of the program. However, being able to carry it out is primarily dependent on funding. Sharing Dance applied for, but was not awarded, a Metcalf Grant for next year to perform this research. Yet, they are undeterred. The Ballet School has appointed a new director of strategic initiatives, John Dalrymple, who will be integral in shaping Sharing Dance's future. Joanna Gertler, director of marketing and communications, explains:

> If we can put the funding together we want to conduct a survey of teachers, primarily in Ontario. We want to ask them how they teach the dance curriculum, if they use online resources, if they are familiar with Sharing Dance ... and if they use Sharing Dance. We want to determine a baseline. Once that information is gathered, we want to follow-up with interested teachers and ask them more detailed questions such as: What would Sharing Dance need to have

> in order for you to use it? How would you share this information with other teachers within your [school] board?

The idea, Joanna continues, is to use this information to help influence the development of future Sharing Dance materials. Sharing Dance would then put together a presentation to give to various school boards – either in person, or by having a teacher advocate work on the program's behalf. The primary goal of this phase is to connect with a wider audience by making the personal connections that are backbone of the Sharing Dance community. Digital media strategist, Amy Weinstein, agrees with this tactic:

> It would be good to have teacher advocates: people in the community who are passionate about dance education and Sharing Dance. We call them "key influences" or even "superfans". They play an important role in a community, in this case, the education system. They are leaders who influence others' decision-making. They could be Principals or senior teachers. The important thing is that they believe in the values behind the program. There is a lot of noise online – so it takes champions to get people to take action.

Partnering with organizations positioned to raise the program's profile within the educational community is also important. Sharing Dance is currently in talks with PHE (Physical Health Education Canada) and OPHEA (Ontario Physical Education Association) to do just that. Pursuing these partnerships will help solidify Sharing Dance's presence in the educational community and get teachers aware of the materials available. Both PHE and OPHEA are youth-centric not-for-profit organizations that

promote active living by making programs and services available to teachers, students and community members.

Sharing Dance's goal to increase the number of teachers who are aware of the program is clear. Deborah believes that in addition to raising awareness of the program, Sharing Dance should be focusing on answering questions such as: "How do these resources make teachers' lives easier, more effective, and ultimately better? How do these instructional videos solve a specific challenge facing teachers?" Working these answers into the Sharing Dance online marketing material, and the proposed presentations, will help increase the likelihood that more teachers will use the program in the future. But, until funding is available to carry out this plan, Sharing Dance simply does not have the resources or person-power to implement these changes.

In an interview, John Dalrymple outlined a number of strategies he has in mind to secure this funding over the next few years. He believes that applying for governmental grants is time consuming and ultimately does not provide a sustainable funding model. He would prefer to employ a combined venture philanthropy and peer-to-peer fundraising strategy. As John explains it, venture philanthropy requires a long-term plan for social change with funding secured on a multi-year basis. The focus is on measurable results; donors can therefore assess progress based on mutually determined benchmarks. Peer-to-peer fundraising, John explains, is a method that would allow schools or community groups to use Sharing Dance routines to stage their own fundraising events, such as a flash mob or dance-athons, to raise money for other charities. Individuals would raise funds through pledges from their personal networks. These pledges would support a charity, but 5% of all proceeds would go to Sharing Dance. Therefore, Sharing Dance can continue to create online materials and individual organizations can use these materials in their communities to raise money for the

charities of their choice. John's ideas are very promising, but will require time, resources, and person-power to implement effectively.

Deborah's next piece of advice deals directly with social media: understand which social media tools classroom teachers are using and target them there. Leveraging Sharing Dance's large email list (which Joanna tells me has thousands of contacts) is currently the program's best asset. Understanding timing is also very important, Deborah explains. Often, digital marketing is done without regard for *where* and *when* the target audience spends their online time. Deborah elaborates:

> We can never assume that people are going to go an extra distance to seek something out online – unless they are specifically looking for something that they know about. Assuming that they are going to hunt down Sharing Dance won't work. Many teachers, for example, are reluctant to use their real identities on Facebook, so having a Sharing Dance Facebook page – while important for reaching students – may not reach teachers.

Amy adds:

> Teachers *are* on Facebook – but they are not necessarily there *as teachers*. Finding out which social media platforms teachers are using should be part of the programs' research phase. Perhaps the best thing to do would be to make real world connections to contact with the influencers. You then need to expand that real connection to people into the social space. Posting on Facebook, or tweeting – it has to represent something that actually exists in the world, and you have to know that your audience is listening.

The next step is to develop an authentic, autonomous online voice for Sharing Dance. Innovate By Day works with many organizations to develop their authentic voice for the digital space. Deborah and Amy identify a potential obstacle for Sharing Dance – the program's link to CNBS – as something that will need to be addressed. Deborah explains:

> CNBS is often thought of as elitist and exclusive. So given that, I would not as a parent, never mind as a teacher, think to use it as a resource. Because Sharing Dance is a National Ballet School program, there is a fundamental branding issue that needs to be addressed. CNBS' online voice *should* be elite and professional. Sharing Dance's online voice should be accessible, approachable, and friendly. Some of your greatest strengths can also be your greatest weaknesses. Sharing Dance needs a really strong campaign that shows teachers how practical the material is, in an approachable way.

In an earlier conversation Ashleigh addressed this issue as well:

> A lot of the marketing and development at CNBS is done to reach out to young people who want to pursue dance as a career. Sharing Dance is looking to attract people with a spark of an interest – a much broader audience. I see the link between the school and the program as a positive. We can't lose that it is special to be a ballet dancer ... but I know that the word "ballet" can be intimidating to people.

In conversation with Ashleigh, Laurel, Joanna, and John it is clear that the Sharing Dance team believes the link between the school and the program lends validity and credibility to the dance education material Sharing Dance develops. But, to what extent should this link be highlighted in the online marketing material? The Sharing Dance website currently presents the program as separate from CNBS. The bright colors, the layout, and the wording are designed to evoke a fun, approachable vibe. CNBS' logo is visible, but the program is presented as a separate entity. So, the foundation is already set to ask the question: How can everything CNBS develops for Sharing Dance have its own, authentic, approachable voice? John and Joanna have a new hub-site model in the works for the Ballet School's website. They are planning on a complete website overhaul next year. This is an excellent opportunity to redefine Sharing Dance's brand and voice and to situate the program within the context of the Ballet School's other initiatives and programs.

Another element that Deborah thinks is important for Sharing Dance to consider is the *sharability* of each video resource they produce:

> By ensuring that each Sharing Dance video is properly branded, you can easily increase brand recognition. It's also important to remember that these videos need to be sharable. That way both teachers and students can email them to their friends and coworkers, post them on their Facebook pages, and tweet links to them on Twitter. Each video should have a consistent short introduction and conclusion. A simple "This is a Sharing Dance Video, visit our website to find videos one through five of this series" allows people who stumble upon a video to link it back to the source. Also, having a recognizable "face" of Sharing Dance and/or consistent imagery would help with brand recognition.

The final element that both Deborah and Amy advise Sharing Dance to consider is their website and YouTube channel analytics. Although Jackie explained why Sharing Dance does not have access to the analytics currently, perhaps after the website overhaul, the Sharing Dance team will finally have access to this important information. Deborah reiterated why it is vital to track the website's traffic:

> Analytics can be daunting and overwhelming, but are so useful. When incorporated into your website, analytics help you understand how people have found you, where they are landing on the site, and why they are staying. Understanding the 'why' and the 'how' will shed light on the needs of the client base and give insight into how to engage them further. YouTube is another platform that Sharing Dance should be tracking. Looking at the number of views, exploring who the viewers are, how long they watch, if they stay to the end of the video – these insights let you know which elements of the videos are working and which need adjustment. The comments section is also important. After all, comments allow people a forum to discuss and share what they see, and provide Sharing Dance with the opportunity to talk back directly to their viewers.

Amy adds that understanding search engine optimization and key word tagging is also crucial for discoverability:

> In terms of the website, analytics help you see how well your site ranks. Every platform needs to link to every platform. These links create pathways on the

> Internet. The more often these pathways are used, the stronger they become, and your ranking gets higher and higher. I think that keyword research – understanding what people are keying in, in order to find out how they land on your page – will be very useful to Sharing Dance.

By employing these techniques with the new hub-site, Sharing Dance will ensure that the program is searchable and findable. That way, when teachers search "Help – I have to teach dance!" they are directed to the Sharing Dance website. They do not have to type in "National Ballet School Dance Education" to find the resources. The Sharing Dance team is clearly open to exploring ways to increase the website content's discoverability. For example, Jackie brought up an interesting point about the website tabs, which she finds currently unclear:

> When you see the word "Resources" on a website, I think of a page that houses links to external sources, other websites, or a blog role. Maybe the tab should be called "Classroom Resources" or "For Teachers". The "Routines" section is also a little confusing because there are routines in the Resources section too. Maybe it should be renamed "Flash mobs".

As Jackie articulates, clarity and simplicity are imperative online. The program cannot expect teachers to click through many windows to find what they are looking for. The potential for Sharing Dance to expand its reach and engage its online community is high. By employing John's new fundraising strategies, following the guidelines outlined by the digital media strategists, and continuing to explore ways to better serve the program's target audience, Sharing Dance will have the capacity to

reach a wider audience and bring quality dance education material to Canadian classroom teachers and community groups in a manner that is both meaningful and relevant.

Conclusion

Through Participatory Action Research, the Sharing Dance team and I identified many of the challenges facing Sharing Dance. Although we approached this research with a plan to implement The Desk Dance Challenge and derive information from it, the process did not roll out as intended. We therefore drew on our methodological approaches to cycle back, reflect on our progress, and adapt our plan. Ultimately, this allowed us to collaboratively develop strategies to strengthen the Sharing Dance program for the future. In spite of the obstacles we faced, this research process reinforced my belief that through collaboration and co-operation, knowledge can be revealed and change can be fostered. Increasing the reach and impact of the Sharing Dance program became our primary goal for the future and helped us shape the following strategies:

Target Demographic Research: Undertaking a detailed research survey will allow Sharing Dance to service its target community by fulfilling a clear need. Discovering the needs of Ontario classroom teachers will allow Sharing Dance to create offerings that fulfill those needs directly. This research phase will also help to identify "key influencers" within the educational community. Targeting these "key influencers" – either in person or online – and turning them into Sharing Dance advocates will ultimately lend validity to the program and expand its reach.

Defining the Brand and Voice: Solidifying the Sharing Dance brand and finding its authentic voice will ensure that the program feels accessible and approachable to teachers. It will be important for Sharing Dance to decide how they want to present their link to CNBS to the public.

Creating Sharable Content: The Sharing Dance video content needs to be branded and sharable, so that classroom teachers can easily find and share the resources. The website and social media platforms analytics must be reviewed in order to better understand what is/is not being shared and why.

Discoverability Online: Analyzing and implementing search engine optimization and key word tagging is crucial for discoverability. It is important to understand what people are searching for, in order to find out how they land on the Sharing Dance webpage. Integrating these techniques into CNBS' new hub-site format will make the Sharing Dance webpage more searchable and findable online.

Partnerships: Partnering with organizations such as Physical Health Education Canada and the Ontario Physical Education Association will help Sharing Dance raise its profile and make connections within the education system in Ontario and across the country. Through these partnerships Sharing Dance's programs and services will be more readily available to teachers, students, and community members. In addition to partnering with organizations, Sharing Dance should explore the possibility of leveraging peer mentors or teacher advocates in schools. Teachers who hold both a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance and a Bachelor of Education may be uniquely qualified to mentor their teacher colleagues. This tactic would facilitate convenient, ongoing advice and feedback for teachers for feel unqualified to teach dance without support.

Fundraising: A strategy that combines venture philanthropy and peer-to-peer fundraising will help Sharing Dance to thrive in the future. These strategies will ensure

a long term, sustainable funding structure and will allow Sharing dance to focus on developing high-quality dance education content.

Once these strategies are put in place and teachers are aware of the Sharing Dance program, how can Sharing Dance set teachers up for success? Sharing Dance team members are committed to finding and implementing the best possible methods to offer classroom teachers and their students easy access to dance education material online. Laurel, Ashleigh, and I discussed the design and implementation of new processes to better meet the needs of the educational community. The following options are possible methods to enhance the user experience of the program by leveraging what is already working:

"Steppingstone" Facilitator: This model requires CNBS dance specialists to come in person to each participating class one time in order to set up the Sharing Dance program. Although this model eliminates the need for dance specialists to visit classes numerous times over extended periods, facilitators would still be required to attend each participating class, in-person, one time. This option would obviously be much easier to coordinate for schools in the Greater Toronto Area. However, it may be possible for CNBS to incorporate these "steppingstone" facilitator visits while on their national audition tour, which brings them to locations such as Halifax, Thunder Bay, Calgary and Vancouver. Another challenge of this model is that it potentially undermines Sharing Dance's goal to overcome the perception that only a dance specialist is "qualified" to deliver dance education, thus rendering the classroom teacher "unqualified" in the eyes of the students.

In-Person Staff Training: This model requires a Sharing Dance ambassador to visit interested schools in person and provide staff training sessions on how to deliver the material going forward. This would allow classroom teachers to feel "properly trained", and ensure that students would learn the "correct skills" safely. An in-person staff training model would allow Sharing Dance to provide classroom teachers with the training that specifically addresses their needs, based on their feedback from the research phase, in order to deliver the dance material. Again, this idea eliminates the need for CNBS facilitators to visit the same school numerous times over extended periods, but dance specialists would still need to get to participating schools in person. This option does, however, reinforce Laurel and Ashleigh's stated goal to empower teachers to deliver Sharing Dance content themselves.

Online "Steppingstone" Facilitator: This virtual facilitator model would allow "steppingstone" workshops to be conducted by facilitators from CNBS remotely to participating schools across the country. Dance artist-academics, such as Lisa Marie Naugle and John Crawford, have experimented with the concept of this "virtual venue" in their work (Warbuton 116-117). Naugle has also written about her exploration of networked performance that she describes as "a synchronous approach to communication" in which collaborators may be located in different places through the use of video-conferencing systems (Naugle 56). Therefore, an online facilitation model may, in fact, be quite feasible for Sharing Dance. However, both Sharing Dance and any participating school would need to have access to appropriate, compatible technology - most likely a computer with a large monitor, high speed Internet and Skype, to conduct a video conference in real time. Also, the classroom teacher would be needed to manage classroom discipline and mediate the experience, possibly leaving them with little

opportunity to ask questions, participate and observe the process. As digital-natives, students may be just as engaged with a screen as they would be with a real person (Oliver 111-113), but this model could potentially render the classroom teacher less qualified to lead dance education activities than the virtual dance specialist in the eyes of the students.

Online Staff Training: A hybrid of the previous two options, online staff training sessions require Sharing Dance staff to offer interested schools virtual staff training sessions through online video conferencing. With similar benefits to the in-person version, this model may be more sustainable for financial and accessibility reasons. In addition to having access to appropriate, compatible technology, a potential challenge of this model would be the coordination of the sessions. Both the schools' administration and the Sharing Dance team would need to communicate and develop appropriate goals in advance of the sessions in order for the training sessions to meet the specific needs of the teachers.

Ongoing Community Engagement: By empowering teachers to use Sharing Dance as a resource, and then providing them the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences with other teaching professionals online, teachers and community members will eventually become more confident in the process of delivering dance education in their classrooms. The success of an open forum model ultimately requires an active and engaged online community and will require ongoing moderation by Sharing Dance to keep the online space positive and safe.

In my view, Sharing Dance is special because it has the potential to reach classroom teachers and students who might not otherwise have access to quality dance education material. While CNBS will continue to grow the in-person component of their dance education outreach program, Sharing Dance has the potential to reach a large number of teachers, students, and community members across the country. In order to do this, teachers' attitudes toward dance in general will need to change.

While Sharing Dance can work to break down the barriers that stop interested teachers from including creative dance in their classroom routines, not every teacher will be willing to teach the subject – regardless of which resources are made available. Even though dance is a curriculum-mandated subject, many teachers do not feel comfortable fulfilling the requirements on their own. Regardless, we believe that if Sharing Dance can find and implement strategic ways to reach interested teachers, the high quality, creative, accessible resource material will speak for itself. Teachers are busy. Sharing Dance has the potential to make their lives easier by increasing their confidence in teaching dance. This fact needs to be at the forefront of the Sharing Dance teams' marketing strategy and content development going forward in order to ensure the program's success. I look forward to seeing the program grow and reach teachers and students across the country in the future.

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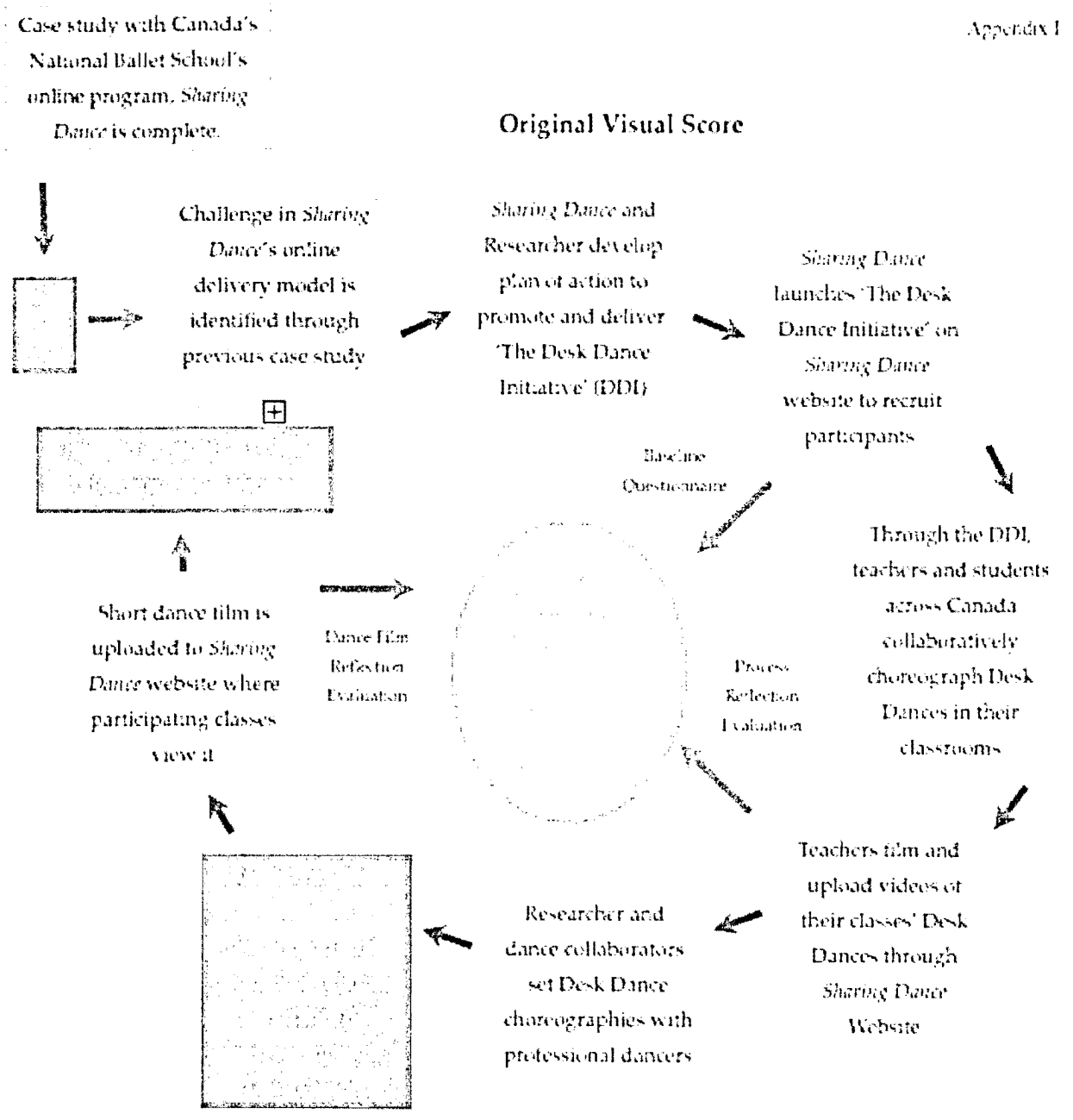
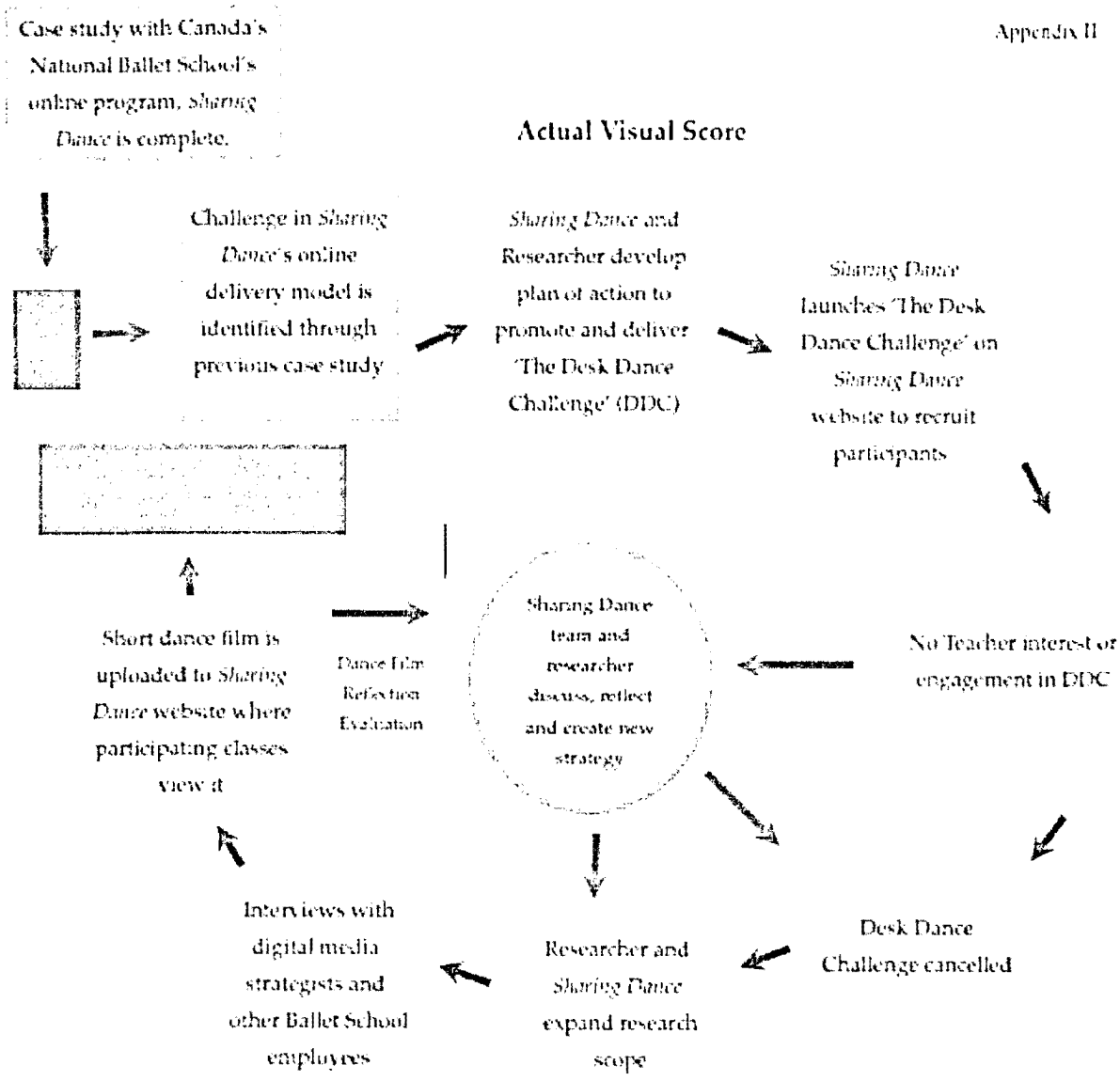
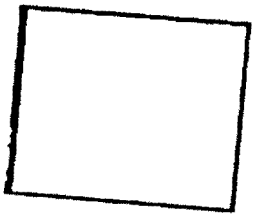
Appendix I


Case study with Canada's National Ballet School's online program, *Sharing Dance* is complete.
Appendix I
Original Visual Score
Challenge in *Sharing Dance*'s online delivery model is identified through previous case study
Sharing Dance and Researcher develop plan of action to promote and deliver 'The Desk Dance Initiative' (DDI)
Sharing Dance launches 'The Desk Dance Initiative' on *Sharing Dance* website to recruit participants
Baseline Questionnaire
Through the DDI, teachers and students across Canada collaboratively choreograph Desk Dances in their classrooms
Process Reflection Evaluation
Teachers film and upload videos of their classes' Desk Dances through *Sharing Dance* Website
Researcher and dance collaborators set Desk Dance choreographies with professional dancers
Dance Film Reflection Evaluation
Short dance film is uploaded to *Sharing Dance* website where participating classes view it

Appendix II


Case study with Canada's National Ballet School's online program, *Sharing Dance* is complete.
Actual Visual Score
Challenge in *Sharing Dance*'s online delivery model is identified through previous case study
Sharing Dance and Researcher develop plan of action to promote and deliver 'The Desk Dance Challenge' (DDC)
Sharing Dance launches 'The Desk Dance Challenge' on *Sharing Dance* website to recruit participants
No Teacher interest or engagement in DDC
Desk Dance Challenge cancelled
Researcher and *Sharing Dance* expand research scope
Interviews with digital media strategists and other Ballet School employees
Short dance film is uploaded to *Sharing Dance* website where participating classes view it
Dance Film Reflection Evaluation
Sharing Dance team and researcher discuss, reflect and create new strategy

Appendix III



The Desk Dance Initiative

VIDEO RELEASE FORM FOR STUDENTS
To be completed by parent or guardian

Thank you for agreeing to allow your child to take part in "The Desk Dance Initiative." This dance initiative is being run by Canada's National Ballet School's online dance education program, Sharing Dance. You can find more information at sharingdance.ca. Classes from all across the country are participating and we are excited to be a part of this fun initiative.

As a class, we will create an original dance routine at our desks. A video recording of our class' Desk Dance will be made. This video will be uploaded to the Sharing Dance website, sharingdance.ca.

Sharing Dance will use our video (and videos from classes across the country) to create a dance film with professional dancers. The video may also be used in promotional materials produced by Canada's National Ballet School. This may include, but is not limited to podcasts, promotional videos, website material and other electronic media.

As the video recording will be on the Internet, available to the public, it may be used by other third parties external to Canada's National Ballet School for other purposes. Our school, _____ and Canada's National Ballet School accept no responsibility whatsoever for the use of the video recordings by any of those third parties. Canada's National Ballet School is unable to offer any compensation or fee for its, or a third party's, use of our video recording.

By reading and signing the agreement below, you are acknowledging the intended uses (above) and giving your permission for the video recording to be uploaded and possibly reproduced without limitation. You also agree not to seek payment from Canada's National Ballet School and release our school, _____ and Canada's National Ballet School from any and all liability associated with the use of the video recording as set out in this agreement.

Classroom Teacher Name:

_____

Project:
The Desk Dance Initiative

I, _____, grant permission for my child, _____ to be videoed on behalf of our school, _____ and Canada's National Ballet School. I understand that the video may be used by the Canada's National Ballet School and by other third parties in accordance with the above.

Signature

_____

Date:

_____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Appendix IV (Informed Consent Forms)

Sharing Dance Co-Managers of Community Engagement Consent Form

The Desk Dance Challenge

You are being asked to participate in a collaborative applied research project. There are two distinct elements of this project that you are being asked to participate in. These elements are:

- The creation and disseminating of Desk Dance material online (including a dance film with professional dancers).
- The research component of a larger applied research study.

Before you give your consent to be a volunteer collaborator in this project, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigative Collaborators: "The Desk Dance Challenge" is being conducted by Sharing Dance, CNBS' online dance education program, in collaboration with Julia Lefebvre, a Master's of Arts student from the Department of Communication and Culture, a joint program at Ryerson University and York University. Sharing Dance is conducting this initiative to explore the potential artistic and educational impacts of their collaborative choreography exercise, the Desk Dance. Ms. Lefebvre's involvement with this initiative fulfils the requirements to obtain a Masters of Arts degree and will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Christopher Innes, Professor at York University.

Purpose of the Study: "The Desk Dance Challenge" has two main goals. Firstly, to examine the effect of making the online experience of Sharing Dance a dialogue between teachers, students, dance industry professionals and CNBS. Secondly, to provide a qualitative barometer of how students and teachers are engaging with the Desk Dance material. This will allow Ms. Lefebvre to explore the educational and artistic impacts of the initiative. This project is collaborative.

Description of the Study: You are being asked to collaborate in the development, execution and research components of the initiative. As you are aware, teachers from across the country have been directed to "The Desk Dance Challenge" online material. Using this online material, teachers and their students will collectively choreograph original Desk Dances in their classrooms. You will be asked to present the Desk Dance educational material online, host online questionnaires and to facilitate the promotion of the initiative to potential teacher participants online. Once completing the exercise, participating teachers will film their classes' dances and upload the video files to sharingdance.ca/performance. A team, which will include Ms. Lefebvre, five independent professional dancers will then collaboratively create a dance film based on these Desk Dances. You will be asked to assist in selecting independent professional dancers, through CNBS' community network, to collaborate in the film. You will also be asked to facilitate the inclusion of any interested students from CNBS' Teacher Training in this creative process. You will be asked to engaged in filming process as an advisor, give input about decisions regarding the editing for the final film, and conduct two 45-minute interviews reflecting on the initiative. Questions such as "How do you envision "The Desk Dance Challenge" growing over the next five years?" and "In your view, what are "The Desk Dance Challenge's" potential artistic outcomes for students and teachers?" will be asked. In addition to acting as a dance dramaturge and filmmaker, Julia Lefebvre will be conducting an ethnographic study of this process. In this case, the term ethnography can be understood as a form of qualitative research where the researcher explores her own experience and the experiences of others in order to create a holistic representation of the process. Ms. Lefebvre may therefore draw on examples from the process, recount anecdotal stories and conversations she has with you informally, in addition to drawing from more formal interviews, in order to describe the process in her final written report.

Risk or Discomfort: There should be no more risk associated with collaborating in "The Desk Dance Challenge" than there is when conducting any type of community outreach program. Your participation and the participation of

Sharing Dance in this initiative is entirely voluntary. If at any time throughout the process you wish to stop your involvement with the initiative you are free to do so. This will not affect your on-going or future relationship York University or Ryerson University.

Benefits of the Study: This applied research project will provide CNBS with valuable information on Sharing Dance's educational and artistic impacts. Critically reflecting on the initiative throughout the process may assist you to create best practices and develop new resources. Assessing the cultural impact of online dance education programs in schools across Canada may help Sharing Dance secure future project funding. The research component may provide Sharing Dance with vital information to continue improving your free-for-use program in order to create the best possible content and resources to reach and serve your target audiences. "The Desk Dance Challenge" also offers you the opportunity to engage in an active and creative manner with teachers across the country.

Confidentiality: As a Sharing Dance Co-manager of Community Engagement, your identity will not be stated in any published written work unless you give express permission to do so. However, due to the content of this study, it may be possible for members of the public to determine your identity. You will be given a copy of any written work to be published prior to submission, and should be are aware that the name of your organisation will only be used with permission from both yourself and the other Sharing Dance Co-manager of Community Engagement. Both Sharing Dance Co-managers of Community Engagement have the right to provide Ms. Lefebvre with editorial input on what is or is not included in any resulting reports or publications. However Sharing Dance does not have the right to a "final say" in regards to any resulting reports or publications, including Ms. Lefebvre's final critical analysis. As this project is collaborative, Ms. Lefebvre will work to ensure that all parties are satisfied during the final written editing process, before submitting any reports for evaluation or publication. All formal interviews will take place in an area that offers aural and visual privacy, such as an office with the door closed. Audio recording devices may be used during these formal interviews. All raw data will be stored electronically in both password-protected and encrypted computer files and password protected and encrypted USB drives for up to two years and then deleted. Your name and personal information will not be included in any interview notes. A code linking all data with all participants will be used. You will not appear in the dance film. The dance film will be posted online on the Sharing Dance website and will therefore be in the public domain. Depending on your level of involvement in the film process, with your permission your name may be credited.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in both this initiative is voluntary. Your choice of whether to participate in this initiative will not influence your relationship with Ryerson University or York University, now or in the future. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty. If you would like to have your written data permanently deleted, you can contact Julia Lefebvre at julia.lefebvre@ryreson.ca.

Costs and/or Compensation for Participation: There are no costs associated with participation.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact.

Julia Lefebvre
julia.lefebvre@ryerson.ca

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the project. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

_____
Name of Participant (please print)

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator Date

Sharing Dance Team Consent Form

The Desk Dance Challenge

You are being asked to participate in a collaborative applied research project. There are two distinct elements of this project that you are being asked to participate in. These elements are the creation and disseminating of Desk Dance material online and the research component of a larger applied research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer collaborator in this project, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigative Collaborators: "The Desk Dance Challenge" is being conducted by Sharing Dance, CNBS' online dance education program, in collaboration with Julia Lefebvre, a Master's of Arts student from the Department of Communication and Culture, a joint program at Ryerson University and York University. Sharing Dance is conducting this Challenge to explore the potential artistic and educational impacts of their collaborative choreography exercise, the Desk Dance. Ms. Lefebvre's involvement with this Challenge fulfils the requirements to obtain a Masters of Arts degree and will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Christopher Innes, Professor at York University.

Purpose of the Study: "The Desk Dance Challenge" has two main goals. Firstly, to examine the effect of making the online experience of Sharing Dance a dialogue between teachers, students, dance industry professionals and CNBS. Secondly, to provide a qualitative barometer of how students and teachers are engaging with the Desk Dance material. This will allow Ms. Lefebvre to explore the educational and artistic impacts of The Challenge. This project is collaborative.

Description of the Study: You are being asked to act as a Sharing Dance team member to collaborate in the development, execution and research components of the Challenge. As you are aware, teachers from across the country have been directed to "The Desk Dance Challenge" online material. Using this online material, teachers and their students will collectively choreographed original Desk Dances in their classrooms. Teachers will then film their classes' dances and upload the video files to sharingdance.ca/performance. A team, which will include Ms. Lefebvre and five professional dancers, will collaboratively create a dance film based on these Desk Dances. You may be asked to engaged in the creative process as an advisor, give input about decisions regarding the casting and editing for the final film, and conduct a maximum of two 45 minute interviews reflecting on the Challenge. In addition to acting a dance dramaturge and filmmaker, Julia Lefebvre will be conducting an ethnographic study of this process. In this case, the term ethnography can be understood as a form of qualitative research where the researcher explores her own experience and the experiences of others in order to create a holistic representation of the process. Ms. Lefebvre may therefore draw on examples from the rehearsal process, recount anecdotal stories and conversations she has with you informally, in addition to drawing from the more formal interviews, in order to describe the process in her final written report.

Risk or Discomfort: There should be no more risk associated with collaborating in "The Desk Dance Challenge" than there is when conducting any type of community outreach program. Your participation in the research component is entirely voluntary. If, at any time throughout the process, you wish to stop your involvement with the research component you are free to do so. You may choose to withdraw from the research component and continue your involvement as a Sharing Dance staff member at CNBS. This will not affect your ongoing or future relationship with CNBS, York University or Ryerson University.

Benefits of the Study: This applied research project will provide CNBS with valuable information on Sharing Dance's educational and artistic impacts. Critically reflecting on The Challenge throughout the process may assist you to create best practices and develop new resources. Assessing the cultural impact of online dance education programs in schools across Canada, may help Sharing Dance secure future funding for projects. This research project will provide Sharing Dance with vital information to continue improving their free-for-use program in order

to create the best possible content and resources to reach and serve your target audiences. "The Desk Dance Challenge" also offers Sharing Dance team members the opportunity to engage in an active and creative manner with teachers across the country.

Confidentiality: As a Sharing Dance team member, your identity will be stated in any published written work and will be in the public domain. You will be given a copy of any written work to be published prior to submission, and should be are aware that the name of your organisation will only be used with your permission. CNBS has the right to provide Ms. Lefebvre with editorial input on what is or is not included in any resulting reports or publications. However CNBS does not have the right to a "final say" in regards to any resulting reports or publications, including Ms. Lefebvre's final critical analysis. All formal interviews will take place in an area that offers aural and visual privacy. All raw data will be stored electronically in both password-protected and encrypted computer files and password protected and encrypted USB drives for up to two years and then deleted. You will not appear in the dance film. The dance film will be posted online on the Sharing Dance website and will therefore be in the public domain. It will be viewed by various teachers and students and your name may be credited.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in both the research and film components is voluntary. Your choice of whether to participate in this Challenge will not influence your relationship with CNBS, Ryerson University or York University, now or in the future. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation in either component at any time without penalty. If you would like to have your written data permanently deleted, you can contact Julia Lefebvre at julia.lefebvre@ryreson.ca.

Costs and/or Compensation for Participation: There are no costs associated with participation.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact.

Julia Lefebvre
julia.lefebvre@ryerson.ca

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the project. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

_____
Name of Participant (please print)

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator Date

Online Teacher Consent Form through Opinio

The Desk Dance Challenge

Thank you for your interest in participating in "The Desk Dance Challenge." We're very excited about this project and hope you are too!

This initiative is being conducted by CNBS in collaboration with Julia Lefebvre, a graduate student at Ryerson University. The goal of this initiative is to facilitate a collaborative exchange between the Sharing Dance team at CNBS, the professional dance community, the academic community and classroom teachers and students across Canada.

Classroom teachers currently living and working in Canada are eligible to participate in this project. Please click START below to view the consent agreement and to confirm that you qualify.

START

The Desk Dance Challenge
Sharing Dance Consent Agreement

By participating in "The Desk Dance Challenge" you are engaging in a collaborative applied research project. Before giving your consent to be a volunteer collaborator it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure that you understand your role. Questions can be directed to Sharing Dance at info@sharingdance.ca or to the Primary Investigator, Julia Lefebvre at julia.lefebvre@ryerson.ca.

Investigative Collaborators: "The Desk Dance Challenge" is being conducted by Sharing Dance, CNBS' online dance education program, in collaboration with Julia Lefebvre, a Master's of Arts student from the Department of Communication and Culture, a joint program at Ryerson University and York University. Sharing Dance is conducting this initiative to explore the potential artistic and educational impacts of the Desk Dance exercise. Ms. Lefebvre's involvement with this initiative fulfills the requirements to obtain a Masters of Arts degree and will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Christopher Innes, Professor at York University.

Purpose of the Study: "The Desk Dance Challenge" has two main goals. First, we want to examine the effect of making the online experience of Sharing Dance a dialogue between teachers, students and dance industry professionals at CNBS. Our second goal is to provide a qualitative barometer of how students and teachers are engaging with The Desk Dance material. This will allow us to explore the educational and artistic impacts of the initiative. This project is collaborative. Together, we hope to create an exciting and inspiring experience for you and your students.

Description of the Study: You are being asked to act as a collaborator in "The Desk Dance Challenge." As a collaborator you are asked to complete "The Desk Dance Challenge" activities as outlined below and to complete three separate online questionnaires, one at each stage of the process. Each questionnaire will take five-ten minutes to complete. When you sign up, you will be directed to the first evaluative questionnaire. This evaluative questionnaire allows us to learn a little bit about who you are and your level of experience with dance. Then you will be directed to "The Desk Dance Challenge" online material, including a video outlining the process step-by-step. This material is provided in the Resources section of the Sharing Dance website (sharingdance.ca). You will then collectively choreograph an original desk dance with your students in your classroom. Once your class' desk dance is complete, you will film your class's dance and upload the video file to sharingdance.ca/performance. A template for media release forms, to be signed by students' parents or guardians, can be found at sharingdance.ca. It is your

responsibility to ensure that all students have completed media release forms before uploading your class' video to sharingdance.ca/performance. You will be asked to confirm that you have done so before commencing the video upload. You should retain all media release forms on file in compliance with your school board or governing body's media policy for a minimum of one year. You will be directed to a second short online evaluative questionnaire which will asked you questions about your class' experiences with the collaborative choreography process. We are then going to take your videos and create a dance film with professional dancers based on the desk dances you choreographed! On June 1, 2013, you will be able to view this dance film with your students. You will be asked to complete a final questionnaire evaluating the overall process and your class' reaction to viewing the dance film.

Risk or Discomfort: There should be no more risk associated with collaborating in "The Desk Dance Challenge" than there is when conducting any type of Sharing Dance workshop in your classroom. The completion of evaluative questionnaires is entirely voluntary. You may still create a desk dance and upload a video even if you do not wish to answer the questionnaires. If, at any time throughout the process, you wish to stop your involvement with "The Desk Dance Challenge" you are free to do so. You may continue your membership as a Sharing Dance subscriber regardless of your involvement in "The Desk Dance Challenge."

Benefits of the Study: This applied research project will provide CNBS with valuable information on Sharing Dance's educational and artistic impacts. You will also experience the direct benefit of being able to view a professional dance film with professional dancers, based on your class' desk dance choreography and the choreographies of classes from across the country.

Confidentiality: As a collaborator, your identity will remain confidential. All data will be stored electronically in both a password-protected document and password protected USB drive for up to two years and then deleted. However, any video that you post online through the Sharing Dance website will be in the public domain and therefore accessible to the public. Media release forms for your students can be found at sharingdance.ca. If you do not wish to post your class' desk dance publicly online, but would still like your desk dance to be incorporated in the professional dance film, contact Sharing Dance at info@sharingdance.ca and a suitable alternative (mailing a DVD, uploading to a password protected link etc.) will be arranged.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this initiative is voluntary. Your choice of whether to participate will not influence your relationship with CNBS, Ryerson University or York University, now or in the future. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty. If you would like to have your video or written data permanently deleted, you can email the Primary Investigator, Julia Lefebvre, at julia.lefebvre@ryerson.ca at any time.

Questions about the Initiative: If you have any questions about the initiative now, or in the future, you may contact Sharing Dance at info@sharingdance.ca or Julia Lefebvre at julia.lefebvre@ryerson.ca.

Agreement:
Clicking "ACCEPT" indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask questions. Your advancement to the next page indicates that you agree to act as a collaborator in "The Desk Dance Challenge" and that you have been told you can change your mind and withdraw your consent at any time. You may print off a copy of this agreement in order to retain a copy for your records.

You have been informed that by clicking "ACCEPT" to this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

SELECT:
- ACCEPT
- DO NOT ACCEPT