



CONFIDENCE TO TAKE THE LEAD IN THEIR LIVES

HIGHLIGHTS OF A TWO-YEAR EVALUATION
INTO THE SEL EFFECTS OF THE
DANCING CLASSROOMS PROGRAM



**DANCING
CLASSROOMS**

THE RESEARCH

For over 20 years, Dancing Classrooms has provided in-school dance education residencies to schools across the country. In addition to offering a high-quality arts education experience, our mission is to cultivate essential life skills in children while learning the art of social dance. Children develop important social and emotional learning (SEL) skills as they go on our ten-week ballroom dance journey.

While the anecdotal evidence of our program's impact from administrators, teachers and parents has been overwhelmingly positive, we understand the need to make the case with quantitative as well as qualitative data.

To that end, Dancing Classrooms called upon the team at ArtsResearch to evaluate the SEL effects of our program on 5th grade students. Led by Dr. Rob Horowitz, the research team over two years conducted 192 classroom observations, 217 teacher surveys, 87 principal surveys and 25 interviews.

After considering a number of indicators, ArtsResearch and Dancing Classrooms chose to look closely at the following categories:

**Dance Learning:
Kinesthetic and Cognitive Development**

Social Development

Emotional Development

Dance Learning: Kinesthetic and Cognitive Development

"In our inclusion class, the students had to treat each other with respect. General education students had to pair up and dance with special education students and expect to cooperate. This wasn't easy for a lot of students. Some students come out of this appreciating a bit more about each other, others not. But the message that it is expected - that they all practice the same routine and work together and perform side-by-side - is a very powerful one." - Teacher

Teacher Observations

93% of teachers reported that their students developed physical coordination and confidence

87% of teachers reported that their students developed an understanding of ballroom dance history

From the Report:

An underlying premise of our research is that dance is more than just a collection of structured physical behaviors. Dance simultaneously engages the cognitive, affective and kinesthetic domains, all in the service of creative expression. It is obvious to anyone observing [these] dance classes that there is some serious thinking going on.

Dancing Classrooms successfully supports development of students' dance and expressive skills. Students learned and applied specific dance skills, choreography and the aesthetic qualities of ballroom dances.

Researcher Observations

90% of students demonstrated improvement in coordination and balance

95% of students demonstrated acquisition and understanding of dance vocabulary

88% of students successfully responded to rhythm and tempo, incorporating musicality and physical expression

"We observed a boy who progressively improved his execution of the swing dance as he moved from partner to partner. At first, his eyebrows were furrowed as he whispered the counts to himself. By his second partner he was not mouthing the counts and his timing improved. By the time he got to his third partner, he was almost completely accurate. The repetition and trading of partners allowed him the space to reflect." - Researcher Observation

Social and Emotional Learning: Social Development

Dancing Classrooms instruction developed students' social and collaborative skills and improved relationships with peers and adults. Students learned to successfully collaborate with a partner and show support to peers as they developed social confidence.

Researcher Observations

93% of students demonstrated achievement in cooperative skills

71% of students demonstrated improvement in social confidence

"It's always with the boys. They're like, 'Oh, we've got to hold those girls' hands.' And they learn how to respect and work with one another. One of the things that I have found is our discipline problems have gone down in the fifth grade." - School Principal

Teacher Observations

93% of teachers observed improvement in collaborative and teamwork skills

93% of teachers observed improvement in students' self-confidence

91% of teachers observed improvement in social confidence

From the Report:

The Dancing Classrooms lessons emphasized improvement of observation skills as they learned the characteristic details of each dance. Students learned from formally and informally observing each other perform the dances. They were often asked to verbalize their observations. For example, a girl in one class would quickly teach her classmates the correct steps when the music paused, helping them understand what they were supposed to do.



Social and Emotional Learning: Emotional Development

*"One of my fifth grade students had a hard time making friends and feeling comfortable at school - kind of socially withdrawn from the group. When ballroom started, it really just transformed who he was. You could just see every week - slowly building confidence and standing up straighter, being more proud of himself. To see him now - I'm even getting chills thinking about it. He now is playing with other students, engaging in conversations with students in class or choosing to sit at lunch tables with kids that he never had before." -
School Principal*

Dancing Classrooms supported development of emotional skills and positive changes in self-perceptions.

Researcher Observations

95% of students demonstrated engagement and motivation

88% of students demonstrated self-discipline and focus

Teacher Observations

92% of teachers reported that their students developed a sense of mastery and achievement

88% of teachers reported that their students demonstrated improved engagement and motivation

83% of teachers reported that their students improved self-discipline and self-control

From the Report:

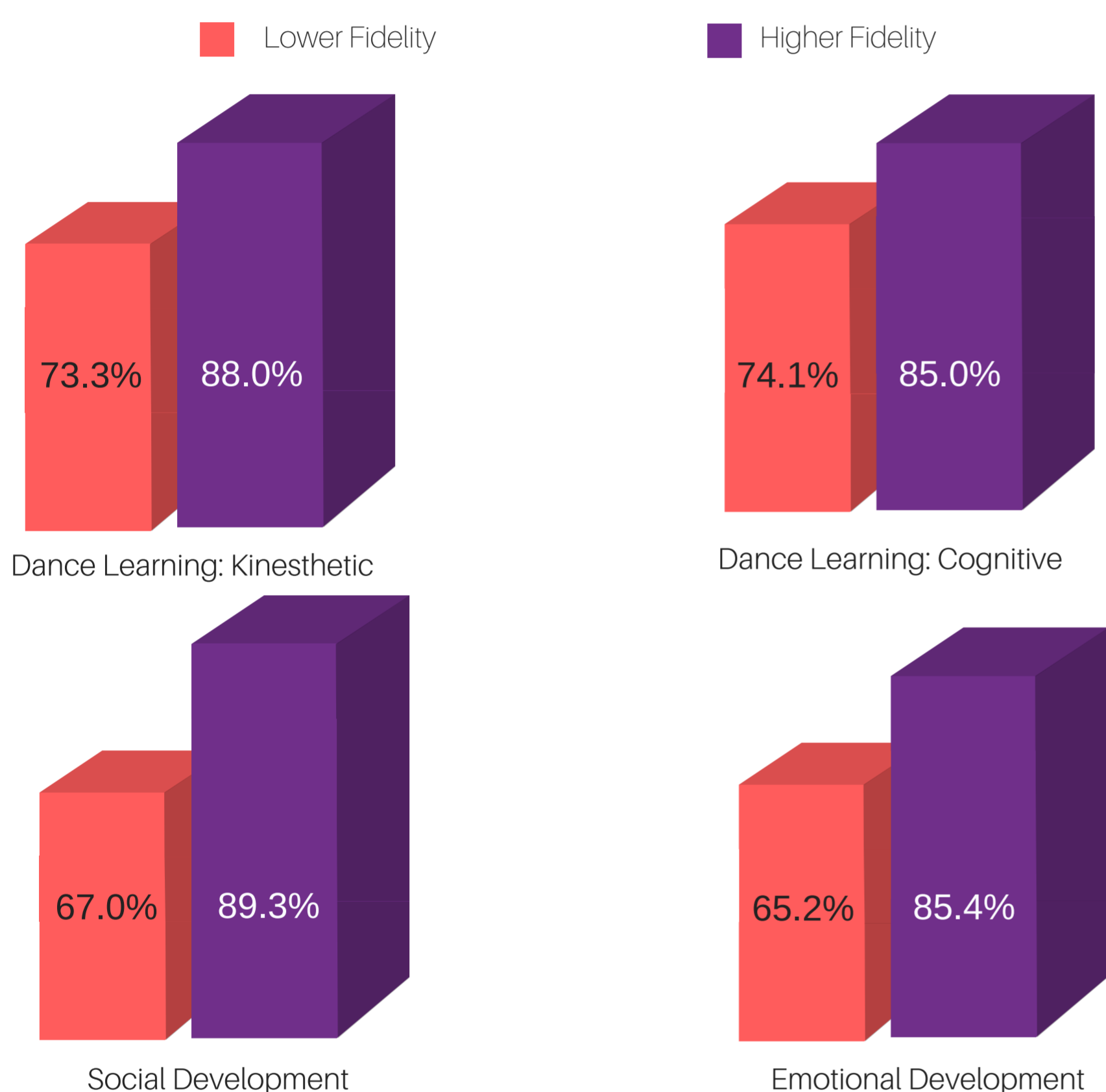
The Dancing Classrooms approach cultivated positive behavioral skills that ensured an effective learning experience, particularly affecting self-discipline, focus, engagement and a sense of ownership of the learning process.

"He was very much at risk with academic achievement as well as his social-emotional well-being. He comes from a challenging home. In Dancing Classrooms, he really had a chance to shine. He was much more open to moving and enjoying the music. This was a forum where he could be successful. And this was so important because in the academic world maybe he is not the superstar of the class. But in Dancing Classrooms he was the leader and he showed the children that not only does he have things that he is good at, but also has things that he can be proud of and the other children recognized how wonderful he was." - Teacher

The Importance of a Good Partnership

The core values of a Dancing Classrooms residency are Respect, Elegance and Teamwork. As an organization that teaches an art form grounded in partnership, we recognize that high levels of cooperation between schools and Dancing Classrooms leads to wonderful results for children. The research supports this as well.

When there is high fidelity in the delivery of our program, the results are significant. High fidelity program delivery includes enthusiastic classroom teacher participation and support of the teaching artist; successful integration of general and special education students when necessary; a dedicated, non-trafficked space to conduct classes; adherence to a mutually agreed-upon schedule and adequate audio/visual resources.



Student development ratings were significantly higher in schools delivering the program with high fidelity, indicating stronger effects when Dancing Classrooms is well-implemented.

However, program outcomes were favorable across all schools.

From the Report

Schools with low implementation (fidelity) had lower ratings across all student outcomes, most significantly in the areas of social and emotional development. In contrast, schools with high implementation had scores above 85%, most significantly in kinesthetic and social development. However, across all schools the Dancing Classrooms program was shown to favorably impact student outcomes.

Most teachers enthusiastically supported the Dancing Classrooms program. The teachers often supported the teaching artists, by helping students with steps, applying the Dancing Classrooms vocabulary and referring to the performance criteria. The teachers' support was most effective when they participated in the classes.

"It was the best thing that could've happened in my class. I had never danced, and they were low on girls, so I got to [dance]. I was learning with them, and it wasn't easy for me. I would step on their feet and I'd forget which way we were going, or I'd step in when I'm supposed to step back. So my boys got to be in a position, I think, where they got to see me learn something new and be uncomfortable and then overcome it, and just have a positive attitude. Same with them. Some of them are so uncomfortable with it but we were learning together. Nobody knew anything when we started and then we made that journey together and we had so much fun. It was about camaraderie." - Teacher



Our program supports educators' efforts to transform their classrooms into spaces that nurture social and emotional skills. The goals we set in each of our dance lessons carry over to the classroom - learning step-by-step and alongside each other - looking forward to new experiences.

To find out more about this research report or about how to bring Dancing Classrooms to your school or community, please visit our website.



www.dancingclassrooms.org