

**Evaluation
Of The
Broadway Junior – ArtsConnection Program
In
Three New York City Public Schools**

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Summary of Key Findings
Broadway Junior – ArtsConnection Evaluation
Three New York City Public Schools

Broadway Junior is a highly effective program for enabling elementary and middle schools to stage age-appropriate musical productions.

The program we observed supported the development of general cognitive skills. These include creative thinking abilities, such as originality and elaboration, and the ability to synthesize and represent knowledge from multiple domains and learning disciplines.

Children participating in the program demonstrated personal growth in several areas. We observed improvement in positive risk-taking, self-confidence, motivation, self-discipline, and social behavior.

Children demonstrated improvement in social skills and relations with others, including teachers, administrators, peers, and Broadway Junior staff. They developed cooperative learning skills, new kinds of relationships with adults, and new perceptions of their peers.

Children developed a variety of skills within the performing arts disciplines of music, dance, and theater.

The program had a positive impact on school climate. Teachers and students interacted in new and positive ways. Teachers saw aspects of children they otherwise might not have been exposed to. The school community grew stronger and more cohesive.

Participating schools strongly supported the program. Their support was demonstrated by committed Coordinating Teachers and Principals, the provision of rehearsal spaces throughout the school year, and attendance at performances.

Broadway Junior provided an exceptional set of books and materials to produce each of the musicals. These resources are comprehensive, well organized, and attractively produced.

ArtsConnection provided exceptional leadership, organization, and support for the collaborations. They selected the artistic staff and provided organizational support through individual Program Managers for each school. All of the participating schools praised ArtsConnection as an effective collaborating partner.

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Setting the Stage

*The lights dim in the packed auditorium at PS 176, and the curtains on the stage open. The lights brighten as a stage full of fifth graders launch into the opening lines of *Guys and Dolls*. There is a still moment before the first lines are spoken, and then the dialogue begins. The students quickly hit their stride, their voices steady after a moment's opening night shakiness, and the audience of parents, brothers, sisters, friends, classmates, staff, and teachers begins to follow the story of the “*Guys and Dolls*” on stage. With perfect timing, the kids launch into the first song in the musical. They project their well-rehearsed harmonies towards the back of the room, and their faces radiate a combination of exhilaration and concentration. Two hours later, the show is over, and the kids, teachers, school community, and the ArtsConnection staff savor a feeling of accomplishment.*

These accomplishments are the subject of this report. Our aim is to describe the multi-faceted benefits of the program on student learning and school climate.

The Broadway Junior Program

This report describes the results of a yearlong evaluation of the Broadway Junior program in three New York City public schools. Broadway Junior is a program of Music Theatre International (MTI), a dramatic licensing agency specializing in Broadway, Off Broadway, and West End musicals. Broadway Junior provides elementary and middle schools with a package of materials to produce condensed versions of musicals, such as *Annie*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Into The Woods*, and *Fiddler On The Roof*. In the programs we observed, two of the schools (PS 176 and East Side Middle) performed *Guys and Dolls* and the other school (PS 94) performed *Annie*.

ArtsConnection implemented and coordinated the Broadway Junior projects in the three schools. It provided artistic support and administrative staff, and directed the project from its planning stages to rehearsals and final performance. Each school worked with an ArtsConnection Director, Musical Director, and Choreographer. Planning, scheduling, and administrative details were coordinated by an ArtsConnection Program Manager. Each school provided a coordinating teacher and adequate space for rehearsals and performance. Steve Tennen, Executive Director of ArtsConnection, was personally involved in overall planning. The school principals were also actively supportive of the collaboration.

Each school received a Broadway Junior Showkit. The Showkit is a package of materials needed for staging a production. The materials include Student Libretto/Vocal Books, Piano/Vocal Scores, Director's Guide, Cross-Curricular Activities and Enrichment Guide, Performance/Accompaniment CDs, Production Handbook, and a Choreography Video.

The program began with planning sessions between ArtsConnection staff and the participating schools. The two Artistic Directors conferred during planning meetings. Each school established a rehearsal schedule based upon school needs and artist availability. PS 176 and PS 94 each scheduled and held approximately 40 rehearsals. These rehearsals were held twice a week after school for two hours. East Side Middle held 22 rehearsals for approximately 3½ to 4 hours once a week, starting during school and finishing after school. The Musical Directors would often work separately with groups of children to develop their vocal ability and to learn the songs.

Rehearsal time was spent on a variety of activities, including learning songs and dances, good rehearsal techniques, drama and vocal technique, auditions for principal roles, and character development. Detailed descriptions of several rehearsals appear in the Appendix to this report.

The rehearsals culminated in three to five performances per school, preceded by technical and dress rehearsals. Two of the schools had follow-up reflection meetings, where the students, coordinating teacher, and the artistic staff could review the year's events and lessons learned.

Each school had an artistic and support staff assembled by ArtsConnection:

East Side Middle

Mary Ann Hay, Artistic Director and Choreographer

Michael Roth, Music Director

Jay Lyons, Coordinating Teacher

Jessica Pabotoy, ArtsConnection Program Manager

PS 176

Mary Ann Hay, Artistic Director

Amy Little, Musical Director and Assistant Director

Roy Fialkow, Assistant Choreographer and Assistant Director
Jessica Pabotoy, ArtsConnection Program Manager

PS 94

Victor Maog, Artistic Director
Michael Eisenberg, Musical Director
Stephanie Farhood, Choreographer
Madeline DiOrio, Coordinating Teacher
Brenda Malloy, ArtsConnection Program Manager

The Schools

We observed the Broadway Junior program in three New York City public schools. Two of them were elementary schools: PS 94 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn (Community School District 15) and PS 176 in Inwood, Manhattan (Community School District 6). One was a middle school: East Side Middle (Community School District 2).

Basic demographic information for these schools may help to put the program's target population in context. East Side Middle school, in Manhattan's Upper East Side, serves 386 children, 46.2% of whom are eligible for a free lunch. Free lunch eligibility is a commonly used poverty index for comparing the socio-economic status of students in public schools. In terms of ethnicity, 52.3% of East Side Middle School's students are white, 15.8% black, 17.4 % Latino, and 14.5% are Asian or classified as "Other." Academically, East Side Middle School stands out as a high-performing public school in New York City, with 89.4 % of its students passing or excelling in state and city administered tests.

At W. Haywood Burns School (PS 176) in Manhattan's Inwood neighborhood, 69.5% of the students are eligible for free lunches, and the student body is 17.2 % white, 11.3 % black, 68.2% Latino, and 3.4% Asian or "Other." In terms of academic performance, 32.8% of students pass or excel in state and city administered standardized tests in English, and 33.0% pass or excel in mathematics.

At Henry Longfellow School (PS 94) in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, 91% of its 1402 students are eligible for a free lunch. The school is primarily comprised of students of Latino (68.6%) and Asian (23.1%) background. White students make up 6.8% of the school's population and black students, 1.5%. Academically, 42.5 % of the students are passing or excelling in city and state standardized tests administered in English, and 43.7% passing or excelling in mathematics.

The Evaluation Process

Methods of Inquiry

We determined at the outset that this would be a **qualitative** research study. That is, we sought to understand the impact of the program on children and the participating schools through naturalistic observations, interviews, and analysis of materials. We did not introduce a “treatment” or try to manipulate variables, as researchers do when they conduct an experimental study. We did not set out to collect statistical data. We wanted to carefully observe the program as it “naturally” occurred, while trying to ensure that our presence had minimal impact on the program and its participants.

We began our study by referring to a general model of the kinds of learning we thought we would observe. This model is based upon my previous research at Teachers College¹ and ArtsConnection² as well as other ongoing research.³ We expected that specific areas of investigation would include the development of children’s: (1) cognitive, social and personal skills; (2) theater, music, and dance skills; and (3) academic skills. We also were interested in the program’s potential effect on dimensions of school climate.

We gathered a four-person research team with significant experience in qualitative research. All research was done by Dr. Rob Horowitz, Elsa Davidson (CUNY, anthropology), Susan Falls (CUNY, anthropology), and Amy Kleiman (Teachers College, background in theater and musicals). Data collection methods included: (1) site observations of planning meetings, rehearsals, and performances; (2) interviews with children, artistic staff, Principals, and coordinating teachers; and (3) content analysis of Broadway Junior materials.

After each site observation, the researchers wrote a descriptive, narrative report.⁴ At first, we attempted to describe just what we observed, with minimal interpretation. In the language of qualitative research, these reports contained “thick, rich descriptions” of the physical settings and behaviors of the participants. Through ongoing analysis of the observational data, we sought to clarify our initial model of learning and define the areas where we might be able to claim program impact. Towards the end of the school year,

¹ Burton, J., Horowitz, R., & Abeles, H. (1999). Learning In and Through the Arts. In E. Fiske (ed.) *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning: Curriculum Implications*. Washington, D.C.: The Arts Education Partnership and The President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.
Burton, J., Horowitz, R., & Abeles, H. (2000). Learning In and through the Arts: The Question of Transfer. *Studies in Art Education*, *41*(3), 228-257.

² PS 130/ArtsConnection NYCPAE Annenberg partnership, 4 years; PS 38/ArtsConnection NYCPAE Annenberg partnership, 2 years.

³ Horowitz, R. *Learning In and Through the Arts: Implications for Partnerships*, Buffalo Arts Council, 2000.

Horowitz, R. *Arts Learning, Transfer, and its Research: Implications of Learning In and Through the Arts. ArtsBridge Sciences for the Arts Conference*, University of California, Irvine, 2000

⁴ A collection of these reports can be seen in the Appendix.

our observations became more focused and evaluative. Once the performances were over, we observed student reflection meetings and conducted a round of interviews in two of the three schools.

Once all data was collected and organized, we conducted a systematic analysis of the reports and interviews, looking for common patterns. We used the method of **triangulation**, looking for common findings from different data collection methods.

Through the method of triangulation, we sought confirmatory responses from:

1. Different data sources, such as teachers, Principals, artistic staff, and children (Did they report similar experiences?);
2. Different research methods, such as interviews, observations, and content analysis of materials (Did we learn similar things from different methods?);
3. Different field researchers (Did we observe and report similar phenomena?);
4. Different schools (Were there similar effects across schools?).

Student Learning

Children participating in the Broadway Junior program gained skills in a number of domains. Their experience of working intensively in group rehearsals and the challenge of performing before the school community facilitated the development of social and personal skills, as well as artistic learning in the fields of dance, drama, and music. Learning to understand a script, develop a character, and explore the cultural and historical context of the musicals enriched academic skills. More generally, and perhaps most importantly, the data on children's learning suggest that the program supported the development of cognitive skills essential to all kinds of learning, such as the ability to synthesize different kinds of material, to think creatively, and express ideas.

Our findings in this section are grouped within five categories: (1) cognitive learning, (2) personal learning, (3) social learning, (4) arts learning, and (5) academic learning. We illustrate our findings through examples from the data, such as excerpts from site reports and interview transcripts.

Some of the data that follow could easily have been presented within other categories than those chosen in this report. As a researcher and evaluator, I am always trying to categorize learning into neat bundles, so I can communicate what I find as clearly as possible. Unfortunately, the clarity I seek through this process starts to bend the truth. The arts learning process is incredibly complex and multidimensional. As we sorted through our data and began to categorize it into the areas presented here, it was apparent to us that we were sometimes making choices that were somewhat arbitrary. For instance, when a teacher described a child's increased ability to work through a dramatic role, we had to consider whether this represented arts learning, increased motivation, understanding of character development, expressive ability, task persistence, and on and on. The "true" answer is that all of these cognitive functions are operating

simultaneously. And, although the evaluator’s job is to understand, define, simplify, and communicate, the reader of this report will understand that our definitions of learning are limited by the words we can use to express them.

In other words, next year, come see the show.

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Unless otherwise noted, in the excerpts from interview transcripts, **P** indicates a school Principal, **T** indicates a teacher, **C** indicates a child, and **I** indicates the interviewer. Italicized passages are excerpts from interviews or comments made during site observations. Indented passages are taken from observation reports.⁵

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I think on many, many levels it was very successful. I think back to October, to the fall. We wondered, When will they get the performance dexterity? Can they sing? Can they move? Can they follow? From those thoughts to what happened this week in May is really a big jump. I am very, very pleased with that. I think on a lot of levels it went very well. We’re seeing skill building as opposed to trying to make it a huge lights-and-sets show. We wanted to focus on the students. (artistic director)

Cognitive Learning

The Broadway Junior experience supported the development of general cognitive skills. Areas of development included **creative thinking abilities**, such as **originality** and **elaboration**, and **the ability to synthesize and represent knowledge from multiple domains and learning disciplines**.

Creative Thinking Abilities

Elaboration

Elaboration refers to the ability to put more details in one’s work, going beyond minimal expectations. The students learned that adding details to their performances – business, in the parlance of theater – helped add depth and dimension to their characters.

These examples illustrate how children worked on adding detail and nuance to their characters:

At a dress rehearsal before East Side Middle’s first performance of *Guys and Dolls*, girls wait in the wings for the mission scene they are about to rehearse. At the suggestion of one of the “dolls,” these girls are wearing old-fashioned, forties-style gloves...The girls are looking at the gloves

⁵ The data have been lightly edited for readability, leaving the original meaning intact.

that they are wearing for the mission scene. As they wait, they practice hand movements in variety of ways for effect...trying out the gestures of the 1940s as they see them.... (site report)

On a different day:

Two boys, both with leading roles as “Guys,” run through a speaking scene that ends in a song and dance. Not only do they know the songs but they have added personal touches and style to the songs. For example, the “Skye” character makes large circular arm movements and shifts his weight from hip to hip to give his song a big, sweeping feeling that works quite well. (site report)

Originality

There were opportunities for the students to bring some of their own ideas into the character development. Artistic director, Victor Maog, described being pleased that he was able to bring in some their original ideas.

I tried to work with them in the rehearsal process to not just stage things A to B, by the numbers. I tried to bring into it what ideas they had about it and I discovered throughout the process that they were very creative and that they were very much collaborators.

Synthesis of Knowledge and Skills across Domains of Learning

A complex production, such as a Broadway musical, requires that the performers master multiple artistic domains. Performers learn diverse musical, dance, and theatrical skills, and then must learn to put them all at the service of artistic expression. Although the children we observed were not in training for a professional theater career, they still had to attempt to master and synthesize these multiple skills. After learning the individual skills, they then simultaneously remembered and performed dance steps, melodies, dramatic lines, and characteristics of their roles.

A girl, playing “Adelaide” in *Guys and Dolls*, was working on a song-and-dance number about having a psychosomatic cold caused by the predicament of being engaged to a foot-dragging fiancé. She learned to gradually incorporate different elements of her performance until they were synthesized into a cohesive whole.

All the kids are sitting in the auditorium and the character of Adelaide is on stage about to begin her solo song. The room is quiet. M_____ begins singing and dancing. Her movements are precise as is her timing. She steps forward in time to the song, acting at turns sick and lonely and then proud or scheming. She demonstrates these feelings by raising her eyebrows and widening her eyes to look innocent. The whole group is watching M_____ and many girls are mouthing the words of M_____’s solo with admiration on their faces. (site report)

Another example, from PS 94, exemplifies how kids learn to synthesize material by adding and combining elements in rehearsals:

They finish the read-through [of a scene] and then run through it with the CD [parts of the scene have music while other moments are speaking only]. They then do the scene listening to the CD, saying lines, and adding body movements. Again, the director emphasizes focus and working together as a group. There is notable improvement after three run-throughs and some students are asked to sing solo to demonstrate, which they do without hesitation. (site report)

At a rehearsal at East Side Middle School in January, a researcher watched the children try to master a *Guys and Dolls* musical number that involved a complex rhythm, the learning of new lyrics and a new melody, and harmony. Michael Roth, the music director, added new elements slowly as the kids rehearsed.

Students asked questions that suggested they were registering the details in their minds: “So they enter at the first ‘boat,’ right?” one asked. “O.K. Can we do it really slow with the words and everything to get it smoother?” After practicing this number a few times all the way through with accompaniment, some kids felt the improvement. “Yes!” a few shouted after a run-through. “We got it!” (site report)

Personal Learning

Working on the productions helped develop children’s understanding of themselves in ways that are not typical of most school activities. Students developed a dedication to the project over many months, as they worked to master the material. They learned about their capabilities, feelings, sense of self, and relations with others. In this section we identify several areas of personal growth, such as positive **risk-taking, self-confidence, motivation, self-discipline**, and improved **social behavior**.

In the first example, the musical director described how he watched students develop self-awareness through the process of self-critique. He noticed that they were able to become more comfortable with the process over time.

I think in general, there’s a lot of self-critiquing. And that’s difficult. I feel that’s been a general thing for students and for some of the principals particularly because they’ve been subjected to so much introspection. And I feel like now there has been an easing [in discomfort]. A feeling of being more comfortable to sort of look at themselves. Because for some of the children, it was a little bit difficult. Some of them, once you said, ‘Well, this needs to be improved,’ or you talked about something like that, immediately they would shut down. And I felt that really improved.

The director also discussed students' ability to critique themselves and become confident enough to examine their performance with others and then try and make improvements.

They were learning about critiquing themselves. Sometimes they'll say, 'We did this [incorrectly or not as good as could be]' and I'll say one word and then they just make automatic adjustments. I think that was the hardest part. Instead of saying, 'Oh, yeah, we did great, we did great,' they could step back and say, 'Now, how can we make this better?' I think that's important.

Risk-Taking

In preparing for the performance, many children confronted for the first time what it meant to stand in front of an audience made up of peers, teachers, and parents. This was a personal act of courage inherent to the performing experience. Students became positive risk-takers, taking personal steps of courage as they developed their roles and learned to perform, first within their ensemble, and later before the entire school community.

The arts can help children gain confidence in their ability to think, to persist, to master a form, and to express themselves. It's not hard to imagine that the children who are engaged in this kind of risk-taking are also acquiring capacities that will likely serve them well in other domains, and in life, generally.

The musical director described how one girl seemed to have a breakthrough as a performer and as an individual. He watched her development progress dramatically from the beginning of the rehearsal process through the performance.

- I: Did you notice any changes in individual students?
- Michael: A girl that I had worked with in the program last year. When we started, this child was really shy. Very, very introverted. And it was also difficult. I had a feeling that there was not a great deal of exposure to music, so improving the skill was very difficult. I felt that there was a lack of confidence, at least in this situation, and that made it more difficult. And we really made some breakthroughs. So when we started this year with *Annie*, there was definitely an increased level of performance...and this child had some solos... Sometimes these kids shy away at first. Back off. And I saw, more and more, this child begin to look the flame in the face and just really be more expressive. And I felt that translated to dramatic performance, too. I felt that the more she was able to come out musically and really perform the skill under pressure, the more I saw a correlation in overall performance. There was a difference in terms of the way this child approached these tasks at the beginning and the way she approached the task at the end. Because she was much more motivated at the end...This child would come up to me and say, 'I have to warm-up with you.'...One

time we were running really late and invited anyone who wanted to come and warm-up. And this child ran to me, which was very unusual for her, very much taking that risk.

At the PS 176 auditions for *Guys and Dolls*, Mary Ann Hay addressed students about being nervous to audition, and one boy described his feeling about being part of the production:

“Last year in *Bundles* [he was nervous].”

“So how did you like your part last year? You did such a good job!” Mary Ann asked.

He responded, “Yeah, but this year I want a bigger part – it should have been bigger!”

Mary Ann: “Well, now you are used to it, but remember in the beginning you wanted a small part, right?”

“Yeah,” he agreed, “but...I got used to it and now I’m ready for a big part!” (site report)

Children recalled their feelings during a reflection meeting with ArtsConnection staff after the performances. It was evident that they each had to take initial steps of courage to gain confidence in their abilities.

I thought it would be difficult. When I practiced sliding or saying lines I thought I might fall off stage. But doing it over and over again, I got calm.

It was difficult singing and dancing. Every time I sang I was embarrassed.

Remembering my lines was hard.

I found it difficult to be in front of a crowd.

I was nervous but I felt really confident after the second song. I didn’t really notice the people. I was just into the play. I was really happy when we finished because I didn’t know we’d be so good.

I was surprised how well it went. During the rehearsal I thought it looked like crap.

I was nervous all through the second and third performances. Being nervous made me work harder.

Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem

Children gained self-confidence as they took chances and acquired new skills.

The performance was fantastic. Just the presence of the children. How they performed, their stage presence, the confidence that they exhibited. It was beyond what I could have expected back in October. [Principal]

Getting over the hurdle of the performance was transformative for many kids. As a child at PS 94 put it:

The performance? I got stage-fright somehow. I saw my parents and I said I gotta do this, because I knew they wouldn't be proud of me if I didn't do this. I knew that they would be like just acting that they were proud of me, so I really wanted to do this and when I did I was so proud of myself.

Another little girl, J_____, who ended up replacing the girl playing the Warbucks character at PS 94 (when the original cast-member playing Warbucks was in an accident two weeks before the show), described the challenge of rising to the occasion to learn a leading role in two weeks. Her pride in this achievement is evident, as is her empathy for her injured classmate and her belief in cooperation.

Before I joined up with Annie, I didn't know that it was going to be fun. But after all the students, like, the people who joined up with Annie, they started talking great things about it and I decided I wanted to join up, too. So I did, and...when the play came, I got excited, because looking out at all those crowds with millions and millions of faces staring at all of us, I was like, 'uh-oh, I can't do this, there's too many people!' So when I saw that G_____ had broken her leg, I decided I gotta do the play for her, so that everybody should give the play to her, like dedicating it to her. So I practiced.

For some students, the opportunity to play an outgoing character allowed them to express a more social side of themselves. The boy playing the “Skye” character in *Guys and Dolls* at East Side Middle School is a case in point. As an introverted boy clearly uncomfortable in the spotlight, J_____ seemed an unlikely choice for a debonair, swaggering lead role. In many early rehearsals, his delivery was a little flat; he spoke his lines in a quiet voice while looking downwards. As the rehearsals progressed, he learned to personalize his role, enhancing his character’s circumstance and attitudes with body language and effective pauses. Teachers, ArtsConnection staff, and researchers alike noticed the change in “Skye” over the course of a semester. Through developing the character of Skye and trying his hand at acting, singing, and dancing, J_____ developed a new confidence and a sense of himself. His classmates’ perception of him changed as well.

The Principal noticed that this student’s demeanor changed as he gained confidence in himself through participating in the program.

We see other sides of the same kid. For example. J_____ is one of my most shy students. He never looks you in the eye. He always looks at the

floor and mumbles his answers. I would say that he probably thought he's smart but doesn't know that he has anything else to offer. And here was J_____ on stage. He didn't look himself. Didn't carry himself like himself. And I think doing that in the guise of a character gave him a sense of confidence in how he carries himself, generally. And I have gotten him in the hall now to stop, look at me, and even smile if I talk to him.

Mary Ann Hay and Jay Lyons discussed "Skye's" personal development.

- J: And J_____ who plays Skye....I don't even know how to explain how far he came. He's an incredibly bright guy and slightly uneasy with himself and with his age group. He has respect. His peers respect him. But he's awkward physically. Slightly cranky kid, not disrespectful, just cranky with the world. Really smart. He has a real awareness of the world. More than his peers do. His sort of [physical] presentation is this: He's sort of slumped over, head down...which is still slightly evident in the show. He had to deal with this sort of terror of having to be in front of peers. Come up with the character. Make connections. I mean, this is SO not him.
- I: As a teacher, do you see those changes in areas apart from the show?
- L: Yeah. I see more of a sense of humor. I see a little more lightness. He smiles a little bit more. I mean, he's not transformed. It's impossible to do that when you're an adolescent.
- I: What is it about the experience that...
- L: The reason he stayed is because he's a kid who knows what commitment means. So that made him hang in there.
- M: It had to take an incredible commitment from his inner being to do this. And then he started to feel what it was like to open up. He's much more open now. Just looking at him today. When we were reading the letter today that complimented him – usually if he was complimented he wouldn't react but today he was like....
- L: He actually looked up and smiled.
- M: He's much more open as a human being. I have to give him so much credit for getting to where he got. And he went outside and got some vocal training, because we don't always have that individual time to give them.

The Principal also mentioned another student, A_____, who demonstrated a similar change:

I think that was a really great experience for him, because he's...somewhat on the shy side, and now he carries himself differently.

A teacher also commented on A_____’s growth:

There’s something that’s important in all of this, and that is what it does for a kid’s emotional growth. I mean, this is a quiet kid, very withdrawn. I’ve heard from his teachers that they can see the change.

Some additional student comments:

At the beginning I wasn’t comfortable around everyone I was around. I wasn’t as confident as I would have liked. We needed more rehearsal time.

At the beginning it would take an hour and a half to get through one scene. Then when we did the show, all of the scenes went by really fast. It was Scene One and then before we knew it, it was the Finale.

Task Persistence

Children developed an increased ability to keep working on difficult tasks until they mastered them (or at least improved). The arts often provide opportunities for children to concentrate on tasks for longer periods than other learning disciplines. It takes time and concentrated effort to master a melody or a dance routine, develop a character, and then synthesize these acquired skills in a performance or rehearsal. In this study, we are using the term “task persistence” to characterize the quality of children who stay with an activity longer than they usually do, or longer than expected. This stick-to-it-iveness and capacity for extended focus was an outcome of this program.

Sometimes this quality was evident to us as we watched children work on their parts on their own. At PS 94 the girl who played the leading character of Annie practiced her part repeatedly until she was able to perform independently.

As the other kids begin a song that S_____ will later have to come in on, she taps her foot and sways slightly to the music, waiting to begin her center-stage singing and dancing. On cue, she puts her hands up in the air and begins dancing. Then she steps forward with a serious expression on her face, smiles a little, and begins her solo. She knows all of the words, and sings her part with careful concentration and ease. She never falters, and looks at Stephanie [the choreographer] as she works. (site report)

An example from PS 176 in Inwood:

Mary Ann and Roy are teaching the “Dolls” a new dance. The dance involves using different parts of the foot to pivot and step in a pattern, while moving downstage. In order to make sure everyone has got the step down, Mary Ann goes around the stage and works with every girl for a few moments. While the other girls wait, many practice on their own,

trying out the step again and again, or helping one another get it. (site report)

Children learned to maintain their concentration and stay on task during distractions. This would help them avoid “breaking” character during performances.

One student, M_____, joined the others offstage. She came down the stairs when Mary Ann asked everyone to go and get their hat props for the scene while the Scene 9 actors remained [on stage]. Mary discussed the best way to wear the hat: “Do you think we should wear it over to the side like this? Or like this?” (She straightens the hat). She and her friends discuss which looks better and then pull out their scripts to go over lines while the Scene 9 actors work on choreography on stage. There is so much distraction from a number of other classes filing through the rehearsal space with teachers talking very boisterously to one another that it’s surprising how focused M_____ and her friend remain. They keep going over the script together, disregarding the commotion...They were practicing the lines from the next scene. (site report)

A musical director told us he believes that students develop a specific type of focus that is connected to musical learning. Music is a temporal art. One must constantly stay focused and on task, or else risk falling behind.

You learn concentration a lot better with music than when taking a test. I can be taking a test and lose concentration many times and then come back and still perform well on the test. Whereas with music that’s not the case. If you space out even for a split second, you’re gone. Music develops a faster kind of concentration.

Motivation

Participating in the rigorous Broadway Junior rehearsals helped develop student’s capacity for satisfying hard work, discipline, and focus on developing a variety of arts and cognitive skills. Some children demonstrated an increased ability to stay on task. I believe this is largely due to these factors: becoming immersed in the arts disciplines sufficiently to develop a sense of pride, a self-perception of increased competence, an adaptation to the habits of focused rehearsal, and a sense of group responsibility and desire to be seen as contributing to the overall success of the endeavor. These factors appeared to coalesce into increased **motivation**.

B_____ normally has a difficult time staying still. She does her own thing. But when you give her the directions, she’s very clear and loud with the lines. And really just giving it all she’s got when she’s there. (Artistic Director)

A director described the experience of a girl who was transformed from an unmotivated participant to a disciplined performer. She replaced a classmate in a major role who had broken her leg two weeks before the production.

The girl J_____ got into the car accident, so we had to shift two parts. So it was amazing that our new Daddy Warbucks just literally in two weeks time knew all the songs, sang it, and was able to pick it up. That's amazing when somebody else is rehearsing the part since October, and she has only two weeks. But the amazing thing is how she came through, literally, in a couple days time with the lines memorized and could sing all the tunes. The girl that became Daddy Warbucks had a different role at the beginning. One of the reasons I bumped her up for that role was that in the beginning [of rehearsals] she was horribly distracted. Just running around, not participating, but throughout the process she became more and more focused, more and more invested. So, I thought she would be up for this role. Part of it, too, was to see if you could do it. And she did. So it's a very successful story...She really improved through time. She showed she can be focused. Because before she didn't want to do anything. It was like, 'B_____ are you going to join us?' And it was one of those things like, "Why are you here?" But she certainly was very capable of playing that role. She proved over time that she could be focused.

The directors and their teams maintained very high expectations for the students. At one of the schools the team found that they could motivate the students better if they tempered their comments and helped the students learn to critique their own work. The coordinating teacher explained that sometimes the staff's expectations of the students work might have been too high. They had a meeting about this issue and as a result the staff became more relaxed and started praising the work of the students more. The teacher thought this lighter approach brought out the best in the students. She also thought it was informative for students to view themselves on video and learn to become more self-critical about their performance. She thought that all of this helped the staff "get a little more out of the students."

We did a little bit more of the praising instead of the criticizing. And the more you praise them, the better they did, you know. And that was nice. And they got to see it on video before they went on stage, which was a good experience for them. Because they were able to see where they could change it. They said things like, "I'm not loud enough" or "I guess I got to slow down. Because I couldn't hear myself." Or, "I couldn't understand what I was saying." So it was another learning experience.

Some additional student comments:

Trying for perfection made me work hard.

I sometimes had a dream before I performed. I dreamt about the performance. I'd run through it in my head.

When we did the show everyone was really focused.

I messed up sometimes when I was starting but then I would remember something about how to fix it from the rehearsal.

Developing Values and Personal Choices

Some children learned that they liked rehearsing and performing musical comedies. They made new friendships based upon their new interests.

As a result of participating in Broadway Junior, one East Side Middle School student described her personal growth and shifts in her group identity, based on her new interests.

- I: What were you feeling after the performance was over?
C: I was sad, I felt we should have done more because I felt like we worked so hard and only had three performances. I felt sad that it was over.
I: What did you get better at doing?
C: Well, basically just the etiquette of being in a play. I got better at knowing how to conduct myself in a play. I think maybe I learned how to dance with other people on stage, how to sing with other people.
I: Did you learn anything about your classmates or any other people you worked with in Guys and Dolls?
C: Some people I've seen in the halls – I never knew that they would be interested in these kinds of things—in like, *Guys and Dolls*, and when I saw them, I was like, wow, so they're like me, too.

A parent described how his son had become more independent in his thinking and personal interests.

He was shy at first. Now he is getting more confident. His is more independent from us [parents] and from his peers. His friends didn't think of the play as cool at first. But he did it anyway and he found that he really likes it.

Discipline

Students learned to respect the hard work and discipline that went into preparing a complex artistic production.

They realize that it's hard work. It was just a wonderful experience for them in the sense that they were the ones that said when it was all done, "Now I know why these stars and athletes get paid big bucks." They were doing something in writing and one of the topics was, 'Are Athletes Worth

the Big Bucks?’ And of course most of them were saying, “Oh, no, no, no, they shouldn’t get that money. And my kids in Annie, said, ‘Yes, they deserve it.’ (teacher)

I miss it. I had fun sometimes when I did it but didn’t always know it was fun at the time. Now I know it was and I miss it. (student)

A coordinating teacher attributed the children’s growth to the standards set by Mary Ann Hay.

She treats the kids like they’re professionals, but doesn’t forget that they’re kids, either. And that balance is really hard. Mary Ann strikes it, all of the time. It’s not like she comes in with this watered down, junior high school play. It’s with this professional eye and this professional talent and that’s how she gets them to do it. It’s because of her tenacity and her artistry. She doesn’t dumb it down. It’s amazing to watch the process. We’re aware they’re not professional actors, acutely aware, but we’re going to do it well.

Behavioral Changes

Some of the children appear to have improved their overall behavior and attitude towards school as a result of participating in the program. Take the case of Z_____, a student in the PS 94 production of *Annie*. A member of the artistic staff told a researcher:

Z_____ used to give me a LOT of attitude. She used to roll her eyes at me and it seemed like she didn’t want to be there. But last week she came up to me and told me that her grandma wants to come and help sew the costumes. She used to talk back, but she’s much more respectful now. Now she wouldn’t dare talk back to me. She’s excited.

A Principal observed a huge difference in another child. The coordinating teacher and artistic director agreed.

R_____ tended to be defiant. She tended to be cranky and whiny. She just smiles all the time now, and she’s been really responsive. She’s gotten all of her assignments in a timely manner. She went from a pretty angry defiant kid to someone who is very much a member of the cast and very much a member of our school community.

Participation in Broadway Junior strongly affected some children who have trouble staying focused. Sometimes this was not evident until the end of the project.

Keeping our expectations high and working towards our goal without lowering it because we thought they might not be interested...that was not easy at times. Like the one who played “X _____.” He was a huge problem the whole time. One of the biggest problems. And he said today that this

was one of the few things he would miss when he leaves this school.
(artistic director)

Social Learning

The Broadway Junior program had an impact on children's relationships with others, including teachers, administrators, peers, and Broadway staff. They learned to interact with others in new and constructive ways. These included increased cooperative learning skills, new kinds of relationships with adults, and new perceptions of their peers.

Cooperative Learning

Our data provide conclusive evidence that children engaged in many cooperative learning experiences. They learned from each other, relied on each other, and grew together.

At PS 94, a group of fifth grade girls gathered to read part of the *Annie* script together. This typical rehearsal scene also illustrates the spontaneous expression of enthusiasm that came with satisfying, challenging work

While practicing, students consulted with one another on how to best say the lines for their characters. "You say it like this," one student said to another. "Strip them sheets!" she said in a loud, demanding voice. The same student went on: "Crystal! Here, look at my part. I've already memorized it – listen to this!" (site report)

In this excerpt from an interview with a Principal and teacher, they comment on how students in the production developed a sense of camaraderie that they may not have the chance to experience in other kinds of school activities. They also point out how the performer's classmates were positively affected by the performance.

- I: Any other thoughts about the children?
P: After last night's performance they were hugging and kissing.
T: They really don't get much of a chance to intermingle class to class. So this was a nice experience for them.
P: The fifth grade was just sitting there. They were just staring.
T: They saw a difference from dress rehearsal from what they saw today [the performance]. The other students were thinking, "Wow, that was really good."
P: They were treated like professionals.

Students developed a strong group identity. They learned they had to pull together and rely on each other to make the show happen. We saw evidence of cooperative learning experiences that teachers try and promote in their classrooms, but often far less successfully. The special qualities of preparing an artistic production naturally promote this kind of cooperative learning and maturation.

In this interview, Victor explains what he believes children gained from the experience.

- V: For me, skills are really secondary. What's important is that they can push themselves further. They can make a commitment. The idea of a team effort. That someone's really counting on you to make this happen.
- I: Do you see a difference in the children from the beginning?
- V: I think they have a sense of being able to support each other a lot more. It's like being on a team. Somebody was absent the other day and they came up to me and said, 'You know, M_____ is not going to be here, but you know what? A_____ 's gonna say her lines and we're gonna cover it.' So they came up to me with that sense of filling in the pockets.

Children were in charge of a number of aspects of staging and production. They managed lighting, curtains, props, and other elements of the show. As rehearsals went on, kids began to pay more attention to the timing and placement of props. They also worked collaboratively on their costumes. Whenever we could, we tried to capture conversations among students.

Students tried on various outfits and helped each other decide what looked most appropriate: "Oh yes – you need a white shirt...I have one in my bag," one student told another at a final *Guys and Dolls* rehearsal. Frequently kids asked one another for a discerning opinion regarding costume choice: "This is what I am wearing for the Hot Box girls. Do you like it?" and "Hey! That looks good, is that for the Mission Band scene?" Or "Beautiful! That looks smashing! Do you have a hat? That would really look great!"

Boys helped girls playing "Guys" to tie their ties. "See, it's easy..." one boy mentioned to a girl as he drapes the tie around the girl's neck, "and you just pull this here to make it tighter."

At one East Side Middle rehearsal, the extent to which the kids had absorbed the message that putting on a Broadway production requires teamwork and reliance on everyone's part was evident. While practicing the song, *A Bushel and a Peck*, a few students suggested that an absent student be replaced because "he hasn't been here enough," as one of them put it. Earlier, the same kids had murmured in appreciation when a boy came to rehearsal – after missing a day of school due to illness – despite the fact that he didn't feel well.

A coordinating teacher summed up the ultimate effects of participation in the program on the children's ability to achieve through working together:

I'm sure that half of them had no idea how much work it was. A lot of times they would have to sit, because that's the nature of the process. So it was very abstract, and they didn't have anything to hang onto. And then

when the first performance did occur it was extraordinary the way they pulled together. And the heat was no small event in this particular end product. It was unbearable. I was afraid kids were going to get sick. It was really, really unbearable on that stage. And they weren't cranky. I mean, they were hot and people were talking about it but they were making sure people were making their cues and dressing people and racing props around. They didn't need me. On the last show I just left and didn't go back there more than twice. I was actually in the way.

On another occasion, an Artistic Director asked the children: "Why did you stay [in the play] even if you had wanted to leave when you didn't get the part you wanted?" "Because we would have let the team down," came one reply. "If we changed parts it would ruin the performance," another child added.

Changes in Peer Relations

Social skills can take many forms. For some children it can be as simple as learning to speak respectfully with one's peers, and listen to what others say in turn. Apparently, the rehearsal process and the development of group identity helped some children mature in this area.

The coordinating teacher said that she saw growth in the students. Even the girls in her classroom just being able to talk one at a time during a discussion, as opposed to overlapping. But that's a big deal. Those kinds of skills have translated from the show.

The children gained new friendships through working together intensely throughout the school year. In one interview, we asked a Principal and coordinating teacher what they thought the students got out of this experience.

P: I think the camaraderie.
T: The friendship, the experience. Now they don't want it to end.

Developing Relationships With Other Age Groups

The productions provided the opportunity for children to develop important relationships with older and younger students. Older students had an opportunity to perform for appreciative younger audiences, and at East Side Middle School, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders mixed together as participants in the production.

One student at East Side Middle, described with happiness how in her two years with Broadway Junior, she had made friends with kids in the eighth grade, and this year, as an eighth grader, with seventh graders. The Principal at East Side Middle corroborated this, commenting on peer relationships across age groups:

I watched M_____ with S_____, who's only in sixth grade, and their chemistry was magical. And I think that's because M_____ had a chance to be a more junior member of a cast last year [in Fiddler on the Roof] and a more senior member this year. And I would expect that kind of thing from S_____ next year, when she's in seventh grade.

An interview with S_____ was enlightening on this point:

- I: What about your classmates? Did you learn anything new about somebody that you go to school with?
- C: Yeah.
- I: Can you give me some examples?
- C: Well, sort of. I learned more about the eighth graders. Like, I didn't really – I was better acquainted with the sixth graders. I didn't really think they would want to talk to me, but I made a lot of friends in eighth grade and seventh grade. And I made friends that I didn't know I had before. Sometimes I have trouble making friends because people are different from me and they don't really think that what I like is good. But I found it was better to be around people who have the same interests as me, because we all like the theatre and I'm pretty sure that's why we have the same elective. There were a lot of friends. I made friends with C_____. I made friends with J_____. She's in seventh grade and I found out that we have a lot in common. I made friends with A_____, M_____ and with other sixth graders. But I don't really like the kids in my class, 'cause I don't think we really have a lot in common and they don't like me 'cause I'm so different from them. But the sixth graders in this class (theatre elective) have more in common with me, so, I made friends with more of them.

Another girl at East Side Middle, now in seventh grade, noted how the production had expanded her relationships in school.

Now I see kids in the halls that I didn't know before, and I know more about them. That we have the same interests.

Learning Within the Arts Disciplines

Although Broadway Junior is not an arts education program, children learned a variety of skills within the performing arts disciplines.

Music

In order to be able to perform in *Annie* and *Guys and Dolls*, the students had to develop a number of musical skills. They developed their ability to vocalize and match pitches. They memorized, interpreted, and performed a number of songs.

I saw one child improve markedly in terms of vocal skills. This child was always very focused but had a real serious issue with singing. And I just

could not believe when we had this rehearsal yesterday. The difference. It's really wonderful.

Very few children had any prior experience with singing lessons or vocal production. The techniques gained through singing instruction helped the children sing their parts, and may also have helped them in other ways. Michael, a music director, described this in one of our interviews:

- M: There's also a physiological correlation to what happens when you're singing. There's a certain kind of experience of one's space, inner and outer.
- I: Have you seen this with any of the kids?
- M: I've seen it on a daily basis. Like I see them going head to head, and then we sing something, and automatically there's a relaxation. And physically, we talk about yawning, relaxing, that all the facial muscles have to be relaxed. A physical, physiological awareness is developed. Because before that, you're not aware. This puts you in touch with a discipline that focuses you on those muscular issues. You may be holding tension in your body. It may be an issue of coordination that you're completely oblivious to. But I saw that on a daily basis. I saw that as we sang, there was relaxation and a little bit more of a calm and a centering of the individual.

Kids at PS 94 recalled their experience learning singing techniques while rehearsing for their spring *Annie* production, and their memories illustrate what they learned about vocal production.

We had to stretch our vocal cords. Michael told us we had to pay attention. We had to project so everyone can hear – not just the front row. He taught us how to sing high and low. He would tell us to make different sounds, like try to make them louder and louder. Like mi, me, ma, mo, mu. And like start low, and then go to a higher level, then higher and then higher. Until we can sing as high as the sound of the piano.

The children also learned to match pitches, articulate, project, and use good diction.

Any time Michael hears a flat or uneven note, he sings or plays the note on the piano, and then has the kids sing it again. In parts of the song, girls have one-line solos, and Michael has the girls with solos practice their lines, repeating the line if diction isn't good, or if they sing too softly, or not on cue. The solos are then integrated into the rest of the song. Running through the song, Michael spurs them on, shouting above his playing, "That sounds beautiful!" and "Good!" Each time a soloist sings a line, Victor has them take a step forward in front of the row, and then step back afterward. Victor also chimes in, correcting the kids' singing. "I

didn't hear 'K' at the end of 'knock,'" he says. And they try it over again.
(site report)

The children also learned musical terminology, such as *staccato*, *legato*, *allegro*, and *fortissimo*, commands used frequently by the musical directors.

Drama

I don't think they quite understood the theatrical experience until they were finally on the stage. And what that pulled out of them. The leads were particularly focused and I think they took their cues off of the leads to pull some characterizations out that were not there [in rehearsals beforehand]. Both Mary Ann and I – our mouths were dropping open.
[coordinating teacher]

The children developed many basic drama skills, such as concentration, breath control, diction, and body alignment. They then were able to put these skills to use to express the personal qualities of their characters. They also learned how to work together within a theatrical ensemble. Naturally, participating in one year of this program did not produce polished, professional actors. Nonetheless, their individual progress was striking.

Character Development and Dramatic Expression

Much rehearsal time was spent on character development. Much of this took place under the guidance of the artistic directors. They learned to match their dramatic expression to inherent qualities of their character.

Children also spent time trying out ideas on their own. During rehearsals, we observed them experimenting with different modes of characterization, from smiles and coy looks, to sad eyes and shy stammers, as they found ways to express a character's predicaments or jubilation. A fifth grader described her first experience conveying a story dramatically to an audience through her role in the *Annie* production at PS 94:

I made faces. Like when I was looking to see if everything was clean and then I had to smell the food cooking and show a reaction – if it smelled good or not.

Another fifth grader recalled another example:

When Warbucks had an adoption party for Annie – Warbucks is gonna adopt Annie, right? J___, she had to act like she was really, really happy, skipping across the stage.

A middle schooler who had previous theater experience described how her role helped her improve:

I think it's made me a better actress, 'cause I can do different things. In between, I did a Juliet monologue and I think it's gotten me able to do different kinds of voices.

Students at East Side Middle wrote biographical statements about their characters based upon supplementary reading, the script, and their own experience working on their characters in rehearsal. This process of refining a character helped them develop critical thinking skills applicable within theatrical and academic domains. The following examples from interviews illustrate the nuanced characterizations they developed.

S_____, a girl in the sixth grade who played the missionary leader, "Sarah," in *Guys and Dolls*, describes her character:

Well, she's sort of stiff, because she wants to be respectable. But since she's a missionary and she wants to help people, it's getting really hard, so I think she's getting frustrated since nobody's listening to her. And she's making her speeches, and she's getting to be a very tense person, because deep down she's sort of been attracted to sin. And also she's not very happy that she's in love with Skye Masterson because she thinks it's wrong because he's a big-time sinner. And she's against that, but on the other hand she wants to help him....But she wants to draw away from him, she doesn't want to get involved with someone like that.

And here is J_____ 's description of his own part, "Skye Masterson." He played opposite "Sarah" at East Side Middle.

- I: How would you describe your character, Skye?
C: From what I had read and interpreted, he seems kind of suave, kind of like Nathan is usually described. As more of a trickster kind of person because he's always trying to get money for things. But I think Skye, even though he did end up falling for the trick, was also pretty clever when it came to that looking only for the angle, to getting his way.

We observed that when the children had more contextual information about their characters, they became more physically expressive.

The... "Guys" dance involves miming the motion of kneeling down to play a betting card game on the street while singing a song, the lyrics to which the kids already know.. Mary Ann tells them to imagine themselves betting ... on a city street in groups of four... the kids mime the dice game in the storyline of the play, shooting make-believe dice down onto the sidewalk. They touch the ground, and make bowling gestures. Mary Ann turns on the CD version of the musical score so that they can integrate these miming sequences into the dance they are learning, and listen to the lyrics sung about the miming actions they are simultaneously practicing.
(site report)

Staging

Children learned about the physical presentation of putting on a play through the use of props, background scenery, and costumes. They were responsible for most aspects of the production. The directors repeatedly emphasized the principles and procedures of staging, integrating attention to posture, blocking, and the importance of not standing in front of another actor.

J_____, a fifth grader, recalled learning to receive staging directions, and learning the kind of discipline required to create a Broadway production:

Michael said don't look at the crowd, look at Michael, see what he's doing. If he says project, you have to project more, and you have to stand up more, like, profile left, profile right, and like move left or move right, or step forward and get louder. I think he did that to make the show more interesting because some people in the crowd, it's their first time seeing this.

During a rehearsal at East Side Middle School, as kids worked on the choreography for the number *Sit down, You're Rockin' the Boat*, they called to students offstage, "Can you see me?" "Is this a good place to stand?" – "Oh no! I'm in front of the pole. Can you still see me?"

Dance

Participating students demonstrated the acquisition of a number of movement and dance skills. They showed improvement in kinesthetic awareness, concentration, and focus in performing movement skills. They were able to memorize and reproduce complex movement sequences. They also demonstrated the ability to work cooperatively in a dance ensemble, and follow movement and dance directions from the Choreographers and Artistic Directors.

This example from PS 176 describes a dance rehearsal, as the children learned movement techniques:

The first dance to be learned goes with the *Luck Be a Lady* segment. The girls are left in the room, and dance around as Mary Ann confers with her assistant. The first step to learn is a pivot walk, with both knees facing the same direction. Mary Ann and Roy demonstrate for the class. She has the class try this step few times, explaining verbally as well as demonstrating for them what the step should look like.

They run through the first step again, and then Mary Ann and Roy move onto the next two steps, which follow one another. These steps involve stepping and using different parts of the foot. Many of the girls ask for help on this point, having difficulty mastering it. Mary Ann and Roy

divide them into groups of three, and after demonstrating the step, ask each group of three to come forward and demonstrate the step for their classmates in unison. (site report)

The young performers needed to learn how to synchronize their movements with one another. This was not easy for them at first. They had to learn to follow the tempo and count the rhythm. If they tuned out even briefly, they would fall behind. Mastering this skill took considerable focus and discipline. It was evident how far they had progressed in the final performances,

As the dancers mastered the dances, they began to embellish the choreography, adding expressive flair to their performances. A striking example of this came at an evening performance of Guys and Dolls at PS 176, where a very small girl playing Adelaide performed each dance with incredible spirit, flouncing dramatically and using her hands expressively as she sang and danced.

Academic Learning

The Broadway Junior – ArtsConnection program was not designed to improve academic performance and this evaluation was not designed to track academic improvement. Nonetheless, we observed how participation in the musicals supported development of academic skills, particularly verbal skills. Readers of this report should not assume, however, that these findings indicate or imply that participation increased academic performance as measured by standardized test scores.

English Language Arts

Much of the Broadway Junior rehearsal time was spent working on language skills: speaking, listening, vocabulary, diction, meaning and interpretation of a text, narrative, and character development. Although we did not attempt to measure learning in this area, we were able to observe how the rehearsals supported development of these ELA skills.

Michael, the music director, described why he thought that learning songs helped develop language skills.

Obviously, music builds memory skills. In this production, we really tried to work with linguistic issues, too, in terms of diction and syntactical projection of the language.

We observed many instances where working on the script helped develop reading skills.

“OK, let’s take it from the top of page 95 – now read loud and clear.” This out-loud reading exercise is interesting in several respects. The student’s abilities to read aloud varied and some struggled with parts of the text. One student stumbled on the word “champagne” and another on

“wonderful,” another on “Ms. Warbucks” and “Roosevelt.” When a student failed to pronounce a word correctly, the others and Ms. DiOrio prompted them to help them get it right by saying the words. The prompting appeared to be done in a very good-natured way and judging from the body language of the students, they enjoyed helping out and being helped. The read-through was a group exercise, then, on a number of dimensions. (site report)

The children needed to learn new vocabulary to follow stage and musical direction and to improve their theatrical performance (such as *staccato*). Sometimes, the directors worked intensively on articulation exercises, during which they learned the meaning and pronunciation of various words.

The enunciatory exercises consisted of a call and response-type of interaction in which Victor called out exaggeratedly precise renditions of words such as “bright,” “Broadway,” “Annie,” “war,” and “opera” in various tones. Students then mimicked Victor. He gave the students feedback and then they made adjustments, such as “make sure you hit the ‘t’ real hard on ‘bright’.” (site report)

The children were also exposed to slang and turns-of-phrase from the historical periods of Annie and Guys and Dolls. There were references to historical figures (President Roosevelt) and composers (Gershwin).

Students also worked on ELA skills such as narrative development and sequence, character development, and dramatic expression.⁶ They needed to read and interpret scripts, and memorize their lines. In East Side Middle School, students also read supplementary material to learn more about the context and creation of *Guys and Dolls*. Several students at East Side Middle remarked that they were reading books about the play outside of the rehearsals. “I have this book that talks about all of the characters and we could use it since it has a lot of suggestions about characters,” one student suggested to the ensemble.

Social Studies

Students gained a deeper understanding of the historical periods that were represented in the musicals. Although the characters were idealized, they gained an appreciation of the social and cultural contexts in New York City history. Children found themselves comparing contemporary lifestyles to those of the characters. Some issues that came up were fashion, attitudes towards marriage, and humor.

We do a very large piece on immigration and the twentieth century and so there are connections. There were connections with Fiddler last year and what happened there to what’s going on with people losing their homes in places like Sarajevo and Bosnia. There are

⁶ See section on Drama, above.

also connections this year with Guys and Dolls because they read Gatsby and this is just one more way to get a sense of what it was like in New York. It brings history to life. (Principal)

Effects on the Schools

School Climate

This is the best thing that ever happened to this school. It brought us together. (parent)

Broadway Junior had a very positive effect on the climate of each of the participating schools. Various members of the school community came together to watch performances. Teachers and students were able to interact in new ways. Teachers saw aspects of children that they otherwise would not have been exposed to. The rehearsals and performances provided a healthy alternative to the daily routine of tests and academics.

Well, it's hard to articulate because it gets kind of corny and mushy. Last year was the first time anything had happened like that in this school and it's a very hard time of year for the teachers. It's a hard time of year for the kids. School should be over by now. You can quote me on that. It's too hot, and it's enough. And it [the production] changed people's spirit. Teachers were talking about it. They were a little lighter in their demeanor. They had something really, really wonderful to talk about that they've seen their kids do. Nobody sees their kids doing these particular things in any other context. So all of a sudden everyone has this whole other experience with each other that they would not have had without this. And people cry from the excitement. Not just the parents, but the teachers who are working really hard with the kids in another context [than normally]. To see this whole other thing with the children just moves them. (teacher)

At East Side Middle, the Principal commented that when she came to the school, people had mentioned to her that there wasn't a sense of school community and spirit. She said that it's clear to her that the productions foster a sense of community, through the mixing of the children across ages, through working together on a project outside of a classroom context, through the opportunity that parents, teachers, and other staff have to appreciate different sides of students, and through collaborating to realize a challenging goal.

Last year, the kids in the audience were stunned. Seeing their peers do something like this moved them incredibly. Nobody put it down and no one was goofing on it. Rough eighth graders even had to back off their shtick.

People constantly talked about it afterward, and tons of kids wanted to do it this year. (teacher)

Audiences responded enthusiastically to the performances. In an interview, three children discussed their memories and how their peers reacted to the show.

- C1: A memory of Stephanie, Victor, and Michael? We're going to remember them forever 'cause like that was our first Broadway *Annie* show, and it will be like one of the best shows we ever did. We'll remember that when we were in fifth grade we did this show.
- C2: When we did the *Annie* show, my mother took pictures, and I made a scrap album of it. To remember in fifth grade when I did a Broadway show. And [looking at the pictures] brought back feelings for me.
- C1: Our classmates, I think, loved the show. They never seen a Broadway show before.
- C3: And almost nobody said it was boring, or 'Oh, that took a very, very long time. I wish I wasn't even there.' People just said 'That was spectacular! It was great!! It was fantastic!'

During an interview with a Principal and the coordinating teacher, they each commented on how students watched the progression of scenery being built on the stage and how that affected them. The principal commented how the younger grades, "saw the scenery being built in the auditorium."

- P: Then the students came back the next day and saw them painting.
- T: They watched it grow.
- P: The school watched it grow. Because no one knew what do expect. So they saw this scenery grow and take shape. It kept on building over the last three weeks. The students thought, "Gee, that's more than we thought was going to happen here."

Additional student comments about the performances:

The Thursday show was the best because my family and friends were there. The grownups laughed more than the sixth graders because they thought it was funny. They understood the jokes.

I liked the Thursday performance most because we were trying to impress friends and families. And they got the jokes.

Teacher Support

The coordinating teachers were very helpful in providing support to the projects. Mr. Lyons, a classroom teacher at East Side Middle School, and Ms. DiOrio, a fifth grade teacher at PS 94, contributed greatly to the successful outcome of this year's Broadway Junior program.

Ms. DiOrio participated in rehearsal exercises. She helped out when students did not understand the instructions from Victor, Michael, and Stephanie, or when they just needed a little extra prodding when following directions. Her participation was invaluable to the program's success in PS 94, and exemplifies how well the partnership functioned.

Mr. Lyons, the coordinating teacher at East Side Middle, was a constant and helpful presence at rehearsals. While Mr. Lyons did not participate on stage, he helped keep discipline in the room during weekly, four-hour rehearsals, and was clearly dedicated to the goal of having the children produce an excellent show and expand their horizons, both socially and artistically. His own background in theater was evident, as he frequently gave helpful advice to students who were, for example, singing a flat note, or having trouble with the script. The students looked to him for guidance, limits, and approval. He is clearly a valued teacher and his affiliation with Broadway Junior is a boon to the program.

Administrative Support

Principals in the participating schools offered strong administrative support of Broadway Junior activities. Rehearsal spaces were provided. The concerts were enthusiastically attended by the school community.

The Broadway staff reported to us that the Principals and teachers were helpful and supportive throughout the year. The success of the program was due in part to the commitment of individual school Principals and coordinating teachers

In this school, we have a lot to build on for the future.

The Principal was supportive and open. He adapted to our needs, let students rehearse when they needed to. They gave us the physical space that we needed.
(ArtsConnection staff)

Parent Involvement

The program helped increase parent involvement in the participating schools. The performances were well-attended by parents. Individual parents helped their children prepare their parts, and were often surprised by their children's accomplishments and commitment.

In one interview, we asked Victor Maog what he had heard from parents.

I love hearing from the parents. They've told me, 'Well, you know, they're [students] singing that song all the time.' I said, "That's good." The parent continued, 'Well, she's just practicing and practicing, she's just singing all the time, I'm getting sick of it' [Laughs]. They took that home

with them, being able to show that we're not going to learn this show in just two hours. It's a bigger commitment than that. That it's not just 3:15 to 5:15. One mother came to all five shows. They are just very supportive.

Partnership and Implementation Issues

Materials and Resources

Broadway Junior provided an exceptional set of books and materials to produce each of the musicals. Students received a Libretto/Vocal book, with the full script, music and lyrics. Additionally, the book has a description of theater terminology, rehearsal expectations, and advice for making the project a successful personal experience (including sections on “How to start talking like a bigshot actor” and “How to destroy your script like a professional”) Additional materials included a Production Handbook, Director’s Script, a Piano/Vocal Score, Performance/Accompaniment CDs, and a Choreography Video.

These materials are quite complete, well-organized, and attractively produced. They capably provide sufficient support for schools to produce the Broadway Junior musicals.

Collaboration Between the Schools and ArtsConnection

ArtsConnection provided exceptional leadership, organization, and support for the collaborations. They selected the artistic staff and provided organizational support through individual Program Managers for each school. The Program Managers maintained schedules, planned performances, and organized logistical details. All of the participating schools praised ArtsConnection as a collaborating partner. They all hope to continue the relationship and want to retain Broadway Junior and ArtsConnection as a partner.

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Potential for Additional Research

We cast a wide net in this study. We tried to investigate many different areas of learning, such as the personal, social, and cognitive dimensions we describe in this report. It would be interesting to select just a few of these variables for more in-depth study using a combination of quantitative/statistical and qualitative approaches. We could then try and understand in greater detail how children, for instance, develop self-confidence, creativity, or dramatic skills.

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