

Hip-hop culture: a primary motivator

1. Introduction

Hip-hop music culture has promoted a new interest in dance and movement for young people. Breakdancing has made dancing 'cool' and accessible for boys and girls, and it also offers positive role models in dance.

Learners are inspired by contemporary culture and can express themselves through dance (this relates to EXA 2-09a).

The project initially developed out of the need to support and motivate a group of learners. Primary 7 can be a testing and challenging time for many young people. They are developing physically, emotionally and may be anxiously anticipating the transition to high school. The dance project was an excellent vehicle to focus the learners in a positive way.

The breakdancing programme promoted a strong sense of teamwork and respect for others, as well as highlighting the importance of collaboration and listening to each other during tasks, for example, while constructing dance routines as a group. This outcome may be linked directly to the health and wellbeing organizer, mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing.

2. Background information

Mid Calder Primary School worked in partnership with a local breakdancing instructor.

The deputy headteacher who co-ordinated the project wanted to use the context of dance to increase learners' engagement with school and learning. The initial project aimed to support and motivate learners through the expressive arts. It was soon realised that the impact and possibilities of other activities, for example, learners teaching other learners, could be used to extend learning opportunities and build skills.

All the videos from this project are shown in a playlist on the [National Improvement Hub page](#).

Watch Video 1 – An introduction by the deputy headteacher

3. Skills development

Watch Video 2 – Skills development

Watch Video 3 – Practising skills

Watch Video 4 – Listening skills

Watch Video 5 – Building up skills

The importance of discipline and consistent practice in perfecting new steps and building fitness was stressed (this relates to HWB 2-22a). Learners learned the value of working as a team, moving together, communicating with one another and co-operating during dance sequences (this relates to HWB 2-23a).



4. Partnership working and collaboration

Watch Video 6 – Partnership working.

The first activity as a group was to create ground rules. The group discussed what rules would be needed to make the most of dance sessions and how these rules would be reflected in all areas of school. The learners agreed on a set of realistic rules. They decided that time should be lost from dance sessions if rules were broken.



Break Dance

*I am committed to doing my best.

*I will try to show respect to teachers,
other adults and children.

*I will work on having a positive attitude
and willingly co-operate.

*I will be an effective listener and value
the contributions of others.

*I will aim to be a good role model for
others in school.



Pupil signature _____
Parent/Carer signature _____
Teacher signature _____

Contracts were made and signed by the learners, parents and practitioners confirming their support for the programme.

Partners can make significant contributions through their specialist expertise and knowledge. Professionals from outside the school can become good role models, as the learners are impressed by their unfamiliar skills and knowledge.

The learners looked at a range of celebrities (from sport, music, and television) as possible role models. These were selected and debated with regard to the qualities which make people good role models. There was some discussion concerning good role models who may have made poor decisions in the past but, having recognised their mistakes, managed to change things round. This showed the group that even if they sometimes make the wrong choice they have the ability to stop and make a change for the better.

5. Opportunities in art

The project focus was initially on expressive arts through the context of breakdancing and how this could be used to build life skills, motivate and engage learners. However, opportunities to include learning from other areas of the curriculum in the project quickly became apparent.

As part of the project, the pupils created an ipod playlist (this relates to TCH2-03b) for their dance routine. They selected music with acceptable lyrical content and appropriate tempo and rhythm. They were encouraged to listen to a variety of music styles, including modern rap and hip-hop.



Song	Artist	Album
She Said	Plan B	no Album
OmG	Usher	Unknown
Rude Bow	Rihanna	Rated R
This aint a Love Song	Scouting for Girls	no Album
If We ever meet Again	Timberland ft. Katy Perry	Unknown
Russian Roulette	Rihanna	Rated R
StarStruck	3OH3 ft. Katy Perry	no Album
Baby	Justin Bieber	My World
One time	Justin Bieber	My World

In order to encourage peer mentoring, sessions were organised for the learners to work with a middle years class. The learners brainstormed the positive and negative qualities of a good role model. They discussed what skills they would need to teach others breakdancing. The boys then worked in pairs to create a sequence of three moves to teach to younger learners.

Watch Video 7 – Teaching younger learners.

The depute headteacher discusses how learners had to use the skills discussed to teach and to help younger learners perform a simple breakdance routine (this relates to HWB 2-11a). The learners commented on the difficulty of teaching younger learners, especially when they were not being listened to, with many showing empathy for classroom practitioners.

Some learners particularly enjoyed this experience, were very patient and understanding, made sure they explained things clearly and used lots of encouragement. Many found it difficult to ensure they were teaching moves suited to the ability of the young learner and were not merely performing the most intricate step they knew.

Graffiti art

Graffiti art is a fundamental element of hip-hop culture, so it was decided to create 'tagging' activities linked to the learners' experiences in the break dancing lessons. Tagging involves using spray paint to write your name and create a design that represents your personality and style.

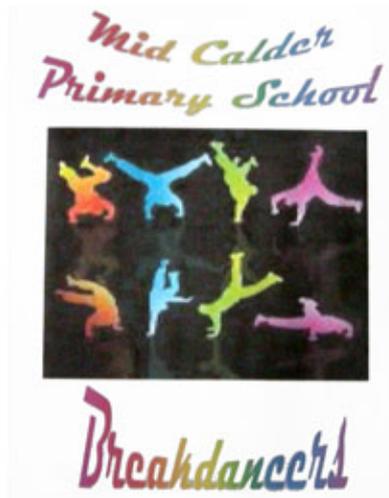
In a class discussion learners looked at whether graffiti was a form of art and specifically at the work of famous graffiti artist 'Banksy' (this relates to EXA 2-07a). Learners then painted bricks onto cardboard boxes to build a blank wall and planned a graffiti design of their name that was made into a stencil. This stencil was used to 'tag' the class wall. They worked outside in the school field, experimenting with spray paint and creating a class graffiti wall (this relates to EXA 2-02a). The result was displayed in the end-of-year assembly.



T-shirt design

To develop the idea of group identity and further their understanding of respect, the learners were set a challenge to design t-shirt logos (this relates to EXA 2-02a). The logos had to represent respect, positive role models and enjoyment.

T-shirt designs were developed through drawing by hand or using computer graphics. The learners voted for the most appropriate logos, which were then applied to the t-shirts for the breakdance performance. The boys looked like real breakdancers, with the stereotypical baggy trousers and t-shirts.



Performance

The breakdance performance was organised by the learners in the project for their peers and parents at the leavers assembly (this relates to EXA 2-01A). Some of the learners also wrote hip-hop inspired raps about what they had achieved in Primary 7 and how they were feeling about high school. The learners were extremely proud to showcase their skills to an audience (this relates to LIT 2-20a).



6. Opportunities in choreography

During physical education, pupils were given the opportunity to choreograph their own dance routines to a set piece of music (this relates to EXA 2-09H).

Learners created their own raps on climate change (this relates to LIT 2-20a), and filmed these as they were performed in front of their peers.

Learners experienced the energy and excitement of performing for their peers and being part of the audience for their peers' performances (this relates to EXA 2-01a).

The learners worked together to create stop motion animations using Lego figures to reflect their experiences with the breakdancing project.

7. Impact

Breakdancing gave learners an opportunity to show respect for other people's opinions and ideas in a real-life context. The learners became more tolerant of one another in these scenarios. The learners chose to showcase their skills as a 'Golden Time' activity, and supported and encouraged one another while practising different moves.

Learners learned to listen carefully and appropriately to the instructor and to copy moves until they had achieved a level of skill. They went on to explain and demonstrate to others a series of moves they had mastered in both informal (during 'Golden Time') and formal (teaching sessions with younger learners) situations.

'Tag' designs were recognised and used as an effective way to emphasise self-identity, especially at this stage in school when learners are going through personal and social changes. The stimulus of hip-hop culture helped to motivate learners.

Learners' confidence was boosted significantly by involvement in the programme. The learners always returned from the lessons very positive, happy and excited about what they had achieved. They were particularly excited when they had mastered a new skill that they initially thought was unachievable. This positive frame of mind was an effective stepping stone in encouraging learners to tackle challenges, set goals in class and become involved in new things.

The class teacher identified one learner in particular who lacked self-esteem and did not feel very popular, but whose confidence was boosted by the applause and encouragement they received from their peers during the project.

Watch Video 9: Impact on confidence

It is clear that the breakdancing programme had some positive social effects within the class. The project effectively helped to promote confident learners.

The class teacher had envisaged that the children would not be able to focus after the physical exercise, but she discovered that, having expended energy, the learners were able to concentrate and settle quickly once back in class.

Parents and other learners were very impressed by the quality of the dance performance and how well the participants worked together.

The positive feedback from pupils and parents questionnaires confirmed the success of the project.

There was interest in the project from the wider community and the learners developed their communication skills as they explained to people in the community what they had achieved. The excitement and enthusiasm generated by the project was evident. The learners became much more motivated in their work across the curriculum.

Go to the final pages to read feedback from parents and learners.



8. Next steps

Guitar Hero project

A Guitar Hero project was introduced to build upon the link the breakdancing project made with contemporary music culture. The relevance to current music trends shared by break dancing and Guitar Hero meant that the learner's interest and enthusiasm was heightened.

Learners organised themselves into rock bands of around five members. They worked cooperatively to plan, organise and complete tasks, given to them by their class teacher, within different subject areas. The project provided scope for active and interdisciplinary learning. The class teacher outlines some of these opportunities in the video.

Watch Video 10 – Guitar Hero The class teacher talks about using Guitar Hero during the dance project.

The learners produced a band identity for their group, CD covers and a piece of functional costume (this relates to EXA 2-02a). The guitar designs were created after researching, exploring technology (this relates to TCH2-01a) and developing their ideas for a constructed model of their guitar design (this relates to TCH2-14a). The groups gave a performance to their peers (this relates to EXA 2-01a) and then reviewed one another's performances by writing reviews (this relates to ENG 2-30a).

Most of the tasks in the Guitar Hero project involved teamwork and cooperation. It was evident to staff that a transfer of collaboration skills, previously developed in the breakdancing programme, were being used by the learners involved in this project.



Parent Questionnaire

Your child has participated in the break dance programme. The programme is designed to motivate boys through dance. Are you aware of this programme?

YES

NO

How do you know about this programme?

Through the School

Has your child spoken to you about the other related activities involved in this programme? *yes*

If yes, please give more details.

Mark talked about the Free Running classes at West Hottian College and attended for a few weeks.

Has your child demonstrated any commitment to the programme out with school?
Please give details: -

He practices the dance moves and routines regularly.

Do you feel the dance programme has motivated your child?

yes - definitely

Has the programme had a positive impact on your child's education?

yes

Thank you for your support. Your opinion is important to us and we value any comments you have which may enhance future dance programmes.

Breakdancing is an excellent form of fitness and gives boys an alternative way of keeping fit.

Not all children are interested in football or other sports and breakdancing is a great way of keeping them active.

Parent Questionnaire

Your child has participated in the break dance programme. The programme is designed to motivate boys through dance. Are you aware of this programme?

YES

NO

How do you know about this programme?

My son was really enthusiastic about it and came home to practice each week.

Has your child spoken to you about the other related activities involved in this programme?

If yes, please give more details.

Yes, he let us know he was teaching younger boys at the school to break dance.

Has your child demonstrated any commitment to the programme out with school?

Please give details: -

Not really although used to go to one of John's classes at Bannodynes, however practices at home all the time

Do you feel the dance programme has motivated your child?

100% he has loved every minute of it and would like to continue at high school

Has the programme had a positive impact on your child's education?

Yes I am sure it has helped to focus when required

Thank you for your support. Your opinion is important to us and we value any comments you have which may enhance future dance programmes.

Fantastic programme for boys - something they have enjoyed and have had fun. George Samson + Diversity have shown kids that they can achieve their goals if they work hard enough.

Would like to see something for girls that would motivate them too ?? Dance Jam?

Pupil Questionnaire

Please state 2 things you have enjoyed about the break dancing programme.

1. The moves
2. Being with my friends and having fun.

What break dancing skills have you learned?

all the moves

Through break dancing and other related activities. What life skills have you learned?

Dancing with a team.

What do you feel you were good at?

An L Rick, keeping in time with the music.

Through working with John and as part of a team, what have you learned about respect, motivation and discipline?

~~_____~~ I have learned that if you work hard at something you will achieve your goal.

We would like your help to develop this programme for the future. Please write any suggestions any suggestions.

No suggestions this year of breakdancing was great!!!

Pupil Questionnaire

Please state 2 things you have enjoyed about the break dancing programme.

1. Seeing John doing all the cool moves.
2. getting out of class to do it.

What break dancing skills have you learned? I learned how to do the worm because most of my friends could do the worm before the breakdancing and I couldn't.

Through break dancing and other related activities. What life skills have you learned? To not get involved in gangs

What do you feel you were good at? I think I was good at the moves.

Through working with John and as part of a team, what have you learned about respect, motivation and discipline? I have learned that if you can't do a move don't give up keep trying until you can do it

We would like your help to develop this programme for the future. Please write any suggestions any suggestions. To not have breakdancing during break time

Pupil Questionnaire

Please state 2 things you have enjoyed about the break dancing programme.

1. The dancing

2. Getting out of class

What break dancing skills have you learned?

Foot work Uprock

Through break dancing and other related activities. What life skills have you learned?

If you respect someone they will respect you

What do you feel you were good at?

Not giving up

Through working with John and as part of a team, what have you learned about respect, motivation and discipline?

It reminded me about how important they are

We would like your help to develop this programme for the future. Please write any suggestions any suggestions.

Can't think of any way to improve it