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## Dance Partnership in a Tele-secondary School at Estado de Mexico

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### Abstract

This paper explores a dance partnership in a tele-secondary school at Estado de México, in which the Language of Dance<sup>®</sup> approach and the Movement Alphabet<sup>®</sup> are used to stimulate an interdisciplinary learning process. I describe how the different arts communicate and interchange methodologies and contents to shape an aesthetic-artistic experience for students to create new meanings in their productions. I examine how one teacher of this school used the Movement Alphabet as a tool for creating phrases of movement, interlacing it with both the creation of scenic situations for teaching music and using improvisation from unconventional scores—all to develop his own practices in teaching arts. This partnership belongs to comprehensive research I coordinated, in which a team of artist-teachers and master's students from the artistic education vein of the Master in Education Development of the National Pedagogical University partnered with three teachers in the implementation of the full-time school program for which we developed an interdisciplinary process of arts-initiation.

**Keywords:** arts partnership, dance education, professional development arts, artist/teacher collaboration

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## Introduction

Despite the fact that scholars of artistic education have stressed the fundamental role of arts in the integral development of human beings, in Mexico, the arts were marginalized in the school curriculum for many years. The reforms of Preschool (2004), Secondary School (2006), and Primary School (2009), finally included the arts in the official syllabus and articulated them along the whole formative process of the 2011 Integral Reform for Basic Education (RIEB), which constitutes an advance in acknowledging their higher value.

In these reforms, particularly in the RES (Secondary School), professors were insisted on the necessity of “overcoming the vision that contemplates artistic education as an activity intended to produce handicrafts, staging shows for school festivals or repeating exercises.”<sup>1</sup> This advice was an invitation for teachers to explore the arts and create educational situations in which the students could develop artistic thought and critical judgment for appreciating arts.

I belong to the artistic education vein of the Master in Education Development (MED) of the National Pedagogical University (UPN) in Mexico, thanks to the convention between this university and the National Center for the Arts (CENART). The team I worked with for this project has kept an active attitude towards the needs and requirements of the artistic formation at the basic school in our country.

Because in 2011, the Mexican government had launched the Integral Reform for Basic Education (RIEB), it was a crucial moment to promote practices that improved the quality of the learning process. This is why since then, in the artistic education vein, we have developed a line of inquiry about Arts Partnership, whose purpose is to analyze the educational practices in the teaching of the arts in primary school, and at the same time to potentiate them through the active involvement with specialists of different arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts).

In our studies, there are teachers of the artistic education vein (both artist-teachers and pedagogues) and Master’s students. So far, we have made five studies: The first two in Tele-education Secondary Schools (“*telesecundarias*” referred here as “tele-secondaries”) from Estado de México,<sup>2</sup> and the rest in Mexico City: two in Primary Schools, and the other one in a boarding school. In the first two, I directly participated as an artist-teacher of dance, and I partnered with the professors of the tele-secondary school; in the rest, I guided my students in the partnership, but when necessary, I joined them in it.

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1. Secretaría de Educación Pública. *Educación Básica. Secundaria. Artes. Danza. Programas de estudio 2006* [Basic Education. Secondary. Arts. Dance. Study Programs 2006], 11.

2. These two studies were supported by the Artistic Education program 2010 and 2011 by INBAL.

In this paper, I present some of the results from wide research I coordinated in 2011. Our team partnered with three tele-secondary school teachers in the implementation of the Full Time School program. During this Arts Partnership process, we intended to know which tools and strategies from arts were owned by the tele-secondary schools teachers. Our team was integrated by a dance, literature, music, theatre, and visual arts specialists, who developed an interdisciplinary process of arts- initiation. In this article, I observe my own experience as a Dance partner, in which I used the Language of Dance<sup>®</sup> (LOD) approach and the Movement Alphabet<sup>®</sup> to stimulate an interdisciplinary process. I will generally describe how the different arts communicate and interchange tools, methodologies, and contents to rouse an aesthetic-artistic experience in the students. The focal point will be on how one teacher of this school owned the Movement Alphabet as a tool for creating phrases of movement, and how he interlaced it with both the creation of scenic situations and the teaching of music using improvisation from unconventional scores. Finally, how all of this stimulated him to develop his own practices for teaching the arts.

### Brief Literature Review

Due to the results confirmed in studies such as the McKinsey and Company<sup>3</sup> and the TALIS survey of the OCDE,<sup>4</sup> we knew of the low effectiveness of the courses and teaching materials in transforming the teaching practices because of the problems that teachers must relate the new proposals to the real situations in their classroom.

Therefore, we considered the Arts Partnership<sup>5</sup> a viable way for giving training to the teachers because it takes place in their context and responds to their needs, which allows them to ask specific questions about how to implement the educative reform, according to the concrete possibilities of their schools. Besides, the professors and the artist-teachers walk and learn together, which facilitates the professors to articulate new knowledge with their teaching wisdom, transform their teaching practices, and motivate them to work cooperatively.

Arts Partnership has been proved to be an effective way to professional development in Arts in other countries such as Canada, the USA, Finland, and

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3. Michael Barber and Mona Mourshed, *Cómo Hicieron los Sistemas Educativos con Mejor Desempeño del Mundo para Alcanzar sus Objetivos*. [How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top].

4. OCDE. Informe TALIS. *La Creación de Informes Eficaces de Enseñanza y Aprendizaje. Síntesis de los Primeros Resultados*. [Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS Executive Summary].

5. It is worth mentioning that I chose the term partnership to translate the concept of accompaniment, because it is the one that best captures the main ideas of this paper; however, in some moments the terminological details match the ideas of Maela Paul ("L'accompagnement: une

Australia.<sup>6</sup> The main benefits reported for some of these studies are the meaningful exchange of expertise between artist-teachers and teachers, the implementation of shared decision-making, the adaptation to intrinsic and uncertain obstacles, and the establishment of support structures while promoting the interdependence of partners. They also confirm that the partnership of artists with teachers has increased the latter's knowledge of artistic disciplines, the confidence to include them in their everyday teaching practices, and the openness to creating experiences with the arts. This practice has also refreshed the teachers' habits for planning curriculum and giving feedback to students' processes. Effective arts partnership at school is a platform for enhancing students' voices and engagement. It also improves their creative abilities, social learning, and art-related knowledge and skills.

From these studies, we borrowed the idea of working closely with schoolteachers, but with some significant differences concerning the training process duration, the type of pedagogical relationship, and the use of strategies and tools adapted to the needs of the basic school.

The partnership also allows us, researchers, to observe the same tools and strategies the teachers actively assimilate during the process and how they customize them, and at the same time document and analyze how the specialists tailored their pedagogical and methodological procedures to the needs of the teachers with which they partnered. At the end of the formative process, we spared some time to reflect on the practices, "to critically learn from them," to improve their own performance, "share the insights with whom they have developed similar experiences, and also contribute to the enrichment of the theoretical knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

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posture professionnelle spécifique" ["The Accompaniment: A Specific Professional Posture"]), who is the main theoretical reference on how to behave during a partnership.

6. See: Bernard W. Andrews, "Creative Osmosis: Teacher Perspectives of Artist Involvement in Professional Development," *Creative Education*, 3 (Special Issue 2012): 971–979; Andrews, Bernard, "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Identifying Effective Partnership Practices in Arts Education;" Mary Ann Hunter, William Bake, and Di Nailon, "Generating Cultural Capital? Impacts of Artists-in-Residence on Teachers Professional Learning," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39, no. 6 (June 2014): 75–88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n6.4>; Wesley Imms, Neril Jeanneret, and Jennifer Stevens-Ballenger, *Partnerships Between Schools and Professional Arts Sector. Evaluation of Impact on Student Outcomes* (Southbank Victoria: Arts Victoria, 2011).

7. Carmen Sofía Saracho and Stella Maris Peralta, quoted by Rosa María Torres-Hernández, "Proyecto de Investigación: Prácticas de Enseñanza en la Asignatura de Artes de la Educación Secundaria en el Marco de la Reforma Integral de la Educación Básica" ["Research Project: Teaching Practices in the Subject of Arts of Secondary Education within the Framework of the Integral Reform for Basic Education"].

## Our Approach Towards Arts and Their Teaching

Since the purpose of basic education is not the command of artistic techniques and languages, but introducing children and youngsters to the appreciation and active enjoyment of the arts, in the artistic education vein our first approach to the Master's students was conceived as a sort of literacy. Instead of learning techniques and the specialized use of materials, we introduce the minimal elements of dance: an alphabet of the different movement languages for creating educational sequences and learning situations in which aesthetic-artistic experiences could emerge. This academic perspective offered a solid pedagogical formation for teachers to interpret and teach the Arts Program for basic school.

In our perspective we assume a learning vision in which the arts can expand the world's perception while enhancing people's awareness for living the human experience that embraces the unexpected, unprecedented, surprising, and admirable. We believe this vision raises a sense of uniqueness in each human being that experiments it, and at the same time, provides them with a sense of belonging. Our viewpoint requires that students live this experience consciously interacting with aesthetical objects, expressions, and artistic practices. It means that they do not merely seek the works of art, but they notice their elements and engage themselves with an empathic presence that intensely involves their mind and body; furthermore, they abandon the position of mere observers and become active participants of the artistic expressions. Hence the importance of giving momentum to ludic and creative learning with the minimal elements of art.

In this formative process, we also stimulate the development of a productive awareness<sup>8</sup> for students to transform their reality, abandon their routines and explore new horizons and perspectives from which they can both understand and act in the world. For this reason, we designed learning situations that empower their capacity to imagine and turn their ideas, emotions, and feelings into sound, color, form, movement, gesture—a process in which the educational value of the activities matters more than the artistic value of the product(s).

Besides these experiences, we offer the Master's students opportunities for dancing in a group, playing, and expressing collectively, so that they can immerse in an inter-subjective, communal experience that questions the state of affairs, and in which they might discover something new about themselves that also resonates in the others.

We developed an arts pedagogy with these ideas that articulated RIEB axes and pedagogical guides with our own pedagogy. RIEB's axes of arts learning are appreciation, contextualization, and expression aligned to the pedagogical lines of

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8. Hans Robert Jauss, *Pequeña Apología de la Experiencia Estética*. [Small Apology for the Aesthetic Experience].

project method, instructional sequence, and learning situation. On the other hand, the pedagogy we have built recovers the force of questions as the core of a dialogic and reflexive learning and a methodology sustained in Dewey's proposal of an experience-based and reflexive thinking learning that also stimulates inquiry and questioning.<sup>9</sup> This pedagogy contemplates moments of (1) Creative exploration-sensory awareness, in which participants can freely play with the arts alphabet to discover expressive possibilities; (2) Experimentation-composition, in which arts' minimal elements are used "for embodying their feelings in paint, clay, movement, and sound," expressing their view of the world and leaving their trace in it;<sup>10</sup> and (3) Reflection, in which they reconsider and value the lived experience and give meaning to it.

This view of arts has guided our studies to motivate them to develop educational practices in the teaching of the arts in which students can live aesthetic-artistic educational experiences that may spark in them the desire to learn arts.

### **A Theoretical Perspective on Practice and Educational Experiences and Their Relationship with Partnership**

We understand the educational practice in an anthropological sense as a complex web of actions oriented to the production of educational experiences in which a reiterated dimension of norms, together with tradition-given values, simultaneously interacts with a creative dimension. This way, the educators renovate their practice, generate learning environments, and use educational procedures and resources to ignite an experience whose strength shapes students' desires that facilitate continuity in their development process, leaving them eager for new experiences. Likewise, we think of it as a complex process of experiences articulation in a dual sense: On the one hand, we regard the teacher as the creator of environments that allow the emergence of educational experiences, as well as an observer and a "counselor" of students' experience to its completion. On the other hand, we see them as practical professionals that focus their actions on educational values, whose meaning and significance do not come from outside, but from the deliberation of their own actions: This implies both think about how to self-conduct because of certain educational values, and to give meaning to those actions in certain circumstances. Thus conceived, the educational practice prioritizes the

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9. See: John Dewey, *Experiencia y educación* [Experience and Education] and John Dewey, *Cómo pensamos. Nueva exposición de la relación entre pensamiento reflexivo y proceso educativo* [How We Think].

10. Maxine Greene, *Variaciones Sobre una Guitarra Azul. Conferencias de Educación Estética*. [Variations on a Blue Guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education], 16.

intervention's quality and the relationships produced as experiences in an educational situation.

The experience can be regarded both as life (*Erlebnis*)—which emphasizes the singularity of the lived moment—and as a journey (*Erfahrung*), which highlights the accumulative and formative character of the experience.<sup>11</sup> Intended as a life event, in an experience, as suggested by Dilthey,<sup>12</sup> knowledge, affection, and desire are complexly interlaced: *Knowledge* holds on to the memories and lived past, whereas *affection* allows apprehension and enjoyment of the present, and *desire* aims to modify the lived circumstances. These three forces working together reconstitute themselves into a whole new form that allows the individual to appraise the world events in a differentiated way. An experience destabilizes and questions our previous wisdom, while it helps to recognize some limitations and uncertainties. Understood as a journey, the experience assumes a temporal connotation like the one we find in stories: One faces dangers, obstacles, tests, unexpected events that abruptly interrupt the flow of life in a journey. So, the endured experience becomes *formative* since the past gradually constitutes the basis of our practices but is also modified according to what others have undergone. A tradition is conformed, in which there are both continuity and discontinuity of experiences because there is no invariable transmission of the facts: in the moment a fact is updated, it is rediscovered, reconstructed, reinterpreted.

According to Dewey,<sup>13</sup> the experience as a basis of all authentic education takes place when it develops a person's sensitivity and automatic ability towards a particular aim. This way, educators may pay special attention to where the experience is heading to notice the attitudes that promote growth and those that will hinder it.

If we expect an experience to enrich the practice, it must translate into specific procedures. And for this experience to become formative, the person needs to narrate it by “rais[ing] awareness of [one's] own historicity and find[ing] ways for making sense of oneself concerning the lived experience [;] any attempt of interpreting a lived experience, [in terms of] what one learned from it, becomes a new experience.”<sup>14</sup> Hence, to mobilize the professors' teaching practices and deliberately guide them towards an educational practice of the arts, it was essential that they lived an educational experience and reflected upon it as part of the formative process.

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11. Fernando Bárcena, *El Aprendiz Eterno. Filosofía, Educación y el Arte de Vivir* [The Eternal Apprentice. Philosophy, Education and the Art of living].

12. Wilhem Dilthey, quoted by Alejandra Ferreiro-Pérez, *Escenarios Rituales. Una Aproximación Antropológica a la Práctica Educativa Dancística Profesional* [Ritual Scenarios. An Anthropological Approach to Professional Dance Educational Practice].

13. Dewey, *Experiencia y educación* [Experience And Education].

14. José Contreras and Nuria Pérez de Lara, *Investigar la Experiencia Educativa* [Researching the Educative Experience], 35.

The Partnership in Arts allowed us to consider that art specialists and teachers, walking side by side, could develop arts teaching practices customized to the tele-secondary students' needs. According to Paul,<sup>15</sup> this walking together is oriented to achieve the empowerment and autonomy of the participants using a mediator's guidance tailored to their conditions and a peer relationship that aims toward reciprocity. As this author suggests, the partnership does not go into the deficiencies but the strengths. It is a collaborative and not a prescriptive model in which mutual learning and support are generated. There is a predominance of negotiation, and thus trust emerges with reciprocity. Considering these suggestions, we intended that the teachers owned our pedagogical focus, strategies, and tools during the partnership and reworked them using their wisdom. At the same time, we offered different resources that detail the minimum contents of the arts with which we work.

### **A Research Methodology Articulated with the Partnership**

In our studies, we consider that means and ends, research and practice, knowing and doing are interdependent. Thus we opted for Partnership, which allows us to research while supporting the teachers.

We took on a qualitative perspective because we looked at the participants' (both the specialist partner and the partnered teacher) experiences and the meaning they gave. We proposed flexible design research projects that allowed us to realize which Art teaching strategies were used and owned by the teachers and how they reworked them while developing new teaching practices.<sup>16</sup>

To document the study and gather the information, we used a series of procedures and tools, after which we produced thick descriptions that allowed the analytical and categorical construction. In the different phases of the partnership, we observed the participants' types and modes of interaction. We registered some non-verbal expressions of the feelings that emerged during the activities. We obtained the teachers' reflections and points of view through interviews and informal talks. We contrasted them with the observed information to detail their personal experiences. With the pictures, we documented moments that were useful to create visual narratives and identify some of the artist-teachers' practices and how the teachers had reworked them. The audio and video recordings helped us

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15. Maela Paul, "L'accompagnement: Une Posture Professionnelle Spécifique." ["The Accompaniment: A Specific Professional Posture."]. *Recherche et formation*.

16. In Mexico, for doing a research in a public school it is necessary to get permission from the authorities; this is why we asked to the Chief of Sector 6 of Tele-Secondary Education of Estado de Mexico permission and explained him that we filmed and photographed teachers and students, because our main research product would be a video, but also books and articles. As we got this permission, we can use this material in any article.



specify the learning environments just the way they happened in the face-to-face interactions; they were also useful to reconstruct the subtle nuances in the non-verbal language of teachers and students, which changed throughout the different activities. Additionally, the video recording enabled us to contrast the *in situ* observation with the deferred one,<sup>17</sup> which modified our perception of what we had experienced and modeled the construction of data and categories because we could observe the actors' gestures, expressions, and movements in more detail, as well as the learning environment in which their actions and interactions took place. But we also followed Tobin's proposal to use it as a "non-verbal indication designed to stimulate critical reflection."<sup>18</sup> We made six recordings in key moments of the partnership that would feed the video that we prepared about the process and a reflexive interview with the teachers, in which they shared the lived experience. Once finished, we presented it to the tele-secondary community, and we encouraged students to comment on the experience and their memories.

### **An Interdisciplinary Experience of Teaching Arts from the Perspective of Movement and Dance**

In the first and foundational research named *Teaching Practices in the Subject of Arts of the Secondary Education in the Context of RIEB*, coordinated by Dr. Rosa María Torres Hernández, which took place in the School Year 2011–2012, three teachers were accompanied in the partnership in dance, two female and one male. One of the challenges of this partnership was motivating teachers to start their own process for approaching dance and showing them they did not require specialized skills to teach it. For this, I presented them some strategies of the LOD, especially the Movement Alphabet,<sup>19</sup> and ways to create movement phrases. During the formative process, I observed the ease with which teachers (and students) owned

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17. Elisenda Ardèvol, "Por una Antropología de la Mirada: Etnografía, Representación y Construcción de Datos Audiovisuales." ["For an Anthropology of the Gaze: Ethnography, Representation and Construction of Audiovisual Data."].

18. Joseph Tobin, "Poéticas y Placeres del Video Etnográfico en Educación," ["The Poetics and Pleasures of Video Ethnography of Education"] 211.

19. The Language of Dance<sup>®</sup> (LOD) is a novel and enriching way of presenting dance in education and introducing the students to dance composition, created by the renowned Labanotator Ann Hutchinson Guest. This system proposes an original path to perceiving and understanding the elements of dance, and it establishes an innovative framework for the creative exploration of movement, from the basic components to its most subtle and complex differences, basing the study in a musical perspective. (Language of Dance Center, "Language of Dance Principles.") The Movement Alphabet is the main tool of LOD, in which Hutchinson Guest organized the prime actions ("verbs") or concepts that make up movement. Each concept has a symbolic representation, a Motif that allows a systematic exploration and interpretation in a myriad of ways. (Hutchinson Guest, Ann and Curran, Tina, *Your Move: The Language of Dance Approach to the Study of Movement and Dance*.)

this methodology and its tools, thanks to their “pedagogical accessibility.”<sup>20</sup> (See Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Teacher teaches Movement Alphabet. Photo by Alejandra Ferreiro-Pérez. Texcoco, 2011.

A teacher’s process is worth noting: With more than twenty years of teaching experience, she showed a high degree of development in her pedagogical thought. She designed and carried out a complex project and sequence; she built the necessary framework and provided students with resources to discover a path to develop artistically in an autonomous way. The idea for the project came from a movie’s plot in which dance turns around the life of a poor young man; the teacher connected this idea with her desire to channel the tele-secondary students’ concerns since they live in unfavorable environments and thus have low expectations for their personal and professional development. She used the fact that the “life project” concept had been addressed in Mentoring class. The sequence started by watching the movie and then analyzing it, using the vocabulary of the Movement Alphabet. Then, students explored the concepts of the Movement Alphabet using imaginary, playful situations; the teacher taught them the symbols, and they created easy movement phrases that they performed expressively (see fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Students interpret a movement phrase. Photo by Alejandra Ferreiro-Pérez. Texcoco, 2011.

20. Flavia Terigi, “La Enseñanza como Problema Político.” [“Teaching as a political problem.”]

The teacher promoted the reading and discussed a novel related to how people face trouble in life. She used the teaching aid *Movement stories* to encourage students to create movement phrases together with other classmates and perform them creatively. She proposed students express their life projects plastically into a *papier maché* doll (see fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Students showing their creative maps and their *papier maché* doll. Photo by Alejandra Ferreiro-Pérez. Texcoco, 2011.

When this first phase was over, she repeated the cycle in a more complex way, also modifying some of the end products and going deeper into the reflection. With this recursive process, the teacher built her own track for the teaching of creative dance, which facilitates, in addition to the learning of LOD, the learning of other artistic disciplines (see fig. 4). Likewise, this process allows us to envision the many possibilities teachers have for developing integration projects with different curriculum subjects.



Fig.4. Movement Stories performed by students. Photo by Alejandra Ferreiro-Pérez. Texcoco, 2011.

In the second research, named *Full Time School: Cultural and Arts-Initiation Practices of Tele-Secondary School Teachers*, coordinated by the Author, which was carried out in the School Year 2012–2013, five specialists in arts partnered collaboratively with three teachers from Estado de México in the implementation of the Full-Time School Program (FTSP). We focused on this program to harness the advantages of an extended school day and the objectives of this educational strategy, the FTSP, to improve tele-secondary school professors' teaching of Culture and Arts.

As in the first research, in this study, we also intended to find how the practices of teaching arts develop while also maximizing them through the partnership of specialists from different artistic disciplines (visual arts, dance, literature, music, and theatre); as we would work with the FTSP, we considered it pertinent to focus on an interdisciplinary process of initiation to arts and culture. We opted for artistic initiation because, in the tele-secondary, the teachers are *generalists* (they teach all the subjects), and most don't have artistic training. That is why we approached the National Program of Associated Artistic Initiation Schools of INBAL (Fine Arts and Literature National Institute) taught in several *Casas de Cultura* (cultural locations for the public) around the country and intertwined their educational perspective with ours. We drew the interdisciplinary experience in the artistic training of children and teenagers from this program. In addition to responding to the current transformations of the arts, this program promotes the project-method, in which the artistic disciplines are integrated into the search for a solution to a problem or theme. Moreover, it allows the students to discover and boost the creative and expressive abilities that the scholar curriculum does not acknowledge nor value. We agree with the program in believing that the arts are a privileged means to structure social and community values and also face the contradictions and challenges of the contemporary world.<sup>21</sup> For that reason, we included the axis of community development, as it stimulates the recovery of the social and cultural environment of the student and promotes multicultural and intercultural practices to broaden education.

Just as in the previous research, we presented the professors with our perspective of teaching arts through the project method and the weekly planning of an instructional sequence. We tried to integrate all the artistic disciplines. As indicated, we conceive our perspective as literacy since it is the participants' initial approach to a discipline and a process where reading and writing abilities are acquired. The arts literacy implies that the approach to the artistic disciplines through aesthetic experiences enable the appreciation of the aesthetic character of the objects produced by the participants or by different artists (reading) and through

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21. INBAL, Programa Nacional de Escuelas de Iniciación Artística Asociadas. [National Program of Associated Artistic Initiation Schools.]

artistic experiences in which expressive processes of creation and communication stress the value of the experience taking place (writing). We also developed the partnership in five phases. (See Fig. 5)



Fig. 5. *Partnership phases.*

We *first* presented the project to the professors, adapted it to their needs and interests, and agreed on the ways of working and the project's scope. We also exposed the general principles of the project method and the instructional sequence and discussed and narrowed down the general theme. We decided to develop it into two projects, one about trash recycling and another about reforestation. We concluded this phase by guiding the professors in planning a sensory experience to motivate their students to participate in the project.

In the *second* phase, the specialists exemplified, over eight weeks, how to develop a scholarly artistic project. We worked on the theme of trash recycling and environmental care to make an installation-performance about endangered animals (see fig. 6). We considered the interests of the students and maximized their productions. Each week we designed the instructional sequences that served as a guide to our intervention with the students and allowed the accompanied teachers to learn the contents of the arts relevant to the chosen theme. We also invited teachers to observe the pedagogical and artistic demeanor they could benefit from and intertwine with their knowledge and experiences.



Fig. 6. Bodily, visual, and theatrical exploration prompted by endemic animals' images. Research team's archive. Tequexquináhuac, 2012.

After concluding the project and evaluating the process, we considered it necessary to include a *third phase* in which we gave four three-hour workshops, one for each of the arts in which the teachers had the opportunity to clarify their doubts, learn the basic structure of literacy for each of the arts, and get used to some of the supporting resources produced by the specialists. (See Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Tele-secondary schoolteachers in the workshops. Research team's archive. Tequexquináhuac, 2012-2013.

In the *fourth phase*, the first-year teacher, who planned and instrumented the reforestation project over ten weeks, concluded this theme by constructing a botanical garden. In this process, he encouraged students to experiment, express themselves through the different arts, and generate an audiovisual product in small groups where they documented their experience and retrieved their artistic productions (see fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Students explore arts while making a botanical garden. Research team's archive. Tequexquináhuac, 2013.

Finally, we interviewed the teacher in the fifth phase to reflect on the experience.

I also looked at my experience as a dance specialist with dance literacy: While teaching the professors some basic elements of movement and dance, I showed them how to develop interdisciplinary arts projects.

For this purpose, I used the Movement Alphabet to introduce the teachers and students to the learning of movement and dance. The selection of the dance elements I proposed and the routes followed in the partnership was subjected to the needs of the project method and the disciplines crossing, first with music and theatre, and then with visual arts and rhymed texts. I used the Movement Alphabet as a methodological strategy to start the interdisciplinary experimentation that implies, on the one hand, to face “the contingent, the ill-timed, the unexpected, and the immeasurable” and, on the other, to be open to ideas exchange and conversation<sup>22</sup> among disciplines. We experimented with different possibilities for

22. Martínez de la Escalera, “Interdisciplina,” [“Interdisciplinary”], 26.

producing meaning while we taught dance basics to teachers and students; the movement concepts of movement of the Movement Alphabet and its methodology became articulating nodes that stimulated the interdiscipline. Next, I will describe the Movement Alphabet used that emerged from the necessities of the partnership, and that became a route to dance literacy.<sup>23</sup>

### The First Route: Movement Alphabet Explored through Imaginary Situations and as an Igniter of the Creation of Movement Phrases

In the second phase of the partnership, I designed a dance sequence of four sessions to show the professors the dance elements I would use during the project. This phase was also for them to familiarize with our pedagogical focus, especially with the problem setting and research question that served us as guides for the artistic inquiry and the structure of the sessions according to the methodological moments of our proposal and the learning axis of the RIEB. For this sequence, I selected some concepts of the Movement Alphabet directed to explore the movements of the local animals and the different environments, using waste objects arranged as an installation.

This route expects the following actions from the professors: choose one or several concepts from the Movement Alphabet, think of an imaginary situation, search for sounds or music for creating an atmosphere and, finally, enrich it with one or several of the movement qualities. The route allowed the students to:

(1) explore the ample variety of movements that concept fosters, which expands their horizon of movement possibilities when they are asked to create and perform their phrases of movement,

(2) generate movement with the intention and quality that the imaginary situation suggests,

(3) link that piece to a rhythmic pattern, with a specific sound quality that stimulates dancing,

(4) strengthen the movement quality that the image and music suggest with specific instructions. After this exploratory process, the students can create movement phrases that either link the explored imaginary situations or express their ideas and feelings. (See Appendix 1).

The next moment of the partnership required that the specialists exemplified how to carry out one of the planned sessions so that the teachers, supported by us,

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23. A version of the routes was published before in Spanish as “El Alfabeto de movimiento: una estrategia de formación y de producción interdisciplinaria” [“The Movement Alphabet: a Training and Interdisciplinary Production Strategy”] in Alejandra Ferreiro-Pérez, *Experiencias interdisciplinarias en la enseñanza e investigación de las artes en una telesecundaria* [Interdisciplinary experiences in the teaching and research of the arts in a tele-secondary school], 115–143.



could immediately start to outline a sequence and lead some activities until they felt confident enough to continue on their own with the development of the project. To carry out this session, the specialists reviewed the sequences and decided to take on the landscape idea proposed by the visual arts specialist as the thematic problematizing node that would stimulate the interdisciplinary process. In dance, this node became the possibility to explore the movement landscape, for which I inquired about the flora and fauna of the region. As I have mentioned, tele-secondary school is located in Tequexquináhuac, in Texcoco's region, devastated by human intervention for several centuries; especially in the 20th century, the region was exploited indiscriminately, generating a serious environmental deterioration that the community's inhabitants still endure.

I found several extinct animals and others in danger of extinction (ocelot, eagle, deer, coyote, and some others) still common in the region (snake, rabbit, badger, squirrel, magpie, hummingbird, among others). With these ideas, I guided the creative exploration of the Movement Alphabet concepts of flexion, extension, and rotation (see fig. 9). I also encouraged them to explore some possibilities of traveling using waste objects to form the paths. These improvisations were reintroduced by some of the students (especially the first graders) in the creation and illustration of the folk songs that were requested by the visual arts and literature specialists.



Fig. 9. Bodily and visual exploration prompted by the images of endangered animals. Research team's archive. Tequexquináhuac, 2012.

Once the activities of each discipline were over, the students performed a small presentation that articulated all the disciplines to have the students recognize the receiving, communicating, and expressing the capacity of their body while integrating what they had learned in each of the four disciplines in a brief *performance-like* improvisation. The theater specialist in charge of guiding this activity decided to retrieve the written folk songs, the drawn images, the explored rhythms and sounds to improvise action, movement, and sound sequences. With this activity, we gave teachers an example of the possibilities of integrating the sound, visual, sensory, and movement landscape in a *performance*.

Despite having invited the professors to plan and conduct any of the activities for the second session, they still did not feel ready to participate. Once again, we designed and guided the activities, but now with a change of strategy that would strengthen the interconnection of the disciplines. The specialists integrated two groups formed by visual arts and literature and dance, music, and theatre. This organization had already shown its capacity to promote interdisciplinary work in visual arts and literature, whose specialists, besides working as a teaching couple, had planned together since the first session. We had confirmed, as García suggests,<sup>24</sup> that the spatial and temporal interaction among disciplines is not enough, because in the planning and operating of the first session, despite the explicitness of the thematic problematizing node (the landscape), the discipline's focus still prevailed, and for that reason, the result was only a multidisciplinary approach. However, thanks to the networking teachers and their attentive attitude towards the work of our peers, we had the opportunity to make use of the precepts and ideas suggested by the other specialists in our own explorations. Thus, by experimenting with collaborative teaching,<sup>25</sup> the articulations between dance and theater began to emerge, when using the concepts of the Movement Alphabet as intersection points between the arts: the theater specialist proposed an exploration of the plants of the region that suggested the concepts of flexion, extension, and rotation, which I used to reinforce the concepts; the motivations I gave to explore the forms of the environment were built up by the theatre specialist with the ideas of the *sensorama*<sup>26</sup> he had done in the previous session. More articulations emerged in the music sessions: Since we started appreciating the soundscape and improvising with the instruments made of recycled materials (both in theater and dance sessions), we had students set the actions and movements to a soundtrack produced by their own instruments. This way, as when writing an essay, “a forceful exchange of opinions

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24. Rolando García, *Sistemas Complejos: Conceptos, Métodos y Fundamentación Epistemológica de la Investigación Interdisciplinaria*, [Complex Systems: Concepts, Methods and Epistemological foundations of Interdisciplinary Research].

25. Don Finkel, *Dar Clase con la Boca Cerrada*. [Teaching with Your Mouth Shut].

26. According to Mexican theater artists and teachers, the sensorama is a group of games in which students have opportunities to experience with all senses simultaneously.

about everyday life” started a conversation in which listening and being open to *the other’s* proposals prevailed. That is how we produced a *performance*, walking together, along the way,<sup>27</sup> which was the beginning of a “convergent practice,”<sup>28</sup> that allowed us to take a step back from our discipline’s view and contemplate the problems from the standing point of another specialist. (See Appendix 2).

From the third to the eighth session, we concluded the *performance* and integrated it into the installation (see fig. 10). The specialists planned together to articulate the elements of the different arts in joint activities. We created a ludic environment where the students had several opportunities to imagine and create music, movements, and dramatic actions. This process brought the possibility of using the concepts of dynamics to make students and teachers aware of the qualities they imprinted to the movements inspired in animals.



Fig. 10. *Performance by the tele-secondary students*. Research team’s archive. Tequexquínahuac, 2012.

On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that at this stage of the process, even though the tele-secondary professors still had not adopted the idea of designing dance works using the concepts of the Movement Alphabet in the

27. Ana María Martínez de la Escalera, “Interdisciplina” [“Interdisciplinary”], 27.

28. García, *Sistemas Complejos* [Complex Systems].

activities that they proposed and guided, they did incipiently use the idea of exploring with imaginary situations, even though the practice of “staging a dance” still prevailed when they presented it to the students. They did not use the Movement Alphabet explicitly until I modeled it in a workshop.

### Second Route. Two Modes of Teaching the Movement Alphabet, Stemming from Dance Appreciation or Using the Movement Alphabet's Symbols

After concluding the first phase, even though the teachers were motivated and had participated by conducting some of the activities and taking charge of some partial rehearsals of the *performance*, the specialists considered that their participation had still been marginal; so to stimulate them even more, I offered them a space in which they could address their doubts about the elements of the arts that we had used. We decided to support them with four brief workshops of three hours each.

In the dance workshop, I first broadly explained the elements that constitute the Dance program of the Secondary School subject of Arts. I began with a very brief journey through the history of dance. I then continued with a reflection about the educative value of dance in basic education and the importance of including creative dance. These reflections helped me to introduce the LOD and the Movement Alphabet. Soon afterward, I presented some ideas for the creative and imaginative exploration of the concepts of the Movement Alphabet and the symbols with which they are represented. Then I showed them two modes for their use.

In the first modality, I used the Movement Alphabet to explore elements that could constitute a dance piece to guide improvisations and create simple movement phrases. This experience was followed by a video presentation of excerpts or the whole piece so the work could be appreciated. This process helps viewers *examine deeply* and appreciate details in an art piece to recognize that each dance work has layers of details that can be examined. The conditions are set for students to have a reflexive encounter with the work of art, which may broaden their signification horizon. Generally, I use dance pieces to observe certain movement concepts; I also identify some choreographic strategies that the artists use, such as canon, action-reaction, repetition, enumeration, and I propose them as choreographic forms to develop creative movement phrases. I base this work on the methodology of aesthetic education proposed by the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, which has been promoted in our country by the Mexican Institute of Art at the Service of Education (IMASE for its acronym in Spanish). This methodology considers that the reflexive encounters with arts are possibilities to broaden the perceptive capacity of humans, free their imagination and maximize reflexive thought.

The second modality for using the Movement Alphabet corresponds to the LOD methodology. I introduced teachers to the creative process of developing movement phrases using the symbols of the Movement Alphabet. I encouraged them to make a free and creative interpretation of their phrases, where they expressed an idea or feeling of their own. (See Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. First-grade teacher performing a movement phrase. Research team's archive. Tequexquináhuac, 2012.

I oriented the teachers to the pedagogical approach of using the Movement Alphabet to teach dance. At all times, I insisted on the possibility of interrelating the Movement Alphabet with the other artistic disciplines, pointing, for instance, to the use of the LOD concepts to create stories and visual images. This practice was just as suggested in the *Historias en Movimiento*, and the dramatic actions could emerge from the imaginary situations with which the concepts are explored.

### Third Route. Articulations of the Movement Alphabet with the Musical and Character Creations

This route emerged during the partnership with the first-year professor. He implemented the idea of materializing the general theme of reforestation in designing and constructing a botanical garden of medicinal plants.

In this phase, the first-year professor was responsible for its development, and the specialists only suggested improvements or ways to give more articulation to the disciplines' contents. He designed the sequence weekly to include the proposals and ideas generated by the students in their inquiries of each session.

Until the second session, he incorporated movement and dance as warm-up and creative explorations. It is noteworthy how the professor adopted the idea of exploring imaginary situations by adapting them to the theme of reforestation: Dragging an extremely heavy sack of soil that we cannot lift from the ground, pushing a cart full of plants, carrying an enormous package of seeds, digging the earth with a hoe or shovel, planting a seed with the foot, getting rid of dry weed in a field. However, even when I suggested it to him in the planning, he still did not find the courage to invite the students to create movement phrases with these improvisations. Later on, he programmed a visit to "Las Terrazas," a zone with archaeological vestiges where the older *texcocans* built terraces for agriculture. There, the professor proposed some of the movements from the *Dance of the Seeders*—a tribute to the Earth in which the planting of corn is simulated (see fig. 12).



Fig. 12. First-grade teacher shows the steps of the *Dance of the Seeders*. Research team's archive. Tequexquináhuac, 2013.

For this sequence, the professor found support in two students that are part of the dance and performed it at the patron saint's day of the community. Likewise, he integrated the idea of creatively exploring the movements of medicine men and shamans, themes that arose during the sensorial experience, and brought them back in the second session thanks to the richness of the students' interviews with their

grandmothers and family members. In the third session, the teacher asked students to use movement to perform the actions of these characters when they carry out the healings. He then replicated this way of working in the scripts made by the students: Not only did they give them voice and bodily expression, but also movement.

Up to that point, the teacher had used dance as a “creative warm-up” and pertinently incorporated contents of dances he previously knew to “illustrate” the explored theme in the sequence with movement. However, he still had not integrated the Movement Alphabet. However, he continued to show interest in adopting more tools to enrich the sequence with dance activities, so he asked for my help to use the Movement Alphabet. So I prepared a chart in which I proposed several ideas for the creative exploration of some concepts and music to give an atmosphere to the imaginary situations. Yet, the teacher requested that I show him how to conduct a class using this material, so in the fourth session, I guided an activity with the students: After exploring with some concepts, they developed a movement phrase with the symbols, which they creatively performed in teams and presented to their classmates. (See Fig. 13).



Fig. 13. Exploring with the Movement Alphabet. Research team’s archive. Tequexquináhuac, 2013.

In the next planning, the teacher had already included an activity with the Movement Alphabet: “with the help of the Movement Alphabet and the music’s rhythm, recreate the scripts to give bodily expression to your characters.” Apart from this inclusion, at the beginning of the session, he told me that he had worked on the creative explorations during the week. Therefore, he would like the students to perform their scripts without dialogue, just with movement. I suggested he improvise with the characters, using the concepts of the Movement Alphabet. Later, when the students performed, I observed how one of them used levels to give greater expressivity to represent a seed, which revealed that both the professor and the students had already explored this way of interrelating dance and theatre.

In that same session, students would begin setting their scripts to music and, to stimulate the improvisations, the music specialist had suggested working with graphic scores. Given the creativity and enthusiasm of the students while

improvising with the percussion instruments provided by the specialist, during the development of the activity, I proposed the students have their cards with the symbols next to their graphic scores and create a score of movement (see fig. 14). Thus, while some improvised with music, others would do it with movement. The professor was also excited by the activity, so in the next session, he reworked it, this time improvising with xylophones.



Fig. 14. Music and dance exploration using the symbols and the graphic scores. Research team's archive. Tequexquínahuac, 2013.

This process guided by the teacher provoked a moment of great creativity, in which students alternated their roles of musicians and dancers. It was meaningful to observe how the students introduced movement possibilities to express their characters.

Finally, in the last two recording sessions of the final phase of the partnership, the teacher directed the dance explorations and improvisations using scores on his own with great confidence. This outcome confirmed that the professor had adopted the tool, which can be appreciated in the following report, which shows how he integrated his own instructional and methodological knowledge and began developing his teaching practices.

## Conclusion

In this research, I could observe once again that the Movement Alphabet and its teaching methodology (LOD) created by Ann Hutchinson Guest are strategies that favor the learning of dance in basic education. These strategies are also useful in the formation of generalist professors, thanks to its “pedagogical accessibility,”



since they make the teaching of movement and dance affordable by suggesting that the students' creative explorations of movement are the basic material for the making of dance so that the teacher only must create the situation and an environment that facilitates the process in which they will gradually create their own dances.

I was attracted to dance because, with things I ignored, we could do things fast and easily, even [when I am] a person who is not acquainted with dance. The materials we worked with made it easy because a simple card of a symbol tells me that this is a fall, with a simple symbol they [the students] know that it is a fall or a free movement [...] Well, first you have to give them the concept, but once they already manage it, they alone gradually create their dance movements or bodily movements [...] with a simple symbol, they express something. That is why I found it easy.<sup>29</sup>

By appropriating the strategy, teachers can also integrate their instructional and methodological knowledge into the organization of situations and learning environments that will help them develop their own teaching practices. This way, they can gain self-efficacy to take on new teaching strategies themselves,<sup>30</sup> just as it can be observed in the examples in which the tele-secondary first-grade professor taught the Alphabet and reworked the activities exemplified by the specialists in music and dance.

Now, how I demonstrated to the professors how to use the Movement Alphabet and the LOD shows that, even if the imaginary situations allow a first approach to the dance work that encourages the students to acknowledge their movement possibilities, it is necessary to continue the experience until those explorations become dance. The latter implies insisting on the learning of the Movement Alphabet until the professors engage deeply with the symbols and their associated concepts and can guide activities in which the students create movement phrases, endow them with qualities, develop them choreographically, enrich them with music, and perform them expressively until the emotion of dancing emerges in them. Thus, only when the experience comes to its conclusion can we think of the emergence of the desire to dance and, with it, the possibility that the students are willing to continue with experiences of this type, which would show that they have had an educational experience in Dewey's sense.

On the other hand, I have exposed throughout this paper how the use of the Movement Alphabet in the making of interdisciplinary projects favors the

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29. Interview with a first-grade professor, June 14th, 2013.

30. Amy D. Powell-Moman and Valerie B. Brown-Schild, quoted by Nicole Schlaack and Jamie Simpson, "The Collaborative Residency Project: The Influence of Co-teaching on Professional Development in Arts Integration," 3.

conversation and exchange among disciplines since the movement concepts can be constituted into nodes, from which it's possible to rehearse several ways of producing meaning: It may be articulated with *musical improvisation*, by using the symbols that represent them to create dance scores linked to the graphic scores; it may also manifest in the *creation of characters*, by endowing them of a corporal expression and characteristic movements; and also through *dramatic actions*, in which the students articulate the different imaginary situations in a narrative way.

The Movement Alphabet was a strategy in which the artist-teachers found intersection points, not only of the contents but also of our pedagogical focus, which is why we conversed and developed a convergent practice while we gradually created an educational presence. This way, we intended to motivate, engage, and enliven the students, so they would free their imagination and broaden their creative and expressive capacities, reflect critically on their environment, and be aware of their possibilities to act in favor of the sustainability of their community, and the reversion of its environmental deterioration. At the same time, we showed the teachers which elements of the arts to choose and how to use them to develop interdisciplinary artistic-educational projects at school, with a sense of community. Likewise, by living this partnership and creation process, each specialist gave a new meaning to our experiences and discipline's knowledge. We drew a new path to interrelate our disciplines, which would favor both bringing the students closer to the arts to broaden their possibilities of perceiving and being in the world and helping the teachers develop an expanded perspective of the purpose of the arts in a way that they understand why the arts should be considered an essential content in the integral education for the students and the creation of community.

Finally, the experience in the partnership allowed the first-grade teacher to develop an artistic quality in his teaching, which he could transfer to other subjects. Also, he improved his arts teaching practices since he was "engaged in a concrete task and immersed in inquiry, questioning, and experimenting."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the partnership provided him with active participation because he made the teaching sequences based on his needs. He integrated his knowledge and reworked new experiences, which opened up his horizon of meanings about teaching and the desire to teach arts and continue developing integrative projects. If we consider that one of the principles that favors the emergence of educational experiences is continuity, and if students do not have continuity in activities, learning is not possible, then showing a sequenced process that arrives at its culmination exemplifies to teachers how to create conditions of continuity so that the student can also have an educational experience in the process. LOD and the Movement Alphabet offer this and can support interdisciplinary arts education.

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31. Jonathan A. Supovitz and Herbert M. Turner, quoted by Nicole Schlaack and Jamie Simpson, "The Collaborative Residency Project."

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## Appendix 1: Exemplification Dance Class

In the second phase of the partnership, we showed the teachers how to develop a school project. We transformed their chosen subject into an artistic production that considered the students' interests and urged them to create.

The planning had two moments: in the first, we proposed some disciplinary possibilities to approach the project and trigger the students' inquiry processes; and in the second, we translated these ideas into three concrete sequences that showed a possible path for the development of the project.

For the first session, we designed the display of some disciplinary elements that would stimulate the inquiry around sustainability and the landscape. It was carried out in four locations, one for each art: For twenty minutes, the students of the three grades explored the theme with the disciplines and had the opportunity to create folk songs about animals of their community and illustrate them, and also to make instruments with recycled materials and produce various sounds with them; students explored anatomical possibilities of movement (flexion, extension, rotation) motivated by images of animals, as well as some forms of traveling using waste objects to trace the paths; finally, they became aware of their environment through visual, auditory, tactile and aromatic stimuli, which they also acknowledged as resources to communicate their ideas and feelings. At the end of each of the arts sessions, the theater partner guided an articulating activity, in which he made use of the folk songs, the drawings, the rhythms, and the sounds explored in a brief improvisation. This way, we showed the teachers how a *performance* could integrate sound, visual, sensorial, and movement landscapes. Each of the specialists developed their own sequence, oriented by a shared problem situation:

*Problem situation:* Create a movement sequence to raise the awareness of the community about the risks posed by garbage on the Earth's sustainability while also giving a new meaning to the Day of the Dead celebrations. Each specialist transposed this problem situation to a research question, which guided the design of the disciplinary sequence. Here is one of the dance sequences.

**RESEARCH QUESTION:** How (from the exploration of movement concepts [flexion, extension, rotation, traveling, form, jump, change of support, balance, and fall]) can we create movement phrases and reflect on the artistic use of waste materials?

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- To explore the anatomical possibilities of movement (flexion, extension, and rotation) and the possibilities of fully exploring spatial aspects (traveling) from the observation of the local animals and the use of waste objects.
- To create a movement phrase using the explored movement and integrating the waste objects.

- To reflect on the artistic use of “trash.” To understand actively and creatively that “trash” is no longer trash when reused and recycled.

### Starting

#### 1. WARM UP

- Following your teacher’s instructions, warm up to exercise dynamic postural coordination, lubricate your joints, perform circular movements with your arms and legs, and travel in different directions (forward, backward, sideways) (3 min.).

### Development

#### 2. CREATIVE EXPLORATION

##### A) Flexion and Extension:

- Students are asked to brainstorm about the local animals. Then, they are asked to describe how they move: *How do their limbs move? How do they move their trunk? Their head? How do they flex and stretch? How fast do they do it? How do they travel? What kind of paths do they make when they travel?* Then students were requested to make a brief movement sequence showing these movements: *Now imagine that the animals are scared (Music 1); now they are stalking their prey (Music 2), now there’s a game or a fight between them (Music 3). Now freeze in such a way that you clearly show a characteristic of the animal.*
- *Move in slow motion (Music 4), then in fast-motion (Music 5). Play with these movements exploring different speeds and fronts.*
- *Think about the sounds these animals make and pick up one waste object with which you can make a similar sound. Integrate that sound into your movement. (3 min.)*

##### B) Rotation:

- *Explore the possibilities for rotating the arms with the waste object in your hands. Now place the object on your head and rotate on your vertical axis. Repeat the movement as if the object had shrunk and then as if it had grown massively. (Music 6).*
- Find out what other axes go through your body (side to side: lateral axis; forward-backward: sagittal axis) and rotate on those axes at different levels (medium and low) (Music 7) (2 min.).

##### C) Traveling:

- Make different paths with the recycled material, perhaps recalling some of the paths you take from home to school. Travel through these paths in different ways (walking, jumping, running, squatting, on one foot, squat-jumping, etc.) (3 min.). (Various songs).

#### 3. CREATION OF MOVEMENT PHRASES:

- In small groups, create a movement phrase using some of the movements you have explored; integrate the materials into the phrase in different ways (8 min). (Music).

**4. CREATIVE INTERPRETATION**

- Present the created phrase to your classmates and be attentive to the feedback (3 min.).

**5. APPRECIATION**

- Observe your classmates and discuss what you liked about their work, tell why, and point out the aspects to improve. (3 min).

**6. REFLECTION**

- The whole group reflects on how they have used the waste objects in our explorations and their artistic possibilities.

### Appendix 2: Exemplification Interdisciplinary Class

In the second moment of planning, we articulated the disciplinary views. The next problematic node that stimulated the discipline-crossing was the concept of *landscape*, primarily guided by the visual arts partner. Thus all our proposals revolved around the exploration of the landscape: *Visually*, by observing landscapes represented in images of different materials; *literarily* by reading and writing literary texts, especially folk songs inspired by animals; *sensorially*, using sensory stimuli that promoted appreciation and communication of ideas; *musically*, through listening carefully to the sounds of the environment, *kinesthetically*, by making movements inspired by the characteristics of the local animals and plants, and *theatrically*, by putting everything together in dramatic representations.

To begin the process, we posed a guiding question: How can we create an installation-performance by exploring sound, visual, and movement landscapes represented in different media to reflect on the care for the environment and endangered animals within the school community?

For eight weeks, we collectively planned and developed the didactic sequences with which we guided the students. We tried to intertwine our strategies in each sequence, regain students' creations, and trigger new possibilities. As of the second session, students worked in two groups: one for designing an awning-installation, and another one for creating the performance scenes. The visual arts and literature companions were in charge of the former, whereas the dance, music, and theater partners of the latter.

In the third session, the integration between languages was already noticeable, not only around the common theme of the landscape but also in the intention of linking explorations—the sound environment with movement and voice, for example—even incorporating the creations from the group of visual arts-literary texts, as when they turned the geometric shape into body and sound forms. At this point, the communication in a social network group was relevant, and an



idea came up: to use the myths and legends of the endemic animals: the ocelot, the eagle, the deer, and the snake, to refine the movements and sounds to sketch the performance scenes. The following table shows a fragment of the creative exploration we proposed to students for that session.

### CREATIVE EXPLORATION

- Discuss the sound map you made during the week, describe the elements of the visual and sound landscape that caught your attention, and share the images or words you used to represent them.
- Explore the possibilities for creating animal sounds using your voice, the objects on the table (keys, marbles, cans with seeds), or the different parts of your body (through clapping, snapping, stamping your feet, etc.). Improvise a rhythm and organize the sounds creating an orchestra.

- In teams of 4 to 6 people, choose a sound environment from a circus, a zoo, a jungle, a farm, etc., and recreate it, either using your voice, sounds from your body, or other objects. The chosen environment must include at least two of the endangered animals from the region or those that have already become extinct, such as ocelots, eagles, snakes, or deer.
- Rehearse and present the work to the other teams. The members of each team will receive feedback from their peers. Observe your classmates and comment on what you noticed and caught your attention.

At the end of the activity, each student chooses an animal from the previous exploration that was most noteworthy. Then, the group is divided into two groups.

#### Team 1

- Briefly discuss: How does your animal move? Considering *time*: Is its movement *sustained* or *sudden*? Considering weight: is it heavy or uplift? How are its muscles used when moving (strong, gentle, relaxed, or collapse)? How does it travel? What is its typical print on the floor? What makes it change its movement? Does it produce any rhythm while moving? What sounds does it make? When scared? When calling one of the members of its group? When calling its partner?
- Then, explore the movement, traveling, and sounds of your chosen animal. Pay attention to its bodily and vocal characteristics, quality of movement (use of time (sustained or sudden movement), weight (heavy or uplift) energy, (strong, gentle, relaxed, or collapse), nuances, rhythm, etc.

#### Team 2

- With the help of instruments and different objects, explore sound possibilities to make a soundtrack that accompanies Team 1. Include the hand-made maracas (shaking idiophone) you made during the week. Observe the movements made by your classmates from Team 1 and wait for your Music Teacher to start playing the chordophone, so you start altogether.
- Rehearse your soundtrack before you present it to the group. Pay attention to all the sound features: duration, intensity, tonality, timbre, rhythm, etc.

During the subsequent sessions, the art-making that resulted from the explorations gradually defined the focus of the installation-performance. We intended to build an artistic way of proceeding in which the content comes from students' proposals, as opposed to a regular school play, in which students are mere recipients of their teacher's productions. The last stage of the process was the students' design and construction of an awning-installation made of PET bottles, inspired in the tales they wrote about the endangered animals from Tequexquináhuac zone, plus a performance in which they staged and musicalized their own scripts, based on the myths and legends from the endemic animals. Every student designed and made their costume, makeup, and props. Noteworthy, the rap interpretation of some of the folk songs written by the students was the thread and connector that articulated the three groups' presentations. The last two sessions were for the dress rehearsal, and the final presentation was video-recorded, with parents as part of the audience.