

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

Dr. Rob Horowitz
Evaluator

Appendix: Sample Observation Reports

In this section, we present extended excerpts from observation reports written by our research team. They provide detailed descriptions of the rehearsal process. They were originally written quickly for our internal use only and so are not edited for public presentation. **The reader should note that these reports are “raw data.” They contain the opinions and perceptions of the researchers at the time and do not necessarily represent our final evaluation findings.** The findings we presented in this report were made after a complete analysis of all data.

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**Researcher: Susan Falls
PS 176
December 13, 2000**

Through ArtsConnection, the after-school program at PS 176 is incorporating a production of the Broadway show “Guys and Dolls” directed by Mary Ann Hay. After arriving at the school and checking through security and the principal’s office, I was directed to the school auditorium where the program takes place.

In talking with Amy and Roy (directors), I learned that this was only the second day of production – the first day was spent explaining the project and going through a few lines from the script – so the organizational process is just shaping up. The goal for that day was to hand out scripts to students (grades 4, 5, and 6) and begin auditions.

When Mary Ann arrived the children responded to her at once; she outlined the goals for the day, and had everyone sign in. The students were to audition in small groups, and Mary Ann explained that, “...you shouldn’t worry if you are a little nervous since you will be singing in groups and then later some people, if they want to, will be asked to sing a little on their own. Everyone has a special part so don’t worry about that.” Mary Ann emphasized the importance of every role, and that each “actor” was going to make an

important contribution to the show, no matter how “big” the part. I felt that this helped to allay any fears or worries the students had about getting a part since the students responded positively to this remark. There were many students raising their hands to make comments or ask questions, and my impression was that they were very interested and excited about the project. Amy, Roy and Mary Ann took time to answer all questions.

Patience, following directions and quiet were going to be important today, and the directors emphasized this when they explained in detail the things they would be looking for in auditions. These skills included voice projection, diction, stage presence, and concentration, and were explained by example. The students then participated in breathing exercises and singing exercises that helped to bring everyone together. I felt that Amy’s calling the students “actors”, as in “Actors, you need to keep your scripts in your lap”, was a good way to generate a sense of “groupness” as well as suggest to them a sense of talent. The children are being transformed from “students from different grades and different classes” to “a group actors working on a common project!”

The children practiced singing the scales accompanied by body movements, which they appeared to enjoy. As the exercise progressed, the coordination of the group improved and the students were calmer and a little better concentrated. The scale exercises were of a call and response type, with Amy calling the scales and then the students mimicking her efforts (a good listening and concentration exercise). Their efforts were met with compliments as well as instructions, such as how to improve enunciation.

Amy went over the clip from the song that was to be auditioned today:

*When you meet a gent
Paying all kinds of rent
For a flat that could flatten the Taj Mahal...
Call it sad, call it funny
But it's better than even money,
That the guy is only doin' it for some doll!*

The group practiced pronouncing the words extra-clearly, and then they heard a recorded rendition of the song – ostensibly from the Broadway production (a rhetorical device serving to link the student show with the Broadway production in the minds of the “actors”). Mary Ann asked for volunteers for the first group and over half the group volunteered to go first. They were to go up on stage to sing alongside Roy, Mary Ann, and Amy in groups of three. Roy played a simple melody on the piano to help students get the tune, and gave them music to sing along with. Mary Ann again emphasized the importance of patience, respect, and that whistling was prohibited. The children, spread about in the first six or so of twenty rows in the auditorium, were talking excitedly, laughing and cracking jokes. I could see that that it was going to be difficult for them to sit still and quiet during the two-hour rehearsal, but Amy, Roy and Mary Ann had anticipated this problem. The solution was to do call and response clapping or snapping exercises (where Amy clapped out a rhythm and students respond in turn) in between

groups and to allow them to talk amongst themselves between turns. Those who had already finished were sent to another room with a parent assistant (where they could play or do homework or talk without distracting those who had yet to audition).

Besides reinforcing the importance of patience and respect for each other, the rehearsal was an opportunity for the students to learn about cooperation and support in a non-classroom environment. A large, multi-grade project such as a musical production require an especial set of dynamics and practices from more individualized or small group classroom exercises. This means that everyone, having various skill and maturity levels, must learn to work together smoothly as a group. When each audition was finished there was clapping and commenting, and during the singing on stage many of the children took the opportunity to practice singing the song.

About halfway through the rehearsal, one student made several mistakes in the song. Mary Ann made a deliberate point to explain to everyone that rehearsals were the time to make errors, "...now, don't worry if you make mistakes....you know this is the first time many of you have seen the script and been on stage, so its no big deal – if you make a mistake just keep going – we just want to her your voice so we can see what the best part is for you, because we want to give you the best role that fits with your voice!" The students are really very eager to get up on stage to audition and they continue practicing to themselves while the others sing on stage.

After each group finishes, the directors gave them some feedback such as "Good diction, K____," or "I liked the way you looked up, M____," or "Thank you all so much, there is a lot of talent up here," etc.

Of course, some of the students were shy than others, and a few students did not want to audition at all. This did not seem to be a problem, and while I could not hear exactly what was being said, I guessed that some non-singing parts might be available. After every student had a chance to sing, "When you meet a gent," the whole group reconvened and Mary Ann complemented them on their patience and good behavior (and it *was* difficult to be calm and still during the entire audition, and while there were a few moments of wildness the students were quite well-behaved). They again discussed some important things to keep in mind in order to have a successful show, such as patience, respect, support, and concentration. Mary Ann explained the plan for the next week or so, and then gave the students a chance to ask questions.

Mary Ann explained that everyone would have a special part...and it was important to get everyone his/her part. "If you are very nervous and it's your first time, it might not be good if you have the biggest part, right?" One student raised his hand and said, "Yea – like last year in Bundles?" Mary Ann asked him, "So how did you like your part last year – you did such a good job" and he responded, "Yeah, but this year I want a bigger part – it should have been bigger!!" "Well, now you're used to it, but remember in the beginning last year you wanted a small part, right?", she asked.

“Yeah,” he agreed, “but...I got used to it and now I’m ready for a VERY BIG part!” he said with a big smile.

I believe the rehearsal will be a good opportunity for students from various grades (4,5 and 6) to interact, to learn from each other and cooperate in a major project that will give them a real sense of accomplishment, engendering self-confidence and a sense of group pride. Practice for the show (to be unveiled late in the spring semester) will give students a chance to learn the importance of support and concentration. Some parents are participating in the program, and when other parents come to pick up their students from the program, there is a chance for them to watch the show evolve and to talk with each other, as well as communicate with Mary Ann, Roy and Amy about the show or any other matters that may be pertinent. I think it will be very gratifying for students and parents alike (not to mention the directors and parent helpers) to watch the show come together over time. I noticed that a number of parents had questions or comments that they wanted to express to Mary Ann, and she made it quite clear that she was available if parents had questions or concerns they needed to have addressed (both to the students and parents).

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Researcher: Susan Falls
PS 94
January 24, 2001

Victor Maog – Artistic Director
Stephanie Farhood – Choreographer/Asst.
Michael Eisenberg – Musical Director
Madeline DiOrio - PS 94 Coordinator

The fifth grade after-school program at PS 94 is rehearsing for their production of *Annie*. The rehearsal has been going on since October and both the children and the instructors seemed well adjusted to the routine.

The atmosphere of this rehearsal was a little more serious than at other schools, there was less joking around and more critiques coming from instructors, but the students seem more focused and better at following directions. Victor and Stephanie remarked to me afterwards that they had been working with the students on discipline and following directions and that there had been a lot of improvement over the course of the sessions.

I arrived at the school at 3:00 and was shown to the auditorium. Michael Eisenberg was there and said that the class was meeting upstairs so we walked up together. He asked me which of the other productions I had seen, and he explained to me that this school was doing *Annie* with about 30 or fifth graders.

Upstairs I met Victor and Stephanie who were going over the plan for the rehearsal when I arrived. The children filed in very quietly and took their places – I had been unaware

that the children were gathering outside of the door under the direction of Ms. DiOrio (she gave them name tags and prepared them for the rehearsal), and I was astonished at the orderliness and “good behavior” of the students.

Ms. DiOrio mentioned that “...a few students are missing because of the Chinese New Year,” but there are still about 20 students present. Most students are Hispanic though not all. There were mostly girls (there were only 3 boys). When Victor asked the students to “make the room as still as possible” they immediately became silent and took their positions in three long rows, with each student standing on an “x” marked with masking tape. Victor led the students through several breathing exercises (8 breaths in, 8 breaths out, etc) and then worked on “articulation exercises”. The enunciatory exercises consisted of a call-and-response type of interaction in which Victor called out words such as “bright”, “Broadway”, “Annie”, “war”, “opera” in an exaggeratedly precise manner, and students then mimicked him. (He gave the students feedback and they then made adjustments, such as “make sure you hit the “t real hard on “bright”)

Victor also took the students through a series of shoulder-rolls to help them relax and also keep their attention focused. He then took them through several squatting movements. The students were intently focused on Victor and were not talking at all amongst themselves. They appeared to be concentrating during the exercises. I thought it was interesting that Ms. DiOrio participated in all of the exercises throughout the rehearsal and also helped facilitate the directions coming from the director/choreographer/music director when one or more students did not understand or needed a little extra prodding in following directions (which was not very often!). Victor then led the class through a noise making (i.e. trilling like a bird) call/response and then a “scat” type lesson that is a good listening and concentration exercise.

Stephanie took over at this point – students were asked to mirror her movements – a kinesthetic exercise, which required their focus. Students executed the exercise quite well and laughed during several of the movements. She taught then a short 8-step sequence. Stephanie demonstrated the steps and then went through them slowly and step-by-step. After three or four tries the students performed the “dance” (they got a little better each time).

Michael took over and began working on the singing sections. He also performed call and response type exercises and then took the students through the scales (a piano was in the room for him to use). He encouraged the students to make their voices smooth and beautiful “like a ghost” for one set of scales. “oohhh oohhhh oohhhh oohh oohh oohh oooohh” sang the students in various notes. Praising their performance, saying “oh beautiful.” “that sounds very good.” Michael also used the opportunity to suggest the importance of good posture and being relaxed but focused while singing. He showed the students how to feel the tension in the larynx and place a finger upon it to remind themselves to be relaxed and easy. The students responded very well to Michael and their rapt attention suggested that they both respected and endeavored to please. They sang one of the central pieces in *Annie*, “the sun’ll come out tomorrow.”

The class then practiced the song “New York City” and again Michael gave them clear instructions about the larynx, relaxing the shoulders and the subtle tightening of the abdomen and while I of course could not ascertain what was happening objectively, many of the students placed a hand lightly on the belly or on the larynx in an attempt to do a self-check regarding Michael’s instructions. “O.K., now be bright but not loud – make the words clear and string but don’t shout, OK? Make sure you don’t get sloppy at the end. OK, let’s go....”

Two of the points that were again emphasized when the students rehearsed “Hard Knock Life” were FOCUS and LISTENING. They were asked to pay special attention to energy and singing in tune... “Beautiful.” It seemed important to the music director to give the students a balance of praise and constructive criticism. When some of the students caught my gaze they smiled and turned coyly away. I gave O_____ back a big smile and he beamed, forgetting the words but clearly happy.

Next was a continuation of the read-through that had begun last week. Students sat in a large circle and some shared their book with another student. Casting had already been made, though there were a few changes made during the rehearsal. There were several students absent and others read their parts. The directors discussed with the students the importance of commitment in a production such as a play, and the importance of attending rehearsal whenever possible. The students were quiet and followed directions with regard to getting into their respective groups –i.e. “the orphans”. When C_____ was asked to read the part of Lilly, Victor’s directions were met with a smile and she nudged her neighbor.

“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.

During the reading students consulted amongst themselves about how to give the lines a little emotion or tone (“Oh yeah, you say it like this (student demos), “Strip them sheets” in a demanding voice); “C_____, here look at my part – I have already memorized it – listen to this!!!” The students then listened to the CD versions – a recording of the Broadway version which gave them an idea as to the speed and tone of the lines. The end of the scene was “The Sun’ll Come Out” and everybody sang.

They finish reading and then do a run-through along with the CD, which is a good multi-dimensional lesson (they have done the number several ways – with the piano, with the read-through, along with the CD, listening to the CD, along with body movements). Again, the import of focus is emphasized and the director discusses working together as a

group. There is noted improvement after three run-throughs and some students are asked to sing solo which they do without hesitation!! Students are praised on their “patience” (and I thought they were being quite patient).

Putting the number all together there were lots of big smiles and one student remarked, “this is sure hard work” but they seem to enjoy the challenge. The director made a game out of getting the parts correct and students are laughing and spontaneously act out the lines such as pinching their noses and wafting the air when they say “rotten , smelly life” or pretending to yank a beard when saying “pulling whiskers out”.

The most apparent collateral benefits visible in the rehearsal were **cooperation, teamwork, patience** (especially when the directors were focusing on parts of the production that involved only one or two students and other were asked to be silent and attentive), **focus**, memory (script books had to be put away after a certain number of run-throughs), **kinesthetic/body coordination** (i.e. correctly following specific directions) and the idea that **practice makes perfect**.

At the end of the session students were praised for their hard work and then quietly got ready and filed out with Ms. DiOrio.

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Researcher: Elsa Davidson
PS 94 - Brooklyn, Sunset Park
February 1, 2001

Introduction: I traveled to PS 94 in Sunset Park to observe 40 fifth grade girls (participation is optional and the few boys who had originally been involved had dropped out) practice dances and songs and stage presence for an ArtsConnection-assisted production of Broadway musical, *Annie*. Present were the children, one teacher, and three artists -- a dance teacher, Stephanie, an artistic director, Victor, and Michael, the music director. The two-hour rehearsal began with a vocal and physical warm-up, and some groups practice involving all the girls, and then the division of the group into two; the orphans were taken to a classroom to practice a dance and lines, and the other girls stayed downstairs in a practice room to work on songs and solos and stage presence. It should be noted that the girls began rehearsing *Annie* in November, and are now in the process of polishing and learning new songs and dances for the show. At the end of the rehearsal, the “orphans” who had been upstairs learning a dance came downstairs and performed what they had learned for the other girls. Then, everyone worked more on singing and integrating the long section of the dance and stage direction they had learned with the rest of a longer song. The group also worked on one other song. At the end, there was a physical warm-down exercise, and the rehearsal was dismissed.

Chronology: At 3: 15, Stephanie, Michael, and Victor, one of the students’ teachers begin by lining up all of the students outside of the empty room where they will be rehearsing. The students are all wearing nametags on their shirts. Standing at the head of

the line, Victor asks the girls to be quiet, to stand up straight, to form an orderly single line in order to file quietly into the rehearsal room. Once assembled, Victor has them arrange themselves in two neat rows. Victor leads the students in a speaking warm-up drill, during which they shout and whisper in unison various words and work on clear enunciation of consonants. The girls are all looking at Victor and paying attention, involved in this call-and-response exercise. Victor circles the room, checking posture here and there. One girl has her hands in her pockets, and Victor motions to her to place her hands at her sides. When this exercise is completed, Michael sits at the piano, and begins a choral warm-up, accompanying the girls as they practice scales. The first song to be rehearsed is “Hey Hobo Man.” The words have already been committed to memory in previous rehearsals. The girls sing a few complete stanzas—accompanied by Michael, who, as he plays, comments on what he wants from the singers. “Staccato!” he shouts, and then “Legato!” He stops them. “I know you guys can do this. Don’t sing too aggressively.” They begin the stanzas again, following the direction to begin notes delicately, and then increase the volume of the sound. The girls run-through the stanzas again a few times, until Michael nods, and tells them they sound great. Victor sings along too, and walks around the room, making the girls stand up straight. Victor reminds the girls that they have to envision how they will look to the audience when they are on stage. Michael then moves onto the next few stanzas. The girls practice the next parts. Everyone is in tune, but Michael tells the students that they need to sing out more strongly. They practice the section again – accompanied. Michael nods excitedly as does Victor, who smiles at them often while they sing. They are all still standing their places, forming two rows.

On a few occasions, Michael has just the first row sing a section, while the back row listens to them, and then vice versa. Any time he hears a flat note or uneven tone, he sings or plays the notes on the piano, and then has them sing it again. In parts of the song, some 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. Victor smiles and nods at the second attempt.

Michael asks the singers to put a hand over one ear and really listen to how they sound individually as they sing. “Do me a favor. Listen to yourselves.”

At this point in the rehearsal, Stephanie takes eleven girls – all “orphans”— out of the classroom to go upstairs to Room 406 to practice dance. As the girls with orphan parts leave, the others get a little fidgety. “Actors! Freeze!” Victor shouts. “It’s your responsibility to make sure that you don’t stand next to someone that your tempted to talk to.”

It is now time for the group to learn a new song. Michael has the kids gather around him. Victor and Michael gather the kids around the piano to learn the words to a new song. He begins with the words and no music, saying first to the girls, “Commit this to memory.” He says the line: “It ain’t fair how we scrounge for three or four bucks...” One line at a time, they repeat after him. They repeat this process, sometimes saying two lines back-to-back, until approximately the first verse have been spoken numerous times. The girls look attentively at Michael, and some of them lean a bit on the piano. Then, he plunks out the tune for them on the piano, and then they sing the first two lines a few times. They sing another line, and then comes a line – “That little brat.” The girls sing it loudly. Michael stops them and tells them that they don’t sound as good as he knows they can sound. He explains to them that first they should sing the line “That little brat” as prettily and properly as they can, and then, and then add the “dramatic ugliness” later. He has many of them sing the new lines they have learned individually, praising each girl when she sings the line correctly. One little girl raises her hand, and then starts singing but doesn’t know all the words and looks down embarrassed. He has them all do the part that she missed together. As the group recites the words, the girl who had faltered with the words nods excitedly, reading the lyrics on the sheet music over Michael’s shoulder at the piano. They sing this section again, and Michael and Victor say that it sounds out of tune. They go back to singing the tune only on the vowels --- *doo , doo , doo* and *tu, tu, tu*. Michael asks them to sing the melody on these vowels more loudly.

The girls then learn another stanza’s worth of lyrics, and Michael shows the girls who will have certain lines as solos, according to their roles in the musical. Although the group has been very attentive, two girls who are standing next to each other are vying for space around the piano. One says “Stop it” to the other one and Victor instantly separates them and has one girl move to the other side of the piano next to him.

As they are practicing, Michael stops them and says: “You’ve got to be very, very picky. You can’t just let any old sound come out of you. Very picky, very discriminating. If you think you don’t know the note, then move next to someone who does.” They try the bars again, and Michael stops them again and says to them “I know you can do this.”

Michael now wants to work on range with the girls. Michael listens to a few girls individually try to hit a very low note, then a high note, and then a low note again over the course of a three-syllable lyrical phrase. One of the girls has difficulty and he stops her again, suggesting that she sing the high note gently and quietly and then broaden the volume of the sound once the note is hit securely.

Victor suggests to Michael that the girls move to the back corner of the room, and practice projecting as they sing. The girls are now on the other side of the room from the piano. Now, Michael and Victor begin rehearsing the girls on the entire song, integrating the solos with the verses, and emphasizing timing. Michael stops the singers, and tells them that they have to keep time and know when to come in, and that they have to project across the room. Some students are starting to shift from foot to foot, and it takes those with solos more than a few tries to get it right. B_____, one girl with an entire song to sing, is then called across the room to the piano. Michael turns to me and tells me that

B_____ has worked for a long time the night before, learning the song. He goes over the words with her and melody once quietly at the piano, and then Victor quiets the kids, who are now allowed to sit down and listen to B_____’s solo (the kids sigh a large collective groan of relief at this news). Victor says, “Guys, focus on B_____’s body language.” B_____ is standing in front of the piano. “B_____, you want to look older for the solo, you don’t want to look like an orphan. Plant your feet apart. See kids? It’s so easy to look older.” Accompanied on the piano by Michael, B_____ runs through the solo, and falters. She tries again. “That was excellent!” Michael says, and the other girls clap.

At this point, I left the room and went upstairs to watch Stephanie rehearse the dance movements with the kids. Stephanie’s group of eleven were supposed to have a large room adjacent to the music room that Michael and Victor’s group is using, however that room has become unavailable due to a banquet planned for the following day. The classroom teacher apologizes, and Stephanie explains the fact that they will be practicing in a carpeted corner of the fifth grade classroom means that they won’t be able to practice all the steps. In addition, the stereo that was to be used in order to accompany the dancers is broken. When I enter the room, they are speaking the song lines in tempo, and acting out the mime movements of the song. The song is about what the life of an orphan at the orphanage is like, and the meanness of the orphanage’s headmistress. The girls know the lyrics very well, and each new meaningful phrase is being associated with a new gesture or movement to make up the dance. In addition, the girls are arranged in certain groupings, such that characters who share a solo part – for example, in the middle of a song, one girl asks the “orphan” next to her “Santa Claus?” and the other girl says “What’s that, who’s he?” Stephanie explains to the girls that they are pushing to learn everything very quickly because they have so many more dances to learn. Stephanie stands facing the kids, miming the motions with them. Lyrics about “Bellies full” or “lonely life” are associated with movements expressing those meanings in rapid succession. The girls follow quickly, and the dance involves blocking out different positions, and pairings. There is no talking among the girls, outside of the lyrics. Everyone seems to be paying rapt attention to Stephanie. The classroom teacher says the lyrics along with them, and praises them after a run-through, as does Stephanie. Stephanie tells them that they are doing a great job. When the girls get through most of a song/dance number, the time is out, and it is time to file back downstairs to join the other group.

It’s now about 5: 05 –ten minutes left of rehearsal. When Stephanie and her group of eleven dancers enter, they perform for the downstairs group the dance, but with Michael accompanying them on the piano. Stephanie stands in front of the girls, who now have an audience, and warns them that with the piano accompaniment, everything could get a lot faster. She also tells them that they are great. The girls run-through what they know (not quite the whole song) while the other kids watch them. In the wider space, they are able to make clearer gestures. The observers clap at the finish of the dance. Michael and Stephanie confer.

“I just couldn’t hear you,” Michael says to the kids. Victor orders the kids to get into three lines, and when they don’t move very quickly and are chatting together, he says

loudly “5,4, 3, 2, 1, pin drop!” There is silence. The kids, once in three rows, are each asked to say an adjective out loud that represents how they feel about how the rehearsal went. “Good” says the first girl, and then down the line, “happy,” “joyful,” “focused,” “confused.”

“That’s great,” Victor says. “ I like that not everyone picked “happy” or “good.”

The rehearsal is over.

Personal Observation: This rehearsal had a lot of energy. The kids seemed very focused, and Michael, Stephanie, and Victor demanded a lot from the kids. The instructors’ attention to small details – the clarity of sung consonants, the position of their hands while singing, total quiet, and even filing into the rehearsal room in an orderly line set a tone of concentration and respect. The genuine enthusiasm that the teachers had for a job well done, their repeated statements of belief in the kids’ ability to do a better job and master something difficult, and their grown-up way of addressing the kids in my opinion worked very well. The kids took the work seriously. They wanted to impress themselves, their teachers, and each other. They seemed very engrossed in learning, and smiled in what appeared to be real enjoyment when they knew they had done well. In addition, I noticed that Michael and Victor were careful to contextualize what the kids were learning. In terms of leadership style, Michael and Victor both assumed a prominent role. Victor often jumped in to make a suggestion, or demand something –usually about dramatic presence, or praise someone while Michael directed the musical component.

The all-girl dynamic may be a factor in the ability of the kids to concentrate so well, and I wonder if the boys dropped out because *Annie* was perceived as too feminine, or for other reasons.

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**Researcher: Elsa Davidson
East Side Middle School
March 1, 2001**

When I arrived just after 2 p.m., seventeen girls were on stage practicing a song and dance number for the musical (*Guys and Dolls*).

One girl, M_____, is center stage, and the others form a line behind her. Mary Ann is in front of them, directing them. She begins rehearsing them on a song by going over the box step and other steps with the “chorus line.” Meanwhile, M_____ is miming the words to the song and practicing different dance steps to herself. Her cheeks are flushed and she looks as if she is really concentrating. The girls seem to be in sync with Mary Ann as she goes through the steps, saying the lyrics in time with her movements to demonstrate the synchronization of the song and the dance. Some of the girls on stage are putting more hip movements into their dance – dancing more coquettishly, and the steps come very naturally. There is a lot of smiling as the girls dance. M_____ is still in the center,

waiting for her solo part. She is shaking out her hands and feet, no smiling, looking impatient. Then her part comes up. She goes through her lines, making a kissing gesture where the lyrics intimate a kiss, smiling flirtatiously in keeping with her character in the musical. M_____ knows all the lyrics, and sways her head back and forth as she dances. Then everyone joins together for another section of the dance, where the girls sing “My heart is leapin’. I’m having trouble sleepin’!” They go through the miming dance for this a few times. M_____ has it down, making theatrical expressions of surprise and distress as she sings the lines of the song.

Ten more kids come on stage—boys and girls. These are the “guys” who are holding plastic hats that Mary Ann has passed out. The understudy for a male role in the production is called to the front by Mary Ann and Mr. Lyons, the classroom teacher. Mary Ann explains the role of an understudy in a production, and how the person with the role should help the understudy get accustomed to the role.

“All the “guys” should be looking for real hats – you have to provide your own hats—so go to thrift stores—these [plastic ones] are just for rehearsal.”

The group begins to rehearse a new dance (about a horse race) to the lyrics “Why it’s good ol’ reliable Nathan, Nathan, Nathan, Nathan Detroit.” The group seems confused about the steps. Kids are performing steps at different times, and seem timid in their movements, partially lifting an arm, turning neither left nor right. Many of them are not singing, and they are looking at each other, trying to figure out the steps. There is a fair amount of chattering. Mary Ann starts them again, trying to go over the steps, and many of the kids are talking. Some are concentrating, looking down at their feet to get the steps, mouthing the words of the song as they dance. The general impression is of disarray. The kids who are in the cast but not on the stage are socializing loudly in the auditorium in little groups. Mostly segregated by sex. Mr. Lyons is at the front of the auditorium, surveying the kids on stage and the kids in the audience who are waiting until they are in a scene. Suddenly Mr. Lyons moves to the center of the room, and motions to Mary Ann.

“You are NOT FOCUSED!” he says. “There is a legacy to live up to. Last year’s show was fantastic. Yes, you will be compared. Yes, people will say “oh, it wasn’t as good as the year before. You’ve got pay attention and try hard. There is TOO MUCH talking.”

Mary Ann begins quietly now that the kids are quiet. She demonstrates the hand gestures for the songs. One girl says eagerly “We should have fans!” They work on this dance for a while, Mary Ann breaking the dance learning down into segments. The kids look at their feet, learning the steps. Some are socializing quietly on stage, in between little segments of rehearsal. A lot of them giggle occasionally. Mary Ann splits them up into three groups. The Twos move to stage-left, the Threes to stage-right. Some kids have no idea what group they are in, and try to ask Mary Ann and Mr. Lyons. Mr. Lyons tells N_____, a boy in the class who is on stage to be quiet. He has been whispering and chatting with J_____, another boy in his group. The Ones are in the center. These three groups are going to sing and dance a number in the production. It requires that they harmonize and come in at different times. The “Guys” go over the dance and clearly

already know the song, which is about betting on a horse. Mary Ann goes over not only the song and dance, but also the affect of the dancers. There are soloists in this song, and she has them sing their parts. The soloists look solemn, paying careful attention to what's going on, keeping their gaze on Mary Ann for direction. The first boy goes. She sings his part and he has a lot of trouble hitting the high notes. In the audience, Mr. Lyons points upwards towards the ceiling to signal to the boy that he is flat. Mary Ann tells them that the solos should be like a conversation between the three soloists, so that after each solo, a soloist should physically react to the next soloist. One girl – part of the background groups – raises her hand and asks, “Do we look at the audience at that part or stay frozen?” (The groups in back are supposed to stay frozen in position until the chorus.) Meanwhile, the boy soloist taps his foot and moves his hands – going over his steps.

The next part of the song/play involves a troupe of seven girls from the back singing a missionary song, marching down the aisle of the auditorium up onto the stage as they sing. One girl leads them, a character who is supposed to seem unsure of being a missionary, it seems. The girl playing this role has a singing solo. When she marches onto the stage, she falters purposefully. She sounds depressed during her speech, and ends the speech sounding anxious, in keeping her character's predicament.

Generally, the boys seem to be relying on their scripts more than the girls in the production. Many of the boys read their lines from the provided script, whereas the girls have no need of the script.

Mary Ann wants to rehearse the “Nathan” song again from the top. The kids scramble quickly on the stage to find their appropriate spots to begin the dance/song.

One of the “couples” in the play, one of the male leading characters who plays a “sinner” (played by S_____) and “Adelaide” (played by M_____), now must act out a dialogue in which Adelaide has a psychosomatic cold because she is paranoid that Nathan never wants to set a date for their intended wedding. In this scene, M_____ parodies a kind of “dumb blonde” character with a heavy and nasal New York accent. M_____ sounds very squeaky and comic, screwing up her face as she talks, then smiling and looking wide-eyed and wistful. M_____’s lines then get a little strident. She projects well. She is sort of nagging the male character, Nathan. To demonstrate this, M_____ puts her hands on her hips, rolls her eyes, and purses her lips. S_____ (“Nathan”) is still using his script, but he modulates his voice while he reads to express the character's wish to comfort “Adelaide” and reassure her while still getting away to go bet on a horse race and hang out with the guys.

S_____ reads his lines with a smile on his face, pausing expressively between phrases at points, as if mimicking an actual conversation.

Pretty soon thereafter there was a fifteen-minute break. The kids go out to get a snack. When they slowly filter in it is at least five minutes after the time they were supposed to return, and it takes another five minutes for them to quiet down and pay attention. Mary Ann has to shout for their attention many times. Kids ignore her. She finally screams and

they slowly pay attention and turn around, put their things down. Some come up to rehearse the next scene.

During the next scene, I began by focusing more on S_____, whose role involves him pretending to be a “sinner” so he can ask out the lead missionary society girl, (whose real name is A_____).

S_____ moves toward his female counterpart, A_____. There are now props on the stage. Mary Ann has brought a small desk on stage – which serves as the missionary’s desk – and some pretend pamphlets for her to give out. He moves unsteadily toward her with a smile on his face, saying his lines. During this scene he tries unsuccessfully to ask out the missionary girl, and suggest that they fly to Havana for a night of gambling (the play is set in the forties). He’s supposed to mime writing the names down of his friends as he says the line, “I guarantee I can fill a meeting with one dozen genuine sinners.” Mary Ann wants him to mime the writing motion more clearly, and he tries again, but does it quickly and it isn’t clear. He crinkles the paper in his hand nervously as he looks at Mary Ann. At the end of this scene, he is supposed to kiss A_____. Mary Ann coaches him through this. He does it very hesitantly. A_____ stands calmly in front of him. Everyone is standing around watching him practice. He folds his arms tightly in front of his chest, smiles, and blushes. They rehearse this scene a bit more, and then Mary Ann moves them onto S_____’s solo, during which he raises his eyebrows trying to hit the high notes. Mary Ann asks him to incline his body toward his partner, which he does immediately upon being given the direction.

S_____ comes off the stage and when he comes to sit down, two kids snicker at him. “Don’t you know how to kiss a girl?” a girl says. “I mean, haven’t you watched TV at least?” She smirks and S_____ says “Shut up!” loudly and stomps to his seat, ignoring them.

Another run-through. Mary Ann plays the CD version of the music to accompany the kids. S_____ and A_____ are still working on their scene. Mary Ann wants them to speed up their dialogue, but they continue to perform it at the same pace.

In the next scene the group rehearses, there is a dance with many people on stage. M_____ is in the front again with these other kids forming a chorus line. During this scene, I focused on a girl in striped tights without a main part. She stands in the back of the stage. She knows all the lines to the song, dances excitedly, smiling and looking at Mary Ann. Her feet anticipate the next steps. Occasionally she whispers to her friends standing in a cluster next to her, also dancing. At times she giggles in excitement as she performs. They stop. A girl nearby raises her hand. In an irritated voice she tells Mary Ann that she can’t hear M_____ when M_____ comes in, so she doesn’t know herself when to come in. This information seems to irritate M_____, who frowns and then rolls her eyes. M_____ then complains that the instrumental version Mary Ann uses is a little off. Mary Ann doesn’t think so, but M_____ insists. “Seriously, I listen to this song like everyday.” she says.

Four girls suddenly appear in the auditorium, one of whom is crying. They had apparently never come back after the break. Mr. Lyons addresses the group angrily: “I’m not teaching middle school to babysit!” he says. “Some people don’t think they have a responsibility to come back after break. You don’t understand commitment yet, and you have a commitment to this show...”

Everyone goes back to rehearsing. A girl without a main part has a line – “Has anyone seen my earrings?” She runs out on stage to deliver the line, and Mary Ann asks her to do it again and project, while tilting her face toward the audience. The girl (C____) giggles and does it again. Mary Ann asks her to repeat it. C____ breaks into hysterics but then finally says the line again, and then runs to join her friends at the side of the stage. A lot of the kids are talking, their gaze fixed on one another and not Mary Ann. A few try out dance steps on the side.

It is time now for a solo that M____ performs. It’s a song and dance about having a cold. Everyone else is either at the side of the stage, or sitting in the auditorium chairs watching her. M____ wings the song, dancing and singing in time, and acting at turns sick and lonely and then proud and scheming. She demonstrates these feelings by raising her eyebrows and widening her eyes to look innocent. The whole group is watching M____. Two or three girls sitting in the audience watching M____ rehearse are mouthing the words to the song she’s singing. Boys and girls alike seem transfixed by M____. She finishes, and everyone applauds.

The rehearsal is nearing a close, with two more quick scenes to practice. J____ is on stage, reading his script carefully, and then going over to Mary Ann to ask for help with a line. He continues reading the script. He has many lines in the play and is not “off-book.”

Mary Ann reviews another dance with them. There are fourteen on stage. One of the girls raises her hand to correct Mary Ann, pointing out that they should be beginning with the left foot and not the right foot. Mary Ann consults her script guide with the girl, and agrees.

They run through the dance, and the kids look forward out at the audience. A few have their lefts and rights mixed up. The kids in the audience are talking and laughing amongst themselves. At 5: 25 the rehearsal wraps up, and everyone rushes to get their backpacks.

Mr. Lyons addresses everyone, and tells them that they need to start thinking about how they want their character to be when they perform. He passes out an assignment. Before next week’s rehearsal, the kids are to write a bio of their character (including the “Guys” and “Dolls” without main parts).

Personal observation: My sense was that the kids are getting a lot out of this, enjoying immensely the self-expression of the dances and the songs. Four hours is just too long, though. They are unable to concentrate for that long a period, and they begin to fidget and gossip and talk out of turn. It was clear, especially from the facial expressions, and the attempts to get steps down correctly, the mouthing of song lyrics, and the studying of

scripts that the kids are engrossed in the process of getting ready for the performance. One important thing to note is that this group has 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in it, and the older kids are more prone to not do as they are told.

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Researcher: Elsa Davidson

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March 11, 2001

Victor, Stephanie, and Michael were the ArtsConnection staff working with the kids during my visit. A classroom teacher was also present, dancing and singing along with the kids. There were 22 kids present – 21 girls and one boy. All of the children are fifth graders, and many come from non-English speaking homes. Some are learning English themselves, so when kids don't sing, or seem to sing only about half of the words in a verse, this may be a reason.

The goal for the day is to learn a new song and new dance (part of the same number) with Stephanie. When I arrive, they are doing this. They form three rows, with the first row consisting of three main characters in the musical (*Annie*): “Annie,” “Grace,” and “Warbucks.” The kids are learning to synchronize their movements, raising their hands above their heads at the same time, singing “The city is bright as a penny arcade/ To think I've lived here all my life.” The dance then requires the kids to move quickly in a marching circle, and Stephanie asks them to practice this many times. Periodically, Michael jumps in to give instructions on the singing. He is accompanying them on the piano. Victor stands in row 2, modeling for the kids how the dance and singing should be. Occasionally, he signals non-verbally for someone to stop talking.

Meanwhile, I began to follow a little girl in the middle row with glasses on, K____. K____ keeps her eyes on Stephanie, who is facing the kids at the front of the room. Half the time she is singing the lyrics of the song, but following the dance steps consistently and closely. In between practices, she giggles and tries out a few steps, raising her arms in the air quickly, and then getting back into position for the next attempt. She whispers to the girl next to her in her row. As she dances during the rehearsal, her movements are bouncy, but she gets confused about the steps a number of times. Frequently she exchanges looks with the girl next to her.

The rehearsal goes on, and Michael asks the kids to sing louder. The kids singing is in tune, and they all seem to be earnestly paying attention to Stephanie, trying to keep up with the dance and put the right foot forward.

I next turned my attention to “Annie,” the main character (whose real name is S____). S____ has a serious expression on her face. She is standing the closest to Stephanie, and rarely turns to the side to look at the two other people in her row, “Grace” and “Warbucks.” The characters of Annie, Grace, and Warbucks all have solos in the particular song the group is working on, and they have to come in at different times from

the other kids, each separately. As the other kids begin a voice that S_____ will later have to come in on, she taps her foot and sways slightly, waiting to begin her center-stage singing and dancing. On cue, she puts her hand up immediately and begins dancing. Then, she steps forward somberly, smiles a little, and begins her solo. She knows all of the words, and sings her part with careful concentration and ease (i.e. she never falters and makes it look easy). In general, S_____ rarely talks to anyone in the room, and just pays attention to Stephanie. She looks at times a little placid, and doesn't alter her facial expression much. Nonetheless, she follows everything on cue.

Stephanie and Michael begin teaching two new verses and the accompanying movements. Michael goes over the music first, and then they work on the movements with Stephanie and Victor. The section of the song they are working on requires them to mime the motion of writing a letter with a great flourish. The song lyrics refer to things such as "Gershwin," and "California."

After watching S_____ for a while, I decided to follow one of the "orphans" in the chorus. She is standing toward the end of the third row in the back of the room. While Stephanie is talking, this little girl seems to be going over the movements of the dance in her head. Her eyes look far away and she performs mini-versions of the movements she will soon be practicing again. Stephanie begins a run-through, and this girl looks closely at her the entire time, but doesn't sing. Then she turns to a friend next to her and corrects something she is doing. It looks like they are disagreeing about what the step should look like. They go through it again, and the girl does the steps but doesn't sing. She seems to be having a good time, smiling a lot. The second time around she pays more attention to what her neighbors are going, and whispers a little.

The rehearsal breaks for a moment while Stephanie confers with Michael at the piano. I notice that S_____ ("Annie") is going over her part, and rehearsing with the other two soloists on her own during this time. They go on singing: "Tomorrow, a penthouse," looking up towards the sky as they sing this line. A lot of the kids are smiling as they dance and sing, and Michael and Victor smile a lot at the kids too. There is little disciplining going on, but much instruction. After a run-through, Michael points to two girls in the second row and says "I caught both of you not singing!" The kids smile sheepishly at him.

Stephanie turns to pay some attention to the rather big girl playing "Daddy Warbucks." She sings her part loudly and does all of the steps. Stephanie seems satisfied and goes back to the group.

Stephanie starts the kids on practicing the final verse and finale of the dance, which involves the kids eventually piling into a group pose with some kneeling in the front, and others standing right behind the kneeling ones. Stephanie cheers them up, telling them they have learned a lot and are almost done, just the finale to go. She tells them that she really thinks they can do this part, but that it's going to take hard work. The kids are starting to fidget more, and talk louder in between segments of practice. When they start practicing the finale, some kids complain that other kids are pushing them and that there

isn't enough room. Stephanie warns them that they'll have to pick a different ending if they can't behave, somehow implying by tone that the different ending would be boring and less fun.

Eventually, Stephanie says, "Let's try it with the CD now." Michael laughs. The kids clap and jump up and down. As they run-through the tail end of the song again, many are tapping their feet before starting steps, and making expressions that go with the lyrics – sad, happy, awestruck.

At the end of the rehearsal, Victor does a relaxation exercise with them, having them relax their bodies, stand in parallel position, and take deep breaths with their eyes closed. He tells them to practice their songs and dances at home as much as possible.

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Researcher: Elsa Davidson
East Side Middle School
March 28, 2001

I arrived at about 3:35 to the afternoon rehearsal for *Guys and Dolls*. The adults present were Michael the Music Director, Mary Ann Hay, and a classroom teacher, Jay Lyons. At the moment I arrived, M_____, one of the girls in a leading role, was rehearsing the song in which she sings about having a cold. As on other occasions, the other kids (sitting in the auditorium chairs facing the stage) are involved in M_____’s performance, laughing at her gestures, and generally looking at the stage despite occasional whisperings. This is notable, as at other times it can be quite loud in the audience while kids (not required on stage) socialize.

M_____ is batting her eyes, and maintaining an evenly high-pitched, nasal, and comical singing demeanor as she works her way through the song, using her arms to pantomime her condition. She is supposed to be reading out of a book the symptoms of psychosomatic colds, and she pauses as she sings, to humorously show the character’s slow mental process in relating the meaning of the scientific prose to her own lovelorn condition. The performance seems quite polished.

Mary Anne is moving the rehearsal chronologically through every scene. M_____’s current scene is Scene 4.

Scene 5: M_____ finishes her song, and the kids clap. M_____ smiles and quickly moves off stage Mary Ann says “Great!” and then says, “We need the curtain opened now!” She reappears this three times with no response from A_____, the curtain girl. She is trying to get the kids to get onto the pace of staging the show, with kids ready at the end of the scene to begin the next phase of the show (in retrospect, a lot of her time was spent stressing the importance of being organized in staging the show, and the importance of being ready. The kids generally were not).

Again, Mary Ann calls “A_____!” (the curtain girl) and A_____ is still nowhere to be found. Finally she emerges from the back of the audience where she has been chatting with her friends. Mary Ann calls kids for scene 5 onto the stage. A girl comes on stage and asks Mary Ann what’s happening. She asks whether in this scene her job is to both move the chairs onto the stage and then sing a solo. A boy who is going to be in scene 5 is studying his script busily on stage, not looking up at the surrounding commotion. Scene 5 includes a song, “Mission Man” which is begun by a troupe of girls called the “Mission Band.” The girls start singing and Michael, the Music Director, interrupts them: “You all need to be leaders here,” he says, wanting them to sing more strongly.

A boy on stage has a solo, and he frowns in concentration, snapping to the music and looking at Mary Ann as he sings. Stage left a few characters enter and he looks expectantly in their direction. He knows all the words and is doing all of the hand motions. After his solo finishes, he continues watching Mary Ann direct, sitting quietly in his chair. Mary Ann is giving instruction to someone else now, and he watches, not talking with the others on stage (some of whom are whispering to each other).

Another song is begun and Michael asks the kids for more sound and diction. At this point the boy I’m following mouths the words of the song being sung even though he isn’t the one singing.

Four girls are practicing now on stage (we are still in Scene 5) and all of them are looking at Mary Ann as they say their lines. One girl, who is speaking says lines quietly but modulates her voice to express emotion. When others have a turn at their lines, she looks at them. The mission band girls form the bulk of this scene, and they stand behind the speaking girl. One smiles and gently bangs a tambourine against her hips as she watches.

Now the “Nathan” character has to speak and act his lines. He seems confused, studying the script and confused about what body language to employ to get the scene across at first. He says his lines hesitantly without his script, but reads well and with expression. The scene is about Nathan being pushed into a wedding with M_____’s character. Now more in control of the scene after a few more practices, he looks hesitant, stutters (appropriate to the scene) and seems relaxed but just not off-book. Other kids have lines at this point, one girl has lines cajoling Nathan to bite the bullet and get married. Her bold pressuring and cajoling is enhanced by the fact that she knows her lines, and pushes him physically, gently pushing him towards M_____, his betrothed. His attention is strained by the fact that he has to read a lot of lines from his script.

A lot of girls around him (one is playing a boy) touch him and focus on him when he is standing on stage. He seems un-self-conscious when he doesn’t know his lines when Mary Ann calls on him. She has to cue him as he isn’t quite focused and seems involved now in the girls who are paying attention to him. Mary Ann prompts him again and he says “But I thought I was supposed to wait to come in until the Mission Band comes in.”

The Mission Band comes through across the stage and he taps his feet to the song they are singing. He smiles at the girls in the “band” who are also on stage. Suddenly his

attention is drawn to a group of girls in the audience and not on stage. As the scene goes on with Mary Ann directing, he is looking off stage at the girls, winking at them.

Mary Ann calls another kid whose character's name is Skye but whose real name is J____, onto the stage. She says, "J____, can you come up here for your last lines?" He responds "I don't have the last line," and then smiles to himself. It seems he is privately enjoying having corrected the teacher. The scene (seven) involves a trip to Havana – for some reason the scene is not included. Now scene 8 will begin, and none of the kids in scene 8 appear on stage. Mary Ann has to call them onto the stage by name. A girl moves onto the stage and Mary Ann asks her to say her lines that open the scene. They work for a while on saying the lines with expression. The girl says the line, and then Mary Ann repeats the line adding emphasis and has the girl try it again. She also prompts the girl on the actual line. They go through it many times. The girl seems embarrassed, as she looks down a lot, giggles at Mary Ann's suggestions, and doesn't seem to try very hard to modulate her voice or facial expression. They go through it again and at one point when Mary Ann looks down the girl turns around to whisper something to her friends on stage (the other Mission band girls). The girls behind her are standing with their instruments in hand. A girl with a drumstick and a pretend drum taps her drumstick against her hip as she watches the scene progress. Mary Ann finishes rehearsing this particular line with this Mission Band girl, and then turns her attention to a girl with a bandana on who is entering stage left. The girl with the bandana laughs with her friends at the side of the stage and smiles. Meanwhile, the audience is getting kind of loud.

Mary Ann signals to Mr. Lyons and she motions for all the kids to sit in their seats facing the stage and come off stage. She begins a speech to them, with Mr. Lyons by her side:

"Let's take that great stuff and make it deeper," she says. "even if your character is a light kind of character, you can still be the most like that that you can..."

She suggests they re-energize and continue rehearsing by starting at the beginning of the musical with a run-through of scene one. Neither Michael nor Mr. Lyons adds anything to her comments, and the kids jump up, and head toward the stage.

Mary Ann plays an accompaniment version of the music— the CD with background instrumental and no music. The kids then bunch into their groups and the music starts. They are pretending to be betting on the street. The first scene is this ambience-setting scene, in which three groups of kids mime betting, and then freeze in a betting pose. The three clusters of kids on stage then form three harmonizing choruses and in each group there is one soloist with a few lines to sing on their own at various points in the song. The kids spring into action, each of them miming throwing dice, laughing, commenting to a neighbor, wiping a brow, etc. Then they freeze, The song is "Paul Revere," (the name of a horse). Mary Ann runs it through with them, and they review a few sections where Michael thinks the two of the three groups have been too quiet in their singing. One kid raises her hand to ask whether she's supposed to come in at a certain point. The kids' actions are confident, and no one looks like they don't know the words or the notes. This is one of the first songs that they learned.

After this initial song is sung, two girls on stage argue about where they are supposed to be standing on stage. They seem engaged with creating the show judging by their desire to get the stage placement right. In the next scene, the action focuses on the organization of a crap game by Nathan, one of the lead boys. He has some lines and Mary Ann corrects not the lines but his stage mannerisms. Afterwards, he stands at the side of the stage busily studying his script. A girl next to him looks at the script over his shoulder, and points something out (that I cannot hear).

For the rest of the scene, I focus on a girl who is in the back of the stage, not in this scene. She watches the action at the center of the stage, and then listens to a friend who is saying something quietly to her. She makes a face at her friend, and then turns back to watch the boy working with Mary Ann say his lines. The group of girls she is with fidget a bit – the rehearsal is nearing its close, and people are slouching a bit, looking like they want to sit down. She continues watching the center stage, relatively expressionlessly—it is hard to tell if she is engaged or just spacing out. But when the scene is over, she quickly moves off further to the side.

It's time for another song. This song is about the gambling game that has been organized. Its resounding chorus is "It's the oldest established permanent crap game in New York!" Everyone sings this chorus and the rest of the song heartily, and in harmonized parts. The songs seem well rehearsed—the tone, diction, and enthusiasm are there. Also, the "Guys" in the audience are holding hats in their hands, and they hold them up in the air at the end of the song. Some kids smile when the song is finished.

M_____ and N_____ have their first scene together, a flirtatious scene in which the subject of the dialogue is the length of their engagement and whether or not they are going to set a date for the wedding. N_____ reads his lines off of the book, and M_____ knows hers by heart. They both run-through the scene with feeling. N_____’s modest but many gestures of half-smiles, hands in pockets, light swaggering step, and slightly nervous voice as if pressured gets across his character’s predicament. M_____’s whininess and pleading smile make her character’s objective clear. M_____ is coquettish in her bodily movements- more bold than the boy playing her lead.

After this scene, two of the three lead boys have a scene alone, during which they discuss going to Havana and the ease with which they can acquire dates. The scene calls for a macho attitude on both of their parts. In real life, as I have watched these two boys in many rehearsals, I have observed that one is extremely shy and not very confident, and that the other one is the most confident and popular with the girls in the group. And yet on stage, their roles are reversed and it seems completely the other way around. The shy boy says his lines loudly and with a lot of bravado. His body language is very forward, he moves his arms, and laughs confidently, saying his lines from memory, about how he could take any girl he wanted to Havana – "I'd have my pick of any girl." The other boy questions him and his demeanor is funny but a little calmer—his voice isn't as loud, and he doesn't know his lines by heart—he looks often at the script. The boys face each other in profile (from the audience vantage point) and they seem totally absorbed in this

exchange. Mary Ann has them say a few things over and work on emphasis, and then the rehearsal is over.

Other comments: Although the kids aren't always following directions, and often seem to only do so when it cannot be avoided, they also simultaneously exhibit signs of being quite engaged with the production. This is true during one-on-one character scenes, the miming, and the singing. Everyone clearly looks to M_____ as the "professional" of the group, impressed with this talent that she has. The last scene between the two boys I found indicative of the fact that these boys are able through their acting to transcend the reality of their socially assigned roles within their everyday milieu. It could be that the experience of acting together in the show will make them re-evaluate one another in real life.

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Researcher: Susan Falls
East Side Middle School
April 4, 2001

I got to the school at 2:00 and checked in with the security desk on the first floor – then I walked up to the auditorium – a large room on the second floor – filled with wooden chairs and a linoleum floor – much like any school auditorium – and is painted pink with dark blue curtains. The stage is fairly big and has a nice rounded front and there is a piano off the left side of the stage in front of the rows of chairs. The back wall of the auditorium is decorated with posters from old musicals such as *Gypsy*, *The Sound of Music* and *My Fair Lady*.

Michael is practicing some of the songs on the piano and Mary Ann comes in at 2:00. Then the students came in with the teacher coordinator – he plays a very active role in the rehearsal – making suggestions and comments (see below) to students and to the artists as well as helping to keep the group organized and focused. Mary Ann discusses with Michael the fact that one of the main actors is absent and he does not know his part...she is "not very happy" about this. The teacher offers to spend some time working with the student later in the week.

The group is sitting in the wooden chairs in groups, talking amongst themselves while the artists and teacher coordinator are planning out the rehearsal. Mary Ann asks for the group's attention and asks who has turned in the personal bio sheets that the students were supposed to develop for their characters. One student raises her hand and asks for an extra form...then a bunch of other students follow in kind. Michael asks how many others need the form and about half the students raise their hands. He says, "I will Xerox it but you guys need to connect with the project here – it is not just about you, it is about the community – we are working out butts off.

Mary Ann then thanks those who HAVE turned in the assignment, and then explains what scenes they are planning to go over during the rehearsal. "We will start with scene 9

and mission band - you are going to bring your instruments with you on stage every time from now on – and let me know if some of you still need instruments so I can put it on my list....” The Mission Band actors agree to this and then one student asks about the props “do we bring them in after they change the props” – which tells me that they’re beginning to get the details in their mind about the actual sequence of events that will take place on the stage. Mary Ann then explains to the prop changers (6th graders) and then explains in lengthy detail about how the scenery is going to look and where it will be.

Next was the voice warmup led by Michael....all of the students stand up and direct their attention towards the piano – the exercise is of a call and response type at first....Michael calls out a particular scale and the students repeat it in kind...”ma me mi mo mu...” sometimes all of the students and as the scales go higher and higher some of the lower voices drop out (most of the actors are girls so many stay in for the majority of the time). The students are engaged and the ease with which each knows when to drop out indicates that they have practiced this exercise many times. As Michael gives the students instruction such as “staccato now.....” or “allegro” and the students alter the sound of the scales in following the instructions. They are very clear on what kind of sounds each of these musical terms is supposed to elicit.

C____, one of the few male students, is called to the front since they are going to practice the song “sit down you are rocking the boat” and in the actual performance he will be on center stage singing alone. C____ walks stridently up to the stage and then sings in a bright clear voice along with the CD and the rest of the students come in on cue....his demeanor suggests one of confidence – during the song he stands straight upright with his hands clasped behind his back and looks around – he seems quite relaxed, there is no problem in his singing alone in front of the group. He leans a little against the pole here and there and taps his feet to the rhythm of the song...Michael meanwhile directs members of the group chorus. The members of the chorus are looking at Michael and respond directly to his suggestions, for example when he says, “clear and bright now” the students tighten up their diction and delivery! When the song is over he kind of skips over to his seat and plops down with a satisfied grin. Mary Ann compliments him on his performance and also tells the group that they had done a good job of coming in on time and maintaining high energy...Michael seconds her compliments and then reminds the group to keep the same crispness and high energy throughout the rehearsal, reminding them that what they practice is what they will perform.....

The entire group is asked to the stage to get it ready for rehearsal – all of the chorus cooperates in arranging the props. Mary Ann asks the performers to go and wait offstage. At that point I observe one student (M____) go out onto the stage to pick up little bits of trash that have been left on the stage, put them in her pocket and then join the others offstage. This same student came down the stairs when Mary Ann asked them to go down and get their hat props for the scene while the Scene 9 actors remain. M____ discusses the best way to wear the hat. “Do you think we should wear it over to the side like this? Or like this? (putting it straight up and down)”. They talk about what looks

better and then get the script book out and go over their lines while the main group goes over the choreography for the scene. There is so much distraction from a number of other classes shuffling loudly into the auditorium with teachers talking very boisterously to one another that I am surprised how focused M_____ and her friend remain. They kept going over the script book regardless – I could not hear what they were saying but they were obviously practicing the lines from the next scene. Meanwhile in the confusion Mary Ann is calling forth several of the actors and asks the actors to remain quiet and focused which they surprisingly do. I noticed that the attention/focus/concentration level was much higher during this first hour – after the first hour the students begin to get a little more testy and restless – talking more and paying attention less.

The curtain closes and C_____ comes out with another boy who is playing “Skye.” This second boy that I remember from a previous rehearsal surprises me because although he is still gangly and shy I can see that he has really worked through a lot of this...he has really found a voice and has MUCH more of a stage presence. His demeanor is more confident and he speaks in a loud and clear voice, he is not mumbling or looking towards the ground during his speaking parts. I saw him closing a little into himself when he came off the stage later but even still, I noticed that he was interacting with the other students on and off stage. Later in talking with Mary Ann, I mentioned to her that I had noticed this boy was working through some of his shyness and that I was really impressed by the changes – I suggested that since I hadn’t been there in a while the change was really apparent – did she see same thing? Mary Ann responded that she was always amazed at how much these kids come out and develop and that it “is very hard to really explain to anyone how this works and you know every kid – well almost every kid – no, really all of them really change and you know by the time of the performance they have really found themselves!” I can plainly see the changes in this boy playing Skye.

The run-through is going very smoothly – Skye and C_____ know their lines and sing without hesitation in a loud articulate voice. Not only do they know the songs but have added personal touches and style to the songs. For example, Skye 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.

Meanwhile the group/audience off stage is getting restless and the teacher scolds them, “Be quiet, do your homework or watch – just be quiet – show some respect to your fellow actors. I don’t want to have to say this again!!” (but he does...many times). Most of the students are sitting in groups and many are talking and cutting up but some are sitting quietly reading and doing homework or going over the script and working on the “bios.” Several of the students read along with the script as C_____ and Skye speak the parts. One student speaks the parts quietly to himself while listening to the play unfold, and even singing along when the song starts.

“D_____!!!! That’s your part.....D_____!! Where are you?” Mary Ann calls out to D_____, who is nowhere to be found. The rehearsal is held up and there is lots of grumbling, eye rolling and harumphing by those on stage and off. Time is a’wasting so Mary Ann decides to give the group some instruction about an upcoming scene.

Finally “Sister Sarah” volunteers to do D_____’s role. She does the role very well. She knows D_____’s lines – “the mission was full of your kind last night” – and delivers them without flaw. She was even able to add some flair to the role by moving her body in an appropriately exaggerated and comical way. Then she stood demurely by and the rest of the scene was acted out.

There is lots of walking around and waiting between scenes – very much like on the scene of a movie production where 80% of the time is spent getting ready for each scene and 15% of the time is spent talking about the scene and breaking the scene down. I have been on many such sets and given this I think that the rehearsals run by Mary Ann are extremely efficient.

“OK Scene 11 Folks!! Gamblers! Get up on stage!” A big group of students run up to the stage and there is chaos but order emerges. One student is playing Big Julie. She sidles up the stairs and takes her place. She says her lines and gets them wrong the first time...she giggles and tries again....and then growls and laughs as they are wrong once again. Mary Ann encourages her – “OK Big Julie....try it again!!! a big loud voice now!!” Big Julie composes herself, takes a big breath and then says the lines getting it right this time...she says the lines slowly but with a clear and loud voice. She fusses with her hair and clothes between lines and during the lines “Ha, I win!! Now gimme the prize.” Big Julie smiles broadly and does the lines in a few different waysshe is giggly and then chooses what she believes to be the best delivery style – “Ok how about this one?” Mary Ann likes it and says “Take it from ‘Say who is this guy.’ ” She forgets the line but pulls out the script and looks at it – and then they go on with the scene. I was glad to see that Big Julie was not feeling too bad about forgetting the line and in fact everyone responded to line forgetting throughout in a very light-hearted way, especially since Mary Ann took the cue and said that they have time, and always praised what they remembered and executed well, reminding the actor “you have time to get it all straight and I really like what you did with x.....” The overall feelings were camaraderie and hard work. “Hey you – you’re scaring off all the action,” shouts Big Julie....she looks down at the script for the next line....and then focusing on details, asks Mary Ann “Should I look over to the right or move over to the left here?” She cracks a big smile and her part is over – I noticed a few scenes later at the “Midnight Prayer Meeting” scene that Big Julie acting in a group was much less engaged, looking all around and saying her lines a little more loosely, with less energy, but, of course, then the scene goes on....

The happening on stage is a fake punch – Skye and the others really have to work on getting the choreography right for this and so they go over it many, many times while the others watch on. It is engaging to watch and the students practice doing fake punches amongst themselves for fun while the actual actors practice it for real. The one who gets “hit” finally pretends to be crumpled in the corner and breaks out in genuine laughter which gets the others laughing. At this point Skye breaks out into the song *Luck Be a Lady*. The groups offstage are talking while Skye and the others concentrate on stage. Skye is required to do a dance with the song that he executes quite well, I think! And I can really see him working through his shyness here! Afterwards the students on stage (a

very large group) clap and smile and shout “alright!” and I can see that Skye is pleased. Mary Ann goes over in slow-motion the choreography of the dance to get it a little more clear and as she does so the group breaks out into the song spontaneously the words that go along with each movement...and again there is clapping and whooping!

Now several more classes come into the auditorium and it is very disruptive...they are apparently waiting for the bus. There are younger students who seem rather interested in observing the older students rehearsal and watch what happened on the stage....Mary Ann calls for another run-through and this time Skye goes through the role, still a little tentatively but clearly working through it...he is really adorable and then comes the big voice from the chorus to back him up...”Much better!” Mary Ann shouts....one student (J____) still practices her role as Mary Ann goes over to Skye to help him fine tune the finale of the scene.

“OK – Let’s run-through it one more time!” Skye again is improving and looks more relaxed. J____ looks over at the others to evaluate her movements, looking for a comparison but she seems to know most of them. They are really cooking now and J____ is loosening up – looking around less and doing her own movements from within. There are quite a few steps that she does very well with lots of style and confidence but more actorly (less pure dance-like) moves she struggles with. As the class exits the stage by walking down the front stairs, J____ does a diva wave towards the second graders. Yet another class is coming in and out of the auditorium and amazingly the rehearsal goes on and I am impressed by the lack of distraction manifest in the rehearsal. Offstage J____ and her friend work on the bio sheets – writing and comparing each others assignments and then going over their respective characters by comparing and contrasting.

“We need teamwork and lots of effort to get this done, people,” says the teacher coordinator – he is really working hard to keep everyone focused. “I think now might be a good time to take a break” he mentions to Mary Ann – “I think they need a break and it seems like a good place in the rehearsal to do it...OK?” Most of the students file out to go the restroom or get water or a Coke but a few stay behind. J____ walks over to Mary Ann and explains the outfit she is thinking about wearing for one of the numbers: “...here are the clothes for the Hot Box Girls scene, but I am not sure what...well maybe a white shirt over these pants....” Mary Ann assures her that this is a good idea “Yeah, that would work and then maybe something black.” So the students are obviously involved in designing various elements of the production, in this case, the costumes. “OK I will try this combination for the first one and then the red one for the second...but then what about Hot Box? How about a red plaid shirt... or a blue plaid but with short sleeves? With white tennis shoes....”

Once J____ and the friend get the outfits approved by Mary Ann, they walk out. Several students are doing homework or reading. Skye and another girl, whose character is Adelaide, volunteer to stay behind and practice their solos with Michael who plays the songs at the piano. Michael tries to get them paced and achieve the correct volume and pitch.

The students begin to filter back in and are talking and running about – Mary Ann goes over the mechanics of the next scene with the relevant actors. They are paying attention and asking very specific questions such as the precise location of a prop set-up or the exact line that they should use as a cue. The production is really tightening up and the students are picturing what will happen in their minds “When do we move ‘Havana’ to the other side?” “Will the curtain be closed then?” “How do we get the bench in?” They are doing much more than just taking in what Mary Ann is saying, but actively participating in the negotiation of timing and placement of props and scenery. L_____ raises her hand, “We will have moved the ‘mission’ by then, right?” Meanwhile the others are looking over the script.

“OK, scene 12/13 – Let’s go”, Mary Ann calls out to the group. N_____ asks, “Should we wear gloves like they did in the 40’s?” The students are very much keyed into the fact that this is a period piece of sorts. “Oh, sure, that would work,” answers Mary Ann. Several students crowd around Mary Ann to ask specific questions and one student calls out from the stage, “Ms. Hay, a lot of students are missing...” I noticed the students do police each other but on a very low level sayings things like “You guys be quiet so we can get going...” etc.

Adelaide and Nathan are out on the stage – Boy, this Adelaide is really good!!!! I think to myself. Nathan’s role is played by a stand-in who reads the lines in a very lame, monotone vice – Mary Ann steps in and tells the stand-in to do it with a little personality and do it over – they start over and Nathan speaks with a little more charisma. They go over the scene about 6 times and by the end of 6 times it is looking much fuller, with some style and oomph built into the voice and the bodily presentation.

The group sets up for “Sit Down, You’re Rocking the Boat” by bringing up lots of chairs. The students are talking and not really paying attention – it is a long, intense rehearsal and I am not surprised that attentions are waning. But as soon as the actual rehearsal of the scene gets under way they snap to attention and stop talking amongst themselves. They are present and focused. Mary Ann gives lots of encouragement and reminds the groups that the “sloppy people” need to get crisp!!!! The choreography is extremely complex for this scene but they seem to know what they are supposed to do – whether it is actually perfectly executed every time is a different story. “I know when I am supposed to stand up, but when it comes time, it’s hard...” exclaims one student. “Do groups 3 and 4 stand up at the same time in the beginning?” one asks. Then they do several run-throughs (Mary Ann asks for energy and focus) of this long number and the quality varies....but Mary Ann at the end says, “999% better!!!! Very good.”

“Any questions?”...L_____ volunteers that “when we are on stage you are more conscious, more self-conscious so it’s a lot harder – I mean I know what I am supposed to do or what I want to do but up here – well, its hard to just be here!” Another student complains about J_____, who is absent, saying, “He really gets into it – it’s embarrassing.” Mary Ann explains that this is supposed to be a comedy and that its funny

to exaggerate and then snap back to 'reality' on the next scene ...so he is doing the right thing...eventually the student concedes.

A debate ensues as to who should stand in "In the Fold". The Mission Band argues that they should stand up while everyone else sits – they want to be seen..."Pleeeeee Ms. Hay...we want to stand up by ourselves...". The others shout, "No!! Everyone stands!!" Mary Ann has the last word – "Everyone stands!!"

Next is a run-through with Adelaide and Sarah. They discuss the particular choreography on stage. Everything is becoming very specific, such as "How high should we raise our arms at the end?" Sarah and Adelaide are asking questions and telling Michael and Mary Ann how they envision this scene. There is lots of negotiation between the actors and directors!! They then go over this scene about 10 times and the others are getting quite restless (and so was I, incidentally). After the last run-through one student in the audience says "I have a veil...should I bring it for Adelaide to wear?" And then another says, "And I have a big white hat...I think that would look good." The fact that the students are actively participatory in the details of the production allows for a dimension of creativity that may be absent in lesson plans that don't allow for true collaboration. I think that this collaboration helps the students to have a sense of ownership and responsibility,

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Researcher: Susan Falls
East Side Middle School
April 25, 2001

The students were late coming to the auditorium but the atmosphere of the rehearsal is one of pervasive excitement and camaraderie. This is a dress rehearsal and so Mary Ann is spending a lot of time talking with the students about the importance of having completed costumes and cooperating and helping one another. "It's real important that you all have your costumes – you need to really cooperate with each other here...check with each other...O.K. whose shopping bag is this up here? Whose bag is this?" One student calls out that it is hers and many of the actors begin going through their props and showing one another what they will be wearing for each scene. Students who have brought bags of props share their extras with those who have forgotten or who need specific outfits.

The students are getting settled and continue working on making sure everyone is outfitted, while some are engaged in stapling black paper over the stage murals – the stage is beginning to look finished and with black paper, the setting appears much more "professional." As usual, there is a lot of commotion in the auditorium. there are classes continuously coming in and out during the first hour or so and students in the play keep filtering in throughout the first 30 minutes or so of the practice. Because of this Mary Ann continuously repeats instructions, or other students fill the latecomers in on what they are supposed to be doing.

Students try on various outfits and help each other to decide what looks most appropriate: “Oh yes – you need a white shirt...I have one in my bag,” or “This is what I’m wearing for the Hot Box girls...do you like it?, or “Hey, that looks good – is that for the mission band scene?” The boys are especially engaged in helping the girls to tie their ties since many are acting as “guys” and don’t know how to tie one. They seem happy and proud to help the girls, “See, it’s easy...” one boy mentions and then drapes the tied tie around the girl’s neck, “and you just pull this here (motioning to the inside end) to make it tighter.” There is lots of sharing and cooperative efforts, “Does anyone have an extra tie?” one girl calls out to everyone, and one is brought to her quickly.

“Beautiful! You look smashing...do you have a hat...that would really look great!” exclaims one girl. Many of the girls are happily taking on the role of divas!

Mary Ann now goes around and individually asks each student to show her what they are going to wear for each scene they are in – she makes suggestions and comments accordingly. For example, the costuming takes away some of the overt sexuality out of the Hot Box girls number which could easily have been construed as rather precocious, but the costumes really tone it down...I don’t have the impression that these students are reading the scene as overtly sexual but rather think that it is “cute.” Mary Ann asks some students to acquire different outfits, i.e. “Does anybody have a long black skirt for Sister Sarah?” Some of the students go over to the piano and practice singing with Michael during the bedlam and they sound very good, very put together...Michael works with them on pronunciation and the voicing of, i.e. of “marry a man today”...he demonstrates the pitch and they imitate the sound...Michael does this with several other students as well.

Many of the students begin to sit down in groups and talk animatedly in anticipation for the actual rehearsal to begin. Then Mary Ann calls the group to attention and gives them directions regarding where the props and stage scene lists will be. She discusses with them the importance of being quiet offstage – the group had discussed many of these issues before. The students seem to understand the directions. Then Mary Ann goes over the plan for the day – the students are paying attention and shushing the ones who are talking. As the time for rehearsal gets nearer they begin focusing and paying attention to one another.

As Mary Ann explains the scene changes, the girls who are in charge of changing the “scenery” begin asking very detailed and specific questions “How far out should Havana be?” “When Skye starts singing should we already be ready?” etc. The students are able to clearly and in detailed fashion imagine the scenes in their mind and are playing out the possibilities. As Mary Ann narrows down the field of possibilities, the students run up on stage to pantomime the way they will be changing the sets. They are taking the job seriously, judging by the earnest listening to instructions and the making sure among themselves about how exactly they will (jointly) execute these maneuvers. While the set changers work out the sequences, Mary Ann calls out who exactly will be on the stage. Evidently, they can all visualize the play as of now and are familiar enough with each

scene to imagine and check their notion without actually having to be up on stage going through the motions physically. These mental visualization skills are enhanced by having to be competent in “seeing” the entire play and making minor adjustments, (i.e. “I want Sarah to come in AFTER instead of before...”). When Mary Ann calls out for the Mission Band Scene to get onstage, practically the whole class hurriedly and excitedly rush up the stairs to their places.

During the speaking parts, Mary Ann and Michael constantly give directions regarding pacing and tone, “Louder here!” “Use a big voice!” “Now – don’t look at the audience...” and their directions are carried out immediately. Skye (the shy boy I had identified in earlier reports) has improved tremendously. He holds his head higher and moves with more confidence. He is really sweet and has begun to give his lines personal flair and suggestive movements instead of the rather flat delivery he started with. When he does confuse his lines he just laughs. It’s no big deal and he seems to feel comfortable with making little errors in practice – knowing that the night of the performance he will have to perform. “Oh gosh, sorry, let’s do it again,” he says with a broad grin. “Alright,” Mary Ann answers, “It’s no big deal – lets just start at.....” Nobody seems too uptight – everyone appears relaxed and happy, but still serious about the rehearsal. The students on stage do not whisper among themselves, but are in character and paying attention to the scene changes.

At this point I notice how much tighter things have gotten since last time. I overhear Mary Ann and Michael commenting on the improvement of the scene. By now several parents have wandered in and are watching practice. Some of the students sitting on stage are quiet (some are whispering to one another) but they are all on the edge of their seats and it is more than obvious that they are really hyped up.

Mary Ann calls to do the same scene again. Throughout the rehearsal, the sequence of activities is the same: Mary Ann calls out the prop changes and helps them set the scene, she checks to see if all actors are where they are supposed to be and then there are lots of little do-overs within the scene – lines or movements that need to be perfected. The students are happy to do these, never complaining but rather looking to Mary Ann for guidance and approval of the relatively tiny changes they make.

The children who are waiting in the auditorium for their buses are watching the rehearsal...they are especially engaged during the singing numbers and I overhear a few girls discussing the costumes and props that are on the stage.

The girls who are in the performance waiting by the stage are looking at their gloves for the church scene, moving their hands in a variety of ways for effect – I think they enjoy trying out the gestures of the 1940s as they see them. Skye is onstage and has really moved beyond the shyness that characterized every move he made in the beginning. His dialogue is now big, bold and confident.

One student’s mother and sister have entered and are sitting near me. The student comes back frequently to discuss what is happening in the rehearsal with her mother, who seems

to be coaching her delivery. The mother and sister are singing along audibly with the singing onstage. They actually know the songs – evidently the student-actor has been sharing the rehearsal experience with the family!

In Scene 10 the lines are a little jumbled but Mary Ann gives them the cues and they practice the lines again and again until they are relatively smooth.....once the students have memorized the line sequence they must work on delivery.... “Let’s get the level of projection back up” and I remark to myself that Mary Ann is really very good at making criticisms that are directed at those onstage but also speak to everyone. She really has a handle on how to approach these rehearsals; the students really respond to her and respect her.

There is really very little activity going on outside the actual rehearsal. The students who are not on stage have settled down and are watching. I search for things to observe but all of the activity is on the stage and actors are in character. The students are really focusing on the performance and on Mary Ann’s instructions. A few are practicing their lines while sitting in the audience chairs, but in very low voices. There is one kid that does not really seem to know what he is doing and keeps going up to the stage during the wrong scene.

Mary Ann gives out the “money” for the gambling scene and gives some specific directions about how to deal with the “money.” Many students ask questions: “Can we ball it up?” “Should we fold it?” “When we throw it down , shouldn’t it be in a pile?” “Should I stand here...or here (6 inches away)?” These are very specific questions and it is crystal clear that the actors understand and have a clear vision of what the scene is supposed to be like – very well developed compared to the last time I was here! This is a long song and dance number. “BIG VOICES PLEASE,” Mary Ann pleads. The execution of this direction is uneven. The mother behind me says to her daughter, “weight off the knees!” when she does the slide and the daughter mouths back, “OK.” She does as her mother has suggested on the next go-round. They repeat this scene five times, with focus on specific moments, really working on small series of notes. For example, the line “coming out, coming, out, coming out, coming out!” is a tricky tune and Michael demonstrates for the students, who then try to imitate the sequence. They go over this many times until it sounds correct.

After this scene is over there are lots of little conferences with Mary Ann. The students have concerns and questions and need individual attention. “How far out should I be?” “How high do we lift the benches?” “When should I start walking out?” This tells me that the performance is really in the fine-tuning stage. After these discussions, the group practices “Sit down, you’re rockin’ the boat” about five times. Mary Ann then ends practice by telling everyone what to bring for the last practices, and be in costume by 3:15. Everyone seems elated.

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Researcher: Amy Kleiman
PS 94
May 17, 2001

I attended a reflection meeting at PS 94 after the second performance of *Annie*. Before the meeting began, the cast and Ms. DiOrio, the liaison teacher, were waiting in the auditorium for Victor, the director, who would be conducting the meeting. She asked the students to close their eyes and, “reflect on the experience from eight months earlier. “Examine your feelings, thoughts, and think about what we learned—and still need to learn.” The students obliged. Soon after, Brenda Malloy from ArtsConnection entered the auditorium and began the meeting.

Brenda asked the students to, “relax, take a deep breath, and let your thoughts settle.” Then she asked, “What did you think it was going to be like (to be in the production)?”

Children’s comments:

I thought it might be a little boring.
I thought it would be difficult. When I practiced sliding or saying lines I thought I might fall off the stage—but doing it over and over again, I got calm.
I thought it would be like a regular class play.
I thought it was gonna be fun.

Another student commented that she thought they would have a real dog. Brenda then asked what it had been like for them.

It would be better if there was more space to dance (on stage).
It was difficult singing and dancing—every time I sang I was embarrassed.

“What was the hardest thing about it?” asked Brenda.

The hardest for me was singing my solo.
The hardest was the dancing because if you make a mistake you fall on your face.
Remembering my lines was hard.
I found it hard to stop talking.
It was hard going on stage.
Dancing on the stairs. I was afraid I would trip.

Ms. DiOrio mentioned how if they missed a step they had learned enough to move on. A girl named R_____ said she had been afraid of tripping on the covers. Another girl, A_____, stated, “When I was dancing, I didn’t know if I was going to do it right.” A third girl chimed in, “When I was walking on the stairs I was afraid I might bump my head.” Lastly, a student commented, “I had trouble singing my solo and controlling myself on stage (from laughing).

At this point, Victor and Stephanie entered the auditorium. Stephanie told the children she had to leave to catch a flight. “You did a great job—I loved working with you,” she exclaimed. The students looked crestfallen and a large group of them got up and surrounded her, hugging her and telling her they would miss her. Many said, “I love you,” to her and the girl who played Annie had trouble letting her go. Stephanie was doing the same and had tears in her eyes. A tremendous attachment had been formed.

After the commotion about Stephanie’s departure, they resumed their discussion about what they found to be the most difficult thing for them.

I found it difficult being in front of a crowd.

Right now, saying goodbye.

Trying not to bump into each other on stage (when we were dancing).

When something funny happened on the stage it was hard not to laugh.

At this point, Victor took over the reflection. He asked the students to go up to the stage and sit on the steps. Then he had them take deep breaths to the count of three. He asked them, “What did you learn from the experience? What worked? What didn’t? Think about how far you’ve gone. You’ve come a long, long way.” Then instead of having the students answer the questions verbally he asked them to show him with their bodies and facial expressions, one by one, “what it was like for you at the very beginning in October or November. Take a pose here—show physically what you were feeling at the beginning. Let your body tell the story.”

Each student came forth in turn and struck a pose that they thought reflected their experience. Naturally, some were more comfortable expressing themselves in this domain than others. As each student assumed a position they formed a human sculpture.

When they all were in position Victor told them he would tap each child on the shoulder and then they were to, “say one word to express your feelings.” Here are some examples:

Tired

Bored

Confused

Shy

Thoughtful

“Now go to the middle of the year,” exclaimed Victor. This time the student’s body language changed completely. Most students used their bodies to express openness and confidence. “What made you feel great about yourselves now?” asked Victor.

I got used to it and learned how to focus.

I felt good because I was Flannigan.

This comment led Victor to ask, “Why did you stay even if you had wanted to leave when you didn’t get a part you wanted? Some students had left the production for various reasons.

*Because we would have let the team down.
My mom made me—then I started getting used to the show—then my mom wanted to take me out! But I wanted to be part of something important.
If we changed parts it would ruin the performance.*

Victor asked them to pose to represent the current week. They did. “What will you take with you?” One girl responded, “I was sad to see Stephanie go.” She started to cry and others grouped around her to comfort her. “We got to know you and Michael and Stephanie so much,” she continued.

“What do you think the school got out of it?” Victor asked them.

*They got to have a play.
The others got to experience it and then they can think if they want to be in it.
Inspiration.*

In conclusion Victor asked, “What advice would you give to future fifth graders that want to do Broadway Junior?”

*That they need to project their voices.
I would tell them they need to focus.
They need to articulate.
They need to be serious and then have fun.
They will learn how a performance feels so exciting.
If they are looking to do a show they need to work together and pay attention—the show will be better.
I would tell them to join a lot of plays. In middle school they could have a good resume if they do a lot of things.
I would say it was hard—and if something bad happened I had to keep on smiling.*

**Perspectives
On The
Broadway Junior Program
In
Three New York City Public Schools**

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November 2002

**The Broadway Junior Program:
Summary of Key Findings from a Two-Year Evaluation
Robert Horowitz, Ed.D.**

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*. For the last two years, we evaluated the Broadway Junior program in three New York City schools: PS 94 (Brooklyn), PS 176 (Manhattan) and East Side Middle (Manhattan).

Quality of Program and Materials

- Broadway Junior provides an exceptional set of books and materials to guide production of the musicals. These resources are comprehensive, well organized, and attractively produced. Materials include librettos, vocal books, piano/vocal scores, a Director’s guide, Cross-Curricular Activities and Enrichment Guide, Performance/Accompaniment CDs, Production Handbook, and a Choreography Video. These resources provide excellent support for schools to rehearse and stage the musicals.

Impact on Students

- Children participating in the program demonstrated personal growth in several areas. We observed improvement in self-confidence, positive risk-taking, motivation, self-discipline, and social behavior. Children learned that they needed to work hard on their roles over several months, developing focus and discipline.
- Children demonstrated improvement in social skills and relations with others, including teachers, administrators and peers. They developed cooperative learning skills, new kinds of relationships with adults, and new perceptions of their peers. The rehearsals provided a unique school opportunity to work collaboratively on a challenging long-term project with students from other grades. Many children were engaged in a variety of backstage and production tasks besides performing. They learned that they must all work as a team to develop a successful performance.
- Children were challenged to integrate learning from different disciplines – such as the performing arts, language and culture – as they developed their roles. This process of thinking and performing across domains of learning supported the development of general cognitive skills. These include creative thinking abilities, such as originality and elaboration (the ability to add detail in one’s creative work, going beyond minimal expectations), and the ability to synthesize, represent and express knowledge and ideas.
- Children developed a variety of skills within the performing arts disciplines of music, dance, and theater.
- Although our evaluation was not designed to track academic improvement, the rehearsals supported development of English Language Arts skills, such as speaking, listening, vocabulary, diction, meaning and interpretation of a text, narrative, and character development.

Impact on the School Community

- 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. Parents strongly participated in various roles, including costume design and production.

Perspectives on the Broadway Junior Program in Three New York City Public Schools

Dr. Rob Horowitz

The Broadway Junior Program and This Year's Study

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*.

During the 2000-2001 school year we conducted a qualitative study in three New York City public schools that produced Broadway Junior musicals, PS 94 in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn, East Side Middle School in Manhattan, and PS 176 in the Inwood section of Manhattan¹ This year we continued our research in these three schools as they staged productions of *The Music Man* and *Schoolhouse Rock Live*.

Basic demographic information for these schools can help put the program's target population in context. East Side Middle school, in Manhattan's Upper East Side, serves 394 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, 57.9% of East Side Middle School's students are white, 12.2% black, 16.2% Latino, and 13.7% are Asian or classified as "Other." Academically, East Side Middle School stands out as a high-performing public school in New York City, with 84.2% 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 its 660 students are eligible for free lunches, and the student body is 17.4% white, 11.8% black, 67.3% Latino, and 3.5% Asian or "Other." In terms of academic performance, 38.1% of students pass or excel in state and city administered standardized tests in English, and 31.5% pass or excel in mathematics.

At Henry Longfellow School (PS 94) in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, 91% of its 1378 students are eligible for a free lunch. The school is primarily comprised of students of Latino (67.6%) and Asian (24.4%) background. White students make up 6.7% of the school's population and black students, 1.4%. Academically, 43.2% of the students are passing or excelling in city and state standardized tests administered in English, and 43.3% passing or excelling in mathematics.

¹ Horowitz, R. (2001). *Evaluation of the Broadway Junior – ArtsConnection Program in Three New York City Public Schools*. New York: Music Theater International,

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.

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.

This year we were interested in learning more about the perceptions of the various adults who participated in or observed the Broadway Junior rehearsals and productions. Therefore, we interviewed teachers, parents, and principals in the three schools. We also sent a survey to the parents of the young performers.

This report presents their perspectives on the Broadway Junior program.

Children's Experiences: Reflection, Growth and Learning

After the children in one school finished their last production of the year they gathered for a 'reflection' – a meeting where they talked about what they had experienced as they rehearsed and then performed the show. The thrill of the kids after the performance was palpable. It was clear from the way they spoke to each other and respected the directions of the teachers that they had developed into a real team. Many of the students remarked on their feelings of belonging to the group.

The kids were obviously excited. A teacher suggested they put their heads down and breathe in and out slowly to calm themselves down. Then Victor Maog, the Director, sat in front of them and asked them to say one word to express how they felt. Each child had a turn: *Excited, nervously excited, embarrassed, fun, nervous, glad, scary, awesome, proud, hyper, electricity, hurray.*

The teachers in the room offered their responses: *stupendous, fabulous and scintillating.*

After lunch, they sat in a circle on the stage of the auditorium. Victor asked them to close their eyes, drop their heads and raise their hands, in turn, to show whether they thought they had changed a little, pretty much, or a lot. They all raised their hands for "a lot."

He asked, “What’s the difference in you now?” They answered:

- *I used to be really shy. Now I know you guys and can tell you how I feel and stuff.*
- *Before I wasn’t confident about performing. Now I can give it 100%. I’m not scared ‘cause I know I’ll do good.*
- *I used to be nervous sometimes. Now I’m used to it, ‘cause we’ve done seven shows already!*
- *I didn’t use energy before. Now I use a lot of energy.*
- *I wasn’t a dancer before. Now I can dance. I’m not shy anymore.*

“What do you know now about yourself, apart from your talents?” Victor asked.

- *Before I had low self-esteem. I didn’t believe in myself. I was sure I would mess up. You all were teaching us to go with the flow. Don’t let anything stop you. There could be bombs going off, the World Trade Center disaster, you sing no matter what!*
- *I, too, didn’t have self-esteem. I thought I couldn’t do anything. Now I’ve done seven shows. I have to believe in myself.*
- *I know more about my talent. In Junior High I won’t be shy to participate if there’s a musical or something.*

“Imagine if you were a fourth or fifth grader who just saw the show. What do you think surprised you in the show? What do you think you would have liked?”

- *Everything. That someone in your class who normally is annoying to you and won’t leave you alone, then they see you up there and they get jealous of you!*
- *They liked the way we had our attitude, the way we performed it.*
- *They liked the beat of [the song] ‘Conjunction Junction.’ They were clapping!*

“What do you think your classmates found out about you?”

- *When the papers came back telling who was in the program, they were like “I don’t think she’s talented, she never participates.” Now they see they’re wrong. She has a lot of energy and is a talented person.*
- *Now I have attitude. I can be nice and quiet and I can have attitude.*
- *Everyone in the class said, “Oh, it’s gonna be boring.” Then they saw it!*
- *Before they didn’t know I was a good actor. Now they know I’m a good actor.*

The reflection session continued. Victor asked about their academic work. “Did being in this program affect your participation in your regular schoolwork and in the classroom?”

- *I didn't participate before. Now I do. This helped. My head was always in the clouds. Now my attention is on the teachers. Now I can focus.*
- *Me too. I used to look around and out the window when the teacher was talking. Now I focus on the teacher and so I learn more stuff.*
- *We put our focus straight on what we have to do.*
- *I used to be afraid to read in front of the class. Now that I've been performing, I've seen getting in front of the class is the same thing, so I am focused.*
- *I used to be the bad guy. Now I'm a good guy in class. It used to be that the teacher was always paying more attention to me. She used to always be looking at me. I used to always be bad. Now I'm a good kid...I take deep breaths when I'm mad.*

Victor then asked what had most surprised them about the production.

- *When everyone was clapping and then laughing. It was so exciting because they didn't boo us!*
- *That my friends were there to cheer me on.*
- *My cousin grabbed me and hugged me so hard! He wouldn't normally do that.*
- *Our friends were surprised and so excited.*
- *I was surprised by the audience participation. They were laughing and moving with us.*
- *We made it through with no show stoppers! [meaning no songs that fell apart in the middle]*

Obviously, the children were deeply affected by their experiences. They had worked hard for many weeks on the production, learning lines, songs, dances, characterization and much more. They had given several performances for their peers, families and teachers and now were trying to encapsulate their feelings with one word. Certainly not an easy task.

The children in the reflection meeting spoke about making new friends and about the sense of family within the group. At first, the children pointed to the talents they never knew they had as the principal benefit the program. But when questioned directly about how they had grown as people, they were quite articulate about many of the other changes that they had noticed in themselves.

The yearlong nature of Broadway Junior may be one of its most significant positive traits; the fact that children were chosen to participate and had the choice themselves of whether to stay in the production clearly contributed to their own sense of self-worth and appreciation of the program. Several students were grateful and proud that they'd chosen to stay with it despite disparaging remarks of peers, or boredom with some of the activities, or frustration with the hard work.

The performance aspect was also key: children could build their skills and talents over time, and build the sense of group commitment, and thus feel confident to perform in front of peers. It was a huge achievement that they had felt so vulnerable at first, but then persevered. They spoke of realizing that “if you stick with it long enough, you can do it.”

The lesson of discipline, commitment, and staying power were as important as discovering their hidden talents. The camaraderie and supportiveness of the kids to each other were also important. Through their experience, they built a small community that was able to help them persevere and ultimately perform the show for their parents, peers and teachers.

This community of young performers was in a sense a microcosm of our larger society, and in a manner that is truly an exception to the typical school experience. Each participant had to discover their own way to make a unique contribution to the success of the final performances. In addition to acting and singing, children prepared props, gave stage directions, worked on scenery, and much more, all for a common effort. Ultimately, they learned to rely on each other’s contribution, as they gained skills and confidence in their roles. Another unique aspect of the production community was its diversity, across ages and grades, gender, background and ethnicity. Parents contributed as well, preparing costumes and selling tickets. Few programs in schools call on this kind of coordinated effort, and with such high standards of performance.

In this study, we present the perspectives of various grownups on how working on the productions affected the children. As much as possible, we use the words of the adults, obtained through observation, interview and survey. Through their descriptions we can try to understand the changes that the students went through, and better understand their experiences.

In the excerpts from interview transcripts, **P** indicates a parent, **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.

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Motivation, Persistence and Self-Discipline

Many parents and teachers spoke to us about how the collective effort at learning skills, rehearsing, and developing the performance required focus, discipline and motivation. Children developed an increased ability to stay on task as they attempted to master difficult artistic and performing skills. They needed to make a strong commitment to the production despite competing demands on their time and interest.

Some children found this kind of focus easier than others. For instance, a parent of a seventh grader talked about her daughter’s experience with Broadway Junior. The parent noted that her child had a background in theater and a strong interest in the discipline.

- I: Was it hard for her to learn all the lines and the songs?
P: I have to say, I was just talking about this with a friend the other day. J_____’s an excellent student...but of course school is school, no matter what. So, when it comes to a test or something there can be moaning and groaning. However, when she comes home with a script, particularly for this production, she comes home, whips it out, and is so excited about both the songs and the lines. And in my mind, practically memorizes it overnight along with everybody else’s parts. [She] gets familiar with everyone’s roles. So, to answer your original question, it requires a lot of work, but she doesn’t look at it like hard work. She just enjoys it. It certainly takes time, but it’s something she looks forward to.

It’s difficult to generalize about the source of each child’s motivation. We heard one story of how several children had dropped out of last year’s production, but were angry and envious when they saw the show. So they decided to participate this year, and channel that anger into a successful performance.

- T1: We had a couple of kids then who had gone in and had started with *Guys and Dolls*, and then had dropped out.
T2: Yeah. And they were angry when they saw the performance, and said...
T1: And then came and did this and stuck with it.
I: Oh, really?
T1: Yes, they did. We had three or four of those...I mean, they were really mad.
T2: Some were really upset because they wanted to be in it.
T1: They were so jealous. And it was a healthy jealousy. Look how well they directed their feelings of envy. It was pretty terrific.
I: And they turned around and did it.
T1: Turned around and did it. And they remembered it, they stuck with it. Which was pretty cool...

A collaborating teacher explained that although a group of students left the show, those that stayed learned the value of discipline and commitment.

But the really dedicated ones stayed. They learned a lot about discipline. They saw that if they stuck it out – stuck with it – it would be rewarding. In my fourth grade class, I had three kids who were in the show. They didn’t necessarily change because they didn’t need to change. They were just very dedicated to the process. They showed up at every rehearsal. It was a great experience for them.

A teacher described a difficult student who was able to learn to work effectively in the production.

He really got into it and managed to keep it together. He was a real discipline problem in the beginning. But in the show itself, he was a real clutch performer. His talent showed.

A school principal explained how the collaborative focus of the group helped build a sense of community among the kids.

They need to develop a lot of staying power. The show requires commitment. For the first few months they don't see a show, just the preparations, exercises, vocalizing, and warm-ups. Until January they don't see the goal. And they have to attend two afternoons a week. They have to give up Little League and soccer. Thirty remained in the end. Over time they start to bond, camaraderie builds up. (principal)

It's good for them, it motivates them. They feel like they're talented. They're surprised about their talent. They get little feelings about it. My daughter does ballet so she likes it, it's her thing. But the show made her more responsible. It was hard for her. She thought it would be a regular play. She didn't know she'd have to put so much effort into it. You have to love it. She learned a lot. (parent)

A parent of a seventh grader talked about his child's commitment to stick to the task of learning his lines. He had a lead role with many lines to learn.

I: What was the most challenging thing for him?

P: I think he felt learning the lines was challenging. That was something quite new to him, and something he'd never done. I would say it was the thing he was most nervous about.

I: His part had many lines?

P: ...We didn't really do [memorization] at school [when I was young], but my parents stood up there in front of their classroom reciting poetry and just memorizing things. Reciting is how they used to do things. It's something that doesn't happen really in schools anymore. Kids don't memorize and recite. So that was something he had never done before. I think probably in some ways it was the most surprising thing about it. I don't think it had really struck him before, that, "Oh God, I've got to memorize lines and remember them word for word." And he felt responsible for memorizing them and delivering them word for word. So that was probably the most challenging, besides the fact of getting up on stage in front of his peers.

I: How did he cope with learning the lines?

P: He practiced a lot. He didn't seem stressed about it. He never said, "Oh, I can't do this," or anything like that. He definitely took it seriously and practiced. And he practiced lines with his sister. I'd walk by his room and I'd hear him practicing.

A Musical Director spoke about how the children learned that they had to work hard to develop their performing skills.

I think it was also really good for these kids, all of them, across the board, to really learn about what it means to bring something up to true performance level. You know, there's no second chances, once the curtain comes up, you have to know your lines cold, as opposed to sorta-kinda know them. That was a big piece for our music band. Knowing the difference between kinda-sorta knowing them, and really knowing them inside out, backwards and forwards. A big piece. Because a lot of the children have no opportunity to be called upon to rehearse something again and again and again until it's polished. They don't know what that means!

Four girls worked consistently to master the quartet in *The Music Man*.

Those four little girls worked very, very hard to be able to pull that off. And they now know what it means to have to rehearse. Every week they were in here with me, an extra rehearsal. Every Monday for the last six weeks before the show for an hour working on harmony, so that they could do it. And no question about it, they never said, "Oh, I have to do it again," or "Come on, I'm tired." No, they got it. They really got it. (Musical Director)

A parent talked about her sixth-grade son, who was motivated to learn his lines and never complained.

P: I think when he originally did it, he expected to be back in the chorus somewhere, and not have a featured role...I encouraged him to do it because I liked the idea of a long-term elective. And, quite frankly, also because I felt that the public schools provided a somewhat limited amount of arts exposure and this was an opportunity for a good dose of arts...And I knew that they would also be going to see shows and talk about them. That was a lot of my motivation. I didn't see any other way he was going to get it in this year.

I: Was it difficult to learn all the lines, songs and choreography?

P: He didn't complain about it, but he worked at it. He did very diligently go and study his lines. He never asked me to read lines with him...He was nervous also about the dancing, because it was something he had never done. There was one part, he would come home every week and show it to me and practice it. He was obviously concerned about how he was going to perform it.

I had five kids [in the production]. They said it was a lot of work, but they enjoyed it. They became more focused. They became closer with each other. They wanted to read and work together. They had to be so focused to be in the play. [Back in my classroom], in their reading, they were a little more focused. They took more pride in what they were doing. They made beautiful posters in

class for a project we were doing. They did lots of details which they wouldn't have done in the past. (teacher)

On the other hand, some students didn't stick it out, and dropped out of the production. In one school, some students were forced by their Little League coaches to choose between baseball and musical theater.

In the beginning, after a little while, some kids dropped out. They got itchy. They wanted to be given parts and start working on the show itself. Some of the kids who left early on complained that they were tired of doing the exercises. We began with seventy kids and lost a few every month or so. We ended up with twenty-three. But that was enough. It was too much work for some of them. I was very disappointed when about ten kids dropped out about a month before the show. They weren't the absolute best workers, but still. I think they had some stage fright, some anxiety [and, according to the principal, because of Little League]. But the really dedicated ones stayed. They learned a lot about discipline. They saw that if they stuck it out, stuck with it, it would be rewarding. (teacher)

Gaining Self-Confidence

Parents and teachers often told us about children gaining confidence through participation in the productions. For instance, they sometimes mentioned that their child was shy, but was able to gain confidence through learning to perform.

And his sister, who did a whole bunch of small roles, she was right on the mark. She's a shy kid. And for her to show her colleagues, to see her on her mark, doing her thing, she was incredible. She's only 9 years old and she is so solid. [parent]

Some children had trouble dealing with their fear of performing. But they overcame their fear, gaining confidence in their ability to perform.

I mean, I don't know how these things sort of are. They're contagious. So, I don't know if he started it or he picked up on somebody else's thing. But you know, it turned into an almost crisis for him. He didn't go to one or two rehearsals....He said, "I'm not going to be in the show and that's it." And I said to him, "You can't do that. It's not responsible, the show's a week away, and all of your friends and everyone else is depending on you to do your part. You know, you can't just get up and walk away from this." So then, when I got home from work, he hadn't gone to rehearsal that day. [But then] he said, "Okay, that's it, I'm going to do it." [parent]

A parent described her child's growth in confidence.

I think she has a little less confidence in a few areas and I think that [Broadway Junior] helped her tremendously. And I think for all the kids, I think in just getting up in front of a class, making presentations, speaking up for yourself and just being more self aware and more confident in what you're going to say, I think it's a huge help doing it in a fun way. And I definitely think it spills over into your everyday life as you get older, too, even if you don't want to be an actress or a singer or a dancer. In the business world you need these skills. Or just in your everyday life. I really think it makes you a better all around person.

Other parents talked about what their children gained from Broadway Junior.

I think, every time he goes to a show for the rest of his life, he's going to remember it, quite frankly. And he'll feel good about it. And I think he'll always have this kind of good feeling about himself.

Well, the behavior that I'm talking about is not bad behavior versus good behavior, but shy behavior versus pride, you know, full of self-worth. A personal sense of satisfaction. Okay, I can give you a very specific example. My own daughter, who really has, in some ways, some really great onstage qualities. And on the other hand, she can get very fearful. She's not a risk-taker, as a person. And the first couple of performances, she did very well, then she kind of freaked herself out. And with two subsequent school performances, the weekend, Saturday and Sunday, she absolutely came alive. And Saturday night I saw she really came alive. Really alive, and I said, "What happened? That was fabulous!" And she said, "I tried to be the star when it was my turn." I was so happy. I said, "You know, if you use that philosophy in your whole life... Whether or not you're on the stage, but just on the street...in the boardroom. You will be a very successful person." You know? So that's a pretty heavy thing to learn.

Other perspectives on improved self-confidence:

I think they developed a certain, almost secret, pride about themselves. That they did this. This girl, before, during the rehearsals, if I saw her in the hallway, she wouldn't look at me. And then after the performance, now she's so happy to see me. She is really proud of herself. She's just different. The sense of accomplishment is amazing. (choreographer)

It gives the kids confidence that they didn't have before. They get stage presence and a better self image. They realize they have talents they never knew they possessed. The program nurtures and develops them. They get to show off to their parents. (principal)

A teacher talked about one girl who struggled to overcome her shyness and perform confidently on stage.

She literally hid behind people, I mean, [at first the Director] would say “Stand there” and she’d go hide behind a taller person! And [she would] dance with her fingers. I mean, it was so sad! Well she didn’t go front and center, but she put herself on her mark and did her thing, so it was still a group thing, but the fact that she wasn’t hiding behind someone else was fabulous. [At first] she never wanted a line, and then she was saying her lines, nice and big and clear.

A parent described her son, who was in sixth grade at the time he played a lead role last year in *Music Man*. She described him as shy, but nonetheless he found that he enjoyed performing.

- I: What do you think that your son got out of it?
P: He got a lot out of it. One is that he had a ton of fun. He came home from rehearsal every week and said, “Gee, we had a great time at rehearsal today.” Of course, when you want your kids in school you want them to really have fun at school. It was a different learning process for him. He thoroughly enjoyed it. Well, I think that being on stage in front of your peers is a terribly difficult thing to do, than in some ways in front of strangers at that age. Particularly in front of your peers. By the way, he is a shy kid. He is absolutely a shy kid.
I: Yet he got one of the lead roles.
P: That was very unexpected to him. My recollection is that they discussed the roles at the beginning and then he kind of came home and thought about who he would try out for.

A Musical Director told us about one child who has difficulty with school work and how working with the Broadway staff had helped his confidence.

The problems that he has really did impact on the rehearsal. I mean, it wasn’t scot-free, it’s not like he comes here, and he suddenly is no problem. [But the reasons for his success are] twofold. One, he knows deep down this is an area of strength for him. He is aware of that. The other thing is that he feels very safe, especially with me and [the choreographer]. He just knows how much we believe in him. And I know that, and that is not something that he normally allows himself to feel so readily.

Another parent spoke about gains in a child’s confidence through the challenge of mastering a difficult role.

The fact the director had made a commitment to his having the lead, endorsing and affirming his ability. That he could say, “Wow, people have confidence in me. I can have confidence in myself to do this.” Also, his confidence was built in that when he looked at how many lines it was, and he said, “Oh, it’s 140 lines, 3-plus songs. I don’t know.” But as they walked through it the first few weeks, he

realized he was going to be able to digest it and do the memorization and do the blocking and do the performing he needed to do.

A teacher told us about two fourth graders who almost left the show.

Two kids wanted to drop out at one point and we spoke to them and convinced them to stay. They complained they were tired of standing all the time. Their legs were hurting them. During the show they were among the most energetic. They were really out there. Their teacher said that [one of the girls] used to be very shy, and now she has more confidence .

Another parent talked of how her son took his role seriously, as he developed confidence in his abilities.

I think that he just most of all developed a sense of himself, of challenging himself. And I did feel throughout the process, especially at the end, that he was challenging himself to do it at a certain level that he would feel good about himself. And he would come home and he'd say, they did four performances but he felt differently about how he did each one...He'd say, "You know this performance my dancing wasn't as good," or he delivered this line a little bit late, somewhat self-critiquing, or "Gee, this was a really good show," Being able to assess himself and also assess the other performers. How they had done and how the group had done as a whole. Had they fooled around? Had they pulled it together? Had they taken it seriously? Because he's someone who felt like once he was going to do it, he was gonna do it. He wasn't going to go up there and make a fool out of himself.

A parent explained that being a part of the production enhanced her child's feeling of success:

The sense of self-worth and self-esteem was increased. I really think it's been really important for him. Because school's a very painful experience for him, and this is one big way in which it is not. I'm sure it has [carried over into other areas]. I mean, I can't quantify that, but I am convinced that it has.

Positive Risk-Taking

Another parent talked about his third grader gaining confidence and learning to take risks:

His self-esteem, I think, was definitely impacted favorably. And you know, at first he was worried, in last year's play, about the kiss and the slap... And you know, it turned out that he got to learn that there is a little respect for getting up on stage and doing something like that, and that you're not going to be teased for taking chances like that. And so that helped his attitude, his confidence as a kid, not just as an actor.

A parent described how her son worked with the Director to develop his performance, taking a personal risk and gaining confidence.

But, you know, he had a problem this year with Music Man, when he wanted to sing “Shipooopi” down an octave. And Mary Ann [Director] just wanted him to be comfortable in the part. But when he went down, and he tried to sing, you know, (sings in a very deep voice) “Well, a woman who’ll kiss on the very first date” – he couldn’t, you know, there was no tenor or baritone available to sing. He had nothing downstairs, so there was no energy, so the song couldn’t sell – and he was dancing a pretty vigorous dance. So he had no air to push, even if he was trying to go on the bottom on his register. So they kept saying, “You sound fine when you sing up high.” And some girl – a chorus member from last year – had teased him about how high he could sing, because one of the ballads he sang very high. And it lingered in his mind like a little virus. When it came time to sing this, he was not comfortably sing the octave up. And both Mary Ann and Amy [Music Director], to their great credit and to saving that song, walked him through that – he’s the comedy guy, he’s the party guy – and they walked him through the character, so that he could find that he could still be the funny guy and the nutty guy and sing it up the octave and have the confidence that he was doing the right thing as a singer and actor.

Performing

Clearly, the children’s growth in self-confidence was due to their perception that they had acquired new and difficult skills in dance, drama and singing, and had been able to use these skills to perform in front of their families, teachers and friends.

You know, I was just floored by it...Kind of parental pride, but also there was a lot of marvel in just that he could do it, and that he could enjoy doing it, and that it was really a pleasant and fulfilling experience. (parent)

Well, there was just a lot hard work. They improved a lot. Oh, I know, we all saw their joy when they got their first round of applause from the very first show in front of their parents. They ran back stage when the curtain closed and they were yelling at the top of their lungs “We’re superstars! We’re superstars!!!” You could see the sheer joy and excitement. It brought tears to all of our eyes. I know the kids here. A lot of them have hard lives. To get that response, to see a new side of them that they hadn’t seen, in the neighborhood in the school – that was it. (teacher)

Connections to Others: A Sense of Community

The productions helped children develop new kinds of relationships with peers and teachers. They were able to become friendly with other students from different grades.

As the rehearsals progressed, they became more aware that they were depending on each other to make the production a success, thereby developing a stronger sense of community.

In an interview, a parent talked about what a positive experience it was for her child to work with and get to know kids from the other grades.

That is a big thing because it's all grades, three grades, anybody can participate. In sixth grade she was able to make a lot of good friends with the seventh and eighth graders. It was so nice for her to meet a lot of other kids. And I liked particularly getting to know the older kids, too. That was terrific. The boys and the girls, they were all just so nice to each other. In the production, on the sidelines, the whole community was really great.

Another parent described a similar outcome for her sixth grader, telling us how important it was for him to be part of the group working on the production.

I: You said he really enjoyed the sense of community. How did you know that? Did he talk about it?

P: Well, because he came home every day and he would say he had so much fun, and during the break I sat with so and so, and we got this done, and we were laughing about this. And he would say, "Gee, now I know a lot of kids in different grades because they're in the show with me." Certainly as a sixth grader he felt connected to the whole school, being part of something that he might not have [otherwise]. Because he didn't just know kids in the sixth grade anymore, he knew kids in seventh and eighth grade really well, and spent a lot of time with them. So, that's when I say a feeling of community, a kind of feeling apart of something that was kind of significant to the entire school.

A parent spoke convincingly about how important it was for her child to be part of the production community.

I'm convinced that this was a really critical experience for K_____, given his basic overall failure in being able to keep up with his schoolwork. And I think that it has been a critical part of keeping him feeling okay about school. He looked forward to the play – from last year to this year – and I think it gave him a great sense of accomplishment. It gave him a peer group. You see, I mean, he's in his class, and they are his peer group in some ways, but in other ways they're not at all...It really gave him a sense of being able to do what everybody else is doing. And feeling like he's a full participant, and competent.

They were very supportive of each other. They were never putting each other down. They built strong relationships. (teacher)

The School Community

We asked a teacher if the Broadway Junior project affected the whole school community.

ArtsConnection has been great. The school had stopped doing performances before this. Anyway, the shows the school had put on themselves had been really garbage-y. So the kids weren't getting these skills anywhere else. A lot of kids feel better and happier when they see these other skills and are not judged entirely on their school skills. There are other sides to them. When I see the kids who were in the show in the hallways now, they always look happy and confident. They are smiling. You can tell they feel good about themselves.

The principal described the school community's reaction to the performances.

It adds a nice spirit, good feelings. Every grade sees it and they learn that they can eventually attain that. The performances add a lot. It shocks the community to see the performances – the professionalism of the scenery, the staging. They perform not as fourth or fifth graders but as much older children.

I'm just so happy that it's in the school. Of course she can always do this on the outside but it's just so nice for it to be in the school they're going to. And to be with a group of kids that they already know and to get to know other kids that they may not have, and I think that makes a big impression on you, even more so than doing it with outside groups. I think it's wonderful to have it in the school community, so I hope they're able to continue it. (parent)

Interest in Theater

A parent described how Broadway Junior had provided her child with the wonderful opportunity to perform and show her interests to the school community.

[Theater] is one of the things in her life that she just truly loves. She's the type of kid, I have to say, over the years most people's first impression of her is that she's be more of a shy child, not shy, but not the life of the party, you know, more reserved. And in my mind, because I know her at home, and from doing these things, I say she's really quite the opposite. When she's performing she has no fear, she loves being out there. She's on the small side. She's petite and she sings these numbers that are loud as can be. It's such a funny difference, what people's perceptions of her who don't know her that well. She really has a whole different side to her that comes out on stage and it's great to see.

A teacher told us that his students developed a greater interest in theater through working on the production.

Most of the kids had been touched by theater in some way in the past, some previous experience in an earlier grade, but very minimally. They developed 100%! After the process of a whole year, there was tremendous improvement. The experience of the whole legitimate, professional theater experience changed them. It opened a door for them. When they get older and the opportunity is there they will choose to do theater again....For instance, S_____ said she is going to a dramatic arts middle school. Out of 23, I assume 10 to a half will go on with drama.

A parent talked about how doing the production increased her child's desire to be a performer.

I guess it reinforced her good opinion of this kind of life in general. In the back of my mind, you know, it can be a heartbreaking life, if that's what you choose to have as your career. She just enjoys it so much I think it totally reinforced her idea of the type of people involved with it, and the joy of performing, and the communication with the audience, you know, knowing how to get people how to respond to you. And it also reinforced her idea that she really wants to go to LaGuardia [High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts].

A parent explained that her seventh grader developed a better understanding of drama as a result of the Broadway experience.

Partly it was the confidence of getting up on stage, and partly it was the new confidence of tackling a challenge. He likes being a part of the community. He developed a whole new appreciation for looking at the theater. We went to a children's production shortly thereafter he had done "The Music Man." It was a production of Gilbert and Sullivan and he said, "I didn't like it 'cause they really didn't have good character development." You know, Gilbert and Sullivan characters are pretty flat. I mean, he noticed that. He said, "Well, they're just kind of like caricatures and they were just played very flat." So I think he really developed an eye for what to look for as a member of the audience. At the same time, he looks at the actors and the actresses and the whole production in a different way. The first thing they're doing at school is they're reading a play this year, and he's very interested in it in a way that I do not think he would have been before...I'd say he definitely values theater and feels a linkage to it in a way that he didn't before.

A parent of a seventh grader told us that her son would be taking a break from Broadway Junior next year, but would continue in the future. However, she felt that his interest of in theatrical experiences was altered as a result of his participation in the production. She explained that he hadn't liked going to the theater in the past.

He is actually not going to take Broadway Junior this year. He opted for football (he's very passionate about this and he put the play as his second choice). Although, he said, "I did it last year and I'll do it next year." When other people

do it, when he goes to the theater, when he reads plays or he thinks about the theater experience, he thinks about it very differently [now].

Theater and Music Skills

A parent described the theatrical skills that his child learned.

I think he knows how to ratchet it up for a show. And I think that was a key component of this that he knows how to click from being the nine-year-old kid to whatever role he is. And I'm sure some of that is embedded in being able to draw out of a good script, and direction along with the script. He found something that he likes. If I said to him, "Mary Ann's doing a play, would you be interested?" he would say yes before asking what the play was. And a lot of it has to do with the experience of these two plays that he did, that were both Broadway Junior plays.

He got to find out how he could lean on his voice and actually shine. He learned to play with his voice. (parent)

A parent expressed surprise at how good the production was and how much her son had learned about drama.

It was better than I expected. I thought the show was wonderful. I was surprised because he kept talking about how he really was very concerned that he be in character. It was obvious that they had had a lot of conversation about this during the rehearsal process because he was [often saying] I've got to be my character, and who the character would be. And I felt like he was not the only one who got this message, the entire cast did. That part of it really struck me.

Another parent comment:

It was more than clear to me as a parent, that there was training and experience here that was beyond anything purchasable. I could spend thousands and thousands of dollars and not be able to buy that anywhere.

So they're really, really talented kids. I know these children, and we have a lot of children in there with issues, learning issues and behavioral issues, that one would think would impede the learning of some very specific skills. That turned out to be completely untrue. [Musical Director]

We asked a principal what he had heard from parents about the performances. The principal emphasized how parents were impressed with how the children pulled together to put on the production.

After the show parents said they couldn't believe how well it was staged. They are used to regular performances that are cute, nice, but without the polish

professional artists can bring. Since October, [the children] have been working with a choreographer, musical director and technical director. They've been using real mikes. There are totally different characteristics in such a performance. The parents were truly awed by it. They commented that they couldn't believe it.

A teacher in one school explained that she had showed a video of the musical to her entire class. The children in her class that were in the production demonstrated their knowledge by explaining the context of the video to the rest of the class.

I think they're a lot more sophisticated about it. I mean, my experience was, I showed the movie to all the classes, not just the kids in the show. So that the kids who were watching would understand what they're watching, and instead of being filled with: "What happened?" "What's he saying?" "What did they do?" They would know. But the kids that were in the show, when we were watching the video, would ask me to stop, and they would explain to the [non-participating] kids.

Responses to Parent Surveys

We surveyed parents to gain additional insight into how children grew during the rehearsals and productions. Representative responses are provided in this section.

Why did your child participate in the Broadway Junior program?

Parents reported that their children participated because of their interest in the arts and their positive experiences with prior Broadway Junior productions.

Sample responses:

- *She has loved to sing, dance and act since she was in kindergarten.*
- *He found the program very interesting.*
- *His sister had fun with it previous years, and he had enjoyed Pied Piper production.*
- *She had been in Annie and Guys and Dolls in previous years.*
- *I saw it as a great after school opportunity.*
- *She loves the theater and musicals and she enjoys acting.*
- *She has a penchant for everything artistic.*
- *My child is interested in the acting/singing field.*

Did he or she participate in musicals, acting, dancing or singing before Broadway Junior?

Most parents who responded to the surveys reported that their children had some prior experience in related arts activities.

- *No, she sang in the school chorus only. Her first year in Broadway Junior was in 3rd grade.*
- *Yes, dancing and singing.*
- *Yes, the school has a strong drama program. Kids write and present their own one-act plays.*
- *Yes, community theater productions – 2 shows.*
- *Has been in school “mini” plays and shows. Also plays violin in school.*
- *Yes, other plays put together by the drama teacher at the school and other Broadway Junior productions.*
- *She has been taking tap dancing classes. She participated in Christmas shows at her Catholic school since kindergarten.*
- *Yes, school plays.*

Did your child gain new skills or abilities in Broadway Junior?

Parents reported gains in arts skills, self-confidence and performing ability, and new relations with peers.

- *She learned how to dance better and perform with a huge crowd watching. She learned to take instructions.*
- *Learned new dancing steps and songs he enjoyed.*
- *Yes. More confidence in being in front of a crowd, and more control in his singing—he had two solo songs, so it was not like just being in the chorus.*
- *Her singing voice and confidence keep improving. Also, she was able to improvise in a scene to cover a missed prop cue—This was amazing to watch!*
- *As a member of the “Barbershop Quartet” she learned to sing a capella harmony.*
- *She started the show with stage fright and by the end was asking for more lines.*
- *She increased her confidence to perform and of course learned to work with a group of fellow students. She also learned to memorize her parts and speak her lines slowly and enunciate. And, of course, she had fun.*
- *Yes, she had to learn her lines. Synchronize with the rest of the cast. Work in with the chorus. [She learned] the importance of rehearsal and more rehearsal.*
- *My child gained self-confidence and was not afraid to conquer a role of a different gender.*

Did you notice any other positive changes in your child because of the Broadway Junior experience?

Again, parents reported improvement in self-confidence, performing ability and peer relations. They also reported an increased interest in theater.

- *She learned how to be more outgoing and make more friends.*
- *He was really proud of his scenes, especially one which had a lot of exits and re-entries from different sides of the stage.*
- *She continues to strengthen her ability to create and “inhabit” a character. And her sense of pitch kept improving. And she really developed her brogue (her character was Irish.)*
- *She met and worked with kids from the other programs and other aged children. Great concentration and development of stage presence.*
- *She felt special (which she is) and invited friends to come and watch!*
- *I think any creative endeavor brings out the best in children and when they see themselves get better at something it impacts positively on other school activities.*
- *She came out more enthusiastic about continuing in acting and dancing classes.*
- *Higher self-esteem and confidence in herself.*

What surprised you the most about the production?

Parents were impressed with the dedication of the children and the quality of the performances.

- *My husband and I thought the production was so excellent.*
- *How much I enjoyed seeing a play. Everything.*
- *How good the kids were, though, this was less of a surprise with Music Man. We had been treated to surprisingly good productions of Annie and Guys and Dolls in previous years.*
- *I was blown away by her comfort on stage.*
- *How good it was.*
- *Nothing! I had seen last year’s performance and was extremely impressed with the level of professionalism.*
- *They’re always very enjoyable and of course some kids are better than others, but as an ensemble the kids really know what they are doing.*
- *The professionalism with which the kids took their participation. The potential that was revealed in most of the kids to act and express themselves.*
- *The children were very dedicated to the performance. They memorized complex lines and songs.*

What was the most challenging about the Broadway Junior production for your child? How did he or she cope with these challenges?

Parents reported that children were positively challenged by the musical, dance and dramatic demands of the production.

- *She had to learn a lot of songs and how to dance to all the songs.*
- *He just kept working hard and practicing his lines. His focus and motivation were great!*
- *Singing harmony. [She coped with it through] extra practice with the musical director.*
- *She originally wanted only backstage work. Then as time went on she loved the play and wanted to be part of it.*
- *She really enjoyed the entire process and didn't find any of it challenging.*
- *What I believe was most challenging about Broadway Junior was getting the young children to memorize their lines.*

Broadway Junior and the ArtsConnection Staff

Principals, parents and teachers were overwhelmingly appreciative of the work of the Broadway Junior-ArtsConnection staff. For instance, a parent described how the production team helped create a positive experience for her child.

I think that he felt that they were taking it seriously and wanted a good performance out of him. That they were talking to him. I was around rehearsals because I was helping supervise kids in the back room, with costumes. And I could see the level that were treating the kids. He felt like he was treated with respect, that he was doing something seriously and they were respectful about the way they treated him. He's a kid who's always been in large classrooms, in a public school situation. He's in a school with a lot of kids, not that many teachers for the number of kids. Anytime an adult pays attention to you, you kind of suck that up in a way, because you're not just part of the [big] group. That was part of the good experience for him. Someone was paying attention to the way he specifically was doing something. Even if it was the way he said a line that day, or when his entrance was. I think again, in a large class public school setting, when you have some individual attention for something good and something serious, even if it's because you are doing something slightly wrong and someone's trying to correct it, to make it better, it's good attention.

A parent praised the relationships that her child developed with the adults involved in the production.

She just always talks so much about the people, the grown-ups that were involved in the production. She just thought they were lovely. I mean she couldn't say enough about how nice they were...I think it's a discipline too, it's not just a free for all. They really have to learn to work as a team. And there would be certain times when she'd come home and say, "So-and-so wasn't cooperating," and how they had to handle it and that would annoy her because she's a very well-behaved child and she likes things to go smoothly and participates in a positive way. And I do think Mary Ann [Director] just really handled it really well...I think that made a big impression on her. And that makes an impression on your life, how you see grownups handle situations.

The parent continued:

I can't say enough about the grownup role models. I think that's been just great for her....You know, some kids really get connected to their teachers and it's just love, love, love, adore them. She has not always been like that. So I know when she picks out certain people to talk about I know it really means a lot to her. And this group, she has only had great things to say about them. So, I really think that was a big, big deal.

We asked a parent whether it was difficult for her son to learn his lines and songs. She spoke of how the Director helped him prepare.

I'd say it was somewhere between difficult and whatever would be a little less than difficult. He was enthusiastic, so he was motivated to learn. He wanted to. And I think that Mary Ann made it easy. She pointed out a pace that would work. She got them to bite off small chunks, and that made a big difference. She knew how to pace them. And at times she would say, you need to know this song, you need to have this song memorized now, you need to be able to do this scene without the script. So they would walk with the script for the first couple of weeks of rehearsal. The kids would all be walking around with binders. She encouraged the kids to scribble on the script, highlight your line.

And finally, some additional perspectives on the program and the staff that helped put together the performances:

It was great to work with a group of adults who know what they are doing, who were so professional. I was very impressed with Broadway Junior. The instructors were excellent. They were really good with the kids. They spoke nicely to them, were pleasant and mature. They were very insightful. I mean they really knew their stuff. (teacher)

The quality of what Mary Ann got out of the kids and the degree of fun that the kids had, and satisfaction they got out of doing their best, definitely met or succeeded my expectations. (parent)

It's an excellent program. It's enjoyable and brings a good spirit to the school. (principal)