



Press Coverage

22 August 2007, Third Sector (www.thirdsector.co.uk)

Funding story: Step into Dance

By Radhika Holmstrom, Third Sector, 22 August 2007

The Jack Petchey Foundation and the Royal Academy of Dance have brought the art form to children across London.

When the Jack Petchey Foundation approached the Royal Academy of Dance in November 2005, with the aim of funding a pilot of extra-curricular dance classes for 400 students in 28 secondary schools, Melanie Adams, head of marketing and communications at the academy, was sceptical.

She says: "As a dance education charity, it's not every day that someone contacts you with a proposal to fund your mission. However, the more I found out, the more I felt secure that this was a real possibility. When we met, it was very clear that the foundation had done its research.

"The key to this has been partnership. We had very strong ideas of what we wanted to achieve, and so did they. We were very lucky in that those rarely clashed - but there was a bit of compromise along the way."

Adams admits that, although the Step into Dance pilot has been successful, not everything has gone smoothly. The academy was unsure about working in the four London boroughs the foundation wanted it to: Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington. However, Adams says: "I'm very glad we did, because we have widened participation in dance."

Andrew Billington, director of the foundation, agrees about the importance of a genuine partnership. He says: "We did ask questions, mainly about the ability to meet the needs of schools that didn't have very good facilities for dance. And, yes, some of the tutors have had to adapt some of their thinking, but they've been prepared to do that.

"We were very concerned about offering different forms of dance, and the academy was happy to do that. But forcing people to do things they don't really want to won't work - both parties genuinely need to appreciate each other's goals and interests."

The Step into Dance pilot has been so successful that the foundation has given it £179,000 to extend the scheme to four more London boroughs - Croydon, Hammersmith & Fulham, Merton and Wandsworth. It plans to extend the initiative further. "The key to rolling it out was our ability to say 'these are the areas where we can improve' and theirs to say 'we realise we need to get more out of it in this area'," Adams says.

The questions will continue, but that's precisely what makes the partnership effective.