

Child Development Relevance Program Proposal  
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**Program Title:** Child Development Relevance Program (CDR)

**Location:** Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre

**Participants:** Teacher Assistant Program (TAP)

### **Program Background**

**Target audience.** CDR is designed for TAP participants, including pre-professional students in PBT's Graduate Program.

**Specific Need.** TAP is a Teacher Assistant Program based on reaction-action, hands on learning where graduate students are provided the opportunity to teacher assist (shadow teach) with an established PBT teacher. However, TAP participants, while in a teacher-learning setting, are not given the opportunity to learn about child development or its relevance to ballet instruction. A student based need is highlighted by the PBT Graduate students who are at a pivotal moment in their dance education. The graduate program is meant to prepare dancers for their next step in the ballet journey. In many cases, this results in a developed passion for teaching dance. One prevalent issue in ballet instruction is a lack of teachers who teach for their students. Often ballet teachers are passionate about ballet over children or education, and their teaching strategies then prioritize the artistic desire and technical demands of classical ballet. One cause of this issue results from the fact that many dancers are thrown into teaching based not on their teaching ability, but on their own accomplishments in ballet. Providing dancers at this stage of career decision the option to study teaching ballet with emphasis on child development and educational strategy would create more competent, student-focused ballet teachers.

### **Objectives:**

- Develop knowledge base of general child development
- Obtain context knowledge for correct ballet technique
- Identify appropriate sequence of ballet step instruction for each level
- Identify specific aspects of child development within ballet instruction
- Develop class plans supportive of age specific child development for ballet instruction
- Establish a set of strategies to handle child behavior in class
- Build confidence in classroom management for ballet instruction
- Develop ability to successfully assist in ballet classes

### **Discussions and Training Activities:**

**Initial discussion.** The initial discussion will begin with a brief introductory exercise where they will describe one example from their own experience in the classroom for TAP where either their shadow teacher or themselves felt frustrated in teaching a specific age group or individual. They will identify where they may have sensed or experienced a disconnect between the teaching process of student behavior, teacher response, and student learning outcome.

**Presentation.** The child development presentation will be held in a PowerPoint format, with a provided information handout with relevant child development points. This presentation will establish a connection between child development knowledge and its relevance to teacher applications. This presentation will be organized to facilitate participant listening and learning

by using headlines and analogies to connect to the initial discussion activity in order to keep learning on track towards new information acquiring and teacher applications.

**Observation.** Observation will be utilized after the presentation to connect child development learning to generalized ballet teaching applications. The observation will take place in the form of short video clips of instructional strategies or behavioral management from a variety of age groups, ranging from 2 year olds to 15 year olds. These clips will begin with student behavior. During these clips, participants will be provided a series of questions to take note of focusing on the child's behavior, instructor's response, and child response. Participants will then be asked to provide constructive feedback in application of prior knowledge to explain what they would have done differently, and the student learning outcome they would have expected

**Writing and reflection.** The strategies of writing and reflection will be combined to offer an opportunity to connect child development and teacher applications with personal experience. Using journal writing, participants will return to the personal teaching experience identified in the initial introductory exercise. By reflecting upon their feelings of frustration identified from the experience, participants can use a stream of conscious writing to digest and sort through added feelings and other information. Through a reevaluation of experience, participants will revisit the initial description of their experience, looking for new ideas and connections to learn from in application to the CD presentation (utilizing the handout as a reference point).

**Program debriefing discussion.** CDR will end in a debriefing discussion, where the floor will be opened to participants to discuss their learning experiences and their ideas of potential implementation of the gathered knowledge into their work setting in the studio.

#### **Plan for assessment and evaluation**

Program assessment and evaluation will take place at four levels

**1) perception and reaction.** Following the conclusion of the program debriefing discussion, the CDR leader will administer an evaluation of participation perception in order to determine effectiveness and satisfaction of the program and leadership as seen by the participants. This assessment will take place in the form of a three-part survey relevant to program content, leadership, and participant participation.

**2) learning.** Participants will take a brief examination of relevant information structured to match the program objectives in order to measure participant knowledge and skill acquisition immediately after the program and determine whether the program objectives were met

**3) performance, behavior.** Supervisors will conduct a class observation and assessment three months after the training to evaluate the participants behavioral changes in relation to knowledge, mindset, and skills discussed and learned through the CDR as translated to the class setting.

**4) performance, results.** A results evaluation will be conducted during the class observation. Upon completion of CDR, participants will receive an explicit list of specific aims that they will be evaluated on during this class observation three months later. This evaluation will provide an assessment of the effectiveness of learning applications from CDR to the workplace.

#### **Follow up action plan to contribute further to the project's objectives**

Immediately after the completion of CDR, participants will be asked to list any questions, or desires for further information. A similar question opportunity will be provided again at the

three-month mark, and again at the six-month mark. Participants will be asked to continue journaling after classes, making note of further developments in child development application. Three and six-month follow up meetings will be held to encourage peer discussion and the sharing of experience in applications.

### **Conclusions**

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's Teacher Assistant Program (TAP) would benefit largely by the implementation of the Child Development Relevance program (CDR) in the development of well-rounded and more effective ballet teachers. TAP provides an opportunity for graduate students at PBT to learn how to teach ballet through the experience of teacher assisting positions. However, lacking in this program is a focus of child development. Through a program design with discussions and training activities including presentations, active engagement exercises, observation, writing and reflection, and program debriefing, CDR provides a key factor in child development applications ballet teaching through several objectives regarding child development and ballet technique knowledge growth, age specific developmentally focused class plans, behavioral strategies, and classroom management. Utilizing the four levels of evaluation and assessment, through surveys, brief examinations, and classroom observations and assessments, the evaluation plan for CDR ensures that all objectives are met. Lastly, by continuing with further action plans for development, feedback regarding the long-term application of CDR can be ongoing beyond the confines of the specified program time.

## **Appendices/Attachments (optional)**

### **Leadership:**

*TAP Program Supervisor:* Kaila Lewis, Children's Division Coordinator

*CDR Program leadership:*

Kaila Lewis, Children's Division Coordinator, Student Division

Julia Adams, Children's Division, Student Division, Education Department, Community Division

Toma Smith, Student Division

Christine Schwaner, Student Division

### **Child Development Relevance Program Agenda**

- I. Introductions (5 min)
- II. Introductory Exercise (10 min)
- III. Presentation (35 min)
  - A. Relevance
  - B. Child Development
  - C. Specific connections to ballet instruction
- IV. Observation (20 min)
  - A. View video clip, children's division
  - B. View video clip, student division
- V. Writing / Reflection (25 min)
- VI. Debriefing Discussion (20 min)
- VII. Concluding thoughts (5 min)