

Understanding current global practice for dancers with Down syndrome

Ideas and innovations for progressive

and beneficial dance practices

Dance is a very popular activity in Down syndrome communities across the world. Yet little is known about the range of dance programs available globally and which of those practices align best with disability affirming values. Collating practice from across the world creates shared knowledge of innovative and ethical dance practice approaches that validate and meaningfully include people with Down syndrome.

What did we do?

We undertook a global review of practice. We analyzed 55 websites that describe dance projects or programs for dancers with Down syndrome.

- A collaboration between a SERC social sciences academic (Dr Belinda Johnson) and an expert inclusive dance facilitator (Mx Tristan Sinclair).
- Geographical reach: Data came from many countries including Australia, United Kingdom, Singapore, United States, Brazil, the Netherlands.
- We focused on dance practice, program purpose, how programs are organised and disability values.
- Data from websites included video and visual material as well as written information.
- We analysed key themes and also “affective analysis” to map our felt response to the data.



What did we find?

- Dance programs for dancers with Down syndrome claim benefits across: social connection, community wellbeing, physical health and development, creative expression and performance opportunities, personal development and capacity building in dance and leadership.
- Practices informed with progressive disability values enable people with Down syndrome to participate in leading and creatively directing their dance worlds.
- Dance projects with dancers with Down syndrome can create performance and video works of high aesthetic value.
- Dancers with Down syndrome make creative works on disability issues and other topics of concern to them.
- Dance collectives that include dancers with Down syndrome create value as social worlds.

What do these findings mean?

- Funding dance and community creative programs for dancers with Down syndrome is a valuable investment across social, health, life-purpose and creative outcomes.
- Exceptional dance programs for dancers with Down syndrome align with human rights and progressive disability politics through involving people with Down syndrome in leading and creating within dance worlds.
- Sharing knowledge on global practice provides innovative ideas to a large global community of dance programs.

Where can I find out more?

Citation:

Johnson, B., & Sinclair, T (2024) Dance and Down syndrome: choreographies of social change? TASA Conference 2024. Perth.

https://tasa.org.au/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=671860&module_id=660148 > TASA 2024 Program > p. 31.

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