

HMS Dance Collaborations

Community Outreach Programs Allow Students to Flourish

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

Just last week, I was walking through the Gowen Educational Wing at HMS, when I came upon our after school dance collaborative with Drexel University. While watching the seven HMS student dancers and seven Drexel dancers warming up together, I focused on Kyle. Wearing his “Just Do It” shirt, he is the perfect example of how collaborations like these can help our students grow and flourish.

When Kyle first came to HMS, he avoided most social outreach programming, Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and the recreational dance program, in particular. He was frustrated and did not want to engage and occasionally disrupted other participants. At first, it was unclear why Kyle was so disinclined, but as it turns out, Kyle just wanted to hear more up-tempo music – beats more in line with his favorite genre of music: WrestleMania scores. Once more varieties of music were included, his outlook on participation started to change. Moreover, as he began to build relationships with peers, instructors and volunteer dancers from Drexel University, he started to engage – and he enjoyed it! **Having people from his school and local community consistently working with him allowed Kyle to trust the program and be himself.** Now both in the HMS/Drexel Dance Collaborative and during DMT sessions, Kyle initiates movements, encourages others and focuses on being fully present during activities. He even talks about his work with the dancers to everyone he sees!



Kyle and his dance partner performing at Drexel University's Mandell

Our Dance Movement Therapist Rachel Federman-Morales explains, “We’ll have a DMT session in the morning, and by the end, he’s already asking me if he’ll see me at 4pm when the Drexel Dancers come. He’s excited all day and shares his joy with everyone. It’s truly incredible to see how much he’s transformed and grown over the past few years.”

At HMS, we are committed to supporting real, impactful programs like HMS/Drexel University Dance Collaborative. These collaborations are often not included in tuition costs, but they have a lasting impact on our students, and as a result, are funded through supplemental funds. We will continue to make programs like this one a priority. We invite you to do the same, as **donor commitment to our outreach programming has made all the difference for students like Kyle!**

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