

## **RE-IMAGINING THE RED BALLOON**

**Action Research Study and Evaluation of a Magic Box Productions, New York City  
Center and P.S. 84 Partnership for Fourth Graders**

***By Jane Remer, Independent Researcher and Evaluator***

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# RE-IMAGINING THE RED BALLOON

## Action Research Study and Evaluation of a Magic Box Productions, New York City Center and P.S. 84 Partnership for Fourth Graders

*By Jane Remer, Independent Researcher and Evaluator*

### Introduction

During three months of the 2011-1012 school year, Magic Box Productions, New York City Center and PS 84 Manhattan continued to develop their six-year partnership by combining dance and video as equal partners and compatible languages. Taking a different approach from prior years' projects, the partners turned to the 1956 French film **The Red Balloon** as the source and inspiration for the collaboration. This thirty-four minute 1956 film fantasy directed by French filmmaker Albert Lamorrise follows the engrossing adventures of a young boy who one day finds and befriends a red balloon that a gang of bullies ultimately destroy. Filmed in Paris, France it won numerous awards (an Oscar and the Palme d'Or) and became popular with children and educators.

Beginning on November, 30, 2011 students worked with their classroom teachers and the visiting dance and video artists using the framework of the source material as a motivation to re-imagine the French narrative in a New York City setting. Students watched, discussed and commented on the short film and with the artists' guidance decided to break the narrative into eight key scenic events which they ultimately stitched together on film.

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In an attempt to provide both dance and video experiences for every child, students spent half the sessions in one art form and then switched to the other. The process challenged their imagination as they worked together in different mediums to make artistic choices, build new story lines, learn unfamiliar body movement, build new video ideas, learn many new artistic terms and build and maintain a collaborative spirit. In the end, and in spite of some scheduling problems and the frustrations of not knowing where all this activity was leading, the students were able to transfer all their dance and video inventions into their own Upper West Side version of **The Red Balloon** film which they presented to parents and the school community on March 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

### The Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to gather evidence from the fourth grade students and the project team of classroom teachers, arts coordinator, video and dance artists, arts organization partners, school principal and evaluator about the quality and effectiveness of the project. The driving question for me as the action researcher and program evaluator was: What have we learned from this ambitious and complex project that will enable the arts and school partners to improve these residencies? I was particularly interested in the degree to which everyone valued the experience and understood the implications of its outcomes for P.S. 84 leadership and staff.

### Goals and Objectives for the Red Balloon Project

#### What We Wanted the Students to Know, Understand and Be Able to Do

Early in the planning phase of the entire project team met to clarify and set down the goals and objectives for the project. We charted our aims and referred back to and adjusted them throughout the project. Below is a chart developed early on with a later section attached at the bottom that I have added from participants' reflections and comments on the last day of the residency. You will notice that our early expectations are somewhat general while the added expectations at the bottom are more concrete, built on actual experience and observation. We will return to this table in the final section of this report.

KNOW	UNDERSTAND	BE ABLE TO DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steps taken to create a piece of art using dance and film</li> <li>• How to look closely for details to glean meaning</li> <li>• How to identify decisions made by filmmaker/writer/choreographer</li> <li>• How to use the camera in an artful way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Film as an art form</li> <li>• Media is made with a message and purpose</li> <li>• Language across art forms and academics</li> <li>• A sense of story regardless of whether media is narrative or non-narrative</li> <li>• Differences between dance on stage and dance on camera</li> <li>• The critical role of music and sound in dance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret the film/dance</li> <li>• - <i>Use Prior knowledge</i></li> <li>• - <i>Problem solve</i></li> <li>• - <i>Demonstrate critical and creative thinking</i></li> <li>• - <i>Develop craft</i></li> <li>• - <i>Show evidence of understanding</i></li> <li>• - <i>Make inferences and predictions</i></li> <li>• - <i>Sequence the story</i></li> <li>• Blend movement and media</li> <li>• Develop and transfer language and vocabulary</li> <li>• Demonstrate mental, social/emotional, physical stamina</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADDED AT THE FINAL REFLECTION MEETING (APRIL 2012) IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The positive impact of the residency on the development of community and collaboration within the fourth grade and the school</li> <li>• The ability to compare and contrast when thinking things through and making decisions</li> <li>• The growth of risk-taking in a safe environment facilitated by artists and teachers</li> <li>• The growth of pride in the work accomplished in both dance and media</li> <li>• Development of sequential thinking, ability to analyze what works and what doesn't with evidence to bolster the position taken</li> <li>• The moving image has meaning - can be colorful or without color</li> <li>• The gradual increase of making strategic choices in a purposeful way</li> </ul>		

## Research Question: *How do we tell a story in images and movement?*

Our Research Question grew out of the conversation that produced the goals and objectives. It is simple, direct and action-oriented. There are many sub-questions that we might have attended to had we more time, for example: What are the criteria for effective stories told in images and movement? Why did we make the choices we selected as we went along? While reading, analyzing and interpreting all the data collected during the project, I noticed that many students asked these kinds of questions and often came up with their own thoughtful opinions and ideas.

## Methodology

Given the complexity of the project and the severe time constraints of normally one double session a week for ten weeks, the challenge for me as action researcher/evaluator was considerable. Realizing I didn't have the time and resources necessary for a full-blown project, I decided to train my focus on gathering data of student, teacher, artist and arts coordinator behavior and their responses to probing questions about the process, product and performance. I was able to examine and triangulate the data that poured in to me each week from the students and compare what I was observing, hearing and

reading to our planning meetings and my formal and informal interviews with teachers, administrators, a parent representative, the arts coordinator and the principal. My process was to:

1. Collect, catalog and organize all the raw data
2. Observe classes, interview students and teachers, attend team meetings, facilitate reflections
3. Read every single student survey, make notes, summarize implications and periodically share these thoughts with the rest of the team.
4. Devise questionnaires and surveys for everyone on the team for “baseline data”, and then canvas the artists and the teachers for their mid-term thoughts in answer to my “mid-term” questions.
5. Work with City Center and Magic Box admins on a final 5 point questionnaire for all students, distribute the form, collect, read, notate, catalog and store the data.
6. Gather all data, re-read, sort, note connections, unusual situations, important information that had not surfaced before, and start writing the report.
7. Realizing that I was drowning in data, implications and fascinating material, I chose to analyze only the last two student response survey. This meant re-reading 200 surveys of three or more pages each in search of critical data that would reveal what our fourth grade students were thinking and their reaction to their experiences during the last week of the project. As I plowed through the data, I tried to triangulate (see definition in the Appendix Glossary) – that is, seek confirmation of my own findings with a substantial number of others on the team. I combed through the selected data, sorted things out into different categories and have come up with about fifteen to 20 indicators that offer important affirmation to both the quality and originality of the work the students produced and the process they went through to deliver it.
8. Finally, when I began to write this report, I was able to gather, analyze and interpret the most important data, the results of which are in the remainder of this report. The method I chose to use would be to triangulate every aspect of the project that was available. I gathered various kinds of information to capture three-dimensional evidence of learning. Specifically, I observed students watching the Red Balloon film, discussing the meaning and the impact of the French film and then re-imagining many of the scenes with a strong Upper West Side culture.
9. In addition to interviews with teachers and administrators, and attendance at planning meetings, I developed questionnaires for the students to complete, for teachers, the principal, the arts organization administrators, the arts coordinator and the artists. My aim was to gather as much data from different points of view as possible which when studied together, I hoped to distill into a basically simple narrative to capture good information about what students were learning and the effectiveness of the project.
10. In short, I observed, participated in and took copious notes over the ten week project, right through the dress rehearsal, parent evening, and sharing sessions of the film the students produced under the guidance of their teachers and the professional artists. The remainder of this document will provide evidence of our discoveries and findings.

## **A List of Surveys and Questionnaires We Developed to Collect Our Data**

The methods we included in our Action Research/Evaluation project included observation and assiduous note taking, interviews, a steady stream of archival notes for each of our planning and reflection events, study of the videos of the art forms for scrutiny by the students and the artists, and a final DVD for the students and their parents.

**STUDENT SURVEYS – The First Nine Sessions (3 questions); the Final Sessions (Reflection – 5 questions, and recapitulation of the content and sequence of the entire re-imagined Red Balloon) – See below:**

***Reflective Process for Weekly Responses (the first nine sessions)***

Students addressed the following questions weekly in their journals. We hoped to be able to capture the arc of their learning, curiosity and gradual knowledge accession.

- What did you learn today about how to tell a story in movement and image?
- What are you curious/puzzled about?
- What else would you like to know?

**Sample responses:**

“I learned that the images don’t come from the movie; they come from the mind.”

“I am still wondering if there’s anything we can’t do because there are a lot of choices. How does the balloon move and react?”

“I learned that the character can move to describe their feelings with their body.”

“What language would you need to use when you show movement without speaking?”

“I learned that your body is your tool. You have to use every part of it.”

“Could you change the balloon to a grey elephant?”

“I am curious about images and movement. I am nervous about how it is going to look but I am not scared to dance. I have to face my life.”

“When are we going to put things together? How will it work? What should we expect to see, a film? A dance? Both? Will I have a part?”

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***Student Reflections and Responses to Final Survey’s Five Questions:*** -- The final questionnaires prompted long and thoughtful responses about the actual experience of seeing their own version of the Red Balloon film that wove video, music and dance into the production.

- What do you think is the difference between *The Red Balloon* film you watched and *The Red Balloon* you created? What did the two films have in common?
- What was different about storytelling in dance and in moving images? What was the same?
- If you decided to tell your own story, would you do it in movement, moving images or with words? Why?
- Can you describe how all the parts of this project came together at the end?
- If you had the chance for your class to do your scenes of *The Red Balloon* again, how would you make them better?

***In addition*** to the questions above, a number of the fourth grade classroom students wrote scrupulously detailed descriptions of the process of the project and recounted their own strong reactions to the final three productions. The most frequent comment was how astonished they were about how strains and strings of the project all came together in an impressive and moving way. The amount of writing and design about the project is immense, easily filling a large file drawer in the principal’s office in the school.

**BASELINE DATA – Questions for the Principal, other administrators, the teachers, the arts coordinator and the artists:**

1. By the end of the residency, what do you expect our students to know in video and movement, in the context of telling their version of a story of *The Red Balloon* in images and movement?

2. By the end of the residence, what do you expect our students to understand in video and movement?
3. By the end of the residency, what do you expect our students to be able to do in video and movement?

**MID-TERM DATA – Questions for Arts Coordinator, Classroom Teachers and the Dance and Video Artists (Responses will be charted later on in this report)**

1. Where are you now?
2. Where are you going on the Red Balloon continuum?
3. What’s working?
4. What needs attention?
5. Suggestions? Comments?

**Analysis of Student Data - Final Two Surveys for All Four Classes**

**Note: The following chart sorts out and summarizes the issues, concerns and discoveries that appeared most frequently on the surveys I chose to analyze.**

<b>Themes They Repeated</b>	<b>Patterns I Observed</b>	<b>Discoveries/Realizations</b>	<b>Outliers</b>
Proud to have learned new skills in both art forms Permission Required to reprint Property of Magic Box Productions & Jane Renter	Repeated questions, week after week about puzzling issues that no one seems to answer leading to frustration and impatience	Video and dance both tell a story but differently; when put together, they increase the depth and meaning of the project.	Preference to use words (not movement or moving image) when telling his next story because it’s easier for the audience to understand and some people didn’t “get” our Red Balloon
Anxious about how and when all the pieces would come together, who will have parts, what will it look like, where will it be – the parts and whole issue, but mostly satisfied when they finally saw the whole production	Spelling, especially the new many syllable words related to the art forms or processes are creatively written; need word walls and a glossary to define the many new arts and other terms they are learning	We don’t need words to tell a story.	Wants to see all the actors’ names on the movie credits
If at first you don’t succeed, try again; practice makes perfect, and trial and error are an important part of learning	Choices were available to students in Video and in Dance; requests for more student involvement in designing their own	Planning, research, discussion and compromise when we disagree are essential to teams that are collaborating.	Doing a film in black and white is more exciting than ours, with color

	choreography		
Hard work, persistence, focus and concentration has its rewards	It is important to learn the fundamentals of each art form and to understand the arc or sequence of the story to be able to put it together so it makes sense	The sound of silence and the role of music in the Red Balloon intrigued many students	Our Red Balloon ends happy in Balloon Land while the original ends sad and ours has a NY setting, color and strong music
Collaboration, taking turns and teamwork are essential for success	The mastery of professional terms for video and dance and the agility of the students to demonstrate them	There are steps to learn in sequence in the arts	Need to put more scenes in our version
The arts are languages that communicate meaning in special ways	Repeated examples of student engagement in the process throughout	There is never enough time	"After all the disagreements, it turned out good"
Stories can be told in dance and moving images without words	Eagerness to write down their responses to questions, especially the beginning sessions and the ending	The purpose of the Red Balloon project was for us to learn to tell a story without words	
The project needs both leaders and followers		Movement makes you feel free.	
The five W's are important, especially for the setting			
We can express ourselves in both video and movement			

The data reveal significant knowledge, understanding and the potential ability to apply the skills and wisdom acquired by a very large majority of all four classes. The content compares with the rich responses from the adult Red Balloon team in their baseline and mid-term surveys (next pages), my classroom and auditorium observations and the reflection sessions conducted and documented throughout the residency.

### ***The Red Balloon Project Baseline Data – Adults Expectations for Students***

This grid condenses and distills the numerous responses gathered to describe expectations from the adults in the project (triangulating the data). Almost every expectation below was repeated in spirit by other participants, so that the information on this document demonstrates how in tune the adult team was from the beginning of the project. As you read these statements, remember they are commenting on their own experience as well as the students. Obviously the adults express these expectations in both arts and educational language, but notice how they tend to jibe with the students' statements. Also notice how many of the expectations were fulfilled and rewarded both during and at the end of the project.



Who	Know	Understand	Able to Do
<b>Administrators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Video &amp; dance are unique languages that provide a means of expression and communication</li> <li>-Source material can be a powerful motivation for creating new work.</li> <li>- A story can be told without words.</li> <li>- Vide and dance are two art forms that can inform and influence each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observing, interpreting, analyzing, critiquing and tapping into personal experiences are necessary steps in creating work inspired by source material.</li> <li>- Engaging in arts learning ignites the imagination and provides opportunities to make artistic choices and build collaborative spirit.</li> <li>-The students will understand and know that through editing they put the story together into a predetermined linear fashion that was decided during the planning and preproduction process...and that shooting video is a nonlinear process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Present their work to an audience and speak thoughtfully using artistic language to describe processes</li> <li>- Engage in self- and peer-assessment and revision.</li> <li>- In time, work with their teachers to apply this unique way of learning across other arts and academic disciplines.</li> </ul>
<b>Classroom Teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I expect them to know what the artistic creation process is in video and dance. They should know the different steps of the process and how these steps are connected to each other</li> <li>- I would expect the children to understand that a story can be told without words or language using color, sound, movement, facial expressed as clues to understanding the story line.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I would like them to understand that each detail of a video or a dance performance has been decided in advance and has a purpose – each detail has meaning.</li> <li>- I would like the children to understand that a story is told in the details whether words are used or not.</li> <li>- They have to work together in order to demonstrate the cooperative learning, listen to one another</li> <li>-I expect students to understand that a variety of strategies can be used to convey certain meanings, tones, moods, etc. in both video and movement and that they can transfer their knowledge of that writers do to convey meaning into a difference medium.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I would like them to be able to make decisions in their group, listening to each other and compromising when needed. They should be able to practice certain skills until they reach mastery. They should be able to show an audience a final product (a performance).</li> <li>- At the end of the residence, I hope the children will be able to put the segments of the story in the correct sequence even though it was produced and choreographed out of sequence</li> </ul>
<b>Artists</b>	<p>Students will know the steps to make a film (script, planning, film, edit, etc.), the video vocabulary (long shot, medium shot, close up), and how to use the cameras provided</p> <p>Source material for a work of art can come from other works of art, personal experience and imagination.</p>	<p>Students will understand that to make a successful film their ideas need to be simple and they need to plan their production well.</p> <p>How the structure of any story, whether in words, images, or movement requires choices about the whole story, its parts and its sequence</p> <p>How both observation and imagination are tools for creating new work.</p>	<p>Students will be able to film, create an action list, use video vocabulary words and use basic features in iMovie (drag, transitions, splits, etc.)</p> <p>Students will be able to contribute their individual ideas and incorporate the ideas of others in their reimagining of <i>The Red Balloon</i></p>

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## The Red Balloon Project Mid-Term Data Analysis

Information in this document demonstrates how in tune with each other the adult teaching team was from the beginning of the project and how close they are to recognizing student needs and understanding their accomplishments and concerns. The grid condenses and distills many (but not always all) of the teachers' and arts coordinator's thoughts up to the middle of the Residency. I have underlined the phrases throughout that match up or connect with those appearing as themes, patterns and revelations in the students' data. My purpose here is to provide a glimpse of how the triangulation technique works, and you might like to jump by checking the corroborations you find when looking at the students' data and comparing it with the data below.

My findings indicate that almost every expectation and observation mentioned below has been repeated within and across this grid and into the findings in the student's chart. While there are a few themes emerging here that were not specifically stated by the students, they are close in spirit. In short, I hope it is clear that information such as this is invaluable for providing corroborated evidence to support our action research goals and our expectations for the project as a whole.

1. Where are you now & 2. Where are you going on the Red Balloon narrative continuum?	3. What's working?	4. What needs attention?	5. Suggestions? Comments?
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### Permission required to reprint Property of Magic Box Productions & Jane Remer *ARTS COORDINATOR*

1. My hope from the beginning was that students understood the importance of the details in telling a story and how those details support the main idea. In my opinion the majority of the children in the 2 video groups did understand as it pertained to the video piece they produced. They were able to break down their little piece into 8 parts [and wholes] and the children in each group were able to identify the main idea. They discussed what kind of shot they would use and why. They talked about color and emotion. Group 1 created the setting by drawing pictures of the park and making balloons out of cardboard. They even drew the dog walker's dog. They were enthusiastic every time. Group 2 Just shot video, once going to the park and other times using a green screen. Both groups were enthusiastic and most children wanted to participate (engagement). Everyone was curious about how this would be put together
2. I think the children in the first 2 video groups were moving in the right direction. My hope is that they can continue what they learned when they get to dance
3. Taking the time to break down each scene and to have them use their journals to record the information. Briefly reviewing what they did the week before and what they would do today. Making them think about what they learned or did and what they still wanted to know. Reminding them that they have to support the main idea of the piece in the use of details. In this case the way the camera moves, or freezes, or there is a close up, etc. The group editing was extremely beneficial, although we could have used a bigger screen! The children went to garage band to pick out the music. This is the first time we did this and I feel it was a good addition.
4. In the perfect world we would have more time. The kids weren't able to take the video themselves because of time restraints. In addition, going to the park can't be done in 50 minutes!! Which makes using the neighborhood as a backdrop almost impossible. Consistency in the schedule. This is really BIG! The school schedule has no room for major disruptions. PS 84, had set aside Friday mornings as the Magic Box/ City Center residency time. When unexpected changes in the original schedule happen that leaves us with a big problem. We weren't able to accommodate all the changes in the residency as it pertained to time. As a result the classroom teachers weren't been able to participate in the program since the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in January. We couldn't switch prep periods and other

scheduled activities. The classroom teachers missed out on the culmination of their group's activity. This was a major drawback!

5. Suggestions:

\*\* Start earlier in the school year so that schedule changes becomes less of an issue.

\*\* Minimize disruptions

Our tech teacher should be available for tech support and as an extra set of hands every week.

### **Classroom Teacher (1)**

1. This question is a little hard to answer, as I haven't been able to participate in the project lately, because of scheduling issues. What my students told me is that the video group is done with filming. They spent two sessions editing the video. The dance group was filmed last week.

2. We are going to switch the groups this week: students who danced will work on the video and vice versa. I worked with the group who did video first. They use video vocabulary and know what the steps of video making are (planning, filming, editing).

My students can't wait to see the other groups' work and how all the pieces will work together, and so do I... Lots of expectations...

3. My students have a clear idea of how each group works on a little piece of the project. They have a pretty clear idea of the sequence of the project. Their motivation is very high. They have lots of suggestions/ideas to share every week. It is great that they have been the decision makers of the project.

4. The fact that the schedule had to be changed is a problem, because classroom teachers can't attend the sessions.

5. (na)

### **Classroom Teacher (2)** *only two responded*

1. At this time the students in the movement were completing their part where the Balloon follows the child into the subway. The students have really enjoyed the work they have done with the dance artist and so have I. The permission required to reprint Property of Magic Box Productions & Jane Remer ~~is a big piece~~ put together by important details that make the scene so powerful. I have been with the movement group throughout the entire process and it's been wonderful to see the students really get engaged and give life to this balloon. Both {teacher} and my class have enjoyed the experience. The students in movement were excited to take part in the scene, many were worried they wouldn't be part of it. Their main concern now is to see their work and appreciate the work they have put into this. I haven't had the opportunity to see the students in the video portion and do not know the process they have gone through. Some of the students in video have shared with me that they don't understand how this was going to be put together and if they would all be part of the recording and editing process. I'm not clear on the plan for that section.

2. Next, I'm hoping to join the video team and see their experience and creativity come into play to put this together. I'm not sure if that's what you are asking me, but we have definitely discussed the concept of main idea through this activity and how all the scenes are the details that will help everything come together. First group finished their project. They came up with lots of ideas which we selected and help them refine. They learned and are using video vocabulary. They were involved in the production in several ways: painting props background, acting, filming. We did some editing together last time and many of the students worked with garage band to make the sound track. Do you see student engagement, enthusiasm, and curiosity? Students have been overall very engaged, and enthusiastic as well as curious, they have questions AND suggestions on how and what we are doing. Where are you going, next, after that, and then finally? We are starting a new group this week, we will follow a similar curriculum with them and eventually look at all the videos and decide how to put it together.

3. So far, from what I see, [the dance teacher] helps the students really become the characters in the scene. We have discussed in class how in reading in order to make the story meaningful to them they have to become the character and connect with their part. She encourages that so much, she even has made me feel that in the warm up exercises

4. What needs attention? I feel that students from both the video and movement should have insight into what is going on in their process. The students that were in video had the opportunity to see what the students in movement in video were doing and they were so excited and asked me questions. Some of the students in video

from my class were upset to see that they were not part of the editing and how that was going to be done. They felt it wasn't fair and I could understand that, they didn't have input after all the work they did. I agreed with them.

5. A suggestion would be to inform both groups of the progress because for some they couldn't see the connection. Many needed to see the process from both ends. Even I was a little confused and still am on how this would be put together and if the students will have the opportunity to see it. I have enjoyed working with dance artist very much and this has been a great way to involve our work in the classroom with the arts

### **Video Artist**

1. First group finished their project. They came up with lots of ideas which we selected and help them refine. They learned and are using video vocabulary. They were involved in the production in several ways: painting props background, acting, filming. We did some editing together last time and many of the students worked with garage band to make the sound track. Do you see student engagement, enthusiasm and curiosity? Students have been overall very engaged and enthusiastic as well as curious. They have questions AND suggestions on how and what we are doing.

2. Where are you going, next, after that, and then finally?

We are starting a new group this week, we will follow a similar curriculum with them and eventually look at all the videos and decide how to put it together.

3. Working closely with [the arts coordinator] and three of the teachers when they are around. As well as being "on the same page" with the [dance artist] even though I don't see her often. Also, in video, working together as one group rather than breaking the group into smaller projects has been great.

4. Schedule. It is too bad that because of scheduling the teachers are not available to work with us every time. Also we have had technical problems with the school cameras since they don't seem to work well when we film inside. Because of that we had to at times use [art teacher] and My Phone as cameras and the kids don't get to film as much. We need good cameras and tripod.

5. The students seem very happy with the work they were able to do. It's been great to see some kids who appreciate the work that we do and their contribution to the project and their contribution.

### **Dance Artist**

1. We have just completed the first round of movement scenes and filmed them. We have now had the first session with our new groups, introducing the two other movement scenes we will be working on... In each of the two scenes I tried to focus in on the role that scene played in the whole story. In "Boy Finds Balloon" we discussed the purpose of that opening scene: to introduce the characters and create the setting. We also focused on "tension" and "foreshadowing" as the students wanted the Bullies to be present on this opening scene.... The students in this section responded really well to this simple structured scene. They really enjoyed filming the scene, and expressed this in a discussion with {the video artists and the arts coordinator} {my colleagues} afterward. I was not sure how much impact it had on them.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> group worked on the "Balloon Follows Boy" section. ...Taking a more abstract approach with this group we worked with structured improvisation with all students in pairs as either the Boy/Girl or the Balloon. Within rules (example – use only walk, stop and turn, OR move only in a zigzag path) students improvised their own movement onstage, maintaining the leading/following relationship This group was very engaged in the movement material and the idea of improvisation. (although they had to be constantly coached to maintain the freshness of their improv choices). In the ending of the scene, at the students' request, the Boy/Girl waited for a subway (instead of the Parisian bus in the movie). They delighted in making the subway, leaving one pair as Girl/Balloon to board the subway. When the Girl was allowed on, and the Balloon forbidden to board, the Balloon "cowered" and then seemed to "weep." This beautiful, expressive choice, made by one girl entirely on her own, was my key moment of satisfaction.

2. Finally we are moving toward assembling the whole project, all captured on film. Students have asked again and again if they will be able to see the WHOLE story so I think that answers our question about how the project will ultimately be presented. The students have worked hard on the parts. They want a sense of the whole....

3. • They love the source material
  - Stories resonate for them
  - They are highly motivated
  - They have enjoyed moving, more than I think they expected to.
  - The connections to the writing/reading curriculum are obvious and natural
4. The schedule, of course, is a challenge. In fairness while there are many restrictions from the TAs and cultural partners, many of our changes and challenges have come from the school schedule after the project was in process. If, for example Friday morning is the only time in the week when the stage is available, then the schedule with vacations, test prep, performances, etc. is bound to get stretched out. Perhaps if we had just an alternative time (another place, another time or day) it would not be so drawn out and confusing.
5. See above. I am really enjoying the work, despite the logistical challenges.

## Summing Up: Rating of the Partnerships' Success as Measured by Its Own Criteria and Indicators

When I work in action research/evaluation territory, I am very much part of the event, often from start to finish. It is tricky therefore to “rate” the success of an ambitious and overall well-thought out program such as the Red Balloon. I take comfort, however, that the technique of triangulation is considered a very safe and wise approach to take because the multiple layers of people and their perspectives, the variety of evaluation tools, and the perceptions of the educational commenters generally kept everyone both honest and not biased. That said, I present my rating of the project.

Criteria	Indicators	Rating 1/low- 4/high & Comment
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Purpose of the Study – gather evidence from all participants about the quality and effectiveness of the Red Balloon project	Data and evidence to interpret the level of accomplishment and to triangulate	4 – Purpose clear
Goals and Objectives	Documents and grids to determine triangulation	4 –considerable agreement among the adults and the students
Methodology	Many perspectives and tools from many people in several different circumstances to provide multiple layers of conversion in many areas of the inquiry	3 – triangulation is a very deliberate and time-consuming job; more information can be derived with more time and attention
Analysis of the Evidence	Abundant opportunity to triangulate the data	3 – the wealth of data and information suggest effective teaching, learning, infrastructure and professionalism in both education and the arts areas involved

In summary and overall, the partnership has met its goals and objectives, and because of the ongoing multi-layered analysis of the data, most of the practitioners knew instantly when the scheduling fell apart and when the students complained about lack of information from their teachers and the artists about the exact course of the project.

From what students, the team, the abundant written material and close observations tell us, students have learned and can describe and demonstrate how to tell a story without words. The experience of making the Red Balloon their own within the structure of the original allowed the students to explore different ways of telling their story without words but with dance and video as the narrative. The overall quality of the student work was sometimes uneven but always above average, and some of it outstanding in both the art forms.

Things to consider and adjust for next year:

- ✓ Keep students engaged and informed throughout the entire process; most of them had a hard time being kept out of the loop, but in all fairness, the exact development and direction of the project tended to emerge only as it grew.
- ✓ Make a schedule and stick to it.
- ✓ The two artists worked mostly separately and were rarely in touch with each other in the development period; all the data that I gathered was abundant and impossible to distribute (time, resources, opportunity) so that the dissatisfied and frustrated information I was getting from the students was not directly felt by everyone else until we brought it up at a team meeting.

✓ Somehow students must be given the opportunity to learn the proper spelling of all the marvelous new words they are learning in dance and video. Perhaps we could devise a way to comb the documents I receive and distribute them to their teachers. Here is a real common core opportunity!

- ✓ A number of students wanted the opportunity to choreograph their own movements and to film and edit their own video. When given the chance, most of them say they want to be able to test their own capacities and challenge their own vivid imaginations. I believe they did some of this adventuring but wanted more.

Things to be proud of:

- ✓ The quality of the artists, the arts coordinator and the classroom teachers, all of whom were devoted and extremely knowledgeable about teaching, learning, the arts and fourth graders
- ✓ While I would like to have had the time and resources to do more in-depth triangulation of the data, it is crystal clear to me how well the technique works for this kind of arts education project. Everyone in the project from the outstanding principal on down took serious responsibility for the work and the final “performances” were a testimony to the hard work and dedication.

Jane Remer

June 15, 2012

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## Appendix

### Definition of Terms

**Based on Glanz, J. (1998). *Action Research: An Educational Leader's Guide to School Improvement*. Norwood, Massachusetts: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.**

- ✓ Action Research – a type of applied research -- is a form of research that is conducted by practitioners to solve specific problems and improve practices in educational settings. It utilizes an array of methodologies and approaches, both qualitative and quantitative. There are four steps in Action Research: Select a Focus – Collect Data – Analyze and Interpret Data – Take Action – Start Again
- ✓ Assessment – a process of interpreting data and information to aid decision-making by various measurements, e.g. Interviews, observations, portfolios, surveys
- ✓ Baseline – a graphic record of measurements taken prior to introducing an intervention or treatment
- ✓ Empirical research refers to methods of investigation based on observations; action research is a form of empirical research and many other methods

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- ✓ Mixed method studies combine the two.
- ✓ Outlier is a scientific term to describe things or phenomena that lie outside normal experience, but that may have significance for participants.
- ✓ Qualitative studies – examine questions that can best be answered by verbally describing how participants in a study perceive and interpret various aspects of their environment.
- ✓ Quantitative studies – examine questions that can best be answered by collecting and statistically analyzing numerical data.
- ✓ Triangulation – is an important research technique that deliberately combines multiple action and other research approaches, data sources, data collection procedures, and analytic procedures. It strengthens the validity and credibility of data collection and analysis as well as research findings. Action researchers often include both qualitative and quantitative methods and believe that the more triangulation, the greater the understanding of your own data and its impact on your teaching, learning methods and results.

## Example of a Random Student Data Sheet

PS 84 Follow the Red Balloon Residency 2010-'11 - Student Responses to Weekly Questionnaire Magic Box Productions & New York City Center		
Following are selected student responses organized by class edited for spelling & syntax      Session 1		
Date	Class	Question
12.16.11	159	<p><b>What did you learn today about how to tell a story in images and movement</b> I learned that I should remember where the movie starts and ends ...we got together to talk about our setting</p> <p><b>What are you curious or puzzled about how to tell a story in images and movement?</b> How I write about the movie We got together to plan our story and we all agree</p> <p><b>What else would you like to know more about how to tell a story in images and movement?</b> I would like to know more about how we going to be acting and feeling on stage.</p>

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