

The Rock Your Community Danceshop™  
by P. Valerie Dauphin

If I presented my 2018-19 ACTIVATE project at TEDx, this would be the script...

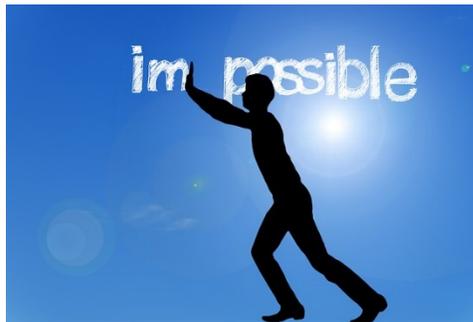
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What if under-represented, under-served, and marginalized students of color, and their families, had a safe space to continuously discuss those societal and interpersonal experiences most troubling to them while also being uplifted, having fun, and creating massive connection?

This is what the Rock Your Community Danceshop™ aims to do. Set up in centers and dance studios throughout L.A., students grades 6 through 12 now have a place to come on a monthly to weekly basis to hash out their biggest gripes with issues including, but not limited to, social justice, peer pressure, LGBTQ identity, and the special challenges they face as first generation Americans or as members of an immigrant family.

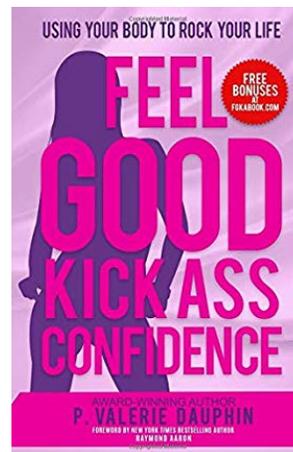


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Credit:Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

My name is P. Valerie Dauphin and I am an immigrant, a first-generation American. In addition to being a dance instructor, I am also a published author and certified life coach and I work with my clients on living their most authentic lives while embodying radical confidence.



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The Rock Your Community Danceshop™ is a dance class melded with a deep conversational component.



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For the first half of the workshop, youth, their families and community members, unite in the spirit of art and creativity by participating in [Valerie's Salsa Hip Hop Dance class](#). Imagine a 14-year old "I'm too cool to act like I care about my grades because I'm a try out for the football team" young man dancing side by side with his sweet 46-year old mama.

Imagine the laughs, smiles, sweat, the release of stress! Imagine what his school would be like if he came to class with that energy.



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Participants will engage in follow-along dancing and move into learning a short routine they can remember and “perform” at the next quinceañera or backyard barbeque.

Their emotional and social guards are lifted and masks removed. As a result of the happy sweating, the workshop then shifts gears by moving into discussion. A skilled facilitator will then invite participants to engage in a thought-provoking discussion around topics they don’t necessarily have safe and supportive outlets to digest and process their experiences, while also envisioning change and creating doable actions. Sample conversation starters could be: When is the last time you experienced racism and, as a student, how did that affect the way you showed up in school? What does self-worth mean to you and on a scale of 1-10, how would you rate yours? Why?

The workshop wraps with light movement and meditation.

At the start of ACTIVATE, I met with LAUSD Interim Arts Education Director Stephen McCarthy and LAUSD Dance Specialist Shana Habel to identify those schools within my district needing the most support in the arts. Those schools happened to be middle schools.

When I initially designed my action project with their notes in mind, I imagined it would be a dance-integrated series of workshops to specifically support middle school learner issues, such as peer pressure, identity development, social emotional learning, and generally having the conversations they need to be having at this age but don’t have outlets for.

As the fellowship progressed, my project evolved, with one big realization:

Students do not exist in silos. Where they go and who they’re with off-campus directly affects their performance on-campus. I wanted to open this Danceshop to a wider age range of youth and to extend this work to their communities and families.

One word also contributed to the shift in my action project: SIMPLICITY. I had already been facilitating a similar adult-focused workshop on a monthly basis called KickAss Salsa Fusion. Rather than reinvent the wheel and create a brand new workshop, I decided to use KickAss Salsa Fusion as the foundation for The Rock Your Community Danceshop™.

Help me create more communities of wellness by contributing to this project. I am seeking abundant dance studio space, Spanish-speaking translators, financial backing, and ace marketers.

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We are only as strong as our communities and everyone deserves to have a community that rocks.



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Thank you to Arts for LA for the opportunity to develop a meaningful project that will affect student access to the arts and overall well-being.

And thank you all for listening.