An abstract charcoal or pencil drawing of a human figure in a dynamic, expressive pose, possibly dancing. The lines are thick and gestural, capturing movement and form. The background is a light, textured surface.

**BETTER  
PRACTICE  
IN ARTS  
EDUCATION**

**VOLUME I**

*BETTER  
practice in* **DANCE**

**EDUCATION**

Lynette Y. Overby, PhD  
*University of Michigan*

Karen Bradley, MFA  
*University of Maryland*

James L. Tucker, Jr.  
*Series Editor*

**BUILDING EFFECTIVE TEACHING  
THROUGH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

## **BETTER PRACTICE IN DANCE EDUCATION**

Better Practice in Arts Education, Volume I  
Building Effective Teaching Through Educational Research

James L. Tucker, Jr. *Series Editor*

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**BETTER  
PRACTICE  
IN ARTS  
EDUCATION**

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*practice in* **DANCE**

**E D U C A T I O N**

**MARYLAND STATE  
DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION**

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*University of Michigan*

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**BUILDING EFFECTIVE TEACHING  
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## F O R E W O R D

The State of Maryland is gaining increased recognition nationally for its education reform initiatives and its commitment to high standards of accountability in education. It further recognizes the need for high quality arts education as an essential part of our children's education. In 1989, after a decade of requiring experiences in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts for all students in grades K-8, Maryland became one of the first states to require that students earn a credit in the fine arts to receive the Maryland High School Diploma. Maryland's reform initiatives have traditionally focused on envisioning what students should know and be able to do, providing resources and enhancing instructional practice, and documenting student learning. This particular project focuses on informing instructional practice.

In 1995, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted a goal that 100 percent of Maryland's students will participate in fine arts programs that enable them to meet the content and achievement standards established by State standards for the arts. By 1997, K-12 standards for dance, music, theatre, and visual arts education, developed by a 38 member task force, were approved by the State Board. The following year Project BETTER was initiated to develop a resource tool that would inform instructional practice in each of the art forms.

The concept for Project BETTER – Building Effective Teaching Through Educational Research – was created by the Division of Instruction of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) during the late 1980s as part of its mission to promote effective instruction. The development of the four volume publication for the current project was guided by the same three major objectives: 1) to identify current research on effective instruction, 2) to synthesize this research in the form of non-theoretical summaries, and 3) to deliver this information directly to practitioners.

The information in this publication is designed as a resource to assist teachers in expanding and refining their repertoire of teaching strategies and to guide instructional planning and decision-making that supports student achievement of State standards in the arts. It is not intended to prescribe a particular style of teaching or one "best" method. This resource provides a guide to teachers as they consider their curriculum objectives, the nature and needs of their students, their personal style of teaching, and their available instructional resources. The application of this knowledge will result in more effective teaching and more powerful learning.

# Introduction

Teachers who are aware of research studies in dance education and whose practice is informed by such studies are enormously effective teachers. In addition, to be able to cite studies in which dance has been shown to be a valuable mode for learning in all areas is to be the most useful kind of advocate for arts education across the board.

Current teaching practices in dance classrooms and studios cover a wide range of theoretical and practical approaches. From rote performance of skills to preparation for concerts to instrumental uses of dance to enhance creative thinking, cognitive skills, social intelligence, and kinesthetic learning, the range of approaches and curricular content is quite vast.

All aspects of the dance curriculum are important to educators. Dance exists in a world that is primarily nonverbal but that requires verbal and written understanding, and it builds upon early movement skills that everyone has but requires continual refinement and articulation of those skills. Dance is a discipline that bolsters other disciplines throughout the school day and fosters an array of learning outcomes.

Sources for curriculum development and discussions of teaching practices are as varied as they are sparse. Conference proceedings, occasional articles in scholarly dance journals, sporadic articles in juried and popular physical education and education journals, informal discussions online, and the one journal in the field (*Journal of Dance Education*) form the bulk of the theoretical considerations. Additionally, a number of unpublished papers, theses, and dissertations turn up in database searches; most of these are narrow in scope and largely inaccessible. Some are included in this document because they relate to the topic, but readers will need to be fairly persistent and patient if they pursue follow-up reading.

With the advent of the database of dance education research forthcoming from the National Dance Education Organization, however, the terrain will undergo a quick change. Over 2,400 studies are expected to constitute the largest collection of sources and

resources for teaching and researching dance education theory and practice. The database will be upgraded and updated regularly, providing a useful springboard for lessons, practices, curricular approaches, and research methods.

This document cites studies drawn from a number of sources, including the journals and conference proceedings mentioned above and the NDEO database to date. The studies fall into three categories:

1. Teaching *Through* Dance
2. Teaching *In* Dance
3. Teaching *About* Dance

Additional sections include:

4. Studies in Dance Analysis and Applied Movement Theory (since such studies cross the three categories listed above)
5. Studies Dealing with Teacher Behaviors and Effectiveness
6. Research on Advocacy and Policy Efforts, including the National Standards, and
7. Studies of Children with Special Needs.

State Standards for the Arts

### **Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes**

Maryland curricular guidelines for dance education include four categories for content in dance:

Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education

Outcome II: Historical, Cultural, and Social Context

Outcome III: Creative Expression and Production

Outcome IV: Aesthetic Criticism

The major portion of the studies that involve teaching *through* dance, or the instrumental uses of dance, fall under Outcome II. The studies covering teaching *in* dance fall primarily under Outcome I. And the studies involving teaching *about* dance tend to meet the expectations under Outcomes II, III, and IV. Few studies in dance education deal with teaching *about* dance; the majority of studies cover teaching students to dance or using dance to teach in other academic areas.

Therefore, the research does not entirely reflect the priorities for dance education as defined by the state of Maryland. Part of the reason for this discrepancy has to do with the natural curiosity of dance educators (who do most of their own research; very little is done in dance that is initiated from outside of the field). The questions that interest prac-

titioners are those that relate to practice. For dance educators who have had to deal with an injury or other type of physical challenge, exploring why that happened or how others have dealt with similar challenges is of natural interest. And for dance educators who can see how dance has enhanced cognitive and social skills in themselves or in their students, discovering how that process works is of inherent concern.

The other part of the equation is the state's interest in dance curricula that are about dance. Dance history, dance in other cultures, and dance criticism predominate as areas of study in the ELOs. It is not the purpose of this document to speculate on why that is so; it is interesting to note the dearth of research studies in teaching and learning *about* dance.

### **Dance Education Research**

Research, in recent years, reflects practice as much as it informs practice. The recent and useful studies in dance are more robust than the anecdotal reflections of years past, yet they are still grounded in real classrooms and with real children. Many of the current approaches to unpacking the nature and degree of learning taking place in the dance classroom/studio involve action research, or teacher-evaluated learning. Therefore, while there are exciting and provocative quantitative studies on the effects of dance in the classroom (Rose, Gilbert, Minton), there are also studies that draw upon the analytic and critically reflective skills of the dance educator herself.

Despite the current administration's call for "scientifically based research," much of what is happening on the research front (in all fields, not simply the field of dance) draws upon the notion of emergent design. Emergent design defines the researcher's use of analytic and synthesizing skills to gather data and then to reflect upon the data as a whole body of information. The design and sometimes the variable to be assessed emerge from the data as a whole. In other words, sometimes we have to see the children create dances, and then we can look at the body of work to decide what elements of the project are salient to their learning. The teacher-researcher may, in the example given, note that students may best reveal what they have learned through a journaling experience, a drawing experience, a video analysis, or small group discussions.

Therefore, the pretest, followed by exposure to a dance experience, followed by a *posttest*, still occurs, but it is not the only, nor may it be the best, way of unpacking learning. Children do not live in Petri dishes, nor are their days simple and straightforward. It is difficult to provide the kind of pure environment that good quantitative research requires. It is also difficult, especially with dance, to provide the numbers of subjects that high-quality

research requires, such as matched control group subjects. But the biggest problem with much of the research in dance education that is quantitative in design lies in defining the dance experience. Several studies linking dance with creative thinking skills are included because they indicate where research needs to go next in order to demonstrate what dancers are learning. But it is unclear what aspects or elements of the act of dancing or creating dance foster that learning. There are exceptions; these are noted below.

### **Somatics, or Embodied Learning**

A subdiscipline that is emerging in the literature and ongoing discussions within the field is somatics, or body-based learning. This area of dance studies evolves from both developmental and physiological bases. Because early learning derives from the kinesthetic interactions of physical movement and feedback from the environment, patterns, propensities, and aptitudes unfold as the “dance” of development proceeds. Even in very young, preverbal children, patterns of learning style, relationship modes, personality, and skill sets are evident in movement. Research in which these types of proclivities are assessed reveals uniqueness and commonalities that can inform the classroom teacher in many areas, not only dance.

The physiology of movement is another area of research that influences the training of dancers and other learners. How children and adolescents’ physiology is affected by and affects dance techniques, especially in elite ballet schools, has implications for dance in public schools as well. Nutrition, exercise (both anaerobic and aerobic), weight-bearing and impact effects, and environmental factors such as flooring, temperature, and room size all contribute to the picture of learning in dance.

The somatics field, which combines information from developmental and physiological knowledge, offers a rich resource for future research on embodied learning. Whether we are curious about how movement study affects learning or how the learning environment affects movement study, students will benefit from a deeper understanding of healthful dancing.

Karen Bradley, MFA  
University of Maryland  
2003

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# Teaching Through Dance

*Interdisciplinary Learning Through Dance*

*Jazz Dance: Teaching an African American Dance Form*

*Dance Education Enhances Physical Self-Concept*

*Gender Issues: A Study of Culture Through Dance*

# Interdisciplinary Learning Through Dance

## T H E O R Y

Teachers who use creative dance as a tool to facilitate learning in other school subjects promote learning and retention. An explanation for this phenomenon comes from the research and writings of Howard Gardner (1989).

The theory of multiple intelligences includes discrete intelligences that deal with language, logic and mathematics, music, spatial information, bodily kinesthetic information, knowledge about other persons, and knowledge about oneself (Gardner, 1989).

Each form of intelligence resides to some degree in all individuals, but individual profiles differ because of genetic and environmental factors. Some individuals have high levels of musical intelligence, while others have higher levels of interpersonal knowledge.

## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Teachers who use creative dance as a means of teaching other subject matter enhance learning across the curriculum.**

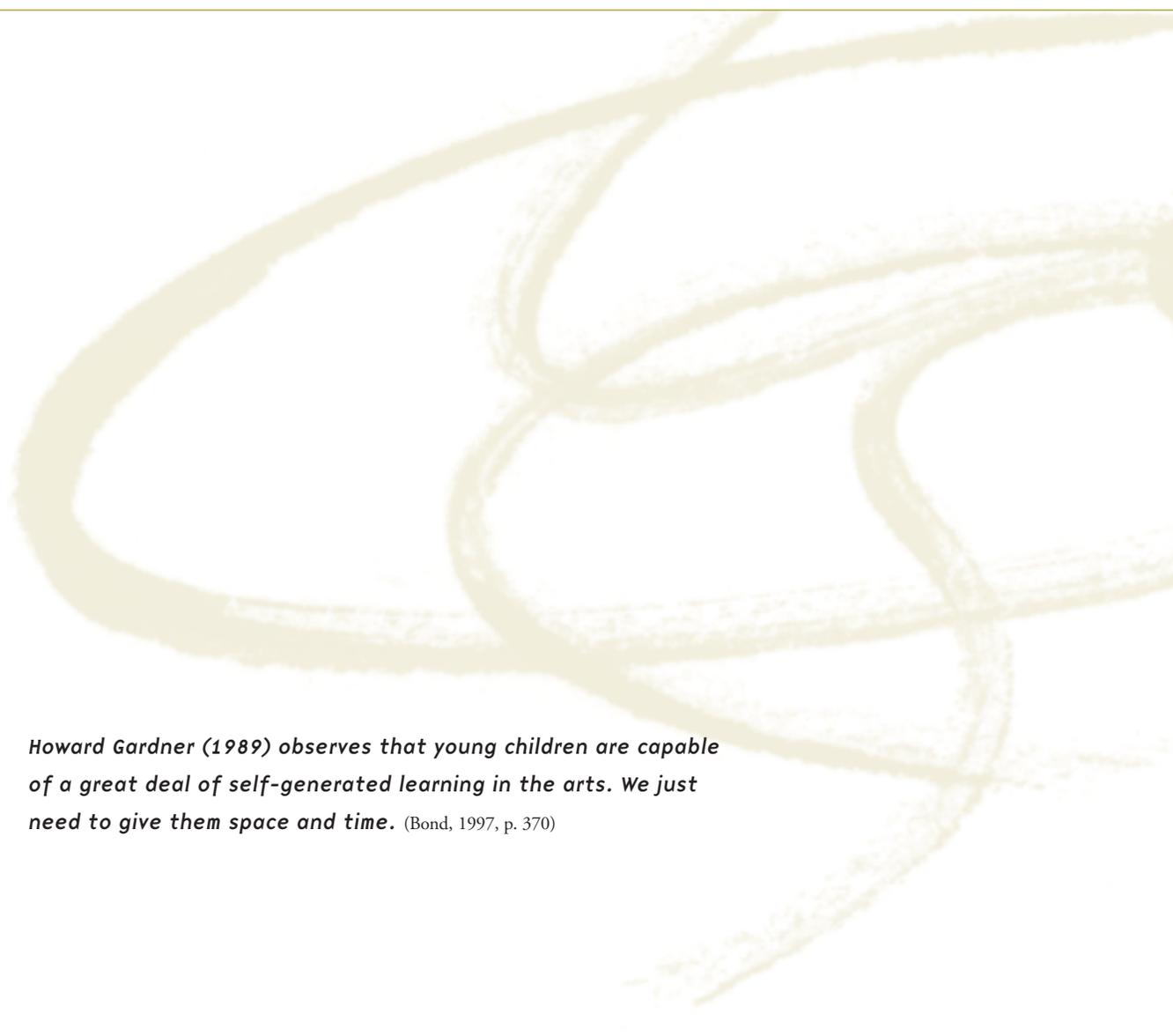
Educators design learning activities to enhance student capacities in the various intelligences. Creative dance, which utilizes the body as a tool for exploration and expression, hones bodily kinesthetic intelligence. Creative dance can also be a device for learning through the bodily kinesthetic intelligence. Dance has assisted students to learn math, reading, science, and social studies.

Collaboratively designed units of instruction often incorporate creative dance. Specialists in a variety of subjects work side by side to design specific thematic units. For example, preschoolers in a 10-week program explored a collaboratively designed unit—the Octopus Project (Bond, 1997). Specialists in dance, early childhood theory and practice, language development, mathematics, music, science, and visual art created a multidisciplinary learning environment. The preschool children expressed their perceptions and understanding of animal forms through dance and visual art.

Teachers can develop interdisciplinary units of study by enabling students to transform the curricular content into movement. For example, the exploration of clouds can help students develop a connection between the various types of clouds and kinds of movement (cirrus—light, airy clouds; movement—light force, smooth movement).

One research project divided 40 beginning readers into experimental and control groups. Both groups were pretested on vocabulary words and comprehension of two stories. The experimental group was taught reading with the use of creative dance; the control group was taught in a more traditional way. The posttest scores of the experimental group were significantly higher than those of the control group. The medium of dance enhanced learning of the vocabulary words and comprehension of the stories (Overby, 1975).

Interdisciplinary teaching through dance links to kinesthetic intelligence and has been demonstrated to enhance learning and retention in other subject areas.



**Howard Gardner (1989) observes that young children are capable of a great deal of self-generated learning in the arts. We just need to give them space and time.** (Bond, 1997, p. 370)

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A collaborative interdisciplinary project involving preschool-age children. The study illuminates children's perception of dance.
- Gardner, H. (1989). Zero based arts education: An introduction to Arts Propel. *Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research* 30 (2), 71-83.  
A report and update of the activities of Project Zero from the 1970s to 1989. The project, led by Howard Gardner at Harvard University, provides a research basis demonstrating the positive effect of the arts. Recent efforts of the project attempt to influence school reform through arts education.
- Overby, L. (1975). *The effects of creative dance as reinforcement for reading skill*. Unpublished master's degree thesis, The George Washington University, Washington, DC.  
A comparison of the effects of learning to read through dance and learning to read with traditional methods. Children who learned through dance achieved significantly higher posttest scores on vocabulary and reading comprehension.
- Zamdmer, M. (1994). Learning to read through the arts: Its emergence in context. ERIC No. 378103.  
The use of the arts as a core for teaching reading and writing skills to under-achieving students in grades 2 to 7.
- State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Elementary School  
Outcome II: Historical, Cultural, and Social Context  
The student will demonstrate an understanding of dance, its relationship to other significant components of history and human experience, and ways that it provides opportunities for individual, cultural, and creative expression.  
Expectation C: The student will demonstrate the ability to relate dance experiences to other disciplines.
- National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*  
Content Standard 7: Making connections between dance and other disciplines.

# Jazz Dance: Teaching an African American Dance Form

## THEORY

Jazz dance, with its roots in both Africa and America, offers a glimpse of a largely unexplored aspect of American history. Jazz dance combines the influences of African-American social dance with modern and ballet dance.

Many schools cover American history in the 5th, 8th, and 11th grades, but jazz dance is usually not included in textbooks for those grades. Higher education has assigned jazz dance a lower class ranking, after modern and ballet. Jazz dance has been treated in this way because of the Eurocentric bias in American educational institutions (Otto, 1995, p. 160).

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who teach jazz dance from a historical perspective promote the integration of knowledge about dance into a cultural context.**

In teaching jazz dance, the social dances of the various eras of history may be described, performed, and placed within the context of American history. For example: “The dancers of the 1960s were similar in their accomplishments: the twist, frug, jerk, pony, monkey and watusi allowed whites to cast off the rigidity of the 1950s for a more open-spirited and flexible approach to social life” (Hazzard-Gordon, 1991, p. 48). Jazz dance derived from the social dances is characterized by elements of form, rhythm, identity, and expression.

### *Form*

The African American social dance embraced by jazz dance includes elements of improvisation, embellishment, originality, and call and response. Syncopation is also evident—a musical form where the accent falls on a beat other than the first. Swing dance exemplifies this musical characteristic.

Call and response, an African form, is prevalent in the Big Apple; it was a popular dance of the 1920s performed in a circle, with a leader and group response to specific dance steps. Improvisation was also included when leaders directed individuals to execute a break.

### *Rhythm*

Rhythmic syncopation and intonation are unique to African and African American music and dance traditions (Otto, p. 105). The rhythms of Africa make up an integral part of jazz dance and of the dance forms of each successive decade.

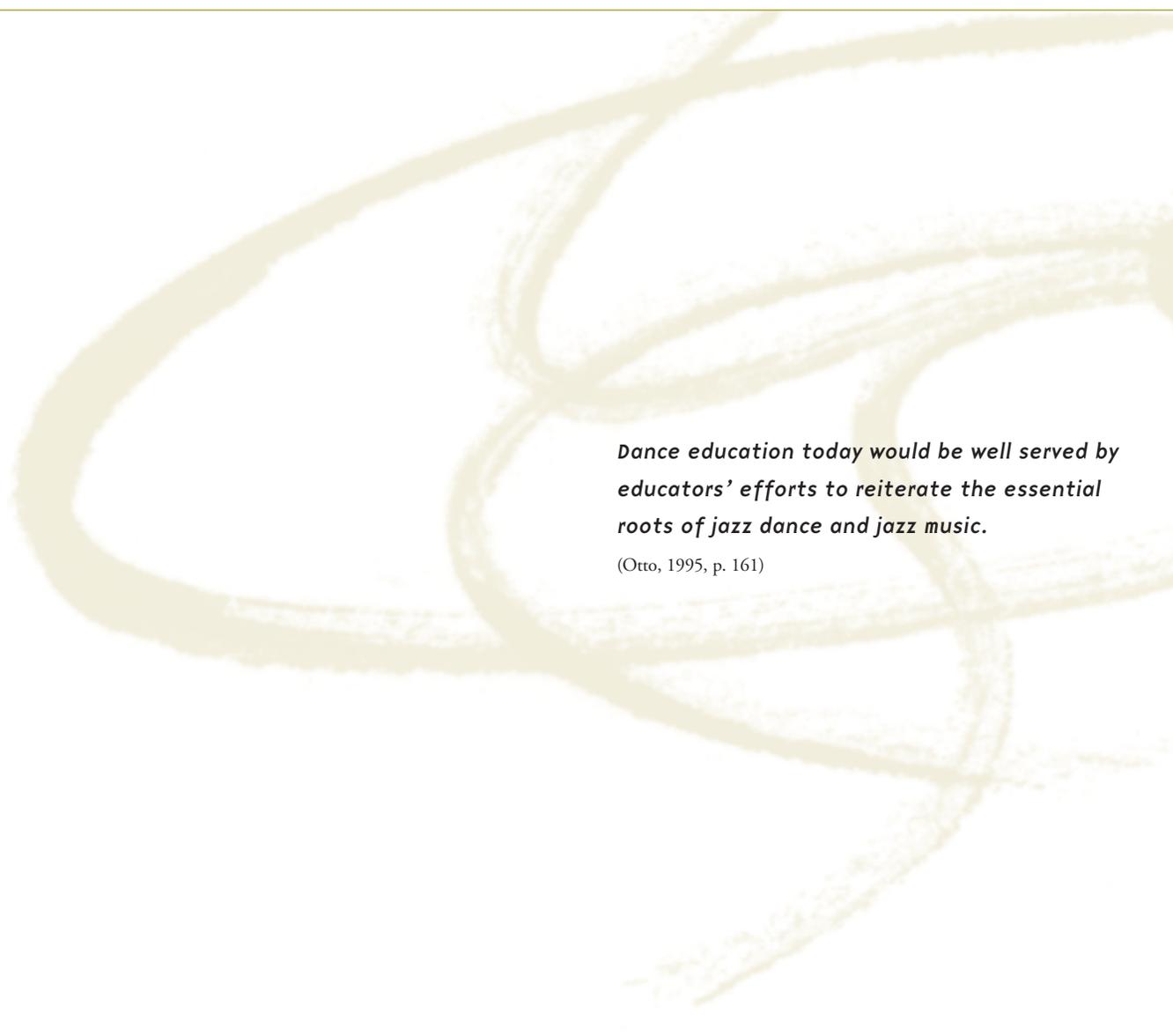
### *Identity*

African American dance allows the individual to express identity, which might be authentic, or a masking of true identity, as in the cakewalk of the 1800s, in which slaves performed an elaborate version of the popular ballroom dances of their masters. Dance has always been an area of pride for some African Americans, who created and performed dances that became mainstreamed and ultimately incorporated into the vocabulary of jazz and musical theatre.

### *Expression*

Jazz dance is a high-energy, creative form of expression. The roots of the expression, undeniably African, are characterized by strong syncopated rhythms and fast percussive movements. It is an uplifting expression of a youthful, strong people.

Teaching jazz dance from a historical perspective helps students become aware of the contributions of Africans to this distinctly American art form.



***Dance education today would be well served by educators' efforts to reiterate the essential roots of jazz dance and jazz music.***

(Otto, 1995, p. 161)

---

## REFERENCES

Hazzard-Gordon, K. (1991). Dancing to rebalance the universe. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 62 (2), 36-39, 48.

A description of the characteristics of African dance and their reflection in secular dance forms.

Otto, P. (1965). Social dance forms of the Harlem Renaissance: Embracing a deeper understanding of jazz dance and aesthetic principles. *Impulse* 3 (3), 159-171.

The interplay of values that includes characteristics of Harlem Renaissance dances and jazz dance. The author emphasizes the need for educators to provide a more complete picture of this period of American history.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*

Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the High School  
Outcome III: Historical, Cultural, and Social Context

The student will demonstrate an understanding of dance, its relationship to other significant components of history and human experience, and ways that it provides opportunities for individual, cultural, and creative expression.

Expectation A: The student will develop the ability to recognize dance as a form of individual and cultural expression.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 5: Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods.

# Dance Education Enhances Physical Self-Concept

## THEORY

Dance educators assert that dance education has a positive impact on self-esteem and body image. Much of the dance and body image research, however, has yielded equivocal results (Overby, in press). Many of these studies lack dance movement instrumentation, and their insensitive project designs do not allow for the analysis of various types of data.

## BETTER PRACTICE

### Teachers who teach creative dance promote physical self-esteem and positive body image.

methodology determined the impact of a six-week creative dance program on 30 boys and girls. The students were administered a body image scale, a body build test, and the culture-free inventory before and after the program. The study indicated the following:

#### 1. *Physical self-esteem*

Dance performance and fitness activities were perceived as fun while building healthy self-esteem in boys and girls.

#### 2. *Self-esteem gains higher in girls*

Interview data provided an explanation for the differing scores. Fifty percent of the boys mentioned nervousness about the creative dance program. They appeared to have some conflicts with the experience, stating, “Girls like dance the best,” and “Boys think dance is baby stuff. They like playing football where you roll in the mud” (Riley, 1987, p. 38). Teachers also confirmed a difference in the experiences of girls and boys, commenting on the willingness of girls to take risks and the reluctance of boys to be different. Boys enjoyed dance but felt more at risk, which affected the lack of change in their physical self-esteem.

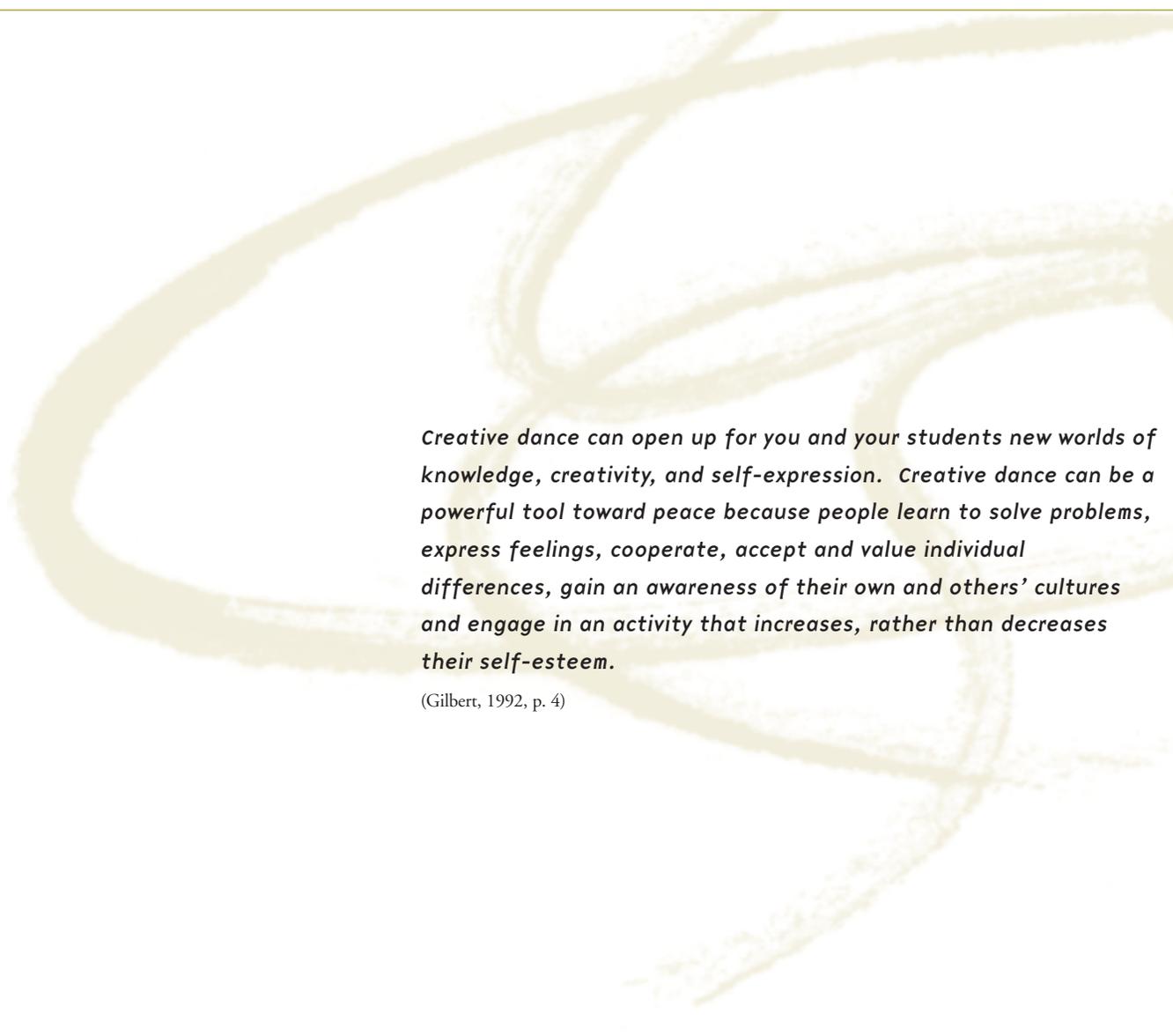
#### 3. *Expressive behavior is enhanced*

Boys and girls demonstrated the ability to verbalize an image produced by dancing, and an action and feeling related to that image.

#### 4. *Positive attitudes toward teacher*

Boys and girls commented positively about the dance teacher, which contributed to their positive attitude toward the creative dance program. The study confirms the beneficial effects of creative dance on physical self-esteem and body image.

Riley (1987) conducted a study that utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigating the connection between dance self-esteem and body image. The purpose of the study was to explore the interrelationships and effects of creative dance on physical self-esteem, body image, and problem-solving skills of fourth-grade children. Case study



*Creative dance can open up for you and your students new worlds of knowledge, creativity, and self-expression. Creative dance can be a powerful tool toward peace because people learn to solve problems, express feelings, cooperate, accept and value individual differences, gain an awareness of their own and others' cultures and engage in an activity that increases, rather than decreases their self-esteem.*

(Gilbert, 1992, p. 4)

## REFERENCES

Gilbert, A. (1992). *Creative Dance for All Ages*. Reston, VA: National Dance Association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

A conceptual approach to teaching creative dance. This detailed resource provides a method of teaching creative dance that combines skill development with exploration and improvisation.

Overby, L. (in press). The body image: A review of the literature in L. Y. Overby & J. H. Humphrey (Eds.), *Dance: current selected research* (Vol. 4). New York: AMS Press.

A survey of research in body image of dancers. Conclusions point to the need for more dance-specific instrumentation and methodologies.

Riley, A. (1987). Is creative dance responsive to research? *Design for Arts in Education* 36-40.

The lack of appropriate methodologies in creative dance research. The author suggests that a responsive research design can provide a more complete picture of the impact of creative dance on the child.

State Standards for the Arts

*Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*

Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Elementary School

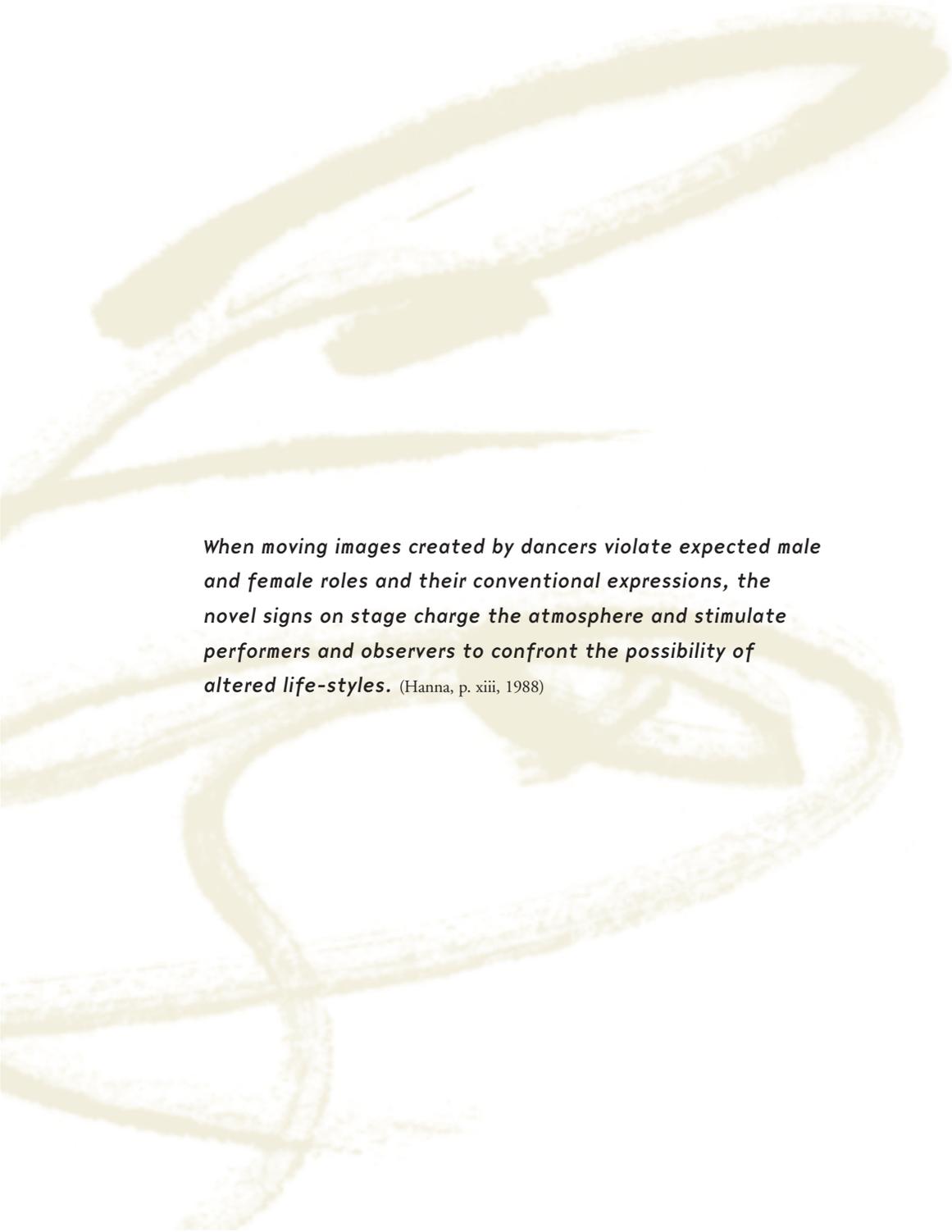
Outcome III: Creative Expression and Production

The student will demonstrate the ability to create dance by improvising, organizing dance ideas, and performing.

Expectation A: The student will develop the ability to produce spontaneous movement from various stimuli.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning.



*When moving images created by dancers violate expected male and female roles and their conventional expressions, the novel signs on stage charge the atmosphere and stimulate performers and observers to confront the possibility of altered life-styles.* (Hanna, p. xiii, 1988)

# Gender Issues: A Study of Culture Through Dance

## THEORY

For any given individual the experience of gender identity is an absolute boundary that is existentially insurmountable (Polhemus, 1993). The study of dance provides a rich venue for analysis and interpretation of gender issues. Regardless of the cultural domain, male and female dancers are relegated to differing roles and expressions. For example, Ghanaian men demonstrate differing dance styles from Ghanaian women. Differences are very evident in classical ballet as the female ballet dancer performs on pointe, while during the pas de deux the male dancer supports her movements. Ballroom dancers provide another example of gender role distinction, as the male dancer takes the lead.

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers should present dance as a rich arena for the cultural study of gender issues.**

Dance styles and choreography can offer students a data source for analyzing gender roles. The choreography of Martha Graham provides a variety of cultural settings for female characterization. For example, in work choreographed for the 1935 production of *Frontier*, Graham portrayed the female as both powerful and dangerous in such roles as Jocasta in *Night Journey*, who is incestuous, and Medea in *Cave of the Heart*, who murders her children. In 1958 she portrayed Clytemnestra, who murders her husband (Burt, 1998).

Hanna (1988) analyzes in detail styles of dance that reveal gender biases. For example, classical ballet tends to present two contrasting images of woman—the unattainable, idealized, or repressed virginal love and the passionate heartthrob (p. 173). There are many gestures and movements in ballet that symbolize stereotypical male and female behavior.

Recent choreography has challenged the stereotypical definitions of dance by portraying males and females in alternative roles. Men and women choreographers have portrayed women in roles of stature, in the reality and illusion of exerting physical strength, and even in lesbian relationships. For example, in the dance *Intentional Divisions/Implicit Connections*, choreographer Bill T. Jones, a tall, muscular man, is flipped over by a diminutive woman who is less than one-half his height and weight (Hanna, 1988).

Dance teachers should promote discussion and analysis of gender issues as displayed through dance. As students learn about the impact of culture on the expression of gender issues, they will be able to approach gender biases with knowledge and understanding. Through the study of choreography, dance styles, and ethnic dance forms, dance becomes another powerful tool for creating new cultural realities for male and females.

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Burt, R. (1998). *Alien Bodies: Representations of modernity, "race," and nation in early dance*. New York: Routledge.

Hanna, J. (1988). *Dance, Sex, and Gender*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Information on dance, sex, and gender issues, including the continuing reconstitution of gender roles and meanings that bear on the human struggle with questions of self-identity and interpersonal relationships.

Kahlich, L. C. (2001). Gender and dance education. *Journal of Dance Education* 1 (2), 45-47.

Editorial encouraging dance educators to reflect on gender biases incorporated in their teaching.

Polhemus, T. (1993). Dance, gender, and culture. In H. Thomas (Ed.), *Dance, gender and culture*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Gender constrains responses in general, and specifically in dance. Polhemus

provides many examples of social and ethnic dance as expressions of the intersection between gender and culture.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the High School  
Outcome II – Historical, Cultural, and Social Context

The student will demonstrate an understanding of dance, its relationship to other significant components of history and human experience, and ways that it provides opportunities for individual, cultural, and creative expression.  
Expectation A: The student will analyze the ways people use dance as a means of communication and expression.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 4: Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance.

Content Standard 5: Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods.





## **Teaching In Dance**

*Teaching with Dance Images*

*Laterality: A Dance Teacher's Approach to Balanced Teaching*

*Recalling Dance Sequences*

*Motif Writing*

*Developing Student Choreographers*

*Developing Creativity in Dancers*

*Dance Performance as a Tool for Learning*

# Teaching with Dance Images

## THEORY

Many dance teachers use mental imagery in planning, implementing, and evaluating technique and choreography. Researchers have noted that dance teachers rely on imagery with beginning, intermediate, and advanced dancers. The images are visual; the dancer forms a mental picture of the movement or kinesthetic and imagines the feeling of a movement. An image may be direct or a practice mental image of a specific movement, or it can be indirect or metaphorical: “Imagine walking and turning as if there were no gravity to keep you earthbound.” Teaching with mental practice imagery can enable students to recall movement sequences. Physical practice can precede a few minutes of mental practice to enhance the learning and

## BETTER PRACTICE

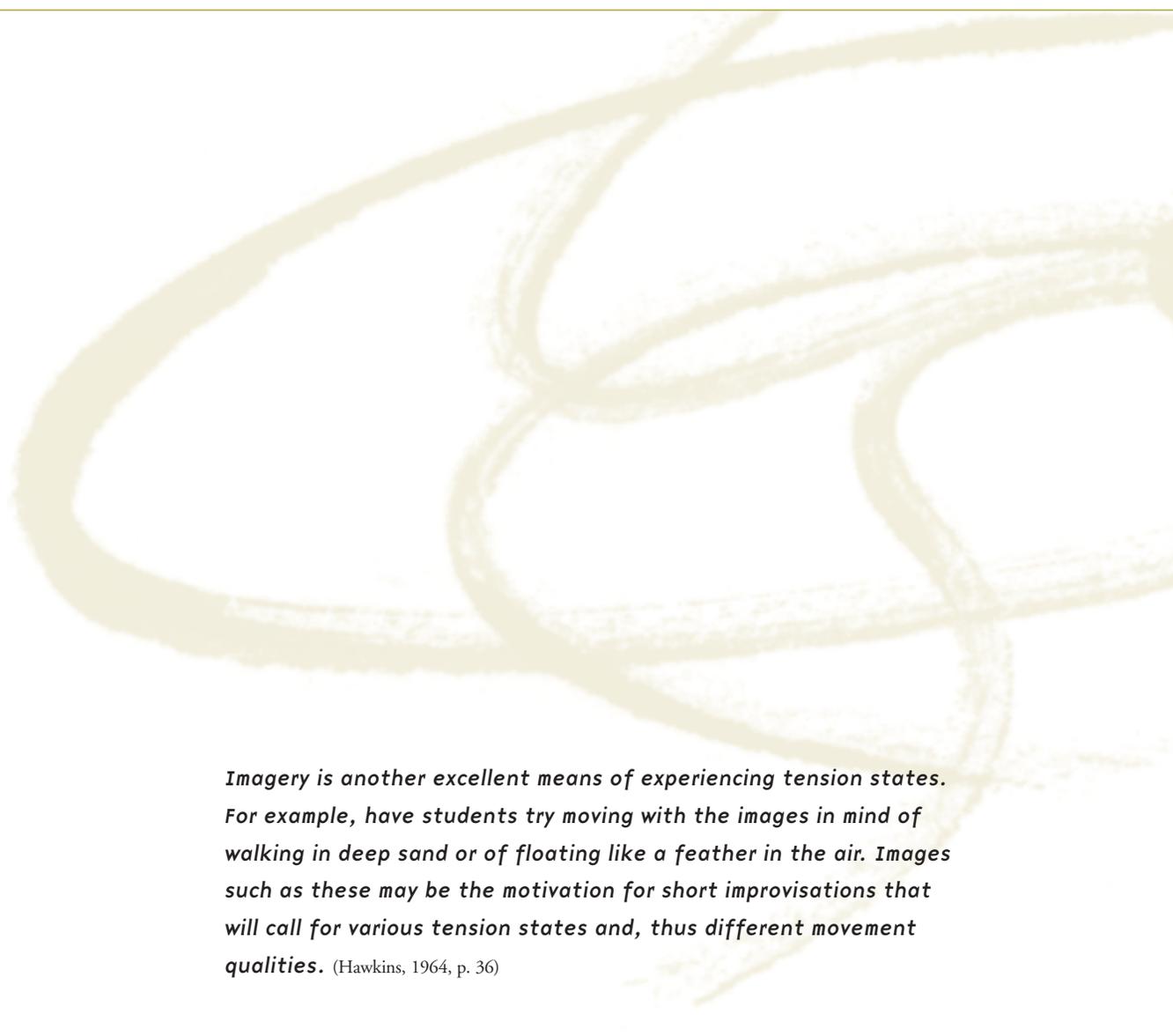
**Teachers who use mental imagery in their teaching promote learning because images enhance the recall and performance of movement.**

performance of a movement sequence. Metaphoric imagery can enhance the qualitative performance of a movement and add meaning. For example, a metaphoric statement to “run as if you were running in a pool of water” changes the quality of the execution of the run. Metaphoric images also enhance choreography (Hawkins, 1964).

Recent research has revealed that modern dance teachers use more imagery than jazz dance teachers do. Both mental practice and metaphoric imagery can be useful in structured (folk dance, line dance) and unstructured dance forms (creative, improvisation). Guidelines for teaching both types of images follow:

1. Provide an accurate demonstration of the skill. The learners must be able to form an image of the space, time, force, and specific movement of the skill.
2. Articulate the critical elements of the skill and point out its important components. For example, in teaching a port de bras, the spatial relationship of the arms and body position is described. In a first port de bras, the avant position (front), the hands face one another and are lower than the shoulders. The hands are positioned no higher than the base of the sternum. By pointing out the critical elements, the teacher allows the learner to focus on the correct execution of the skill.
3. After observing a demonstration and focusing on the critical components of the skill, the learner should physically practice the skill several times.
4. Give feedback to provide information about the success of the movement and what must be done in a succeeding performance.
5. Provide direct imagery practice. Direct mental practice imagery provides students with a method of rehearsing the skill. Now is the time to guide students through the dance image. Students should be focused, receptive, and physically still during the delivery of the dance image.
6. Have students physically practice the skill. Physical practice immediately follows mental practice.
7. Present indirect metaphoric images, but be certain that they are part of the student’s experience. Can the learner form a mental picture of the desired image from the port de bras example? Provide the metaphoric image while the student is moving.

Teaching dance images adds important dimensions to the pedagogic strategies available to the teacher or choreographer. Images appeal to the multidimensional aspects of the learners, including their visual, kinesthetic, and auditory senses.



*Imagery is another excellent means of experiencing tension states. For example, have students try moving with the images in mind of walking in deep sand or of floating like a feather in the air. Images such as these may be the motivation for short improvisations that will call for various tension states and, thus different movement qualities.* (Hawkins, 1964, p. 36)

## REFERENCES

- Hawkins, A. (1964). *Creating Through Dance*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.  
A comprehensive view of dance technique and creativity.
- Minton, S. (1996). Assessment of the use of imagery in the dance classroom. *Impulse 4* (4), 276-292.  
A survey of modern and jazz teachers to determine differences and similarities in imagery use.
- Overby, L. (1990). The use of imagery by dance teachers—Development and implementation of two research instruments. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance 61* (2), 24-27.  
Two research instruments for the assessment of imagery use are introduced.
- Overby, L., Hall, C., & Haslem, I. (1998). A comparison of imagery used by dance teachers, figure skating coaches, and soccer coaches. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality 17* (4), 323-337.
- Coaches and dance teachers differ in their use of kinesthetic and metaphoric imagery. Dance teachers use more metaphoric imagery than figure skating and soccer coaches do.
- State Standards for the Arts  
*Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Middle School  
Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education  
The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.  
Expectation C: The student will demonstrate understanding of the language of dance, including technical skills, terminology, and refined physical abilities, by executing increasingly complex movements.
- National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*  
Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.

# Laterality: A Dance Teacher's Approach to Balanced Teaching

## THEORY

Bilateral transfer relates to learning a motor skill or task on the opposite side. During a dance class, teachers typically teach a combination of movements on one side only. They expect students to perform the movement sequences on the other side without a previous demonstration. In a study by Puretz, the dancers learned two complex dance movement sequences in eight treatment conditions. The treatment conditions included naive and experienced dancers, right or left side preference, and transfer of one-trial training versus practice time. Surprisingly, the results of the study supported the strategy of teaching to the nondominant side first.

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who promote bilateral transfer by teaching to the nondominant side enhance the ability of dance students to perform on both sides.**

Teachers should demonstrate dance sequences on the nondominant side. The students should be allowed to practice to a mastery level on that side. Students should then be able to easily transfer to the dominant side.

*Dance teachers should teach to the non-preferred side (i.e., the left side) to maximize learning through bilateral transfer.* (Puretz, 1989, p. 247).

## REFERENCES

Puretz, S. (1983). Bilateral transfer: The effects of practice on the transfer of complex dance movement patterns. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 54 (1), 48-54.

This study is reported above.

Puretz, S. (1989). The psychology of dance. In L. Y. Overby & J. H. Humphrey (Eds.), *Dance: current selected research* (Vol. 1). New York: AMS Press. Review of research literature in psychology of dance, specifically self-concept, body image, motor learning creativity, and clinical considerations.

Skinner, M. (1984). Motor learning research may help the dancer. *The Dancer as Athlete. Olympic Scientific Congress Proceedings*, (Vol. 8), 187-194. The state of the field of dance research/motor learning research, especially perceptual skills, learning, instructional cue use, and transfer.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*

Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Middle School

Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education

The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation C: The student will demonstrate understanding of the language of dance, including technical skills, terminology, and refined physical abilities, by executing increasingly complex movements.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.

# Recalling Dance Sequences

## THEORY

Experts are more capable of recalling information specific to their skill. This effect has been demonstrated in many sport skills, including chess and field hockey. Starks, Caicco, Boutilier, and Sevsek (1990) compared the ability of expert young ballet dancers to recall structured and random ballet sequences with that of nondancers. The expert dancers were able to recall the dance sequences significantly more accurately than the novice dancers. The researchers also noted the lack of primacy and recency effects, which include the tendency to recall the first and last items in a list more accurately than the items in the middle.

In a later experiment, creative modern dance served as the movement for study. Unlike ballet, creative modern dance does not have specific verbal labels for each movement. Expert dancers again were compared with novice dancers. The expert dancers recalled the creative modern dance sequences more accurately than the novice dancers. The primacy-recency effect was also evident in this experiment, as the first and last movements were recalled more accurately than the middle movements.

*One suspects then that very skilled creative modern dancers must develop an ability to recall any and all movement sequences, not simply those constrained by traditional structure.*

(Starks, Caicco, Boutilier, & Sevsek, 1990, p. 318).

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who teach dance help dancers recall structured and unstructured dance sequences more accurately than nondancers can.**

Experience contributes to the ability of dancers to recall and perform movement sequences more accurately than novice dancers.

## REFERENCES

Crisp, F. (1987). Motor versus verbal recall of ballet sequences by young expert dancers. *Journal of Sport Psychology* 9, 222-230.

A comparison of the ability to recall choreographed ballet sequences of expert young ballet dancers and novice young dancers. The two groups did not differ in the unstructured trials, but the expert dancers performed significantly better than the nondancers in the structured, motor, and verbal sequences.

Starkes, J., Caicco, M., Boutilier, C., & Sevsek, B. (1990). Motor recall of experts for structured and unstructured sequences in creative modern dance. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 13, 317-321.

A comparison of the ability of expert modern dancers and novice dancers to recall performance of structured and unstructured movement sequences. The expert dancers performed better than the novice dancers in both conditions.

State Standards for the Arts

*Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*

*Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Middle School*

Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education

The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation C: The student will demonstrate understanding of the language of dance, including technical skills, terminology, and refined physical abilities, by executing increasingly complex movements.

National Standards for the Arts

*What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.

# Motif Writing

## THEORY

Motif writing is a symbol system for writing movement concepts. The purpose of motif writing is to stimulate creative movement exploration (Guest, 1995; Venable, 1998). When dance educators introduce motif writing, their students are able to improvise and document dances by moving and writing. The written record encourages retention of the created movement sequences. The students have a final product that includes a dance score and a movement vocabulary, and are able to share the information with other dancers, parents, and friends.

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who use motif writing to develop dance literacy provide a visual representation of movement experiences to enhance learning.**

interdisciplinary learning, combining geography with cultural dances, and helping kindergarten students use motif symbols to dance and to notate literature (Bucek, 1998).

Motif writing provides dance educators with a tool for developing dance literacy for students of all ages. Students learn to combine creative problem solving with a visual representation of movement sequences.

*Motif writing provides a means for students to put down their core ideas to contemplate, compare, or share with others.* (Venable, 1998, p. 33)

## REFERENCES

Bucek, L. (1998). Developing dance literacy. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 69 (7), 29-32.

Motif writing as an intellectual framework for movement that builds children's ability to conceive of movement in a system of symbols. Motif writing is also described as a way of blending various school subjects.

Guest, A. (1995). *Your move: a new approach to the study of movement and dance* (3rd ed.). New York: Gordon and Breach.  
A comprehensive description and application of motif writings.

Venable, L. (1998). Demystifying motif writing. *Journal of Physical Education Recreation and Dance* 69 (6), 32-36.

The history of motif writing and an explanation of its symbols. The author also traces the growth of motif writing in schools in Columbus, Ohio, over the past three decades.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Middle School

Outcome II: Historical, Cultural, and Social Context

The student will demonstrate an understanding of dance, its relationship to other significant components of history and human experience, and ways that it provides opportunities for individual, cultural, and creative expression.

Expectation A: The student will develop the ability to recognize dance as a form of individual and cultural expression.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning.

# Developing Student Choreographers

## THEORY

Student choreographers are expected to produce unique and expressive dance works. Teachers can create a learning environment that promotes inventive problem solving and reflective thinking. James Penrod of the University of California, Irvine, and Larry Lavender and Jennifer Predock-Linnell of the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, offer two approaches.

Penrod devised a series of workshops for second-year choreography students to enable them to find fresh approaches to discovering their own movement preferences and to organize them into a meaningful choreographic structure (p. 11). The workshops offered a number of perspectives, including Laban movement analysis, Bartenieff fundamentals, psychology, Gendlin focusing, dance therapy, Stanislavski actor training, and choreographic craft and structures. The 10-week course revealed that students were able to expand their personal boundaries, increase their personal risk taking, and choreograph some powerful dance movements based upon their own deeply felt life experiences.

*For dance students to gain the maximum benefit from their choreographic experience it is important for faculty not to let the Mentoring process become one of dictating rather than facilitating the students' artistic development.*

(Lavender & Predock-Linnell, 1996, p. 235)

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who promote a student-centered environment in their classes develop creativity in student choreographers.**

and reflective thinking. The paper discusses the role of mentor as an active and reflective process. A good mentor has effective listening and questioning skills. The mentor enables the student choreographer to recognize when to revise artistic choices.

Another paper, "Standing Aside and Making Space: Mentoring Student Choreographers," supports the notion of establishing a learning environment that promotes creative problem solving

Assisting student choreographers in developing dance works promotes positive outcomes for the teacher/mentor, the student choreographer, and the audience.

## REFERENCES

Lavender, L., & Predock-Linnell, J. (1996). Standing aside and making space. Mentoring student choreographers. *Impulse 4* (3), 235-252.

Penrod, J. (1994). Expression in dance: Teaching beyond technique. *Impulse 2* (1), 3-15.

State Standards for the Arts

*Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*

Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the High School

Outcome III: Creative Expression and Production

The student will demonstrate the ability to create dance by improvising, organizing dance ideas, and performing.

Expectation B: The student will apply fundamentals of composition to design

and perform dance ideas and themes.

Outcome IV: Aesthetic Criticism

The student will demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze, and apply criteria for making aesthetic judgments in dance.

Expectation B: The student will develop the skills and sensitivity to examine personal efforts in choreography and performance.

National Standards for the Arts

*What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 2: Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures.

Content Standard 4: Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance.

# Developing Creativity in Dancers

## T H E O R Y

Dancers, like other artists, exhibit creative behaviors. Teaching dance in a creative manner enhances creativity.

Creative dance and improvisation incorporate problem solving and movement explorations as integral aspects of training in modern and creative dance. Dancers explore the elements of movement in designing movement studies. Creative dance, which is most often taught to students in preschool through grade 5, focuses primarily on exploration and understanding the elements of movement. Students of all ages are encouraged to develop brief movement studies based on a particular element.

## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Dance teachers can contribute to the development of creativity in dancers by carefully planning for creative experiences.**

Modern dance, which emphasizes technical development, also incorporates improvisation in training. Modern dancers develop movement vocabularies essential for performance and choreography.

Composition and choreography directly relate to the application of creative behaviors. Teachers of dance composition provide students with specific tools for developing unique works of art.

Investigations of the behavior of dancers find that dancers are creative. Like other students in the performing arts, dancers may be characterized as self-confident, flexible, achieving, and dominant.

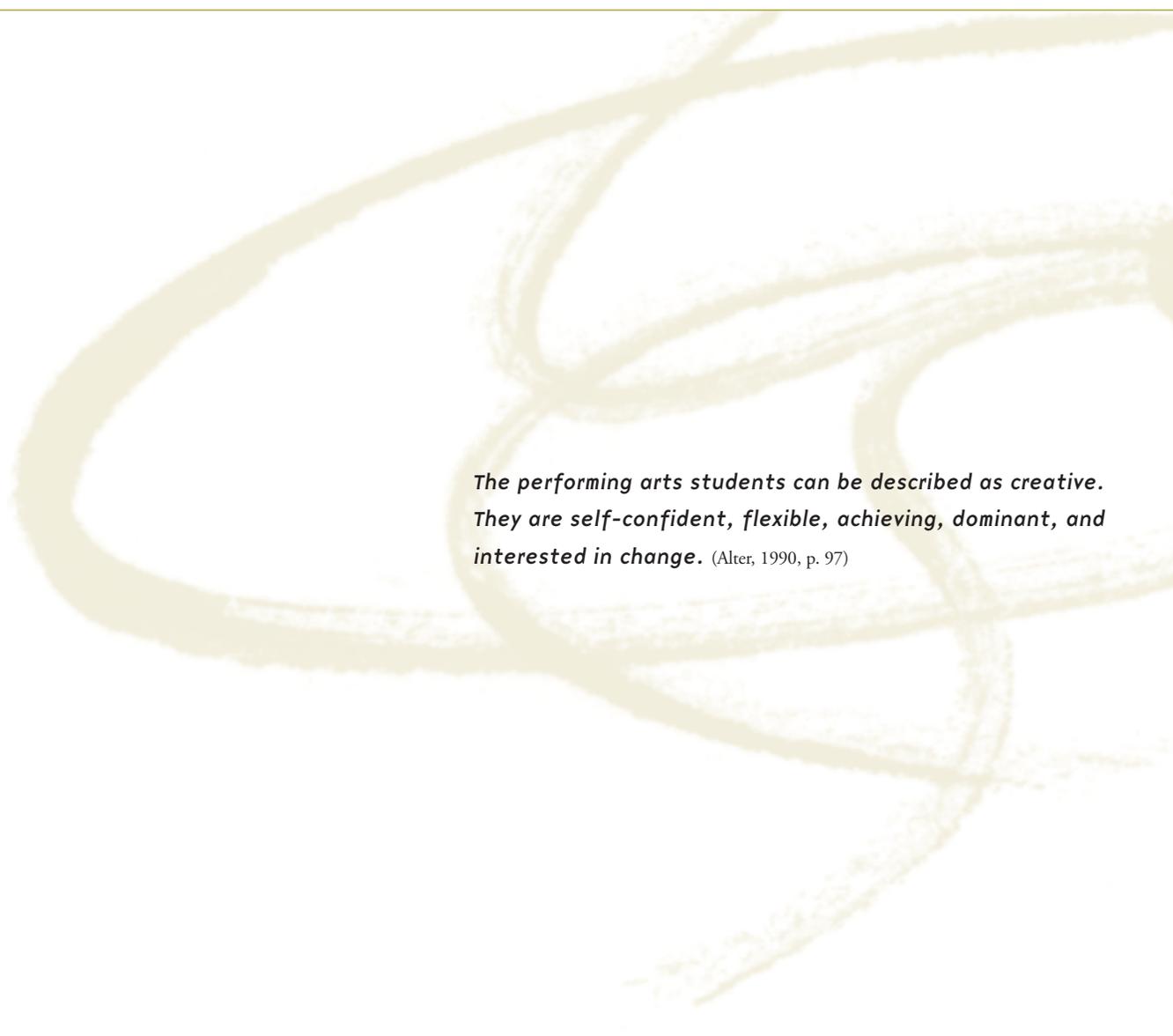
Standardized tests of creativity (Brennan, 1985, and Alter, 1990) have measured the creativity of dancers. Brennan developed a movement test based on the Torrance creativity measures (Torrance, 1965). Torrance developed a movement instrument consisting of tests of position, composition, and movement creativity.

Another measure, developed by Alter (1990), provides information on the high-energy tendencies of creative performing artists.

Teachers can use Torrance's seven guides to creativity when devising creative experiences for dance classes.

1. Do not leave creative development to chance.
2. Encourage curiosity and other creative characteristics.
3. Be respectful of questions and unusual ideas.
4. Recognize original, creative behavior.
5. Ask questions that require thinking.
6. Build on the learning skills that pupils already have.
7. Give opportunities for learning in creative ways.

Although creative activities are often left to the modern dance or creative dance teacher, teachers of other types of dance should also incorporate a creative component as part of the class.



***The performing arts students can be described as creative. They are self-confident, flexible, achieving, dominant, and interested in change.*** (Alter, 1990, p. 97)

## REFERENCES

Alter, J. B. (1990). Performing arts students: Their creative potential, preference for high energy activities and personality characteristics: An analysis of variance. *Dance: Current Selected Research* 2, 69-104.

Brennan, M. (1985). Dance creativity tests and the structure of intellect models. *The Journal of Creative Behavior* 19 (3), 185-190.

Brennan constructed a dance creativity instrument based on Guilford's Structure of Intellect (SI) framework. This framework stipulates three main parameters of intellect—operations, content, and products. The instrument encompasses the positions test, the composition test, and the improvisation test. The purpose of the study was to assess the reliability of the measures. Results indicated that reliable dance measures could be constructed by employing the categorical organization of the model.

Isaksen, S. G., & Parnes, S. J. (1985). Curriculum planning for creative thinking and problem solving. *The Journal of Creative Behavior* 19 (1), 29.

A survey of 150 curriculum planners about their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in regard to the development of creative thinking. Results contributed to a creative problem-solving model to engage in curriculum planning for creative learning.

Torrance, E. P. (1965). Seven guides to creativity. *Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 26, 68.

The positive effect of creative dance on the creativity of young children. The paper describes seven guidelines to develop creative thinking abilities through movement.

State Standards for the Arts

*Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*

Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the High School

Outcome III – Creative Expression and Production

The student will demonstrate the ability to create dance by improvising, organizing dance ideas, and performing.

Expectation B: The student will apply fundamentals of composition to design and perform dance ideas and themes.

National Standards for the Arts

*What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 2: Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structure.

Content Standard 4: Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance.

# Dance Performance as a Tool for Learning

## RATIONAL E

Participation in dance performances and attendance at performances by dance companies can effectively teach curricular content.

In a program on the history of dance, fifth-grade students were pretested and posttested to determine their knowledge of African American dance and their attitudes toward it as a historical entity. A narrated performance showcased specific dances, including the cakewalk, tap, the Charleston, and the Lindy Hop, placed in historical context. After viewing the performance, the students improved in their knowledge and appreciation of African American dance history (Overby & Durr, 1993).

A second program presented a dance pantomime experiment that introduced the health concepts of nutrition, mental health, bicycle safety, and anatomy to elementary school children. Experimental groups

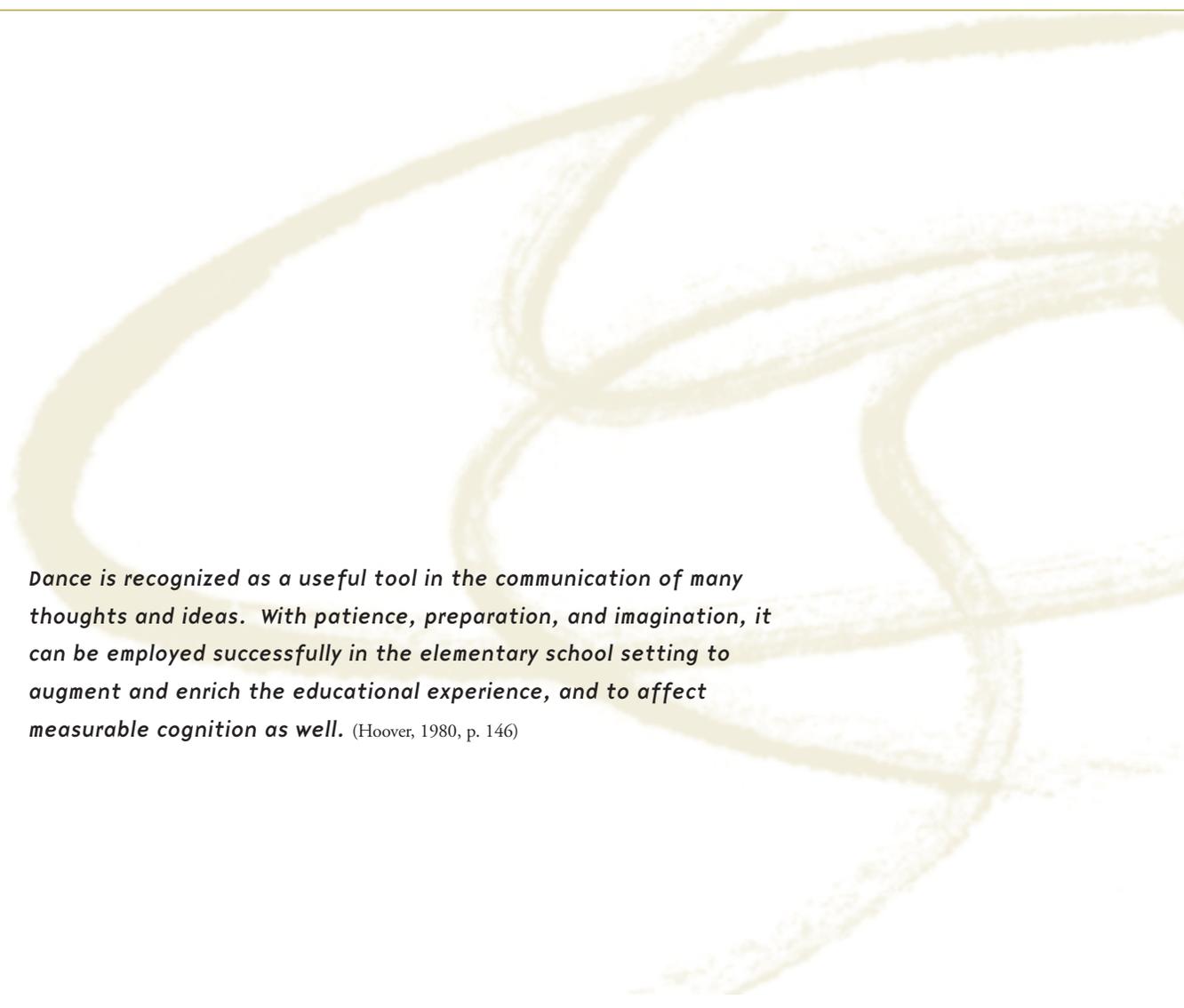
## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who require attendance at dance performances and participation in dance promote student learning by engaging students in an artistic and educational experience.**

observed two 45-minute presentations. The third-grade students in the experimental group were pretested, viewed the performance, and then were posttested on the health concepts presented in the dance performance. The control groups did not observe the dance pantomime but received written materials on the topics. The study indicated improved concepts of anatomy and bicycle safety. The scores of the experimental group were significantly higher than those of the control group.

A third presentation demonstrated integration of physical science concepts with dance and theatre. The performance, entitled Kinetic Energy, focused on the concepts of kinetic and potential energy, gravity, inertia, and friction. The program was based on the Michigan Science Standards and Objectives for elementary school students. A survey of fourth-grade students indicated that they gained knowledge of kinetic energy, potential energy, and gravity while experiencing an artistic production.

The three programs demonstrate the potential for dance performance to affect learning. As teachers look to more interdisciplinary approaches, the dance performance offers a viable option for learning both in and through the arts.



**Dance is recognized as a useful tool in the communication of many thoughts and ideas. With patience, preparation, and imagination, it can be employed successfully in the elementary school setting to augment and enrich the educational experience, and to affect measurable cognition as well.** (Hoover, 1980, p. 146)

## REFERENCES

Hoover, C. F. (1980). *The effectiveness of a narrated dance/pantomime program in communicating selected health concepts of third graders.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon, Eugene.

The effects of a dance pantomime program on the health knowledge of third graders. The students became more knowledgeable regarding anatomy and bicycle safety.

Overby, L., & Durr, D. (1993, October). Dance in America: An African-American Journey. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Midwest Popular Culture and Midwest American Culture Association, East Lansing, MI. Touring company of collegiate dancers performed in 20 schools throughout Michigan. Educational materials were distributed to the schools in preparation for the performance. Students and teachers in fifth grade were pretested and posttested on their knowledge and attitudes. Results indicated that the children gained in their knowledge of African American dance and in their attitudes toward African American dance.

Overby, L. (1999, July). Presentation of the science education standards through theatre and dance. The 10th International Conference on Creativity in Colleges and Universities. Midland, MI.

Touring company of collegiate dancers performed in 20 schools throughout Michigan. The dance and theatre program was designed around the physical science objective of motion of objects. Educational materials were delivered to

the schools to encourage introduction and follow-up activities. A survey of fourth-grade students recorded their understanding of scientific concepts presented in the program.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Elementary School  
Outcome II – Historical, Cultural, and Social Context

The student will demonstrate an understanding of dance, its relationship to other significant components of history and human experience, and ways that it provides opportunities for individual, cultural, and creative expression.

Expectation A: The student will develop the ability to recognize dance as a form of expression and understand why people dance.

Outcome IV: The student will demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze, and apply culture for making aesthetic judgments in dance.

Expectation A: The student will discuss reactions to dance performance.

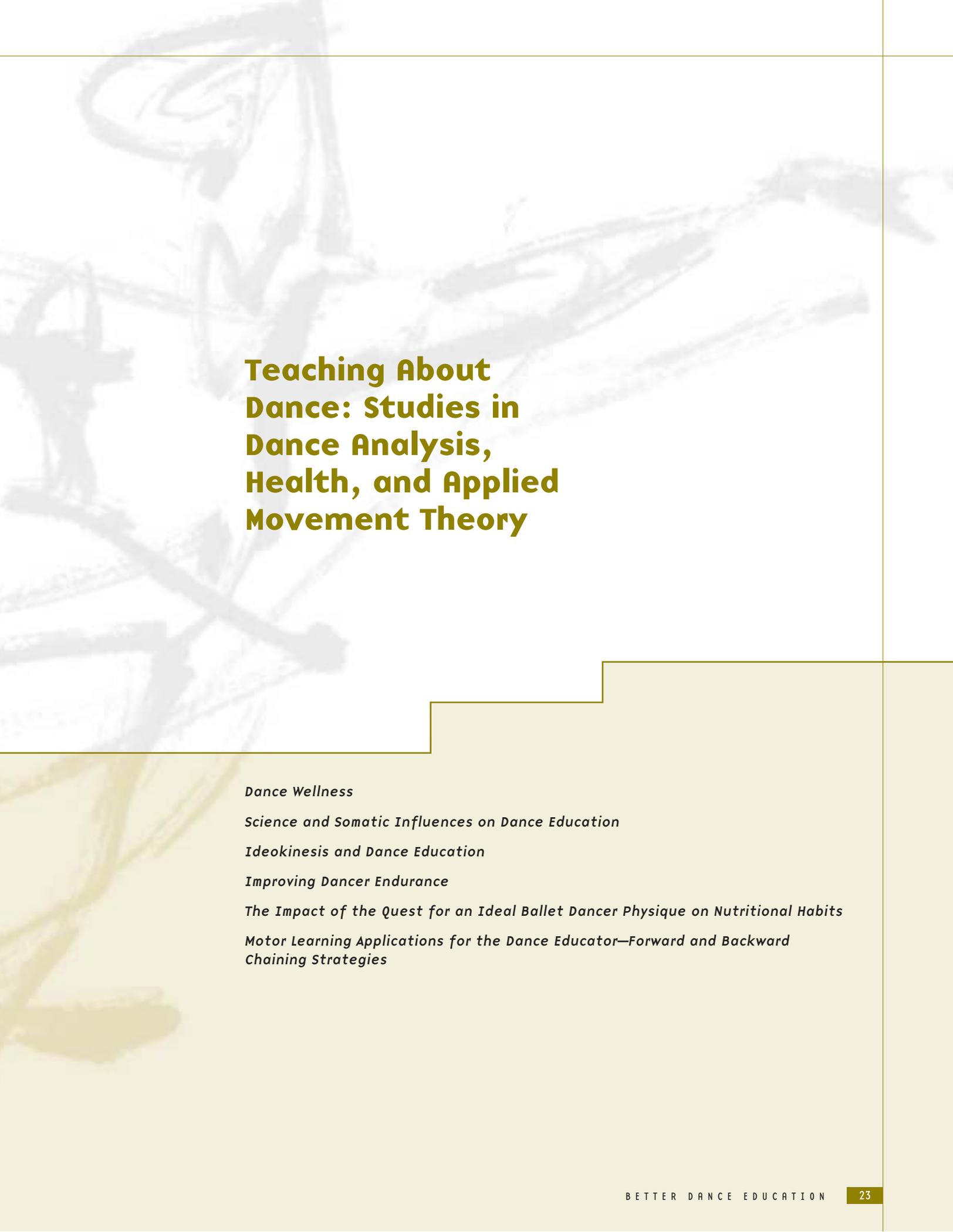
National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 1: Applying and demonstrating critical and creative skills in dance.

Content Standard 5: Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods.

Content Standard 7: Making connections between dance and other disciplines.





## **Teaching About Dance: Studies in Dance Analysis, Health, and Applied Movement Theory**

*Dance Wellness*

*Science and Somatic Influences on Dance Education*

*Ideokinesis and Dance Education*

*Improving Dancer Endurance*

*The Impact of the Quest for an Ideal Ballet Dancer Physique on Nutritional Habits*

*Motor Learning Applications for the Dance Educator—Forward and Backward  
Chaining Strategies*

# Dance Wellness

## T H E O R Y

The phrase “dance wellness” encompasses all aspects of human health and well-being. Dance wellness programs include anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, biomechanics, body therapies, dance injuries, nutrition, personal health, psychology, and motor learning.

The four major strategies for implementing dance wellness curricula are specificity, balance, integration, and a multidisciplinary approach. A recent survey of 70 schools by Cardinal and Hilsendager (1996) determined that 57.1% of the schools maintained dance wellness programs. Not all aspects of dance wellness, however, were covered. Anatomy and kinesiology were offered in 80% of the schools and psychology in only 60.5%. The third most prevalent component is the body therapies, or somatics. The majority of dance wellness programs are located in undergraduate programs.

## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Teachers who include comprehensive dance wellness programs promote beneficial behaviors in dancers.**

To enable dancers to perform with good physical and emotional health, a strong program of technique and wellness information is needed. Educators can utilize a multidisciplinary approach to develop a program with components of technique supported by knowledge of wellness principles and ways of learning.

*Dance Wellness is an area of dance composed of a wide array of components that share as a common goal the overall health and well-being of the dancer, as related to increased qualitative and quantitative performance potential.* (Cardinal & Hilsendager, 1996, p. 239)

## R E F E R E N C E S

- Cardinal, M., & Hilsendager, S. (1996). Dance wellness curricular model for higher education. In L. Y. Overby & P. Cote-Laurence (Eds.). *Dance education a lifetime of experiences—Proceedings of the First Biannual Dance Education Conference* (pp. 52-53). Reston, VA: National Dance Association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.
- A curricular model for dance wellness programs. The needs of the whole student are taken into account—mind, body, and spirit.
- Cardinal, M., & Hilsendager, S. (1995). Incorporating dance wellness-related components into higher education dance programs. *Impulse* 3 (4), 238-248.
- A survey of dance programs. The author promotes more comprehensive, multidisciplinary training of the dancer.

- State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the High School  
Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education  
The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.  
Expectation C: The student will demonstrate proficiency in dance form and technique, discuss ways in which proficiency affects dance performance, and describe how training to achieve proficiency translates to personal life experiences.
- National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*  
Content Standard 6: Making connections between dance and healthful living.

# Science and Somatic Influences on Dance Education

## THEORY

The field of somatics encompasses such body disciplines as the Alexander technique, Feldenkrais, Pilates, and Bartenieff fundamentals, ideokinesis, and body-mind centering. The focus of each of these body disciplines is awareness of the body. When science and somatics are integrated into specific techniques like stretching, a dancer's flexibility, movement efficiency, and movement quality improve. Somatics works by developing awareness of and responsiveness to the dancer's reactions and sensations.

Body therapies utilize images, directions, and verbal cues to actively and passively enhance body awareness. An example of a body therapy is the Alexander technique. Alexander, an actor, developed a technique for changing habits of use through inhibition and direction. When applied to dance, the student learns to inhibit poor movement habits and to utilize directions that lead to more efficient body use. The Alexander technique focuses on the movement of the head, neck, and back as the primary target for re-establishing greater control and efficiency of the body (Richmond, 1994).

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who understand somatics promote technical learning by leading students to increase their body awareness.**

Dance science and somatics have entered the curriculum of higher education programs. Because the inclusion of dance science and somatics as viable teaching tools is a relatively new phenomenon, many dance teachers need to take advantage of workshops and summer courses (Plastino, 1995). Dance teachers may also collaborate with somatic specialists to ensure integration of the concepts into technique classes.

Teaching that relies on science and somatics promotes self-understanding and leads to more authentic aesthetic expression.

***The hallmark of somatics is that the body learns improved movement organization and movement quality by consciously sensing and directing sensory awareness while moving or in thinking about moving.***

(Batson, 1993, p. 132)

## REFERENCES

- Batson, G. (1993). Stretching technique: A somatic learning model. Part I: Training Sensory Responsibility. *Impulse 1* (2), 126-140.  
The use of somatics to enhance dancers' physiological flexibility. The Alexander technique is applied to stretching.
- Richmond, P. (1994). The Alexander technique and dance training. *Impulse 2* (1), 24-38.  
The Alexander technique and its applications for use with dancers to increase coordination.
- Plastino, J. G. (1995). Moving to the 21st Century: Dance Science and Higher Education. *Impulse 3* (4), 249-252.  
The evolution of dance science as an integral part of the dance curriculum in higher education. Funding and personnel requirements for dance science and wellness programs are discussed.
- State Standards for the Arts  
*Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the High School  
Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education  
The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.  
Expectation A: The student will investigate ways that changes in perception affect dance experience.
- National Standards for the Arts  
*What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*  
Content Standard 6: Making connections between dance and healthful living.

# Ideokinesis and Dance Education

## THEORY

Ideokinesis is a form of imagery based on the location, direction, and forces required to perform a movement efficiently. The movement images are used to gain subcortical control over spinal musculature. Ideokinesis enhances alignment and improves the execution of dance skills.

Dance teachers can apply this use of imagery to many dance forms. Ideokinesis works because of the relationship of the images (ideokinetic facilitators) to anatomical structure and function. This body therapy is especially conducive to correcting faulty alignment. The images are anatomical and metaphorical lines of movement that are global, visual, and kinesthetic.

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Instructors who teach dance through ideokinesis promote the execution of anatomically correct technique and alignment.**

Researchers have verified that ideokinesis improves alignment (Krasnow, Chatfield, Barr, Jensen, & Dufek, 1997; Fairweather & Sidaway, 1993; Sweigard, 1975) and technique (Hanrahan, 1994).

The following example applies ideokinesis to technique:

“Imagine a strong gust of wind brushing down your back, gushing into your pelvis and blowing through your whole body and out through your head, arms, down through your supporting leg, and gushing through and out in front of you” (Hanrahan, 1994, p. 136).

Teachers can create their own images (ideokinetic facilitators) by following these guidelines:

1. Determine which parts of the body should be moving and in which direction.
2. Identify a positive, specific goal.
3. Identify the desired movement qualities and dynamics.
4. Find an existing form of energy appropriate to the desired movement dynamics.
5. Determine where the image is located in relation to the body.
6. Determine the desired direction of the flow of energy in the image.
7. Create an image with an appropriate energy directed toward a specific movement goal and located appropriately in the body.
8. Ensure that the chosen image does not have negative connotations or undesirable effects (Hanrahan, 1995, p. 35).

*The following example applies ideokinesis to technique:*

*“Imagine a strong gust of wind brushing down your back, gushing into your pelvis and blowing through your whole body and out through your head, arms, down through your supporting leg, and gushing through and out in front of you”*

(Hanrahan, 1994, p. 136).

## REFERENCES

Fairweather, M. M., & Sidaway, B. (1993). Ideokinetic imagery as a postural development technique. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 64 (4), 385-392.

The effectiveness of ideokinetic imagery and flexibility combined with abdominal strength training to correct the spinal angles of lordosis and kyphosis, and to reduce back pain. The results support the use of ideokinetic imagery to improve poor posture and reduce lower back pain.

Hanrahan, C. (1994). In search of a “good” dance image. *Impulse* 2 (2), 131-144.

The effectiveness of dance images used in an experimental study. Several imagery presentation strategies, including the constructive rest position and choice of music, as well as drawings, verbal explanations, and an audiotaped imagery guide, were perceived by the dancers to be effective.

Hanrahan, C. (1995). Creating dance images: Basic principles for teachers. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 66 (1), 33-39. Principles for constructing images to enhance specific movements.

Krasnow, D., Chatfield, S., Barr, S., Jensen, J., & Dufek, J. (1997). Imagery and conditioning practices for dancers. *Dance Research Journal* 29 (1), 43-63. A comparison of the effectiveness of mental imagery alone, mental imagery and

conditioning, and conditioning only, in terms of dynamic alignment and performance competence. The results confirmed imagery and conditioning as a means of enhancing the dynamic alignment of dancers.

Sweigard, L. (1975). *Human movement potential: Its ideokinetic facilitation*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. The theory of ideokinesis, with exercises for adapting it in teaching and therapy. Sweigard coined the term “ideokinesis.”

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*

Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Middle School  
Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education

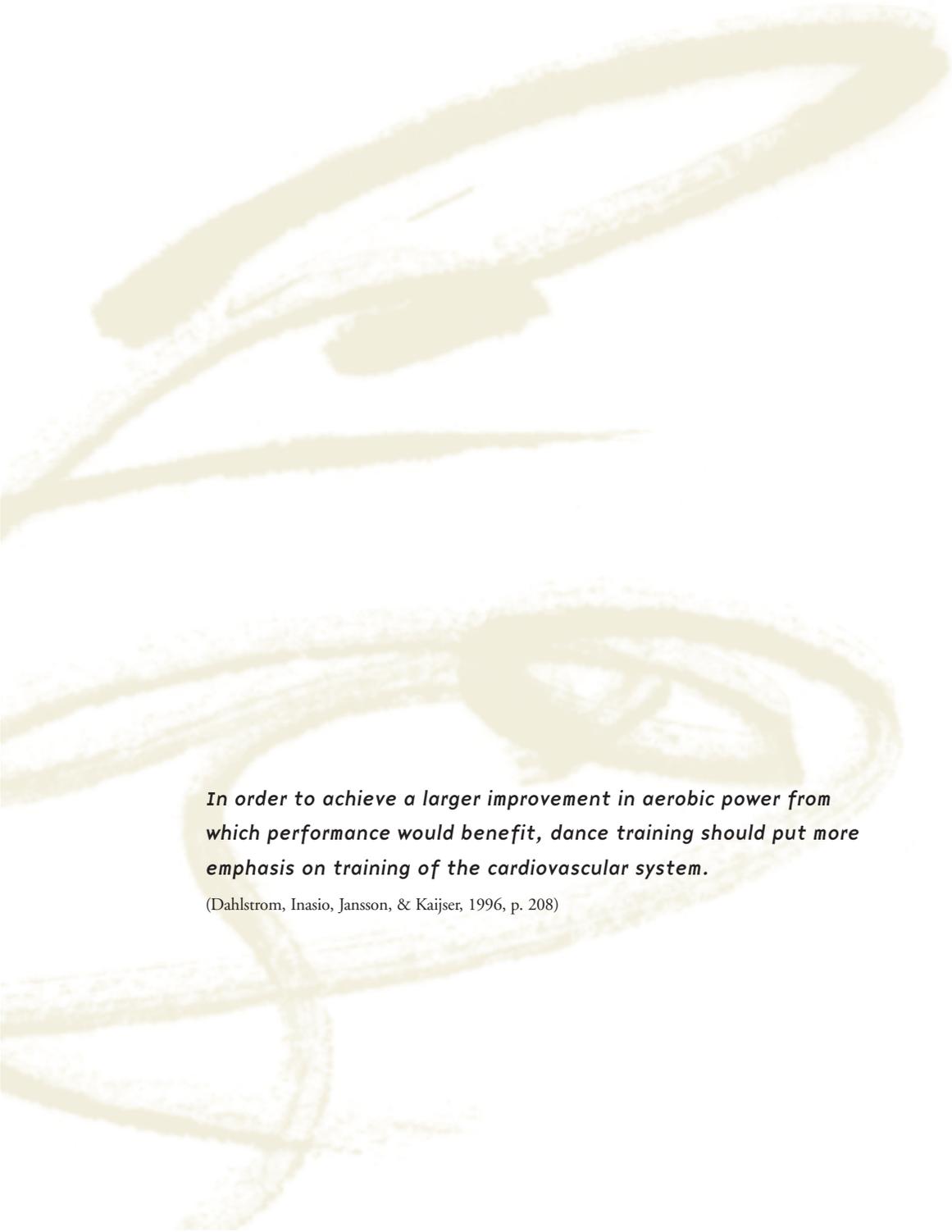
The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation C: The student will demonstrate understanding of the language of dance, including technical skills, terminology, and refined physical abilities, by executing increasingly complex movements.

National Standards for the Arts

*What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.



*In order to achieve a larger improvement in aerobic power from which performance would benefit, dance training should put more emphasis on training of the cardiovascular system.*

(Dahlstrom, Inasio, Jansson, & Kaijser, 1996, p. 208)

# Improving Dancer Endurance

## THEORY

Dance performance requires a high level of cardiovascular fitness. Dancers are often required to rehearse and repeat dances for several hours, and to perform at a high level of intensity during performance. Several researchers have studied the physiological demands of dance performance. In a recent study by Rimmer, Jay, and Plowman (1994), dancers wore a heart rate monitor as they prepared for a ballet performance and during the performance. The study indicated that the ballet dancers achieved moderate aerobic and anaerobic training levels by participating in ballet dance classes and performances.

A study by Dahlstrom, Inasio, Jansson, and Kaijser (1996) demonstrated 20% improvement in cardiovascular fitness over a period of three years in ballet, modern, jazz, and character dances. They suggested that levels could be even higher if more aerobic types of activities were included in the daily class work. Teachers can improve the endurance of dancers by planning specifically for improvement in this area. A few suggestions follow:

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who teach ballet, modern, and jazz techniques can enhance the endurance of dancers by developing cardiovascular endurance during class time.**

1. Include an aerobic component in each dance class.
2. Keep dancers moving. There should be no long breaks while giving feedback or making corrections.
3. Make performance an integral part of every class by including a long dance sequence. This will enable the dancers to develop endurance while achieving artistic expression.

Dance training can benefit from research findings in the area of exercise physiology.

Since the intensity level of dance performance resembles that of athletic competition, the training regimens of dancers may benefit from similar training guidelines for cardiovascular fitness.

## REFERENCES

Dahlstrom, M., Inasio, J., Jansson, E., & Kaijser, L. (1996). Physical fitness and physical effort in dancers: A comparison of four major dance styles. *Impulse 4* (3), 193-209.

The results of this study are reported above.

Rimmer, J., Jay, D., & Plowman, S. (1994). Physiological characteristics of trained dancers and intensity level of ballet class and rehearsal. *Impulse 2* (2), 97-105.

The results of this study are reported above.

Rimmer, J., & Rosentswieg, J. (1981). The maximum oxygen consumption in dance majors. *Dance Research Journal 14* (1 & 2), 29-31.

Investigation of the aerobic capacity of highly trained female dancers. Finding: The dance majors at Texas Woman's University have a high maximum oxygen intake.

Plastino, J. (1990). Integrating Dance Science into Technique Class and

Performance. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance 26-27*. Suggestions for incorporating scientifically sound components into the technique class.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the High School

Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education

The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation C: The student will demonstrate proficiency in dance form and technique, discuss ways in which proficiency affects dance performance, and describe how training to achieve proficiency translates to personal life experiences.

National Standards for the Arts

*What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 6: Making connections between dance and healthful living.

# Impact of the Quest for an Ideal Ballet Dancer Physique on Nutritional Habits

## T H E O R Y

Ballet dancers are required to maintain very lean bodies. Choreographers and ballet masters select dancers who fit the ideal physique of long legs, arms, and neck, and an extremely thin body. Many classical dancers attempt to match calorie intake with energy expenditure. They do not know appropriate strategies to maintain leanness, or the detrimental effects of this eating pattern.

Several studies have investigated the energy expenditure of ballet dancers. They demonstrate that ballet dancing is primarily an anaerobic activity. While dancing in a ballet class, activity occurs intermittently and at low energy levels. Bursts of energy are required in rehearsal and performance. Dance exercise alone often is not sufficient to achieve the desired body leanness.

## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Teachers facilitate appropriate eating and exercise patterns by promoting proper nutritional practices. To do this, they monitor diets and provide educational literature, helping ballet dancers maintain lean body physique.**

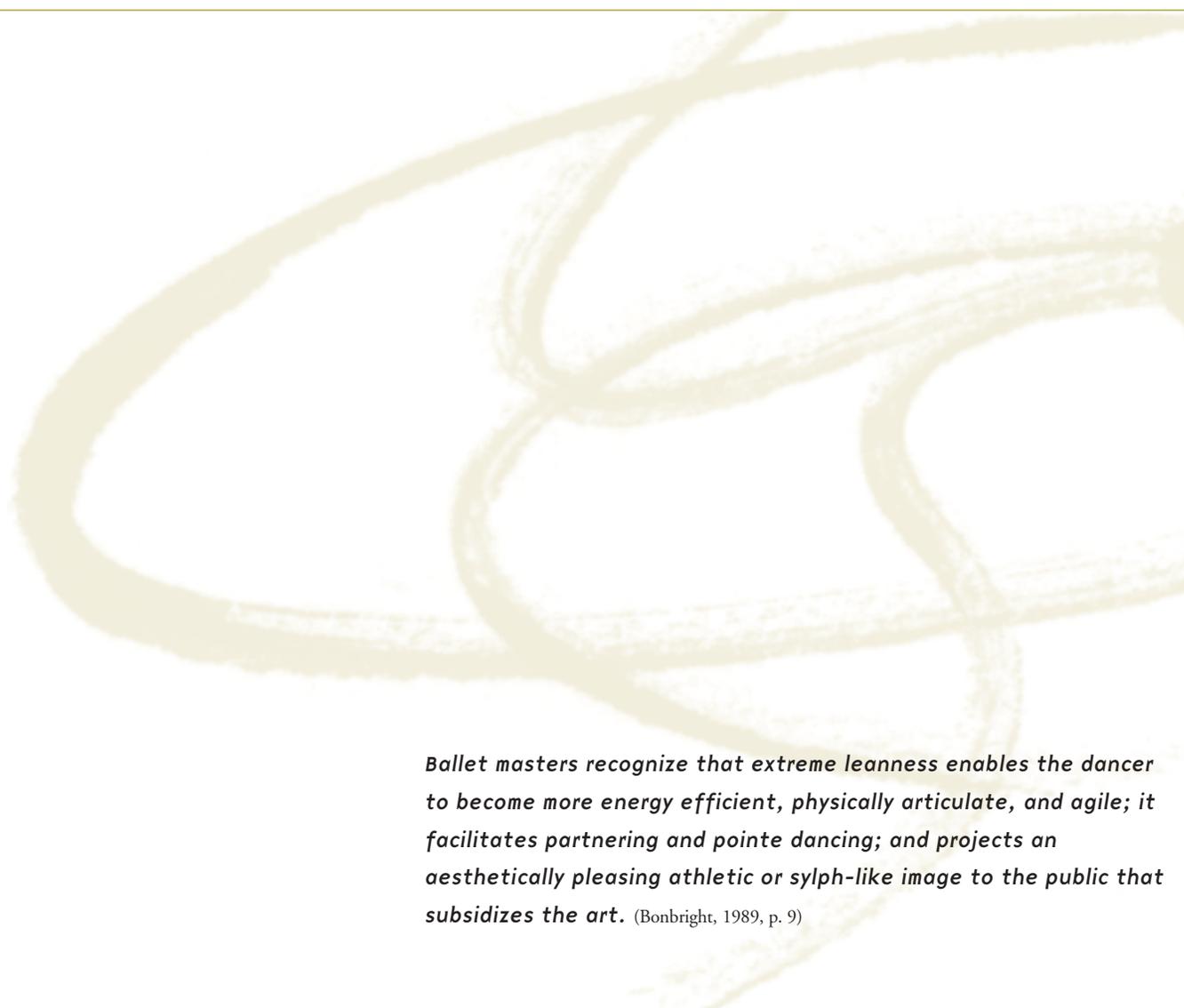
Ballet dancers are prone to disordered eating patterns. They limit caloric intake drastically, and they binge and purge. The nutritional habits of dancers have been investigated through surveys and studies.

Bonbright (1989) studied the dieting habits of ballet dancers for five days. The majority of the 31 subjects tended to consume foods low in energy value and nutritional density. Nutrition is an important topic for dance educators, who need to inform dancers about nutritional intake necessary to meet

energy requirement, tissue repair, and growth. Bonbright (pp. 12-13) recommends the following:

1. Eat sufficient food daily to meet the body's energy requirements for growth, tissue repair, and physical activity. The body needs approximately 15 kcal/day to function under normal circumstances, and an additional 200-300 kcal/day to meet the physical demands of ballet class, rehearsal, and performance.
2. Be aware of the caloric and nutritional value of foods in order to make wise, more diverse food selections.
3. Consume complex carbohydrates, which are the energy base of the dancer's diet. They are slowly reduced to glucose, providing a sustained energy release over a greater time.
4. Consume liberal amounts of water daily.
5. Incorporate a well-balanced multiple vitamin and mineral supplement in the diet for nutritional insurance.
6. Incorporate an endurance activity in the training program to compensate for the nonendurance component of ballet activity.
7. Consult a nutrition specialist and/or qualified physician if either a significant weight gain or weight loss is necessary.

The teacher plays an important role in the health and well-being of dancers. By providing nutritional information to the young dancer, the teacher can promote healthful dietary practice and contribute to attaining the desired body leanness.



*Ballet masters recognize that extreme leanness enables the dancer to become more energy efficient, physically articulate, and agile; it facilitates partnering and pointe dancing; and projects an aesthetically pleasing athletic or sylph-like image to the public that subsidizes the art.* (Bonbright, 1989, p. 9)

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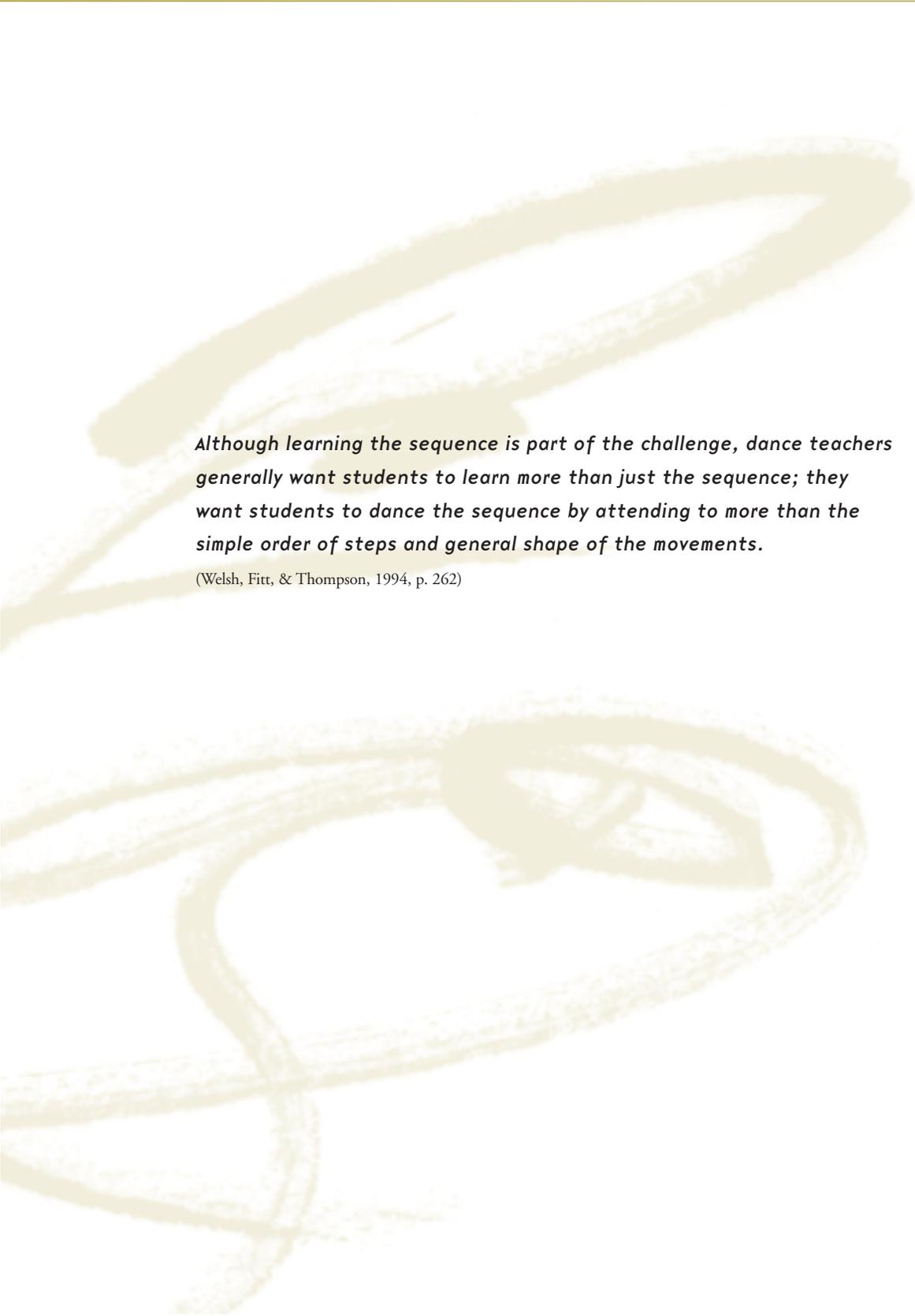
#### REFERENCE

Bonbright, J. (1989). The nutritional status of female ballet dancers 15-18 years of age. *Dance Research Journal* 21 (2), 9-14.  
This study is reported above.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the High School

Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education  
Expectation C: The student will demonstrate proficiency in dance form and techniques, discuss ways in which proficiency affects dance performance, and describe how training to achieve proficiency translates to personal life experiences.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*  
Content Standard 6: Making connections between dance and healthful living.



*Although learning the sequence is part of the challenge, dance teachers generally want students to learn more than just the sequence; they want students to dance the sequence by attending to more than the simple order of steps and general shape of the movements.*

(Welsh, Fitt, & Thompson, 1994, p. 262)

# Motor Learning Applications for the Educator: Forward and Backward Chaining Strategies

## THEORY

Findings of motor learning research can be applied to the teaching and learning of dance skills. Motor learning involves a relatively permanent change in behavior resulting from practice. Forward chaining and backward chaining are opposite strategies for learning a sequence of movements. Forward chaining is a systematic procedure for teaching the beginning of a sequence and teaching each component in succession. The learner practices the first component of the chain, then the first and second components together, then the first, second, and third components, and so on, until the entire chain is learned. Leap-ahead, or chunking, enables teachers to present a group of movements clustered together. In backward chaining, the learner practices the final behavior first. The next immediately prior behavior is practiced and added to the final behavior. Additional behaviors are added and practiced sequentially and in order. Practice always occurs in a forward direction.

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Dance teachers who teach movement combinations with a forward chaining method enhance learning and retention.**

Backward chaining has been used successfully with laboratory animals, disabled children, and adults.

A recent study evaluated a backward chaining strategy for teaching modern dance movement sequences. Six dancers were taught six modern dance sequences in forward and backward chaining conditions. They were videotaped and evaluated by

trained judges. Results indicated that dancers made fewer errors when taught with a forward chaining progression. The learners also expressed greater ease and enjoyment during the forward chaining sessions.

The limited number of studies of forward and backward chaining strategies in the teaching of dance technique makes it difficult to come to a definitive conclusion. The above study, however, supports the current practice of teaching in a forward chaining manner.

When motor learning research is applied in a dance education setting, both teachers and students benefit.

## REFERENCES

Welsh, T., Fitt, S., & Thompson, W. (1994). A comparison of forward and backward chaining strategies for teaching dance movement sequences. *Impulse 2* (4), 262-274.

Forward chaining is superior to backward chaining.

Overby, L. (1993). Motor learning knowledge in the dance education curriculum. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 42-44, 48. Motor learning concepts that affect the teaching of dance technique.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Middle School

Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding – Aesthetic Education

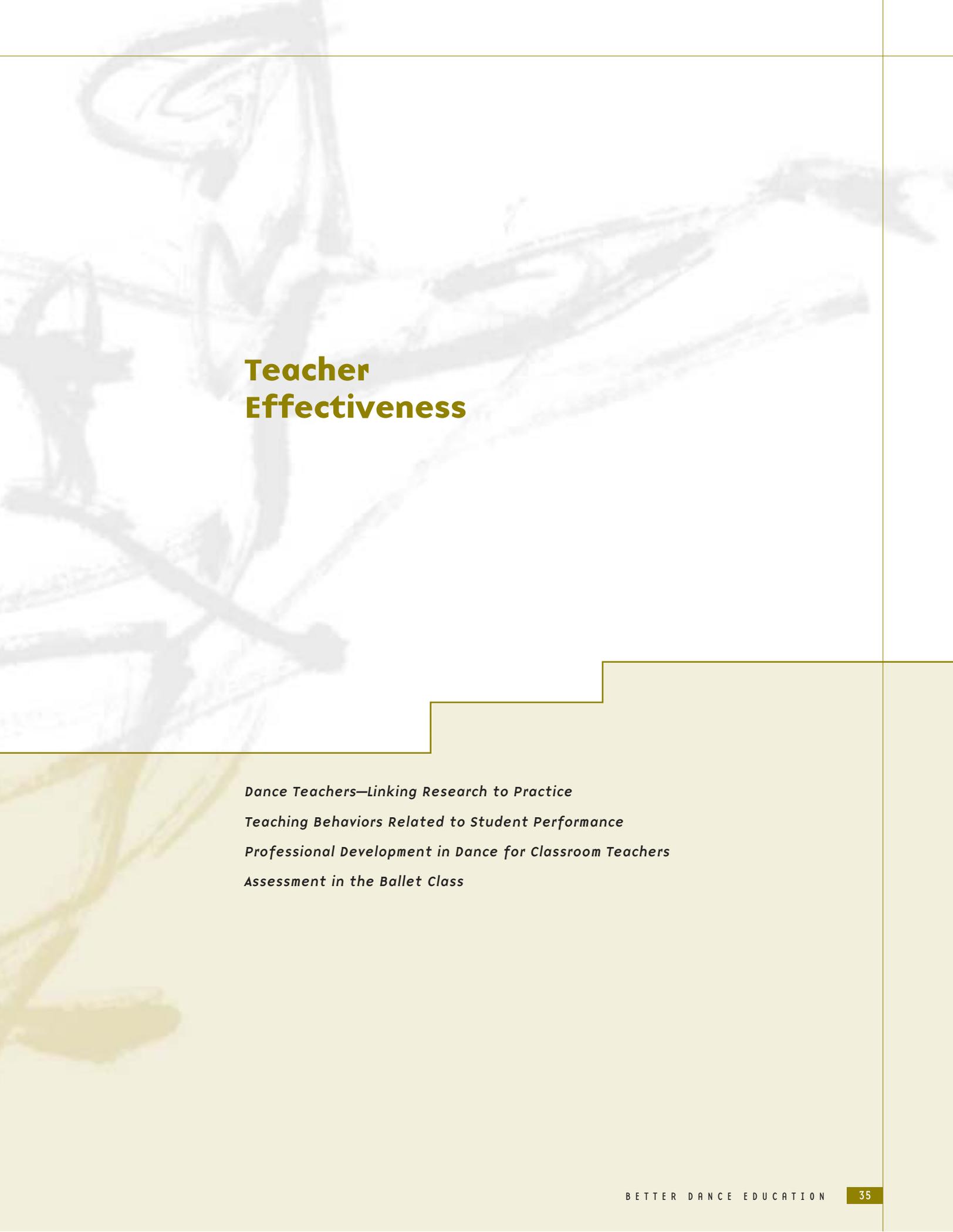
The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation C: The student will demonstrate understanding of the language of dance, including technical skills, terminology, and refined physical abilities, by executing increasingly complex movements.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.





## **Teacher Effectiveness**

*Dance Teachers—Linking Research to Practice*

*Teaching Behaviors Related to Student Performance*

*Professional Development in Dance for Classroom Teachers*

*Assessment in the Ballet Class*

# Dance Teachers: Linking Research to Practice

## R A T I O N A L E

Research in dance teaching behavior provides information that enables teachers to analyze, assess, and improve their teaching. Most ballet and jazz teachers work from a “teach as you were taught” perspective by modeling the dance form and providing corrective feedback to the learner. Modern and creative dance teachers teach more from a problem-solving approach. Research in the area of teacher behaviors has focused on analyzing types of instructional cues and the delivery of feedback during a lesson. The research closely follows education and physical education teacher behavior research, using many similar observation instruments to collect and analyze data (Fortin & Siedentop, 1995; Lunt, 1974; Lord, 1989; Gray, 1989; Minton, 1996). In a review of dance teacher research (1989), Lord concluded that teachers rely on three main behaviors during technique classes—support or guidance of the student’s motor responses, preparation for motor activities, and feedback.

## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Effective dance teaching requires the teacher to have depth of understanding of the art form and appropriate techniques for demonstration, feedback, and goal setting.**

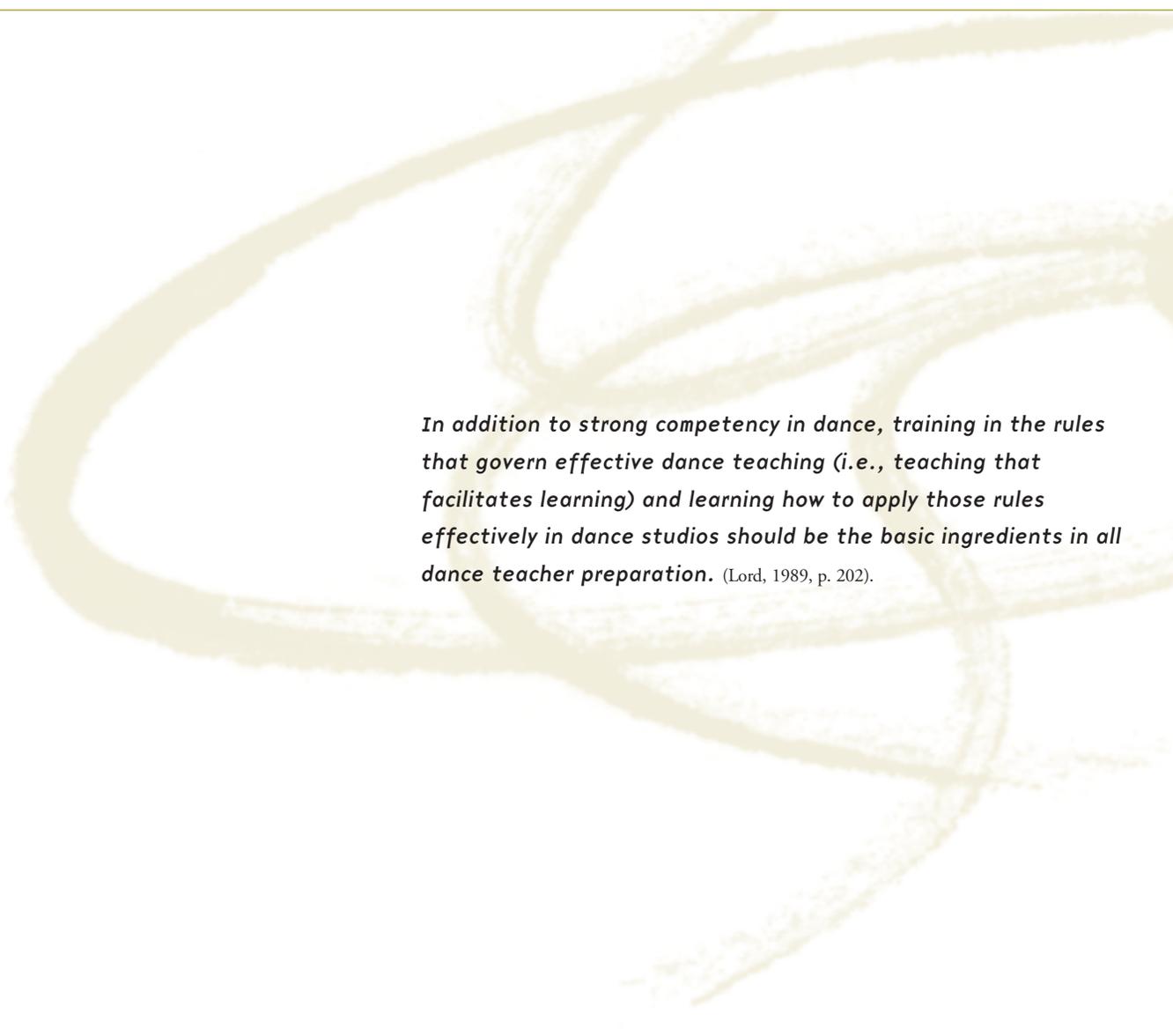
Judith Gray (1989) determined through behavior research that the dominant verbal behavior displayed by the teacher was instruction, primarily stated to the class as a whole. The next dominant nonverbal behaviors were leading, demonstrating, and manually assisting.

In a recent case study of a modern dance teacher’s behaviors and knowledge of teaching, Fortin and Siedentop (1995)

acknowledged deep and broad content knowledge as necessary for teaching. They offered the following suggestions for applying the results of this research to teachers:

1. Have a deep understanding of the art form.
2. Develop appropriate verbal cues to the specific technique or quality of movement.
3. Provide feedback to the entire group and to individual dancers.
4. Clearly articulate the goals of the dance class and/or specific exercise.
5. Provide a good demonstration of the movement.

Behavior research tools can help teachers assess and improve dance teaching.



***In addition to strong competency in dance, training in the rules that govern effective dance teaching (i.e., teaching that facilitates learning) and learning how to apply those rules effectively in dance studios should be the basic ingredients in all dance teacher preparation.*** (Lord, 1989, p. 202).

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## REFERENCES

Fortin, S., & Siedentop, D. (1995). The interplay of knowledge and practice in dance teaching: What we can learn from a non-traditional dance teacher. *Dance Research Journal* 27 (2), 3-15.  
A case study designed to illuminate the primary influences of teacher behaviors on learning.

Gray, J. (1989). *Dance Instruction: Science Applied to the Art of Movement*. Human Genetics: Champaign, IL.  
Provides specific teacher behavior guidelines to dance teachers.

Lord, M. (1989). Dance teaching research: A progress report. In L. Y. Overby & J. H. Humphrey (Eds.). *Dance Current Selected Research* (Vol. 1, pp. 201-237). New York: AMS Press.  
The history and present state of dance teaching research. The author recommends two avenues for future research: (a) studies focused on the teaching of choreography, improvisation, and interpretation, and (b) the search for meaning in a variety of dance teaching contexts.

Lunt, J. (1974). A procedure for systematically describing teacher-student verbal and non-verbal interaction in the teaching of choreography. (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina, Greensboro.) *Dissertation Abstracts International* 35, 2123 (University Microfilms, No. AAC 8219619).  
Describes a multidimensional observation system focused on the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of teaching choreography.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Elementary School  
Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education  
The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*  
Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.

# Teaching Behaviors Related to Student Performance

## T H E O R Y

Minton and McGill (1998) investigated the relationship between teacher behaviors and student performance on the Spatial Kinesthetic Awareness Test (SKAT). The study differed from previous research in that change in student performance was correlated with specific teacher behaviors. The researchers used the Physical Education Teacher Assessment Instrument (PETA) to assess teacher instruction time and teacher management time, correlating scores from the PETA with the results of the SKAT. The SKAT assessment required the students to accurately reproduce 16 positions and shapes. The results of the experiment demonstrated the importance of what is said by the teacher. The scores of the teachers who included more response presentations and motivational feedback correlated highly with improved student performance on the SKAT.

There was a negative correlation between monitoring behaviors (observation) and student performance. Simple observation, without feedback, has little impact on student learning.

Creating a positive, motivating environment with upbeat statements like “good,” “better,” “nice job,” and other specific feedback responses contributes to student learning.

## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Teachers who provide feedback directly after a student performance, and give positive motivating comments, have a beneficial effect on student learning.**

*A teacher must translate observations from monitoring sessions into relevant feedback, while creating an environment in which students are encouraged to work to improve their skills.* (Minton & McGill, 1998, p. 48)

## R E F E R E N C E

Minton, S., & McGill, K. (1998). A study of the relationships between teacher behaviors and student performance on a spatial kinesthetic awareness test. *Dance Research Journal* 30 (2), 39-52.

Correlates student learning with teacher behaviors.

State Standards for the Arts  
*Maryland Essential Learner Outcomes*

Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Elementary School  
Outcome III: Creative Expression and Production. Expectation C: The student will explore and describe the basic elements of dance by using the body instrument in a variety of ways.

National Standards for Arts Education  
*What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*  
Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.

# Professional Development in Dance for Classroom Teachers

## T H E O R Y

Professional development programs can promote competence and confidence in teachers who do not include creative dance in their classrooms. Classroom, music, and physical education teachers may not be familiar with creative dance. In-service programs designed to serve group needs and interests, and that provide a specific activities with follow-up support, can affect teachers positively.

A study by Colla MacDonald (1992) offers a unique example of a professional development program in creative dance for the classroom teacher. Eight teachers were exposed to 15 hours of creative dance workshops. They were interviewed before the first workshop, and they maintained journals during and after the workshops. The researcher observed the teachers in their school settings and assisted them with problems during the study. The participants were interviewed again four months after the first workshop.

## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Teachers who participate in professional development activities can change their attitudes and practices in regard to the teaching of creative dance.**

Results indicated that the workshops significantly helped the teachers change their practices. The workshops and follow-up sessions provided a supportive climate and practical information. Before the workshops, the teachers were unclear about the nature of creative dance and how to use it in their classrooms. After the workshops, all were able to incorporate dance in their teaching.

The climate of the workshops played an important role. Initially, the teachers felt self-conscious and reluctant. Because of the structure and supportive feedback offered by the workshop leader, however, the teachers gained confidence.

Practicality of the workshop materials was also of great importance. The teachers could draw immediately in their practices from the workshop examples and resources. The workshops gave the participants the opportunity to try new ideas right away.

Student response marked another important outcome of the workshops. The researcher observed that teachers and students responded to the new teaching method in a positive manner.

When professional development opportunities are constructed in such a way that teachers have follow-up support, significant positive change in attitude and practice occurs.

***It is not enough for in-service programs to provide teachers with knowledge and methods, nor is it enough for teachers to experience and carry out activities during in-service programs. Rather, teachers must receive enough information on an innovation that they feel comfortable and confident enough to try the innovation in their classrooms.*** (MacDonald, 1992, pp. 112-113)

## R E F E R E N C E

MacDonald, C. (1992). Effects of an in-service program on eight teachers' attitudes and practices regarding creative dance. *Elementary School Journal* 93 (1), 99-114.

The effect of professional development on the creative dance teaching practices of classroom teachers. The teachers benefited from the supportive structure of the workshop and follow-up sessions.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Elementary School

Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education

The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation B: The student will demonstrate an understanding of movement as a response to experiences and the environment.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.

Content Standard 7: Making connections between dance and other disciplines.

# Assessment in the Ballet Class

## THEORY

Teaching and assessment go hand in hand. Ballet is an especially demanding movement form that entails mastering the execution of a highly stylized movement vocabulary.

Evaluation of ballet usually includes daily feedback in the form of both images and verbal cues. Specific feedback to each student on a regular basis, however, is difficult for most dance teachers.

Kassing and Mortensen (1981-1982) designed an action research project to develop a methodology for objectively assessing performance and providing frequent feedback. Their seven-phase evaluation procedure covers a one-semester intermediate ballet class:

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who utilize appropriate assessment instruments promote learning because students improve their skills and gain a better appreciation of the art form.**

**PHASE 1. PREASSESSMENT AND PLANNING** The instructor assessed the level of each student, identified the skills to be taught, and selected some exercises and center floor combinations.

**PHASE 2. TEACHING THE SEQUENCE** Three weeks before midsemester evaluations, the instructor taught the sequence in two class periods.

**PHASE 3. PRACTICE USING SELF- AND PEER EVALUATIONS** Students rated themselves on each barre exercise and evaluated a peer on the center floor combinations. Students discussed the rating.

**PHASE 4. MIDTERM VIDEOTAPE, SELF-EVALUATION, GROUP CRITIQUE, AND PRIORITIZING** Students were videotaped performing barre and center exercises, then rated on their performance. The instructor rated the videotape and provided each student with a written critique with suggestions for improvement.

**PHASE 5. PRACTICE THE SEQUENCES; CONTINUE SELF- AND PEER EVALUATION** Between midsemester and final evaluations, students practiced and continued both self- and peer evaluations. The teacher introduced new material during this time.

**PHASE 6. FINAL VIDEOTAPE, GROUP CRITIQUE, FINAL EVALUATION** Students performed sequences in small groups while being videotaped. The students then met with the instructor for a final critique and suggestions for future work.

**PHASE 7. EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS** Students evaluated the process.

The study found that videotaped and criterion-referenced evaluations were more meaningful than a written examination. Self- and peer evaluation during class was viewed as helpful for individuals to improve their skills. The videotape helped students visualize their performances better and assess their skills more accurately.

This form of evaluation had the following positive impact on teaching style:

1. The instructor got to know individual students through the midterm conferences.
2. The role of the instructor changed from the only reference for feedback on performance to one of several sources.
3. Use of this methodology provided more accurate and adequate feedback to students and a more defensible final evaluation.
4. Students became skilled at critiquing their own choreography and performance.

A multifaceted approach to designing and assessing a ballet class has positive implications for teaching and learning. The results of this study can benefit those considering ways of assessing a variety of dance forms.

*Through videotaped performance, self- and peer evaluations, and instructor-led group critiques, students develop observation skills that enable them to identify specific problem areas in their work.*

(Kassing & Mortensen, 1981, p. 46)

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**R E F E R E N C E S**

Kassing, G., & Mortensen, L. (1981-82). Critiquing Student Performance in Dance. *Dance Research Journal* 14 (1 & 2), 43-46.

Kassing, G., & Jay, D. (1998). *Teaching Beginning Ballet Technique*. Human Kinetics: Champaign, IL.  
A guide and reference for teaching students and evaluating beginning ballet technique.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the High School  
Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding: Aesthetic Education

The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation C: The student will demonstrate proficiency in dance form and techniques, discuss ways in which proficiency affects dance performance, and describe how training to achieve proficiency translates to personal life experiences.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.





## **Advocacy Policy**

*Student Perceptions of Dance Classes*

# Student Perceptions of Dance Classes

## THEORY

Dance classes promote positive experiences for students in what is often a stressful, non-caring school environment. Recent research demonstrates the value of dance education in promoting positive perceptions among middle school, high school, and college-age students.

Students who enroll in dance classes from middle school through high school have positive experiences. They enjoy the social interaction, creativity, and opportunity to move (Stinson, 1997). Middle school students indicate that dance, a vehicle for transcending space and time, is a good form of stress release (Stinson, 1997). High school students find dance class to be a more positive experience than other high school classes. High school dance teachers are described as more caring, and the structure of the classes invites caring behavior by peers (Stinson, 1993). College students take dance classes because they enjoy dancing, creating, and performing (Alter, 1997).

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who establish a caring, motivating, and involved learning environment promote the psychological engagement of students.**

Current research suggests that students should have opportunities to find constructive activities that deeply engage them if they are to avoid the aimlessness and despair that seem to characterize so much of contemporary life. In addition, teachers should encourage adolescents to begin engaging in a lifelong search for what is meaningful and purposeful (Stinson, 1997, p. 66).

Many students view dance as a different kind of school experience, and in this case, different is definitely better because students perceive dance positively. Dance classes support cooperation, caring, and involvement.

## REFERENCES

Alter, J. (1997). Why dance students pursue dance: Studies of dance students from 1953-1993. *Dance Research Journal* 29 (2), 70-89.

A comparative overview of research conducted from 1953 to 1993. The paper also presents the results of a recent study of dance students conducted in nine colleges and universities in Southern California.

Stinson, S. (1993). A place called dance in school: Reflecting on what the students say. *Impulse* 1 (2), 90-114.

How high school students construct meaning of their experience in public school dance classes.

Stinson, S. (1997). A question of fun: Adolescent engagement in dance education. *Dance Research Journal* 29 (2), 49-69.

How middle school students construct meaning of their experience in public school dance classes.

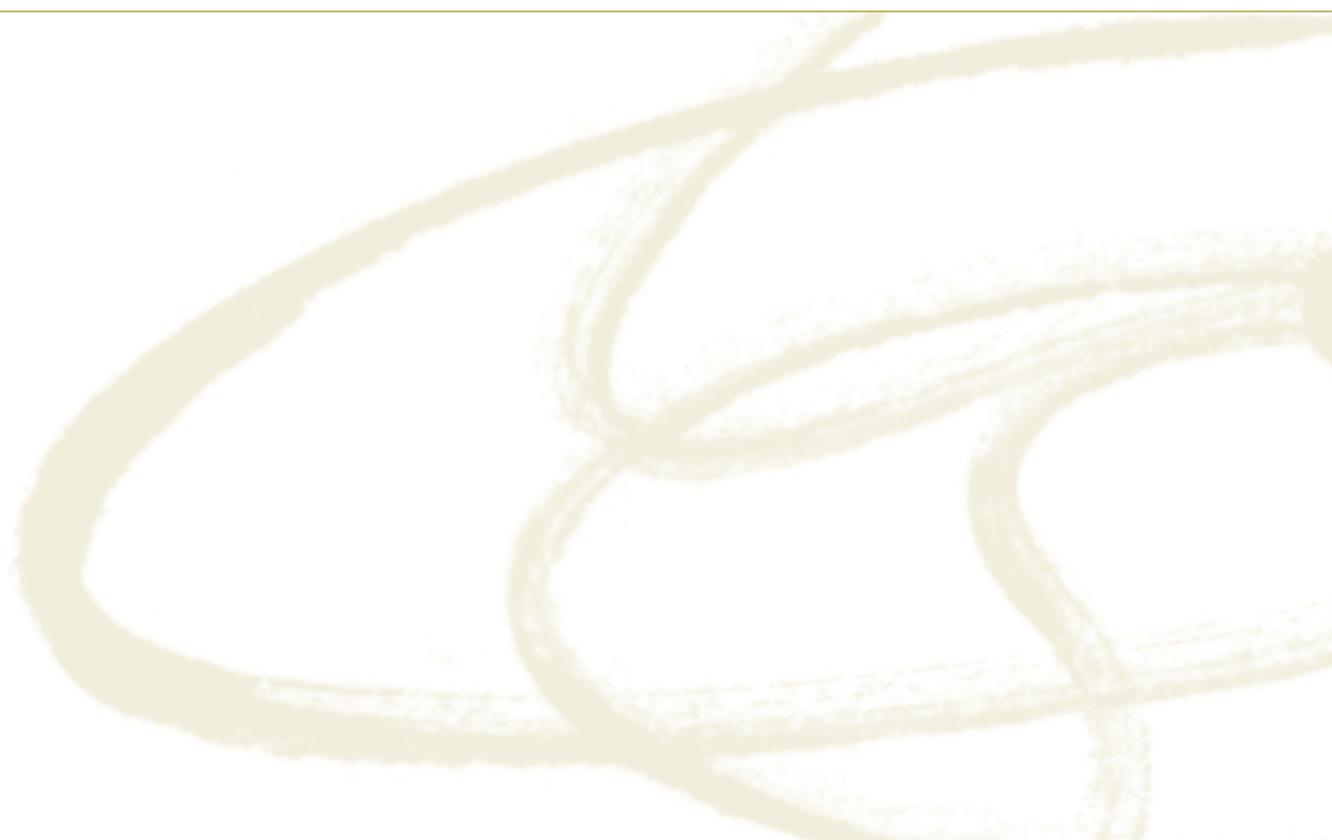
State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Middle School  
Outcome II: Historical, Cultural, and Social Context

The student will demonstrate an understanding of dance, its relationship to other significant components of history and human experience, and ways that it provides opportunities for individual, cultural, and creative expression.

Expectation A: The student will develop the ability to recognize dance as a form of individual and cultural expression.

National Standards for the Art, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning.



*As a dance educator and teacher educator, I am interested in how students make sense of their school experiences in dance as well as in other subject areas. Part of this interest is intellectual curiosity—an attempt to expand my own perception of what dance education is and can do to people. Part of it is pragmatic—a sense that teachers can be more effective if they understand how students are perceiving what they are being taught. But still more of my interest is fueled by what drove Miss Clavell to turn on the light in that cherished childhood story of Madeline—a sense that “something is not right” when we view education as only a way to gain supremacy rather than as a way to find personal meaning and human satisfaction. (Stinson, 1993, p. 91)*





## Special Programs

### *Dance Education for At-Risk Youth*

*Students with Special Needs: Creative dance as a Tool of Expression for Individuals with Disabilities*

*Students with Special Needs: Data-based and Creative Dance Approaches to Learning*

*Students with Special Needs: Creative Dance Facilitates the Attainment of Balance Skills*

# Dance Education for At-Risk Youth

## THEORY

Dance education can make a difference in the lives of youth at risk for school failure. The dance experience provides youth with an exciting activity that can lead to greater learning in reading, social studies, math, and the character skills of discipline and organization. Three nationally recognized programs that utilize the power of dance to change lives are the National Dance Institute, ArtsConnection, Young Talent Program, and AileyCamp.

### *National Dance Institute (NDI)*

The mission of NDI is to provide dance to boys and girls ages 8 to 14 that would not have the opportunity to experience dance. The dance faculty of NDI works in schools to teach dance, integrating it with learning in other subjects. The program was created by Jacques D'Amboise, a professional ballet dancer, and has operated in New York City since 1978. The program has served as a model for other cities and has expanded both nationally and internationally.

## BETTER PRACTICE

**Teachers who provide dance education for at-risk youth enable them to attain both education and social competencies.**

### *ArtsConnection Young Talent Dance Program*

This program targets at-risk youth. They learn modern, jazz, African, Spanish, and Caribbean dance, and ballet, and are evaluated on physical development, classroom discipline, and personal development.

### *AileyCamp*

AileyCamp links dance and academic achievement. It is an outreach program of the Alvin Ailey Modern Dance Company that operates as a summer camp. Assessment of students indicates that their participation enhances self-esteem and interpersonal and cognitive skills.

### *Teaching Applications*

Teachers can adapt these successful programs to situations in any school or community. They can incorporate a variety of ethnic dance forms that appeal to students, giving them opportunities to create and perform. Assessment tools can evaluate the effect of the programs.

Dance teachers can make a positive impact on the lives of at-risk children by providing them with dance as an integral part of the curriculum.

***Once students are engaged in dance education, a hook and an anchor to school, other educational options present themselves. The palpable, enveloping excitement of dance, the discipline required, and the success achieved propels many students to academic achievement and productive citizenship.*** (Hanna, 1999, p. 130)

## REFERENCE

Hanna, J. (1999). *Partnering Dance and Education*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics. Chapter 6, "Dance Education for At-Risk Youth," describes several nationally recognized dance programs that have successfully engaged at-risk youth. These dance programs serve as models for other at-risk programs.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Middle School  
Outcome III: Creative Expression and Production

The student will demonstrate the ability to create dance by improvising, organizing dance ideas, and performing.

Expectation C: The student will develop performance competencies.

National Standards for the Arts

*What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning.

# Creative Dance as a Tool of Expression for Individuals with Disabilities

## T H E O R Y

Dance, a nonverbal form of communication, is an accessible art form for individuals with disabilities. Without unnecessary props or equipment, dance movement provides a nonthreatening environment for expression of emotions, ideas, and concepts. Children and adults with a wide range of disabilities can benefit from the opportunity to dance.

Because of the focus on unique interpretations inherent in creative dance, individuals with severe disabilities are capable of mature artistic expression. For example, six children with both vision and hearing impairments involved in a dance program experienced whole body engagement, creation of new forms, cumulative learning, and conscious self-presentation (Bond, 1994). The children participated in 30-minute sessions four times weekly for five weeks. Data included a combination of video analysis of behavior, coding of field records of interviews with staff, and school reports. All children in the study exhibited the ability to express themselves through dance, but one particular child developed movement sequences with his own personal style in a ritualized, formal manner. He was transformed from a nonverbal child to a communicative, expressive dancer.

## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Teachers who offer creative dance to individuals with disabilities help them develop artistic expression because creative dance promotes the personal expression of ideas, emotions, and concepts.**

Dancers of all ages, regardless of disabilities, can use dance to express a troubling aspect of life. Through dance, they can release and channel pent-up emotions through artistic expression. One example is a dancer confined to a wheelchair after a diving accident left him paralyzed. Dance provided him the opportunity to recall and express the early stages of isolation and despair and later stages of joyful expression. His dance movement progressed from inward shaping of despair, to more forceful movements that demonstrated diminishing fear, to movement in circular floor patterns with changing shapes and spins that denoted the joy of connecting to another person (Boswell, 1989).

Teachers can help individuals with disabilities to explore, within their limitations, the creative and expressive aspects of dance. In the process, both the teacher and the student become transformed and transformers in the dance of life.

***What hidden treasures are we ignoring or denying ourselves? Participation in creative dance can change our perspectives, lift us [from] what can become, for both disabled and able-bodied persons, a life of dull routine. For many disabled individuals, participation in dance could be a very valuable opportunity for creative expression.*** (Boswell, 1989, p. 30)

## R E F E R E N C E S

Bond, K. (1994). Personal style as a mediator of engagement in dance: Watching Terpsichore rise. *Dance Research Journal* 26 (1), 15-26. A qualitative, two-group experiment conducted with an intensive program of dance compared with a second group based on play. The author presents a detailed description of one child involved in dance.

Boswell, B. (1989). Dance as creative expression for the disabled. *Palaestra: The Forum of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation for the Disabled*, 28-30. A description of the creative process in designing a dance, undertaken by a nonprofessional dancer and an individual with paralysis.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*

Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Elementary School Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding – Aesthetic Education

The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation B: The student will demonstrate an understanding of movement as a response to experiences and the environment.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 2: Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structure.

*Interdisciplinary study in which dance specialists, adapted physical educators, and special educators share knowledge is clearly needed in order to examine methods of teaching dance to mentally retarded students in special class settings.*

(Roswal, Sherrill, & Roswal, 1988, p. 213)

# Students with Special Needs: Data-based and Creative Dance Approaches to Learning

## T H E O R Y

Dance education promotes the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. Structured or creative dance is taught to children with and without disabilities. Structured dance includes folk and square line dances, which have specific steps or movements. Creative dance emphasizes solutions to movement problems, which can vary greatly. For example, jumping, turning and leaping, or hopping could accomplish dancing on high levels.

A data-based approach to teaching dance involves teaching each child a particular step or movement. In accordance with data-based pedagogy, lesson plans include instruction in all skills to be taught. The data-based approach to teaching individuals with disabilities was developed by Dunn, Morehouse, and Dalke (1979). Each skill breaks down into three to six phases and steps. A step is a support of a phase. For example, balancing on one foot for four counts equates to four steps. The data-based approach is appropriate for teaching structured dances. Roswal, Sherrill, and Roswal (1988) compared skill learning and change in self-concept that occurred when mentally handicapped children were taught 10 dance skills with either the data-based or creative dance approach. Each child participated in an eight-week study with 40 half-hour sessions of dance instruction.

## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Teachers who teach dance using data-based or creative approaches foster learning of dance skills.**

The children in the creative dance group received no structured practice of specific skills. The dance skills were integrated into lessons taught with a theme such as time, shape, space, energy, and body parts. The lessons were taught in a group format using indirect problem-solving methods.

Conversely, the students in the data-based group worked one-on-one with a teacher while the others waited for their turns. Teachers gave specific verbal cues, modeling, positive reinforcement, and physical assistance if needed. Students worked on the same phase or step until they could perform to mastery. The results of the study revealed no overall significant difference between the two pedagogies. Both groups improved significantly from pretest to posttest in the 10 dance movement skills.

Teachers should develop teaching strategies based on the goals of the specific lessons and units. While a data-based approach may apply more to teaching structured dance, the creative approach to teaching leads to mastery of specific dance skills and fosters cooperation and creativity.

## R E F E R E N C E S

Dunn, J. M., Morehouse, J. W., & Dalke, B. (1979). *Game, Exercise, and Leisure Sport Curriculum*. Corvallis: Oregon State University, Department of Physical Education.  
The data-based approach to teaching motor skills.

Roswal, P. M., Sherrill, C., & Roswal, G. M. (1988). A comparison of databased approaches in creative dance pedagogies in teaching mentally retarded youth. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly* 5, (3), 212-222.  
Investigation of the effectiveness of two forms of dance in improving the motor performance (including balance) and self-concept of students who were mentally handicapped. Both groups improved with no significant difference between groups.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*  
Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Middle School

Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding—Aesthetic Education  
The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation C: The student will demonstrate understanding of the language of dance, including technical skills, terminology, and refined physical abilities, by executing increasingly complex movements.

National Standards for the Arts

*What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*  
Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.

# Students with Special Needs: Creative Dance Facilitates the Attainment of Balance Skills

## T H E O R Y

Dynamic balance is moving balance. The child must be able to maintain equilibrium while moving. Children with mental retardation often score lower than children with no disabilities in dynamic balance. Creative dance that includes many experiences in static and dynamic balance can develop this ability when teachers include specific balance experiences in their lessons.

Creative dance activities promote exploration of the elements of space, time, and effort. An example of an exercise that relates to the development of dynamic balance is exploring swinging movement while focusing on a particular spot on the wall.

Activities that promote integration of certain reflexes, i.e., equilibrium reactions, may also facilitate balance skills. Examples of these movements include activities that engage the student in folding limbs into the trunk while lying in supine positions and shapes.

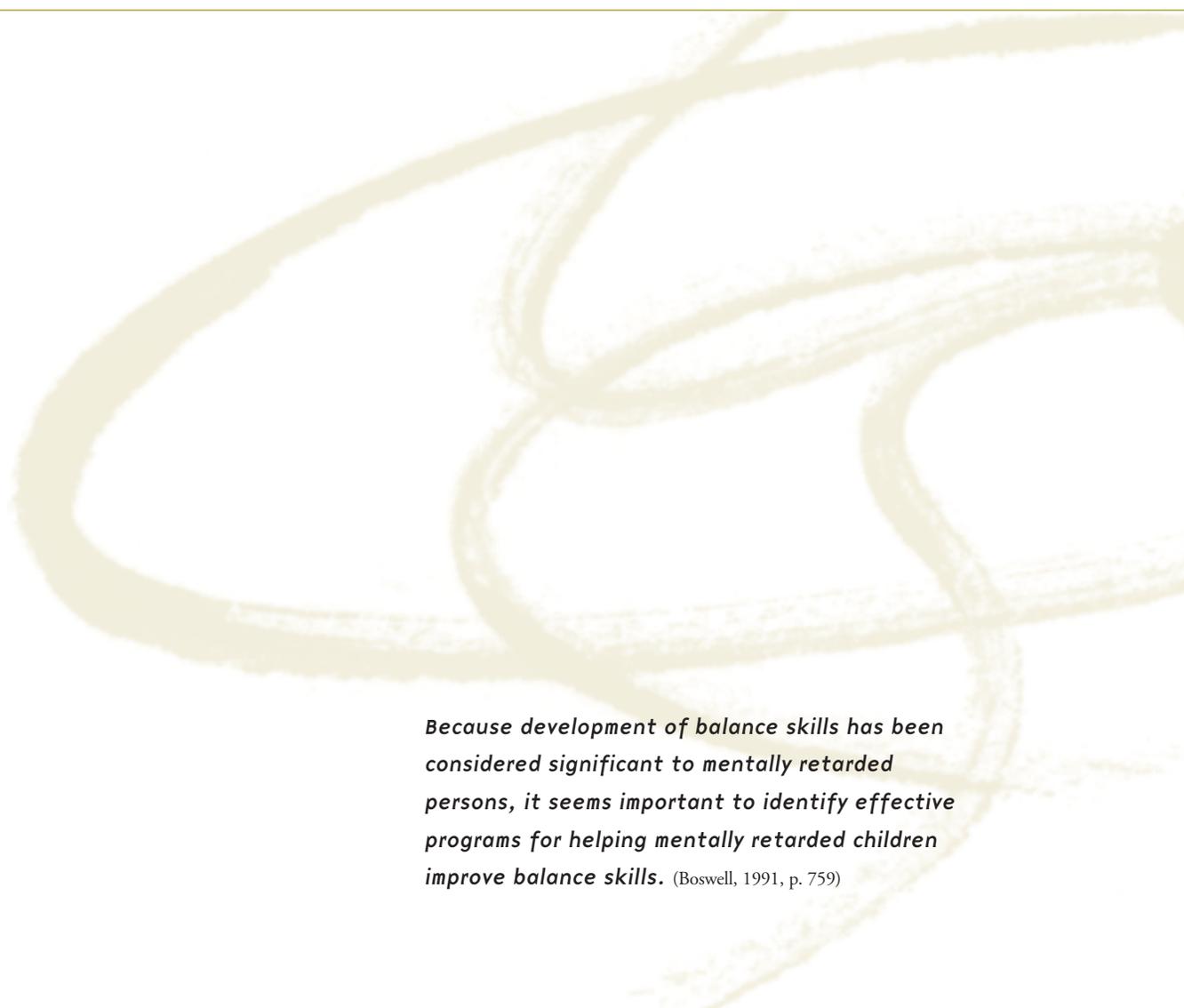
## B E T T E R P R A C T I C E

**Teachers who create lessons to help enhance the balance skills of mentally handicapped students promote learning.**

Visual focusing, or spotting while turning, develops the vestibular and proprioceptive systems. Stretching quickly into a high shape and melting slowly into a low shape also develops the vestibular system.

In a recent study, specific creative dance movements were integrated into a dance program for mentally handicapped children. The program took place once a week for 50 minutes over a period of 12 weeks. Dynamic balance skills of the children improved from pretest to posttest. Improvement was also seen in comparison with a group of mentally handicapped children in a gross-motor program (Boswell, 1993). This study confirmed previous research that describes the positive impact of dance on the balance skills of children with disabilities (Roswal, Sherrill, & Roswal, 1988).

When creating curricula for mentally handicapped children, teachers should design experiences especially for developing specific motor skills and abilities.



***Because development of balance skills has been considered significant to mentally retarded persons, it seems important to identify effective programs for helping mentally retarded children improve balance skills.*** (Boswell, 1991, p. 759)

## REFERENCES

Boswell, B. (1991). Comparison of two methods of improving dynamic balance of mentally retarded children. *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 73 (3), 759-764. Each group received 24 half-hour lessons for 8 weeks. Comparisons of the two groups indicated that both improved from pretest to posttest and did not significantly differ from each other at posttest. Mildly and moderately retarded boys and girls, ages 8 to 13, were assigned to either a dance group or a movement exploration group. Exploration improved dynamic balance.

Boswell, B. (1993). Effects of movement sequences and creative dance on balance of children with mental retardation. *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 77, 1290.

Mentally handicapped children, ages 7 to 10 years, participated in a creative dance (N = 12) or traditional gross-motor program (N = 13). Posttest scores on the stabilometer indicated a significant difference, with the children in the creative dance program scoring significantly higher than those in the traditional gross motor program.

Boswell, B. (1995). Enriching creative dance to facilitate balance skills of children with mental retardation. *Palaestra* 11 (2), 9.

A research application summary of the Boswell, 1993, research study.

Roswal, P. M., Sherrill, C., & Roswal, G. M. (1988). A comparison of data based on creative dance pedagogies in teaching mentally retarded youth. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly* 5 (3), 212-222.

Investigation of the effects of two forms of dance in improving the motor performance and self-concept of mentally handicapped students. Both groups improved with no significant differences between groups.

State Standards for the Arts, *Fine Arts Essential Learner Outcomes*

Dance Essential Learner Outcomes for the Elementary School

Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding – Aesthetic Education

The student will demonstrate the ability to use perceptual skills through performing and responding in dance.

Expectation C: The student will explore and describe the basic elements of dance by using the body instrument in a variety of ways.

National Standards for the Arts, *What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*

Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance.

