

Pedagogical Practices in Dance Education
Addressing Motor, Aesthetic, Social, Emotional and Cognitive Development
For Pre-Kindergarten through Post-Secondary Students

A resource for aiding in the creation of developmentally appropriate
Content Standards in Dance by
The College Board & the National Coalition of Core Arts Standards

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Introduction

In this review of current scholarly research in dance for youth in education, I will provide an overview of the social, emotional and cognitive development, relating to motor and aesthetic development, of youth from Pre-Kindergarten through the first two years of Post-secondary learning, covering approximately 5 – 20 years of age. I will separate this overview into five bands based upon age: Early childhood – 1st grade, Elementary Grades (Grades 2 - 5), Middle School (Grades 6 - 8), High School (Grades 9 - 12) and Early College (Grades 13 – 14 /Freshman-Sophomore) and present each levels' developmental characteristics.

In the National Dance Educators Organization's *Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts* there are four processes involved in the inner core of dance – Performing, Creating, Responding, and Interconnecting (Farber, 2005). These bands of learning are deconstructed into the detailed standards for teaching and learning dance for early childhood through 18 years old. These standards encompass the actual dancing, making dances, expressing ones' feelings and thoughts about dances, and applying the skills and knowledge of dancing, and dances, to other disciplines and areas of life. Thus, for each age band listed, I will relate developmentally appropriate best pedagogical practices in reference to these standards, as well as areas where revision or additions are indicated.

Of note: The elements included in the NDEO Standards (2005), are closely aligned with the New York City Department of Education's *Blueprint for the Arts in Dance*, also developed in 2005, which identifies Five Strands of Learning in Dance: Dance Making, Developing Dance Literacy, Making Connections, Working with Community and Cultural Resources and Exploring Careers and Lifelong Learning. Despite the differences in the categorization of the elements of a developmentally and pedagogically sound dance curriculum, they both encompass essentially the same concepts

Model Criteria Overview

The NDEO has indicated minimum criteria for dance arts model programs in K – 12th grade education. As applied to all levels, a model program of dance curriculum would place dance firmly in the daily schedule as a core curricular subject, not as an extra or elective class. For early childhood and elementary learners, classes should be no more than 30 minutes long, three to five days per week. Middle school students should have classes 40 – 60 minutes long, three to five days per week. In high school and early college level, 50 - 90 minutes classes, five days per week are recommended. All classes need to take place in a large open space (gym, stage, or classroom) with a safe floor (ideally sprung and seamless). Access to music and video equipment would also be provided for movement explorations, performance, and viewing of dance. Dance would be provided at all grade levels, beginning with Pre-Kindergarten so that sequencing and growth through consistency is afforded throughout the entire educational system. Essential to best pedagogical practice, is a full-time dance educator who has

received a degree in dance education – not only as a performer or choreographer, but as an educator with knowledge of developmental ages and stages, as well as psychology. This qualified dance educator should be able to implement the curriculum that meets national, state, and local school district dance standards adopted in arts education in dance for the early childhood student.

Literature Review

In our educational system, from early childhood through post-secondary institutions, current research supports the inclusion of dance as an essential core component of curriculum at every level. Dance, from creative movement in early childhood through advanced techniques in all genres (Ballet, Modern, Jazz, Social, Ethnic, etc.) is intrinsically aesthetic (Detels, 1999; Spitz, 2006) and addresses the physical development of the individual (Eliot, 1999; Kail, 2004), as well as social (Deasy, 2002; Katz, 2006), cognitive (Bresler, 2004; Damasio, 2003), and emotional development (Merriam, 2008; Pettit & Frederiksen, 1998), which makes it unique among the arts. Along with motor development afforded through the movement arts, dance is uniquely capable of providing rich opportunities in exploring creativity (Smith-Autard, 2002; Spitz, 2006; Gardner, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), creating connections with peers (Whitlock, 2009), supporting critical-thinking (Warburton, 2008; Snyder, 1999) in youth at all stages of development (Gilbert, 2008; Kail, 2004) and encouraging positive self-image through embodied learning (Shusterman, 2008; Katz, 2006).

Observed progressions and theories of motor and cognitive development indicate parallels with artistic development in the visual arts and kinesthetic modes in children. Earliest aesthetic movement occurs when all aspects of physical, cognitive, psychological, and socio-environmental development support the young child's ability to create dance (Lao 2008; Debnam, 1997). Indeed, movement leads to the optimization of the life of the organism in all aspects of humans' growth (Damasio, 2003) and its inclusion as an integral component of a quality educational curriculum to develop the confident and competent child, is overwhelmingly supported by established and recent research in artistic growth (Burton, 1999; Lord, 1999), motor (Sansom, 2009) and neurological science (Fauconnier, Gilles & Turner, Mark, 2002), in somaesthetic (Shusterman, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), psychological (Damon, Lerner, Sigel, & Renninger, 2006) and sociological studies (Chatterall, 2002).

Early Childhood (PreK-Grade 1)

Developmental Characteristics and Dance

Sensorimotor explorations are the key to learning in the urgent formative, early childhood years (Burton, 1999). Physically, children at this are total-body, perpetual movers and are refining their gross motor skills (walking, running, galloping, skipping, jumping, rolling) while developing fine motor skills (printing, tying, balancing, shifting weight, stillness). They are able to move in spatial directions primarily concerned with contrasts: up-down, side-to-side, front-back) (Sansom, 2009). Socially, 5 – 7 year olds, develop friendships with either gender, and are developing skills for working together as a group. Aesthetically, children in the early childhood years are moving from purely sensori-motor explorations to creating representational dances the expressing their feelings, thoughts, and preferences (Hurwitz, 1995; Burton, 1999; Louis, 2000; Spitz, 2006).

Emotionally, early childhood youth are sensitive to criticism, and have a concern for fairness and for right and wrong. The development of a sense of humor is emerging, which reinforces their sense of self and growing independence from family (Drewe, 1996). Cognitively, PreK – 1st grade students are learning and recognizing letters – words, sounds, numbers, movements and pictures symbolize meanings. They listen for meanings in language, and are able to integrate movement as a means of learning, as their short-term memory is refining (Damasio, 2004; Johnstone, 1998). An understanding of sequencing assists in creating movement patterns which may be repeated. The NYCDOE's *Blueprint for the Arts* also addresses the metacognitive development of this age as children begin to reflect on their own dancing, and that of their classmates, verbally and through visual or written artifacts.

Best Pedagogical Practices

Early childhood through 1st grade dance classes should include high energy movements which seamlessly flow from one to another, as well as repetitive movement phrases and patterns that include stillness within (Gilbert, 2008). Teaching-artists should create opportunities for social development by providing children ways to express their feelings through movement in explorations using imagery, stories, sounds, words, and games that help build articulation and confidence by making connections with peers (Stinson, 1999). Basic dance skills need to be introduced and repeated which include gross and fine motor skills - jumps, hops, foot articulations (point and flex), bends and stretches - which reinforce kinesthetic and neuro-pathways, and strengthen cognitive processing (Fauconnier, Gilles & Turner, Mark, 2002; Finkelstein, 2005). The introduction of movement qualities, linked with imagery (melting, freezing, rough, smooth, heavy, light) stimulates awareness and interest in textural qualities of movement and the environment through their appeal to the interest in fantasy that is noted at this age (Sansom, 2009; Elkind, 1976). Developmentally, children at this point process cognitively in concrete thoughts so their movement exercises need to be concise, and singularly focused (Ruffin, 2009). While most activities at this level are full class - group, with the teacher modeling, students may also begin partner dances, which address social interactions of friendship, and build self-awareness and confidence (Gilbert, 2008). Very short creative explorations that are solo may begin, and need to be

structured and brief, to honor their limited focus developmentally at this time (NDEO, 2005). Dancing together with a partner, and following another's movements create bonds and assists in understanding leadership and social order which is crucial to social growth for Pre-K through 1st grade learners (Bresler, 2004; Eisner, 2002).

Examples

Children in PreK – 1st grade classes should be able to execute original or existing artistic dance movement through knowledge of their bodies – their anatomy – through isolated and coordinated movements with alignment of the body (Gilbert, 2008.) The body skills most urgent at this age pertain to balance, strength, range of motion and coordination. Movement skills which are attainable at this developmental level are use of breath, non-locomotor or axial movements, and locomotor, or movements that move through space, as well as patterns combining these skills (NDEO, 2005). The cognitive development supported through these kinesthetic repetitions and masteries are memory development, spatial awareness and the concept of relativity and of succession (Sylwester, 2003).

The concepts to be explored at this age include the elements of dance: Space (direction, pathways, levels, shapes, personal body space, relationships to environment), Time (tempo, rhythm, patterns, use of music) and Energy (movement qualities, dance qualities, stillness) (Bucek, 1992). Aspects of performing which are age-appropriate include awareness and focus, repetition, reflection, refinement and revision, and a rudimentary understanding of performance etiquette. Opportunities for making dances that support emotional development allow children to express their feelings, experiences, and ideas in original, aesthetic movement compositions (Drewe, 1996). At ages 5 – 7 years old, children increasingly should be able to make their own movements including axial and locomotor moves, and combinations of movements after exploring several ideas, and choosing and repeating their choices. These short movement vignettes should have a beginning, a developed middle section, and an end and assist in cognitively grasping order and basic development of an idea (Gilbert, 2008). As children create their movements, they cognitively learn to pattern and increasingly are able to represent their ideas and feelings to create meaning through movement (Burnham, 1994). Further, by engaging in discussion with peers, students are able to share their intent, building confidence and social skills (Stinson, 2007). This creation of meaning through art-making is at the core of the aesthetic development process, and aids in the emotional development of self-concept and positive self-image (Louis, 2002; Burton, 1998). Further, these creations directly tie into the developmental social needs of children this age to learn to be their own independent selves, which leads to the ability to then build friendships with others who are similar and also dissimilar from themselves (DeBord, 2004). Learning movement vocabulary assists children at this age to respond to their own movements, as well as those of others, and creates linkages with early literacy concepts of words and sentences for cognitive growth (Hanna, 2008). They should be able to watch dance, and describe dance skills, similarities and differences, and even share movements they note.

These first three standards for early childhood dance – Performing, Creating, and

Responding – are interwoven in the final standard of Interconnecting. Essential to the dance curriculum for this age are an exposure and experience with dances from different cultures and historical periods, dance’s contribution to a healthful lifestyle, and the integration of dance with other disciplines and literacy (NYCDOE, 2005).

Additional Considerations

Dance for early childhood learners encompasses the whole child - movement activates the neural wiring throughout the body, making the whole body the instrument of learning (Farber, 1994). All aspects of development – physical, emotional, and cognitive affect all the others and must be integrated with motor development when young children attempt to communicate creatively through movement expression (Damasio 1999, Lao 2008, Kail 2004). Aesthetic movement development is intertwined with motor and cognitive development in childhood and throughout life (Gilbert, 2008).

Many of the standards’ recommendations may be appropriate for 1st graders, yet too advanced for PreK students who have had no exposure to the movement arts. In a number of our prekindergarten classes, students are only beginning to master the developmental benchmarks socially, emotionally, cognitively, aesthetically and in motor development indicated for their age band (DeBord, 2004). The factors that may influence this delay are at times a result of limited economic stability, poor nutrition, inadequate family support, and genetic learning delays (Kail, 2004). Many children that struggle with these issues and others, have not yet been evaluated, and the process of identifying and supporting progress in these areas may take time and be laborious. The Standards, especially in the early childhood classroom, need to address special needs students in some way.

Even in a mainstream early childhood classroom, the variance in developmental progress is wide (Debnam, 1997). It must be stressed that children mature at individual rates and a wide variance will be seen within any one group of children. These urgent early times are ones of such growth and potential and clearly research indicates that the inclusion of dance in the curriculum in early childhood curriculum can foster development in all areas (Stinson, 1999).

The inclusion of methods for addressing multi-lingual learners at this early age seems an essential addition for dance educators’ preparation. While movement is truly a universal language, many of the more evolved activities presented in the standards would need revision, and interpretation, to reach non-English speaking youth (Sansom, 2009).

While the physical fitness aspect of dance education was briefly addressed in the NDEO’s standard focusing upon Interconnections with a healthy life, more attention to this area needs to be included in our standards considering the growing number of overweight, unhealthy, and sedentary youth, even in the early childhood classroom. For young dance students, curriculum that always includes a healthful food and exercise component, should be created (Papalia, 1992).

Elementary (Grades 2 - 5)

Developmental Characteristics and Dance

Moving out of sensorimotor explorations, into representational artwork in aesthetic development (Burton, 1999; Louis, 2000; Spitz, 2006), elementary-aged children are becoming skilled in the mastery of gross motor movements and a growing repertoire of fine motor articulations, in addition to increasingly complex patterns of both, to help them create their own dances (Cullen, 2003). This time of ‘middle childhood’ brings a steady rate of physical growth that brings youth to adult coordination levels (DeBord, 2004). Cognitive development in the upper brain at this time allows children to think about their behavior, trace back events, and see consequences for their actions, which provides linkages in both social and emotional growth in this understanding of cause and effect (Finkelstein, 2005; Damasio, 2004; Gilbert, 2008). This awareness of and ability to self-control is paramount at this age for learning the discipline necessary in dance, as well as in social relationships (Gilbert, 2008; Elkind, 1976). Positive reinforcement by authority figures as well as peers, helps youth to build confidence and competence in all areas of development as they grow to understand the values of their society and cross-culturally (DeBord, 2004; Kolberg, 1969). Children at this age still retain their playfulness – they enjoy creating games, language, and codes with words and movement (Finkelstein, 2005), though emotionally and socially they are developing a sense of industry – the need to bring a productive situation to completion (Erikson, 1950). Middle childhood bridges the dependence of early childhood with independence, bringing with it self-consciousness and explorations of potential through movement which may contribute to emotional and social maturation (Sansom, 2009; Papalia, 1992).

Best Pedagogical Practices

Youth in elementary school classes in grades 2 – 5 should be able to execute isolated as well as coordinated dance movements, maintaining alignment and balance, as well as more complex and contrasting body movement patterns (NDEO, 2005; Finkelstein, 2005). Through repetition there is increasing strength, coordination and an expanding range of motion with flexibility within the body, and through space that leads to physical development (Hanna, 2008; Stinson, 1999). The cognitive development of sequencing, analysis, revision and mastery is supported through kinesthetic explorations that require the development of movement phrases through improvisation, patterning combinations in a choreographic form (Bond & Stinson, 2009; Gilbert, 2008). Discussions and movement explorations about feelings and content, assist students in fulfilling their intent for their original dances, which supports their cognitive development in literacy and supports emotional growth (Ruffin, 2004; Papalia, 1992). Both genders should be given the same range of activities at this level to avoid stereotyping, while also supporting boys and girls in being proud of who they are and their accomplishments (DeBord, 2004).

Examples

Expanding upon the concepts of elements of dance learned in early childhood (Space, Time and Energy), elementary students now deepen their movement awareness through explorations that explore diagonals, curves, and twists – moving into asymmetry (Gilbert, 2008; NDEO, 2005). An awareness of personal space is enhanced through dances that move through space without interacting with other dancers on all levels and with changing energies and movement textures supporting affective growth as well as cognitive challenges (Spitz, 2006). Performance considerations that are appropriate for this level include collaborative activities in duets, trios and small groups that strengthen emotional and social awareness, foster confidence (Stinson, 2007). Learning the essentials of being a performer as well as an audience member through in class sharing of dance pieces supports emotional maturation, and teaches empathy and competence (Erikson, 1956; Bucek, 1992).

Essential to the dance curriculum for this age are an introduction and experience with dances from children's own heritage and environment, as well as a continued multicultural and historical exposure to different cultures and time periods. Traditional folk dances taught within a cultural context introducing different lands and languages, and basic movements from different dance styles, expands awareness of the elementary student's personal life within their world (Hong-Joe, 2002; Dils & Albright, 2001). Building upon the early childhood curriculum in dance, students now are able to create and share their own original movements that are created from their newly acquired knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Respecting one's health – physically and emotionally – assists students at this age to cognitively understand others, and respond in socially positive ways to their peers' health, too (Steinberg, 2007).

Additional Considerations

As noted for our early childhood learners, the developmental range physically, aesthetically, cognitively, emotionally, socially and emotionally between 2nd graders to 5th graders is expansive. The NDEO standards are categorically on pointe, and yet must naturally be simplified, pared down to basics for the youngest dancers in this range. For the older, more developed learners in this band, dance explorations delving into more advanced concepts need to be presented. Our earliest elementary school students (6 – 8 year olds) can rarely sit for longer than 15 – 20 minutes, while the older elementary students have a longer attention span (DeBord, 2004.)

As children mature physically in the elementary school years, it is challenging for educators in all fields to recognize that along with being multiple-intelligence learners, with strengths in different aspects of intelligence (Gardner, 1984), they are also at very different levels within each individual in different areas or types of development (Lao, 2008; Ruffin, 2009).

Especially urgent at this age level is the need for the physical activity – through dance and other activities, and nutritional education and monitoring. Too many children at this age level are overweight (Papalia, 1992) and this growing self-awareness links directly now with the socio-emotional development (DeBord, 2004).

Middle School (Grades 6 - 8)

Developmental Characteristics and Dance

As youth move out of childhood into adolescence, hormonal changes in the body are major considerations in physical, aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Girls begin puberty around 10 or 11 and ends around 16 years old. For boys, puberty starts around age 12 and lasts until around 17 (Steinberg, 2007). The physical changes that accompany puberty impact the emotional development of a positive self-image and their social relationships (Ruffin, 2009).

Cognitively, adolescents are still primarily concrete thinkers, and yet they are more aware of their actions' consequences and fairness in the world (Damasio, 1999; Kohlberg, 1969.) They do have a strong sense of invincibility that causes them to be risk-takers, and increasingly they question rules and authority (Knox, 2010.) They are very self-focused, and believe they are the center of the world – this also leads to their self-consciousness. Physical appearance is very important at this age and status also forms the framework for many choices (Ge, Conger, & Elder, 2001). Socially, adolescents are spending more time with peers than family, and identity formation is taking place (Strauch, 2003). This need to create independence impacts relationships with family, and may lead ungrounded youth to experiment with more risk-taking behaviors to express emotional questionings (Palo Alto Medical Foundation, 2001; Ruffin, 2009).

Best Pedagogical Practices

Connecting with middle school students through dance to foster physical, aesthetic, cognitive, social, and emotional development is a complex task, which begins in a safe, trusting class. Essential for growth in all areas, is the requirement that students are in a supportive, challenging, yet non-judgmental environment (Sparkes, 1997). The physical challenge of being introduced to, practicing, and mastering basic dance techniques (Ballet, Modern, Jazz, etc.) affords middle school students cognitive challenges of focus, revision, and repetition bring intense concentration that aids in cognitive growth (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Learning more lengthy and complex movement phrases that include rhythmic and muscular understanding and control support physical and cognitive maturation (Gilbert, 2008; Ruffin, 2009). Classes that include time for composition, and choreography incorporate emotional and social challenges, which address the middle school students need and ability to overcome awkwardness, build trust among peers, work independently and reflect on their own qualities as dancers relating to their training – the beginning of understanding a personal knowing of one's own motion, or bodily kinesthetic intelligence (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2009; Gardner, 1999).

Channeling students' risk-taking proclivity into aesthetic exercises which provide students experiences in balancing, jumping, turning, and stillness foster motor, cognitive, emotional and social growth by promoting self-confidence as well as acceptance of self and others (Strauch, 2003; Ruffin, 2009). The intrinsic biological connections of motion and emotion for the middle school-aged student indicate that explorations that mine their creative expressiveness contribute to cognitive development through articulating neural and muscular systems, and integrating feeling and logic (Sylwester, 2003). These physical, improvisational motor exercises now may

incorporate whole brain processing through the development of complex logical sequences, reordering of progressions and reversals, and mental transformations and imaginings (Gilbert, 2008).

Examples

Middle school students are able to return to many concepts of elements learned in early childhood and elementary dance classes, yet approach them with an expanded perception of dance. They can learn, rehearse, and truly dance different styles of dance, understanding and feeling in the body, how they are different, and in what ways they are connected. Opportunities that challenge students to create their own dances with peers that contain movements they have created and revised, have put together with choreographic understanding of structure, dynamics, use of space and time, allow them to access their developmentally aligned physical, cognitive, and social abilities (NDEO, 2005). Beginning at this middle school level, students are now able to learn traditional ethnic and multicultural dances, and also dances from classical and modern dance repertory (Finkelstein, 2005.) Emotionally, students are now developmentally able to delve into their feelings through movement, and are trusting, autonomous, and industrious when given a task (Erikson, 1950). They now understand dance as a form of multi-layered communication (Hanna, 2003). These choreographic exercises may begin as short solo works, and then expand into works with peers. Further, students should be given opportunities to continue work on their dances for longer than one class visit, so they can reflect, revise, and complete all aspects of dance making (Gilbert, 2008). Physical development now allows for longer classes with more repetition, which builds discipline. Explorations into different accompanying musical styles and compositions with a broad range of instrumentation supports their growing awareness of the world (NDEO, 2005).

Additional Considerations

Knowing that middle school students are developing their sense of self through personal and social challenges, the dance curriculum for this age should include opportunities that are structured and defined to push physical and cognitive limits in a trusting, safe, supportive classroom (Ruffin, 2009). Understanding students' needs to avoid embarrassment and awkwardness as they move through puberty, dance classes provide a place to coordinate physically and express their feelings and needs, with emotional freedom within the context of choreography (Gilbert, 2008). They are able, and need opportunities to share their original dance pieces to build confidence and self-awareness (NYCDOE, 2005).

High School (Grades 9 - 12)

Developmental Characteristics and Dance

A major consideration as adolescents move through the teen years in high school into adulthood is their social and emotional development. They learn a great deal about themselves, others, their community, and living a meaningful life through social interactions (Gilbert, 2008; Whitlock, 2009). Current brain science is showing that though motor and physical development has reached an adult maturity by around 16 or 17 years old, the connections between neurons affecting emotional, physical and mental abilities are incomplete (Strauch, 2003) in high school students that explains why some teens make inconsistent choices (Knox, 2010). The task of defining the physical self as both a personal identity and as a social form is paramount (Brettschneider & Heims, 1997) for high school youth, and through this process they recognize the significance of bodies, both as resources and social symbols that “give off messages” about a person’s identity (Shilling, 1997). Social development intertwines with personal emotional development as students this age acquire self-certainty as opposed to self-consciousness and self-doubt. (Erikson, 1965.) Unfortunately, those who do not meet societal ideals often internalize feelings of anxiety and guilt about their apparent lack of self-control (Sparkes, 1997; Ruffin, 2009).

In aesthetic development, the growing complexity and depth of the art and dance-making process can lead high school students to a knowledge of the social extensions of differing styles, forms, and cultural perspectives (Parsons, 1987). Further social development in the dance arts occurs when a dialogue between an artwork and an adolescent is expanded into a full conversation with other peers (Burnham, 1994; Ruffin, 2009). Finding, and making meaning through the dance arts is a deeply valuable experience which impact the emotional and aesthetic maturation of students, as it does with adults – we value objects and experiences which we find most meaningful – those which resonate within us (Burton, 2000).

Best Pedagogical Practices

For the high school student, dance provides physical, aesthetic, cognitive, social and emotional challenges and opportunities for growth. At this age, if students have taken dance since early childhood, they are able to train as professionals from a technical perspective. For those that have not had such continued training, they still bring a level of maturity that allows them to grasp the discipline of the process of training the body. This involves classes of an hour or more, five days a week, with awareness of the health and artistic demands required. Warm-up exercises that prepare the body in strength, agility, and safety are now able to be understood cognitively, and performed with aesthetic awareness, also (Barr & Lewin, 1994; NYCDOE, 2005). Dance projects that support social and emotional development include opportunities to initiate, plan and produce independently, but in coordination with others. Emotional development is intimately linked with the competence afforded by physically demanding technique and composition classes where high school students can invest themselves fully in the ‘flow’ of the total experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

Learning dance terminology, and choreographic principles, structure and processes provides high school students with cognitive work that builds connections with other disciplines and supports dance as another form of discourse or literacy

(Hong-Joe, 2002). Using critical analysis and comparison, they are able to articulate their impressions and critiques of dances they observe as active, informed audiences members whether of peers' works, videoed dances, or performances in professional venues.

Examples

Understanding the linkages between dance and other disciplines, literacy, other cultures, and its performance and social aspects, high school students are now physically able to perform at an aesthetically elevated level (NYCDOE, 2005). Daily techniques classes in various genres allow students to gain proficiency and mastery of specific techniques. At this point, they are able to form and articulate their own personal approach to the arts and knowing their strengths and weaknesses they develop their own aesthetic, and need opportunities to create and perform from this knowledge (Burton, 1999). Dance explorations which are structured around the NDEO standards including movement skills, somatics, elements of dance, choreographic forms, and expressive communication are all supportive of high school students brain, motor, and emotional development (Ruffin, 2004). Socially, exercises that afford high school students the chance to share their feelings and ideas with peers in a space that is safe and supportive, as dance classes naturally should be, aid in identity development and security (Ruffin, 2004; Erikson, 1965). Digital films, videos, and live performances are necessary to expand high school dance students' awareness of the cultural, historical, and expressive value of the movement arts.

Additional Considerations

High school students are now in a range of levels in their dance training – some are continuing rigorous training as they envision careers as performers, while many take dance classes as an elective, for gym credit, or simply for fun. Designing separate courses that can address these various levels, intentions, and needs is critical for the high school dance curriculum. Performance opportunities within the classroom, as well as for the school and wider community, allow high school students to participate in all aspects of the artform, with growing professionalism.

The thoughtful and thorough inclusion of college and career counseling in the high school dance program will provide students with needed information for planning next steps. Additionally, the inclusion of assignments to research online provides students access, inspiration, and information to the world of dance history, world dance, music for dance, and historical and current dance performance.

College (Grades 13 - 14)

Developmental Characteristics and Dance

For late teens and young adults in their early years of post-secondary education, there are five psychosocial issues that they must deal: establishing identity, establishing autonomy, establishing intimacy, becoming comfortable with one's sexuality, and achievement. (Ruffin, 2009; Weiss, 1999). While many of these challenges begin during the high school years, these issues are intertwined with the physical and cognitive developmental of young adults as they essentially repeat and remap the developmental movement patterns that initially wired the central nervous system sparking brain – body learning in infancy (Gilbert, 2008; Damasio, 2000.) If they are able to emotionally and socially develop at this time by experiencing the value of intimacy and love versus isolation, it makes it possible for them to create genuine friendship and even long-lasting relationships or marriage (Erikson, 1965.)

Physical development of motor movements has matured, and the young adult is able to refine and focus intent on specific motor articulations and specialties of their own choosing. If one chooses to become a professional dancer, the physical, emotional and social development is in place to support the rigors of the discipline and integrate internal reorganization and reconstruction and promote cognitive growth as well (Barr & Lewin, 1994). Making life choices concerning career, is a crucial and challenging task, and yet the dance arts may support this process through fostering confidence, providing expressive communication possibilities, and a community of supportive peers and mentors (Hanna, 2008).

Knowing oneself as a unique and idiosyncratic individual, allows young adults to create dance movements, sequences and entire dances that are solely theirs alone, which provides great satisfaction of accomplishment and infuses the experience with great meaning (Burnham, 1994). Interacting and engaging in conversations about dance takes an investment of time, space and self, yet creates meaningful experience that supports aesthetic, cognitive, social, and emotional maturation (Lavendar, 1999).

Best Pedagogical Practices

Rigorous, professional level classes should be offered in colleges for those students who are advanced in the arts, yet committed to pursuing a liberal arts education (Finkelstein, 2005; Chappell, Craft, Rolfe, & Jobbins, 2009). For young adult beginners, classes that honor their cognitive, social and emotional developmental maturation, yet offer basics in technique for specific physical development in dance are recommended employing various teaching strategies to reach all levels (Barr & Lewin, 1994). All young adults will benefit from an exploratory and improvisational dance component to continue supporting emotional health and growth (Lavendar, 1996). Young adults also are capable of being reflective of their lives, strengths, weaknesses and goals, and delving into these issues through critical evaluations of dance pieces with peers in composition classes will support further social and emotional development as well (Smith-Autard, 2002; Erikson, 1956).

Examples

Offerings in post-secondary institutions' dance departments should include a broad range of courses that support movement learning for adult beginners as well as professional level dancers. Classes in various dance techniques and ethnic genres at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels, composition and choreography, exploratory or improvisational, music for dance, dance notation (Labanotation), video technology and performance, stage technology (sound, lighting, set), and dance history address the current dance standards for performing, creating, responding, and interconnecting at all levels.

The critical thinking involved in the aesthetics of learning dance as a distinct performing art is crucial in all courses and supports cognitive development at this age level (Warburton, 2008). Developmentally, young adults are now able to focus their dance learning with an intentionality that enhances the process of maturely developing the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2009; Gardner, 1999).

Additional Considerations

College students may now be professional dancers, and the demands of their lives attempting to incorporate their careers with their academic studies may be challenging. Awareness of the varied needs of the range of young adult dancers requires dance professors, and dance departments to be highly sensitive to their course offerings, times of courses, and support systems when designing their programs.

Additionally, many professional dancers do teach to support their performing lives. This fact is often left unaddressed in college course offerings for dance. More attention needs to be given to training dancers in pedagogy, as well as in developmental theories and milestones, and in the psychology of teaching and learning before they attempt to teach. Further, if we do, in fact, support students choosing careers in dance as performers, we should also offer classes in financial planning to give them the best tools possible to create and manage a successful life as a dance professional in our country that provides minimal support for the arts.

End Thoughts

Developing appropriate Dance Standards for all ages and stages of learning must include opportunities to foster, stimulate, and refine physical/motor, aesthetic, cognitive, social and emotional development (Gilbert, 2008; Stinson, 1999; Bonbright, 1980; Bucek, 1992).

Within all of these categories of development there is a set of principals that characterize the process of growth: development proceeds from the head down, from the center outward, from simple (concrete) to the more complex, and from general to specific. Further, development depends upon maturation and learning readiness, is a continuous process, and the rates of growth are idiosyncratic (Ruffin, 2009). Within our dance standards, this awareness of the multi-layered and multi-dimensional characteristics of the individual learner is paramount (Gilbert, 2008; Damasio, 2004; Gardner, 1999).

In dance, the curriculum must necessarily include learning physical dance skills and techniques, creating and performing dances with intent and aesthetic value, as well as integrating and relating dance to other disciplines, peoples, places, times, and concepts (NDEO, 2005; NYCDOE Blueprint, 2005). By valuing dance as a vocation and an avocation (Klein, 2005), a sequential study of dance from Pre-Kindergarten through Post-Secondary learning and beyond, has the potential to enhance and enrich all of our lives.

Recent research into the still developing adolescent brain (Knox 2010; Strauch, 2003), provides a new awareness of the risk-taking, impulsive qualities, and other cognitive issues of teens which drive their inconsistent actions and moods. We need to develop standards that mine this proclivity – more improvisational work, rigorous physical demands through technical challenges, and heightened opportunities for discussion and sharing, as well as social peer connections around movement.

Now that current research on the brain-body connections for learning is documented (Damasio, 2004; Kolb, Gibb, & Robinson, 2004), we need to include more movement in all areas of the academic curriculum, as well as cognitive challenges throughout the dance curriculum. The evolving field of somaesthetics (Schusterman, 2008) challenges our pedagogy in dance to consider the body, or soma, as not just a collection of bones and muscles, but as a living, feeling, purposeful, and sentient being. By acknowledging this concept of embodiment, our standards curriculum will be more holistic and address the whole child.

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Glossary of Dance Terms for Early Childhood Dance (from NDEO Standards, 2005)

alignment: the organization of the skeleton in a functional relationship to gravity

agility: the ability to coordinate movement quickly with ease

axial movement: movement that is organized in space around an axis of the body and does not travel in space from one location to another (non-locomotor)

beat: the regular measurement or counting of movement or music; often an accented motion or tone that defines the tempo or speed of the movement or music

choreographic principles: compositional elements in dance; factors to be considered in aesthetically satisfying dance composition

choreographic structure: the compositional form of a dance

choreography: dance movements that are planned and performed

cognitive: the process of thinking or acquiring knowledge

crawling (creeping): moving low to the ground on hands and knees in cross-lateral hand and leg movements

creating: the inventing, composing, and generating of dance

creative movement: movements that are spontaneously created in order to express an idea, feeling, experience, or solution to a movement problem

cross-lateral movement: movement that crosses the vertical mid-line of the body; movement that goes right to left or left to right

curriculum: a detailed plan of goals, objectives, skills, and lessons on a particular subject

dance: the language of movement as expressed by the human body for communication, aesthetic purposes, and the release of energy or emotions

dynamic: also called —efforts,|| or —energy;|| the qualities or characteristics of movement which lend expression and style

elements: the building blocks of dance movement; movement of the body using space, time, and dynamic (energy)

fine motor activities: activities that involve the coordinated use of small muscle groups such as the fingers in handwriting, playing piano, or drawing

flexibility: range of motion determined by a person's particular skeletal structure and muscular elasticity

force: a change in energy with which a movement is executed

form: the structural organization or design of a dance composition; the inter-relationships of movements

gallop: a springy locomotor run/leap in which the same foot always advances forward

genre: a particular style or category of dance, such as ballet, modern dance, jazz, tap, world dance

gesture: the movement of a body part or combination of parts that suggests a particular idea

gross motor activities: activities that involve the use of large muscle groups such as the legs in running or jumping

group skills: skills that require cooperation, coordination, and interpersonal skills of inter-dependence, lead and follow, imitation, echo, mirroring, and call and response

hop: a movement that leaves the ground from one foot and lands on the same foot

improvise: to spontaneously invent and perform movement

isolation: movement performed with one body part or a small section of the body

jump: a movement that leaves the ground from two feet and lands on two feet

kinesthetic: having to do with motion or movement of the body

kinetic: having to do with motion

leap: a locomotor movement that leaves the ground from one foot and lands on the other foot

level: the height of the dancer in relation to the floor: high—moving standing straight or on one's toes; middle—moving with knees or body bent; low—moving close to or on the ground

locomotor movement: movement that travels from one location to another or in a pathway through space

movement problem: a specific focus or task that serves as directions for exploration and composition

movement vocabulary: the range of movements or steps used in a particular dance style or genre; movements that suggest an idea or meaning

multicultural: acknowledging the strength and richness of human diversity

musicality: the attention and sensitivity to the musical elements of dance while creating and performing

narrative: a compositional structure that develops a story line with a beginning, middle, and end

non-locomotor movement: movement that remains in place; movement that does not travel from one location to another or in a pathway through space

pathway: the line through space along which a person or body part moves

pedagogy: the art or science of teaching and principles of instruction

performing: the execution of movement and dance or the presentation of choreography

personal space: the area or space directly surrounding one's body extending as far as a person can

reach

phrase: a series of movements that has a sense of completion

proprioception: internal sensations and awareness of body position and movement

quality of movement: the dynamic, energy/force, effort, or characteristics that give movement its style or affect

responding: an affective, cognitive, or physical observation or reaction to that which is perceived or experienced

rhythm: the patterning or structuring of time through movement or sound

rock: movement of the torso that rhythmically tilts off the spinal axis from side-to-side or forward and backwards.

slither: a form of crawling movement with the belly on the floor (like an alligator).

space: the element of dance that refers to the cubic area in a room, on a stage, or in other environments; the location where a dance takes place

style: dance that has specific characteristics or qualities that give it a distinctive identity.

tempo: the pace or speed of movement or music.

techniques: the physical skills of a dancer that enable clean execution of steps and movements required in choreography

tempo: the pace or speed of movement or music

theme: the unified subject or main idea of a dance; a repetitive movement phrase, either *ver batum* or with variations

time: an element of dance involving duration, rhythm, tempo, or phrasing

transition: as organized connection between dance movements that maintains continuity in the dance

turn: rotation around the central axis of the body

unison: identical dance movements that take place at the same time in a group

values: qualities and behaviors that have intrinsic worth in the process of making or experiencing dance, or for personal development and health

Glossary of Dance Terms for 5 – 18 year olds (from NDEO Standards, 2005)

AB/ABA: pattern of dance in which there is a first, then second theme; pattern of dance in which there is a

first theme, second theme, and then a return to the first theme

aesthetic criteria: standards on which to make judgments about the artistic merit of a work

agility: the ability to coordinate movement quickly with ease

alignment: the organization of the skeleton in a functional relationship to gravity

artistic expression: conception and execution in the expression of one of the artistic disciplines

axial movement: movement that is organized in space around an axis of the body and does not travel in space from one location to another (non-locomotor)

balance: a state of body equilibrium

beat: the regular measurement or counting of movement or music; often an accented motion or tone

that defines the tempo or speed of the movement or music

canon: a choreographic and musical form in which individuals and groups perform the same movement or phrase beginning at different times

choreographic principles: compositional elements in dance; factors to be considered to attain an aesthetically satisfying dance composition

choreographic structure: the compositional form of a dance

choreography: dance movements that are planned and performed

climax: the “high point” or point of culmination in a dance

cognitive: the process of thinking or acquiring knowledge

crawling/creeping: moving low to the ground on hands and knees in cross-lateral hand and leg movements

creating: the inventing, composing, and generating of dance

creative movement: movements that are spontaneously created in order to express an idea, feeling, experience, or solution to a movement problem

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level: the height of the dancer in relation to the floor: high—moving standing straight or on one’s toes; middle—moving with knees or body bent; low—moving close to or on the ground

locomotor movement: movement that travels from one location to another or in a pathway through space.

mirror imaging: a “follow the leader” exercise for two or more dancers in which one person initiates movement and the other(s) attempt to imitate the leader simultaneously and exactly

motif: a distinctive and recurring gesture used to provide a theme and unify ideas 116

movement problem: a specific focus or task that serves as directions for exploration and composition

movement vocabulary: the range of movements or steps used in a particular dance style or genre; movements that suggest an idea or meaning

multicultural: acknowledging the strength and richness of human diversity

musicality: the attention and sensitivity to the musical elements of dance while creating and performing

narrative: a compositional structure that develops a story line with a beginning, middle, and end

non-locomotor movement: movement that remains in place; movement that does not travel from one location to another or in a pathway through space

pantomime: a genre in which the performer communicates actions or situations through gesture, facial expression, and realistic movement, rather than speech

pathway: the line through space along which a person or body part moves

pedagogy: the art or science of teaching and principles of instruction

performing: the execution of movement and dance or the presentation of choreography

personal space: the area or space directly surrounding one's body extending as far as a person can reach

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slither: a form of crawling movement with the belly on the floor (like an alligator)

somatics: systems of bodily movement that focus on moving with ease, lack of physical stress, and movement efficiency

space: the element of dance referring to the cubic area in a room, on a stage, or in other environments; the location where a dance takes place

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