

# ED348368 1992-09-00 Status of Dance in Education. ERIC Digest.

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INTRODUCTION

Dance is an art form characterized by use of the human body as a vehicle of expression. Dance has been described as "an exciting and vibrant art which can be used in the educational setting to assist the growth of the student and to unify the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of the human being." (Dance Directions, 1988). Dance is immediately accessible for most people--no special equipment is needed, just the ability to move.

Until recently, dance was taught mainly as an activity included in the physical education curriculum. It is now recognized as an art form comparable to music, drama, and the visual arts, and equally worthy of study (Carter, 1984). Nevertheless, it has been observed that, of all the art forms, dance is experienced the least (Dimondstein, 1990).

This Digest examines the rationale for dance in education, the status of dance education, and selected issues in dance education.

## RATIONALE FOR DANCE IN EDUCATION

Education in the arts has been found to have a positive effect on both student motivation and academic performance (Hanna, 1992). The AMERICA 2000 Arts Partnership recognizes dance in its nationwide initiative to encourage arts education in the schools. As part of the partnership, schools in Missouri, Nebraska, and California have initiated dance components in their curriculums. U.S. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander recently commented on the formation of the Arts Partnership, "If I were helping to rethink the curriculum of a school in my hometown, I would want instruction in the arts to be available to every student...and integrated into most of what we teach" (New arts, 1992).

Dance education programs include opportunities for the development of:

- \* Critical thinking and analytical skills;
- \* Cooperation and teamwork;
- \* Self-expression and self-esteem;
- \* Organization and problem solving;
- \* Cultural literacy; and
- \* Communicating emotions through movement.

## STATUS OF DANCE EDUCATION

At least 15 states have developed dance curriculum guidelines, including California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, North Carolina,

North Dakota, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin (Hilsendager, 1990). Except for North Carolina, however, no states have mandates that the guidelines be implemented (Gingrasso & Stinson, 1989).

Many of the curriculum guides contain specific content, goals, objectives, and limited measurable outcomes for such areas as:

- \* Dance techniques for social, modern, and ethnic dance;
- \* Aesthetic perception;
- \* Kinesthetic sense;
- \* Creative expression;
- \* Choreography; and
- \* Dance criticism.

For example, Michigan Dance Education Guidelines (Michigan State Board, 1987) include outcomes concerned with specific dance technique/vocabulary; specific historical and cultural information; production of unique, creative, and expressive dance studies; analyses and critical examination of professional and peer performances; and recognition of the relationship of dance to the other arts.

Dance elements can also be integrated into other subject areas, which may increase the likelihood of dance being included in the school curriculum (Burke-Walker, 1989). Hanna (1992) provides an example of a physics class in which principles of momentum, force, velocity, and energy are applied to dance to improve dance performance. Franke (1989) identifies connections between writing, tennis, and dance.

**DANCE IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS** Dance is usually taught as a part of the physical education curriculum. In a survey of 31 state departments of education, 89% of elementary school dance was taught by physical educators (DeBryn, 1988). Secondary dance programs have been described as "understaffed, underfinanced, and unapplauded" (Posey, 1988). A recent nationwide survey of secondary schools found (a) the majority of dance classes are taught in physical education departments, and (b) the styles of dance most frequently offered are aerobic (45%), folk (11%), ballet (9%), social (8%), and creative or ethnic (7%) (Pappalardo, 1990).

Magnet schools, model programs, and collaborative efforts A number of magnet programs are located throughout the country. These schools serve children drawn

throughout a city or school district because of their special interest or ability (Kraus, Hilsendager, & Dixon, 1991).

In several large cities, specialized high schools have been established to meet the needs of gifted dance students. The High School for the Performing Arts in New York City and the Duke Ellington High School for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. are schools which have provided exceptional training for many future performers.

The Interrelated ARTS program in the Montgomery County, Maryland, public schools is based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983), which suggests many linkages with the arts. The Interrelated ARTS teacher goes to the classroom to work with students on curriculum objectives in language arts, social studies, science, or mathematics, taught through use of various art forms, including dance (Weincek & Richardson, 1991). Arts Connection, a New York City-based organization, developed a middle school/junior high school curriculum called "Dance: A Social Study." Funded through the National Endowment for the Humanities, this curriculum included 40 lessons on Black dance in the Americas, facets of Latin American/Caribbean dance, and Native American dance (McLaughlin, 1988).

Collaborations also exist between professional dance companies and public schools. Two examples include the San Francisco Ballet program, which includes ballet company members and dance educators, and the Boston Ballet Company's South End Community Dance Project (McLaughlin, 1988).

## ISSUES IN DANCE EDUCATION

**PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION** With the current emphasis on incorporating dance into the total educational curriculum, professional preparation programs in dance will undoubtedly have to expand from an exclusive emphasis on technique to a broader perspective (Posey, 1988). Hilsendager (1990) estimates that fewer than 500 K-12 dance educators embrace the more comprehensive view of dance education.

**TEACHER CERTIFICATION** Ten states have dance teacher certification (Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, North Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin) (Hilsendager, 1990). In states that have guidelines for dance education but no certification, classroom teachers, physical educators, and even music specialists may serve as dance teachers. No state requires a dance credential for dance educators working in private studios.



**MULTICULTURALISM IN DANCE EDUCATION**Multiculturalism should be acknowledged in the dance education curriculum. Much of modern dance draws upon dances of other cultures, and through a study of folk dance, an appreciation of the similarities and distinctions of various cultures is also gained. Dance may be used as one of many windows to the history, religions, and customs of people (Schwartz, 1991).



**RESEARCH**Dance research can be used to demonstrate the strengths of a comprehensive dance curriculum in addressing educational needs. Topics such as problem-solving ability, self-concept, and holistic approaches to learning can be included in the dance research agenda. Findings of such research could help build the case for the inclusion of dance, as well as the other arts, in education.

## REFERENCES

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