

Dance, A Partner in Education

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The arts are essential to the growth and development of today's young minds. As a branch of the arts, dance education enhances a child's physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social development. By moving one's body through space in a structured environment, the individual utilizes problem solving and creative thinking skills. Not only do children experience the creativity and physicality of dance, statistics show students involved in arts, score higher on college entrance examinations (The College Board, 1995). Through the enrichment of the arts, such as dance, children build lasting skills that will benefit not only them but also the society in which they live.

Having come from a childhood full of dance and the experience with dancing through college and into my adulthood, I find dance to be an integral part of life with its benefits, still to this day, appearing to me everyday. I found dance as my form of exercise, not only for the body, but also for the mind. Dance has helped me in many area including development of concepts, movement education, a good framework basis of behavior, a variety of locomotor and non-locomotor skills, and development of scope and sequence as well as goals and objectives.

Dance educates us mentally by having us learn how to think on our feet, problem solve, adapt when in dance class and outside of class and in real life situations. Cognitive skills are learned through dance education because of the use of the mind in class to remember the exercises, the choreography, the movement, corrections, and vocabulary through concentration and focus. Children are able to develop their own movement sequence and even teach it to their peers or others. These children are able to speak in front of people with confidence. They also learn about various social and ethnic groups and how dance affects different cultures and societies.

Children grow physically through dance education by means of learning fundamental locomotor skills and non-locomotor. The development of motor control, basic body concepts, and kinesthetic understanding are physical growths of the body. Children learn to transform a piece of music into an image of the body that can be seen by the eye. They learn to use proper body mechanics, learn rhythm and musicality, and learn the importance of spatial awareness. Dance also improves stamina and it has been proven that dance in youth promotes longer and more productive lives.

I believe spiritual growth in this case isn't based on your religious beliefs, but more on what you believe is your own spirit or how you see yourself, your emotional self. Dance is an exploratory development; you use dance to help find yourself. Dance is a great means for understanding yourself and others; it helps develop a positive attitude, and allows for self-discovery. An education in dance would help children grow in appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of dance. They will become creative, become

more sensitive and in touch with their feelings, will find their values, have personal growth in expression, and will find more meaning in their experiences. Dance pushes one to live up to their full individual and collective potential.

Dance education helps children fully see the world, gives them the ability to communicate with others, as well as understand their own bodies. The arts bring self-discovery, self-awareness, and self-expression. Dance promotes the development of friendships, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and they respect others as well as themselves.

Dance and physical activity demonstrates responsible behavior by means of teamwork, sportsmanship, how to play by the rules, and a positive social interaction. It also teaches respect of differences among all people such as skill level, culture, race, physical characteristics, and disabilities. Physical activity helps improve strength and endurance, helps build healthy bones, muscles, and bodies, reduces anxiety and stress, and increases self-esteem.

Dance challenges children to reach for something bigger. Not only to be able to do a movement, but also to look good doing that movement. The challenge never leaves no matter what level of dance you attain, no matter if you are a professional dancer. You are always striving to perfect your movement, to learn a new form of dance, to choreograph your won dance, to teach younger children, and much more. Dance also teaches self-expression. Children are inspired to find themselves, to find a form of dance that they can relate with, to express themselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Children learn to interact socially with children their own age, as well as how to be role models for younger children as they grow, and how to respect their teachers. Not only is dance a learning experience, but it is also an outlet to have fun and to be free.

Also in this modern age, with all our technological advances, the world is more mechanical. Dance brings the humanism back into us. Children are allowed to be themselves and not worry about getting something right on the first try. Dance is one of the oldest forms of expression. Though this form of communication is non-verbal, it is a great way to allow children to learn through their own bodies how to communicate with all people on a whole new basis. It is a way for kids to express their feelings, needs, wishes, and beliefs.

My experience with dance has allowed me to become a well-rounded adult. Through dance I not only grew physically stronger, but have also become stronger mentally, with the daily class participation and the need to pick up quickly to movements and choreography given to me during class work. Also I have grown socially with my daily interactions with other in the classroom, learning how to behave and conduct myself not only with my peers, but also with those with authority such as my teachers. Emotionally I am able to express myself through this form of physical activity; I have learned a lot about my inner self through dance. Dance was and is my best educator.

Anyone and everyone can dance and it is easily adapted to all age groups. Dance is inherent in all of us, it provides an outlet for many people, it's not only an educator, but also a form of therapy. All people can find joy and fulfillment in dance. An educational program that uses dance as a valid learning modality is exactly what our society needs today. Dance is a lifelong lesson that you will never fully master, but it is always there to push a little more. The arts provide us with a lesson that can be carried on into our adulthood as we become lifelong learners.