

Why Include Dance in Education?

By: Rebecca McGregor

I remember sitting at my desk or at the kitchen counter on a bar stool many days and late nights studying and thinking, “Why can’t I get this?” “It just doesn’t make sense to me?” I was a smart young lady, always on the honor or high honor roll, but I would have to read and reread and write and rewrite so much in order for anything to stick. What I did remember sticking in my brain were the projects teachers assigned that required movement, collaboration, self-reflection, creativity, and hands-on work.

In many states, like VT, the arts are elective, not mandatory. Many of the arts reach a variety of learners and accommodate many different learning needs. Without the arts, not every learning style is being accommodated; in dance, all learning styles/intelligences are met. Dance is a discipline that enhances one’s physical, intellectual/cognitive, social, and emotional wellbeing. Dance does more than provide exercise for fitness, joy and fun (though it does☺). It helps students keep persisting and stay focused in their learning, manage their time and think before acting/plan ahead, develop good listening skills and empathy, take risks with their learning and be more creative and open when solving problems/coming up with solutions, become more aware of their thinking and think about their thinking (self-reflective), question their work, make connections to own experiences or past knowledge learned, and use all their senses when processing information. Dance also teaches students how to communicate more clearly and pay attention to details, be more creative and use their imaginations, take responsible risks, collaborate cooperatively and respect self and others, and stay open to continuous learning in life, never ending self improvement, and endless opportunities. There is so much learning that occurs when the student is active that it is surprising that dance/movement – tactile-kinesthetic learning – is the least accessible intelligence found in schools throughout our country.

It is my mission as a dance educator to teach my students the value of dance in education and share that with other educators at any grade level and subject matter so that no student in any subject gets left behind.