

# Early Childhood Dance Philosophy

Early Childhood Committee of Unity – Dancer Magazine August 2003

**The Early Childhood Committee of Unity, at their annual meeting in January, accepted a Philosophy and Goals for Dance in Early Childhood.** This was the end result of the efforts and input of many highly trained and experienced dance educators with a variety of backgrounds and produced a cooperative work that should be a benefit to all.

## **Early Childhood (2-7 years)**

### Philosophy

**Dance, for the young child should be a joyful experience.** Children need to enjoy the process of learning dance. In short, dance classes should be fun. In this way, children will develop a love and appreciation for the art.

**Dance class should provide a positive environment in which children can learn and grow.** It should offer a variety of experiences that promote physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth in the child. The physical benefits of dance class are widely accepted, but the social, emotional and even academic learning promoted by a good dance program are less popularly understood. A well-balanced class addresses the “whole child.”

**Dance classes for young children should be child-centered.** Children develop at individual rates, thus abilities and talents in early childhood are extremely varied. Curriculum should provide a sequential program that is appropriate to the age and developmental needs of the child. This will build the child’s self-confidence, and understanding and appreciation for his or her body and a love for movement and dance.

**While developmental movement skills are important to acquire, dance for the young child should focus on creative movement.** Not yet inhibited by socially accepted expectations, their imaginations are at peak. A variety of sensory experiences to stimulate the imagination are important. Young children possess the imagination of the skilled artist. They learn readily and deeply by applying acquired knowledge to solve problems in new and different ways.

**In order to achieve a balance, technique should be intertwined, respective to the maturity of the child.** While it is important that young children be provided with a class structure that will promote learning, it is also important to provide nurturing for the individual development of the child.

**Dance for the young child requires an experienced and adept teacher who understands the individual developmental needs of children and balance this with organized classroom management.** Dance for all ages is a joyous learning experience but formal dance class for children under three years of age is inappropriate. Under this age, a different class structure is advised; preferably one with parent participation.

**Dance in early childhood is important work that provides lifelong values.**

### UNITY

#### **Goals for Dance in Early Childhood**

1. Love of moving and dancing
2. Appreciate and understand the art of dance
3. Create a positive experience from which to learn and grow
4. Develop physical skills that are age appropriate
5. Develop social skills:
  - a. To participate and share within a group
  - b. To lead and follow
  - c. To appreciate the work of other children
  - d. To develop an awareness of personal space and to respect the personal space of others
6. Develop Body Wellness
  - a. To understand and respect one’s own body
  - b. To learn how to move safely
7. Educate the parent and greater community about the importance of appropriate dance for young children

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