Dance Education in New Jersey – Equity for Every Child

In New Jersey, dance, music, theater and visual arts are a part of the core curriculum in the K-12 Schools. According to Administrative Code, every elementary, middle and high school must offer opportunities for learning in dance for all students. This ensures that every child has equitable access to learning in, through and about dance regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, ability or economic status as provided by their constitutional right (NDEO, 2005; NJAEP, 2012).

Districts are expected to provide opportunities for learning in ALL four arts content areas using sequential instruction taught by highly qualified teachers. This means the arts programs must have the same level of academic rigor and educational validity as any other core subject such as language arts literacy or math. (NJAEP, 2012)

School dance programs open windows into the world of dance and its many cognitive, physical and affective benefits for millions of children who may otherwise never have the opportunity. As the field of neuroscience advances, the benefits of dance learning become ever more convincing (Bläsing, Puttke & Schack, 2010). Learning in, through and about dance is powerful education that develops 21st Century skills as well as prepares children for fulfilling lives in the arts.

The idea of dance learning as imitating a series of steps is a vastly outmoded one. In today’s K-12 dance programs in New Jersey, students develop technical skills and perform different genres and forms of dance; they imagine, experiment and choreograph; they research dance history and cultures from the past; and they critically examine the great works of dance and dance artists. They read, write, listen and speak -- kinesthetically as well as literally. They learn about the different movers and shakers that make up the field and how dance learning enhances other fields. They understand that dance can be studied with deep intent as artists and in leading to terminal university degrees.

Without school dance programs the future possibilities are vastly reduced – the next wave of great visions of choreography, the next moments of transformative dance performances, the next revelations of past cultures and even new scientific discovery are lost. Our theaters will be lacking the informed audience members whose imaginations we desire, ignite and ponder. K-12 dance is serious study that is nourished by credentialed professionals as well as by state-level and national learning standards.

Dance in Elementary Schools:
In grades Pre-K-5 dance may be instructed in a self-contained classroom by anyone holding a N-8 teaching certificate. However in such cases, dance instruction may not exceed one half of the instructor’s teaching load and individuals cannot be designated as a dance teacher without an additional K-12 teaching endorsement in dance. Health and Physical education teachers are also appropriately certified to deliver K-5 Dance instruction.

Dance in Secondary Schools:
In grades 6-12, dance must be instructed by individuals with K-12 certification in dance. The type of dance certification required depends on how a school is registered. Generalist dance and performing arts programs require the Teacher of Dance (1635) certification and Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools or programs require the Vocational Arts Dance (4086) licensure. It is possible for individuals to obtain both or dual certification (see additional headings below).
**Dance in All Schools:**
Co-curricular activity or extra-curricular activity in dance in K-12 schools, such as dance teams, dance clubs or teaching artist or dance/performance company residencies may not be used by schools to fulfill the New Jersey Administrative Code, Core Curriculum Content Standards or arts graduation requirements.

For more information on instructional regulations visit:
http://www.nj.gov/education/aps/cccs/arts/faq.htm

**The New Jersey Arts Census**

In 2007 and again in 2012 a consortium of arts partners led by the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership (NJ/AEP) along with the New Jersey State Department of Education published a K-12 school arts census. The data on dance education is dismaying. Only a small percentage of schools in New Jersey provide at least one class in dance (2007):

- **8%** of Elementary Schools
- **9%** of Middle Schools
- **20%** of High Schools

Furthermore, only **44%** of dance teachers in 2007 and **53%** of dance teachers in 2012 who were employed as the primary providers of dance education in K-12 schools were certified dance specialists.

Nonetheless, NJ exceeds the national average for saturation of dance education programs. The problem of inequity of access to equal opportunity for learning across the four art forms is a national issue.

**New Jersey’s K-12 Dance Teacher Preparation Programs**

Until 2009 New Jersey did not yet have accredited college programs for the preparation of dance educators for the K-12 schools. Several accredited university programs have now emerged:

**Montclair State University**
- B.A. in Dance Education with K-12 Certification
- B.A. in Dance Education with Dance Studio Teaching Concentration

**Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey**
- B.F.A. + Ed.M. in Dance Performance & Dance Education with K-12 Certification
- Ed.M. in Dance Education with K-12 Certification
- Ed.M. in Dance Education for Professional K-12 Dance Educators
Accredited K-12 Teacher Preparation Programs:

It is important to recognize that not all college programs in dance education or dance pedagogy are accredited for K-12 teacher certification. College programs that are accredited, such as Montclair University and Rutgers University, have undergone a registration and approval process with the State Department of Education in order to offer curriculum that fulfill state criteria for teacher preparation. These accredited programs are regulated and must uphold the requirements for teacher certification circumscribed by the state in which they reside. It is wise to check both the college program’s literature for evidence of state accreditation for teacher preparation as well as the associated state department of education’s website page listing the accredited, registered teacher preparation programs.

Certified K-12 Dance Educator – Teaching Artist – Studio Teacher

The role and pedagogical approach of a dance teacher will necessarily change dependent on the demands and values of the context he or she is teaching within. The purposes and demands of delivering a dance curriculum in a K-12 school as a district employee in comparison to the role of a visiting artist or a studio teacher are dramatically different. Each context has benefits, challenges and needs unique to the particular situation. Teaching dance is not a one-size-fits-all field. What is certain is that these diverse learning contexts for dance have equally important roles to play in the education of children and young dance artists.

In 2012 the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE) published a report entitled Roles of Certified Arts Educators Certified Non-Arts Educators, & Providers of Supplemental Arts Instruction that helps to clarify the confusion between the different roles arts providers occupy in America’s K-12 schools.

K-12 Dance Teacher Certification in New Jersey

In New Jersey there are two areas of K-12 dance teacher certification:

• Teacher of Dance (1635)
  This certification is for employment in generalist programs in elementary, middle and high schools. Teachers holding this certificate are not eligible to teach dance in an approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, unless they are dual certified with both the Teacher of Dance (1635) and the Vocational Arts Dance (4086).

• Vocational Arts Dance (4086) This certification is for employment in Career and Technical Education (CTE) high schools. In grades 9-12, dance instructors holding a Vocational Arts Dance certificate in schools with state approved Career and Technical Education programs in dance, may deliver dance instruction to program participants (non-CTE concentrators) as a means of meeting the one year (5 Credit) Visual & Performing Arts Graduation Requirement. However, holders of Vocational Arts Dance certificates are not appropriately certified to teach dance in schools that do not have approved CTE dance programs.
Performing Arts High School Dance Programs vs. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dance Programs

There are many configurations of public school performing arts dance programs in New Jersey within the District schools (including charter and non-charter schools), comprehensive non-charter and charter schools with state approved CTE programs and County Vocational schools.

District and Regional High Schools – These high schools serve under the auspices of the local town board of education or regional school district, which may include several municipalities. Students progress into high school from local (or regional) middle schools serving that same town or region. Dance programs at these schools vary. Some offer dance as elective coursework that satisfies the high school graduation requirement and/or as free elective enrichment courses. Others offer a sequential curriculum. Dance educators in these schools are obliged to address the NJ Core Content Curriculum Standards in Performing Arts/Dance. Students in these programs do not undergo statewide testing in dance, unless they are program completers in a state approved CTE program.

Charter - Charter schools, which are public schools, operate independently of a local district’s board of education through an approved charter authorized by the state department of education. They are managed by a board of trustees and are corporate enterprises. Students may be admitted through lottery, IQ tests, test scores, audition or other criteria as is determined by each individual school. Dance educators in these schools, as employees bound by a state charter, are obliged to address the NJ Core Content Curriculum Standards in Performing Arts/Dance. Like the students in comprehensive (non-charter) high schools, students in these programs do not undergo statewide testing in dance, unless they are program completers in a state-approved CTE Dance program.

Comprehensive School Setting CTE Program - District or regional high schools, must apply for CTE status to be state approved as a Career and Technical Education program if they offer more than three (3) dance courses that sequence. District and regional high schools with approved CTE dance programs must fulfill the CTE requirements (see below) and qualify for federal Perkins funding.

Career and Technical Education – State approved CTE Dance programs may be located within the curriculum of a district or regional high school or Charter school, but are predominantly housed in a County Vocational School System that serve all pupils from municipalities located within a given county. County Vocational Schools are funded by the County Freeholders and receive state aid on a per pupil basis from the sending districts within the county. Students may select to attend a CTE school in order to concentrate on a profession of choice (ex: agriculture, finance, health, tourism, law, public safety, manufacturing, science, technology, dance, etc.), aligned to 16 federally defined Career Clusters.

CTE high school programs are by necessity, proficiency-based. An important indicator of success in New Jersey CTE programs is that the vocational districts/programs are held accountable for the positive placement of their program completers in post-secondary education; either directly into a professional career within their field of study, into college or the military. While other high schools may have similar goals for college and career readiness, the primary difference is that CTE schools and their dance programs/dance teacher(s) are held accountable to this goal and in addition are
evaluated based on their students’ competency as revealed through scores on statewide practical and written exams for dance.

The CTE dance exams evaluate student proficiency in regards to the NJ Core Content Curriculum Standards in Performing Arts/Dance and the NJ CCS for 21st Century Life and Careers. Furthermore, districts are required to report their students’ academic scores to the federal government. Federal Carl Perkins funds are then distributed to CTE schools based on the school’s/dance program’s exam score results.

CTE school programs that do not meet the needs of their constituency (through low post-secondary placement or high numbers of students that fail to pass the exit examinations, must remediate such deficiencies according to parameters set up and monitored by the state department of education, and could ultimately loose their federal funds, which in most cases leads to programs being riffed.

New Jersey K-12 Certification Process

Prior to employment in the K-12 schools, dance teachers must obtain a certificate that warrants their eligibility to teach in the K-12 schools that is dependent on the type of school they anticipate to be employed within. Without obtaining a certificate an individual cannot be hired by a school:

- Certificate of Eligibility (CE) Teacher of Dance (1635)
- Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS) Teacher of Dance (1635)
- Career and Technical Certificate in Dance (CTE) Vocational Arts Dance (4068)

The CE and CEAS have lifetime validity. Once an individual has obtained an eligibility certificate and has been hired by a school, the school district requests a Provisional Certificate that legalizes employment. The provisional certificate has a two-year validity.

When a teacher successfully completes mentoring, supervision, evaluation and all other requirements the provisional certificate is upgraded to a Standard Certificate. This is a permanent certificate.

K-12 Dance Teacher Certification in Other States

In many instances, if an individual holds a teaching certificate in their area of endorsement in their home/accredited university state, they can apply for positions in other states through the Interstate Reciprocity program. For example, New Jersey K-12 dance certification has reciprocity in 36 other states, including New York.

The K-12 teacher certification process varies from state to state. Therefore if an individual holds a New Jersey dance certificate and is contemplating teaching in another state they must check the Interstate Reciprocity Agreement within the alternate state by going to that state’s department of education website to read about certification processing. This is likewise true for out-of-state residents contemplating employment in New Jersey. Although there is not currently a Praxis exam required for New Jersey dance certification, an individual applying to an alternate state may be required to fulfill the Praxis or other exams required for certification within that state.
Professional Development for Dance Teachers in New Jersey

Dance New Jersey, Montclair State, Rutgers and NDEO all provide opportunities for dance teachers from diverse contexts to continually develop their dance knowledge and pedagogical skills.

- DanceNJ Events
- NDEO On-Line Education and National Conferences
- Montclair State University Events
- Mason Gross/Rutgers Teacher Advancement
- Rutgers University Dance Teacher Database

Physical Education vs. Dance Education

While it is recognized that dance has many physical and health benefits, Dance New Jersey, as an affiliate of the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), is “dedicated to the advancement and promotion of high quality education in the art of dance,” (www.ndeo.org).

Historically, dance education was first cultivated in departments of physical education within universities beginning at the turn of the 1900’s. The first dance major was established within a department of physical education at the University of Wisconsin in 1926. K-12 dance education trickled down from the universities and, initially, K-12 dance educators were prepared in university physical education programs; obtaining K-12 certification in physical education. Since this time, dance education has been stereotypically viewed as a form of physical education rather than as an arts education with physical and health benefits (Haygood, 2000; Ross, 2000; Wilson et al., 2006).

As universities began to offer professional programs in the 1970’s, vocational certification in dance, such as in New Jersey, began to proliferate throughout the next few decades, allowing professionals to teach dance in vocational high schools. Then, beginning in the 1990’s, recognizing the need for equity in arts education in non-vocational schools, states across the U.S. began to initiate generalist K-12 certification in dance. Meanwhile universities responded by obtaining accreditation for preparing dance teachers under the auspices of the new K-12 dance certification rather than the former physical education certification.

In New Jersey, the establishment of the arts as core learning content in K-12 schools was first accomplished in 1997. In 1998 NDEO was founded to promote dance as arts learning. In 2004, generalist K-12 dance certification was approved in New Jersey and in 2007 the NJAEP published the results of the first New Jersey K-12 school arts census. Supported by these developments, the first accredited university dance teacher preparation programs in New Jersey appeared as recently as 2009. Therefore it is not surprising that the legacy of physical education yet lingers in the minds of the New Jersey public where many key stake holders do not yet differentiate between physical education goals (learning standards) and arts education goals (learning standards), although dance-as-art as well as physical education are required to be offered to every child in New Jersey schools.
References & Resources


