

What are Some of the Benefits of Brain-Compatible Dance Education?

By Anne Green Gilbert, Director of Creative Dance Center

Physical Benefits

Through quality creative dance instruction students:

- Develop strong and healthy bodies and brains through movement and exercise.
Each class begins with appropriate warm-ups, includes strengthening and stretching exercises, and keeps the student actively moving.
- Increase body awareness, control, balance, and coordination.
Moving through the BrainDance patterns helps align body parts and develops the vestibular system.
- Release energy through positive physical activity.
Aerobic exercise creates a healthy heart and releases the feel-good chemical serotonin.

Social Benefits

Through quality creative dance instruction students:

- Learn to cooperate with others through partner and group work.
"Can you dance under, around and through your partner's shape?" "Each group will create a totem pole dance."
- Practice self-discipline through sharing space, and interacting safely with other dancers.
"Look for the empty space as you dance in general space with other dancers."
- Discover the value of individual differences and appreciate diverse cultural expression.
"Take turns shadowing each other's movements and then discuss whether you move the same way or differently and why that might be."
- Learn a universal, nonverbal language that is inclusive of all cultures and abilities.
"Copy my fast and slow movements and then dance your own way fast and slow."

Emotional Benefits

Through quality creative dance instruction students:

- Become more self-aware by expressing feelings through movement. Contrasting movements help define feelings which lead to appropriate behavior.
"Move strongly & powerfully when the music is loud, lightly & delicately when the music is soft."
- Increase self-esteem through positive and noncompetitive experiences.
"Look at all those interesting shapes. Everyone is different!"
- Feel the joy and satisfaction of expressing his or her own thoughts through movement and voice.
"Show me how you dance in Sharpland. Let's travel to Smoothland and see how your movements change. Make a shape in your favorite land and share the reasons for your choice with a peer."

Intellectual Benefits

Through quality creative dance instruction students:

- Acquire a movement vocabulary, both verbal and physical, applicable to all areas of a child's life.
Understanding the concept of space helps children move appropriately in a variety of places.
- Develop problem-solving skills through the experience of solving movement problems.
"How many different ways can you move on three body parts?"
- Strengthen the ability to listen and follow directions.
"Run forward, jump three times, tiptoe backwards and melt to the floor."
- Increase learning in other curricular areas such as reading, math and science.
"Write a cinquain (five-line poem) about the water cycle and create a dance illustrating your poem."
- Develop neural pathways through movement patterning that are essential to language acquisition, reading readiness, and mathematical ability. Research has shown that perceptual/motor ability is related to the acquisition of more complex skills.
Do the BrainDance.