

National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) Releases Report on Evidence of Impact of Dance in the K-12 School Setting

"Evidence: A Report on The Impact of Dance in the K-12 Setting" marks a major step for NDEO and the field of dance, as it builds a collection of evidence that provides scientific support for the necessity of dance education within every K-12 school. This evidence is particularly useful to educators advocating for dance within their schools or district, as well as students and scholars studying the trends and gaps in existing dance research.

Funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) undertook a review of over 200 documents for evidence of how dance impacts learning in the K-12 setting. The report pays particular attention to several areas determined to be under-researched in NDEO's 2004 "Research Priorities for Dance Education: A Report to the Nation" including the categories of Creative Process, Neuroscience/Brain Research, Student Achievement, Affective Domain, Student Performance, Equity, Cultural and World Dance, and Children-at-Risk.

Researchers combed a variety of databases including NDEO's Dance Education Literature and Research descriptive index (DELRdi), the U.S. Department of Education's Fast Response Survey System, and a newly discovered collection of reports from their Arts-in-Education programs. The researchers prepared evaluations and summaries of each study, article, or report that provided insight into the evidence of how dance education impacts teaching and learning in the first decade-plus of the 21st century. The end result of this is a 65-page research report entitled, "Evidence: A Report on the Impact of Dance in the K-12 Setting" ([Evidence Report](#)).

Beginning with the launch of the [DELRdi](#), an online index of over 5,700 literature and research documents, NDEO continues in its legacy of advancement and credibility in the field of dance education research. The Evidence Report is a compilation of scientific support for the necessity of dance education within every K-12 school. In addition, this evidence is particularly useful to educators advocating for dance within their schools or district, as well as students and scholars studying the patterns, trends, and gaps in existing dance research. Particularly rich are the final reports from the U.S Department of Education's Arts-in-Education projects, wherein the researchers have discovered data from the ten years of funded projects in model arts programs. These reports reveal overwhelming evidence that dance effects student achievement and test scores in other subject areas such as language arts, math, and science.

One such participator in this project was the Jefferson County School Board in Monticello, Florida. According to the 2005-2007 report, students in the Jefferson County model arts program outperformed other districts in reading and math scores. As opposed to many programs, which seek to integrate the arts into the academic curriculum, students in Jefferson County "took time away from instruction in writing and language arts for visual, dance, and dramatic arts instead, which actually increased test scores overall."

Some of the most tantalizing evidence to support dance in schools comes from the field of neuroscience. In "How the Arts Develop the Young Brain," David A. Sousa addresses the neurological benefits of dance and movement in schools. He writes, "even short, moderate physical exercise improves brain performance," and "dance techniques help students become more aware of their physical presence, spatial relationships, breathing, and of timing and rhythm in movement." The studies in the report reveal that physical learning increases cognition, and this occurs at the neurological level. While this is beneficial to all students, children-at-risk

populations, such as children with autism, or those with other cognitive and emotional challenges in dealing with conflict resolution and school violence, would especially benefit from dance as therapy. The researchers also uncovered additional studies from the field of dance-movement therapy that highlight the impact dance can have on a person's emotional well being at the neural level.

As documented by a May 2013 story on NBC Nightly News, in a school "notorious for its lack of discipline and where backpacks were prohibited for fear the students would use them to carry weapons," grades have dramatically improved and school violence has decreased. As reported, the reason for this transformation is due to the principal's decision to fire the security guards and bring in more arts teachers.

According to the National Dance Education Organization Executive Director, Susan McGreevy-Nichols, "these stories frequently appear on the news, and now NDEO has uncovered research that backs this up." McGreevy-Nichols adds, "It's nice that we have a collection of all of these findings in one place for quick reference."

The Evidence Report shows that incorporating dance into the curriculum can, among other benefits, improve student test scores, lower drop-out rates, improve learning in other subjects, foster teacher and student morale, and support the learning of under-served populations.

As concluded in the Evidence Report, "In schools where dance programs flourish, students' attendance rises, teachers are more satisfied, and the overall sense of community grows."

To read the full Evidence Report, visit NDEO's home page at www.ndeo.org.

Founded in 1998, the National Dance Education Organization is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to advancing dance education centered in the arts. To that end, the organization provides its members, and the field at large, with advocacy, professional development, standards, leadership, support services, honor societies and research for dance teachers, artists, administrators and students in dance education across all genres. NDEO members can be found in PreK-12 schools, colleges and universities, dance studios, community centers and performing arts organizations.



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