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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

NON-MUSICAL CHOREOGRAPHIC INSPIRATIONS:
CHOREOGRAPHIC CURRICULUM CHALLENGES
WITH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts

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College of Visual and Performing Arts
School of Theatre and Dance
Dance Education

December, 2016

This Thesis by: Leslie Kaye Williams

Entitled: *Non-Musical Choreographic Inspirations: Choreographic Curriculum Challenges with High School Students*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in College of Performing and Visual Arts in School of Theatre and Dance, Program of Dance Educator Intensive

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ABSTRACT

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For this study a curriculum was designed which encouraged high school students to explore non-musical inspirations for their choreography. The questions of concern in this study were: 1) What are the effects of non-musical inspirations on high school student choreography? 2) What curriculum will be most effective for encouraging student creativity? 3) How will this new curriculum align with national and state curriculum standards? 4) Will students and audiences be emotionally connected to compositions created this way? Students were led through a series of choreographic and improvisational lessons, and at the conclusion of the lessons students rehearsed selected pieces of choreography and performed in a concert. Audience members were asked their thoughts about the performance to gauge if there was a connection to the dance pieces performed, and if they preferred this concert to previous concerts. This study informed the creation of a comprehensive research-based choreography curriculum for a public high school dance program.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Goal of Thesis

According to popular legend Friedrich Nietzsche is quoted as saying, “Those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.”

What happens if choreography is begun without the stimulus of music, but from another source? High school students will generally begin the process of dance-making with the thought “I really like this song. Let's do a dance!” Though many young or new choreographers start creating with a piece of music, this is the opposite approach of most college level composition classes. College composition classes explore structure, techniques, and subject matter, and may only add music near the end of a course in order to more fully explore movement for movement’s sake. Most high school students do not have the luxury of a dedicated dance composition class and do what they observe in the dance classes they take: their teacher puts on a piece of music and teaches them a piece of choreography to perform to that song, and they may or may not have any conversation about what they piece is attempting to portray, if anything. Due to this lack of initial training, and an attempt to copy what they have observed, students will use a purely musical motivation for choreographic work, and many high school pieces end up one-dimensional and ultimately less satisfying for both the dancers and the audience. Imposing limitations on where choreographic inspirations can come from, ideally anywhere but a song should motivate students to higher levels of creativity and

ownership in their compositions. The goal of this thesis is the encouragement of creativity in high school choreographers through a process of composition curriculum and performance opportunities.

The questions which are of concern in this study are:

- Q1 What are the effects of non-musical inspirations on high school student choreography?
- Q2 What curriculum will be most effective for encouraging student creativity?
- Q3 How will this new curriculum align with national and state curriculum standards?
- Q4 Will students and audiences be emotionally connected to compositions created this way?

As part of the requirements for a graduate degree in dance education, this thesis study will help the researcher create a comprehensive research-based choreography curriculum for a public high school dance program. Additionally, this study will help the researcher understand how students and audiences react to more meaningful choreographic works.

Purpose of Study

Young dancers are inundated by media which tells them what to wear, what to watch, and what to listen to. Much of popular music incorporates highly choreographed sequences with music videos or stage shows. There are also a plethora of dance reality shows, most of which glorify competition style dancing, to mainstream popular music, wherein choreographers explain the impetus of their movement as partially coming from the song.

There are limits to the types and authenticity of dance styles that are emphasized on *So You Think You Can Dance*. They tend to be popular, entertainment, front-facing, and skill-oriented styles. Not that there is anything wrong with this, but the public needs to be aware that the show represents a somewhat narrow definition of dance. (Cardinal)

Young choreographers should be exposed to opportunities to find their inner voice as choreographers. They already get this opportunity through their language arts classes, through creative and technical writing assignments. The ability to create sentences which are strung together to create a comprehensive story or essay is a writing skill that is taught from an early age to all students. In his commencement address to Northwestern University in 2013, Mikhail Baryshnikov said, “I found that dance, music, and literature is how I made sense of the world . . . it pushed me to think of things bigger than life's daily routines . . . to think beyond what is immediate or convenient,” (Keister) and this deeper connection is what students should find as a result of this study. Through a combination of improvisational exercises, written work, and dance–making studies, students will have the opportunity to discover that voice and find something meaningful to present in their choreography.

High school choreography stagnates because it is frequently motivated by the need to find a song to do a dance to, instead of having something to share or investigate through dance. Students have not been exposed to enough options of how to find alternative choreographic motivations; they understand the connection between music and dance and believe that is where dance–making originates.

Significance of Study

In order to maintain its relevancy in an ever evolving educational landscape, K-12 dance education is constantly being revised. This revision must naturally include an updated curriculum which addresses the requirements encompassed in national and state content standards in dance, the inclusion of twenty-first century skill readiness expectations from all graduates, and the advent of STEM (Science, Technology,

Engineering and Math) or STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) philosophies in education. As an art, dance is a natural part of the STEAM philosophy.

[Henri Lefebvre's] hypothesis that (moving) bodies create space is compelling as a provocation for the study of dance for two reasons: first, because it provides a frame for defining choreography as an aesthetic activity; and second, because . . . it provides a point of departure for discussing the social quality of choreographic practice. (Stanger)

Dance classes give students the opportunity to develop many twenty-first century skills including critical thinking, collaboration, self-direction, and creativity. With the addition of a comprehensive choreography curriculum classes would also address the emphasis on invention. "The 21st century skills are the synthesis of the essential abilities students must apply in our rapidly changing world. Today's students need a repertoire of knowledge and skills that are more diverse, complex, and integrated than any previous generation" (Colorado Department of Education). Content standards in dance all include an element of choreography. In the National Core Arts Standards this is represented under the Create Artistic process with the general Anchor Standards stating that "students will: 1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. 2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. 3. Refine and complete artistic work." The Colorado Department of Education lists "Create, Compose and Choreograph" as one of four equally important areas which should be taught in all Colorado dance classrooms. More specifically the Colorado standard states that students will "1. Refine the creative process in dance-making; 2. Compose dance works that convey meaning and intent; 3. Utilize choreography components when creating dance works." Dance-making is an important and necessary part of a dancer's educational experience.

Overview of Methodology

This study was conducted using two advanced level high school dance classes with thirty-eight total participants. Both classes had previous experience choreographing, or participating in student choreography, where few or no limitations were established. As part of the study of the efficacy of the curriculum, students were asked to participate in improvisational dance exercises designed to spark creativity and guide them to think about new ways to create and combine movement, as well as to provide possible topics to use when creating a fully formed piece of choreography. The curriculum included instruction in the structures of choreography through both lecture and handouts. Students were asked to journal about their daily experiences. In order to better analyze the problem and answer the essential questions posed, the researcher used pre- and post-questionnaires with the student participants, an analysis of their journal entries, and an anonymous audience questionnaire which was handed out at the end of study concert. “Qualitative values are intrinsic to dance. They are the values we name when we identify something as dance, the various kinds of values that we experience when dance fulfills its potential,” (Fraleigh and Hanstein 17) and qualitative methods gave the researcher insight into the positive and negative response of the participants to the exercises and their ultimate performance, as well as the audience’s connection, or lack thereof, to the presented works. The methodology will be detailed further in its own chapter.

Students and audience members involved in this study had the opportunity to experience dance-making at a higher and more meaningful level. Although there are state and national dance standards in existence which dictate the teaching of dance-making in a high school classroom, few concrete examples of curriculum are published at a

governmental level. For this study, a curriculum was developed as a guideline for choreographic coursework. High school dance educators can follow this curriculum model to create lessons which will lead to higher quality concert productions. The purpose of this study is an evaluation of the curriculum model for further use in public educational institutions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A History of Dance-Making

From the beginning of time “dance was something in which everyone in the tribe participated, dancers were not regarded as specialists to be singled out and trained because of their particular skills or beauty” (Mackrell). Dance as a performance art in Western culture began with ballet, which moved out of the salons of Louis XIV and onto stages in the eighteenth century, with professionals who devoted their lives to the pursuit of technical perfection. Even as this art form evolved, codified guidelines for choreography did not exist. “The ballet master of this era, the choreographer, was an arranger of dance as a theatrical art” (Choreography). It was instinctually created by the masters of the time, based on the music composed for that purpose, and modeled on what had been done by previous masters. “Plot, when needed, was patterned after drama, but only the lighter and more whimsical forms...The drama was interrupted by display pieces of technique, thought to be much more important than the story” (Humphrey 15). The structure of these new ballets closely followed courtly rituals, with the soloists as king and queen, surrounded by their noble court as corps de ballet. Unlike “music with its counterpoint and harmony, or painting with its laws of perspective and proportion . . . dance flourished very well without rules or guidelines for composition” (Humphrey 16). This process of learning through experience, and following in the footsteps of previous choreographers worked very well through the nineteenth century.

Dance continued with its lack of written and formalized choreographic theories until the advent of Modern Dance in the early twentieth century. “The absence in the West of any reliable form of notation until the 20th century resulted in a relative paucity of dance traditions when compared to other art forms” (Mackrell). This is not to say that the art of choreography didn’t grow and evolve during this time, it was passed down from master to student through rehearsals and performance, who learned by doing, instead of studied in universities through dedicated composition classes. Dance pioneers of the 1930’s, including Doris Humphrey and Rudolf Laban, began to develop, teach, and write theories of dance composition and notation. Because much of dance is created as a reflection of music, the language of choreography mimics the language of music theory and the following vocabulary is widely used in choreography: ABA, theme and variation, canon, call and response, motif, rhythm, and dynamics. Choreographic theorists also developed vocabularies describing qualities of dance, and elements necessary for dance. These choreographic theories are now integral parts of state and national dance standards and taught throughout dance academia.

The Choreographer and Choreographic Craft

As part of the modern dance revolution of the early twentieth century, dance was added to university majors and school course offerings. Dance students were being hired as teachers and subsequently asked to choreograph for recitals, musicals, and other performance events. The effective training of those individuals has become paramount in comprehensive dance education. But what personality or creative traits should a choreographer have? Doris Humphrey suggests a number of qualities, which should exist within an individual for them to have the possibility of success with dance-making

including someone who knows dance, understands movement potential, and has “an over-all theatrical sense of shape” (Humphrey 25). This person is an observer of human behavior and physicality, and has the ability to interact with others. There should be an understanding of time schedules, and an ability to be resourceful and use good judgment. “Finally, our choreographer had better have something to say” (Humphrey 24). Instead of simply gaining a base of technical dance understanding, choreographic students should be led through a curriculum designed to introduce theories and potentially tap into their desires to communicate something through dance.

“Choreographic theory and the study of it is a craft, [but not everyone] can be taught to create, [and] talent or possibly genius can be supported and informed by know-how” (Humphrey 19). Not unlike a writing course where each student is taught the basics of spelling, grammar, and sentence construction the educator’s job is to give every student the tools to develop a great masterpiece regardless of the existence of the spark of genius. This should come with the understanding that artists are not “strange, dreamy people who live alone in garrets and produce masterpieces by some dark mysterious process that comes on them like a clap of thunder” (Humphrey 45). Choreographers are highly trained individuals who refine their craft through an intimate knowledge of the elements inherent in dance technique and composition.

Choreography is an integral part of contemporary concert dance, the choreographer must make sense of and organize steps to create something to perform, and teach it to the performers. It is a codified craft, but also must have a catalyst of creative genius to fully congeal into art, so can choreography effectively be taught?

Blom and Chaplin in their book *The Intimate Act of Choreography* say

You learn by choreographing, by experimenting, by creating little bits and pieces and fragments of dance phrases, by playing with the materials of the craft over and over again until they become second nature. You learn by getting your ideas out and into movement, onto a body (3).

The craft of choreography exists on a theoretical level and a practical one. The practical level consists of the structures described above, and has individual elements that can be taught. Much of the craft is taught on an experiential basis, where the student is given an example and then told to do an assignment based on that example. This can remove the craft from the kinesthetic–body moving and creative–sphere and into the cognitive–thinking and logical–sphere “leading to a head approach rather than an organic one. Exploration in working out the problem is limited” (Blom and Chaplin 4). A head approach can lead novice choreographers to use the easiest solution to the assignment, which usually lacks originality or creativity. The goal in choreography should be an unexpected and unique solution to the problem of communicating ideas to the audience. One approach, used widely through dance composition classes, is to “provide situations, in the form of improvisations, where learning results from experience. This is the way life teaches” (Blom and Chaplin 5). This process of improvisation in class to lead to choreographic studies is explored next.

Teaching Dance–Making

Although there now exist theories and guidelines to aid with structuring a dance composition, there is no single method that will create a masterpiece. Choreography is still an art form and although the process can be studied, the spark of creative genius may not exist within an individual. One of the universal ways a composition class begins is with teacher led dance improvisational exercises. Sandra Cerny Minton says in her

introductory chapter in her book *Choreography: A Basic Approach Using Improvisation* that “discovering the right movement through improvisation is an important part of the choreographic process” (2). Classroom improvisational exercises can, and should, be designed to help students with all aspects of dance-making. The discovery of a theme or concept to begin a choreographic work can come out of working with imagery, text, memories, alongside an understanding of choreographic elements and structures. These elements and structures included guided experiences working with shape, space, time, and relationships; where building upon the format of beginning-middle-end can be internalized with improvised phrases. “With time, these [improvised] experiences will be automatically incorporated into your way of working” (Blom and Chaplin 6).

The choreographic process is inherently a creative process, so students must reach a fertile state of mind where they can process ideas and translate those ideas into movement. There are five steps for any creative process: “1. A period of preparation; 2. Time for incubation; 3. Occurrence of insight; 4. Sessions in which evaluation occurs; 5. A period of evaluation” (Minton 2). Although this list appears sequential, the creative process can follow the steps in any order, and return to a step a number of times before a dance is complete to the satisfaction of the choreographer. Choreographic craft gives the creator the tools to mold improvised movement and inspiration into a coherent work of dance. This craft includes the process of movement manipulation, effective sequencing of movements to clearly communicate with an audience, creativity generating something novel, and crafting a total picture for public presentation.

There are many processes that exist to create choreography, and it can be overwhelming to focus on all of them at once. It becomes important for an instructor to

introduce these to students individually, eventually discussing how they interweave and combine to create an artistic piece. Blom and Chaplin affirm that “the separation fosters an awareness of their distinctiveness . . . [and] the reintegration of the parts occurs naturally” (4). The way these elements of choreography are analyzed and dealt with independently becomes the determination for each educator to make, based on the needs of their students, and the level they are ready to proceed in their studies. This becomes part of the craft of teaching, creating lesson plans which are structured for the individual learning requirements of their programs and students. Integrating the improvisational lessons with discussions on the tools inherent in choreography will create context for students, allowing for students to apply the skills they are developing through improvisation.

Dance-making is an integral part of dance education standards, at a national level and at the Colorado state level. In her book *Teaching Dance as Art in Education* Brenda Pugh McCutchen includes it as the second of four cornerstones of dance education, and labels the cornerstone “Creating and Composing” (169). “The creative process is about experimenting with movement, movement exploration, and improvisation” (McCutchen 170). McCutchen’s process of teaching dance-making begins with a presentation of movement problems to solve, which should be based on prior knowledge learned in the course, and then refined through a series of critical and reflective activities. Students begin with experimentation and improvisation, are introduced to proper vocabulary pertaining to choreography, move through the principles of form, structure, and aesthetics of design, eventually choreographing a phrase or longer piece, and using editorial feedback to polish their pieces. Much like the creative process mentioned above, all of

the steps are fluid, can be returned to or repeated in order to increase the skill and understanding, and can aid in artistic growth for the student. McCutchen also states that the creative process “is not unlike the scientific process . . . [you] gather information, identify potential problems, seek solutions, and conclude the investigation” (177). All of these concepts are part of national and Colorado dance standards, including twenty-first century skills which are imbedded in those standards, as important skills for graduating students to know and use.

The last part of McCutchen’s process, the critical feedback, is one of the most important pieces in building an effective composition curriculum. Although getting the creative juices flowing is important, if no actual craft is applied to the movement created from prompts in improvisational exercises then the resulting work will have no artistic impact or value. Improvisation alone cannot bridge the gap for students to move effectively from technicians to creators. “Interestingly, the literature is virtually silent on just how it is that improvisational work is actually supposed to function as a preparation for choreography” (Lavender and Predock–Linnell 197). Their article discusses how apply improvisation and use it effectively to help students with fully developed choreographic works. They insist there are three skills in effective dance–making: improvising, composing, and criticism. Dances should be created as feeling objects of art, which can defy logical understanding, but in order to be taught and effectively assessed must have a rational structure attached to the process. “As far as we are concerned, underlying the teaching of art making is the assumption that not just anything is art, and not just any process will result in a work of art” (Lavender and Predock–Linnell 202). Students should take time throughout the process and evaluate what they have created.

There should be a continual dialogue between the artists and their work, which will hopefully lead to a greater understanding of movement possibilities. Self-critical skills can and should be developed during the improvisational steps because “to make the improvisation class a meaningful first step in the development of choreographers, the critical skills of the students must be engaged and developed from the start” (Lavender and Predock-Linnell 206).

Problem Solving in Improvisation and Play

It has already been suggested that an instructor needs to establish an encouraging climate, which is accepting of individuality and develops confidence for improvisational students. This atmosphere allows students to create their best work safely, without fear of any rejection but their own through self-criticism and weeding out of ideas that don't fully support their final work. This focuses on the product, the piece of choreographic work, but not necessarily the process, problem solving through improvisation. “Creativity may be evoked in a dance improvisation situation through a specific use of problem solving and that such creativity involves creative thought process” (Hjermstad 9). This thought process is what educators are looking to stimulate within their composition students. “Psychology has long recognized creativity as a distinct thought process” (Hjermstad 10). Students use the experimentation of improvisation to produce creative ideas and then invoke their problem solving skills to choose the best and most usable ones. “Problem solving [is] a teaching method which involves the thought process of the individual solving the problem . . . There is no single solution to the problem” (Hjermstad 13–14). Through the process of improvisation and self-reflection students develop better skills as not only choreographers, but as thinking individuals.

There is an inherent need for non-structured play, which helps children, adolescence, and adults learn, grow and release stress. Friedrich Frobel, the Father of the Kindergarten movement in Germany in 1826, is credited as saying “children have an innate craving for activity implying that when awake and free from want, the child continually wants to do something and be involved in activity” (Eller 28).

Improvisational exercises in dance feed that need to play, or be involved in activity, which according to Eller doesn't go away as people age, it is just seen as less socially acceptable. “Play expression is the antithesis of work . . . play [is] recuperation from the stress of everyday living as an adult” (Eller 35). It is necessary to repeat behaviors to become skilled at them, this is true in life and dance, hence the rigors of the dance technique class. This is no less true for the craft of choreography, as mentioned by Blom and Chaplin, but Eller adds that “in an attempt to become competent at a skill or behavior, an individual repeated a cycle...then depending on her/his success or failure, she/he experienced a feeling of efficacy or inherent pleasure” (32). Gaining skill, effectively problem solving, creating a piece of artistic choreography is emotionally satisfying and creatively satisfying.

Findings of Literature Review

Utilizing improvisation as a tool to teach choreographic concepts is nearly universal, but must be used judiciously with students understanding the context of their improvisational work. “Bring creative products forth from the skills students are acquiring . . . artful creation depends on how the teacher conveys the tools of composition” (McCutchen 171). A dance-making curriculum which incorporates students previously learned technical skills, and asks them to independently problem-

solve, will give them a richer learning experience and more access to effectively create and present their concepts through choreography to an audience. “The purpose of school-based dance is to educate broadly by stretching the body and the mind through dance [using] a holistic approach to teaching” (McCutchen 64). Students need to learn the language involved with dance-making, including music based terms, and vocabulary specific to dance, and gain an ease with using it, which will come with extensive practice. As a part of all of these needs for creating class, special care must be taken to understand the age of students, which are being taught. “Know readiness factors so you can concentrate on what is productive and avoid what is non-productive at different grade levels (ages)” (McCutchen 65).

This review of literature has discovered that there is a strong need for improvisational studies through dance in school. Play is important to keeping learners engaged, and gives them opportunities to problem-solve. The need for additional improvisation and problem-solving skills serves as the basis for creating a strong curriculum with which to teach choreographic structures to students, and allow them to discover non-musical inspirations for choreography.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the process the researcher followed to create and study the effects of a choreography curriculum with the ultimate goal of encouraging creativity in high school students. The study was conducted qualitatively, drawing conclusions based on student feedback throughout the process. The study was conducted during a semester, beginning with the presentation of lessons created and concluding with the performance of a cumulative concert. Students experienced improvisation-based lessons, and looked for new ideas with which to create choreography. At the conclusion of the lessons, students were asked to present a theoretical choreography proposal, based on the work done in previous lessons. The class, and instructor, chose the most interesting concepts and these were rehearsed and performed. The concert presented the products of the work that the students created as a result of their explorations with choreography and non-musical inspiration.

The participants in this study were students in grades nine through twelve who were enrolled at a public high school that has a tradition of supporting the arts, but that is not considered an arts magnet school. All participants were enrolled in one of two highest-level dance course sections offered at the school and were admitted to the class based on the completion of prerequisite classes, or a skill based audition. Students in

the class had varying backgrounds of dance instruction, some coming from an extensive studio training background, and some with dance training only received through the high school. All students had experience performing dances choreographed by teachers and creating dance compositions as classroom studies, but only a few students had any prior experience with choreographing their own pieces for performance. The process of crafting a piece which is fully realized— including rehearsing, refining, and adding technical elements— was part of the aim of this curriculum. In the interest of class continuity, all students in the class participated in the lessons, but only the study participant's journals and feedback will be included in the discussion of the findings of this study. Students presented their non-music inspired concepts to the class, and the pieces ultimately chosen to be produced were based on instructor grades and popular vote of their classmates. Students were graded in the class on participation, completion of pre-choreographic steps, and their final presentation, which was either verbal or written.

Institutional Review Board Process

Prior to beginning the in classroom study, the researcher had to gain approval from two Institutional Review Boards: University of Northern Colorado, and the school district in which the study took place. Both review boards had specific documents to be submitted, and revised, to grant permission to conduct the study. The documents included the main questions of concern in the study, the proposed participants, the consent forms to be signed, methods of data collection, and any risks inherent in the study. Once granted permission from both boards, the study could begin.

Designing the Curriculum

The creation of a new choreography curriculum began with a detailed study of the Colorado Academic Standards for Dance and the National Core Arts Standards. The Colorado Academic Standards were adopted on December 10, 2009. The Colorado Academic standards specifically referenced for this curriculum are shown in table 1.

Table 1

Colorado Academic Standards for Dance	
Standard 1: Movement, Technique, and Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence and confidence during a performance is the goal. • Skillful movement and technique provide the practical substance for performance. • Performance is the demonstration of human feeling and reasoning through movement.
Standard 2: Create, Compose and Choreograph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative dance involves using the dance elements of space, time, and energy to explore, improvise, and make movement phrases. • The degree of sophistication in the choreographic process is evident in composition, which is a shorter work of art in progress. • Choreography is the art of making dance using meaning, intent, and principles of structure and design.
Standard 4: Reflect, Connect, and Respond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect upon dance to stimulate the imagination and challenge the intellect; connect it with other disciplines to enrich and enhance the spectrum of knowledge; and respond to it to deepen and refine one's emotional nature. • Represent dance as art in oral and written communications. • Distinguish the aesthetic values of dance, and discover the artistic intent.

The National Core Arts Standards were adopted in 2014 as a voluntary framework for educators to use in conjunction with state standards. These standards evolved out of the *1994 National Standards for Arts Education* and the *2005 Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts*. These standards follow *The Understanding by Design*

(UbD) Framework®, co-created by Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins and also have similarities to the Common Core State Standards to help arts educators with implementation in their classrooms.

The National Core Arts Standards specifically referenced for this curriculum are listed below.

Table 2

National Core Arts Standards

<p>Create:</p> <p>Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchor Standard #1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. • Anchor Standard #2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. • Anchor Standard #3. Refine and complete artistic work.
<p>Performing (dance, music, theatre):</p> <p>Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchor Standard #5. Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.

After the specific standards relating to the curriculum were selected, the teacher and student objectives were created. These objectives, which reflect the chosen standards and define the goals of the curriculum, are listed in table 3. The details of each lesson were developed based on the standards and objectives. These lessons created by the researcher were a combination of ideas gained from books written about improvisation and choreography instruction, web resources on developing creativity and social awareness, and previous experience of the researcher. When activities from specific sources are used, they will be referenced in the lesson outlines below. Some sources, specifically web-based sources, were used as introductory videos, or to gather examples of prompts for additional engagement of the students in the daily activities.

Table 3

Choreography Curriculum Teacher and Student Objectives

Teacher Objectives:	<p>Students will demonstrate dance movement skills with technical proficiency and kinesthetic body awareness. (Colorado Dance Standard 1, Anchor Standard 5)</p> <p>Students will understand, demonstrate and apply movement elements and choreographic structure. (Colorado Dance Standard 2, Anchor Standard 1 and 2)</p> <p>Students will use analysis to reflect upon and understand choreographic works. (Colorado Dance Standard 4, Anchor Standard 3)</p> <p>Students will demonstrate thinking skills such as describing, interpreting, and problem-solving through dance movement and verbal discussion. (Colorado Dance Standard 4, Anchor Standard 2 and 5)</p>
Student Objectives:	<p>I will define, understand, and apply movement elements and choreographic structures through improvisation and movement studies. (Colorado Dance Standard 1 and 2, Anchor Standard 1 and 2)</p> <p>I will create, discover and analyze text for application to movement studies. (Colorado Dance Standard 2 and 4, Anchor Standard 3)</p> <p>I will examine my personal creative journey, and use my experiences to find inspirations for choreography in issues of social change. (Colorado Dance Standard 2 and 4, Anchor Standard 2 and 5)</p> <p>I will conceive and present a theoretical choreographic work. (Colorado Dance Standard 2, Anchor Standard 2, 3 and 5)</p> <hr/>

Presentation of Lessons

The lessons created to encourage non-musical inspirations in choreography were presented over five weeks in two different classes. Typically, the classes were ninety minutes in length and met every other day on opposite days. Small adjustments were made between class presentations, based on the previous work of the class, the length of time in each class period, and the classroom space being used for that lesson. The semester the lessons were presented was a turbulent one with weather, particularly snow storms, which caused many adjustments in class scheduling. The unit began with parent and student signing of consent forms and students completing a pre-course questionnaire,

which can be found in appendix A. The chapter used for reference, readings, worksheets and the unit test was chapter nine of Helene Scheff, Marty Sprague, and Susan McGreevy–Nichols’s book *Experiencing Dance: From Student to Dance Artist*. Following a brief synopsis of each lesson is a table with a more formal lesson plan intended to be used by the researcher in the future, as well as shared with other secondary dance educators. Supplementary documents mentioned in lesson plans and a copy of the concert program can be found in appendix B. Specific details of curriculum and vocabulary referenced in lesson plans can be found in appendix C.

Lesson One

Lesson one was the introductory lesson for the unit, and was designed to establish an atmosphere of creativity and thinking outside the box. Students were exposed to unique choreographic examples and asked to reflect on them in new or unusual ways. The format for the choreography unit was discussed, and students received reading and worksheet packets with supplementary information to the classroom lecture and experiences.

Table 4

Lesson One

Instructional Strategies:	Student-centered exploration, journaling, student discussion and reflection
Hook:	Journaling: What makes good choreography? What specific elements should be involved?
Activities:	Show videos of choreography without traditional musical accompaniment or in a unique visual style. “Footloose” w/o music http://youtu.be/8d7LCO3aSAE “Footloose” w/ music http://youtu.be/j8XGmZ8HDIU Traditional Irish Step http://youtu.be/oFNGHy_-e6Q “Variations V” Merce Cunningham http://youtu.be/yOAagU6cfBw Spoken word Dance: Reflection http://youtu.be/9LNFoxJEflc Moses Pendleton “Pictures at an Exhibition” https://youtu.be/ZUhOwizI90w “Anchors Away” http://youtu.be/ZUIhu7_Hryg “Singing in the Rain” https://youtu.be/w40ushYAaYA “Umbrella/Singing in the Rain” mashup https://youtu.be/wnDrfyol29Q Analyze videos using “Appreciating Choreography with the Senses.”
Closing:	Student Discussion: What pieces did you like? Why? What did you dislike? Why? What descriptive words surprised you? Was everything we just watched dance? Was everything we just watched good? Which piece would you personally have liked to dance in?
For Next Time:	Pass out Chapter 9 of <i>Experiencing Dance: From Student to Dance Artist</i> Set due dates for completion of the packet, and final project

Lesson Two

Lesson two introduced and reviewed movement elements and qualities and their associated vocabulary. These elements were then explored through improvisational explorations. Students also had the opportunity to work on a problem-solving movement study in small groups. The movement study allowed the students further exploration of the choreographic and movement elements discussed at the start of class.

Table 5

Lesson Two

Instructional Strategies:	Direct instruction, student discussion and reflection, student-centered exploration, student-centered exploration, scaffolding
Hook:	Lecture: Review and define the elements included in shape, space, time, locomotor, axial, movement qualities, referring to page 121 in chapter 9. Ask for a list of examples of each element and list on the board. Have students stand up and try some of each.
Activities:	Improvisation: Turn the lights off in the room, and direct students to find a place they like. Say “explore the negative space around you, with at least one body part planted into the floor at all times” and “explore different movement elements.” Direct students to alternatively be: “smooth and light,” “heavy,” “broken and heavy,” “travel,” and repeat all prompts at a low level. Movement Study: Map Problem Solving. Draw a crude map on the board which includes a river, mountains, a forest, and a bridge, with a star in the center as the ultimate goal. Ask for list of movement words used in class so far (erase the board from earlier so students must recall the discussion from the beginning of class), list on the board. Have students, in pairs or trios, create a movement study traveling through each obstacle, in any order they choose, referring to the movement words on the board. Ask students to pay attention to the sequence each group creates, see if they can identify parts of the map, and interesting choices in movement qualities.
Closing:	Student Discussion: What was the easiest part of this project? The most difficult? Why for both? What did you struggle with? Did the lack of music help or hurt your creativity? How did you decide on an order, spacing, body positions, transitions, etc...? As an audience member, was the composition interesting?
For Next Time:	Remind students to continue work in Chapter 9 – reading and worksheets.

Lesson Three

In lesson three students use improvisational exercises to explore choreographic structures, and begin the search for potential non-musical inspirations.

Table 6

Lesson Three

Instructional Strategies:	Student discussion and reflection, student-centered exploration, student driven instruction, direct instruction, scaffolding
Hook:	Lecture: Introduce and discuss choreographic structures and elements, referring to page 121 in chapter 9. Ask for a list of examples of each element and list on the board. Have students stand up and try some of each.
Activities:	<p>Movement Study 1: Structure Study Students, in pairs or trios of their choosing, will create 8 counts of movement. Students will take the original 8 counts and create a variation which is not a canon. They will show both the original sequence and variation. Ask students to pay attention to the study each group creates, and see if they can identify what the choice of variation, and any interesting choices in movement.</p> <p>Movement Study 2: AB- opposites, from <i>The Intimate Act of Choreography</i> (93) Ask the class for a list of words which are opposites. (examples are: hot/cold, fast/slow, happy/sad). Write these opposites on the board. Individually create a brief study showing a pair of opposites abstractly. Pair students, show studies to their partners and guess the word pair. Ask for pairs to show their studies with the class guessing.</p> <p>Movement Study 3: Life cycle (IC 96) Guided Improvisation: Students lay on the floor and explore the space as a baby; a toddler; an elementary, middle, and high school student; a young, mid-aged, and elderly adult. Continue moving through the ages at their own pace. Focus on one age and develop more movement for this age, then begin to abstract that movement.</p>
Closing:	<p>Movement Study 1 Discussion: How did variations affect the original 8 counts? Did you like or dislike them? How did you decide on an order, spacing, body positions, transitions, etc...? As an audience member, was the composition interesting?</p> <p>Movement Study 2 Discussion: How did you feel about creating abstract movement? Did you like or dislike the use of opposites? Did you think about the words and their relationship to one another? As an audience member, was it easy or difficult to guess the words?</p> <p>Movement Study 3 Discussion: What age did you pick? How did it feel to focus on that age, as opposed to cycling through the life-cycle? Did you find yourself watching other dancers, and being influenced by them?</p>
For Next Time:	Remind students to continue work in Chapter 9 – reading and worksheets.

Lesson Four

In lesson four students begin to work with internally focused motivations and textual motivations for choreography. The internal motivations will be based on the idea of subtext and non-verbal communications.

Table 7

Lesson Four

Instructional Strategies:	Student discussion and reflection, student-centered exploration,
Hook:	<p>Improvisation: The first improvisation places students in four groups. They are given verbal sub-textual motivations, an obstacle or an objective with verbal results. The verbal group instructions are: 1. say “Hi” to everyone in the room, but you are terrified of the color pink; 2. walk over every inch of the floor, but do not make eye contact; 3. shake hands with everyone in the class, but you are disgusted by the color black; 4. find out every middle name of the class, but you may not tell anyone your own name.</p> <p>The second set of motivations are physical. The physical group instructions are: 1. You must paint the entire room a color; 2. There are flowers covering the floor, you must pick them all but may not make eye contact; 3. You want to prevent everyone from doing anything; 4. You must walk on every inch of the floor, but have to stay within arms-reach of your group the whole time.</p>
Activity:	<p>Movement Study: Students will independently write a 6-word memoir Then develop a brief movement phrase based on memoir.</p>
Closing:	<p>Class Discussion: Ask students in each group what each direction felt like to try to complete, and how they were affected by the other groups. Ask the entire class about their reactions to other groups, and if there was a group they wanted to be a part of instead of their own and why?</p>
For Next Time:	<p>Have students keep their memoir, and record their movement phrase on their phone so they can remember it for the next class. Ask students to bring in external text, which can be a poem, quote, song lyrics, a piece of a novel, and put it on a piece of paper which can be collected and distributed.</p>

Lesson Five

Lesson five expands on the textual motivations for creating choreography. It takes the internal text, the six–word memoir, and also uses external text brought in by students as movement inspirations.

Table 8

Lesson Five

Instructional Strategies:	Student-centered exploration, Student discussion and reflection
Hook:	Allow students to take a few minutes to review individual memoir studies. Students will perform for the class in small groups (5-8 students).
Activities:	<p>Movement Study 1: Have each student write their 6-word memoir on a piece of paper without signing it, and then collect the memoirs and pass them out to a different person. The students will then develop a brief movement phrase based on someone else's memoir. Show these new studies in small groups, again 5-8 students. Ask if anyone is comfortable claiming their memoir, and willing to do their phrase at the same time as the student who was given their memoir.</p> <p>Movement Study 2: Students will be in groups of 4, randomly assigned, and be given 3-4 pieces of text. The groups will get 20-45 minutes to create a more polished study based on one or many of the pieces of text. Remind students about choreographic structures. Students will read the piece(s) of text prior to showing their studies.</p>
Closing:	<p>Movement Study 1 Discussion: Did you like creating your memoir or someone else's memoir? Why? Which did you prefer performing? Why do you think there were differences between the two interpretations? What observations do you have of those different interpretations?</p> <p>Movement Study 2 Discussion: What was the easiest part of this project? What was the most difficult? Why for both? What are your feelings about using text as direct inspiration, both as a choreographer and an audience member?</p>
For Next Time:	Remind students to continue work in Chapter 9 – reading and worksheets.

Lesson Six

Lesson six looks at social issues and change as motivation for creation. It also looks at the choreographic concept of abstraction for students to utilize while dance-making.

Table 9

Lesson Six

Instructional Strategies:	Student-centered exploration, journaling, student discussion, reflection, student driven instruction, direct instruction, scaffolding
Hook:	<p>Writing Warm up: Have students individually complete “Your Creative Autobiography” from Tharp. Ask students if they would like to share their first creative memory, their best, their worst, or any rituals they have.</p> <p>Class Discussion: Post Richard Schechner's Seven Functions of Performance found in <i>A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO Performance Studies</i> (Komitee) on the board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To entertain • To make something that is beautiful • To mark or change identity • To make or foster community • To heal • To teach, persuade or convince • To deal with the sacred and/or the demonic <p>Ask students to give examples of types of performances they have experienced.</p>
Activities:	<p>Movement Study: Place social change issues on cards scattered around the room. (selected from: Gonchar's <i>200 Prompts for Argumentative Writing</i>, and Swarthmore College's <i>Guidelines for Daily Prompts</i>) Ask students to choose a partner they haven't yet worked with during this unit, then pick a prompt with this partner. Ask students to particularly focus on using functions 3-7 create a movement study inspired by their prompt. Allow students up to 45 minutes to create a more polished movement study. Students will present movement studies, after having read their chosen prompt aloud.</p>
Closing:	<p>Discussion: We have now created movement based on three different types of text: 6-word memoir, external texts, and social change prompts. What did you observe about the different movement studies? Which studies did you like watching the best? Which did you like creating the best? Was there anything which made you uncomfortable, want to research more, or provoked a response in you?</p>
For Next Time:	Remind students that chapter 9 and choreography paper/presentations are due next class.

Lesson Seven

Lesson seven is the culminating lesson of the inspiration finding work for this curriculum. Everything following this lesson is the rehearsal and performance of the chosen pieces. In this lesson students will either turn in a written proposal for a theoretical piece created from an inspiration or complete a verbal proposal for the class to vote on performing. On this day students were expected to turn in their completed chapter nine worksheets, and complete a short chapter test.

Table 10

Lesson Seven

Instructional Strategies:	Student discussion, reflection, student driven instruction
Hook:	Turn in completed chapter work and any additional papers. Complete chapter 9 test.
Activities:	Student Presentations: Interested students present their pieces to the class. The class will have the opportunity to ask the choreographer for any additional information they would like to know before voting on pieces. The class votes on pieces, the ones they are and are not interested in.
Closing:	Collect student votes.
For Next Time:	Students will know the pieces and their roles in them by the next class meeting.

Student Rehearsals

The instructor collected the votes from the students, and compiled a comprehensive list of student choreographed dance pieces to be performed. These pieces were chosen based on a combination of popular vote and teacher feedback. As a part of the vote, students could pick pieces to be performed, and additionally request to be cast, or not cast, in certain pieces. The choreographers were also given the opportunity to pick a dream cast, and request to not work with individuals because of potentially negative

rehearsal atmospheres. The instructor took all of this input into account and chose pieces for each class, and then cast those pieces. A rehearsal schedule was created, which allowed dancers and choreographers to know what was being rehearsed on any given day during class. These rehearsals included staff-created choreography and technique days. Two pieces rehearsed each day, with the class split between the two pieces, as there were two rehearsal spaces available for use during class time. All students were expected to be rehearsing and contributing positively to their choreography every day as a part of their class assessment.

To collect data for this part of the process the researcher used a combination of daily student journals and note-taking during rehearsal observation. Dancers and choreographers were asked to write in their journal daily, creating a record of their creative work with their peers, on unique material. As the researcher was also the instructor of the class during rehearsals there was sometimes just observing but frequently questions were asked or suggestions made to help further develop and refine the student work. Some of this rehearsal process was also documented in the post-course questionnaire.

Concert Performance and Audience Reactions

At the end of the semester all pieces were performed in an evening concert for family and friends. This concert was rehearsed during class, with one dress rehearsal after school. All pieces were staged with costumes and theatrical lighting, student pieces with guidance from the instructor. Choreographers were also asked to submit a brief statement about their piece for the concert program, see appendix B.

Prior to the beginning of the concert the researcher introduced herself to the audience and briefly explained the research conducted throughout the semester, with one of the goals being a more meaningful concert performance. The audience was asked to complete surveys at the end of the performance, which included voting on favorite pieces, an explanation of those choices, a least favorite piece, and a statement of their overall enjoyment of the concert. These were optional and collected anonymously at the conclusion of the concert.

Summary of the Study Process

There were three main parts to conducting this study: the creation of the curriculum, the classroom presentation of the curriculum, and the final performance. Throughout the process the researcher took notes on observations and collected journals that contained student feedback on the process. As with all curriculum creation, there were successes and failures in lessons, and adjustments made during the class based on student needs and teachable moments. Students and parents were receptive to the idea of approaching choreography in a new way, and responded generally positively to the classroom content and the final performance.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This research began with the question: What happens when choreography is motivated by an impetus other than music? This researcher then began to look at what it would take in the high school classroom to achieve the goal of non-musical inspiration in choreography. It was decided that a curriculum would need to be devised to introduce students not only to choreographic principles but to other sources of inspiration. An evaluation was made of state and national standards for dance to ensure that the curriculum meet those requirements as well as the needs of the study. As a part of the process an evening concert was presented in order to gauge the effect of the student's explorations into dance on an audience of peers, parents, and community members.

In this chapter the success, or lack thereof, of each lesson will be discussed as well as students' reactions to the activities presented in the lessons. The findings of this study varied widely from lesson to lesson and person to person, but gave the researcher a wealth of information to utilize to craft future classroom opportunities for choreographic students. Also discussed will be the feedback from the audience about the final concert performance, in conjunction with student's reflective comments. In this chapter all students have been given aliases and all audience surveys were filled out anonymously.

Limitations

There were a few factors which caused this study to have limited value, although they provide the opportunity for further investigation. The sample size of students involved in the study was relatively small, and limited to one school in one district. An additional place to conduct this study in the future would be school districts with varying socio-economic backgrounds, and with students from different backgrounds. All of the materials presented in class, both for Institutional Review Board requirements and curriculum presentation, were researcher created. Additionally, all of the lessons were presented by the researcher not an independent dance educator. The ability for the researcher to more impartially observe class and review the journal, questionnaire and survey responses could have led to a different interpretation of the results. However, the researcher was able to make future adjustments to curriculum and lesson plans based on the input gathered from students.

Pre-Questionnaire

Students were given a questionnaire at the beginning of the choreography unit, with little or no prompting beyond understanding that it was part of the research study, but also part of the requirements of the class. This form, which can be found in Appendix A, asked students about their current feelings about inspiration, music, the choreographic process, and their abilities and goals as a choreographer. This questionnaire allowed the researcher to form a baseline for the classes about their knowledge and comfort level with the topics which would be presented throughout the study.

When asked about what inspiration is many students responded with thoughts about emotion. Michelle commented that “I would say that inspiration is emotions, it is

what you do because of your emotions” while Susan said, “I’d say I am someone who expresses a lot of emotion in my pieces. Most of the time they are sad contemporary pieces and I would love to challenge myself to do a happy, uplifting piece.” These were the types of responses expected from the researcher at the outset of this study. Two students had somewhat more insightful ideas about inspiration: Esther said, “Inspiration strikes me as a seed choreographers cultivate,” and Denny commented, “Inspirations I’ve had for choreography are life events, sounds, and natural elements.” Specific sources of inspiration for choreography which were mentioned by students centered on ideas important to them: emotions, families, friends, and songs. Michelle again commented, “I’ve been inspired to do a waltz with my dad because he taught me how to dance” while McKenna added, “I usually pick the music first, then I come up with an idea that ties in with the music. It is hard for me to find music I like that ties in with the theme of the dance, so I just pick the music first.” This idea of picking music first is the motivation for the study, as the researcher hoped to influence the students to search outside their musical and inspirational comfort zones. One student, Melissa, was on her way to starting this process already stating, “I pick music after I have a general idea of what I’d like to portray onstage, and before I start stringing movements together.” The most interesting comment about specific inspirations was from Ema, who said, “My inspiration comes randomly to me as I sit throughout the day. It’s usually some impossible dream for a dance that would be really cool if I could figure out how to do it.” This encouraged the researcher to continue with the process of teaching choreographic methods in addition to providing inspirational prompts for the students in hopes that they would gain the ability to realize their dreams.

Students also responded with challenges in the pre-questionnaire. Many of the challenges supported the need to review, or be taught, choreographic structures, terminology and processes. The researcher came to the realization that many students had received no formal training in dance-making, despite many of them having had years of technique training, and anything they had previously choreographed was a result of absorbing concepts while experiencing the choreography of others. Denny said “I would describe myself as having ideas, but not knowing how to build up the dance to where it makes sense” and Tricia added, “Some of my ideas I don’t know how to express in the form of dance.” This is similar to the way choreography was “taught” prior to its formal codification in the early twentieth century, and put these students at a disadvantage when attempting to create performance pieces. An almost universal challenge was to understand the process, and become a more confident choreographer, summarized nicely by Denny: “My challenges are that I’ve never choreographed a dance before and I get stuck at a certain part of the song to figure out how I want to do the dance. My goal is to just become better at choreography and processing my ideas.” The students who had some previous choreographic experience were interested in exploring movement outside of their comfort zone; they were searching for a challenge. McKenna said, “I want to challenge myself to try different styles and explore deeper meanings for my pieces,” while Rickie mentioned that “I often use the same movements when choreographing, a challenge would be to change up the moves. A goal is to tell a powerful story with my choreography.” The researcher’s hope is that through the process of this curriculum the students would be able to take what they needed to be successful in achieving their goals and creating meaningful pieces to perform in the concert.

The Lessons in the Classroom

One of the main goals in this research was the creation and presentation of a comprehensive choreography curriculum which would encourage high school students to look beyond music for reasons to create choreography. The details of the curriculum were discussed earlier in the Methodology section of this paper, and the reactions to and effectiveness of the curriculum will now be discussed.

Lesson One

Lesson One was created to introduce students to dances performed without music, to unusual music, with a non-traditional setting or style, and which might make an uncomfortable emotional impact. The students were asked to react to the pieces following a very specific list of questions which encouraged students to analyze their reactions with their senses. There was no movement study included in this lesson so that students could concentrate on their reactions to choreography and inspire them to think about how they might prompt reactions from an audience with their own choreography. Two students were inspired by the spoken word video, and created pieces set to spoken word poetry instead of music.

The written reactions from students varied from silly to insightful, but there appeared to be an honest attempt to complete the assignment. Students were only asked to respond to the questions in full for three of the videos, to allow students time to absorb the video contents without feeling the need to constantly write a reaction. In reaction to the *Footloose* videos, Esther commented “The music both makes the movement make more sense and also distracts from it. You've got more to do than look at the guy dancing,” and “It smells like dust and wood,” from Gloria. After specifically watching

the no-music version, Charmin said, “I think it would be awesome to do this dance but I would want to dance with music without the music I would be kind of uncomfortable,” and “This dude is crazy,” from Ellie. Students emotionally reacted to the spoken word poem, mostly because it was from the point of view of a girl their age. Krystal commented, “It makes me feel sad and mournful to the speaker and the dancer,” and Melissa said, “It tastes like tears maybe? Or that awful taste in your mouth you get when you're really hungry or blood from biting your tongue or mint from brushing your teeth to curb your hunger.” The *Singing in the Rain* video prompted Denny to say, “It tastes like there is sweat and metal and anger but also happiness because of dancing in the rain.” Esther echoed the metallic feeling: “Wet, fresh, metallic from the rain mechanism.”

In conversation with students during and after the videos, many expressed excitement and curiosity about different methods of approaching choreography. They did not like many of the videos shown to them, but were inspired by the thought of trying something new. This lesson proved to be an effective introduction to the unit, as it succeeded in providing students with the opportunity to see choreography which was not dependent on music.

Lesson Two

This lesson was an introduction and review of movement elements which are important to consider in dance-making. Students were also given the opportunity to begin following the creative process through a problem-solving map movement study. Although students did not know some of the specific vocabulary, they were familiar with the concepts of the movement elements. This introductory lecture and discussion allowed students to become more comfortable with the vocabulary. Students also saw the

connection between the class discussion and the packets they received during lesson one, and it was explained to them how to utilize this additional resource.

The improvisational work resulted in two outcomes: its intended purpose, which was to allow students the opportunity to kinesthetically explore the movement elements and the unexpected benefit of actually experiencing improvisational dance.

Unbeknownst to the researcher, there were a number of students in the class who had little or no previous experience with movement exploration. Students reacted positively, though understandably a bit hesitantly to the experience. Melissa said “I liked it but I'm self-conscious so I didn't want to get too far into it” and Darla added “At first I was a bit uncomfortable with it all, but as we continued I started opening up more and moving more ‘outside the box.’ I really enjoyed when the lights shut off and just let us really gel into our movements.”

The movement study combined problem-solving skills with the use of movement elements. The study began with showing students a crude map drawn on the board.

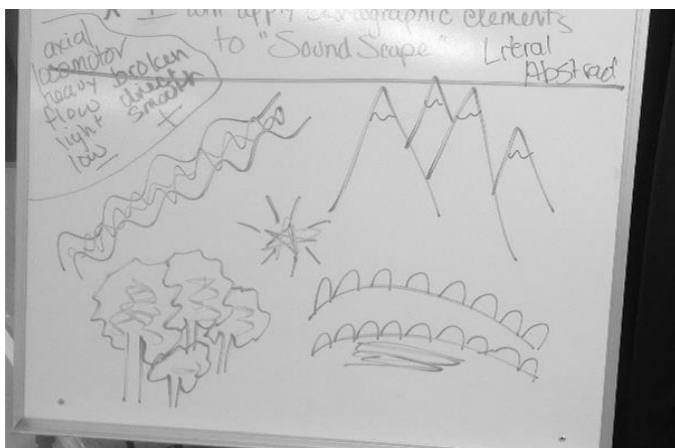


Fig. 1. Choreographic Problem-Solving Map.

Students were directed to create a pathway from their chosen starting point on the map through each obstacle, ending at the star which could be any reward or goal they chose. The obstacles in the map included a forest, a bridge, mountains, and a stream. Students created movement which was either literal, realistic in nature, or abstract, an artistic interpretation of literal movement. Students enjoyed the collaborative nature of the assignment, which allowed them to feel more comfortable developing movement utilizing many of the movement elements from the beginning of the lesson. Ema mentioned, “It was really fun and taught me how I can choreograph based off of nature,” but Melissa commented, “we performed our journey (forest, river, mountain, bridge, home). The one that Serena and I came up with was really dumb but it was fun.” That fun aspect was part of what the researcher was hoping for, in attempting to take some of the stress out of creating movement. Students were told that the performance was not a formal performance, merely a check-in to see what thoughts they had come up with in the short amount of exploration time they were permitted.

Lesson two was an effective measure of where each class was in their current knowledge of movement elements and terminology. It placed all students on a similar footing with understanding of these elements and allowed them to practice the application of terminology to the movement. This lesson also showed the instructor the relative comfort level, or lack thereof, students had with improvisation and dance-making, while giving students a safe opportunity to work on these skills. Students worked without music, and did not comment about the lack; they appeared comfortable focusing on the steps and sequencing, instead of what should go next with a piece of music.

Lesson Three

This lesson began with a class discussion that allowed the instructor to assess current knowledge and get all students to an equal level of comfort with choreographic structures, their terminology, and uses. When the concepts were understood by all students they began their first movement study, a practical application of these structures. Students worked in small groups, and continued to find this easier than attempting the work individually. Rickie commented, “I think it's fun being able to bounce ideas off of another person.”

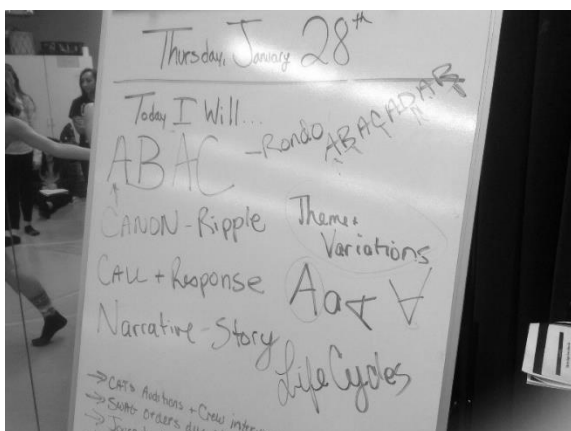


Fig. 2. Student Brainstorming Choreographic Structures

The second part of the lesson was an exploration of opposites. Students brainstormed a list of opposites and then chose their favorite pair. Individually students created a movement sequence to demonstrate the opposite pair. Students were asked to kinesthetically express these words in a literal or abstract manner and be prepared to share their studies. After completing their studies, students performed for a partner, who then guessed which opposite pair their partner chose. Students did not comment on this exercise in their journals, and although it may have been a beneficial step in asking them to work with new inspirations for literal and abstract movement, it was not hugely

impactful on the students. When presenting this lesson in the future it might be interesting to present students with parallels between opposites in choreographic structure and elements and the word opposites they suggest.

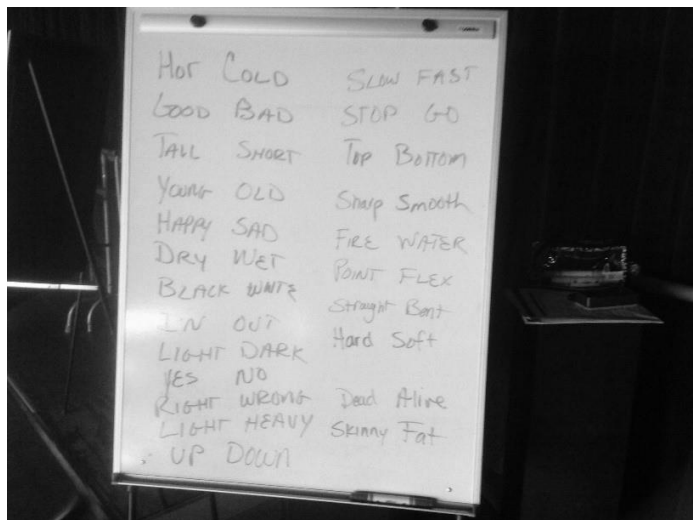


Fig. 3. Student Brainstorming Opposite Pairs.

The third part of lesson three was an exploration of the cycle of life. This was an individual improvisational exercise where they responded to the prompts to move as they would if they were at a certain age, again with no specific requirement to be literal or abstract, and once finishing the life cycle, to begin again. Ellie wrote, “I am not very comfortable with improv normally but today wasn't too bad. I found that I was more towards literal than abstract and sometimes I did both.” Students were hesitant to get into the movement, but the longer the exploration went on the more they began to explore different ideas. They eventually were directed to pick one age and develop the movement for that age more. Melody said, “I thought this was super cool and it made me think of what that age group is defined as and what I think it is.” In the discussion, after the exercise, students expressed surprise at the ages they ended up in, which were spread across all the ages younger than middle age, no students stayed in middle age or elderly.

Rickie said later in her journal, “It was so interesting what different concepts and movements everyone thought of when we tried to represent certain aspects of age and life,” and Julie added, “The one stage that I focused more on was the middle school stage. I picked movements that showed me comparing my body to others and being insecure about my image.” Some students found it cathartic to work through emotions at that age, some found joy, and some were tenser than beginning the exercise. The exercise inspired students for their choreographic inspirations, Denny commented,

I felt really accomplished in terms of making a sequence in my head and making it into a fluid movement. It was really nice to see everyone supportive of each other and seeing the different interpretations of what the life cycle is. I think that the choreography things we do help develop our choreographic minds.

and Krystal said, “I found some fun rolling around the ground stuff with the life cycle exercise that I want to use later on!”

Having a concrete connection to something they understood like the cycle of life allowed students to discover ideas about how to create interesting and unique movement with meaning. This was the most successful portion of lesson three, as it began to link of students understanding of the specific techniques of choreography with the presentation of meaningful ideas through dance.

Lesson Four

This lesson was presented in a shortened period of time due to weather cancellations of school days, and so required the instructor to separate lesson four and five. This gave the students more time to work on the external prompts from the beginning of this lesson. This was an unusual exercise for many of the students as they were asked to move and talk, and to perform many pedestrian, or literal, movements instead of interpreting ideas through movement. Gloria commented, “Today we did

acting exercises and that was so much fun. I had to walk around with a goal to say hi to everyone and be afraid of pink. I have no idea how she came up with it, but I honestly thought it was so fun!” Students were asked to not only clarify their own reactions to the exercises presented, but also to observe and attempt to understand what others were doing, Darla mentioned, “I really enjoyed seeing other people's reactions to things.” Initially the researcher was uncertain how this exercise was going to be helpful to students, but wanted to present students with a wide variety of different opportunities to explore and create. One benefit from this exercise was that students had to work together and move out of their comfort zones, which will help them become better collaborators in the process of choreography for their final performance. This was an effective and unexpected bonding and team–building exercise.

The second part of this lesson, a preliminary step for lesson five, was to have the students create a six–word memoir. This could be a collection of separate words, phrases or a single sentence; however students wished to represent themselves in six words. Some examples of the student’s memoirs are: I was born then I died; I am a child of God; She was athletic, artistic, and outgoing; I’m still living my life yolo; Katniss, pure, lover, Catholic, achiever, doubter. The students then created movement to accompany the words they created.

Lesson Five

Students began this lesson with the six–word memoir movement studies they started in the last lesson with a brief review of their choreography. Half of the class danced their memoirs, then the other half danced, no student read their memoir aloud prior to dancing. Their written memoirs were collected and anonymously given to

another student, and the class created brief movement studies with their new memoir, which were shown. Most students were hesitant to claim their memoirs when asked if they were willing to show their own memoir studies along with their classmate's interpretations. A few students were willing to claim their memoirs, which demonstrated of how the same inspirations could be interpreted differently. The hope of the researcher was to show students different points of view coming from the same piece of inspiration, one incredibly personal and one impersonal. Perhaps using this exercise later in a unit of study, when students are more comfortable with one another is advisable, or utilizing a less personal piece of text.

The most substantial part of this lesson was the external text study. Students brought in pieces of text, which could be phrases, poems, stories, or sections of books, and these were randomly given to groups. These groups took inspiration from the written words to create a longer and more developed work. Rickie said, "It was a little hard to come up with an initial idea but once we did it was fun and it turned out to be a pretty cool dance," and Gloria commented, "It was super interesting to see how certain groups interpreted their texts and how they worked together." It was agreed by the students and instructors that these movement studies were interesting and entertaining to watch.

Lesson Six

This was the final lesson in the choreography unit prior to students creating their final projects. The lesson began with students completing a Creative Autobiography. This was intended to get students thinking about how they had been creative their entire lives, and that creativity could be found in many places. Many students recalled their first creative memory from early childhood, and it was almost always a joyful one. In her

journal Darla remembered, “I was like five and blew my first bubble.” Similar to the memoir sharing, students were hesitant to verbally share their memoirs, but were very open in their written responses in their journals.

Students were then introduced to Richard Schechner's Seven Functions of Performance which are: to entertain; to make something that is beautiful; to mark or change identity; to make or foster community; to heal; to teach, persuade or convince; to deal with the sacred and/or the demonic (Komitee). The class discussed what performance functions they had personally been a part of, and venues where the different functions might be used effectively. Many students had experience in the first two functions, and some with the last, particularly in a church setting. They were interested in the idea of performance to teach or persuade. Students then chose a partner they had not yet worked with and the pairs chose a social change issue about which to create a movement study. Rickie said, “I never realized how hard it was to create an idea from an article. It is much easier for me to create a random dance spur of the moment.” This exercise was effective in showing students that not all choreographic pieces needed to be deeply emotionally tied, or purely for entertainment purposes, but could be used for many different reasons.

Lesson Seven

This final lesson was not so much a lesson as a culminating activity for the students. Every student in the class had to complete their worksheets, which Rickie commented, “This packet made it really easy to lay out all my ideas in an organized manner so it wasn’t as overwhelming as trying to make a whole dance in my head.” The packet of worksheets led the students step by step through the creative process of creating

a piece of choreography. The worksheets asked for students to brainstorm ideas for inspiration, ideas for movement within that inspiration, music and technical ideas which could be used for the piece, and to rework the ideas after problem-solving. Students turned in the worksheets, and then completed a comprehension quiz, which 85% of the students received an 80% or better on. The final part of the activity was to individually create a concept for a choreographed piece. The concept could be purely theoretical, and turned in as a paper, or practical and presented to the class. The pieces all had to have an inspiration or source material which was ideally non-musical in nature, a preferred number of dancers and technique level, possible costuming or lighting ideas, and maybe a song or example of choreography.

Choreography presented to the class included pieces inspired by TV and movies such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *American Horror Story*; historical periods from the Renaissance to the Roaring Twenties and war-torn forties; social issues such as technology, aging, the emotional toll of sickness, feminism, depression and suicide; and textures of movement. Students had the opportunity to ask choreographers questions at the end of their presentations for clarification, and then voted on pieces. The voting had three parts, the first to nominate pieces to be included in the concert, the second to request to be put into pieces, and the third to request not to be put in pieces.

Choreographers had the option to request dancers for their piece. Final piece selection and casting were the decision of the instructor. The pieces chosen, and their casts, were posted on the board the following day in class. As a part of the spring concert, seniors are invited to perform solos, and these rehearsals were included in the casting of pieces.

Student Choreography

Once selected, the choreography process during classes began immediately.

Choreographers worked on their pieces on their assigned day in class, and were expected to arrive in class prepared to teach and rehearse their movement. Students in assigned pieces were expected to be respectful of their choreographers, and remember the movement they were taught. Some choreographers were incredibly well prepared, and their pieces went together quickly, others did not do their preparatory work prior to rehearsals and their pieces struggled. The struggling choreographers suffered from lack of leadership skills and effective group management, which the instructor coached them in as problems arose throughout rehearsals. The biggest issue for the student choreographers was the newness of creating movement, which caused them to teach more slowly than was practical, or to constantly revise their movement which caused confusion for their cast. The one unifying factor of all the pieces was that every choreographer had a clear vision of the statement their piece was going to make, which was different from previous concerts.

A journal thought from choreographer, Ema, on the process of rehearsing and choreography stated: “with the suggestions and opinions I got I will continue to improve and work my piece until I’m satisfied with it. It’s hard to be happy with your own choreography.” Ellie said, about another student’s piece “I love the style so much it is different than anything I have gotten to do before! I look forward to working on it more!” Melissa’s thoughts on working with a less-prepared choreographer were “I get kind of confused when she teaches things because she changes it and the timing is weird and she

doesn't tell us the specific cues.” Generally, students were excited to work and attempt new styles but got frustrated when they did not feel they were getting as much from their choreographers as they were willing to put into rehearsal. The choreographers were equally frustrated with dancers who didn't consistently give their all, and in the end everyone decided to work hard to create a successful performance. The instructor watched rehearsals and did some conflict management where it was truly necessary, but allowed the students to find resolutions on their own when possible. The instructor also gave suggestions to the choreographers to better fulfill their vision for their pieces, or to polish them for more effective performances.

The Performance

The concert was entitled *Dance Alive!* and was divided between two evenings. All pieces from the Dance Three and Four classes were performed both evenings, but senior solos and duets went on either Friday or Saturday night, Dance One performed only Friday night and Dance Two performed only Saturday night. The concerts are performed on two evenings because the performance space was not large enough to allow all audience members who wish to attend seats on the same evening. This also gave the researcher more feedback from two different sets of audience members. The survey given to the audiences can be found in appendix A.

Prior to the performance's beginning, the researcher addressed the audience and introduced the study. The audience was asked to fill out surveys and return them at the conclusion of the performances. The purpose of the surveys was two-fold: a ballot for selecting favorite pieces which received awards at the end-of-year banquet, and data collection for this study. The data collection portion included a space to provide feedback

about their favorite and least favorite pieces; asked them to indicate if they had been to a dance concert at the school before; and a discussion about how this concert compared to previous concerts.

The audience overwhelmingly chose to simply vote on the ballot, but there were some highly informative comments as well, some positive, some less so. One comment from an avid fan stated

To me I could tell right away that more thought and meaning went into every piece. That was beautiful. As an audience member that meaning is what I need to connect and if dance, of all performing arts, does not teach you to visually, kinesthetically, physically connect with your world then what can? Thank you for your experiment!

A less excited audience member said, “too many backwards rolls in your dances, less smiles and fun on stage this time around,” and one horrified attendee commented, “this was the most horrible thing I have ever sat through, maybe you should spend more time *teaching* your students to dance instead of writing a paper.” There were also comments liking or disliking the content, and sharing judgements on what was or was not appropriate for high school performances: “it’s a shame to see young ladies so objectified, they don’t need to grow up so fast,” and, “I appreciate the mature subject matter tastefully presented, allowing these girls to tackle real issues. Beautiful!”

This researcher’s overall take-away was that audience reaction was difficult to judge for a number of reasons. Because of the request to compare this experience to previous concerts, which many people indicated they had never attended, there was no clear answer as to the specific preference for concert content. By asking audience members to vote for their “favorite piece” for awards to be given at the end of the year, many chose to only vote and not provide written feedback. There was also a tendency to

vote for their child, or friend's piece as there was no specification to vote for a piece with high artistic merit, or strong choreographic qualities. Surprisingly, many commenters stated their appreciation of pieces with deeper meanings and the addition of program notes. Unfortunately, others simply wanted to be entertained with a straightforward little jazz dance. This suggests a need to educate audiences more about dance as an art, not just an entertainment form.

Post-Questionnaire

The students ended the study with a post-questionnaire, found in appendix A, which repeated some questions from the pre-questionnaire with a few added. The added questions asked students to reflect on the experience of the class, which activities were most helpful, and if their perceptions of the art of dance-making had changed throughout the process.

When again asked about inspiration, students had different and more intuitive answers than from the beginning of the unit. Ema's new thoughts were, "Inspiration is something I want to express to the world in my choreography," and Esther added, "Inspiration, to me, is having such a connection with something that you want to create yourself." Tricia said, "I have learned it is easier to develop movements off of the inspiration than finding music and creating movement." This sentiment that music is not a necessary element when beginning the process of dance making was echoed by a number of students.

Students commented on the process of choreography, and were both daunted and inspired by it. Michelle said, "it's much harder than I thought it was, but do it in chunks. Sometimes you need to listen to the music a million times to get unstuck. Watch dance

videos, it helps a lot.” Brittney added, “since taking this class I have learned that its challenging creating something that means something to you because you want the audience to get your point that you are trying to make.” Amber learned, “that choreographing is a process requiring a lot of intention and practice. Before, I expected it would come a lot easier.” Rickie realized that a choreographer should “listen to/read/research as many things as possible; work with literal and abstract movement; give opinions on other pieces.” Students discovered new choreographic challenges for themselves during the class, Melissa said, “I want to challenge myself to try different styles and explore deeper meanings for my pieces,” McKenna wants “to challenge myself with more story based pieces” and Christine wants “to be able to choreograph something that has a lot going on and doesn’t look like a complete mess.”

A theme which appeared in the post-questionnaires was overcoming fears of sharing ideas. Ema listed her biggest challenge as “trying not to care too much about what others think about me and/or my choreography,” and Kellis added, “My biggest challenge was showing some of my piece to the class for the first time.” The exercises in class were credited with giving students more confidence to explore ideas and then share them. Madi said, “I’ve learned that getting out of your comfort zone and being comfortable using random movement is important,” and Kellis commented, “I enjoyed the warm-ups we did, to let go and find ourselves as choreographers, especially when we took poems and choreographed to them, then got to see what everyone else did.” Students were also self-reflective in the post-questionnaires. Shalee said, “I learned I’m very sensitive about my own dancing as it leaves you kind of bare. It’s like exposing a part of yourself.” Amber was “proud of it because it’s the first piece I’ve done, even if it was just

for two people.” Ashley commented, “if anything I am just more encouraged to find inspiration in all I create.” Brittney “learned that I have the potential to create something unique and powerful if I try hard.”

Based on the comments from students in the post-questionnaires the curriculum was successful at its intent. The researcher was attempting to motivate students to look beyond music for inspiration for choreography, and their responses detailed their excitement about the lessons they experienced, and their intentions to continue to look deeper when searching for subjects to create choreography about.

Summary of Discussion

The first intent of this study was to create an effective curriculum to teach high school students choreography and give them tools to find inspiration in non-musical sources. Based on the student journal reaction and classroom observations by the instructor, the curriculum designed was mostly successful. As with all lessons, students reacted differently to different lessons, but overall the feedback was positive. The next intent of this study was to align this curriculum to state and national standards, an important step because the lessons were presented in a public high school where all courses are expected to align to the published standards. As shown in the methodology section, all lessons were aligned to both state and national standards. The third intent of this study was to see if non-musical inspirations were effective in creating choreographic works for students to present in a concert. Most pieces presented were inspired from the work done in class, and students commented that they felt motivated to continue to work with inspirations when choreographing in the future. The last part of the study was gauging audience reaction to the pieces created by students. Based on the surveys,

audience members were either overwhelmingly neutral or pleased with the choreography, with a few individuals highly displeased. From the audience's standpoint the concert was a success. This study was successful, and final thoughts on the process, and steps to move forward will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Why music? Does dance-making have to be dependent on music to be successful? Why are students drawn to music first when tasked with creating a dance piece? How can dance educators encourage high school students to find inspiration from something other than music? Will a curriculum designed for non-musical choreographic inspiration meet state and national standards? This researcher considered all of these questions prior to beginning and while conducting this study.

The curriculum presented to the students was created after a thorough gathering of ideas and examples from established choreographic curriculums. It was curated and developed into a specific curriculum unit designed to introduce choreographic concepts, and inspire creativity in the students who participated in the classes. The curriculum aligned with state and national standards, and better prepared students who were considering studying dance after graduation. The researcher asked for information from the students' pre and post study to better evaluate their learning and opinions, as well as journaling throughout the process. At the completion of the study, after the concluding performance, the researcher also gathered opinions from audience members to better study the wide-ranging effects of the choreography on members of the community.

High school students feel successful and fulfilled when choreographing pieces for performance with a non-musical inspiration. They had a stronger connection with the

material they created and presented, and more reason to perform their creations. This was true for student choreographers as well as the dancers in the pieces. The experience was different for the students compared to previous experiences creating choreography to a favorite song, or with no imposed limitations. Audience members also expressed more connection with some of the material, although less so than the dancers. It is possible that the audience had less of a connection with the dances presented because they had not been part of the creative process, and also because of the choreographers' inexperience with creating movement.

By studying how students feel about the process of dance-making at the beginning of the research project and comparing it to their feelings at the end, new suggestions can be made on how to approach this curriculum for high school students. As with many subjects, the content standards provide lists of skills and vocabulary for students to master, but the delivery is largely left up to each individual instructor. Inspiring students to find their own choreographic voice made the learning of the skills and elements of choreography more meaningful.

The process of curriculum design and lesson creation is a fluid one, requiring the instructor to have a strong understanding of the content and an ability to adapt to changes in the teaching atmosphere and student needs. Throughout the course of this study, changes had to be made to the original lesson plans due to the need to catch students up on content. There were also issues with students' lack of comfort when sharing thoughts and ideas, which was originally a part of the lessons. In general, the lessons went well, and there was no more than the expected amount of adjustments necessary to instructing.

This study resulted in some interesting future considerations regarding curriculum and lesson design, and concert programming. Choreography curriculum should progress from an introductory level dance class through advanced level dance class, so that when students arrive in the advanced level class they understand and can apply the concepts and elements used in choreography. Students need to be exposed to improvisational exercises throughout all levels as well, which will help their comfort level when asked to improvise about and discuss more difficult subjects. In regards to concert programming, pieces should be considered which are emotionally and technically challenging for students, while still being age level appropriate. It would be an interesting further study or project to create programming which would educate an audience about the history of dance and dance as an art. This was a successful study, which effectively instructed students in the elements of choreography, and led them to more creative non-music inspirations for their dance-making.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTERS OF APPROVAL
NARRATIVE
CONSENT FORM
PRE AND POST-QUESTIONNAIRES
AUDIENCE SURVEY



Institutional Review Board

DATE: January 5, 2016

TO: Leslie Williams

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [829051-4] Non-Musical Inspirations for Dance Making: Choreographic Curriculum Challenges with High School Students

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: January 5, 2016

EXPIRATION DATE: January 5, 2017

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of January 5, 2017.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Leslie -

Academy District Twenty

Dr. Mark Hatchell, *Superintendent of Schools*

Education and Administration Center
1110 Chapel Hills Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920-3923
Website: www.asd20.org

Phone: 719-234-1200
Fax: 719-234-1299

January 7, 2016

To: Leslie Williams

From: Karin Reynolds, Deputy Superintendent

RE: Research Proposal

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Academy School District Twenty has recently met to review your research proposal. We have approved your proposal to study student choreographic processes at the high school level.

Please be sure to discuss your process with Mr. Alan Thimmig, Liberty High School Principal, and Ms. Holly Meacham, Liberty High School Assistant Principal, as you proceed through your study; their involvement in this process will be crucial. They have given their permission for you to move forward as well.

Please call on me at any time should you have questions. I can be reached at 719-234-1210. The IRB wishes you the best with your research study.

CC: Mr. Alan Thimmig, LHS Principal
Ms. Holly Meacham, LHS AP

"The mission of Academy School District 20 is to educate every student in a safe and nurturing environment and to provide comprehensive, challenging curricular and extracurricular opportunities that meet the unique needs of every individual by expanding interests, enhancing abilities, and equipping every student with the knowledge, skills, and character essential to being a responsible citizen of our community, our nation, and the world."

Non-Musical Inspirations for Dance Making:
Choreographic Curriculum Challenges
with High School Students

A. Purpose

- a. The purpose of this study is student choreographic process at the high school level. The questions which are of concern in this study are: 1) What are the effects of non-musical inspirations on high school students' choreographic process? 2) What type of curriculum will be most effective for encouraging student creativity when non-musical inspirations are used? 3) How will this new curriculum align with national and state curriculum standards? 4) Will students and audiences be emotionally connected to compositions created using non-musical inspirations?
- b. As part of the requirements for a graduate thesis project this study will help the researcher create a comprehensive research-based choreography curriculum for a public high school dance program. This study will help the researcher understand how to better prepare students for the rigor and level of dance composition which will be expected of them in an undergraduate program. The study will be conducted during a high school semester. This study presents no more than previously understood risks of participating in a dance class for participants.

B. Methods

- a. Participants
 - i. The participants in this study will be high school dance students currently enrolled in Explorations in Dance 4. There are a total of 44 students enrolled in the class from grades 9-12. Students will have the opportunity to opt out of the study, and will not be penalized if they do not participate. All those who participate will provide parental consent. In addition, audience members will participate on a voluntary basis. It will be their choice to fill out a survey following the performance.
- b. Data Collection Procedures
 - i. Pre-study questionnaire: Students will be given a pretest in the form of a questionnaire concerning their feelings about the choreographic process, the inspirations they have used in the past to make dances, and their previous choreographic knowledge. These observations will be recorded in written form.
 - ii. Classroom curriculum observations: Students will be observed throughout the semester to gauge their learning of the subject matter, and to assist in critiquing the efficacy of the curriculum.
 - iii. Performance Survey: Audience members will be given an optional brief survey to determine what, if any, reaction they had to the student's choreographic work. Completion of the survey will signify an audience member's willingness to participate. No names will be collected on these surveys. Surveys will be paper and pencil and will be passed out in the program for the concert. The researcher will give guidelines for completing the survey as part of the pre-show announcements. The surveys will be collected in a collection box following the performance. Questions will include: previous performances attended, opinions of the quality of previous performances, opinion of quality

- of current performance, differences noticed between this performance and previous performances, and feelings about any specific dances.
- iv. Post-study questionnaire: Student participants will be given an exit survey asking them about their feelings on the process and product when using the new choreographic methods.
- c. Data Analysis Procedures
 - i. All data will be analyzed with the intent of inclusion in the thesis document as a primary source. When referencing data in the thesis document, care will be taken to protect the anonymity of participants.
 - ii. A coding system will be used to identify all student participants, and only fictitious names will be used in the thesis when referring to any participant. All audience data will stay anonymous. All data will be used to guide and develop the curriculum and research results.
 - iii. All data (questionnaires, observations and audience surveys) will be analyzed using qualitative methods to reveal themes and ideas as they relate to the curriculum and its effectiveness.
 - d. Data Handling Procedures
 - i. All consent forms and research data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in Christy O'Connell-Black's office in Crabbe Hall on the University of Northern Colorado campus. Mrs. O'Connell-Black is a co-coordinator of the Dance Education MA.
- C. Risks, Discomforts and Benefits
- a. The risks inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered during regular dance classroom participation. The course syllabus includes the following statement: As part of this class, you will be participating in various movement/dance activities and other types of hands-on activities. Please let the instructor know ahead of time if you have an injury or other reason that you cannot participate in a particular activity. If you participate, you agree to take on all risks involved and the instructor, the high school, and the school district are not liable.
 - b. This topic of research will be professionally beneficial, as it will inform future choreographic instruction for students. It will give them more meaningful experiences as choreographers and better prepare them for college dance courses.
- D. Costs and Compensations
- a. The costs related to this study will be minimal, if any, and will be entirely covered by the researcher.
 - b. No participant will be compensated for the study.
- E. Grants
- a. There will be no grant funding for this study.

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



College of Performing and Visual Arts
School of Theatre Arts and Dance

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Thesis Title: Non-Musical Inspirations for Dance Making: Choreographic Curriculum Challenges with High School Students

Researcher: Leslie Williams, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado

Contact Information: Leslie.williams@asd20.org

Research Advisor: Christy O'Connell Black, University of Northern Colorado,
christy.oconnellblack@unco.edu

You, or your child, are being asked to take part in a research study of the use of non-musical inspirations for high school choreographers. I am asking you, or your child, to take part because of their presence in Explorations in Dance 4. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part, or allow your child to take part, in this study.

What the study is about: My research thesis is a creation of effective curriculum to aid high school students in using non-musical inspirations for their dance making. The curriculum will focus on classroom activities to broaden the views of students as they are searching for inspirations for choreography. The essential questions for this thesis are: 1) What are the effects of non-musical inspirations on high school students' choreographic process? 2) What type of curriculum will be most effective for encouraging student creativity when non-musical inspirations are used? 3) How will this new curriculum align with national and state curriculum standards? 4) Will students and audiences be emotionally connected to compositions created using non-musical inspirations? Before beginning the classroom activities, I will give the students a brief questionnaire to judge where they are in their feelings about choreography. During the course students will be observed on their participation and engagement in the activities. After completing the course, and performing the compositions dancers and audience members will be given

questionnaires to assess their reaction to the different choreographic inspirations. I am trying to see which activities are best to encourage young choreographers to broaden their inspirations for dance making. The resulting research will be used to refine the choreography curriculum for continued classroom use.

Risks: I do not anticipate any risks to you, or your child, in participating in this study other than those normally encountered in a dance class. All data collected will be in narrative format and will consist of participant questionnaire answers and notes taken by me. **It is important to note** that I already evaluate you, or your child, as a part of this class. The only difference between this thesis and the day-to-day operations of this class is that I will be writing about your, or your child's, development throughout the course.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any report I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you, or your child. No actual names will be used. I will use pseudonyms. The goal of this research is to document the effectiveness of the curriculum. My notes and all questionnaires will be secured in a locked file cabinet at all times, and will be destroyed following the completion of the thesis.

Taking part is voluntary. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision, and that of your parents, will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits of the class or impact your grade. If you decide to take part, and your parents also agree, you are free to withdraw yourself or your child at any time.

If you have questions: the researcher conducting this study is Leslie Williams. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me using the information listed above. Please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Pre-Course Student questionnaire: Date:

Student Code:

1. Describe inspiration, specifically as you see it connecting with choreography.

2. What inspirations have you had for choreography?

3. When in the process of dance composition do you pick music?

4. What topics are interesting to you to explore through movement? Some examples might be poetry, nature, relationships, social change, growing up, fairy tales. Make a list of at least five, and describe why you listed those topics.

5. Pick one of the above topics and describe some movements you might use to express this topic.

6. How would you describe yourself as a choreographer?

7. What are your challenges and/or goals as a choreographer?

Post-course Student questionnaire: Date:

Student Code:

1. Describe inspiration, specifically as you see it connecting with choreography.
2. What inspirations have you had for choreography?
3. When in the process of dance composition do you pick music?
4. What topics are interesting to you to explore through movement? Some examples might be poetry, nature, relationships, social change, growing up, fairy tales. Make a list of at least five, and describe why you listed those topics.
5. Pick one of the above topics and describe some movements you might use to express this topic.
6. What is the relationship between the collaborative choreographic process and your interest in and ability to make dances?
7. How would you describe yourself as a choreographer?
8. What are your challenges and or goals as a choreographer?
9. Has your point of view about dance creation changed since taking this class, yes or no? For either answer, please describe in detail.
10. What new strategies have you learned about the choreographic process as a result of taking this class? Please describe at least three.
11. How do you feel about the pieces you created or danced in for this concert?
12. What have you learned about yourself as a result of taking this class?
13. What was your biggest challenge in this class?
14. What part of this class was most interesting to you?

Audience Survey Date:

1. What was your favorite piece of the concert? Please circle one. (I will provide a list of pieces for the audience to choose from)
2. Briefly, why did you chose this pieces as your favorite?
3. What, if any, was your second favorite piece in the concert?
4. Briefly, why did you chose this piece as your second favorite piece?
5. What was your least favorite piece?
6. Briefly, what did you not enjoy about this piece?
7. Have you attended a dance concert at Liberty High School previously?
8. If you answered yes to the previous question, please check one option below:
 - I enjoyed this concert more than previous concerts
 - I liked this concert the same as other concerts
 - I disliked this concert more than previous concerts

APPENDIX B
RELATED DOCUMENTS

“APPRECIATING CHOREOGRAPHY WITH THE SENSES”
“YOUR CREATIVE AUTOBIOGRAPHY”
CONCERT PROGRAM

APPRECIATING CHOREOGRAPHY WITH THE SENSES

1. What is your gut reaction?
2. How does it feel?
3. How does it taste?
4. How does it smell?
5. What sounds were most prominent? (If silent what could you imagine hearing?)
6. How does it look?
7. Would you want to dance this? Why or why not? (Cannot be a like statement)
8. What was the purpose? (Everything has a purpose)

YOUR CREATIVE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1. What is the first creative moment you remember?
2. Was there anyone there to witness or appreciate it?
3. What is the best idea you've ever had?
4. What made it great in your mind?
5. What is the dumbest idea?
6. What made it stupid?
7. Can you connect the dots that led you to this idea?
8. What is your creative ambition?
9. What are the obstacles to this ambition?
10. What are the vital steps to achieving this ambition?
11. How do you begin your day?
12. What are your habits? What patterns do you repeat?
13. Describe your first successful act.
14. Describe your second successful creative act.
15. Compare them.

Adapted from Twyla Tharp's *The Creative Habit*.

Dance Alive!

Oh! The Places You'll Go

Choreography: Leslie K. Williams

Music: Dr. Seuss, read by John Lithgow

As I was reading this book to my sons I realized what a fabulous sense of movement Seuss's words had.

Ballerinas: Expectations v. Reality

Choreography: Ema

Music: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

This piece expresses the reality of how a ballet class usually goes, something I experience nearly every day.

Fiesta

Choreography: Alexandria

Music: Will Smith

Thank you to the Winter Guard for joining us for this concert. They are currently gearing up to start the 2016 marching season with our Pride of the Lancers Marching Band.

It's Okay To Ask For Help

Choreography: Kelly

Music: Richard Garrick

Depression is a serious mental disease and it's not weak to ask for help. Thank you for giving me the help I needed because it made it all better.

Exes and Ohs

Choreography: Leanne

Music: Elle King

Dancers: Scarlet Elite Dance Ensemble

Miss Missing You

Choreography: Esther

Music: Fall Out Boy

Dance is an expression of emotion, and makes the dancers alive.

Send Me On My Way

Choreography: Leslie K. Williams

Music: Rusted Root

A blending of styles chosen by the class.

Carousel

Choreography: Brooke

Music: Melanie Martinez

Two girls go to a Circus Carnival, and get lured in...

The Ripple Effect

Choreography: Melissa

Music: Halsey

My inspiration came from water ripples and water in general. I tried to create formations and flowy movements that resemble waves and ripples.

Let's Have A Kiki

Choreography: McKenna

Music: Glee Cast

An experimentation with textures of movement.

Have We Lost The Art Of Listening?

Choreography: Susan

Music: The Cover Creed

This issue was brought up in class, how does it look when danced?

Ships in the Night

Choreography: Leanne

Music: Mat Kearney

Dancers: Navy Elite Dance Ensemble

Loneliness Is Always A Choice

Choreography: Leslie K. Williams

Music: Counting Crows

"...every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind – is, in the end, Hell." C.S. Lewis

Our Lighthouse

Choreography: Ema and Esther

Music: Troye Sivan

For Ellie Adelman, who passed away about a year ago due to a rare brain disease.

Troublemaker

Choreography: Mina

Music: Olly Murs

Ladies night out.

Exist

Choreography: The Dancers

Music: Sleeping at Last

Cherish what your friends, and the world, has to offer you, when they aren't appreciated

they slowly disappear until they no longer exist.

Little Game

Choreography: Hailee

Music: Benny

What are gender roles and society's control of them?

7 Years

Choreography: Ashley

Music: Lukas Graham

I wanted to choreograph a dance that was about growing up and memories.

The Ironic Recovery

Choreography: Michelle

Music: James Arthur

To all those who are suffering. Also to my family and friends who were there for me.

Stay Alive

Choreography: Ava

Music: Jose Gonzalez

There are universal connections throughout the human race.

Somewhere Over the Rainbow

Choreography: Leslie K. Williams

Music: Nena, R.E.M., The Beatles, John Legend, Madonna, Prince

I found a picture of seven dancers in rainbow jewel-toned dresses, and was drawn in by the simple beauty of it. This piece started with that image, and took on a life of its own.

Flawless

Choreography: Heather

Music: Beyonce

Girls, and feminism, are important... Men don't have a higher value than women.

Bittersweet Symphony

Choreography: Leslie K. Williams

Music: The Verve

I'm a million different people from one day to the next.

You There

Choreography: Aleia

Music: Aquilo

There is a physical and emotional toll sickness places on the individual and those around them.

Dance With Me Tonight

Choreography: Krystal

Music: Olly Murs

I drew my inspiration from a 1920's speakeasy event, but as I choreographed it, the piece turned into more of a 1950's swing dance.

Seven Devils

Choreography: Carley

Music: Florence + The Machine

This piece was inspired by season 3 of the television series American Horror Story.

SoundScape

Choreography: Leslie K. Williams

What does it sound like when a choreographer is teaching a piece?

A note from Mrs. Williams:

This semester I have been conducting the research for my thesis as part of the requirements for completing an MA in Dance Education. I am studying the process of choreography in high school students, and developing a method of finding non-musical inspirations. The challenge, to myself and my student choreographers, was to find an idea for a piece prior to picking a song. I wanted to avoid the usual "I love this song, I wanna do a dance to it!" Both of my Dance 4 classes graciously agreed to be my Guinea Pigs for this process. We spent the beginning of the semester going through a series of exercises picked to get their creative juices flowing. The students in these classes then got to present a theoretical piece to their peers, and the best were chosen to be set on the class and performed tonight. I have asked each choreographer to put a few words in the program about their source of inspiration. I have tried to follow this model as well, as you can see with the less traditional nature of many pieces tonight. Also in the concert tonight you will get to see senior solos and duets, which is a spring tradition of the dance department. All of these pieces were either choreographed by the dancers, or a classmate, and I am so proud of all these ladies' accomplishments during the past four years, and tonight. In addition to voting on pieces for acknowledgment at the Dance Banquet on Monday, May 16, I would like to ask you to take a moment to fill out the audience questionnaire to assist with my research.

I want to take a moment to thank the LHS administration for their continued support of the dance program, space is always at a premium in the building, and allowing us to hold most classes off campus at Northridge Dance Center has given us a place to grow. I also want to thank my colleagues in the Performing Arts Department, we are frequently teaching and working right on top of one another, and our programs are only as strong as they are because we collaborate well, in a bubble of stress, passion for the arts, and sarcasm. I have to thank Mrs. Leann Nelson. She not only is my co-coach for Elite Dance Ensemble, but she subs my dance classes, helps set choreography for Scarborough Fair and the musicals, and helps keep me calm during productions. She is an indispensable piece of the dance department. Lastly I have to thank my family, Dave, Dillon and Lucas. They share me with my dancers, and remind me to water my plants.



APPENDIX C
CURRICULUM ELEMENTS

MOVEMENT ELEMENTS
CHOREOGRAPHIC STRUCTURES AND ELEMENTS

MOVEMENT ELEMENTS

- locomotor and axial movements: locomotor- walk, jump, slide, skip, gallop; axial- bend, twist, stretch
- shape elements: symmetrical and asymmetrical, levels, straight, curved
- space and time elements: formations on stage, negative and positive space, on the beat, half time, syncopated
- movement qualities: smooth, swing, percussive, collapse, vibratory

CHOREOGRAPHIC STRUCTURES AND ELEMENTS

- canon, AB, ABA, call and response, rondo, theme and variation
- beginning, middle and end, narrative, cycle
- unison, repetition, abstract and literal
- contrasting and complimentary movements or shapes