DANCE IN EDUCATION:
A FOCUS ON AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

by

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This study focuses on aesthetic development, its nurture and assessment, in dance education. Observations, interviews, and examinations of student journals, were used to collect data for this multiple case study. Four classroom settings provided a picture of aesthetic growth representing a range of ages. The findings were examined in light of the symbolic theory of the arts developed by Suzanne Langer (1953), aesthetic learning through entry to the world of play described by Huizinga (1950), and the developmental aesthetic model of Malcolm Ross (1984). Significant descriptions voiced by the participants provide snapshots of student growth at various stages of development.

The study concludes that the aesthetic experience, defined as the simultaneous engagement of intellect and emotions, is indeed evident in dance to both the dancer and the observer; it may be seen and recognized as a special quality which invariably draws the eye and focuses the viewer's attention. Opportunities for such engagement are carefully structured by effective teachers.

While stages of aesthetic growth are evident, students of all ages grow aesthetically in individual ways; aesthetic understanding results from complex combinations of social, psychological, and experiential factors, as well as maturation.
The study concludes that assessment of aesthetic growth is possible and appropriate in dance education, informing both instruction and evaluation. When the palpable, significant learning which takes place in dance is recognized, the discipline should take a step forward to assume its rightful role as one of the four arts contributing richly to the whole education of the child.
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DANCE IN EDUCATION:
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Chapter One - Introduction

This study concerns dance as a school subject and as an art form. Within this context the study identifies characteristic stages in student development and ways in which aesthetic sensibility can be recognized and nurtured. Aesthetic sensibility is of central importance in dance, as it is in all the arts, for it is within this dimension that both the emotions and the intellect are engaged simultaneously. Significant understandings and powerful acts of creativity may result from this engagement (Lankford, 1991). Within the aesthetic dimension which is common to the performer and the observer, the dancer communicates feelings, images, and ideas, while the observer intuits these qualities. Expressive elements and ideas are understood through each individual's experience and comprehension. Doing, feeling, and performing are but one facet of aesthetic growth. Fuller development takes into account the ability to appreciate, analyze, and interpret from a spectator's point of view.

In recent time, the growth of dance on television, and on film, has allowed us to look at ways in which children and young adults respond to and learn about dance. Student interpretations, descriptions, and responses to
varied examples of dance on video are part of the data collected for this study.

The doing and the observation of dance are examined separately even though there is constant interplay between these two ways of understanding dance as they grow and develop in the individual. This study spends as much time on student reactions to dance as observer/analyst as with the dancer as performer/interpreter. The use of these two strands of analysis, gives a clearer picture about ways that dance can be progressively enjoyed and understood.

Research has been done on the acquisition and nurture of aesthetic response in the visual arts, music, and drama. Various researchers have developed models for aesthetic growth in those areas. Little research, however, has been done in dance, and no such models for aesthetic development exist. This study then, has no precedent. No one has attempted to monitor and describe aesthetic development in dance, and no previous research in dance has asked questions in the same way as this study. Involving students and classroom teachers, this study provides needed data for teaching and understanding dance in education.

For reasons that are largely historical, research in dance education is minimal. The position of dance has been an ambivalent one, plagued by ideas that it is not appropriate for men (Carter, 1984), that it is associated
with the erotic, and that its focus is the body and not the mind (Hanna, 1983). While these factors have influenced dance performance, they have been damaging in the extreme for dance education, making it difficult for dance to be an exciting art form on par with the other arts. School dance has come to depend largely on social forms, losing the power of performance, interpretation, and aesthetic development. All the expressive elements have been played down or lost. There have been a few exciting school dance programs, particularly in post World War II Britain. But these programs, as well, have existed in the face of great difficulty given the ideology surrounding dance.

Because the popular notion of dance tends to be narrowly interpreted, and because there is considerable misunderstanding of dance as a school subject, clarification of what is meant by dance may be useful. Terms such as "creative movement" and "creative dance", which are associated with particular limited forms, are not appropriate. Rather "dance", the preferred term, is broadly defined in this study. I take the view that dance implies the constant interplay of expressive, dramatic, traditional and innovative elements linked by a common aesthetic thread. This perspective of dance includes dance as pure design, dance drama, folk-dance, dance composition and attention to
the sociocultural aspects of dance. Divergent thinking and creative problem solving enabled through formal direct teaching, indirect teaching and student generation of dances are central to this understanding of dance. The aesthetic dimension is woven throughout.

The recently published British Columbia Curriculum Guide in Dance (1994) offers new hope for the inclusion of dance in the school timetable, and for the recognition of the contribution which dance can make in the education of the individual. In British Columbia schools, dance, along with visual arts, music, and drama is a mandatory subject until the end of grade six, and is one of the four arts which may be offered to students in the years which follow. This Ministry document provides a framework for the teaching of dance. It focuses on the elements of movement that comprise dance, on processes of composing and interpreting dance, on the roles of performing and audience, and on dance in societies other than our own. Within this framework, experiences may appropriately combine to provide opportunities for development of skills, kinesthetic awareness, and intellectual growth. Aesthetic values are central to all these aspects of dance, enriching their various contributions. Thus, a discriminating understanding of dance is built in an incremental manner involving progressive development. Ever increasing understanding of how form and feeling combine to make meaning is complemented
by growing knowledge of the structure of dance. Aesthetic
insight is recognized as the transforming element: it
implies knowing and feeling.

If dance is to become a vital, meaningful school
subject, the focus must be placed on that element which
links together and vivifies these various ways of knowing:
that is aesthetic growth.

Guidelines designed to assess aesthetic development are
required and will, it is hoped, lead to more sophisticated
teaching and learning in dance education. Research into
aesthetic growth involving primary, intermediate, and
secondary school students seems most timely. This research
is concerned with ways that children and older students
enjoy, understand, and find meaning in dance experiences.

Statement of the Problem

To build successful curricula, teachers involved with
dance education need ways to observe and assess student
development.

The research questions addressed in this study are:
1. How do behaviours associated with absorption in the task
reveal aesthetic development?
2. How do behaviours associated with expression and
presentation reveal aesthetic development?
Langer's symbolic theory of the arts, Huizinga's writing on play and the freedom it brings to dance, and Ross's model of aesthetic development provide frameworks for this study.

**Rationale**

The importance of aesthetic development in quality arts education is widely recognized. Aesthetic learning has been said to be the central value of arts in education (Ross, 1984), and to provide a unifying framework for the organization of the arts in education (Abbs, 1989).

The aesthetic experience is essential to dance in education if it is to be considered an art form (Stinson, 1982). According to Langer (1953) art is "The creation of forms symbolic of human feeling" which "serves...to establish the relation of art to physical skill, or making, on the one hand, and to feeling and expression on the other" (p.40). Finding form is an interaction between movement and the idea or image, with each informing the other. Dancers convey their personal meaning abstracted or generalized from the original idea through the concrete representation of the dance itself (Ministry of Education, Schools Division, 1986) Dance involves the kinesthetic as well as the intellect and emotions. The simultaneous engagement of feeling and knowing gives play to transforming aesthetic insights.
Decision making in the arts offers opportunities for critical thinking and the development of sensory discrimination. Aesthetic activity gives play to qualities of imagination, reflection, and comprehension. These qualities are highly valued in a variety of educational settings and in everyday life, equipping individuals to cope knowledgeably and competently with the modern world.

Dance is, in many ways, an ideal vehicle for aesthetic learning. The sheer joy of the physical involvement in dance engages children of all ages. The exhilaration of the use of space and of the physical effort is undeniable. At the same time, dance partakes of the creativity that characterizes all the arts. Huizinga (1950) claims that dance is an integral part of play, and that "...the relationship (is) one of direct participation, almost of essential identity" (p. 165). As part of the child's world of play, dance offers a natural conduit to..."rhythm and harmony, the noblest gifts of aesthetic perception..."(p. 10).

Much has been said about the interrelationships of the arts. (This is apparent in the introductions to the new fine arts curricula.) Entry points and connections to each of the other arts are offered by dance. For example, kinesthetic response is made to a wide range of music. Dance narratives make obvious links with drama. Further, the fundamental concern with images in space is inseparable from the concerns of the visual arts. All of the arts, including
dance, are means for understanding and communicating human experience.

Given these positives, one may well wonder why dance education is minimal, and actually feared by many teachers. Answers may be found in widely held perceptions of dance, which are rooted in history. Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth century feared the erotic potential of dance; dance was considered "sinful submission to the power of the flesh" (Fallon, 1979, p. 76). In addition, by the early twentieth century, the male in ballet became synonymous with homosexuality. In other words, dance has been surrounded by social and religious prejudice. In spite of the immense freedom of our own social times and the open eroticism of dance in popular culture, these prior stereotypes still affect dance as an art and as a school subject. Parents, concerned that education should ensure financially rewarding jobs for their children, seldom see dance as a career option, or as a rewarding leisure pursuit.

There are also practical reasons why dance programs are not widely offered in schools. Dance to be fully effective and enjoyable, requires space for movement. Many activities compete for such space in schools; expansion of strained facilities is limited by budgetary restraints. Dance education classes have not been made a requirement in pre-service training in education. As a consequence, teachers who themselves had no dance in school, lack relevant
background and training. Not only may teachers feel ill-equipped to teach dance, but they have no confidence in their ability to assess children's progress. Under these circumstances, the uncertainty of approaching this subject is overwhelming for teachers.

As a consequence of all these reasons, historical and practical, many teachers who would love to teach dance, and who believe in the educational benefits for the students that they teach, decide not to include dance in the school day. If dance is to become a vibrant force in the curriculum, certain barriers must be overcome. Scholarly research and the development of curricular support and assessment materials are fundamental.

Researchers have examined the nature of aesthetic experience with attention to its acquisition and growth in the individual. As noted earlier, the focus of the research on this topic has been primarily on the visual arts with some attention to music and drama, but with less attention to dance. Yet few would deny that aesthetic experience is also essential in dance. Clearly, if children are to realize the greatest benefits from dance in education, the aesthetic must lie at the heart of the experience. There is an evident need for studies which focus on aesthetic learning in and through dance.
Contemporary models of aesthetic development in each of the other arts: music, drama, and the visual arts, provide precedents for similar investigations in dance. For example, interesting frameworks have been developed by Parsons (1987) and Housen (cited in Pariser, 1987) in the visual arts, and by Ross (1984) in the visual arts, drama, and music. As Ross (1984, p.126) says, "I have speculated about development in Art, Drama, and Music: if these profiles are to be found to have some substance then it would not, I think, be difficult to adapt the scheme to other artistic areas." Ross’s point is well taken because dance can, indeed, take elements from these other works.

Studies which investigate aesthetic growth are useful to educators in various ways. The preparation and interpretation of curricula depend on the appropriateness of concepts and tasks which lead to further growth. The curriculum for dance education in British Columbia schools has been published in the last year. Support materials, including guidelines for the assessment of aesthetic response are of considerable importance to teachers implementing the curriculum. The findings of this research are timely, and are offered as one basis of developmental evaluation.

All disciplines must continuously refine means of evaluation. The arts, but especially dance, must do more than this. They must mount an ongoing defence against
marginalization in the school system by demonstrating that tangible, significant learning is taking place. If dance is to assume a more visible presence in the school curriculum, it must have confidence in its own aesthetic criteria.

This qualitative study, which investigates aesthetic growth in dance, uses case study design. The techniques used as the principal means of data collection are discussed in the methodology chapter.

**Constraints**

When I undertook this study I was aware that aesthetic growth would not easy to determine. Breakthroughs in children's understanding are not always readily observable. The ephemeral nature of dance must be considered when observing and assessing aesthetic qualities. Each movement and gesture in dance passes in a moment; it cannot be replayed. Clearly, careful observation and note taking were of prime importance.

Ongoing data collection confirmed my belief that aesthetic refinement was highly observable in growing expressiveness, and in degrees of engagement and absorption of individuals. Certain dancers stood out by virtue of what Nachmanovitch (1990) refers to as "raw creative power" (p.119). Others showed aesthetic awareness in less dramatic, but very real ways, through the extension of ideas with their own original work, and through the projection of
feelings into their dancing. The students, too, recognized
aesthetic engagement in one another. In cases where
aesthetic engagement was less clearly seen, analysis and
relating the various data perspectives proved helpful.

The realization that aesthetic development could indeed
be readily observed was crucial: if the students and I were
able to recognize it, so would teachers. In fact, the
special knowledge that teachers have of their students gives
them even greater insights. It should be noted, however,
that "growth and development" is often translated as that
which occurs in the individual, over the long term, from
infancy through adolescence. This study prefers a "snapshot"
approach; each of the settings contains children of one
particular age. Something is lost in individual continuity,
but the study does provide cross-sectional data
characteristic of various age groups. The phrase "growth and
development" should be translated with that emphasis rather
than one grounded in individual age-stage progression.

Finding appropriate sites for the study presented
challenges. As dance is not widely taught in schools, such
classrooms were few. A common thread which I sought in the
classrooms which comprised the research site, was the
teachers' shared experience, knowledge, and understanding
resulting from having taken University of British Columbia
dance classes. A range of ages among the students was needed
in order to provide a broad picture of developmental stages. I recognized my good fortune when three exemplary sites became available. Limitations in my choices of settings, however, meant that a degree of pre-selection was involved among the students of three of the four age groups studied.

The junior secondary dance settings, were French immersion classes; this voluntary program drew a number of students who were prepared for challenge. As well, the dance classes offered to each of these grades were electives, chosen by the students from a small number of possibilities, although students signing up were not always aware of the dance emphasis in the course. The grade four/five/six dance club was a voluntary activity. The dance club students, although inexperienced, were personally committed enough to volunteer to attend dance club on their own time. Only in the grade two/three class, where every student in this regular classroom took part in the dance activities, was a site free from pre-selection.

A further constraint on the study was that children's insights are not always amenable to articulation or physical expression. Verbal and written responses by the children, especially the seven and eight year olds were limited by their vocabulary and their facility with language. Children's ability to write and their levels of articulate speech varied and in some cases doubtless deterred the child
from full expression of ideas. Successful assessment, in those cases, was the product of constant and sensitive observation. Through these means of data collection with different age groups, discernable stages have emerged. These stages should provide practical help for teachers in assessing their students.

Conclusion

While the importance of aesthetic development in dance is widely recognized, little research exists regarding the nature of its acquisition. Yet, the examination of existing models of aesthetic development in each of the other arts (music, drama, and the visual arts) can provide the impetus for similar investigations in dance. Allegations, often ill-founded or misconceived, but nevertheless persistent, which create challenges for such a study have been considered: the association with homosexuality, the association of dance with the body and not the mind. The lack of developmental dance experience in the schools, thus limiting study opportunities, and the ephemeral nature of dance which makes assessment in dance challenging, have been mentioned as constraints. Yet if dance is to assume its place along with the other arts and its contribution to education is to be realized and valued, study of the aesthetic character of dance education is essential. A proposal has been outlined for focusing
assessment of aesthetic growth in dance on the individual’s embodiment of aesthetic comprehension as well as response to performance.

Studies which investigate aesthetic growth will be useful to educators in various ways. The preparation and interpretation of curricula can be informed as to the appropriateness of concepts and tasks which will lead to further growth. Assessment, and evaluation will benefit from description of those aspects of aesthetic learning which accompany developmental experiences in dance. Such assessment will be valuable for teacher and student, informing and shaping learning and teaching in the classroom.

All disciplines, including dance, must work towards means of evaluating the important elements of that discipline. The arts, especially dance, must mount an ongoing defence against marginalization by demonstrating that tangible significant learning is taking place. Research in this important area should contribute to a body of knowledge which will be significant to the future of dance education, to aesthetic education, and to the acquisition of learning in general.

Outline of the Study

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter two provides a critical review of literature related to the
research questions. Chapter three describes the methods used in the collection and analysis of the data. Chapter four takes the form of a classroom narrative, combining observations and reflections on dance exercises conducted in three settings. Chapter five restates the research questions and discusses the findings, describing the characteristics of students of various ages, evidence of aesthetic engagement, and instances of growth. Conditions which give rise to student growth and factors which contribute to aesthetic growth are also discussed. Chapter six relates the findings of this study to the body of literature which is relevant to it, states conclusions, and suggests directions for further research.
Chapter Two - Review of Literature

Aesthetic Learning

Attention has been given to the acquisition and nurture of aesthetic response in music, drama, and the visual arts, but not in dance. This study, with its emphasis on aesthetic development in dance takes a step in redressing this imbalance. In the extensive and complex domain of aesthetic theory, three special footholds are evident: the ideas of Suzanne Langer (1953), those of Johan Huizinga (1950) and finally those of educator, Malcolm Ross (1984). Langer’s symbolic theory of the arts provides a philosophical foundation for the study of aesthetic qualities in dance; Huizinga, on the other hand, draws attention to the role of play in social life. Within a broad perspective on the subject, he sees play as liberating the imagination and drawing the individual into that state of absorption that encourages aesthetic activity. Ross’s theories concern aesthetic development in relation to maturity. His ideas are particularly helpful to this study for they take us into readily imagined school settings, and have implications for curriculum needs. Furthermore, his developmental model in the visual arts, music, and drama, draws attention to dance through its absence.

Developments over the past decade have placed value on the study of aesthetics as an important component of a
quality education in the arts. The arts, while "...an important content area for instruction in and of themselves, are germane to intellectual and imaginative growth" (Pioli, 1991). The heightened sensory and perceptual abilities which are part of aesthetic awareness, enable achievement in all areas of the school curriculum, and assist in qualitative decision making. In this manner aesthetic thinking enriches many facets of life. Fowler (1990) posits that, "Study of any of the arts can furnish people with a crucial aesthetic metaphor of what life at its best can be...through the provision of an aesthetic value orientation" (p. 163).

But perhaps the most provocative and compelling reason for focus on the aesthetic dimension is provided by Ross, (1984). "I am persuaded that the function of the arts in general education is to give children - by whatever means and in whatever medium - experiences of the sacred and of the numinous" (p. x). It is the hope or promise of rising above the ordinary, of feeling moments of illumination and of being enveloped by the creative spirit, which makes the aesthetic at once mysterious and desirable.

Researchers have examined the nature of aesthetic experience with attention to its growth and acquisition by the individual. The focus of that research has been primarily the visual arts, with some attention to music and drama, but with less attention to dance. Yet there are few in the field of dance education who would deny that
aesthetic experience is essential in dance. If children are to realize the greatest benefits from dance in education, aesthetic values should lie at its core (Schmitz, 1990; Hanstein, 1990; Stinson, 1982).

In fact, the very definition of dance involves the aesthetic. The aesthetic dimension of dance, comprising sensuous and affective, physical and emotional dimensions, is critical in distinguishing dance from movement (Stinson, 1979; McColl, 1979).

**Aesthetic Theory**

Aesthetic experience involves the simultaneous engagement of intellect and the emotions, enabling imaginative and transforming experiences. Such a stirring of the spirit implies involvement of the whole self and is "...immediate and intuitive, not detached or reflective" (Stinson, 1982, p.72). For Langer (1953) the arts are symbols through which we give articulate form to feelings. "Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling" (p. 40 ). Dance as an art, gives form to feelings in movement.

Various aesthetic theories exist in dance, beginning with the imitation theory perhaps originated by Jean Jacques Noverre, 16th century ballet master. "The distinguishing feature of imitation theory is its reference to an idea or object external to the work itself-its focus on the subject being imitated" (1988, Gelbard, p.31).
Formalism, another aesthetic view, is expressed by Monroe Beardsley (cited in Carter, 1983). Beardsley "believes that an artwork is a perceptual object, direct(ing) our attention to aesthetic properties, which he holds are a function of formal unity and regional qualities of a performance" (p. 66). Formal properties, Beardsley claims, may be objectively apprehended by the discriminating observer. Dancer and choreographer George Balanchine, who holds the formalist view, states that "one does not want to know whom this or that ballerina represents but only to see the pure beauty of her body, her movements" (cited in Gelbard, 1988, p. 32).

Dance in education has definite purposes. Laban (1948), whose work and writing in contemporary dance education have been highly influential, states that, "It should be mentioned finally that the new dance technique endeavors to integrate intellectual knowledge with creative ability, an aim which is of paramount importance in any form of education" (p. 13). In dance education students give concrete representation to their knowledge and experience of the world through the medium of the body. Thinking and feeling interact to give form to the dancer's images and ideas. John Dewey wrote that "The image is the great instrument of instruction. What a child gets out of any subject presented to him is simply the images which he himself forms with regard to it" (cited in Brigham, p. 27).
The positions expressed by Langer and by Goodman form a basis for theory in dance in education. The symbolic theories of Langer and Goodman could be termed expressionist views (Gelbard, 1988). Goodman claims that performance operates symbolically. According to Carter (1983) he "might approach a performance looking for instances of representation, exemplification, or expression as a way of outlining the cognitive significance of a particular performance" (p.66).

Langer (1953), whose position aligns closely with that of Goodman, contends that the arts are symbols through which we give articulate form to feelings.

An artwork is more than an arrangement of given things— even qualitative things. Something emerges from the arrangement of tones or colors, which was not there before, and this rather than the arranged material is the symbol of sentience...the making of the expressive form is the creative process that enlists a man’s utmost technical skill in the service of his utmost conceptual power, imagination. Not the invention of new original turns, nor the adoption of novel themes merits the word 'creative' but the making of any work symbolic of feeling, even in the most canonical context and manner (p.40).

In dance, form is sought which gives aesthetic representation to ideas and feelings of the dancer; the body is the medium of expression. Ideas are refined as the dance is created through the pairing of motion and kinesthetic awareness, which is awareness of energy, space, and form (Ministry of Education, (Schools Division), 1986).
Langer writes,

...with his own body-feeling [the dancer] understands the gestic forms that are its interwoven, basic elements. He cannot see his own form as such but he knows its appearance - the lines described by his body are implied in the shifts of his vision, even if he is dancing alone and are guaranteed by the rhythmic play of his muscles, the freedom with which his impulses spend themselves in complete and intended movements (cited in Ministry of Education, (Schools Division), 1986. p. 11)

"The dance is a concrete representation of the personal experience of the dancer [which] is communicated to others" (Ministry of Education, (Schools Division), 1986, p.11). Ideas and feelings may be refined and expressed by the dancer to reach various degrees of potency; the greatest power lies in the extension of ideas beyond the literal to symbolic forms.

The Acquisition of Aesthetic Growth

How is aesthetic awareness acquired and nurtured? Knowledge and understanding of the arts are thought to grow as the individual grows cognitively, acquiring a repertoire of increasingly complex strategies. The arts are regarded by many as cognitive symbols through which aesthetic endeavors take place (Carter, 1983). In dance, aesthetic understanding is exercised in the thinking and refinement of the performance, and in the impressions of those responding to the performance. "Performances and responses to them, such
as criticism and aesthetic theory, represent important arts-related cognition" (Carter, 1983, p. 61).

Parsons (1987) posits that developmental stages can help us to understand responses to the arts and that a cognitive approach to aesthetic response has value. Feldman and Goldsmith (1987), however, in response to Parsons, (1987) emphasize that the distinction between universal and non-universal cognitive development is an important one to consider in an account of aesthetic development. Cognitive universals are achieved by all people in all cultures, while cognitive non-universals are mastered only through sustained particularized interaction with the environment. Feldman and Goldsmith claim that aesthetic judgement is non-universal, refined through instruction, as opposed to Parsons' position that aesthetic experience is biologically inherent and universal, gradually shaped from birth by culture. Both agree that if aesthetic understanding is to achieve the highest degrees of refinement, it will require instruction. This position underlines the need to create learning opportunities for the development of aesthetic sensitivity in students.

That we can teach for aesthetic understanding is affirmed by Langer (1957). "Feelings", she contends, "can be progressively articulated" (p. 101). According to Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, thinking and doing are inseparable in the
performers' mental process. Thus movement is the thought rather than a means for conveying thought. In relation to dance Sheets-Johnstone claims,

To be thinking in movement means that a particular situation is unfolding as it is being created by a mindful body, a kinesthetic intelligence is forging its way in the world, shaping and being shaped by the developing pattern surrounding it (cited in Carter, 1983, p. 63).

Improvisation as described here, does not occur randomly; rather, through intense preparation the dancer sets the stage for magic moments. Nachmanovitch (1990) claims that it is practice until skills become unconscious which allows for improvisation. Such practice allows the performer to capitalize on the moment, permits the imaginative to take over when small surprises occur. "Practice", declares Nachmanovitch (1990) "comes from playful compulsion, experiment, and from a sense of wonder" (p. 68).

Nachmanovitch (1990) draws on the significant writing of Huizinga (1950) on play. Huizinga distinguishes "play" from "game", showing that play in its various forms is all-pervasive in our lives, embodied in ritual, the arts, statecraft, sports, and civilization itself" (Nachmanovitch, p.42). "But", Huizinga informs us, "in acknowledging play, you acknowledge mind, for whatever play is, it is not matter" (cited in Nachmanovitch, 1950, p.42). Play is joyful exploration, carried out voluntarily for its own sake. It is
disinterested, in that it is not driven by wants and appetites, but it does have order and rules, and is defined in time and space. "The primordial quality of play" (p.2) Huizinga claims, its very essence, lies in its powers of intensity and absorption.

Ordinary acts may be pulled "into the special context of play" (Nachmanovitch, p.43) and may even become divine play known in India as "lila". Play as a form of free speculation is the well-spring of original art enabling freedom from the ordinary and opening realms of imagination and insight. "Creative work is play; it is free speculation using the materials of one's chosen form" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 42).

Huizinga posits that play functions largely in the field of aesthetics. "Play...is invested with the noblest qualities...of aesthetic perception... we are capable of perceiving in things"... (p.10). Ross (1984) it is noted, recognizes spontaneous aesthetic development in children's play.

An important connection between dancing and playing is made by Huizinga (1950). "Dancing is a particular and particularly perfect form of playing" (p. 165). The absorption and freedom of play in dance, its spontaneity, underline dance as a natural form for aesthetic engagement. Dance can invite the child into the natural world of play,
permitting exploration and experimentation. The interaction of imagination and expression along with freedom to become fully absorbed can result in significant aesthetic engagement. In fact, unless the individual is engaged or absorbed it is doubtful that the focus necessary for aesthetic quality is present. The freedom of absorption, enabled by the spirit of play, is examined in this study as an indication of aesthetic engagement.

Ross's Model of Aesthetic Development

Several models of aesthetic development exist. The most recent are those of Housen (cited in Lachapelle, 1991), Ross (1984), and Parsons (1987). This study examines the aesthetic development model of Ross which has the special relevance of being grounded in the visual arts, music and drama. As no models of aesthetic development include or are specific to dance, it is hoped that an examination of this closely related research should prove relevant to aesthetic development in dance.

Ross (1984) has constructed a developmental scale of aesthetic response for each of music, drama, and the visual arts. He describes four broad categories or levels, which range from least to greatest complexity.

The Pre-aesthetic level, the very first category, precedes level one. It is a level of purely pragmatic
attachment and perception, described by Ross as "having a practical outcome in mind that is directly linked with such central life issues as security, love, status, nourishment, livelihood, communication, efficiency" (p. 56).

At level one, Attentional Detachment, there is a degree of detachment. The art form is seen as a thing in itself, engaging "...the powers of perception, discrimination, and... a purely intuitive feeling for coherences" (p. 122). Along with importance and value assigned to the form for its own sake, there is perception of quality.

Level two, Disinterested Attention, recognizes the experience as having form, or uniqueness of being in its own right. "We have moved from the perception of qualities to a recognition of quality" (p. 57) Sensitivity to the authenticity and genuineness of the object, that it is worthy of our respect and is the bearer of quality becomes important. The appreciation of uniqueness calls into play affective and mental operations. Criticism and discriminating judgements may be made, with sensitivity to uniqueness and coherence as well as to social and aesthetic interrelationships.

At level three, Tacit Attention, the individual reads many different meanings into the art form. Ambiguity and deeper, metaphorical awareness of what the object may represent are intrinsic to this stage; the means of expression is important. There is freedom to engage in
imaginative exploration and to invest forms with feeling. "Empathy, that is the ability to identify personal meaning, to get feeling into sensuous forms lies at the very heart of the artistic response and is likely to be composite of mental and emotional resources" (p. 123). Ross stresses that these levels are not discrete, but that an individual may touch on all three levels, and may be on different levels in different areas.

Although Ross' (1984) scale of aesthetic development appears to be very different from that of Parsons (1987), there are points of agreement. Both of these researchers' findings indicate that the individual moves from a stage of realism to one of expressionism, then to a stage of symbolic operation and reflection.

Ross' model and other models are significant in that they indicate the feasibility of developing models of aesthetic response. As Ross (1984, p. 126) says,

I have speculated about development in Art, Drama, and Music: if these profiles are to be found to have some substance then it would not I think be difficult to adapt the scheme to other artistic areas."

If the visual arts, music, and drama allow for the identification of discernable levels in aesthetic growth, it should be possible to identify such levels in aesthetic growth in dance, as well!
Factors Influencing Aesthetic Growth

Even though individuals may pass through the same stages there is little doubt that some individuals will attain a much greater degree of aesthetic sophistication than others. Ross (1984) mentions interacting factors of psychological, mental, emotional and cultural developments. Prior knowledge and experience, along with individual construction of meaning, become a window through which we view and remember a work of art (Koroscik, Osman, DeSouza, in Lankford, 1992). Environments of home and community as well as exposure to mass media influence aesthetic learnings. Networks of assumptions about what is valuable about artworks, and their meanings, learned as we gradually become enculturated, are "heavily affected by subcultural context and patterns of interaction" (Parsons, 1990, p. 137). Detailed knowledge of a subject, along with effort, motivation, and interest, push the individual to master higher levels in a domain.

According to Gans (1974), the values of the society and the needs and characteristics of its members dictate standards of form and substance. Gans discusses aesthetic pluralism, identifying five taste publics and cultures which exist "because of the diversity of and disagreement about aesthetic standards and values" (p. 68). Shared values and standards constitute the basis of a taste culture, and people who make similar choices for similar reasons are a
taste public.

The categories identified by Gans (1974) are "high culture, upper-middle culture, lower-middle culture, low culture, and quasi-folk culture" (p. 71). High culture, which draws its membership from an elite social class, includes creator-oriented and user-oriented perspectives. The creator-oriented view pays explicit attention "to the construction of cultural products such as the relationships between form, substance, method, and overt content and covert symbolism" (p. 76). The user-oriented segment of high culture enjoy the products created, but are less interested in the processes of creation. The user-orientation focuses on the more easily understood, less scholarly aspects of the culture.

The upper-middle class culture is described by Gans (1974) as a well-educated group which is catered to by quality mass media. This public is not concerned with innovation in form, nor with links between method and culture, but prefers more substantive, less abstract themes than high culture.

Large numbers of the population are found in the lower-middle culture which is catered to by mass media. This culture rejects most high and upper-middle culture, preferring an emphasis on substance favoring romantic and representational themes, and those which reinforce the ideas
and feelings of the culture. Form functions to clarify and enhance substance.

Low culture publics, which consist mainly of skilled and semiskilled workers, may be hostile in their rejection of culture. "They find culture not only dull but also effeminate, immoral, and sacrilegious... (Gans, 1974, p. 89). Form is totally subordinate to substance, and there is no concern for abstract ideas or themes dealing with contemporary social problems and issues. Themes often feature dramatization and sensationalization of the culture’s values, such as conflict between good and evil, with good eventually prevailing.

Quasi-folk low culture consists of unskilled workers with low status and low purchasing power. Gans (1974) describes this culture as "a simpler version of low culture with the same sexual segregation and emphasis on melodrama, action comedies, and morality plays in its content" (p.93).

Gans identifies the major source of differentiation between the views of the taste cultures and publics to be that of socioeconomic level or class. Educational achievement, and the school attended, Gans contends, have much to do with cultural choices. This position validates the school as a player, for better or worse, in the shaping of the aesthetic consciousness of the population.

There are factors which must be considered which affect aesthetic growth specific to dance. Dance seems to be the
least known of the arts, considered by many to be frivolous, certainly not a school curriculum priority. Laban (1950) perhaps the definitive advocate of dance education points out, "Compared with what is known concerning the other arts, our knowledge in the field of the art of movement is very scanty" (p. 1). As a consequence of this lack of value there is limited opportunity for children to experience and grow in dance in a school setting. Sparshott (1992) refers to the tendency to ignore dance as..."the aversion of the gaze" (p. 75). In a multicultural society, there is a need to overcome inherent cultural boundness and to acquire sensitivity to the aesthetic of movement and gesture of dance derived from other cultures (Kealiinohomoku, cited in Kerr, 1993). Any examination of aesthetic development in dance must take into account these and other factors which influence perceptions of dance.

Assessing Aesthetic Growth In Dance

These obstacles notwithstanding, attention to aesthetic development in dance is overdue. Present educational reform in British Columbia includes instruction in all four arts, including dance until grade seven. Thereafter choices among the arts may be made by the individual student. Furthermore, a curriculum for dance has been published. But if dance is to assume a more visible presence in the school curriculum, it should be nurtured and evaluated according to
its intrinsic features and particular discipline. Both strands of understanding dance, that is the child’s embodiment of aesthetic comprehension of dance, as well as the child’s response to observing dance should be reflected in a developing sensibility in this area.

Assessment in dance focuses on a quality of movement that implies both knowing and feeling. Elements that contribute to such expressiveness draw upon rhythm, timing, and dynamic variations, which according to Bergmann (1992) and Philpott (1986) give form to feelings, ideas, and impressions. Facility with the movement elements is important. In order to exercise choice within a medium, an understanding of the structures and conventions of that medium is required. Thus, informed choices for self expression are based on an understanding of the given possibilities, as is transcending the rules to explore greater possibilities for self expression (Arnold 1986). "To create," declares Nachmanovitch (1990), "we need both technique and freedom from technique" (p.73).

If, in order to be creative (or aesthetically self-expressive) children or students are to exercise choice, they need to be shown what choices can be made, and they require some criteria which will enable them to discriminate, to make critical judgements (Chapman cited in Arnold, 1986, p. 54).

Arnold further suggests that self expression in children’s dance can be seen in... "their critical understanding, skill in the form of a movement vocabulary
[and] use of imaginative powers" (p. 56). Stinson (1982) refers to "the sense of total involvement, connection and transformation" (p. 73) which may be achieved during dance, while Logan (1984, p. 301) speaks of a "non-verbal metaphoric dimension". Thus through the use of expressive and imaginative powers the embodiment of multiple meanings which go beyond the literal is possible.

Nachmanovitch (1990) also acknowledges,

...the unsophisticated performance that may be full of wrong notes, or a performance by a street musician where we may be moved to tears, immobilized with a palpable feeling of awe" (p. 119)

These rare and special performances according to Nachmanovitch, place us in the presence of what he calls "raw creative power". While knowledge of form may provide the necessary refinement to enable the intuitive to reach its promise, the spirit and emotion are the transforming elements. Aesthetic knowing in action leaps out at us, highly visible and undeniable.

The multicultural nature of many Western societies challenges dance educators to include a wider range of dance forms. Recognition of dance traditions and aesthetics other than those of the western cultures is essential in such a society. However, difficulties arise when we attempt to assess dance deriving from other cultures. "Dance technique in the folk style of an ethnic group is best judged by a member of that group according to the standards prevalent in
that culture ..."(Kerr, 1993, p. 39). The possibility arises of misunderstanding and misinterpretation and the failure to grasp the true meaning and significance which only knowledge of context can bring to a situation.

Kariamu Welsh Asante (1993) acknowledges regional particulars even in common aesthetic elements found in all African dances. She argues not for uniform criteria for criticism of all dance, but for acknowledgement and acceptance without imposing unnecessary and irrelevant European-derived criteria and aesthetics.

Including a range of dance forms through knowledgeable guest artists, representing a range of dance traditions, serves to acquaint students with these traditions. Aesthetic elements are best assessed, however, by representatives of each cultural tradition.

Compared to the other arts, there is not a significant body of literature in dance. Sparshott (1985) declares that, "A venerable tradition regards dance as one of the most basic arts....[yet] philosophers of art [have] done little work on the aesthetics of the art" (p. 94). However, what research there is calls for a focus on the aesthetic, "Making a case for a consistent and sustained aesthetic education in the nurture of all children" (McColl, 1979, p. 44). This study with its developmental approach to the aesthetic in dance education, is a step in that direction.
Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature which focuses on the importance of placing aesthetic learning at the centre of dance education. Aesthetic theories which inform education in dance, as well as social and historical factors challenging dance as a school subject have been examined.

The framework of the study draws on Suzanne Langer's symbolic theory of the arts, and on Johan Huizinga's considerable research on the important role which is served by play in promoting aesthetic development in dance. Finally, the "aesthetic stages" model constructed by Malcolm Ross, provides a promising basis for assessment in dance.

The next chapter will outline the methods of the study which sought understanding about aesthetic development in dance.
Chapter Three - Method

This research project began with my introduction to dance education by Dr. Jean Cunningham, coordinator of the dance program of the School of Physical Education at the University of British Columbia. I have been involved in education in the arts for most of my life, believing the arts to offer unique and significant opportunities for learning. As a teacher and a learner my areas of focus had been music and the visual arts until my program of personal studies required a dance class.

My experience with dance until that point had been minimal, although movement was used as an aid to learning in music classes which I taught. In Jean's class, I soon realized that dance was an integral art form quite apart from its connection to music classes. Dance, taught by Jean, was a marvellous, joyous form of expression which involved the intellect, the kinesthetic and the aesthetic. It was a wondrous activity for children, a natural learning vehicle. As I took further classes and my understanding grew, I was increasingly eager that the children whom I taught should experience the learning possibilities of this discipline.

It became clear to me that dance could play a significant role in learning in the arts in school, but only if it was taught in such a way that the full expressive power of the form could be realized. This meant that aesthetic awareness should be central to both the teaching
and the learning. The aesthetic is at work for both the performer and for the observer in dance. The performer communicates feelings, images, and ideas, and the observer apprehends these elements in individual ways. These two aspects of aesthetic response are interrelated and contribute to the development of the individual. All aspects of dance, developing skills, kinesthetic awareness, and intellectual growth, have aesthetic values at their core; understanding is built over time, developing progressively.

My conviction grew that more knowledge was needed about how aesthetic growth occurred and could be nurtured in dance. In order to provide meaningful dance education for their students, teachers needed guidelines for learning experiences and assessment which centered on the development of aesthetic growth. Impetus was added with the promise of a new British Columbia Ministry of Education Dance Curriculum Guide. Here was an area badly in need of research; the next step for me was to undertake a thesis which would contribute to understanding aesthetic growth in dance.

Methodology

The decision to study aesthetic growth in dance was accompanied by a search for a methodology which would best facilitate this inquiry. Case study design, which allows for
the in-depth understanding of a phenomenon such as aesthetic development in dance, seemed particularly appropriate. The case study approach of "carefully planned observations in natural settings" (Stake, 1988, p. 257) seemed promising for gaining insights into students understanding and enjoyment of dance.

As case study design "may involve any number of sites, individuals or documents", (MacMillan, 1989, p.180) it would permit the study of aesthetic growth as it appeared in individual children of various ages. Each individual is a case, "a functioning specific or a bounded system"(Stake, 1994, p.236). This study, comprised as it is of fifteen individual cases, is a multiple case study.

Choosing Sites

Sites selected for this study were those which offered the richest opportunity to observe aesthetic development, the subject of this research. MacMillan and Schumacher (1989) suggest choices of persons, situations, and events most "likely to yield fruitful data..." (p. 395). As dance is not widely taught in British Columbia schools, possible sites are limited. In addition, the research questions imposed several criteria on the site selection process. In order to gain a broad picture of aesthetic growth it was important to observe students who represented a range of ages; therefore I sought three sites where I might observe
grade two, grade five, and grade eight students as they engaged in dance activity.

An additional requirement for selected sites was that the teachers of dance would share common understandings, knowledge, and experience from having taken University of British Columbia dance classes. The teaching in these classes placed importance on child-centered learning. Teachers in child-centered classrooms feel that the process as well as technique and style are important, and that children should have opportunity to explore ideas of their own in creating and composing. "Creative, expressive, artistic dance/movement ...is taught through a process-oriented method that uses problem-solving, discovery, and exploration" (Werner, 1990, p. 133). Direct and indirect teaching play a part in providing structures wherein students successfully develop their own ideas.

It was important to my study that the dance classes selected for study currently offer opportunities to engage in creative problem solving and thus have aims consistent with the British Columbia Curriculum Guide in Dance (1994). Such settings afford opportunity for students to think for themselves, to explore movement, to express feelings, and thus to grow in aesthetic awareness. All of these considerations made finding appropriate sites a challenge.
Gaining Access

To my good fortune, grade eight, and grade nine/ten sites presented themselves. An action research project for a university class brought me into contact with a former dance education classmate and teaching colleague. Claude, a dynamic teacher of seven years, was teaching dance in a French immersion setting in a junior high school. He too, was focusing on dance as the topic of his thesis. His enthusiasm both in response to my suggestion of collaboration, and in his teaching of dance made his classes ideal settings for this research.

The first site comprised a grade eight class conducted from September to January, and a grade nine/ten class from February to June. Originally, I had intended to focus on three classes only, but when the possibility arose of extending the study to include a grade nine/ten class, I was eager to do so. This class not only completed the age range, but offered an opportunity to include students who had been in the dance class on previous years. The addition of the experienced students has added invaluable insights to this study.

The second site was suggested by Jean Cunningham. A former student of hers had organized and was teaching three separate age groups in her school dance club. The membership of one such dance group was drawn from grade five/six. Cynthia, a teacher of ten years experience, agreed to my
collecting data for this study in the grade five/six dance club sessions.

The third site, a grade two/three class, was taught by a colleague in her sixth year of teaching, Kathryn, who had also taken University of British Columbia dance curriculum development courses. Kathryn had been teaching dance to her students once weekly, since the beginning of the school year. An enthusiastic teacher, who welcomes challenges, she readily agreed to my gathering data in her classroom dance sessions. She felt that she and the students would benefit from the focus that the project would bring to the dance class.

Of these four groups, three indirectly involve student self-selection. The two junior secondary dance-drama classes, grade eight and grade nine/ten, are electives, chosen by the students from a small number of possibilities. The grade five/six class, or dance club, which took place after school and at noon hour, once weekly, is a voluntary activity. The dance club students, although inexperienced, were personally committed enough to volunteer to attend dance club on their own time. Only in the grade two/three class, where every student in this regular classroom took part in the dance activities, was a site free from self-selection.

Participants

Within each class three or four students were chosen
for focused study in accordance with sampling criteria. The criteria were access, age, and gender. Boys and girls, who were available to be interviewed, and who represented a range of ages and developmental stages, were selected. No student with obvious learning or behaviour problems was chosen. Students with little or no dance experience were chosen in order that growth could be observed from a starting point over the course of the dance classes. This was true of the three sites involving the younger students; in the grade nine/ten site students who were in their second year of school dance classes with the same teacher were actively sought. This allowed the opportunity to observe the effect of long term growth. Students of various ethnic and racial backgrounds were chosen in order that the sampling would be as representative as possible of public school classes in the lower mainland.

The Grade Eight and Grade Nine/Ten Site

The grade eight and the grade nine/ten classes were taught by one teacher in a junior secondary school. The school was located in a middle class neighborhood, but because it was one of the few schools in the district offering a French immersion program at the junior-secondary level, it drew students from various elementary schools. This school had a total school population of 752, including a large group of students requiring English Second Language
support, and the French immersion program which involved one-third of the students. All three streams of French immersion were present, that is cadre, late immersion, and early immersion.

This dance-drama class was offered as an elective to the French immersion students. The grade eight dance-drama elective was scheduled in the first semester of the year, and the grade nine/ten dance-drama elective in the second half of the year. Although French immersion students were able to choose electives from the English program, this class was the only arts elective which is part of the French immersion program. The school is run on an eight day timetable, which means that the dance-drama class is scheduled for a fifty-five minute class period occurring on five days out of eight.

The grade eight dance-drama class was offered in the first semester of the year, from September to the end of January. Originally, twenty-three students were enrolled but as the new school year got underway, others were added to the class list. There were eventually thirty students enrolled, five of them boys. Some of the students in the class knew only one or two other students who had come from the same elementary school program. For this study four students, two girls and two boys, were chosen for special focus. All of the focus students were thirteen, and none had previous experience in dance.
The dance-drama elective for grade nine/ten was offered in the second semester of the year. This class consisted of eighteen students including two boys. The students knew one another as they had been in many of the same French immersion classes for one and a half or two and a half years. A number of the students were in the dance-drama elective for the second year, and one student was taking the class for the third time. As the teacher varied the format of the class for each group, the class remained interesting and challenging for all students. With the help of the teacher, I chose four students for focused study, three girls and one boy. One of the girls and the boy were in grade ten; the other two girls were in grade nine. All of the girls were in the class for the second time. Kay, who is in grade ten, had no dance experience outside of this class. Nancy had taken ballet lessons from age seven to ten, Jeanette had taken dance lessons from age three. Eric had no previous dance experience.

The Grade Five Site

Kent Austin Elementary, which is in a neighboring school district, enjoys a setting which overlooks the city. The community comprises middle income families who live in the new homes built to capitalize on the view. Nearby are older homes owned by less affluent families whose children attend the school. The total school population is 425, including a large group of English Second Language students.
The grade four/five/six dance club was organized and opened to new membership in early November in order to prepare for a Christmas performance. Observations for this study took place over the time that the dance club met while preparing for the performance.

The dance club met twice weekly, once for an hour after school, and once at a noon hour for about forty-five minutes. This time was actually shorter because the students sometimes took longer to eat their lunches and therefore arrived a little late. Changing into gym wear before and after dance class also took a few additional minutes.

Although some of the members had been in the dance club in previous years, the students selected for focus in this study were new to the club. Four students who met the criteria were chosen with the help of the teacher. The dance club membership was all girls. The selected students were girls. Of those selected, two were Chinese-Canadian, one having emigrated from Hong Kong in the last year. One of these girls declined to be interviewed, so that reduced the number of focus students to three. Another girl selected, Jennifer, was also new to the school this year, but had danced at her previous school. The fourth girl, Ruth, was taking private dance lessons. All of the focus girls were in grade five.
The Grade Two/three Site

Pebble Beach Elementary is located in a desirable neighborhood which borders on the beach front. Most of the school population is Caucasian.

The grade two/three class dance class which was part of this school took place in a scheduled gym period, from nine to nine-thirty every Wednesday morning starting in early September. Sometimes additional gym time was available and the class could continue until ten o’clock. Observations for this study took place in December, January, and February.

This class comprised ten boys and eleven girls. Focusing on the criteria for selection outlined, the teacher, Kathryn, helped me to choose four students for more detailed observation. Two girls, grades two and three, and two boys, grades two and three were chosen. Of these children, Simone was taking highland dance lessons, and Anna had taken some early dance lessons. The boys, Donald and Craig, had no previous formal dance experience.

The following figure summarizes the data collection sources.

Data Collection

Major strategies for data collection for this study were participant observation, interviewing and document analysis.
Figure 1  Summary of Data Collection Sources

The use of these various means of data collection provided important triangulation, contributing to the authenticity of
the study. A further check was provided by the teachers in their responses to my interpretations, corroborating, disagreeing, or providing additional insights to the data. "Acknowledging that no observations of interpretations are perfectly repeatable, triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen" (Flick, in Stake, 1994, p. 241).

Since this case study design involved four sites, every attempt was made to maintain consistency in data collection procedures at all the sites. As the researcher in all cases, I used common data collection procedures conducted in a similar fashion. However, Herriott and Firestone (1983) note the necessity of maintaining a certain flexibility in order to recognize the unique aspects, processes, and contexts of each site which would bring rich meaning to the phenomena of interest. I found as well, that logistics and my growing experience determined differences in procedure. The time over which the dance club and the grade two/three dance class were in session determined the number of observations possible. Similarly, in the dance club setting, permission to conduct the interviews was given at the end of the dance term. Thus, it was possible to interview the students only once rather than the two or three times I had anticipated when planning the study. One interview with each of the focus students seemed sufficient. In the grade
two/three site, the students were shy in the interview. For this reason, informal conversations proved to be more fruitful for gathering data. Formal interviews with the grade nine/ten students on one occasion also seemed sufficient. Gaining the students' acceptance and trust took time. As the success of the interviews depended on students' willingness to speak freely, I arranged the interviews to occur late in the term. An additional advantage of this timing was that questions, which arose from observations over the term, were included in the interview.

**Participant Observation**

Observation from a variety of perspectives focussed on verbal interactions, especially between students, and between students and the teacher, as these revealed a growing understanding and appreciation of dance. As nonverbal behaviours were of great importance, particularly movement qualities, these too, received special note. The selected students naturally received the greatest focus. My observations during dance sessions, during and after dance film viewing, and in any other appropriate context, were supplemented by those of the given teacher.

The greatest number of observation hours were spent in the two junior secondary settings: in the grade eight class on thirty-one occasions, and in the grade nine/ten class on twenty-seven occasions. This was in part because of the length of the semesters, and the greater complexity of the
learning at these grade levels, but also because of the special collaboration between the teacher, Claude, and myself. As we were both embarking on research projects which involved observation of the dance class we were able to compare our observations, reactions and interpretations of events on an on-going basis. This dual perspective created an opportunity which is rare for researchers, in that we were able to dialogue, question, and test data with the other, and to shape the direction of our individual research projects with greater confidence in view of this cross-checking. This association and collaboration with a respected colleague proved to be one of the many benefits of this research.

The number of observations of the dance club students, defined by the duration of the dance club, took place on seven occasions, in November and December. The grade two/three class was observed on nine occasions in December, January and February.

Observer role.

Fundamental to participant observation is acknowledging ourselves to be part of that which we study. "There is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it; nor fortunately is that necessary" (Hammersley & Atkinson, p. 14). As a participant observer I recognized that I influenced the actions and responses of the students and teachers whose views I hoped to capture, and that by
participating I altered the setting in many ways, significant and insignificant. Working with the idea that I cannot step out of my own biases, made me "less blinded by my own subjectivities" (Ely et al, p.22) and more sensitive of my role. My aim was to be constantly walking on the boundary between friend and stranger.

My role as observer varied from class to class. In the grade two/three class I was very much the participant observer, even teaching the entire class on one occasion. In the dance club setting, however, I was an observer who gave words of encouragement to the hard-working students and teacher. In the grade eight and grade nine/ten classes, I participated by working with small groups, and by assisting with the positive critiquing which often followed small class presentations. At one point in my ongoing observations, I realized that the students thought that I was evaluating them. As this perception could have inhibited the students from sharing the insights I wished to note, I re-evaluated and redefined my role as one where I participated more and avoided direct note-taking unless the students and teacher were also writing. This meant frequent quick trips to the immediately adjacent drama office in order to record verbatim conversations. Observations by the teachers of each class contributed to the data. My own observations were challenged, supplemented, or supported by each classroom teacher.
Interviews

Interviews with students similarly were an important source of data, providing opportunity to collect data on the individual's aesthetic comprehension of dance, both in regard to her/himself and when observing classmates or film excerpts of dance. Taping the interviews permitted me to give undivided attention to each informant. In addition, transcripts provided verbatim data, allowing participants' own voices to be heard. Each of the interviews was coded as follows: the first numeral stands for the interview, either first, second, or third. The next numeral stands for the month, and the last numerals for the year. This code appears in brackets at the end of each quotation.

Interviews in the grade eight class were conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the term. Four additional interviews were conducted with other students in the dance-drama class who were interested in the research project and who wanted to make a contribution.

The first grade eight interviews were conducted early in the semester with each of the focus students. A seminar room in the library provided a comfortable and private setting. All interviews were taped, and then transcribed immediately. Transcribing the interview tapes myself allowed me to relive the experience, and to add retrospectively the voice tones, facial expressions, and gestures which accompanied the voices.
The insights which the students shared with me at this time provided a baseline to which growth over the duration of the semester could be referenced. Although the students spoke somewhat guardedly in the initial interviews, as they did not yet know me, they revealed feelings of apprehension and nervousness along with excitement as they embarked on this new dance adventure. In subsequent interviews conducted with the same students at the midpoint, and the end of the semester, they were able to express growing confidence and understanding. The students were more voluble at these later interviews, quite possibly because they knew me better. The interviews came to be regarded as somewhat of a "status thing", with other students asking to be interviewed as well. All were eager to tell me about their own learning as students in dance.

Interviews with the grade five students were conducted on one occasion, after the dance club performance, and thus at the end of my time in the site. This timing occurred because approval from the district with regard to interviewing was not conferred until that point. However, this proved to be no great disadvantage, as by that time the students knew me as a regular figure who attended the dance club. Although one grade five student declined to be interviewed, the two others, their teacher informed me, were excited and anxious to be interviewed. Jennifer, in particular, told me as we proceeded to the hall outside a
classroom where we conducted the interviews, that "she had things to say". There was no hesitation as the students answered my questions about what they understood, enjoyed and had learned over the course of the dance club. They were able to describe their growing confidence over that period and their excitement, trepidation, and delight in the culminating performance held for the parents.

Interviews were also conducted with the grade two/three students. These interviews were held in the back of the classroom, at a special classroom centre which was at once private and reassuring for young students. As these conversations took place shortly after I had begun observation sessions in the class, the students were somewhat shy and responses were limited. They did tell me of their enjoyment and progress in the dance class. They placed great faith in their teacher's ability to help them to learn to become better dancers. I did not conduct a second interview with these children, feeling that observations yielded greater and more spontaneously occurring information.

Interviews were also held with the teachers: in-depth interviews with Claude, and Kathryn; and the other, a three way conversation with Cynthia and Dr. Jean Cunningham.

Student Journals

Student journals were a course component of the junior secondary dance-drama classes. Students were directed by the
teacher to reflect in their journals about such things as their own progress in dance, or their group's progress, to describe their reactions and feelings about their dances, to critique video excerpts of dance seen in class, to identify required elements in peer group dances, to develop ideas for small group dances, and to develop visual symbols for ideas. The journals were thus a rich source of information, helping to construct the students' views about their growing enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of dance. Ongoing analysis of these student documents contributed important insights into student growth and awareness.

Because of the nature of the dance club where students of various ages met for short classes, over a defined time period, viewing video examples of dance was not part of the instruction, nor did students keep regular journals. The performance provided a goal-in-view which necessitated an instructional emphasis on technique and style. The students did watch the teacher, who modelled refinement of technique, and observed one another as well. There are many instances in the data of the students watching one another to learn the steps, or to capture a special style.

The grade two/three students kept journals in which they wrote regularly. The teacher provided frame sentences which guided their responses. Such frames as, "I learned...", "The part I enjoyed the most...", "It made me feel...", "The movements I used...", "What I noticed...". In some cases the
students used drawings to communicate what they understood in dance. The written responses of children of all ages added a dimension to the growing picture of their understanding.

Original plans for this study included the use of videotaping as a means to capture student interactions and examples of dance. The video camera was used in the grade eight class, the first setting which I accessed. It consumed my energy and attention, causing me to lose my observation focus. If the camera was left unmanned it seldom caught any interactions of significance, featuring instead students "cutting up" and making faces for the camera, or scrupulously avoiding dancing or any other interesting form of interaction in front of the camera eye.

In addition, many students seemed affected by the camera. As dance requires a good deal of risk-taking, especially in the middle and junior years, the camera became an intrusion, inhibiting the students, and delaying the essential growth of confidence. The teacher and I decided that ongoing use of the video camera should be discontinued, but that it should be used to record performances. A small number of videos, mainly of performances, were successfully made.

All of these data collecting processes, participant observation, interviews, and document analysis proved
effective, yielding a useful body of information. The several sources of data provided means to triangulate that information.

Throughout the period of data collection in each site the teacher and I discussed the happenings and the findings. Their special insights were added to the body of the data, serving as corroboration for other collected material.

**Generalizability of the Findings**

It is hoped that the findings of this case study will be of practical use to teachers. What is intended is naturalistic rather than scientific generalization (Stake, 1988), with the focus resting on transfer of knowledge to the reader (Jorgensen, 1989). Clearly, teachers will interpret the study in their own ways. Based on the ways that the findings of the study are meaningful to them in their own practice, teachers may be encouraged to include dance in the daily curriculum.

**Data analysis and Interpretation**

As advised by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), analysis of the data was ongoing, part of the research process from the conception of the problem and continuing until the written study was produced. "It is a systematic process of selecting, categorizing, synthesizing, and interpreting to
provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest" (MacMillan and Schumacher, 1989, p. 414). Patterns, themes and issues which emerged and which were directly related to the focus of the study, shaped the direction of further data collection, of both observations and interviews.

For example, it became evident that there were a number of conditions which promoted aesthetic development, such as the critical role of the teacher, class structures which gave opportunities for students to create and compose, and practice and hard work. Also critical were observations of models in dance, and opportunities to work in groups with peers. These very important considerations which emerged as the study was underway, became a fourth question, "What conditions are helpful for the processes (of aesthetic development) to occur?"

Student confidence was another theme which emerged from the data collection as an important factor in aesthetic development. Confidence, it became apparent, was related in complex ways to student success. Possessing confidence freed the individual to enter fully into activities, take risks, and express what was known. Understanding confidence as pivotal in the aesthetic learning and communication in dance was an outcome of reading the data.

Data analysis was both descriptive and interpretative. Observations were examined and analyzed in descriptive
terms, that is, how they contributed to a picture of aesthetic understanding of each student age group. This analysis focused on students' ability to give form to their ideas, as well as to express verbally what they understood and enjoyed in dance. Student interviews were analyzed for their contribution to the picture of the student's appreciation and understanding, and perceptions of their own growth in dance. Students' views both in their growing ability to give form to ideas and feelings and in their understanding of dance were analyzed.

Interpretive analysis focused upon the significance of these descriptions for teacher nurture of aesthetic understanding, and for assessing student development in dance. In addition, these findings may be interpreted as part of a growing body of evidence which supports the inclusion of dance in the curriculum.

In the next chapter, the findings of the interpretive and descriptive analysis are discussed. Names of the students and teachers involved in the study have been changed, along with the names of the school settings.

Summary

This qualitative study, which investigated aesthetic growth in dance, used case study design. Several techniques—participant observation, interviews, and collection of written responses were the principal means of data
collection. Data were collected over the period of a year, with collection in some sites occurring concurrently.

In my role of participant observer, I was present at most of the dance classes at each site. This gave me the opportunity to observe selected children in classroom/gymnasium contexts as they interacted with each other, their teacher, and inevitably with myself.

Data collection focused on growth and development, aesthetic refinement, and on ways that children understood and enjoyed dance. Teacher observations in each site provided another dimension to the data.

Through the various means of data collection and the additional insights contributed by each teacher and class, data resulted that was germane to the research problem and to the specific questions asked in the study.
Chapter Four - The Classroom Narrative

**Student Development**

The Kindergarten to Grade Twelve Education Plan published by the British Columbia Ministry of Education (1994) sets out Principles of Learning which guide all aspects of educational practice. They state that learning is both an individual and a group process, is active, and is accomplished in a variety of ways. The application of these principles was readily accomplished in dance, where each student started at his/her own level of experience and developmental understanding of dance. Interest, ability, and background all played a part in the students' readiness and in their progress. It follows that the profile of growth in dance for each student was unique. Developmental progress shown by students in dance might well be thought of as a continuum along which each student proceeded at an individual rate.

In this chapter I will describe the students in each age group in the study. In the context of these groups, I will discuss the evidence of aesthetic understanding in dance shown by individuals. Examples and descriptions of the ways students gave form to ideas and of students' expression and absorption in presentation are drawn from field observations.

There are particular conditions wherein aesthetic awareness may be engaged. Each teacher set about framing
specific aesthetic experiences for students in particular ways. However, all three teachers set the stage for two things: thinking and feeling, which combine in aesthetic experience. Carefully constructed lessons engaged student thought processes by providing structures within which they used and extended their own ideas. Lessons were structured around appropriate thematic material, and emphasized the effective use of the elements of movement, use of aesthetic elements such as contrast, variety, unity, balance, and accent, and flow in movement sequences. Engagement of feelings was less readily structured. Although opportunities were provided, emotional response at any time can only be encouraged. However, the use of imagery, visual and descriptive, carefully chosen music, and the setting of problems which related to students' concerns proved to be effective motivators.

No representation of any depth can occur without engagement of thought and feeling. Degrees of absorption are evident to the observer, as the examples will show.

In the following paragraphs, I will describe the teachers' provision for engagement of both the intellect and emotions, and I will focus on the responses of the students. Students of each age group had their own priorities, insights, and typical conceptions of what was of aesthetic value. Descriptions indicate these variations among the age groups as well as differences between individuals. It is
hoped that these descriptions will paint a picture enabling the reader to recognize aesthetic engagement in its various forms, in dance, as highly observable.

The Grade Two/Three Class

Kathryn, the teacher of this grade two/three class was a young, enthusiastic woman who had been teaching for six years. Her classroom was a vibrant learning place, characterized by much student activity. Many centres provided stimulation and opportunities for student exploration. The children were proud to describe the techniques and image development of their abundantly evident artwork.

Very much an advocate of a child-centered approach, Kathryn believed that dance provided the children whom she taught with special opportunities for development. She said:

Dance offers students a medium for expression. Children of this age, because their language is often not well developed, simply aren't always able to express what they feel in words or in writing. Through the physical connection, dance opens children up. It is vital that (children) be given opportunities for creating, and for expressing their ideas (10695).

As the grade two/three students entered the gym I was struck by their bubbly enthusiasm, high energy, and happy anticipation of the dance activities to come. The children were dressed in loose clothing or exercise wear which allowed them to move freely. They hurriedly removed their shoes and socks, placing them at the side of the gym. The
large space of the gym was an apparent invitation to run, play and leap, which they did! Students gloried in large body movements, rushing speed and apparent freedom. As they had not yet reached a stage when they were critical of themselves or others, children were generally unselfconscious, reacting in spontaneous and intuitive ways to directions given by the teacher.

Many children were interested in and skilled at games of make-believe, familiar to them in their world of play. For their interpretations they drew on what they knew. When asked, as part of a dance, to portray a tree burdened with snow in the dead of winter, most children were able to enter wholeheartedly into this pretense. Careful preparation including an art lesson drawing trees, preceded this activity, helping them to draw upon images which were familiar to them to inform their portrayals. The gym was suddenly transformed into a small forest of wonderfully gnarled and twisted trees, branches sagging under the weight of snow.

Students physical pleasure in the medium was made clear not only by their eager and enthusiastic participation, but also in the written accounts in their journals. When asked what they enjoyed most, the students mentioned high action movements. Donald said that his favorite part was, "The end (of the dance), where we were going back and forth hitting hands" (11294). Anna said that the part of dance that she
had enjoyed the most was twirling; in fact, several students commented on the pleasure they took in particular movements such as "cartwheeling, twirling, leaping".

Students also enjoyed particular physical sensations which various movements gave them. Anna said, "I like it when I crisscross over my feet. I walk then I criss-cross" (11294). Simone described with obvious enjoyment a dance step that she and her partner made up. "We took another dance step... and we made up some new steps from it like the washing step. We usually move back and forth with each other on this one step we put together with another step" (11294) When asked why it was called the washing step, Simone replied, "Because we’re kind of moving our hands washing the window." Familiar images provided Simone with ideas for her dance.

When asked to take positions such as "wide as you can" or as "tall as you can", the children tried very hard with little apparent self-consciousness, and great eagerness to please. Many students volunteered to demonstrate particular movements or to show a particular position. They were responsive to praise, and the teacher worked constantly at giving specific positive reinforcement.

Although they were apparently free of self-consciousness with their own classmates, the students felt some self-consciousness when presenting for others. For
example, a grade seven class came in at the end of a period, just as two girls were about to show their dance. The girls, previously highly enthusiastic about performing, became hesitant and shy, requiring assurance from the teacher that they would do well, that they had a dance to show that everyone including the grade seven students would be very happy to see. Likewise, Simone, when asked to demonstrate for a guest a movement which she had done with particular sensitivity, flushed and became self-conscious. Her demonstration which followed was less expressive and free, using less space.

Simone explained reasons for feeling self-conscious. "I'm kind of nervous of it because everybody's watching me and we're usually the last ones to do it, so everyone's paying attention to us" (11294). Anna, too, felt self-conscious, concerned that, ..."Maybe some people might laugh at you and then you think you might be a bit shy of them or something." She also felt that she was growing in confidence. "I'm getting used to going in front of the class ...It's just fun" (11294).

**Analyzing Dance**

The grade two/three class viewed a ballet excerpt, 'L'Oiseau Exotique.' This film featured a male dancer who danced joyously and freely. His movements were light, sensuous and graceful. Following the observation of the
video excerpt, grade two /three students were asked to
develop movements which might evoke the spirit of a familiar
animal. Craig, eight years old, wrote in his journal:

Today I saw a video called Exotic Bird. What I noticed
about the dance was that the dancer moved very quickly.
Some words to describe how the man moved were graceful
and swift. The movements I used for my animal were he
was running around. I enjoyed moving like a raptor
because I like dinosaurs (11294).

Simone, eight years old, described the same dance.

"What I noticed about the dance was it was very light.
Some words to describe how the man moved were light,
hight, (sic) jumping, running and liping (sic). The
movements I used for my animal were soft. I enjoyed
moving like a bird because I like how it moves."

Students in grade two and three made literal
interpretations of movement; the man was pretending to be a
bird. Although Craig is able to describe the qualitative
aspects of the movement, "graceful, swift", he seems most
impressed with speed, using words such as "swiftly, running
around, moved very quickly" rather than connecting these
qualities with the essence of the bird. Craig's interest in
high levels of activity is typical of a boy of seven. His
interest in the dinosaur, raptor, reflects the current
popularity of the high action movie, 'Jurassic Park'.

Simone, on the other hand, is intrigued with the
dancer's lightness and with his agile movements which she
found pleasing. The animal chosen for the dance which she
composed was a bird, with movements which appeared to draw
their inspiration from the bird of the film.
Of the entire group, a number were birds, probably taking inspiration from the video which we showed them. An equally large number were dinosaurs or other creatures from Jurassic Park. Little doubt that popular culture provides strong imagery; but the classical "L'Oiseau" also influenced their movements and their choices. The students were open to enjoying and accepting both these sources of imagery. No concern was expressed with the dancer's costume or with his balletic style, in the L'Oiseau Exotique film. The students' choices very much reflected their growing knowledge of the world, and they drew upon ideas for their dance from what was known and admired.

Although the children expressed appreciation of all video excerpts and all the dance activities, they did indicate an emerging awareness of quality and refinement in dance. Donald was able to pick out a peer whose dancing he admired, "because I like his moves that he does...like jazz. He moves his hands" (11294). Simone too, could explain why she liked a particular dance created by a small group of her classmates."They move their arms good and I like how they move their neck. I like how they finish and I think they are very focused on each other" (11294).

Simone indicated developing discrimination and taste in relation to dance."...Me and Andrea were kind of doing a draft of the dancing, she made up this totally ugly step".
When asked why she said "draft", she replied, "It's not really what we were going to do. So we can change that and that's what we did". In this last statement she indicated that she was capable of refining and polishing her dance.

In a summary of their own learning toward the end of a term, students invariably commented on their acquired ability to use the elements of movement such as "to use travelling steps". Many students, including Craig, mentioned, "to show slow and fast". Simone, among others, said that she had, "...learned how to go from heavy to light".

Along with learnings centering on effort and speed, and use of space, the students recognized emotions expressed and felt while dancing. Several students mentioned their growing ability to incorporate expressive elements into their dance. As one girl said, "I learned how to express my feelings through my body movements." Special feelings and enjoyment during the dance were described by Yonina and Donald. Yonina said, "I felt like a ballerina and everybody was watching me." Donald added, "I enjoyed the dancing because it made me feel very strong."

Evidence of Aesthetic Engagement

On one particular day the teacher had directed them to run three laps of the gym. When finished the warm-up, students returned to their places on the floor.
On this day, Kathryn directed the children to spread out into the large space of the gym. She led them through various warm-up movements. The exercises were big, reaching, pointing, and circling movements. The students followed the teacher fully focused, watching intently, confident and eager. Thus prepared, they moved on to the next part of the lesson.

Kathryn pointed to a chart of action words which they all read together. She reminded the children of the art lesson of the previous day where they had made different kinds of lines with paint. She related the visual lines to effort in dance by asking the children to imagine lines on the gym floor. One student was chosen to illustrate "a dark line". The student demonstrated a heavy forceful, sustained walk in a line across the gym. Another student illustrated "a light line" with a quick light step. Students demonstrated thin lines, curved lines, and jagged lines. It was noteworthy that students were eager to volunteer, apparently confident that they were able to demonstrate in front of their peers. Having reviewed possible efforts, the students were asked to choose a travelling step from the chart and to think of the best way to present it. They were to think of a way to portray the action, but also to show feelings which go along with the action.

In spite of the demonstrations, responses varied considerably. There was a range of portrayals which
indicated different stages of understanding of the students. There were running steps which were mainly concerned with speed. There were demonstrations of skipping, and of flying which involved literal flapping of wings. But there were also some sensitive portrayals by both girls and boys where clearly both thought and feeling came together with pleasing effect. A portrayal of "staggering" involved the student clutching his chest with one hand, groping with the other, while lurching unevenly across the floor. This travelling step had been well thought through, and was invested with considerable feeling and empathy. "Spinning", too, portrayed by one girl incorporated light twirling, and high and low levels. At times she slowed and shifted balance. It was as though she had conjured up a toy top, and had been able to embody its essence. Both of these children drew my eye because of a particular quality which set them apart in the midst of considerable movement and activity. Short and literal in interpretation, the examples nevertheless reflect engagement of both thought and feeling at age seven or eight.

On another day students responded to direct teaching, as Jean Cunningham, a guest to the class, led them by means of detailed description and provision of imagery, through the steps of painting a fence. As the students understood the game, they were increasingly able to incorporate their
own imagery into the fence painting. Students showed various degrees of engagement in and sensitivity to the task. The following description from field notes records the engagement of one student when asked to "paint a fence".

Watching Anna, I am convinced that she is absorbed in the make-believe. Her eyes focus on her fingers as they work. She truly mixes her paints, then bending at the knees, she sweeps the paint across, her eyes following the paint brush. When she reaches high, she balances perfectly, extending one toe behind which forms a graceful continuous line with the length of her body.

Anna is able to enter imaginatively into the task, extending the directions given by Jean with her own original ideas. For example, her focus on each aspect of the task was her own, as was the extension of her toe. With this action she appeared to be acting intuitively, enjoying the feeling that the elongation of form gave her and creating an eye-catching shape in the process.

Other students responses to the fence-painting were noted as well.

Derek follows the directions and demonstration. His actions, while not flowing, are forceful. His feet remain firmly planted on the ground as he reaches across to paint. His eyes flicker to other students as he engages in this activity.

Donald attended to the painting, but there was not the involvement in the task that I witnessed in Anna. There was no evidence of particular thoughtfulness, imaginative exploration or emotion.
Simone's painting is very flowing and sensitive. She, too, reaches up high, and reaches across in the appropriate spots. This work is more tentative than Anna's utter absorption. She seems to take a little step back to survey the work.

Although there were passages in Simone's portrayal which are pleasing, she follows the directions including the step back to appraise her work, almost directly. Her tentativeness appears to reveal a lack of confidence which may account for lack of absorption and the fact that she does not attempt to extend the ideas.

"Craig does his reaching and leaning across the painting rather abruptly and with little flow. He is following directions, and is doing all the suggested gestures."

On the whole the children entered into this step by step make believe very well indeed. There is every reason to believe that they were enjoying themselves and were gaining ideas for future work. Anna is set apart by several things. Her utter absorption, her sustained attention to details, her focus, and her extended reach and the foot with it, draw the eye. There is evidence of the engagement of both thinking and feeling which results in the arresting quality of her movement, her imaginative extension and refinement of the actions given, and in her intuitive sense of the rightness of the shapes that she is creating.

On another day Kathryn told the children that they were going to go around the circle, with everyone, in turn, doing
a gesture, holding it for a minute for the others to see. This was done for three words, 'happy', 'sad', and 'fierce'. The children had an opportunity to think of a way to express the feeling convincingly, and to see other children's ways of expressing these emotions.

Following this preparation, the students were placed in groups. The group was to express a particular emotion in movement, then to freeze into a tableau. The other students, the teacher and I were to guess the emotion based on what we saw. Students were able to find a variety movements and gestures, some which communicated the feelings very well indeed so that the guessing went very quickly. Anna's group portrayed sadness. Anna moved slowly and very convincingly; she indeed looked bereft, with limbs low, sagging body, and eyes averted, then she put her arms around another person and held them there, in a gesture of comfort. Although all the children participated, Anna again drew my eye because of the particular sensitivity of her portrayal of the emotion. She not only thought of appropriate ways to communicate the emotion, but she "lived it" in a convincing manner. The students who were the audience were able to identify the actions which made them think that one group was showing "sadness". They gave such answers as "...the people were crying", "sad", and "weeping".

Another group portrayed anger. One child with shaking fists, hopping around with displays of temper caught my eye
with his effective portrayal. He froze with arms folded across his chests, with his face distorted by anger. This group effort, too, was easily guessed. Someone said, "Mad?" then another child amended the answer to, "Angry". The teacher, Kathryn, asked why they thought so. They answered, "Because he’s got an angry look", and "He seems mad," and "The way he’s jumping". Just as I had been drawn to the boy who was so convincing, so were the others. He had been able to think of recognizable ways of conveying anger, and had been able to invest these movements with feeling.

This group understood how to portray an emotion and had a repertoire of ways to show this through movement and drama, using their faces and bodies. Not all the students were equally effective in their portrayals, yet all the class responded and were able to express their own understanding with enjoyment and satisfaction. The students were also able to read the emotion portrayed by the others with guesses based on what they saw and understood. This observation of others, it appears, can contribute significantly to learning.

The Ten Year Olds’ Class

The teacher of the dance club, Cynthia, expressed strong belief in the benefits of dance for students. As she observed, dance is expensive for students. By organizing
dance clubs for each age group, grades one/two/three, grades four/five/six and grade seven she created effective dance opportunities for students, at no cost, but which required, of the students, a commitment of time and effort. Her own time and effort expended beyond regular teaching duties were enormous; she had few unbooked noon hours. Through the performances of her students at school concerts, she gained support from school colleagues and parents. Parents were pleased to be included in various aspects of the preparations, such as costuming, makeup, dressing students, and providing backstage support. The large number of parents, many in working clothes, who attended an after school dress rehearsal attests to the success of the dance initiative in strengthening ties between home and school.

Cynthia declared that she emphasized technique and style in the dance club; the structure of the dance club with a performance goal in sight, with time-limited practices and with students drawn from many classrooms reinforced that. She expressed her hope that the next term would afford time to include opportunities for student composition and viewing of dance film as exemplars. In any event, within the structures that Cynthia provided for students were opportunities for students to invest expressive qualities which gave them ownership of the dance.

When the gym doors opened to admit the waiting students to dance club, they ran in eagerly, went to the change rooms
behind the stage to change into shorts and T-shirts, and to remove their shoes and socks. As they emerged, they had standing directions to run around the outside of the gym two times. At the end of this time they would assemble to sit on the floor beside the stage, in front of the teacher. When all were assembled, the teacher would give them the practice agenda for the day.

Children of nine and ten years old who were in the dance club, were enthusiastic and eager to take part in the dance activities. They were characterized by a general optimism and a belief that they could do well. Jennifer, who loved to participate in dance and in sports declared, "I like to show off my power...(through participating)"

But these students also expressed self-consciousness, particularly during performance. Patricia described how she made mistakes in a dance performance, doing a movement sequence the wrong number of times because she was nervous. Ruth described her nervousness prior to the evening performance for the parents, "I knew that this is it; if I mess up I can't get another chance" (11294). Jennifer, recognizing that others were nervous to perform, understood that her confidence and composure was an asset to her, allowing her to perform well.

Students at this stage were also beginning to be self-critical. They were aware of different skill levels and
expressed concern that they lacked needed skills. Patricia was critical of herself, saying that she "...never (thought) I was good" (11294). In an interview, Ruth said that it was "really important...to do a good job" and that "if everyone's dancing good and you're dancing poorly, they'll (the audience will) know" (11294). An unsuccessful audition for a dancing part in the chorus of an out-of-school production caused Ruth to reflect, "It doesn't feel good when you don't get the part".

The students were concerned with what made dances good or less good. They agreed that a thorough mastery of the dance movements resulted in a more pleasing dance. These are the words of one student:

That [qualitative] difference is when you don't know them and you keep on forgetting them and when you get used to them you just remember them and your feet just do it...you can do it better now that you know it (11294).

Jennifer recognized active engagement of the whole self in dance, noting that such dancing was more enjoyable to watch.

It looks different when they're more enthusiastic in their moves. Like instead of just going like this (illustrated a noncommittal tentative movement) they would just go (illustrates a vibrant extended movement) like that, rush it sort of instead of just going slow..." (11294).

According to Ruth, learning and using new material was important to ensure audience appeal. "You need to learn new things. If you used the old things the dances would be
really boring. You have to make sure the people never saw it before" (11294).

Analyzing Dance

The dance club, which met after school and at noon hours, had a large membership drawn from various classes. Because of limited practice time and impending Christmas Concert performance, viewing film excerpts of dance was not part of the learning experiences planned by the teacher.

However, an opportunity to reflect on qualitative differences was offered when the older students in dance club performed. Two dances, one involving popular and somewhat seductive images, and the other more abstract and spiritual in tone were discussed by the students whom I interviewed. Jennifer preferred the popular dance, feeling that the enthusiasm and commitment of the dancers made an important difference.

...that was really fun to look at...they were so enthusiastic with the scarves, it’s like they really enjoyed it so much that they would do it professionally all the time and they couldn’t stop (11294).

This dance, however, more closely resembled dance images of popular culture supplied by television and videos, and thus was more readily interpreted than the other more ambiguous dance.

Of the second dance, Jennifer said, "I didn’t like that dance that much because it looked like something was there
that didn’t belong...(that) made it look boring" (11294). Ruth, on the other hand, was less concerned with the differences between the dances, feeling that both dances were enjoyable and interesting to watch.

Sheer pleasure in the physical engagement was expressed by all three students interviewed. Jennifer described a pleasing movement as "...interesting and they make you feel that your arms and legs are getting a muscle inside them that’s really working hard and that feels nice" (11294). Patricia declared, "I like the part where we have kick-change-kick" (11294). Ruth, too, describes sheer physical engagement.

I felt good about that part. That part wasn’t too hard, but it was kind of hard doing the foot thing. I liked it because I like kicking my feet. I don’t know why, but I like kicking my feet (11294).

Evidence of Aesthetic Engagement

On the first day of observation, the teacher told the dance club students that they would start by learning all the steps. She provided a little jingle, "One-two-three-step-back-step-front", which they repeated as they concentrated fiercely, eyes fixed on their feet. As they tried these first movements, the lines of students were ragged and their feet came down hard on the floor.

The teacher directed them to change places, to step softly, and corrected the spaces between dancers. They
repeated the sequence of steps several times. They were told by the teacher not to bend their elbows as they moved, and to relax a little! All told, this directive at this time resulted in a visible improvement in the lines. The dancers were starting to look lighter, freer, smoother, and the lines less ragged. As they became familiar with the steps, the dancers were able to do the movements more precisely and with flow.

The dance club teacher continued to add to the dance step by step. The teacher placed an emphasis on technique and style through direct teaching, yet she did not ignore the emotional connection. She used imagery with skill in order to touch the spirit and to fully engage each child. For example, she suggested and demonstrated "soft hands" as they did a reach, and instantly there were twenty-two hands reaching softly.

My attention was focused on three students new to the dance club. Patricia listened very hard, but seemed to be a little confused. I noted her watching another student who appeared to know what to do. Patricia, however, moved lightly and gracefully, and as she mastered the steps, seemed to gain confidence and was able to do increasingly well. As she repeated the sequences various times, she started to look up and to connect her movements in a flowing manner.
Jennifer, on the other hand, appeared to have mastered the steps and there was a nice flow as she stretched into the lunge or reached high. Her eyes followed her movements, she appeared at ease and her timing and rhythm were good.

On the following days more steps were added until two dances were built. Jennifer and Lynn were developing finesse over time. Having mastered the steps and routines, their movements became sure, flowing, clean, and well-timed. Jennifer was able to do, with ease, a special challenging part which fell to one individual. Both Jennifer and Patricia were able to invest the dancing with feeling and style which made it their own and made it exciting to watch. The teacher had set the stage with the thinking challenge of the steps, and had provided modeling and imagery for the students. This helped the students to add a dimension of sensitivity and feeling. Both of these components, thinking and feeling, were essential for aesthetic knowing, "feeling good" about the part, to be at work.

Ruth, on the other hand, did not progress as far. Mastery of the steps was difficult for her. Her movements did not flow, nor really fit with the music. She leapt too hard and too high and so was not quite on the beat. Her gestures were hurried with sharp edges and lacked commitment; she was not focused. Yet she seemed perky and happy, if a little lost at times.
By performance time, Ruth had not yet reached a point where she focused on either the thinking or the feeling. Her dancing was still characterized by small difficulties and lack of finesse. Ruth was, in sum, at a less advanced stage of aesthetic understanding in dance than the other two dancers. It is to be noted that in spite of this, the teacher placed Ruth in the front row, a spot which Ruth enjoyed. A less sensitive or less child-centered teacher might have chosen to put one of the more spectacular dancers in the front row. Instead she placed Ruth with other short students in the front where their parents could see them.

The Thirteen Year Olds' Class: Grade Eight

Claude, who taught the grade eight and grade nine/ten classes had about seven years teaching experience. In keeping with his "focus on the students", and as a "definitely child-centered" teacher, he sought to know the children individually in order to teach them in the best ways possible. He spoke of his own growth in the arts, especially dance, and of his desire to provide experiences for his students in those areas. Creating opportunities for students to feel successful and to build confidence was high on his priority list. His dance classes were structured in ways which were consistent with his philosophy, and at the same time promoted aesthetic growth for students. Lesson activities in Claude's classes called upon students'
thinking powers in developing and extending their ideas, and at the same time emphasized expressive elements, thus creating opportunities for aesthetic growth.

Classes for the grade eight and the grade nine/ten students in this study, took place in the drama room, which was the backstage space adjacent to the gym. There was a good sized black floor for activity, and stage curtains which could be moved around, but were usually pulled back out of the way for this class. The lighting in the centre of the floor space was bright. There was an ambiance about the room and the floor space seemed inviting.

When students in grade eight entered the drama room for their first session in dance, they were quiet, arriving alone, or in pairs. Students sat on chairs at the side of the room. Early get-acquainted activities were greeted with quiet enthusiasm as many of the students did not know one another. This was because in the first year of secondary school, the grade eight French immersion program drew students from various schools around the district. As the year progressed and friendships were formed, students arrived in groups and often stood in groups talking animatedly to friends. On occasion a student would practice or demonstrate dance steps for a group of friends. On the whole there was much more activity and conversation before class as the year progressed.
During first classes in the semester, students were often slow to begin the movement parts of the classes. Early field notes describe a "flurry of panic" when students were asked to do travelling steps in the first session. Students revealed in interviews that they felt extremely self-conscious in the first sessions until they had acquired a knowledge of some dance steps, and had met and felt comfortable with new friends.

Confidence, an important and influential issue in dance, was particularly crucial here as students in grade eight revealed considerably more self-consciousness than the other age groups in the study. This may be explained by several factors, not the least of which that they are young adolescents, a group traditionally acknowledged as being in a stage of sensitivity. In addition, they were in their first year of secondary school, a new setting with many other French immersion students drawn from different parts of the district. At the beginning of the term all-important peer friendships were not yet in place. Further, using a physical medium such as dance to express ideas and feelings can be especially intimidating in early adolescence.

Students' were very conscious of their own perceived lack of skill. Connie expressed the need to acquire skills. "Some people don't have a clue how to dance -like me -and I guess it's easier getting lessons first,... so I think more lessons (would help)" (21194).
Students recognized the importance of acquiring technique in order to effectively convey ideas in dance. James claimed that, "You’re trying to portray your feelings through dance, but the thing is if you’ve got those fast feet and steps and stuff you can portray happy or sad..." (21194)

Will, too, had carefully analyzed technique. "You know the people who take it seriously and they’re concentrated, their movements are crisper and when it has to be light their movements are lighter and slower" (21194).

In the grade eight class of thirty, five students had some previous dance experience, ranging from two to five years of experience. Other students admired students who had skills and dance experience, saying that they liked to watch them dance. Megan noted that

There’s lots of people that have taken dance already and I like how they can dance cause they have a lot of experience and I like watching that because it’s usually a bit better than everybody else does (21194).

James admired the apparent ease of those with dance experience. "I guess I admire the students with dance experience cause it’s easier for them" (10994).

Analyzing Dance

Some students in grade eight approved dances that were true to life or that conformed with images of dance seen in popular media such as music videos. For James the video, 
Four Comic Men which depicted men engaged in a skilled and manly exercise was enjoyable. "We watched how these guys kicked themselves in the butt and used these big metal pots and made all these weird sounds" (10994). He admired their practice and dedication, deeming their dance worthwhile and appropriate.

It would have taken a lot of training...it always takes time to do and it would have taken a long time to do that because it’s a routine and it’s steps over steps over steps, just repetition and they kept doing the same thing until it turned out to be funny (10994).

Another video was shown a day or two later. This video, L’Oiseau Exotique, featured a male dancer clad in a flesh-toned body suit performing a sensitive balletic dance. James’ response to this video was quite different from his response to Four Comic Men.

Well, I have some very strong feelings about that video. I don’t know - I didn’t really like it because that man was nude. (Latter part of the sentence was almost whispered). I think it would have been better if he was in costume as a bird or something or even as a mime where they have those body suits instead of being nude. Whether it made him weird or whatever it made him show pride and stuff but it was too funny. It wasn’t dance to us; it was this guy becoming like a streaker or whatever (10994).

James did not acknowledge the skill involved in the dancing, saying, "His moves weren’t that hard" (10994).

James’ offense at the L’Oiseau film excerpt indicated his inability to move beyond the certain limited conventions. His rejection of the dance did not allow him to look for ways that it might have related to his
understandings or feelings. The dance offended his sense of propriety because a man was involved in a kind of dancing which did not conform to models of dance and masculine behaviour in James' world.

A video was shown some weeks later featuring Australian male aboriginal dancers engaged in a war-like, aggressive dance. The dancers' dramatic but scanty body coverings were observed by James and others without comment. Although I would like to account for the difference in James' reception of the various male dancers as a change in attitude and growth in acceptance of different genres, it seems more likely that the Australian dance was consistent with James' perceptions of appropriate male behaviour.

Danielle in grade eight also described the dancer in 'L'Oiseau Exotique'. She discussed how the dancer used all the body, turning, sliding and making high leaps. She described these movements as rapid, delicate, and graceful. Her initial impression was one of interest because there were many different high leaps, and because this was a style of dance of which she had seen little. She commented on the freedom of the dancer, saying that the dance made one think of freedom and of innocence, like a fairy. Because of the music and all the little leaps, she felt that the dancer could be representing a fairy, but this was not of central importance. There was a carefree mood in the dance
heightened by the use of the costume. The dance made her feel happy and free, and she liked it.

This student was able to move beyond the obvious, such as details of costuming, or even a literal interpretation to see that the dance, while representing a bird or fairy, might symbolize other concepts such as freedom or innocence. She was not bound by narrow conceptions, and was able to see a genre new to her as interesting, rather than threatening. She saw relationships to her own life, was able to share in the feeling of freedom conveyed in the dance.

Students at age thirteen drew on what was familiar to them as a source of ideas in dance. James describes his comfort in creating a dance around a baseball theme. "We all knew what baseball was and how it was played and we all had a part that we knew how to play so it became easier" (21194).

Over time, students became more sensitive to possible ideas for dance. Megan in grade eight expressed this heightened awareness. "Well sometimes I look at it and kind of take the ideas in so I can have more ideas. I just look at the ideas and I think, 'Oh, I can use that for (dance)'" (21194).

As mentioned previously, videos and dancers provided ideas which students could draw upon. Will's journal written after two consecutive classes reflects his receptiveness to ideas. "I think that we will try to find a way to
incorporate what (the visitor) demonstrated for us." The following day after viewing a video he wrote, "They included levels, much space and created a mood". Here, too, he considered application of his learning to their own group dance.

Many students found music to be a source of ideas for dance. Will commented that he was better at "...thinking up ideas...I never thought about how [music] made me feel...now I think about how it makes me feel so I can do that better now" (30195).

Group work often facilitated the generation of ideas, although this required flexibility and the ability to accept the ideas of others. As one student allowed, "You don’t get an idea and stick with it. Everybody combines their own ideas and it kind of gets transformed into one" (21194).

As time went on students became increasingly aware of the possibilities for expression in dance. Midway through the dance course, James felt that dance could communicate where words could not.

You can really show what you think...what you’re feeling even if they (the audience) don’t have words for it...With dance you can show that exact same way, that exact same thing you felt before but you never know how to describe it in words - there’s not a word for it (21194).

Sensitive to the qualitative differences between performances, many students wanted their dances to look professional and good. Journal entries of the students
reveal their concern with "...doing as well as the other groups."

Realism was particularly important to James. "I think realism is important no matter what you do", and in a later comment, "I preferred to have that realistically...", and "I think that’s where we lost most of our realism." He spoke of how he would redesign a whole group dance."...we’re in the Australian outback. It would have been better – you know kangaroos or crocodiles or he comes to a lake, or some more of a story line..." (30195).

In group dances James’ best moments were associated with real, dramatic action. For example he showed freedom, using large sure movements when he was depicting baseball.

What I liked about the first time was we were doing baseball, so we learned the steps and it wasn’t as hard because it was easy movements and it wasn’t like dance where it was very technical. We were trying to describe easy things like what does it look like when you comb your hair without a mirror, or how you brush your teeth (21194).

While realism was important to James, this was not the case for all students. Will, on the other hand, felt there was strength in leaving a dance open to interpretation, to leave some things unanswered and thus to engage the thinking faculties of the audience. "Sometimes it’s good that way where you don’t want to make it too precise and you want groups to think about it or whatever so its fun. It makes you think and stuff" (21194).
Evidence of Aesthetic Engagement

Early in the school term students were given a group assignment. Each group was to do a two-minute dance, during which there were five music changes. Each music change meant a change in dynamics and space. Claude had been teaching toward this assignment. In the lessons leading up to this assignment, students had been introduced to and given a chart of The Elements of Movement; Claude had demonstrated, giving examples of changes in dynamics and use of space, following which the students explored and practised these elements. To further students' understanding, video excerpts had been critiqued in terms of the elements of movement.

In this particular assignment students were given an open-ended narrative, entitled, Friday Night, around which to build their dance. The narrative was as follows.

It is Friday night and you are preparing to meet your friends. You leave your house and walk to meet them. You are greeting them, when all of a sudden another member of your group arrives and tells you of an incident which has happened. He tells you to follow, which the group does. The group sees the problem and reacts to it.

Claude asked the students to consider how they would react, how they would feel. He assisted them in this project by relating each step of the sequence to one of the music excerpts, each of which provided additional emotional engagement for the building story.

Claude had provided the students with the necessary structure for them to be successful. Within the safety of
these parameters students could use their own original ideas, and could invest these with as much sensitivity and feeling as they could bring to the particular task.

Students worked in groups for several class periods to compose, practice and refine their dances for presentation to their classmates. Regular positive feedback, and suggestions for improvement were provided to each group by Claude and myself as we went from group to group. After three or four practice sessions each group had improved and gained confidence.

Will's group, three boys and two girls, worked well together from the beginning. They were engaged in working out unison and contrasting moves, and in putting together the story line. There was both pattern and narrative in their dance, as well as variations which took into account the boys' desire for action and the girls' ability to do highly synchronized tight moves. All members of the group made suggestions for the original dance concept, and later for changes and refinement. Their practices were conducted in a narrow hall which restricted their free use of space. Immediately prior to the performance they had an opportunity to try it twice in the larger space of the drama room where they would be performing. Steady improvement occurred over this practice session.

When this group performed for their peers, Will went through a kind of transformational experience. Up until that
time he was observed to be enthusiastic, attentive to instruction, and accurate, if somewhat wooden, in his movement. But when the audience was in place and the dancers actually performed, something extraordinary happened. Will seemed to come alive! He moved freely, using greater space. Each movement flowed smoothly into the next as though he was anticipating and highlighting each in turn. He used new arm gestures freely with vigor and apparent comfort, actually leading the others of his group into the swirl of movement. He improvised with his voice at intervals, creating a kind of unity and heightened atmosphere. In the fight sequence, what had previously been a tentative movement became a full clean flip by Will onto his stomach to lie prone. This improvisation, too, was at once dramatic and graceful.

It was as though in the dance Will was somehow transformed, and that he was thinking in the moment of dance. He acted intuitively to create a kind of spontaneous force that enhanced the dance and made it exciting. The audience was first silent, then enthusiastically acknowledged the magic hold of that moment. As the teacher Claude said to me immediately afterward, "It was a real breakthrough!"

Not all aesthetic understanding is realized in dramatic breakthroughs. At times, it may occur in quiet moments, in ways that are very real and satisfying to the dancer, and apparent to the viewer.
Such an example may be found in a part of the large Group Project which was presented at the culmination of the term. There were individual, partner, small group, and large group dances in this project. One part of the dance represented a village celebration, a send-off for a youth departing on a symbolic voyage. Claude, the teacher, prepared the students by reading them a story of such a journey, the initiation into adulthood. As well, the students watched video examples of dances which provided rich imagery and examples of dance steps. As this dance occurred late in the term, all students had experience in application of the elements of movement.

For one part of the dance, Claude provided the structure of a circle which was to involve all the students weaving around the young hero. Steps were individually designed ranging from a mere walk to complex rhythmic pulsing involving the whole body. As the students danced in the circle to the music, they became visibly freer, entering into the dance with larger motions, greater variations of movement including improvised segments, and with enjoyment evident in the intensity and concentration brought to the task. My eyes were drawn to one student in particular. This girl used her whole body as she danced, she twirled as she maintained a complex rhythm pattern. Her arms were at times held aloft, at other times held at shoulder height. Her facial expression was one of utter absorption in the task;
she seemed at one with the rhythm and the music. She was able to invest her original ideas with emotion to create a dance all her own which was quite lovely to behold.

Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen Year Olds: Grade 9/10

The dance class for grade eight was offered in the first semester of the school year. In the second semester, Claude taught a dance class for grade nine/ten students. Once again, the drama room provided the necessary space for classes and presentation.

Students in grade nine and ten were in general more relaxed in dance than their grade eight counterparts. Claude and I marvelled at their enthusiasm and apparent enjoyment of dancing in class, and in the presentation of their group dances to one another. They were largely on task, well-motivated and attentive. The following comments were recorded along with my field observations at the beginning of the term.

I am surprised in the extreme at the pleasure which these students take in the dance. The joy of movement is almost palpable in the groups which I observed... I am surprised at the ability and enthusiasm of these students to present for one another. Having seen the hugely paralyzing embarrassment of grade eight students when asked to present for each other or even to move in a group, this seems quite amazing. It is not that these students are not embarrassed or do not feel that they are taking a risk; rather it is that they seem to go ahead with it anyway, and that their enthusiasm and desire to dance seems to take precedence over these other factors. The movement here is not extraordinary, rather it is unpolished, but interesting. It has a spark of commitment and of enthusiasm.
It is important to note that in the grade nine/ten class, eight of the eighteen students were attending for the second year, one for the third year. As in the grade eight class there was a small number of students who had taken some studio dance lessons. Three of the students were accomplished dancers. Naturally, these previous experiences contributed to the feelings of comfort felt by the group.

The students' experience and practice were factors in allowing them to reach significant thresholds of aesthetic awareness. The important role of practice acknowledged by Nachmanovitch (1990) is borne out in descriptions of these students' intensity and absorption, and in some cases dedication in dance. "Mastery comes from practice: practice comes from playful compulsive experimentation (the impish side of lila) and from a sense of wonder (the godlike side of lila)" (p.73).

Even though a number of students in this class claimed that they were somewhat self-conscious, particularly at the beginning of the term, this phenomenon was less frequently expressed by the students than by the grade eight students. Various students claimed that the previous year's experience in the class, or their experience in studio dance made them more comfortable. Observations confirmed students' claims that they achieved levels of comfort relatively quickly after a small number of class sessions. Eric, sixteen years,
who had no previous experience and who was in the class for the first time, discussed growing confidence.

At the beginning I found it really challenging to let myself go and do it and get over the fear and embarrassment. But I've done it for a while and it's fine once you get to know everyone well in the class...I'm really comfortable, I have no trouble doing stuff anymore (10695).

Some feelings of nervousness did accompany performances. Presentations made early in the term of group dances to their peers were accompanied in some cases by giggling or lack of focus. For example, grade nine students presenting their dance, "Le Loup", lost their concentration before the right moment, creating a less than perfect ending. Yet, when this dance was performed later to an audience of parents teachers and peers, they remained focused until the very last moment. Practice contributed to growing confidence which was manifest in this performance.

Students of fourteen to sixteen were well aware of the need for form. The importance they placed on mastering technique was strikingly demonstrated by a group of grade nine and ten students who were teaching their own dances to other students. The teaching students chose to disregard the emotions of the dance and to focus on the technique. "When asked by Claude, the teacher, why they had made such a choice, one student replied that the emotion '...won’t come through because we don’t know the dance yet'"
Holly, fourteen, enjoyed the challenge of acquiring technique.

I like doing dances that I know I can do, but I haven’t done like if I have to do a pirouette or something, and I haven’t done it before I like doing something where I can learn that new step (10695).

She described the satisfaction that followed mastering a new step. "I felt really good ‘cause (in) that one step at the beginning where we did the circle I couldn’t figure out the leg movement. Then finally when I did it was like, ‘yeah!’" (10695)

Absorption or engagement in dance was mentioned by several of the students interviewed. Students’ statements reflected different degrees of engagement. However, it appeared that an inverse relationship seemed to exist between self-consciousness and total engagement; the two did not co-exist. Eric, who earlier in the term felt self-conscious doing any dance, had grown to a point where he could say,

I never get nervous, during the performance I just go with the flow, just have fun with it. And then after I can think about what I did wrong. I sort of get mad sometimes if I goofed up and then I got a bad mark for the group or something like that and I get mad at that. During it I’m into it and I don’t really notice it. I don’t really get nervous or anything before (10695).

Jeanette, one of the accomplished dancers, describes her feelings of total absorption.

When I’m dancing I get totally lost in it...sometimes when I’m dancing I don’t have enough presentation because basically I don’t get lost in what I’m
doing...I have this dance called, "Bring Him Home" from 'Les Miserables' and I'm Jean Val Jean. And whenever I dance that dance I don’t hear anything I don’t see anyone. I just flow with the music (10695).

Students valued dance which was different or original. Eric expressed as his criteria for valuing a dance of peers that it was different - original and experimental.

I think cause they sort of took a step farther than anyone else during those presentations...everything else was so serious and theirs was a comedy; it just struck me as being different (10695).

Holly, too, placed a premium on originality, discussing copied ideas which she felt made student-created dances less than original. "...most people get ideas from that so its not really original...they watch...they say, "Oh that looks neat, so they sort of copy it, but put it in a different way" (10695).

Jeanette spoke of a friend whose highly original dancing style she admired. "...he has his own extreme style. He is very modern. He has weird movements; he likes to do things very strange..." (10695).

Students of fourteen, fifteen and sixteen had definite ideas of what was good and what was less good. This included perceptions of quality and style in the dance of classmates. "...just the way she - everything seems to flow no matter what she does. Everything just looks really nice every time she does it. Anything - she can be just fooling around - it just looks really nice" (10595).
Dance as a personally significant medium for expression took on particular importance in this age group. Students felt that dance was a vehicle through which they could communicate. Eric emphasized that through the dance process, he had gained communication skills, allowing him to communicate in different ways. He declared that he could "...express myself more in a lot of different ways, more emotions, freely". He spoke of gaining courage, and the understanding."...if you open yourself up to people, not to feel embarrassed about it; other people will accept it" (10695).

I've learned a lot about how symbolism is really important in dance and how you can communicate nearly anything that you want through dancing or through movements. Just that you can use dance for nearly anything (10695).

Natalie, an experienced dancer who was in the dance class for the third year declared, "I think the emotional value has to be stressed more - dancing is more than just physical...Last year we did emotions (in class) and it helps me (in dance)" (10695). Jeanette enjoyed the expression of emotions facilitated through dance.

It helps you bring out like the feelings and stuff and I like to do a lot of stuff that has a lot of feeling in it...there are some dances that I really enjoy what I'm doing and I really like and I have deep feeling for (10695).

Jeanette continued to discuss the process of communicating meaning.
... you have to feel what you’re doing. Cause you have to interpret every single move you do into what you’re using. Like if you’re using "longing" you have to make everything look like the feeling. ’Cause nobody else feels it except you and you have to make them feel it by watching you (10695).

Analyzing Dance

Students in this age group were intrigued with various ways of interpreting dance. Natalie (sixteen years) discussed multiple interpretations in dance.

Everyone will interpret differently. I did a dance this year called "Confessions" and even to myself I had more than one interpretation... I think that’s what (makes) a really good dance - if you can interpret it for yourself, but also leave an opening for other people to interpret it their own way and they can actually bring it right into them and it can be personal (10695).

Jeanette (fourteen years) expressed her understandings of meaning in dance. "Yeah, there’s a different meaning in everything...some have meanings that are underneath...and there are different meanings for what they’re saying, and so you just have to look" (10695).

When asked if he could suggest an alternative interpretation of Le Loup, the dance also discussed by Jeanette in the next section of this narrative, Eric replied,

Life and Death. I guess just the struggle between two forces, and then (pause) - just a struggle, because there was a lot of change in power in all that cause the wolf had the power at times and I guess the hunters they overcame it (10695).

Along with the understanding that dances might be interpreted on many different planes, was the ability to
apply themes from dances in new ways. Jeanette discussed Le Loup, a dance created by her group.

This dance could have been interpreted a lot of ways because it's simply a dance about being lost. So you could put it in the big city and you could change the wolf into say a marauder and then it would be extremely different, it would have more of a gang scene. Or you could change it to in the desert or change it anywhere. You could change it many different other ways...

(10695).

Students were aware of this class/activity contributing to their personal development and providing opportunities to build skills needed for life. Self-confidence was often mentioned as one such skill. As Holly expressed in an interview:

I was always a very shy person when I was younger and growing up. When I came in we did that first performance in front of the school. It was the first thing I've ever done in front of a big group of people, and I felt good about it afterwards because I liked our dance and I was proud of myself... If you're a shy person it...takes that away. If you can stand in front of a different group of people and feel good about it - what you take away from it is a feeling of accomplishment (10695).

Natalie too, felt that the feelings of accomplishment and gains in self-esteem provided through dance were invaluable.

I'm a lot stronger person than I would have been without dancing. It really builds up your self-esteem...A lot of people won't go up on a stage and talk let alone dance and express yourself with your body...it's like the best feeling of accomplishment (10695).

Eric felt that learning dance extended his ideas, assisting him as an individual in "broadening your choices" in life and helping him to avoid being "narrow minded" (10695).
When the term was under way, Claude showed the class a video excerpt from, "Strictly Ballroom". A young dancer is brought to understand and feel the "heart" which infuses the dance. Empowered thus, he becomes absorbed, losing himself to the dance. The powerful unifying force of shared emotion and understanding through the dance results in a wondrous performance.

Evidence of Aesthetic Engagement

Following the film viewing, the grade nine/ten class discussed the use of symbolism in the performance scene. Claude assigned group dances which were to be symbolic, that is they were to explore, "What can you communicate symbolically?" Previous work in drama in the class, and knowledge of the elements of movement were further help to the students in this assignment. Music provided inspiration and imagery.

Students in search of moods and images which they could build their dances around, listened to a variety of music which Claude provided. Initially, Kay's group had trouble putting ideas to the music which they had chosen; their dance creation seemed to have ground to a halt while other groups were going ahead with the process. The group members asked Claude if they could change their music. With his permission they selected new music, and almost immediately had a theme to which they could add ideas. Once their dance creation was under way, they were highly successful in
putting together a dance about which they all felt enthusiastic.

All the groups planned and practiced their dances, each with their own music in a different spot in the school. Two groups could practice separated by screens in the drama room. One group practiced in a hall, one group in Claude’s classroom, and one in an adjacent classroom. Practices took place for at least part of the class period on five or six days. Students worked during that time to refine and polish their dances for presentation to the rest of the class. In several of the dances props or costumes were used to create mood. For example, Kay’s group in keeping with their private eye mystery theme, based on a sensational 1990’s murder trial, wore trench coats with collars turned up, sunglasses, and hats pulled low.

Kay played a central role in the dance, including the short dramatic introduction. Here the stage was set for the assignation which was the dance. The dance began with the dancers’ backs to the audience. In trench coats, dark glasses, and hats, which set the mood, they leaped and twirled in unison to face the audience, guns drawn. Each in turn leaped again, this time to the side, then crouched with guns extended.

The dancers formed a line, two on each side of Kay all facing stage right, then moved their arms in a unison move
from left to right, a sustained movement across their bodies. They shaded their eyes, turning slowly in unison from one side to another, then crouched suddenly with guns pointing identically. Rising then crouching again, this time in different directions and at different levels, the dancers regrouped on each side. Kay, facing the dividing screen away from the "audience" called out,"O.J. Simpson, Murderer!"

The other dancers did a spin so that they were back to back. Kay and the others stepped back toward each other, all closing in on a central point. When they touched, they all jumped and twirled to face one another, shocked, raising their guns into the centre. They all walked with big stealthy steps first out of the centre, then into a line facing one way. Their eyes travelled from side to side as they slowly leaned, twice forward and back, then sideways.

They drew their guns first in unison, all in the same direction, then moved again to freeze in different directions. Kay hurriedly took off her coat, hat, and gun laying them out on the floor, with two dancers on each side. She screamed, the lights blacked out momentarily, then blinked on to reveal that Kay had disappeared, and that the other dancers were mystified as to her disappearance, gazing at the laid out coat and hat. The dance ended with the dancers in a tableau, propped against each other at different levels.
Although all the students in this group clearly enjoyed practicing and presenting the dance in an entertaining manner, one student stood out. Throughout the dance, I was drawn to watch Kay. Her movements were bold and sure, her eyes followed her movements, and conveyed the wariness, and stealth appropriate for this role; she is focused, absorbed and intense, living the dance. Both thinking and feeling are engaged in Kay's performance to make it extraordinary and to capture the audience. The observer is watching aesthetic understanding at work.

Evidence of aesthetic awareness may also be seen in other groups who did this assignment. Each group naturally interpreted the assignment their own way using music as a springboard for ideas.

Jeanette has taken two years of dance with Claude. She has also taken some years of studio training. Jeanette's group created a dance which they entitled, Le Loup, because they "had a sense of big forests and could hear wolf cries" in the music. The theme was loneliness which they worked to convey through the movements of the dance. The dance began with the six dancers in a circle facing outward. According to Jeanette's explanation, the circle represented connectedness and cycles; that they were turned away from each other symbolized alienation and loneliness. The dance continued using sudden turning movements, with contrasts in
levels, formations, use of space and relationships between
dancers which conveyed a feeling of churning, of unrest and
conflict. The taut, tense bodies of the dancers, their
startled expressions, and roving wild eyes, and the
increasing speed of the movements all reinforced the feeling
of building tension.

The dance progressed to a point where all were lined up
on one side against Jeanette the wolf. She bent her body,
arched her back and threw back her head, remaining poised in
this position for a moment. She was a wolf! she was truly at
one with the dance. From here she sprang forward, driving
the group opposing her backward with sheer intensity.

There was a tremendous sense of conflict between her
and the others, during which she fell to the floor lifeless,
then sprang up and was transformed as part of a joyful
circle dance. This represented a complete change of mood
with the dancers in happy communication with each other,
turned toward each other. The dancers formed a line one
behind the other. They used graceful, sustained arm gestures
in cannon, that is each slightly after the one directly in
front This had the effect of leading our eyes from one to
the other in turn. Then the dancers, crumpled to fall limp
to the floor, one after the other. The timing was split-
second, and this was an original, effective device. They
ended by standing in two lines, holding their arms up, feet
together, very straight and tall, then bowing in unison. They held their final position, then exited in an orderly manner to the side. This ending was polished and highly effective. They maintained the performance right to the end.

Jeanette was an exemplar; her movements were completed, tight and accurate, and her focus was sustained. She stood tall making complete use of the dramatic element, in the intensity showing in her face and in every line of her body as she moved. Jeanette moved intuitively, expressively, reading and responding to the moment.

Although the others in the group danced well, by contrast to Jeanette who was outstanding, they were less remarkable. However, the mood of all the dancers was one of joyful delight at the success of their dance. They wolf-howled in triumph as they made their way across the floor and out the exit.

Student Growth

All the examples provided of aesthetic awareness at play are instances where growth is taking place. This section will highlight a few episodes from the data which present another perspective of growth. In some cases the teacher is describing apparent growth, or a student may be reflecting on growth.

Growth was different for each individual. Although there were dramatic moments when growth was evident, more
often understanding, knowledge, and skill built gradually and incrementally. There were times when growth of a whole class was evident. One astute student interviewed said that over the time of the dance course, "...everyone's improved together slowly and you can just see the quality rising" (21194).

**Moments of Growth**

Claude, the junior secondary teacher, referred to "moments on the continuum" or "moments of growth" in relation to both the class and the individual. Following a performance he discussed the moment of growth for the grade nine/ten group:

...it's another moment- it's just a different experience, and this is the one that actually gives them the growth now to the next sort of level. Once they've been working toward this moment and it's all there and they know it's coming up and they've done it, not only that they've done it but they've done it very well. It's going to be so important for me now to take that, recognize that it's been moment of growth for the whole group and from here what can we look to now (10395).

Another moment of growth, this time for the whole grade eight class, was described by Claude, the teacher as, "...a kind of transformation...". This growth followed, as Claude explained, "...watching videos, exploring, and working."

Each of the activities which preceded the observation of growth made its own particular contribution to learning. As student growth is not assured, but is rather the outcome of careful planning, the pivotal role of the teacher,
setting the stage to maximize student interaction and learning is underlined.

Claude also discussed the moment of growth in relation to an individual student in her second year of the course.

...it builds up for her. She’ll cooperate, she’ll participate, and do well and then there’s sort of a click and there’ll be a moment in the course where she just becomes so focused, it’s just so impressive to watch. This term she’s already there, whereas last time she was in the course it was maybe about half way through (10395).

Nachmanovitch, too, uses the concept of a "click" to describe a special moment of knowing.

As the form refines the feeling, the Poem just gets better and better and truer to the original unnameable feeling at its source...There comes a moment when the whole thing slides into shape—you can almost hear the click—when the feeling and the form come into a state of harmony (p.111).

The transformational experience of Will, described in the last chapter, was a dramatic moment of growth. In Will’s spontaneous, intuitive response in performance we recognize Maxine Sheets-Johnstone’s "knowing in the moment". He was primed through the carefully planned lessons of the teacher and through the additional practice. In addition, he was motivated to do well in front of his peers. But the intensity of his performance is only explainable through the special insightful knowing which suffused his extraordinary freedom.
Steady Growth

Growth took various forms; it was at times slow and steady, accompanied by increasing satisfaction and the realization that progress was being made. Daily journal entries reflect students' feelings of growth and progress with their dances. This ongoing dialogue often included comments, changes, and improvements that the students perceived were needed in their dances. Sometimes ideas for strengthening their dances from such sources as a video, a guest or another student were discussed with the notion of incorporating this new material into the current dance. As the dances took shape, enjoyment and excitement often accompanied statements tendered such as, "We are going to have a good dance!" Jeanette, in grade nine, indicated the growing ability of her class at the end of the term, to shape their dances in meaningful ways.

These last dances are going to be excellent because everybody has just thought hard and done exactly what they want to do with them. And they're very creative dances I must say! (10695).

After presentations students often said, "It went well", thus expressing the satisfaction which comes from steady progress.

Kay, a grade ten student described earlier, told of her initial limitations in the class. "I was really shy and I couldn't get into all the activities...I just kept my
movements short and just to get by". She continued, "Last year when we finally presented in front of people it made me realize like, I can dance!...I just felt we had it all together and we were successful" (10595).

At the end of her second year in the dance course, I asked Kay if she were given a choice of medium for the expression of an idea, what she would choose. Kay said, "I'd probably dance (gentle laugh) I really would. Like for a presentation or something I'd just dance because you can express anything!"(10595).

One performance occasion in the middle of the grade eight term, drew attention to student growth. The following comments of the teacher, Claude, clarified the nature of the achievement.

In fact the kids have come along hugely from the beginning of the year. What we’re seeing here, for Matt and Gary, for example, is a huge step forward in the dance they did today. It had a beginning, a middle and an ending! They completed it! The opener was quite compelling. In a sense they have learned something here which will apply to their lives - take responsibility, do your best, complete it. Earlier I don’t think they could have risked like this in front of their peers (10395).

Understanding dance as a unified whole, or that it has quality of its own which sets it apart, in this case a beginning, a middle, and an end is a point of aesthetic understanding( McColl, 1979). This stage of development is consistent with Ross’s Stage One.
For the other three boys it was quite a leap forward as well. It's just that they were in a sense, farther along to begin with. Will again rose to the occasion, making a dramatic start, leaping, concentrated, confident and strong. They sustained the power almost to the end (10395).

Power, a recurring word in description of dance by participants in the study indicates intensity, engagement, or absorption such as that ascribed to divine play. This stage is congruent with the third or Poetic Stage of Ross’ model.

Summary

Each age group in the study exhibited a range of behaviours, preferences, and abilities. A general pattern of progressive understanding linked to age emerged from the responses of students. Both performance/interpretation and observation/analysis contributed to a picture of student growth in relation to self-awareness, discrimination or what is enjoyed and valued, imagination and sources of ideas, and originality. Presentation and expression of feeling became a means of communication while engagement and absorption in the task were related to depth of aesthetic experience. Facility in written and verbal expression which increased with the ages of the students afforded one more means for the articulation of understanding in dance. Patterns of growth varied, including gradual incremental growth,
dramatic moments of growth, individual growth, and growth for a whole group.

Students in all of the age groups responded aesthetically in dance. These responses range from the literal, but very real aesthetic feeling and grace of the eight year olds painting the fence, to the style and expressiveness of the ten year old dance club students. We see it in the grade eight student’s absorption of the circle dance and in Will’s dramatic transformation in the moment of dance. We see it as well in grade nine and ten, in the mysterious excitement and expressiveness of the Mystery dance, and in the complex and subtle symbolism of Le Loup. Both maturity and the experience which each student has to draw upon are factors which play a part in the student’s ability to give expressive form to ideas.

Each teacher set the stage in deliberate ways to ensure aesthetic growth. By engaging students’ cognitive abilities through the generation and extension of ideas, and their affective faculties to induce the emotional and expressive elements, richly creative dances resulted. Aesthetic engagement is qualitatively different and instantly recognizable. Just as audiences are drawn to the dancer who has soul or is aesthetically engaged, students and teachers may observe and recognize aesthetic engagement in the classroom.
In the next chapter the findings described here — various stages of aesthetic engagement, and the many faces of its presentation revealed in the classroom observations — will be examined.
Chapter Five - Discussion of the Findings

Conditions Which Promote Aesthetic Development in Dance

The research questions that prompted this study are:
How do behaviours associated with absorption in the task reveal aesthetic development? How do behaviours associated with expression and presentation reveal aesthetic development? To the original two, a third was added as the study progressed: What conditions are helpful for these processes to occur?

The nature of the classroom observations of this study precluded separating out the responses to the research questions in the same straightforward format that they were presented in the introduction. Instead, elements of absorption, expression, and presentation overlapped continually. The focus, therefore, is on presenting the dynamics of classroom interaction that resulted in aesthetic growth. Although each element has not been examined in isolation, the answers to all the research questions are contained in the argument of the study.

It became apparent as the study progressed that certain conditions were particularly favorable for the promotion of student growth. Successful growth and development for students in dance rose from teacher nurture, opportunities to create and compose, practice and hard work, experience, observation of models and exemplars, collaboration and cooperation with peers, and presentations or performances.
Each of these made its own contribution to facilitate student learning in dance.

Confidence was part of student growth, and of those factors which contributed to student growth. Linked with freedom of expression, focus, and absorption, self-confidence is critical in the development of the individual dancer, and was therefore given attention throughout the study.

The Teacher

The teacher played a critical role in student growth and development in dance. The data made clear that were many aspects to teaching which effectively set the ground for student success. Each of the teachers involved in the study manifested superior skill and sensitivity in creating opportunities for students to succeed.

A point made in the previous chapter, but which bears repeating, is that in order for aesthetic learning to take place, lessons must be structured to call upon both the student's intellect and emotions. Teachers in the study did so in ways that were appropriate to their own contexts.

It became apparent that the teacher was key in establishing a nurturing environment, one where risk-taking could take place and where the confidence necessary for growth could be built. The prescribed Provincial Curriculum
Guide in dance makes reference to "...a nurturing environment that encourages risk-taking" (p. 3). A sincere respect for students was part of an effective teacher student relationship.

Claude, the junior secondary teacher, spoke of setting "...up a type of rapport where the [students] will respect me just as much as I respect them for doing the types of things and taking the types of risks that I'm asking them to do." For the teacher this involved modelling, risk-taking and as Claude put it, "Not asking students to do anything I wouldn't do." Claude approached his students directly, "I'm going to take some risks and this might look funny to you, but essentially I'm just practicing what I preach" (10395).

Through modelling of attitudes as regards willingness to take risks in dance, and as advocates for their art, the teachers served as role models. All three teachers participated actively and with evident enjoyment in dance activities. On one light-hearted occasion Claude demonstrated dance on the spot to words suggested by the students. The students responded with glee, then entered the activity following with enthusiasm, all self-consciousness dispelled. Thus, the teacher led the students into the world of play. Claude spoke of his own growth in the arts, and of wanting students to share such opportunities, and to have experience in the arts, specifically dance.
All teachers gave students ongoing positive feedback. Claude stated, "I just keep feeding that fire with positive strokes and giving as much feedback right on the site and complimenting them and really building their confidence as they go" (10395)

On some days providing all-important encouragement necessitated a search for positive aspects of student work. As Cynthia, the grade five teacher confided, "I try to praise and encourage them even if they don't do so well. I find that they seem to do better when I do" (11294).

Setting students up for success seemed to be a continual concern for the teachers. Each of them spoke of each student's potential and of organizing learning experiences which they thought might help students to realize that potential. Claude described his own role of providing opportunities; to do so he used a house metaphor: the teacher providing the foundation upon which the students might build. Considerable time was spent by each teacher planning and preparing learning experiences for the classes. Prior to performances these activities often became all consuming, adding to the teachers' already heavy workloads.

Concern for individual students was also manifest by the teachers. The teachers often focused on students who seemed to need special opportunities. Claude spoke of one such student saying, "I honestly believe that given more opportunities, doing more of what we've done, he's going to
surprise everyone. I can sense that...I’m going to find him a role that will make him bloom."

Of a grade five student, Cynthia said, "Dance may be very important for her, allowing her a chance to grow and to assume responsibility." Kathryn, the grade two/three teacher described the needs of various students. Of one student in particular she said,

Dance is so good for self-esteem... Simone is able to dance very sensitively, to use the symbolic and yet she does not do well in other areas of school and has low self-esteem. It's so good for her!

**Opportunities for Creating and Composing**

The Prescribed Provincial Curriculum Guide in Dance (1994) uses Creation and Composition as one of its four curriculum organizers. Through creating and composing students are engaged in critical thinking such as "...exploration, selection, combination, refinement, and reflection" (Prescribed Provincial Curriculum Outcomes in Dance, 1994, p. 3). Claude, the junior secondary teacher stated," And so my focus is definitely on the students and right through building of their own dances and the ownership that they feel"(10395). Kathryn, the grade two/three teacher stated simply, "The kids need to have the freedom to create".

Opportunities for creating and composing were also highly valued by the students, promoting feelings of
ownership through the exercise of choice and decision-making. In addition, such an approach facilitated personal expression as the students created their dances. James, a grade eight student, discussed the child-centered approach of the teacher who incorporated these indirect teaching methods, rather than relying on direct teaching.

I don’t think this is a teaching class; I think this is a learning class. Like he doesn’t teach the stuff; you learn stuff from your own experiences with how you dance and what else happens (21195).

Strong links were made between student enjoyment and involvement and opportunities to compose and create. Observations indicated that students of all ages were often highly engaged in these activities and were able to describe with enjoyment and pride, sequences or dances that they had created. One student spoke in appreciation of the freedom to make choices offered in the dance class.

If someone tells me to write about a certain topic I find it harder than if someone just tells me to write a story of any kind that I like. So it’s almost the same when we’re dancing here (10994).

Eric, in grade ten, linked engagement in the task with freedom of choice "...because it makes you think more and not having the teacher doing the work for you. It makes it more enjoyable and it makes you more interested in it" (10695).

The ability to experiment and explore freely was valued by Natalie, also in grade ten.
I like the freedom, and that's one of the things I like and (the teacher) gives us - lots of freedom. It's "How about this? Let's try this. If that doesn't work, let's do something else to improve it" (10695).

Creating and composing allowed the students to engage in the dance process in meaningful ways, as expressed by Nancy. "I think its a lot better to make it up yourself because you feel like you know it and you make a connection with the dance" (10595).

According to Jeanette, such freedom is ultimately highly motivating, permitting the experimentation which was so thoroughly enjoyed and engaged in by the students. "If you have a choice of what you want to do...usually you go all the way with it" (10695).

The teacher of the dance club, because of constraints of time, numbers of students, and the pressing goal of nearing performance, used a more direct teaching approach. Jennifer responded to this approach. "I think we should think of some of our own ideas and put them together as a dance. Like let some of the kids make up their own moves and try to fit them in" (11294). A favourite part in one of the dances, for several of the dance club students, was an improvisation movement sequence.

Providing students with opportunities to explore, and discover in groups created a different dynamic in the dance room than would be seen in a class where only direct
teaching took place. Students were much more active and sound levels sometimes rose during discussions and exchanges. Pristine, uniform order, as when the teacher directs was neither possible nor desirable. Rather the atmosphere of the dance area might be characterized by the hum of fully and actively engaged students.

Practice and Hard Work

Many connections were drawn between hard work and success. Practices which went well were often described in terms of the hard work accomplished. "You will become successful", said one grade eight student, "if you do the best you can" (30195). Kyle in grade two spoke of "...practicing them (the dance sequences) until they get them right...or else you would end up sloppy and no-one would come to see you dance" (11294). Another student spoke of her frustration with her small group when they didn't want to practice as she felt they needed. Effort took many forms. One student described how he held a freeze position by "...imagining I was a rock ...to help me to concentrate".

Students commented that their final performance would have been better if they had more time for practice.

More serious practice....working going right through maybe another day or two to perfect a lot of the parts. I think the beginning looked more professional than the middle... and I think we practiced it more (30195).
Understanding through experience the work required to polish a dance helped the students to look at the performances of others in a new way. The effort involved in professional performances was better appreciated. At the end of the semester, several students spoke admiringly of dancers, as James did in terms of "how hard they work".

**Working With Peers**

In all four of the classes dancing involved being part of a group and working together with other members of that group to present a coherent dance. Students expressed feelings of responsibility to do one's own part well in order not to let the others down.

In three of the classes students also worked in small groups to create their own dances, pooling ideas and working with the abilities of each member of the group. In some cases students had to work at getting along together and at listening to one another's ideas. Teachers felt that learning to work successfully in groups was an important life skill which could be developed through dance.

The value of group work, both in the dance creation process and as a valuable life skill, was often mentioned by the students. Natalie felt that over her three year involvement in the class she had acquired skill in working with other people. "I've always had problems working with people, because I'm very independent and this class helps!" (10695).
When asked what was important for students if they were going to develop in dance, Claude, one of the teachers, replied, "Well I think what has become quite evident is group work, cooperation and collaboration." He went on to say that students with experience "will not necessarily come up with a product (that is the most) cohesive" (10395), rather that the outcome of the group work might be dependent on the ability of individuals to cooperate and work together. Nancy, a grade nine student, felt that for a dance to go well the group had to, "Work together and sort of know what everybody else in thinking about, concentrate on the dance" (10595).

Students valued opportunities to work in groups especially those of their own choosing. Many expressed the feelings of enjoyment and fun which came from engaging in group work with their friends. Peer support and encouragement were also important factors in feeling successful.

At the same time peer pressure was felt by individuals. One student hesitated to advance his ideas, fearful of rejection and another was concerned about the way her enthusiasm might appear to her peers. "...it was kind of embarrassing I know cause not everybody was enthusiastic about it and if you were enthusiastic you’d feel kind of weird because you were the only one doing things"(10994).
One incident involving group work was brought to my attention by Will and by James, in separate interviews, and was discussed in their journals. These accounts told a story of Will and James as a two person dance composition group, who had an idea that they felt had merit. They already had their dance under way when a third student was assigned to their group. When the new boy presented a different approach, James and Will were reluctant at first to make any changes. However, when they finally did make changes they found that a new, highly original dance which incorporated elements of both ideas, resulted. Any time that Claude and I spoke to them during practices of their new dance they were, all three, extremely positive about the progress of their dance. The final performance was strong, enhanced by percussion and some costuming which they added. It seemed that all three boys gained energy from fusing their ideas and from the particular collaboration which resulted.

Observation of Models

This study focused on two strands which contributed to growth of understanding of dance: active participation in dance and viewing dance. Observation of dance took several forms. Excerpts from dance videos, performing artists who visited the schools, performances by artists outside of the school which the classes attended, visitors to the classroom, and peer performances were all part of the dance that was observed. In addition, the teachers modelled
or demonstrated steps or concepts as part of regular teaching in the classrooms.

These observations of dance contributed to student learning in various ways. Students found that professional dancers provided exemplars for performance. In an early interview, Will expressed value in observing others "...to see how it's done in a professional way - what it's supposed to be or look like..."(10994). Later in the semester he observed, "...watching people helps us. I find it helps cause you learn new things and see how it looks when it's well done, kind of smooth and flows and stuff..."(21194).

Observing exemplars helped students to understand characteristic movements of particular genres of dance. For example, one student commented on the focus, the distinct steps, and "the dip" characteristic of the tango. Following a visit to the ballet, a small group of students composed a dance which contrasted the formal disciplined qualities of ballet with the vigor and flexibility of "funk". Craig, in grade two, expressed a desire to learn the dance movements of Ache Brazil, a performing group which visited the school and which performed dazzling gymnastic movement sequences.

Watching dance also enriched students' vocabulary of movements, providing new ways of moving which they could incorporate into their own dances. Following critiques of dance excerpts in class, students expressed their intentions to include particular movements or sequences in their own
dances. Jazz dance illustrated by a guest provided sequences of movement observable in student dances thereafter. Observing the dances of their peers, was another source of dance ideas. It was not unusual to see students trying one another’s dances after performances in order to master the movements and sequences.

Learning through observing involved more than just steps or movements. As Kay said, "I look at it and I get lots of ideas from them, not just their moves - it's their all over attitude towards the dance" (10595). Megan, too, observed, "I never knew you could express your feelings by dancing, but now I've learned that by watching others - by watching videos and everything" (21294). Another student added, "We've learned... from observing other groups we see what expresses what feelings. So eventually after doing it a lot it comes more naturally than anything" (21194).

The teachers frequently modelled dance for students illustrating concepts such as focus, teaching movements or sequences, and drawing students' awareness to the need for refinement. Teachers used counting the beats, commentary, and descriptive phrases to trigger imagery and to help students remember. Such phrases as "soft hands" and "like a very soft pillow" accompanied modelling by the dance club teacher. The effects of such demonstrations were directly observable in the students' work, in students' focus and in the students' qualitative approach.
Observation also played a part when students taught one another dances. Sometimes such teaching was necessitated by a student's absence from a performance. Not only did the one who was learning observe in order to master the dance, but other students who observed the process provided invaluable coaching.

The students were most interested in dances created and performed by their peers. The dance club dress rehearsal offered the dancers an opportunity to see all the different age groups in action. They watched closely and had many observations to share. Just prior to a class presentation of small group dances, a grade eight student said, "I have seen the dances in progress and I can hardly wait to see them performed!" and another student, "In this group there's going to be some really good ones..." The students were high in their admiration for one another's dances, paying one another compliments during practices, presentations, and by clapping heartily when it was appropriate. Many of the students were originally attracted to sign up for both of the junior secondary courses and for dance club because they had seen exciting demonstrations of dance by students previously enrolled in the courses.

As students' experiences observing dance grew, so did their ability to write critically about dance. Over time they were increasingly able to appraise technique, mood, and meaning in the dances which they watched. This was
particularly evident in the grade eight and grade nine/ten classes where it was possible to provide considerable experience in critiquing dance.

All of these considerations, teacher nurture, opportunities for creating and composing, practice and hard work, observation of dance, and peer support contributed to a rich ground which set the stage for student growth. Student confidence was an important additional contributing element, but because of the complexity of its relationship to student growth, it is discussed here, separately.

Confidence

As the study progressed, a theme of student self-consciousness asserted itself. It became apparent that student confidence played an important and complex role in the learning of dance. Confidence was the great enabler necessary for growth, a benchmark of growth, and at the same time enabled the manifestation of growth through expressiveness and style in vibrant presentation and performance. Confidence promoted the realization of potential and the development of ideas, whereas lack of confidence detracted from the students' enjoyment and performance.

To more fully grasp the importance of confidence, it is necessary to consider the very nature of dance itself, which uses the body as the medium of expression; an emphasis on
the body places the dancer in a position of great vulnerability. This is especially true of young people who are acutely aware of their growing bodies. Claude, the junior secondary teacher, referred to "How frightening it can actually be at this age level" and "the huge risk-taking involved" (10395) for young people to dance in front of others. As the grade five teacher put it, "In dance there is no mask; it all shows. There is nowhere to hide - it’s total vulnerability" (11294).

Students who entered dance classes for the first time often expressed anxiety and self-consciousness. Self-consciousness interfered with freedom of expression and in some cases with their ability to take part in dance. In the words of one student, "I was nervous because it was a new experience...I was really shy and I couldn’t get into all the activities" (10595). As dance was a new venture for those students and they had little precedent upon which to base their expectations, such concern was understandable. Will (thirteen years) commented in hindsight on his initial feelings.

You feel embarrassed to go around dancing and stuff because never! - you don’t really do that a lot and now all of a sudden you’re jammed in with a bunch of people who you don’t really know and you’re asked to get up and dance around and stuff. It’s embarrassing at the beginning and you don’t really know what you’re doing and you’re trying to just do what you can and go through and eventually you feel more comfortable and can join in with everyone (30195).
Students recognized that self-consciousness was a deterrent to progress and success. A grade eight student put it well. "If you’re embarrassed you feel shy and you don’t want to do anything and then what you do gets sloppy and stuff. So you want to get rid of the embarrassment and you’ll do fine" (30195). His teacher expressed it another way.

If the students are not confident that they can actually do it (dance) they might go through the motions, but they’re robbed of it because they don’t truly realize its full potential; it’s just sort of going through the motions.

Jennifer (ten years) described what can happen if you are confident. "I’m not afraid to go out there and... if you’re not afraid it really helps ...if you’re more confident then you’re more enthusiastic and you dance better" (11294).

Students linked confidence with expressiveness. As the term went on, Connie found herself, "putting more expression into the dances instead of being shy about it and not expressing yourself well" (21194).

Admiration was expressed for those students or performers who apparently did not feel self-conscious, or who performed with vigor, commitment, or daring that might be considered risk-taking. Connie admired people in her class who, "...didn’t seem afraid to do anything in front of other people." Several students commented on a character in
a video excerpt. Danielle’s words in her journal were, "She didn’t know how to do the dance but she took a chance and tried it. I think that the man (actor) liked the way she took a chance".

Claude, the junior secondary teacher, considered the benefits of the risk-taking made possible through confidence.

...confidence would have them take more risks. And in doing so not to say that the more risks you take the better dancer you become, but because of the type of dance that we’re doing the risks through symbolism, through interpretation, - these are also risks that I encourage, not just the risks through movement. So in terms of purely dancing...it will surely play a large role...(10295).

Performances were the time of greatest anxiety, and students were often as a grade five girl described herself, "More scared than when we practiced." But this anxiety eased with experience. "The first presentation was the hardest ...I wasn’t as nervous on later presentations as I was with the first one because it’s your first time doing it and everyone’s there" (11294).

Although the grade two three students were observed to dance with freedom and abandon at times, they too expressed self-consciousness with performing in front of others. In a conversation Craig expressed the comfort felt by students of all ages in performing in a group rather than alone. "I’d feel sort of scared if it was just me alone, but in a group I’m okay with it" (11294).
The most frequently mentioned factor which contributed to gaining confidence was getting to know other students in the class. Grade eight students coming from a variety of elementary schools for their first year of junior secondary school, expressed this concern more than the other grades involved in the study. Typically the students expressed self-consciousness followed by growing comfort and relief as they developed friendships in the dance class. This student journal entry is one of many such similar. "I feel more comfortable in this class...I have met several people and learned their names." Students frequently offered encouragement to one another. This peer support was a significant factor in students' growing satisfaction and feelings of comfort with their dancing.

Being prepared was also considered important to confidence. As James, in grade eight put it, "If you're not prepared it's just go out there and do anything, you don't feel as comfortable as if you know exactly what you're going to do" (30195). One teacher when discussing a performance noted nervousness on behalf of "...perhaps one group; they hadn't had time to practice as much as the other groups".

Connie expressed the students' growing confidence and comfort as the class progressed. "...from the beginning I was kind of self-conscious - I think that everybody was at the start - so that after a bit I think everybody just kind
of adjusted to it" (30195).

Kay, too, described her growing freedom in dance. "I got more comfortable with the people around me and then I could do anything in dancing" (10595). A conversation in relation to an incident illustrates the dramatic change that took place for one student.

**Interviewer:** If at the beginning of the year someone had said to you that you would be standing up with three people in front of an audience and you would not know what you were going to dance what might you have said?

**Response:** Well I would have said I would never get myself in that position. (laugh and pause) Things change. I guess I couldn't help that really so I just had to go with the flow, and if something changed like having to do something like that I'd just have to do it (laughs) (30195).

Confidence was associated with success. Freed from the binding constraints of self-consciousness students were able to focus on dancing expressively and with style. Melissa commented that confidence allowed her to "...put more expression into the dances instead of being shy about it and not expressing yourself well." As students became increasingly comfortable, refinement became a priority. Group performances characterized by confidence were described in observations as having "mood and focus" and "power and dignity". Will described his feelings leading up to a very successful dance performance.

Once you see other people's you're not as shy and you want to make other people think that you're good at something too so you try your hardest and that's what's
happened to me. I saw other people were doing it and it just makes you feel more comfortable with what you’re doing so you can do everything and try and perfect it that much more (21195).

Confidence acquired through dance was recognized as an asset and valuable life tool. As Holly expressed in an interview:

I was always a very shy person when I was younger and growing up. When I came in we did that first performance in front of the school. It was the first thing I’ve ever done in front of a big group of people, and I felt good about it afterwards because I liked our dance and I was proud of myself... If you’re a shy person it...takes that away. If you can stand in front of a different group of people and feel good about it - what you take away from it is a feeling of accomplishment (10695).

Natalie too, felt that the feelings of accomplishment and gains in self-esteem provided through dance were invaluable.

I’m a lot stronger person than I would have been without dancing. It really builds up your self-esteem...A lot of people won’t go up on a stage and talk let alone dance and express yourself with your body...it’s like the best feeling of accomplishment (10695).

The grade five teacher, Cynthia said,

They gain confidence through performance...the confidence that they learn spills over into other areas...after the performance the children were walking as though they were the stars of the school (11294).

Summary

The last two chapters, chapter four and chapter five, have presented findings in relation to each question asked in the study. Although the answers to the question have not
been considered separately, but rather cumulatively, the spirit of the research questions has been observed.

Through a focus on strands of performance/interpretation and observation/analysis, Chapter Four described the growing understanding of students of various ages. Presentation and expression of feeling, and absorption in the task were related to growing aesthetic sensibility.

The conditions described in this chapter, teacher nurture, opportunities to create and compose, practice and hard work, experience, observation of models and exemplars, collaboration and cooperation with peers, and participation in presentations and performances all played a part in support of students' growth in dance. Together they formed a rich ground which maximized student aesthetic learning and promoted student success. Teachers provided the general frameworks within which aesthetic understanding could grow. Given opportunities to create their own dances in the relative safety of a nurturing climate, students were able to explore original ideas and to invest them with feeling. The forms given to ideas and feelings were refined by the students' growing aesthetic sensitivity. Practice and experience, working with others, and observing a variety of examples of dance, contributed to students' increasing ability to generate and present ideas which were personally relevant.
Confidence is the great enabler, promoting growth, realization of potential, style in presentation, and the origination of ideas and expressiveness. Confidence interacts with all the other elements as it is at once the enabler of growth, the benchmark of growth, and essential to the presentation of aesthetic learning. In order to invest dance with feeling and style, the dancer must be able to move beyond crippling self-consciousness. Total absorption removes the performer from the restraint of self-consciousness and permits free exploration of expressive form for the presentation of highly imaginative imagery and deep feelings.

In the next chapter, the findings of this and the last chapter will be examined in light of the literature review. In addition, conclusions and recommendations as well as suggestions for further research will be made.
Chapter Six - Conclusions

This final chapter brings the various strands of the study together. The findings presented in the two preceding chapters will be discussed in light of the literature review, and are further related to the questions of the study.

Each of the contributing frameworks provides a lens through which the findings may be examined. Langer's philosophical theory of the arts provides important underpinnings for examination of the student's dances as forms for presentation and expression of the symbolic thought. Ross's model of aesthetic development provides descriptions of stages of aesthetic development in the arts, while Huizinga's theory of play as enabler and stimulus to aesthetic knowing contributes further insights.

Relating Findings to the Literature

Dance As Symbolic Art Form

The arts, according to Langer (1953) are forms symbolic of human feeling. Dance in education seeks to give form to images, ideas, and feelings. The medium of expression is the body. Through dance forms, students give concrete or symbolic representations of their knowledge of the world (Ministry of Education (Schools Division ), Victoria, 1986). The body is used as the medium for the transformation of feeling.
Jeannette (aged fourteen) and her group, in their symbolic dance conveyed feelings of loneliness and alienation. Although the image of the wolf gave rise to the dance, the dancers did not make a merely representational response. Rather they extended and transformed the original idea. The dance gave powerful form to these extended ideas. "The true power of the image," posits Langer, "lies in the fact that it is an abstraction of a symbol, the bearer of an idea" (p.47)

Likewise Danielle perceived the dance, "L'Oiseau Exotique" to embody ideas which extended beyond the literal. She saw and felt freedom and innocence, rather than a replication of the bird.

Natalie, Eric and others also recognized the symbolic play in dance. They were aware of the power of symbolic imagery as an effective tool for the expression of ideas. Will, too, demonstrated an awareness of the symbolic both in his response to film and in his tolerance of ambiguity in the interpretation of dance.

James might have been capable of perceiving symbolic form in the dance which he observed. He declared "Whether it made him weird or whatever it made him show pride and stuff but it was too funny". But his desire for authenticity, for the dance to be congruent with the reality of his world, prevented him from fully exploring ideas.
But what of the younger students? The ten year olds gave no particular indication of understanding metaphor. Jennifer, though, was aware of quality in dance, recognizing it as a transforming element.

The responses of the youngest students in the study, such as Anna, Craig, and Simone were to give literal, although sensitive and accurate portrayals of the bird, the raptor, or of painting a fence. Observing the bird in L'Oiseau Exotique entailed noting details of movement which each child found appealing, whether speed or lightness. No attempt was made to read different possible meanings into the dance, other than the portrayal of a bird.

Art, as Langer explains, has its greatest power in its ability to give symbolic form to ideas. The students in the study were increasingly able to give symbolic form to ideas as they grew older, but the ability was still very individual. Jeanette is two years younger than the oldest students in the study, Danielle, three years younger.

Certainly, factors in addition to age effect aesthetic development. It is apparent that various other factors perhaps greater individual sensitivity, experience, practice, family values or education have played a part in the shaping of the aesthetic consciousness of these students. Dance education has a significant role to play in the development of students' aesthetic sensibility.
Ross's Model of Aesthetic Development

As mentioned in the literature review chapter, when Ross (1984) developed a model of aesthetic development for each of visual art, music, and drama, he left the door open for the development of such models in other areas. Since dance holds much in common with the other arts, this study draws on the logical premise that dance would benefit from the development of a similar scheme describing incremental aesthetic growth.

Since the problem focused upon in the study is student aesthetic development in dance, accommodation is made between Ross's model which applies to the other arts and the concerns of dance. Ross's model (Figure 2) is shown to provide an adaptable structure for describing aesthetic development in dance. The descriptions of stages of development in dance should provide a useful basis for teachers in assessing and teaching dance. Descriptions and examples from the data cited in earlier chapters examined in light of Ross's framework of aesthetic development permit the reader to make comparisons and to view student understanding in dance from a broadened perspective.

Stage one of Ross's model encompasses ages 3 - 7, and Stage Two ages 8-13. The development of seven and eight year olds, the youngest students in this research study, might be expected to correspond with Ross's Stages One and Two. In Stage One, Ross suggests that students show increasing
## A SUMMARY OF ROSS'S MODEL OF AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

### LEVEL 3
**years 14 +**

- "...clearly the level of imaginative feeling...(of discerned) correspondence' between our own life and the 'life' or ...'object' that confronts us..." (p. 58).

Acquired sense of ambiguity, "...disinterested respect for the thing itself" (p. 57), interest in personal expressive form - "...forms are symbolic statements in their own right, not simply imitations of scenes from life" (p. 127). Form offers "...scope for affective projection and exploration" (p. 127). Emphasis placed on character development and on complex issues and tensions in relationships rather than on the story-line. Coherence of the overall structure more important than episodes. The art form "is regarded as pure...symbol...a symbolic act of significance in its own right" (p. 126). Self-consciousness accompanies self-awareness.

### LEVEL 2
**years 8-13**

Disinterested Attention. "Increasing recognition of quality, greater ability to discriminate the good from the less good. Sensitivity to uniqueness and coherence (interrelationships social as well as aesthetic" (Ross, 1984, p. 2). Form and convention of real-life drama important, and "interest in film and television as 'models' for material" (p. 126). Conformation with reality along with real-life issues and scenes are emphasized. "Desire to be true-to-life, to take scenes and issues from the real world and make their own versions conform to reality" (p. 126). Self-awareness and perception of skill or its lack are present. Awareness of skills or lack of skills becomes an inhibiting factor for the first time" (p. 126). There is preference for stories, which are coherent, consistent and which "end significantly...(There may be) adoption of stock material and subservience to cliche'" (p. 126).

### LEVEL 1
**years 3-7**

"Increasing 'disinterest' meaning lack of practical associations/values. Form important for its own sake; it has inherent value and there is a perception of quality" (Ross, 1984, p. 1).

"A degree of detachment allows some measure of freedom to the play of sensibility" (p. 57). Attention is given to the quality of a work over and above its function. The child does not identify with the object or part. "Deep commitment to the imaginative world created by play....Inhibitions are at their lowest" (p. 126).

### PRE-AESTHETIC LEVEL
**years 0-2**

"Pragmatic attachment and perception. The form/object implies practical consequences" (Ross, 1984, p. 1) This practical orientation is linked to "such central life issues as security, love, status, nourishment, livelihood, communication, efficiency" (p. 56).

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Figure 2 Summary of Ross's Model of Aesthetic Development
disinterest, allowing for some exercise of sensibility. In Stage Two, students are able to recognize quality and better discriminate the good from the less good.

The students in the present study were well able to enter worlds of pretend and fantasy, as evidenced by Craig's close identification with the raptor, and by Anna's detailed role play in fence painting. All the students were able to play roles, and to translate them into movement with varying degrees of effectiveness. In his description of Stage One, Ross includes make-believe play as important, referring to, "Situations representative of personal encounters and happenings in the object world...simulated and re-enacted as part of the process of subjective integration" (p.126).

The students' ideas for dance came from personal experience, from popular culture, such as movies as in the Kyle's raptor, from visiting artists, such as the Ache Brazil dancers, from imagery in art lessons, and from stories, music, and films. Drawing upon what is familiar for ideas in dance is consistent with Ross's description for drama, that of idea generation at all three stages of aesthetic development, but especially at Stages One and Two. The emergence of popular culture as an important source of ideas, appears in Ross's Stage Two where he sees a "Greater concern with the forms and conventions of real-life drama - interest in film and television as "models" and as source
material" (1984, p. 125). However, it should be noted that the students made equal use of the classical ballet example, L'Oiseau Exotique, as a source of imagery for their dances. At ages seven and eight students are still open to different sources of imagery and are not inevitably bound by stereotypes in their choices, as this study as shown.

Students aged seven and eight in the study made free use of space, used large body movements involving the whole body, and were for the most part uninhibited. Their responses to directed activities were immediate, intuitive, and spontaneous. High action, speed, and running were commonly favored. According to Laban (1948) "First the child is mostly concerned with speed - enjoying quick actions, and gradually learning to move in a more sustained manner" (p. 22). Other students enjoyed light, quick and light sustained movements as well, which would seem to challenge Laban's claim that "Light sustained movements develop naturally later" (p. 21).

All students in the study, while generally accepting what was modelled by the teacher, or shown on film, were able to discern quality. This appeared in eight year old Simone's desire for refinement, and in seven year old Anna's extension of given ideas with her own original ones in the fence painting. While interpretations were literal for the most part, students were capable of sensitive portrayals in
movement which incorporated emotional elements along with their ideas.

In his description of Stage one, Ross recognizes the spontaneity mentioned above, as well as claiming "that inhibitions are at their lowest" (p. 126) at this stage. While the students were largely uninhibited, the beginnings of self-consciousness were evident in the children of seven and eight in the performance situation. Ross, however, makes no mention of such self-consciousness in Stage One or even in Stage Two of his model.

Yet, this study revealed the restraining effects of self-consciousness which severely inhibited students from entering freely into dance. This crippling uncertainty and lack of confidence has been described as it applies to each age group. Evident at age ten, self-consciousness was found to be at its greatest around ages 12 and 13. Although Ross recognizes the effects of self-consciousness in the drama part of his model at Stage Three, 14+, he does not mention it in relation to student participation at Stage Two: that is, for students between 8 and 13 years. I would modify this clear cut distinction made between thirteen and fourteen year olds regarding self-consciousness in drama. In dance this problem is even greater. Consider that many students have seen little of dance as an art form or as part of school life, and that by this age they may have absorbed narrow social attitudes toward dance.
Those students who formed the age ten group in this study had begun to show evidences of self-critical attitudes. Awareness of their own lack of skill was evident in the ten year old dance club students and the twelve and thirteen year old grade eight students. As one ten year old put it, if she "messed up" in front of the audience or did less well than her peers everyone would know. Grade eight students expressed the hope that they would do as well as their peers in their group dances. Many students felt that they needed to practice and refine in order to do their best. This awareness of skill caused students to reflect on peers who had previous experience or who exhibited ability. Ross describes Stage Two as one where "Awareness of...skills or lack of such skills becomes an inhibiting factor for the first time"(p. 126).

Idea generation was not a concern for the dance club students. However, ten year old Jennifer’s preference among dances which she observed was consistent with the imagery of popular culture. She described her favorite dance as "professional".

The negative response, of James, a grade eight student, to L’Oiseau Exotique, a balletic dance performed by a male dancer revealed the influence of cultural stereotypes in formulating his attitudes toward what he felt to be appropriate in male dance, and also, the way males in particular are socialized to think of serious dance. James’
response should be compared to the responses of the seven and eight year olds to the same excerpt. Rather than forming negative judgements, the younger students found the dance to be a source of imagery. In James’ response we see Ross’ description of "Interest in film and television as ‘models’ and as source material (and) concern with the forms and conventions of real-life drama" (p.126) typical of Stage Two. For James the models of popular culture became prescriptive.

James also indicated a clear preference for realism in student generated dances in the class. His criticism of the large group dance centered around its lack of realism and story line. These concerns are consistent with Ross’s Stage Two, "Desire to be true-to -life, to take scenes and issues from the real world and make their own versions conform to reality...(p. 126)."

Danielle, who was also thirteen, responded to the same video excerpt as James, but in a much different way. Her response was one of interest in what, to her, was a new dance genre. Her interpretation was less concerned with the literal; she saw the dance as symbolic of freedom and innocence, opening up realms of understanding, and related to her own feelings.

Danielle’s response was consistent with attributes of Ross’s Stage Three. Ross declares that:
The thing may signify other than itself and yet not lose its own identity. This is the level of metaphor, the level of the expressive character of the sensuous, the power latent in all sensuous phenomena to arouse and organize feeling idea (sic) (Ross, 1984, p. 57).

Ross also states that at Stage Three there is the "inevitability that we discern 'correspondence' between our own life and the 'life' or the presence of the character of the object that confronts us and asserts its influence upon us." This too was evident in Danielle's response.

Along with students' awareness of deficiencies in their own dance or that of others, was an ability to perceive good and less good. Jennifer, aged ten, was able to discern and describe qualitative distinctions evident within the dancer's engagement of the whole self.

It looks different when they're more enthusiastic in their moves. Like instead of just going like this (illustrated a noncommittal tentative movement) they would just go (illustrates a vibrant extended movement) like that, rush it sort of instead of just going slow... (11294).

In other words she was aware of the aesthetic engagement of the dancer and was responsive to it, perceiving it to have special quality. Likewise, Jennifer and Patricia were able to dance with expression and style, bringing feeling to their dancing.

Will, in grade eight showed yet a greater degree of aesthetic awareness, both in performance and in his observations. His moments of free, intuitive, spontaneous
performance in class, were a vivid example of the aesthetic in action. He was wholly absorbed, cognitively and emotionally. Furthermore, he spoke of the desirability of allowing ambiguity in the meaning of dance in order to engage the thinking faculties of the viewer, and to allow for various interpretations. This awareness of multiplicity is characteristic of Stage Three of Ross's model. Ross describes it as the Metaphorical Level because of its multidimensional possibilities. He writes:

The third level of the level of latent or potential meaning, of meaning awaiting realization, of connections to be made, truths to be revealed. The realm as I have said of metaphor, of sign. It is the poetic dimension of aesthetic experience (p. 58).

An even more advanced understanding of aesthetic engagement in dance, consistent with this description of the poetic dimension by Ross, was shown by fourteen year old Jeanette. The dance, Le Loup, composed by a group of students led by Jeanette, not only incorporated highly symbolic content but when performed by Jeanette was invested with a powerful combination of intellect and emotion. This was as apparent to the observer as it was felt by the performer herself. That this dance and others could be interpreted in many ways, with multiple potential meanings was maintained by Jeanette, Eric (sixteen), and by Natalie, also sixteen.

Another characteristic of students in grade nine and ten was an emphasis on personal expression. Dance was seen
as an opportunity to express original thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Students rather than being bound by popular images placed value on highly original or distinctive work, and the development of personal style. The students' interest in personal expressive form is consistent with Ross's description of Stage Three. "...forms are symbolic statements in their own right, not simply imitations of scenes from life" (Ross, 1984, p.126) It would seem that these students had broken free of the stereotypes which guided the aesthetic values of James and Jennifer.

Dance and Play

Huizinga (1950) has written that "The connections between playing and dancing are so close that they hardly need illustrating... In play the beauty of the human body reaches its zenith; In its more developed forms it is saturated with rhythm and harmony, the noblest gifts of aesthetic perception known to man" (p. 166-167). Play, in Huizinga's words, absorbs the player completely and utterly.

Young children are possessed of a free spirit, being naturally drawn to the fun of dance-play, and to being transported out of the ordinary. Play as pretend brings possibilities of assuming qualities of heroes, larger, perhaps more terrible, (Huizinga, 1950). The playful spirit in dance allowed seven year old students to feel
"beautiful", as Yonina claimed, or "powerful" as Donald declared.

The seven and eight year olds were good at entering the world of unabashed play. They needed little invitation to be trees, raptors and birds, or to be artists painting a fence. Different degrees of engagement were evident, with Anna’s absorption at one end of the spectrum.

In time, of course, disenchantment occurs when reality collides with this innocent free play of the imagination (Nachmanovitch, 1990). This fall from grace brings with it understanding of limitations and accompanying self-doubts. In dance this means that a very real and binding self-consciousness asserts itself.

At age ten, the students became engaged in the dances, but there was not the free abandon of the younger students. Growing self-awareness, perceptions of their own lack of skill, and of their need to do well, conflicted with feelings of freedom. When mastery of the steps had been attained, enjoyment along with flow and style was evident.

The attitude of play with its beckoning absorption can provide the means for dance. But the feeling quality that transforms it is dependent upon the individual’s ability to enter play unreservedly. This could be readily seen in the students in grade eight, nine, and ten. Kay spoke of initial nervousness when performing that shortly gave way to getting
"caught up in the dance". Lack of self-consciousness permits entry into the play world and permits the freedom of absorption; absorption in turn, dispels the last vestiges of self-consciousness.

Will gave himself up to his dance in a dramatic way, but even Mary became immersed in the repetitive circle dance. Both students might be said to have entered the play world, and to have experienced its freedom and imaginative insights. Jeanette, one of the most experienced dancers, revealed yet another degree of absorption when she said, "When I'm dancing I get totally lost in it...whenever I dance that dance I don't hear anything, I don't see anyone. I just flow with the music"(10695). This degree of absorption allows the dancer to become the dance, bringing to it the utmost powers of skill and imagination of which the individual is capable.

**Summary**

Descriptions and examples from the data indicate that the aesthetic at play may be observed and unmistakably recognized. It may be seen in the simultaneous engagement of both intellect and emotions in ways that are qualitatively different and which draw the eye. It may be seen in the symbolic forms used by the more sophisticated students to represent their ideas and knowledge. As such aesthetic experience is consistent with the centrality of symbolic
representation in art forms, as defined by Langer (1953).

The world of play defined by Huizinga (1950) offers students a safe haven of absorption where they may explore and create with freedom and where possibilities for aesthetic knowing may be explored. The perspectives of Langer and Huizinga are highly relevant to understanding aesthetic development as it appeared in the students of the study. They reinforce the congruence of the findings of the study with Ross's framework of aesthetic development.

There is much correspondence between the findings of this study and the aesthetic framework of Ross (1984). The findings support Ross's claim that aesthetic awareness in the arts progresses with the age and experience of the individual. The data indicate that carefully designed learning experiences which place aesthetic learning at the core set the stage for growth. Through such experiences, the responses of the individual involved both as performer/interpreter and as observer/analyst in dance became more sophisticated.

Each of the three aesthetic stages described by Ross is present in the data with various characteristics exemplified. Additional attributes that adapt Ross's framework to dance have been added from the data. Significant observable criteria for aesthetic knowing in dance may be examined in light of descriptions of the
various stages outlined by the adapted framework. In this manner judgements about student progress may be made.

It is important to note that the model of aesthetic growth that emerges from this study is not one where a number of characteristics are listed for a particular age. Development, in this study, varied with the individual. Students of the same age indicated very different aesthetic understandings. Some individuals will likely never achieve the highest levels of aesthetic understanding in dance.

The examples and descriptions offered in this study should be useful to teachers for recognizing and identifying aesthetic growth, for assessment and other educational purposes. The development of criteria which place aesthetic awareness at the core of learning and which are critical to learning in the broadest educational context, should be more accessible, and more defensible, as a result of this study.

Conclusions and Implications

In this study, aesthetic awareness in dance was noted, enjoyed, and marvelled at in its transforming power. That it was tangible and perceptible to me, to the teachers, and the students themselves validates the premise of this study, that aesthetic development can and should be part of the student’s evaluated school experience. Growing aesthetic awareness in students was evident in their written and verbal expression; at times it was manifest in
presentation of dance, characterized by special quality and refinement, and enabled by absorption in the task. Aesthetic awareness was seen to have developmental stages which corresponded in certain respects to Ross’s model of aesthetic development in the other arts. Ross’s model adapted for dance can provide a basis for assessment of aesthetic development in dance.

Teachers must seek active engagement of aesthetic responses if these are to be central to teaching and learning in the dance curriculum. Although aesthetic awareness follows a course of development it only happens under certain conditions. Important challenges must be set that are directed at the attainment of aesthetic qualities appropriate to the child’s level. "To fail to give the most significant emphasis to aesthetic experience in dance is to deny children the greatest benefits of dance in education" (Stinson, 1982, p. 74).

That aesthetic development in dance can be assessed opens up great possibilities for dance in education. In order that the arts be valued, instruction and assessment in the arts must be considered to be as systematized and rigorous as in other school subjects. Without accountability the character of arts instruction may appear to be peripheral and nonessential (Pioli, 1991). Assessment in dance which draws on systematic guidelines presents a
convincing case for dance as a subject with rigor, resulting in very real, complex learnings. It is hoped that dance may shake off the negative image of being a mere indulgence or frivolity in the educational scene, and rather be regarded as an essential art which offers students unique opportunities for expression of knowledge and for personal development.

Further research is needed in all aspects of dance in education, for, as noted earlier, little research has been done in this area. Assessment in dance needs much work and would greatly benefit from such research. Studies which chart student progress in comprehensive, sequential dance instruction over time would add valuable insights. Other questions arise. What of the individual who truly enjoys dance, but manifests little aesthetic awareness? Studies in this vein would not only add to understanding dance in education, but would surely benefit arts education in general.

There is no doubt that at the present time, lack of established programs in dance limits research. I was extremely fortunate to find three exemplary sites for my study; other researchers may not be so fortunate. Thus, a cycle may be established where much needed potential research in dance is thwarted. With the impetus of the new provincial curriculum, it is hoped that dance programs will
become established in schools. This in turn will ensure more sites for research.

Final Words

"A child’s body and sense are the primary vehicle for understanding and appreciating the self and relating to the world...dance as an art form offers a unique opportunity for involvement of the whole self, through processes of sensing, moving, thinking and feeling" (Commission on Children’s Dance of the National Dance Association, 1979).

Maslow (cited in Kiester, 1985) too, recognized that dance could offer a powerful form of all-inclusive learning. "Education is learning to grow, learning what is good and bad, learning to choose and what not to choose...This realm of intrinsic learning may very well have art education, music education, and dance education at its core...dancing is the one I would choose first for children" (p. 24).

Attention to the aesthetic dimension of dance in education offers depth and richness to children’s understandings of themselves and the world (Stinson, 1988). Emphasis on aesthetic awareness develops, "...feeling for, awareness of, and intuitiveness about the forces affecting the universe - the vastness of space, the magnitude of time, and the dynamics of change" (Costa, 1985).

Designing quality dance education programs, programs with aesthetic awareness at the core, programs that are
responsive to children's development through ongoing assessment, offer untold exciting possibilities in a transformed conception of education. Within this conception, it is the children who will win, and who will eventually shape new social attitudes towards dance.
References


## APPENDIX A

### Sampling Frame

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GRADE 5

People
Teacher
Students
Parents
Other teachers
Researcher

Place:
School Gym

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Grade 2/3

Time:
Wed. - 9:00 a.m.

People
Teacher
Students
Visitor
Researcher

Place:
School Gym

* Int.
Teacher Interview
(Excerpt starting Page Four)

I. I’m wondering about you as a teacher and what you do that is important to set the kids up for success?

R. (Pause) Umm, well the first thing, because of the nature of the course, having to do things with their body, and having been through dance myself and recognizing moments that can completely floor you and have you never stepping back on the floor, and how frightening it can actually be at this age level, is to set them up to be able to take risks. And then having taken the risk they can see it’s very discouraging. It’s disappointing at times but it’s nothing that you can’t get right back up and do again. And that is the most important thing for me. And then not only for them personally, but for others around them is to see this huge risk that they’ve taken and not to - no put-downs and down play it and this type of thing. But once I have the students understand that risk taking is okay, and I do that by admitting right from the start that there are many of you that have a lot more experience than me in dance. But for my love of movement, and you know I’m, going to take some risks, and this might look kind of funny to you, but essentially I’m just practicing what I preach. So set them up for risk-taking and just really through journals and contact outside of the classroom setting up a type of rapport that they will respect me just as much as I respect them for doing the types of things and taking the types of risks that I’m asking them to do. So that’s the rapport with the students, have them take risks, ensures that success.

I. In order to set all of this in play what are some of the things that you’ve found are some effective ways to get kids into dance, some teaching strategies perhaps?

R. Well first, so that they won’t be afraid of this vocabulary as we’re working with this language new to most of them. So work from a point of reference right from the curriculum the elements of movement. Looking at this table and understanding how the elements - how we’re going to study them and how they’re going to work for us later when we’re creating our own dances when we’re looking at other dances. So having a common reference point where students are all there and we’re studying it together and we can start using that vocabulary so that sort of structure is essentially, initially - again, the idea of showing and
demonstrating or - I haven't been able to demonstrate everything but organizing myself so that if I can't do it a resource person will come in, but periodically having much of what I want them to do demonstrated. Once that's been done and again the risk taking - they feel comfortable, they start creating their own dances and they feel a sense of ownership and I just keep feeding that sort of fire with positive strokes and giving as much feedback right on the site and complementing them and really building their confidence as they go.

I Is that a key, confidence?

R Oh, absolutely, yeah. Again their age level, everything about the teenager in asking them to dance and do certain things - if they're not confident that they can actually do it they might go through the motions but they're robbed of it because they don't truly doesn't realize its full potential, its just sort of going through the motions.

I Do you find that when kids come to you that they lack confidence or that they need to build up that confidence?

R Yeah, there are some and I think it's quite obvious, really hesitating with their movement, always wanting to duck in the back where it's dark and not be seen almost every time I've started a term there have been one of two of those students. And they will take the longest to gain the confidence but I honestly believe that upon leaving that everyone leaves with more confidence, some better than others but it's been my experience.

I Does the level confidence relate to how far they can go in dance and their development and growth?

R (Pause of 6 seconds ) I'm not really sure. Because the confidence would have them take more risks. And in doing so not to say that the more risks you take the better dancer you become, but because of the type of dance that we're doing the risks through symbolism, through interpretation, these are also risks that I encourage, not just the risks through movement. So in terms of purely dancing I'm not sure - it will surely play a large role, but not to the extent that would be the only ingredient.

I One ingredient.

R Yeah

I. The new dance curriculum, do you find this to be helpful?
R. Extremely. Primarily because it's not the way it was put together you don’t have to be a specialist in dance to be able to teach. You have to be someone who is willing to take risks, recognizing that the language that is use throughout the curriculum is user friendly and it’s not really heavy on technique and therefore if you don’t have the years of training you can still do it and I believe this comes through very clearly in the curriculum. So the curriculum offers the structure from which the creation of the dances and the interpretation and so forth come into play. So yes, the curriculum is really helpful.

I. Good. I know that in some dance classes that there is an emphasis on direct teaching, on teaching them steps, somewhat teacher centered and an emphasis that is placed on performance. How does that relate to what you do?

R. Well, I’ve struggled with those two terms, performance and presentation. If you look at Thursday for instance, Thursday I would like to think of as a presentation. Not to say that students can’t help to set up for a performance, but it was I find it was on the informal side. Even when the audience came in and sat down, they were very close, very intimate, actually feeling part of what was going on. Not to say that it isn’t happening when it’s a performance, but I always tend to think of a performance being somewhat more formal, flashy,... yeah. I like to think I follow the idea of presenting rather than performing because I have a sense that it is more informal.

I. How would you describe your particular teaching approach?

R. Hmmm. Definitely child-centered. Right from the start the journal is understood as a kind of tool which I get to know them and they get to know me because we correspond through their journal. right away I try to find out through reading different stuff that they share with me -its their fears where their strengths are, and know the students as well as I can individually. That’s why I say, with this smaller group its more easily done than compared to a larger group. And so my focus is definitely on the students and right through building of their own dances and the ownership that they feel. And sometimes I get - I struggle with how much should I actually let them have and when should I step in and in doing that what do I destroy , so I find that’s a tricky area, but yes, student centered.

I. What else is important for students if they’re going to develop in dance?
R. Uh...Well I think what has become quite evident is group work, cooperation and collaboration I've seen many times you've put the students with the most experience together yet they will not come up with a product that is as cohesive as a group that doesn't have as much experience, so feeding from one another, not looking at a great idea and saying you know - looking at it competitively, you know my idea is better than that and that sort of deal, but from that young age really being able to work together and no put-downs trying as much as possible to bring that to light is huge. So cooperation, group work. The other thing also - well I say technique but in the way I use that not in the sense not in one form, you know ballet, jazz, whatnot, but the intent of the movement and that is something that is more defined in the table, the elements of movement, but for them to understand that there is a purpose for that movement and how they execute the movement so that's what I mean by technique. And the idea of risk taking and confidence which we did discuss earlier.
Sample Interview Two

Grade Eight Student
(Excerpt starting the middle of page one.)

I. I'm going to ask you to think back if you can - dig back in your memory to the first class when you first came in how did you feel?

R. Really uncomfortable and embarrassed.

I. Why did you feel that way?

R. Well cause - I knew lots of people but I didn't really trust them and I thought I might do something really stupid - I mean I do that a lot anyways but...

I. Did the part about doing dance or something like that??

R. (Quickly) Yeah.

I. ..was it scary?

R. Yeah, it was.

I. What about speaking French?

R. Oh no, that was okay.

I. Did anybody else feel the way you did?

R. Yeah. I think most people did.

I. How could you tell?

R. Well we would just stand there. He'd tell us what to do and we would just stand there for a minute and wait for other people to start. We wouldn't just all start at the same time; we'd just wait.

I. You didn't want to be the first one?

R. Yeah.

I. So now this time later, 2 1/2 months later. Has that changed for you?

R. Yeah. Totally. I just love now I like go in there I feel I can trust people, even if I don't know them very well, I feel I can trust them. It doesn't matter if I make a fool of myself which is good cause I do that a lot. And I like being
I. I wanted to present first but I couldn’t because of my foot but I really wanted to, but I couldn’t.

R. Yeah.

I. So you’re pretty comfortable with doing – dancing in front of the group.

R. Yeah.

I. Do you feel you have more ideas now?

R. Yeah, probably. And more with the emotional thing and the interaction, but not with the movement, but with interacting and the relation and yeah I guess.

I. Now ideas – you’ve been exploring different ways of expressing ideas in the class. At first you did something that was pretty literal, that is if you’re combing your hair it looks like you’re combing your hair, but you’ve gotten into more symbolic kinds of things. Can you tell me anything about that?

R. I like the symbolic things a lot better because it’s more abstract and people can interpret them in their own ways. And it’s – more emotional and people can get more into it with the music and stuff. And the literal thing that’s okay, but just telling the story there’s just one idea it’s all the same but it’s not as free.

I. Lovely. Then do you feel over the time of this course that you have made progress in being able to do that?

R. Yeah, probably. I think so.

I. Can you identify it when you’re watching someone in a video or when someone else is doing it. Is it easier for you to do that?

R. Yeah.

I. When you were doing the dances in the class. Is there anyone in the class whose work you admire that you like to watch? Without naming the person tell me why or describe what they do or tell me what you want to say.

R. They have their distinct style. And I’m not sure. I just liked it - it just hit me. I just liked it the first time I saw it and I really liked it and lots of other people like (said)," Oh my god, what the heck." I just always liked it.

I. So it’s something personal and distinct?

R. Yeah, different...
I. And it has a quality that draws your eyes. What are the things that you have done that have been fun and enjoyable?

R. The symbolic things are the best. Doing the group projects. I like designing our own dance and picking our own music. The first project that we had was too much of an outline and it was all the same music and stuff so it wasn’t as interesting. Like the last project that we did was the best cause we could choose the music and do all the choreography and story and all that.

I. When I said to your group that I felt disturbed when I watched [your dance] was that what you hoped that I would feel?

R. Well, I didn’t really think about that. I didn’t think that was how it was but you said that, I was glad that that’s how you felt because that’s how you’re supposed to feel. But I hadn’t really thought about it before that.

I. You were glad that I was involved and engaged in your dance. If you had an idea, would it be easier to speak it in English speak it in French or to dance it?

R. Depends on the idea. Like if it’s something more visual I mean lots of time I just get inspired I just go into my living room and I start dancing. And if it’s something more symbolic or visual then it’s a lot easier to dance it, but if it’s something more literal or - then it’s easier to speak it.

I Fabulous, that’s great. Is there anything that you can think of in the dance area that you would like to have happen to help your learning? The next thing you would like to have?

R. I want to be as good as Molly and June. I want to able to move - like to do weird things. (laugh)

I. Is there any difference in the way that you look at dance now when you see dance going on in different places like videos ,tv?

R. Well now I like a lot more different kinds of dance, like before I just liked, well just jazz and ballet, the things that were most common, but now well I like any kinds of dance now. Like folk dancing, line dancing, anything.

I. Do you see it differently do you think ooh, something different about...
R. Yeah more symbolism, and lots of it and I can pick it out better.
I. And do you appreciate it in any different way...

R. Yeah, because I know it's hard so and I appreciate it and I can sort of relate to it. And I can sort of understand how the dancer is feeling because I know how it feels to do it and to try to express that emotion or whatever, so I can sort of feel what they’re feeling more than before.