



January 25, 2010

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## ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY FOR DANCE ARTS EDUCATION

The National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) was established in 1997<sup>1</sup> with the vision that all citizens should have equal access and opportunity to quality dance arts education regardless of age, gender, ethnicity/race, socio-economic status, interest or ability. To work toward achieving this vision, NDEO dialogues with approximately 150 federal and state agencies, national art and education organizations, philanthropic foundations, and businesses and corporations. We do so with the knowledge that by identifying and sharing common goals we can develop mutually beneficial plans of action that, over time, will impact policy and funding for U.S. arts and education.

### Overview

This paper primarily focuses on PreK-12 education because of the complex and persistent issues we face as a nation in public education; the sudden influx of \$4.35 billion in Race To The Top funds and \$650 million in Investing in Innovation stimulus funds that are now available to make change in public education; and, in our opinion, the most compelling reason for dance educators in the U.S., the ever-present need to *still* establish dance as an art form in education.

The latter factor remains the greatest challenge for dance artists, educators and administrators. What are the threats that keep our field at risk? Why are we not making more progress on this? What national initiatives are underway to help address these ever-persistent problems?

### Threats That Keep Dance At-Risk

There are four prime threats that keep our field at risk. Not only do they make it next to impossible for national, state, and local leaders to establish dance as an art form in education; but, until we collectively address these threats, the field will continue to fight for identity in the arts, and the arts in education.

In overview, the four prime threats are: (1) the lack of parity of dance in arts education; (2) the lack of equity and access to dance in K-12 education for students and teachers; (3) the lack of data collection and longitudinal data analyses; and (4) the dire need for dance arts educators to define, articulate, and enforce: *What is dance education? Who teaches it? What is the appropriate channel of delivery?*

The strategic partnerships that NDEO builds provide infrastructure for dance education in America and, even more important, they gnaw at these very threats involving parity, equity and access, data collection and trend analyses, and defining dance arts education – what it is, who teaches it, and demanding legal channels of delivery. As you read this, think what you can do in your daily job to address these critical needs in the field because each of us must be aware and steadfast in our resolve to address these threats at whatever level possible – national, state and local levels. These threats are not to be taken lightly.

#### 1. Lack of Parity of Dance within the Arts

In most federal legislation, language does not identify the four individual art forms as “dance, music, theatre and the visual arts.” Instead, legislation titles the four art forms collectively as “the arts,” or in white papers and position statements as “music and the arts.” Given the language of legislation, the domino effect kicks in across

other federal agencies and follows suit among liaison arts organizations in documents and briefs written down line about “music and the arts.” In turn, “music and the arts” is often construed by the public as only two art forms in America – music and the visual arts. For all intents and purposes, dance and theatre go widely unrecognized in federal legislation, national assessments, federal surveys, and the media. In federal legislation, the four individual art forms should be listed separately as “dance, music, theatre and the visual arts.”

This lack of parity plays out in local K-12 schools and districts in which music and the visual arts are the only two art forms offered in curriculum. All too frequently, those two disciplines satisfy state and local school district mandates. Many schools, districts, and states do not even strive to offer dance and theatre beyond their current music and visual arts programs – even in years with good economies.

Most disturbing is the fact that dance and theatre have been omitted from national surveys designed to capture important data for arts education in U.S. schools – e.g., the National Assessments for Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Fast Response Survey System (FRSS). Since the inception of the NAEP assessments in 1969, music has been assessed four times (1971, 1978, 1997, 2008) and the visual arts has also been assessed four times (1974, 1978, 1997, 2008).<sup>2</sup> Theatre and dance have received precursory treatment in targeted surveys, but no full scale assessments have been executed on these two art disciplines. As reasons for this omission, federal agencies cite two conditions: first, the scarcity of government funding that precludes expanding the NAEP assessments to include dance and theatre; and, second, the NAEP assessment’s research methodology that requires stratified sample groups (demographic representations of U.S. education populations) which, in turn, allows results to be generalized across K-12 populations to represent U.S. education. Dance and Theatre have difficulty meeting the NAEP criteria.

Frequently, the latter point is misrepresented to the public as “there are not enough dance programs to assess in U.S. education.” This is incorrect. There are thousands of excellent dance programs in K-12 education. NDEO even estimates from U.S. Department of Education data that “qualified dance educators” teach approximately 7% of U.S. children in K-12 education, or 3.5 million students a year.

Finally, three Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) tests were administered to school principals in 1995, 2000 and 2009. Two types of surveys exist: (1) FRSS surveys completed by school principals that provide important data on the extent to which all four arts forms (dance, music, theatre and the visual arts) are included in K-12 instruction; and (2) FRSS surveys that are administered to art specialists in schools that provide in-depth data on curriculum, scheduling, staffing, facilities, equipment, safety, and teacher preparation, professional development, and credentialing – often referred to as opportunities to learn.

All four art forms have been included in the FRSS surveys completed by school principals which provide general data; but, never has dance and theatre been awarded arts’ specialist surveys to provide in-depth data on opportunities to learn. Again, lack of federal funding and difficulty in locating teacher populations are cited as reasons for not including dance and theatre in the 2009 FRSS.<sup>3</sup> This is unacceptable. Thus, NDEO is already discussing 2016 NAEP assessments and FRSS surveys with government officials. NDEO can now provide sample groups for targeted surveys which are not generalized across populations. Twelve years ago we could not provide these data. Today, we can.

## 2. Lack of Equity and Access to Dance within K-12 Education

Without a doubt, the lack of parity in the arts leads directly to lack of equity and access issues. The 1997 NAEP data report the frequency with which 8<sup>th</sup> grade students receive instruction in the arts 3-4 times/week (visual arts 52%, music 43%, theatre 10%, and dance 3%); or 1-2 times/week (music 38%, visual arts 25%, theatre 7%, and dance 4%); or where the subject is not taught (music 9%, visual arts 17%, theatre 74% and dance 80%).<sup>4</sup>

The FRSS-II (1995) and NAEP (1997) both support findings that 57% of elementary students do not have access to dance education and of the 43% of students who do, 36% receive their training from teachers in physical education and 7% are receive their training from dance specialists.<sup>5</sup>

## 3. Lack of Data Collection and Longitudinal Analyses

The lack of data from national surveys, as cited earlier, creates significant voids in our ability to understand our field and address opportunities to learn in curriculum – scheduling, staffing, facilities, equipment, safety, and teacher preparation, professional development, and credentialing. As a result, we have little understanding of these important components in K-12 education and thus we lack focused, methodical, short- and long-term plans of action. This must change.

4. The need to articulate: *What is dance education? Who teaches dance in the arts? Is the channel of delivery through arts or physical education (PE)?*

Lack of clarity to these questions continues to promote major misunderstandings at national, state and local levels among our colleagues in the arts and education fields. This confusion causes gross misalignment of curriculum and resources in schools, school districts, and states. Without dedicated alignment, students and teachers suffer.

The clearest way to answer these three questions to people outside our field (including the other art forms, disciplines, parents, students, and administrators at all levels) is to simply state: It all depends on the goals or outcomes of the program.

- If the goal of the program is to teach the artistic processes (creating, performing and responding) and the outcome for students is to have them create, perform and critically analyze work of self or others, then dance is taught as an art form in education. The channel of delivery is the arts; and, under the law (*No Child Left Behind*, 2002), the program *must* be taught by a “highly qualified” educator – meaning the instructor must be teaching in his/her major area of study (e.g., dance art performance and education) and must be state certified in this discipline.
- If the goal of the program is to promote physical activity (directed towards health, social and recreational aspects of education), then the dance component is taught under physical education. The channel of delivery is physical education; and, though physical education is not legally defined as a core academic subject under *No Child Left Behind*, it too should be taught by a qualified educator – meaning the instructor is teaching in his/her major area of study (e.g., physical education) and be state certified in physical education.
- Each discipline requires completely different pedagogical preparation. Generally, dance specialists are trained in Colleges of Fine Arts and physical educators are trained in Colleges of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance – or some similarly titled college/department.
- It is important to note that both professions are valid and legitimate. They absolutely serve different educational goals and outcomes, and they require very different professional preparation. They *must* not be confused. They *must* not be substituted one for the other! In fact, it is illegal to do so under *No Child Left Behind* (2002).

The 2002 legislation is the first time in our history that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) literally mandates that dance as an art form *must* be taught by a qualified dance educator. This law is our opportunity to get the right people in the classrooms teaching the right content under the arts.

Thus, dance educators, administrators, and state arts consultants throughout America should analyze their own dance programs at local, district, and state levels to see if their program goals, staffing, and channels of delivery are in alignment. If we are wise, we will use the law to its maximum advantage to henceforth align arts programming, teachers, and delivery systems so they support arts education. Students deserve no less!

### **Call to Action**

Now is the time for our field to address the threats to dance as an art form in education. The discipline has federal legislation (*NCLB* 2002) that, for the first time in history, actually defines who can teach dance as art in K-12 education. The discipline has Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts (2005) that articulate the content, skills and knowledge required of teachers and students in dance taught as an art form in education; and the artistic processes dictate the channel of delivery. The discipline has Standards for a K-12 Model Program (2005) that provides documentation for administrators on the opportunities to learn and detail the channel of delivery for dance as art in education. In addition to these documents, federal legislation leaves no doubt about the legal qualifications required of those who teach dance art in K-12 education. Finally, we have once-in-a-lifetime funding through the U.S. Department of Education with which to make significant change. The Race To The Top (\$4.3 billion) and Investing in Innovation funding (\$650 million) provide a unique opportunity for dance educators and administrators to work with their state on including dance in arts programming designed to improve K-12 education, as specified in the Request for Proposal. NDEO encourages every dance educator and administrator to contact his/her own State Superintendent’s office and State Arts Consultant (State Education Agency Director of Arts Education) to ask what the State Education Agency plans are for including dance as a part of the arts in the RTTT funding and to ask what the different Local Education Agencies within the state are doing to include dance as a part of the i3 funding opportunity. It is important that our field offer itself as a knowledgeable resource state leaders can build into their state plan.

NDEO works for all dance artists, educators, and administrators to advance dance education centered in the arts. Collectively, we need to address these threats at all levels of operation – national, state, and local. Without a doubt, the benefits accrued in K-12 education will absolutely impact colleges and university programs, the performing arts, and private studios and schools of dance.

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<sup>1</sup> NDEO was legally established as a 501 (c)(3) in December 1997 to advance dance as an art form. Founders are Rima Faber, PhD, President; Thomas K Hagood, PhD, Treasurer; and Marcia Lloyd, EdD, Secretary. NDEO officially began building membership and services in the spring of 1998.

<sup>2</sup> National Assessments of Education Progress, Chronology of NAEP Assessments:  
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationalsreportcard/about/assesshistory.asp>.

<sup>3</sup> Logistically, NCES administers the survey to 1,700 music and visual arts schools to reap 1,000 responses. With a 20% response rate for dance and theatre, NCES would have to administer the FRSS survey to 5,000 schools to reap 1,000 responses.

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Education Statistics: *The NAEP 1997 Arts Report Card*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 1998, p.146.

<sup>5</sup> *Fast Response Survey-I*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 1995, p.11. *National Assessments for Education Progress*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 1998.