

Teaching Philosophy

by *Cheridan Couty*

I believe that teaching dance is one of the most important jobs you can do. Dance is not only physical but also mental. It is an outlet, hobby, job, workout, therapy, and much more. Each level of training has a different purpose but all can be beneficial in some way. There are many teachers who have taken students' love of dance away from them and I have seen that first hand. I choose to be a teacher that fixes what others have broken. Dance is supposed to be an outlet, and something to make you feel good about yourself. I hope that my students feel accomplished after every class and never feel judged. My students should feel empowered and more confident in themselves after each class and also learn to empower others as well. I strive to help my students be much more than just amazing dancers, but amazing human beings as well.

My goal is that my students will feel they have a better understanding of the terminology as well as how to execute the movement after my classes. For each movement exam/performance/combination, I want them to feel confident in their knowledge of the material and how they perform it. My dancers should have a clear understanding of what is asked of them because they feel comfortable asking questions and do not feel judged if they do not know an answer or how to demonstrate a movement. My students will never feel degraded for asking a question and I will answer to the best of my ability. Growing as a dancer not only comes from doing the movement, but also from the understanding and the ability to not be fearful of mistakes.

My goals are expressed in my classroom through repetition and good energy. I believe that having their peers cheer and give support goes a very long way. Students tend to feel more safe to make a mistake in an environment that will pick you up when you are down and keep you up when you succeed. Repetition is the most used method in my classroom for achieving a goal. I have students go across the floor multiple times to give them new chances to focus on different aspects. Drills are a method that I also use in my classroom. For beginners and even students who are having an off day, I have them do drills to build basic foundational technique. It is very easy for a dancer to throw away beginner level basics because they have been doing more advanced work. I like to always start off with slower paced drills or incorporate them in when I feel a student is struggling.

For the beginner level I use more imagery and repetition with demonstrations. I have them learn more kinesthetically while also giving visual and verbal cues. In the intermediate levels, I tend to show less and say more. I want my students to fully grasp onto the verbal cues and start feeling the movement in their own body while watching themselves, instead of me. In the late pre-teen and teenage years I will start to give them partner work, and have them positively correct each other when told. I believe at this age, you have to make sure this method is used in a positive way. This is a time when children start to become self-conscious and I believe having positive partner work can really help boost their self-esteem.

With my more advanced classes I try to only use verbal corrections unless visual corrections are needed. I also demonstrate less than my other classes and get them to focus on the terminology and movement qualities that I am verbally giving without seeing them first hand. I want them to dive deeper into giving themselves corrections without me breaking them down. The corrections that I give to this age group are more detailed. Students are expected to work hard in class and use their class time as a way to make sure they are not forgetting the basics while also challenging themselves to try new things. At this point, my students should feel comfortable and confident in their abilities and should be able to push themselves harder without pushing too far.

If I am able to see their humble confidence shine through their dancing and see the positive outlook in the way that they represent themselves, then I feel that I have accomplished my job as a teacher. I hope that I can give each of my students a memorable experience. Even if dance is not what they end up pursuing, I want to at least be able to help them in some way. Students should have a teacher that truly loves what they are doing and that helps them become not only a better dancer but a better version of themselves. I hope that I am able to give each student the positivity they deserve while working at what they love.