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Understanding Poetry: Integrating Creative Movement and Dance to Enhance the Learning Process for Middle and High School Students

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

UNDERSTANDING POETRY: INTEGRATING CREATIVE MOVEMENT
AND DANCE TO ENHANCE THE LEARNING PROCESS
FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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

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

December, 2016

This Thesis by: Toni C. Duncan

Entitled: *Understanding Poetry: Integrating Creative Movement and Dance to Enhance the Learning Process for Middle and High School Students*

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

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ABSTRACT

Duncan, Toni C. *Understanding Poetry: Integrating Creative Movement and Dance to Enhance the Learning Process for Middle and High School Students*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2016.

The focus of this thesis project is the integration of creative movement and dance to enhance the learning process for students studying poetry. This project was a descriptive pilot project designed to evaluate a piece of dance curriculum. The researcher posed the following three essential questions: How can creative movement and dance in middle and high school students' classes be used to enhance their understanding of poetry in terms of its structure? How will creative movement and dance help middle and high school students understand the meaning of poetry? Which creative movement and dance techniques can be used to help students best understand poetic structure and meaning? Through the use of professional research including pre-tests, posttests, journal entries, and audience surveys, the author discovered integrating creative movement and dance could successfully deepen the students' understanding of poetic structure and meaning.

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Christy O'Connell-Black

To my mom, Carol, who has supported my dream of becoming a Dance Educator, since I was 4 years old.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Goal of Thesis

The idea of integrating creative movement and dance with an academic subject is not new. Many books and articles have been published demonstrating the importance and effectiveness of incorporating movement explorations into a student's traditional educational experience. As stated in *Using Movement to Teach Academics: The Mind and Body as One Entity*, "many educators believe that children learn best when they are doing because they become engaged with the subject matter" (Minton 1). Additionally "as educational research and experience has shown, the development of critical-thinking skills does not support the simplistic linear model on which our traditional teaching of the "3Rs" is based" (Overby, Post, and Newman xi). The focus of this thesis is integrating creative movement and dance with the study of poetry to enhance the learning process for middle and high school students. This project is a descriptive pilot project designed to evaluate a piece of the dance curriculum.

Several well-known and respected dance educators published the results of their work fusing creative movement and dance into core academic subjects. This thesis project referenced these publications to develop the curriculum used to integrate creative movement and dance to help students comprehend the structure and meaning of poetry. In *Interdisciplinary Learning through Dance: 101 Movements*, the authors state "not

only is dance a discipline with specific content, but it is also a tool for synthesizing and transforming other disciplines” (Overby, Post, and Newman 2). Anne Green Gilbert, author of *Teaching the Three Rs Through Movement Experiences*, believes “movement experiences are not meant to replace the traditional methods of teaching the *three Rs*. Instead, they should be used along with these methods to increase motivation and learning” (Green Gilbert 3). Sandra Minton’s book is based on the “natural tendency of children to like and want to move” and “how movement and dance can be used to help students in elementary and middle school connect with academic concepts” (Minton 1). The addition of creative movement and dance to the study of poetry should allow students to use both mind and body to fully understand the arrangement and intent of the poets in a manner similar to the methods described by the authors cited.

Research into the mind/body connection has produced a plethora of credible resources for the educator supporting the claim that movement will enhance a student’s ability to fully comprehend academic concepts. As John Medina states in, *Brain Rules*, “Physical activity is cognitive candy” (Medina 31). Medina’s research into the development of the human race in terms of survival of the fittest theory supports the idea that “the human brain became the most powerful in the world under conditions where motion was a constant presence” (Medina 21). Motion was a constant presence due to the need to survive.

Movement boosts brain function. It is a scientifically documented fact that through movement and exercise more blood and oxygen travel to the brain and cognitive function increases. John J. Ratey, an MD and clinical psychiatrist, refers to a protein that is elevated in the brain during exercise as “Miracle-Gro for the brain” (Ratey 19). In his

book *Spark*, he discusses the effects of exercise on the brain and the resulting increased academic test scores for students involved in a physical education program at Naperville Central High School outside of Chicago. The authors of *The Kinesthetic Classroom* state adding movement to the classroom “provides both teacher and students with a stimulating classroom environment” while providing students the opportunity to “grow cognitively, physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially; academic standards can be met, test scores can be improved, and important life skills can be developed” (Lengel and Kuczala 2). These sources as well as additional studies, books, and articles about the mind/body connection, exercise and the brain, and where the arts fit into this puzzle to enhance student learning will be further discussed in this thesis.

The essential questions in this project were: How can creative movement and dance in middle and high school students’ classes be used to enhance their understanding of poetry in terms of its structure? Poetic structure refers to the line organization and patterns of sound. How will creative movement and dance help middle and high school students understand the meaning of poetry? When a poem is read it can create images in the mind of the reader, connect with his or her memories, or stimulate a response that aids interpretation of meaning. The intent was to explore the varied ways movement and dance can be used to help students interpret poetry in a meaningful way. As noted American poet, writer, historian, biographer, editor and 3-time Pulitzer Prize winner Carl Sandburg wrote “Poetry is an echo asking a shadow dancer to be a partner” (Sandburg 317). Hopefully, the imagery and interpreted intent in the poetry read by the students in this study will make the echo and shadow referred to by Sandburg come alive in their movements and dances. The final question addressed is which creative movement and

dance techniques can be used to help students best understand poetic structure and meaning?

Purpose of Study

There are several reasons that interest the researcher about the topic of integrating poetry and dance. The use of movement and dance in this study will help the researcher become a well-rounded educator and enable her to pursue her true passion, which is using movement/dance as a teaching tool in a variety of academic classes. Integrating dance into the classroom setting makes sense. “Dance is successful in the classroom because it harnesses the innate desire harbored by every child: *to move* [emphasis theirs]” (Overby, Post, and Newman xi).

This thesis project will provide further documentation that fusing dance and academic subjects results in better and deeper understanding of the concepts being taught as well as provide additional support for the work currently being done by colleagues and researcher. As Minton says:

Using movement and dance as a teaching tool incorporates the natural connections that exist between brain, mind, and body. This is true because students must recognize and understand academic concepts with the brain-mind, followed by performing concept-based movements with the body. (Minton 9)

The researcher is excited to do this project to bring a hands on approach to the classroom. Today’s modern students can benefit from less traditional forms of information transfer because classes are no longer teacher-centered. Instead, a student-centered classroom is the goal. Prior to this study the researcher has experimented with alternative ways to help students retain information and build confidence. Two sources of information that led to the thesis project idea and further investigation were the Brain

Dance concept developed by Green Gilbert and incorporating yoga into the learning process. As Green Gilbert states:

Every child working in movement experiences has success. There is no such thing as failure because each child proceeds at his or her own rate. Each child's solutions are accepted because there is no right or wrong way to explore movement. This continual success helps build a positive self-concept. (Green Gilbert 7)

In addition, results presented in the article, "Basic Reading Through Dance Program: The Impact on First-Grade Students' Basic Reading Skills" and "Abstracting Bulls: A Dancing Words/Writing Dance Workshop" by Michèle Root-Bernstein Ph.D. support the claim that integrating creative movement and dance with the study of poetry are successful learning experiences for students. The authors of the first article indicated "imagery, memory, and elaboration are skills involved in both reading and dance, dance techniques designed to facilitate the steps involved in language arts acquisition have the potential to improve reading skills" (McMahon, Rose, and Parks 108-110). The infusion of dance and language was successfully demonstrated in the second piece of research mentioned above. With this integration, the researcher found there is great potential in the future for dance to be incorporated in academic settings because "the experimental dancing words/writing dance workshop forged new possibilities for integrating dance into a larger, transdisciplinary educational experience, one capable of reaching beyond the arts alone into the academic classroom as well" (Root-Bernstein 134).

Significance of Study

This study is being conducted to demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating creative movement and dance with poetry in order to enhance the learning process for middle and high school students. Involving both the mind and body in the study of core

academic courses allows for the students to fully explore the topic as well as experience a rise in self-confidence levels. In Sandra Minton's article "Assessment of High School Dance Students' Self Esteem" she states the "development of self-esteem is intricately entwined in the development of the person" and the dance educator "should be aware of the connection between the participation in dance and the self-esteem of our students" (Minton 63).

Miriam Giguere's published study, "Thinking as They Create: Do Children have Similar Experiences in Dance and in Language Arts?", focused on the "cognitive experiences of children as they engage in creative projects in both dance and poetry" (Giguere 41). The focus of this thesis project is similar. This study is aiming to provide data to academic teachers that the skills necessary in dance, "observing, empathizing, recognizing patterns, transformational thinking" (Giguere 46) are not only necessary for academic subjects, but are integral to dance. Thus, using creative movement and dance to teach academics should reinforce all learning.

In the article, "Dance Teaching Techniques and Practices: Informing Other Disciplines" author Julie Kerr-Berry states "Inherent in the methods employed in dance instruction is their capacity to engage students fully in the learning process" (Kerr-Berry 79). Through this thesis project, students are given the opportunity to be fully engaged in the learning process as related to the study of poetry. Students are presented with opportunities to use their bodies in order to better comprehend the structure and meaning of grade appropriate poetry. Participating students are encouraged to experiment with movement as they feel it relates to the poems. Combining creative movement and dance

with the academic study of poetry is being done in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of poetic structure and its interpretation.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A large amount of literature on exercise and the effects on the brain, the influence of the arts on the learning process, and specifically creative movement and dance integrated with language arts and other core academic subjects provides a basis for the present study. This chapter will discuss the mind/body premise that supports the essential question of this thesis, will creative movement and dance enhance the learning experience. Additionally, the chapter will summarize the role movement has played in daily classroom experiences and what added benefits the art of dance, not just exercise, provides to the learning process.

Exercise and the Effects on the Brain when Learning

Exercising is beneficial for all parts of the body especially the brain. When exercising the blood is pumping which makes the brain function at its best. Activity “provides the body with greater *access* to the oxygen and food” (Medina 30). The more an individual exercises the more parts of the body can be fed resulting in improved performance. As Ratey states “the point of exercise is to build and condition the brain. Building muscles and conditioning the heart and lungs are essentially side effects” (Ratey 3). It’s not the exercise alone that makes us smarter: rather the exercise “makes us more able to learn and focus and optimizes the brain for learning” (Stevens-Smith).

Oxygen is necessary for all organs of the body, and the brain requires much more than any other organ. To learn it is essential that the brain has oxygen. Movement gets oxygen to the brain. The problem with the way students learn today is that in the current classroom students are sitting too much of the day. In the article “Movement and Learning: What’s the Connection?” author Deborah Stevens-Smith cites Jean Blaydes’ research that after sitting for just 20-30 minutes 80% of the blood pools in the hips. If the blood is in the hips and not in the brain, learning becomes more difficult (Stevens-Smith). Therefore, it seems like a no-brainer that movement is essential for learning. Passive learning might be easier for teachers to administer, but is it truly the best way to activate the brain?

In the book *Smart Moves: Why Learning Is Not All In Your Head* author Carla Hannaford, Ph D discusses, not only the importance of movement, when learning, but also its importance in life. Movement is happening in our bodies even when we appear to be at rest because the digestive system is moving food and waste, blood is being moved throughout the body, the heart is beating, and the lungs and muscles are expanding and contracting.

Movement awakens and activates many of our mental capacities. Movement integrates and anchors new information and experience into our neural networks. And movement is vital to all the actions by which we embody and express our learning, our understanding and ourselves. (Hannaford 107)

Both Medina and Ratey discuss the importance of the brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) and it’s role in the mind-body connection. Over the past 15 years or so scientists have begun studying this factor that is present in the hippocampus area of the brain, related to memory (Ratey 39). The level of usable BDNF is increased due to exercise. (Medina 31). “BDNF is a critical biological link between thought, emotions

and movement” (Ratey 40). Based on these scientific discoveries it can be concluded that by exercising the BDNF levels go up allowing for more effective cognitive learning to occur. This research provides scientific evidence that movement while learning enhances the experience.

*Effects of Adding Basic Movement
to the Daily Classroom*

Valerie Strauss in her Washington Post article “Letting Kids move in class isn’t a break from learning. It IS learning” makes the commanding statement “Movement is a powerful teaching tool” (Strauss). Research suggests that the brain functions better when it has a high level of oxygen and exercise is what moves the oxygen to the brain. The logical conclusion is that incorporating movement into the classroom is a necessity. By using movement learners can articulate better and internalize new thoughts (Strauss). “Memory and movement are linked, and the body is a tool of learning, not a roadblock to or a detour away from it,” states the author of the May 19, 2016 article “Why Young Kids Learn Through Movement” (Dotson-Renta). Using the whole body when learning enhances rather than distracts from the process.

Movement benefits everyone. As the researcher writes this thesis paper, it has proved beneficial to take frequent breaks from the computer to go for a walk, do yoga poses, and play tennis. After completing these activities, the production level and quality of the writing improved, as well as mood and determination. Writing this paper has turned into its own little mind/body experiment not originally expected in the project planning. This experience makes it even more clear and important to the researcher that

Movement is one of the most beneficial ways for ALL children to engage with and retain the information they are being taught in school. It makes lessons more engaging and memorable, it helps students focus, it regulates student behavior, it

helps foster inclusive environments for all children and it makes children want to go to school. (Fiore)

Study of New Physical Education in Naperville Central High School

The Naperville Central High School New Physical Education started as a way to teach fitness, instead of sports, in order to develop a commitment to a lifelong healthy living style. The philosophy of two physical education teachers, Phil Lawler and Paul Zientarski, is that their department creates the brain cells and it is up to the teachers to fill them (Ratey 19). A Zero Hour program was put in place at the school. Students who were a part of a literacy course to increase their reading comprehension had the opportunity to volunteer to participate in a higher intensity physical education course than other students at the school. The requirement was to stay between 80—90% of their maximum heart rate. After completing the exercise, the students were sent off in a state of maximum brain awareness to their literacy course. At the end of the semester there was a 17% improvement in the Zero Hour student reading comprehension scores as compared to the 10.7% increase by students who elected not to be part of the Zero Hour fitness group (Ratey 11).

The physical education curriculum has been in place for over twenty years, and the results are more than for just physically fit students. In 1999, the Naperville students signed up to take the TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), a test that compares student knowledge levels from different countries in two key subject areas (Ratey 13). The Naperville students scored the highest in the world in the science section, ranking sixth for the math section. Naperville is a demographically advantaged school with a 97% graduation rate. The town's biggest employers are science-based

companies, which suggests that Naperville students come from educated families. Even with the students' environment and genetics the two factors that stand out from this school are the unique physical education system and the test scores. The results of this study led Ratey to investigate the system and state that the "correlation is simply too intriguing to dismiss" (Ratey 15).

How the Arts Enhance the Learning Process

Setting test scores aside, adding the arts to the classroom learning process can result in happy students who are eager to return to school for new and exciting experiences. Classrooms with the arts benefit from "fewer dropouts, higher attendance, better team players, an increased love of learning, greater student dignity, enhanced creativity, a more prepared citizen for the workplace of tomorrow, and greater cultural awareness" (Jensen vi). The arts help students become better humans. Table 1 below is based on Jensen's research. It lists the impact studying the arts can have on students.

Table 1

Results of Students Exposed to the Arts

Action	Result
The arts reach all children	Keeps lateness, absences down; eventually dropouts decrease
Students connect to each other better	Greater camaraderie; less fighting; less racism
Learning environment is changed	Re-ignite passion; take a break from fact memorization
Arts provide challenges to students of all levels	Students can work at their own pace and as a class develop their own level of learning
Arts connect students to the real art world	Students develop into future arts consumers and supporters
Students learn to become independent thinkers	Students are not robots spitting back facts for the test
Students of all economic status gain	Arts education is for everyone

In Jensen's book *Arts with the Brain in Mind* he asks the question

At a time when higher standards are being thrust on all of us, arts have an even bigger place. Even if one *could* get the higher scores without a basic or integrated arts curriculum, do you really want to live in a world where the best we have to offer is a high-test-score graduate, but a person who can't work with others, be creative and express himself, solve real-world problems, and do it with civility? (Jensen vii)

Studying the arts contributes to student growth as humans that can be argued is just as important, if not more so, than high standardized test scores.

The learning process is enhanced by the arts. They stimulate the integrated sensory system, the attentional, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities which are the systems that are the driving forces behind all other learning processes (Jensen 2). Emily Cross, professor in the School of Psychology at the United Kingdom's Bangor University, is quoted in the article "Why Young Kids Learn through Movement" that neuroscience research shows "where the learner is doing, moving, acting, and interacting can change the way the brain works and can accelerate kids' learning process" and "there are striking changes in brain activity when we combine dance and music in the learning context" (Dotson-Renta). Additionally, learners "acquire knowledge and develop cognitively because dance 'bulks up' the brain and, consequently, dance in itself as an artistic, recreational, educational, and/or therapeutic form, is a good investment in the brain" (Hanna x).

Awaking Genius in the Classroom by Thomas Armstrong expresses that every student is a genius. When observing a baby in the act of learning you will notice "explosions of excitement, flailing of arms, bright eyes, and a kind of 'dance of life'" (Armstrong vi). The book lists 12 qualities of a genius: curiosity, playfulness,

imagination, creativity, wonder, wisdom, inventiveness, vitality, sensitivity, flexibility, humor, and joy, which the author believes are the basic qualities that all students are born with. These qualities are also attributes that can be developed through the study of the arts either by themselves or infused into the core curriculum. Involving art in the learning process can result in producing genius students in the classroom. Teachers should take advantage of students “intrinsic curiosity, in whatever form, and make it available to the curriculum” (Armstrong 4). This is true of the attribute of playfulness, allowing for it to naturally occur in class through movement “can find its way into many parts of the school day in an appropriate way” (Armstrong 5). Imagination, creativity, wonder, wisdom and inventiveness are important components of dance creation, which further add to and aid student academic learning. These genius qualities should be part of the core curriculum “that can allow kids to contribute their cognitive fancies to whatever is being studied and thereby immeasurably enrich the experience of learning” (Armstrong 10). Adding creative movement and dance to the academic subject allows for vitality, sensitivity, flexibility, humor and joy to be naturally infused into lesson plans because these attributes are intrinsic to dance. Without these components “learning is like soda pop without the fizz—flat and tasteless” (Armstrong 15).

Integrating Creative Movement, Dance and Language Arts

For decades esteemed dance educators such as Rima Faber, Anne Green Gilbert, Susan Griss, and Sandra Minton have been researching, experimenting, implementing, and documenting through books and articles the effects creative movement and dance have when integrated with core academic subjects. Creative movement and dance add to the learning experience for the student because the mind-body connection is being

utilized to its fullest potential. “The successful use of movement—and dance-based lessons depends, however, on the fact that mind and body are not two separate entities but are intimately connected” (Minton 107). The effects of movement on the brain and the effects that the arts have on the learner have been presented, and now the specific research that supports this thesis topic will be discussed.

“When children are given the opportunity to ‘physicalize’ a scientific process, a literary character, or the geographical terrain of a country, learning becomes more tangible, accessible, and memorable” (Griss 30). Educator and choreographer Susan Griss has been using movement to reinforce math, science, grammar and poetry for over twenty-five years in the public school system. While working in an afterschool program in Poughkeepsie, New York, Griss was teaching patterns of movement such as skipping four times, running three counts, jump and a turn. The math teacher approached her questioning what she was doing with the students because those that had been in the dance class learned the math concepts quicker than the students who had not. Turns out both were working on patterns and Griss had no idea she was teaching a lesson in math (Griss 28). Since then she has gone on to create dance lessons that kinesthetically explain and explore countless academic concepts including the speed of sound, punctuation, vocabulary definitions and “interpreting poetry through dance, exploring mood, meaning, even particular metaphors” (Griss 28). Academic teachers have given her feedback such that as a result of her speed-of-sound workshop, “it was the only question the entire class answered correctly on their sound test unit” (Griss 31). After using creative movement and dance with a fourth grade class to understand punctuation the teacher said it was the first time the students used punctuation correctly. Griss attributes the results to having the

information take “root as it passed from their muscles to their nerves to their brains” (Griss 31).

Rima Faber, educational dance specialist and one of the founding members of the National Dance Education Organization, worked with a public school in Baltimore to use dance to teach science concepts. After submitting an application for and receiving a grant through the Hands-On-Science fund, Faber worked with two Baltimore science teachers to create science lessons incorporating creative movement and dance (Macel). In the July 2010 issue of *Dance Teacher Magazine* Faber tells author Emily Macel that the project was unique because both the science and the dance were seen as important. “They are given equal treatment. . . . Usually the art gets forfeited in favor of the academic goals. But here they are mutually respected” (Macel). This collaboration was enthusiastically viewed as a way to excite students and also provide an alternative way of learning for those students that are not natural verbal learners. Just like Faber, Minton spent a number of years working in public schools using creative movement and dance to teach academics. “If the ability to think in a creative way is important to the future of the world, then teaching students how to think creatively should be part of education (Minton 49). Adding creative movement and dance is a potential way to make sure that no child falls through the cracks in the education system as demonstrated by the writings of these two dance education experts.

Bringing creative movement, dance, and language arts together seems to be a natural fit. The researcher has been teaching dance for over twenty years and frequently uses the metaphor that learning to dance, creating choreography, and producing a performance is similar to writing a book. First you need to learn the letters, the dance

steps. Next you create the words, which is like putting the steps together, the sentence (the dance combination), the paragraph (several combinations danced one right after the other), the chapter (a finished piece), and finally the completed book (the performance). The overwhelming verbal response from students is that they understand this explanation and see the connection. Therefore the leap to use creative movement and dance to further enhance the learning process of poetry was chosen for this thesis topic.

In “Dance and Literacy Hand in Hand: Using Uncommon Practices to Meet the Common Core” the author, Janet Adams, discusses her methods for incorporating dance with language arts. Similar to the thesis researcher, Adams compares the creation of choreography to writing. Both dance choreography and stories need a beginning, middle and end. Adams, a dance teacher in the public school system for over 25 years, supports the literacy (reading and writing) goal of her school by using symbols similar to Labanotation, the notation system used to document dance on the page. She has her students create and draw with symbols a dance plan with a clear beginning, middle, and end. This creates a framework for more creative ideas to emerge while the students explore and experiment with their clear beginning, middle, and end written pattern. This movement-based activity reinforces the set-up for writing a paragraph, a story, or a book. “Teaching young children to plan and document their choreographic explorations enhances the development of both literacy and dance by strengthening the reading-writing connection through movement” (Adams 34).

The articles “Thinking as They Create: Do Children have Similar Experiences in Dance and In Language Arts?” and “Abstracting Bulls: A Dancing Words/Writing Dance Workshop” both focus on the integration of creative movement, dance and language arts,

specifically poetry. In the first article, author Miriam Giguere, investigated the cognition as children created dances and poetry. Her observations of the creative process over the twenty years she has spent as a dance teacher were “that children are quite cognitively active when they create and have the capacity to articulate these mental experiences if given the opportunity” (Giguere 42). The workshop was conducted with fifth grade students during their elementary school day. The second article discussed a workshop held at a dance studio with seven teenage girls. The goal of workshop was to forge “new possibilities for integrating dance into a larger, transdisciplinary educational experience, one capable of reaching beyond the arts alone into the academic classroom as well” (Root-Bernstein 134).

The groups in each study worked with creative movement and dance to understand, interpret and create poetry. Both researchers discovered similar findings. Root-Bernstein found that the students incorporated tools for thinking when working with both dance and poetry. These tools, which are used in every art and science, are:

. . . observing, imaging, abstracting, recognizing, and forming patterns, analogizing, empathizing, body thinking (kinesthetic and proprioceptive), dimensional thinking, modeling, playing, transforming, and synthesizing. (Root-Bernstein 135)

The tools of thinking are “as essential to language arts, mathematics, earth science, and history as they are to dance” (Root-Berstein 141). Since learners need to incorporate the same thinking processes for core academic subjects as they do when dancing, it seems logical that dance will serve as an excellent resource to enhance the learning process.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methods used in completing the study, giving emphasis to the analysis of data. The methods used were pre-test—posttest, journal writing and audience survey. It should be noted that the methodology to a certain extent was an evolving one, which took shape as the study progressed. The number of students involved in the project was small, eight students. Nineteen adults participated in the audience survey.

Before the project began the researcher needed approval by the Institutional Review Board. A formal application narrative was submitted including sample consent forms, pre-test, posttest, and audience survey questions. The Institutional Review Board requested revisions to the application. The researcher corrected the revisions and resubmitted. One more set of revisions was requested. After the revisions were completed, the project was approved and the study began. See Appendix C.

General Research Perspective and Type

The methods of research being utilized in this project are both quantitative and qualitative. The researcher identified themes and ideas in the resulting data as they are related to and answered the three thesis research questions: How can creative movement and dance in middle and high school students' classes be used to enhance their understanding of poetry in terms of its structure? How will creative movement and dance

help middle and high school students understand the meaning of poetry? Which creative movement and dance techniques can be used to help students best understand poetic structure and meaning?

Research Context and Participants

The participants for the study were students enrolled in ballet classes at a private dance studio, Contemporary and Classical Dance Studio. (Contemporary and Classical Dance Studio is a fictitious name, used to preserve confidentiality). The studio is located in the town where the researcher lives. The researcher has been a dance teacher at this studio for sixteen years. Participants in the study were students already enrolled in the researcher's ballet classes, which met once a week for ninety minutes. The study took place over a 16 week time period January through May. The students were in seventh and eighth grades for the middle school group and ninth through twelfth for the high school group. The study included only students who chose to participate. Participation was not required in order to take part in the ballet classes. Student assent and parental approval were required of all those participating in the study who were under the age of eighteen years. Audience members at the annual spring dance concert, where the end product of the thesis was presented, participated in the study through a survey. Their consent was also needed to participate in this study. (Appendix C).

The Data Collection Procedures consisted of pre-test and posttest of participants, journal entries by participants and audience member surveys. The pre-test of the participants asked students to answer questions in writing regarding their knowledge of poetic structure and poetic meaning. A poem's structure refers to its organization of lines. For example, a Haiku is a three-lined poem (5, 7, 5 syllables) and unrhymed verse. A

limerick, a five-lined poem with an AABBA rhyming pattern, is an example of the way sound is used in a poem. The researcher used a code system to identify all participant responses including the pre-test, journal and posttest information. No actual names were used in the thesis. Students kept a journal throughout the thesis project. Students documented their thoughts and responses to the integration of creative movement and dance with the academic subject poetry. The students' journal writings responded to specific prompts posed by the researcher. The posttest of participants consisted of asking the students the same questions from the pre-test for analysis to determine if the creative movement and dance integration resulted in an enhanced understanding of poetry. The questions were the same as those asked on the pre-test, but the poem the participants were asked to review was different. The last method of data collection was an audience reflection survey. Audience members consisting of parents, friends, and family members of students who attend Contemporary and Classical Dance Studio as well as dance faculty members at the same studio were given a survey to complete after watching the two groups perform. The questions in the survey related to whether or not students' dances communicated poetic structure and meaning. A code system was used to identify all participant responses. No actual names were used.

The methods of research being utilized in this project are both quantitative and qualitative. In the quantitative part of the analysis, the researcher calculated the number of students who answered questions in a particular way. For the qualitative part of the analysis, themes and ideas were identified in the students' journal entries as they related to and answered the research questions as noted above. Data were analyzed by the researcher and served as the primary source for writing the final sections of the thesis.

The data were analyzed to answer the three thesis questions. Selections included in the written thesis did not compromise the confidentiality of those involved in the research because all data were coded and code numbers were used in this text. The original three questions were used to create, guide and develop the research from the beginning to end. All written materials were analyzed and summarized while keeping these questions in mind.

Methodology for Thesis Questions

Pre-test and Posttest Methods used for Question 1

The thesis project involved minors, which required the researcher to receive written consent from their parent or legal guardian. The participants also signed consent forms indicating their willingness to participate in the study. Once the researcher collected the necessary paperwork, the pre-test was administered to the participants and they were given an assigned code for the purpose of confidentiality.

The purpose of the pre-test was to determine what the participants understood about poetic structure and dramatic content prior to completing the creative movement and dance integration with poetry lessons. Question 1 of this thesis project was to determine if movement would enhance the learning process regarding understanding poetic structure. Participants would be working with the following poems: *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost for the middle school group, and *Because I Could Not Stop For Death* by Emily Dickenson for the high school group in the pre-test and culminating activity (Appendix A). Participants were given five minutes to individually read the poem. Once all participants were finished reading the poem a seven-question pre-test was distributed. While the participants filled out the pre-test, the researcher directed them not

to discuss their answers with each other. The purpose of the pre-test was to measure individual, not group, knowledge about poetic structure (Appendix B).

The following two classes were spent discussing the pre-test topics, first through a traditional lecture and then by adding creative movement and dance activities. In her lecture, the researcher verbally described rhythm as it is found in poetry. Thus, she talked about beat or meter of a poem and told the participants it is similar to the rhythm of a song. In addition, the researcher explained that poems traditionally include five types of meter: iamb, trochee, spondee, anapest, and dactyl. The researcher referenced two websites: Study.com What is Rhythm in Poetry—Definitions and Examples <http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-rhythm-in-poetry-definition-examples-quiz.html>, and Elements of Poetry <http://learn.lexiconic.net/elementsofpoetry.htm>. The following is a table that explains the five types of meter, which the researcher presented to the participants during the thesis project.

Table 2

Five Types of Meter

Type of Meter	Definition	Example
Iamb	One unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable	En-JOY
Trochee	One stressed syllable followed by one unstressed syllable	CON-quer
Spondee	Two stressed syllables, the pattern may cross over from word to word	GO! GO!
Anapest	Two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed syllable	to the NORTH
Dactyl	One stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables	FLY a-way

In the first of these two classes, the researcher used the following steps to introduce creative movement. First, she had the students clap out the five different meters putting the accent in the appropriate location. For example, with the iambic meter the students clapped for each syllable but more loudly on the stressed syllable. The students then took the meters and incorporated them into whole body movement and dance, again using their bodies to add the accent in the correct part of the meter, for example jumping on the accent. The middle school group had three students in the class and the high school group included five students. When the researcher refers to the students working in groups she means the entire class worked together. In this class session the students experienced the poem as read aloud to listen for the meter, then it was clapped, and finally the participants improvised to the meter of the poem, using their body to accent the correct part of the meter.

During class two, the participants listened to an explanation regarding the flow of poetry, which includes the natural stopping and starting point, rhyming structure, stanza structure, and alliteration or the repeated occurrence of the same sound. Together with the researcher the participants wrote down the rhyme structure for each poem. In *The Road Not Taken* the students discovered the structure followed an ABAAB pattern (the end rhyme scheme lines labeled A rhymed with each other and the two B lines rhymed) in all four stanzas with each stanza's having five lines. The students decided that the poem had a natural flow and then improvised while the researcher read the poem, noting the natural starting and stopping points by coming to a frozen pose. The students also added a pause to their movement phrases between stanzas indicating that one stanza ended and another began. The middle school students represented the rhyming scheme through movement

by doing similar movements for the rhyming words with one or two differences: for example for every “A” in the pattern they could jump but their arms were in a different position. *Because I could not stop for Death* did not rhyme, but there were key words within the poem that rhymed. The high school group did the same movement activity to help them understand natural flow. Neither poem contained alliteration, but it was discussed. The researcher and participants concluded that if alliteration were to be done in the body, the learner would incorporate the use of repetition to reflect the repeated occurrence of the same sound.

At the end of the project, participants were given a posttest with a new poem. Both groups were asked to answer the same questions in the pre-test. The middle school group worked with the poem *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost while the high school group was given *A Shropshire Lad 2: Loveliest of trees, the cherry now* by A. E. Housman (Appendix A). These four poems were selected after speaking with the local public school middle school Language Arts teacher. He provided these suggestions based on the middle school and high school curriculum followed in the local school district. Again the participants were directed to individually answer the questions and not work in a group. A copy of the blank posttest can be found in Appendix B.

Pre-test and Posttest Methods used for Question 2

Question seven in the same pre-test was used to measure students’ knowledge of understanding dramatic content, which was the focus of the third class. There were two creative movement and dance activities used during this class to enhance the learning process. *Teaching the Three Rs through Movement Experiences* by Anne Green Gilbert and *Interdisciplinary Learning Through Dance: 101 Movements* by Lynette Overby,

Beth Post, and Diane Newman were references for these creative movement and dance activities.

The researcher used a specific process in the third class. She read the poem and asked the following questions: On what level do you want to move in response to this poem? Can you move in several directions? What type of traveling movement can you do? Does the poem remind you of a strong or weak force? Do the words come quickly or slowly? What is the mood of the poem? (Green Gilbert 75). After the students answered the questions, the researcher gave them a blank piece of paper and asked them to draw their answers. Such a drawing might include lines that are high or low on the paper, point in different directions, or be wide or narrow to indicate a varying use of force. Lastly, the participants were asked to dance their drawing.

The second activity in the third class, “Dancing Dreams,” provided a guideline for the researcher to help participants understand dramatic content by listening to the words, discussing the meaning, suggesting movements, and then exploring movements to the words (Overby, Post, and Newman 85-86). The poems for each age group were written line by line on a white board while the other half of the board was left blank for the students to write suggested movements based on the line of the poem. After each line was discussed and movement was suggested participants worked together to choreograph a finished product. Tables 2 and 3 are replications of what the researcher and participants had on the white board regarding dramatic content and framework for creating a dance. The tables are listed on the next two pages.

Table 3

<i>The Road Not Taken</i> by Robert Frost Middle School Group Dramatic Content	
Line of Poem	Suggested Movements
Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,	Connecting shape on different levels; "looking"
And sorry I could not travel both	Different levels, reaching different "paths"
And be one traveler, long I stood	Pose, pause, no longer in a group shape, students seen as an individual "traveler"
And looked down one as far as I could	Traveling movements
To where it bent in the undergrowth;	Low level, roll
Then took the other, as just as fair,	Travel on the same "path", Cannon
And having perhaps the better claim,	Travel on the same "path", Cannon
Because it was grassy and wanted wear	Travel on the same "path" Cannon
Though as for that the passing there	Travel on the same "path" Cannon
Had worn them really about the same,	Travel on the same "path" Cannon
And both that morning equally lay	Travel in Unison
In leaves no step had trodden black.	Travel in Unison
Oh, I kept the first for another day!	Pause, pose while the dancer looks in to the section of the stage that represents the path not chosen
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,	Travel on the chosen "path"
I doubted if I should ever come back.	Travel on the chosen "path"
I shall be telling this with a sigh	Movement in place
Somewhere ages and ages hence	Repetition of in place movement
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -	Pause
I took the one less traveled by,	Turn
And that has made all the difference.	Connecting group shape

Table 4

Because I could not stop for Death by Emily Dickinson High School Group Dramatic Content

Line of Poem	Suggested Movement
Because I could not stop for Death -	Sharp movement then melts
He kindly stopped for me -	Welcoming gesture
The Carriage held but just Ourselves -	Holding gesture with a partner
And Immortality.	Lifting up with chest and torso
We slowly drove - He knew no haste	Turn and travel in new direction
And I had put away	Travel with a partner in Unison
My labor and my leisure too,	Travel with a partner in Unison
For His Civility -	Travel with a partner in Unison
We passed the School, where Children strove	Traveling in a criss-cross pattern as a group
At Recess - in the Ring -	Jumps in a circle formation
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain -	High and low level changes
We passed the Setting Sun -	High and low level changes
Or rather - He passed Us -	Group low level, small introspective movements
The Dews drew quivering and Chill -	Group low level, small introspective movements
For only Gossamer, my Gown -	Group low level, small introspective movements
My Tippet - only Tulle -	Group low level, small introspective movements
We paused before a House that seemed	Travel to a new formation
A Swelling of the Ground -	Struggle gestures within the group
The Roof was scarcely visible -	Struggle gestures within the group
The Cornice - in the Ground -	Struggle gestures within the group
Since then - 'tis Centuries - and yet	Long, expansive movements
Feels shorter than the Day	Contractions, collapse
I first surmised the Horses' Heads	Looking around
Were toward Eternity -	Reaching Poses

Journal and Survey Methods for Question 3

The two methods used by the researcher to answer the third question—which creative movement and dance techniques can be used to help students best understand poetic structure and meaning—were student journals and an audience survey. The two sets of data were again analyzed quantitatively by calculating the number for each type of response, and qualitatively by identifying themes and ideas found in written comments. The students were given prompts after classes one, two, three and four when direct instruction for the project was given.

This thesis project was part of a private studio technique class, therefore the remaining time the students were given a ballet technique class and worked on improving the execution of choreography they created as a group. The students presented their pieces in May at the studio's annual dance concert and the audience survey was conducted.

The journal prompt given to the students for class one was to reflect on the activities done in class. The students were asked if they thought the movement activities led to understanding poetry more thoroughly. The journal prompt for class two was to work on the rhyme scheme of the poem selected for the final project, first mapping it in the journals and then moving as discussed earlier in this chapter. The journal prompt for class three was to answer the prompts from the Green Gilbert book which were stated in the pre-test and posttest methods used for the Question 2 section of this chapter. Additionally, students reflected on their experience with the line-by-line movement activity that is also described in that same section of this chapter. The ideas the students discussed are provided in Tables 3 and 4 with the results discussed in the next chapter.

The journal prompt for class four asked the students if creating the movement to the poem helped you to understand more deeply the intent by the poet. Why or why not? The final journal prompt, after the posttest, asked the students: What did you learn new about poetry by adding movement to the learning experience? Would you like to study poetry in your academic classes as we did in this movement inspired workshop? Give examples of why or why not.

The audience members were asked to answer the survey questions during dress rehearsal. Consent forms were filled out and collected prior to the performance (Appendix C). When the audience members were given the consent forms they were also given copies of the two poems to read before they watched the performance. The dancers performed the pieces two times for the audience members. The audience consisted of parents of the dancers and family members and friends of the researcher. The audience members were asked not to discuss their responses with others. The audience survey prompts were: Did the movement you saw in the performance mimic the energy found in the poem? Did the movement mimic the rhythm and tempo of the poem? Were you able to find a deeper meaning in the poem after viewing the movement? Before the performance, did you previously think about the connection between movement and poetry? Please explain your answer (Appendix B).

Summary

This chapter has explained the methods used in this study of a researcher's attempt to show in what way adding creative movement and dance to the study of poetry might result in a better understanding by the participating students. The next chapter presents the results obtained using these methods.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

As stated in the Introduction Chapter, this study examined the integration of creative movement and dance to enhance middle and high school student understanding of poetry. This chapter is organized in terms of the essential questions presented in the Introduction Chapter. The study first examined the addition of creative movement and dance to enhance student learning regarding poetic structure; it then investigated creative movement, dance and student learning in terms of dramatic meaning in poetry. Finally, the question—which creative movement and dance techniques or teaching strategies were most effective—was addressed. The resulting compositions from the classes were presented for audience feedback to offer added support for the three essential questions. That data is also included in this chapter.

Pre-Test, Posttest, and Journal Data for Questions 1 and 3

The data collected from the pre-test and posttest regarding enhanced understanding of poetic structure will be discussed through the use of the following table. The researcher will discuss where improvement was seen, where improvement was not seen, as well as any differences noted between the middle and high school groups. In addition to the results of the two tests, student feedback as written in their journals will be presented. The journal feedback expressed the student viewpoint concerning teaching

techniques that worked and those that did not to help understand poetic structure. The data collected is as follows:

Table 5

Pre-Test and Posttest Data Comparison of Poetic Structure (8 participants)

Question	Number of Student who answered Pre-Test Correctly	Number of Students who answered Posttest Correctly
What is the rhythm of the poem you just read? Is it even or uneven?	7	7
Is there a flow to the poem?	7	8
Does it have a natural starting or stopping point?	5	8
Is there a clear rhyming structure in the poem?	7	8
Is there a specific stanza structure in the poem?	8	7
Does the poem contain alliteration?	7	7

The table shows some growth in understanding the content of three of the six questions from the pre-test to the posttest. In two other questions, the participants displayed the same amount of understanding at the beginning and end of the study. One question showed a lack of understanding by one participant on the posttest who scored correctly on the pre-test.

The first question was: What is the rhythm of the poem you just read? Is it even or uneven was answered correctly by 7 out of the 8 participants on the pre-test. The same number of students answered correctly on the posttest. Middle school participant #1 who

wrote on the pre-test “I don’t know what that means” answered “the poem is written in iamb” for the posttest, which was correct. Middle school student #3 did not answer correctly on the posttest writing “I really do not know” however the student did know the answer on the pre-test. All of the high school participants knew the rhythm for both the pre-test poem and the posttest poem. High school participant #4 wrote in her journal “I already knew how to identify stressed/unstressed syllables from learning in school,” while a middle school student #2 reflected “we did bigger movements on stressed syllables and smaller movements on unstressed syllables. Doing the movements helped me understand the rhythm better.”

The next question: Is there a flow to the poem?—was answered correctly by 7 of the 8 students on the pre-test. High school student #5 answered incorrectly on the pre-test by saying no, but did not elaborate. All participants answered correctly on the posttest. The next two questions also received 100% correct answers on the posttest. Question 3—Does it have a natural starting or stopping point?—was answered correctly by 5 participants on the pre-test. Still, after completing the creative movement activity, when students were asked to pause or freeze at the natural starting or stopping point, all participants understood this concept as indicated by their correct responses on the posttest. Seven of the eight participants answered question 4—Is there a clear rhyming structure in the poem?—correctly. Middle school student #1 wrote, “I don’t know what that means” for this question on the pre-test. Again, after participating in the rhyming activity, the student was able to write the correct answer on the posttest indicating that there was a specific end rhyme scheme. Middle school student #1 wrote in her journal that by adding movement “I learned that there’s a rhythm and a beat to the poem.”

The question, “Is there a specific stanza structure in the poem,” was answered correctly by all 8 participants in the pre-test, but on the posttest, middle school student #3 answered incorrectly by simply saying, “I do not think so.” The last question dealing with poetic structure—Does the poem contain alliteration?— had the same number of correct pre-test responses as posttest responses. High school student #7 answered incorrectly on the pre-test, and middle school student #3 answered incorrectly on the posttest.

After the posttest students were asked to reflect in their journal based on the following questions: What did you learn new about poetry by adding movement to the learning experience? and Would you like to study poetry in your academic class as we did in this movement inspired workshop? The journal reflections supported the enhanced scores from pre-test to posttest. High school student #6 said, “I learned to listen to the rhythm more closely. I can hear the beat in the poetry more easily now that I have put the words to movement.” Middle school student #2 responded similarly “by adding movement to the learning experience, I was able to learn more about the rhythm of the poem.”

There was a mixture of responses to the second question about learning poetry with movement in the academic classroom. Middle school students and high school students indicated that they would enjoy it because they are dancers. Middle school student #2 said, “it would be very funny to watch non-dancers try to do it,” and high school student # 7 said, “I would like to learn about poetry like this in school, but I don’t think people who don’t dance would like to learn like this.” High school student #6 wondered about the academic teacher stating, “I think it would be entertaining to see a teacher in school try to teach poetry like this.” And continued on saying, “It is kind of

[an] unorthodox way of teaching but it would be interesting to try. I think it could help some people and do nothing for others.” High school student #8 stated, “I would like to study poetry in school through movement because it is not given the credit it deserves. Teaching poetry can give students a new perspective with looking at things when movement is added to it.”

Pre-Test, Posttest, and Journal Data for Questions 2 and 3

The data collected from the pre-test and posttest regarding enhanced understanding of poetic meaning will be discussed through the use of the following table. As with the data collected for the poetic structure, the researcher will discuss where improvement was seen, where improvement was not seen, as well as any differences noted between the middle and high school groups. In addition to the results of the two tests, student feedback as written in their journals will be presented. The data collected was as follows:

Table 6

Pre-Test and Posttest Data Comparison of Poetic Meaning (8 participants)

Question	Number of Students who answered Pre-Test Correctly	Number of Students who answered Posttest Correctly
How would you describe the dramatic content of the poem?	6	8

The table shows some growth in the understanding of poetic meaning. The pre-test indicated that two students (middle school student #1, and high school student #7) were not able to describe the dramatic content of the poem. Middle school student #1 replied, “I’m not really sure about this,” and high school student #7 wrote, “I am unsure

of how to answer this question at this time.” As indicated by the posttest, it appears both students may have been able to apply the information taught through movement to successfully answer the posttest question about dramatic content of the poem. Middle student #1 wrote, “By adding movement to the poem I think it helped me further understand because while dancing you can feel what the author of the poem is trying to express. Also you can sense the emotion of the poem.” “I thought this activity was interesting. It was like picking apart the poem for inspiration and moves. Almost like waiting for the poem to tell us what to do,” said high school student #7.

The journal entries after classes three and four provided feedback when using movement to further understand dramatic content in poetry. All the students found the line-by-line activity, taking each line and assigning movement ideas to it that was done in the third class, helpful in figuring out the meaning of their poems. Based on their journal entries this was a successful technique used by the researcher for teaching the dramatic understanding of a poem. Middle school student #1 said, “Going through the poem did help me further understand the poem and its meaning by doing this it helped choreograph the dance and the meaning behind it.” Middle school student #2 commented, “matching a movement with each line of the poem helped me to feel the message of the poem more.” Middle school student #3 wrote, “This helped me understand and get to know the poem a bit better.” High school student #4 stated, “pairing words or the image that the words give off with a certain movement will help us build our dance and hopefully successfully convey the poem’s meaning.” High school student #5 mentioned the following, “it helped me understand the poem even more and start to visualize what our piece could look like.” High school student #6 thought, “it was good to get all of our thoughts out in the open for

some basic ideas of movement.” High school student #8 stated, “I thought it was very helpful in the understanding of the poem. Breaking it down helped me understand the message and we were able to come up with movements to mimic the words.”

The journal prompt after class four asked students if creating movement based on the poem helped students understand the poet’s intent more deeply. The students wrote similar responses in their journals. Overall, the students indicated that adding movement to the poetry allowed for more in-depth analysis, and therefore discovery of a deeper understanding of the poet’s intent. High school student #8 articulated it best by saying “creating the movement to the poem has helped me understand more deeply the intent by the poet because there is [sic] different meanings for words and we find out the meaning by taking it literally and metaphorically.” It could be said that the movement activities presented in the fourth class had a positive effect on the enhanced learning of the dramatic meaning of the two poems as indicated by the pre and post tests and further supported by the journal entries.

Audience Survey Data

The audience survey was the final method used to collect data. These data were collected to support the researcher’s claim that adding creative movement and dance to the poetry learning process would result in a deeper understanding of poetic structure and dramatic meaning. The audience members were asked to arrive thirty minutes before the dances were scheduled to be performed in order to fill out and sign the consent forms. During this time the researcher distributed copies of the two poems and asked the participants to read the poems. As part of the live dance performance, the first three lines of *The Road Not Taken* were read aloud by the dance studio director, who acted as a

narrator for the entire dance concert. The lines were read while the dancers stood in their opening connected group pose. The last three lines were read as the dance concluded with the dancers joining together in a final ending pose. The high school dancers took turns reciting the entire poem, *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*, as part of the choreography.

Below are the results from the nineteen audience members who agreed to participate. The results are broken down into the middle school performance of *The Road Not Taken* and the high school performance of *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*.

Table 7

Audience Survey - *The Road Not Taken* (19 participants)

Question	Number who said Yes	Number who said No	Number who said Not Sure
Did the movement you saw in the performance mimic the energy found in the poem?	18	1	
Did the movement mimic the rhythm and tempo of the poem?	14	2	3
Were you able to find deeper meaning in the poem after viewing the movement?	14	2	3
Before the performance, did you previously think about the connection between movement and poetry?	11	6	2

Eighteen out of nineteen audience members said yes, the movement seen in the performance mimicked the energy of the poem. Audience member #11 stated, “I thought that the energy of the movement was a bit more energetic than that of the poem.” To answer the next question, fourteen audience members said yes the movement mimicked the rhythm and tempo, while two said no and three were unsure. Audience member #18 believed the movement went with the rhythm and tempo of the poem saying, “a lot of the movement had a rhythmic quality—of either this or that then the ultimate choice had a rhythmic steadiness to it.” While audience member #3 was “unsure—but I don’t find that as important as the visual imagery.” Apparently this audience member felt the movements in the dance created visual images and other types of images that helped in understanding the rhythm of the words.

The same breakdown of responses—fourteen yes, two no, and three unsure—was true for the third question, “Were you able to find deeper meaning in the poem after viewing the movement?” Audience member #1 wrote, “Yes, the last pulse of the dancers before they left stage really struck me and helped me see the ending of the poem differently.” Audience member #8 agreed stating, “I felt the ‘road’ was created with the use of diagonals and patterned movement. The ending was very nicely done. The dancers had chosen the road less traveled.” For audience member #18 there was a deeper meaning conveyed in relation to specific sections of the dance. “The part where each girl runs individually to the corner and then runs back deepens the idea of seeing the first path, but rejecting it—and then going to the other path—crossing it as the sure thing—the way to go—the only way.” Audience member #9 was not sure commenting, “perhaps not deeper—but it did make me want to re-read and compare dance and verse.” Audience

member #12 did not find a deeper meaning by watching the dance commenting, “No. This was a difficult one because it’s a poem I know well and so my head is already filled with images of two paths in the woods and I couldn’t see that on stage.” Only eleven audience members indicated they thought about the connection between dance and poetry before coming to the performance. Most of these members mentioned that they were either dance teachers or dancers and had previously worked integrating dance and poetry. Audience member #1 stated, “I often think about the connection between poetry and movement. I’ve actually done a very different piece to this same poem. I loved seeing a different interpretation.” Audience member #13 commented, “Yes, I have experience choreographing a dance to a poem a friend of mine wrote.”

Table 8

Audience Survey - *Because I Could Not Stop for Death* (19 participants)

Question	Number who said Yes	Number who said No	Number who said Not Sure
Did the movement you saw in the performance mimic the energy found in the poem?	19		
Did the movement mimic the rhythm and tempo of the poem?	16	2	1
Were you able to find deeper meaning in the poem after viewing the movement?	15	2	2
Before the performance, did you previously think about the connection between movement and poetry?	10	9	

All nineteen of the audience members felt that the movement in the performance mimicked the energy in the poem. Three audience members gave specific examples. Audience member #1 stated, “The repetitive head circles echoed the energy of the poem, as well as its content.” Audience member #13 said, “Yes, it was a little chilling.” Finally audience member #18 commented, “The head rolls were indicative of a finality of life, of the repetitive cycle of life then death, over and over again.” Sixteen audience members felt that the movement mimicked the rhythm and tempo, two did not and one was unsure. Audience member #1 said, “Yes, the dancers speaking the text emphasized the tempo and added to the mood of the piece.” While audience member #4 felt, “No—the rhythm/tempo is slower in the poem than in the dance.” For the question “Were you able to find a deeper meaning in the poem after viewing the movement?” fifteen audience members said yes, two said no, and two were unsure. Audience member #4 said, “Yes—having one dancer stop to recite while the others move was effective in that it ‘slowed down time’ and fit perfectly with the theme of the poem.” Audience member #19 also commented on the dancers speaking: “After viewing the movement I connected more with the words of the poem. The incorporation of individuals speaking at separate times highlight the idea of ‘death not stopping’ for anyone.” However, audience member #12 felt that, “no, there wasn’t any representation of death.” For the final question posed before the performance—Did you previously think about the connection between movement and poetry?—ten audience members said yes, and nine said no. Audience member #7 said, “No, I am not very artistic and so poetry and dance seemed very separate categories to me.” Audience member #11 said, “Not really, aside from thinking about this survey. Music and poetry, yes. Movement. . . no.” Audience member #16

commented, “Not really. But the music and movement brought so much expression to the poem.” Finally audience member #17 said, “No, but now I always will. Thank you!” It is interesting to note that the number is different than the answers given for the middle school performance even though it was the same group of people who watched both pieces one after the other. Thus, there were more yes answers in response to the second dance in comparison to the number of yes responses to the first dance performance. Perhaps after seeing the first dance, audience members were more attuned to connecting movement and poetry.

The results presented above indicate that the use of creative movement and dance enhance the poetry learning process for students to some extent. The student growth shown from pre-test to posttest for both the poetic structure and the dramatic meaning questions demonstrate that adding movement helped this small group of students improve their understanding of poetry. The students’ journal entries supplied constructive feedback for the processes used by the researcher. The positive audience survey responses further supported the researcher’s claim that adding movement to poetry would deepen understanding for both poetic structure and meaning as demonstrated through the choreography and the dancers’ performance. Discussions of the findings are presented in the next chapter as they compare with other studies based on the use of movement and dance to understand poetry.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

As previously mentioned, this study was conducted to explore the relationship between adding creative movement and dance to the study of poetry in order to enhance the learning process. The final chapter of the thesis restates the research problem and reviews the major methods used in the study. The major sections of this chapter summarize the results and provide recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of the Findings

As stated throughout the chapters of this thesis the intent of the project was to determine if adding creative movement and dance to the study of poetry would result in enhanced understanding both in terms of structure and dramatic content. The thesis attempted to answer the following three questions: How can creative movement and dance in middle and high school students' classes be used to enhance their understanding of poetry in terms of its structure? How will creative movement and dance help middle and high school students understand the meaning of poetry? and Which creative movement and dance techniques can be used to help students best understand poetic structure and meaning? Participants in the study were eight ballet students enrolled in technique class at the studio where the researcher teaches. The students were divided into two groups: middle and high school. At the performance, some of the audience members also participated by answering a survey after viewing the dances.

The research methodology consisted of pre-test, posttest, journal entries and an audience survey. These research methods were both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative analysis consisted of the researcher calculating the number of students who answered the pre-test and posttest questions correctly, and also the number of audience members who answered the questions posed in a particular way. The pre-test and posttest data results directly tied to questions one and two in the thesis problem, as did the audience survey, which provided quantitative feedback for questions one and two. Collecting the students' journal entries and comments from the audience survey provided the qualitative research data for this study. These data were collected to answer question three in the research problem.

After the pre-test was administered, the researcher spent four classes reviewing the pre-test material. First the researcher presented the material in a traditional lecture manner. Then the researcher introduced various creative movement activities to explain and enhance the pre-test concepts. Students reflected in their journals about these movement experiences. Each of the groups created a dance based on the creative movement and dance activities. The three middle school students worked together to create a dance to the Robert Frost poem "The Road Not Taken" and the five high school students collaborated to choreograph to Emily Dickenson's "Because I could not stop for Death." The dancers performed for an audience who completed a survey. The survey asked audience members if the dancers successfully communicated the poetic structure, rhythm and meaning of the selected poems.

The results indicate that the project produced enhanced understanding of poetry through the addition of creative movement and dance. The pre-test and posttest consisted

of the same six questions related to poetic structure. Three questions showed participant growth in understanding; two questions showed the same degree of understanding, and one showed lack of understanding from one student who showed understanding in the pre-test. One question tested the dramatic content knowledge. The pre-test demonstrated understanding from six students with the posttest results showing all eight students' ability to explain the dramatic content of the posttest poems. The journal entries supported the growth seen from pre-test to posttest.

The audience survey results further supported the student data of growth between pre-test and posttest based on the addition of creative movement and dance. Eighteen out of nineteen audience members surveyed said the dancers' movement in "The Road Not Taken" mimicked the energy found in the poem. All nineteen concluded the energy in "Because I could not stop for Death" was portrayed accurately by the dancers. When asked, "did the movement mimic the rhythm and tempo of the poem," fourteen said yes, two said no, and three were unsure for "The Road Not Taken." The response to the same question for the "Because I could not stop for Death" group was sixteen yes, two no, and one unsure.

Additionally, the audience survey included a question regarding finding deeper meaning in the poem from watching it danced. Fourteen members said yes, two said no, and three were unsure if having the poem "The Road Not Taken" danced for them resulted in a deeper meaning. The results of the same question for "Because I could not stop for Death" was fifteen yes, two no, and two unsure. This collected data further supports the thesis claim that creative movement and dance will enhance the understanding of poetry.

Limitations and Comparisons to Previous Research

The researcher, who was also the teacher, worked with trained dancers for this project. This could have influenced the success of the project. Dance technique classes incorporate tempo, rhythm, mood and energy in typical movements. This prior practice and knowledge most likely had a positive influence on the outcome of the choreography created by the students. The trained dancers are not new to concert performances. Therefore they were able to successfully portray the poems' energy, rhythm, tempo, and meaning, as indicated by the audience survey results and were able to do this without being nervous than perhaps the nervousness experienced by students who have never performed. The sample sized used for this project was small, only eight students participated in the study. It is also important to note that a limitation for this project was that the researcher designed tools, pre-test, posttest, and audience survey, do not have reliability or validity.

This study successfully integrated creative movement and dance into an academic subject as did several of the studies mentioned in the Literature Review Chapter. Faber, Gilbert, Giguere, Griss, Minton, Root-Bernstein, and others worked to integrate dance into an academic classroom environment, while this study integrated academic learning into a private dance studio's ballet technique class. In Root-Bernstein's article, "Abstracting Bulls: A Dancing Words/Writing Dance Workshop" the author infused poetry into the dance class as was the case for this study. This project did not have the students write their own poetry while Root-Bernstein's did and "all of this writing was interwoven with dance" (Root-Bernstein 139). This project worked with middle and high school students while the resources consulted for this thesis by authors Faber, Gilbert,

Giguere, Griss, and Minton wrote mainly about their dance and academic integration experiences with elementary school students. However, the results were the same—creative movement, dance, and academic subjects combined result in enhanced understanding of the academic subject.

Recommendations for Further Research

Additional research seems needed in order to definitively conclude that creative movement and dance will always result in enhanced learning for a student. This research project involved a small number of participants. It is not known if the growth shown by these eight dancers would be reflected if conducted with a larger group of students. This study did not take in to account any student who may have a learning disability or is considered gifted.

In conclusion the researcher/teacher believes that this study shows the addition of creative movement and dance to the study of poetry enhanced the learning process for the eight students involved in the study. Through the use of pre-test and posttest data collection methods the researcher/teacher observed that the majority of the eight students gained a deeper understanding of poetic structure and dramatic meaning. Furthermore the results of the audience survey support the effective use of creative movement and dance to enhance the learning process for the students. Moving the body stimulates the brain which studies have shown results in higher test scores and understanding of academic concepts. Integrating creative movement, dance and poetry as observed in this study can be a successful combination of dance and core academic curriculum.

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APPENDIX A

POEMS

The Road Not Taken

By: Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth:

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Because I could not stop for Death

By: Emily Dickinson

Because I could not stop for Death —
He kindly stopped for me —
The Carriage held but just Ourselves —
And Immortality.

We slowly drove — He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility —

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess — in the Ring —
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain —
We passed the Setting Sun —

Or rather — He passed Us —
The Dews drew quivering and Chill —
For only Gossamer, my Gown —
My Tippet — only Tulle —

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground —
The Roof was scarcely visible —
The Cornice — in the Ground —

Since then — 'tis Centuries — and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity —

Nothing Gold Can Stay

By: Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leafs a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

A Shropshire Lad 2: Loveliest of trees, the cherry now

By: A. E. Housman

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

APPENDIX B

PRE-TEST, POSTTEST, AUDIENCE SURVEY

Research Methods/InstrumentsPre-Test Questions for Middle and High School Students

1. What is the rhythm of the poem you just read? Is it even or uneven?

2. Is there a flow to the poem?

3. Does it have a natural starting or stopping point?

4. Is there a clear rhyming structure in the poem?

5. Is there a specific stanza structure in the poem?

6. Does the poem contain alliteration?

7. How would you describe the dramatic content of the poem?

Posttest Questions for Middle and High School Students

1. What is the rhythm of the poem you just read? Is it even or uneven?
2. Is there a flow to the poem?
3. Does it have a natural starting or stopping point?
4. Is there a clear rhyming structure in the poem?
5. Is there a specific stanza structure in the poem?
6. Does the poem contain alliteration?
7. How would you describe the dramatic content of the poem?
8. Did you gain a new appreciation for poetry as a result of this class? If so, please explain your new appreciation.

Audience Survey Response Questions

1. Did the movement you saw in the performance mimic the energy found in the poem?

2. Did the movement mimic the rhythm and tempo of the poem?

3. Were you able to find a deeper meaning in the poem after viewing the movement?

4. Before the performance, did you previously think about the connection between movement and poetry? Please explain your answer.

APPENDIX C
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORMS

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



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

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
PARENT/GUARDIAN

Thesis Title: Understanding Poetry: Integrating Creative Movement and Dance to Enhance the Learning Process for Middle and High School Students

Researcher: Toni C. Duncan, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado

Contact Information: dunc3669@bears.unco.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Sandra Minton, University of Northern Colorado, sandra.minton@unco.edu

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study of the effectiveness of creative movement and dance integrated with the study of poetry to enhance the learning process. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow your child to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The aim of this research is to discover answers to three questions: (1) How can creative movement/dance in middle and high school students' classes be used to enhance their understanding of poetry in terms of its structure? Poetic structure refers to the line organization and patterns of sound. (2) How will creative movement/dance help middle and high school students understand the meaning of poetry? When a poem is read it can create images in the mind of the reader, connect with his or her memories, or stimulate a response that aids interpretation of meaning. The intent is to explore the varied ways movement and dance can be used to help students interpret poetry in a meaningful way. (3) What creative movement/dance techniques can be used to help students best understand poetic structure and meaning? As part of the graduate thesis project the research will

assist the researcher and future readers of the final thesis in understanding the benefits of a dance integrated approach to learning and understanding poetry.

Risks: The risks and discomforts inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered during regular dance class participation. The teacher will make every effort to warm students up properly in order to avoid injury. Students will be instructed to let the teacher know ahead of time if they have an injury or other reason they cannot participate in a particular activity. If students participate, they agree to take on all risks involved, and the teacher, university and dance studio are not liable.

Your answers will be confidential. Every effort will be made to protect your child's identity. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify your child. A code system will be used to identify all participant responses including the pre-test, journal and post-test information. No actual names will be used. I will use pseudonyms. The goal of the research is to simply document the success of dance integration with poetry. All documents pertaining to this study will be stored in a locked cabinet. The notes will be destroyed after the completion of the thesis.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled. If you decide to allow your child to take part, you are free to withdraw your child at any time.

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

Thank you for assisting me in my research. Sincerely,

Toni C. Duncan

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



College of Performing and Visual Arts
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Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Child's Full Name (please print) Child's Birth Date (month/day/year)

Parent/Guardian's Signature Date (month/day/year)

Researcher's Signature Date (month/day/year)

Printed Name of Researcher Obtaining Consent Date (month/day/year)

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on (date).

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



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CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
STUDENT

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Researcher's Signature Date (month/day/year)

Printed Name of Researcher Obtaining Consent Date (month/day/year)

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on (date).

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



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AUDIENCE MEMBER

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Researcher's Signature Date (month/day/year)

Printed Name of Researcher Obtaining Consent Date (month/day/year)

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on (date).



*Institutional Review
Board*

DATE: January 13, 2016

TO: Toni Duncan

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [826787-2] Understanding Poetry: Integrating Creative Movement and Dance to Enhance the Learning Process for Middle and High School Students

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION:

APPROVED APPROVAL DATE:
January 13, 2016

EXPIRATION DATE: January 13, 2017

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of January 13, 2017.

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

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

Toni -Thank you for patience with the UNC IRB process. The first reviewer, Dr. Hessler, has provided approval based on the thorough revisions and modifications submitted. I've subsequently reviewed your original and revised materials and also approve your application based on the modifications submitted in the second package.

Please make one additional change to all of your consent forms. Add a place for participants to initial every page prior to the signature page (e.g., Page 1 of 3 please initial) before use in your recruitment and data collection. This small addition does not need to be submitted for subsequent review.

Best wishes with your research and please don't hesitate to contact me with any IRB-related questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.