

## **Serious Fun and Creative Dance Center's Early Childhood Program**

By Anne Green Gilbert, Founder and Director of Creative Dance Center

**We like to think of our dance classes as “serious fun.” At CDC the emphasis is on education and enjoyment.**

**Our very youngest students learn through:**

### **Manipulation**

Parents and caregivers increase the child's movement experience and knowledge through touch; by exploring the dance concepts while carrying the child; through gentle manipulation such as moving the child into shapes, and moving while holding his/her hand (s).

### **Observation / Imitation**

Children need time to observe their surroundings. They process the activities through their visual, auditory, and kinesthetic senses. Sometimes your child may need to do more observing than moving. Some children prefer to observe in class and dance at home. Children also learn a great deal from imitation. Therefore, it is important for parents and caregivers to keep moving and demonstrating the suggested activities. When you are dancing, it is more likely that your child will dance. When you are socializing with friends, it is more likely that your child will socialize or demand your attention through off task behavior. Your modeling is a very powerful teaching tool.

### **Repetition / Consistency**

Several parts of the lesson plan are repetitive such as the BrainDance exercises and skill development. Repetition of certain movements and skills is important. Through repetition the brain hard wires patterns that

are essential for laying the foundation for reading, social behavior, emotional stability, balance, and coordination. While some adults may find this repetition “boring,” it is necessary and quite enjoyable for the child! Repetition of the lesson format gives a structure to the class which creates a safe environment and a feeling of trust and expectancy. Consistency is another important form of repetition. Coming to class consistently throughout the semester and also throughout the year is another way to provide the best learning experience for your child.

### **Exploration / Play**

The CDC lesson plan alternates repetitive activities with new, playful explorations. New synapses are formed through novelty and are hard wired through repetition. Exploration and play are very important for developing young people that are creative, understand diversity, and able to find a variety of solutions to a problem. Exploring the dance concepts, manipulating props and instruments, playing and laughing with adults and peers are very important ways that children learn.

A happy, healthy human being is one who understands the balance between boundaries and freedom, structure and creativity, holding on and letting go. We learn these skills at an early age. We feel that our Early Childhood Program is a great place to start.

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