

Abstract

Bringing People Together One Step at a Time: Tap To Togetherness, Motor Function and Relationship Building on Early Childhood

The benefits dance can have on growing youth is an underdeveloped topic and needs further exploration. Tap To Togetherness is a program designed to explore motor development and function in children using tap dance as a growth enhancer to improve their motor development. In order to explore this idea, I used the coding method, OSRAC-H, which provides a list of actions performed by an individual child in a set amount of time. When using this coding method, it shows that tap dance enhances the child's ability to do refined and precise movement rather than just large overall changes in body movement and action. For example coding, "2, stand," can represent at least 5 different movements, all using different amounts of energy: "rainbow, shuffle, tapping your toe, high, and low." In coding, this shows that the child's movement can be more precise and refined rather than going from big movements like running to standing to climbing. When coding younger children they perform a larger variety of bigger movements and changes in movement. However as children participate in multiple Tap To Togetherness sessions, I observed that they are able to execute more confined and distinct movements, ultimately showing better motor control than previously observed. While coding, I found that children could improve their motor function by regularly coming to Tap To Togetherness sessions. The younger children observed would have more sporadic and varied movements and as the sessions continued, these same children's muscle movement and functionality improved noticeably by learning how to successfully accomplish smaller and precise movements. If children were receiving aid from a parental figure, I found that these children would eventually learn how to do these actions more effectively than the children who did not have parents engaging fully with them, during the Tap To Togetherness sessions. This research provided me with more understanding of my role as a dance teacher, allowing me to become more aware, in a deeper way, of children's motor movement. One of the results is that I can now adapt my teaching methods and lesson plans to better accommodate the capabilities of specific age groups. The ground work for an article that will be submitted to the Journal of Dance Education In Practice, I will focus on the movements from Tap To Togetherness, the levels of engagement in which the parents participated, the engagement of the children with their peers, and align those items with the progress I observed within children of all ages.