THE MEANING AND MOVEMENT OF COLORS

Christine Terese Costales

B.A. California State University, Sacramento, 2002

PROJECT

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

EDUCATION
(Curriculum and Instruction)

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SPRING
2010
THE MEANING AND MOVEMENT OF COLORS

A Project

by

Christine Terese Costales

Approved by:

__________________________, Committee Chair
Crystal Olson, Ed.D.

____________________________________
Date
Student: Christine Terese Costales

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this project is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the Project.

_______________________________, Associate Chair ____________________
Rita Johnson, Ed.D.                                                          Date

Department of Teacher Education
Abstract

of

THE MEANING AND MOVEMENT OF COLORS

by

Christine Costales

This project was designed to create a dance performance which focused on research based choreography while portraying the historical, cultural and emotional significance of color. Various activities were used in order to help dancers gain a greater sense of self confidence in dance and performance. The author hoped to prove that by educating a student dancer holistically including the mental, physical, and emotional aspects of dance, the end product or dance performance would be significantly enhanced. This project aimed to show that by engaging a student in the creative process through research, creative activities, and peer collaboration, a more emotionally committed performance would be created.

Research for this project was conducted in several fields. First, literature pertaining to current educational trends and alternative practices was studied and reviewed. Educational theorists such as Dewey and Arntzine provided a base from which further conclusions on education could be formed. Next, the author researched methods of dance pedagogy and philosophies from respected dance professionals. Finally, research was conducted to explore the connotations of color from various historical and cultural perspectives.

The creative process used when producing a project such as “Colors” was extremely important and directly related to the quality of the end product. The research based approach used to create choreography led to a diverse body of works which challenged the dancers both physically and mentally. Activities designed to promote focus and self confidence were just as essential as activities designed to gain higher extensions and greater balance. This holistic approach to training resulted in a significantly enhanced end performance.

_________________________, Committee Chair
Crystal Olson, Ed.D.

________________________
Date

iv
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Project</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Project</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of the Project</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Procedures Used to Complete the Project</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Documentation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Future Teaching</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Leadership in Arts in Education</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of terms</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories on Arts in Education</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on Dance Pedagogy and Dance Psychology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional, Cultural and Historical Connotations of Color</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. THE PROJECT: FROM CREATION TO PERFORMANCE</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1: Creation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2: The Learning Process</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3: The Performance</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. REFLECTION ON THE “COLORS” PROJECT</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Review of “Colors” Dance Concert by a High School Student</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: List of Dances on DVD of “Colors” Project</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Figure 1: Picture of “Color Wall”</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Figure 2: Identifying Strengths and Areas of Growth Circle Graph- Personal Skills</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Figure 3: Identifying Strengths and Areas of Growth Circle Graph- Technical Skills</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Figure 4: Negative Thought Stopping Activity</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Figure 5: “Colors” Poster</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Project

The creation of choreography can be driven by many influences. These influences can be an emotion, a favorite piece of music, or a distinct dance genre. A driving force in many dance studios is competitions. In this case choreography is often created by a formula designed to use flashy moves which are sure to win points. When movement is created to win trophies can students truly experience dance as an art form? The purpose of this project was to take a research based approach to produce choreography for performance. The dances in the performance were driven by meaning over movement which created an experience where the choreographer and dancers together explored the intention behind each piece of choreography. This project set out to show that through engaging students in the learning process the final performance was enhanced significantly. The theme of the performance was “Colors,” and each piece was centered around portraying a particular hue. This project involved the evolution of the choreographer as an artist and researcher through actively taking classes in a variety of disciplines, seeing a range of dance performances, and studying literature that pertained to the performance’s theme of “Colors.” The choreographer created dances based on this research and then immersed students in the artistic meaning behind the movement in order to explore how an aesthetic educational experience can affect the quality of performed choreography.
The Importance of the Project

A great deal of dance education is focused on the perfection of various steps and molding individuals to dance as a unit. While this education is valid and important, it is equally vital to nurture the creative and emotional forces that make dance an art form and not a sport. This practice of molding the individual has gone even as far as to dictate the body type a dancer should have in order to be successful in the art form. By focusing solely on the physical aspects of dance, educators are not giving students a full dance education. By taking a research based approach to choreography the process of learning or internalizing movement took precedence over the finished product. This process also contributed to a dancer’s self confidence and provided a learning environment where the individual was affirmed and celebrated.

An educator cannot expect students to actively advance their own skills if that educator does not also pursue lifelong learning. This education of the individual was lead by example by the director, who also developed her skills as an artist.

Context of the Project

This project was developed with high school dance companies. The high school is an all female private college preparatory institution. The girls are between the ages of fourteen to eighteen and have had extensive dance training in a variety of dance disciplines. The dances were set on the dance company, a group of eighteen advanced dancers, and two Apprentice companies, a group of forty intermediate level dancers. Being a private Catholic school, engaging the students in dances with a spiritual theme was not an issue. The school is also extremely supportive of the arts and the project was
set with full access to studio space and theatre use. The choreographer was also able to collaborate with the other fine arts areas including visual arts, music, and technological stage craft departments.

The Procedures Used to Complete the Project

This project began with the choreographer developing her skills as an artist and using that knowledge to better teach dance as an art form. The choreographer attended classes in a variety of dance disciplines, watched numerous dance performances and journaled those experiences through a series of narratives. Research materials looking at the significance of color from an assortment of viewpoints were also utilized in the composition of choreography. This research influenced music choice, stylization, and emotional intentions within each dance. The choreographer began with a particular color and then researched the cultural, historical, and spiritual significance that color has in societies throughout the world. This research was shared as part of the learning experience with the students instead of only sharing the choreography or end product. Not only were the dancers trained and taught new steps and skills, but they were able to comprehend and internalize the intention behind the choreographic works. It was also important that students should reflect on the learning process for the “Colors” show, so each dancer was given a blank journal tin which to draw, write, and note choreography in. Group activities such as painting, writing and improvisation also were used in order to better internalize the meaning behind each work. The choreographer actively worked with the visual arts department in order to collaborate with ideas for set design and an art show corresponding with the “Colors” dance performance. Due to the nature of the
project “Colors” a new level of collaboration between the visual and performing arts departments was made possible. The choreographer also worked with the technical director of the school in order to see how lighting, and set design could enhance the theme for the show. This project demonstrated that through the director developing her skills as a dance educator she was able to construct meaningful and effective choreography that allowed for a more in-depth artistic experience for the students. This artistic experience in turn created a more cohesive and successful performance. A reflection of the final performance was important in determining whether the method of research based choreography led to the students feeling more confident and engaged in their dancing. Responses from the company members included whether they felt more emotionally and physically committed to their dancing in performance because of the how the choreography was taught. The director used narrative writing to document whether or not a greater commitment to each work was visible from the dancers both in rehearsal and during the performance, and whether or not the entire show seemed more cohesive than previous performances.

Research

This project involved research in three key areas important to the educational, choreographic, and artistic process. The first section of the literature review looked at current practices and trends in arts education. Research in what educators such as Howard Gardner, Elliot Eisner, and John Dewey have found in regard to the arts and the importance of experience based learning guided the direction of this project and how it could best be presented to students. The next section of the literature review researched
methods of past and current dance educators and choreographers. This involved attending a variety of dance classes, workshops and performances in the Sacramento and San Francisco area. Participating in and reflecting on these classes and experiences was essential in furthering the dance educator as a lifelong learner. It also enabled the choreographer to have a wider range of styles and tools to use when teaching her students. The final section of the Literature review deals with the theme of the performance “Colors.” Articles and books such as *A History of Colors* by Manlio Brusatin were used to understand the cultural, historical, visual and musical relationships that various societies have with different colors. This section served as the starting point for the creation of the choreographic works that would later be used for the final performance.

Research and Documentation

Research and documentation in this project was conducted through reading literature as well as through active participation in classes and performances. Written sources were used and cited as a starting point for understanding how color influences individuals of different societies as well as looking at past biographies from well known and successful choreographers. Development of choreography and the creative learning process was documented through a series of narratives written by the director. Video recording of some rehearsals and the final performance were also utilized. A reflection of the final performance from the Dance Company and director served as a way to analyze how the company members felt the learning experience helped them grow as dancers and individuals.
Effect on Future Teaching

The success of this project affected the director’s future teaching and choreography in a variety of ways. No longer can the finished product be more important than the artistic process of its creation. This project also demonstrated the importance of an artist continuing to challenge herself and discipline the mind to become a lifelong learner. For the director, an important part of this project was a reflection on whether students progressed as dancers more when the emphasis was put on development as an artist rather than the emphasis being placed on the acquisition and assimilation of new steps. This project affected the way in which dance is taught at the school and the method used in designing future dance performances.

Providing Leadership in Arts in Education

The success of this project will show dance educators that research based choreography, or meaning before movement, is an important method when teaching young dancers. The program included descriptions of the meanings behind the colors portrayed in the show in order for the audience to see some of the research that went into developing the choreography. Hopefully this allowed the audience to realize that dancing is not just about flashy movements and winning competitions, but instead involves cultivating and creating dance as an art form. By encouraging this development in young dancers who are the future educators and artists in the field, this method of research based choreography can continue to grow and be utilized.

Limitations

There are several circumstances that limited how much the success of this
project could be analyzed. Reflections from students can often be influenced by the individual’s personality. A shy student may not share as much as one who is more outspoken. The project also had a number of time restrictions. The school severely limits outside rehearsals so that extra time besides what is available during the regular class period must be counted as optional for students to attend. Because the dancers were young and not at a professional level, there were limits to what could be expected from them technically and in many cases emotionally. Although the process of this project helped with this limitation, in many cases dancers at the high school age are still dealing with insecurities. The last limitation is that the final project evaluated was a live performance and subject to uncertainties and the nervousness that often affects a dancer’s abilities. These factors were taken into consideration in the final reflection of the project.

Definition of Terms

The terms central to this study are defined as follows:

*Alignment*: the organization of the skeleton in a functional relationship to gravity.

*Ballet*: a theatrical work or entertainment in which a choreographer has expressed his ideas in group and solo dancing to a musical accompaniment with appropriate costumes, scenery and lighting.

*Choreographic principles*: compositional elements in dance.

*Choreographic structure*: the compositional form of a dance.

*Choreography*: dance movements that are planned and performed.

*Choreographic Intention*: the meaning or emotion behind a dance meant to be communicated by a dancer to the audience.
Cognitive: the process of thinking or acquiring knowledge.

Creating: the inventing, composing, and generating of dance.

Creative movement: movements that are spontaneously created in order to express an idea, feeling, experience, or solution to a movement problem.

Curriculum: a detailed plan of goals, objectives, skills, and lessons on a particular subject.

Dance: the language of movement as expressed by the human body for communication, aesthetic purposes, and the release of energy or emotions.

Dynamic: also called “efforts,” or “energy;” the qualities or characteristics of movement which lend expression and style.

Elements: the building blocks of dance movement; movement of the body using space, time, and dynamic (energy).

Kinesthetic: having to do with motion or movement of the body.

Multicultural: acknowledging the strength and richness of human diversity.

Narrative: a compositional structure that develops a story line with a beginning, middle, and end.

Pedagogy: teaching and instruction.

Performing: the execution of movement and dance.

Phrase: a series of movements that has a sense of completion.

Piece- a dance piece is a series of dance steps and movements bound together by a particular meaning, song or group of songs.
Quality of movement: the dynamic, energy/force, effort, or characteristics that give movement its style or affect.

Responding: an affective, cognitive, or physical observation or reaction to that which is perceived or experienced.

Rhythm: the patterning or structuring of time through movement or sound.

Space: the cubic area in a room, on a stage, or in other environments.

Style: dance that has specific characteristics or qualities that give it a distinctive identity.

Work: a dance work is a series of dance steps and movements bound together by a particular meaning, song or group of songs.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In order to fully evaluate how to create a successful creative experience and performance for the students, the author researched several key areas connected with this project. First, the author looked into theorists who support the arts in education and their views on the importance of art in school curriculum. Then, the author researched famous choreographers and dance teachers and their views on dance pedagogy and dance psychology. Finally, the author delved into the meaning and history of colors. This research provided background information for the performance’s theme and inspiration for choreography.

Theories on Arts in Education

What is the aim of education in society? Many times the aim of education will depend on what a particular culture deems as valuable or important knowledge. Current standardized testing places the focus largely on reading, writing, and mathematics, often trivializing the arts and sciences. The narrow aim of education today leaves behind many children who have skills in these forgotten or trivialized subject areas. Education should embrace creativity and integrate the arts into the curriculum. Only then can the aim of education in our society begin to broaden and create lifelong learners with a desire for knowledge. Numerous theorists have explained the importance of the arts in education. These theorists have redrawn the aim of education to include educating the entire child, providing aesthetic experiences when learning, and embracing productive diversity. While some schools have put these theories into action, integration of the arts in
curriculum is still very limited. In order to truly educate young people, these ideas should be embraced, giving the arts a solid place in educational practices in America.

The arts, when integrated into curriculum, help to educate children more holistically. The arts stimulate a child’s intellect, emotion, body, and spirit when discovering knowledge. John Dewey explained that “Such vital intimacy of connection cannot be had if only hand and eye are engaged. When they do not, both of them, act as organs of the whole being, there is but a mechanical sequence of sense and movement, as walking is automatic” (1934, p. 51). In this quote Dewey illustrated that learning without feeling or intellectual process is merely regurgitation or following a routine. Knowledge given in this manner is often more easily forgotten as well. Dewey advocated that when the arts are included in learning, the entire person is awakened into the educational process. Rudolf Steiner made a similar argument about educating the whole child in Waldorf education

We should always emphasize the need to educate people as whole beings if we know their separate parts, including the soul and spirit, and understand how to put them together. We can never educate people as whole beings if in education we allow thinking, feeling and willing to interact chaotically. We can educate people as whole beings only if we intuitively know what the characteristics of thinking, of feeling, of will are. Then, we can allow these powers of the human being to interact correctly in the soul and the spirit. (Steiner, 2003, p. 25)

Steiner, like Dewey, stated that there is more to an individual than merely their eyes or their hands, just as there is more to education than merely reading and writing. Both men
argued that educators must understand the different parts of the individual and find thoughtful ways of bringing together the mind, body, and spirit in order to create a meaningful educational experience. By educating the entire child, teachers would be creating a disposition for learning that would last long after high school or even college. As Arnstine stated, “It is the process by which one human being makes it possible for another to become alert, grow sensitive to his world, and think independently. Without making over his pupil into an image of himself, such a person enables a learner to eventually do without him” (Arnstine, 1967, p. 371). Arnstine showed how the aim of education should not be for students to remember the information long enough to take a test, but instead to help children learn how to learn. One could argue that this would not be possible without a holistic approach to education. A fragmented and capricious formatted curriculum would not create a desire for continued education and discovery.

In order to develop a disposition for learning in young people, education must provide opportunities for aesthetic experiences. An aesthetic experience is an intellectual process through which a person interacts with a part of the world to discover a satisfying solution to a problem. This process involves the creative and feeling spirit as well as the intellectual and critical mind.

The aesthetic in education has two major contributions to make, neither of which is yet a purposeful part of our educational agenda. First, it tells us about the world in ways specific to its nature. Second, it provides the experiential rewards of taking the journey itself. These potential contributions must surely be important to those who wish, as we do, to improve the quality of schooling for the young.
Eisner argued that the aesthetic plays a crucial part in how the minds of students are developed. He stated that not only does the aesthetic experience give insight into cultural values; it also helps to make the learning process enjoyable. As Eisner also stated, this is currently not the popular practice in education. However, making education a fun and positive experience is essential in creating lifelong learners. In the Orff Schulwerk method of teaching, students are encouraged to experiment or play while learning. Carl Orff often advocated that children will learn a concept better when there is an element of play involved (Carl Orff, 1978). Orff pointed out that learning is most effective when the process is enjoyable and the child is fully engaged in what they are doing. In aesthetic experiences the student has the opportunity to explore, feel, and think in a creative playful manner. Art in education breaks away from the monotonous and mundane, and instead allows children to express themselves through symbolism and abstract forms of representation. Dewey also stressed that an aesthetic experience has an element of fulfillment involved. “That which distinguishes an experience as esthetic is conversion of resistance and tensions, of excitations that in themselves are temptations to diversion, into a moment toward an inclusive and fulfilling close” (Dewey, 1934, p. 58). This quote supports what Eisner said about how the aesthetic can improve the quality of education. How wonderful it would be to have a curriculum that excites and tempts children to explore and learn in a creative and fun way. Arnstine, like Dewey argued that the aesthetic experience is a vital component in education.

People are not inert objects, simply to be manipulated. They are active centers of
energy participating and not simply reacting to the events happening around them. Insofar as education is more than socialization or the mere inculcation of habits, it’s not something that can be done to learners. It demands that learners participate in their own learning. They have to do something. (Arnstine, 1995, p. 67)

Arnstine stated that in order to truly learn something, the participant must be actively involved. An aesthetic experience forces students to gain knowledge through exploration instead of mere memorization. All three theorists argued that experience based learning, particularly when aesthetic, allows a student to play an active part in what they are learning. By giving the arts an important place in education, educators can give children multiple opportunities for aesthetic experiences in a wide range of subjects and disciplines.

One area in practices of education that has been surrounded by debate is assessment. Assessment, or measuring what a student has learned, has become in today’s educational system a set of standardized tests focusing on competency in reading, writing and math. This one size fits all method of assessment often creates tension and feelings of inadequacy for students who do not measure up to these specific standards. “Ideals are what people strive for. Standards are what they try to meet. You can fail to achieve an ideal, yet not be a failure. But falling short of a standard is what we mean by ‘failure’” (Arnstine, 1995, p. 22). Arnstine pointed out that by setting up an educational system where students are judged by specific standards severely limits how many children will be successful in school. Here Arnstine cited that ideals, when used as a goal for
education, lets students learn without the fear of failure. Theorists have argued that when education allows for productive diversity instead of explicit standards, more children can be successful at school. Eisner stated that “Educational practice does not display its highest virtues in uniformity, but in nurturing productive diversity” (1998, p. 68). This quote argued that if America is strongest as a country when people embrace diversity and celebrate differences, then why should education be any different? Problems in everyday life seldom have one distinct right answer, so schools should focus more on the process through which a student arrived at an answer versus the answer itself. Schools today which focus on explicit standardized methods of assessment forget that students have different intelligences that might not be included in these tests. Howard Gardner pointed out in his theory of Multiple Intelligences

…that human intelligence encompasses a far wider, more universal set of competences. Currently I count eight intelligences, and there may be more. They include what are traditionally regarded as intelligences, such as linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities, but also some that are not conventionally thought of in that way, such as musical and spatial capacities. These intelligences, which do not always reveal themselves in paper-and-pencil tests, can serve as a basis for more effective educational methods. (Gardner, 1998, p. 1)

As Gardner stated other forms of intelligences may not be able to be measured through multiple choice tests, which is why a broader range of assessment must be used when measuring a student’s understanding of a particular subject or lesson. It is also very important to label these other skills, such as music or painting as intelligences instead of
only talents. This labeling represents that skill in art is just as valuable as skill in mathematics. Gardner’s idea of Multiple Intelligences is very similar to Eisner’s idea of multiple forms of literacy. In his book, Eisner talked about how schools often restrict the definition of literacy to mean competency with processing written or discursive materials. Eisner argued that education must expand that definition to include other forms of knowledge such as the arts.

…a spectrum of literacies that will enable students to participate in, enjoy, and find meaning in the major forms through which meaning has been constituted.

We need a conception of multiple literacies to serve as a vision of what our schools should seek to achieve. (Eisner, 1998, p.12)

Eisner stated that by embracing the diverse skills of the student population, children will be able to find joy and confidence in learning. As Waldorf and Orff Schulwerk methods have demonstrated, learning without joy and excitement is not a true learning experience. When schools can open up the methods of assessment to encompass these various intelligences or literacies, more children will have the opportunity for a successful educational experience.

There are many different theories about education and how best to teach young people. More than ever, theorists such as John Dewey, Elliot Eisner, and Arnold Arnstine agree that arts in education are vitally important to the success of the American educational system. While some schools such as Waldorf and Orff Schulwerk have put these theories into action, the majority in the public school system still cling to the standardized teaching methods. Without the arts young people will not develop the
disposition to learn, feel, and problem solve in a way that betters society and culture in America. The arts allow children to discover the magic of and power of learning which can transcend subject areas and create in children the disposition to be life-long learners.

Views on Dance Pedagogy and Dance Psychology

For hundreds of years people have been dancing for a variety of reasons. Whether for a religious ceremony, a public performance, or a social celebration; dance holds a purpose in every society. At the high school where this project was conducted, dance served a variety of functions. Some students danced as a way to socialize with friends, or fulfill their PE requirement. More advanced student dancers often audition for the UC approved fine arts courses in dance: Apprentice Company and Dance Company. Both companies were year long courses, the Apprentice Companies operated on a beginning intermediate level while the Dance Company performed at a high intermediate to advanced level. The author had been directing these companies for six years, and every year brought new challenges and opportunities. The highlight for these classes was the main stage dance production called “Winterfest Dance Concert.” From August to February classes are geared toward producing and mastering choreography for the performance. The quality of past performances had been at a consistently high level; however, there seemed to be some dancers who had difficulty being more sincerely emotional while performing. This project provided the perfect opportunity to work on that challenge: to produce a performance coordinated around the theme “Colors” that helped the students grow technically, emotionally and intellectually. In order to evaluate how the author’s own choreographic and teaching processes could be improved for the
“Colors” dance production, the methods utilized by both the masters of choreography and the masters of dance pedagogy were researched.

Artists such as Balanchine, Edward Villella, Alonzo King, Mark Morris, Twyla Tharp, Danny Grossman, Martha Graham, and Alvin Ailey are among the most influential and notable choreographers in the American dance world. What do these choreographers value most in dancers, choreography, and performance? One common thread found through this research was the idea that the “intellectual” aspects of a dancer were just as important as the technical or skill aspects. As Edward Villella stated

I don’t want to see someone’s technique, I go to see someone’s mind driving their technique. It’s a very different idea. The artists are people who take that information and allow their minds to participate without stepping over the parameters to fully develop what’s available. (Roseman, 2001, p. 16)

This idea of the intelligence behind movement is apparent on stage even to audiences. This intelligence involves an understanding of the elements and principles of dance as well as a strong commitment to the feeling or meaning behind the movement. When a dance has been intellectually processed by a dancer, elements such as dynamic, dimension, and focus can be used to fully communicate the intention behind the choreography. It is this action of dancing from the inside out which transforms steps into art. Mark Morris described this attribute in a dancer as the ability to

…re-imagine what you are doing on the stage every time so it’s real, it’s not by rote, it is not just a bunch of moves…There are more important attributes to dancers then obedience; there is imagination and intelligence. You don’t have
to be smart to be obedient. You have to be smart to be a good artist. (Roseman, 2001, p. 83)

After reading so many references that mentioned the importance of an intelligent dancer, the author wondered whether these choreographers felt that intelligence in a dancer was an attribute that could be taught or was it an inherent gift dancers either have or lack. When asked if he thought performing with passion and intelligence was something that could be taught to a dancer Mark Morris stated that “You can encourage it, or adjust it, or promote it. There are people who have fabulous passion and artistic intelligence who are terrible technicians. I don’t want to see them, either” (Roseman, 2001, p. 83). This statement reinforced the importance of a balance between passion and technique. This balance of emotion and skill should also be mirrored in dance education. The goal of this project was to provide an opportunity for the dancers in the companies to explore choreography in a way that would facilitate a greater confidence and commitment to the final performance. This idea of the “intellectual” dancer corresponded to the project in a number of ways. The choreography itself was created through researching the cultural and historical meaning of particular colors. Because this research was communicated and explored with the students, more was challenged than the dancer’s technical skills such as higher kicks or multiple turns. The author maintained the primary focus on the creative process instead of the memorization of steps, which provided a greater opportunity for the dancers to process the character or meaning behind the movement. “Colors” provided a chance for intellectual as well as technical growth. Mind centered activities in addition to daily technique class meant a holistic approach was used when teaching the pieces for
“Colors.” The activity of putting together Winterfest Dance Concert or “Colors,” engaged the entire dancer through cultivating the intellectual, physical, and emotional training of the students. “Charisma cannot be measured like the height of a leg extension or the number of pirouettes, but most agree on its presence” (Cass, 1999, p.165).

Because performance ability is considered an important attribute in a dancer, dance curriculum must address the need to train students not only to model movement correctly, but to intellectually process the meaning within the movement in order to be successful in front of an audience.

How does a teacher foster the intellect and performance qualities in a dancer?

According to Gayle Kassing and Danielle Jay in *Dance Teaching Methods and Curriculum Design* there are three stages of motor learning: Verbal-Cognitive, Motor and Autonomous Stage (2003, pp.47-50). The Autonomous Stage is the later phase where dancers can focus more on the entire combination as well as the quality of the movement. All of the dancers in the Dance Company were well advanced in this stage and 80 percent of the Apprentice Company dancers were also at this stage. Kassing and Jay argued that it is in this stage where “Applying imagery, mental practice, and other psychological techniques” are vital to the success of a dancer (2003, p. 49). This meant that in order to create a successful performer a teacher must present activities to students that can develop the psychological aspects of a dancer as well as the physical aspects.

Researchers have explored the psychology of dance and how teachers can better prepare their students for performance. “Just as dancers work on physical and technical skills at an early age to develop to a high level, they can begin to master psychological ones as
well. By teaching sound thinking, emotional, and behavioral skills early in dancers’ careers, you can avoid many potential difficulties” (Taylor and Taylor, 1995, p. 4). This statement reinforced the idea that activities in class such as journaling, profiling, and mental imagery can improve the intellectual process behind movement and are essential to creating a confident performance experience for young dancers. Taylor and Taylor gave a variety of exercises in their book designed to assess a dancer’s individual strengths as well as personal, technical and physical areas for improvement. The authors argued that these three areas have an enormous effect on a young person’s performing attitude. The authors also outlined a “performing attitude pyramid (Taylor and Taylor, 1995, p. 4). This pyramid started with motivation, and then moved to self confidence, intensity and finally concentration. These areas of the performing pyramid have a direct connection to the ability for dancers to perform at their highest level. The authors argued that without awareness, control and repetition, positive change cannot occur. This is similar to what Edward Villella said when he spoke about his training with famed ballet master Stanley Williams, “Stanley taught me to understand that, assuming a reasonably appropriate body for the work, seventy-five percent of dancing is mental” (Gottlieb, 2008, p. 1255). This statement reinforced the idea that the psychological training of a dancer is just as important as the physical training.

There are dance companies that have put this holistic and aesthetic approach to dance training into practice. Alonzo King, director of the LINES Contemporary Ballet Company in San Francisco, is one example. Roseman described King’s process as “Reexamining the dance training that he had received and recognizing the training that
was lacking for dancers, he fashioned a holistic approach that would nurture all aspects of a dancer’s persona: mind, body, and spirit” (2001, p. 113). Because this project was based out of a Catholic High School, the idea of engaging the spirit in dancing served as a major focal point in class and choreography. It also gave a sense of ownership for the dancers in their work. The dancers have often complained they can’t perform well in class because they need an audience in order to feel “it,” or that emotional dancing only happened for them while on stage. It is also common for dancers to complain about the energy level of the audience and how that affected their performance. These attitudes come from the illusion that a successful performance is dependant on an external source. By teaching young dancers that a successful performance comes from within, a student can feel more empowered and in control of their gifts as a dancer. As Alonzo King stated, “In my training as a dancer, I found that there were two things that were missing. One was spiritual force and the other was the concept that ‘it is within you,’ so that the idea of training would be to bring ‘it’ out or remove the obstacles to do ‘it’” (Roseman, 2001, p. 113). The concept that each person is born with certain gifts, and that the main purpose of education is to draw those gifts out of young people is an important lesson for teachers. The entire person needs to be addressed in education.

Journaling and imagery are just as important as plies and pirouettes. Dance is by nature a very physical art form, but it requires a great deal of mental focus and concentration. Without training dancers how to focus their minds and energy during a performance, dancers can become distracted in a show. “The dance ends (or is interrupted) when attention (focus/awareness) drops. The dancer becomes like a
flickering lamp, intermittently leaving the viewer in the dark” (Franklin, 1996, p. xi). Self confidence often has a great impact on a dancer’s focus during performance. A dancer who feels confident and capable in the movement will be able to overcome nervousness and have a successful performance experience. In order to cultivate self esteem, a positive and safe environment must be present. Negative internal thoughts such as “I can’t do this” as well as external negative influences such as gossiping, hurt a dancer’s self confidence and hurt a dancer’s performance skills. It was important for the author to maintain an environment that encouraged self confidence and gave the students an enjoyable experience.

In the midst of our technical struggles, we must always remember that the most important technique in dance is the love of dance. If you are ‘in love’ with moving, your technique greatly improves and you are capable of expressing beautiful things. (Franklin, 1996, p. 70)

“Colors” dance performance was designed to help the young students in the Dance Company and the Apprentice Company grow as dancers physically, intellectually, and spiritually in environment that helped to promote dance as an art form and an important part of life. As Danny Grossman stated about the importance of dance and art

In world cycles, there are times of ignorance and times of illumination; trends rise and fall, but dance will never disappear. Art cannot die anymore than electricity can die. We may be ignorant of it, but it is there nonetheless. It is knowledge. It is by the art within us that things are made. (Roseman, 2001, p. 133)
Emotional, Cultural and Historical Connotations of Color

Throughout history colors have been used for a variety of purposes and are symbolic in cultures around the globe. Color can represent many aspects in the lives of people such as emotion, death, religion, and even social status. The theme for the 2010 Winterfest dance production was “Colors,” which provided a wonderful opportunity for exploration and cross discipline connections. The author began choreography for the performance by first researching the cultural, historical and emotional significance of colors in various societies.

The book, *A History of Colors* provided a solid starting point for background information on how color has been used and debated by people from around the globe. In the book several theories on colors were presented. One theory in particular from Goethe, served as an overall connection for the dances. Goethe stated “All that is visible in this world is so through light mixed with shadow, through a sort of clarified darkness. Colors are therefore the properties of an object obscured, of a darkened light” (Brusatin, 1991, p.105). From this theory the author developed the idea that if the colors of the world are the product of light and darkness, then the colors of the soul are the product of light and darkness or rather the good times and the bad. This theme provided a common thread that could weave through all of the pieces in the show and gave the dancers a starting point for emotional inspiration.

Theorists have argued that connotations connected with colors arise mainly from cultural influences. “Color preference and aesthetic values are subject to powerful cultural influences operating over and above race” (Whitfield & Wiltshire, 1990, p. 4).
Most theorists agree that it is our cultural influences that shape the psychological affects and preferences of color. Researchers have posed many theories on how color affects an individual emotionally and whether this effect is more cognitive or impulsive. “In short humans respond to color more on the basis of subliminal emotion than on the grounds of rational consideration. This helps explain the attractions of color (chromophilia) in all cultures” (Finlay, 2007, p. 394). This emotional aspect of color provided a great deal of inspiration for the project and helped the dancers to better understand the intent behind the movement. “Color is a power which directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings" (Humphrey, 2006, p.19). Color reflects emotion in many ways, from the color of paint that had been chosen to decorate a room, to the color a person dyed this or her hair and even the color of clothes worn can give an insight into the emotions of an individual. Color has been a way to both reflect the mood of a person as well as a way to modify the mood of a person:

Color is linked to the neocortex; but as a psychological phenomenon, it is radically subjective, seemingly reporting directly to the emotional matrix of the limbic system. While wavelengths of red reach the upper stories of the brain, feelings about red- a color typically associated with fire, anger, desire, danger, and bloodshed-bubble up from its cellar. (Finlay, 2007, p. 394)

Even in today’s marketplace companies are using software programs that explain the associations a particular culture has with colors in order to get a better idea of how to market their products. “The meaning of a color may vary dramatically from country to
country. For example, while Japanese consumers see scooters painted black as stylish, consumers in India avoid buying such models because Indian culture strongly associates black with death” (Finlay, 2007, p.16). Color has a strong attachment to culture and the project provided the students with a chance to gain a different perspective and appreciation for different societies. One example of how cultural perspectives can determine associations with color is the contrast between Asian and Western opinions on the colors black and white. To Americans and Europeans black has always been seen as the color of death, sadness and evil while white represents purity, peace and heaven. Eastern societies have a very different view of these colors. White is the color of death and mourning while black is often used in decoration and of course associated with beauty such as a common hair color in Asian societies. This contrast was illustrated well in the article *In Praise of Shadows*. The author, Tanizaki, stated “Why should this propensity to seek beauty in darkness be so strong only in Orientals? The West too has known a time when there was no electricity, gas, or petroleum, and yet so far as I know the west has never been disposed to delight in shadows” (1999, p.30). This is just one example of the broad range of connotations colors can carry. In India, color is used in association with symbolic dances. The make-up the dancer wears while performing represents the character the dancer is portraying. In one dance, Kathakali, the make-up is particularly complicated and important to the meaning of the dance.

The dominant colors used for make-up are red, green, yellow, black, and white.

The sentiments are reflected through the different colours. For example, green
means virtuosity, black means evil, red means ambition and ferocity, yellow means passivity, and white means spirituality. (Bharati, 1967, p.47)

Color has been frequently linked with a style of dance such as this example in Indian culture. In the Yoruba culture the various African deities are associated with a color or colors, such as the deity Shango is represented by the color red to symbolize his fierceness as a warrior and strong male persona (Welsh, 2004, p. 14). African dance is an example of how dance can be intricately tied to cultural traditions and customs. “African dance can be defined as a collection of dances that are imbued with meaning, infused purposely with rhythm and connected to the rituals, events, occasions, and mythologies of a specific people” (Welsh, 2004, p. 18). Cultural ties to color have been found across the world in every country and have played an important part in the traditions of a society. Brusatin even identified how particular colors have been used more by cultures with specific religious beliefs. He stated that colors could be divided according to monotheistic and polytheistic societies. Red, yellow and black carry connotations to more polytheistic religions such as Buddhism and African belief systems, while blue, green and purple are commonly used in Monotheistic cultures such as Islam and Catholicism (1991). The author had witnessed how the use of color changed in the Catholic Church during the liturgical calendar. The cloth decorating the cross and the color of the robes worn by the priest changed with the different seasons of the year as related to the events of Christ’s life. The use of purple is one example of how color is symbolic in the Catholic tradition; purple is used during the Lenten season to symbolize pain and penitence. These religious meanings were gathered from the author’s own
experience from being a practicing Catholic and were especially important to the author because the project would be conducted at a Catholic school. Overall culture defines how color is perceived in many situations. The project allowed the dancers to explore both their own perceptions of color as well as explore how cultures other than their own associate colors.

Researchers have documented the history of color back to the evolution of the Homo sapiens. More than any other mammal, humans are extremely sensitive to visual stimulation

Visual sense is linked directly to the neocortex, the seat of consciousness and understanding, where information from the outside world is processed. In fact, more than half of that portion of the human brain is devoted to handling visual intelligence. (Finlay, 2007, p. 393)

Though most humans have the capacity for seeing and interpreting an enormous number of colors, how these colors are interpreted largely has depended on historical influences. Overall the use and acceptance of color in art and material objects has had a direct correlation with the availability of dye and color in a region. In places like Egypt, India and Afghanistan, where raw materials to create rich colors were a natural resource, color was readily accepted and valued. “Prone to embrace color in the first place, West Asia had less difficulty obtaining the most effective and treasured coloring agents than did any other part of the ecumene” (Finlay, 2007, p. 414). In the Islamic tradition, color is used in reference to religion and in describing God. As Jalal al-Din Rumi said, “God possesses a colour mixing soul” (al-Din Rumi, 1968, p. 63). While Western Asia was
ready to celebrate and embrace color, European cultures were not as willing to embrace vibrant hues. Raw materials needed to dye fabric had to be imported, which meant that only the wealthy could afford to be colorful. Even then some churches felt that using color was a sign of vanity and shallowness. “Extravagant colors, like flowers were associated with pagan practices, and it was a cliché of clerical homilies that the Almighty’s decision not to create multihued sheep proved that he frowned on brightly colored clothing” (Finlay, 2007, p. 422). It is interesting to see the contrast between the European cultures and the Western Asian cultures with regards to color. Government, war, politics and religion were often the deciding forces of the connotation associated with a particular color. Spartans looked down upon the use of bright colors because it represented the invading Persians and the extreme extravagance of their king Xerxes (Finlay, 2007). This distain for colors such as scarlet, turquoise, and ultramarine began to fade with the expansion of commerce. Money and availability eventually outweighed moral prejudice against color and led to a greater availability of colored fabrics and paints for people to acquire (Finlay, 2007). As trade with India expanded, people other than royalty could wear colored garments. Oil paints and stain glassed windows brought color into churches that previously looked down upon bright pigments:

Thus the rise of the West in the new global ecumene heralded the triumph of the rainbow at home. It also foreshadowed the globalization of color values that would take place in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as Western technology and industrial products had an impact on cultures everywhere. (Finlay, 2007, p. 429)
Today, the limits of color continue to expand with the advances in HDTV and graphic design. Even in the paint aisle at The Home Depot, consumers are faced with an enormous number of color choices. In an increasingly visual society, color and all its cultural, historical, and emotional associations, continue to affect every aspect of life.

The research presented in this chapter provided the author with the critical information for designing a successful final project. The historical and cultural research provided inspiration for choreography. The ideas presented by theorists such as Dewey and Arnstine, combined with the methods presented by directors such as Alonzo King and Edward Villella, gave the author the information necessary to outline a clear path for the project. This information reinforced the assertion that a holistic approach in dance education is critical. Without training a dancer’s intellectual, spiritual and emotional abilities along with their technical abilities, a true aesthetic experience cannot be achieved.
Chapter 3

THE PROJECT: FROM CREATION TO PERFORMANCE

The creation of choreography is exciting and frightening at the same time. The fear of failure is always in the back of a director’s mind. I find myself every year wondering how I can top the previous performance. I question whether inspiration will come or if I have simply run out of ideas. When a choreographer creates, there is always an uncertainty of how the project will be perceived by the audience and how it will be executed by the dancers. Perhaps it is partly this fear that keeps an artist committed to lifelong education and betterment of personal skills. The dance show “Colors” was no exception to the fear, doubt and excitement that surrounds a new performance. The project “Colors” went through three phases from beginning to completion. The first phase was the creation of the show, which began with research both in literature and in dance workshops and then progressed to setting movement to music. The research conducted was used to formulate the meaning and style behind each color for the show. This information was the foundation for the creation of the choreography by both director and students. After creating the movement the dancers could then acquire the steps and emotions of the dance through vocal motivation and demonstration. This second phase used researched methods for improving a dancer’s commitment and self confidence in a dance, as well as rehearsal time to perfect new choreography. The final phase of the project was the actual performance of “Colors” for a live audience. This culminating experience was directly connected to the work conducted in the other phases of the project. A dance show cannot be created in a day, but slowly evolves over time. This
evolution is similar to building a tall structure; the architect must start from the ground up. Like a dance performance, the entire structure will only be as strong as its base, and shortcuts or lack of commitment to any of the phases will weaken the overall stability and strength of the entire building.

Phase 1: The Creation

The process of creating choreography can vary from flowing inspiration to tedious evaluation and construction. The idea behind the dances created for “Colors” came from research based on the emotional, historical and cultural connotations of color. This research was essential in developing not only the meaning behind each dance, but also movement phrases that would support the meaning. By conducting the research prior to the choreography, the overall show seemed to have a clear and connected theme. The research also helped to develop methods of communicating the meaning behind each piece to the audience. Each dance was unique in meaning and therefore unique in movement vocabulary. This contributed to the diversity and depth of the performance.

In order to create the fifteen or so works for the dance concert, I researched the material I would need to communicate the theme “Colors” through literature, dance workshops and live dance performances. The live dance concerts I attended helped to evaluate what worked and didn’t work in performances. It was important as an Artistic Director for me to see what other dance companies were creating and performing. These performances provided creative inspiration and insight on how different choreography would be received by the audience. I felt it was important to watch professional works and high school dance concerts. Overall these live performances provided further
motivation and ideas for the “Colors” dance concert. It was inspiring to see how many more student dancers were involved in our show when compared to some of the other high school performances I attended. Not only were there more students involved, but the level of dancing in our show was kept very high. Because the school where I taught had such a strong Dance Company, I felt it was important for our program never to become overly inaccessible. Although having more students in a show caused a greater need for more rehearsal time because of the greater range of technical abilities, it is important to provide opportunities in dance to a greater number of students. These outside dance concerts affirmed the need for having two Apprentice Companies and a Dance Company and creating a show that provided more students the opportunity to participate and perform. These dance shows also gave insight to the current trends and new styles emerging in the dance world.

It was important that each color would contain a dance vocabulary somewhat unique from all the other colors. In addition to the literary research outlined in chapter two, I took a variety of dance workshops. These dance classes included African, Latin, Aztec, Contemporary, Jazz Blues, and Indian technique. These workshops helped to broaden the scope of movement I could choose from when creating each piece. Regardless of how skilled your dancers are, if every dance looks the same choreographically, an audience and a dancer will become bored. These dance classes and workshops also gave me new ideas for teaching and communicating with my students. One teacher was very motivational and gave great imagery while teaching her class. After taking that class I used this technique with my own students more frequently and
found good results. Sometimes a metaphor can communicate the feeling or dynamic behind a certain move better than demonstration. An example of this would be, “move as if you are traveling through water,” versus “move slowly and smoothly.” Another teacher had a set warm up that used a lot of different elements I had not seen in a warm up before. One tradition I truly took to heart was the spiritual aspect of training in Aztec dancing. In an Aztec dance gathering class was more than steps; it was a way of life. The class focused on movement and rhythm, while strengthening spirituality and community. Teaching at a Catholic school this was a great example for what I could do with my own company. Overall, while I improved my own skills as a dancer, I also improved my skills as a more aware and imaginative teacher. When I created “Colors” I also tried to use different methods of choreography. Some of these methods included ABA format, videotaped improvisation, and mixing cultural with modern dance. All of the choreography I created was recorded in a journal which included sketches, poems and pictures to remind me of the meaning behind each dance. Experiences from workshops and performances were recorded through narrative journal entries so I would remember ideas inspired by these experiences. This journal symbolized how the entire show was bound together with a common theme. With time restrictions it was important to be extremely prepared as a teacher. For many of the dances spacing, steps and transitions were mapped out ahead of time in order to use time efficiently. This kept the creative process running smoothly and left more time to rehearse and understand the steps and meaning in each dance.
While it would be tempting to create every piece this way for the sake of efficiency, it would not be conducive to engaging the student in the creative process. Therefore, several pieces were created through peer collaboration. One of the works created in this manner was the dance for the color black. The idea behind the dance was reflection on hard or difficult times in order to better appreciate the blessings in life. The choreography for the color black was created by students journaling about their own darkest days. The journal entry served as emotional inspiration for movement phrases and music selection. After each individual dancer performed their combination for the rest of the company, I put them into small groups based on similar feelings and styles of choreography. The main challenge with this dance was working together, making concessions with movement, selecting a song, and portraying the emotion of dance. While this process was easy for some groups and more difficult for others, the project proved to be a wonderful experience for the girls. Working with others is an important life lesson and is not an inherent trait of all people. The dances took a bit longer to complete, but the creative process was extremely engaging for the dancers. This engagement helped the students feel fully committed in what they had created. Through both teacher choreography and peer collaboration, the creative process utilized for “Colors” provided the company with a greater mix of opportunities to feel engaged in the performance while developing a diverse show.

Phase 2: The Learning Process

The Dance Company met for the first time back in early August 2009. After a brief orientation and welcome, the group started right away by learning choreography
that would later be used for the February 2010 production of “Colors.” Time is a challenge every year for the dance companies. Choreographers and students must accomplish a new dance every two weeks in order to stay on schedule. While six months sounded like a great deal of time, the shortness of class periods, vacation days, student illness and other performances all cut down on actual time available for learning the new choreography. These restrictions can also lead to more focus being placed on the steps versus the emotion of a piece. This made it important that I, as the director, set up from the beginning an atmosphere of dedication, focus, creativity and motivation. One of the ways this atmosphere was accomplished was by providing the students with a creative space to express their feelings and views about different colors in the show. A wall in the dance studio was made available for students to post pictures, writings and anything else related to the show. This “Color Wall” stood as a motivational reminder of the common goal all the dance companies were working toward. It also let the dancers feel more engaged in each piece. The wall started bare and over time became a symbol of what each color stood for in the show.
Another way the students worked on emotions for each dance was through journaling. Each student had a journal that she could write and reflect in. These journal entries were used as motivation for choreography as well as inspiration for portraying emotions on stage. As a director of a high school company I felt it was extremely important to cultivate the idea of the company being like a family. A person may not always agree with their family but they should always show respect and compassion to each other. To reinforce this family atmosphere the Dance Company started out by first learning a group dance directly related to the theme of “Colors.” The dance to the song “True Colors” served as a starting point for which the rest of the show could then build upon. The
dance was a group piece which contained both individual improvisation and partnering. This represented how the Dance Company is both a group of individuals with unique talents and strengths and a group focused on working together. By beginning the year with a dance that represented the mission of the Dance Company, I hoped to reiterate the importance of being a cohesive family where no one individual is more important than the entire group.

Overall I felt this mission was followed throughout the year. Dances were taught, rehearsed, and finally ready for the next phase. Several factors helped immensely with rehearsal and retention of choreography. One important tool was the use of video recording. Because of the restrictions on time and to help students practice dances outside of class, I recorded each dance as it was learned. These videos were then placed on the class website so students could access them anytime for review. This proved extremely helpful with guest choreographers and other pieces that were learned in a short amount of time. Students watched themselves dancing and saw the corrections I gave them. These videos also helped to document how the choreography evolved the dancers continued to feel more comfortable in the movement. Another aspect of the show which contributed to the end product was sharing with the students the research that went into each dance. Before starting each “Color” we would sit down as a group and fully discuss what the dance was about and where the movement for the dance came from. This gave the dancers a better sense of what I was expecting from the piece as well as personal motivation for performance. While the choreography overall was at high level of
difficulty, the dancers definitely rose to the challenge throughout the process as they learned and rehearsed the show.

However, like any art form or even sport, competition and insecurities crept into the process. There were two main challenges when learning the dances for the show. The first challenge was internal insecurity, or helping the students who lacked self confidence keep focus and fully engage themselves in a performance. The second challenge was external insecurity, or those students who would direct their own insecurities on another student through gossiping or negative attitudes.

The first problem was addressed through activities designed to help teach a student to gain confidence. The dancers were asked to fill out a circle graph showing what they felt their strengths and weaknesses were.
Figure 2: Identifying Strengths and Areas of Growth Circle Graph—Personal Skills

Figure 3: Identifying Strengths and Areas of Growth Circle Graph—Technical Skills
This circle covered technical dance skills such as turns and leaps, along with mental skills such as focus and imagery. After the students filled out their graph, I then added comments and my own graphing to show how I would place their skills and abilities. It was interesting to see that the girls struggling with self confidence scored themselves much lower than I scored them. After I passed back the graph, the students then made a list of short term and long term goals in dance. By creating goals, the activity set a plan of action and empowerment. This activity also provided an opportunity for me to give feedback to the girls and to let them know I would be helping them to achieve their goals in dance. To help build individual self confidence, envelopes were added on the “Color Wall” with a dancer’s name on each one. I placed to envelopes on the wall for a week at a time. During the week dancers placed positive comments in the envelope. At the end of the week I would read one or two of the comments for each dancer. This activity helped to bring the company closer together and affirmed individual talents gifts in the company. One activity that addressed both internal and external insecurities was a worksheet on “negative thoughts.” This activity was used to create awareness in dancers of the destructiveness of negative attitudes. While dance is a very physical activity, it involves a great deal of mental process. If a dancer tells herself “I can’t,” then they will most likely fail. This is also true to the success of a company. If negative attitudes toward other group members or even the director are left to grow, the entire group can pull apart. To help combat both issues, students were asked to become aware of any negative thoughts or words they used in relation to dance over a week time period. They were supposed to try to stop the negative thought and then replace it with a positive one.
The students then recorded these thoughts on paper to show themselves how often they were negative and how to deal with these detrimental thoughts.

**Figure 4: Negative Thought Stopping Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEGATIVE THOUGHT</th>
<th>What event or step caused the negative thought?</th>
<th>Positive thought used to replace negative one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My back is so un-flexible</td>
<td>being told to do an arabesque</td>
<td>my back is getting more flexible because I have been stretching, though it is not quite true yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can never do good turns</td>
<td>being told to turn</td>
<td>you can almost always do a triple, so just go for it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My left side is worse for everything</td>
<td>being told to do anything on my right</td>
<td>your left side is weaker because you do not like it, love it, and you will improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. People judge every move I make</td>
<td>performing for the class in general</td>
<td>people may judge, but do well and they will praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My moves are not well-connected</td>
<td>looking at my arms when I can't</td>
<td>try to work on allowing energy to flow through your fingers and only your arms through movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I am always off the timing</td>
<td>hitting a move before or after everyone else</td>
<td>try to really listen and feel the music, pay attention to counts, and not keep timing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was interesting to see the comments recorded by the students. The dancers in this show were among some of the most talented I have seen at the high school level, and yet, they were also some of the least confident. This activity reinforced the importance of educating young people to be self confident instead of passing negative attitude off as a phase. If a young dancer does not believe in herself, what are the chances she will fully engage in the emotion and movement in a dance? Where there is insecurity, there will be doubt in a dancer’s strength and the strength of the company. A simple activity used to combat external negativity and insecurity was that we celebrated each other’s birthdays. The company had a “birthday board” with pictures of each company member along with
the date of her birthday. On their special day I would bring a treat and the entire company would sing “happy birthday” and eat together. Although I may not be able to give every person in the company a solo dance or featured part, I could give them a day where they were appreciated and recognized in the company. These activities could not completely erase insecurity, but it made students aware of its presence and gave the dancers the support they need to grow as confident individuals.

Phase 3: The Performance

“Colors” dance concert consisted of an hour and a half show with a cast of over sixty students. The dance company along with the two apprentice companies brought to life each color through movement mixed with emotion. The show opened with a “student rush” performance, followed by two sold out evening performances.
Prior to each performance, to help the students focus and calm nerves, I led the dancers through meditation. In this meditation the dancers focused on breath, putting problems away and visualized themselves achieving their dancing goals for the show. I believe the meditation was extremely helpful in preparing the dancers for performing for a live audience. As a group, the entire cast warmed up together and said prayer together. The first performance or the “Student Rush” show seemed to be a great way to start the run of the show. While the audience was smaller, this first performance helped to release nerves and build self confidence for the rest of the dance shows. I documented the performance
by video taping the show with a small camcorder without the use of student names. The show was also professionally video taped and made available for the public to purchase. I have included several of the pieces from the “Colors” dance concert to show the range of styles included in the show. Overall the performance was a wonderful culmination of the long months of preparation and rehearsal.
Chapter 4

REFLECTION ON THE “COLORS” PROJECT

The actual performance of “Colors” was one of the best dance performances so far at the school. The show succeeded in communicating the theme of the performance through a variety of well articulated and cohesive dances. The dancers who had doubted themselves seemed to rise to the challenge and gave an incredible amount of emotion and technique. The audience received the show very well, which only helped to boost the dance company’s self confidence even more. Problems seemed to be put aside for the shows, and the entire company pulled together to support one another. Overall I was pleased with how the choreography turned out, and I felt that I had grown as a teacher and choreographer.

A major contributing factor to this growth was the variety of classes I attended, both in dance and in education. This coursework in education provided new information about curriculum and methods for teaching. The variety of dance classes I took sparked a renewed creativity and a broader base of knowledge from which to create choreography. Through challenging myself as a teacher and dancer I began to feel more confident in my work and the level of dance at the high school I teach at. As an educator, I have learned the importance of pursuing lifelong learning and will continue to challenge myself to grow as a choreographer, dancer, and teacher.

This project demonstrated the benefits of using research to develop dance shows. The concept emphasizing meaning over flashy movement gave the dancers more information about the purpose or idea behind each dance and allowed the dancers to grow
as performers. The research done in dance teaching methods as well as the research done with the meaning of color contributed to the success of the project. The information gathered in this research was used in each phase of creation for the project. I will definitely use this method for creating future performances.

I was also proud that although each dance was challenging, the dancers dedicated themselves to that challenge. No matter how much rehearsal time there was, it would always be nice to have had more, but I felt as though the dancers were well prepared for performance. The last week of extended rehearsals was necessary, and contributed to the polished performance. The use of video as a study aid was also extremely helpful. Following the close of the show I sat down to have an open discussion with the Dance Company about the performance, reflecting on the positive and negative aspects of the experience. The comments made by the dancers were overall positive with a few areas they felt could be improved for next year. The two areas for growth were, more effective review time and more activities designed to bring the company together. These will both be addressed next year. Effective review time could be solved by having more after school practices, or cutting back on the number of dances so there would be more time for review. I also feel it is important to stress the responsibility for knowing choreography lies with the individual dancer. Just as students must study for a math test, dancers must practice their pieces. Building a closer family within the dance company is something I work toward every year. Personalities, attitudes and compatibility are difficult obstacles but not impossible to overcome. While no company will ever be perfect, it is important to address concerns and strive to make the next year even better
than the previous one. Next year I will start by creating a mission statement for the dance company as well as holding a company retreat to bring the members closer together.

I have included sections of the performance documented through video tape as well as a review of the show by a student from the school. I felt that the student presented an interesting perspective from an audience member. Overall I felt this project was successful because of the attention and detail put into each phase of creating the “Colors” dance show. Through carefully planned choreography and new methods of engaging and encouraging the students, the end project was fully realized. I will continue to focus on teaching my dancers holistically, nurturing the mental, physical and spiritual aspects of dance. By including activities in class for building self confidence I believe the overall show was improved. I have also learned this year that while creating an incredible show is an important goal for the dance company, it is not the only purpose. Creating a safe, creative, and family like environment for the students to learn and grow in is equally important. While there is always room for improvement, I felt the “Colors” performance came together very well. This project has taught me that the arts can teach a student so much more than just how to dance or draw; the arts can teach a student to believe in themselves and that through hard work and determination anything is possible.
APPENDIX A

Review of “Colors” Dance Concert by a High School Student

2-26-10

Dance Critique

The dance that I saw was Winterfest: Colors. I went on Saturday at 7:30pm. This dance took place at St Francis High School. This performance contained the SF dance company, the SF Apprentice Company, ERA, and a couple guest performers. The audience that went to this show was mostly high school kids and parents. The foyer was beautifully decorated with different colored silk. It set the theme for the performance since the theme was colors.

There were many styles of dances in this performance. There was ballet, hip-hop, jazz, lyrical etc. The lighting and the costumes corresponded to the theme of the dance. For example, if the theme, or name of the dance, was red, the costumes and the lighting were also red. This made it very easy to understand which color the dance was supposed to portray. My two favorite sections of the performance were red and black. In the red dance, it was a love story from the movie Twilight. I liked how the dance showed how their relationship is and how Bella is torn between Edward and Jacob. I thought the dancers did a wonderful job showing emotion and getting the audience to feel the relationships between the characters. I also liked the dance black because I felt like I could relate to it and I could really get into the emotion of it. This dance showed all the hard times in life when you just want to fall and give up. It showed how hard life is and that it can be painful sometimes. I thought the dancers did a wonderful job portraying

I loved this performance. I go to winterfest every year, and each time it just gets better and better. I would definitely recommend this show to anyone that wants to be entertained. It is a wonderful experience and I am so lucky to be able to have the opportunity to go to it. This performance went above my expectations and I wanted to see it over and over again so I could really interpret the different dances. It was an awesome show and I can’t wait until next year to see it again.
APPENDIX B

List of Dances on DVD of “Colors” Project

1. *Red*- choreographed by Christine Costales *and* Inspired by Stephanie Myer’s *Twilight* Novels

2. *Yellow*- first two pieces choreographed by Christine Costales, third piece choreographed by Kelli Leighton and inspired by various songs about the color yellow

3. *Green*- Choreographed by Christine Costales and inspired by the tragic loss of the world’s rainforests

4. *Brown*-Choreographed by Christy Costales and inspired by the urgent need to preserve and protect the environment

5. *Orange*- choreographed by students and inspired by the vibrant energy of the color orange

6. *tap solo*-Choreographed by dancer

7. *Grey*- choreographed by Christine Costales, the first piece was inspired by sleepy grey days and the second piece was inspired by the idea that people often numb their feelings instead of dealing with difficult issues and problems

8. *Purple*- choreographed by Christine Costales and inspired by the Catholic faith

9. *Silver*- choreographed by Katie Rose Mennemeier and inspired by the age of technology
REFERENCES


[http://search.ebscohost.com](http://search.ebscohost.com)