

Adriana Durant
Teaching Artist

My work as a dance teacher and artist aligns with the notion of aesthetic education based on the writings of John Dewey. Dewey argues that societies benefit from a dynamic exchange among individuals with distinct personalities and varied perspectives. His democratic approach to education, calls for the unity of theory and practice, and privileging of sensory perception and experiential learning links to my own teaching philosophy. I teach dancers to value their senses, curiosity, and personal experiences.

My choreographic research revolves around the human condition and is built on a strong sense of community, both in the process with the dancers and in production with the audience. In training dancers and students, I incorporate this spirit of inquiry into the classroom. My teaching feeds my artistry and vice versa. Like Dewey, I know we define ourselves through what we do—by what we experience. It is our physical experiences in the world that connect us to one another. I train dancers to identify with their experiences in order to become responsible individuals, aware of their surroundings and community. Through dance technique, composition, and improvisation, I encourage students to connect to their physicality, intellect, emotions, and spirit.

I consider dance a language. I believe in developing meaning, values, and intention through physical practice; and I offer mindful embodiment as a way of being in the world. I encourage students to ask questions, to reflect on those questions, and to articulate their experiences. Considering Howard Gardner's eight multiple intelligences, I address a variety of learning styles through diverse movement exercises. Welcoming and sharing a range of experiences in the classroom community is a vital part (and often a missing link) in today's educational system. In dance education, interpersonal communication comes both in language and in the body.

I teach observation skills – on finding connections between the students' experiences both inside and outside the classroom. I help students to recognize compositional structures and emergent patterns so that they may recognize them in life. My interest in expanding and inventing movement vocabularies, group awareness, and taking risks clarifies focus and intention in students. When learning fails to include physical practice, students are shortchanged. Integrating arts into educational programs is essential. I promote critical thinking through experiential learning. Expanding arts education is an important endeavor; it prepares students to become informed contributors to society.

