

Program 4: Choosing Instructional Approaches

Dance

SEGMENT 4 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mary Harding
14 years teaching

Tom Kanthak
28 years teaching

About the School

Arts High School
Perpich Center for Arts Education
Golden Valley, MN

Type:
Statewide residential program/
Arts-focused public high school

Grades:
11-12

Students:
300
Very mixed socio-economic status

Majors:
Dance, Literary Arts, Media Arts, Music,
Theatre, and Visual Art

About the Dance Program

Faculty:
2 full-time

Students:
20-30 dance majors + 75 non-majors

Facilities:
Above Average in the Area

- 1 large studio
- 2 locker rooms
- 120-seat black box theatre

Focus:
Modern dance-based ensemble program
that welcomes dancers with developed
talent as well as potential.

Required Courses:
Ballet Technique, Composition,
Improvisation, Dance History, Dance
Criticism, Career Explorations, Anatomy
and Somatics, Music for Dance,
Repertory, Guest Artist Residency,
Conditioning, Yoga, and Jazz

Elective Courses:
Modern Dance, Arts Improvisation, Arts
and Ideas, Moving Anatomy, Viewpoints
in Dance and Theatre, and Drumming

Audition:
Movement class, interview, and an arts-
oriented assignment. Prior to the
audition, each student is sent a list of 5
words and asked to bring in a new,
original artwork related to those words.
Dancers must present a short solo in any
style.

About the Featured Class

Improvisation (for dance majors):

The class employed Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), a visual art program for students and teachers that uses art to teach thinking, communication skills, and visual literacy through the following:

- Looking at art of increasing complexity
- Responding to developmentally-based questions
- Participating in carefully facilitated group discussions

Students in this class used a visual artwork by Ben Weaver as their creative impetus.

Student Motivation:

Mixed. Some dancers lose their motivation when they work on more abstract dances. Others lose their motivation as they realize that this is not the field for them.

Student Level:

Mixed. The background of the dance majors varies widely with some having just started, while others have been dancing for ten years or more.

In the Teacher's Words

How have you adapted the VTS approach?

Mary Harding: Adapting VTS to dance has meant converting a process designed for visual art to a process suitable for dance, which is a kinesthetic, temporal art form. Advantages of using the VTS approach include developing dance vocabulary, ensemble, movement memory, and critical analysis.