CHAPTER 3
PSYCHOMOTOR DOMAIN:

Dance

Susan R. Koff, Ed.D.
Dance Education Program, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development, New York University, 35 West 4th Street, New York, NY 10012

Abstract: This chapter will demonstrate the taxonomy in the psychomotor domain through a beginning dance experience. As the dancer moves from beginning to intermediate movement skills, the taxonomy clearly describes the increase of skill level and application to related dance experiences. The student begins learning to replicate movement; and then makes the transition to be able to explore and create movement. The taxonomy explains the development of skill as well as the development of the creative process, making dance a rich example of the psychomotor domain.

The psychomotor domain will be discussed through the dance experience. In this chapter, the adolescent dance student will progress from initial skill acquisition to the ability to use those skills in order to compose dances on self and others rather than going from competitive to cooperative dance. In order to achieve the completed progression of dance skill development cognitive, affective and interpersonal development will be tacitly integrated with the psychomotor. As discussed within the Principles (Seidel et al., 2005), the early stages of this taxonomy include less cognition, but the last two stages include cognition to achieve near term transfer and far term transfer. In dance, affective and interpersonal development are also integral, specifically in the creative process of expression.

There are various factors that may influence the dance skill development of adolescents. During this stage of life, two developmental issues become important: the socialization toward adulthood, and the changing body. Within the movement realm, these issues affect the way that the students see themselves and the way that they interact with others.
Dance is an inherently social activity during skill acquisition as well as during composition. Within the dance class, the student engages with others for feedback, sharing of ideas, and non-verbally moving in unison. There must be negotiation of shared space, and developing comfort in being visible to others. All of this occurs in multiple domains and not just the psychomotor domain although the psychomotor development is what drives the practice. While socializing toward adulthood during adolescence, the student is attempting to develop the adult persona and identity. This can become an aspect of the mediated exchange that is inherent in the dance class.

In addition, the body is going through puberty during adolescence. At this period of life the body is developing some of its greatest changes and achieving maximal growth in order to emerge as the adult body. Ease of movement that might have been present prior to puberty is subtly altered as the proportions of the body change. The adolescent may assume the outward appearance of an adult, but the inner persona of a child. There is inherent conflict in these changes. Two sub-issues to be aware of are that the changes do not all happen at the same time and at the same rate for the population of a homogenous chronological age, and the changes are happening in a public arena, which is heightened by the fact that the body is the medium of expression within the dance class.

The instructional issues that occur within the context of the adolescent issues are that the students:
- May have difficulty cooperating with the opposite sex
- May be uncomfortable with the attire requirements for the dance class
- May resist physical contact with other students
- May resist physical contact from the instructor (an instructional method) and
- May be uncomfortable demonstrating for their peers.

All these issues can be mediated by the instructor who slowly introduces the concepts of movement with others, performance in front of peers, description of attire and the use of physical contact within the dance class. If all are introduced with sensitivity and perception, they will become a natural aspect of the dance class, and ultimately, help support this period of adolescent development.

For further clarification of various dance terms, refer to Appendix A.

1. PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The practical exercises are structured to move through the stages of Acquisition, Automaticity, Near Term and Far Term Transfer in four different, sequential dance settings: