

Assessment 2011-2012 Dance SAC

Professional Competence

Demonstrate and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enter and succeed in a defined profession or advanced academic program

In assessing professional competence among dance students at PCC we thought it most practical and useful to look at our highest level of Modern and Ballet classes at Sylvania. Students wishing to transfer to a four-year institution to study dance need to be prepared for placement at a high-intermediate level in both of these styles in order to complete their degree seeking process in a timely manner. It should be noted that such students make up a very small percentage of PCC dance participants. Sylvania regularly offers Modern and Ballet to level 2 & 3 students in a combined class each term. The instructors for both of these classes for Winter term met to create a practical exam. All students enrolled in Modern 2&3 and Ballet 2&3 at Sylvania completed these exams at the end of Winter term. Students were taught movement phrases or combinations testing their ability to demonstrate essential concepts in dance training. They were tested on clarity of line and shape, mechanics, alignment, sequencing, transitions, dynamics/movement qualities, and musicality. Each student was tested individually and graded on a 0-5 scale for each of these concepts.

Explanation of scoring:

0-does not demonstrate understanding of concept

1-demonstrates a very limited understanding of concept

2-demonstrates a basic understanding of concept

3-demonstration of concept is inconsistent, but present

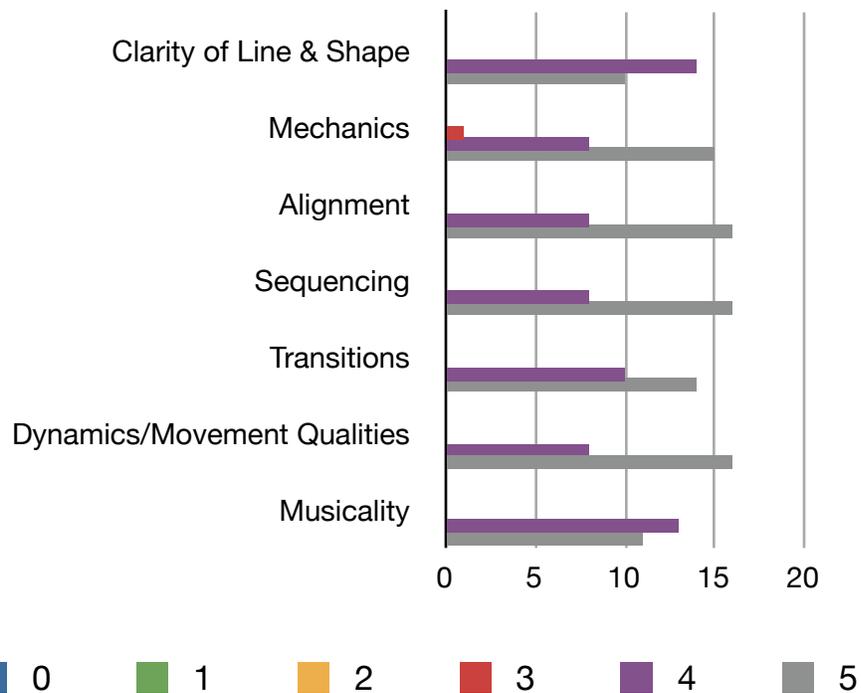
4-demonstration of concept is mostly clear

5-demonstration of concept is clear and consistent

Twenty-four students were tested and copies of the exams without student names were collected and analyzed. In the table below, final scores are listed on top with percentage of students shown on bottom.

100	97	94	91	89	86	83	80
16%	19%	13%	19%	5%	13%	10%	5%

When analyzing how students fared in each category it appears that scores were high overall. The areas that were the weakest are clarity of line and shape followed by musicality. However, all the students tested still earned a minimum of 4 points in each of these categories.



Recommendations

Several faculty members within the dance program use practical exams to assess student progress, clarify class needs, identify instructional gaps, and most importantly to give students individual feedback. Administering the exams on a regular basis can be helpful and productive for both students and faculty. However, with an ever-changing student population these benefits are short-lived. Though they may help individual students, teachers, or classes they rarely help to make program-wide recommendations. If teachers choose to use practical exams it is recommended that they administer a midterm as well as final exam so that students have time throughout the term to incorporate feedback and gauge improvement. Also, testing students who are largely adult beginners can be intimidating and end up alienating many of the students who we are trying to serve. This kind of practical exam would be most useful for students wishing to advance either within or beyond the PCC program.

Self-Reflection

Assess, examine and reflect on one's own academic skill, professional competence and personal beliefs and how these impact others.

In discussing how we might assess self-reflection among students in dance courses at PCC we were encouraged to create an electronic survey through Survey Monkey. Though several faculty members are already assessing self-reflection through various, thorough, course-appropriate assignments a generic survey was created which could potentially assess this skill among a larger population. Many of the questions used were taken from a program survey completed in 2011 as part of the Dance SAC's program review. They were:

Do you feel that you have made a contribution to this class through your participation?

Were you active in shaping your own experience as well as the experience of others in the course?

Do you feel that you have learned skills, concepts, and ideas that you will take with you from this course?

Has this course changed how you look at the subject being taught?

Did you observe or experience improvement in your ability to perform assigned tasks throughout the term?

Has taking this course impacted your body image?

Did you experience a connection between mind, body, and spirit at any point during this course?

Has your participation in this course created an appreciation of dance for you?

A link to the survey was created and emailed by the SAC Chair to all part-time faculty with the request that they would email the link to all of their students using My PCC. This email was sent on May 23rd, 2012.

As of Tuesday, June 5th only 63 responses were recorded through survey monkey. Responses to the above questions were:

1. Do you feel you have made a contribution to this class through your participation?
95.2% yes, 4.8% no.
2. Were you active in shaping your own experience as well as the experience of others in the course? 95.2% yes, 4.8% no
3. Do you feel that you have learned skills, concepts, and ideas that you will take with you from this course? 96.8% yes, 3.2% no

4. Has this course changed how you look at the subject being taught? 81% yes, 19% no
5. Did you observe or experience improvement in your ability to perform assigned tasks throughout the term? 90.5% yes, 9.5% no
6. Has taking this course impacted your body image? 71.4% yes, 28.6% no
7. Did you experience a connection between mind, body, and spirit at any point during this course? 85.5% yes, 14.5% no

Of the 63 responses the vast majority felt that they had played an active role in their learning and that they had contributed to the class. They recognized improvement in their ability to perform tasks while learning skills, concepts and ideas that are transferable. They observed a change in how they perceive the subject being taught as well as how they perceive their bodies. And, they reported experiencing a mind, body, spirit connection through their participation in a dance course.

Recommendations

The fact that these students chose to complete the survey and respond to the questions alone demonstrates some level of self-reflection. And, the majority were able to identify their role in shaping their environment and their experience of self and others. However, how effective was this survey in gauging our students' capacity for self-reflection? With hundreds of students in the program, only 63 responded. And what about this survey can help to shape how we are teaching our classes?

More than any other assessment exercise, this one has seemed the least valuable. The idea that all teachers in any one discipline should use the same tool for assessment seems hollow and impractical. Individual teachers within the dance program are already using much more useful tools such as journal assignments, self-reflection papers, student questionnaires, and personal goal setting and outside practice assignments. It is in the nature of dance instruction to encourage self-reflection as a means of improvement. We are already doing this work on a daily basis through informal feedback, peer observation, group discussion, and more. However, these seem to be disregarded or unrecognized as valuable because they are not used universally or filed in a report. Perhaps it could be argued that these methods we are incorporating as part of our regular teaching contributed directly to such positive responses among the 63 students who filled out the survey.