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TEACHING THROUGH MOVEMENT

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Abstract

Within the United States, many children struggle in the public school system to meet the demands required of them. Often the underlying issue stems from a lack of focus around the social and emotional needs of the children. The demand of this issue requires work on multiple levels: the individual, collective, and institutional, and can be met through better understanding and application of nonverbal communication. Dance/movement therapy is an approach that can be applied to address these issues in such a manner. Through the application of dance/movement therapy for students and teachers alike, improvement can be made to further promote achievement and the overall wellbeing of the students as well as the classroom environment.

Keywords: nonverbal communication, social development, emotional development, dance/movement therapy, school system

Children in the United States spend a majority of their daily life at school. In fact, the average student in the United States spends approximately seven hours a day, 180 days a year in school where they are expected to learn about various subjects that challenge them on a cognitive level (National Education Center for Statistics, 2008). Although cognitive development is emphasized heavily, there seems to be less energy focused on social and emotional development. This can exacerbate mental illness and dropout problems as well as discourage prosocial behavior, academic performance, and increased self-esteem (Taylor, et. al., 2017). This dampens the child's ability to thrive in a school setting. There also seems to be a rather large emphasis on verbal communication and lack of awareness around nonverbal communication, which limits the communicative power and ultimately the message. It also limits the effectiveness of the teacher in forming relationships, motivating students, and solving conflict in the classroom (Bambaferoo & Shokrpour, 2017). This is no mere coincidence, considering a great deal of social and emotional development relies on the understanding of nonverbal cues. This begs the question, how do we grow a knowledge base around nonverbal communication and implement it into the school system to help children develop socially and emotionally?

By looking at the school system as a whole and how the institution itself has an impact on social and emotional development, one can discern the detriment the system has on the students within it. Attention is directed here due to its large role in shaping the students socially emotionally, and academically. Social and emotional skills play vital roles in interacting with others. One lens to look at interactions is through a socioeconomic one, in which impactful interactions for development can occur on the individual, collective, and institutional level. On the individual level, attention is paid to each person to help further their goals and achieve social

and emotional competence. On a collective level, attention is directed towards groups and how the social and emotional nature of interaction comes into play. On an institutional level, there is a focus on the support of the surroundings and how it can positively impact the person or student's social and emotional wellbeing. Each of these different levels should be treated uniquely with different mindsets to tackle the unique challenges each level poses (Panagiotopoulou, 2018) . Breaking the school system down into these levels allows for identification on how each is impactful and how resolve can happen to further the socio-emotional development of the student body, thereby increasing academic performance and the overall health and wellbeing of the individual. Breaking down the specific needs of children in each of these levels will provide different avenues to equip teachers with the specific tools to help. Having a more holistic view of a certain child's academic needs through their emotional state will provide for a more well-rounded educational experience.

Dance/movement therapy provides a way to tackle social and emotional development on different levels, as it is a field dedicated to how movement and cognition interrelate and influence one another. Through studying nonverbal communication with methods from this discipline, we can gain a deeper appreciation for how the ways we move may reflect back on us. With this knowledge, people will be more apt to develop relationships and connect with themselves and others. Nonverbal communication helps convey meaning through the presentation of bodies and provides context to what is being spoken. It is what allows for expression of emotions, giving words life beyond their original meaning. Nonverbal communication helps clarify intent and allows for gathering information about what the person is trying to express. In fact, a majority of the understanding around communication comes from nonverbal cues. Paying attention to subtle details that someone's actions may be giving off to

others around them, without them even knowing it, can be vital to comprehending information about the self and others.

While nonverbal communication is connected to all of our social and emotional interactions, it is especially important in forming the basis of interpersonal relationships early in life. Nonverbal cues and body language play a significant part in how emotion is communicated before thoughts can be expressed in words; for example, an infant's face may smile at something as a sign that they like something. It is then up to the caregiver to pay attention to such nonverbal cues and respond to them accordingly. In developmental psychology, this is known as attunement and the ability for the caregiver to attune to the child's needs physically and emotionally impacts the way in which the child continues to communicate nonverbally (Karen, 1994). These key interactions will set the stage for how that child will approach their relationships in life, whether they seek out positive experiences with others, or retreat from others for a variety of reasons. One of the most important times for social development is preschool. This is when children begin to expand their social networking beyond their parents and begin attempting to build relationships with their peers. During preschool, children learn to be in relation to others. Often the way in which they do this is related to the attachments they form (Lobo, 2007).

Bowlby published his first article on Attachment Theory in 1958 (Karen, 1994). Bowlby noticed that children who lacked physical care from their caregivers ended up "failing to thrive." This often meant the child had a difficult time socializing with others and had a lower IQ. Bowlby theorized that infants initially formed bonds to their caregivers in order to survive but continued to carry out these attachments later in life. In other words, the attachment behaviors demonstrated in infancy influence the way the child continues to form relationships (Bowlby,

1982). Subsequent research (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970) attempted to classify the ways in which attachment manifested in different relationships. She noticed that different infants reacted differently to separation which she categorized into three different attachment styles: secure, ambivalent-insecure, and avoidant-insecure (Ainsworth, 1970). The children who were securely attached showed distress when a caregiver left but calmed down and were content when the caregiver returned. These children felt comfortable seeking care from the caregiver when frightened and felt comfortable exploring while the caregiver was present (Ainsworth, 1970). These children often have attentive parents and can be seen forming healthy relationships with others in the future (Simpson & Rholes, 2010). Children who are classified as ambivalent-insecurely attached become very distressed when the caregiver leaves. Upon the caregiver's return the child can be found clinging to them whilst also showing aggression and looking away from them (Ainsworth, 1970). Ainsworth theorized that this is often the result of the parent not being available to the child. These children have a hard time adjusting to separation from the parent and may repeat this ambivalent nature and dependent behavior in other relationships (Simpson & Rholes, 2010). Children who were classified as avoidant-insecure showed minimal to no distress when the caregiver was not present and avoided the caregiver upon return. Ainsworth hypothesized that this is usually the result of neglect (Ainsworth, 1970). These children often avoid seeking help in the future and may avoid forming close relationships with others. In other words, the care and affection the child receives from their caregiver affects the attachment they form (Simpson & Rholes, 2010).

As the infant grows into a child and attends school, these behaviors formed from previous attachment relationships are brought into the classroom and the rest of the world (Thom, 2010). The teachers and students who nonverbally attune to the child and who portray similarities in

attachment style behaviors with their caregiver end up capturing the child's interest. The child then goes on to replicate their attachment behavior with these new individuals. Through this process the child learns how to socialize with their peers (Thom, 2010). This means that they have to learn how to take turns, share, empathize, cooperate, and inhibit maladaptive behavior, which are crucial skills and a significant predictor of how well they will do in kindergarten (Lobo, 2007). Children get along with other children who can attune to their needs. Some children are more capable of attuning to others nonverbally than other children. They can interact with these children in a way that allows the child to feel understood, whereas the child who is not attuned may end up upsetting the child and ultimately alienating them (Thom, 2010). Through these nonverbal social interactions, children form further schemas (concepts) of how relationships work, which grow stronger as children repeat actions and learn cause and effect (Dowling, 2014).

Therefore, these nonverbal social interactions that occur even in infancy impact the child's emotional well-being as they lay the groundwork for future interactions (Karen, 1994). If an infant does not engage in social interactions with a caregiver, it can stunt their emotional and cognitive development. One study done by Levy (1937) found that infants who were orphans and did not receive any social stimulation up until about age four when they were adopted, had a flat affect, lacked pride, were deceitful, and were unable to make friends. These children often had a lower IQ than those with maternal affection. It was also found that some of the infants died from sadness. Lobo (2007) was also interested in the importance of social development. She described how young children with substandard social skills are particularly vulnerable to many problems in adolescence and young adulthood. These include behavioral problems, delinquency, failing in school, low self-esteem, and poor emotional adjustment. Children who are more socially

competent are likely to show less “internalizing symptoms” such as depression, anxiety, and withdrawal (Lobo, 2007). Nonverbal social interactions support cognitive and emotional development in children and are necessary for the child to survive and thrive (Karen, 1994). Nonverbal communication is something that is ingrained from birth and impacts the way in which attachments form and communication occurs with the rest of the world. It is quite instinctual and yet important for social and emotional development as it impacts interpersonal understanding and communication with one another. These skills continue to develop as we grow (Karen, 1994).

During preschool, children often use gestures, facial expressions, and space to express their emotions. Within an emotional expression, there is a two-process system that Thom (2010) refers to as the “low road” and the “high road.” The low road is embedded in the autonomic nervous system. This system is responsible for the fight, flight, or freeze reflex, heavily focused on physiological responses to stress. On the other hand, the high road involves higher processing and allows the brain to think consciously and critically about how one is feeling and how to react to a situation. Both interact to determine a person’s bodily response and feelings in a given situation. Often the low road has more control over the high road, resulting in unconscious body reactions overshadowing emotion brought forth by cortical thinking. However, allowing a child to organize, express, and regulate the low road system helps them integrate the systems together, resulting in greater social-emotional competence. Young children also often cannot integrate abstract concepts. This means that words such as “anger” are difficult for the child to understand. However, integrating the word for an emotion into the child’s verbal and bodily expression of it can help the child integrate the two processes into their thinking (Thom, 2010). This can allow the child to eventually recognize the emotion, determine an appropriate response to it, and utilize

it. It can also help the child to recognize the emotion of their peers. In short, the body plays a huge role in the understanding of emotion. Through the use of nonverbal signals, the child is able to identify that they are feeling something and then express said emotion where social interaction helps them to understand the meaning of the emotion and the impact it has on others.

Emotional processing starts in the body. Homann also found that emotional processing begins as sensory information (2010). Sensory information travels through the body to the thalamus; it then moves to the specific sensory location to which it is allocated. In kinesthetic, or body-based sensing, the somatosensory cortex receives input from the nerve endings in the body and works closely with the hippocampus and amygdala to instill meaning onto the person's experience. Then the information gets sent to the cortical processing centers where information is flagged as relevant (Thom, 2010). Homann also brings into focus the way in which information is imbued with meaning. Otherwise stated, emotion plays a principal role in the processing of information: it influences how we gather information, make decisions, and regulates how we think (Homann, 2010). As Thom discusses, different types of affective information are responded to differently; positive experiences ease the memory retention and access processes. In fact, Thom argues that children with anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem may not be able to perform specific tasks that require "global focus" (2010). These are children who are not able to focus on the bigger picture and get caught up in minute details. For example, a child like this would get stuck with a puzzle on one specific piece, whereas the child that can think more globally is able to enjoy putting the puzzle together using different strategies with more ease. Therefore, social and emotional competence is important in an individual student's ability to be successful in school, but their growth and experiences also play a big role as to how they have

gotten to this point. To that end, others' interactions with them and their whole environment can form the basis for how they develop ways of interacting with the world.

While interactions on the individual level are important, it is imperative to look at many different nonverbal aspects in the environment and how they impact students' social and emotional development collectively. Smith (1979) conducted a review of the research on nonverbal communication, where he identified several categories of nonverbal communication. Smith looked at how these unfolded in a school setting and how their dynamics affected the teaching process. One key area that seemed to have a large effect on the students that may influence the headspace they are in while trying to learn is their setting. Environmental factors are aspects of the surroundings that affect how a person relates to it. Smith looked at research done by Romney (1975) who found that the amount of light a classroom gets can have a great impact on student behavior. Even though teachers believed windows were distracting, he found that without natural light, student aggression increased, dropping teacher efficacy (Smith, 1979). This finding could be related to natural light. Bancroft (1995) discusses how different lighting can impact students' behavior and engagement. The fluorescent lighting often found in schools can cause, "fatigue, eye strain, anxiety, irritability, lapses of attention, hyperactivity and decreased classroom performance" (p. 22). He also discussed how bright light tends to lead to discomfort when it comes to interacting with others because of its intensity.

Novelty in the classroom environment can also be used to change behaviors. Weinstein (1977) found that, by altering the classroom arrangement, there was a change in the students' spatial patterns, the ways in which the students engaged with the material and the environment, and the frequency of new behaviors. This resulted in the teacher's goals being met and an overall decrease in undesirable behaviors. This could also explain why students prefer more open

classrooms as opposed to traditional classrooms and study carrels over tables even though they report them being more distracting (Smith, 1979). Bancroft (1995) also discusses how rearranging furniture to the students' comfort and introducing art and plants can increase student engagement.

Color also has an impact on the emotional state of the child, which influences academic performance. Although color is something seemingly insignificant, studies have shown that different colored surroundings can have an impact on performance. For example, Stone (2001) found that red and yellow colors tend to be more stimulating and that blue and green colors tend to be more calming. He also found that tasks that involve a heavier cognitive load, such as reading, were affected negatively by stimulating colors. Specifically, children who read in red rooms showed the worst reading performance (Lewinski, 2015). Bancroft recommends that younger students' classrooms should be painted brighter colors and that older students' classrooms should be painted blue or green (1995).

Another form of nonverbal communication Smith identified is proxemics. Hall (1966) coined the term and defined it as the distance around the person that is impactful in a social and personal realm. He identified four zones: interpersonal (up to eighteen inches), personal (eighteen to forty-eight inches), social (forty-eight inches to twelve feet), and public (twelve feet or more). He communicated further that different distances are often used to indicate levels of comfort and interest between individuals (Hall, 1966). Weinstein (1977) found that different classroom arrangements could lead to different amounts of participation. One example where he found this is the distance between students and their teachers, where students who were farther away from the teacher and/or faced them less ended up participating less. Students who sat closer to the center when in a horseshoe-shaped arrangement participated just over three times more

than those who sat farther on the outside. Afterwards, students reported a preference for this layout and other circular ones like it because they felt freer. In a grid formation, those who sat in the front row participated actively 71% of the time, whereas those sitting further away only actively participated approximately 50% of the time (Smith, 1979). Teachers should take these findings into account when structuring the layout of their classroom.

Communication helps shape the beliefs instilled in children. Smith recognized this and looked into a study done by Koneya (1976). He noticed that students who liked to verbalize: tended to gravitate towards seats that were closer to the center and the teacher. Koneya also found that students seated more centrally were found looking at the teacher and writing down more but were also seen looking around more than the students who sat on the periphery. However, when high verbalizers were seated in less central seats, they ended up participating less. This trend did not exist with low verbalizers, though; when placed in both central and non-central seats, they maintained low verbalization (Smith, 1979). However, teachers often rely on class participation in order to gauge understanding and interest in a particular subject. They are also more willing to teach those who they believe are putting in the effort towards succeeding, such as participating regularly. Therefore, the child's ability and willingness to socially participate influences the relationship they have with the teacher and the subject matter. For example, Mottet (2000) reviewed a study about stereotypes of students. He looked specifically at how a teacher's beliefs around nonverbal communication impacted how well students do in their class. Mottet (2000) found that when a teacher was told that a student was a late bloomer and that they would catch up and even pass the other students, the student's IQ scores increased dramatically, and often exceeded that of the other students. Just believing in the students came across through the teacher's body language and impacted the children so much that they became

as invested as the teachers were in their education. Something as simple as a belief shows up in the body on an unconscious level and shapes the students' beliefs around their own efficacy so much so that they were able to exceed otherwise low expectations (Mottet, 2000).

The communication from the student also shapes the teacher's beliefs around their own efficacy. For example, if the students are actively leaning forward and participating, the teacher believes that they are efficiently teaching the subject matter, whereas if the students are looking around or talking the teacher may feel like the students are disengaged and may therefore conclude that they are a substandard teacher (Mottet, 2000). He discerns that this often occurs in new teachers as they are learning to gain a sense of their own abilities in the field. Another aspect that affects the student-teacher relationship is expectations. For example, they expect their students to stay engaged, on task, and be responsive. They also expect their students to ask questions when they are unsure of their comprehension of a specific topic. Teachers also have expectations around appropriate behavior in a classroom and having the ability to complete their lesson plans promptly. The beliefs the teachers hold will heavily influence their performance. As long as teachers believe they're effective, their enthusiasm, and the ensuing student engagement, will follow (Mottet, 2000).

Teacher's efficacy relies on an instructor's ability to be aware of their biases and projected nonverbal behavior. Mottet provides examples of ways teachers can be more critical of their interactions and how they could improve relationships (2000). For example, Mottet argues that it is crucial for teachers to have reasonable expectations and not make assumptions based on their students' communicative behavior. Teachers should also make sure that they are basing their expectations of many different experiences with the class and the students within it. By keeping their expectations in check, teachers are more capable of watching out for their bias.

Mottet (2000) discusses another approach that teachers can use to maintain a positive environment is to not reciprocate projected negativity. Instead, they should pick up on that negativity and adjust accordingly, decipher whether or not that projection was a reflection of them or if it is based on something else entirely. They should use the other person's nonverbal communication to decipher their verbal behavior. It is also important to know that there is a tendency to grant special permission to those who violate expectations around nonverbal behavior and to be aware of that (Mottet, 2000).

It is important to look at why schools are not implementing nonverbal communication considering its significance. This begins with looking at the school system, how it functions currently, and where resources are being allocated. Currently, 92% of school funding in the United States comes from state and local governments. This means that although the federal government makes recommendations to the state and local governments, it does not regulate or set the standards. The states set the number of school days and the courses required for graduation while the local governments set the length of the school day and the curriculum (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999). As most funding stems from the state and local government, there is a need to address the way in which funding is allocated and the way in which disparities in funding affect quality of education. Schools often receive funding on a state level based on how well a student is doing academically. If a school's students score highly on standardized tests, their school will receive more funding (Hoffman, et.al., 2013). Another dilemma is local funding. Local funding stems from property taxes. This affords students raised in wealthier neighborhoods more funding for their schools. This becomes problematic because the schools that end up getting more funding are schools in wealthier areas who are in turn producing more academically accomplished students (Hoffman, et.al., 2013, Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999). As

one study done by Hoffman (2013) showed, schools in Arizona that received more funding had higher scores in math. This is because there is no funding formula that addresses the individual needs of the district's students, including those who struggle with poverty.

Schools in impoverished neighborhoods have students who are not getting their needs met socially and emotionally (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999). These are students that are often addressed as being "difficult to educate" as their grades reflect the lack of their needs being met. These school's need funding that can address this issue but, at this point, are not receiving any (Hoffman, et.al., 2013). The impact of this is that, in wealthier neighborhoods, the schools have more varied class difficulties, better equipment, facilities, and higher-paid staff. The ability for teachers to have more one-on-one time with the students and make more individualistic planning towards the students' needs has proven effective. Schools that have the funding can pay for different programs, pay teachers more, and have a wider curriculum to choose from. These are all things that affect the quality of education the student receives and in turn impact the child's social and emotional development (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999).

The child's social and emotional development should be an important part of the school system. In fact, one of the goals laid out by the federal government is, "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999, p.20). In other words, schools should be working towards creating an environment that promotes healthy behavior on a socio-emotional and cognitive level. Many schools highly promote the cognitive level as evidenced by standardized testing, and an overall emphasis on math and science (Hoffman, et.al., 2013). After national survey showed that the United States performed low on both math and science when compared to 50 other countries, an overall push for higher standards

in academics followed. The United States set itself a goal to be number one in those subjects (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999). Standardized testing was put in place in the 1970's to determine academic achievement among students, to assess it in terms of the average student, and to give the teachers an idea of the subject matter taught.

As it turns out, the government's idea for increasing academic performance backfired. One main result seen has been a rigid structure that places teachers under the demand of the school system to teach to the test. This impacts the quality of education received (Rakhshanda Kaukab, S., & Mehrunnisa, S., 2016). Barrier-Ferreira (2008) states, "Because the stakes have reached disproportionate levels, educators are often forced to abandon all things unrelated to the tests and consequently lose sight of what is important: the whole child, who is not simply composed of intellect but is emotional and spiritual as well (p. 140)." In other words, standardized testing impacts a teacher's ability to address individual needs that are not test focused and adapt the curriculum around the students in their class. Standardized testing promotes the collective over the individual to the point where we have left the humanity of the child behind. Many teachers believed that standardized tests were at best an acceptable course of action. At worst, it was believed to exacerbate classroom aptitude issues. It was also likely that students who repetitively did not perform "well enough" on the tests had their self-esteem negatively impacted. One might also wonder how much weight would be given to the tests when factoring into overall grading. Despite the attempt to normalize student testing for cognitive and academic aptitudes across the nation, clearly many more negatives were present. Unfortunately, they still often end up being a factor in the ability of the child to get into more advanced classes (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999).

The emotional wellbeing of a child often shows up in the child's relationship with their caretakers. Gonzalez-Pienda (2002) found that self-concept was the variable most affected by parental involvement and that how the parent views the child's accomplishments influences how the child views their own achievements (2002). Therefore, it is no mere coincidence that many teachers reported an unstable home life to be an important factor in a child's success in school (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999). At one low achieving school, a teacher reported low homework completion from students who lack parental support. At another school, a teacher reported not letting the advanced class do their homework in class but letting the regular class do it because otherwise the homework would not get done because the students would lose it. The students' lack of ability to keep track of their things may be a reflection of an unstable home life where the parent is not helping the child keep track of their homework nor helping them do it (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999). These circumstances often reflect low socioeconomic status, as many of the parents of the children either do not have the education to be able to help or are incapable of helping due to time strains from their career, and not being able to afford tutoring services (Chohan, B., & Khan, R., 2010).

Homework can also impact the amount of social life a child has. Many children are expected by the fifth grade to do one hour of homework per night and listed homework as being an inhibiting factor for hanging out with their friends during the week. Those that did not worry about their homework often reported hanging out with their friends outside of class but faced consequences for doing so. The idea of homework tends to be controversial, as some believe that it provides a structured use of leisure time and that intellectual development is more important, while others see the value in social and emotional development and question if it is the school's place to decide how children spend their leisure time. Some reflect that homework teaches

responsibility and time management, while others believe that responsibility is not something that children should be coerced into doing and that teaching time management skills can be accomplished with less homework and through group projects with longer deadlines. There is often a question of what should the school be prioritizing and what is the school's responsibility (Vatterott, 2018).

The power of positive thinking impacts how well students do in the classroom. Research has shown that self-esteem is linked to academic performance as well as emotional wellbeing. Self-esteem can be built through the installation of hope (Ciarrochi, 2007). Helping the students believe in themselves and their academic ability will lead them to a more stable sense of self. This in turn impacts their attributional style (the way they think about an event) which leads them to a more positive outlook and effort in school (Ciarrochi, 2007). This is something that teachers recognize in their classroom. One teacher reported that incentive seemed to be a huge factor in her classroom. She commented that to feel incentivized, "you have to feel good about yourself first" (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999, p. 136). She goes on further to report that the lack of self-esteem may stem from no one ever complimenting them and building up their self-esteem. Many teachers report feeling like they have to be counselors and parents as well. They report asking questions that they would ask their children at home such as "Where have you been?" and report that parents expect them to teach their children respect, manners, and responsibility. They also report expecting them to follow up with their child whenever there is misbehavior (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999, p. 139). These are often addressed by teachers as being social aspects that belong at home and not in the classroom. This may lead to a lack of support as teachers get tired of such behavior. When children are not receiving the support from their teachers and parents that facilitate a sense of self efficacy, social behavior issues arise.

These issues often arise in low funded schools, such as inner-city schools, which results in teachers doing more disciplinary work. This takes away the focus from class time and places it on the struggling individual. This often occurs in impoverished neighborhoods as parents often lack the education and funds needed to provide social, emotional, and academic support. These are all situations that teachers commonly face and feel unequipped to deal with (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999).

Social issues tend to look different at different ages. Erickson (1959) defined there to be eight stages of socioemotional development, two of which occur during the time period children spend at school. These stages are industry vs. inferiority and ego identity vs. role confusion. Industry vs inferiority occurs from ages five to twelve. During this time the focus is on achieving competence and a sense of self-efficacy. The child is learning through their teachers and peers the different values in society and gaining a sense of confidence through goal achievement (Erickson, 1959). Without doing so, the child may develop low self-esteem which can lower their academic performance and lead to mental health issues later on in life (Donnellan, et. al., 2005). Ego identity vs. role confusion occurs from age twelve to age eighteen (Erickson, 1959). During this stage, the child struggles with figuring out who they are and who they want to be as an adult. During this exploration, they may try out different roles to see where they fit. If a child is unable to figure out who they are or what they want to be, role confusion can persist. This all occurs while the child is grappling with independence and body insecurity. Supporting a child during this time is essential for their wellbeing, as trying to force an identity on the individual can result in rebellion or negative identity formation. This stage is often heavily dependent upon the child's social interactions. Those with whom they socialize often have an effect on the choices they make towards identity formation (Erickson, 1959). Teachers can assist by building

and modeling healthy relationships as well as encouraging healthy experimentation with identity. Teachers also have the unique role of teaching children subject matter which can influence interest, guiding them towards a career path in the subject matter. Therefore, the teacher's role in supporting the child's social and emotional development is instrumental for healthy growth within the stages.

Although students need lots of social and emotional support throughout their entire education, this does not seem to occur. One study done by the United States Department of Education (1995) found the social aspect of teaching was most accentuated in elementary school where teachers judged each other based on how well the teacher could empathize, be understanding, and be sensitive to the needs of the children. By middle school, they found there was still a need for some sensitivity, but there was a greater emphasis on a teacher's knowledge of the subject matter they were teaching and an overall emphasis on the ability to keep the students engaged and to have them like the teacher and school. This change from emphasizing social and emotional development may be a factor in children's lower self-esteem, rebellious behavior, and lower academic achievement. Therefore, it is imperative to continue to emphasize it throughout the child's educational experience. However, teachers may be unable to satisfy these demands.

Teachers are often underqualified and underpaid, which leads to an inability to adapt themselves to classroom demands. In order for teachers to teach, they need to have specific qualifications, although they vary state to state oftentimes, to teach young children (2-5 years old) the person must have a high school diploma, to teach K-12 a teacher must have a bachelor's degree with at least a minor in education, and to teach at a college level the teacher must obtain a doctorate (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999). Students also getting their teaching certifications are

often required to have spent time observing an experienced teacher teach. Many undergraduate schools provide the students with an eight to twelve week program where they can go and observe a teacher teach. Many teachers complain that this is not enough hands-on time and that more time should be spent teaching teachers to be able to adapt to the needs of their students.

In a 1990 survey, teachers were found to have been paid an average salary of \$19,100 which was the lowest paying salary of recent graduates except those that majored in humanities (Stevenson, H., & Lee, S., 1999). This wage gap has continued to grow over the years and as of 2018 teachers made 21.4% less than the average college graduate with an average yearly salary of \$62,140 compared to the average \$92,404 (Allegretto & Mishel, 2020). Teachers often do not have much free time while they are on the job. Often many picked up supervisor duties while they were not teaching. Teachers also have less contact with their peers than many other professionals. Some classroom teachers rarely communicate with other adults throughout the day and even fewer report frequently consulting with peers or supervisors in regards to personal or professional challenges. In fact, in the United States, teachers received significantly less mentor time than other teachers in different countries (Stevenson & Lee, 1999).

All of these issues amount to teachers not having the right tools to teach. They are often left to figure out how to teach on their own. The small amount of practicum experiences leaves them to build their own schemas about what to expect when running a classroom. They are not taught how to build relationships with their students or peers, nor are they taught how to handle classroom disruptions, and they are certainly not taught how to serve those who are socially and emotionally disadvantaged by poverty. This means that they are not prepared to handle running a classroom nor are they able to reach out to other staff and teachers for help (Zeichner, 1995). They are not able to develop the skills necessary to recognize the nonverbal cues presented by

their students, such as being able to gauge interest and understanding of current material, to recognize when a student is struggling, and to defuse classroom disturbances. Recognizing these differences allows for intervention and engagement, which can further support the child's academic needs as well as provide opportunities for social engagement and emotional support furthering the development of all areas.

Dance/movement therapy can provide a way to meet the child socially and emotionally through the observation of nonverbal communication. Through seeking attunement and embodied awareness of the child, the therapist is then able to make comments, ask questions, and reflect the participant's movement so that they feel heard, understood, and responded to physically and emotionally (Homann, 2010). The therapist provides a space to explore movement and engage on a body level, which brings forth emotions. By tracking how the body reacts to different emotions, one can find new ways to express themselves, experience their emotions, and learn how to emotionally regulate. In other words, dance/movement therapy allows for a person to develop emotional awareness which can then lead to an ability to find ways to regulate said emotions (Homann, 2010). This is because the body is such a principal part in the processing of emotions and movement is a salient way to express emotions and make connections among the systems. Inability to integrate emotional information corresponds with an inability to respond accordingly. Those that can respond properly are able to make sound decisions and take appropriate risks. Being able to recognize bodily arousal has shown to be a predictor of good judgment when responding to the environment (Rothschild, 2000).

Dance therapists also provide an opportunity to engage with others both verbally and nonverbally in a safe environment (Homann, 2010). Research done by Porges (2009) has shown that socially engaging with someone safe and stimulating helps to calm the nervous system.

When engaged in such a conversation, the mind and body can relax and one can think more creatively and interpret feelings more easily. This embodied experience is similar to the ideal way babies learn since they are most receptive in this state for new information. Stress, on the other hand, stimulates adrenaline release which limits a person's ability to process new information, thereby inhibiting the learning process (Porges, S. W., 2009). Creating a space where a child can have an embodied experience that feels relaxing will allow the child to be more receptive to information. Teaching children embodied ways to manage their stress allows them to learn coping mechanisms that can help them self-regulate. This starts with body awareness. By building body awareness one can become more aware of what they are feeling and how their body is processing what is happening in the environment. This awareness can help an individual become more aware of the implicit reactions a person has, allowing them to use clearer judgment when assessing the environment around them and choosing how to engage with it (Homann, 2010).

Moving with others also provides an opportunity to see and hear how others experience their movement (Homann, 2010). These experiences allow the participant to feel understood and in turn make the participant feel less alone and accepted by others. This happens because the person becomes more self-aware after seeing their movement and others reflection of their movement. This is a process known in dance/movement therapy as mirroring. Mirroring is when one person provides movement and the other(s) does the movement with the participant. Mirroring encourages development of the limbic system, such as the ability to read facial expressions and interact empathetically with others. This is supported by evidence which has shown that when children are asked to mirror facial expressions areas in the brain responsible for recognition of emotions and empathy are activated (Pfeifer, et. al., 2007).

Implicit, emotional, body-based experiences are deeply intertwined with memory (Homann, 2010). During these nonverbal moments with others, an emotional tone is set that can be experienced through the body, influencing our perceptions of the current environment. These moments, although fleeting, are processed, filtered, and stored in our unconscious body-based memory. Memory is necessary for our identity, as it allows us to integrate new experiences into our sense of self. Implicit (unconscious) memory influences how we understand what is happening around us. In situations in which we experience an event that creates a strong emotional response, our body takes in the event and it is processed through the amygdala. By allowing children to reenact these experiences through movement, they can use different sensory modalities to become aware of and place meaning upon such events. Reenacting experiences helps impact the perception of those experiences. It allows them to transform into feeling familiar and comfortable thereby entangling these feelings with this experience and new experiences allowing them to learn and grow. Dance/movement therapy works to help shape these perceptions and integrate new ways of thinking (Homann, 2010).

Dance/movement therapy can be beneficial to preschoolers (Lorenzo-Lasa, 2007). Dance movement therapy provides an opportunity to link meaning to specific movements, therefore creating new ways to communicate and experience movement in their bodies. This helps further their emotional capacity, as they learn new feelings that can be attached to movements. It also helps children to begin to learn emotional cues within their bodies and others'. It provides self-awareness to their emotional states, as well as opportunities to see how their movement lands. They learn about new ways to negotiate with their peers regarding personal space and objects. This can help the preschooler begin to form their own identity as a mover and as a person. It can

also develop body awareness, as the child begins to become aware of their own body, the way it moves, and the amount of space it takes up (Lorenzo-Lasa, 2007).

Dance/movement therapy can also be used to help further motor development (Lorenzo-Lasa, 2007). This is often provided through goal-directed movement. When a child is asked to complete a movement task, the child has to focus on the way in which their body moves in order to execute the goal. Often this is done in dance/movement therapy through the use of imagery, such as walking on a tightrope or balancing while standing as still as a building. These goals are often easily understood and provide an experience that is challenging but enjoyable. This not only allows for the development of motor skills but also provides for a unique learning experience. By providing a movement structure, there is also an opportunity for growing capacity in paying attention, memory, and regulation (Homann, 2010). These structures can be centered around what is being learned in class. Subjects like math can be practiced as children count beats in music. Children can learn about different animals by embodying them (Lorenzo-Lasa, 2007). While learning all about new ideas and correlating it to their bodily experiences, there is more integration of the information, as different perspectives are being provided and there is a new opportunity to learn and experiment with the information. Continued allowance for repeated exposure allows for experiences to be predictable. This allows the children to begin to anticipate what will happen and provide an opportunity for mastery of different movements and ideas. Having a sense of predictability provides a sense of stability that is needed when it is time to explore new movements. It allows for more flexibility along with a willingness and ability to adapt to new experiences (Lorenzo-Lasa, 2007).

Dance/movement therapy has been shown to provide prevention against aggression and possibly aid with prevention against aspects associated with mental illness such as self-control

and problem-solving skills. One study done by Koshland & Wittaker (2004) found that dance/movement therapy helped elementary school children decrease their levels of violence as well as increase their levels of self-control and problem-solving skills. The decrease in violent tendencies continued to decrease over time more than in the control group (Koshland & Wittaker, 2004). It also has been shown to work effectively in high school students (Panagiotopoulou, 2018). Dance/movement therapy is also believed to improve the psychological capacity, skills, and capabilities of students who appear to be doing well in school. This means that it is beneficial for the neurotypical child as well as the child that may be struggling socially or emotionally. It promotes the strengths of late adolescence while incorporating different characteristics of a student's personality such as their emotional, moving, and learning skills. Research done by Poulou (2008) supports including the entire student population because students with behavioral issues (that are reflected by their lack of social and emotional skills) often enforce others to persist with their behavioral issues, students who are struggling are not isolated by the rest of the student population, and because students who have social and emotional skills can model and help those who do not.

Devereaux (2016) implemented a dance/movement therapy program into a school in the United States and found that educator's perspectives around the incorporation of dance/movement therapy in the school system improved student behavior and academic performance. She found that the success of the program was often dependent on the collaboration of the dance/movement therapist and the teachers. Devereaux asserted that there was a need for understanding and coordination between the different theoretical beliefs of the teachers and therapists. Many of the children who took part in the sessions needed support from staff and had emotional disabilities. When examining the students before and after there was an

increase in the ability to focus, concentrate, and transition. The teachers and assistant also noticed they seemed to appear calmer and were more able to take on the school day. Teachers also commented positively on the ability of the dance/movement therapist to adapt their sessions to be able to meet the children where they were and connect them to one another. The teachers also reported that their participation in the sessions allowed them to remain engaged in teaching. Some of the teachers even began using aspects of the sessions in their classroom to help with the student's energy and to help them self-regulate. The teachers also discussed how the school environment does not lead to many opportunities to engage themselves or their students in an embodied experience of a regulated state (Devereaux, 2016). However, dance/movement therapy allows for this experience to happen, ultimately creating an outlet for both students and educators. This ability to achieve a sense of emotional regulation is a goal for many educators and therefore there was a huge emphasis from the teachers for the dance therapist to bring the students into a calmer space. Educators also asked for dance/movement therapy to be integrated more during the week; however, there were many barriers to satisfying this request, from financial reasons to a lack of knowledge of the positive effects of dance/movement therapy (Devereaux, 2016).

Discussion

Dance/movement therapy can provide a way to engage with the school system on multiple levels. It can be used to both help encourage social and emotional development through movement and provide a space for the teachers to learn and express their feelings as well. Dance/movement therapy encourages children to become aware of their bodily emotions and

engage with their peers. It can help relieve stress and build bonds among classmates. This can be done through the use of mirroring techniques, as observing and joining in with others' movements can provide a way for the student to express how they are feeling. It also allows the mover to witness what their movement looks like through others which in turn can provide a feeling of connectedness and understanding. It also provides an opportunity for the other students to create other associations with the movement and connect through sharing those. Engaging in these activities can help the child to cope with stressors inside and outside of the school as they have the opportunity to share experiences from both environments and take away coping mechanisms to deal with the stressful situations. Dance/movement therapy encourages a more positive sense of self through the body by celebrating what each mover has to offer. Through doing so, the child is able to recognize their strengths and creative potential. Encouraging them and exploring each student's strengths will foster focus and motivation to do better in school. This can be done through exploring polarities and incorporating opportunities for mastery within movement. Dance/movement therapy permits the child to have a space where they feel supported and heard where they may not otherwise have that space. It gives them a space to move and express themselves in the way they wish so that they can regulate and be ready to learn. In a session, this could look like big full energy movements, a dance party, or even pretending to be something/someone. It allows them to be creative and encourages them to take safe risks. This amounts to them learning more about themselves and the people they interact with on a daily basis. By relieving some of the stress and taking time to learn about themselves, the student can come to a place where they are able to focus in the classroom.

This is all important if the goal is for the child to succeed in school and in life. Many children struggle in and out of school with getting their social and emotional needs met because

they are busy doing homework or do not have a family that is able to support them.

Dance/movement therapists can give them the space to do so and promote their growth.

Allowing them to recognize what is happening on a bodily level when many children are in a space of great change allows them to reconcile with themselves and gives them a place to ground themselves that they will always have. It encourages them to take an introspective look into themselves to cope with their emotions and also gives them a place to express what their needs are. Through moving the body, the child is able to recognize changes and connect fully with themselves in a place where they remain in a cognitive space all day. Moving the body releases some of the cognitive load placed on the brain, giving it a break which can be helpful for refocusing later. Teachers could benefit from incorporating a body-based approach in their learning, because it can give students a different tangible way to incorporate information. It allows them to create a bodily memory of it, something that is unconscious and therefore intuitive, which can make it easier to remember. It allows for the brain to build more connections with the information and experience it through other senses rather than just through vocalization. For example, while teaching about convection, everyone could express how they look when they're cold (bundled up and sunk into their chairs) then everyone can show what it's like to touch something hot (lifting their hand up and away). This could be any easy trick to remember that hot air rises and cold air sinks.

Teachers could also incorporate different movement approaches to help the children engage more in class. For example, if the children are more rambunctious and full of energy on a given day, they could incorporate a short meditation or deep breathing sequence to bring their focus from external energy to an internal place of focus. Conversely, if the students are in a place where they need more energy to wake up, they may do movements to energize the students such

as stretching or a short aerobic activity. However, this requires the teacher's ability to read the nonverbal signals of their students. Therefore, it would be helpful to spend some time teaching the instructors to be more aware of the nonverbal signals in the classroom coming from their students and even the nonverbal actions they are performing. If they are able to pick up on such nonverbal cues they are better able to engage with the students who will in turn want to engage more with the teacher and the material.

Teachers could also benefit themselves by partaking in dance/movement therapy sessions with other staff. Through this process teachers can have a space to express their concerns and address them with other staff members. It would give them a place to roleplay different scenarios on other staff members and gain a sense of support from their peers. This would not only allow teachers to feel less isolated from the classroom, but it would also allow for a continued learning environment and a place to practice teaching skills. This could lead to an increase in self-esteem and confidence in teaching, which can in turn affect how well the material comes across. Over time, they would also be more connected to their own inner workings and with each other. Through better understanding themselves they may be better able to attune to their students and help them succeed. This could all help improve teacher efficacy. Teachers would also have the opportunity to address their own feeling states and work through them so that they don't bring these negative feelings into the classroom. This would also allow teachers to experience the healing benefits of dance/movement therapy and promote incorporating nonverbal skills learned in a session to their classrooms which could in turn promote academic performance. Teachers could also learn about nonverbal skills and apply them in developing relationships with their students which could further social and emotional competence and create a more positive view within the classroom.

Although I have primarily discussed in the literature the social and emotional development of elementary school students, there seems to be a lack of research on the social and emotional development in middle and high schoolers. This is likely because of the stigma around working with teenagers. They are often labeled as difficult to work with. However, this is often considered a period of time where there is a lot of identity formation and a growing want for independence. This is why building relationships with teenagers is so important. By attempting to establish a relationship with them and being understanding of their social and emotional needs, one can meet them where they are at. When someone feels as though they are understood, they are more likely to do what is being asked of them. In the case of school, they will participate more and be more interested in what a teacher has to say because that person has taken an interest in understanding them. Since most of what is conveyed to each other stems from nonverbal communication, it is imperative that teachers present in a way that shows that they understand and are empathetic to the students' situation. This can be as simple as facing the body towards the child, making eye contact, and using an open body posture.

However, it is important to not neglect the significance of the work that needs to be done within the school system in order to make this happen. Funding would need to increase and there would need to be more focus on the implementation of programs to support the social and emotional needs of the students and teachers. Focus would have to be made on creating environments for students and teachers alike to thrive in. There is an increasing demand for a more person-centered approach. Although it is important to consider the people as a whole when working in the school system, we cannot ignore the fact that not everyone is able to learn the same way nor does everyone have the same needs. This is why it is important to consider the significance of the whole individual and not just their parts. In fact, this is why dance/movement

therapy can be a benefit, since a main goal in dance/movement therapy is to address the physical, emotional, and cognitive attributes of the individual while still addressing the group at large.

More work can be done to implement a holistic approach into the school system. It begins by making it a primary focus, bringing awareness to the problem, and funding it. Teachers can be taught to be more aware of the way they provide the material as well as being more aware of how it may come across. They should be able to have regular meetings with other staff members to discuss any problems that may arise with themselves or their students, to get feedback on what they are seeing, and to discover how others in their field respond. Validating what they are seeing or doing may allow them to exude more confidence in their teaching which may help the students engage more with the information. This requires there to be smaller classrooms and more teachers in order for there to be time for a more focused approach on the individual and to allow time for the teachers to be able to have this conversation. In dance/movement therapy, supervision is often a space where the dance/movement therapist is able to discuss their clients and assess their own style and how it fits into the system and their line of work. Having this ability is crucial to their work as it allows them to grow as a professional. This is something that should be allotted to teachers as well for the same reason.

Smaller classrooms also allow for classes that can be tailored to different needs. As different students have various ways of learning new information and also are at different academic levels, smaller classrooms allow for each individual to be able to learn at a pace similar to their peers. Although there is an overall need to make sure that standards are still in place to ensure that the subject matter is being taught, the way in which standardized tests currently operate is problematic. As I previously have mentioned, standardized tests place stress on the students as failing one can result in the student repeating a grade. Therefore, tailoring the test to

varying academic levels could be instructive. Breaking up classrooms into varying academic levels and teaching to those levels with tests that address those levels could be a fairer way to test. If a uniform test is necessary, not having it be the one factor in a student passing the class could ensure less stress is placed on the student. The test could be geared towards teacher assessment rather than student assessment therefore acknowledging standards and also creating a more comfortable environment. Other measures of assessment could be put in place such as student participation, classroom assignments, projects, or presentations.

Another possibility that could be implemented is by allowing for different ways the students could show their knowledge. For example, allowing students to come to the same solution of a math problem in a different way or leaving a section of the test open to allow the student to discuss other things that they have learned throughout the school year. In other words, allow the students to have space to voice what they have learned. Allowing the students to have a voice in their education and show their knowledge, will encourage them to take responsibility in the learning process. It will allow them to show off their knowledge and provide them with a physical representation of their knowledge which could further the confidence in themselves, their knowledge, and their beliefs around the subject at hand. Dance/movement therapy is often a place that encourages the participants to express themselves. Allowing for expression in dance/movement therapy often provides a space for a person's voice to be heard and felt. This sensation is often powerful and prompts further exploration of themselves and instills self-confidence. This therefore seems applicable in the school system.

In conclusion, dance/movement therapy can provide a basis for furthering social and emotional development within the school system. The promotion of such skills through nonverbal communication can serve as both a preventative measure as well as an avenue to

promote academic performance and the wellbeing of the individual. Through the incorporation of this holistic body-based approach, a difference can be made on an individual, collective, and institutional level. Relationships can be further developed among staff and students, and a greater awareness around the importance of social and emotional development and its role in the school system can be ascertained.

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