

Denise J. Murphy

TEACHING STATEMENT

Teaching Philosophy

As a student, my most vital learning experiences were those in which I became immersed in a supportive learning community, one that fostered respect and encouraged openness to new ideas and left me with a deep sense of curiosity. Drawing on my education, teaching experiences and independent creative and scholarly research, I shape my experiences with students in order to nurture this sense of community.

I believe students must develop skills to think critically about their technical and scholarly work and discover ways to engage with the world by appreciating differences and exchanging ideas. I encourage them to become critical readers, thinkers and writers, as well as, critical dancers, performers, educators and choreographers. It is my goal in the technique and theory classroom to develop their intellectual engagement with material and help them cultivate both a reflective and reflexive relationship with their education. In both theory and practice courses, I recognize the importance of understanding the diversity of the class and engage multiple learning styles in order to connect individually with students. I am an adaptive teacher, using questions and observations to influence the structure of my courses.

In studio practice, I promote inner awareness so students have an understanding of the range and limitations of their bodies and develop a sense of when to conserve and when to accelerate. My contemporary/modern class is informed by my training in techniques such as Graham, Limon, Horton, Cunningham and Hawkins and a variety of release approaches to contemporary dance. My movement style draws on the use of breath, momentum, velocity, and weight while encouraging regular self-reflection in the practice.

I believe that students learn from what I do as much as from what I say. As such, I seek to model strong and effective communication, sincerity and trust, enthusiasm for dance and openness to their ideas and questions. I greatly value a diverse population and endeavor to always create an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and sharing ideas. Dialogue amongst students is essential to their learning and it is my mission to ensure students approach discussions with reciprocity, listening to and respecting diverse opinions. I believe that discourse comes in multiple forms and as such create assignments that require students to engage with one another through writing, speaking and moving.

My philosophy of dance education has been strongly influenced by my experiences as both a dancer and teacher in diverse communities. I do not expect my philosophy to remain static, but rather envision it as a design in motion. I take great pride in continuing my education and expect my philosophy will vary through research and experiential work in the field of dance. This will enable me to bring new concepts to my class and further develop my philosophies and goals as a dancer educator.