

## **Dance Based Teaching and Learning: Inquiry, Construction, and Assessment**

Alison Marshall, PhD

Teaching with and about the arts provides the opportunity to design and deliver learning experiences that:

- Engage students and motivate them to learn
- Assure that students acquire knowledge and skills
- Encourage students to extend and refine what they know and are able to do
- Prompt students to reflect upon and synthesize what they have learned
- Provide meaningful opportunities for students to use what they have learned.

Students are constructors of knowledge. They interpret information, integrate it with their previous understandings and construct new understandings. Students as “learning-artists” should be given problems to solve that share features with those that intrigue professional artists. This enables students to engage in, and identify with, artistic processes central to creative thinking.

Inquiry based challenges and questions help guide students’ reflective thinking about the work they made and the work they’ve observed. Open-ended questions prompt the student to engage more deeply in the thinking process and help to guide the inquiry. By open-ended, we mean problems without clearly defined methods of solution and questions with a variety of possible answers. Students can be given problems that they must define and solve for themselves. In looking at pieces of performance or fine art work we want to ask students, “What’s going on here?” (understanding) and “What do you see that makes you think so?” (evidence/assessment). Good questions help students to be energetic thinkers.

When building student understanding is the purpose of instruction, the process of assessment is more than just one of evaluation; it is a substantive contribution to learning. Assessment needs to inform students, teachers and teaching artists about what students currently understand and about how to proceed with subsequent teaching and learning.