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*Movement is not always dance.  
However, dance always involves movement.  
Movement is the raw material out of which dance is made,  
just as music is made from sound.  
Stinton (1988, p:11)*

Movement is one of the first ways children communicate. Body language is a rich non-verbal language that we all use, children use their bodies to express themselves from birth and continue to develop these skills. Using movement in your program allows children to further develop fine and gross motor skills as well provide a place to freely express themselves creatively. Movement is what we use everyday and this can become the 'raw material' that can lead to creative dance. Creative dance allows children to use their bodies to express themselves while extending imagination, exploring emotions and connecting with others. This can be done in many ways and by exploring creative movement as a teacher it can help you facilitate this with your children.

### **Planning**

Planning needs to be clear and thorough like any other curriculum area. The session should flow so that one activity moves to the next developing skills while allowing time for the children to express and create. Creating dance together requires an openness and wiliness of the teacher to explore the unknown and allow the group to explore the dance together. The classes can be a mix of individual, partner and whole group work. If your sessions are split-up in to three areas: introduction- rich content - relaxation, this can make the process flow and the session work as a whole rather than a series of separate activities.

### **The elements of dance**

<b>The Body</b>	locomotor (running, walking, skipping, sliding, creeping, rolling etc.) Non-locomotor (twisting, wriggling, stretching, shaking, etc.), shapes - still or moving (pointy, curved, twisted)
<b>Time</b>	fast, sudden, slow, gradual, accelerated
<b>Force</b>	powerful, strong, light, gentle, soft
<b>Flow</b>	unrestrained, ongoing, free, bound, tight, controlled
<b>Space</b>	levels (high, medium, low), directions (forward, backwards, sideways, up, down, diagonal), pathways (zigzag, straight, curved, circular), size (big, small, medium).

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*Learning in this creative area of dance for young children is best nurtured by guided discovery.*

Wendy Schiller & Jeff Meiners (sighted in Susan Wright. (2003 p:)

### **A Sense of Wonder**

To wonder: to be curious to know about something / to be in a state of amazed admiration or awe. Having a sense of wonder as a teacher allows you to spread this openness and exploration throughout your dance sessions. Being open to exploring with the children allows teachers to develop their own imagination and be apart of the experience rather than just telling a set of instructions. "What if we twist our bodies?" "How can we move with our arms touching the ground?" Problems to be solved within the dance allow the children to explore different ways to move their bodies.

*If we try to look at things with children, if we value the moments when they stop and stare and wonder at the world, we probably do more for creative, aesthetic and artistic development than a host of specific art activities might ever do.*

Ursula Kolbe (2001)

### **Children's Voice**

In my experience the meaning making that occurs with creative dance is all the richer when the children voice is at the forefront of the work. Their ideas and suggestions should become part of the dances. The dances then evolve into an ever-growing creation and therefore no two classes will be the same. If you create dances where the children's ideas and suggestions are used and incorporated into the dance, and where individual styles and expressions are celebrated and recognized as a valuable part of the experience, this can only lead to a class that is rich in content and valuable for all participants.

### **Relaxation**

*...relaxation skills should be viewed as a valuable 'life skill', like many others that we learn in childhood, such as learning how to ride a bike or swim.*

Rickards (1996 p:5)

An area of movement that is often forgotten is stillness. Just as silence is a part of music, stillness is a part of dance. Stillness within the dance can create an important pause. As well as this relaxation and mediation are valuable ways to allow children to focus on their body and thoughts in a quiet way. By using this as part of the dance experience, it can enhance the children's awareness of their bodies and can serve as a reflective time at the end of the class.

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*It is a well-established fact that children learn best by 'doing'.  
What better way of 'doing' can there be than by moving and dancing creatively.*  
Thraves & Williamson (1994)

#### Ideas and support for movement experiences

- Dance stories - adult initiated stories for the body
- Drum games - using bodies to create individual and group body shapes
- Free dance - child centred exploration
- Dance with props - using props to enhance and focus and movements
- Shapes and the body - body awareness
- Music - world music/classical/percussion
- Relaxation - meditation and massage
- Action songs
- Theme approach to dance
- Ritual and celebrations
- Poetry to enhance expression

#### RELEVANT BOOKS OF INTEREST:

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Kolbe, U. (2001). *Rapunzel's Supermarket All About Young Children and Their Art*. Paddington, NSW: Peppinot Press.

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