

What is Dance Therapy?

Introduction

From time to time your students may receive related services to help them deal with their present special education situation. There are times when parents may not fully understand what exactly a related service does. This **Parent Teacher Conference Handout** explains to parents what the role of dance therapy will be if their child has it on his/her IEP.

According to the American Dance Therapy Association:

Dance/movement therapy, a creative arts therapy, is rooted in the expressive nature of dance itself. Dance is the most fundamental of the arts, involving a direct expression and experience of oneself through the body. It is a basic form of authentic communication, and as such it is an especially effective medium for therapy. Based in the belief that the body, the mind and the spirit are interconnected, dance/movement therapy is defined by the American Dance Therapy Association as "the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process that furthers the emotional, cognitive, social and physical integration of the individual."

WHAT DO DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPISTS DO?

Dance/movement therapists work with individuals of all ages, groups and families in a wide variety of settings. They focus on helping their clients improve self-esteem and body image, develop effective communication skills and relationships, expand their movement vocabulary, gain insight into patterns of behavior, as well as create new options for coping with problems. Movement is the primary medium dance/movement therapists use for observation, assessment, research, therapeutic interaction, and interventions. Dance/movement therapists work in settings that include psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, schools, nursing homes, drug treatment centers, counseling centers, medical facilities, crisis centers, and wellness and alternative health care centers. Dance/movement therapy can be a powerful tool for stress management and the prevention of physical and mental health problems. Dance/movement therapists integrate the dancer's special knowledge of the body, movement, and expression with the skills of psychotherapy, counseling, and rehabilitation to help individuals with a wide array of treatment needs. Social, emotional, cognitive, and/or physical problems can be addressed through DMT via group and individual sessions in many different types of settings from hospitals and clinics to schools. The fact that dance/movement therapists are immersed in the language of the body, rather than focusing solely on the verbal, lends characteristics to their work that set it apart from other types of therapy.