

DANCE FOR PHYSICAL LITERACY AND WELL-BEING

BY SPORT NEW ZEALAND

Sport New Zealand believes all children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand should have quality experiences that lead them to value and choose ongoing participation in physically active lifestyles. Quality experiences are those that grow the motivation, confidence, and broad skills needed to choose a movement-based, active lifestyle. In this way movement and physical activity can play a significant role in contributing to children and young people's overall well-being.

These experiences need to be far broader than just sport or fitness activities. They need to include rich and varied opportunities that enable individuals to use movement in their own way to enhance and enrich their life.

Dance can provide one such opportunity for children and young people to do just this, whether it is within a formal setting or as part of their play and recreation. Dance responds to the holistic nature of individuals (their physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual needs) and is an expressive form of movement that aligns well to the 'physical literacy approach' which Sport New Zealand promotes. This emphasis on recognising and responding to the holistic nature of individuals is further supported by the capacity of dance as a form of cultural expression.

Sport New Zealand recognises that everyone has their own unique 'physical literacy'. This is a combination of their motivation, confidence, competence, knowledge and understanding about physical activity which ultimately affects how they value and choose to be physically active throughout their lives.

An individual's physical literacy is the outcome of the many movement and physical activity experiences

they have. Physical literacy is not static or linear - it is an ongoing 'learning journey', constantly shaped by our experiences and interactions with others and our world. While all life stages are important and contribute, the experiences in childhood and adolescence are of particular significance due to the long-term developmental impact of these life stages.

Sport New Zealand's physical literacy approach identifies the crucial role of play and physical education in childhood years and the considerable potential of dance in both settings. The imaginative, creative and innovative nature of dance lends itself to be a natural play choice for children. A wonderful way for them to learn about themselves, their bodies, and the world around them, and to promote the value in purely taking delight in movement itself.

Dance is firmly established within the New Zealand Education Curriculum. It is noted as one of the four disciplines of the arts learning area and additionally can easily provide a context for learning within physical education. In physical education, learning is facilitated in, through and about movement. Students therefore gain an understanding that movement is integral to human expression and that it can contribute to people's pleasure and enhance their lives. They learn to understand, appreciate and move their bodies, relate positively to others, and demonstrate constructive attitudes and values.

Sport New Zealand is excited to be working alongside DANZ. Together we are part of a system that is supporting our children and young people to develop a love of movement, and being active, so that throughout their lives they choose to be involved and can reap the well-being benefits of that choice. ■

