

**National Society for Experiential Education  
2014 Fall Conference, Baltimore MD  
September 29-October 1**

**Innovative Movement and Music Strategies for the Classroom**

The presentation focuses on strategies for incorporating movement, dance, and musical elements in any classroom on various subjects. The focus will be primarily on a movement exercise known as the Brain Dance, which was developed by Anne Green Gilbert. Through movement improvisation that focuses on waking up the mind and the body, we will explore how to combine this movement with musical concepts that are taught in the classroom. The presentation also incorporates best practices for strengthening creativity in the classroom. The presenters will finally discuss how to build partnerships between the creative and performing arts. Participants should wear comfortable clothes and be prepared to move.

Presenters: Kira Omelchenko, D.M.A.  
Director of Orchestra and Strings  
Department of Music  
Florida Southern College  
111 Lake Hollingsworth Drive  
Lakeland, FL 33801  
Email: [komelchenko@flsouthern.edu](mailto:komelchenko@flsouthern.edu)  
Phone: 863-680-4216

Susannah LeMarquand  
Assistant Professor of Dance  
The University of Tampa  
Box 104F  
401 W. Kennedy Blvd.  
Tampa, FL 33606  
Email: [slemarquand@ut.edu](mailto:slemarquand@ut.edu)  
Phone: 813- 257- 6322

*Dance is the Hidden language of the Soul*  
*-Martha Graham*



## **BrainDance**

copyright Anne Green Gilbert--[www.creativedance.org](http://www.creativedance.org)

**Benefits:** The BrainDance, according to Anne Green Gilbert, is “crucial to the wiring of our central nervous system.” Anne lists the following benefits (both for children and adults) on her website, [creativedance.org](http://creativedance.org):

**The benefits for children and adults in cycling through these patterns include:**

**Reorganization of the neurological system:** The fundamental movement patterns wire the central nervous system laying the foundation for sensory-motor development and life long learning. Cycling through these patterns on a daily basis may correct flaws in a person's perceptual process and reorganize the central nervous system so to develop better proprioception, balance, attention, memory, eye-tracking, behavior, sensory integration, and motor skills.

**Increased blood and oxygen flow to the respiratory system and brain:**

The brain consumes one-fifth of the body's oxygen. Deep breathing is essential for a fully functioning body and brain. All movements and rhythms are based on breath.

**Enhanced core support, connectivity, and alignment:** Becoming aware of the visceral and muscular systems that support the body leads to correct use of body structures and helps children and adults to be injury-free and move with ease and coordination. Each pattern underlies and supports the next pattern and when done in succession brings connectivity to our use of the body, reflecting an integration of body and mind.

**Deeper understanding of the elements of dance technique:** The fundamental movement patterns are an integral part of dance technique. Whether taking a Ballet, Modern, Jazz, or Creative Dance class, students are able to integrate and apply the patterns of the BrainDance to their technical skill development. Dancers acquire and practice skills with more ease when they are aware that a particular pattern underlies the movement. Movement intent becomes clearer as dancers embody the BrainDance patterns.

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## **Brain Dance**

copyright Anne Green Gilbert--www.creativedance.org

### **Breathing and stretching**

**Tactile:** squeezing, tapping, patting, and brushing your whole body

**Core-distal:** stretching out to all 4 distal points (arms and legs), and pulling into small ball

### **Head-tail movement**

forward and back

side to side

rolling/ twisting through spine

### **Upper-lower connection**

ground lower body; move upper body

ground upper body; move lower body

### **Body- side connection**

ground one side of body; move other side

repeat for other side

### **Hand-eye coordination**

horizontal tracking following your thumb

vertical tracking (elbow to knee on each side) following your thumb

marching in place, wrists to knees, following first one hand, then the other

**Cross-body:** elbow to opposite knee, for example

### ***Vestibular***

**Swinging:** be sure to engage the head

**Spinning:** both sides and jump up and down in-between

## Incorporating Music and Rhythms in the Classroom

### Benefits:

- Eases physical pain
- Reduces Stress
- Meditative State
- Awakes the mind
- Elevates the mood
- Helps one think Creativity to solve problems
- Helps one perform better under high pressure situation
- Music training helps develop brain areas involved in language and reasoning
- Provides glimpse into other cultures and teaches them to be empathetic towards the people of these cultures.
- Music study enhances teamwork skills and discipline
- Allows for self-expression and individuality
- Brings a sense of community within the classroom

For More Information: *Twelve Benefits of Music Education* by Carolyn Phillips.  
Phillips is the Former Executive Director of the Norwalk Youth Symphony, CT.

### Creativity Exercise: Listen to various music

- Describe the mood, character, and emotion
- Relation to society, history, culture, language, etc.

### Improvisation Rhythm Games

- Everyone has a heartbeat thus everyone has rhythm
- Walking, clapping, stomping to the rhythm

### Call and Response with Singing

#### *Dalcroze Eurhythmics* (<http://www.dalcrozeusa.org/>)

- Teaches concepts of musical structure using movement
- Founded by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950)

#### *Solfege Singing and hand symbols*

- Kodály Method
- From Sound of Music Musical  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgawkL3zhfE>)
- More Information:  
(<http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Solf%C3%A8ge.html>)

*Laban Movement*

Founded by Rudolf Laban (1879-1958)

Study/analysis of basic principles of human movement structure and purpose

For everyone: the musician, actor, dancing, entertainer, business person, etc.

Flow: Bound or Free

Space: Direct or Indirect

Time: Sudden or Sustained

Weight: Strong or Light

More Information:

(<http://www.ista.co.uk/downloads/LabanMovementbyJillianCampana.pdf>)

*Thank you!*

