

## **Looking Back before Leaping Forward**

*Keynote Address: North Carolina Dance Education Organization,  
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Colleagues.....

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak with you. I appreciate the opportunity to share. As I am now an elder statesman, [emeritus is behind my title], I decided to document with you, some of the noteworthy accomplishments of all of us who worked for dance in the state of North Carolina during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> C. These are my own recollections so if I miss something please forgive me and correct me. I also apologize if I have forgotten to mention anyone as everyone who was and is involved in dance education throughout the state deserves mention. It is not my intention to omit anyone but rather a failure of memory. I also live and work in Charlotte so my historical perspective is reflective of this community. I know those of you in other parts of the state have your own histories that also need to be told.

One morning as I was waiting in line at a Starbucks line in the 1990's, a woman in front of me turned and asked if I was from here. I mentioned I had been here since 1976. She commented "Do you feel like you have wasted your life working in this state." (implying North Carolina was somehow behind everyone else). I should have punched her in the nose but rather, I said simply to her that she apparently had not spent any time here, at least not as a dancer. There is no other state in the country that could have afforded me the opportunities that were here in NC. When I arrived, the state was already referred to as the "State of the Arts." My revenge to her comments is seeing all of you here still involved in dance education and successfully running dance programs at many different levels throughout the state.

My own personal experiences began in 1976 when I was hired at the University of North Carolina Charlotte. Almost immediately, fantastic opportunities in dance began presenting themselves. There was a new movement afoot in NC led by Senator Terri Sanford and Governor Jim Hunt to forge a new place for North Carolina in the Twentieth Century and beyond. They felt the way to do this was through education. With Chief Superintendent Craig Phillips, and a new education plan, The Basic Education Plan K – 12, they would guide the state forward. The new plan would determine all the curriculum offerings for every child in North Carolina. No matter where a child lived he should have the same curriculum and opportunities. No child should be disadvantaged because he or she did not live in a major city. Also and most importantly, money at the state level was set aside to pay for teachers in areas where school districts could not afford to hire teachers to teach the varied areas of the new curriculum.

Most interesting for us dancers, was the inclusion of an arts designation in the Basic Education Plan. The Arts were now BASIC. Included in the arts was dance. Four arts, from the beginning, were identified as visual arts, music, theatre and DANCE. There were also four arts specialists hired in the State Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh to oversee the development of arts programs in the state. Our first dance consultant was Linda Warren McCulloch. It would be her job to build the dance programs for the public schools throughout the state. She did a remarkable job.

So now the state had the Basic Education Plan with an arts component and four State Consultants in the four arts touring the state to present the new curriculum. The next step was to find public school teachers and get them hired in all school districts to teach the new elements of the curriculum such as dance and science. This is where I began my

journey. The University of North Carolina system of campuses with teacher education programs had been responsible for training and licensing our state's public school teachers. For dance, which had never been a serious part of North Carolina's public school curriculum, there were no teacher education dance programs. We had to develop state standards for training teachers, that would lead to professional licensing and permanent tenured jobs for dance educators. At the same time we had to determine what the curriculum K-12 would look like in a classroom. What would be the shape and content of a dance lesson? Could a dance lesson conform with the basic lesson plans expected for all curricula? Could dancers define the field with behavioral objectives? Could dance classes fit into a format of "guided and independent" practice? What would constitute a dance education methods class.

With Linda McCulloch leading, designated educators began meeting to determine licensing standards and competencies. Dr. Susan Stinson from Greensboro, Julia Wray from Duke, and I represented the Universities in those first meetings along with designated superintendents. We began writing.

For developing curriculum and lessons, Linda MCCulloch was influenced by perhaps the greatest of our 20<sup>th</sup> century dance educators , Virginia Tanner from Utah. Virginia was brought into the state and toured school systems giving workshops for teachers, principals and superintendents from one side of the state to the other. (This was a large task as there was no I-40). Most places had to be gotten to the back way....From Charlotte 3 to 4 hours to Raleigh. about 7 hours Asheville, Raleigh. Lots of hotel stays.

I had the great pleasure of touring with Linda and Virginia and taking many workshops. Virginia Tanner's accompanist in North Carolina was Lemma Mackie, from Raleigh, who with her daughter Glenda Mackie

directed the Rainbow Dance Company a creative movement dance school and company still in place today, not unlike the school V. Tanner maintained in Utah.

I still have kept my lesson notes from those days, in fact, over dinner one evening in Asheville I asked Virginia if she was planning publish a book documenting her lessons. I personally would love to have had a book to order and remind me of my own learning. She indicated she had all her notes on napkins but was too busy teaching to organize them in a book. Dance was living and of the moment. So I knew I just had to tag along as much as possible.

I also asked her how she began her dancing career. She told me she was the daughter of a Mormon father who had more than one wife. They all resided separately so her father would visit each on a rotating basis. Her way of getting her father's attention was to dance. When she saw her father totally engaged with her dancing and how it pleased him, she found for herself the magic of dance and its subtle yet truthful way of communication. She would be a dancer. Ultimately she worked with Doris Humphrey and wished to dance in her company. Doris however saw her teaching genius and encouraged her to go back to her roots in Utah. We are all very glad she did. Since 1937 she directed and inspired children's dance throughout the nation. When the first NEA funded professional Modern Dance Company was formed, outside of New York City, in 1966, the Utah Repertory Dance Theatre, it was located in Salt Lake City. This is the company that launched the career of performer and dance educator, Bill Evans. Who has himself been to NC numerous times. I have been told the company was situated in Utah because of the presence of a dance audience and support for the new modern dance movement begun with the work of Virginia Tanner.

In 1966, as well then Governor Terri Sanford supported the founding of the North Carolina School of the Arts currently called the University of the Arts and in 1970. This was a professional arts school considered second only to Juilliard in New York City. Soon North Carolina had its own first dance Company, the North Carolina Dance Theatre, in Winston Salem, founded by the Dean of Dance at NCSA Robert Lindgren. The current company, now called the Charlotte Ballet has been an important arts source throughout the state and in Charlotte since 1990 when it moved here. The 60's and the support of the arts starting with a forward looking Governor Terri Sanford provided needed support and validation for public school dance education implementation in the state ten years later.

In 1977 – 1978 the American Dance Festival, the oldest and most important summer modern dance festival moved to the campus of Duke University. What a wonderful boon for dance in North Carolina. Purchase, in New York State was the main contender, but North Carolina was able to successfully lure the festival here with its site on the Duke campus and the promise of a permanent home, with funding.

The festival had begun in 1934 at Bennington College and later moving to Connecticut College . It basically provided a home for the new art form of modern dance and since its beginnings has provided support and a home for every major modern dancer of the Twentieth Century and currently.

Along with the professional arm of the festival there was the educational arm which provided classes at the highest level to College students. In Durham, the festival offered a six week course providing students with instruction from the greatest of dancers and choreographers in the modern dance world. At the same time, a special week for educators was provided. What a great professional development opportunity for

our NC Dance Educators. I became Assistant then Associate Dean with Dean Martha Myers of the School. In that capacity and as a faculty member, I was able to work with the professional dance faculty and new as well as established dance educators from all over the country. Dance Educators who came for the week long course were given classes and attended performances for a week of intensive instruction. In the first year, Linda McCulloch and Governor Jim Hunt supported a special event featuring Mary Ann Lee, Sara Lee Gibbs from the Tanner school in Utah and Susan Cambique Tracey a California educator with a national reputation. Virginia Tanner had been ill and could not attend. Professional artists, educators and politicians readily attended workshops and presentations about the new dance education programs and curriculum led by these prestigious teachers along with dance professionals.

After travelling the state in workshops with Lynda McCulloch and Virginia Tanner, I went back to my university UNC Charlotte and began to develop my dance education program with the full support of my department and university. Our department awarded a Bachelor of Creative Arts Degree at that time that allowed an independent track for students to follow any discipline that they wished for 30 or more credits. I immediately began working with the College of Education to develop a Dance Education (Licensure) program. I also developed Dance Education Methods Courses with laboratory experiences in the schools. As dance had not been readily found in schools, no one knew quite what to expect so I was going to have to be out there working.

These beginning years of launching dance in the public schools were exciting and exhausting. Can you imagine every school system needing to find dance educators? Where would they come from? Incidentally they all had to be licensed, and UNCCCharlotte and UNC Greensboro were the

only Universities with approved programs at the start. Fortunately East Carolina and Meredith College joined later. How on earth could we possibly find teachers? For me the answer was to develop, alongside my undergraduate studies in dance education, a program for those teachers who had been hired either from the community or from other states who needed North Carolina licensure. They were called lateral entry teachers. The education track in my own licensure program allowed me a clear structure and competency clarity. Fortunately, it was decided statewide, that licensure would be determined by meeting competencies rather than specific courses. A person coming to NC with a BFA or BA in dance or even a minor in dance could match competencies with my education tract and take needed courses following the established competency based criteria. It was one way to secure qualified dance educators in the schools and insure they had requisite skill to teach a K-12 curriculum. Professional development activities at ADF or elsewhere could continue to support their work. I was able to develop a workshop to train some of the lateral entry dance teachers around NC who needed extra credit toward licensure in conjunction with the Young Dancer's School. Working with Jackie Current, the second Dance Consultant at the State Department of Public Instruction who followed Linda McCulloch, we constructed a Teaching Methods course at ADF.

Many lateral entry teachers were hired from a variety of backgrounds. I travelled the state from one end to the other to assure competency and because a requirement of licensure was student teaching. If I undertook to work with a student in a lateral entry capacity, I had to supervise their student teaching. I was the only dance educator at UNCCCharlotte that meant I had to go.

Simultaneously, we had begun to hire our first dance specialists in Charlotte as early as 1980. They began in elementary schools. Their

schedules were grueling, 11 classes a day with ½ hour lunch break, a physical education model. Usually the teachers used the lunch time to travel between schools because, of course, they saw children from at least two schools each day. The trunks of their cars were their offices. Our first teachers were hired and supervised by our Physical Education curriculum specialist in CMS. Her name was Shirley Greene, a great supporter of dance, whose daughter was at UNC Greensboro studying dance and physical therapy. Shirley worked very hard to ease the dance teachers into the elementary school program. She and I worked together to find teachers and develop a program for Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools.

We found several pioneering graduates from UNCGreensboro, Claudette Miller, Linda Booth, Debbie Foxx Simmons, and from UNCCCharlotte, Melissa Pope. Each travelled from school to school providing exemplary classes in hard floor multi- purpose rooms sandwiched between Physical Education classes.

There was a great deal of fear and resistance to dance in the schools. .... My first male graduate with licensure, Hardin Minor, when he applied to CMS was told no one could imagine a man teaching dance on an elementary level. No one could imagine what the curriculum would be and, of course, no young man should ever be introduced to dance. Hardin of course has gone on to become a major dance and mime performer and educator in Charlotte, after having assisted Jacques D'Amboise in the beginnings of his public school programs in New York City.

I had a wonderful meeting with a principal in Hickory who by the way had a marvelous dance educator, Rachel Riddle. He said to me, that it wasn't until we called what we were doing "creative movement" that he could allow a dance teacher in his school. Parents were too afraid of the

word “dance”. I am not sure what he or the parents expected us to be doing. In any case, he was extremely pleased with the program that Rachael was presenting. Which I might add was taught in a brick foyer in the same model of ½ hour - 40 minute classes as in Charlotte.

Unfortunately, in Charlotte, there was also a great deal of resistance and fear of dance as well, from Physical Education Teachers. They thought they were teaching dance, and why did we need another specialist. What they didn't understand was that the physical education world was changing nationally and with the North Carolina Basic Education Plan. Very soon dance was not going to be part of their responsibility. Their curricula was changing to include health, wellness and other sports areas with specific new competencies that did not include the specific dance curriculum requirements .

The Elementary Dance Teachers in Charlotte were in trouble almost before they established themselves.

A stroke of luck called the Middle School Movement saved dance in the public schools in Charlotte. Middle School for children between the ages of 11-13 was a school designed to prepare children in this transition time, for high school. To give them the background to make wise choices in high school based on experience. A curriculum “wheel” was introduced with rotating activities to inform and prepare students to make choices. I approached Shirley Green, once again, with another idea. I volunteered to create a “demonstration school” at Piedmont Open Middle School to develop Middle School curriculum and specifically train teachers for this new age group. We approached Principal Stephanie Counts, she was amenable... and off we went. I and my Dance Methods Students provided the dance section of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade “Wheel offerings.” We also taught 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades so all children could have a dance experience on site at Piedmont Middle School.

During this time we also modeled a Middle School Dance Residency. With Colleague, Karen Hubbard, I was awarded a grant to bring Chuck Davis to Piedmont Middle School to teach and stage a work for the middle school students and my UNC Charlotte Dance Education students. Chuck and I met in the early years of ADF. He was a featured teacher. His teaching success and his generous larger than life personality resulted in his being asked to direct the community outreach arm of the festival. A Raleigh native himself, he enjoyed being back “home” in fact, he moved his company the African American Dance Ensemble here in 1984. North Carolina could not have been more fortunate. Chuck dedicated his life’s work to preserving African Dance traditions in performance and bringing African Dance Traditions to children in the public schools. He came to Charlotte too many times to count. There are no words to express Chuck’s contributions to the State of North Carolina and to the country. His work created for Piedmont Middle School was a resounding success. The auditorium was filled with parents and dignitaries of the CMS School system.

For the future, new CMS dance positions would open in the Middle Schools only. Eventually Piedmont Middle School would have its own dance educator.

Moving into the 90’s, dance programs continued to grow in CMS and were very successfully expanding with the middle school movement.

Now was time for a new philosophical change in Charlotte arts education, called Magnet Schools, first introduced to CMS by Superintendent Dr John Murphy in 1992. This was not a new concept. There were already arts magnet schools throughout the country modeled after La Guardia High School in NYC of FAME celebrity. However, the magnet idea in Charlotte was new. Working with the philosophy of the Basic Education Plan we educators wanted every child to have at

least an introduction to the arts. We were concerned. It is understood that a magnet school is a school of choice. If we only gave some children arts experiences and not others, many children would be left out. As pioneers we wanted dance in every school, not just a few. Unfortunately, developing magnet schools was the direction we would follow. Dance instruction in elementary education and high school would now be only available in magnet schools.

Dancers and educators worked together first to make the Middle and High School Arts Magnet School, Northwest School of the Arts successful and looked at it as another advocate and supporter of the arts in the community, not a replacement for the Middle School teachers in place. As it turned out no Middle School dance educator lost a job because of the opening of our magnet school. The dance educators had done such a good job establishing their programs, that the Middle School principals retained the positions.

Beginning in 1993- 1994, Northwest School of the Arts opened its first middle school classes and followed the next year with its first high school classes. In 1996 University Park Elementary School, opened almost next door to NSA. Another Elementary Arts magnet school currently First Ward Elementary shifted locations two times before finding its permanent home. These three magnet arts schools have continued to serve the community since that time.

I would like to take a moment now to digress from Charlotte and just NC events. As I mentioned earlier there was a move afoot nationally to separate the curriculum of dance from the curriculum of physical education. National meetings were convened by leaders in the field of dance education to explore the potential for creating a separate national dance organization. New national dance standards were being written and more states were working to find ways to incorporate dance into

their public school curricula. Eventually, the National Dance Education Organization was created in 1998 with Jane Bonbright as its Director. It would operate out of Washington DC as did the other arts national organizations. I attended every meeting I could as the new organization was formed. As dance educators in other states worked to place dance teachers in their public schools, to follow national trends and standards, I was constantly asked how we did it in NC. What we did was unique and solid. Other states were counting on Visiting Artists or after school enrichment, or simply residencies of professional artists to fulfill bringing dance into the schools but there was no permanence. Now don't get me wrong, in North Carolina we did have wonderful visiting artists and wonderful residencies but we also had a permanently licensed dance educator in the school to make the artist experience relevant and meaningful for the children served.

I would like recapitulate here and outline what I advised other state dance educators. I think first and foremost, philosophically, we ( by WE I mean all the dance educators superintendents, principals and administrators ) felt dance and the arts were a basic part of public education not only an elective activity. IN addition:

- We had the support of a forward looking Governor Jim Hunt who appointed a state superintendent of education Craig Phillips who was supportive of the arts.
- The Basic Education Plan or full curriculum guidelines for the state was written and expected to be implemented everywhere in the state. In the Basic Education Standards, dance was considered an art form with a discreet curriculum. This was law, voted in by the state assembly.
- State money was set aside for the hiring of teachers for the program.

- A state dance consultant in the State Department of Education, Linda McCulloch, was appointed to oversee the implementation of the dance program across the state
- There were standards written for the training of dance teachers for public schools with Universities granting dance licensure/certification. Standards were competency based.
- Interested people from across the state and from different levels of administration were included in the planning and implementation of the program.
- We had dedicated young dancer educators often working alone, and in difficult physical spaces willing to work long hours to pioneer the new programs.
- Throughout the state, school system curriculum specialists were assigned to oversee the development of dance offerings in their districts. They could be Physical education Consultants, Theatre Consultants or whomever each county could spare to supervise and hire the new dance teachers. In CMS Cheryl Maney assumed the role of Pre-K – 12 Art and Dance Curriculum Specialist. We are very lucky to have her and the continued support for dance.
- New schools built after the Basic Education Plan was enacted, were to include dance studios with wood floors, mirrors and barres.

In other states, school systems or their advocates had part of this list but it seems without all of the component parts listed above, it was hard for states to get dance licensure, hire dance professionals and provide steady tenured work for dance educators.

With the beginning of the new century, Target 2000 standards developed for the nation under President Clinton included dance. Now dance would have national standards along with our NC standards. We in North Carolina added our two and ½ cents to the new national standards

and moved with the nation into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, your current reality. Things are different now with different challenges. Curriculum is evolving as well as new changes in national and state views about what should be included in the new programs such as STEM or STEAM.

We have had dance as a part of our K-12 public school curriculum offerings since 1980. Our dance educators in the public schools deserve all the credit for this longevity. They have figured out how to belong in public school faculties and advocate to the parents and faculties in their schools. In Charlotte, the Middle School teachers have also been working to encourage the development of offerings in High Schools so that several non-magnet schools are developing programs due to parental and student demand. When I think of the accomplishments of all of you in making North Carolina a solid supporter of dance as an art form, and in the public schools, I am extremely proud, and consider myself extremely lucky to have found myself in North Carolina at a time when so much was happening in dance. I don't believe I personally wasted a second.

I look forward to the new directions the art of dance will go after the explosion of modern dance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I am awaiting new discoveries to be made in the field of dance education research and pedagogy from a national perspective and in North Carolina. As we are now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with new challenges and realities, you dancers are standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before. It is a substantial legacy and one to be proud of. Thank you.