**Dance Debut’s Second week of Dance!**

Dance this week saw a continuation of the use of “Stacey on the Keyboard” CD. We were able to fine- tune positions and attention to detail this week.

 **“Criss Cross Oh My Gosh”** we added a brain exercise from Svetlana Masgatova that awakens several systems in the body – visual, auditory, proprioceptor, vestibular, direction, and cross brain. This pattern is called out as : CENTER, CENTER – elbow to knee on each side; BRAIN ,BRAIN – opposite hand to side of head, repeat other side (the feet can be stationary or they can step dig from side to side with all of the movements listed next as well); EYE, EYE – opposite hand to outside corner of eye, repeat other side; EAR, EAR – opposite hand to ear, repeat other side; HAND, HAND – clap hands to right side of body, then to left side of body; FOOT, FOOT – touch opposite hand to foot raised up, then repeat to the other side.

From Dan Devion’s CD – “Bridges and Boomerangs” we added **“Lucky Star”** to our warmup exercises. Using Archetype Movement patterns identified by Svetlana Masgatova, we devised a complete brain body connection warmup that included eye tracking.

 What is Archetype Movements? These movements “define the future motor development and connections between different aspects of our being (coordination systems, movement skills, motivational, emotional, personal, and intellectual)…If for any reason the archetype motor pattern does not develop in time, then the next coming pattern as well as different aspects of a person’s life will slow down, be in disharmony, or be blocked…Motor activity can be passive (because of the slow maturation of the Central Nervous System), there can be also be wrong stimulation of movements and skills, stresses and traumas or weak learning abilities.” Reflexes in the body which are innately programmed can help integrate and support a higher level of movement control and learning. Where there is dysfunction and non-productive patterns, we can shift the body to new ways and natural ways.

With the “Lucky Star” music we **(1)** expanded our bodies into **a star shape** with regular breathing (no holding of breathe). Then, we **contract into the smallest planet** our body can be. This stimulates the bodies orientation of a star shape reference point that begins at the center of the body and radiates out to limbs, head and sternum. The body orients movement patterns from the center and out, and establishes how the rest of the body will react to any movement of this nature. In the curl of the body there is emphasis on pushing through the spine and awakening the knowledge of this position. **(2)** We **blew into space with our lips as we rotated around with our spine** to look behind us. Doing this exercise both directions we were looking for other stars and blowing kisses to them. “This pattern is very important in teaching the spine rotation movements, the dynamics and direction of movement, and future time-space orientation.” **(3)**Next we made a circle with our fingers together and **placed a crown on the crown part of our head**. As we did this pushed into our hand with our head and became the King or Queen of the Stars. Then we **placed our hands on our lower back** and pushed onto our sacrum as we bounced our knees to the music. This movement influences cranial-sacrum vertical connections. It also influences lengthening and straightening of the spine creating links between up and down and front and back. Further reflexes depend on the body’s knowledge of this information for new patterns of movement. **(4)** Homologous movement of the arms or “**porte de bras**” or “bubblegum” as we call it is added next. Symmetrical bilateral motions of body limbs are important for teaming the muscles to pull, lift, take or push. The midline of the brain is important here for communication to occur across the hemispheres. We also explored raising the hands in a circle up and over head, turning the palms out and then pushing the hands out and down towards the floor, this extra rotation of the hands is important as well. **(5)** Homolateral movement is added next with **one arm raising in front of the body**, circling over head, and lowering behind the body. We did this exercise without tracking with the eyes, and by adding tracking. Tracking was down by lowering the arms in different positions, but following the star in our hand with our eyes until the arm had completed its movement. We did this without movement of the head. There was a significant change in the eyes ability to move easily through its range of motion without jumping, quivering, blinking or skipping. **(6) Cross lateral movement** was utilized by moving elbow to knee, marching, touching finger to nose, and opposite finger to ear and then switching directions. This pattern aids the body with “Movement-thought Integration”, and this includes the coordination between movement and thinking, as well as gestalt (right brain) and analytical (left brain) thinking. **(7)** Lastly, we continue to just dance and explore new positions and dance steps for learning. This utilization of dance reinforces the development of movement control. As the motor cortex develops there is a shift from conscious movement to automatic movement. Much of the development of dance and sports skills relies on the body’s ability to transfer movement from the conscious part of the brain to what we call “muscles memory” and body awareness at an automatic or subconscious level. (Items in italics come from Dr. Masgatova’s description of Archetype Movements from her training sessions for work with Challenged Children).

In addition, we invited parents to join us for **“Back to Back”** an all-time studio favorite of the dancers. This dance encourages team work, identification of front and back of the body, up and down, right and left. As well, we add many increases skills to the dance to challenge the dancers at their different levels. We have added: tuck jumps, pirouettes, soutenus, specific dance arms (jazz, ballet, highland), a challenging hand shake of “knuckles, slide, high 5, shake and tuck” on both hands, and a high 5 sequence that changes directions with the body. As well, dancing with parents or grandparents can be a highlight for many students.

**For our older dancers** we continued on our quest to find more flexibility in the body. We focused on loosening up the hip muscles by stretching and swinging the leg. In Rhythm Quest we explored how to properly get height on a jump and apply that knowledge back to tap steps and jazz jumps, as well as tumbling. In highland and jazz we began to create a balance of skill between hands and legs for lifting, holding and turning. Scarves were used in some classes to develop this technique too. Hip Hop and Ballet were also a part of this learning as we coordinated and challenged the bodies. Head spotting and eye tracking was a huge focus for our dancers, and we saw great improvement in their skill level as they worked at this.

**Hop Scotch** isvery often played as a warmup activity for the dancers. The group has to work together as a team to connect the hopscotch pieces, and then turns need to be taken as dancers line up to go down the line. As a teacher we are watching for various skills as they go down the line. Can they hop through the foot? Do they land hard on the floor? Do they bend the knee to hop or do they keep it straight? Can they follow the squares or do they skip specific squares? What happens if they turn their body – can they travel sideways or backwards, can they land in all the squares now? All of this information helps the teacher to decide what skill to work on next. By warming up the feet we can change the way the foot connects to the floor and how the rest of the body reacts to this. We can work on knee bends to help with the knowledge of how to jump. We might bring out the trampoline to help with how to use the foot and leg to jump correctly. We may find a child who skips squares, and she may need some tracking information for her eyes. We can work on rhythm down the squares as well. This will help determine what to work on with tap shoes later in class. Thank you for taking the time to observe your own child’s movement and letting us know of anything you might be noticing or see changing as they develop their dancing skills.