# Education Support

American Dance

## Classroom Burnout

*By Joyce E. Pennington*

As summer has drawn to a close and each of you are starting back to school to face your classroom students as well as the ties and responsibilities for the dance/drill team, you find yourself fantasizing what it would be like to have just the dance/drill team, five conference periods and two assistants, and still be paid your full salary!

As the fog clears and reality sets in, you walk into your second period dance class to face 47 non-motivated students who have decided to take your class because it would be "an easy P.E. credit." None of them have had any dance and all are in for a rude awakening when they have to dress out every day and actually break a sweat. After 45 minutes of groans and mumbling you are grateful to dismiss them to get dressed and wondering how you are going to survive a year of this four times a day!

Although there is no sure cure or solution to make your classes perfect, there are some methods that may offer diversity for both you and your students that will apply both to the academic classroom as well as the activity class. Vary from the normal routine at least one day a week. Friday is a good day because it gives the class something to look forward to all week.

Suggestions:

- Have a guest speaker/teacher come in one Friday a month. For instance if you are covering ethnic dances or dance history in dance class, have a Spanish flamenco dancer, American Indian dancer, a Clogger, a Square dance group, etc.(Many times there are students in your school who can perform ethnic dances.)
- When covering musical production numbers, have the choir teacher come to teach them the singing/vocal parts so they can get the true feeling of performing

in the "chorus" of a musical (ex. "Annie", "Its a Hard Knock Life", "A Chorus Line", "One")

- Have a costume/dress up day that enhances a theme you are covering in class (ex. let them wear western clothes/boots when covering square dance or country/western dances)
- Even if students cannot afford tap shoes, you can budget for furniture taps and have students bring an old pair of hard soled shoes to put the taps on. They will have a great time with a tap unit.
- Allow students to request music for stretching and warm up. (they must submit to you a week in advance for your review/approval).
- Utilize daily or weekly individual incentives either through extra credit points, awards/rewards (ribbons, certificates, even bubble gum!), or giving the class an extra 5 minutes to get dressed after a hard but productive workout. Just as your dance/drill team members respond to awards at camp, so will your classroom students.
- When your class has been cooped up inside for several weeks, hold class outside on a pretty day for diversity.
- Show a video of a movie or special that involves a majority of dance. Utilizing current movies or dance videos will activate their interest.
- Organize an end of year (semester) dance recital to be performed for a final grade during class testing time. Invite parents, administrators and study hall classes to attend. Feature some of your better original choreography as well as group performances of routines learned during the semester. Print a "program" that includes all students' names and acknowledgements.

Instilling an incentive for the students to look forward to each Friday will allow you to have a break as well as your students. Emphasize that these weekly "treats" are rewards for good behavior all week and can be taken away if they are not giving 100% Monday through Thursday. Keep in mind that each of your classes will respond differently to various incentives. You may have to diversify your incentives from one class to the next and not be afraid to experiment with new ideas that will make your classes respond with positive enthusiasm.