

## **Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation for Dance Education**

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The training of dancers has evolved over time. Significant change in pedagogy is due to dance educators understanding of somatics and the implications of dynamic alignment, core stability particularly efficient use of the transverse abdominals and functional movement patterns. As high-performance athletes, dancers benefit from exercises designed to foster core strength. A particular emphasis is placed on spiraling and spinal rotation because of its common association with functional movement and injury. Incorporating traditional pilates exercises within the dance class support the development of the proprioceptive aspects of three dimensional, multi-planar core stability.

My ongoing investigation in the benefits of pilates training for the development of dancer's core integration, dynamic alignment and mobility and stability has led me to consider Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF) as stimulus in the training of dancers. PNF is a complex system physical therapists use for rehabilitation. PNF patterns are based on functional movement patterns of diagonals and spirals, alternating mobility/stability, stretch/strength, and simultaneously utilizing three spatial pulls instead of only one (Hackney, 2002). There are few dance education practitioners working in the area of PNF and even fewer scholars investigating PNF with the needs of dancers and athletes in mind.

If funded, I will study with master somatics teacher Irene Dowd. During the PNF training, I will share ongoing research in core stability, dynamic alignment and PNF in the training of dancers completed in the UNCG dance pedagogy program with pilates and movement science practitioners and learn new methods and strategies which will support future research and coursework in dance education.

Insights and experiential understanding will not only benefit teachers that are enrolled in our MA in Dance Education program but also students in the K-12 initial teacher certification program, as well as, young dancers in the Dancers Connect community dance program. I will come away with ideas and understanding of methods, assessment and application for instructional practice with people of varying ages and ability levels.