CATS – McAlee draft

**Improving Student Self-Assessment Tools and Practices in Ballet Classes**

Dance can be very deceptive, how a movement feels or looks in a mirror does not always provide an accurate indication of what is really going in the body. To help students acquire an accurate perception of how they are doing and develop a practical and self-determined process for improving their ballet training, I have each student fill out a Goals and Assessment Sheet which identifies four specific areas: Posture, Technique, Locomotion and Artistry. For each of these categories students identifies an Issue (area of difficulty), their Goal (what they want to achieve within the semester) and the Assessment (specific movements they select to track their progress). They are videotaped executing their chosen movements at the Midterm so they can objectively view themselves; and again at the Final when they evaluate their progress and identify new or continuing areas of focus for improvement.

In the Fall of 2013, my overall approach of identifying goals, videotaping twice and evaluating progress was successful, but it was also clear to me that the students didn’t initially fully grasp what constituted an assessment in ballet, particularly those in Ballet 1. On their Goals and Assessment Sheets they were able to clearly identify issues and goals, but few understood how to select a movement for assessment that would give them the information they needed. Instead, they described a new way of approaching the movement issue they found challenging, an important development in their understanding of dance, but not an actual assessment. I only realized this when they turned in their sheets just prior to the Midterm Videotaping and I addressed this lack of clarity through discussion and helping each student pick movements in class during the Midterm Videotaping.

I decided that this process could be greatly and easily improved by including more descriptive language in each of the four areas; providing some concrete examples for each category on the Goals and Assessment Sheet; and reviewing the document and assessment examples with the class prior to turning it in before the Midterm Video.

For my ballet classes this semester, I revised the Goals and Assessment Sheet and will discuss the sheet in class prior to the Midterm so students can prepare and clarify their assessment choices if they have any questions. I will evaluate the responses I receive on the sheets by the new Ballet 1 students to see if the Assessments are now more clearly articulated; and will monitor if these changes also improve their ability to better assess their own progress at the Final as well.