

Sample Student Research Paper, MLA Style

"Student Paper A"

shows correct MLA format and documentation (in-text citations and on Works Cited Page)

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Instructor: Bob Sherrin

English 100 - 04

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A Valuable Art Form for Children

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centred]

The first ballet costume I wore to perform on stage was rather tacky: red body suit, red tutu, pink tights, pigtails with red ribbons, and chubby cheeks. Despite the tasteless start to my dance career, I have been training recreationally and pre-professionally since the age of six, and my knowledge of the dance world is extensive. Accordingly, I have performed on stage in Vancouver, Montreal, and Japan and have been cast in new and innovative works by world-renowned choreographers: Roberto Campanella, Emily Molnar, Matjas Mzorewski, and Lynn Sheppard, to name a few. Through my experiences, I am confident that the addition of ballet training to my list of extracurricular activities during my childhood positively contributed to the person that I am today. Consequently, I learned the importance of exercise and its positive impact on the body (muscularity, core strength, balance, and coordination) at a young age. Therefore, I feel that enrolling children in ballet is crucial for their healthy development. In contrast, due to the negative connotations associated with ballet, some parents are apprehensive to enroll their children in this art form. However, I believe that children would greatly benefit from ballet as a form of exercise, despite the reputation ballet training has as a major contributing factor to the development of eating disorders as well as chronic injuries.

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Those in opposition to my proposition are parents who are apprehensive about subjecting their children to a situation such as ballet, in which they will be

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particularly vulnerable to developing an eating disorder. Dr. Warren, an eating disorders specialist, states that "[t]he average incidence of eating disorders in the white middle-class population is 1 [sic] in 100. In classical ballet, it is one in five" (qtd. in Dunning 1). Anorexia, "an emotional disorder characterized by an obsessive desire to lose weight by refusing to eat" and bulimia, "an emotional eating disorder characterized by bouts of overeating, typically alternating with fasting or self-induced vomiting or purging" are two extremely dangerous eating disorders that occur in the dance world ("Anorexia"; "Bulimia"). Clinical psychologist Richard A. Gordon explains why ballet dancers have specific demands to be thin:

In the ballet, there are particularly intense pressures to attain a thin body shape, a requirement that is attributable to contemporary aesthetic standards of the art form. The ballet dancer is expected to trace out a sharp, moving contour in space. For this purpose, slight body bulges are seen as a drastic impairment. (72)

L. M. Vincent, a psychiatrist and former dancer, describes ballet schools and dance companies as hothouses of competition and he states that "the athletic demands of the ballet are as vigorous of those of any sport, but in no other athletic activity is the appearance of the body so crucial for success and acceptance" (qtd. in R. Gordon 73-74). Accordingly, Vincent criticizes ballet teachers for setting dangerously low weight standards for young students and he documents among aspiring ballerinas widespread starvation dieting, food faddism,

[[sic] indicates an error in the quotation. Generally, numbers below 100 are spelled out.]

[indirect source]

[two sources]

[quotation more than four lines in the original]

[Vincent does not appear in the Works Cited. R. Gordon quotes Vincent.]

[author's name is already in the text sources]

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[Because two authors used have the same surname - Gordon - the initial indicates which Gordon it is] vomiting, and laxative abuse (74). Richard Gordon reports that many ballet dancers testify as having been tapped on the sternum and ribs and being told, "must see the bones" and were given the recommendation, "eat nothing" (72). Therefore, these anorexic behaviours became socially acceptable in the subculture of the ballet school (74).

In contrast, Health Canada reports: "eating disorders are complex syndromes strongly associated with other mental illnesses, such as mood, personality, and anxiety disorders" (83). It suggests that the development of an eating disorder results from a combination of biological, psychological, developmental, and social factors (83). In a table constructed by the health agency, out of nineteen direct risk factors contributing to the development of eating disorders, only one factor is dance-related. Some other factors include an "E[ating] D[isorder]-specific genetic risk," "energy metabolism," "gender," "aversive mealtime experiences," and "trauma affecting bodily appearance" (83). Therefore, the health agency illustrates that there are many factors that contribute to eating disorders and the development of such is most likely due to the combination of many risk factors, not a single factor such as ballet.

Support for my proposition comes in an article by Jennifer Dunning that implies that people who are attracted to the idea of ballet training may very well have personalities that are susceptible to developing eating disorders in the first place, and the likelihood of these individuals developing eating disorders without ballet training is very high indeed (1). She states that in respect to the ideal ballet body, the pendulum seems to be swinging back toward greater diversity. For instance, Heinz Poll, the Director of Ohio Ballet, explains that if someone can "convince [him] that [s/he] can move

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[the source used the term "ED," which might not be clear on its own]

[edited quotation]

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and ... dance, [he'll] hire her/him" (qtd. in Dunning 2). For example, Dunning describes one of Ohio Ballet's outstanding ballerinas as having the most un-balletic body, but the moment she lights up the dance floor, this is forgotten. Likewise, Peter Martins, the Director of New York City Ballet, explains that he doesn't require a specific ballet type but hires dancers based on ability; he also describes today's dancers as fundamentally responsible for their own health (Dunning 2). Correspondingly, Dunning states that major ballet companies offer "confidential help to dancers with problems," regularly conduct workshops on nutrition and health, and constantly reassure dancers that they don't have to look like anyone else (2). Likewise, Artemis Gordon, the Artistic Director of Arts Umbrella in Vancouver with 30 years of dance experience, agrees that the aesthetic aspect of dance is changing. She explains that today's directors and choreographers are in search of dancers who look healthy and muscular, and although ballet is the foundation of all dance forms, contemporary dance is becoming increasingly popular. Artemis Gordon describes

[Poll's name does not appear in the works cited. The brackets include small changes, so that the grammar fits.]

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[blend of quotation and paraphrase]

[no page number, as source is an interview] contemporary choreography as "physically demanding, powerful, and high-energy" and dancers with eating disorders don't actually have the stamina or aesthetic look needed to meet these demands.

Those in opposition to my proposition are parents who are also apprehensive about subjecting their children to ballet training because of the pain associated with injuries and the long-term effects on the body. A not-for-profit organization in British Columbia entitled Safety and Health in Arts Production and Entertainment (SHAPE), explains that musculoskeletal injuries (MSI) are the most frequently reported medical problem among classical dancers

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("Dancers and MSI: Symptoms, Contributing Factors, and Types of Injuries" 1). It states that "60-80% of dancers have reported at least one injury" that has kept them from dancing for a period of time, while "50% of dancers report at least one chronic injury" (1). SHAPE also explains that MSI affects areas of the body such as muscles, bones, joints, tendons, ligaments, nerves, and blood vessels, and the most common types of MSI in dancers are strains, sprains, and bone disorders affecting the back or lower extremities (1). Also, it reports the contributing factors to MSI: "excessive dance training at an early age (before puberty), ... intense rehearsals, ... dancing on pointe, improper technique, [and] ... dietary habits common to dancers" (2).

[ellipses for omissions]

On the contrary, Lesley Brennan, a physio-therapist who has been treating patients for 13 years, has only worked with four patients diagnosed with chronic dance injuries, while she consistently sees patients with chronic sports injuries. She explains that dance injuries are only a threat when children train for many hours a day, while being pushed to increase their flexibility when it doesn't come naturally. Brennan states that the increasing popularity of modern dance has changed the dance world in a positive way, so that everyone can be an individual; in the modern dance world there is no perfect body or perfect way of expressing oneself. Despite her profession, Brennan is confident that enrolling her two-year old daughter in ballet will "promote balance, coordination, and core strength

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crucial for her daughter's development." Also, the BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit (BCIRPU) reports that from 1999-2003, "there were more than 95,000 visits" from children "due to injuries at the Emergency Department of BC Children's Hospital" ("Injury Facts"). Accordingly, they report that leisure activities such as unorganized play have the highest frequency of injury. BCIRPU reports in a table the top ten hospitalizations due to

injury in children, and recreational sports (including dance) are not even on the list. Consequently, the number one reported injury involving children is falls, which accounted for 34, 733 cases in British Columbia from 1999-2003. Also, BCIRPU states that in 1999 the top five sports that led to the most Emergency Room visits among children were ice hockey, soccer, basketball, football, and baseball. Interestingly, dance isn't even on the list, let alone mentioned.

Support for my proposition is evident in the fact that Canada is taking action to promote safe ways in which children can be exposed to exercise in an organized way. For example, British Columbia has employed a program called ActNow BC to help children become more active ("Children"). ActNow BC explains

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that endurance or aerobic activities which "involve continuous movement of large muscle groups [and] increase[d] heart rate... are important for the development of a healthy heart and lungs"; . . . not surprisingly, dance is listed as a "healthy heart and lung activit[y]" ("Children"). ActNow BC also lists dance as an activity that increases flexibility, which is important to "[promote] good posture, [reduce] muscle stiffness and soreness, [increase] relaxation, and [minimize the] risk of injury" ("Children").

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Correspondingly, beginning with the 2007 tax year, the government of Canada is implementing a Children's Fitness Tax Credit, designed to promote physical activity in children and youth; the Children's Fitness Tax Credit allows parents to "claim up to \$500 per year for eligible fitness expenses" (Canada). As described by the government of Canada, for an activity to be an eligible fitness expense, it must "include a significant amount of physical activity that contributes to cardio-respiratory endurance," muscular strength, flexibility,

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and balance; clearly dance qualifies because it contains all of these factors. As well, the BC Ministry of Education has taken steps to implement dance training as an important part of the required curriculum from kindergarten to grade 12, as outlined in "Learning Outcomes: Dance K to 7" (British Columbia). The BC Ministry of Education requires that students be able to demonstrate a growing awareness of the history and influences of dance within a society (British Columbia). Also, the BC Ministry of Education is persistent in that students must be able to use the elements of movement combined with the creative process of exploration to eventually participate in the presentation and performance of dance (British Columbia). Obviously, if the government were concerned that dance training causes pain and lifelong injuries, they would not heavily promote dance as an integral form of exercise for children. Heather Myhre, an elementary school teacher of 13 years, explains that dance is now a requirement in the curriculum as opposed to an option. She also states that far more injuries occur in PE during sports such as basketball, floor hockey, and soccer than in dance. Myhre is enthusiastic in saying that the dance curriculum is an amazing opportunity for students who don't excel in sports, and she always sees the majority of students becoming more confident by the end of the dance portion of the term.

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In the past seven years I have worked with many different professional dancers and choreographers, as well as students in dance training. During this time, I have met only one dancer out of hundreds who was suffering from an eating disorder. Not surprisingly, she stopped dancing shortly after she was officially diagnosed with bulimia. Ultimately, I have encountered more potentially anorexic and bulimic girls in my high school class and at my gym than during my dance training.

Ballet does not cause eating disorders in children, although children with numerous risk factors for developing an eating disorder may be attracted to ballet. Also, with the increasing popularity of contemporary and modern dance, the so-called "ballet body" is soon to be extinct, and the new look of dance (which we are already seeing) will be the epitome of health: strength, stamina, and muscularity. Statistics show that children are more likely to suffer an injury while playing on the playground, playing in their own backyard, or participating in team sports, rather than while taking a ballet class. Therefore, ballet is an excellent way to develop a child's physical characteristics such as muscle tone, core strength, balance, and coordination, which in turn positively enhance a child's self-esteem. But the most important thing is that ballet training provides all of these opportunities and positive effects for children without them even knowing it; they are simply having fun.

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