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# IADMS Education Committee

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## Considerations for Mirror Use in Teaching Dance

- Most students want to use the mirror in class and in fact, view it as a critical tool for the study of dance. Present the mirror as one of many teaching tools that can be used but note it is not necessary for optimum training.
- The mirror is potent. The image students see of themselves in the mirror and the feedback it provides can frequently overpower the kinesthetic feedback students feel in their body and are learning to interpret. Overuse of the mirror can delay students' development in learning to utilize kinesthetic feedback. Emphasize the long-term value in being able to use kinesthetic feedback.
- Be specific in instructing students how to constructively use the mirror. Give them limited time frames so as to avoid a lingering gaze that can go on too long and lead to negative self-evaluation.
- As a teacher, work to be sensitive to negative body image issues provoked by mirrors in some students. Use the mirror sparingly by either closing curtains over the mirror or having students face away from the mirror.
- Work to integrate other methods of movement information into classes, including the use of verbal imagery and other somatic approaches, so the mirror is not framed as the primary mode of information gathering for a student.
- As dance teachers, we need to understand the background and needs of our student population, be clear about the goals of our classes, deepen our understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of the mirror as a learning tool, and use the mirror selectively and strategically to support this process.

