Question: What is good coaching practice?

I firstly asked my colleagues at work, ‘What is good coaching practice?’ however working with them now for the last four years it came as no surprise that we share the same values of respect and commitment to the student. We all come from a professional background where we understand that; passion, dedication, commitment, collaboration, self-motivation and respect are how we encourage a dancer.

So not being overly satisfied with my investigation I then moved to Facebook and asked my 356 friends the same question (thankfully I did not receive 356 answers). However, the answers I did receive (appendix 1) that were from ballet teachers, ballet mothers, PE teachers and people involved in the arts were not much different from my colleagues. Among the words that arose in their answers were commitment, compassion, respect, encouragement, knowledgeable, disciplined, honesty, experience, inspiration, confidence, collaboration and integrity.

Surprisingly the word ‘competition’ did not come up, nor did any other word that was ineffective to developing a positive behavioral approach. Similar to Nash, Sproule and Horten’s (pg236, 2011) findings, the ballet school director placed emphasis on collaboration and giving the individual responsibility for his or her own learning. Apart from this most of the other answers had a holistic approach; only the first mother took a more pragmatic attitude when she talks about planning. For all of the participants involved their answers corresponded to the coaches in Nash et al’s (pg236, 2011) paper. These coaches describe that it is not just about sport performance development but also about growing an athlete’s holistic development.

Even though I did not mean it to happen, this ended up being a small survey in which showed that people are aware it is just as important to having a holistic approach as well as the performance development.

Appendix 1

Mother (amateur marathon runner)

Equal commitment by both the athlete and coach, someone who knows the sport, and someone who is knowledgeable across a large range of skills. Sports can be technical and a coach needs to be many things from a friend, data analysis, masseur, psychologist, motivator, nutritionist and plenty more. But again the most important fact would be equal commitment from both parties and have a strong knowledge in your given area. Good at periodization and planning too.

Ballet mother 1

A coach or teacher needs to set high standards and must also be able to show compassion and respect.

Ballet mother 2

A good coach is someone who gives the children positive encouragement and never puts them down. Constructive criticism is good if the right wording and context is used. I also believe in fairness

Ballet Mother 3

Encouragement, knowledge and discipline

Ballet mother 4 also PE teacher

Good teaching practice- I think a good coach/teacher is able to recognize and nurture the strength of their players/students. Honest feedback, they can challenge and extend their players/students. They need to be consistent with their approach, follows through- be a role model and show by example. They also need to show respect to the individual.

Ballet mother 5

*je peux donc te dire que tu es ce professeur. Tu as toutes les qualités que l'on attend "d'un bon professeur." Gentil, à l'écoute de ses élèves, tu sais les reprendre quand il le faut, tu sais trouver les qualités et les défauts de tes élèves et donc tu arrives à les faire travailler avec cela, tu donnes envi à tes élèves de danser, envi d'aller plus loin dans leur capacité et ça je pense que c'est le plus important, tu es toujours disponible pour eux même après les cours, tu sais être sévère quand il le faut car tu veux que ton élève réussit. le fait d'avoir étè danseur dans de grandes compagnies fait de toi un professeur de GRANDE QUALITÉ Tu mets ton expérience professionnel au service de tes élèves.*

Translation

I can tell you Mark that you are that teacher. You have all the qualities that we expect of a teacher. You are nice, you listen to the students, you know when to be hard, you know how to find their qualities and faults and you help them to work with them both. You make the student want to dance and you push them to go to their capacities. The thing that is most important is that you are always there to talk to the students after the classes. You are strict when it is needed and this is only when you want the student to succeed. Because you were a dancer in big companies makes you a teacher with a lot of qualities. You make your professional experience available to your students.

Ballet teacher

As a ballet teacher I think it’s important to have patience, yet endurance. Not to be overly authoritarian, but still disciplined. The most important quality? Be approachable and available out of class hours for students to come to you with problems, the teaching role does not end when the class ends.

Former female ballerina, international guest teacher and coach

INSPIRATION, KNOWLEDGE AND THE ABILITY TO IMPART IT, ENERGY, ARTISTRY, MUSICALITY, ABILITY TO GIVE CONFIDENCE AND A KICK UP THE BUM WHEN NEEDED, and an ABILITY TO ASSIST IN PRIORITISING AREAS TO WORK ON.

Former male dancer and now ballet teacher

Giving inspiration and confidence ;-)

Former Male dancer

A sense of humour and tight buns help too!

Arts female Administrator

As parent I would say patience, pedagogy - I mean the way you transfer your knowledge (expertise and practice). Also, charisma and leadership in order to inspire the little ones :)

Female ballet teacher

Empowerment, excitement for and about the topic, and making the information relevant to the student. Teach/coach/nourish the whole person, not just the body...mind & spirit are just as important. Dancer Empathy, experience, communication, observation, integrity , tolerance, initiative & unrelenting drive to instill discovery of ownership in the mind- Body , integral connection's as vocational & life skills.

Male Ballet teacher

The ability to form a connection with a child, to be able to capture their imagination and inspire them. Ballet teachers or any teacher can make or destroy a student, knowingly or otherwise. You have to be able to engage with a student. Fairness and consistency are important. The worst trait for me as a student was to not be encouraged and watch the teacher always have a "favorite" student....

Former Female ballet dancer

Purely and simply, "honesty, (if they are not up for the challenge, tell them), passion (show them how passion can sometimes beat ability, resting on your strengths can be damming) and hard love, when needed, (the truth hurts but if you have honesty and passion, the hard love/truth will make you the best you can be). For me, honesty is the best policy!!

Female ballet teacher

To teach children the joy of hard work and the rewards that this brings.

Pilates’ teacher and former professional female ballet dancer

Developing a relationship that creates a space where together you work to bring out the individual's potential. Encouraging both the coach and the individual to take steps everyday to dig deeper, step into the unknown, where things feel a little uncomfortable. It is in this place where the extraordinary happens. Characteristics for a coach, mentor, teacher, are integrity, honesty, a healthy ego, commitment, mindfulness, awareness and openness. Both need to be working for a mutually decided upon goal.

Former ballet dancer and now Ballet School director

Collaboration, never give the answers, make it so interesting that the student wants to listen to the instructions, this will enable the student to work out the problem by themselves.