Fine Arts dance department offers children ballet lessons

Peeking around the corner of the dance classroom in the Fine Arts Building, you see twelve little kids learning ballet. Precocious youngsters enrolled in college early? No. Young-looking 20-year-olds?

It seems that Dance and Performance classes are not the only ones that the Department of Dance offers.

“Students don’t realize that we also offer a teacher training program, not only performances,” said Valerie Roche, coordinator for the Department of Dance.

Presently 12 youngsters between the ages of seven and ten are participating free of charge in a special teaching practicum offered by the Dance Department, Roche said.

Every Tuesday and Wednesday these children arrive at 5:30 p.m. for beginning ballet lessons. These lessons give student teachers a chance to use their skills, Roche said.

Roche said, that each of the five student teachers presently enrolled in the program is given a chance to teach the children.

The children are taught ballet basics, strengthening exercises and exercises to learn rhythm, Roche said.

“Getting over being nervous, especially teaching the first class, is probably the hardest thing to overcome,” Roche said. “After each class it gets easier as the students develop more and more confidence,” she added.

After class an evaluation of the students’ performance, is given and discussed.

Later in the semester similar classes will be given to staff and faculty children between the ages of 5 and 6, Roche said.

The classes benefit both the teacher and child. Both are learning; one how to teach, the other how to dance, Roche said.