

DanceTalk101/Episode 1: Lesson Plan 1-What is Dance?

Objective: Students will be able to create their own personal definition of dance.

They will participate in viewing and having a conversation about dance – introducing ideas of various life experiences, and culture and society effecting their dance perceptions. They will be able to identify the 5 Elements of Dance, Improvisation and Choreography in basic terms. (these concepts will be expanded on in coming episodes)

Activities: Students will watch DanceTalk101 Episode 1 “What is Dance”

Teacher will lead a reflection and conversation about what the students heard in this dance talk and how they relate to it with their own perceptions, experiences and feelings about dance. This could take a short while or a longer amount of class time. Flexible plan.

Students will watch and are encouraged to dance along with the demonstration in the Activity 1 that goes with the “What is dance” episode.

The teacher can lead students through the same exercises observed in the activity.

1. Students will be asked to move – improvise – freely – with the intention of choosing three movements from their improve that they like.
2. They will be asked to string those three movements together.
3. They will be asked to do the movement small – in a small space, then bigger – really expanding the movement.
4. They can be directed to try the movement in a different order – seeing how that effects the movement phrase.
5. They can be directed to do the movement faster or slower – or repeat the same movement several times, change facing or levels – depending how far the teacher wants to expand the movement from an improvisational study to a choreographed study. This introduces students slowly to choreographic tools as the concept of improvisation and choreography are defined.

Students can write/reflect and answer these Questions:

1. What is my personal definition of dance?
2. What is Improvisation?
3. What is Choreography?
4. What are the 5 Elements of Dance

Evaluation:

Teacher can have students show each other the work in small groups or individually.

Peer feedback can be led by the teacher – in a positive way: What did you see?

What was your favorite moment? What caught your eye?

Teacher can give feedback – what was interesting to watch...

Student engagement, participation, creativity can be part of the evaluation process.

The students answers to the written questions will inform the teacher about how they perceive dance – perhaps what experiences they have had with dance, comfort level etc..

Some of the questions will inform the teachers of the students listening and recall skills as well.

National Core Arts Dance Standards addressed in this lesson:

Create – Perform – Respond – Connect

DanceTalk101/Episode 1: Lesson Plan 2- Getting Moving!

Objective: Students will work with large and small movement and be able to move with confidence and curiosity. Students will participate in a warm up, locomotor and creative combination. Sequencing and exploring movement and body parts.

Activities:

1. Students will follow along in a simple warm-up starting with smaller movement and going into larger movement – honoring safety and addressing the whole body. Awareness of muscle groups and warming up the whole body.

Suggested warm-up exercises:

Standing start with **rolling down** slowly through the spine, dropping the head gently down, curving down one vertebrae at a time hanging over to feel the weight of the head while standing in parallel – weight evenly on both feet. Rolling back up slowly 4x to awaken the spine and find stability in a parallel position.

Head rolls – slowly and gently roll the head in a circle right and left and nod down and up and side to side (as if ear to shoulder) to find range in the neck – gently.

Shoulder rolls – rolling the shoulders back in circles, reversing forward and finishing back (4 of each) to release any tension – especially from being on computers and phones!

Easy demi plies, bending the knees and rising 8x keeping feet planted on floor
Play with any arm movement or let arms relax for this

Arm circles – 4 on each side, repeat. Make large arm circles, following the path of the arm with focus – “see your hand” allows upper body to move with the circles. Soft knees and feet to follow the movement – so no stress in body as twisting to follow the circular movement.

Arms above head and slowly lowering down – **rolling the wrists** as you lower the arms to the sides of the body – do twice. Feeling the articulation of hands and wrists.

Standing in parallel lift one leg knee toward chest, crease in hip socket – warming it up slowly and hold the leg with hands in this parallel passé type of position. **Roll the ankle** in both directions for 8 counts. Switch legs.

Lunge down with one leg front bent and one extended to stretch. Note parallel lines of the position so that there is no knee strain – talk about alignment of the knee and ankle for safety. Do on both sides.

Sitting on the floor – lie on back and bend knees, feet planted on the floor. Do 20 **crunches** to engage the abdominals. Add variety of sit-ups as desired. Suggestion: diagonal or full sit ups are an option.

Stretch in second position with the legs stretched out on the ground to the sides so that the student can let head fall forward to the ground - curving spine over to stretch upper body and legs/ hamstrings in second position. Stretch to each side gently and slowly. Pointing and flexing the feet at this time is great to introduce articulation of the feet. Pushing through the feet and articulating the muscles in the feet here. Then brings legs together in parallel while sitting on the ground and reach up with both arms to ceiling and down and over – curving over head to knees for another slow stretch.

Roll to tummy and press hands into the floor (placed at sides of chest) to **arch up** to ceiling – gently and slowly.

This is a good place to transition to plank position for a few push ups if desired and to walk the hands toward the feet to roll back up to parallel, standing position.

2. Have students explore some simple **Locomotor Movements across the floor**

Walk (on the beat of the music) go forward, back, side.

Run slow, fast, in various directions

Skip – note the use of opposition and arm placement and feet pointed when leaving the ground here – taking pedestrian movement into “dance” movement.

Maybe start with these three. Next explore; gallop/chasse, leap (if beginners having them leap over a shoe or something is helpful, use imagery such as leap over a stream) jump and hop (talk about hop scotch, one foot to one and two feet to two to describe the difference from hop to jump is helpful) This is a great lesson taking movement most students have experienced from daily life into the dance studio

3. Ask students to choose and **combine four** of the locomotor movements to create a phrase.

They might work in partners for this – fun and connects them – feels safer.

Each can show/share what they created. They can teach each other their phrases to build longer phrases. This builds collaboration skills as well.

Generally this warm up and exploration of Locomotor skills will take a full class period.

Evaluation:

Students can be evaluated based on participation, attitude, openness, creativity, grasp of movement.

National Dance Standards of create, explore, perform, respond, connect are employed in this lesson.

DanceTalk101/Episode 1: Lesson plan 3- Greetings

Objective: Students will move with teacher improvisationally.
Students will participate in leading parts of the improvisation.
Students will create movement studies in small spaces based on gesture.

Activities:

1. Teacher will play music and move through an easy warm up that students can follow along – stretch, reach, roll, sway, movement that goes up and down, side to side, moves each body part. Teacher can “pass it on” by signaling who to watch and each student can lead a short part of the warm up, the can signal the next person etc – improvise follow along fun movement – creating a fun open easy atmosphere to move and create together.
2. Teacher will introduce the idea of how we greet each other – wave, high five, a handshake or hug (during covid abstract all of these with social distance) demonstrate how these movements can be made into ‘dance’ by changing facing, levels, making the movement big or small, facing each other or away, toward audience etc. adding a turn or a shape to enhance the gesture. Look at ways to connect the movements - create transitions between the movements. This again is a great lesson to bring daily gesture and and familiar movement into the dance space.
3. Have each student create 4 sets of 8 – based on gesture of greeting someone
For example a student might: turn, wave, step forward and hug, hip bump, jump high five...
4. See them all – share and give feedback, teacher and peer, positive words and observations
5. Have the students work in partners – learn each others phrases. Play with how to make that into a “duet” use some or all of the movement, change levels, facings, repetition, unison, counterpoint (introduce some basic choreographic tools to use the movement and make it into a mini dance)
6. Show the duets, if time, connect them – can be used to create a whole dance piece – add music etc... all students can learn one of the phrases to start the piece or end it to create a larger unison phrase that enhances the duets and can help make the structure for a whole piece. This can develop, change, adapt for several days of work depending on the time line a teacher has to work on it with the students.

Evaluation: Teacher can grade based on participation, attitude, contribution of comments, engagement of students during the lesson. Peer review – sharing and observing.

National Standards: Create, Perform, Respond, Connect

DanceTalk101/Episode 1: Lesson Plan 4- Improvisation & Flocking

Objective: Students will become more comfortable with improvisation, creating movement on the spot. Students will be able to participate comfortably doing some basic improvisational activities. Students will experience the tool of “flocking”

Activities:

Teacher will lead the students in a follow along warm up – moving large muscle groups, basic stretches of choice, standing or on floor. Isolating body parts can be helpful here – starting with the head, rolling down through the spine, arm circles, leg lunges, rotating ankles and wrists and moving through space together – safe setting all moving together.

Teacher can lead the students in basic “flocking” exercise, follow her around the room – walking, jogging, changing directions, vary tempo, lunges, prances – various ways of moving that are easy to follow. Making different patterns in the room – curved and straight pathways. Stop and discuss the experience with the students.

Use the image of birds moving in flocks, fish swimming in schools, etc...

Then guide students to change off who is leader for flocking – this can be passed on by focus, or a signal, or whoever ends up in front naturally (for more experienced dancers) or a vocal call out of someone’s name – be sure all students are included...

So all get a chance to lead the flock for a short time.

Have students go across the room in lines or pairs – depending on set up in the room giving cues for various improvisational qualities and ways of moving.

Set up the room to be non threatening, welcoming and non judgemental. One suggestion is to dim the lights, to talk about how we all feel self conscious at times trying new things, but this is a safe space to take chances and be creative. To not judge self or others and know we are all experimenting and not taking time to judge anyone, but we are here to support each other as creative individuals and dancers.

Cues teacher can use: “dance as if you are in peanut butter, sticky, thick, slow efforted movement”

“move across the room as if ice were covering the ground” (give descriptive with the word cues, slick, slippery, for the ice image, encourage level and direction changes, “play” atmosphere with safety cues as well – telling students to be safe with body and others spatially as they explore)

Other cues: “move across the floor as if it is windy, how would you move?”

“Move across the floor as if it were hot, on fire, move quickly, touch the ground as little as possible...”

Teacher can create other environments for the students to move through

If time, Teacher can combine the ideas created across the floor – a movement environment, quality combined with the flocking exercise to create movement studies. This lesson can be expanded on in a variety of ways.

Evaluation:

Peer Observation – risk taking – safely exploring the concept of Improvisation, flocking. Sharing feedback and students can reflect and share what they saw, what they felt, as viewers and doers.

What was easy, more difficult? Challenges?

They can contribute ideas (writing or verbal sharing) of their own for what environments or images might be effective – creative component.

Teacher can observe their comments, feedback, participation, writing, reflection – for evaluation.

Dance Standards – Create, Perform, Respond, Connect

DanceTalk101/Episode 1: Lesson Plan 5- Shapes and Emotion in Movement

Objective: Students will move through various shapes and movement and connect words that are emotion based with movement. Creating movement with meaning without a particular dance vocabulary will be a source for expression, and original, organic movement.

Activities: Teacher will lead students through a basic warm up, stretch, Head to toes – some core exercises, sit-ups, work through the body to move with ease and comfort. Take a few minutes at the beginning – maybe sit in a circle – check in with students, ask how they are feeling, maybe ask them to contribute one word to describe how they are feeling ie: happy, excited, tired, mellow, whatever it might be.
(these words can be used later in class as a resource)

Teacher will lead students through a series of shapes – demonstrating and moving with them as he/she describes various outward things about the shape – a shape that is low, medium or high – a shape that is round and curved, a shape that is angular, long, stretched, a shape that is bound tight and compact, a shape that is symmetrical and even, flat or twisted, a shape that is uneven, asymmetrical shapes – on the ground, standing, facing up, down, sideways, back, front ... Moving through a wide range of physical possibilities.

Discuss how the various shapes felt – comfortable, uncomfortable, fun, weird etc..
Maybe group students together once they have set shapes and look at the movement in groups – find similarities and complimentary movement. This can be developed.

Teacher then leads students in a different way with emotional word cues like: can you make a shape that feels sad, one that feels scared, one that feels happy, silly or funny, one that feels unsure, one that feels excited, one that feels full of joy... teachers can use the image of the shape being a photograph depicting the emotion. Students can work all together or in groups – watch one group at a time, share and get peer feedback – analyze what kind of shapes felt certain ways – what kind of movement and design aligned with what kind of emotion. Perhaps list basic emotions on the white board and break students into groups to create shapes based on an emotion (or several emotions) and string them together into a movement phrase. Share these studies, build on them in another lesson if desired. Students can share and reflect and can see how movement can evolve and be expressive with simple physical and emotional description, direction, experimentation. Discuss from performer perspective and viewers perspective. How does the movement feel and how does it look? Is it conveying the intended emotion to the audience? How can we modify it – feedback opportunity.

Evaluation: Teacher can evaluate based on participation, willingness to try the shapes, enthusiasm, performance of the studies. Peer review and feedback can be part of the process. Self reflection after the work can be helpful for students – journaling or some form of written reflection on the experience.

National Standards: Create, Perform, Respond, Connect