

Using Movement in the Classroom

This portion of the resource kit is intended to provide you with structured ways to introduce sequential movement exploration in your classroom, and integrate it with your classroom content. You do **not** need any dance or movement training to do this – just the qualities of creativity we have explored in the creativity overview!

Movement safety and best practices

If you have worked with movement in your classes before, and already have basic practices for respect for others' space, and for safety, these tools will fit easily with your practices.

If you have not worked with movement before in class, basic best movement practices are probably not very different from your regular classroom management practices. All practices, of course, are partly dependent on the age of your students.

Here are a few simple guidelines:

- If your school does have a dedicated space for movement and you can work with your students there – do! This could include a gym, cafeteria, empty classroom, hallway or atrium.
- If you are working in your classroom, do not be intimidated by desks! Desks can be pushed aside, or danced around.
- At some point, you will want a clear space, however small or large, for performing and viewing.
- You can also manage the space by having students work in small groups, half the class at a time, thirds, or however you are accustomed to dividing your students into groups.
- When moving, again depending on the students' ages, it is important to ensure that early on the students understand the difference between their own personal space (moving in place) and community space (moving with, through and around others.) You can ensure this concept is understood beginning with a movement warmup. Refer to the video warmups!

Using the Videos

The dance movement videos can be worked with in sequence or in an order that serves your teaching goals. The videos include:

1. Two creative dance ways of warming up your students – the **circle warmup** and the **walking warmup**. Both work well with all age groups. Each can serve different purposes.

Along with warming up students in ways that are natural for their own bodies, the warmups provide opportunities to introduce teaching concepts as well as opportunities for formative assessment of where the students are starting from and how they are progressing with the concepts.

- a. The circle warmup is effective for individual work, and encourages students in controlled ways to see and share movement, as well as interact.
 - b. The circle warmup can start with a movement/name game, as in the video, or it can start with simple breathing, reaching, and gentle full body “shaking out” to get students focused.
 - c. The circle warmup can incorporate any of the dance elements, including shapes, body parts, levels, and energy. The teacher can initiate at times, and different students can initiate at other times.
 - d. Copying shapes or simple movements, and passing simple shapes and movements are two formats that can be varied in fun and exploratory ways from class to class.
 - e. The walking warmup is also effective for individual work, especially in exploring personal and community space, but is additionally suited for exploring ways of traveling through space and using locomotor movement.
 - f. The walking warmup can incorporate any of the dance elements, including tempo, energy, shapes and levels. This is an opportunity for students to experience how they are feeling in the moment (their own natural walking pace, for today), and working with that feeling.
2. The next several videos include demonstrations of most of the **dance elements**. There is no separate video for shapes, because shapes are demonstrated in many of the other videos.
- a. The dance element videos are intended for use by the teacher or directly by the students, for assignments and discussion.
 - b. You can work on a single element demonstrated by the videos, or combine elements.
 - c. The videos can be viewed as a class, for discussion of what the students are seeing.
 - d. You can combine different elements from the video for classroom practice, i.e. traveling on a curved pathway

in a round shape, while speeding up and slowing down. As you become more familiar with the elements, these kinds of combinations can be introduced spontaneously as you guide students through a walking warmup, based on your instructional goals and what you are seeing for movement performance.

- e. You can give students more freedom to experiment by varying the movement parameters you set, i.e. by asking them to explore a sequence of three different shapes of their choice, moving with the energy of their choice.
 - f. Of the movement elements, time and space are often the easiest to grasp, while energy can be a little more advanced. Energy, however, adds subtlety, emotional quality and texture to movement. Images can be particularly effective to help explore movement qualities and energy, as in the videos where I ask students to move as if they are made of steel or stone, or to make their movement light as a feather. Simply discussing and generating a list of images for movement can become a rich exploration for classroom content.
 - g. You and your students will notice over time that different people feel more comfortable or familiar working with different movement elements. Some people like to move fast, others slow; some people like to move directly, and others indirectly. This is a good opportunity to explore personal preferences, tendencies, strengths and weaknesses through movement.
 - h. The videos are not meant to be all-inclusive! Encourage exploration of additional ways to demonstrate each of the dance elements.
3. Additional videos demonstrate **dance-making tools** that students can use, most often in small groups.
 - a. These videos can be incorporated once students are engaged in the dance making process with the classroom content they are exploring. Not all of the tools on the handout are demonstrated, including motif and phrase.
 4. Three additional videos provide simple **dance structures** that students can incorporate in their explorations. Again,

these videos are not intended to be all-inclusive – dances can have many different structures!

5. The final videos feature two **small group improvisations**.
 - a. Movement improvisation is an important dance making tool, and a vehicle for performance and expression in its own right.
 - b. Improvisation is also an effective way for students to learn to focus on each other and collaborate.
 - c. These improvisations are fun and effective, and work well for most age groups, with some modification called for with very young students.
 - d. Both improvisations are good icebreakers, after going through a warmup and some movement exploration, to introduce students to the concept of creating a structure, performing it, and being viewed by an audience.
 - e. Both improvisations can be modified or varied to fit into larger structures or group dances.

Instructions for the slow motion improvisation (instructions are not included on the video):

1. Works best in small groups.
2. One student is the leader, and starts moving in slow motion.
3. The rest of the group follows, trying to move all together, in unison.
4. The movement has to be slow enough and simple enough for others to follow!
5. When the leader feels finished, he or she slowly turns or changes direction, until someone else is in front.
6. That person becomes the new leader.
7. Ideally, with practice, there is no “communication” about who is the next leader; instead all members of the group feel the change.
8. This process continues until everyone has had a turn as leader.

Instructions for the group shape improvisation (instructions are not included on the video):

1. Members of the group start offstage.
2. Each person will enter one at a time.
3. They can pick an order to make an entrance, or find an order as they go.
4. The first person enters the space, moving however they want, and freezes in a shape.

5. The second person follows, moving however they want, and adds on to the first person's shape. They must find a way to physically connect.
6. Each additional person enters the space and follows the same process, until all the group members are in the space, frozen in a group shape.
7. The group, based on how the shape feels and looks, must find a way to **move** (nonlocomotor) together.
8. Next, the group must find a way to **travel through space** (locomotor) together.
9. Finally, the group must find a way to exit in all different directions. The exit can be set as part of the instructions, or left to the dancers to decide.
10. In the video, the instruction is to find a time and way to exit by scattering in all directions. Other options could include exiting one at a time, exiting as a group, or ending on stage in a still shape. This improvisation is an excellent way to introduce the **simple dance structure**.

A content-based dance making exploration

This lesson blueprint is intended to be a seed for exploring any content area through movement. The idea is simple enough that it can be accomplished in one class, or it can be explored and developed over several weeks. The process, if fully explored, can cover most if not all of the MLRs or NCAS dance standards. Here's how it works:

1. An initial core content theme or focus: This starting point could be any core concept, whether arts-based or from another core area such as English language arts or science. It could be related to personal identity, a story, a mathematical concept, concepts of foreground and background, etc.
2. A stimulus for students to work with in small groups. The stimulus could be an artwork or photo that embodies the concept, a passage from a story, a piece of music, an object or a cultural artifact. The stimulus could also be student work.
3. Students start with a class warmup (circle, walking, or other).
4. Students are given time for exploration of movement elements (time, space, energy, shapes) that can be used later in dance making.

5. Students break into small groups and either choose or are assigned a stimulus.
6. They discuss the stimulus in relation to any content-based instructions, i.e. to generate feeling words, or discuss particular details, emotional qualities or concepts they notice in the stimulus.
7. Groups are given time to create a dance based on the stimulus, with specific instructions for elements and dance-making tools to include.
 - a. A clear beginning shape.
 - b. Demonstration of at least three dance elements (i.e. levels, speeding up and slowing down, moving in a line formation.) Elements can be assigned by the teacher or chosen by students.
 - c. A high point, or change, shown in the dance.
 - d. A clear ending shape.
8. Groups are given time to practice their dance.
9. Groups take turns showing their dance, and perform it twice. Performing twice will give them a chance to get over nerves the first time, to improve the dance the second time, and will ensure that they have really learned the dance and are not just making up something new each time.
10. Student viewers provide constructive, guided feedback, and dancers share about their experience.
11. Time for self-assessment and reflection can be provided in any preferred format, whether written, documented in journals, visually, verbally, musically...
12. Possibilities for assessment, both formative and summative, are endless, and can become material for further work.

The above process is a framework for a single class dance making exploration, using the tools provided in this resource kit. There are many possibilities for variations, including having some students accompanying or responding to the dances in real time with music-making or art-making on large posters that become part of the performance.

As an alternative to using only a single class period, this kind of thematic movement exploration can be spread out, developed and layered over several weeks, with a variety of culminating activities and documentation. Dances can be more extensively developed, and additional disciplines can be incorporated.

Creative movement provides a structuring element that can allow you and your students to engage in a content-based, sequential creative process that is as rich and rewarding as you would like it to be!