



HSDC EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



Performance Guide

Strategies for using dance performance in the classroom

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Hubbard Street Dance Chicago thanks the following contributors for their support of HSDC Education & Community Programs: Bank of America, The Leo S. Guthman Fund, the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, JPMorgan Chase, The MetLife Foundation Partners in Arts Education Program, Midwest Generation EME, Polk Bros. Foundation, Dr. Scholl Foundation, Charles & M.R. Shapiro Foundation and the Siragusa Foundation. The MetLife Foundation Partners in Arts Education Program is funded by MetLife Foundation and administered by the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts. This program is partially supported by a City Arts Program 4 Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency

Before the Dance Informance

Assessing prior knowledge

It's likely that all of your students have experienced dance in their daily lives, the trick is to allow them to recognize that the arts exist in many forms beyond the formal stage. Try using the following questions to explore dance in their lives.

- What is dance?
- Have you ever attended a performance before? If so, what type of performance and what was your experience? If not, what do you think this performance will be like?
- What do you think are the differences between going to sports events and attending the theatre; or listening to the radio and going to concerts? What do they think the differences will be between going to a dance performance and attending a play?
- Discuss the various jobs associated with creating the dance performance: wardrobe supervisor, dancer, artistic director, lighting designer, etc. If you could work in a dance company, what would you do?
- Where have you seen or experienced dance (for example, at school dances, in their neighborhoods, MTV, movies, etc.)?



Photo by Todd Rosenberg

Lesson Idea: Identify aspects of a story (such as beginning, middle, and end, main idea, characters, setting, etc). Using this picture as your main idea, create/identify the characters, imagine the setting. What happens next? How did they get here? Embody your story as a class, creating your own "movement story".

During the Dance Informance

Suggestions for watching dance

You don't have to have any special training or previous experience to watch dance. You will be taking in information with all your senses – your eyes, your ears, even your muscles. You may be fascinated with the physical activity you see, the music, the production elements (lighting, costumes, props), or with a “story” the dancers tell you.

Every piece of choreography has a reason for being. Dances may be celebrations, tell stories, define moods, interpret poems, express emotions, carve designs, visualize music. As you watch a dance, a story may occur to you because of a past experience. However, not all dances relate to stories. The sequences do not have to make literal sense. Allow images and personal feelings to come to the surface of your consciousness. Open your mind to the moment; you are as much a part of the performance as the dancers.

You may want to ask yourself some questions as you watch:

- What are the sensory properties in the dance? What do you see? What do you hear? What are the dancers actually doing?
- What are the technical properties in the dance? What kind of space is being used? What are the shapes and designs being made? What kinds of energy, dynamics or emotional qualities are being used?
- What are the emotional properties in the dance? How does the movement make you feel?

After the performance, feel free to discuss your thoughts with others, but do not be disturbed if you find that others have a different reaction than yours. Think about your personal images and thoughts. Was it fun to watch? Did the dance remind you of experiences in your own life? Did the choreography inspire you to express yourself – write a poem, draw a picture or make up your own dance?



Photo by Todd Rosenberg

After the Dance Informance

Experiment with the elements of dance

Experimenting with the elements of dance is helpful and fun for all audiences. The body as the instrument, combining the other tools of energy, space and time, creates every movement that exists. Try some of the following ideas and experiment with new ones. The possibilities are endless!

- Try to move each body part by itself. This is called **movement isolation**. Can you move your head without moving anything else? Find all the joints in your body: wrist, knee, elbow. How many different places can you put your elbow? (Over your head, to the side, up, down). Can you move your elbow with different time, i.e. slow, fast, rhythmically? There are many ways to experiment with moving your body. This way of moving the body without moving through space is called non-locomotor or axial movement. How many different non-locomotor movements can you think of?
- Now try **moving your body through space**. This is called locomotor movement. Changing your weight on one or both feet gives you all the different locomotor movement possibilities. How many different ways can you move through space on your feet? (walk, run, jump, hop, skip, gallop, leap).
- **Space** can be thought of as large or small. Look at the room you are in now. Large space means that you would use a lot of the space in the room, traveling through it with locomotor movements or it could mean that the range of space you use with your body is large (like big windmill arms making huge circles in space while jumping). Small space might mean making tiny movements in the space of a finger or an eyelid or it might mean using just a small amount of space in the room, making shapes or non-locomotor movements. We call the way we move through space the spatial pattern. Spatial patterns can be traced onto the floor or onto a piece of paper and can look like doodles, lines, geometric shapes, zigzags and many other things. How many different spatial patterns can you make? How many different ways can you dance the same spatial pattern, i.e. a zigzag?
- **Energy**, or force, changes the quality of motion of the body. If you use a lot of energy you can create a very strong movement (like slamming a door or pulling a heavy load). Very little energy makes a light and free movement, like balancing a feather on your hand or petting a cat. Dancers use energy in a lot of different ways – to tell the audience how they are feeling, to move powerfully or quietly through space, etc. Find an easy, repeatable movement (such as stretching your arms or walking). How can you change the energy of your movement? How does it feel with a different energy? Have a friend watch your dance. What do they see with different energies?
- **Time** is the final element of change in your dance. All the factors of time used in music can be explored with dance, even without music present. How can you use your body, space and energy to explore time components such as duration, speed, pulse/beat, accent, phrase, or syncopation?

After the Dance Informance

Experiment with the elements of dance

Manipulating the elements of body, energy, space and time creates movements that become choreography. Here are some additional qualities of movement that choreographers use. See what happens when you incorporate them into your movement ideas.

- **Sustained:** an even release of energy that stays constant, either fast or slow but not both. Usually sustained movement feels best when it uses a large range of space and a slow time. But changing any one element changes the quality, so experimenting is fun. Try doing a very fast and strong sustained movement.
- **Percussive:** sudden short bursts of energy that start and stop quickly.
- **Swinging:** A drop of energy into gravity that sustains and follows through.
- **Suspend:** this is the movement at the end of a swing, before gravity takes over. It is a euphoric quality.
- **Collapse:** a sudden and complete release of energy, like fainting. You can have partial collapse of the body like head, shoulders, arms, etc. Try collapsing in slow motion. Now collapse quickly. What changes did you notice? What stayed the same?
- **Explode:** The opposite of collapse. To explode, gather all your energy then let it burst forth in one huge sudden action with the whole body. Now experiment with smaller explosive movements – can you explode just your finger or your leg?



Baker's Dozen by Twyla Tharp
Photo by Todd Rosenberg

Vocabulary

The elements of dance

Dividing dance into its key elements allows us to develop a conscious awareness of how we move, where, when and to what effect. The following is just one of many systems for categorizing the elements of dance, particularly useful because of its organizing acronym: BEST.

Body

Parts: Head, neck, torso (hips, abdomen, shoulders, back), arms and elbows, hands and wrists, fingers, legs, knees and feet (ankles and toes)

Shapes: curved, twisted, angular, small/large, flat/rounded

Actions: Nonlocomotor: stretch, bend, twist, rise, fall, circle, shake, suspend, sway, swing, collapse

Locomotor: walk, run, leap, hop, jump, gallop, skip, slide

Energy

Force: smooth or sharp

Weight: heavy or light

Strength: tight or relaxed

Flow: sudden or sustained, bound or free

Space

Level: low, middle, high

Direction: forward, backward, up, down, sideways

Size: large or small

Destination: where we move

Pathways: patterns we make with the body on the floor and in the air

Focus: where you look

Time

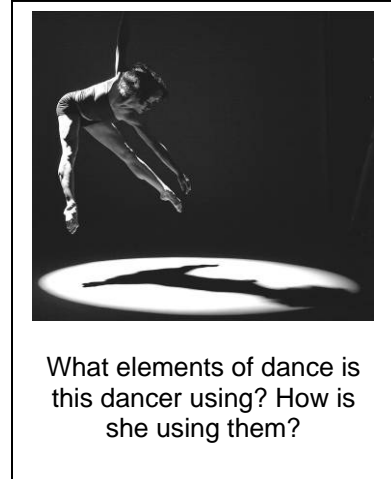
Rhythm: pulse, beat

Speed: time or tempo

Accent: light or strong emphasis

Duration: length

Phrases: dance sentences, patterns and combinations



Photos by Todd Rosenberg



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Cornett, C. (1999). The Arts As Meaning Makers. Person Education, Inc

Vocabulary

Who makes up a dance company?

Many people with different responsibilities work together to make up a dance company. These are just a few of the various jobs; can you think of any more?

The **Artistic Director** is the person who makes the artistic choices and decisions for a company, deciding which dancers to hire, which choreographers to use, and which dances from the repertoire (collection of dances) will be performed on each program.

The **Choreographer** creates, arranges, and/or directs the movements of the dancers.

The **Dancers** take classes to improve the technical (physical) level of their dancing; rehearse to learn, explore, and refine the movements that they will be presenting; and perform dances for audiences to share their love of dance.

House Stagehands

The crew sets the scenery on stage or “flies it in” using a pulley system. The crew also helps dress, launder and iron costumes, and runs the light board (a computer with all of the different lighting “looks” or cues in it). The show cannot go on without a crew. Many stagehands belong to a union, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE).

A **Lighting Designer** decides which lights will help create the desired mood of the dance. Mood is created through the use of light and shadow, as well as color.

The **Production Manager** has a variety of responsibilities including overseeing set and costume construction and lighting and sound set-up and operation before each performance. The production manager coordinates and supervises all aspects of touring, including transporting the equipment and planning with each theatre manager the lighting and special needs required for each dance.

The **Stage Manager** conducts the flow of each performance, supervising the lighting and sound and calling the dancers to their places before the curtain rises.

The **Sound Engineer** is responsible for music during the performance. He or she makes sure both the dancers and the audience easily hear the sound.

*What job
would you like
to have in a
dance
company?*

A **Wardrobe Supervisor** maintains the costumes and shoes, making sure they are always in good condition and that the dancers can move comfortably while wearing them. He or she also oversees the construction of new costumes for the dancers.