

Observing DANCE



The language of dance is universal. Therefore, when students observe creative movement through the use of the human body, they will respond to the images and sounds of the performers. The images translate the ideas, thoughts and feelings of the dancers into the **content** of the dance which is then **shaped** by the **five basic elements** of **Time** (tempo and rhythm), **Shape** (width, length, height, depth), **Space** (levels, direction, facing, focus, floor patterns), **Energy** (qualities and dynamics) and **Relationship** (interaction, lead and follow, call and response, mirroring).

Observation of the dance art form may inspire students to express their own ideas, thoughts and feelings starting with universal gestures to explore one's past, present and future.

Dance provides students with a vehicle for developing **critical thinking skills** and can also be dramatically effective in helping students connect experientially, through their senses, to academic concepts; making the abstract more real. Student observation of professional performances combined with the student's own participation in performance, creates the kind of total learning experience that helps reinforce other academic skills.

The following are examples of academic concepts that can be taught through the study of dance:

Math (Geometry) - **space** (lines - parallel and perpendicular, circles, angles, curves, transversals, rectangles, square, etc); **time** (sequential ordering, counting); **shape** (problem solving, symbolic representation and graphing).

Science (Physics) - **time** (acceleration, deceleration, static, segmented); **space** (levels, dimensionality, horizontal, vertical architecture); **relationship** (to self and others, design of space, to other moving objects/people, action/reaction); **shape** (position, physical power, stillness, control, gesture, gravity); and, **energy** (potential, inert, polarity/magnetic attraction, force, personal energy).

Social Sciences - **space** (map skills, directionality, moving in abstract spaces); **relationship** (sensitivity to self and others) and **energy** (non-verbal (verbal) communication skills, cultural awareness, citizenship, clarification values, listening skills).

Language/Media - vocabulary; critical/analytical writing/discussion; creative writing/discussion; reflective writing/discussion; observation; and, listening/thinking skills.

Physical Education - time (rhythmic awareness); energy (body as a communicative tool, strength, balance, flexibility, endurance, coordination); and, shape (height, width, length, depth).

DANCE is self-exploratory and problem solving in nature, and fosters a creative approach to learning. Once students acquire the discipline, focus, and control needed to be effective in performing arts, they naturally begin to transfer this “creative learning attitude” to other academic and life situations. Through the arts, one can develop one’s own creativity, increasing self-awareness and self-discipline through observation, sensitivity to feelings, and open-mindedness - the basic tools of the artist. Although individuals may be at different developmental stages, everyone is equal in the creative arena, where reaching for one’s highest potential, at whatever level, is possible.

THE FUNDAMENTAL BODY MOVEMENTS



As students observe  they can reflect on:

- 1. How does dance movement connect with the movement witnessed in the environment/nature?** For example, even plants, as time-lapse photography shows, move in graceful, rhythmic and ordered ways - they toss in the wind or droop in the rain, actively turn during the day to face the sun, and then moving to fertilize themselves or to disperse.
- 2. How does dance movement mirror life and connect with emotions of love, hate, disappointment, sadness, joy, curiosity, jealousy, shock, anger, contentment, grief, surprise, envy, excitement, etc.?** Universal gestures can stimulate our senses to recall prior experiences and knowledge. For example, when a dancer moves slowly across a stage on pointe with their hand over the heart, this movement can suggest sadness or disappointment; whereas, a dancer leaping with extended limbs across a stage can recall prior experiences of joy or freedom.

3. How does dance movement communicate a thought, an idea, a theme, a story, a ritual, a culture and/or an era? Dance communicates on many levels at once, not relying as words must on a single language or type of education, and is therefore ideal as a means of expression in countries with many different dialects and/or languages. It speaks of things “read between the lines”, things that are impossible to put into words.

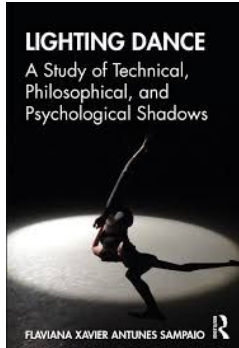


4. How does dance challenge our sense of logic? Does it solve the problem? If so, to what extent?

If not, where did they go wrong? Relationships relating to the principles of design (line, shape, colour, texture, intensity, rhythm, variety, unity) and the elements of dance (time, shape, space, energy and relationships) initiate a response of artistic merit from the observer. Movement is logical; in fact, it has to do with the same kind of logic that physics uses. Dancers may not be able to write the equations; but they will be able to make and understand the movements. This puts the observer in the position to witness if the movement is logical or not. Or, does it cross another boundary making it magical?



5. How do external factors of music, SFX, silence, text, lights, props, sets, costumes (and even the audience) affect the dance performance?
6. How do the technical skills and abilities of the dancers affect choreography?
7. How does dance movement connect with other art forms?
8. How does dance movement connect with other subject



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Communicate thoughts, ideas,
feelings, stories, cultures,
themes, rituals...solve problems
creatively with movement

OBSERVING DANCE
In nature...
In life....

