

Ice Breakers and Friend Makers

Creative Dance in the Classroom

Ideas from

STEP ON THE BEAT

Clap Along Song

What: A seated sequence for two hands on an even pulse. Slap, clap, cross, pound, elbow wave, hitchhike thumb, swim, shimmy up – clap – drop.

Why: To warm up a sense of the pulse and keep an even pulse. To develop focus, memory, concentration, and community. To transition from seated to moving rhythm activities.

How: Leader models, group copies.

Step On the Beat

What: A group movement activity that introduces many elements of movement as students successfully negotiate self and general space.

Why: To develop the ability to move through space as dancers do, without talking or bumping into others. To introduce and use contrasting elements of dance. To move in self and general space.

How: Students follow the prompts. Leader reinforces stop and go cues with drum, adds additional information for movement during transitions, models activities as students move, leads reflection afterwards. “What were some of the contrasting/opposite movements we did?” “What was the cue to stop?” “What were some of the actions we did when we stopped?” “Can you sequence the actions?”

Over The Top

What: A rhythmic dance sequence consisting of a step pattern and body shape freezes in self space contrasted by a traveling sequence through general space.

Why: An entertaining, quick warm up for any movement or rhythm activity. The structure is open to a variety of body shape freezes and traveling movements, adaptable to large or small spaces.

How: Teach the A section, a side-to-side step touch pattern. Add arm movements to the footwork. Add a freeze at the end of a sequence. Repeat three more times, with different freeze shapes each time. Teach the B section. Model the traveling sequence – 2 sets of 8 pulses (counts, beats) to leave your “home” spot – 2 sets to return. Sequence: ABABA (2 times only the last A)

Shape Maker/Shape Explorer

What: A pair or group activity for moving in the negative spaces between a partner or a group of people.

Why: To learn respect for others while moving slowly, smoothly and safely through the empty spaces. To understand spatial relationships. To develop a comfort level for working closely with others. To use imagination and creativity in shape making and exploring.

How: One person in a pair, or half the group, creates body shapes that have many negative spaces and are grounded. The other person or group half explores the spaces. You may move anywhere you want but you may not touch or change any shapes. On a sound cue, Shape Explorers fill empty spaces and freeze. Shape Makers “come to life” and begin their own explorations. Work in silence (“creative laboratory.”) Trade several times. Split groups to watch.

Ideas from

ALPHABEAT

Sodeo

What: An up-tempo, traditional circle or scattered space dance that travels forward and backwards, and includes weight shifts right and left, and body parts identification.

Why: To warm up a sense of the pulse and keep an even pulse. To learn about direction in space, body parts identification, and self and general space.

How: Leader models, group copies. Use branching questions to determine which direction to reach for the 'phone' when you 'call the doctor.'

Drumtalk

What: The drum says 'shake,' 'freeze,' 'melt' and 'pop up.' Students follow the drum.

Why: To develop listening skills and the ability to respond to sound sources.

How: Introduce each pair of ideas. Teach 'shake' and 'freeze' from a seated position; 'melt' and 'pop up' from standing. Then try to 'trick' the students by mixing them up!

Action Dance

What: A sequence of 34 different actions, all done in place.

Why: To build a word bank of action words that you can use for many activities. To explore and later categorize difference qualities of movement: sustained, percussive, vibratory, swinging.

How: Use the CD or call out a variety of contrasting action words and signal stillness with the double beat of your drum. Before you start, ask students to remember one word. Afterwards, collect those words and categorize them based on their contrasting qualities.

Trees

What: An action-shape poem dance that gives your dancers an opportunity to work alone, with a partner and in a group.

Why: To use imagination and creativity in choosing shapes and actions to represent the different trees. To create a movement sequence based on a theme. To use memory and recall in order to repeat the sequence. To work cooperatively with a partner to create body shapes and actions based on a theme. Optional: To learn and demonstrate the skills of audience members and performers by showing the dance.

How: Use the poem "Trees" by Sara Coleridge. There are eight trees in the poem. Build the first four individually, using imaginative prompts and branching questions. Allow for variety of choices. Build the next three with a partner. The last tree becomes a grove, with several trees joining together in a group to end. Narrate the dance with the poem.

Management Strategies

Ask for these **body shapes** by name; signal them with drum, handclap, or word:

- ✓ **Find a Perfect Spot:** Scatter formation, standing or sitting. Empty space on either side of you. Facing the leader. Away from “whispering partners.” Away from walls or furniture. Once you’re in your perfect spot.... *Do a “Helicopter Check”*
- ✓ **Stand Tall, One and All:** Standing tall; arms at sides
- ✓ **Puppet Up Position:** More sophisticated standing. Imagine a puppet string is attached to the crown of the head. Tie it up, and reach the other end up to the sky. Drop hands. Imagine a puppeteer holding that string and lengthening or releasing you. “Puppet sag.... Puppet up! Puppet droop.... Puppet up!” Legs go down as spine and head go up.
- ✓ **Ready Position:** Sitting, legs crossed. “Eyes and nose facing me”
- ✓ **Talking Circle or Dance Circle:** Ready position in a circle
- ✓ **Find a partner:** “go toe to toe (back to back, etc.) with a partner. Connect with body parts, quickly. Students focus on the body part and less on the specific partner. Change partners frequently for multiple interactions.
- ✓ **Mountain Breathing: For transitions, to calm between active, before reflection:** Sitting ready position, arms overhead, in line with the top of your head, with fingertips touching, elbows back and shoulders down. You are a still, quiet mountain. Take 3 slow, full, deep inhalations and exhalations. Then, float your wrists down to rest upon your knees.

Space:

- **Self Space Stay in one Spot**
- **General Space Go!**
- **Empty Space for Freedom and Safety**
- *“Move into the open spaces so you don’t get hurt”*
- *“Bodies move, mouths don’t”*
- *“Be a potato; eyes everywhere, no mouth”*

(For PreK and K) Work often in a Circle

Make a Circle

1. Toes on the circle (if working in a gym, or if a center circle is available)
2. Go to the nearest place

Then... ‘*Take Hands to Make the Circle Round*’: Group takes hands but does not pull back. Drop hands immediately.

Open a Circle

Take a...Micro mini step back, Jump step back, Wiggle step back, Crocodile-

sized step back, and Stiff step back. IT'S A CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY!

How much space between you and the person next to you?

Invisible-person space (about the width of a person)

Santa- sized space (double wide)

Behavior

- Freeze! Sit Ready Position – cued by drum
- Put slow learners and behavior problems on either side of you (in a circle)
- Put additional behavior problems opposite you (in a circle or scatter formation)
- Give choices: “You can sit here or here.” “You can dance or watch.”
- Give responsibilities: “Everyone put away the scarves and sit ready position on a perfect spot.”

Teaching Strategies

- I model, you copy
- You do, I say what I see
- “Show Me” assessment
- Use student demonstrators

Dance is BEST: Body, Energy, Space, and Time

- **Body**: shapes, parts, focus, balance, relationships
- **Energy**: quality, emotion, expression, force, flow, weight
- **Space**: place, direction, pathway, level, size
- **Time**: speed, pulse, rhythm, pattern

Step On the Beat and **AlphaBeat** are available from
West Music and J.W. Pepper.

Visit Kate’s website for more downloadable pdfs