

Tonya Kilburn | Session 1:

Exploring the Elements of Dance: Earth Expedition

List of Required Supplies:

- Book: *Earth Dance* by Joanne Ryder (optional)
- Hand drum or another percussive instrument (if you don't have one, be creative. You just need something to keep a beat, i.e., clapping, tapping on an empty box).
- Recommended music:
- Album: *Drum Desk* by Bertram Ritter (provides drum tracks, easy to count and follow)
- Any percussive music is good for the outlined lessons.
- Music in a variety of genres – classical, jazz, pop, folk, etc., to use with the Dance Study section. Instrumental music is recommended.

Space/Facility Requirements: Open floor space, free of obstacles (living room or playroom with furniture moved to provide space to move). A water bottle (or access to water) is recommended.

Student Time Required: Depending on your time allotment, each 60-minute lesson may be split into two 30-minute lessons, three 20-minute lessons, or four 15 minute lessons. I recommend including the warm-up (or a modified version) and the cool down/reflection with any class, regardless of time limits.

Additional Links: Oklahoma Academic Standards for Fine Arts:

https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/2019%20Standards%20MASTER%20DOCUMENT_0.pdf

The Dance Glossary is on pages 83-84.

Dance Element – Body

Lesson Concept(s): Body Parts, Shape, Relationship, Locomotor, Non-locomotor

Dance Element – Space

Lesson Concept(s): Place, Level, Size

Step-by-step Instructions

Pre-Warmup (3 min)

- Direct students to become aware of their **personal space** (the area of space directly surrounding one's body extending as far as a person can reach). Explain that the spot they are standing in now is their 'home' spot - they will be allowed to explore the **general space** that is all around them, but they will always come back to this spot. Ask students to set visuals for their spot by looking at what is in front of them, behind them, and on each side.
- Marking their spot: Using imaginary paint or markers, guide students to:
 - ▷ Draw a circle around their spot with any color of 'magic' marker.
 - ▷ Using 'magic' paint of a different color, fill in the circle they just drew.
 - ▷ Using a new color of 'magic' marker, write their name in the space above your spot and underline it three times.

Warmup (3 min)

Sample Warmup:

(Below are suggested movements to warm up the body before dancing, but the possibilities are limitless. Feel free to adapt to fit your needs and comfort level.)

Counts

Movements

Plie (bend and straighten the knees)

1-8 Slow – 4cts bend; 4cts stretch (straighten)

1-8 Moderate – 2cts bend; 2cts stretch

1-8 Fast – 1ct bend; 1ct stretch

1-8 Rise up to releve and lower 8cts

Head and Neck

1-8 Look up 4cts; look down 4cts

1-8 Up 2cts; down 2cts

1-8 Look right 4cts; look left 4cts

1-8 Right 2cts; left 2cts

Shoulders

1-8 Roll back 4cts; elbows (hands on shoulders) 2cts; backstroke 2cts

1-8 Roll forward – same as above

Balance

1-8 On right

1-8 On left

High Knee and Stomp

1-8 Bring right knee to chest and hold 4cts, return home

1-8 Bring left knee to chest and hold 4cts, return home

1-8 Right knee up 4cts; left knee up 4cts

1-8 Right knee up 2cts; left knee up 2cts; march right, left, right, left

Exploring Locomotor/Non-locomotor Movement (10 min)

- Beginning in their spot, explain that they are now going to explore the general space around them using locomotor movement – movements that travel through space. Guide students through the 8 basic locomotor movements by calling out the movement and letting them try it to ensure understanding. In between each locomotor movement, ask students to freeze and wait for you to call out the next movement.
 - ▷ Walk, run, hop, skip, jump, gallop, slide, and leap
- Instruct students to return to their spot. Introduce them to non-locomotor movements by explaining that these movements do not travel through space. Students must stay in one place and move every body part but their feet. They should imagine their feet are stuck to the floor. Guide students through a few non-locomotor movements to ensure understanding.
 - ▷ Stretch, bend, reach, wiggle
 - ▷ Encourage students to use as many body parts as possible when exploring these movements and to explore all of the space around them (above, below, on each side).

Putting It All Together:

Counts	Movements
16 Counts	Travel using a locomotor movement – WALK
16 Counts	Stop traveling and use a non-locomotor movement – REACH (Ask them to explore reaching on the high, middle, and low levels before beginning activity – “Reach for something on a really high shelf. Now pull some weeds. Now reach for your pencil before it rolls off the desk.”)
8 Counts	Travel using a locomotor movement – SKIP
8 Counts	Stop traveling and use a non-locomotor movement – BEND
4 Counts	Travel using a locomotor movement – JUMP
4 Counts	Stop traveling and use a non-locomotor movement – STRETCH
2 Counts	Travel using a locomotor movement – HOP
2 Counts	Stop traveling and use a non-locomotor movement – WIGGLE

Exploring the Concept of Space: Shapes and Levels

Introduction to Shapes and Levels (2 min)

- Ask students to return to their spot and have a seat. Explain that they are now going to make **SHAPES** using only their bodies. In dance, shapes are more than geometrical and there is no end to the possible shapes that can be made. A shape is like a pose or sculpture and must be held as still as possible.
- Ask students to try keeping their body perfectly still, allowing only movement from breathing and blinking their eyes. Explain to students that they have just made a shape on the **LOW LEVEL**.

- Invite students to slowly begin to stand up until they are standing as tall as a tree. Instruct them to become perfectly still again, making a shape on the **HIGH LEVEL**.
- Explain to students that the **MIDDLE** or **MEDIUM LEVEL** is somewhere between high and low. Invite them to make a shape (or pose) on the middle level and hold it perfectly still.

Shape Words (3 min) – a more in-depth study of shapes

- Bring students back to standing tall on the **HIGH LEVEL**. Invite students to explore the different types of shapes using their whole body as you call out the shape words.
- Curved or rounded
- Straight
- Angular
- Wide
- Narrow
- Twisted
- Symmetrical
- Asymmetrical

Activity: 1 2 3 Shape (6 min) – to deepen understanding

- Ask dancers to find a starting **SHAPE** on the **HIGH LEVEL**. Tell them they must hold the shape for three beats of the drum and then change to a new shape on the fourth beat. The change must be made quickly, and the new pose held perfectly still. Repeat on the high level several times.
- 1 2 3 Shape on the **MIDDLE LEVEL**
- 1 2 3 Shape on the **LOW LEVEL**
- Reverse levels/shapes sequence using small and big movements.

Activity: Travel and Shape (3 min) – to deepen understanding

- Walk 2 3 Shape – Ask students to walk for three beats of the drum and make a shape on the 4th beat or rest.
- Do this several times encouraging the students to create a variety of shapes.

Activity: Move Your Shape (4 min) – to deepen understanding

- Ask dancers to stand tall where they are as you explain the next activity. Begin the activity in a shape on the **HIGH LEVEL**. From this shape, the dancer will move for three counts until finding a new shape and freeze on the fourth count. Explain that the shape should move you into the next shape instead of completely breaking from the shape and walking for three counts (as in Travel and Shape) and then finding a new shape. Each shape takes you into the next shape focusing on moving the torso and limbs of the body exploring the non-locomotor (axiel) movements while traveling.
- Explore on the **MIDDLE LEVEL** and challenge them to explore on the low level.

This is an excellent activity to explore non-locomotor movement in a different context, which is also excellent for warming up big muscle groups.

Exploring Movement Using Story and Improvisation (6 min)

Earth Dance by Joanne Ryder, illustrated by Norman Gorbaty

Bring the students back to their spot and describe the next activity which will put together everything they have explored today using improvisation. Explain that improvisation means to invent and perform movement at the same time. Tell them you are going to read the book *Earth Dance*, and they should listen to the descriptive words and express those words using their body and the elements we explored today – locomotor and non-locomotor movements, shapes, and levels. Instruct students to begin in their home spot and let the words of the story tell you how to move.

*Imagine you are standing tall in an empty space.
Stretch your arms out wide and slowly spin around.
Imagine you are growing taller than the trees, taller than the hills, head high in the sky.
You are growing so large, so tall no one can see all of you now.
Imagine you are dancing in space, even larger than the moon.
Spinning around, you are round wrapped in a quilt of bright colors – blue flowing seas, dark green woods, and deserts of golden sand.
You are twirling so gracefully, carefully, not even the sand moves as you spin.
You are large and grand, and your voice is the proud roar of icebergs cracking, waterfalls tumbling.
Your whisper is a breeze murmuring through the reeds, a tiny wave lapping land.
Wiggle your shoulders and mountains tremble and quake.
Shake your hair and feel windswept grasses tickle your face.
You are streaked with roads and bridges, spotted with farms and factories.
Up your hills and down your rivers, cars and ships carry people from one place to another, all places on you.
You are where crickets leap, rabbits hop, and children run and run.
Imagine them leaping and dancing with you as you spin.
You are where people meet, talking and singing and laughing aloud.
Imagine hearing them all, their voices humming as you twirl.
Turn your face to the bright sun, and cities wake up, yawning to morning.
Behind you, cities in darkness turn on their lights, go to sleep and dream.
As you spin, you bring day then night to everyone who calls you home.
You spin around and also dance around the sun, bringing summer, bringing winter when snowflakes touch and cover you, and people leave soft footprints on your snowy fields.
You are every place people rest and the place everyone knows best.
You are older than anyone.
Yet each day you are where new life grows, flowers bud, and babies are born.
You are home to ants and lizards, fish and dragon flies, roses and redwoods.
You are shelter for people who may never meet but share one thing – you are their home.
Dance slowly, spin gently, and carry them through space.
May they hear your whispers, feel your strength under their feet, and treasure you.*

Processing Questions:

- Did you hear some locomotor movements mentioned in the story?
- What about non-locomotor movements?
- Which part of the book did you enjoy dancing most?

The Dancer's 8 (Eight-Count Phrasing) – A Basic Introduction (does not need to be mastered for creative movement)

- Demonstrate how dancers count to 8 over and over again and how they keep track of how many times they count to eight:
 - ▷ Count out loud to a steady beat – 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, 3 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, 4 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 - ▷ Ask students how many times you counted to eight.
 - ▷ Now ask students to try it doing a call and response with you:
 - ◇ Teacher counts – 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 - ◇ Students repeat – 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 - ◇ Teacher counts – 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 - ◇ Students repeat – 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 - ◇ Teacher counts – 3 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 - ◇ Students repeat – 3 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 - ◇ Teacher counts – 4 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 - ◇ Student repeats – 4 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
- Explain again that if a dancer is asked to dance for 4-8 counts, this is how they keep track of it.
- Ask students what 4 x 8 equals.

Dance Study (10 min)

- Invite students to have a seat in their home spot and think about the part of the book they enjoyed the most. Assure them they do not have to remember the words exactly, just how they moved and how they felt. Give them 30 seconds to think about it.
- Invite students to stand tall and take a minute to create three shapes – a beginning shape on the high level, a middle shape on the middle level, and an ending shape on the low level. Each shape should depict something from the story.
 - ▷ Guide students to practice their three shapes to make sure they remember them.
 - ▷ Make the first shape on the high level and hold it really still for four counts.
 - ▷ Now, make the second shape on the middle level and hold it for four counts.
 - ▷ And finally, the third shape on the low level and hold it.
- Ask students to recall the Move Your Shape activity and explain how they are going to create a dance by doing something similar.
- Explain the dance they create will have a beginning, a middle, and an end. They will move from their first shape until they get to their second shape and then move to their third shape, which will be the end of the dance. The movement between the shapes will represent something about the story. They will be retelling the story with movement in their own way.
- Tell students their dance will be 4 sets of 8 counts (32 counts total). Talk them through this once to ensure understanding of the structure.
 - ▷ Take 4 counts to move to the first shape on the high level.
 - ▷ Hold the first shape for 4 counts.
 - ▷ Take 8 counts to move any way they like from the first shape to the second shape on the middle level. Get to the second shape by 8.
 - ▷ Hold the second shape for 4 counts.
 - ▷ Take 8 counts to move any way they like from the second shape to the third shape on the low level. Get to your third shape by 8.

- ▷ Hold the third shape for 4 counts. This is the end of the dance.
- ▷ If using counts is difficult, allow students to use their own timing.
- Give students a couple of minutes to ‘rehearse’ their dance using the above structure.
- Remind them of all the different locomotor and non-locomotor movements and the different types of shapes. Encourage them to include some their dance.

Perform: Add Music (choose two different genres of music – classical and jazz, etc.)

- Explain to the students that they will now be performing their dance. Describe performance characteristics of a stage – the wings where they will be waiting to make their entrance, the curtain opening, the music starting to play.
- Ask them to go to their places in the wings and wait for the music to begin. When the music begins, they should get ready to make their entrance. Cue them in with a “5 6 7 8”.
- Play the first style of music and let them perform. Applaud their efforts.
- Ask them to exit the ‘stage’ and go back to their places in the wings and be ready to perform again to a different piece of music.
- Play the second style of music and let them perform. Applaud their efforts.
- Invite students to take a big bow.

Cooldown and Reflection (3 min)

Bring students back to their spot and ask them to stand tall to begin the cooldown. Explain that the cooldown is an important part of taking care of their body. By stretching the muscles they just used, it will help prevent injuries. Ask reflection questions during the cooldown.

Suggested Cooldown Stretches:

- From standing, lunge forward with right leg (front leg is bent, back leg is straight) to stretch hamstrings and calf muscles of left leg. Hold for 8 counts. Shift weight to the back leg (bend back leg, straighten front leg) and flex the front foot to stretch the calf muscle of the right leg. Hold for 8 counts. In this position, forward bend with straight back, to stretch hamstrings of the right leg. Hold for 8 counts. Repeat lunging forward left leg.
- From standing, bend forward at the waist, reaching fingertips to the floor. Relax for 8 counts.
- Seated with legs extended in front of you (long sit), gently stretch forward, trying to touch toes.
- Open legs away from each other to the side, gently stretch forward and over each leg.
- Soles of the feet together (butterfly position), gently stretch forward over feet.

Reflection Questions:

- Name a locomotor movement (select 3-4 students to answer).
- Name a non-locomotor movement (select 3-4 students to answer).
- How many levels did we explore? What are they?
- What did we learn about shapes today?
- What was the most challenging part of the expedition today?
- What was the most fun part?

Thank You and Goodbye (1 min)

Explain to the students that it is a tradition to say thank you at the end of a dance class to show respect for the teacher and the students and acknowledge everyone's hard work. This is known as reverence in ballet. In this class, we will simply say thank you to one another.

- Teacher: Thank you dancers
- Students: Thank you Mr./Ms. (name of teacher)
- And.....Goodbye!