

DANCING TIPS

SAY WHEN BEFORE WHAT

Describe when students will do something before describing what they will be doing. For example, when the music starts, skip to a new place in the room and freeze in a curved shape. Other cues may include: when I say go, when I count to three, when your partner freezes, when I point to this picture, etc.

ALLOW A LITTLE CHAOS

As I have taught lessons where student creativity is central to the class, you can become worried that the children are incorrectly interpreting the creative prompts. However, every child should have his or her own ideas to express during the creative process. When twenty-five different ideas are being expressed, it can feel a little chaotic. The creative process is not the same for everyone, so let there be a little chaos!

CHALLENGE THE CHILDREN

Children often surprise me with their dancing abilities. Just as in every subject, we must expect the best from them. Therefore, it is important to constantly challenge students to improve what they are doing. Ask questions like: Can you make your dance bigger? Can you show your movement more clearly? How can you make that movement more creative?

ADDING ELEMENTS AND LAYERING

Though a dance lesson may focus on creation of shapes, challenge students to use different body parts, energy qualities, levels, pathways, or timing. For example, shake your elbow while you skip. Now, turn your leap. Move in a curved pathway as quickly as you can. Perform the sequence as slowly as you can. Continue to add more layers on to an activity once they master its basic form.

DANCE WITH THEM

Dance with the children, will really help with their commitment to the steps. Instead of giving instruction then watching the students complete the task, join in with them. Move throughout the classroom instead of staying at the front. Especially in creative activities, students often do not need a demonstration; they just want the teacher to participate.

BE CLEAR AND CONCISE

As I explain activities, sometimes I find myself taking too much time in explanation and answering several questions before the activity starts. Instead, explain the activity as simply as possible. While the children are moving, add on extra layers of difficulty or additional movement problems. Giving direction while the children are moving saves time and maintains their engagement. So, "When I turn on the music, go running." Then, while they are running add, "Run backwards! Now run backwards in a circle. Skip for 4 in a circle, then stop!"

MAKE DANCE RULES

It is important to establish rules at the beginning of each class. Helpful rules can include: stay one foot away from all furniture and walls; when we dance we speak with our bodies, not our mouths; when the music stops, you stop; do not run into each other; etc. Then say the rules. Every. Single. Class.