Lesson Plan

The Little Engine That Could

Grade Level: Pre-K, ages 4-5

Description: This lesson is for students in an early learning / daycare setting. Many children do not have previous dance experience, and some enjoy dancing more than others. These students tend to sit and watch, participating when the spirit moves them.

Description of Student Work:

Children will devise their own movements and replicate suggested movements to create a short, simple dance that represents the optimistic story, *The Little Engine that Could*, "the timeless tale about hard work, determination, and the importance of working together." (Author: Watty Piper, the complete original edition printed in 2000.) Making literary connections could expand into a curriculum with other children's favorites, some with morals or messages like tolerance, acceptance, forgiveness, bravery, hard work, love, family, etc. Stories such as The Ugly Duckling, Make way for Ducklings, Cinderella, The Grasshopper and the Ants, Little Chick's Story, Seven Froggies went to School, and others may be used, as well as personal favorites chosen by the children themselves.

Standards or Outcomes Met by Student Work:

- Creating: generate own and use suggested movements to create a simple dance-story.
- Performing: select, revise, and recreate simple dance moves that tell a story, then perform for each other and an audience.
- Responding: in simple terms, understand and communicate how the dance tells a story.
- Connecting: relate a dance-story to self and others (feelings, experiences, ideas) with age-appropriate language/concepts.

Standards that may be used for this dance study:

Creating/Explore - Grade Pk: DA:Cr1.1.Pk

a. Respond in movement to a variety of sensory stimuli (for example, music/sound, visual, tactile).
b. Find a different way to do several basic locomotor and non-locomotor movements.

Creating/Plan - Grade Pk: DA:Cr2.1.Pk

a. Improvise dance that starts and stops on cue.
b. Engage in dance experiences moving alone or with a partner.

Creating/Revise - Grade Pk: DA:Cr3.1.Pk

a. Respond to suggestions for changing movement through guided improvisational experiences.
b. Identify parts of the body and document a body shape or position by drawing a picture. (This can also be done by observing illustrations of the characters in the story book.)

Performing/Express: Grade Pk: DA:Pr4.1.Pk

a. Identify and demonstrate directions for moving the body in general space (e.g., forward, backwards, sideways, up, down, and turning) and finding and returning to a place in space.
b. Identify speed of dance as fast or slow. Move to varied rhythmic sounds at different tempi.
c. Move with opposing characteristics (e.g., loose/tight, light/heavy, jerky/smooth).

Performing/Embody: Grade Pk: DA:Pr5.1.Pk

   a. Demonstrate basic full body locomotor, non-locomotor movement, and body patterning with spatial relationships.
   b. Move in general space and start and stop on cue while maintaining personal space.
   c. Identify and move body parts and repeat movements upon request.

Performing/Present - Grade Pk: DA:Pr6.1.Pk

   a. Dance for others in a designated area or space.
   b. Use a simple prop as part of a dance.

Responding/Analyze: Grade Pk: DA:Re7.1.Pk

   a. Identify a movement in a dance by repeating it.
   b. Demonstrate an observed or performed dance movement.

Responding/Interpret: Grade Pk: DA:Re8.1.Pk

   a. Observe a movement and share impressions.

Responding/Critique: Grade Pk: DA:Re9.1.Pk

   a. Find a movement in a dance that was fun to watch. Repeat it and explain why it is fun to watch and do.

Connecting/Synthesize - Grade Pk: DA:Cn10.1.Pk

   a. Recognize an emotion expressed in dance movement that is watched or performed.

Assessment Criteria / Documentation:

Students will understand simple story elements and sequencing, create a dance (with assistance) to represent a story, and perform a dance following musical cues, using costumes, props, etc. Assessment will be formative over the course of four weeks, and the final performance will provide a summative
assessment. Documentation can include teacher's notes, videotaping, and brief question and answer sessions with the children.

Questions to ask the children include:

   • What dance moves do you think were the best ones for the Little Engine? The other characters? (Name each character and have children demonstrate each one's specific dance moves, and ask why they match the character's personality, feelings, or actions.)
   • Can you show and tell of some dance moves of the characters (the engines, toys, girls and boys) that show these feelings: fear, bravery, disappointment, sadness, happiness, etc.?
   • Post-performance: do you think our audience could tell what the dance moves meant? Do you think we told the story well? Did our audience seem to enjoy the dance performance? How can you tell (smiling, clapping, paying attention, etc.)? Did you enjoy the performance? What was your favorite part?

Questions for Teacher Self-Evaluation:

- How well did children grasp the concepts in the story?
- How well did children execute the movements that told the story?
- How well did children communicate their thoughts, ideas, and feelings for this experience?

Teaching Required

Assessing Prior Knowledge / Warm-up Activity

Teacher will read a short, simple story to students and ask questions to ensure understanding of the main theme, characters, plot, etc. Discussion will include general information about trains, how they work, important things they do, as well as the concepts of strength, bravery, self-sacrifice, disappointment, and sense of accomplishment in a job well done. Students will warm up with improvisational and guided dance movements to explore and demonstrate the characters, feelings, ideas, plot, and story elements. Factors and considerations that will be explored are:

- Gross motor skills (locomotor, axial, combination of both). What movements best show how a train moves with and without a heavy load? What facial and body expressions help convey the feelings in the story? Do objects, like trains or toys, have feelings in real life?
- High energy and short attention span for this age group.
- Balance repetition with novelty.
- Improvisation and guided imagery.
- Self-expression, social time, and talking time is important.

Exploring New Knowledge

Students will learn and improve their execution of simple locomotor/axial dance movements. They will select the movements they feel best represent the story elements, put them in order, and practice them as a beginning, middle, and end. The song "The Little Engine that Could" by John Denver may be used as the lyrics follow the story and provide rhythmic variances, musical cues, and imagery. Another option is to use instrumental music from one or more of the "Music for Creative Dance" CDs by Eric Chappelle. If time allows, we may be able to look at photos or books about trains. Suggested activities for families would be to visit the local historical society's exhibit on trains, visit a train station with operating locomotives, visit our local train buff's outdoor train in his yard that provides children's rides, or put together a child's train set.

Cool Down / Reflection on Student Learning

After each dance session, a cool-down will provide time for children to "absorb" concepts and think about the dance moves they just executed. Sitting/standing in a circle, the teacher can lead them through a modified/slowed down version of the dance moves they explored. During the cool-down, students will be encouraged to discuss the movements, ideas, and feelings that comprised the story and dance. The teacher will also give a snapshot of what the next week's activities will entail. Time will be allotted if students have questions, comments, or concerns.

Resources Needed: Music, props, story book, costumes (e.g., child-size train conductor hats, clown accessories), musical instruments (e.g., train whistle, egg shakers), posters of dance terms, symbols, pictures of characters to provide visuals of story elements.

The NCAS Standards in Dance Resources includes lessons, units, Model Cornerstone Assessments (MCAs), and curriculum maps as well as guidance documents to help you understand and implement the National Core Arts Standards for Dance. Contributors include members of the dance standards writing and leadership teams and participants in the OPDI courses Implementing the National Core Dance Standards for Dance and Developing Cornerstone Assessments for the New Dance Standards. The contributor's name and bio is provided at the end at each document. Contributors represent all NDEO sectors, teaching in K-12, Higher Education, Private Studio, and Community and Performing Arts organizations. This cross sector representation demonstrates that the standards provide essential content to all constitutes.

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Educator Bio: Lisa R. Moran began her dance training in the Boston, Massachusetts area in 1977, attending multiple studios and studying many genres and styles. She received her teacher training certification through Dance Masters of America and taught ballet to elementary age students. After moving to New Hampshire, she resumed studies in ballet, modern, and tap while cultivating an interest in folk dance. In 2001 she co-founded an adaptive dance program for individuals with disabilities and continues teaching in that domain. She also leads a creative dance and movement group at an assisted living community for seniors. Ms. Moran completed her NDEO Certificate in Dance Education in 2016 and plans to continue professional development through coursework, conferences, workshops, and webinars to gain further insight and training in the field of inclusive, adaptive, and integrated dance. In addition to a CiDE, Ms. Moran has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Northeastern University.