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Methodology and Benefits of Dance and Movement Therapy for Individuals with Disabilities

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METHODOLOGY AND BENEFITS OF DANCE AND MOVEMENT THERAPY FOR
INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

By

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of the Requirements for
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Executive Summary

The disabled community is one that deserves attention, care, and inclusion. I have previously worked with a group of disabled adults at a local day center called St. Mary's Center in Louisville, KY, where they receive daily care and participate in various activities. As a form of service in previous years, I taught simple ballet lessons to anyone wanting to participate, and found that I felt a great connection to the students. I feel that they have all of the ability in the world, with just as much to teach me as I can teach them. In fact, I prefer to describe these individuals as having "a variety of abilities" as opposed to disabilities, as I saw their unique talents and gifts shine each chance I got to spend time with them. Their abilities and skills continually impressed me, showing that they are highly capable individuals.

After these experiences, I focused on dance as a form of inclusion and growth for the disabled community. Inclusion means that any activities offered to others not in this grouping should be available to those within it as well. With previous experience teaching ballet, I focused on creating dance classes that benefit adults with disabilities. Dance is a beneficial activity in that it provides its participants with confidence, physical fitness, mental and physical stamina, and acuity. As a way to include individuals with disabilities, I explored the field of dance therapy with an aim to understand this field of physical therapy. The research I conducted centered on studies and scientific papers aimed at describing the specific goals of dance and movement therapy in order to get a better understanding of movement based therapy. Furthermore, I created dance classes focused on pedagogy in order to create a beneficial teaching program as a way to unite my personal dance training with my beliefs that dance should be an inclusive activity.

In order to develop dance as an activity that improves physical, mental, and emotional well-being for the individuals at the center, I created a series of nine lesson plans. Each lesson had a detailed intention of outlining classes specifically to be taught to adults with a spectrum of disabilities. I then taught these classes at the center and evaluated each individual lesson based on aspects that worked and those that needed to be changed. Then, I finalized the lesson plans to accommodate the specific analysis obtained within the real-life situation of the dance classroom. Ultimately, I created a curriculum designed to accommodate my specific audience in order to use dance as a way to build and reinforce positive learning outcomes.

With each class, I had specific daily goals as well as larger, overarching goals that drove the direction of my lesson plans. I wanted to create an inclusive environment within a classroom setting for dance to build confidence and ability as it would for any student. I wanted the individuals at the center to feel graceful, strong, and capable. In the process of creating a teaching curriculum for this specific group of individuals, I aimed to challenge the way society views a dancer. In my opinion, the term “dancer” should refer to anybody who embodies movement within whatever physical modes of expression of which they are capable. I ultimately want to continue to build upon the notion that “dancer” just refers to someone who dances, taking out stereotypes and prejudices. I want to challenge preconceived biases of what a dancer should look like, how old they should be, and other factors that could exclude people from enjoying the beneficial aspects dance can offer.

Introduction

As a student at the University of South Carolina, I have studied dance at an elite level as a Dance Performance and Choreography Major with an emphasis in Ballet. I have studied technique daily and have assessed dance as an art form, a sport, a science, and as an historical institution. However, as my training has progressed, I have increasingly come to see the need for broader uses of such an art form in society. This awareness has led me to research dance as a unifying and healing source for all members of the community. Dance has the ability to empower its students and teachers while increasing both physical and mental fitness. In terms of emotional health, expressing oneself through dance can be a positive way of articulating feelings without the use of words. I feel that the practice of dance can benefit any member of society who is in need of therapy in order to create a complete plan of treatment. This led me to research in greater detail the field of dance and movement therapy in order to gain a fuller understanding of such a practice.

After conducting my literature review and research, I can say that I feel alternative forms of therapy for individuals of any disability or illness are beneficial in incorporating positive behaviors. Dance therapy, in my opinion, is a safe, fun way to help advance treatment and care while increasing positive emotions and quality of life. However, I am not a doctor or licensed dance therapist, and therefore am solely approaching this subject matter as a dance teacher using previous experience in the studio to guide my work and research in a field that connects with my interests.

Dance and movement therapy, or DMT as it is sometimes referred, is used as a form of therapy for many different conditions. For those who may not be familiar with DMT, it is a form of teaching dance and movement for individuals with specific needs in order to further their treatment or allow for progression (*American Dance Therapy Association*). DMT has a well-known background in psychotherapeutic work and helping individuals with mental illness cope with their disorders (*American Dance Therapy Association*). However, it can also be used for physical impairments, social disorders, and the like (*American Dance Therapy Association*). There are many different organizations and practices of DMT, with the American Dance Therapy Association as a stand out. ADTA was founded in 1966 in order to establish guidance in this field and to provide clear standards for the practice (*American Dance Therapy Association*). This organization has set clear boundaries within this specialty regarding professionalism and the direction in which the field should progress by promoting a connected community (*American Dance Therapy Association*). The American Dance Therapy Association summarizes what dance therapy is with the statement

“Dance/movement therapy is:

Focused on movement behavior as it emerges in the therapeutic relationship. Expressive, communicative, and adaptive behaviors are all considered for group and individual treatment. Body movement, as the core component of dance, simultaneously provides the means of assessment and the mode of intervention for dance/movement therapy.

Practiced in mental health, rehabilitation, medical, educational and forensic settings, and in nursing homes, day care centers, disease prevention, health promotion programs and in private practice.

Effective for individuals with developmental, medical, social, physical and psychological impairments.

Used with people of all ages, races and ethnic backgrounds in individual, couples, family and group therapy formats (American Dance Therapy Association).”

This is a thorough description of what dance therapy has come to be, as it describes the countless uses and goals of such a practice. In essence, this practice integrates the study of dance

method and gives it a different purpose aside from its original intention. However, dance therapy is authentic in its own practice, as it has set out a new intention for the use of dance in a therapeutic setting. DMT is deliberate in its intention to cater to individual needs while also maintaining inclusivity. Using dance as a form of healing and treatment gives a holistic and well-rounded approach to treatment for individuals in any program.

Scientifically Supported Benefits

As a dancer interested in all applications of dance training, I found it essential to research dance therapy and its practical applications. I was highly interested in any experiments or research projects conducted to study the particular benefits that dance therapy can have for participants. I myself feel that DMT is a beneficial outlet for individuals of any condition. While dance and movement therapy differs greatly from dance technique training, I created lesson plans utilizing some dance exercises with the intention of creating inclusivity and positive physical, mental, and emotional effects. My classes stemmed more so from my previous dance technique training as a way to explore the beneficial uses of such a practice and to challenge the norm within the dance world. For this reason, I established a teaching curriculum for individuals of various disabilities, which included adults with Down syndrome, deafness, blindness, and more. However, given the nature of dance and movement therapy and its connection to movement, I do feel that the two fields have an overlap of interests. It is for this reason that I also decided it would be beneficial to research DMT and its uses within the academic community. I am fully aware that the fields of dance technique and dance therapy are unique, but wanted to gain a comprehensive understanding of both fields as a way to possibly utilize positive aspects of both into my lesson plans. In the following section, I describe data collected on dance therapy as a form of treatment for individuals with various conditions, while paying particular attention to how these studies relate to the group of individuals with which I personally worked.

In order to determine the benefits of this particular form of therapy, there have been a number of studies focused on dance therapy. These have been performed as a way to

scientifically support or reject claims made regarding advantages of this practice and to determine the outcomes produced in participants. One such experiment was conducted studying older individuals with intellectual disabilities (Barnet-Lopez). These adults were evaluated for levels of emotional health using a scientifically based emotional indicator test called the Human Figure Drawing Test (HFDT) (Barnet-Lopez). After a period of dance therapy sessions, those individuals who participated in the classes showed statistically increased effects in their emotional status, while those who did not participate in the dance therapy classes remained placed at the level in which they were initially appraised (Barnet-Lopez).

This experiment is extremely relevant in the field of dance therapy as it scientifically supports reasons for conducting the practice. Furthermore, it is pertinent to my own research as it directly applies to the group of individuals with whom I worked—adults with varying degrees of intellectual disability. While the physical health advantages may have not been the focus of this particular study, it brought to light another important aspect of my research project, which was emotional well-being. I created my lesson plans with a daily goal aimed to provide the students with confidence, autonomy, and healthy expression techniques. I feel that this study scientifically supports dance therapy as a form of emotional adjustment and mental health practice for individuals within my focus group.

There are also a multitude of studies that show the advantages of dance therapy for more specific groups within and beyond the range of my group of focus, such as those with only Down syndrome. However, these studies are still applicable to my own project because I too had a few students with Down syndrome in my class. According to Patricia C. Winders, when a child with

Down syndrome begins physical therapy of any kind, the goal is to limit movement patterns the child may develop as a way to compensate for genetic obstacles to normal growth/development (Winders). These behaviors are termed compensatory movement patterns and are characteristic of individuals with this syndrome due to genetic tendencies for atypical development (Winders). Examples of such physical obstacles are low muscle tone in the legs and ligamentous laxity (flexibility in the ligaments), which lead to a characteristic wide-set gait (Winders). The distinctive walk develops more so from a necessity to walk given the specific impediments to proper walking that this syndrome presents. Therefore, a focus of therapy should be to strengthen weak muscles in order to benefit patients in the long run (Winders).

Winders goes on to explain that another focus of therapy for individuals with Down syndrome should be on discovering the specific teaching/learning style to which the individual student responds best. Experts have noted that individuals with Down syndrome respond well to learning with music, something that dance therapy is able to provide (Winders). A few more tips are given in general, which I found to be similar to my own experiences in the classes. One such tip is that students need consistency—regularity seems to fit learning styles best (Winders). I made sure to include this in my own lesson plans, keeping the same structure for every class. I even included mostly the same combinations and movements, only adding slight variation to keep the students interested.

Another aspect of note is that students need to be introduced to concepts gradually in a process that starts slow (Winders). The process is multi-stepped and includes collaboration, finally ending in autonomy/mastery of the concept (Winders). This was a major aspect of my

lessons and teaching concept that I applied in my curriculum as well. I found that the best way to introduce steps was to start very slowly and repetitively present the same step, class after class. I allowed the students to collaborate with me in the use of exercises in which they were assigned to create their own movements, and ultimately where I hoped they would feel independent without my orders guiding them.

Winders' study is clearly more specific in terms of focus group than my classes, which included adults with varying conditions of strengths and areas of need. However, I found that there were a number of tips Winders gave which I had applied to my classes because I felt they would benefit all individuals that participated. Furthermore, while her study does not delve specifically into the practice of dance technique or dance therapy, she describes a number of reasons when, if extrapolated, would apply to dance. This includes the description of the necessity to strengthen muscles that would otherwise be developmentally stagnated, which would most certainly be attainable through dance. I feel that given a smaller class size of specific groups of disabilities, a dance technique or dance therapy teacher may be able to target muscle groups characteristically weak for that group. Another aspect that I felt directly applied to dance pedagogy or DMT for individuals with Down syndrome was the note that this specific group responded well to learning with music. Music is, of course, a crucial aspect of dance learning and is incorporated in every activity performed in class.

As far as dance therapy practices are concerned, it appears to be common for therapists to employ something called "grounding techniques" in treatments for individuals of numerous different disabilities (de Tord). Historically, this term is applied in bioenergetics as a way to

describe a state of balance in both body and mind (de Tord). Exercises that are aimed to balance these forces are a focus in dance therapy activities as a way to integrate movement for participants (de Tord). It brings together movement and rhythm to benefit individuals and can be applied to different groups of participants (de Tord). In an overview of grounding and its applications in dance therapy, a number of specific details have been suggested given different groups (de Tord). For example, for elderly individuals, grounding exercises are recommended as a way to familiarize participants with walking surfaces in order to improve confidence in balance and movement (de Tord). It was recommended that elderly individuals may benefit from work on uneven surfaces or those that change level in order to build more confidence—something that could be applied to dance pedagogy or DMT sessions with individuals of specific ability and need (de Tord).

Furthermore, grounding exercises were studied specifically for elderly adults with “physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities,” elderly adults with intellectual disabilities and individual sessions with an individual of psychomotor retardation (de Tord). All three groups were said to begin with impediments to proper walking/movement (de Tord). Each group received different numbers of dance therapy sessions, but all exercises focused on at least one of the “four levels of grounding”: Physical grounding (physical strength and positioning), Sensory grounding (proprioception/sensory awareness), Emotional grounding (mental health), and Social grounding (interaction and communication with others) (de Tord). However, it is important to note that the exercises were specifically designed to fit the needs of each group, with different approaches depending on the levels of physical and mental development (de Tord).

According to the therapist conducting the study, the participants in the classes showed significant improvement in various areas of well-being at the end of the total sessions (de Tord). Specifically, it allowed participants to connect with themselves, others, and reality (de Tord). They also improved in physical ability and emotional control (de Tord). While the specific findings of this particular study are listed, the means of evaluation are not detailed. Thus, these findings are most likely subjective. I would suggest an empirical way of evaluating students before and after treatment on all levels of study—physical, sensory, emotional, and social—in order to indicate a significant correlation between improvement and treatment. However, the study is heartening for the field of dance therapy and would provide beneficial information for future studies.

Moving from the study of dance therapy to approaches that study dance performance and technique, there seems to be an established need for dance programs designed for disabled individuals in the community (Kuppers). There are, however, programs that include disabled people in the training, allowing them to dance and perform (Kuppers). This brings disabled dancers to the stage, making dance performance a reality (Kuppers). In doing so, the dance world is challenged in an exciting way—challenged to change preconceived notions about dance and about the disabled. This is something that I feel is a truly critical aspect of such a field of work as it also allows for a change in the way disabled and nondisabled groups interact and perceive each other. It is also a necessary component for the dance world to be able to embrace differences and evolve with the community as the dynamic of “normal” is challenged. According to a work by Petra Kuppers, among the things necessary for dance to grow in availability are techniques, spaces, education, and more. I am in agreement with Kuppers that these are key ingredients to

making dance, and in my own training expertise, specifically ballet— an activity sometimes seen as elitist and unapproachable—accessible for people of all ages, abilities, and developmental stages. By allowing everybody to have a chance to participate in dance, the dance world will become beneficial to a larger population of the community.

Pedagogical Approach

As a way of applying my own experience with dance technique and combining it with my desire to broaden the uses of dance pedagogy, I created a series of nine lesson plans with the intention of outlining classes specifically to be taught to adults with disabilities. I then taught these classes at a local center and evaluated each individual class plan based on aspects that worked and those that needed to be changed. I then finalized lesson plans that had been practically applied in the classroom setting with my specific group of adults with disabilities. Ultimately, I created a curriculum designed to accommodate an intended audience in order to use dance as a way to build and reinforce positive learning outcomes in my students. At the core, these classes were my way of taking action on my belief that dance pedagogy should be inclusive and open to all.

The main focus of my research project was on the efficacy of my lesson plans. Before each class, I would create a lesson plan with distinct goals. Then, when teaching the classes, I observed how the lesson plan was going, in some cases needing to improvise or cut out aspects of the plans that I did not feel would be successful in the moment. After each class, I reviewed the lesson plans, annotated them with feedback and thoughts I had for the next class, and added any changes I improvised during the course of the lessons. In essence, I applied an Alternating Treatment Design, as is described in chapter 10, Experimental Design, of *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (Creswell). I used one single group of individuals with which I worked over the course of nine distinct interventions in the form of dance lesson plans. After self-evaluation, I determined which

intervention forms were the most beneficial and tried to build upon the useful aspects while cutting out parts of the lesson plans that were unsuccessful. In this way, I hoped to ultimately build up to the most effective lesson plans possible.

In order to determine the best way to construct dance classes for adults with disabilities (my particular group of focus), I created nine lesson plans to be used in the classroom setting. I worked closely with a day center called St. Mary's Center in Louisville, Kentucky. St. Mary's Center is a nonprofit organization that cares for the special needs adults in my hometown community. I have had previous experience teaching dance classes at this center as a form of community volunteering on a more informal basis. In my previous visits, I received positive feedback from the students and felt a great connection with the individuals with whom I had the privilege of working. The staff was very appreciative and urged me to come back, which is why I chose this program as the location to conduct my project. Additionally, I felt that the three main tenets of the center's mission resonated with the goals set out in my classes. The mission is as follows (*St. Mary's Center*):

- 1. To foster a positive self image and encourage greater independence and productivity among its students.*
- 2. To provide opportunities for personal, educational and social growth through community activities and relationships.*
- 3. To improve the quality of family life for its students through improved social skills.*

As a part of developing my lessons, I taught nine times at the center using pre-constructed class outlines (see Lesson Plans). At the beginning of each class outline, I set goals for the day that I used as the main force with which to orient the rest of the class activities. I then went on to prepare movements and activities I wanted to complete during the class and what I hoped the students would gain from them. Keeping in mind that the main focus of my project was the construction of my own curriculum and not the performance of the students themselves, I found it best to allow any student who wished to participate for the day to take class. Additionally, participation in any exercises was voluntary and they were able to come and go throughout the class as they pleased. I initially hoped to have the same students for every single class but ultimately decided that the end goal of the project was not centered on the students but rather on my own class structures. This included the efficacy of the order, specific exercises, and structure of each class. Therefore, I concluded that having a class roster would add unnecessary pressure on the students and would not benefit my lessons in any way. I even found that this notion was helpful in encouraging the students to come to class and made them comfortable with participating at their own pace.

At the end of each class I evaluated my own lessons, noting what activities worked and what needed amendments. Essentially, the goal of this entire project was to create lessons based on research done for effective lessons and very specific experience in dance training and to then evaluate the classroom applications of these sessions. I feel that it was essential to test my lesson plans in a practical setting in order to evaluate my own preconceived notions and to make more educated decisions about proper pedagogy. After each syllabus was prepared and then taught, I went through and marked things that I would suggest changing for future practices. I have

included all nine lesson plans in the Lesson Plans section; the original, untried outline is what is shown with any necessary adaptations added in red.

The students in my classes ranged from ages between early twenties to upper sixties, with a varying spectrum of category and severity of intellectual disability—all of which were factors that needed to be included in my class planning. Furthermore, given that participation was random and open to all, this presented an even greater challenge to incorporate into the class planning. Given that I couldn't necessarily prepare for a specific group of students or any type of background in dance, I used the same outline for each lesson, with subtle differences in movement or theme. As far as level of difficulty was concerned, I started using the most basic and elementary dance teaching style—essentially what would be comparable to a beginner kindergarten-level ballet class. This level typically introduces fundamental movement concepts to novice, young students.

As I briefly mentioned before, there were goals set for each class that were intended to be actualized via the exercises and combinations gathered for the day. These included autonomy, confidence, focus, participation, and both physical and mental stimulation. Certain class exercises were orchestrated with the idea that they would help the students attain these ideals. Ballet has the ability to teach dancers discipline, encourage focus, and improve physical ability and performance. These are all beneficial to the view of oneself and one's role in society. By practicing certain exercises, I intended for the students to gain the confidence to engage in such movements. Furthermore, by incorporating at least one exercise every class in which students

had to demonstrate a move on their own, I hoped to build their autonomy and creative thinking skills.

Each lesson plan consisted of the same basic structure of stretches followed by a warm-up exercise, then barre work, followed by center work and lastly a reverence (including bows and curtseys). It is best to use repetitive structures for classes when working with individuals with disabilities, as this is how they will find a niche with which to engage. This method makes the class more relatable and familiar.

I would start every single class by looking each student in the eye, welcoming him or her and asking how they were doing that day. Next, I would go on to announce that the class was only intended to be fun and stress-free—I would also state that if anyone felt uncomfortable or something hurt they should not do the movements. The class was created with the intention of getting exercise and making everyone feel welcome in the space, and if there were any questions they were encouraged to ask me. Again, it was reiterated that if something did not feel good they were to not do it—they were always welcome to sit out or drink water whenever they needed. I mainly only needed to say this to new students but found that the daily reminder of the intention helped the students feel welcomed. I also gave intermittent reminders to not push too far or do anything that felt uncomfortable as I saw fit.

After beginning the class with introductions, I moved on to stretches. The stretching exercises were intended to bring the students into the space and prepare them for the upcoming exercises. I also felt that this time was important in building community in the classroom as it

provided a set time to sit in a circle and engage in a common activity. Additionally, it is extremely important that students are warm and have engaged their muscles via stretching in warm-ups before moving on to larger movements solely for the purpose of having a safe, injury-free class. As is visible from the provided lesson plans, I initially began with the students sitting on the floor in a circle and completing a series of common stretches. However, as I continued to create and adapt my lesson plans, I decided that it was better to start with a breathing exercise. This was intended to focus the students and initiate mindfulness in the space. I included this breathing/port de bras exercise before the stretch sequence, which I ultimately decided was the best structure. After the stretch sequence, which usually remained the same but would sometimes include subtle variations or additions to add variety, I added a port de bras exercise. For this exercise, I had the students go to their assigned spots in a semi-circle oriented toward me. They would sit in their chairs and follow along as I demonstrated a port de bras sequence. I felt that this was best implemented before barre work so that the students could use this muscle activation throughout the rest of the class. It also provided a better transition than just going from stretches to the warm-up exercise.

Next, I implemented the warm-up portion of class. This took place mainly in the form of what I referred to as our mirroring or echo exercise. We would all stand in a circle and I would start by performing a short movement that fit the theme for the day. I made sure to tell the students to focus their eyes on me and to not move while I was moving, which was intended to build their focus and concentration. Next, everyone would repeat the movement that I had just demonstrated. Next, the person to the left of me would come up with his or her own movement to demonstrate for everybody else to echo. The exercise continued on until we completed a full

circle among the group. Some students preferred not to participate by showing their own movement or would try to put off their turn. However, I felt that the ability to come up with their own moves and the benefits gleaned from finding confidence in their abilities was necessary and thus urged for full participation. This took patience, and in some cases it was necessary to give them little ideas/movements with the intention of them making their own.

Moreover, the mirroring exercise was the main combination used to reach the goals of autonomy and creativity of expression. I found that by allowing each student to practice their own move, which everyone else would then repeat, the exercise gave them a sense of importance and capacity. By encouraging participation, I hoped to prove to each student that his or her contribution was important to the class as a whole. This exercise was intended to provide a space for individual roles that made up the whole, and I hoped it could show them that their ideas were valuable.

Following the warm-up portion of the class, I applied the barre work section. This is where I employed the ballet terminology and combinations found in a classical ballet class. As is usual with a ballet class, I began with plies followed by tendus and eventually built up to degages. When I first constructed the lessons, I planned plié combinations from first position and second position. However, as the classes went on I cut out second position and only incorporated first position. Then, as I taught with this adaptation, I found that I needed to further modify the plié step by only coming from 6th position (parallel). I found that this adaptation was necessary, as the proper muscles and technique needed to hold first position were not being utilized. In order to eliminate the possibility of injury, I created plié combinations only in 6th position. The

same process of evolution also occurred with my tendu and degage combinations. I had initially planned to teach the steps from first position, but found it necessary to adjust the combination so as to only go from 6th position. This mainly applied to tendu, as it took weeks to build up to the use of degage in the classroom. My main cause for adapting the barre work so greatly was the concern for safety—I did not want to build in poor technique. This concern mainly stems from a safety standpoint because executing ballet steps incorrectly or with improper muscle engagement can cause injury or other issues.

Proceeding from barre work came center work/across the floor combinations. These were very loosely designed activities designed to follow the natural progression of a classical ballet class. However, these exercises were all very simple, including activities like walking across the floor with ballet arms held in second position, galloping across the room using one foot in front of the other, and moving across the floor like an animal you would find in the jungle. We went on a “jungle safari” around the room during a themed class in which the students followed behind me to spot the various forms of wildlife that could be encountered in the jungle.

As the lessons continued to evolve, I began to add a reverence to the class. This is where I would incorporate a few little things used from class and use them to wind down for the day. I also intended to help them transition from being in ballet class to returning to the rest of their daily activities. Initially, I had them follow along with a few steps to the side and a plié, but found this also needed to be adjusted. Eventually, I decided that the best way to cool down for the day and readjust was to repeat the breathing exercise that we did at the beginning of class.

The cool-down exercise was a way to refocus, calm the mind, and again engage in mindfulness. This is also the portion of class where I taught them the proper way to say thank you to a teacher via a curtsey or bow. This was simply intended to teach ballet etiquette and encourage students to always be courteous.

Additionally, I conducted an exit interview with a supervising faculty member who was present for most of the classes I taught. This particular overseer provides supervision and cares for the individuals at the center on a daily basis and has a lot of experience working with my particular students. Thus, I felt her input would be helpful as she has an idea of their particular needs and behaviors within and beyond my class sessions. This interview was intended to critique my teaching methodology in order to improve the already adapted lesson plans. I asked questions regarding the efficacy of my classes, the good things that she noted, things that did not work at all, things that worked but still needed adjustments, and any areas of improvement in my own teaching manner and class style she recommended.

Key Findings

While teaching the lesson plans, I made a few key discoveries via trial, error, and adaptation. First, I discovered that using a theme for the day—like lion king, ocean life, and colors—was extremely beneficial. This is essentially where I saw a turning point in the participation and acceptance of the syllabi. Prior to the themes, the students seemed a bit disengaged from the class. By incorporating other areas of interest into the class, they were able to relate more to the class as a whole. During my exit interview, this was mentioned as a positive aspect of my lesson plans—it was stated that after creating a daily theme I “hit the nail on the head.” I was even told that after I left, they raved about how they did the Lion King in ballet and loved it. I believe that this was also important developmentally for the students as it challenged them to think of dance movements within an imaginative context. They needed to draw on previously learned concepts about the ocean or jungle, and try to embody them using dance movements. This required more critical thinking, connection-making, and encouraged participation from the students. It also allowed for a greater variety of movement options during the echo exercise, as they had a larger range of choices. Previously, they drew from a narrow set of dance moves, but were able to see creative applications of movement once the themes showed flexibility.

Another very important note of discovery was the necessity to become aware of my language and descriptive imagery. This became particularly pressing when I had a student who was blind and who occasionally came to class. I continually caught myself relying on the concept of demonstrating with my body—as I am so used to doing in my classical ballet training—

instead of also adding descriptive language. This was a major area for me to work on; I must admit that I still need to improve upon the art of teaching dance without relying on body language. However, the more I became aware of using language to verbally communicate with my students, the more I found myself trying to conceptualize dance movements without the use of the body. This benefits the students who are blind and auditory learners as they are able to mentally visualize with clear descriptions.

However, another aspect that I needed to always be cognizant of was also maintaining a reliance on body language to demonstrate and communicate with visual and Deaf students. This necessity stemmed from also having a Deaf student who relied solely on visual representations of dance and movement. This particular student was very focused, but I found that the more I maintained eye contact, the more she was able to participate. Also, I needed to adjust the way I did a lot of my movements and transitions. I often needed to add gestures to indicate that we would be moving to the left or right and needed to make my demonstrations more deliberate in order to communicate what our next steps would be. Additionally, this student was very adept at lip-reading and was able to understand a large portion of the class. However, this also presented a new challenge as a teacher, as I quickly discovered that I personally am not expressive enough with my lip movements in order to communicate effectively this way. This may seem counter-intuitive, as I am speaking and therefore moving my lips. However, in order to aid in the process, I needed to emphasize the natural articulation of my lips more dramatically. Teaching requires not only the willingness of the student, but also the cooperation of the teacher and thus I needed to be more attune to her needs. Furthermore, the use of body language helps not only the Deaf students, but also those students who are visual learners.

With these two differences in mind, I needed to always be aware of how I was presenting the movements to the students. Awareness of self is important even when there are no sensory-limited students in the room, as overt and dramatic articulation is helpful in communicating with any student. By using language to engage and describe while simultaneously using the body to demonstrate and energize, I found that I was better able to serve each student in the room. While I have had very limited experience teaching dance, I feel that this is something that can be applied to everyone from adults to children, and including the disabled. Having an energetic teaching persona helps focus the students and keep them mentally engaged with the current tasks.

Although I previously touched on areas of improvement or adaptation that I discovered naturally throughout the process, I also felt it would be beneficial to get the opinion of an expert in the field of care for the disabled. The caregiver at the center was able to give me this needed perspective during my exit interview. The first thing mentioned in the meeting that I would suggest for future reconstructions is the use of a full class period to get to know the students. I found this to be very valuable advice, especially since my interviewee has more familiarity in working with students at this level. I came in on the first day ready to get to work, which is more the norm with experienced dancers. However, this is not necessarily the wisest approach for teaching individuals with disabilities. I learned that building trust is just as necessary as teaching the movements. Students will only feel welcomed to move in a safe space if they feel comfortable around the teacher. This was a major point that I wish I had known from the first

place. However, I do feel that I was still able to form close bonds with my students since I had taught many of them prior to this particular project.

Another important key insight discovered through this process was that having a set, clear structure for classes is an important feature of lesson plans. This builds familiarity, trust, comfort, and predictability that allows students with disabilities to have a better relationship with the process overall. Many students learn well with a predictable structure. I was told during the exit interview that most of the students I worked with have daily routines and schedules, so having one for ballet class was comfortable for them. Structure is something that is built into ballet, so I felt that it naturally lent itself well to this particular aspect of the situation.

Lastly, I found that music was an aspect of classes that needed particular attention for the sake of my hearing students. When I taught my first lesson plan, I attempted to play classical ballet music much like the form I am familiar with in my own technique classes. However, I found that the students did not respond well to this style of music. In fact, one student even interjected “When will we get to the fun stuff?” This was an amusing exclamation that I found very useful because it brought my attention to the fact that I needed to gear my classes toward my students, not the other way around. I needed to make the dance classes applicable to the individuals, which was something that I tried for the next class and found a great improvement in enthusiasm and participation. For the following classes leading up to Christmas, I played Kidz Bop Christmas hits, which allowed me to form a connection with the students on a point of excitement. After Christmas, I came up with the themed classes, where I played soundtracks to

the according theme for the day. The use of relatable music engaged my students and allowed them greater freedom of motion and participation.

Implications

This project was particularly valuable for myself and for the artistic community. I learned a great deal about how to present myself as a teacher, how to construct course material that would challenge and inspire students, and how to critically reflect upon my work in order to enhance future classes. I also learned a great deal about the tremendous capacity that the community of individuals with disabilities has to offer. I was continually challenged to give these students my best every day and felt that their aptitude continually pushed me to better myself and my class plans. The community of individuals with disabilities, while restricted in some senses such as physical movement or sensory facilities, is extremely able in other areas. My students held me to a higher standard every day, and continually challenged me to improve my own lessons. This is something that can be applied in all other centers as well. I believe that the disabled have capabilities that need to be tapped into in order to challenge them physically, emotionally, and mentally. They can rise to the occasion as I saw each and every time I came into the room.

Furthermore, this confidence in their abilities needs to be carried over into all facets of the arts. I believe that by establishing programs and individually adapted lessons, the community will be able to engage more with these students. The artistic community needs to change its paradigm of what is accepted as “normal” dancers and artists, and expect ability from all. The arts community will benefit from lessons learned of inclusiveness, individuality, and expression. By creating more programs that are aimed to include all members of society, the whole community will be promoted.

For future projects and analysis, I would suggest creating a controlled group of individuals that comes to each class. This would benefit researchers who want to analyze any benefits gained by students over the course of study. The researcher would need to develop a way to evaluate each student based on a certain criteria before intervention and would need to continually monitor any changes to placement throughout and after intervention. This would establish correlation between participation in a dance class or DMT program and any progress.

I would also suggest teaching highly specific group classes based on conditions/diagnoses. This would allow the teacher or therapist to focus specifically on needs and strengths of the group in order to target precise areas of focus. With the integration of treatment and knowledge held for certain conditions, dance could be used to target areas of concern in order to benefit the specific populace.

Lesson Plans

The lessons are written in the order of class schedule. The first planned outline is typed in black font, while any omissions are added in red. Anything added to the class is typed in blue. Any notes of particular importance are added in green. Classes were created based on previous teaching experiences and knowledge as a student. Inspiration and tips were also drawn from syllabi provided by Mindy Rawlinson of the University of South Carolina Dance Conservatory and an online syllabus from the Pacific Northwest Ballet located in Seattle, Washington.

Teaching the lesson plans was my practical way of creating an inclusive dance world over which I had control. This was my take on how to apply my dance training and my beliefs that dance should be open to all. The lesson plans were my application of the two. Since I feel strongly that dance should be available to everybody, creating the lessons was my way of applying this belief into an actual practice.

Lesson Plan 1

Goal: The goal of this class is to introduce myself and get students comfortable with attending dance class. I want everyone to feel free to express themselves while working hard. I also want students to start getting a feel for what is expected of them in a dance class and what dance etiquette is.

Intro: Start by welcoming the students and introducing myself. Making sure the students are comfortable with me will help them get more out of the dance classes. Meet each student and learn a little about him or her. Make a safety announcement stating that students should only execute movements or combinations that they are comfortable with. They are expected to not push themselves too hard or to do exercises that hurt. If they need water or to sit down at any time, they should do so. Questions are welcome.

This class was a nice introduction to dance; I found that I needed to improvise with a few things. Getting the students interested and engaged was a bit difficult. I played classical ballet music in the background, which I think made the class feel less relatable. I plan to use popular childrens music for the next class to see if that helps engage students more.

Stretch: Sitting on the floor

- With right leg out straight in front with the left leg bent, walk hands down as far as you can (comfortably) to stretch the right leg—30 seconds
- With the left leg out straight front with the right leg bent, walk hands down as far as comfortable to stretch the left leg—30 seconds

- With both legs straight out in front of the body, walk hands down as far as you can to stretch the calves—30 seconds
- Stretch right leg out to the side with the left leg bent, walk hands over to the right side to stretch the inner right thigh—30 seconds
- Stretch left leg out to the side with the right leg bent, walk hands over to the left side to stretch the inner left thigh—30 seconds

(The stretches are all intended to warm up the dancers bodies and get the blood flowing in their limbs in order to safely prepare them for class exercises. They are also intended to slowly ease students into the class while allowing their body time to stretch and warm up so no injuries occur.)

Warm Up:

- Echo/mirroring exercise—standing in a circle, I start by demonstrating any movement. Each student repeats. The student to my left demonstrates his or her favorite movement that everyone repeats. Each time, we start with my movement followed by the next, building on to our sequence at each turn. This is intended to build self-confidence and independence as well as community between students. It also encourages participation and memory as the previous steps are kept while new ones are added to the sequence each time.

Barre: Standing at chairs

- Plié— introduce what a plié is and its proper execution, describing proper muscles to engage

- First position right then left—plié down 1, 2, 3, 4 up 5, 6, 7, 8 repeat 4 times
- Tendu— introduce a tendu and the correct way to execute
 - From first position right then left—tendu front out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 repeat twice

These are two basic movements in ballet class that are performed typically in a sequence from plié on to tendu. They are beneficial movements to build proper posture, muscle tone, and muscular engagement. Students should be introduced to these movements because they are such core basics.

Center:

- Ballet walks across the room—use the space to go from the right side of the room to the left side of the room and back; following me across the floor copying my epaulement. This is to get students comfortable with walking elegantly across a space, which may help with balance or walking obstacles.

Reverence:

- Curtsey/bow to say thank you to each student—did not teach students to curtsey/bow to thank me yet.

Lesson Plan 2

Goal: The goal of this class is to get the students more engaged by creating a more lighthearted, fun class. I plan to increase interaction in order to improve social skills, communication, and expression of emotion and thoughts.

Intro: Start by looking each student in the eye and engaging in small talk with them. Get to know them and how they are doing. Urge for their full attention and participation by saying I want their eyes and ears on me at all times. Give directions of doing things safely and not doing any exercises that do not feel good.

Stretch: Sitting on the floor

- With right leg out straight in front with the left leg bent, walk hands down as far as you can (comfortably) to stretch the right leg—30 seconds
- With the left leg out straight front with the right leg bent, walk hands down as far as comfortable to stretch the left leg—30 seconds
- With both legs straight out in front of the body, walk hands down as far as you can to stretch the calves—30 seconds
- Stretch right leg out to the side with the left leg bent, walk hands over to the right side to stretch the inner right thigh—30 seconds
- Stretch left leg out to the side with the right leg bent, walk hands over to the left side to stretch the inner left thigh—30 seconds

The stretches are all intended to warm up the dancers and get the blood flowing in their limbs in order to safely prepare them for class exercises.

- Deep breathing exercise: With legs in butterfly position breathe deep in and out—repeat 3 times. This is done in order to focus the dancers and prepare them for the upcoming class.

Warm Up:

- Echo/mirroring exercise—standing in a circle, I start by demonstrating any movement (my favorite). Each student repeats. The student to my left demonstrates his or her favorite movement that everyone then repeats. Each time we start with my movement followed by the next, building on to our sequence at each turn. This is intended to build self-confidence and independence as well as community between students.
- Repeat echo exercise, this time asking them to demonstrate a movement that embodies a certain shape they can think of. This is very literal ideology intended to draw upon outside knowledge of shapes and asking them to apply it in dance class.
 - Note that students can dance with elbows, fingertips, or toes in order to make them aware of proprioception.

Barre: Standing at chairs

- Plié—
 - First position right then left—plie down 1, 2, 3, 4 up 5, 6, 7, 8 repeat 4 times
 - Second position right then left—plie down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8 repeat 4 times
- Tendu—
 - From first position right then left—tendu front out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 repeat twice

-----Here class got cut off so we did not get to do center work or reverence-----

Center:

- Gallops around the room—use the space to go from the right side of the room to the left side of the room and back; following me across the floor going on a trip

Reverence:

- Curtsey/bow to say thank you to each student

Lesson Plan 3

Goal: The goal for this class is to continue to form confidence, building upon previously established lesson plans and goals.

Intro: Start by looking each student in the eye and welcoming them into the space. Today, tell them that we will be using assigned spots so that everybody feels that they have a spot in the room to call their own, thus making them feel more included. Give announcement about doing things safely and not pushing too hard—students should only do things they are comfortable with and should only execute movements that do not hurt.

Stretch: Sitting on the Floor

- Foot Isolations: with legs straight out in front, flex toes up to the ceiling then pointe toes out in front keeping knees straight. Repeat 3 times. (This is intended to wake up the little muscles of the feet and toes)
- With right leg out straight in front with the left leg bent, walk hands down as far as you can (comfortably) to stretch the right leg—30 seconds
- With the left leg out straight front with the right leg bent, walk hands down as far as comfortable to stretch the left leg—30 seconds
- With both legs straight out in front of the body, walk hands down as far as you can to stretch the calves—30 seconds
- Stretch right leg out to the side with the left leg bent, walk hands over to the right side to stretch the inner right thigh—30 seconds

- Stretch left leg out to the side with the right leg bent, walk hands over to the left side to stretch the inner left thigh—30 seconds
- Sitting in butterfly position: arch and curl back to warm up core
 - Head to toe in butterfly—omitted based off of energy level of students
 - Head isolations: look right hold, look center hold, look left hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times
 - Head isolations: look up hold, look center hold, look down hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times

Head isolations are intended to warm up the muscles of the neck and shoulders.

Warm Up:

- Echo/mirroring exercise—standing in a circle, I start by demonstrating any movement (my favorite). Each student repeats. The student to my left demonstrates their favorite movement that everyone then repeats. Each time we start with my movement followed by the next, building on to our sequence at each turn. (This is intended to build self-confidence and independence as well as community between students).

This exercise worked very well today. I felt each student was engaged and seemed to benefit from the exercise.

Barre: Standing at chairs

- Plié—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—plié down 1, 2, up 3, 4, down 5, 6, up 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total
 - First position right then left— plié down 1, 2, up 3, 4, down 5, 6, up 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total

- Second position right then left— plié down 1, 2, up 3, 4, down 5, 6, up 7, 8.
Execute 4 times in total (omitted due to the need to establish a more basic foundation)
- Tendu—
 - From first position right then left—tendu front out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute twice.
 - Repeat from first position to the side--- tendu front out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute twice.
- Degage
 - From first position right then left—degage out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute twice
 - Repeat from first position to the side
- (All omitted due to the advanced nature of the steps. I felt that moving onward would not be in the best interest of the students at this point.)

Center:

- Ballet walks across the floor—stepping gracefully with arms held in second position walk across the floor as if wearing a crown
 - Follow me across the floor copying my epaulement and timing
 - Repeat across the floor with arms held in high fifth position
- Gallops around the room—use the space to go from the right side of the room to the left side of the room and back; following me across the floor going on a trip—move to fourth class
- Christmas freeze dance—move to fourth class

Reverence:

- Curtsey/bow to say thank you to each student (did not get to today)

Lesson Plan 4

Goal: The goal for this class is to continue to form confidence. Students should begin to feel comfortable with me and their fellow students, and I want them to feel open to expression and participation.

Introduction: Look each student in the eye and welcome him or her to the space/room. Ask them how they are doing in order to make them feel welcome. Give safety announcement about not executing any movements that hurt or are uncomfortable for the student. Make sure they know to ask questions and that their safety is the first priority.

Warm Up 1:

- Start standing in a circle. Reach arms up to the ceiling, breathing in deeply, then drop them quickly, breathing out fully.

Stretch:

- Standing: reach up to the ceiling and bring the arms down to touch the toes (repeat 2 times)
- Stretch hands out in front into a downward dog position
- Sitting on the floor:
 - Foot isolations: with legs straight out in front, flex toes up to the ceiling then pointe toes out in front keeping knees straight. Repeat 3 times. (This is intended to wake up the little muscles of the feet and toes)

- With right leg out straight in front with the left leg bent, walk hands down as far as you can (comfortably) to stretch the right leg—30 seconds
- With the left leg out straight front with the right leg bent, walk hands down as far as comfortable to stretch the left leg—30 seconds
- With both legs straight out in front of the body, walk hands down as far as you can to stretch the calves—30 seconds
- Sitting in butterfly position touch head to toe
- Head isolations: look right hold, look center hold, look left hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times
- Head isolations: look up hold, look center hold, look down hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times

Warm Up:

- Echo me: knee bounce, twirl—simple movements to repeat after I execute them
- Echo each other around a circle: make a point to not allow the other students to move or get distracted while another student is demonstrating in order to demand attention and focus

Barre: Standing at the chair

- Plié—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total
 - First position right then left— plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total

- Second position right then left— plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total
- Tendu—
 - From first position right then left—tendu front out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute twice.
 - Repeat from first position to the side--- tendu front out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute twice.
- Degage
 - From first position right then left—degage out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute twice
 - Repeat from first position to the side

Center:

- Gallops around the room—use the space to go from the right side of the room to the left side of the room and back; following me across the floor
 - I was Rudolph the Red nosed Reindeer and the students were the other reindeer
- Christmas freeze dance—the student can move as freely as they wish but must freeze in a pose when the music stops. They then resume their movements when the music restarts.

Reverence:

- Everyone stands in a circle for a cool down: repeat the beginning exercise of bringing arms up breathing in then dropping the arms and breathing out

Lesson Plan 5

Goal: The goal for this class is to continue to form confidence, building upon previously established lesson plans and goals.

Introduction: Look each student in the eye to welcome them into the room. Give safety announcement that every student needs to participate but only in exercises that feel comfortable and safe.

Warm Up:

- Start standing in a circle. Reach arms up to the ceiling, breathing in deeply, then drop them quickly, breathing out fully.

I decided that this was a necessary permanent first exercise as it brought the students into the space and seemed to get them focused.

Stretch:

- Standing:
 - Holding on to a chair so as to keep balance, step one leg back to stretch the calf (hold for 30 seconds). Repeat with the other leg. Students can bend the knees to get a different stretch as well.
 - Reach up to the ceiling and bring the arms down to touch the toes (repeat 2 times)
 - Stretch hands out in front into a downward dog position (omitted once more—didn't feel doable in the space or at this level)
 - Shake out knees quickly to get blood flowing and to release any tension students may have

- Sitting on the floor:
 - With right leg out straight in front with the left leg bent, walk hands down as far as you can (comfortably) to stretch the right leg—30 seconds
 - With the left leg out straight front with the right leg bent, walk hands down as far as comfortable to stretch the left leg—30 seconds
 - With both legs straight out in front of the body, walk hands down as far as you can to stretch the calves—30 seconds
 - Stretch right leg out to the side with the left leg bent, walk hands over to the right side to stretch the inner right thigh—30 seconds
 - Stretch left leg out to the side with the right leg bent, walk hands over to the left side to stretch the inner left thigh—30 seconds

I re-added the side leg stretch to get a more comprehensive floor stretch

- Foot isolations: with legs straight out in front, flex toes up to the ceiling then pointe toes out in front keeping knees straight. Repeat 3 times. This is intended to wake up the little muscles of the feet and toes.

Placement of this exercise was moved to later in the stretching sequence compared to earlier lessons

- Head isolations: look right hold, look center hold, look left hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times
- Head isolations: look up hold, look center hold, look down hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times

Warm Up:

- Circle Echo/Mirroring exercise—review the different shapes that students have learned (circle, square, diamond), then ask how they think they could make these shapes with their bodies (using arms, legs, entire movements). I choose a shape to execute and all other students must repeat after me. Then, the person next to me in the circle has a turn to choose a shape that the rest of the students then repeat. Adding along, we ultimately create a personalized sequence of movements, so each student feels that they have contributed to the choreography.
- Repeat the circle echo exercise, except using extending and contracting vocabulary. Ask students what movements would be big and what would be small—repeat in a circle.

Barre: Standing at the chair

- Plié—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total
 - First position right then left— plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total
 - Second position right then left— plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total

First and Second position are now permanently removed from the syllabus. I felt that the students were not benefitting from these positions and didn't want to teach incorrect placement.
- Tendu—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—tendu out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times.

- From first position right then left—tendu front out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute twice.
- Repeat from first position to the side--- tendu front out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute twice.
- Degage
 - From first position right then left—degage out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute twice
 - Repeat from first position to the side

At this point, I decided to completely cut any other position from the curriculum besides sixth position. Also, I felt students were not ready for degage, so we just focused on plié and tendu slowly from sixth position.

Center:

- Gallops around the room—use the space to go from the right side of the room to the left side of the room and back; following me across the floor
 - Adventure through jungle/ safari theme
- Freeze dance—improvisation time using the shapes we discussed earlier in class. The students must dance making shapes and freeze in these shapes when the music pauses.

Reverence:

- Everyone stands in a circle for a cool down: repeat the beginning exercise of bringing arms up breathing in then dropping the arms and breathing out

This is now the fixed reverence activity in order to bring the class full-circle and help the students transition from dance class to the rest of their daily activities.

- Following me, step right to touch the left foot on the ground, then step left to touch the right foot on the ground—this was intended to improve following and listening skills
- Curtsey was introduced—in order to teach proper ballet etiquette, I taught the students to curtsey/bow in order to say thank you. This was also established as the final activity of class.

Lesson Plan 6

Theme: Lion King (safari animals and Lion King sound track)

Goal: The goal of this class is to get the students really focused on the activities at hand. By adding a theme, I hope to get every student participating and active in the class—I do not want students to lose interest, so I made the class more interactive for them. The learning goal for the day is to teach degage.

Introduction: Look each student in the eye and welcome him or her into the class. Ask how each student is doing. Introduce the theme today and tell them that I want everyone to participate fully. Also give safety announcement by telling students to only do what is comfortable and to not push themselves to a point of discomfort. They are always welcome to sit down, drink water, or ask questions.

Warm Up:

- Start standing in a circle. Reach arms up to the ceiling, breathing in deeply, then drop them quickly, breathing out fully. Execute 4 times.

Stretch:

- Standing:
 - Shake out head, then shoulders, then arms, then hands, then legs, then feet. This is intended to release tension and to introduce proprioception.

- Sitting on the floor:
 - With right leg out straight in front with the left leg bent, walk hands down as far as you can (comfortably) to stretch the right leg—30 seconds
 - With the left leg out straight front with the right leg bent, walk hands down as far as comfortable to stretch the left leg—30 seconds
 - With both legs straight out in front of the body, walk hands down as far as you can to stretch the calves—30 seconds
 - Stretch right leg out to the side with the left leg bent, walk hands over to the right side to stretch the inner right thigh—30 seconds
 - Stretch left leg out to the side with the right leg bent, walk hands over to the left side to stretch the inner left thigh—30 seconds
 - Butterfly head isolation: sitting in butterfly position proceed with head isolation combination:
 - Look right hold, look center hold, look left hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times
 - Look up hold, look center hold, look down hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times
 - Foot isolations: with legs straight out in front, flex toes up to the ceiling then pointe toes out in front keeping knees straight. Repeat 3 times. This is intended to wake up the little muscles of the feet and toes.

I initially placed this as the first sitting position stretch, but moved it to the last step of the stretching sequence.

Warm Up:

- Circle Echo/Mirroring exercise— sticking with the theme of Lion King today, each student should dance like their favorite animal which the whole circle will then repeat. By adding each step in sequence we will create a unique dance that we will do along with the Lion King music without stopping—this is intended to challenge their memory and participation.
- Port de bras sitting in chairs—port de bras right arm then left arm; out to second position, up to high fifth, then down to first position and back out to second, then drop the arm. Repeat twice, then execute on left side. Then execute once using both arms. This activity is intended to introduce proper epaulement usage and to warm up the back/arm muscles. I initially placed this exercise last in the reverence section, but felt it would be beneficial to help the students transition from the echo exercise to the more classical barre work.

Barre: Standing at the chair

- Plié—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total
- Tendu—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—tendu out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times.
- Degage
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—degage out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times.

Center:

- Ballet walks across the floor with arms in second position—intended to feel epaulement
- Move like the students favorite animals across the floor (that had previously been established in the echoing exercise).

Reverence:

- Everyone stands in a circle for a cool down: repeat the beginning exercise of bringing arms up breathing in then dropping the arms and breathing out
- Curtsey/bow to say thank you

This was by far the best class yet. The students were very excited about the Lion King theme, which made them more eager to participate. I felt that the class outline was more beneficial as well. By taking out the more advanced positions and only using parallel (sixth position), the students were able to build a strong foundation.

Lesson Plan 7

Theme: Finding Nemo (ocean theme with Finding Nemo sound track)

Goal: The goal of this class is to continue to engage the students and push them to participate, as well as to keep defining autonomy. By allowing them the freedom to choose their own movements within a theme, I hope to teach them that their contribution is valuable and that their participation is appreciated.

Introduction: Look each student in the eye and welcome him or her into the class. Ask how each student is doing. Introduce the theme today, and tell them that I want everyone to participate fully today. Also give safety announcement by telling students to only do what is comfortable and to not push themselves to a point of discomfort. They are always welcome to sit down, drink water, or ask questions.

Warm Up:

- Start standing in a circle. Reach arms up to the ceiling, breathing in deeply, then drop them quickly, breathing out fully. Execute 4 times.
- Tension release activity: Put tension in the facial muscles, then relax. Then put tension in the shoulder muscles and relax. Execute with the arms, hands, legs, and feet. This is intended to reinforce proprioception

Stretch:

- Standing:

- Toe touch: From a standing position with feet wide apart, reach down to touch the right toes (or knee/ as far as possible for the student). Repeat to the left.
- Head isolation: standing
 - Look right hold, look center hold, look left hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times
 - Look up hold, look center hold, look down hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times

This was placed here in order to build in variety with the same movements and to activate core muscles.
- Sitting on the floor:
 - Foot isolation: with legs straight out in front, flex toes up to the ceiling then pointe toes out in front keeping knees straight. Repeat 3 times. (This is intended to wake up the little muscles of the feet and toes)
 - With right leg out straight in front with the left leg bent, walk hands down as far as you can (comfortably) to stretch the right leg—30 seconds
 - With the left leg out straight front with the right leg bent, walk hands down as far as comfortable to stretch the left leg—30 seconds
 - With both legs straight out in front of the body, walk hands down as far as you can to stretch the calves—30 seconds
 - Stretch right leg out to the side with the left leg bent, walk hands over to the right side to stretch the inner right thigh—30 seconds
 - Stretch left leg out to the side with the right leg bent, walk hands over to the left side to stretch the inner left thigh—30 seconds

- Shake out the knees in order to release tension and engage students focus

Warm Up:

- Circle Echo/Mirroring exercise— sticking with the theme of Finding Nemo today, each student should dance like their favorite ocean animal, which the whole circle will then repeat. By adding each step in sequence we will create a unique dance that we will do along with the Finding Nemo music without stopping—this is intended to challenge their memory and participation.
- Port de bras sitting in chairs—port de bras right arm then left arm; out to second position, up to high fifth, then down to first position and back out to second, then drop the arm. Repeat twice, then execute on left side. Then execute once using both arms. This activity is intended to introduce proper epaulement usage and to warm up the back/arm muscles.

Barre: Standing at the chair

- Plié—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total
- Tendu—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—tendu out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times.
- Degage
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—degage out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times.

Center:

- Gallops across the floor—adventure through the ocean
- Move like the students favorite marine life across the floor

Reverence:

- Everyone stands in a circle for a cool down: repeat the beginning exercise of bringing arms up breathing in then dropping the arms and breathing out
- Curtsey/bow to say thank you

Lesson Plan 8

Theme: A Bugs Life (insect theme with A Bugs Life sound track)

Goal: The goal of this class is to build upon the previously established objectives of finding creativity, focus, and individuality within each student.

Introduction: Look each student in the eye and welcome him or her into the class. Ask how each student is doing. Introduce the theme today, and tell them that I want everyone to participate fully today. Also give safety announcement by telling students to only do what is comfortable and to not push themselves to a point of discomfort. They are always welcome to sit down, drink water, or ask questions.

Warm Up:

- Start standing in a circle. Reach arms up to the ceiling, breathing in deeply, then drop them quickly, breathing out fully. Execute 4 times.

Stretch:

- Standing while holding on to a chair:
 - Back stretch: Lean over to the right side to feel a stretch in the upper back and left side. Repeat to the left
 - Calf stretch: Step right foot back to stretch the calf, then feet together, then step left foot back to stretch the calf. Students can bend knees if they feel this would be more beneficial.

- Quadriceps Stretch: standing straight with feet together, kick back right shin and grab this foot with the right hand, keeping the knees together. Hold for 30 seconds. Place foot down and repeat with the left foot.
- Sitting on the floor:
 - Foot isolation: with legs straight out in front, flex toes up to the ceiling then pointe toes out in front keeping knees straight. Repeat 3 times. (This is intended to wake up the little muscles of the feet and toes)
 - With right leg out straight in front with the left leg bent, walk hands down as far as you can (comfortably) to stretch the right leg—30 seconds
 - With the left leg out straight front with the right leg bent, walk hands down as far as comfortable to stretch the left leg—30 seconds
 - With both legs straight out in front of the body, walk hands down as far as you can to stretch the calves—30 seconds
 - Stretch right leg out to the side with the left leg bent, walk hands over to the right side to stretch the inner right thigh—30 seconds
 - Stretch left leg out to the side with the right leg bent, walk hands over to the left side to stretch the inner left thigh—30 seconds
 - Sitting in a criss-crossed position,
 - Execute head isolation exercise
 - Look right hold, look center hold, look left hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times
 - Look up hold, look center hold, look down hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times

- Spine articulation exercise: curve spine back to feel a stretch in the back, then arch back forward while holding core muscles—this is intended to improve spine movement and abdominal control. End with sitting as tall as possible, holding head and shoulders proudly with epaulement that students are urged to continue using for the rest of class.

Warm Up:

- Port de bras sitting in chairs—port de bras right arm then left arm; out to second position, up to high fifth, then down to first position and back out to second, then drop the arm. Repeat twice, then execute on left side. Then execute once using both arms. This activity is intended to introduce proper epaulement usage and to warm up the back/arm muscles. This was moved to before the mirroring exercise to see if this would be a better transition from stretching to dancing.
- Circle Echo/Mirroring exercise— sticking with the theme of A Bugs Life today, each student should move like their favorite insect, which the whole circle will then repeat.

Barre: Standing at the chair

- Plié—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total
- Tendu—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—tendu out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times.

- Degage
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—degage out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times.

Center:

- Move like the students favorite insects across the floor
- Freeze dance—extension and contraction; students should play with the idea of extending limbs out as far as possible and moving in a big space and then transitioning to moving in a smaller space; students should freeze in whatever position they were moving when the music pauses, and continue dancing when the music resumes.

Reverence:

- Port de bras: move arms through second then down
- Arm stretch—cross right arm over to left
- Curtsey/bow to say thank you

Lesson Plan 9

Theme: Color Theme (loosely based on the Inside Out movie, pairing colors with emotions)

Goal: This is a more abstract class that focuses on the students' ability to think creatively and make connections between emotions and expression. I want the students to be able to recognize certain emotions and express them appropriately

Introduction: Look each student in the eye and welcome him or her into the class. Ask how each student is doing. Introduce the theme today and tell them that I want everyone to participate fully. Also give safety announcement by telling students to only do what is comfortable and to not push themselves to a point of discomfort. They are always welcome to sit down, drink water, or ask questions.

Warm Up:

- Start standing in a circle. Reach arms up to the ceiling, breathing in deeply, then drop them quickly, breathing out fully. Execute 4 times.

Stretch:

- Standing while holding on to a chair:
- Sitting on the floor:
 - Foot isolation: with legs straight out in front, flex toes up to the ceiling then pointe toes out in front keeping knees straight. Repeat 3 times. (This is intended to wake up the little muscles of the feet and toes)

- With right leg out straight in front with the left leg bent, walk hands down as far as you can (comfortably) to stretch the right leg—30 seconds
- With the left leg out straight front with the right leg bent, walk hands down as far as comfortable to stretch the left leg—30 seconds
- With both legs straight out in front of the body, walk hands down as far as you can to stretch the calves—30 seconds
- Stretch right leg out to the side with the left leg bent, walk hands over to the right side to stretch the inner right thigh—30 seconds
- Stretch left leg out to the side with the right leg bent, walk hands over to the left side to stretch the inner left thigh—30 seconds
- Sitting in a criss-crossed position,
 - Execute head isolation exercise
 - Look right hold, look center hold, look left hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times
 - Look up hold, look center hold, look down hold, look center hold—repeat 3 times
 - Spine articulation exercise: curve spine back to feel a stretch in the back, then arch back forward while holding core muscles—this is intended to improve spine movement and abdominal control. End with sitting as tall as possible, holding head and shoulders proudly with epaulement that students are urged to continue using for the rest of class.

Warm Up:

- Port de bras sitting in chairs—port de bras right arm then left arm; out to second position, up to high fifth, then down to first position and back out to second, then drop the arm. Repeat twice, then execute on left side. Then execute once using both arms. This activity is intended to introduce proper epaulement usage and to warm up the back/arm muscles.
- Circle Echo/Mirroring exercise— sticking with the color theme today, which is again more challenging and requires abstract thought. Each student should pick a color and associate an emotion with that color. The student should then move in a way that expresses that emotion/color. Repeat for everyone around the circle.

Barre: Standing at the chair

- Plié—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—plié down 1, 2, 3, 4, up 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times in total
- Tendu—
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—tendu out 1, 2, 3, 4, in 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times.
- Degage
 - Parallel (sixth position) right then left—degage out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Execute 4 times.

Center:

- Moving across the room expressing the emotions previously established in class

Reverence:

- Port de bras: move arms through second then down
- Curtsey/bow to say thank you

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