

The Thinking Teacher: Interactive models for dance education, Part 1

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As university professors directing K-12 teacher education programs, Amy Markgraf Jacobson and I regularly share stories of our student's experiences. Some stories are unique to specific students, while others illustrate universal challenges in teacher education and the limitations of our educational methods. Our conversation led us to question:

- How can we support *pre-service teacher's development of curiosity, questioning techniques, learning progressions and critical thinking skills?*
- *What guidelines and resources will help students become articulate examiners of dance content, inquisitive practitioners and thinking artist educators.*
- *When much of educational assessment appears to be one-size fits all, how can we help pre-service teachers become highly effective advocates for creativity, individuality, and artistic expression?*

We identified the following pedagogical concepts which support the development of these skills. While this list is not extensive it reflects our thoughts on teacher education. Thinking teachers do the following:

Support ongoing dance literacy

Using specific dance language to describe what we see and do is essential for the field to grow. To that end we concentrate on the development of sound dance content knowledge construction using the elements of dance. We require the scripting activities that support sequential teaching that focuses on artistic, somatic, and anatomical awareness. I use the Laban Movement Analysis grid in my dance pedagogy classes. The chart centers on the Laban concepts of Body, Effort, Space, Shape, and Relationship (see below).

Expectations

Set clear evaluative measures and high aspirational expectations of students (in all areas of dance). A thoughtful teacher is clear and supportive yet discriminating. Thinking teachers do not accept whatever their students do as good work. All work is



not superior, and all work does not deserve an exemplary grade. Show students what quality work looks like. Once students can see the difference, they can begin to embody and evaluate work quality. It takes time to unpack this but all members of class benefit from the practice. Encourage students to be expectant of the change and provide students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding in class, reading thoughtful reflections or performing phrases as groups or solos for classmates at the end of class.

Feedback

Take the time to meet with and give personalized feedback to students. This may be one on one, audio messages, written, or filmed. Online delivery systems like Google classroom, Canvas and Arc Media can be very effective methods of providing feedback to students on class assignments, collaborative activities and choreography. Students are more likely to revisit classroom experiences, their thoughts and ideas when feedback, notes and videos are posted on handheld devices, thus extending the classroom.

Share responsibility and decisions with students

We encourage shared responsibilities with pre-service teachers the progressions of class assignments, rubric development, peer feedback and both formative and summative assessment. By providing multiple and varied opportunities for personal reflection, voicing opinions and articulating beliefs a shared space for discoveries is fostered. Quickly we are able to see student growth and the promise of a successful professional career.

In part one of our conversation, Thinking Teachers, we have shared a few ideas from our conversations on teacher education and will share thoughts developing learning progression in dance and creating teaching environments to support millennial students needs in the next newsletter.

LABAN MOVEMENT ANALYSIS (LMA)

BODY What **EFFORT** How **SPACE** Where **SHAPE** What Form **RELATIONSHIP** With whom

ACTIVITY **MOTION FACTOR** **QUALITY** **GENERAL SPACE** **SHAPE QUALITIES** **SITUATIONS**
 Traveling Weight Strong-Light Everywhere Contracting/expanding Leading, following
 Stopping Time Sudden-Sustained Narrowing/widening Shadowing, mirroring
 Turning Flow Bound-Free **PERSONAL SPACE** Advancing / retreating Copying / matching
 Balancing Space Indirect (multi-focused) Local Rising/sinking Action/response
 Jumping Direct (focused) Echoing, unison, cannon
 Falling
 Twisting
 Swinging
 Shaking-wiggle

EFFORT ACTION DRIVE
 Punch
 Wring
 Press
 Flick
 Float
 Glide
 Slash
 Dab

LEVELS
 Low, Middle, High

MODES OF SHAPE CHANGE
 Shape flow
 Carving
 Directional movement
 Spoke-like arc-like

EXTENSIONS
 Near reach, Far reach

DIRECTIONS
 High – low
 Forward – back
 Right – Left, Diagonal

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS
 Meeting, parting
 Linking, connecting
 Towards, away
 Near, approach, touch
 Press, Grasp
 Lift, Lean, Carry

BODY PARTS
 Used, leading
 Gesturing
 Touching
 Emphasized

SHAPE FORMS
 Ball
 Wall
 Pin
 Twisted
 Symmetrical
 Tetrahedral

FLOOR - AIR
PATTERN - PATHWAY
 Straight, Angular,
 Curvy, Circular

SPACE WORDS
 Over, under, around,
 Near, far, through,
 Behind, beside, in front

BODY REGIONS
 Upper/lower
 Right/left
 Front/back

SPATIAL FORMS
 Line
 Circle
 Scattered

BASE
 Standing, sitting
 Kneeling/lying

BODY RELATIONSHIPS
 Body to each other
 Individuals to each other
 Groups to each other

ORGANIZATION
 Sequential
 Simultaneous
 Successive