

Manitoba Arts Education Curriculum Programming

“Exemplars of Learning”



This exemplar includes



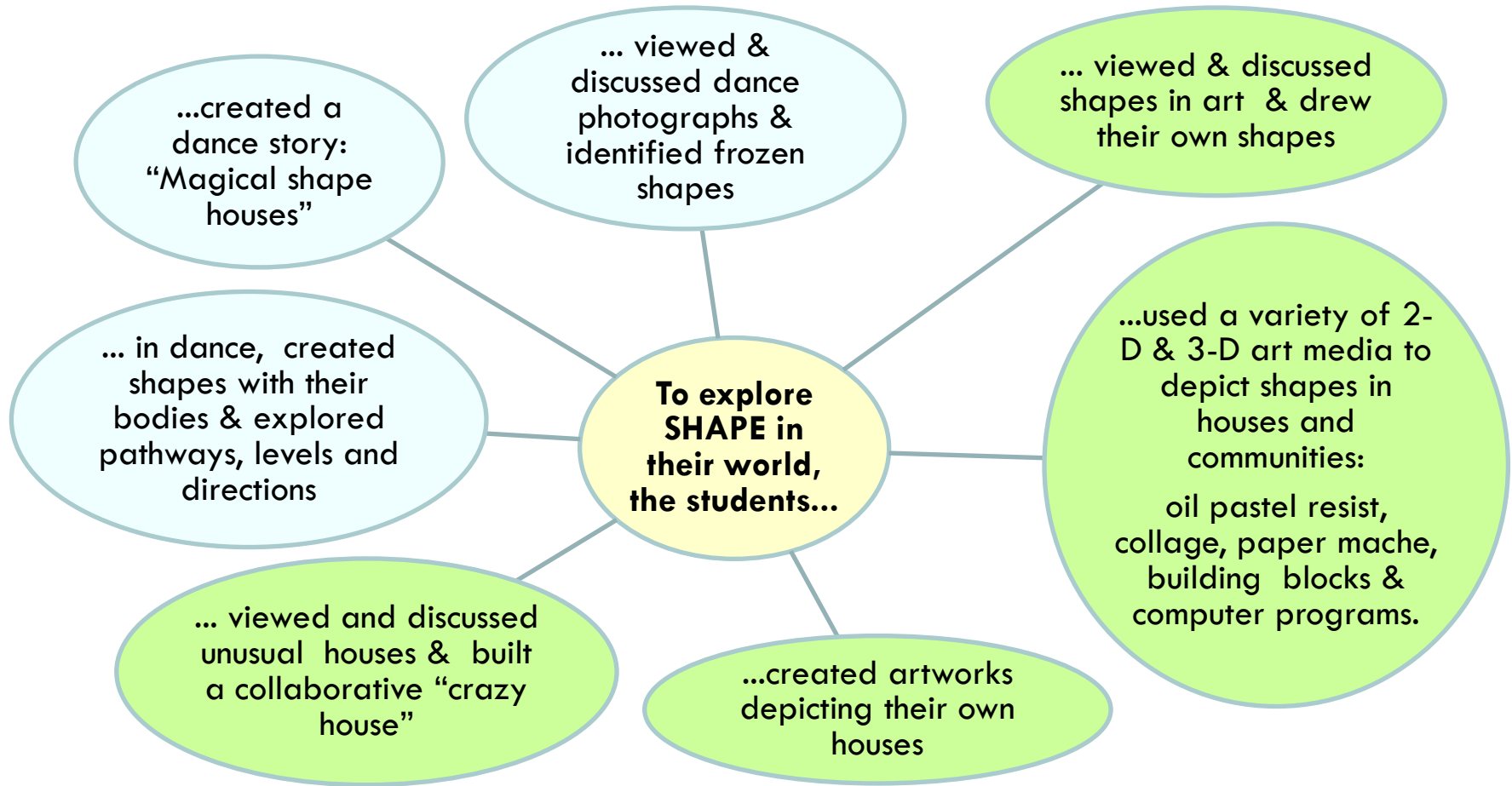
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*Exploring Shape
in our World : Dance*



Overview of teaching and learning experiences.

This unit illustrates how the mathematical concept of shape can be woven through visual art and dance.



This presentation focuses on *Dance*

The presentation: **Exploring Shape in our World: Art** focuses on *Visual Art*

Classroom Context

The classroom is influenced and inspired by the principles of the Reggio Emilia early childhood approach to learning. The environment sets the stage for children's learning, as the primary aesthetic experience. Our classroom is full of texture, light and colour, and materials are always accessible and at children's reach. Materials are displayed beautifully, in glass jars inviting children can "read" the media, and make choices about the tools they wish to use. We learn and think in all ways – through sight, smell, touch, movement – and our environment invites, reflects and honours these many ways of knowing.

Beautiful art supplies, musical instruments, rich children's literature and new technologies are all available for children to explore and investigate. Children are encouraged to share their understandings through the various media, communicating in many languages – through text, images, sound and movement. Our classroom *ambiente* communicates the idea that children are capable, curious, strong, intelligent and rich in potential.

Dancing with Young Children

Children yearn to move. Before children learn to speak, they are already communicating through movement, in non-verbal ways. Watch a child listen to music, and instantly, their bodies become instruments for communicating thoughts, ideas, emotions and moods. While *movement* is not always dance, dance *always* involves movement.

Dance is comprised of many forms...ballet, jazz, hip-hop, modern...however, not all forms are appropriate for young children. *Creative Movement* is a form of age-appropriate dance for children in the early years. Creative movement is an art form that is "based on natural movement rather than movement of a particular style" (Stinson, p. 2).

The following exemplar was based on an interdisciplinary study (inquiry) exploring *shape in our world*. The following creative movement experiences were embedded in the inquiry which spanned over a full year, and were designed to complement and extend children's learning of *shape*. *Dance Integration* (learning *through* dance) was explored as the primary teaching methodology.

The classroom teacher is a generalist with some dance experience. The lessons taught in the study were built on children's previous learning, and attempted to reflect a constructivist approach, where children learned from and with one another through active, participatory experiences.

There were many advantages to using creative movement with my young students:

Dance:

- Helps children develop body awareness
- Fosters self-control, concentration and focus
- Promotes awareness of and respect for others
- Creates a joyful classroom climate
- Boosts self-esteem
- Promotes problem-solving (Source: Sue Stinson (1988), *Dance for Young Children*, p. 16)

Classroom Context

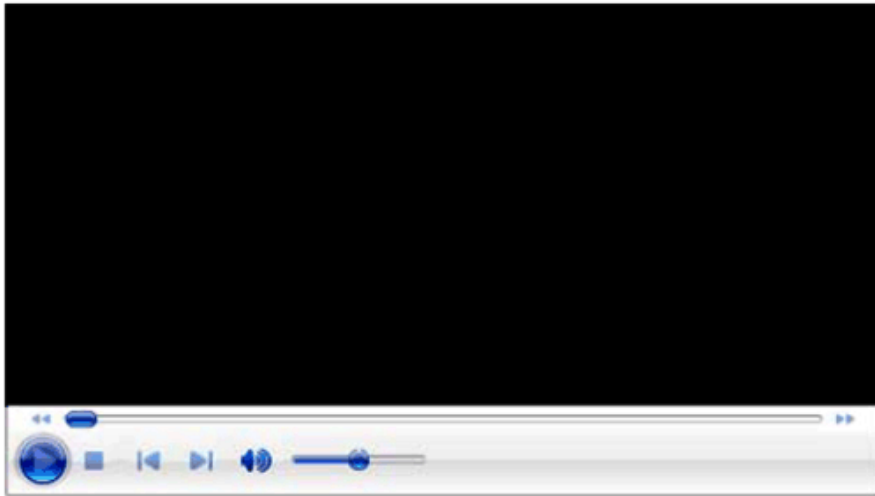






In Dance,

First students reviewed
the Ground Rules:



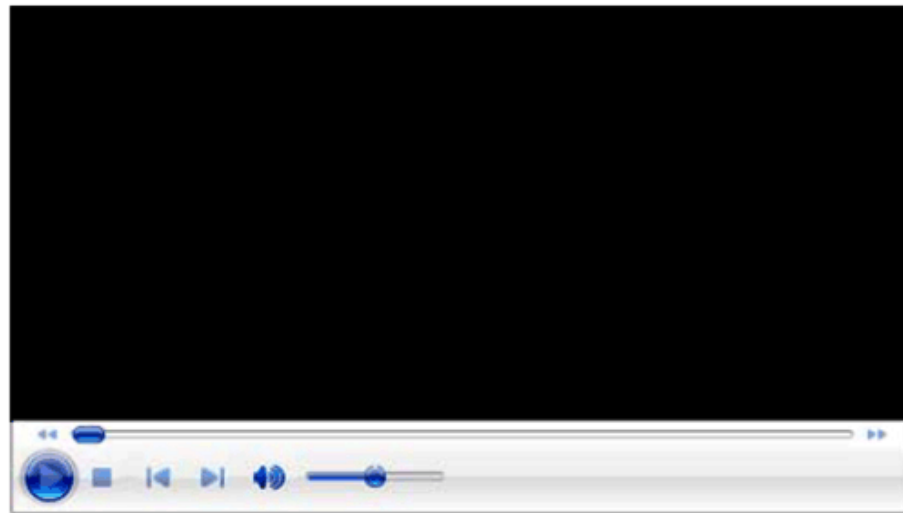
View "Setting The Ground Rules" video



Next,

Students explored the concept of *personal space*. We pretend that we are chewing a big piece of bubblegum, and we blow the biggest bubble. We imagine this bubble surrounding us, protecting us from “bumping into” others, reminding us to respect our own and others’ personal space.

(DA-L1.2)



View “Finding our Personal Space” video

The Warm-Up

Before any dance experience, students warm up their bodies (DA-L1.1)

The same warm-up routine and music are used each time we dance.

We include:

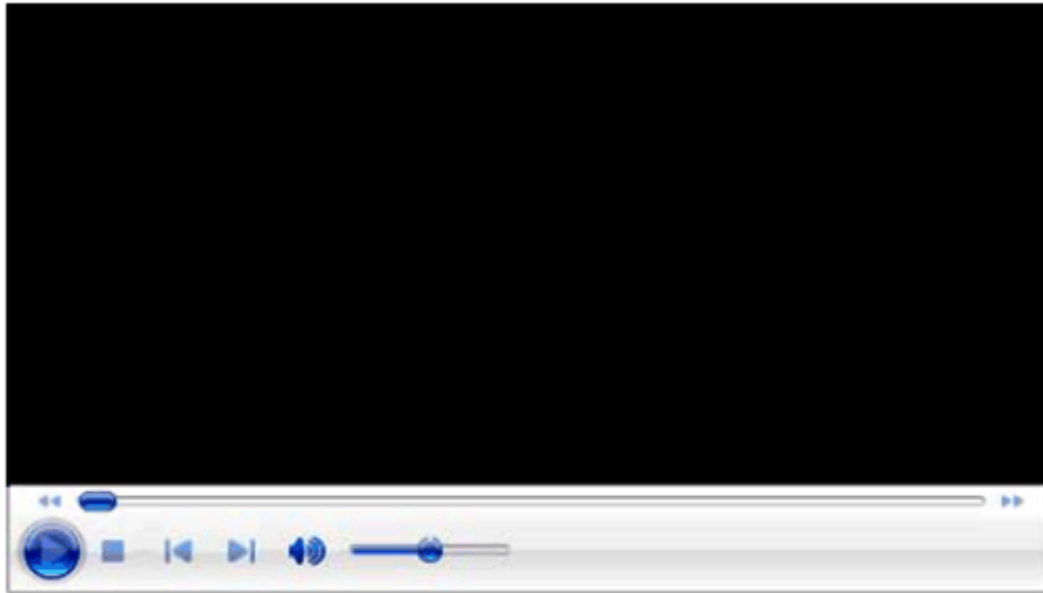
Head, neck

Shoulders, chest

Hips, Legs

Arms

The Warm-Up



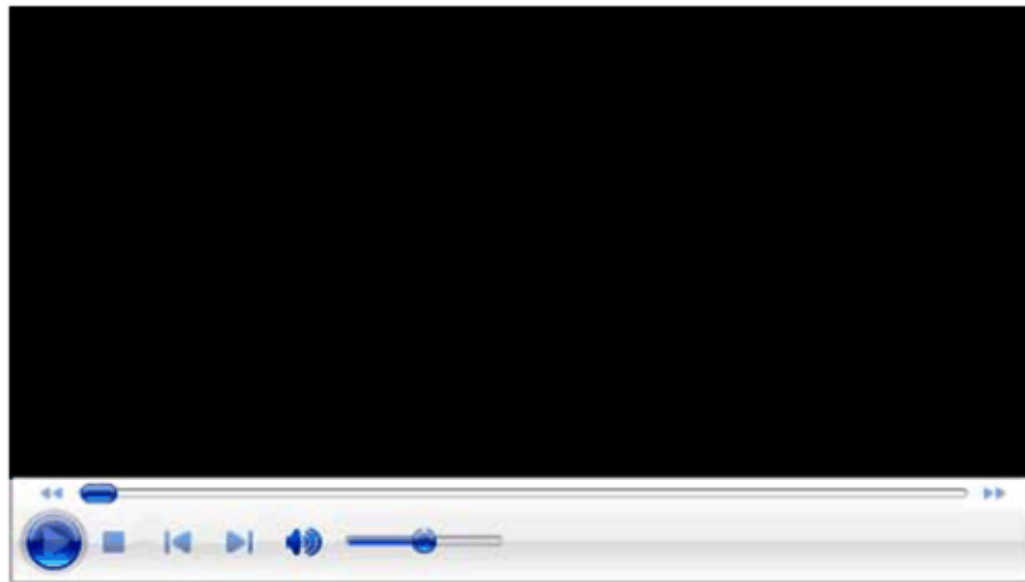
[View "The Warm-Up" video](#)

In Dance,

Students created basic geometric shapes, and “froze” them with their bodies. (DA–L1.1)

We started small (fingers, feet), and moved to bigger body parts (arms, legs, torsos) (DA–L1.1)

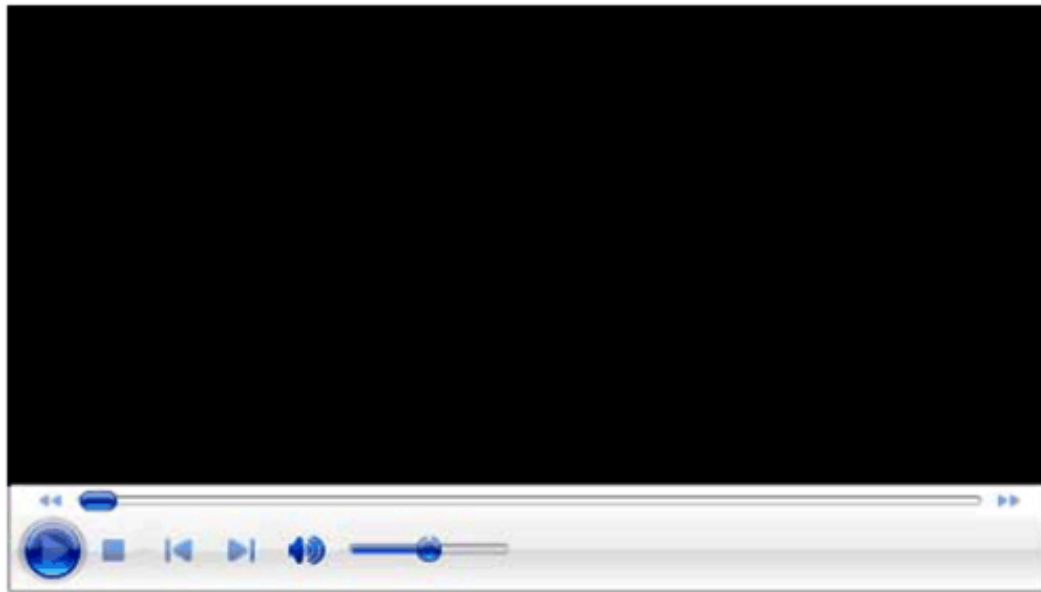
This helped students with control over their movement, and built confidence.



View “Exploring and Creating Shapes with our Bodies – Moving from Small to Big” video

In Dance...

Students “painted” shapes with different body parts, leading movement with a variety of body parts (DA L1.1) We experimented and layered different motion factors (quickly, lightly, strongly...) (DA-L1.4)



View “Painting Shapes” video

Students created shapes with their bodies, individually and in pairs (DA L1.1, DA-L1.3), leading into a discussion of “curved”, “angular”, “twisted”, and “straight”



In Dance,

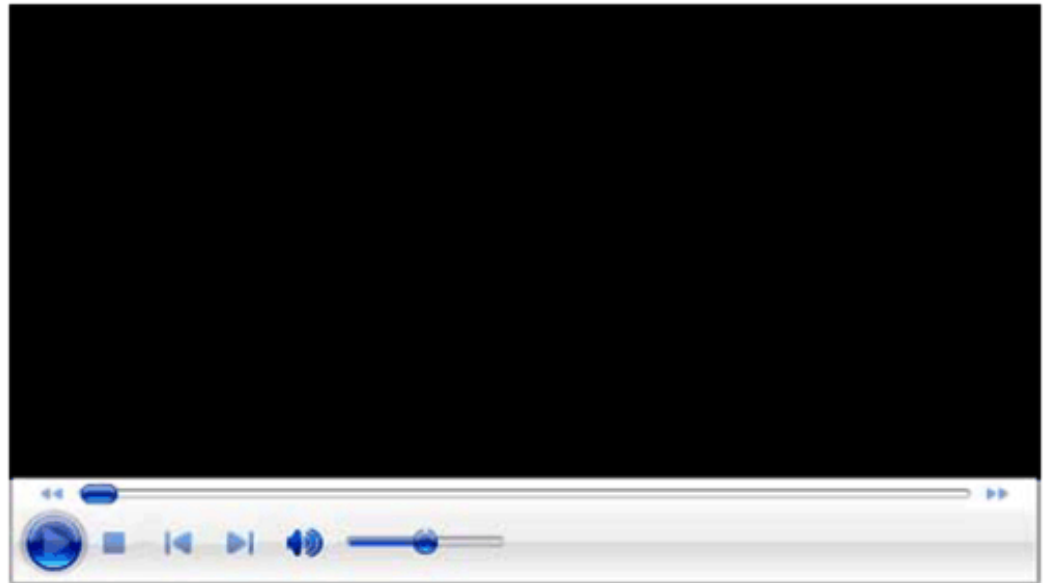
Students explored a variety of pathways (zig-zag, straight, curved) levels, and directions, finding their way to taped shapes on the floor.

- Zig-zag
- Straight
- Curvy
- Spiral
- High
- Middle
- Low
- Forwards
- Backwards
- Sideways



Dancing the "shape perimeter"

Next, students called out the shape, recreated with body parts, then on musical cues, used various dance actions to move around the outside of the shape, for example, tiptoe, crawl, march, backwards, sideways, etc. We explored "inside", "outside", and "on the edge". (DA-L2.2, DA-L2.5, DA-L2.9)



Source: *Nicole Fougere, LTTA*

View "Dancing the Shape Perimeter" video

Valuing Dance Experience

Students used the *ArtsAlive* website to identify “frozen” shapes in various dance photographs. (DA-V1.2; DA-V2.1; DA-U1.2)



“They’re stretching each other, and I see triangles in between.”

“It’s like a fair”



Valuing Dance Experience

We also watched an excerpt of a performance by David Parsons Dance Company, [*In the End*](#). We looked for various pathways, shapes, levels and relationships used in the dance. (DA-U1.1; DA-U3.7; DA-U2.3)

The class discussed these elements as a group, and [charted](#) our ideas on the SMART board. (DA-U1.2; DA-V1.2; DA-V2.1; DA-V2.2; DA-V3.1; DA-V3.2)

Reflection – David Parsons' *In the End*

Describe	Interpret	Evaluate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ HIGH LEVELS, REACHING HIGH■ TURNS■ SPINS■ BALANCES - LIKE A T■ PARTNERS■ SOMETIMES ALONE, SOMETIMES TOGETHER■ CIRCLE SHAPES (FORMATIONS)■ LOW SPINS■ LIFTING■ LEAPING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ I LIKED THE LIFTS - THEY'RE FLOATING, THEY'RE STRONG■ I LIKED THE BALANCES - IT'S HARD■ THEY HAVE STRONG LEGS■ I LIKED THE TURNS - FAST, ARMS HIGH■ I LIKED WHEN THEY WERE THE SAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ I LIKED THE GUYS LIFTING THE GIRL, AND SPINNING HER■ IT LOOKED FUN■ IT WAS A GOOD DANCE, AND WE LIKED THE MUSIC TOO.

Interactive Dance Game

Using SMART Notebook, students identified and discussed body shaping and body part emphasis from a variety of images found on the *ArtsAlive.ca* web site. (DA-L1.6; DA-V2.1)

The screenshot displays the SMART Notebook interface for a lesson titled "Body Shaping". The main workspace features the following elements:

- Title:** "Body Shaping" centered at the top.
- Image:** A photograph of several dancers in various poses, framed by a blue border with a white arrow icon on the left side.
- Text Prompts:**
 - "What shapes do you see?"
 - "What body parts are being emphasized?"

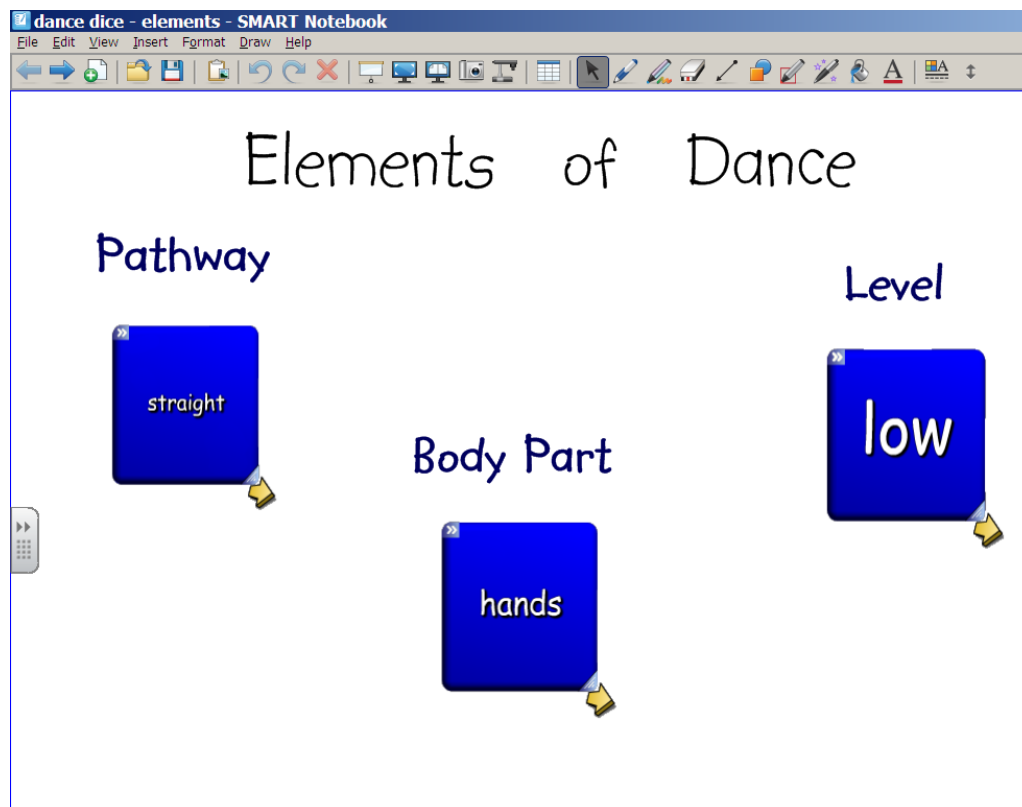
The right-hand sidebar contains a "Groups" panel with six numbered thumbnails, each with a timestamp:

- Thumbnail 1: A red circle with a white 'F' inside. Timestamp: Oct 31-11:08 AM.
- Thumbnail 2: Three red circles with white 'f' inside. Timestamp: Oct 31-10:32 AM.
- Thumbnail 3: A black silhouette of a person. Timestamp: Oct 31-11:07 AM.
- Thumbnail 4: A black silhouette of a person in a dynamic pose. Timestamp: Oct 31-10:48 AM.
- Thumbnail 5: A group of people in various poses. Timestamp: Oct 31-10:55 AM.
- Thumbnail 6: A black silhouette of a person. Timestamp: Nov 21-11:01 AM.

At the bottom right of the sidebar, there is an "Auto-hide" checkbox.

Body Shape Freeze Dance

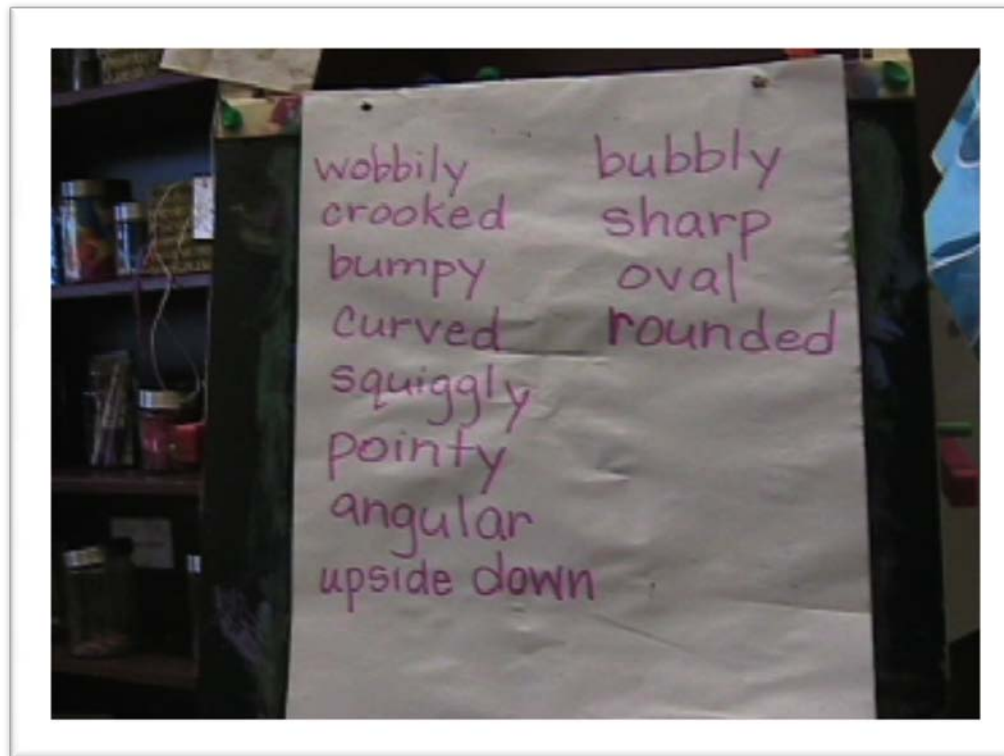
Using the SMART board interactive “Dance Dice” we incorporated various pathways, levels, directions and movements (skips, leaps, jumps, walks, runs...) followed by a READY-STOP frozen body shape (jagged, twisted, curved, straight...) (DA-C1.1; DA-C1.3; DA-C3.3; DA-C2.6)



Shape vocabulary

Students viewed images of [strange and fascinating houses](#).

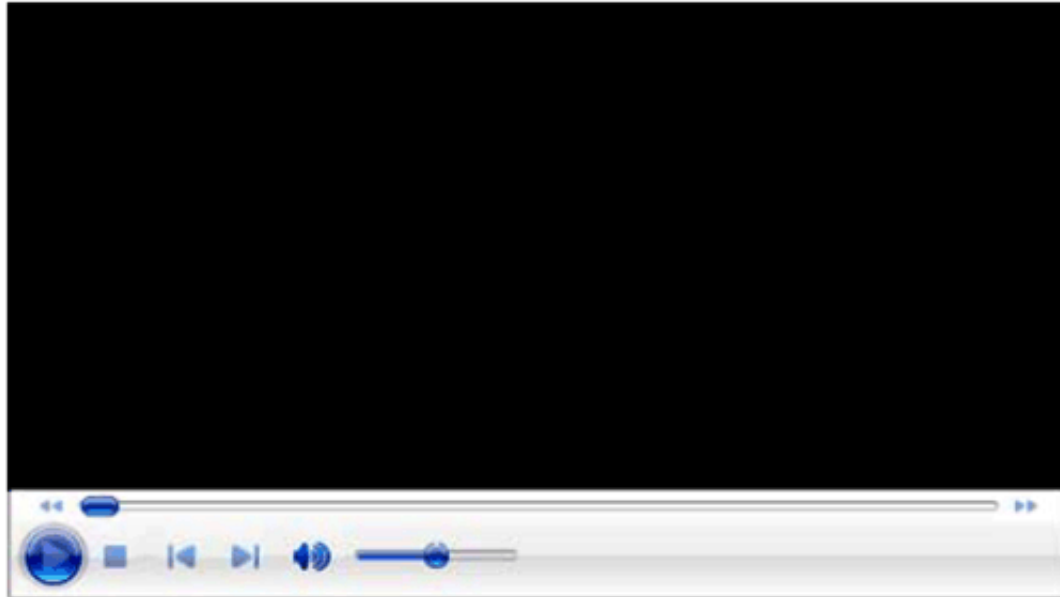
They created a rich vocabulary list which later served as the impetus for some of our dances. (DA-C1.3; A-V2.1; A-V2.4)



Body Shape Freeze Dance

Students explored a “Body Shape Freeze Dance”

Using “Ready, Stop” students froze their bodies into a variety of shapes that they had brainstormed earlier (DA-L1.1; DA-L2.2; DA-L2.9; DA-C1.1)



Click to view “Body Shapes Freeze Dance” video

Dance Story – *Magical Shape Houses*

With a beginning understanding of body shaping in dance, I narrated a story that involved a variety of movements. The story came from Sue Stinson's *Dance for Young Children*, about a house builder who built the most unusual houses for a living – houses made of jagged, twisted, angular, round shapes. After his house was blown over by a storm, magical dancing elves came sneaking about, dancing "building dances."

The elves began sawing, hammering, turning screws and painting. Each of these actions was presented with a picture, and children brainstormed and interpreted these movements through dance.

Source: Dance for Young Children by Sue Stinson

Teacher observations

I have observed that children “know more than they can say” as once expressed by Polanyi, and that “the arts help children say what cannot be said” as articulated by Eisner.

Through visual art and dance, children have opportunities to show what they know in non-traditional ways, often surprising me beyond my imagination. Children who ordinarily have difficulty with language *shine* as they construct meaning and communicate their understanding through movement and art.

I have observed greater cooperation, improved listening skills and focus when children are engaged in artistic activity. With an integrated approach, my students discover the interconnectedness of our world, deepening their understanding of the big ideas that transcend individual disciplines. They think, communicate, and share through multiple sign systems, solving problems creatively by drawing on knowledge and methods from various disciplines.

As students express themselves creatively, they bring joy and wonder into their world. The arts awaken the senses, as children experience their world through sound, texture, image and movement. In the arts, we learn to solve problems through multiple perspectives, and there is not always one right answer. Children cooperate and work together to find solutions to complex problems.

Sharing / Celebrating

We share our work on our class blog site.

We have had comments from across the world: Australia, England and the United States!

Children are eager to share and talk about their work with others, and it is especially motivating when they hear comments from others outside their immediate community.

Currently, we are exploring the possibilities of [VoiceThread](#) and "Skype" to engage in Art Talks with other kindergarten children around the world.

What is Educational Dance?

“A comprehensive, substantive, and sequential contextually based dance program that integrates the arts processes of performing, creating, and responding into all children’s education. Such a dance program is investigative. It furnishes the necessary knowledge, skills, and artistic perspectives to support aesthetic growth in all aspects of dance. Its aim is to educate broadly in and through dance to develop learners who understand dance as an art form and are skilled in the artistic processes.” (Brenda Pugh McCutchen, *Teaching Dance as Art in Education*, 2006, p. 17)

Sources used in this exemplar:

McCutchen, Brenda. (2006). *Teaching Dance as Art in Education*.

Stinson, Sue. (1988). *Dance for Young Children*.

Putumayo Presents: World Playground: A Musical Adventure for Kids

Putumayo Kids Presents: African Playground