

Teamwork through Dance

Creative dance exercise for students ages 5-8. Students will work together to develop spatial awareness, coordination and achieve a common goal. Each of these explorations could be done in about five to ten minutes or as a series to consider different ways in which we can communicate without.

Mirroring

Teacher: Begin by standing facing students and telling them that you are their mirror. When you lift your left hand they should lift their right. You can use music to give it a rhythm or play with creating your own pace. Lead them through a series of simple movements, making sure they understand the concept of “mirroring”.

Next either ask them to find a partner or pair them up and assign one student to be the leader and the other the follower. The followers should “mirror” the leaders until you ask them to switch roles.

Talk about the different challenges of leading versus following. Did some students enjoy one role more than the other? Older/more advanced students might progress the exercise by performing it again and being asked to figure out how to shift who is leading and who is following without talking. (The easiest way is to demo first with a student and stop moving when you want the student to take over).

Blind Lead

This activity works best in an all purpose room or outdoors, where there is plenty of open space.

Begin by pairing students up. One student in the pair will “lead” and the other will “follow”. Leaders begin by placing their hands on their partners’ shoulders and guiding them through the space. Make sure everyone is comfortable steering their partner and able to stop quickly. I usually have them give a little squeeze to “put on the brakes” and suggest they walk diagonally/behind rather than directly behind the person they are guiding so that they can see where they are going. Trade roles and give the followers a chance to experience leading.

If this level of the partnering is successful I then have them go back to the original roles and repeat the entire exercise, this time with the person who will be guided closing their eyes.

Afterwards its great to talk about how it felt to be guided –did they notice they paid more attention to sound, smell? Did they think they knew where they were in the room?

The next step is to have the students change partners during the exercise. As the leaders are guiding they bring the followers to a safe stopping point and go to find a new partner. Followers have to wait for someone else to come guide them. I always say multiple times –if you have your eyes closed you CANNOT move on your own, you must wait for a guide. (These steps can be spread out over a series of days or done all in a row.)