

Exploring Animal Moves - Adapted for Return to Schools during COVID

Elementary Dance/Drama - Primary - Public

Physical Distancing Adaptations

When conducting these warm-ups and conventions, it is important to adhere to the Physical Distancing guidelines from your school board. Students should remain 2m apart at all times. Students in grades 4 -12 are required to wear a mask. CODE recommends that all dance and drama work be done with 1-2 metres of social distancing. Think about using alternate learning spaces such as the gymnasium, library or school yard.

Whole Class Instruction: With floor tape, demark areas where students can stand in the classroom with a metre grid or a peripheral circle so that they can participate in drama/dance conventions at a safe distance from one another. Floor tape that is slip-resistant and made of vinyl to prevent wear and tear during cleaning is recommended.

Partner work: Students can face a partner 2m across from each other. When face to face, outstretched hands should not touch one another. Refer back to personal-space warm-ups.

Small Group work: No more than 3 or 4 students per group to allow for recommended spacing of 2m between students.

If you must move your desks to create space, please ensure that each student is moving only their own desk and chair and then retrieving their own desk and chair in order to avoid contact with others belongings.

Refer to ***General Tips for Safety in our Classrooms*** in the overview.

Big Ideas

We can move with different energies, levels, and shapes to explore, experience, and represent different animals and what we know about them.

We can make observations about our movements and the movements of others and what they communicate.

Curriculum Expectations

D3: use problem-solving strategies when experimenting with the skills, materials, processes, and techniques used in drama and dance both individually and with others

- D3.1: use problem-solving skills and their imagination to create drama and dance

Learning Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will

- begin to explore the creative process in a safe environment
- begin to develop a vocabulary for movement by exploring the elements of dance
- explore how animals move in different ways and how humans can be inspired to move like animals
- explore the structures of mirroring and flocking as a small and large group

Instructional Components and Context

Terminology

- Elements of Dance
- Mirroring
- Flocking
- Knowledge building circle
- Level
- Energy (sustained, light, sudden, sharp)
- Personal space

Materials

- Picture books about how animals move (examples include but are not limited to: *Step Gently Out* by Helen Frost, *Animal Boogie* by Debbie Harter and Fred Penner, *Bugs On The Move* by Charlotte Guillain, *Animals Move Like This* by Bobbie Kalman)
- Many picture books are available digitally through BookFlix, Epic, Vooks, youtube
- Digital images of many different animals

- Camera, iPad or video recorder - optional
- Pool Noodles, Tape (optional)

A note of caution....

Dance play is a fragile thing, prone to falling apart if it's too closely followed. Children value the attention of adults but they can also abandon their play when they feel that adults are asking too many questions or are getting too involved. It is critical that teachers make documentation (photography, transcribing dialogue) part of their everyday classroom routine so that it is unremarkable and that, whenever possible, they not interrupt children's play **while maintaining physical distance and following your School Board's health and safety protocols**. In the Reggio Children book, *Dialogue with Places*, the educators share how the children's enthusiasm for dance creation died when the adults pushed them to create a formal, choreographed dance. There is a real risk that too much direct instruction can suck the magic out of dance play.

Preparing to teach - Personal Space

With floor tape, mark areas where students can stand in the classroom with a metre grid, X on the floor or a peripheral circle so that they can participate in drama/dance conventions at a safe distance from one another. Floor tape that is slip-resistant and made of vinyl to prevent wear and tear during cleaning is recommended.

Suggested warm-ups to teach the concept of space and physical distance:

1) Space Exploration

- To teach students about personal space and social distancing, students will need to be able to maintain a cushion of space around their bodies (called personal space)
- Ask students to explore the size of their personal space bubble while remaining in one spot (you may want to designate spots using pieces of tape or small mats). Ask students to glue your feet to the floor and reach their hands way out into the space (up, to the side, low to the ground, in front, behind). *How far can they go? What happens if you bend your knees? Try it on a low level, close to the floor. This space you've just explored is called your bubble space; it can't touch anyone else's bubble or it will pop.*
- Have students try moving in their bubble to different types of music.

- Have students imagine they have a paint brush. Have them "paint" the inside of their bubbles with imaginary paint. Try moving the imaginary paint brush to different body parts and "paint" the inside of their bubble (elbow, nose, knee etc.)

For more resources on creative movement and the elements of dance:

CODE Resources:

Exploring dance elements

Introducing Creative Dance

Video: Body, Movement, Space Demonstration Classroom

2) Zap!

- In an open space, have students spread out in their own bubbles, with arms outstretched. Tell them that this is their imaginary magic wand. This magic wand has a long lightning bolt stretching out from the tip.
- Tell students the object of the game is to move through the space without touching anyone's lightning bolt.
- Tell students to imagine the lightning bolt will ZAP if it touches another lightning bolt. If two lightning bolts get too close, both participants say "ZAP" and sit down on the floor. The teacher may wish to bang a drum or ring a triangle when she/he sees two lightning bolts come close. At this signal, students can all freeze, look around and see who may be too close.

Note: You may want to practice this game with one half the class to demonstrate while the other half observes at a safe distance. If students are unable to maintain a safe distance from one another, consider using pool noodles or hula hoops if permitted by your school board. Make sure to disinfect any materials before and after use.

Learning Experience

Activity Overview

Young children are naturally curious about the world around them. They are particularly interested in the habits and behaviours of animals in all different environments. Young children are also natural movers. They are open to new ways to move their body without inhibition. This provides the perfect environment to begin exploring the elements of dance and to begin to teach some structures like mirroring and flocking. These

structures will help young children to create their own dance through play and experimentation.

The following are a series of mini-lessons that can take place in large and small groups that lead to a whole group flocking experience inspired by the movement of animals.

Mini Lesson 1

Following recommendations for Whole Class physical distancing guidelines, read a variety of books about the ways animals move. Initiate a discussion where students share what they have noticed about the ways animals move. Challenge the group to notice how animals move differently. This a chance to talk about how some animals move at a low, medium or high level. It would also be a good opportunity to talk about the size of an animal and how that influences how it moves, or the speed and type of movements that different animals exhibit (e.g. hummingbirds dart in many different directions and then pause, and elephants often move in a slow, sustained way). Students should be invited to explore ways that they can move like the animals in their own space. With floor tape, mark areas where students can stand in the classroom with a metre grid, X on the floor or a peripheral circle so that they can participate in drama/dance conventions at a safe distance from one another. Floor tape that is slip-resistant and made of vinyl to prevent wear and tear during cleaning is recommended. Also consider using an alternative learning space such as a gymnasium, library or school yard to allow for more space. Have them share with a partner some of their movements inspired by animals. Students can face a partner 2m across from each other. When face to face, outstretched hands should not touch one another. It would be helpful to put music on while the students are exploring. Pictures or short videos taken during this exploration and then projected onto the wall would be an effective way to come back together to discuss the different ways students moved like animals.

Mini Lesson 2

Meet back as a class with each student maintaining physical distancing, reflect on some of the favourite ways that they moved like animals. Divide class into two groups, one will “perform” and the other group will act as the audience to ensure a safe distance between students. Put some music back on and call out or hold up a picture of an animal, and have the students who are “performing” move like that animal in their own space, maintaining a 2-meter distance from other students by marking off areas with tape. Remind them to explore different levels, the shapes that their bodies are making, the energy of the movement (sustained, light, or sudden and sharp), and the space their body is using. Do this for several very different animals. Repeat, having the

“performers” now act as the audience. As a whole group, discuss what challenges existed as they moved. What did they notice while watching their classmates move?

Mini Lesson 3

Follow-The-Leader. Have students go to their personal spaces marked with tape or you can perform this task in an alternate learning space such as a gymnasium, library, or school yard. Tell them that they will be following you and doing the same movements and actions as you. Start out moving on the spot, using different levels and sustained movements using arms and legs and core body. Suddenly, make some of your movements quick and sharp. Stop and ask the students if it was easier or harder to copy the fast sharp movements. The students will likely decide that sustained movement is easier to copy as you have time to follow the leader’s movements. Continue on with follow the leader, but this time begin to call out an animal and have the students copy your movement. When you feel the students are ready, ask if another student would like to be the leader. Keep repeating until most or all students have had a turn. Encourage students to move using different levels to represent the animal moves.

Mini Lesson 4

Mirroring.

Begin by inviting students to choose a partner to work with. Students can face a partner 2m across from each other. When face to face, outstretched hands should not touch one another. If necessary, place pool noodles or tape to indicate this safe distance. If the class consists of junior and senior kindergarten students, the teacher can consider choosing the pairs so that the senior students could model for the juniors. Mirroring is a technique where one partner leads and the other follows. It should be difficult for someone watching to determine which of the pair is the leader and which the follower. Remind students that sustained movements were easier to follow during follow-the-leader. Suggest that this will likely be true in mirroring.

The partners stand facing each other at a 2 metre distance. The leader is to begin moving and the follower is to pretend that they are the mirror image of the leader. It may be helpful to stop after a while and invite half the class to watch and half to mirror. Once the students are able to mirror, encourage them to try out some of the animal moves that they have experimented with in other lessons (bird movements work very well for this activity). Soft, slow music should be playing during mirroring to help students to

create sustained movement for their partner to follow. *Music suggestions:* [Bensound](#), [Audionautix](#). The partners can switch roles and the leader becomes the follower.

The final step in this lesson would be to share new understandings about movement through a whole group discussion. Prompt: *Which animals were easiest to mirror? Why do you think this was true?* Make a list, or place the animal pictures in a pocket chart or on a ledge, that worked well for mirroring. You will be using this list in the next lesson.

Mini Lesson 5

Flocking. Flocking is a structure where a leader is creating movement that is followed by three or more people. It is often done in a diamond shape as it is easy for all participants to see the leader. In kindergarten, the shape often takes on more of a blob with points than a diamond, but the result is the same.

Roughly position half the class in a “stretched” diamond formation to accommodate for physical distancing. The other half of the class may watch in their own personal spaces, marked on the floor or at tables etc. Students need enough room to move their arms freely and bend and stretch within their personal space. The outdoors are particularly good for the first flocking experience as space is not limited. Choose three students that are comfortable moving using sustained movement. Place these students on the corners. Remind the students about the animals from mirroring that worked best to create sustained movement. Let them know who the leaders are, and that they will be copying the leaders in their movements. The teacher should be the first leader. When the music starts, the first leader stands with their back towards the rest of the dancers. It is not necessary for the dancers to be able to see each other, but they need to be able to see the leader. The leader can either call out an animal or simply create movement inspired by that animal. When the teacher calls switch, every dancer turns a quarter turn to the left and a new leader (at the point) is revealed. This switch happens until the group has turned all the way around and is now facing the direction they started. If possible, videotape kindergarten students flocking. The result is powerful and demonstrates a capacity for self-regulation that many people would not believe. It also allows the group of students to see themselves dancing. This is an amazing experience, and one that leads into the final lesson.

Mini Lesson 6

Audience Feedback. An important part of the creative process is when a performer hears from their audience and receives feedback. Kindergarten students are more than capable of providing their peers with feedback. Have half the class flock and half the

class watch the performance **as described above**. Discuss first, what a good audience looks like, and sounds like. A criteria for a good audience could be co-created with the students and displayed in pictures and words, near the meeting/performance area. After half the class has flocked, the audience can provide the flockers with three stars and a wish. (Three things that were done well, and one thing to improve on next time). Then the group can switch and the other half of the class provides feedback.

A class discussion could be held at the end to consolidate the experience of exploring the movement of animals.

Making Connections: Ways in Which Children Might Demonstrate Their Learning

Saying

“My muscles feel tight when I am doing a sustained movement.”

“Look at me! I’m a...”

“My wings are spread wide and flapping like an owl.”

“I feel happy when I am moving like a mouse.”

Doing

Students will be moving their bodies in new ways - experimenting with levels and space, relationship and energy. They will be self-regulating their mood, and their need for personal space as they move throughout the space designated for dance.

Making Connections: Early Learning-Kindergarten (EL-K) Team’s Intentional Interactions

Responding

“I notice that you made your body very low to move like a snake.”

“It is hard to follow your partner’s movements when they are fast and sharp. You might like to try slowing the movements down.”

“Your expression is just like a happy monkey swinging in a tree.”

“Crocodiles move low to the ground like that. How can you represent the tail in your movement?”

“What other animals might move like that?”

Challenging

“In which ways can you move together without touching? but not touching each other?”

“How can you change your arm shape to move more like an eagle?”

“Which animal moves feel the best to you? Why do you think this is?”

Extensions

Following this exploration into animal movements, students may enjoy the challenge of combining unusual movement scenarios as an extension. The following are suggestions to get you started:

- fly like you are a hummingbird dripping in honey
- run like you are a bear being chased by a bee
- hop like you are an elephant on a trampoline
- walk like you are a bird with elastics on your feet
- fly like you are a butterfly tied to a string
- move like you are a rabbit hopping through jello
- swim like you are a shark looking for dinner
- wiggle like an jellyfish going through a maze

Be sure to ensure that what you are prompting is possible within the space of your classroom while maintaining physical distancing. You may have a small number of students at a time work in a cleared space separately while the others watch, ensuring all students have a turn to move.