

DANCE LESSONS FOR BEGINNERS

AGES: High School

DESCRIPTION

Starting from scratch & teaching the basics with non-dancers for a High School Musical Production. Only brief/informal instructions.

MATERIALS

Good music that's upbeat and consistent in tempo. Plus one song for use of a mini-choreography.

FULL LESSON PLAN

Our school offers a variety of fine arts programs, but not dance. Typically in a large cast of about 45, there are usually about 5 kids who seriously dance, and then a smattering of students who danced "when they were young" and many who have never danced at all. So, in our first choreography rehearsal, I don't even touch actual choreography. I'm also working in a large room with about 40 kids at once in a 2 hour span. I teach the basics from 1st position to push turns to pique turns. We go over the steps a few times, especially steps I know I will be using in the choreography. If you do have dancers in the mix, scatter them throughout the crowd to help. I will try to use proper terminology; however, sometimes it's easier to use a description eg. pas de bourree- sometimes just doesn't stick with the non-dancers right away.

Then I will teach them a mini-combination as a large group. I would use about 8 dance steps that combines basics, traveling steps and at least one turn and one jump. Then they get into groups of about 5 and have time to practice. Then each group will perform the combination and I mark it using a rubric I found on the web - alack I can not find the website again. There are many many resources on the web, and of course the rubric needs to match your purpose. Our students are registered in Musical Theatre Course, so they do receive marks (for a variety of assessments). I will enter three dance marks over the course of the semesters - one from this lesson, one half way, and one for the performance week. When you put together the combination, use sets of 8's this time - it's easier on the students who have never danced.

The students become really supportive of one another in this one lesson alone, and the boys especially become willing to take risks and perform in front of their peers. At the end of the mini-performances, if there is time, I will slip in some more difficult steps (eg. Barrel turns - we did Oklahoma! this past year) so they can practice them on their own.

Some basics I teach day one:

1st position, 2nd position

Step Touch, step point, step heel

plie/sways
Grapevine
hitch kicks
chaine
chasse
jazz runs
push turn
"turning grapevine"
chasse ball change
ball change (stamp together)
kick ball change
"going nowhere's"
battement
pique (turns)
stag leaps
arabesque
basic jumps (eg. tuck jumps)

Obviously, if the theatre production isn't for marks, the rubric isn't necessary. Another aside, we used to have a daytime class, and this allowed for a dance section where students were able to choreograph their own dance number to a song in a musical.