

Dance Exercises for Classroom Management

Focusing the energy of a room

Rhythms Game – (This exercise works best if you start without a great deal of instruction. The students will catch on.)

Staff/Teacher is the leader, students are the followers. Teacher begins a clap or stomp pattern and the students repeat it all together. Leader can change the pattern each time and the exercise is complete when all the students are repeating the pattern each time.

Mime Game – (Can be played in a circle or with a leader facing the followers at the front of the room)

Leader silently moves from shape to shape, changing from simple to complicated shapes until everyone in the room is following their motions. The key is for the followers to do EXACTLY what the leader is doing. Additions to this game include picking the best follower to become the next leader, adding sound along with the movement pattern.

Group Count – (Works best for smaller groups, 5-20 students)

This really helps to focus concentration and feeling out of group energy. Each person in the group has to call out a number, beginning with 1 and ending with the number of people in the group (eg. If it's a group of 15, you'll be counting to 15). You have to go in order, and if two people say the number at the same time, the entire group starts over from the beginning. The goal is to get all the way to the highest number together as a group.

Moving groups from one place to another

Pathways – (these can be created either in a line or individually)

Leader gives the students a specific instruction on a quality of movement (Speed, direction, level etc.) and the group has to move from one activity to another or one station to another using that movement quality. Students can also give ideas for pathways or movement.

Examples: Walk to snack using a wavy or curvy pathway
 Travel from one room to the next leading with your left elbow
 Create a pathway along the floor with your thumb

Follow the Leader –

Variation on the classic game, where teacher gives the leader a specific instruction on the way they move (eg. Do all of your motions as if you are walking through honey, move like you're walking on a tight rope etc...) and the students follow.

Creative Line-ups or Rows

There are so many variations on this idea. These are some of our favorites:

Line up...

Silently shortest to tallest

according to birthday, using no words and only your fingers for communication

according to length of hair

according to shirt color in rainbow order

reverse alphabetical order (Z goes first) by first name.

Community Building

Dance in the Middle – (This exercise is great for drawing out creativity, talking about issues of sharing and being accepting of differences in a group)

All of the students stand in a circle. Members of the circle each share one dance move. The leader helps put the moves together into a dance that everyone dances as a group. The simpler the moves are the better. After the group has danced the movement they created in a circle, the leader calls out groups to dance together in the middle. (eg. Everyone wearing sneakers, if you're wearing a blue shirt, if you're in the 3rd grade..)

Variation: Leader can call out individual names of students for solos if the group is comfortable, or switch back and forth between the two.

Story Dancing – (This exercise can be done in small groups where the students create their own dance or facilitated by a leader in a larger group)

Students share a story. It can be from their day, from their summer, their favorite memory, or on any other topic. It should be short and simple – a few sentences at most. Then the group comes up with shapes and movements that represent the student's story. This can be repeated for each person in the group or with several different stories.

Expressions – (This exercise can help with identifying and expressing feelings and emotions within a group)

Leader guides the dancers through a freestyle/improvisational dance by giving them certain cues or qualities to express in their dancing. The dancers can use any moves they want but they have to express the quality that the leader calls out. This game can also be played in conjunction with Freeze Dance, changing the quality after every freeze.

Examples: love, freedom, kindness, fear, joy, anger, loneliness, respect,

Cranky, silly, tired, stretchy, shy, bold