

TEACHING ARTIST LESSON: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Name: Grace Kohl – DANCE

Date: 2/20/26

1. Describe your lesson.

STORYTELLING THROUGH DANCE: SETTING EXPLORATION – 2nd Grade

We introduce the importance of setting in storytelling, breaking down different settings and discussing how we can illustrate these places with our movement and dancing. This is done through ‘Imaginary Field Trips’ in which the students listen to the sounds of 3 specific places, then identify what they heard and where they might have travelled on this ‘field trip’. After revealing each of the settings- City, Beach and Savannah- the students brainstorm what is vital to each, and how we can use our dancing to illustrate these settings. Students then dance as though they are in each of these environments, collaborating with each other to ensure the audience is able to understand the 3 different settings.

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to define the literary element ‘setting’, as well as identify the specifications of three different environments: City, Beach and Savannah. Students will illustrate each setting through non-verbal communication, using their dancing, movement and body language to express the various traits of each.

2. Did your lesson go the way you expected? Why or why not?

On this particular day, my previous classes all had copious amounts of energy. I always try to lean into these high energy days, as dancing lends itself to the expression of energy and students tend to be more open to exploration when they’re wanting to squirm out of their seats and get their wiggles out.

However, this specific 2nd grade lesson requires students to listen, focus and visualize during these ‘Imaginary Field Trips’. As this was my last class of the day, I assumed these students would share the previous classes’ lively kinetic energy. I planned on starting with my normal fun warm up, adding in a couple of dynamic movements to help channel that high energy that was sure to come.

When the students arrived, they were exhausted. The vibrant, bouncing off the wall energy that I anticipated was nowhere to be seen. Instead, the students were sleepy and ready to go home. I knew that my adjusted, high energy warm up would only zap the last of their energy stores, leaving no room for the lesson and movement exploration to come. This was absolutely not how I anticipated class beginning.

Rather than fight this shift in energy, I leaned into it by starting class with a brief meditative moment that I typically reserve for my end of class cool downs. I led the class in some simple, slow movements to awaken their physicality and prepare themselves for dance, ending with some focused breathing and positive affirmations. This led to an excellent class that had a greater capacity for focus and listening during our ‘Imaginary Field Trips’, as well as an excitement to physically explore these settings with a renewed and lively spirit.

3. Did your students experience growth? How?

Absolutely! I had students who are typically less excited to get up and dance that were actually excited to explore movement during this lesson because they were able to fully listen and visualize the settings. By starting class on a more mindful note, students were able to grow anticipation for movement and dancing. Especially after knowing and discussing all the different animals, objects and things they could physically explore.

There were also students who typically excel at the movement part of dance class, but struggle with the discussions and reflections that accompany my lessons, who were engaged and participating like I'd never seen before. They were raising their hands and contributing to the group discussion when normally they would just beg for me to drop everything and play freeze dance for the whole lesson.

Observing as the students discovered ways of participating outside of their normal comfort zone was an amazing experience that I will continually strive to foster in my dance classes.

4. What challenges did you experience? How did you overcome?

As I had anticipated a much different vibe from the students based on the previous five classes, I was a bit surprised when they entered feeling drained and utterly exhausted. I had to be quick on my feet and pivot my warm up plans to a more meditative, mindful physical warm up rather than the kinetic, active routine I'd typically use. This worked wonderfully, and I was able to facilitate creative discussions and collaborative movement explorations throughout the class. Because I listened and adjusted, relying on my abilities and experience as a dance teaching artist and trusting my programming and routines, the students had an amazing class full of creativity, exploration and excitement.

5. What challenges did your students experience? How did they overcome?

By listening to the students and adjusting my warmup, rather than ignoring them and pushing through class as I intended, they were set up for success in a major way. The mindful warm up allowed students to enter the space as they are, easing into dance class on a day they were all drained and just wanting to go home. Ending the meditative warm up with positive affirmations helped students enter a mindset that was kinder and lighter.

They were then capable of a more focused active listening that allowed their imaginations to run wild during the 'Imaginary Field Trips'. This led to a lively group discussion about what they heard and where they might have travelled to in their minds. By the time it came to exploring the settings through dance, the students were eager and ready to dance.

6. What are you most proud of? Why?

I'm most proud of the students for trusting me as their dance teacher. I always aspire to give them consistency and safety in my dance classes, constantly assuring them that I will never "make them do a triple back flip or anything crazy like that!" So I know that a few students gave me side eye when I told them we would be adjusting our warm up today, rather than doing our usual routine that they know and love. It took trust for them to participate, even when they weren't sure and were just so tired that they probably would've preferred to put their heads down and sleep through class. They gave it a try because they know that dance class is a safe place for them to try and fail and question and learn and grow. I'm so proud of them for always trying.

TEACHING ARTIST LESSON: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Name: Leah Shannon – VISUAL ARTS

Date: 3/4/26

1. Describe your lesson.

MYTHICAL CREATURES PRINTS – 4th & 5th Grade

Students discuss mythical creatures from around the world, design a creature that symbolizes one or multiple bigger concepts, and create a foam-carved stamp to practice relief printmaking.

2. Did your lesson go the way you expected? Why or why not?

I expected the process to be a bit more technically challenging, and I hoped the content (mythical creature) would peak their interests. I was correct on both! I was pleasantly surprised to see so many students comfortable with the mystery and problem-solving of printmaking.

3. Did your students experience growth? How?

I witnessed many students learn how to let go of expectations of "perfect" and be present in the process. I believe printmaking is such a great opportunity for students to experience this. I saw students grow their patience as they kept creating multiple prints to get an outcome they were satisfied with.

4. What challenges did you experience? How did you overcome?

I got better at understanding how to explain the technical aspects of this project - explaining hand strength, how to carve the foam, trial and error. What helped me learn this was reflecting with the class. I would do something and then ask: Why did I do this? Why did I do it in this order? Example: Why am I only using once color for my very first print?

5. What challenges did your students experience? How did they overcome?

Students struggled with legibility of their designs, too much/not enough water, not carving not carving their foam deep enough, not enough marker ink, and couldn't think of a design idea. They achieved success by receiving advice from me and peers and having a good learning attitude!

6. What are you most proud of? Why?

I am proud of how well the students responded to a process that can be frustrating and sometimes unrewarding (in the outcome). I think the students feed off my passion for printmaking and can see how fun the mystery of the process is!

TEACHING ARTIST LESSON: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Name: Kyle Taylor - THEATRE

Date: 2/16/26

1. Describe your lesson.

ANIMAL HERD – 2nd Grade

In this 2nd grade lesson, our objective is to understand adjectives by incorporating them as character traits. Students begin class by brushing up on a previous game called “Animal Herds.” After the review, they move to an area where they can watch “*Unpack Your Adjectives*” from Schoolhouse Rock.

Once we discuss what we liked, learned, or still have questions about from the video, we add another layer to “Animal Herds.” In this version, students add an adjective to their animal characters.

We then return to our chairs, where groups brainstorm potential adjectives to add to their science fiction nature documentary script in progress.

CLTS:

- I can define “adjective”
- I can use adjectives to describe my alien.
- I can act out a character based on a character trait.

2. Did your lesson go the way you expected? Why or why not?

This lesson rarely surprises me. I am proud of the way the activities flow into each other while also allowing students to transition to and from the hallway smoothly.

Where it can surprise me is when students have a lot to say following the video. Sometimes they throw wild curveball questions or comments my way that get us talking. When they’re naturally curious and engaged, it’s hard to cut them off, which can compress the time allotted for the following activities.

3. Did your students experience growth? How?

I believe students experience growth because I can see clear differences in how they act out the animals once adjectives are added to their instructions. After the second round of Animal Herds, I can ask them, “What adjectives did I use to describe those animals?” and they demonstrate a solid understanding.

4. What challenges did you experience? How did you overcome?

One challenge that arises is getting sidetracked by questions and comments after the video. Another challenge is behavior management. This game involves large groups of students moving their bodies in unfamiliar ways in the room, so there is potential for negative outcomes if not everyone moves safely.

Luckily, safety rules and expectations were clearly laid out in the previous lesson, and no new rules are introduced today. Students should be able to help with precorrections, especially if we had trouble sticking to expectations in the previous class. Otherwise, this lesson functions as a nice review of the behavior we are all agreeing to.

5. What challenges did your students experience? How did they overcome?

Students overcome the challenge of adapting their character to fit the adjectives given. They adapt to ambiguity as they attempt to act out an animal they may have never seen before, making a bold choice and being curious to see how close they were.

They also overcome the feelings that come with an incorrect guess by reveling in the joy of learning from a mistake.

6. What are you most proud of? Why?

In this lesson, I am most proud of the flow. It offers just enough time on their feet and time in their seats—time to explore and experiment, followed by time to reflect and absorb.

Sometimes it feels like a bootcamp in transitions, but the students handle it very well.

TEACHING ARTIST LESSON: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Name: Nick Corbello

Date: 2/20/26

1. Describe your lesson.

COMPOSE & PLAY SIMPLE RHYTHMS AND MELODIES – 2ND thru 5th Grade

Students learn to compose simple rhythms and melodies and play them on the xylophones/ glockenspiels. To begin, we use Song Maker to create a simple rhythm with one note. Students tell me where to put spaces and notes to compose our rhythm. Then, we practice singing the rhythm, matching pitch of the note we have used. Once we can sing in rhythm and tune with each other, we practice playing the rhythm on our instruments while singing it at the same time. Students then choose two additional notes with which we repeat our rhythm, creating a simple melody that we practice singing and playing on our instruments. Over the course of multiple classes, we repeat this process in a variety of keys, exploring how we can change the key by changing the root note in the melody (staying with the same key signature).

The main learning target for this lesson is to be able to listen carefully while playing music in a group so that we make sure that we play in rhythm, in tune, and at an appropriate volume with each other. I also aim to show how we can compose rhythms by choosing where to leave space between notes and how we can create music with a wide variety of moods by changing the key we are playing in, even if we have an instrument with only eight notes.

2. Did your lesson go the way you expected? Why or why not?

Overall, yes, I had a good sense of what our challenges would be and how we might be able to overcome them. I think involving students in composing collaborative rhythm and melody has helped to get them focused at the beginning of the lesson. Since many students have not played xylophones and glockenspiels before, I knew that it might be easier if we started with singing our rhythm and melody before they tried to play it. I was worried that it would be hard to get the students to get quiet with instruments in front of them, but Kyle suggested I teach them the terms “rest” and “concert rest” and have them practice following these directions before handing out instruments, and this has helped a lot. I also knew that it would be easier for new musicians to play very repetitive melodies, which is why we repeat the same rhythm with each new note that we add to the melody. These decisions have helped make the lesson very accessible, and students consistently seem to enjoy the rhythms and melodies that we compose together.

3. Did your students experience growth? How?

Yes, when I first teach this lesson, I usually have a lot of students who want to play random notes and rhythms, which is understandable when they are first handed an instrument. I give them a minute or two to explore their instruments, and then we begin to play as a group. I still usually have some students who have difficulty staying focused and playing our composition in the beginning. However, by the end of our first class, most of the group can play in rhythm and in tune with each other for a sustained amount of time. During reflection at the end, some students tell me that playing different notes was challenging, but they also usually say that it was fun, and I sometimes find that these same students did a great job of playing the notes. I also find that students who have resisted participating in classes in the past are more likely to engage when they have physical instruments.

4. What challenges did you experience? How did you overcome?

There are still moments when students have difficulty following instructions, playing our composition correctly, or playing at an appropriate volume. Sometimes, other students feel overwhelmed when our class gets too noisy. At moments like these, I have the class practice playing very quietly, following me as I whisper the notes and demonstrate how to play softly. When I hear students playing incorrect notes, I either stop to clarify for the class which notes we are playing, or I walk around and show students where the notes are on their instruments. If students show too much resistance to following instructions, I will take their instruments temporarily and give them back after the students have demonstrated the ability to focus. We usually succeed in bringing more coherence and less noise to our music.

5. What challenges did your students experience? How did they overcome?

Following rhythm and playing melodies with multiple notes can be challenging for students playing instruments for the first time. However, they usually show strong focus and interest in practicing enough to overcome these challenges. I make sure to set a slow tempo for our music so that everyone can follow along, and, if students find a certain rhythm challenging, I alter it to make it easier to follow. I often mention that a certain level of challenge makes music fun; if it was too easy, it might feel boring. I try to make sure that I offer just enough challenge to make music fun.

6. What are you most proud of? Why?

I strive to offer opportunities for students to feel safe enough to take creative risks in a community because I believe that this strengthens community and builds a sense of belonging and confidence. I think that learning a new instrument can feel intimidating, and I feel proud that I have found ways to make it feel accessible and exciting in a group setting. This includes offering a way for us to compose rhythm and melody as a group so that, right from the beginning, students learn how they can generate their own musical ideas and play them. I also feel proud that, as I have mentioned, this lesson seems to have enough draw to it to interest students who have had trouble staying focused in the past.