

Overview of Dance Elements from The NSW K-6 Dance Syllabus

Action – What?

Action refers to the physicality of the dancing body.

Useful questions to develop understanding of this element might include:

What can the body do? What activity is taking place? developing understanding of the range of possibilities including locomotor action (travel by walking, running, jumping, stepping, rolling, sliding), non-locomotor (twist, gesture, bend, stretch, tilt, balance).

What body shapes can be seen? developing understanding of symmetrical and asymmetrical body shapes in motion or still (curved, stretched, angular, wide, twisted, narrow).

What part of the body is moving? head, torso, limbs, joints, front, back, side, spine, arms, legs, feet, knees, elbows, fingers, wrists, neck, shoulders — using body parts in isolation and in coordination with other body parts.

Dynamics – How?

Dynamics refers to the quality of the dance movement, including the effort made.

Useful questions here might include: *How can the body move? How is the movement carried out? How is the body using weight, force, flow, energy and spatial qualities?* Consideration is given to the quality of the movement and the effort or dynamics involved. Students can learn about dynamics as one of the elements of dance by using the following

examples:

- moving to music with sustained and smooth quality
- moving and stopping suddenly, showing tension, following teacher's direction with hand-held percussion
- moving firmly with strength and power or lightly with a fine and delicate quality
- moving to appropriate accompaniment, showing contrasts of energy
- moving directly to people, objects and locations
- moving with a meandering quality to people, objects and locations
- exploring combinations of qualities such as moving lightly and directly.

Time – When?

Time refers to particular qualities ranging from fast to slow use of the body in time and including pace and speed. These qualities include the musical element of duration, with the use of beat, rhythm, tempo and metre.

Students can learn about time as one of the elements of dance by using the following examples:

- using music or the body as the impetus for rhythmic movement to show contrasting use of pace
- moving to show acceleration and deceleration as the body travels through space
- moving to show gradual changes or sudden changes in speed
- moving to show contrasting use of tempo
- maintaining stepping to a beat or underlying steady pulse while travelling in the space
- performing to show sensitivity to a range of rhythmic patterns and phrases
- performing to demonstrate physical interpretation of metre.

Space – Where?

Space refers to the personal and general space used by the dancing body and is the third element of dance.

Useful questions to develop understanding of space might include:
Where can the body go? Where does the dance take place?

Students can learn about space as one of the elements of dance by using the following examples:

- investigating the personal space their body takes up by making small and large shapes
- sharing general space by stretching and curling to make large and small shapes in groups
- moving using a range of pathways: straight, curved, meandering, zigzag
- moving using different directions: up and down, forward/back, from side to side
- moving close to, towards, away from and far from others and objects
- using eye focus to communicate spatial clarity and intention
- performing movement at high, medium and low levels, across the floor and into the air.

Relationships – Who?

Relationships refers to the way the body relates to individuals, groups and objects and is the fourth element of dance.

A useful question here might be: With whom and what can we dance?

Students can learn about relationships as one of the elements of dance by using the following examples:

- moving contrasting parts of the body in relation to each other (eg finger to foot)
- performing a short piece of dance alongside half the class, with the others as audience
- performing with a partner
- performing their own movement as a member of a group
- performing the same movement as other members of a group
- keeping in time with a group, thereby maintaining the relationship between members
- performing with sensitivity to other dancers, objects, the location and an audience.

Structure

Along with the other elements of action, dynamics, time, space and relationships, *structure* gives unity and form to dance according to the dance maker's intention.

Structure provides opportunities to learn about the use of repetition, contrast, variety and transitions in dances.

Dances might contain the repetition of certain actions, body shapes or rhythms to provide unity.

Dances are made from movement patterns (motifs), sequences or phrases varying in their significance and importance.

Contrast in dynamic qualities, directions and levels might provide interest in the dance.

Transitions are used to maintain fluency by linking phrases and sections to make a unified whole.

Structure relates to the way dances are the same, similar or different.

Students can learn about structure in dance by using the following examples:

- repeating certain actions or sequences to give unity to the dance
- using contrasting actions or dynamics to provide variety in the dance
- making use of the dance space in a variety of ways to provide interest in the dance
- highlighting certain actions by enlarging, exaggerating or diminishing them
- using clear transitions to maintain fluency and link phrases or sequences imaginatively
- repeating rhythmic patterns at certain points in the dance to provide continuity
- performing movement at the same time as other dancers or as a contrast to others.