“Ballroom Dance, Oh, Yes You Can!” – Janet Kennedy

Introductory Activities – Easing students into rhythmic activities and dance

**Connect and Disconnect**

Goal – The following method can take the trauma out of socializing. When you ask students to get a partner and hold hands, you may have asked them to do the worst thing in the whole world. Therefore, make getting a partner a fun thing to do.

Formation – Invite the students to sit on the floor in a cluster, not in any specific formation.

Procedure

1. Ask them to define the word connect. Then ask the students to define disconnect.
2. Now let the students demonstrate the terms. Have one student turn to a classmate and ask him or her to connect his or her index fingers by touching only the fingertips. This person becomes the student’s first connection. As the students to disconnect their index fingers. (Holding hands is not always considered cool. You have remedied that problem by not asking them to hold hands, but you have allowed them comfortably to identify a partner.)
3. The class is now ready for the adventure of connecting with a specific person without holding hands. If there are an uneven number of students, allow one group to have a connection with three students. Students stand up and get in a scatter formation. Say aloud, “Connect with your first partner,” and the students will find a partner immediately and touch index fingers. Now say aloud, “Disconnect,” and the students will disconnect their index fingers. Make sure that the students remember who their first connection is.
4. Now say aloud, “Connect with a second partner with whom to touch index fingers. This activity can continue until you have as many connections as you have activities.
5. What will the students do with each new partner? Perform rhythmic activities that you teach to the class. Turn on music that students can relate to and that is medium paced for the first connection partners. Have them perform five or six activities, such as these:
   - First connection partners cross-clap their hands
   - Second connection partners cross-kick their legs. Partners face each other. They touch index fingertips from both hands. Then they kick with the right foot crossing in front of the left foot and then with the left foot crossing in front of the right. This way they are kicking opposite directions and never colliding or touching each other with their kicks
   - Third connection partners do the bump. They swing their hips and bump them together
   - Fourth connection partners do the elbow swing. They swing with their elbows locked for four counts one way and the reverse direction
   - Fifth connection partners do “step together, step, touch” step
   - Sixth connection partners both do an under arm turn

Teacher Tips
• The concept of connection lets you teach many skills, using equipment (balls, hoops, scarves) as well as basic or creative movement. Since students are partner for a very short time, they can learn to be comfortable with many other students.

• The process is a grand memory exercise. Try some other music that is faster to practice this connect and disconnect activity and to emphasize remembering the connections. Add some combinations: boy-girl, three-person, four-person, two boy-two girl, and so on. This will involve the children in paying attention to directions and not to potential partners.

**Connector**

Goal – Taking the trauma out of socializing. Finding partners and forming a connection in other ways beside hand holding

Formation – Scatter formation around the gym

Procedure

1. Discuss ways to safely touch or connect comfortably with other students.
2. Say aloud, “Find a partner and make a connection with just your fingertips.” Tell students to remember this partner and how they connected.
3. Say aloud, “Find a new partner and make a back to back connection.” Remind them to remember this is their second connector.
4. Say aloud, “Find a new partner and make a connection with your elbows tips.” Again the reminder.
5. Say aloud, “Find partner one and connect.” Students go back to their first partner and try to remember how they connected.
6. Say aloud, “Find a new partner make a connection shoulder to shoulder facing opposite directions.” Remind them again about remembering this fourth connector.
7. Say aloud, “Find partner two and connect.” Students go back to their second partner.
8. Say aloud, “Find a new partner and make a connection with your toes. Remind them that this is the fifth connector.
9. You can continue on with more connectors and the then going back to any of the earlier connectors. It’s difficult to remember more than six or seven connectors.

This is a great memory exercise.

**Roping Them In**

Goal – Work in unison without holding hands

Music – Choose music of various tempos that the children will readily relate to.

Formation – circle - You will need a rope that is strong enough for students to pull without it breaking. It should be made out of a material that will not hurt their hands when holding on to it. Tie it together at
the ends to form one continuous piece of material that is long enough for each student to hold with both hands, yet will allows for there to be at least 24 inches between each child. Cotton rope is great.

Procedure

1. The activity will begin when the students form a circle (try alternating boys and girls) and are facing toward the center of the circle.
2. Stoppers are to be discussed.
   - The rope is never to be put near the neck.
   - The rope is never to be wrapped around the arms or legs.
   - Your space is yours only.
   - Horseplay is unacceptable.
3. The direction in which the rope moves will give another indicator to the student which way to move while holding onto it and learning the steps.
4. Give verbal directions regarding the precise movement you want students to perform, and demonstrate it several times. Have the students model your movement. (4-counts)
   - Walk into the center of the circle lifting the rope and walk out backward lowering rope.
   - Jump into the center of the circle, turn around, and hold the rope behind you with both hands as you the jump away from the center to the edge of the circle.
   - Holding the rope with the right hand, release the left hand and turn to the left; students will be facing clockwise.
   - Side-step for steps to the right – that is toward the center of the circle – beginning with the right foot.
   - Side-step four steps to the left - away from the center of the circle – beginning with the left foot.
   - Still holding the rope with the right hand, move forward clockwise with a “step, step, step, hop” step. Repeat
   - Students hold the rope with both hands, face the center of the circle, step with the left foot, and kick first the right leg and then the left leg four times.
   - Have the students raise both hands while holding the rope and put it behind them at waist level. Note: students may need to let go with one hand. Bow and then raise both hand while holding the rope and put it in front of them at waist level. Bow again.
   - Move into the center of the circle using, “step, step, step, stomp.”
   - Move out of the circle using, “step, step, step, stomp.”

Reference: Rhythmic Activities and Dance, John Price Bennett and Pamela Coughenour Riemer

**Skip and Scatter**

Equipment needed: Boom box, CDs, polyspots
• Have the students find a partner and stand facing partner with a polyspot on the floor between them. It does not matter whether partners are male or female. Partners should stand touching finger tips to finger tips (phalanges to phalanges). The polyspot is their home.

• Tell the students that when the music starts, they should all “**skip and scatter**” around the general safe space until they hear “Come back home.” When they hear “Come back Home”, they should continue skipping and return to their home, ending up facing their partners.

• Stop the music and teach “Honor Your Partner”, or bow (male) and curtsey (female). Be sure that males are far enough apart so as to not bump heads. Bow and curtsey as if you are meeting Queen Elizabeth II

• Then with the music playing, **skip and scatter**. Call everyone back home and teach them to do a right arm swing on an eight count beat and then a left arm swing on an eight count beat. Students need to go around just once and then return to home spot.

• Then with the music playing, **skip and scatter**. Call everyone back home and practice honor your partner, right and left arm swing. Teach the Do-Si-Do and See-Saw. Do-so-do is done by facing your partner, walking forward 3 steps passing right side to right side with partner, then side stepping right to pass back to back in 1 count, and then walking backward to return to where the students began in 4 counts. The See-Saw is a Do-Si-Do passing left side to left side.

• Then with the music playing, call out **skip and scatter**. After 30 to 45 seconds, call everyone back home. Check heart rate! Ten with music playing start with honor your partner, then right arm swing, left arm swing, so-so-do and see-saw and then add a swing with both arms (holding hands), to an 8 count beat.

**Reference:** The World of Fun Folk Game and Dance or Multicultural Folk Dance Guide by Christy Lane and Susan Langhout

**Teaching Rhythm from A – Z**

This activity will help children feel comfortable moving to the beat of the music while moving through space.

**Locomotor moves:**

a) Begin by having students walk across the floor in lines with each line walking across the floor every 8 counts. Use current music or disco music at about 120 BPM

b) Teach basic rhythm by having students walk on the beat
c) Repeat walk focusing on chest lifted and eyes looking straight ahead
d) Walk backwards on the beat
e) Walk forward for 4 counts, then backwards for 4 counts turning sharply on every four counts
f) Turn all the way around every 4 counts
g) Turn the opposite direction every 4 counts
h) Turn again focusing on power of shoulders on turn and looking with eyes
i) Have students perform a continuous grapevine on the beat facing right
j) Repeat facing L
k) Perform the grapevine twice as fast focusing on being “light” on the feet
l) Walk forward for 4 counts, ¼ turn L and grapevine for 4 counts
m) Repeat other side
n) Walk forward for 4, then perform a triple step in 2 counts of music, and triple step with the other foot in 2 counts of music (shuffle or skip)
o) Repeat going backwards
p) through q) Just make up your own 8 count locomotor steps

Reference:  http://www.christylane.com/TeachersNotes20041102.htm  (Christy Lane)

**Now let’s try some basic ballroom steps!**

Swing – Triple step right foot for girls, left foot for boys
  - Triple step left foot for girls, right foot for boys
  - Rock step back on right foot for girls and left foot for boys

Cha Cha – Step forward on left foot and back on right for girls – opposite for boys
  - Triple step (cha, cha, cha)
  - Step backward on right foot and forward on left foot for girls – opposite for boys