

PERCUSSIVE DANCE INSPIRED BY KATHERINE DUNHAM

YOUR TEACHING ARTIST:

KARLA NWEJE



Karla Nweje is a dance artist that believes not only in the intrinsic value of dance but the ability of a dance to inform us about history and culture. She often believes in the arts as instrumental in the quest for social justice. These elements are integral to her Teaching Artist practice.

Katherine Dunham was an anthropologist, dancer, choreographer, creator of the Dunham Technique, scholar and activist. As a youth, Karla was inspired by Dunham's research as well as her ability to transform the roots of black dance into creative choreography that still today speaks to anyone.

ARTIST AND ARTISTIC MODELS INCLUDED IN THIS LESSON:

- Artist – Katherine Dunham (Online Articles and Essays)
 - [Biography](#) from KDCAH
 - [Biography](#) from personal website
- Katherine Dunham: [A Life in Dance](#)
- Katherine Dunham: [Timeline](#)
- Artistic Models (Online Interview, Instructional & Performance Videos)
 - [Dunham on the Need for Dunham Technique](#)
 - [Dunham Technique: Contractions](#)
 - [Dunham Technique: Fall and Recovery with Body Roll](#)
 - [Dunham Technique: Breathing](#)
 - [Dunham Technique: Leg Swings with Single Circle](#)
 - [Cakewalk](#)

LEARNING GOALS:

Students will:

- Experience the art of dance as viable tool for communicating ideas, stories, emotions, and more.
- Identify BASTE principles (BODY/ACTION/SPACE/TIME/ENERGY)
- Utilize BASTE principles as tools for learning and developing dance sequences as well as for post-observation reflections.
- Work collaboratively.
- Experience several fundamentals of percussive movement.
- Learn the cultural and historical contexts of the discipline and how they relate to their experiences with pop culture.
- Participants will contribute as both presenters and observers.

MEASURE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT BASED ON:

- Consistent student engagement
- Ability to use BASTE principles during the composition and reflection phases

GRADE LEVEL(S):

This lesson plan is designed for grades 3rd-8th.



COMPAS PRISM PROGRAM

Teaching Artist-designed lesson plans inspired by the work of local and national African American artists

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THIS LESSON:

Lesson-related terminology:

- BASTE – the 5 elements of dance per MN State Dance Standards (BODY/ACTION/SPACE/TIME/ENERGY).
- Position – an arrangement of the body.
- Transition – movement, passage, or change from one position to another.
- Percussive Dance: A highly rhythmic and musical dance form that relies on precise execution of foot and hand-based dance patterns.
- Echo: any repetition or close imitation.
- Canon: Choreographic form that reflects the musical form of the same name, in which individuals and groups perform the same movement/phrase beginning at different times.
- Call & Response: Although used by many, a structure that is often associated with West-African based music and dance forms. One soloist/group performs with the second soloist/group entering “in response” to the first.
- Polyrhythm: A rhythm which makes use of two or more different rhythms simultaneously.

LESSON ACTIVITIES

(COMPLETE THESE ACTIVITIES IN THE ORDER LISTED)

- Watch the art models provided and decide what to bring into the classroom. Using the artistic models provided, give students a brief introduction to the artist and the art form.
- Warm Up! Have students get into rows facing the session leader. This can include a range of cardio and dynamic stretches.
- Break the students into a large group, introduce a first percussive dance sequence with students dancing in unison.
- Create a second group by dividing the larger group down the middle. Have the students face each other, varying the sequence using TIME as follows: Echo, Canon.
- Have students stop facing each other and face the session leader. Then introduce the second percussive dance sequence with the students in unison.
- Break the students back up into the previous two groups. Encourage students to explore working with sequences one & two by: combining (in no specific order) and practicing as a larger group sequence, working with call & response, doing both sequences simultaneously (blending them into polyrhythms).
- Have students face the session leader and practice sequences one & two in unison.
- Finally, have groups one & two face each other; each group then alternates between presenting and observing.
- Wrap-up/reflection.



EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS LESSON PLAN:

- 4.1.2.1.1 Demonstrate movement using control, coordination and balance in movement replication and improvisation in more than one dance tradition.
- 4.2.1.1.1 Create movement sequences and improvisations using choreographic forms to express an idea, theme, image or tradition.
- 4.3.1.1.1 Interpret and perform movement characteristics and styles of more than one dance form or tradition.
- 6.1.2.1.1 Integrate control, coordination, balance, body alignment and musicality through movement replication and improvisation in more than one dance tradition.
- 6.1.3.1.2 Analyze the meanings and functions of dance, such as dance as art and dance as entertainment.

EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Large, open space (uncarpeted floor preferred)
- Speaker or sound system
- Flipchart paper or Smartboard for posting instructions and/or responses

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HELP YOU ACHIEVE IN YOUR CLASSROOM?**

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