

WEIGHT AND BALANCE FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Ages: 12 to 18

Music suggestions are from *Music for Creative Dance (MCD)* Volumes 1, 2, 3, and 4 and *BrainDance Music* by Eric Chappelle.

Length

Five 45- to 60-minute related classes over the course of one week or several weeks

Day 1

Warming Up

For more information, see Warming Up in chapter 4.

BrainDance: Dancers do these BrainDance patterns standing: breath/strong, tactile/light, core–distal/strong, head–tail/light, upper–lower/strong, body–side and horizontal eye tracking/light, cross–lateral and vertical eye tracking/strong, vestibular/light. *Suggested music: BrainDance Music, #7.*

Introducing the Concept: *Weight—strong, light, passive, active; Balance—on-balance, off-balance.* Dancers read and say the words as they physically demonstrate the concepts of *weight* and *balance*.

Exploring the Concept

Bridges

When you say, “Find a friend and form a bridge,” dancers press palms together with a partner to form a strong bridge, pressing hands with equal weight and on-balance. When you say, “Dance all around,” dancers push apart and dance through space with light, off-balance movements. Also cue changes in level, size, energy, and speed. You might also cue dancers to make light, fingertip bridges on-balance and dance away strongly off-balance. *Suggested music: MCD Vol. 2, #5 or Vol. 4, #6 or Vol. 1, #15.*

Reflection

“Make a strong, on-balance shape or a light, tipping shape depending on your preferred way of moving during the last activity.”

Developing Skills

Choose one of the following activities.

Dance Technique

Work on technical skills in the particular genre or style you are teaching. Focus on strong and light movements, active and passive weight, and on-balance and off-balance movements. For example, in a ballet class have dancers perform light *rond de jambes*, strong *tendus*, or off-balance *chassés*. Remind them to use some passive weight to yield into the floor in a *plié* and active weight to rise to *relevé*. Another idea is for dancers to improvise 32 counts of on- and off-balance movements between one set of exercises and strong and light movements between another set of exercises.

Movement Combination

Dancers learn a new movement phrase created by the teacher that focuses on changes in weight and balance. The new phrase could be added to a combination with which dancers are already familiar. For example, dancers practice this movement combination for 4 measures of 8 counts each: *Press 8 counts, flick 8 counts, balance on one leg 8 counts, tip off balance 4 counts, recover and hold 4 counts.* Another option: Teach a cultural dance such as *Troika* or *Mayim*. Instructions for these dances are in *Brain-Compatible Dance Education* (Gilbert, 2006).

Creating

Vases and Tables

Half the dancers form strong, on-balance shapes representing tables. Encourage dancers to make creative shapes on low and middle levels. The other dancers dance to the table shapes and balance lightly on tables in creative vaselike shapes. Once a vase has balanced on a table, the table melts and rolls away to become a dancer looking for a table. The vase holds the balancing shape briefly and then melts to form a table shape. Continue until music ends. You can also have dancers stay with the same partner throughout the activity. *Suggested music: MCD Vol. 4, #3.*

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Cooling Down

For more information, refer to Cooling Down in chapter 4.

Closure Circle: Dancers form a circle and briefly review *weight* and *balance* concept vocabulary verbally and physically.

Day 2

Warming Up

For more information, see Warming Up in chapter 4.

BrainDance: Dancers perform first four patterns seated while focusing on strong and light movements, and they perform the second four patterns standing while focusing on off-balance and on-balance movements. *Suggested music: BrainDance Music, #5.*

Introducing the Concept: *Weight—active, passive (released); Balance—counterbalance.* Dancers read and say the words as they physically demonstrate the concepts of *weight* and *balance*.

Exploring the Concept

ABC

A—Dancers dance through space with on-balance movements (e.g., gallop, walk backward, skip, chassé) on your cue.

B—Dancers move safely with off-balance movements such as tipping, falling, and meandering.

C—Dancers form individual strong and light counterbalance shapes in self-space, balancing on one, two, or three body parts.

Students follow your direction or changes in music for transitions from A to B to C. Repeat the sequence until the music ends. *Suggested music: MCD Vol. 4, #18.*

Reflection

“Make a counterbalance shape you created that challenged you.”

Developing Skills

Choose one of the following activities.

Dance Technique

Work on technical skills in the particular genre or style you are teaching. Focus on passive and active

weight. For example, have students release into plié and activate into relevé, do spinal work with passive roll-down and active roll-up, and do steps across the floor releasing into the floor and springing off the floor. Also explore 32-count improvisations focusing on passive and active weight between exercises.

Movement Combination

Continue to work on the movement phrase introduced in the first class. Add more movements such as *floating 8 counts*, *slashing 8 counts*, *spinning 8 counts*, and *freezing 8 counts*.

Option: Review the cultural dance introduced in the first class emphasizing strong and light movements.

Creating

Counterbalance ABA

A—In partners or trios, dancers choose three or four strong counterbalance group shapes by pressing palms, sides, or backs together, and then push into lightness and pull away together into another strong counterbalance group shape.

B—Individual dancers improvise a light, off-balance section.

A—In their pairs or trios, dancers return to each other and repeat the strong counterbalance pressing and pulling section.

You could direct transitions between sections, pause the music, or let dancers move in their own time. *Suggested music: MCD Vol. 4, #3.*

Cooling Down

For more information, refer to Cooling Down in chapter 4.

Stretching: Have dancers stretch muscles while discussing in their own group what they enjoyed performing in the ABA counterbalance dance.

Day 3

Warming Up

For more information, see Warming Up in chapter 4.

BrainDance: Standing, dancers perform the following BrainDance patterns: breath with light to strong breaths, tactile with strong to light touch, core–distal with light to strong contractions and extensions, head–tail with strong to light spinal

movements, upper-lower with light to strong movements, body-side with strong to light movements, cross-lateral with light to strong movements, and vestibular with strong to light movements. *Suggested music: BrainDance Music, #7.*

Reviewing the Concept: *Weight—strong, light, active, passive; Balance—on-balance, off-balance, counterbalance.* Dancers read and review the words as they briefly demonstrate the concepts of *weight* and *balance*.

Exploring the Concept

Chopsticks ABABABAB

A—Dancers find a partner and designate leader 1 and leader 2. Pairs lightly balance one chopstick between the right palms and dance connected by the chopstick through general space; leader 1 leads.

B—Leader 1 holds the chopstick and forms strong and light shapes as the partner mirrors shapes.

A—Pairs balance the chopstick between left palms, and leader 2 leads through general space.

B—Leader 2 holds the chopstick and forms strong and light shapes as the partner mirrors shapes.

Suggested music: MCD Vol. 1, #1.

Reflection

“Tell your partner which was your favorite part and why—moving together with the chopstick or mirroring shapes.”

Developing Skills

Choose one of the following activities.

Dance Technique

Dancers continue to develop technical skills, focusing on weight and balance, in the particular genre or style you are teaching. Add 32-count improvisations between exercises.

Movement Combination

Review the movement phrase (or cultural dance) from class 1 and class 2. Focus on unusual balancing shapes and discuss which movements could be lighter and which stronger. Another option is to perform the dance moving toward or with a partner or trio, then making counterbalanced duo and trio shapes.

Creating

Diamante Poem

A diamante poem is a seven-line poem in the shape of a diamond that begins with one idea and ends with a different idea. Small groups (or the whole class) fill in the blanks with movement words (verbs). The first three blanks have strong and light weight words (e.g., *punch, float, stomp* or *flick, slash, melt*). The second three blanks relate to balance (e.g., *suspend, fall, recover* or *hang, meander, relevé*). Small groups begin work on creating a dance to illustrate the poem. Groups select certain words or phrases to vocalize as they dance.

Weight

Strong, light

_____, _____, _____

Dancers connect and disconnect

_____, _____, _____

Tipped, grounded

Balance

Cooling Down

For more information, refer to Cooling Down in chapter 4.

Notation: Groups notate their studies (to date) in any way they choose. They could use motif notation, drawings, written notes, video, or something else.

Day 4

Warming Up

For more information, see Warming Up in chapter 4.

BrainDance: Dancers form quartets in a diamond formation (facing each other) and designate leader 1 through 4. Dancers in the quartet take turns leading a BrainDance pattern while the other three follow. You (or music) designate the BrainDance pattern, the type of weight (strong, light, active, passive), and when leaders change roles. *Suggested music: BrainDance Music, #2 or #4.*

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Developing Skills

Choose one of the following activities.

Dance Technique

Dancers continue to develop technical skills in the particular genre or style you are teaching. Focus on weight and balance for correct alignment. Add 32-count weight and balance improvisations between exercises.

Movement Combination

Allow dancers to add 32 counts (or more) of improvised movement at the end of the combination dancers have been practicing as a transition or ending. For the cultural dance, dancers might choose a section that will be improvised in place of the designated steps. Improvisation should focus on changes in weight and balance.

Creating

Diamante Poem

Dancers continue to develop and practice their diamante studies paying particular attention to their vocal accompaniment and dynamic changes.

Cooling Down

For more information, refer to Cooling Down in chapter 4.

Reflecting: Dancers, in their own diamante groups, discuss what they will need to focus on during the next class to finish and perform the piece for others.

Day 5

Warming Up

For more information, see Warming Up in chapter 4.

BrainDance: Weight sharing and counterbalancing with a partner; dancers move through the eight BrainDance patterns with a partner as de-

scribed in Warming Up in chapter 4. *Suggested music: BrainDance Music, #5.*

Developing Skills

Choose one of the following activities.

Dance Technique

Continue to develop technical skills in the particular genre or style you are teaching. Focus on concepts of *weight* and *balance*. Dancers perform 32-count improvisations between exercises.

Movement Combination

Dancers perform for each other the combination (or cultural dance), including the improvisation section, practiced over the last four classes. Half the class performs for the other half and vice versa.

Creating

Diamante Poem

Choreographers rehearse and polish their diamante studies.

Cooling Down

For more information, refer to Cooling Down in chapter 4.

Sharing: Dancers share their finished studies. Depending on the size and length of your class, groups can pair share or one or two groups at a time can share with the whole class. Choose an appropriate mode of reflection. For example, observers form a shape they remember, selected observers make a brief positive comment about what they saw, observers draw a design motivated by what they saw, or choreographers voice what they thought were strong points of the study.