

***Grades K-5***

To very young children, movement is life. They move when they are happy; they move when they are sad. They move just for the joy of moving. Dance is movement, and many childhood movements are dance-like. The *Peanuts* comic strip by Charles Schultz portrays it best with the caption for Snoopy, "To Dance Is to Live." Movement for young children is purposeful to accomplish a task in work or play; movement is used to express emotions; movement provides a creative outlet.

Dance is important in elementary physical education as evidenced with outcomes at each grade level in the National Standards. Throughout the lesson plans of this text, dance "stems" are included. A dance stem is an idea from which a dance grows—locomotor and nonlocomotor skills; stretching, curling, and twisting actions; and movement concepts linked to the Grade-Level Outcomes. Dance can be used to express emotions, to tell a story, to study the elements of movement, or just to feel the joy of movement. For students in kindergarten through grade 2, dance is movement and the joy of moving, and the teacher often guides the structure of the dance.

For students in grades 3 through 5, dance becomes a summative project to express understanding of the combination of movement concepts with the locomotor and nonlocomotor actions as well as to communicate or exhibit forms of self-expression.

The quality of the movements is important; the choice of movements and use of concepts is determined by the student. Dance for these students is purposeful, and they select movements to fulfill that purpose. Whereas dance for younger students is "free," dance for the upper-elementary students is repeatable—this is, choreographed and recorded. Movements selected are purposeful. They can be slow or fast, smooth or jerky, confined or extended, free or bound. Body shapes, actions of the total body and body parts, beginning and ending shapes, music or no music—all are chosen to create and convey a culminating dance action or performance.

Within the lesson plans for locomotors, nonlocomotors, and movement concepts, you will find the following dance stems:

- Dance of Locomotors I, II
- Dance Malfunction in the Toy Shop
- Transformers
- Action Words
- Slow-Motion Sports
- Pizza Circle Dance
- The Amoebae
- Balances and Actions
- Colors
- Contrasts in Time
- Copy Cat
- Movement Sentences

Creative, expressive dance is the dance of physical education for young children. Developmental and grade-appropriate folk or cultural dance is an excellent environment for the reinforcement of locomotor skills combined with pathways, directions, spatial awareness, and partner and group relationships. Children's literature is rich in opportunities for expressive dance for young children. You should talk frequently with kindergarten and first-grade teachers about the children's favorite books in the classroom.

For students in upper-elementary physical education, cultural dance and developmentally and grade-appropriate popular dances broaden the dance curriculum. Once learned, many dances for older children provide enjoyable physical activity that enhances fitness and promotes positive social interaction. Dance is an important part of the curriculum, but it is often slighted because of teacher inhibitions. Just as motor skill ability enhances confidence to participate in sports, dance skills provide another option for a physically active future.