

THE MOVEMENT SENTENCE

Through dance we have the opportunity to draw important connections between dance and other disciplines such as Language Arts. The link between dance and literacy is a foundational component of DEL.

DEL uses the *movement sentence* as an organizing structure in lesson planning and choreography.

The *movement sentence* parallels sentence format in reading and writing.

- A *movement sentence* is like a sentence and has a beginning, middle and end.
- A *movement sentence* starts still and ends still; a sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a punctuation mark (period, question mark or exclamation point).
- A *movement sentence* starts with a beginning shape and ends with an ending shape.
- A *movement sentence* can be as simple as two action words (verbs) combined.

EXAMPLES OF MOVEMENT SENTENCES

2 action words:

WALK JUMP

RUN STOP

SKIP TURN

GALLOP KICK

3 or 4 action words:

SWIRL BALANCE MELT

HOP HIDE DROP

RUN STOP SPIN FALL

CRAWL ROLL RISE SWIRL

WALK DODGE EXPLODE COLLAPSE

DESIGNING A MOVEMENT SENTENCE

When you are designing a *movement sentence* think like a choreographer. Create a dynamic and interesting movement sentence which links to the theme of your lesson.

Tips For Designing A “juicy” Movement Sentence:

- Select action words from the different categories of action words.
 - **For example:**
 - Travel Non-travel
 - Rise Sink
- Select pairs of contrasting action words
 - **For example:**

- ROLL. *Can you show me how you can roll your arms? Can you roll your head? Can you roll your shoulders? What else can you roll? Can you roll in a log shape on the floor? Can you roll your arms quickly? Slowly? Can you roll your arms in a strong way? Can you roll your arms low to the ground? Can you roll your arms up high? To the side? Can you show me how you can travel and roll with your arms? Can you travel and roll with your head? Can you show me how you can travel and roll with your whole body? Can you roll with your whole body low to the ground? One way and then the other way? Can you roll in a ball shape? How else can you roll? Can you roll with different body parts and travel on a curvy pathway? Can you roll towards me and away from me?*

DEVELOPMENT OF A MOVEMENT SENTENCE

- After exploring each action word using the LMA vocabulary, decide how you will perform your movement sentence, explore possible variations, and move into dance making.
- This section of the lesson plan is referred to as *Development*, and is the process of giving structure to the movement sentence.
- *Development* sets parameters for the movement content that has been explored and begins to focus on choreographic structures that lead to performance.
- *Development* can begin with asking students to perform the movement sentence in unison with the teacher guiding students through the sequence.
- Another way to develop the movement sentence is to ask students to perform the movement sentence on their own time.
- There are many other possible variations that students can explore in a longer and more scaffolded learning process, which progresses in complexity over the course of several lessons.

WAYS TO DEVELOP AND VARY A MOVEMENT SENTENCE:

- Change the order of the action words in your movement sentence.
 - **For example:**
 - RUN TURN JUMP
 - TURN JUMP RUN
 - JUMP TURN RUN
 - RUN JUMP TURN
 - TURN RUN JUMP
 - JUMP RUN JUMP
- Replace one action word with a new action word.
 - **For example:**
 - REACH GATHER COLLAPSE → REACH GATHER BALANCE
- Repeat part or all of your movement sentence.
 - **For example:**
 - SKIP DROP ROLL SKIP DROP ROLL
 - SKIP DROP SKIP DROP ROLL
- Perform your movement sentence backwards (retrograde):
 - **For example:**
 - SKIP GATHER ROLL → ROLL GATHER SKIP

- Vary your **timing**.
 - **For example:**
 - Perform the movement sentence in **unison** or in your **own time**.

- Vary your **tempo**.
 - **For example:**
 - Perform your movement sentence **slowly** or **quickly**.

- Vary your **groupings**.
 - **For example:**
 - Perform the movement sentence with the whole group or with different groupings (solos, trios, duets, etc.).

- Perform your movement sentence to **music**.

EXAMPLE OF A DEVELOPMENT OF A MOVEMENT SENTENCE: CREEP HIDE ROLL:

Simple version:

Guide all students to perform the movement sentence. *Everyone creep around the room on a middle level. When I play the drum freeze in a high hidden shape. Now begin to roll with your arms around the room on any level. Freeze in a low level hidden shape.*

Ask for a volunteer to demonstrate the sequence of the movement sentence, CREEP, HIDE, ROLL. Ask for another volunteer to demonstrate the sequence 3 times through.

OR: *When I begin the music everyone begin the movement sentence. You decide how you will perform the movement sentence. When I end the music, freeze in a low hidden shape. (Students will make decisions about how to creep, for example, they will select what body parts to emphasize, what levels to travel on, types of hidden shapes etc.) Repeat this sequence 3 times.*

More complex version:

Everyone begin in a low level hidden shape. When I tap you begin to creep around the room on a middle level. Change directions as you creep and then return to your spot and freeze in a low hidden shape. Once everyone has had a chance to creep, all dancers begin to creep around the room. Remember to be very sneaky! When I play the drum freeze in a high level hidden shape. When I play the drum again freeze in a middle level hidden shape and when I play the drum again freeze in a low level hidden shape. Begin to roll your arms from low to high and all around yourself as you stay on a low level. When I tap you begin to travel around the room with rolling arms. Change levels and roll on the low level and middle and high levels. When I play the drum freeze in a high hidden shape, middle hidden shape and low level hidden shape!

OR

Divide the class into smaller groups and ask each group to make choreographic choices to create variations to the basic movement sentence. Depending on the grade and experience level, give small groups a task sheet to complete that asks them to select elements from the LMA categories. (For example, choose one movement sentence variation, select an effort quality to focus on, select a pathway, and add a relationship component).

With each step emphasize starting and ending still. Give students time to practice. Then let everyone try performing the movement sentence to music.