



Tracing Footsteps: Honoring Diverse Voices Through Dance History in NYC

A Dance Education Laboratory (DEL) Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The DEL *Tracing Footsteps: Honoring Diverse Voices Through Dance History in NYC* remote learning curriculum was created in response to the need to develop high-quality, standards-based dance curricula in collaboration with the NYCDOE to provide critical dance learning for NYC public school students during this challenging time when arts learning has been restricted. Funded by a grant from the NY Community Trust and the Arnhold Foundation, the *Tracing Footsteps* Curriculum includes three student facing remote learning curricular modules which will be disseminated over the course of the 2020-21 school year:

- Module 1: *Native American Dance History in NYC – Roots to Branches*
- Module 2: *History of Tap Dance – Soul Rhythms*
- Module 3: *Into the Heart of Chinatown - Hidden Voices*

Each module will include the following:

- K-2 5 Lesson Dance Unit with accompanying google slides and resources
- 3-5 10 Lesson Dance Unit with accompanying google slides and resources
- 6-8 10 Lesson Dance Unit with accompanying google slides and resources
- 9-12 10 Lesson Dance Unit with accompanying google slides and resources

FAMILY GUIDE AND ARTS ENHANCEMENT GUIDES

Furthermore, DEL is creating a Family Guide for K-5 and an Arts Enhancement Guide for K-12 to support each module. The Family Guide is designed to support family members of students in grades K - 5 to engage with the dance curriculum. It offers numerous activities for families to do together that directly connect to curricular themes. The Arts Enhancement Guide is designed for classroom teachers who are interested in integrating aspects of the curriculum into their ongoing curriculum and will make links to other non-arts disciplines including ELA and Social Studies.

ORGANIZATION OF CURRICULUM

The Tracing Footsteps curriculum focuses on exploring embodied dance history through the examination of the rich dance contributions of three distinct cultural groups who have often been marginalized, ignored and underrepresented in history. These groups inhabited and continue to inhabit different areas of NYC throughout history until today.

Each dance unit provides teachers with detailed and high-quality lesson plans with embedded links to resources including numerous worksheets, assessments, and extension ideas for furthering the lessons as well as recommended accommodations and modifications for diverse learners. Each lesson is designed for approximately 30 minutes of synchronous remote instruction, yet can be expanded upon and adapted in multiple ways. In addition, student-facing Google slide decks accompany each lesson plan and include speaker notes. The DEL *Tracing Footsteps* curriculum uses Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) as a framework and is multi-modal, culturally responsive, ADA compliant and able-inclusive.

Modules are meant to be delivered synchronously though can be adapted for asynchronous learning. In addition, teachers will explore and experience online resources and supplemental support materials, including instructional dance videos developed by the DEL team and dance artists who are experts in the field.

Each module and curricular unit is aligned with *NYC Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts – Dance* Learning Strands 1-4 (Dance Making, Developing Dance Literacy,



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Making Connections, and Working with Community and Cultural Resources) and NYS Learning Standards and the DEL pedagogical framework.

Hence, each dance unit is a reflection of this framework and includes:

- Skill based and improvisational dance practice, including learning specific dances from specific eras and peoples;
- Genre specific dance terminology and traditions;
- Inquiry-based dance research and investigation;
- Individual and collaborative dance making;
- Imagined and authentic reconstruction of dances of diverse peoples representing different eras;
- Training from dance experts in the field representing different forms and styles;
- Interfacing with high-quality, curated resources from dance artists and cultural organizations

One key goal of DEL is to respect and honor diverse perspectives and to critically examine dance learning through the lens of anti-racist and culturally responsive pedagogy. In DEL, we aim to develop skills and attitudes that help bridge cultural differences and encourage courageous conversations, increased multicultural awareness, and cross-cultural communication and collaboration. As a community of dancers, dance educators, choreographers, and teachers from around the globe, DEL's commitment to anti-racism and culturally responsive pedagogy aligns with our community's shared passion for bringing the gift of dance to *every* child.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- Dance always exists within a socio-cultural & historic context.
- Dance is a vehicle to explore the continuum of dance history from the past to the present.
- Dance is a reflection of cultural values, beliefs, and identities that are shared among people.
- Dance styles and forms emerge in response to societal changes, political oppression, and cultural influences.
- Dance history needs to include all voices in the narrative.
- Dance is a means to honor those whose land we inhabit today.



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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can we use dance as a lens to gain a more complete and inclusive view of history?
- What cultural, social, political, and historic trends and movements have impacted how dance emerged, evolved, and was embodied within different communities in New York City (NYC) over time?
- Who inhabited/s specific neighborhoods within New York City; and what do we know about how these people lived and expressed themselves through dance?
- What did the dances look like from these different eras, and how are they similar/dissimilar from today's dances?

WAYS TO THINK ABOUT DANCE HISTORY

- Dance history goes beyond dance and looks at the entire “landscape.”
- Dance history is not “set in stone” but is an evolving discussion and investigation.
- Dance history is the telling of personal stories and narratives and is alive in lived experience.
- Dance history is anchored in the past and yet permeates the present.

MODULE 1: NATIVE AMERICAN DANCE HISTORY IN NYC - *ROOTS TO BRANCHES*

The Module 1: *Roots to Branches* curriculum focuses on the complex history of Native American nations in NYC from the Lenape Nation, the original inhabitants of NYC, to contemporary Native Nations who inhabit NYC today through the lens of dance history and dance forms and styles.

Several major themes and topics are explored in Module 1: *Roots to Branches*:

- Native American history (especially with a focus on NYC)
- Historical and cultural traditions of Lenape and Native peoples (past and present)
- Importance of Land Acknowledgment
- Native American dance traditions (traditional and contemporary)
- Meaning and significance of the Powwow
- Contemporary Native dance artists

MODULE 2: HISTORY OF TAP DANCE - *SOUL RHYTHMS*

The Module 2: *Soul Rhythms* focuses on the complex history of tap dance as a distinctly



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African American art form rooted in diasporic traditions. The curriculum focuses on honoring the contributions of tap legends from the late 19th and early 20th centuries who have inspired generations of tap dance artists today.

Several major themes and topics are explored in Module 2: *Soul Rhythms*

- Tap Dance Legends of the 19th & 20th Centuries such as Master Juba (William Henry Lane), Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, and John Bubbles
- Roots of Tap Dance History in two New York City Neighborhoods: 5 Points and Harlem
- Basic Tap Dance Terminology and Technique
- History and Basic Steps of the Shim Sham
- 21st Century Tap Artists
- Women in Tap

MODULE 3: Into the Heart of Chinatown - *Hidden Voices*

The Module 3: *Into the Heart of Chinatown* focuses on the often hidden and misrepresented early history of Chinese Americans using dance and literacy to increase awareness and understanding of the Asian American experience. The curriculum is centered around the dance works of Chinese American choreographer H.T. Chen whose pieces shed light on untold stories of early Chinese immigrants in this country –stories that can help our students develop new cultural awareness and sensitivity –all through the universal and transformational language of dance.

Several major themes and topics are explored in Module 3: *Into the Heart of Chinatown*

- Chinese core values
- The Lion Dance and the significance of the Lunar New Year.
- Chinese calligraphy characters
- The concept of Yin Yang as applied to dance
- Chinese American immigration history including the building of the Transcontinental Railroad
- H.T. Chen’s works linked to Chinese American history
- Asian American social activism



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TRACING FOOTSTEPS CURRICULUM TEAM

BIOS

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