

A note from Annie about using right and left hands . . . A child's full understanding and comprehension of their left and right side can be expected to develop around age 7. At this age a child's thoughts become far more logical, flexible, and organized. Thus, their ability to mentally rotate images, their comprehension of distance, and their ability to align their perspective to another's appears. With all of these new found skills comes a consistent awareness of their left and right side. Before age 7 children often times are forced to pair each side with a certain stimulus to serve as a cue. Their awareness of left and right is not yet flexible enough to utilize in novel and varied settings.

A note about positions of the feet . . . Parallel 1st is the term used in this syllabus for placing the feet together facing straight ahead, also known in some methods as 6th position. Use very little turnout in first and second positions for children up to the age of six. When I do start to teach first position, I teach it as a "small V." Young children do not have the stability and alignment to maintain knees over toes in rotation. When turnout is introduced, make sure the rotation is from the hip joint. Show the dancers a picture of a skeleton and how the thigh bone can rotate in the hip joint. Keep a watchful eye on the dancers' knee alignment at all times.

A note about Parental Involvement . . . By posting the monthly objective on the viewing window or bulletin board, parents are informed of what their children will be focusing on in class and are also encouraged to get involved in what their children are learning. In the handout I give to parents at the beginning of the year, I explain the monthly objectives and encourage the parents to ask questions of me as well as their children. While every parent will not be involved in their child's dance education, I am always pleased at how many parents *do* take an active role in what their child is learning. It makes good business sense to keep parents happy, informed, and educated.

A note from Annie About Parental Involvement . . . Research in the areas of psychology of learning and cognitive psychology has indicated that repeated trials of learning lead to more permanent memory stores. Additionally, when information is reviewed and rehearsed in multiple locations with varying stimulus environments, that information becomes more stable as knowledge gained. Therefore, encouraging parents to review and inquire about material your students have learned in the studio is extremely useful in creating permanent knowledge bases of that information. With such practice, your students will demonstrate quicker retrieval of information learned in past years.

Good Instructional Practices from Annie

Necessary Instructor Attributes

Below is a list of Necessary Instructor Attributes for the establishment of a positive tone, a comfortable discipline level, and optimal learning in your studio:

1. *Demonstrate enthusiasm about material you are presenting:* If you seem uninterested in what you are presenting to your class, your students too will be uninterested and will be easily distracted by other stimuli around them.
2. *Be sincere in your presentation:* Children are the most accurate judges of what is fake and what is not. So be sure that your enthusiasm is real and sincere.
3. *Utilize multiple modalities in your presentation:* By presenting material/movement while associating it with emotion, experience/stories, sound, etc. students have increased chances of performing the movement with more awareness of their body and their presentation. When a movement is paired with multiple senses that a student can appreciate, that movement also becomes more enjoyable for the student to perform. By pairing movement with other knowledge bases, your students are developing and improving their confidence in their performance of that movement.
4. *Establish a clear routine and continuously teach that routine:* Consistent routines allow children to feel safe and secure. This feeling of security helps to decrease shyness and disruptive behaviors in your students.
5. *Be prepared in order to limit transition time:* Research has consistently shown that in the classroom setting transition time (i.e., changing music, moving students to new formation/location) is the optimal time for disruptive behavior problems. So, be prepared in order to decrease your transition times. **A note from Beverly . . . Have all music selected with correct tempos before class begins. Always prepare more material than the actual time allotment. If a child is prone to disruptive behavior, she will “act up” if you are searching for music or trying to figure out what to do next.**

MONTHLY OBJECTIVES—OCTOBER

MUSICAL AWARENESS

Dancers of all ages need as many musical skills as possible. The more they work on counting and listening skills, the better they become as dancers. All students, no matter what age or ability, should master each Musical Awareness exercise in sequence. By the age of five or six, students should be able to complete the list of exercises. Students will probably not master all of these exercises in one month, but at the six-year-old level, you should make sure that all of them are mastered. Musical Awareness is a concept that you will want to constantly reinforce to your students throughout the year.

I. Learn to count eight beats of music:

- A. With a percussion instrument, tap or shake to the beat of the music.
- B. Count to Eight: Some younger children may not know how to count to eight. Instead, I'll count in fours, and repeat it over.
- C. Using a 4/4 or 2/4 music selection, try to get the children to stay on the beat with you while counting out loud, either eight or four counts of music.

II. Learn to clap or pat:

- A. Using a 4/4 or 2/4 music selection (suggested selection: #1 *Circle Dance and Claps* on **Scott Killian Kids!**), have the children play "pat-a-cake" (hands clap, hands clap knees) to the time of the music. Playing "pat-a-cake" helps younger children to stay in time with the music as opposed to just clapping their hands.
- B. *Body parts exercise:* Sitting criss-cross style in a circle. Using fingertips, the teacher calls out a body part and the class taps that body part while counting for eight counts of music. For example, the teacher would call out head, and everyone would pat their heads for eight counts of music. On count eight, the teacher calls out a different body part, like shoulders, and students begin patting their shoulders on count one, continuing until count eight. This is a great exercise to introduce young children to all their body parts. Suggested progression of body parts: Head, shoulders, elbows (crossing arms in front so that opposite hand pats opposite elbow), tummies, knees, toes (bring knees up quickly so that toes are in front of body), heels (point toes to the ground, and lift heels and hands go inside of knees), straight knees (shoot legs out straight in front), back (bring arms up over head, elbows pointing to ceiling and pat upper back, bring knees back to criss-cross), one finger on the nose, then the other finger on the nose. Try alternating right and left index fingers to pat nose (right finger pats nose on count one, left finger on count two, etc.)—children love to end the exercise this way!