

PESS approach to Teaching Dance - Key Stage 2

Making Dances

Making Dances

This section deals with how teachers can plan and make dances for themselves and how they can involve pupils in the process so that eventually pupils can make their own dances.

Stimulus for dance

The inspiration for dance is usually developed from a response to a particular stimulus or from a range of stimuli.

Stimuli can be:

- Auditory ♦ response to music, words, poems
- Ideational ♦ response to concepts or issues
- Kinesthetic ♦ response to movement patterns
- Tactile ♦ response to the feel of a prop, object, artifact
- Visual ♦ response to pictures, drawings, paintings, designs, video clips or artifacts.



It is important to expose pupils to as wide a range of stimuli as possible because this will cater for all learning styles. The following table illustrates how Gardner’s multiple Intelligences (1986) could be enhanced by the various stimuli.

Gardner’s multiple Intelligences	Stimuli
Linguistic	Auditory and Ideational
Logical Mathematical	Ideational and kinaesthetic
Visual spatial	Visual, Ideational and Tactile
Musical	Music
Body kinaesthetic	Kinaesthetic
Interpersonal	Can be achieved by pupils considering a group response to a stimulus
Intrapersonal	Can be achieved by an individual pupil considering their personal response to a stimulus

The PESS Approach to Dance KS2 Units of work have been devised in response to a range of different stimuli. Wherever possible examples of these stimuli have been included with each unit. The PESS Approach to Teaching Dance website has additional unit plans that are devised using different stimuli.

Since dance is a form of expression, it may help dancers to think of words associated with the stimulus or with their reaction to the stimulus. Dance conveys or communicates ideas, meaning, moods, feelings and emotions through movement.

Once the dancer(s) have a dance idea they then need to turn that idea into a dance.

Dance structures

A dance can be structured in various ways:

Narrative ♦ this structure follows a story-line and may convey specific meaning through that story. Traditional ballets use a narrative approach.

Story board ♦ this structure considers the dance in sections, each section dealing with a different aspect of the dance idea. The sections are the beginning, the middle and the end. This structure may be used to convey concepts or ideas. The difference between narrative and story board is that in the narrative structure the sections follow sequentially whereas in the story board approach the sections can be sequenced in any order that could be either random or logical. For example Unit 13 is a dance inspired by volcanoes. In a logical sequence the beginning section might be the 'Rumble' phrase, the middle might be the 'Erupt' phrase and the end section might be the 'Lava' phrase. In a random story board structure it might be 'Erupt', 'Lava', 'Rumble'. This reflects the fact that dance can be abstract as well as representational or concrete. The PESS Approach to Teaching Dance uses the story board approach to help pupils plan, develop and reflect on their dances. See Story Board Approach Resource Card.



Pattern ♦ this structure is based around the repetition of movement elements. The pattern structure is abstract, i.e. it does not convey specific meaning. The pattern may be based on the form of music. There are several types of pattern structure:

- **AB** (this is sometimes called Binary Form). AB consists of two distinct self-contained phrases
- **ABA** (this is sometimes called Ternary Form). This is a development of the AB pattern. The dancer repeats the A phrase after the B phrase. The second A phrase may be identical to the first A phrase or it may be a development of it.
- **Verse-Chorus** (this is sometimes called Rondo Form). This is similar to ABA but may continue indefinitely. Phrase A is likened to the chorus of a song and is repeated after a different phrase or verse, ABACADAE, etc.

Once the dancer(s) have decided on what structure their dance will follow they must now begin to translate their ideas into dance by creating phrases or motifs. Phrases or motifs can be used interchangeably and are short sections of dance that are linked together to form the whole. Most of the dances featured in the PESS Approach to Teaching Dance ♦ KS2 use the story board structure, so in order to aid understanding this structure will be used to exemplify the making dances process.

Beginning, middle and end

Now the pupils need to decide what will be included in each of these sections. It may help pupils to brainstorm everything connected with their dance idea. This could be enhanced by using a thesaurus. This will help them select and choose what they want their dance to be about and identify what their beginning, middle and end sections might be. It has proved helpful to use key words or phrases to name each section so that the pupils know exactly which section of the dance they are working on or referring to. Naming the sections also helps pupils' movement memory and recall as that dance phrase is associated with a bite-sized title. This is the same principle as chunking in information processing terms.



Each section

Again it may help pupils to brainstorm everything connected with this particular section. This could be enhanced by using a thesaurus. These key words and concepts should be used to create flash cards that can be displayed in the working space so that pupil can refer to them. Pupils could do this for home learning. The flash cards could be hand drawn or painted or computer generated. They could just be words, pictures, diagrams or a combination of all three.

Dance content for each section

At this stage pupils could 'improvise' (extempore ♦ without preparation, 'off the cuff', 'on the hoof') their dance ideas, but many inexperienced pupils may find this too daunting: they may benefit from thinking about what to include before they start dancing. In thinking about what they might include pupils should consider the following headings and then refer to the relevant Resource Cards to help select the most appropriate dance content:

What

The **'what'** refers to the basic dance actions, travelling, stillness, jumping, turning and gesture. See Basic Actions Resource Cards.

Where

The **'where'** refers to where in the dance space the basic actions are going to be performed. Consideration needs to be given to all the aspects of variety ♦ direction, level, speed, shape, size and pathway. See Variety Resource Cards.

With

The **'with'** refers to what or whom the dancer is going to dance with. Will the dance include the use of props? Will they be dancing solo, duo, trio, quartet or in any other grouping? At this stage pupils should think about spatial arrangements, formations and relationships. See Spatial Arrangements, formations and Relationships Resource Cards

How

There are two main aspects to consider under **'how'**:

- Ensure that dance actions accurately and effectively communicate the dance idea, meaning or emotions. For instance, if the dance idea was about death as in the volcano dance 'Lava' phrase then the movements/actions should not be light, free, bouncy and fast but instead be slow, respectful, sad, grounded and considered. This requires the pupils to decide exactly what they want to communicate to their audience and how best they do that. This aspect is continually refined as pupils progress.
- Which elements of dance from the dance continuum do the pupils think are most appropriate to their dance idea? These aspects include: unison, copying, lead & follow, canon, mirroring, contrasting actions, action & reaction, simple contact, motif development, contact and simple lifts. See Choreographic Devices Page. Pupils may choose to use one of these aspects or a combination of them in each section of their dance.



To

The **'to'** refers to what accompaniment. The pupils must decide what accompaniment will be used with their dance. The music many have been the stimulus in which case the decision is easy. The stimulus for Unit 12 Stretch & Snap was the music. However, if the stimulus was not the music then the pupils have some choices:

- To research and select music that has been composed and performed by others; this may be one track or several

tracks mixed together

- To compose, perform and record their own music
- To research and use sound effects produced by others
- To compose, perform and record their own sound effects
- To use body percussion whilst dancing or pre-record body percussion to play back during the performance
- To recite, chant or sing whilst dancing or pre-record to play back during performance
- To dance to silence
- Or any combination of the above

Involving pupils in the selection and creation of the music is very motivational. This process should be completed for each section of the dance. Pupils may want to sketch ideas for every section at the beginning and then refine as they go along. Or they may want to consider each section as they create it, so that they review the first section before attempting the second section. It is important for pupils to understand that their plans may need to be amended in line with their reflections and evaluations. The dance plan is not set in tablets of stone but is there to help pupils devise their dance: it is expected that pupils will amend their plans to take account of things that happen whilst they are dancing and further ideas that ‘springboard’ from their dance. The important thing is to account for different interpretations and allow pupils to be creative. As pupils become more familiar with this process and gain confidence from performing they will want to ‘improvise’ their initial dance ideas as well as plan them.

RECIPE

The RECIPE format is well suited to this approach to making dances: pupils get to recap previous knowledge and understanding, explore new ideas and concepts, create phrases of dance, perform these to an audience and then evaluate their effectiveness. Each section of the dance can be developed using the RECIPE format. See RECIPE Explained for more information. The lesson plans have been constructed using this approach.

Interactive making dances planning tool

This section has considered each step in the making dances process in detail. Teachers are not expected to remember this process but merely to understand it. The interactive making dances planning tool has been created to assist teachers in creating their own dance frameworks so that they can develop their own units and schemes of work to complement their school, their pupils and themselves as individuals. The interactive making dances planning tool is a web-based resource so you will need to be connected to the internet to use this tool. [Click here for the interactive making dances planning tool](#)

