

Arts Assessment For Learning

DANCE — 7TH GRADE

REFLECTION: IMPROVING JAZZ TECHNIQUE

Without judgment, describe what you did. Just the facts:

1. The students were introduced to the genre of jazz dance and taught basic jazz technique. The first few classes were spent teaching students the criteria of how to execute technique with proper alignment. Students learned the criteria for executing: pirouette; spotting; parallel passé; and leap. They learned how to give paired feedback using the technique criteria checklist. In each class I introduced one skill and then students practiced giving paired feedback on that skill. The students applied the feedback they received immediately and revised the performance of the skill.
2. The students tracked their progress in developing accuracy of their jazz skills through the use of a technique criteria checklist. Feedback sessions were held at the beginning of the class either before or in place of the warm-up. After selecting a focus group of novice dancers I began to film their feedback sessions on my iPad in order to collect data.
3. The entire class was then divided into groups of five and given the compositional task of choreographing a small jazz piece that incorporated the four jazz skills that they had learned. Once the group began choreographing, I filmed their choreographic work before they received any peer feedback on the execution of their jazz technique. My focus group was comprised of the same students whose paired feedback sessions I had begun to film.
4. Although the students gave paired feedback on all of the skills that they were taught, I decided to only focus on and film the paired feedback sessions of one skill, a pirouette. I then set a schedule to film their feedback sessions every other week in order to document their progress in executing a pirouette. I also filmed their group choreography every other week to document the improvement of their jazz technique within their choreographic work.

What went well?

- The entire class was engaged in the learning process throughout the entire unit. Whether they were learning technique, or how to give, receive, or apply feedback, they were all active participants in learning. When students work in pairs it creates an opportunity for them to share their ideas and apply what they learn.

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- Students learned how to communicate effectively because the feedback they gave was based on specific criteria. As a result their feedback was constructive and unbiased. The students also learned how to receive and apply feedback. Overall, communication skills between students were strengthened because of this process.
- The feedback protocol of beginning with a positive, “I like…” and then following with, “I wish…” was a non-threatening way to receive feedback.
- The students became independent learners and did not rely on only me to help them improve their skills.
- Students took pride in their work and were proud of the improvements they had made and what they had accomplished.

What was the impact of this strategy on student learning?

The students became more engaged in learning because they saw that the feedback they gave to their peers was meaningful and important. Also, I witnessed an immediate improvement in their technique when students gave peer feedback. The students were also aware of how peer feedback improved their performance of jazz technique; therefore they never got bored of giving and receiving feedback. Also, the students enjoyed learning. One boy entered my classroom and said, “Are we doing peer feedback today?” When I told him that that we were doing feedback, his response was, “YES! I love peer feedback because I see the improvement instantly and it makes me better.”

What new insights or understandings are forming as a result of this experience?

When students have an opportunity to assess and give feedback to another student, they themselves become more aware of how to perform the skill. The student becomes the teacher and as a result the information and criteria they learn is stored in their long-term memory.

How do the results of your action plan inform your inquiry question?

Peer feedback improves student technique and helps them perform technique accurately in their choreography. Every single student in the class improved their jazz technique because of peer feedback.

Documentation to bring (student work, photos, writing, teacher journal, etc.):

- Video footage of feedback sessions and choreographic work.
- Student jazz technique criteria checklists.