

## PEDAGOGICAL CASE #10 (Short Version)

### An Explorative, Story-Based Approach to Teaching Dance

Chris is a sixth grade classroom teacher at Springfield elementary. For the first time this year, he had been tasked with the responsibility of teaching his class's weekly physical education periods. Although Chris had access to the lessons of a former colleague to assist him with his planning, he noticed that the program his colleague had devised was very 'games heavy' and Chris felt that it was important to include a wider variety of physical education content. The school music teacher often raved to Chris about his class's passion for music and the arts. With this in mind, he thought that his class may respond well to a dance unit as part of their physical education program, but was worried that he may lack the experience, confidence, and formal dance training to deliver it effectively. Nevertheless, he was still determined to develop and deliver a meaningful dance unit for his students.

His first move was to make sure his students were comfortable in the classroom environment for dance. Despite their initial excitement, he understood that many of his students (like him) were also nervous about the unit. Chris addressed this during the first lesson by encouraging them to embrace ideas about challenge – in particular the challenge of stepping outside of their comfort zone, using his own experience as an example. He also revisited the posters he already had hanging around the gym that referred to the importance of being inclusive, caring, and supportive of others in their classroom community. Another step during the planning stages of the unit was allowing his students to select the unit's soundtrack. As a starting point, he consulted the music teacher about songs the class had responded well to in the past. He also tasked a group of four students with the responsibility of consulting their peers in order to create a list of the class's favourite songs during a work period for another subject.

Chris also relied on the features of Meaningful PE to guide the way he structured his lessons throughout the unit. Early on he emphasized the features of 'fun' and 'movement competence', as activities were primarily dedicated to exploration and self-discovery in order to help students to gain a better understanding of their bodies and how they move. He then structured the following lessons to connect these early experiences with certain basic dance concepts, such as rhythm, moving to the beat, and the quality of their effort. As students continued to become more self-aware, he then started to introduce activities with prompts, such as dance monopoly and mirror tag, requiring students to rethink their abilities and start to incorporate and build off the movements of their peers. During this time he also introduced the class to several group dances to further add to their movement repertoire and strengthen their understanding of the previous concepts.

As a culminating activity, Chris had his students work in small groups to create a short dance involving the music and props of their choosing as a way to help them see how dance can be used to "tell stories" or as a tool for representation. The central focus of the culminating task was that each member of the group had to feel equally represented within the 'story' that they were trying to convey. He found in particular that the group planning aspects of this activity really helped students to connect with one another, as it encouraged them to share their ideas and discuss their commonalities. The students were able to come up with a broad range of ideas, as

Chris observed dances portraying everything from sporting events to global issues; with all of these ideas representing things the students found relatable.

Regularly engaging in goal-setting practices also played a fundamental part in the unit's effectiveness. The "doing, thinking, connecting" framework Chris used required his students to set goals in the physical, cognitive, and affective domains before every few classes. Students then revisited their goals at the end of each week by reflecting on how they approached them, the extent to which they were able to achieve them, and why they had selected these goals in the first place. For students who struggled or were new to dance, this framework provided them with a target and allowed them to focus on aspects of dance beyond the physical that may otherwise be taken for granted unless specifically referenced. For example, that dance is not solely a way of moving, but also a means for creating, communicating, and bringing people together.

By the end of the unit, Chris was not only able to get many of his students to step outside of their respective comfort zones, but also to make their physical education and movement experiences more meaningful in the process.

\*\*Case developed by the LAMPE team based on:

<https://www.pyppewithandy.com/pypp-pe-blog/story-telling-as-a-provocation>