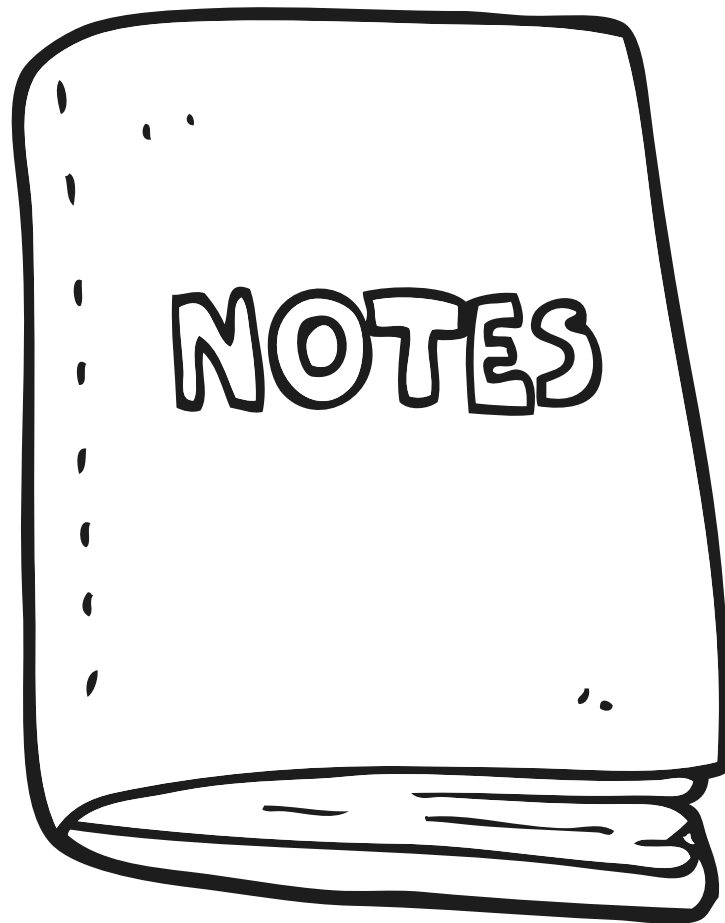




THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW TO TEACH DANCE 'LIKE A PRO'

The School Teachers Notebook



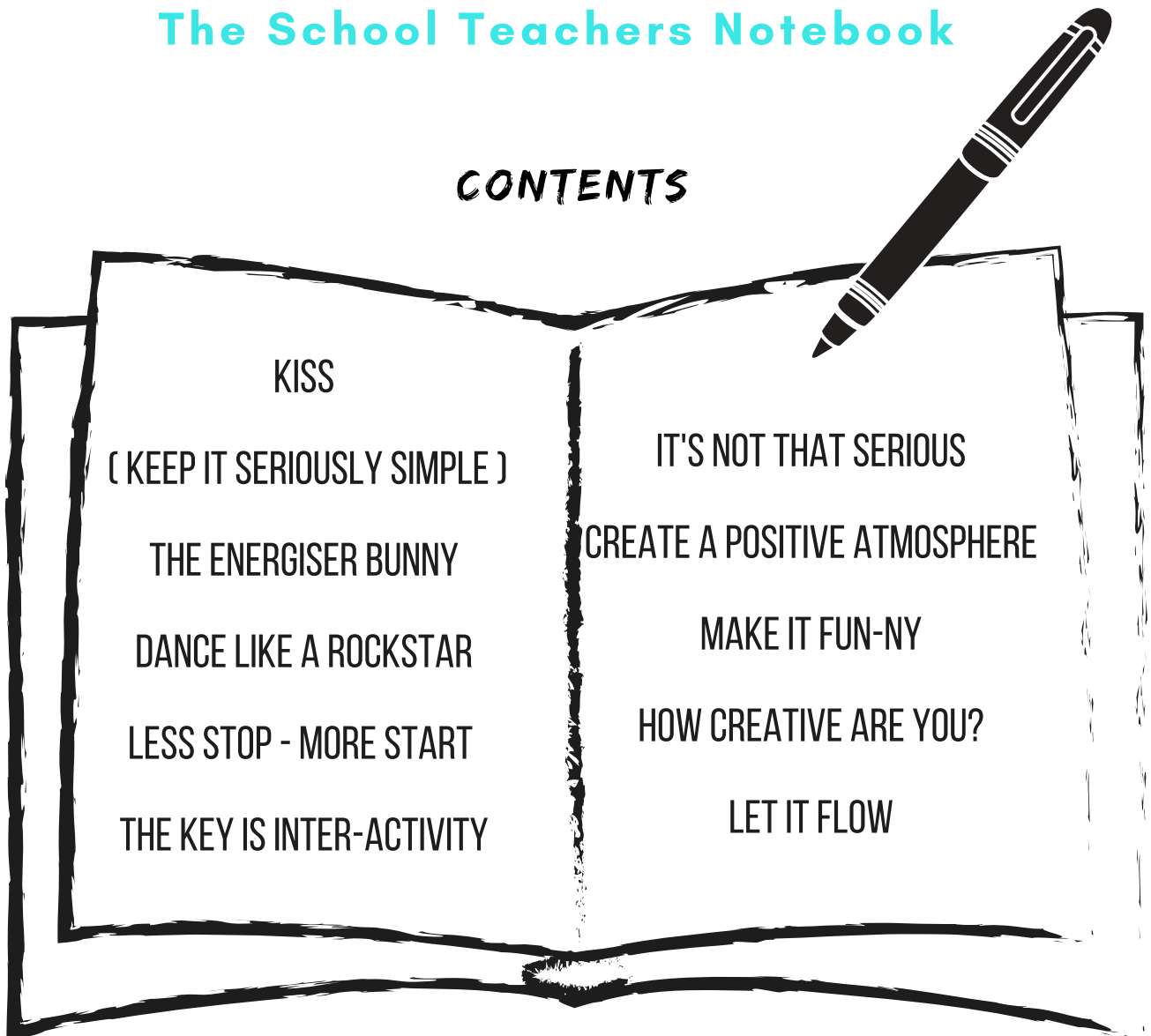
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KISS

(KEEP IT SERIOUSLY SIMPLE)

The first thing you need to do is STOP overcomplicating movement and dance. The average student and teacher has little to none dance experience so it is vital to keep your dance moves seriously simple. Using Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) you can teach dance both successfully and simply.

Speak in a language that everybody can understand. “Jump, Hop, Grab, Step” are movements that students have practised in sport, games and other physical activities. By using (FMS) in dance you can ensure that your students will understand you and the movement being performed. Forget five, six, seven, eight for just a minute and put aside “turn,turn, kick, turn, two, three, kick, turn” – phew! Doesn’t that feel better already?



THE ENERGISER BUNNY

Students thrive in an energetic class atmosphere. Bring your class to life through your own energy and personality. If you are happy and excited when you are teaching, your students will be happy and excited too. Having a larger than life presence is key to motivating and engaging your students in dance. It is your students time to shine so it is up to you to create a class atmosphere where they feel confident about expressing themselves through music and movement.



DANCE LIKE A ROCKSTAR

No doubt there will be many students who are hesitant or nervous about dancing in class. It is the teachers responsibility to 'break the ice' and help student to feel like a rockstar. Begin your dance class by asking your students to strike a pose. It can be any pose they like that makes them feel like a rockstar. If you prefer, you can use gangsta, superstar or a dance style such as Egyptian or Bollywood. Rockstar and gangsta poses tend to be audience favourites. Tell them to strike their pose on the count of three and hold it. One, two, three...POSE! "

You can repeat this exercise up to 3 times with the students. Each time ask them to show you a different 'rockstar' pose; one that is completely different to their last pose. Encourage them to make their poses bigger, different or stronger. You want them to show you a 10 out of 10! Once you are satisfied with their effort at striking a 'rockstar' pose, start your dance or movement sequence. This is a great strategy to help your students to relax and encourage them to express their own unique style with the move. The more different they are from one another, the better.



LESS STOP - MORE START

A typical dance class is often interrupted by the teacher breaking down specific movements and steps and repeating them until they can identify that their students understand the movement. Whilst there is a time and place for repetition and rehearsal it is guaranteed to increase boredom, distraction and break the flow of your class. To keep your dance session physically active you want to aim to teach each dance continuously. If you need to break down a movement, demonstrate the move to your students prior to the next dance and then put the music on as fast as you can. Minimising the amount of breaks in your class is key to engaging your students for the entire dance session.



THE KEY IS INTER-ACTIVITY

Traditional dance classes tend to favour the teacher being at the front of the class with their students facing them. Changing the direction that you teach and also the direction that your students face will make your class more interactive. Use different formations (circles, lines, groups) to teach your students and change the position or area that you teach from. If you have your students in a circle, stand in the middle or be part of the circle while you teach. If your students are in partners, move around to different spots in the space when you are teaching. Always ensure that students can still hear your voice from any spot you are teaching from.

Invite your students to dance with each other or in small groups to help build positive relationships. Variation in your class delivery helps to interrupt their normal patterns or any unwanted behaviour which helps students to maintain focus and attention on dancing.



IT'S NOT THAT SERIOUS

One of the best things you can do for yourself and your students is to NOT take yourself so seriously. Being too serious takes away the fun and excitement of dancing. If you catch your students taking themselves too seriously, simply say, "It is not that serious." Remind your students to relax and be fun. If the aim of your class is enjoyment then you don't want to tell them they are being assessed or do anything that might dim the mood.



CREATE A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE

Is there always someone in the class who makes it their mission to bring other people down? No doubt you have experienced this in your classes. As a teacher it is your responsibility to set the ground rules and install the desired behaviours for the class. It is your job to create a positive class atmosphere. Encourage your students when they are doing a great job:

“That was fantastic”

“You look awesome right now”

“I love your style”

“This is so much fun everyone”

“Great Job”

“You are all really creative”

“Amazing”

It might sound like an obvious thing to encourage students in your class but you would be surprised how little teacher's use positive reinforcement in their dance classes. You get caught up in the teaching process and managing class behaviour and soon enough become ‘negative nelly’ – who isn't fun or exciting for anyone. If your students are genuinely doing a good job, be authentic and reward them for their efforts. Students should also recognise when they are doing a good job and reward one another accordingly. For example: Give high fives, a pat on the back, or say to each other:

“Well done”

“You are a rockstar”

“Great job today, Sam”

“Your moves are awesome, Lucy”.

Creating a positive class atmosphere in dance involves teamwork and the ability to recognise students talents and skills and reward effort accordingly. Focusing on teamwork is a positive and inclusive strategy for teaching dance. Something I say to my students is, “Sometimes you will be dancing and working together with your peers and sometimes times you will be dancing your own way”. This supports student collaboration and also invites creative expression.



MAKE IT FUN-NY

If you are having fun teaching, chances are your students will be having fun dancing. We all know what it feels like to have fun in life so why not make dancing fun too? Encourage your students to laugh, be silly (it's not that serious) and show their personality when they dance. If the dance style is music theatre, this is the perfect time to embrace being ridiculous and 'over the top'. Invite students to use their face to express themselves. If the style is hip hop, "show me some gangsta attitude". Adding more drama and hilarity is perfect to encourage self-expression and build students confidence and self-esteem through dance.



HOW CREATIVE ARE YOU?

As a teacher I get a lot of satisfaction from watching my students immerse themselves in a task as they explore a variety of different rhythms and develop their movement vocabulary. Creativity is about moving beyond the 'follow-the-leader' format to a student-centred focus. Invite your students to use their imagination and develop their own story or idea. Support them to practice and perform their own movement ideas by facilitating creative opportunities in dance.

Students are creative when they have the permission and freedom to express their own style, personality or movement ideas. There are many strategies to teaching creative composition in a dance class. The teachers role is to support the students ideas and guide them to be more creative. For example: If the movement is arm rolls, can you think of three different ways to do an arm roll? Offer suggestions and invite your students to play around with their movement ideas. There is not right or wrong when it comes to students being creative. Ensure they are performing movements safely and respecting each others ideas and the dance space. Creativity helps students to explore movement from a place of possibility.



LET IT FLOW

There are a few ways to determine whether your dance class is successful. Ask yourself these questions:

Are the students motivated?

Are the students engaged?

Are the students enjoying themselves?

Are the students laughing and smiling?

Are the students being creative and expressing themselves?

For me that moment of success is when I see my students fully immersed in a dance or creative activity. It is the point where their skills and abilities are at an optimal level for performing the task at hand. If it is a creative group task, students will be communicating and sharing their ideas. They are enthusiastic, engaged and motivated and will be moving and practising their dances either on their own (student-centered) or with minimal involvement from the teacher. For a teacher it is the point when a student is fully focused and expressing themselves through the dance and movement. They are not distracted by anyone else and are truly “in the flow” of the music and / or movement. This is the peak of your dance class and it should feel great for everyone involved.

LASTLY...

I am passionate about helping teachers like you to teach dance like a pro! If you implement these 10 tips to help you teach dance 'like a pro' into your dance classes you will not only be successful as a teacher, you will create a positively rockin' dance experience for you and your students.

Let's Dance Rockstars!

Bec :)



NEXT STEPS...

Do you struggle to keep your students motivated & engaged for a whole class?

Are you ready to learn new ways to create fun and inter-active dance classes that inspire your students to be creative, unique and dance?

Discover a student-centered approach to teaching and learning dance using a variety of Fundamental Movement Skills.

REGISTER FOR THE NEXT PD DANCE WORKSHOP FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS

<http://www.rebeccamariewilliams.com.au/pddanceworkshopforschoolteachers>