Fifth - Eighth Grade Jazz Dance Project

Objectives

- To introduce the Jazz Dance style.
- To use Jazz Dance as a form of exercise which includes stretching, strengthening and cardiovascular components.
- To allow students to experience the joy of dance.
- To encourage students who have an interest in dance to continue to pursue opportunities which will enhance their personal development and appreciation of the art form.
- To have fun and explore creativity through movement

Dance Activity (approx activity length 45 minutes)

Equipment

Something to play music on (stereo, mp3 player and speakers, etc)

Age appropriate songs that fit the descriptions given with each exercise

Movement Exercise General Information

The class is designed to be conducted without barres, mirrors or special flooring.

It would be beneficial to the safety of the students that they wear athletic shoes that stay securely on their feet.

Students will need a fair amount of room to move in safely. A gym or all purpose room would be ideal for this class.

The goal of the class is for students to be introduced to the movements, not that they perfect the movements in a single class.

Exercise Order, Music Suggestions and Goals

1. Moving Warm up
    a. Music
        i. Use a song or songs that are between 96 and 116 beats per minute. Faster music is more challenging for the students to move in time to.
        ii. Use a song that has a steady beat and is in 2/4 or 4/4 timing
    b. Goals
        i. Increase blood flow through the entire body to warm up the muscles
        ii. Increase heart rate
        iii. Introduce and encourage musicality
        iv. Improve coordination
        v. Challenge balance

2. Plie' 1A
    a. Music
        i. Use a piece of music at least 64 counts long
        ii. Slower tempo music will challenge balance and increase the muscular control needed
        iii. Moderate tempo music will challenge the coordination of movement with music
    b. Goals
        i. Strengthen the muscles of the pelvis, thigh and lower leg
        ii. Stabilize the hip, knee and ankle joints
        iii. Lengthen the muscles of the thigh and lower leg through use of an eccentric contraction
        iv. Engage all postural muscles for control

3. Stretching / Strengthening as appropriate
    a. Music
        i. Use a moderate tempo piece of music
        ii. Music that is too slow encourages students to hang in the stretch which is not beneficial to lengthening muscles
        iii. Music that is too fast encourages ballistic and / or bouncing movements which can be dangerous
    b. Goals
        i. Lengthen muscles through movement
        ii. Introduce the concept of dynamic tension
        iii. Strengthen muscles around joints
        iv. Reduce the chance of injury

Exercise Order, Music Suggestions and Goals continued

4. Isolations 1
    a. Music
        i. similar to the Moving Warm Up
    b. Goals
        i. Ability to isolate 1 body part at a time
    c. Improved coordination
    d. Improved fine motor skills

5. Step Tap
    a. Music
        i. similar to the Moving Warm Up
    b. Goals
        i. Development of musicality
        ii. Increased awareness of the body in space

Comprehensive directions for each exercise are provided on the following pages.

General body alignment notes and necessary definitions of body positions and terms are included before the break down of exercises.

Body Alignment

1. Unless otherwise specified the starting body alignment is standing with the spine as neutral as possible. A neutral spine generally has 3 curves in it. There is a slight curve in the neck (where the apex of the curve goes to the front of the body). The thoracic area has a slight curve in the opposite direction (where the apex of the curve goes to the back of the body). The lumbar area has a slight curve in the same direction of the neck (apex forward). The amount of curve in these three areas will vary from body to body.

2. The pelvis should be held as neutral as possible. In a neutral alignment the crest of the hip bones (ASIS) are approximately in line with the PSIS (roughly where the dimples are on the back).

   If the ASIS are lower than the PSIS, the pelvis is anteriorly (forward) tilted. A person with this body type needs to think about lengthening the tailbone to the floor to encourage their pelvis back to a more neutral alignment.

   If the ASIS are higher in the front than the PSIS in the back, the pelvis is posteriorly (backward) tilted. A person with this body type needs to think about releasing the tailbone down to the floor as it is tucked under them and coming forward.

3. In standing posture, the body is stretched up with the feeling of lift coming from the knees, up the leg, though the spine and head. From the knees down, there should be a feeling of grounding or weight into the floor. The abdominal muscles should be supporting the center of the body. All of the toes and the heels should be in contact with the floor as should the lateral aspect of the feet. The weight should be evenly divided across the metatarsal, not favoring the inside or outside edges. The weight should be centered both front to back and side to side. There should be energy up and out the crown of the head and down through the feet.

4. When bending the knees (using plie') it is important that the knees track over the middle three toes of the foot or feet. The weight placement should remain as consistent with number 3 above as possible.

5. It is important to remember that just as some body types have coming to parallel. If this is the case for a student they should strive to work in the most neutral position they can attain.

Dance Terminology and Positions

Plié	To bend the knees over the toes. Demi plié is a half bend, the heels stay in contact with the floor throughout the movement.
Parallel First	The feet are together (with up to 1 inch distance between them), toes facing straight forward and heels straight back.
Parallel Second	The heels are placed under the hip sockets, toes facing straight forward and heels straight back.
Parallel Fourth-	The right foot is placed in front of the left foot, on a separate track, so that both toes are facing forward and heels are in line. The width between the two feet should correspond with the width of the hipbones and there should be approximately 1 foot length between the front heel and back toe.

Moving Warm Up

A. Head Movement Walks

1. Students nod head "yes" while walking in a specified direction of travel.
   a. Forward
   b. Backward
   c. To the right
   d. To the left

2. Students shake head "no" while walking in a specified direction of travel.
   a. Forward
   b. Backward
   c. To the right
   d. To the left

B. Shoulder Movement Walks

1. Students lift shoulders to ears and lower as far as possible while walking in the following directions
   a. Forward
   b. Backward
   c. To the right
   d. To the left

2. Students press shoulders forward and then retract them while walking in the following directions.
   a. Forward
   b. Backward
   c. To the right
   d. To the left

C. Arm Movements

1. Students circle the arms from front to back while walking in the directions of
   a. Forward
   b. Backward
   c. To the right
   d. To the left

2. Students circle the arms from back to front while walking in the directions of
   a. Forward
   b. Backward
   c. To the right
   d. To the left

General Notes for Moving Warm Up Exercise

1. The purpose of a moving warm up is to increase blood flow to the entire body before stretching or performing finer movement isolations.
2. To be most beneficial, the warm up should begin at a comfortable pace and then increase in intensity to a moderate pace. This does not mean that the body isolated movements should become fast and out of control, but that the walking pace should increase.
3. Smoothness in articulation is important for avoiding injuries in this series.
4. Using a variety of directions is important to keep joints and muscles balanced and healthy.
5. When traveling backwards use a spotter to indicate the end of the room if your class space has no mirrors.
6. Body alignment should remain upright and as neutral as possible through this series.

Stationary Isolations 1

All movement patterns are repeated 4 times before beginning the next one.

1. Head Isolation – Begin standing in a small parallel 2nd Position with knees in a small plie'.
    a. The head looks right, center, left and center.

    b. The head looks up to the ceiling, center, down to the floor and center. When looking up it is important that the neck not be over extended. Ideally the nose will be "looking' to the seam of the wall and the ceiling.

2. Shoulder Isolation - Begin standing in a small parallel 2nd Position with knees in a small plie'.

    a. The shoulders are lifted up to the ears, lowered to center, pressed down towards the floor and back to center.

    b. The shoulders are pressed forward, returned to center, retracted back and return to center

3. Arm Isolation - Begin standing in a small parallel 2nd Position with knees in a small plie'.

    a. Direction 1
        i. Arms are bent in so that the elbows are slightly in front of the body at about the bottom of the ribs and the palms face the body.

        ii. The arms are then stretched up overhead, trying to keep the shoulders down and palms face each other.

        iii. The hands turn so the palms are facing away from each other and the arms are pressed down to about an inch below shoulder level.

        iv. The arms are lowered to either side of the body with the fingers reaching down to the floor and shoulders are neutral and the posture erect.

    b. Reverse Direction 1
        i. Arms raise to the side at approximately an inch below shoulder level. The elbows are stretched and the palms face down.

        ii. The arms are raised to the ceiling. The arms rotate so that the palms face each other on the way up. There is still the distance of the shoulders between the arms and the elbows are slightly in front (not directly next to) the ears.

        iii. The elbows bend and the arms lower to be in front of the torso. The elbows are approximately in line with the bottom ribs. The hands are palm facing the body and fingers are extended.

Stationary Isolations continued

iv. The arms are lowered to either side of the body with the fingers reaching down to the floor. The shoulders are neutral and posture is erect.

4. Feet Isolations – Begin sitting on the floor with the legs straight in front of the body. The body is as pulled up as possible.
   a. The feet are pointed so the toes are as far away from the body as possible.
   b. The feet are flexed (think of pointing the heel not curling the toes back) so that the toes are facing the ceiling.
   c. Ankle circles in both directions

General Notes:

1. Stationary Isolations are designed to develop awareness of the movement of one particular body part.
2. Finding the student's range of motion and not forcing the movement is important.
3. When executing head isolations it is important that the student focus on something at each location. Sharp movements of the head should be avoided for safety of the neck and the nervous system.
4. Only the body part being articulated should be moving during the isolation series.
5. There should be an accent to each movement. The isolation occurs crisply and there is a brief hold before the next movement is made. The staccato action of the isolation is a stylistic feature of jazz dance.

Plie 1A

Starting position – feet parallel, hands on hips.

Counts	Movement
1,2	Demi plie' parallel 1st
3.4	Stretch
5-8, 1-4	Repeat 2 additional times
5-8	Open right leg to parallel 2nd
1-8, 1-4	Repeat pliés in parallel 2nd
5-8	Close right leg to parallel 1st
1-8, 1-4	Repeat pliés in parallel 1st
5-8	Open left leg to parallel 2nd
1-8, 1-4	Repeat pliés in parallel 2nd
5-8	Close left leg to parallel 1st

General Notes:

1. The feet do not need to touch in parallel 1st position. There can be a small space between the feet if it allows for better leg alignment.

2. In parallel 2nd it is important that the feet are placed under the hips. Placing the feet further apart can affect the ability of the knees to track properly.

3. The knee should be tracking over the center 3 toes in all positions. Ideally there will be a straight line from the hip through the knee and through the ankle if the body is in proper alignment.

Stretch / Strengthen

Spinal Articulation

Begin in parallel 2nd position standing tall.

Counts	Movement
1-8	Beginning with the head, roll down through the spine 1 vertebra at a time.
1-4	Plie' the legs.
5-8	Stretch the legs.
1-8	Repeat the plie' and stretch.
1-8	Roll up through the spine, beginning with pulling the tailbone down towards the floor and then re-stacking each vertebra one at a time.
1-4	Repeat the roll down.
5-6	Plie' the legs.
7-8	Stretch the legs.
1-4	Repeat the plie'
5-8	Roll up as described above.
1-8, 1-8	Repeat the series

Hamstring

You will need a chair for each student or pair of students or long benches of about the same height as the chairs.

Stand facing the chair or bench with the feet in parallel 1st position.

Place one leg on the seat of the chair or bench with the leg still parallel and foot flexed towards the ceiling.

The standing leg remains parallel.

Without changing the alignment of the hips, hinge forward from the greater trochanter and maintain a flat back). The movement forward is only as far as the hip alignment can remain neutral.

Hold this position for 60 seconds using the breath to stretch. Every time an exhale is made, allow the breath to deepen the stretch.

Roll up to standing and change sides.

Stretch / Strengthen continued

Quadriceps

If a student feels anything in their knee joint during this stretch have them stop immediately.

Standing upright holding onto a chair back or wall with one hand for support, shift the weight onto the foot closest to the support.

Bend the other knee and hold onto the ankle with the arm of the same body side. You should be holding the front side of the ankle.

Align the pelvis so that it is in neutral position and not tilting forward (anteriorly). This will require use of abdominal muscles to maintain this posture.

Without shifting the pelvis, the idea is to have the knee pointing directly to the floor and the foot of the stretching side coming towards the center of the buttocks.

The knee should be as straight down as possible – if it is opening to the side (abducting) the TFL is showing tightness and pulling it. The student should now be stretching both the quads and the TFL.

Hold this stretch for 60 seconds on each side.

Calf

Have the students stand facing a wall. Their hands should be able to touch the wall with their elbows bent at a 90 degree angle.

Have the students bend one knee and stretch the other leg back behind them. The knee of the stretched leg should be fully extended and the ball of the foot on the floor. Have them stretch the heel down towards the fall to lengthen the calf and help release the Achilles tendon.

Stretch / Strengthen continued

Lateral Flexion

Students begin sitting on the floor with both knees bent and legs crossed. If you have soccer or kick balls give each student one to aid in the stretch. The leg that is crossed in front will indicate the starting side.

The same side arm will either be placed on the floor or ball. The opposite arm will stretch over head.

Have the students stretch up and over towards the hand that is on the floor or ball. Both buttocks should remain firmly on the floor.

The arm that is on the floor or prop can slide further away from the body to increase the stretch.

Return back to upright and allow the arm over the head to open.

Place the arm that was just overhead on the floor and bring the prop arm up overhead. Stretch up and over without allowing the supporting arm to move.

Switch legs and repeat the exercise on the second side.

Hip Flexors

For the lunge series that follows maintain a flat front foot – do not allow the heel to lift. For ease in teaching a class, have students keep their knee at no greater than a 90 degree angle to their foot (a straight line from knee to ankle). While many students could go further without injury, many cannot and it is easier to err on the side of caution. The benefit to those who have the greater range of motion is not so great that it would outweigh the harm to the other students.

It is very important that each student find the most neutral alignment for their body. Not every student will be able to work in parallel alignment, some will need a slight turnout. The important part of placement is that the student's joints are in line without causing curvature of the spine or shifting of the pelvis.

Begin standing in parallel 4th position.

Bend the front knee while allowing the back leg to slide further behind the body until the knee is fully extended off the ground and the ball of the foot is all that has contact with the floor.

Both legs should be as parallel as possible and the hips square.

The hands can either be one on each side of the supporting leg, or both on the side of the back leg. Hold for 8 counts.

Stretch / Strengthen continued

Without changing anything else, stretch the front knee, shifting the weight to between both feet and try to press the back heel down to the floor. The torso should be stretched long down the front leg. Hold this position for 8 counts.

Maintain the above position but now flex the front foot. Hold this position for 8 counts.

Repeat the sequence from the lunge, this time holding each position for 16 counts.

Change to the 2nd side

Back Extension

Have students begin lying on their stomachs with their arms and legs stretched in front and behind them. The legs can be open hip width apart and slightly turned out if it is more comfortable.

Have the students lift just their right arm without moving any other part of their body. Lower it and repeat with the left.

Without allowing the legs to lift have the students lift both arms up. The head should stay between the elbows and lift with the arms.

Repeat the upper body lift for a total of 10 repetitions.

Next have the students lift the right leg without moving any other part of the body.

Repeat this with the left leg.

Making sure the legs are now open hip width apart and turned out have the students lift both the arms and legs off the floor. The head will again remain in between the elbows.

Repeat this for a total of 10 repetitions.

Bring both legs together. Place hands below their shoulders and allowing their knees to bend, push up and over their shins so they are now sitting back on their heels. This position is known as child's pose in yoga and is very good to do after spinal extension is worked on.

Balance

Have students stand on one leg for 30 seconds. The 2nd leg can be off the floor in any direction of your choice.

Repeat with the second leg.

Stretch / Strengthen continued

Abdominals

Begin lying on your back, knees bent and feet flat on the floor hip width apart.

Arms are down by your sides, at shoulder height (not resting on the floor).

Inhale and bring the chin towards the chest without touching the two points.

Exhale and slide the ribs down towards the hips, using the abdominal muscles to create the movement. The shoulders should lift off the floor and the hands should stretch forward towards the outside of the thighs.

The stomach should not pooch or bulge up, but instead flatten into the floor without tucking the bottom under.

Inhale and maintain this position.

Exhale and return to your starting position

Upper Body / Arms

Begin standing up straight.

Roll down through the spine and walk hands out to a plank position.

Hold for 10 seconds.

Walk hand over hand to face the wall ¼ of a turn on the right. The legs remain in place although the feet will pivot to adjust the facing.

Hold 10 seconds.

Repeat this 2 more times until you are back where you started.

Walk the feet into the hands.

Soften the knees and roll up.

Repeat this series to the left.

Step Tap

Forward

Step front with the right foot and tap the left foot next to it without a weight transfer, step front with the left foot and tap the right foot next to it without a weight transfer

Backward

Step back with the right foot and tap the left foot next to it without a weight transfer, step back with the left foot and tap the right foot next to it without a weight transfer.

Sideways

Step side with the right, tap the left foot next to it, cross the left over the right and tap the right foot next to the left.

All of the combinations above should travel from right to left and left to right.

If the students are comfortable with the feet movements and musicality, repeat the exercises above asking them to add an arm, head or shoulder movement to the feet.

Choreography Project

Explain AB choreography. To begin simply have one movement be A and a different movement be B. Ask the students to create an 8 count phrase that demonstrates AB choreography. After the students have created and demonstrated their pieces, have each person find a partner. Partner 1's phrase is now the A and Partner 2's phrase is the B. Have them teach each other the phrases and perform them for the class. Next have the partners join with another pair of dancers. Pair 1's 16 count phrase is now A and Pair 2's 16 count phrase is B. Have each small group learn the choreography and perform it for the class. Have the dancers talk about whether they needed to adjust their choreography at all to allow the pieces to link. Did this involve changing feet? Adjusting timing? Changing direction?

Academic Activity

Have the students write about their jazz class in the context of a healthy lifestyle activity.

What benefits do they see in the following areas:

- Muscle strength
- Cardiovascular health
- Flexibility
- Stress release
- Enjoyment
- Social
- Balance
- Coordination

What activities does he / she currently participate in that could benefit from jazz dance?

Did they find jazz dance to be a fun way to achieve the above areas? Why or Why not.