



## **Dance and Communication Residency with High Bridge School District, High Bridge, NJ**

This residency project *Dance and Communication: Connecting to Social-Emotional Learning* for students with special needs and general population meeting 2 X per week for an entire school year with the High Bridge School District is a year-long curriculum (for two years) to provide consistency in learning and allow the students to discover alternate forms of communication for social-emotional learning within dance making activities connecting to academic and life experiences. Using Roxey Ballet's current 16 session D2L curriculum as a template for expansion incorporating the elements of dance, (space, time, energy) we developed a substantial shift in methodologies, strategies, and program design to provide *consistency and longevity* in the special needs student abilities to connect the arts to communication skills, providing visual & auditory alternatives and tailoring to social emotional practices.

The **Dance and Communication** curriculum & accompanying assembly programs directly relates to our mission by being an all-inclusive organization, fostering a creative environment of growth and providing a safe space for social-emotional learning and communication. This dance project allows us to expand the focus of our methodology, strategies, and formats of our previous curriculum to design and tailor a two year-long residency dance program in direct correlation to Art as Part of Basic Education addressing consistency in lessons, connecting to quality dance arts and delivering social emotional understanding in remote, hybrid or in-person learning environments. Empowering students to: discover dance as a normal part of basic education to be understood and mastered through an accomplished course of study; to develop skills in, and experience of, the elements of dance creative movement processes; and to learn through a systematically organized presentation of lessons over a longer period of time to provide consistency in student understanding and/or mastery of the subject. This Dance and Communication curriculum is about absorbing the "process" which should be allowed time and repetition to comprehend. Lessons provide reasonable and appropriate timetables with which students can honestly grasp and engross themselves in for better life-long comprehension.

The **Dance and Communication** curriculum objectives are for students to experience of the elements of dance as a meaningful and consistent communicative medium and for schools to fund the residency program beyond the first two years of the curriculum. The curriculum encompasses the NJ State Standards in Dance and the National Core Arts Standards in: creating, performing, responding, and connecting to the basic elements of dance: space, time, and energy. The goals and objectives of the program are student ability to: identify and create; explore and make creative choices; and analyze and respond to the meanings and purposes of dance elements while connecting to an outside topic, and collaboratively performing their choreography. This culmination of the choreographic process is presented informally for sharing with students, parents and staff. A Roxey Ballet assembly program is presented during the residency. Students and faculty engage in discussions about who, what, when, where, and why people dance and how it positively impacts their lives. All of these objectives are taught using multiple layers, overlapping lessons, and in the moment sensibilities which are absorbed over time using repetition and consistency.



Student learning outcomes include: understanding and acquiring skills about the meaning and purpose of dance through creative movement using the elements of dance and choreography; exploring and grasping the dance elements by learning the vocabulary and making creative response choices to lesson prompts; and gaining choreographic knowledge and abilities by creating structured choreography through improvisation. These outcomes influence how students view and critique dance and develop an appreciation for dance as an alternate form of communication.

During the second half of the curriculum, the students and classroom teacher choose a topic to co-create choreographed material about, allowing them to make creative connections to the subject. Word Banks are developed enhancing vocabulary, topic understanding and prompts for movement development. Choreography is developed by working in small groups, duets, and creating solo phrases with a specific intent to the movement topic and Word Bank qualities. This process empowers the school community to make the positive correlation between dance and the educative process. This dance curriculum encourages students to use structured improvisation as a mechanism to explore, create, connect, and respond to prompts based on the elements of dance. This exploration in the small group setting enhances their ability to: develop greater concentration and focus, explore personal and group spatial relationships, cooperate with others, problem solve, and collaborate on design and structure.

Through this **Dance and Communication** curriculum, Roxey Ballet provides alternate strategies and methodologies to facilitate learning for students with disabilities by allowing Teaching Artists to carefully monitor individuals engaging in dance movement by examining their process and responding to their development; including alternate means for dance movements and varying the levels of challenge to maintain maximum participation. Roxey Ballet Teaching Artists use appropriate accommodations for communication in all lessons providing options of perception, language, and comprehension by customizing visual displays, clearly defining vocabulary and symbols, using tablets and technology for communication and highlighting features with posterboard and large drawings which engages student response and understanding in connecting to dance. Verbal response aids target dance understanding along with guided constructive responses with questions like "I noticed you...or I invite you to... or What do you know?"

Roxey Ballet's Teaching Artists present multiple means for accessibility strategies, co-creation, and movement expression by monitoring physical and emotional responses and facilitating effective goal setting. This is done by building in scaffolded sensory lessons creating multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate content understanding and mastery. Students observe how choreographic choices create responses in peers when working in small group settings. The Teaching Artists encourage and support constructive criticism and alternate means of expressing the creative process.

Student evaluation and assessment occurs through several documented means: A Student Movement Card monitoring the student's use of the elements of dance through the various lessons; Student Reflection either verbally, written or through pictures to document student learning; Student Oral Feedback "What do you see? What do you think? What do you wonder? How do you know that? Why do you think that?" and Video or Zoom recorded feedback to measure quality and the process. Short cycle formative assessment occurs constantly, every minute or so when working with the special needs community. Teaching Artists are prepared