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John F. Kennedy Center

"Steps Five, Six, Seven, and Eight:  
Beyond the Basics of Dance Education  
For Students with Disabilities"

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>> LISA DAMICO: Good afternoon, and welcome to "Steps Five, Six, Seven, and Eight: Beyond the Basics of Dance Education for Students with Disabilities." I'm Lisa Damico, your moderator and webinar organizer, and today's webinar is part of a monthly series that comes out of office of VSA and accessibility at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. This series addresses topics related to arts, disability and education.

If you would like to view live streamed captioning of the webinar, you could follow the link you see on the slide and in the chat box of the control panel located on the right side of your screen.

Before we get started, let's take a moment to ensure that you are familiar with the Go to Webinar control panel on the right side of your screen. This control panel can be hidden by clicking on the orange arrow in the top left corner.

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You have the ability to submit or answer questions, which is especially encouraged in this webinar, using the chat pane located near the bottom of the control panel.

If you would prefer to say the question instead of typing it, you can click on the "Raise your hand icon" on the control panel and I will unmute your microphone. Your questions will come directly to me, and during the designated question and answer time at the end of the presentation, as well as we'll have a few throughout the presentation, so be ready, I'll relay them to our presenter. I want to emphasize that following the presentation I will send out a follow-up E-mail with a link to the recording of today's presentation, a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, helpful handout that Jenny Seham has prepared, and a copy of the transcript. This means you don't need to worry about frantically taking notes during the presentation. You can go back and watch the recording and review supplemental materials at your leisure.

I'd like to let you know about next month's webinar. The last in this year's season, "Drawing on Disability: Comics Including Difference," which is scheduled for Tuesday, September 22nd from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Washington, D.C. time. We'll have Karen Keifer-Boyd, Michelle Kraft, and Veronica Hicks presenting so I hope you'll join us. If you're active in social media, I invite you to connect with us using the hashtag #VSAWebinar. I have also coerced my colleague, Megan Bailey, into live tweeting

today's webinar on Twitter so head on over to Twitter and say hello to her.

You can also find us on Facebook @VSAInternational, on Twitter @VSAINTL and on Instagram @VSAInternational.

And with that, I'm going to turn it over to today's webinar presenter, Dr. Jenny Seham. Jenny, are you ready?

>> DR. SEHAM: I am. I'm just pulling it up right now.

>> LISA DAMICO: All right. I'm making you the presenter now.

>> DR. SEHAM: Thank you. Hi, everyone. It's Jenny. I'm Jenny Seham, and I want to welcome the dancers, artists, teachers, administrators, friends and fellow paradigm shifters who are here today. We have some ground-breaking educators from all over the world. From the U.S., I can't possibly mention every state because you are everywhere. But from New York, Washington, D.C., Colorado, New Mexico, Florida, and Florida VSA, you do a really kick ass job. Ohio, all the VSAs, but Florida, I noticed you. We also have people from New Zealand, Malaysia, from Panama. In Mexico. Welcome, welcome, everybody.

>> LISA DAMICO: Jenny, I am going to jump in because we are not seeing your presentation yet.

>> DR. SEHAM: Oh, okay. What shall I do?

>> LISA DAMICO: There should be a button.

>> DR. SEHAM: Are you seeing it?

>> LISA DAMICO: There we go. Now you're good. I see it.

>> DR. SEHAM: Do you see me now?

>> LISA DAMICO: Take it away.

>> DR. SEHAM: Okay. So we had a welcome slide. Good. We had a welcome slide, and those were people from all over.

But we're going to continue on.

So in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law. The purpose of this act was, and still is, to provide equal rights and access for disabled people. So 25 years later, where are we now?

Well, in dance education and performance, we are astonishing the world by demonstrating over and over again the capacity for dance to uniquely, spectacularly and globally demolish the social disabilities that shackle our culture.

Now, frankly, though this is a wonderful photo and a wonderful dancer, it's not a new idea. This is a great moment in time. In 1954, this is a photo of Helen Keller visiting Martha Graham's studio, and you see that Martha is holding Helen. I'm going to show you another slide later on. But essentially, teaching Helen dance and teaching Helen how to see dance by guiding her hands to the bodies of the dancers.

Now, over 60 years later, this is Mana Hashimoto, a beautiful blind contemporary dancer. It's Mana's vision to make dance

accessible to blind people by first audio describing her solo piece, and then inviting her blind audience to come and dance with her. So in Mana's words, "To dance is to surrender my body and soul to unknown possibilities. I hear, I smell, I feel, I live, I dance." I had the great pleasure to attend this workshop, and these are -- some of these are students of mine and Mana is in white in the center, as the dancers around her, the audience, some are dancers, some are not, are dancing along with her and feeling different parts of her body.

So the challenge for each of us is how to surmount the social disabilities that impede our ability to dance and to teach dance. And the inspiration is the inevitable success that comes from our passionate belief in the art of dance. And this cartoon says, "Say what's on your midnight, Harris. The language of dance has always eluded me."

We all speak dance here. And we can all expand our teaching language. But what is needed? Sign language, tactile modeling? Translation of dance vocabulary that would be appropriate to the physical disability that you're teaching or that is dancing? Verbal description? A dance partner? Access to the dance class?

I'm going to answer all of those things.

I recently was invited by Brooklyn Academy of Music to conduct a dance workshop at SNACK in New York City, SNACK stands for special needs activity center for kids. This is a haven for kids who have been denied activities because of the severity of their cognitive and behavioral issues, so some of the kids there with autism were even excluded from autistic facilities or organizations specifically for kids on the autism spectrum. They went to observe a class in musical theatre there, and I was struck by one of the teens who kept jumping out of place, making noise and definitely giving the staff a workout. And I'm sure some of you online at the webinar now can relate to this. And I was wondering how or if I could reach him and communicate through dance. This shows the medical model of disability, where the problem is this kid, or our student.

So I really was wondering what was the way in. What was the way in to his brain, and how he worked, and how could I get there.

Well, in the social model of disability, it's the environment, the attitudes and organizations that are the problem and not the individual. This is a world view that is gaining increasing attention and acceptance, and it's critical in our work to not only dispel negative attitudes towards the disabled student, as in my jumping friend, but also our own negative self-talk that disables us from teaching -- disables us from teaching or dancing. When, instead, you should recognize

and repeat. I am a super hero. I am a parent. I am a super hero. I am a teacher. I am a super hero. I am a dancer. I am a super hero. Go ahead and do that. I am an administrator. I am a super hero.

And what happens often and what I've seen in doing a lot of trainings, doing a lot of professional development, is that we stand in our own way. We have the desire to teach and then it is the fear of just standing our ground on what we truly believe in, and that is teaching, and dance as an art.

You educators are teaching and learning constantly, keeping up with Universal Design for learning strategies, monitoring common core changes and implementing evidence-based practices. You review the IEP plan for your students. You collaborate with other professionals; you fiercely fight for funding for your program. And that's overwhelming. So let's just have a conversation about what it is we need to do to take these next steps in what is happening all around us. What do each of us need to do to really set our intentions, set our goal, ask our questions, which I invite you to do, ask our question about what it is we need to break through the social barrier, and how are we going to get it.

You, all of you attending this, and again, as I said, there are dancers, there are artists, there are phys ed teachers, there are friends, there are many -- there are artists. But all of you are leading this charge in social justice movements that affects not only disabled people but all of humankind. Our history as elegant examples of individuals vaulting over barriers, and the movement now is providing access -- what we're really charged to do or what I'm charging myself and all of us to do is to provide access to an exponentially larger numbers of people, and shift away from the way we view dance disability in education. So let's go back to this magnificent moment in time of the friendship between Martha Graham and Helen Keller.

Martha asked -- or Helen asked Martha, what is it to jump. What does that mean, and how is that experienced? And Martha led her to Merce Cunningham, where Helen laid her hands on him to experience the movement of his body. And what she said was, oh, how wonderful! How like thought! How like the mind it is!

Another pioneer in this movement, or this sort of singular accomplishments that have grown now into the magnificent work that you all are doing across the world was that I must mention is Jacques d'Amboise, and his students were wheelchair users from P S199. Jacques d'Amboise was a teacher of ballet and he founded an institute without a manual, without UDL knowledge, without common core. His inclusion -- he founded NDI in 1976. His inclusion model became about dance excellence for all students on a grade, regardless of their classification.

And here's what Howard Gardner, who's the author of Multiple Intelligence and is the director of Harvard University Graduate School of Education Project Zero had to say about Jacques. He laid bare the essence of all good education, discipline, effort, beauty, struggle, joy. In the process, he opens up a universe of possibilities for all who participate, and reveals why an education in the arts must be the birth right of every human being. I'm showing you some pioneers in this field. But we are past some pioneering efforts and we all are leading this charge now, and it's still maintained that an education in the arts must be the birth right of every human being.

Now, it's not a new idea to challenge the dance aesthetic, famously Alvin Ailey, among others, did this in insisting that the black form, the black dancer, was a classical dancer, and one to be admired, when, you know, it is not so long ago in our history that that was not so.

Another example of challenging our dance aesthetic is Lawrence Goldhuber, and here he is with Wallie Wolfgruber, and we certainly did not see Lawrence is the one on the right, the large man, and we did not see dance -- the dance aesthetic as something where somebody was large in this way.

Our pioneers of physically integrated dance are many. Here are just some that I really want to mention. Kitty Lunn is the founder of Infinity Dance. Judith Smith, the artistic dancer -- the artistic director of Access Dance, and Mary D. Fletcher, the founder of Dancing Wheels. I've had the pleasure of working with both Mary and Kitty and taking a workshop from Mary that's just life changing and language changing for me.

And other pioneers, and again, there are many, who have challenged the dance aesthetic, Heidi Latsky is very worthy of mention, that famously did this project, which was shocking to the world and magnificent to view.

So here are some of our role models in professional -- in the professional dance world. As we looked up to somebody like a Jacques d'Amboise, or a classical ballet dancer, the body aesthetic or a standard of excellence in dance, we have growing and growing numbers to look to professionally. So now how do we teach? What do we do with this and how do we reach the incredible spectrum of ability and challenge, physically, cognitively and emotionally that deserves a place on the dance floor?

So certainly one way, and through workshops, that's how we learn how to do it, and here is an example of Mary's Dancing Wheels workshop.

What are our next steps? How do we move from spectacular but singular accomplishments to a positive paradigm shift that makes

inclusion the exceptional norm and not an occasional exception to the norm.

So I'm going to throw that question to you, and ask you how we do that or how do you do that? What is your question? What is your next step? What is it that you need to do?

Well, the first thing that we all need to do is be mindful of our self. Who am I? What is my goal and purpose? What do I need to do to accomplish that goal and purpose? And what is stopping me from doing that? So go ahead and ask that question, or write this down.

I know for myself, I need to write more and get the word out about the work that you all are doing across the world. And what stops me or slows me down is my own fear of finding the perfect words to describe a lifetime of experience and belief in this. What I can do in dance and what I can do in front of the classroom is harder to put into words, but I've decided to do it, and I am.

So the next thing is to be mindful of others. So examine your question, what's the intention that you're setting for yourself? What can you do about it? And now allow yourself to learn from someone else. Your student, a colleague, a parent. I continually learn from the parents of my students, not to mention my own parents. Here's an example of me in the studio. I usually -- and some people are asking specifically for technique. And I'm looking to do choreography with some groups, and wanting to represent what they can do better than I can do, what they can do -- how they can access a certain emotion or feeling or story. I generally put on music and ask them. So I believe that this is a moment of a hurricane, and I discovered new ways of moving, and this is a girl from the Light House Guild International so this is a girl who is blind, but is in full capacity to express what a hurricane is.

Next is reveal your passion. What is that? What are you passionate about? Show it.

So I want to tell a little story about that. About showing your passion. This is a student of mine in the front who sometimes is good at showing his anger, but when he was able to channel that into dance, was able to really focus the passion into dance movement rather than angry gesture. I was giving a professional development workshop at the Light House Guild international, which is where -- the photo is from that, and the assignment was for each trainee to teach a short piece of choreography or a warm-up of their choice to a class of blind students. And one of the participants was a wonderful, wonderful ballet dancer, told me she was stuck. She felt she couldn't teach, didn't know what to do, didn't know how, and was

fearful of being able to teach something. I said to her, do what you know. Do what makes you feel good.

So she decided to teach a balance step. Well, if you know what a balance step is, go ahead, give yourself a stretch and do one, and however your body interprets that, if you're a seated dancer, if you're a standing dancer, and if you don't, that's okay, I'll explain a bit.

So she was doing this very basic lilting 1-2-3 dance step to the right and to the left, and a woman at the end of the first row called out, I got the steps, but there's something missing. I know what the 1-2-3 step is. But there's something missing.

So I guided the sighted ballerina to stand and dance in front of the blind student holding her hand. They did the step together many times. When suddenly the student smiled. Following her ballerina guide and perfectly following the rise and fall of the balance, and you could hear a gasp from the people who were observing this. And the purpose of this story is two fold. One is to do what you know and you love and feels great. To share that is magnificent. I mean, that relates back to the photo of Martha and Helen, just sharing a beautiful moment, a jump.

And the second is to make contact and touch and trust in that. If you've ever taken a workshop with me, you've heard me talk about a remarkable student named Daniel Gellen who's now a senior, and it continues to be his intention to show the world that the blind can dance so here he is with his Braille challenge T-shirt on. I asked him to speak at his last dance class before heading off to college, and he really thrilled us with a talk of the dance -- about a dance of freedom and glory.

The dance piece was to Stevie Wonder's Pastime Paradise and Daniel gave us his present paradise, describing the event. This event of performing in front of an audience was a time to challenge prevailing stereotypes and spread the word about the desire, possibility and remarkable expression of freedom through dance within the visually-impaired community.

And here he is in performance.

This -- I came across this picture because it reminded me that this is not the actual moment, but my friends who are attending from Mexico, this reminds me of a workshop that I did in Mexico with a group of down's syndrome teenagers, and I decided to teach them tango dancing and ballroom dancing. And here's another photo of wonderful context of ballroom dance. And at some point, the students themselves asked if they could invite other people to dance with them. And I went over to the accompanist, and I said look at the reaction! Look at their faces! Oh, yeah, the students are so happy. They're so delighted. I said no, no, no! Look at the teachers. They are

so captivated and engaged and excited to be invited to dance with these students who are all teaching us how delightful this is. So this is a very, very fond memory.

So I want to take this point to kind of check in with people and how we are doing. I actually had a moment to read through some of your preliminary questions. I know that here there are public school teachers. There's Board Certified dance movement therapists, people who are teaching individuals with cognitive atypical development, people who are teaching autism and ADHD, blind students. There are yoga teachers and dance teachers and teaching deaf and hearing impaired, speech therapists. It just goes on and -- people who have taught for seven years, ten years, 17 years, 43 years -- congratulations -- 32 years in music ed, and questions on how to counsel kids with disabilities for safety. How can Universal Design for learning be applied? Many, many, many wonderful questions. And Lisa, I'll turn to you about how I open this to questions at this point.

>> LISA DAMICO: Sure. Well, people can go to the chat pane, the questions, and then type in what they'd like to ask or share, and then I'll relay that to you.

>> DR. SEHAM: Great.

>> LISA DAMICO: Actually, I've already had a comment and a question that's come in from Emma. She says I've been a member of Dancing Wheels for five years. As a dancer and head of the school. I was featured in one of the displayed photos and have loved the work. However, there is a stopping point in the work I do as getting parents and activity coordinators to see the relevance in a dance session. Getting these individuals to see the importance and follow through on it is such a difficult idea. They all love hearing about our work. However, getting them to commit to classes due to scheduling, transportation, or financial issues is always a battle. How do you see these types of difficulties being resolved?

>> DR. SEHAM: I see it as an ongoing struggle, Emma. Resolved -- I definitely -- well, I don't know if we can have a conversation, but I want -- this is a huge issue, and relevant to everybody who's out there. I love this question. I teach classes at a psychiatric facility, at an outpatient clinic, and this is ongoing, the problem that the students want to be here, it's whether the parents can really commit to them coming.

I don't know if you've taught a parent class and had them come in and really learn, so that's one thought, an idea, in getting them very involved. I know I've had focus groups with parents both before and after the fact of an event, and this is something fairly recent because I think for decades, we've been struggling with parents, and you're seeing activities, you know, other people involved. So getting them involved, that is

something -- that is not just them bringing their child or student or whoever it is that they need to -- they need to commit to, but really having them commit to an activity themselves, that's a focus group before a focus group, after perhaps a class with them. So that's the start of that conversation, Emma, but I love your organization and I'm sorry, I'm not mentioning everybody, but love it, love it, and I'd like to continue with that talk. Anything else, Lisa?

>> LISA DAMICO: All right. We've got a few. Daniel says what modifications, adaptations, support, can I provide to a sixth grader with spinal bifida, who uses a walker and would like to dance, but it is painful for her back. She would like to dance in her wheelchair, but her personal wheelchair is only to be used at home.

>> DR. SEHAM: Her personal wheelchair is only to be used at home. Well, okay, so a few things -- and again, I would like all of these conversations to continue.

So one -- I want to throw this out as a general thing. If there's a way to get donations to get her a wheelchair that can be provided at the dance studio site? I'm not sure where it is that you're teaching. I am just constantly in awe, but no longer surprised what people want to donate and want to give. I'm going to show you a slide a little bit later of something that we accomplished that I didn't know how to do, but all we had to do was ask, and received the help and support both financial and physical labor to accomplish what it is that we wanted to do. So I would see if we -- so her wheelchair is only to be used at home, so I'm assuming that you went down that path, but I would definitely see about a fundraiser to get that, or just ask, or just, you know, whether through some social media to ask for a donation. People would like to. Promise you. But let's continue that conversation.

What else, Lisa?

>> LISA DAMICO: We have a question from Jodi -- [audio difficulties] -- sat in on short class -- a day of workshop. How do you deal with the issue of touch? I'm sorry. What was that?

>> DR. SEHAM: Can you repeat the question? Because you cut out for a second.

>> LISA DAMICO: Sure. This question comes from Jodi. She says I work as a teaching artist in dance. I am brought in on short contracts, a week, a day, a workshop. How do you deal with the issue of touch, even this safe touch? I am confronted with the issues of sexual abuse and am often steered away from any kind of touch at all.

>> DR. SEHAM: Yes, Jodi, this is such a great question. That's another paradigm we have to shift. Because we have to

touch. We have to touch. However, we do have to do it in a safety context, and especially in the public schools or in any kind of public setting. So for your safety, there should always be somebody with you. This should be introduced before -- and I don't know what your organization is -- but prior. And I also don't know what your population is. But, you know, I know in working with visually impaired, for example, touch is essential. But, you know, just recently, the work that I've done with SNACK, there was significant meetings beforehand, working with the staff there. And very tough. I'm hearing that you may be doing a one-time. So one-time workshop. So how do you then put in the time to establish what it is you're going to be doing. Great question because I think that tactile communication is essential in the work that we're doing with every -- almost every single category, except that those that were aversive to touch. And again, it's best just to have a conversation about it, and even if it means just prior to or making sure that you have a kind of permission and letting them know. I want to involve, and I would love to have that future conversation as well.

What else have we got, Lisa?

>> LISA DAMICO: Sara says what are best practices to prepare to teach dance in a new program for a population with disabilities? In other words, what information should we ask for? What training for instructors, volunteers, et cetera. It's a big question.

>> DR. SEHAM: Yeah, that's a huge question, Sara. I actually would like to send you that in the handout because that's -- I've got a lot of lists, and we've got some things that will really give you the full-on manual for that. Because that's a biggie. That's a biggie. But that's sort of steps one, two, three, four. And essential. A new program. I'm going to send you that in the handout.

>> LISA DAMICO: She says thank you so much, Jenny.

>> DR. SEHAM: My pleasure.

>> LISA DAMICO: Do you want to take it from there and we can come back to some questions a little bit later?

>> DR. SEHAM: Yeah, it's time for another one and then we may move on and get some questions at the end.

>> LISA DAMICO: I've got one more for you. Lisa would like know how do you best facilitate an adaptive dance class where there are a range in blend of disabilities present in the dancers, cognitive, physical, emotional, et cetera.

>> DR. SEHAM: Yes. I think that that -- I think I was waiting for that question. I think that that -- who is this? Was this -- who sent this question in?

>> LISA DAMICO: This is from Lisa.

>> DR. SEHAM: From Lisa. Okay.

>> LISA DAMICO: Lisa.

>> DR. SEHAM: Lisa. Great. Yeah, I think that this is -- I think that this is the issue that we have across the board in our public schools increasingly. There are so many inclusive classrooms. So one of the most important things -- and I have a slide on this, but I can give a fuller answer since you asked the question -- is to make sure, and it is definitely -- this is something that is a learned skill and honed over years and years of practice, but to make sure that every child is seen.

Now, two stories about that. One is to have a belief that there will be a degree of patience. Not only patience, but acceptance, and enthusiasm for waiting and observing while another child is being worked with, or another student is being worked with, not necessarily a child.

So three elements. One is to really believe in that and to have sort of like the question of the buy-in for the parents. The buy-in for anybody is to bring the other students into that process so that it's meaningful. Have them help.

I can't say this often enough. Partners, partners, partners, partners. Within that class itself or partnering with another classroom so that the students who may need some extra physical help or may need some extra emotional help have somebody with whom they can work, have a partner. And then moments for didactic work so that those kids can work together. Assignments that are open-ended. So, for example, the choreography assignment. Okay, work on this hurricane step so that you as the teacher can walk around.

The other thing I want, and this is also from this recent SNACK program that I did was I actually got feedback from the staff. We had a kid in the program who became very emotional and distraught and really had a full-on tantrum, and the feedback that I got, which -- and I chose to continue teaching and focus on the kids who were not having that tantrum, and staff members there took care of this kid and were able to move him to a quieter spot. And the feedback that I got was wow! That was fantastic! You really -- you really kept dancing. You didn't get flustered by that. So it's a bit of practice of not getting flustered. It's also partnering with organizations that will take care of, will really partner and collaborate with you. This is not work you should be doing alone. In everything that I do now, I insist -- and by the way, my program at the Light House, this year, though, I've been doing it for about 15 years, this year, I said I must have twice as many partners as I dancers because I do not want from any of these children, the most gifted, or the ones who may need the least amount of support, to the ones who may need significant support

physically, so partners, belief in that the other kids will tolerate that you're taking time, and really partnering -- and really working with the organization. So thanks. Fantastic questions. And I want to continue the conversation on all of them. So please do contact me on those and remind me what the questions are.

I want to move forward. I want to tell another story, which actually has a little bit to do with the taking time, and this I learned -- I learned recently from the workshop that I was showing you, Mana Hashimoto, beautiful blind contemporary dancer. And, you know, some of you out there are ballet dancers, and this is familiar to you. You have a graveyard of used ballet shoes or if you're not a ballet dancer, you may walk by a poster or know what a ballerina looks like and what a plank shoe looks like. So I took this workshop with Mana and she spent time talking about a point shoe, and had the point shoe itself, and passed this around. And this was captivating to an audience of blind students, adults and children, who spent just glorious moments examining the silk that tied the shoe, examining the hardness, and imagining what it would be like to dance with them. And it's something that I have valued, I have understood, I have implemented, but I've never brought a toe shoe in. I've never brought an article of my dance wear or somebody's dance wear. So it speaks to the last question a little bit about knowing that you can really take time with something, because it's important. So I never did that.

I did recently teach a section of -- just this is an example of exploring as my wonderful friend Megan is just describing, showing some of the props that the kids are to use in their performance. Recently I taught a section of revelation to my advanced blind teen students because I wanted them to be able to experience and to see this iconic piece. So to be able to go to the theatre and see the piece and know what was happening because they had danced it themselves. But I never passed around a toe shoe.

Other elements, as questions are coming in about -- prior to the webinar and as it's going on about what is it you do, one thing is core movement, and finding the vocabulary for the class that you are teaching. And it may be a mixed class. It may be a class where, you know, this, for example, is the Light House, again. But frankly with very mixed abilities, different kids in the class.

So, for example, what is a tendu and how do you achieve that in a wheelchair and how do you achieve that and how do you teach that for different abilities.

And it's really finding what that core -- that, you know, core -- the strength is, but also what the basic movements are,

and then repeating them, repeating them, repeating them, repeating them so that your students have mastery of the dance, and really can have ownership. I mentioned this before and I knew I was going to get to it. Dance partners. This is a magnificent part of the work that I do, that I have these high school kids, and now a lot of people returning from college and coming back to volunteer and work one-on-one with the kids. I now have more partners than there are dancers because -- and sometimes the dancers have two partners.

This slide is related also to the question that I had before about what do you do with different abilities? So here's the student in yellow. There's a student in the center, if you're not able to see this picture, but the student in the center, who has very limited movement, and initially neurologically real difficulty with processing the movement. So there's no way he could keep up pace with even some of the slowest learners in the class. Well, it turned out he had a magnificent rhythm, and he is a spectacular singer. I have now been able to work with him for over three years and he is keeping up pace. But initially, he, while other people were doing the dance movements, he was clapping the rhythm. I have another wonderful story which we don't have time to go into fully, but while other children were doing a tendu or a front step, this child was doing the step with her eyebrows because that was the part of her body that could move. So this speaks to different abilities. You find -- you can have a vocabulary of what the dance step is, and really find meaning for each and every kid at their level, or at their ability.

So this brings us to some other ways or critical ways to inform our practice and to move forward in the field. I just went -- it's an exciting time in this field because the people who have been doing this work are just getting the recognition that they so richly deserve. There are more and more conferences and workshops, and more appreciation and acceptance of doing work with disability, and, you know, of course the cry being nothing about us, and this is access dance without us, and continuing to learn from. So again, these are professional companies. I think that nothing about us/without us includes your students, and that is an ongoing process. I take as many workshops and attend as many performances as I can, but really my ongoing learning every day, every minute that I teach is from the students in my class, learning how to use vocabulary, how to expand vocabulary and how to expand my ability to teach.

Now, at this recent workshop for Dance New York, I was listening to someone who said that the cry now is not nothing about us/without us, but nothing without us. Now, this is a meaningful statement for me for many reasons. But this is a

particular picture of a 15-year-old in my class who said, I want to show the world -- I had asked each of the students to decide what their revolution was, and what their personal revolution is, and what they wanted to -- how they wanted to shock the world and show the world, and she said mine is to show the world that visually impaired can be visual artists. And I mentioned before in the question period about volunteers. So she -- her vision was to do a large scale artwork while dancing. So it was through dance that she was able to express herself publicly as a visual artist and show not only the finished product but herself as a visual artist. Well, I don't know how to do that. I'm very good at some things and I'm not very good at constructing a large scale canvas, but we just asked and asked around, and found members of the prop department at the Lincoln Center, who actually because of Megan O'Dowell, who I had showed earlier, in another slide earlier, connected to that, and they just heard the story and were happy to build it and bring it to us. Anyway, that's the story about ask. Just ask. Ask for that wheelchair. I'll start the donation on that wheelchair, by the way.

So we are at this point, and I told you about various exciting people and how they're turning the world up around them, and this is the point for you to just take a second and think about your belief.

I believe. Just don't think about it too much. Just what is your belief? And if you want, at the very end, I'd love to hear some of those. I believe.

So as you're thinking about that, perhaps writing that down, the Simi Linton, who I mentioned before, here's Simi Linton, who is an activist, a dancer, and a brilliant documentarian who is currently using a wheelchair who says, I believe that social change can be brought about by shifting the ways that disability and disabled people appear on the stage, screen, page and canvas... I am throwing myself into this endeavor not only because I hope it will foment social change, but because these artists are contributing something vital and exciting to the arts.

Another new hero of mine is Petra Koppers because she's a researcher and an artist and a dancer, and I consider myself in that world. You'll get this. We need to hurry along so we can get a few more questions.

So you set your belief. And now what will you do? I believe and I will accomplish this. I like this slide because it's a dreamer or a goal achiever riding the star. That's her wheelchair. I like that.

So I will tell you what I will do. I will continue to discover new ways of seeing dance. This is another picture of

Mana, and next to her is a new friend, Krishna. If you can see the photo, you see her face is bathed in light. Mana is in white. Krishna is wearing glasses and is a professional dancer. And I observed this dance that Mana intended for the audience to appreciate to see, and to me it became with this accompaniment as Krishna really discovered something, a colleague that she hadn't known before, a really magical moment.

Okay. So inclusion dance. Dance and disability. What do you remember? It is my goal for you to remember something about yourself. For you to be charged with the next step because there is such a richness. And in an hour we can't cover everything. My goal for you to remember that you are in charge of what the next step is and that you have a huge community that is supporting you, and that is with you in this social revolution.

And now what you need to do is you've learned it. You've learned that about yourself, if you didn't know that already. Go out and do whatever you decide that you will do, and then go teach somebody else, either teach a class, teach another workshop, teach a workshop, teach a student that you haven't taught before, or just tell somebody about what it is you've been doing.

So we're near the end. And I'm excited that we have a little bit of time to have some questions. But I love to end, as we charge forward, in not forgetting the beauty in technique and tradition, as we're really challenging the -- challenging the dance aesthetic. We're challenging a social paradigm. We're challenging the way things are, as they should be, and in doing so we are remembering what is beautiful. And, you know, this is why I was excited to reach back a little bit. And we could certainly reach back further, but back at least to 1954, but not forgetting the beauty in our technique and tradition, such as the ritual that ballet historian Jennifer Holman identifies as ability in the treatment of others.

Jeh Kulu in Bambara language means community so we're ending also with again going out and doing what we have decided that we will do with our belief and our passionate commitment, and embodiment of dance and teaching. And I like to end things with a hug. So this speaks to the touch question, which I do want to continue talking about. But I encourage hug.

[Speaking Spanish].

And finally, here's how to reach me and continue the conversation. I want to invite, Lisa, more questions. I'm excited that we have a few more minutes for that. So that's my Web site, and very excited to let you know a special edition of the Journal of Dance Education, a special edition on Dance and Disabilities is coming out on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, right around the

corner, and I have an article on "Extending our vision: Access to inclusive dance education for people with visual impairment." I also know that there are many incredible experts from whom -- well, you all are -- I want to learn. I've been invited to write a chapter in a book on essentially everything there is to know about dance disability. So please, let me include you. Let me throw a spotlight on you. Let me talk about you and the work that you're doing. And so it's really important that I include the people who were here and people that you know who should be included in this chapter and in this discussion.

Lisa, I think we have a few minutes, yes?

>> LISA DAMICO: We have a few questions.

>> DR. SEHAM: Great.

>> LISA DAMICO: I'll start at the top. Matt would like to know, can you speak more to your approach through Universal Design? At one point you said you worked to get inside a student's head. I know many teaching artists say just do it. Just listen to your student and you'll figure it out. But are there specific techniques that you use to find the access point for students?

>> DR. SEHAM: Yes. I will say, Matt, that I -- I study this a lot. I study it all the time. And yeah, that's a frustrating answer, isn't it, to say just get into their head and just go and do it. I did want to give you examples of people doing that, Jacques and Martha and other people who just forge ahead. But there are ways. There are ways to study autism, to study ADHD. There are absolutely great guidelines on each of these -- each of these disabilities. And we don't have time to go through them, but I'm really happy to steer you to those things. And Matt, if you can let me know specifically what you want, what you want more information on, I'm happy to really target that.

That being said, I will tell you, in this recent program with severely autistic kids, though I had done a lot of work with autism previously, I had not had this level of severity all in one class. I had them more scattered through classes, and so I studied and I brought some visual props with me, and it turned out that those were not terribly useful, some of the tools and tricks or some of the tools and strategies were not as useful as me really committing to being connected to the dancer, to each dancer. Now, I had support. Every single child there had a partner. And that makes a difference, and I'm lucky, but I've earned it and demand it now for doing this for many years. So thanks, Matt. Let me know what you want to know specifically, and I'm happy to send it to you. Who's next?

>> LISA DAMICO: Emma would like to know what are your thoughts about ensuring the credentials of teaching dance to

students with disabilities. Today there seem to be a lot of studios or dance teachers who may offer integrated dance with good intentions, but they don't have the proper background or training to do so.

>> DR. SEHAM: Ah, wow, that's loaded. I agree. I think that they need to do the credential. And that, again, is a tricky thing because I think that there's a lot of credentialing that -- listen, I think the whole education system needs to change. I think in general education, we need to be learning about disability. In higher education and in dance, specifically since that's what we're talking about, I think we need to -- I think we need to not kind of add this on, or I think this needs to be built in and not lopped on to what we already know, okay now here's how you teach disability. I think that we should start with these multiple languages. I think it's tricky. I do agree with you. You know, I'm not credentialed except that I have -- well, I guess I am credentialed because I've studied this. But it's tough. I agree. I don't think that everybody is doing it properly. So I just hope for the field that people do due diligence. Thank you, Emma. Do we have time for a few more?

>> LISA DAMICO: Yeah. Sammy says I am currently beginning the process of looking for secondary education that can eventually lead me to do similar work as you. What degrees would you suggest that would be most valuable? I am currently a professional dancer who has two years of experience working with psychiatric adults and a child inclusion program.

>> DR. SEHAM: Well, come to my lab here. I'm a clinical psychologist, and, you know, and I was a professional dancer and an actress and a singer who decided to become a clinical psychologist partly because I volunteered at Belleview Hospital to see if that was maybe what I wanted to do. I was working with chronically psychotic homeless men and I was working in a physical psychiatric locked in patient unit with people with medical and psychiatric disabilities. And I was teaching dance, and the woman in a wheelchair who had been depressed, and in her depression, tried to kill herself and threw herself in front of a train. She then became paralyzed from the waist down -- lived, but in a wheelchair. And while I was teaching, she would watch me, week after week, walk past her, smile at her, invite her, but she always declined.

And one day she wheeled herself down to the activity room, and sat in the doorway in her wheelchair and again declined when we verbally invited her to join the dance. But the other patients drew her in. Created a dance that involved upper body movement and arms and wound its way around her and into a sculpture where she became the center focus. At the end of

this, I thanked her for joining us, and she stopped me and said, no, I want to thank you. I never thought I'd feel beautiful again. And today I felt beautiful.

So that made me decide to become a psychologist.

Now, I don't think that's what psychologists normally do. But I am now being able to integrate my world as a dancer and as a psychologist and develop a center for creativity at Montefiore Medical Centre so Sammy, call me and we'll talk. I don't know a degree. I mean, you know, magnificent, magnificent masters in dance therapy, you know, I had a certain path and I loved the field of psychology, so that's what I wanted to do, but -- and degrees in education would be fantastic also. I think there's a lot of people at this webinar who make great friends through the Kennedy Center VSA, who are in education, might be a direction to go. It's going to really depend on some specific needs. But my path is a little eclectic, but I'm finding more and more dancers who are coming to work and volunteer and work with me and help me do the writing and research. Anyone else?

>> LISA DAMICO: Well, I think we could do maybe a minute or two more. Matt wrote back and said I think you answered my question. It seems to come down to experience. When teaching the arts and all of its subjectivity, it seems that a personal hands-on approach and listening to the needs of your students may be the best way for Universal Design. Like each individual is unique.

And so this is a question. I think it's a little bit more of a reaching out to the community. Mike says, I have a speech disability and teach dance. Is there anyone in my shoes out there that I can join with? I do not want to be alone out there.

>> DR. SEHAM: Mike, where are you?

>> LISA DAMICO: I asked Mike.

>> DR. SEHAM: What part of the world are you in?

>> LISA DAMICO: We'll see if he calls back. I asked that, too.

>> DR. SEHAM: Yeah, so Mike, if you're still here, I don't have a speech disability, or impairment, but I work with a magnificent partner, and I couldn't, in much of what I do, and I couldn't do it without him, and so I think it would be great and thrilling, and I know there's somebody online on this webinar, and I know there are people in the community who would love to work with you. So we're just wanting to know where you're from. And thank you, Matt, for your comment. More on that, too, yeah, I think it takes a lot of experience. But yes, it takes experience.

>> LISA DAMICO: I think we'll do this as our last question. And piggybacking on that idea, teaching with partners, this

comes from Cathy. How do you make sure that there is equity between the dancer with disability and able-bodied dance helper so that there is not a power differential and that there isn't a reinforcement of charity, but value of interdependence?

>> DR. SEHAM: Yeah, I spend a lot of time -- I mean personally, how does one make sure in general? I will tell you what I do, and that is I do training, extensive training prior to, you know, in terms of speaking to this very, very topic, and I gotta say it's sort of self-selected in terms of the Saturday volunteer work that I do. And, you know, I know other programs that I'm connected with. They also select kids who -- so it's not just a general anybody can apply. I do a lot of training and I meet with the partners that I work with every single class after class for a check-in. I walk around and, you know, part of the great work of the partnership is that then some didactic work and individual work can be done and I can really check on people, but I check in and supervise them every single class, I spend about a half an hour after class to really check in with that. So I agree. And I think that, you know, I -- I don't want to rely on that just comes naturally. I don't think it does. I think you need to do some work with them. On the other hand, what I've seen is genuine admiration and not sympathy or pity, but real awe of the imagination, of the creativity, the ability, the resilience, all kinds of qualities. Truly, truly, I really see that.

>> LISA DAMICO: All right. Well, there are several more questions that have come in. I will share those with you, Jenny, after the webinar so that maybe you can touch base with some of the participants, or, you know, I encourage them to reach out as well.

>> DR. SEHAM: Great.

>> LISA DAMICO: So with that, I am going to take back control of the PowerPoint and we will wrap things up.

>> DR. SEHAM: Thank you, everybody. Just great, great, great to have this conversation. We'll keep it going.

>> LISA DAMICO: And with that, I would like to ask you, all of our webinar participants, to remain on the webinar a few minutes longer and complete a short evaluation survey that opens when you close the window. As I said last month, I'm in the process of getting ready to launch our call for webinar proposals for next year. So keep an eye on your in boxes. If there are any changes that you would like to see happen to the series. In this survey, the overall feedback question is a great place to write those.

And with that, I would like to thank you all for joining us today. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free

to contact me, Lisa Damico, and I will be sending out a follow-up E-mail within the next week.

So thanks, and I hope to see you all again next month.

Thanks, Jenny!

>> DR. SEHAM: Thanks, Lisa!

>> LISA DAMICO: Bye!

>> DR. SEHAM: Bye!

[Webinar concluded].