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JFK CENTER
MAKING DANCE ACCESSIBLE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
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>>> Hello, everyone and welcome to Making Dance Accessible for Students with Disabilities. I'm Lisa Damico, your moderator and Webinar organizer. Today's Webinar is part of a monthly series that comes of the 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 stream captioning of this Webinar, you can follow the link you see on this 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 everyone is ready and familiar with the GoToWebinar control panel that you should see on the right side of your screen.

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You have the ability to submit questions using the chat pane located near the bottom of the control panel or 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; I'll relay them to our presenters.

I want to emphasize that following the presentation I will send out

a follow-up email with a link to the recording of today's presentation, a copy of the PowerPoint, any handouts that our presenters want to share, and a copy of the transcript. This means you don't need to worry about frantically taking notes during the presentation.

I'd like to let you know about next month's Webinar scheduled for Tuesday, February 14 from 2:30-4 PM Washington DC time. This Webinar, entitled Universal Design for Learning and Interactive Drama Workshop, will take a practical, real-world, and highly interactive look at drama and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the natural connection between them, and how to make drama work more UDL.

We are excited about this webinar because it will take a different format from the traditional webinar where you are a passive participant. With this we will have people volunteer to be active participants so you will be able to participate in an interactive drama workshop from your desk. I encourage you all to sign up.

And with that, I am going to turn it over to Alisa.

>> Great.

You are the presenter.

>> Hello.

My name is Alisa Rasera and I am the professional learning manager as well as the dance teaching artist with Luna Dance Institute in Berkeley, California.

Thank you to VSA and The Kennedy Center for inviting me here today to share about this work of making dance accessible to students with and without disabilities.

I would like to welcome the audience and thanks for tuning in today to this webinar.

I would like to begin with sharing a little bit of a slice of my own dance history.

During my time in grad school many moons ago at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts I was exposed to physically integrated dance in a graduate seminar course that looked at stretching ideas about what dance can be.

From this stemmed my very important chapter of working with AXIS Dance Company.

AXIS is a major part of my dance history and I have some stories that I can share from that experience as well as where it took me beyond that.

In case you are unfamiliar with AXIS, in 1987, they became pioneers of this dance form in the Bay area where today there continues to be very strong advocacy and activism for disability rights.

I was a dancer teaching artist and the education director during my tenure with AXIS from 1999 to 2007.

My experiences during these years were pretty amazing in my growth

as a dancer, artist, teacher, learner and individual.
And that time prepared me for my next chapter as a dance educator
of working with Luna Dance Institute.

I have two big takeaways that stand out for me during my years with
AXIS.

One was purely from being in the work where dancers with and without
disabilities brought so much creativity and convention of the dance
making and pushed my own physical limits to places that I didn't even
know I could go.

And the second was not only was my knowledge and experience as a
professional dancer expanded, but my lens opened up in a whole new
way to just how inaccessible the world really was and still is.
AXIS remains committed to bringing dance education to the next
generation of dancers with disabilities and I highly recommend that
you check out their really resourceful website or even better yet
try and see them live if they come to your city to perform or take
a class with them.

Luna Dance Institute was founded in 1992 and the mission of Luna Dance
Institute is to bring creativity, equity and community to every
child's life through the art of dance.

Luna uses active inquiry to deepen the learning experience of both
children and adults, improve teaching practice and build high quality
art programs.

As we bring children to dance, we are developing future leaders
choreographers and visionaries.

I was very drawn to Luna's mission, even before I began working with
them.

To have the opportunity to do some professional learning and really
think about what I wanted my teaching practice to evolve into from
where I was at the time.

And still evolving which is great because it's -- it mirrors the
experience of bag performer where it happens in real-time and is live
and -- yeah, and I just continue to let it evolve.

So I have a question I would like to pose to the audience today and
that is have you ever participated in any kind of a dance class?
You can decide.

>> Define dance class.

>> I will launch that poll.

So I will give everyone about 30 seconds to select yes or no.

>> Looks like we have gotten most of the votes.

I will close it and share our results.

Wow, so it looks like we have 93% of the participants have
participated in a dance class and 7% have not.

>> Great.

>> I think it's just an interesting question to put out there.

Again, to think about how we define dance class.

Who has experienced it.

And why -- what might draw you into a class and what might be a barrier for getting to a class.

So some dance teaching A-has that I had over time, there are many of them, but I chose three that stand out that felt relevant to this particular conversation.

And the first one is that my understanding of what dance is and can be continues to deepen.

And as we know dance already can be a challenge to hold a perfect definition to.

It can be a tricky thing to plain to someone that may be just disconnected to the word or not have any experience from kinesthetically being in a dance class or socially dancing or even really having a connection to body.

And perhaps that's why it's an art form and left open to interpretation to the intention of the art maker and eye of the viewer.

One effective way that we learn is by moving.

And whether it's a dance that is done with your fingers or your shoulders.

One-half of your body or your entire body, it's still a dance.

And when I authentically am teaching from my own body it allows students to dance and learn from theirs and can be key to successful and creative learning environment.

And I see this over and over again, and assess it by if I really truly was teaching from the body that I live in.

I feel like that has been reflective of my students.

The second one is teachers think being teachers as experts on dance education and students with disabilities as experts on disability education.

By that I mean if you ask questions about what you need to know to better serve your students, you can adjust as needed based on the answers that you get.

You might also choose to not adjust curricularly and let students use their own decision making.

Creative dance is very language heavy, but I really like to let students do what they think the direction is and to bring wherever they are in their learning to finding that dance constructing their own learning.

And use their own expertise to interpret the meaning.

That's a practice that I can probably say I learned as an undergrad of the California institute of the arts and it's just interesting when you bring back the way you learn into your teaching practice. Doesn't mean that's the way someone else might learn, but I really

like the idea of leaving it opened to interpretation.
And then presenting your passions while making all accountable for learning.

So creative dance has a lot of rigor and space and movement intervention.

It's fun.

Speaks to each individual.

If you teach what you feel passionate about and let students be their best selves as dancing bodies, it's a win-win situation for everybody. This is a photo of a student from a middle school project that we have here at Luna from a special day class who also she dances at our studio program at Luna.

She loves dance and we have loved nurturing her through this art form that she is so excited about.

And this was for an outdoor performance in San Francisco that my students participate in each year.

What I really love about this photo, she -- so the student had a leaning forward and reaching with one arm with her focus down and there is some people in the background that may or may not be dancing but one of the people in the background is my daughter and is doing a complimentary -- complementary shape to my student's shape.

Whether or not it's intentional or not, I really like the photo. So important project at Luna is through working with schools and communities.

We do this primarily in the Oakland unified school district.

We worked with Pre-K and middle school.

We worked with high school as well.

Because in California there are dance specialists in a lot of high schools, we don't actually -- our teachers are not working in the high schools in that capacity.

We work with them as more professional development capacity.

We look at the partnership between classroom teacher and dance teaching artists in a really highlighted way.

We don't just teach in a school without having that partnership be very strong.

And I want to just be specific by saying and being clear that when I'm using the word "special" it's not the preference of Luna as a way of describing an audience taking a dance class.

As we know, there is still a great divide in how language is used to describe and name things and is that way that school districts we work in and I imagine around the country are describing classrooms specifically for kids with disabilities.

Another way is by saying SDC or special day classroom.

Other places in the country or world may have other ways of describing this class.

You will hear me use that acronym during this presentation so I just wanted to be clear that is just keeping in alignment with what our exposure is in this particular school district.

One of Luna's many program areas over the last 22 years has been to do this work and as I said the side by side work with classroom teachers is really important because it's increasing their knowledge of dance and create agriculture for dance in the larger school community.

And this is an important model as we found that without that teacher and administrative support a dance program can struggle to succeed. We want it to succeed.

Our inquiry project began in the Oakland unified school district at a small school what large population of children with autism and communication delays.

We stayed at this particular site for six years until the school closed in 2010.

Here we had pre-kindergarteners through third grade learning dance curriculum that was built for inclusion classrooms of kids with and without disabilities.

Dance became a part of this school's culture.

It was really actually a beautiful model and such a shame it closed when it did.

The teachers were so heavily invested in making dance an integral part of every day for these students, that if it wasn't there, then it was like they weren't having a full day of learning.

Even if we weren't present, the teachers held that thread so strongly so that these students experienced dance as just a regular part of the day.

And this was true in the last year before the school closed when there was a new principal that year who was under the assumption there was no way for -- I'm using air quotes, quote-unquote, these kids to learn about dance.

And that couldn't have been proven more wrong because those children were dancers, are dancers.

Some of them are still dancing and I will explain how we are continued to hold that thread for them so when they went on to their next grade level they didn't feel abandoned from dance.

Simultaneously we piloted a similar project in middle school.

Same school district.

And after some starts and stops at multiple middle school sites there was one middle school that remained committed to going the distance.

And we are now in year seven at that site and continuing to go deeper with our own learning with some new questions.

When we first started piloting the programs it was offered -- dance was offered during the school day through physical education, through

P.E. classes.

And because Luna really loves inquiry, we experimented with this equity approach in middle school as a way for all children to have a dance learning experience.

Some of the SDC classes participate in general P.E.

That was when our inquiry was broadened and deepened into learn being questions about what does creativity look like for students with disabilities.

We are also currently in year number 3 at another kindergarten through fifth grade school site working in three SDC classrooms and one general education classroom.

All of the students are receiving the same developmentally appropriate dance curriculum.

As the dance teaching artists with Luna, I have been able to explore many questions about what dance can look like in these different teaching settings and best practices for teaching in different populations.

We all have different learning needs but planning dance curriculum does not have to be that different.

The how I implement may change but what it is can remain the same. Here are two photo examples of classroom teacher dancing with students in an SDC class in middle school.

In one photo the teacher and students are kind of mirroring each other in a twisted shape and in the other it looks like they are playing some kind of a shadowing activity and if you can see the photo that teacher is actually at the end of the line following the students that are -- have their arms stretched and looks like they are traveling on some kind of a curvy pathway.

Often the classroom teachers and paraprofessionals will support the composition making or choreography building part of the class and then step back as audience to allow students to perform and share their dance making.

Here is another photo example of paraprofessional who does happened to work one-on-one with the student on her left and in this picture the student and paraprofessional are reaching out toward each other. This particular student uses manual wheel chair and over this year alone we've all witnessed tremendous independences that student explores more and more ways to dance with her wheel chair using faster tempos, curvy pathways and new dynamics with her body.

This is a reflection from a student.

Dance has become my escape.

When I dance, I feel everything but human.

I almost feel God-like.

When I dance, I feel like I matter.

And I thought this photo was very reflective of this statement.

This is another middle school student from my SDC class doing a leap across the floor which is something that we do as a ritual at the end of our dance classes.

And I just love how he is just all the way off the floor carrying his body through space.

We do this as a good-bye dance as a way of giving students a moment to move anyway they want to with the only directive being to try a movement with the intention that takes all or part of your body off of the floor.

And for some students that don't have that capacity to actually lift off the floor, they find other ways to give the essence of that. And that's a big goal for me as a dance teaching artist to really encourage students to find what is their jump.

What is their lift.

What is that moment of I'm dancing and doesn't matter who is watching but I'm fully in my body and present.

So we will take a moment.

If you have any burning questions that are coming up, if you are processing and need more time for questions, I will ask again near the end.

And also invite you to contact me outside of today.

I'm happy to have conversation beyond this webinar.

>> So we had a question come in.

This one comes from Marlo.

Are there any full time dance teachers in the schools in which you work?

>> Great question, Marlo.

Where we work at Luna we are at three different sites right now.

No, we are the dance teaching artists that come in.

We are contracted through the district.

California currently does not have a dance teaching credential.

It hasn't since the early 70s when it was taken away.

There is a lot of movement towards bringing it back and we all just hope and pray that will happen sooner rather than later.

Because it's needed.

There are plenty of dance specialists out there qualified and ready to go in and do this work.

But legally cannot without a credential.

There are some private schools can be a different story.

There are dance specialists working in private schools and they have different rules.

And there are programs in some schools where teaching artist does go in for a short residency or a longer residency.

So those positions if there was a credential they would exist, I think, more.

But in the sites we are at, we are the dance teaching artist. Sometimes there is after school programs that will offer dance. In terms of during the school day curriculum, no, not beyond us. That's why we also hold the classroom teachers accountable not to be dance teachers.

Just to hold that thread so it's not just an extra thing but it's integral as part of the curriculum.

Great question.

>> The questions are starting to pour in.

Some of these I think we will take a couple and then some we might hold toward the end after you have gone through the presentation.

The next question comes from Pamela.

How long are your sessions?

Length of residency?

Describe your planning sessions with teachers.

>> Great question.

So we go into a school for 32 weeks of the year which is mostly the whole school year.

We love to be there from day one to the very end.

So sometimes that has a little bit of flexibility depending on logistics, you know the school being ready to start.

Our classes typically are weekly, anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour, depending on again logistics or the age of the class.

Although we are teaching kindergarten and first grade classes now that are -- that do almost make that hour.

The middle school project that I am in, I do see the classes both of the special day classes twice a week.

And this is a very ideal scenario.

I deal, most ideal would be every day.

For what we do seeing them twice a week is so beneficial because it allows for more reputation time and processing of the learning.

We can start new curriculum on one day, have a day in between and then come back and do -- go deeper with it.

So that's really a luxury that we've had at this one particular site.

>> Do we want to keep moving on and I have more general questions like that that I think might be better for the end.

>> Perfect.

>> And it's poll time again.

The question now is, do you consider the classes that you teach if you were a teacher to be inclusive of students with and without disabilities?

And the choices are yes, they are inclusive of students with and without disabilities.

Or no, they are unique to students with disabilities.

>>> And I actually took some liberty and added a third not amicable

so everyone can vote.

>> Thank you.

I will leave this up for another 15 seconds and close the poll and share the answers.

>> Looks like our numbers are holding steady.

So 54% of the participants said yes, they are inclusive of students with and without disabilities.

12% said no, they are unique to students with disabilities.

34% said not amicable.

I don't teach dance classes.

>> Great.

All right.

So I would like to share a little bit about best practices for providing dance access to all students.

In this picture here are more of my middle school students in SDC classes and they are doing big wide jumps.

And I like this picture because it's not always the easiest thing to get middle school students off the floor.

Here you just see so much energy in their bodies and intentionality and focus actually.

So the practices that I will share are ideas that I gathered over the last couple of decades of inquiring about this work.

And I hope that you can benefit for your teaching practice or thinking about a teaching practice or any other learning endeavors you might have.

The first one is looking at the space for mobility access.

And the biggest invitation of welcome to someone with a disability hidden or otherwise is to be on top of the physical space by removing the mystery of these logistics.

Your students will have more space to focus on the dance making. Many studios even here in the Bay area remain inaccessible for someone to use adaptive equipment.

So looking at things like the bathrooms, are they accessibility.

Can someone with mobility issues use them?

Can someone with a wheel chair get into the building?

Get into the space?

Is there one step?

Five steps?

Half of a ramp?

Is there a lift and does it work?

Believe it or not many -- I probably don't need to say believe it or not, but sometimes they don't or sometimes you don't know who has the key to make the lift work.

Dance for dance class accessibility, you need a clean floor and a clear space.

Dance doesn't have a ton of supply needs, but the one supply that it does need is a clear space with preferably a clean floor.

I think many dancers and dance teaching artists can probably giggle at the spaces that we've all danced in from time to time that have not been suitable but we do it because we love it.

Or we know it's important to be there to share the work.

So thinking about these things ahead of time or doing a little site survey or just saying no if these things don't exist until they do. I think it's important.

When I was working with AXIS that was excellent training in how to require these things to be available and in good working condition. I'm really grateful for that because that became a core value for me as a dance teaching artist.

Students' abilities and limitations are not always obvious.

So be willing to try out a lesson and get feedback from students about how it did or didn't work.

You can name it and use it when it comes to using adaptive equipment as an educational stool and that can be an extension of one's body. Naming it and using it it's school to be unique and kids love to learn from each other.

And I noticed that sometimes adults can get caught up in stereotypes and struggle to communicate effectively with each other and particularly sometimes that communication can have a struggle when you trying to be effectively communicating with someone with a disability.

And tools such as wheel chairs and crutches and canes, communication devices give a person access to jump in and participate with making a dance lesson or unit take some risks, teachers and students who are unified in doing this together might gain more in the end.

I had a student two years ago in my class at the middle school who used a manual wheel chair and in the dance studio which we were lucky was a beautiful bamboo -- it's a sprung wood floor.

He would get out of his chair during class and just luxuriate on this floor and move all over.

He learned how to lift his body off the floor to his version of a jump or an extension or partnering and just moved brilliantly.

So we were preparing for a performance that we were going to do outside in San Francisco during Bay area dance week where we learned some choreography and then also create some of our own practices and then go and do it in a flash mob in union square.

As it got closer to the performance, I started to let him know that, we are going to performing this outside and I love the way you are taking this movement into your body but you might want to think about what does this look like using your wheel chair.

He didn't love that idea.

So we didn't really have the time to figure out another version of him.

So we go to San Francisco and he is using his wheel chair there. And I had been thinking could we bring some mats, what can we do? None of the other adults were really into bringing mats to make this work for him.

Plus we were going to be outdoors on public concrete and a big crowd. So it was unfortunate that he kind of shut down for that performance and wasn't able to engage in the way I had seen him engage in the classroom because, "A," probably felt intimidating I imagine because there were so many people.

We are outside and it's really hot on dirty concrete.

And in a downtown city.

Public space.

So my take away from that was I felt terrible that I couldn't make the situation different.

In the end, he was a big part of that process which took a lot longer than the actual performance.

So he got to experience dancing out of his chair in a really big rich way.

And the performance was what it was.

I always go back, could have done something different.

I could have encouraged him to work more using his wheel chair as well because there is so much to be done with that incredible accessibility tool.

>> Getting support from other adults, communication interpreters and symbol systems.

Use the experts around you as resources and let them help demystify fears about students with disability.

Multi-modal learning is good for everybody but can be really key for students whose learning needs rely heavily on visual, kinesthetic, auditory, spatial, tactile or other learning approaches.

I saw that some of you are working with students with visual impairments or who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

And instead of thinking about a curriculum that focuses on the assumptions of what someone may or may not understand notice language of dance, you might consider planning activities that serve everyone's learning and make sure that all participants are engaged. Working with partners or small groups can be a supportive structure. Using visual tactile aids, thinking about different instrumentation and music.

In all of the classrooms we teach in we try to support and bring in UDL, universal design for learning approaches.

Word walls, photos of kids dancing and other examples that might be relevant to the curriculum.

Dance curriculum they are learning.

Symbols, tactile props.

So a lot of different possible ways for dance concepts to be experienced and understood.

I have another story from middle school of some students, some girls that were learning choreography or doing choreography that they created and going across the floor in a line and first girl is looking at me who is holding up pictures or words of what came next in the dance to help as reminders, the next one was watching her and then one behind her was really listening to what I was saying.

The one behind her was listening to the music or physically connected. It was a really interesting example of we all have different needs for how we take in information and experience learning.

The more you can put out there, the better.

And don't be afraid to just try things.

Sometimes they aren't the most effective, but try them anyway.

Using inclusive language.

I am going to assume there is an understanding in this particular audience around this practice, but I always feel obliged to include it.

I learned this the minute I headed out for my first time with AXIS, using people and language is just important.

Using the phrase a person with a, is encouraged when speaking about people with disabilities instead of acknowledging the disability. Language varies across cultural backgrounds much of which is dictated by society as my good friends from AXIS co-founders Judy and Bonnie say, using common sense and courtesy just goes a long way.

And the culture in most deaf California is pretty good in this regard, even in education what are deemed as offensive words and phrases are still being used and sometimes people don't know they are using them. Again, I include this just as a part of your moving forward and thinking about this work just let that be a natural part of it if you can.

>> Asking questions directly is good for everyone.

When possible asking students directly what you want to know is great. In the end it's more informative and can be educating for that adult to step back and it gives more voice to the student.

When I refer to that adult, I mean often when teaching kids with disabilities there are other adults such as paraprofessionals who are very importunate classroom.

Who are involved in children's lives on a daily basis and eager to be the communicators about that child to the dance teacher.

So I really emphasize importance of asking and using eye contact and asking the child directly how to best support their needs in the dance class.

An example might be what kind of support do you need to travel across the classroom, across the space.

And if they can't tell you they might show you.

If nothing is happening, you could give some choices.

And certainly at that point bring in other voices to help support finding the best answer is.

This is another photo of my middle school students.

Can you tell I love them?

This is kind of an older one.

I really like it because they are making connected shapes including the paraprofessional.

She is in there making a connected shape.

And I just want to emphasize the importance of her role in this is not to manipulate what's going to happen, but she gives support to the dance curriculum that's being taught and help guide students to finding their own answers and making their own choices.

This is a subject this year of the role of paraprofessional that Luna is looking at closely to reveal more about what this adult in the room is so vital for dance class success and how we can give them more support to be dance makers themselves.

If be open to what creative success looks like.

Different learning modalities, nonverbal reflection, language, drawing, et cetera, what are the expectations of each class?

Curriculum does not have to change and you don't have to go crazy making a million different lesson plans for one class so that everybody has a way in.

You can shift what your expectations might look like and consider the way you deliver the material in terms of your pacing and reputation, use the reputation.

We all learn differently and with good prompts.

A student can be guided to explore creatively in very rich ways. Often students' success gets interpreted based on a limited aesthetic.

Dance teachers can change the paradigm for who dances and what dance is.

Kids are experts at adaptation and translation.

Use their ideas to improve your own.

This is a picture of Fourth Grade.

Fourth Grade students in a special day class and another one of our sites.

In this photo they are making strong shapes.

There is mostly boys in this class.

One girl.

Making strong shapes at different levels facing different directions.

My students are best at recalling what they create because they had the opportunity to engage fully with their body, senses and to reputation of material.

And it's perfectly acceptable to interrupt a lesson if you see that there is a clear need for more of something.

For example, my middle school students have been working with the dance element of energy and have quite the vocabulary Bank of Energy concepts.

Recently we started to look at weight through gentle partnering. I knew this would need tiny gradual steps for all to feel safe while still being creative.

And I knew from a lot of time and experience with them that it was unrealistic to launch right into what they were telling and showing that they really wanted to do which was rebounding off of each other. So I stepped back and began using the walls of the room as partners with different levels of pressure through use of different body parts.

And then use the adults in the room limiting the contact to be only between hands.

That developed into backs and side of the body or different places that were previously discussed if someone was using a wheel chair. And eventually we were in partners and no one got hurt or upset which was great.

And they were finding a lot of rigor and interesting new choreography through this one practice in their dance class.

And that wasn't necessarily something that I planned to do.

But it emerged from really being -- keeping the bar high.

Setting high goals while staying child centered.

What stays the same while the how has some flexibility.

This is my favorite one because Luna has explored this idea as I shared from Pre-K through 8 grade what deep focus on middle school and keeping the bar high and accessible you can use the same dance curriculum for all students.

Adaptations may be made in the implementation of the material.

We recently mixed fourth and fifth grade students at one of our Oakland sites, both general education classes and special day classes.

And the outcome was so powerful it was a collaborative experience for students confidently created performed and responded together in an hour long dance class focused on the element of energy.

They had each learned the same dance curriculum over the 12 week semester and came together to reveal the learning.

And I think they had a lot of fun.

We hope they get it because we will do it again this month.

I really am looking forward to see how that evolved throughout the

rest of the school year.

>> Here is another photo of middle school boys dancing across the floor and one in particular is in a big open shape dancing alongside his classmates across the dance floor.

This was a few years ago before I became really adamant that everyone takes off their shoes if they can to really protect our dance floor. So it's fun to see them with shoes on now because they haven't worn shoes in years.

I liked this photo and I wanted to share it.

Dance as art versus therapy.

Well, dance has therapeutic value, a dance class is a place for students to explore, have fun and make their own choices about how to create and to move.

Children with disabilities spend a lot of time working with physical therapists and occupational therapists which is very important for their development and growth.

It's an important distinction that gets confused.

Dance therapy is a different field and there are many, many experts that work in it.

At Luna we invite PTs and OTs and other support services that students are working with to come in and dance with us.

Observation can be a very powerful tool for learning more about dance and to really see a student in a new way.

Of course, actually participating is even better as we all learn by moving.

Some students with very little or no verbal skills have improved ability to reflect back in their classrooms by Garnering more experience with aesthetic with their dance making as well as with their peers.

We see this over and over again.

And really just want to make that dance class experience about the art and expressiveness for that child.

And sometimes that will reflect back into their other therapeutic practices.

You don't want to -- you want to keep that distinction clear.

>> Okay, I have a video I want to share with you and I want to give the disclaimer it's not high-tech video.

Get a sense of how these students were moving together.

>> So this took place outside in downtown Oakland.

I like to take them every year out near -- there is a beautiful lake near the school and there is a gazebo.

So we took the work we had been doing in the spring and performed it outside on a beautiful spring afternoon.

And then part two.

There are two classes so this is the second class.

And it's slightly different choreography.
But you can see the pair a professionals are engaged and supporting them.
Not right in their face.
They give them a lot of space to move.
And then I have some resources here that I believe Lisa will be able to send out to you.
Unless you want to write them down.
I want to thank you for listening.
I want to open it up to more questions because I know there were some more and others that have come up.
>> Actually, the most questions we've ever had.
There are some great thoughtful questions.
I will jump right in so we have time to get to them all.
Our first one comes from Jennifer.
She wants to know how do you encourage participation when they refuse or hold back?
>> That's a great question.
We get that a lot through our professional learning department at Luna for a lot of different settings.
We don't make anyone dance if they don't want to.
Kids arrive, students arrive in their own time when they feel safe to enter into the dance curriculum, the dance class.
We continue to invite throughout the time of the class.
And we don't have a lot of resistance, I will be honest.
I don't totally know why that is.
I like to think that kids feel welcome.
Everyone has off days.
Sometimes there is a place for a student to observe and they need to observe.
Some kids will object for weeks and -- observe for weeks and weeks and then they will show up one day and act as this they have been participating the entire time.
We give kids the option to do reflective writing or drawing around what they see happening and honor that there are a lot of different ways to learn.
I know I have been emphasizing we all learn by moving.
Ideally if we can make that happen right away, great.
If not, that's okay.
Sometimes we will teach a class and then get feedback later on from a parent or teacher, well, when she got home she did the entire class.
She dances all the time at home.
There is a lot of reasons why a child might not be able to engage in a group setting right away.
>> So tagging on to that question, Nadia was wandering, is

there -- let's find the question.

How do you start the dance lesson for the first time?

What can you say to encourage the students to participate?

In the beginning, is there some kind of speech you are giving that helps encourage them?

>> There is not really a speech.

We don't like to spend a ton of time giving too much of a preamble about what we are going to do.

Make it transparent by putting a structure of the class up somewhere so it's visible so it's not, my God, what are we going to do next? And we jump in.

We invite people to come, responsible to a -- possibly to a circle to start.

We may start with a name game because it's important that people -- that students feel like, I belong here.

And by inviting them to do a movement maybe with their name or play some other kind of name game activity, that's really saying you do belong here and we want to know your name.

So that might be one example, if that helps, as a way of starting.

We also if there is a student that can't go there right away, again, continuing to invite them throughout the class because there might be another entry point that is less intimidating.

>> Great.

Thank you.

This question comes from JoAnne.

What is your greatest challenge you face every day while teaching?

>> It usually has nothing to do with the students.

It's usually about the space.

Not being warm enough or clean enough or can't get into it because it's locked.

Greatest challenge, I would say as a teaching artist I probably should just give more time to celebrating the successes of, wow, Luna gives us -- we all take a lot of time to do a lot of reflection.

And really think about what are the things we saw happen in any given class.

So much happens that I feel like I can't capture it all in writing.

It would just be a dream to have some other -- the resources to document what happens the whole time.

When you are teaching you can't always capture it in the moment and say I will write that down because it was so great.

So just letting go of, you can't do all of it.

Just capture it as much as you can so it can improve for the next time.

Or share what you see happen with other people.

>> Thank you.

Anna would like to know, as a dance teaching artist, how much mobility do you yourself need to have?

>> Can you repeat that question?

>> As a dance teaching artist, how much mobility do you yourself need to have?

>> Got it.

Well, I think you have to have ideas and passion to share and for mobility if you are thinking about can I demonstrate this, there is not a whole lot we end up demonstrating.

I like to move with my students.

I haven't always been able to move as much as I have wanted to for whatever physical reason there might be.

And it's great because I have to figure out, oh, can I teach this class from a different lens?

Can I do it from sitting?

Can I do it without changing level?

Can I do it with a headache?

I think it's great that our bodies are constantly evolving so that it keeps us really present and real and alive.

Improvisational state which is where many dance teachers like to be anyway because that's where I think there is more creative entry points for problem solving and just making new discoveries.

So I think, yeah, I don't think there is any limitation to what your mobility is to be able to do this work.

>> All right.

Our next question comes from Mary.

What suggestions do you have with working with students on the autism spectrum especially those who are nonverbal Orthos who are high function?

Any thoughts?

>> So that's a lot of thoughts.

There is a spectrum.

I would say being sensitive to how you set up your space.

How loud you're playing your music.

How you are -- where you are spatially in relationship to that student.

Are they able to really -- do they have -- are there other adults that can support that student when he or she needs a little extra support?

Whether it's in bringing them back into the space or even stepping out, taking a little time out.

Not using that word negatively.

But taking a rest.

Just a breath and then coming back in.

Some students with autism will know how to self-regulate and again

step back and then come back in.

Or can you strategically think about if you are working in groups, who would be a good partner for that student and not create extra stimulation but really just be a collaborator.

Those are a few ideas.

>> Great.

Thank you.

Our next question comes from robin.

How do you handle a large class (30 to 40 students) that is composed of kids from the lowest to the highest spectrum of disability?

>> That's a very large class.

I have taught classes larger that were probably more -- less mixed of kids with disabilities but they were still there.

And I have to say one of my fears in that scenario was, my gosh, they aren't getting what they need.

So I would say if there is anyway -- and this is for anyone you are teaching to make that class smaller, maybe even do two shorter classes by cutting it in half.

Also just think curricularly about what you can offer that would be -- were there something for everyone.

Going back to some of those ideas I talked about before around multi-modal learning and paraprofessional support, or really looking at what are your expectations and being very clear about that.

Not putting the world and the kitchen sink into one lesson because it would be too much.

Stepping back and looking at those things and then asking directly, wow, how is that experience for you?

Is there something that you are interested in that we could explore. Or see what kind of communication you can open up with your students, whether it's couple of them or all 30 to 40.

You know, just be communicative.

You might think about structures that keep moving and are less chatty. I know I said that creative dance is language heavy.

And it is.

If you can think how to keep the rigor in there and keep everyone moving and not stop for too many long sets of directions.

Then take a little reflection time at the end to ask students directly about their experiences and what happened for them.

And whatever way you can do that.

>> Thank you for those tips.

We are coming up on 4:00 so I will read one more question.

And then we can share your e-mail address with everyone if they like to contact you after the webinar.

Pamela says the expression on the faces of the young people clearly show they are having a great time and enjoy what they are doing.

Does participating in dance spill over into other aspects of the student's lives?

Do parents and teachers report improvement or advances in other areas as a result of participating in dance?

>> They do.

They do.

In public school as a dance teaching artist you don't always have a ton of direct contact with parents.

I wish there were more.

We wish at Luna there was more of that.

Especially in middle school for some reason.

But when I have had that interaction where parents have come to observe or communicated during an IEP with a teacher or vice versa. There has been revealed that, wow, dance class is where my child is succeeding.

This is where they shine because they have the opportunity to be creative, to problem solve, to make connections from all of their other learning, to have a social interaction, to have a communal interaction, to be unique individual and in a safe space. So, yes, I would say a very strong yes.

And we don't look necessarily at all of the classroom curriculum to say, okay, we have to match all of these standards because there are dance standards that are covered.

If we are having our students be creative.

Creating something, performing it, responding to it in every single class, then they are covered.

So, yes, I think there is a lot of success that happens outside of the classroom as a result.

>> Wonderful.

I'm going to take control back over to my screen.

So I would like to thank everyone for joining us today.

Think Alisa has done an excellent job of giving you all some tips that you can take away from the webinar so I would like to ask you all to take just a moment after we sign off to complete a short evaluation survey that will open when you close the window.

And we definitely read through all of that feedback and try to take that into account in future webinars.

So thank you all for joining us.

I hope that you will join us again next month.

Thank you, Alisa.

And have a good afternoon, everyone.

Good bye.