

ASSEMBLY DATE: _____

ASSEMBLY TIME: _____

FOR STUDENTS IN: _____

***The Valerie Branch Dance Ensemble presents:
“The People We Meet and the Friends We Keep!”***



Introduction

“The People We Meet and the Friends We Keep!” is a contemporary dance performance focused on creating and sustaining healthy relationships between peers, family members, the new people we meet, and those within our surrounding communities. Audience members will have an interactive performance experience as they are invited to think about solutions to problems between friends, explore body movements for self-expression, and use elements viewed in the performance to choreograph their own dance sequence based on what they believe it would take to create and sustain healthy relationships.



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What will the audience experience?

The program will begin with the dancers moving and dancing throughout the space as well as in and around students. Valerie will then interact with the audience as they prepare to go on a journey to meet the dancers and see their stories.

#1 Meet the Dancers:

Dancers will use movement gestures to introduce themselves to the audience. Audience members will *try on* the movement gestures, and work together to create a short movement sequence with gestures. *Audience members will be asked to try-on the movement gesture and to share an idea of what they think the movement says/portrays about the dancer(s).*

#2 **Joy:** this solo is about a young girl who explores what it is like to rely on herself to be happy, joyful and kind to others. She struggles to remind herself that joy comes from the inside – it is not things on the outside (toys, people, circumstances) that make us happy. We can not allow outside sources to determine the path or journey of our day/feelings – sometimes things in our lives don’t go the way we want them to, but we have to decide how they will make us a better person. A person who is kind, gentle, caring and loving towards ourselves and others at all times.

#3: **Best Friends:** this duet is about 2 best friends. They love to play together, talk on the phone, hang out, have a good time, share their secrets and help and support one another. But what happens when they don’t agree? Are they able to push past their disagreements and remain best friends or do their differences push them further apart? Are they able to remember how to treat others even when they are not feeling their best?

#4: **Awkward Moments:** this trio is about a new girl in an unfamiliar situation. We explore what it feels like to be the “*new kid on the block*”. Sometimes we are excited to meet new friends, sometime we are nervous, scared or worried. Sometimes it takes a while to meet new people and find out who are your real friends. Will the other 2 girls accept this new girl? Will they help her find her way? Will they help her feel comfortable and support her in her uncomfortable situation?

#5: **Come Together:** this quartet is about building and sustaining strong communities and friendships. Once we truly know who we are, we are able to work together with others to make strong choices. We can appreciate and respect the differences and opinions of others as well as be open about our own ideas, thoughts and opinions. We come together to celebrate one another and to share the power of what can be accomplished when we work together.





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About the Assembly Program



The People We Meet and The Friends We Keep is a contemporary dance performance focused on creating and sustaining healthy relationships between peers, family members, the new people we meet, and within our surrounding communities. Take a journey with the dancers as they explore, understand and learn to respect themselves, they learn to appreciate, love and respect others around them. Maybe you have a different culture or beliefs. Maybe you are taller or shorter than your best friend. Maybe you speak differently than your cousin. Maybe you are shy around new people. These characteristics don't make us better or worse than the other people around us. These things make us extraordinary and unique. Audience members will learn how to embrace and love others for who they are and embrace their own special qualities. Self-confidence, self-respect, joy, happiness – you cannot get these things from other people,

it must come from the inside so you can be the best you can for yourself, your family, your friends and the new people you meet!

Audience members will have an interactive performance experience as they are invited to think about solutions to problems between friends, explore body movements for self-expression and use elements viewed in the performance to choreograph their own dance sequence(s) based on what they believe it would take to create and sustain healthy relationships.

Program Goals and Objectives:

- To give the audience an interactive experience with contemporary modern dance.
- The program will encourage the audience to view dance and think about it critically in order to develop their own voice and express their point of view.
- Students will practice lessons learned from the performance during core subjects in their school curriculum.
- Students will learn the importance of being active citizens within their communities.
- Students will embrace an appreciation of different cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds.

Research on Dance In the Classroom:

“Research has shown that movement is linked to specific brain functioning in children. For example, cross lateral movement get the right and lefts sides of the brain to work together. Swirinski said, It helps to wake up different lobes in the brain”

(Humphrey – Movement education aims to increase brain function and physical fitness in students, March 15, 2010).



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Inside this guide:

- Artist Bio
- Standards
- Vocabulary
- Additional Resources
- Pre-Performance Activities
- Post-Performance Activities
- Classroom Discussion Questions
- Background Information
- Information about Contemporary Dance
- Describe, Analyze, Interpret, Evaluate
- Reflection Form
- Sample Lesson Plan

***Please pass along the attached teacher program guide to all participating classrooms**

Setup Requirements:

- Dancers will need a changing area that is close to the performance space
- ***Company will need to arrive at least 90 minutes*** prior to performance time to properly prepare and warm-up in the space
- Performance space should be swept and mopped prior to assembly (dancers dance barefoot)
- Audience set-up should include a center isle in between students
- We will need to plug into an outlet in order to set-up a sound system which should be close to the performance space

Artist Arrival Time: 90 minutes prior to performance.

Suggested Introduction:

“The VB Dance Ensemble is a contemporary dance company that uses creative movement to help stories come alive! Valerie has taught and performed in states across the US as well as in different countries such as South Africa and Grenada. All of the dancers bring a wide variety of dance training and experience to our assembly today! Today we will go on

a journey to meet new people, learn what it means to be a good friend, and how a choreographer creates dances to tell different stories. Please help me welcome **VB Dance Ensemble** and their story of ***The People we meet and The Friends We Keep!***”

Inclement Weather

DON'T WORRY! Artists will follow school closings and delays and will work with you to reschedule the performance if necessary.

Young Audiences Contact Number: 410-837-7577

Call 410-837-7577 and follow the prompts to be connected with a staff member on call for After Hours or Emergency.



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Artist Bio

Valerie graduated magna cum laude from the University of Maryland College Park with a Bachelor's Degree in Dance. She has experience touring as a performing and teaching artist both nationally and internationally. She has taught as an independent artist and with different organizations such as WPAS. As a teaching artist, Valerie has brought dance into schools in South Africa and St. George's, Grenada and has received an invitation from the Danish Embassy to participate in a Cultural Arts Program Exchange Visit to Denmark. She is the founder and Director of VB Dance Ensemble, a contemporary dance company focused on social change. Valerie is proud to be a Teaching and Performing Roster Artist with Young Audiences of Maryland to bring dance to schools throughout the state.



Artist Statement

I believe that dance has the power to transform, enhance, and open the mind to new and different possibilities. Integrating dance into the traditional classroom setting helps children gain confidence, increases their memory, assists with their social developmental skills, and helps them to think more creatively, critically, and outside of the box. For me, it is important to work in the schools because I believe that children need as many positive role models and mentors as possible to support healthy development.

I also believe that using dance as a tool for learning helps children to understand different logics and also to assist with independent thinking. Children become smarter because their brains are being targeted and challenged in a different way.

As a dance teaching and performing artist, I believe in the importance of sharing the culture, knowledge and history of dance with under-served youth to enhance growth and development within their communities, while empowering them to make strong independent choices now and in their future.

- Valerie Branch



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Standards:

Common Core Standard:

RL.3.3

Key Ideas and Details

3. Describe character in a story and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

Corresponding and Career Readiness (CCR)

Anchor Standard

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Maryland State Curriculum

Standards For Fine Arts:

Standard 1.0 Perceiving, Performing and

Responding: Aesthetic Education

Students will demonstrate the ability to perceive, perform, and respond to dance

Indicator 3. Respond to dance through observation, experience and analysis

Objective b. Select specific movements in a dance and explain their purposes

I believe that Ms. Valerie is an important catalyst for discovery and achievement. Children need to be able to think and explore with the creative side of their brains. It gives them a better understanding of their world. The arts make children more flexible, gives them the ability to learn new skills in a new and different way, and to be creative and innovative. Ms. Valerie helps to tap, shape, and create their potential.

Cherisse Dotson, Kindergarten Teacher
Henderson Hopkins Elementary School

Our class has really enjoyed our new learning experiences with you with the song Can You Keep A Steady Beat and playing the flute.

Mary Ann Puckett, Kindergarten Teacher
Henderson Hopkins Elementary School

Valerie is the most organized and passionate artist I have had the pleasure of working with! Arts integration makes learning fun and effortless. I love incorporating art into my lessons because it engages the students and helps them to learn, not only curriculum content, but also real life skills.

Kerri Howell, Kindergarten Teacher
Seven Oaks Elementary School



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Vocabulary

Contemporary Dance: a dance form used to communicate thoughts, ideas and feelings. Movements are generally derived from ballet and modern dance techniques; however, any dance techniques can be used for inspiration to create dance sequences.

Solo: a dance performed by 1 person

Duet: a dance performed by 2 people

Trio: a dance performance by 3 people

Quartet: a dance performed by 4 people

Choreography: movement that has been created, specified and practiced in sequential order

Choreographer: the person who creates the choreography

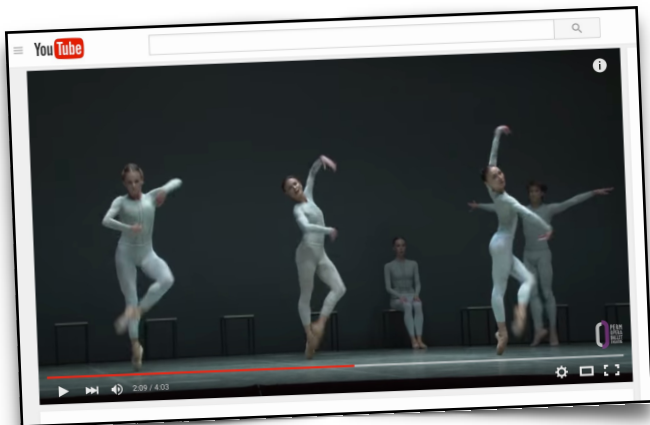
Artistic Director: the lead creative visionary of a production

Movement Gesture: a simple motion that can be done with any part of the body to communicate a thought/feeling/idea.



Additional Resources

Teachers are encouraged to share any of these videos with students before the assembly. What elements of dance do you see? (The Elements of Dance are described later in this teacher guide.) How can you tell a story is happening? (Use your imagination) What story do you think the dancers are trying to tell? What about the dancers' movement or expression makes you think they are telling that specific story?



Alvin Ailey: www.alvinailey.org

<https://youtu.be/LZuBFz6WYfs>

Pilobolous: www.pilobolus.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y38bUumNak>

William Forsythe: www.theforsythecompany.com

<https://youtu.be/StL-TIzW9vQ>

<https://youtu.be/eSXHNPpzdGc>

Valerie Branch:

<https://youtu.be/jDp8rFBmmwc>



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Pre-Performance Activities

1. Can you think of 1 word that describes you? Can you express that word through a movement? (Ex/ Happy: You can jump up and down with your hands lifted in the air. Silly: You can do any fun creative movement with your body).
2. Students can view the above videos and respond what they see (using the document attached/below)

Post-Performance Activities - with assessment

1. Think about what it feels like when you enter a room/space and do not know anyone around you. How do you feel/how does that make you feel? What might you do to introduce yourself to others/to meet new people? How do you feel once you make a new friend? What happens if you don't get along with the new people you meet? (Using the elements of dance) Can you work together in small groups/1 large group to create a dance about meeting new people?



2. With the use of a book (Will You Be My Friend, The Little Engine that Could, You're Wearing That to School?, etc.) – read the book, think about the sequence of events in the book, how do the characters in the book interact and act towards one another. Relate those experiences in the book to your daily life. Think about the feelings and character traits of the characters in the book, as well as yourself and friends. Create a movement gesture that portrays different feelings and character traits. You can create movements (locomotor or non-locomotor movements) for feelings – since feelings change - and a shape for the character traits – since character traits often remain the same over a longer duration of time.
3. Encourage students to create a dance sequence that portrays the sequence of an event of a story or a moment in their life using a different dance technique (hip-hop dance, jazz dance, ballet, etc.)



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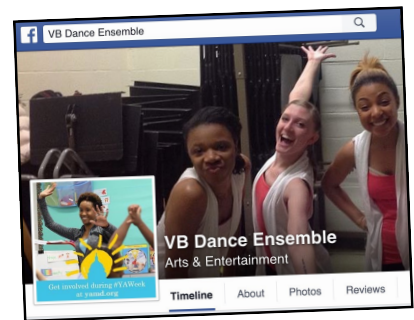


Classroom Discussion Questions

1. What dance elements did you notice in the assembly?
2. What did you learn about dance?
3. What did you learn about contemporary dance?
4. What other dance techniques do you know / have you seen?
5. What did you notice about the relationship of the dancers?
6. What is a solo, duet, trio, quartet?
7. What is a choreographer?
8. What did you learn about friendship in the assembly?
 - a. What makes a good friend?
 - b. What makes you a good friend?

Check out the VB Dance Ensemble on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/VBDanceEnsemble



Classroom Handout

Reflection Form - See below

In-depth Sample Lesson Plan

Moving Our Bodies Through Stories - See below



Background Information

Information about contemporary dance: dance is always evolving and changing. Contemporary dance has wide influences from modern dance and ballet technique. Trained dancers often get their inspiration from their past and current teachers and use their knowledge and history of dance to create new forms of movement and choreography. This link has a lot of different information on contemporary dance as well as the history and background of the history of dance itself: <http://www.contemporary-dance.org>



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Information About Contemporary Dance

The Elements of Dance (B.E.S.T.)

BODY (What)

- **Locomotor**: Movement through space from one point to another (walk, run, jump, hop, leap, skip, gallop, slide)
- **Non-locomotor**: Movement around the body's axis (bend, twist, stretch, push, pull, swing, shake, circle, sway, carve, fall, melt, turn, kick, press, rise, sink, burst, wiggle)
- **Shape**: A frozen pose (curved, straight, angular, twisted, narrow, wide, symmetrical, asymmetrical)
- **Body Part**: Parts of the body (head, eyes, torso, shoulder, arms, fingers, elbows, hands, spine, hips, legs, knees, feet)

ENERGY (How)

- **Weight**: Strong (heavy, firm, powerful), light (gentle, soft)
- **Flow**: Free (continuous, fluid movement), bound (restrained, controlled)
- **Quality**: Sharp, sudden, smooth, sustained, tight, loose, suspended, collapsed, heavy, weak, percussive

SPACE (Where)

- **Self Space**: Space immediately around the body
- **General Space**: Space throughout the room
- **Level**: High, medium, low
- **Direction**: Forward, backward, sideways, up, down
- **Pathway**: Curved, straight, zigzag, diagonal
- **Size**: Big, small, narrow, wide
- **Focus**: Direction of gaze



TIME (When)

- **Tempo**: Fast, medium, slow
- **Rhythm**: A succession of movement or sounds of varying duration.

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Describe, Analyze, Interpret, Evaluate

Students are encouraged to observe dance while keeping the following questions and guides in mind. These tools are helpful generating discussion, but also to allow students the opportunity to share their thoughts, ideas and opinions about what they are experiencing:

1. **DESCRIBE:** simply describe what you observed without value judgments, analysis, or interpretation.
 - a. What do/did you see?
 - b. What elements of dance did you notice?
2. **ANALYZE:** determine what the dance suggests and decide why the choreographer used these specific movements/dance elements to convey this specific idea
 - a. How did the choreographer create this dance?
 - b. How are the elements of dance used within this choreography?
 - c. Determine what this dance is about
3. **EVALUATE:** can you make a personal connection to what you are witnessing in this dance?
 - a. What about the dance connects to some aspect in your life?
 - b. How does this dance make you feel?
 - c. What connections can you make between your life and the dance?
4. **INTEPRETATION:** establish the broader context for dance
 - a. Why did the choreographer create this dance and what do you think it means?
 - b. What is the overall meaning of the work
 - c. If you could title this dance what would you call it?
 - i. What evidence in the dance supports your title?





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Reflection Form

Name _____

For younger grade levels, students can do this as a pair share (sharing ideas out loud with a partner), as a large group, and/or through body movement demonstrations!

3...2...1...

3 The three most significant things I learned about contemporary dance today are:

2 These 2 character traits make me a good friend:

1 Describe your favorite or special moment of the assembly:



Sample Lesson plan with Valerie Branch

Young Audiences of Maryland

Lesson Title: Moving our bodies through stories.

Artist’s Name: Valerie Branch

Grade: K-5

Maryland Fine Arts Standards

Standard 1.0 Perceiving, Performing and Responding: Aesthetic Education

Students will demonstrate the ability to perceive, perform, and respond to dance

Indicator 3. Respond to dance through observation, experience and analysis

Objective b. Select specific movements in a dance and explain their purposes

Common Core Standards

RL.3.3 - Key Ideas and Details

3. Describe characters in a story and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

Corresponding and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standard

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Connected Lesson Objective for students: (Teachers—please post!)**

Students will be able to create their own dance sequence that reflects the impact that acts of kindness has on our society (based on the sequence of events in the video: <https://youtu.be/AiRhJ7ZISbU>).

Assessments:

Movement presentations. Observation. Student Participation.

Children will be able to identify the character traits for each character in each group.

Children will be able to discuss the sequence of events in the video and portray them through movement.

Exit Ticket: How was your dance reflective of the sequence of events in the video? What elements of dance did you group use to create your sequence?

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Introduction/ Motivation (7 minutes)—Start with the Art!!!

Teacher will show a short dance video clip:

Reflect: What did you notice about the movement? How would you describe this movement? What emotions / character traits did you notice? (*Frustrated, Excited, Nervous, Angry, Happy, Sad*)

Teacher will write down or point out key character traits that students call out.

Guided Practice (10 min):

Body Exploration Warm-up

- Teacher will lead students through a movement exploration
- We will focus on the elements of dance: Body (Shapes), Space (levels), Self space, General space, Movement Quality
- Ask students to demonstrate different ideas, ex: *Show me what it would look like if you walk slowly in a medium level*

Character Traits with movement

- Teacher will help students remember character traits
- Teacher will lead students through movement exploration on how we would move our bodies in response to these different character traits (ex/ How or what would you move / do with your body if you are frustrated?)

Modeling / Guided practice (15 min):

Teacher will review with students ‘acts of kindness’ (what it means to be kind and why we choose to be kind to others around us) and the idea of a chain reaction; and what you do always comes back to you.

Teacher will show video (<https://youtu.be/AiRhJ7ZISbU>) to students and generate a discussion when it is over (*What acts of kindness did you notice? How do you think the people felt when others were being kind to them? How do you feel when other people are being kind to you? How does it feel to be kind to others?*)

Teacher will show an improvised demonstration of an act of kindness through movement.

You may demonstrate this alone or will a student-partner.

Teacher will co-lead students in a discussion about what they noticed in the dance.

Teacher will reference back to the movie and the sequence of events that happened in the movie and how the acts of kindness was a chain reaction/ portraying a clear sequence of events. **Teacher partner will decide in advance what sequence of events students will try all together** (*but not any of the events we will see later*).

In a large group, (students may be put in pairs) students will use creative movement to sequence through 3-4 of the events from the movie

Teacher will then pick 5 students to cycle through sequence again to show the entire chain reaction (from person to person).

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Independent Practice (15 min):

Teacher will put students into working groups.

Students will work cooperatively and with respect for each other to portray events through movement.

Teacher will cycle around the room to ensure that students are working respectfully and completing the task.

Criteria:

1. Students should be able to work cooperatively and respectfully in a group
2. Students should be able to portray an act of kindness through a short movement sequence
3. Students should be able to portray and identify character traits within movement sequences.
4. Students should be able to use different ***movement qualities, body shapes and levels*** in order to portray different character traits.

Using the sequence of events identified in the video (**Teacher will give students a handout identifying sequence of events**), students will recreate the scene through movement. The dance will start with an act of kindness and show a chain reaction of events until it comes back to the first person that started the act of kindness.

Example: Child 1 is playing and falls down. Child 2 helps child 1 get up. Child 1 helps child 3 with packages. Child 3 gives sad and lonely child 4 flowers. Child 4 takes one of those flowers and gives it to child 2 (this will end the cycle because it came back to the first child who showed the act of kindness).

Closure (10 min):

Students will present acts of kindness dances. **Audience will** observe group dances with respect for each other.

Teacher and Teaching Artist will encourage short responses / feedback from student audience after each presentation (*What did you notice about the dance or scenario? What elements of dance did you notice were being used throughout the dance? What character traits did you notice?*).

Here's What I learned O yeah!

Here's what I learned, o yeah

Here's what I learned, o yeah

Here's what I learned in my lesson today

Teacher will lead students in a short discussion about what they learned, experienced and know about dance, acts of kindness and chain reaction from this lesson experience. What can you do to show an act of kindness?

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Vocabulary

Curriculum Content vocab: kindness, character traits, scenario, describe, respect, chain reaction

Dance Elements: MOVEMENT, BODY, ENERGY, SPACE, TIME (*see dance elements chart below*)

Materials

Teacher will have access to Music / website for video link

Teacher Preparation:

1. **Teacher will** determine best classroom setting for this project
2. **Teacher will** create 4 student groups (in advance)
3. **Teacher will** create acts of kindness scenarios with / identifying character traits
 - a. Each group will have a 4-5 sequence of events
 - b. Each person will have a special part in the dance
4. **Teacher will** create a flip chart sequencing through the structure of the lesson
5. **Teacher will** include any photos that portray acts of kindness for student reference
6. **Teacher will** ensure that students are always standing in an appropriate space within the larger group setting (separating students that will not / do not work well together).

Resources

Life Vest Inside – Kindness boomerang – “One Day” video: <https://youtu.be/AiRhJ7ZISbU>

*****Extensions for the Teacher:**

Teacher can use elements of dance to help students during writing time. Ensuring that students are focusing on key details, feelings and emotions / character traits / adjective words and sequencing.