

**making it
happen**

a toolkit for Youth Dance



PLANNING

You've set yourself up and now you are ready to start delivering. Now is the time to consider what you are delivering and how you can best support your participants to have fun, learn new skills and enjoy dancing! Below is an example structure for a Youth Dance Session, giving you ideas of what you may include each week along with further online inspiration.



Image Credit: Dan Archer

AIMS AND PERFORMANCES

When preparing for your session content, it is good practice to consider what your short term and long term goals are for the group and the individuals involved. Are you looking to develop technique, to explore creative practice, to produce a performance piece, involve young people in decision making, work towards a target performance date? Does each dancer have individual skills you want to support as well as supporting them as a whole group?

Performances are a great aim for young people as they can develop their skills on a journey towards an end goal and gain a huge sense of achievement. Through the Rural Steps project, the groups worked towards a range of performance events and noted that these moments were often the highlight of the project for the young people involved, getting to perform on regional stages, celebrating as a group and connecting with other young people from other groups.

Below is a list of local and regional events that young people from the Rural Steps project took part in:

DANCE IT UP NORTH

Community Dance showcase held at York Theatre Royal, Managed by York Dance Space
<https://yorkdancespace.com>

UDANCE

National Youth Dance Platform with regional events across the country
<https://www.onedanceuk.org/programme/u-dance/>

YORKSHIRE SCHOOLS DANCE FESTIVAL

Annual event for Schools and Community groups to showcase their performance work
<https://www.yorkshireschoolsdancefestival.co.uk/>

BIG UP NORTH

Annual Community Dance platform run by Ludus Dance taking place in Lancaster
<https://ludusdance.org/programmes/big-up-north/>

NSCD COMMUNITY DANCE PLATFORM

Annual event based at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds
<https://www.nscd.ac.uk/take-part/projects-and-more/nscd-community-dance-platform/>

CLASS CONTENT

OPENING

Gather everyone as a group, in a circle if possible, supporting everyone to feel equal, see everyone in the space and build a sense of community. An icebreaker, energiser task or quick challenge may be a good way to get them focused quickly and set the intentions for the session. This time in the circle can also allow space for discussion about the aims of that session and recapping learning from previous sessions. Keeping discussions brief and beginning movement as soon as possible will help energise the group and set the physicality level for the session, especially if the session takes place in an evening.

WARMING UP

The warm up will ideally support the main activity within the session so consider what you are asking of them in the remainder of your plan (strong technique, rhythm and timing, exploration (therefore providing them with base of material to begin with) etc. In Youth Dance, high energy phrases and exercises, collaborative and interactive challenges and travelling phrases always seem to work well, increasing the heart rate and mobilising the whole body whilst building relationships.

CREATIVE

TAUGHT PHRASES

REHEARSAL

Each session will differ but may include one or a combination of these three elements. Finding an objective and giving a specific target to each one will support skill development, engagement and self-reflection, allowing dancers to take ownership and contribute further to the session content.

For example, if you are rehearsing for a performance or teaching a taught phrase, what is the main focus in this particular session? Timing, technique, spatial awareness, relationship between dancers, performance skills, exploring musicality?

In Creative tasks, are you aiming to produce something or just explore? Is the task open-ended or is there a fixed element (it needs to a certain length of time, a certain distanced travelled etc)? What layers will you provide to help build the creative confidence of the dancers? What is their inspiration or starting point? A movement, a word, a piece of music, existing material, an intention, a challenge, an object?

CLOSING

Allow a moment to cool the body down, reducing heart rate, stretching key areas of the body and calming the energy. Take this moment to consolidate the learning and allow time for it to settle, celebrate achievements and look forward to the next class. Try using calming music, reducing the size of space used, gathering again as a group, allowing time for individual and/or collective reflection.

ONLINE TASKS

As part of the Rural Steps project, three of our Artists created online dance tasks aimed at ages 9-18 years, designed to inspire you when creating your own content. You can access the full playlist including warm ups, taught phrases and creative tasks via the Blue Moose Dance Company YouTube channel or by clicking on the YouTube icon below.

