

Choreographic Tools for Managing Classroom Energy

As educators, some of these tools may be familiar to you. Here's some of what we have found helpful and relevant to choreography in the classroom.

Stillness: Freeze

Just saying "Freeze!...Stay still...notice your position...don't move a muscle don't move an eyelash...see where you are. Check out the picture created in stillness...notice your self in relationship to others" calms the room and helps us notice key elements in choreography: shape and stillness.

Rhythm: Call and Response Clapping

If you need to call the room to a single attention point, facilitator claps a loud recognizable and easy rhythm with the expectation that people will respond with the same rhythm. Students clap the same rhythm back. When whole group joins in, change the rhythm to bring it to a close. Immediately facilitator gives necessary instruction while room is attentive.

If they don't respond facilitator continues to repeat rhythm and makes eye contact and you may need to cue group that this is the last clap series is coming

Level and Size: Dancing in Chairs

Using with less than the whole body while seated at desks can still be an effective and efficient way of using movement in the classroom. We use our hands in gestures to communicate all the time and thus this is a good introduction to moving in class. Seated gestural dances can contain energy to the confines of a desk, and can also be quite detailed and specific, providing an interesting variation to gross motor movement.

Theme and Variation/Juxtaposition: Tone of Voice

Sometimes just changing how we say something can change the environment in the room. Rather than matching an elevated energy with a higher pitched voice, loud or fast voice, dropping down your pitch, volume and speed of speech can bring attention to the speaker. Sometimes, some of us also change accents for comic effect, and this surprise can change also the energy in the room in a light hearted way.

Framing/Connection with Audience: Tell It As It Is

Be not afraid to frame a moment and name what is happening. If students are not taking the activity seriously, frame it. Use your own words to name what is happening, and why you are doing this activity. Sometimes we say, "We use our minds all the time. Sometimes when we use our bodies we think we will lose our minds. But they are connected by a central nervous system, and I believe that is we use our bodies we will discover something new. For the next 30 minutes let's do an experiment and see what happens. But it will only work if you really do it, and I believe you can."