

Dance Units

The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry

Teacher: Sandra Stratton-Gonzalez

The Children's School, PS 372

2nd Grade

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Sandra Stratton-Gonzalez Dance Teacher, Observations

As a full time dance instructor in an inclusive elementary school, I teach both generally and specially developing children in Pre K to Grade 5 within a general education setting. Each classroom of 25 students may have up to 10 children with special needs. The challenges our students face are wide ranging and include Aspergers, Autism Spectrum Disorders, speech and hearing impairments, emotional challenges, ADD, ADHD, and various learning disabilities. Collaborative team teaching is employed in all classrooms. Our teaching teams include two certified teachers, one in general education and one in special education, and an educational assistant.

'The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry,' is a dance making project for second grade. My grade two students bring considerable prior knowledge to this unit of study. They are comfortable with dance class routines and rituals. They have already been introduced to several of the elements of dance including space (level, direction and pathway and time (tempo, stillness and duration). They are beginning to work successfully together; cooperative learning is employed in the grade level classroom as well as the dance room.

Dance making is the focus of the unit, and the images, ideas and patterns in poetry are used as inspiration for choreography. I have selected poems about New York City and its' subways, buses, cars and trains by authors Allan A. de Fina and Arnold Adoff. The familiar context (city travel) and highly energized actions (words like rushing, hurtling and clashing) elicit an enthusiastic response from the children, providing an accessible entry point for dance making. The unit connects to grade level curriculum via the study of city transportation (social studies), and poetry (English Language Arts).

This is a cooperative dancing making project. To support collaborative work, and avoid arguments and competition, students are grouped in threes. Each dancer in the group chooses one action word for the groups' 3-part action pattern, and then chooses a pathway for the action. With as many as 8 groups working simultaneously on dances, the room gets very loud! I have found it wise to limit 'work time' to short intervals. Each class therefore begins with a warm up and a whole group review of one of the big ideas the unit (such as sequencing, tempo or pathway). A ten minute work time for the cooperative groups is next, followed by an opportunity for at least two groups to share their work each week. Throughout the unit worksheets and stage maps are used to help the children organize and document their dance.

During each class session, my teaching partner and the class paraprofessional work as co-teachers, supporting instruction and assisting with classroom management. They move around the room during warm up as needed to assist students. Children with serious behavior/ attention issues are provided with immediate feedback when on task, and a gentle touch on the shoulder or verbal reminder when off task. On a case by case basis, children may be allowed to 'sit out' for short periods of time to help them to refocus, or invited to assist the dance specialist by drumming or distributing materials.

The Educational Assistant, or classroom Para, has the most intimate knowledge of the children in the class their ability to work together. She/he can be asked to set up cooperative groups, and can then help to monitor specific children. During work time all adults should circulate around the room, observing the creative process and providing assistance where needed. This is an opportune time to use checklists as assessment tools, and to write quick notes as you 'conference' with the groups.

During the course of the unit numerous teaching strategies are used accommodate the needs of my special and general education students. Most importantly, the rituals of dance class are made explicit and are followed each week. Students enter into the dance space, put their shoes in a cubby, and go to sit on their 'floor spots.' There I check in with the class, ask them to remind me of what we worked on last session, and outline the class plan. A formal, set warm up that focuses on endurance and skill building then begins. Isolations, repetition, cross lateral movements, tempo changes, freezes and balances are used in the warm up to support learning and to focus the class.

The warm up segues into an introduction of the day's theme, and students help direct this portion of class. I might ask the kids to choose combinations of pathway and level, create an 'action pattern' of three action words, or to take turns 'conducting' a freeze dance. Dance making elements are explored using a variety of methods. For example, pathways can be demonstrated by individual children, small groups of kids, by the teacher, drawn on the board, and drawn by students on individual worksheets. Pathways are danced with supporting musical accompaniment (sharp and percussive music for a zig zag path, a smooth 3 / 4 time for a curved path, and a steady 4 / 4 beat for a straight path). Each step of the dance making process is presented this way to maximize understanding.

Children are given many opportunities to observe each other and discuss what they see. As groups share their dances, I ask specific questions: 'What pathways did you see? What action words were used?' 'Did the three dancers move in unison?' Follow up questions are designed to deepen the inquiry: 'You said the dancers were not moving in unison during the clashing section, how were they different?' 'Does changing the tempo of an action change its energy?' 'If the energy changes, how does it change?' After sharing, groups are provided time to work on and refine their dances.

After about four weeks we have the material for a dance, and I assume the role of 'director.' I place the children's dances in sequence, and select music. Each group is assigned a location to enter and leave the stage, and the transitions between one group and the next are practiced. At the end of the unit a performance takes place in the dance room for family members. The informal nature of the presentation allows students to share their work processes as well as their final dance. The poem is on the white board, and is recited by the class. Student worksheets are displayed, and photographs of the unit are on the bulletin board. Students will introduce the dance, and may even 'conduct' an activity with the audience. The goal is to celebrate each child's performance and contribution to the class.

Unit:

The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry *Overview*

Teacher:
**Sandra Stratton-
Gonzalez**

School:
**The Children's
School, PS 372**

Grade Level:
2nd Grade

Sessions: **6**

Benchmarks:

■ Dance Making

- » Combine levels, directions and pathways with body actions
- » Use both sustained and sudden time in a dance sequence
- » Create, recall, repeat and practice a movement sequence
- » Cooperate with a small group
- » Perform with fullness of movement

■ Dance Literacy

- » Distinguish between contrasting elements as a performer and observer
- » Notate dances using pathway maps

■ Making Connections

- » Respond to other art forms through dance movement

■ Working with Cultural and Community Resources

- » Share dance learning with family members and peers

■ Explore Careers and Lifelong Learning

- » Express pride in student dance performances

Essential Question:

- How can the images, ideas and patterns in poetry be expressed through dance?

Project Description

In this six week unit, students will work collaboratively to create dances in response to poems about New York City.

Instructional Goals

- Students will identify action words in the poems and use these words in creating their dances
- Students will use spatial elements (levels, directions, pathways) and energy elements (sudden / sustained time) in creating dances
- Students will notate dances using pathway maps
- Students will explore various rhythmic patterns in the poetry
- Students will perform their dances for their peers

Unit: The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry

Assessments

Indicators of Student Learning

Students will know:

- Poems about New York City
- Levels, directions and pathways
- Energy elements of sudden/sustained time
- Various rhythmic patterns in 3/4 and 4/4 time

Students will be able to:

- Identify action words in poetry
- Create short dances based on images and ideas in poems
- Notate dances on a dance map
- Work together as a group to create and perform dances

Students will understand that:

- Ideas can be expressed through movement

Pre-Assessment/Planning

Have I taught these students before?

These second grade students have taken dance class weekly with me since kindergarten.

What do students already know and understand about this area of Dance Making?

Students been introduced to level, direction and pathway.

What skills related to this unit have students already developed?

Students have some experience working in collaborative groups and have created two part action patterns.

How will the students' needs be addressed?

Poems will be pre-selected and age appropriate.

Collaborative groups will be comprised of three students each, and student roles will be clearly defined.

Worksheets and templates will be provided.

Unit Assessment Strategies - What is the evidence of student learning?

Self-Assessment

Checking worksheets

Group conferences

Peer Assessment

Students will share their work

Verbal critique

Teacher Assessment

Checklists and rubric for dance making

Video taping

Unit: The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry

Learning Experiences

Teacher Self-Assessment Strategies

What is working well? How do I know this?

The steps of the dance making process are understood by students: they are on task in small group work, create and follow the pathway maps, and use a variety of space elements in their dances (levels, directions, pathways).
Students are proud of their performance. They enthusiastically share their dances with one another and their families.

What should be changed? How do I know this?

The exploration of time (sudden/sustained) needs take place after the action patterns are created. The students had difficulty incorporating time while trying to create their action patterns.
The creation of rhythm patterns based on the poem require an additional time. We often ran out of time at the end of class, and the patterns were not fully developed.

Learning Experiences	Strands				
	<i>making</i>	<i>literacy</i>	<i>connections</i>	<i>resources</i>	<i>careers</i>
Lesson #1					
Review level, direction and pathway	◆	◆			
Create combinations of these three elements		◆			
Read poem			◆	◆	
Identify action words			◆	◆	
Discover rhythmic patterns in poem and practice as call & response			◆		
Lesson #2					
Explore energy elements of sustained and sudden time	◆	◆			
Create action patterns incorporating sustained and sudden time	◆	◆			
Work with small group to create action pattern	◆	◆			
Create body percussion for rhythmic patterns			◆		
Lesson #3					
Practice and share action patterns	◆	◆			
Identify sudden and sustained movement	◆	◆			
Identify pathways in patterns	◆	◆			
Practice rhythm patterns as call and response and as poly rhythm			◆		
Lesson #4					
Notate pathways on a stage map	◆	◆			
Create pathway maps with group	◆	◆			
Practice pathway map	◆	◆			
Share patterns	◆	◆			
Play rhythm patterns on rhythm sticks				◆	
Lesson #5					
Create group dance from individual action patterns	◆	◆			
Explore sequence in the dance	◆	◆			
Practice reciting the poem			◆	◆	
Lesson #6 & Performance					
Practice and revise dance	◆	◆			
Perform for family members and peers	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆

Unit: **The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry**

Lesson 1 Guiding Question/Theme: What is an action pattern?

Objective:

- Students will review and deepen their understanding of space elements (levels, directions, pathways)
- Students will identify action words in poetry
- Students will improvise action patterns

Materials/ Equipment:

- Spatial elements chart, poem written on chart paper, white board and markers, various instrumental music selections, djembe, CD player.

Warm Up/Review 15 minutes

- Students will take off their shoes and go to warm up spots in lines and rows. They will participate in a modern/jazz warm up that includes body part isolations, abdominal strengthening and large muscle group work.
- Students will review the spatial categories of level, direction and path by referring to the spatial elements chart. Selected students will choose one element from each group. The whole class will improvise using these elements. Three different combinations will be explored. For example:

	Combo #1	Combo #2	Combo #3
Level	Low	High	Middle
Direction	Forward	Back	Side
Pathway	Curved	Zig Zag	Straight

Unit: **The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry**

Lesson 1 Guiding Question/Theme: **What is an action pattern?** *continued*

Introduction and Exploration of the theme 10 minutes

- The teacher will read the poem selected for the class. After reading, she will lead the class as they read the poem together aloud. Then, she will ask the students to find the movement or action words in the poem. As the children identify the words, the teacher underlines them.

Development/Sharing 10 minutes

- Students will select three of the identified action words to create an ‘action pattern.’ For example:

PROWL + STRIDE + SCOOP

- The class will be divided into two groups. One group at a time will improvise movement for the action pattern. The teacher can cue the change from one action to the other verbally, with the drum, or by using recorded music. After each group performs the teacher asks questions about the levels, directions and pathways. For example: What directions were used when the dancers scooped? What levels were used to prowl?

Cool Down 5 minutes

- The class will sit in a circle and recite their poem together. They will select two lines and both speak and clap the rhythmic pattern of the words. In two groups they will practice the clapping and speaking as a call and response.

Unit: **The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry**

Lesson 2 Guiding Question/Theme: What is surprise?

Goals/Objectives

- Students will understand the energy elements of sudden and sustained time
- Collaborative groups will be formed

Materials

- Spatial elements chart, energy elements chart, poem written on chart paper, white board and markers, various instrumental music selections, djembe, CD player, Action Pattern Worksheets.

Warm Up/Review 10 minutes

- Students will take off their shoes and go to warm up spots in lines and rows. They will participate in a modern/jazz warm up that includes body part isolations, abdominal strengthening and large muscle group work.
- For the final section of warm up students will select 3 different combinations of the spatial elements level, direction and pathway for improvisation.

Introduction and Exploration of the theme 10 minutes

- Students will be introduced to the energy elements of sudden and sustained time. The teacher will demonstrate surprise, or sudden movement, by walking around the space with her drum. At an opportune moment she will ‘surprise’ the students with a sharp beat on the drum. The sudden ‘flinch’ generally elicited in students is the demonstration of surprise. The teacher then asks students what the opposite of sudden or surprise movement might be.
- Students will improvise both sudden and sustained movement. The surprise can be a quick change of direction, tempo or level. The entire class will improvise together, inserting the surprise or sudden action on a drum cue from the teacher.

Unit: **The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry**

Lesson 2 Guiding Question/Theme: **What is surprise?** *continued*

Development **15 minutes**

- Students will review the poem, and the action words identified last week. Three words will be selected to create an ‘action pattern.’ For example:

GRIND + SLAM + ROLL

- The students will be asked to insert one surprise or sudden movement into the action pattern during the SLAM! action. Students will be divided into two groups and take turns improvising and observing this action pattern. The teacher will select four students to demonstrate their surprise moves.
- The class will be randomly divided into groups of three. Each group will be provided with an Action Pattern Worksheet. Group members will be instructed to each select one action word from the poem and then to put the three words in sequence. Then, the group will select at least one action in which to add a surprise or sudden move.

Sharing **5 minutes**

- One or two groups will share their action patterns with the class. After sharing, the teacher will ask: What actions were performed? Which action included sudden or surprise movements?

Cool Down **5 minutes**

- The class will sit in a circle and recite their poem together. They will select two lines and both speak and clap the rhythmic pattern of the words. In two groups they will practice the clapping and speaking as a call and response. Then each group will choose a different type of body percussion to use for the rhythm and repeat the call and response.

Unit: **The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry**

Lesson 3 Guiding Question/Theme: Can we work together to create original action patterns using spatial design and surprise movements?

Goals/Objectives

- Students will work cooperatively to create a movement sequence

Materials

- Spatial elements chart, white board and markers, action pattern worksheets, various instrumental music selections, djembe, CD player.

Warm Up/Review 5 minutes

- Students will take off their shoes and go to warm up spots in lines and rows. They will participate in a modern/jazz warm up that includes body part isolations, abdominal strengthening and large muscle group work. For the final section of warm up students will select different combinations of the spatial elements level, direction and pathway for improvisation.

Introduction and Exploration of the theme 10 minutes

- The class will read the poem aloud, and review the list of action words from the poem. The class will create an action pattern, and select one action for ‘surprise’ movement. The teacher will divide the class into two big groups who take turns improvising the pattern and observing. After each group performs, she will ask ‘how did the dancers show surprise?’

Development/Sharing 20 minutes

- Each of the 8 working groups (selected last week) will be given their Action Pattern template. Groups will select their actions if they have not already done so, and will practice their pattern.
- Several groups will be invited to share their action patterns. After each presentation the students will be asked: In which action did you see sudden movement? What pathways did you see? What action was sustained?

Cool Down 5 minutes

- The class will practice the two rhythm patterns they have created from the poem. Using various body percussion techniques, and dividing into two groups, they will practice the rhythms as a call and response, and then as a poly-rhythm (overlaid).

Unit: The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry

Lesson 4 Guiding Question/Theme: What is a pathway map?

Goals/Objectives

- Students will work cooperatively to create a pathway map for their dance sequence.

Materials

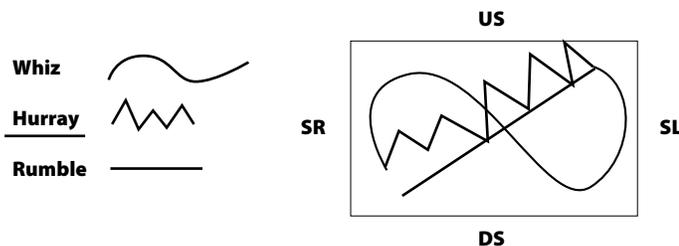
- Spatial elements chart, white board and markers, pathway map worksheets, various instrumental music selections, djembe, CD player.

Warm Up/Review 5 minutes

- Students will take off their shoes and go to warm up spots in lines and rows. They will participate in a modern/jazz warm up that includes body part isolations, abdominal strengthening and large muscle group work. For the final section of warm up students will select different combinations of the spatial elements level, direction and pathway for improvisation.

Introduction and Exploration of the theme 10 minutes

- The teacher will model the creation of a pathway map using the three actions and pathways the class selected during warm up. After drawing the stage map outline, she will ask students to come one at a time to the white board to draw one of the action pathways. Pathways will connect.
- Once the map is drawn, the class will be divided into two groups to try the map. Underlined action words are those that use surprise. See example below.



Development 10 minutes

- Each of the 8 working groups (selected last week) will be given a map template. The group will notate and then practice their pattern.

Sharing 10 minutes

- Two groups will be invited to share their action patterns. After each presentation the students will be asked: What pathways did you see? What action was sustained? What action was sudden?

Cool Down 5 minutes

- The class will read and recite their poem together. They will then practice the two rhythm patterns created from the words. Using rhythm sticks and dividing into two groups they will practice the rhythms as a call and response and as a polyrhythm.

Unit: **The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry**

Lesson 5 Guiding Question/Theme: How can we put our dances together into one?

Goals/Objectives

- Working with the teacher, students will put their individual dances into a sequence as one longer class dance. Various musical choices will be explored.
- Students will practice their rhythm pattern, using it to introduce the dance.
- Individual students will practice reciting sections of the poem.

Lesson 6 Theme: Rehearsing and preparing for performance

Goals/Objectives

- The class will practice their dance, including the musical introduction, the various action patterns, and the narration.
- The class will brainstorm costume ideas and make a decision.

Theme: Performance

Goals/Objectives

- The class will perform for family members and first grade students

**Unit: The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets:
Creating Dances from Poetry**

Action Patterns

Names: _____

Date: _____

Class: _____

1. Create a name for your group: _____

2. Choose three action words from the poem.

_____ + _____ + _____

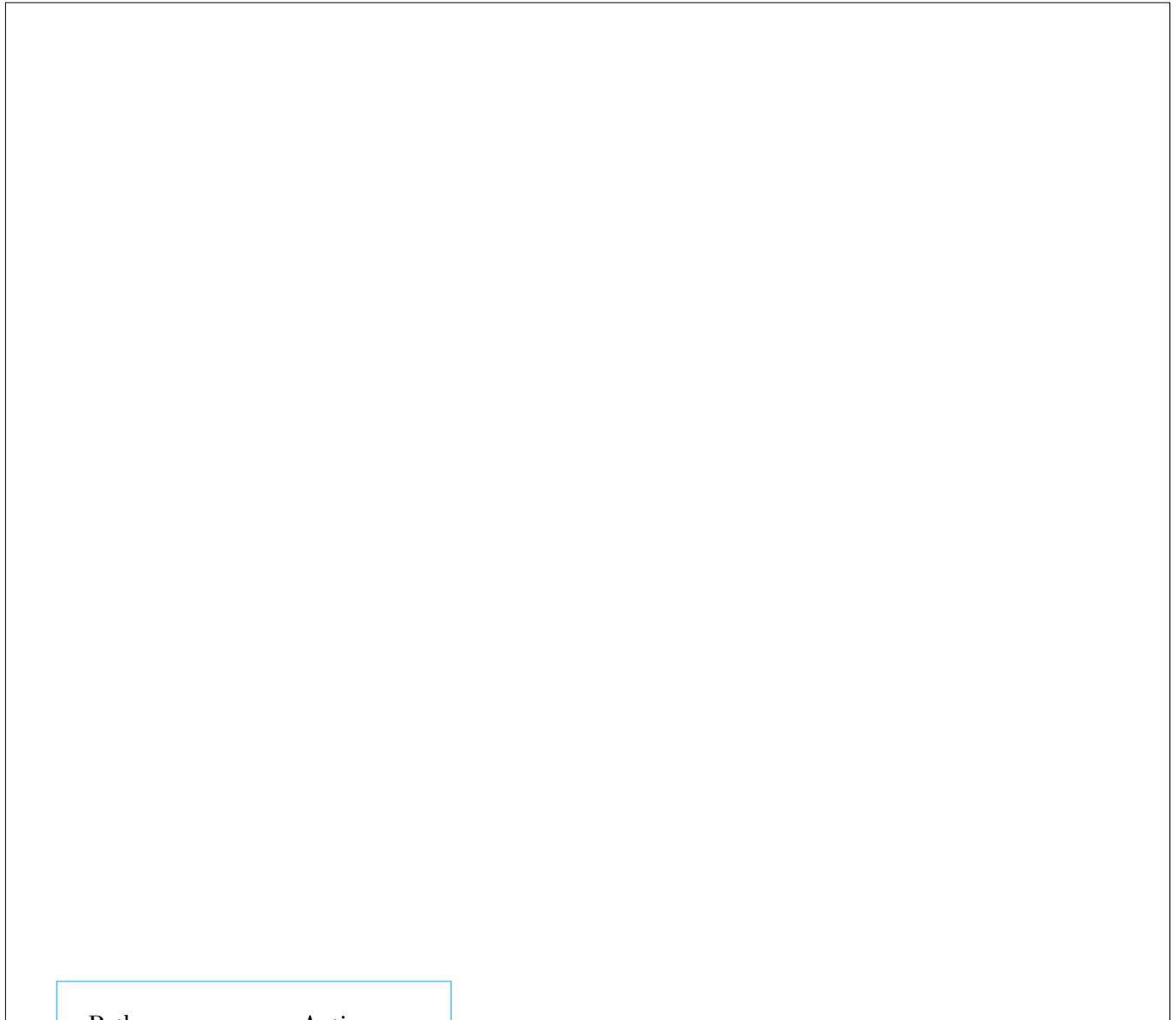
3. Decide which action will have a surprise move. Circle that word.

4. Practice your pattern!

Unit: **The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry**

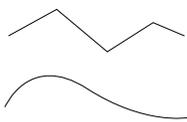
Stage Map

Upstage



Pathway

Action



Downstage

Unit: The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry

Grade 2: Action Patterns

Scoring rubric for Grade 2	4: Exceeds standards	3: Meets standards	2: Approaches standards	1: Area of concern
Participation in warm up	Consistently maintains focus. Clearly isolates body parts. Works from center.	Maintains focus 75-90% of time. Demonstrates understanding of center. Isolates body parts.	Maintains focus 60-75% of time. Emerging understanding of center. Isolates some body parts.	Does not maintain focus. Does not isolate body parts. Shows no evidence of understanding of center.
Listens and responds to cues	Always responds to teacher cues.	Often responds to teacher cues.	Sometimes responds to teacher cues.	Does not respond to teacher cues.
Works well with others	Active participant in small group work. Makes smooth transition between leadership and collaborative roles.	Active participant in small group work. Can take both leadership and collaborative roles. Sometimes needs support in transitions.	Reluctant participant in small group work. Has difficulty taking leadership roles and collaborative roles. Always needs support in transition.	Does not participate in small group work.
Creates 3 part action pattern	Creates 3-part action pattern. Includes several levels, pathways and directions as well as sudden/sustained energy.	Creates 3-part action pattern using different levels, directions and pathways.	Creates 2-part action pattern using different levels, directions and pathways.	Does not create action pattern.
Performs action pattern for class	Performance is confident and demonstrates use of dynamic contrasts. Stays on beat.	Performance is somewhat confident and demonstrates some dynamic contrast. Stays on even metered beat.	Performance lacks confidence. Student demonstrates little dynamic contrast. Sometimes stays on even metered beat.	Student does not perform.
Participates in reflective conversation	Answers questions posed by teacher. Posits questions for others.	Answers questions posed by teacher.	Sometimes answers questions posed by teacher.	Never answers questions.

Unit: The Beat of Your Feet on the City Streets: Creating Dances from Poetry

Poems

Class 2.3

Riding The Subway Train

By Allan A. de Fina

Hurrying, hustling, hurtling past,
the subway train
approaches at last!

Whoosing, whizzing, whistling
air,
blows in faces
and messes hair!

Rumble, rattle, screeching stop!
the train rolls in,
and on all hop.
Snap! Shut! Train doors close!
It jerks and lurches
as off it goes!

Whooshing, whizzing, whistling
along!
The subway sings
its noisy song.

Class 2.2

City Bus

By Allan A. de Fina

As the bus prowls along
it growls along
and fouls behind.
It scowls with glaring eyes
and strides
between those persons walking
by.
It moves its torso
oh, so slow,
scooping strangers
as it goes.

Class 2.1

Street Music

By Arnold Adoff

This city:
the
always
noise
grinding
up from the
subways
under
ground:
slamming from bus tires
and taxi horns and engines
of cars and trucks in all
vocabularies
of
clash
flash
screeching
hot metal language
combinations:
as planes
overhead
roar
an
orchestra
of rolling drums
and battle blasts
assaulting
my ears
with
the
always
noise of
this city:
street music.