

MANITOBA CULTURAL SOCIETY OF THE DEAF

A NEW RHYTHM:TEACHING BEYOND SOUND

Teaching Strategies:

COMMUNICATION

1. Attention Grabbers
 - a. Implementation: Instructors will use various attention grabbers when trying to get the attention of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students (DHH). This includes stomping on the floor, waving, flashing the lights in the studio, and tapping the students on the shoulder/arm.
 - b. Results: This creates an effective and simple way of redirecting DHH students' attention to the instructor.

2. Using American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate
 - a. Implementation: In a class that includes DHH students, ASL should be used. In the case of a hearing instructor, a ASL interpreter would be used. Learning relevant basic ASL would be ideal for hearing instructors.
 - b. Results: This creates an environment in which communication between the instructor DHH students is strong and clear.

3. Gestures
 - a. Implementation: Prior to the first class, it is recommended that a "Pre-Class" is held for any DHH students. Instructors should work with DHH students to create gestures for better communication. Some gestures should include "time out" and "water break". These gestures should be used during classes.
 - b. Results: This strengthens communication between the instructors and DHH dancers.

4. Provide students with the lyrics of the music prior to class so that they can understand the meaning/emotion of the song.
 - a. Implementation: Prior to the first class it is recommended that a "Pre-Class" is held for any DHH students. In this pre-class, provide students with the lyrics to the song. This should also be done if there is no pre-class. If there is an interpreter present (and they are willing), have them interpret the lyrics for the students. If possible, having the lyrics posted during the class would also be helpful.
 - b. Results: This helps DHH students better understand the music, so that they can translate the emotion/feeling into their dancing.

RHYTHM/TEMPO/TIMING

1. Using Visual and Tactile Cues
 - a. Implementation: Instructors will use various strategies to demonstrate time, tempo, and rhythm to DHH students. This includes clapping, snapping, and having a drummer in the room. Visual cues can also be used to help dancers know when they are to begin. Some examples would be turning on or off a light, a person walking in front of the dancer, or creating a gesture of some sort. Tactile cues can also help with this. Some examples include a tap on the shoulder/arm or an increase in the volume of the music. This creates vibrations that the DHH students can feel and use as a cue.
 - b. Results: This helps DHH students grasp time, tempo, and rhythm as they often do not get it from listening to the music.

2. Providing visual counts using ASL.
 - a. Implementation: Instructors will use ASL to provide visual counts to DHH students instead of spoken counts.
 - b. Results: This helps DHH students know when to start dancing, the order of choreography, or remember any counts.
3. High Quality Sound System (Subwoofer)
 - a. Implementation: Instructors will ensure to have a high-quality sound system in their studio. A subwoofer would ideally be included. The speaker can be turned down a bit and the subwoofer will carry the low frequency portion of the music to help the dancers feel the vibrations. The music should be loud enough so vibrations can be felt.
 - b. Results: This helps DHH students to better hear the music and feel the vibrations.
4. Allowing Deaf/Hard of Hearing students to listen to the music beforehand so they can internalize the rhythm.
 - a. Implementation: Prior to the first class it is recommended that a "Pre-Class" is held for any DHH students. In this pre-class instructors should let students listen to the music. Students should also be provided with the opportunity to touch the speakers so that they can feel the vibrations.
 - b. Results: This helps DHH students to internalize the rhythm, so that they can be more successful when dancing.

MIXED CLASS STRATEGIES

1. V- Shape
 - a. Implementation: Instructors will set students up in a V-shape in front of the mirror.
 - b. Results: This helps DHH students position themselves so they can see both the instructor doing the choreography as well as themselves. This ensures clearer communication.
2. Ensure students can see the instructor.
 - a. Implementation: Instructors should be mindful of their position in the studio when working with DHH students. The instructor should be facing students when providing instruction and facing the mirror when demonstrating. In the case of corrections (specifically those made when music is playing), make sure that you are visible to any DHH students. If possible, lower the volume of the music or turn it off completely.
 - b. Results: This promotes stronger, clearer communication between instructors and DHH students.
3. Utilizing hearing dancers as a guide
 - a. Implementation: Instructors should position hearing students throughout the DHH students within the class.
 - b. Results: This helps DHH students to utilize the hearing dancers as a point of reference, or as someone who can help them out during the class. Students can also create their own cues of hearing dancers.