

92NY Dance Education Laboratory (DEL) Curriculum ©2025

DEL Dance and Literacy: Creating Connections Curriculum Overview

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *DEL Dance and Literacy: Creating Connections* Curriculum, the second curricular module of the *DEL Dance and Literacy Curriculum* Project developed by the Dance Education Laboratory (DEL). The *DEL Dance and Literacy Curriculum* Project emerged in response to the impact of the pandemic on foundational literacy skills for New York City students. Responding to this need, The New York Community Trust launched an initiative to address the literacy crisis through high-quality arts education projects to support the development of foundational literacy skills in NYC schools. In June 2023, The New York Community Trust awarded the 92NY Dance Education Laboratory (DEL) a two-year grant to design, implement, and document a new Pre-K-5 dance and literacy curriculum for NYC students. DEL launched the first module of the curriculum in 2024, titled *DEL Dance and Literacy: Poetry Moves Me*.

The *DEL Dance and Literacy Curriculum* is designed as an integrated dance and literacy curriculum that aims to improve foundational literacy skills through dance and movement learning, anchored in the NYC Blueprint Dance Literacy Standards, NYS Anchor Standards, and NYC ELA Next Generation Standards. The dance curriculum emphasizes language learning objectives such as vocabulary-building, reading comprehension, and speaking and writing skills, which are integrated into the dance learning process.

For access to the full **DEL Dance and Literacy Curriculum**, please visit:

www.danceedlab.com/del-dance-and-literacy-curriculum

CURRICULUM ORGANIZATION

The *DEL Dance and Literacy: Creating Connections* curriculum integrates dance and literacy standards and consists of dance units for grade bands Pre-K, K-2, 3-5, D75 K-2, and D75 3-5. The Pre-K, K-2, and 3-5 dance units include eight lessons each; both D75 dance units include six lessons each. Each lesson is designed for approximately 45 minutes of instruction, yet can be expanded upon and adapted in multiple ways. The curriculum includes high-quality lesson plans with hyperlinks to resources such as student worksheets and assessments. In addition, each lesson includes specific language scaffolds to support literacy skills. Furthermore, student-facing Google slide decks accompany each lesson plan. As a bonus, the curriculum offers the [DEL Teacher Toolkit](#) with additional dance and literacy-based support materials that teachers can use in their classrooms, including accompanying [DEL Dance and Literacy Picture Cards](#) and [DEL Dance Framework Charts](#).

LANGUAGE SCAFFOLDS AND LITERACY STRATEGIES

The *DEL Dance and Literacy: Creating Connections* curriculum identifies specific **language scaffolds** addressed within each lesson. A language scaffold is a specific technique implemented during instruction to support student learning. A list of the language scaffolds you will see in each lesson section is **highlighted in pink**. Refer to this [Language Scaffolds and Literacy Strategies Glossary](#) for a list of all language scaffolds and literacy strategies.

SUPPORTS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

DEL strives to provide high-quality, accessible, inclusive, and equitable dance education for every child. The *DEL Dance and Literacy: Creating Connections* curriculum includes instructional practices and strategies to support diverse learners. Refer to this [Supports for Diverse Learners](#) document for resources and strategies that support access to learning for all students.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

The *DEL Dance and Literacy: Creating Connections* curriculum addresses the following Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions:

- We can use dance learning to strengthen literacy skills (reading, listening, writing, drawing, and speaking).
- We can create dances inspired by literature.
- We can make creative choices and express our movement preferences in different ways.
- We can build community through dance and dance-making.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can dance learning strengthen literacy skills (reading, listening, writing, drawing, and speaking)?
- How can we create, perform, and respond to dances inspired by literature?
- How can we connect, understand, and express our ideas and emotions through dance?

THE DANCE EDUCATION LABORATORY (DEL) MODEL

The *DEL Dance and Literacy Curriculum* is grounded in DEL's pedagogy model, emphasizing expanded vocabulary usage and fluency, improving language and communication skills, and strengthening reading and writing skills through dance learning. DEL's curriculum supports dance literacy strategies by applying the **DEL Dance Framework** as a movement-vocabulary enrichment tool, emphasizing accessible movement terminology that links to diverse academic disciplines. In addition, DEL's student-centered model includes movement exploration and dance-making opportunities that reinforce literacy principles in an integrative and collaborative manner. [Click here to learn more about the DEL Model.](#)

DEL DANCE AND LITERACY: CREATING CONNECTIONS DANCE UNIT OVERVIEWS

Pre-K DANCE UNIT OVERVIEW

Curriculum Writer: Daria Fitzgerald

Title: *Hush!*

DANCE UNIT DESCRIPTION:

In this dance unit, students will explore action words and themes inspired by *Hush! A Thai Lullaby*, written by Mingfong Ho and illustrated by Holly Meade. The dance unit begins with students creating a Movement Sentence inspired by bedtime rituals, using props and partners to incorporate **rock** and **tiptoe**. As the unit progresses, students will practice action words such as **crawl**, **jump**, **roll**, **gallop**, and **stomp**, building increasingly complex Movement Sentences with various props like tunnels, hula hoops, and cones. Each lesson reinforces previous skills while introducing new ones, culminating in a collaborative activity where students design and draw their obstacle course, showcasing their creativity, movement preferences, and understanding of creating a sequence.

K-2 DANCE UNIT OVERVIEW

Curriculum Writer: Carina Rubaja

Title: *Thank You Omu!*

DANCE UNIT DESCRIPTION:

In this dance unit, students will explore dance-making inspired by a picture book called *Thank You, Omu!* by author Oge Mora. In the story, Omu cooks a stew and shares it with her neighbors. In return, they show their gratitude by bringing her food. The Movement Sentences are based on the steps to make a stew, the pathway its aroma travels around the neighborhood, and the giving and sharing among neighbors. Language abilities and understandings such as vocabulary-building, reading comprehension, speaking, and writing will be reinforced as part of the dance learning processes, namely creating, performing, developing dance literacy, responding, and making connections.

3-5 DANCE UNIT OVERVIEW

Curriculum Writer: Dawn DiPasquale

Title: *Drawn Together*

DANCE UNIT DESCRIPTION:

In this dance unit, students will explore themes from the book *Drawn Together* by Minh Lê and illustrated by Dan Santat, utilizing dance as communication to connect people across personal and physical distances. DEL Dance Framework vocabulary will inform and support the group and duet collaboration through engagement in dance-making activities, supported by literacy strategies.

D75 K-2 DANCE UNIT OVERVIEW

Curriculum Writer: Sandi Stratton-Gonzalez

Title: *I Can Share*

DANCE UNIT DESCRIPTION:

In this dance unit, students will explore the book *Thank You Omu!* by author and illustrator Oge Mora. The book's theme of sharing will be brought to life through movement activities, and students will use the DEL Dance Framework components of Body and Space to create movement sentences.

D75 3-5 DANCE UNIT OVERVIEW

Curriculum Writer: Sandi Stratton-Gonzalez

Title: *Dancing Connections*

DANCE UNIT DESCRIPTION:

In this dance unit, students will explore the book *Drawn Together* by author Minh Le and illustrator Dan Santat. Students will use DEL Dance Framework vocabulary and image cards to create pathway maps and movement phrases that illustrate the book's theme of connection.

D75 TEACHING CONTEXT

The D75 K-2 and 3-5 dance units are written for elementary students with disabilities in the 6:1:1, 8:1:1, 12:1:1, and inclusion classrooms. The work addresses the access needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, emotional disabilities, sensory impairments, ADD, ADHD, and various learning disabilities (language processing disorder, dyslexia,

etc.). However, no one strategy works for all, and dance educators are encouraged to learn about the varied access needs of their students. Sources of information are the children themselves (through observation and interaction), their family members, classroom teacher(s), paraprofessionals, their Individualized Education Plan, school-based Occupational and Physical Therapists, and Counselors. Dance educators are encouraged to craft routines for each section of the class that provide a sense of safety and belonging and to practice patience, as many children need extended time in an environment before they are comfortable enough to participate. Please adapt and change these units for your students and your classroom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our immense gratitude to The New York Community Trust for the funding to make this curricular project possible. We also want to acknowledge the expert guidance of Literacy Specialist and Curriculum Consultant Jennifer Stengel-Mohr, who provided professional learning to our team regarding supports for Multilingual Learners (MLLs), best practices in literacy strategies in arts education, and review of lesson plans and resources.

DEL *Dance and Literacy* Team:

DEL 92NY Director

[Erin Lally](#)

DEL Associate Director

[Rachael Lieblein-Jurbala](#)

DEL Professional Learning & Curriculum Senior Consultant

[Ann Biddle](#)

Literacy Specialist and Curriculum Consultant

[Jennifer Stengel-Mohr](#)

Pre-K Curriculum Writer

[Daria Fitzgerald](#)

K-2 Curriculum Writer

[Carina Rubaja](#)

3-5 Curriculum Writer

[Dawn DiPasquale](#)

D75 K-2 and D75 3-5 Curriculum Writer

[Sandi Stratton-Gonzalez](#)



This curriculum is made possible in part by generous support from The New York Community Trust.