

## **Dance for Every Body**

*with teaching artists Mary Verdi-Fletcher and Sara Lawrence-Sucato from Dancing Wheels*

**Grade Band:** K-12

**Arts Subject:** Dance

### **SUMMARY**

Teaching artists Mary Verdi-Fletcher and Sara Lawrence-Sucato demonstrate a physically integrated dance that everyone, regardless of ability, can perform.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**Students Will:**

- Learn about physically integrated dance
- Translate three common dance moves to make them accessible to seated dancers
- Perform a short, physically integrated dance that is accessible to dancers of all abilities

### **GETTING STARTED**

**Vocabulary You Will Learn:**

- **Physically integrated dance**—A movement that celebrates the first-person experience of disability and creates a dance environment where everyone can participate regardless of ability.
- **Translation**—A tool used to make movement accessible or possible between sit-down and stand-up dancers.
- **Brush**—A move where standing dancers extend one leg with toes pointed and seated dancers extend one arm with fingers stretched.
- **Turn**—A move where standing dancers march in a small circle and seated dancers can spin their wheelchairs by pulling on the right wheel and pushing on the left simultaneously.
- **Jump**—A move where seated dancers can pop a wheelie and standing dancers can jump in place.

**Materials You Will Need:**

- Nothing—just yourself!

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## [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

### TRY IT YOURSELF

#### How to Create Your Own Physically Integrated Dance for Standing and Seated Dancers

1. The first move you're going to learn is the **brush**. If you are a standing dancer, you can extend one leg forward with toes pointed. If you are seated, you can extend one arm forward with your wrist straight and fingers extended. You'll repeat this move four times.
2. Next, you're going to translate a **turn**. If you are standing, you can march slowly in a small circle, taking four counts to complete the turn. If you are using a wheelchair, you can turn by pulling back on the right wheel and pushing forward on the left wheel simultaneously until you've completed a turn.
3. Next, you'll translate a **jump**. If you are standing, you can jump in place four times, while if you are using a wheelchair, you can pop the front wheels of your wheelchair up four times.
4. Now it's time to complete the dance and put these moves together! Complete the brush move, the turn, and the jumps, with each move taking a count of four. Feel free to turn on music while you dance, if you would like to.

### THINK ABOUT

In the video, Mary and Sara demonstrate how to translate some common dance moves to make them accessible to dancers who use wheelchairs. If you want to go even further, think about these questions:

- What other common dance moves can you think of that could be translated so that a seated dancer could still perform them? What would that translation look like?
- Can you choreograph another dance move to add after the three moves performed in the video? How would that move look for a standing dancer and for a seated dancer? Remember to use the four-count that was used to choreograph each move in the video.
- Did learning this dance, and watching Mary and Sara dance together, change any ideas or preconceptions you had about what people who use wheelchairs can do? Why or why not?
- Think about some of the things that you do on a day-to-day basis, from getting ready for the day to traveling to school to having lunch. How are those things accessible, or not accessible, to someone who uses a wheelchair? Can you think of accommodations that could be provided to help "translate" these actions for people of varying abilities?

## **MORE ABOUT THE TEACHING ARTIST**

Mary Verdi-Fletcher (she/her), the first professional wheelchair dancer in the U.S., founded the Dancing Wheels Company in Cleveland in 1980. Born with spina bifida, Mary wanted to offer others with disabilities full and equal access into the world of dance. An almost unimaginable concept at the time, Mary's vision and passion have since helped to revolutionize our very notion of dance—as well as what defines a dancer.

Sara Lawrence-Sucato (she/her) is the Dancing Wheels Company & School's Director of Outreach & Community Engagement. In this capacity, she teaches physically integrated dance techniques in residencies, workshops, and masterclasses. Sara has danced professionally with Mary in the company for 16 years. She also serves as Rehearsal Director and School Administrator.

If dance is an expression of the human spirit, then it is best expressed by people of all abilities. That is the fundamental belief behind the Dancing Wheels Company & School. Considered one of the premier arts and disabilities organizations in the U.S., Dancing Wheels is a professional, physically integrated dance company uniting the talents of dancers both with and without disabilities. To learn more, visit the Dancing Wheels website: <https://dancingwheels.org>.

## **ACCESSIBILITY NOTES**

Don't forget that you can turn on "Closed Captioning" when watching the YouTube video to view English captions. Modify handouts and give preferential seating for visual presentations. Allow extra time for task completion.

## **CREDITS**

Original Video: Mary Verdi-Fletcher and Sara Lawrence-Sucato from Dancing Wheels  
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