



Helping teachers work with children when they first return to school following major traumatic or life-changing events

## Alone Together

*As students have returned with different experiences, dance can help students share their stories while seemingly focusing on something else. This dance work helps students focus on their own time and that of the people around them - and perhaps see how others will have experienced similar things.*

### Level 4

#### Resources

The simple weaving master.

Music for movement - at least three contrasting pieces without lyrics

#### Key Dance Language

Body awareness – shape, body base

Space – locomotor, pathways

#### Warming into the work.

Weaving through the space around each other in curvy pathways.

Invite students to freeze and create a curved shape at different levels. Maintaining this shape, find a way to continue to move.

Then move into straight pathways, how might they move around each other?

Can you find a way of moving on a straight or curvy pathway using a different body base?

For instance, knees, bottom, one foot, two hands.

#### Exploring dance

1. As students move using either straight or curved pathways, they freeze in a shape that the teacher calls. Remind students these will get progressively harder. Words called will depend on the situation in the room. These shapes are to be created independently.

Examples may be:

Isolated, together, family, lonely, missing, strength, friendship, boredom.

Initially, students are likely to create these as acted images.

Invite them to try again and this time, be the **shape of** boredom or the shape of friendship. Remind them to use different levels and different body bases.

2. Invite students to think of a specific person that helped them through the isolation period. How might that person be represented as an abstract shape? E.g. curved arms as though in embrace or arms outstretched up high as though uplifting someone, curled on the side in a ball to show safety etc.

## Creating dance

1. In groups of three, students take one of each of the weaving strips. Writing in alternate spaces

In the aho (weft) spaces students fill in people that have comforted, inspired, supported or helped them. This may be people that were not in their isolation bubble but helped them feel connected. This can be general e.g. family, best friend,

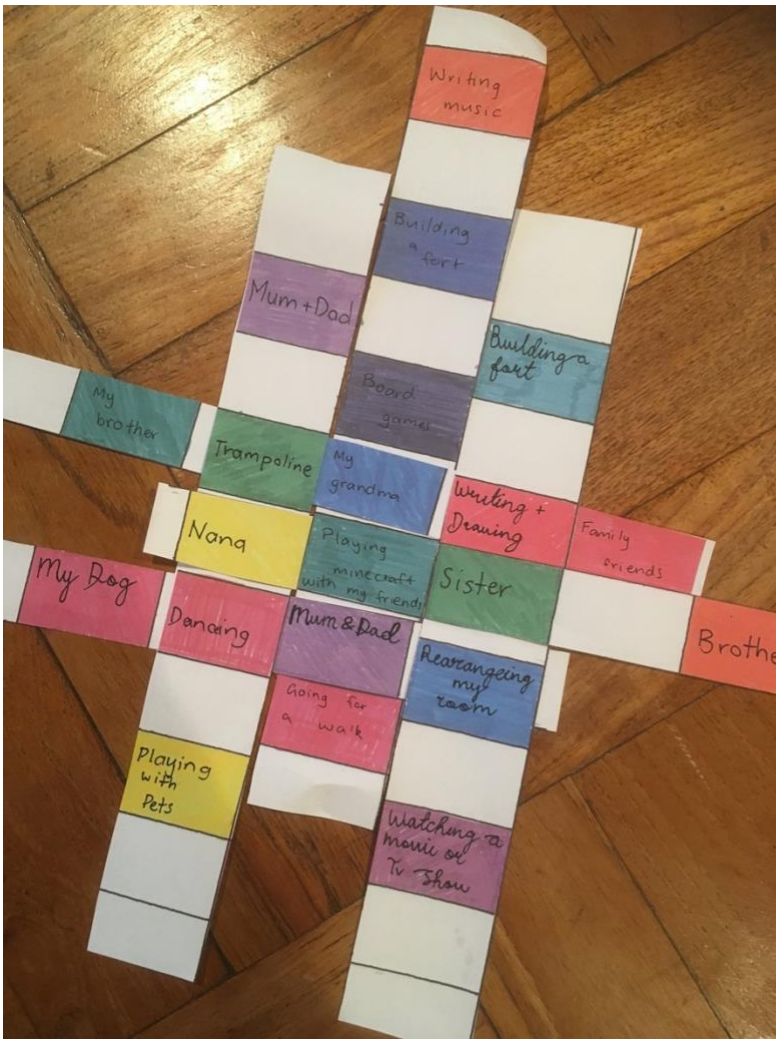
In the whenu (warp) lines, students write what activity they did that helped pass the time this might be reading, walking, games, drawing, chatting,

Students may wish to colour the words



*Depending on the situation, with the people you are working with you can assign the aho and whenu strips as you wish. This might be wishes and dreams, frustrations and hopes, emotions, or anything that makes sense with your learners.*

- Students share their strips with each other, this may involve some storytelling of their time in isolation. Students then weave their strips together. These can be moved up/down and left/right 9 central words that they like. It doesn't matter if they have the same things on their weaving. Gently tape the back to hold this in place.



- Using the words on the weaving, students now create four movements to represent four of the words. As a trio, choose one word to start with. Create a shape to represent this. If still social distancing, it may be all three people create the same shape or at different levels. If not social distancing, the students may want to create a shape together.



### **Add challenges.**

- Can you move this shape along a pathway that helps express the word? e.g. A curly pathway may represent the laughter between friends.
  - Could this be done with a change of body base?
  - How might you arrange the three people for travelling in this shape?
  - Is there a stronger choice you could make to refine the shape or locomotor movement?
4. Students take the second word and create a shape. Repeat the challenges from above.
5. Once they have three shapes and travelling movement using different levels and body bases, the group of three join another group of three. Using the aho/whenu warp/weft weaving pattern, invite students to find a way to weave their movement sentences with another group. This may mean going around, over/under or through another sentence, depending on social distancing guidelines.

Groups will need to show each other, discuss ideas and make collective decisions.

### **Add challenges**

- How will the group enter the space? Or do they start “on stage”.
- Do both groups need to start at the same time?
- How will you create a strong ending? Is this a shape or a fade out, or an exit?

Each time students rehearse through this, they should become more and more focused in the work. It is often useful to play music quietly while they are rehearsing.

## **Sharing Dance**

Students may want to choose the music they perform to, otherwise use a piece of instrumental music that is at a slower tempo.

After a performance discuss the differences and similarities between the various pieces. What worked well in terms of dance? What images or ideas seemed to pop up?

### **Possible Future Steps**

- Research harakeke and the meaning of Te Rito. If the child is at the centre, what does that mean?
- Discussion provocations such as “If the world were designed with children at the centre, how would it be different?”
- Consider other ways that weaving is considered important in cultures around the world. Are there other common patterns that might be able to be used as pathways in your dance work?



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- What activities do people in your whanau/ family do that allow for the communication of stories, ideas and history to be shared?

[PDF OF WEAVING STRIPS](#)

## DANCE FOR UNDERSTANDING

### A FEW TIPS

Creating a movement phrase or 'movement sentence' means students are working in the Developing Ideas strand of the curriculum. Creating within a structure helps those who are new to the work.

This dance work is designed to make space for students to discuss but not dwell on having been in isolation, making room for the positive and not-so-positive stories.

**Adapt** Like all work, the ideas here should be adapted for the age, stage and nature of the learners in your space.

**Encourage** students to:

- start in stillness – like a capital letter
- finish in stillness – like a full stop
- to use all rehearsal time wisely by rehearsing and refining their work.

Using the phrase 'movement sentence' can help.

**Time** Keep adding challenges that use dance language. About 1-2 minutes, is enough for each new challenge.

**Sharing** A quick way of sharing the early ideas is to create a half and half share. Have half the room bob down where they are. The other half share their movement sentences at the same time. The movers then bob down and the other half share.

**Creating** Have students explore ideas individually at first. Initially students may try to be in a partner so gently remind them to work individually during this phase. Once in pairs observe social distancing guidelines as needed.

**Music** For this type of work, find music that is instrumental only to avoid students "dancing the words". Use soundtracks from movies, classical music, background music – but get a range of tempo and timbre. Spotify even has a list called *Contemporary Music that is not Classical*.



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**Warm up** A warm up in dance should be part of the precursor to the work that is about to happen. Try to use the dance language at this time when setting out the task. *Eg. Can you use the **levels** in **space** differently and move **high, middle and low**?*

**View** There are many pieces of dance online. Share dance often with students. Exposing students to the wide variety of ways people dance lets them into other worlds of expression..

**Arts-based teaching is so valuable for the immediate return to school after crisis and trauma. For those looking to sustain the benefits in the longer term, check out Mantle of the Expert - a highly engaging teaching approach combining inquiry learning with drama. It allows ākonga to explore real world contexts in create, safe and meaningful ways through imagined 'adventures' lasting several weeks or a term. With Mantle of the Expert, you can extend on the strategies used in the process dramas on this site to support learning across the curriculum. For more on Mantle of the Expert and other dramatic inquiry approaches in a New Zealand context, visit [www.mantleoftheexpert.co.nz](http://www.mantleoftheexpert.co.nz) or email [mantleoftheexpertnz@gmail.co.nz](mailto:mantleoftheexpertnz@gmail.co.nz)**