

AILEY ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

FINDING GRACE

A curricular collaboration between Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs, 92NY Dance Education Laboratory (DEL), and Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE

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Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Coral Dolphin in Ronald K. Brown's Grace. Photo by Paul Kolnik.

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INTRODUCTION

This curriculum introduces Ronald K. Brown's work, *Grace*, to dance educators and teaching artists. The goal of this curriculum is not only to explore the movement language and cultural influences of the piece, but to engage with "grace" as a powerful lens for teaching, learning, and living.

Ronald K. Brown is a choreographer, teacher, mentor, and visionary whose artistic and personal journey embodies grace in its fullest sense. His work invites us to reflect on resilience, community, and connection—values that are deeply needed in today's classrooms.

This curriculum uses *Grace* as a springboard for students to:

- Explore dance-making
- Build cultural literacy
- Foster Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Teachers are encouraged to extend this inquiry into their own pedagogical practices:

- How do we model grace in our teaching?
- What does it mean to give our students and ourselves grace?
- How can we use dance to foster empathy, resilience, and belonging?

This curriculum invites educators to engage *Grace* as both a dance and a way of being, one that fosters:

- Empathy and forgiveness in the classroom
- Resilience and self-acceptance in student learning
- Connections between artistry and personal growth
- Practices of healing, affirmation and joy



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Constance Stamatiou in Ronald K. Brown's *Grace*. Photo by Danica Paulos.

INTRODUCTION, CONT.

The Experiences

This curriculum offers 8 lesson plans—what we call Experiences—including an introductory lesson and the opportunity for students to perform. Each Experience addresses a different way of “Finding Grace.”

- What is grace?
- Where is grace?
- When is grace?
- How is grace?
- Why is grace?

The Experiences are designed to be flexible, inclusive, and grounded in Social Emotional Learning (SEL), dance technique, and choreographic inquiry. Lessons include prompts for movement, reflection, and discussion that help students see themselves in the work and the world.

How to Use This Curriculum

Teachers are encouraged to use this curriculum as a flexible, modular, and adaptable framework. Each Experience (lesson) is designed to support adaptation, expansion, and student-centered creativity. It can be approached as a full 6-8 lesson sequence, or as individual Experiences drawn from the work. Experiences can be rearranged, repeated, modified, or expanded based on the specific needs and age group of the students. It is not a script, but a guide—a source of inspiration and structure that invites personalization. This is a curriculum about **teaching with grace**, care, creativity, and courage.

“I hope that when people see the work, their spirits are lifted.”

- Ronald K. Brown

Videos

Embedded in each Experience are a series of instructional videos created just for this curriculum, offering teachers and students the opportunity to warm-up with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag, and to learn phrase material directly from Grace. For all student-facing video links and descriptions, [CLICK HERE](#).

Teachers are invited to

- Use these Experiences as inspiration, not prescription
- Add or subtract choreography, discussion time, or warm-up components
- Reorder the Experiences as it makes sense for the population and overall learning experience
- Repeat Experiences as many times as desired
- Augment or simplify based on students’ level of experience
- Create ancillary assignments to deepen understanding and connect with interdisciplinary themes
- Emphasize reflection, storytelling, or improvisation depending on classroom culture
- Add choreographic tasks and challenges
- Learn additional phrases from the full video of Grace
- Use Grace as a springboard for discussions on identity, adversity, and artistic voice
- Let Grace guide not only the content of your lessons but also your approach: teach with empathy, flexibility, humility, and imagination

Educational Connections



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's in Ronald K. Brown's *Grace*. Photo by Danica Paulos.

EDUCATIONAL CONNECTIONS

The *Finding Grace* curriculum is aligned with the New York City Department of Education's *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance*: PreK-12, the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS), and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

The New York City Public Schools Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance

The New York City Public School's [Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance](#) provides a rigorous, standards-based approach to dance education, structured around five main strands:

- **Dance-Making:** Focuses on developing technical and expressive skills, artistry, and a unique personal voice in dance through exploration, creation, and appreciation of choreography.
- **Developing Dance Literacy:** Emphasizes acquiring a working knowledge of dance language and aesthetics, applying this to analyze, evaluate, document, create, and perform dance, and recognizing one's role as an articulate, literate dancer.
- **Making Connections:** Involves understanding the history and socio-cultural significance of dance, and establishing interdisciplinary links between dance and other art forms or life disciplines.
- **Community and Cultural Resources:** Focuses on broadening students' perspectives through active partnerships with cultural institutions and connecting with the wide range of dance institutions in NYC.
- **Careers and Lifelong Learning:** Aims to make students aware of dance-related careers, the value of goal-setting, and the role of dance as a source of enjoyment and lifelong learning."

National Core Arts Standards

[The National Core Arts Standards \(NCAS\)](#)

offer a clear, cohesive framework for high-quality arts education across dance, music, theatre, visual and media arts. The framework emphasizes four artistic processes—Creating, Performing/Presenting, Responding, and Connecting—which support students in generating ideas, sharing work, reflecting on meaning, and relating art to their lives and communities. The NCAS ensures that all students have equitable access to a comprehensive arts education that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong engagement with the arts.

Social Emotional Learning

[Social Emotional Learning](#) is essential to creating kind, caring classroom culture and a holistic approach to dance education that prioritizes the wellness and wellbeing of all students.

"Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities."

[\(CASEL, n.d., Social & Emotional Learning\)](#)

EDUCATIONAL CONNECTIONS, CONT.

CASEL Competencies as Related to the Dance Classroom

- **Self-Awareness:** Connecting with the breath, discovering choreographic and dancer “voice,” anatomical awareness, body check, and positive body image
- **Self Management:** Rehearsing independently, healthy habits, and positive affirmations
- **Social Awareness:** Researching and performing work from choreographers who have made impacts in the field of dance, providing and listening to feedback that centers empathy, participating in inclusive dance practices, and not “othering”
- **Relationship Skills:** Partnering, weight sharing, collaborative dance making, supporting others’ wins, sensing other bodies in the space and being careful and respectful of group space
- **Responsible Decision Making:** Planning and making creative choices in a dance, time management, taking care of your body, making time to practice, and creating your own work. (CASEL, n.d.)

Grounding The Work



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Jacqueline Harris in Ronald K. Brown's *Grace*. Photo by Paul Kolnik.

GROUNDING THE WORK

The Collaborators Behind the *Finding Grace* Curriculum

EVIDENCE, A Dance Company

Founded in 1985 by Ronald K. Brown, the mission of Evidence seeks to promote understanding of the human condition through the dances and storytelling of the African Diaspora, and to provide sensory connections to history and tradition through music, movement and spoken word. Brown gave his company the name EVIDENCE because he wanted people—especially young people and people of color—to see a reflection, or evidence, of their families, their neighbors, their stories, and their circumstances, on stage. In the four decades since the company's founding, Brown has created a rich and diverse body of work that is significant in its pioneering blend of classic and traditional forms grounded by compelling ancestral narratives.

Ronald K. Brown, Founder and Artistic Director of EVIDENCE, A Dance Company

Ronald K. Brown is a renowned choreographer and cultural leader whose work blends African, modern, ballet, and social dance styles. His choreography is deeply rooted in spiritual and social themes. Brown has created work for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, Philadanco, and more. A recipient of numerous awards including the Guggenheim Fellowship and NEA Choreographer Fellowship, he continues to shape the contemporary dance landscape with compassion, activism, and authenticity.

Arcell Cabuag, Associate Artistic Director of EVIDENCE, A Dance Company

Arcell Cabuag has been a longtime collaborator with Ronald K. Brown. He is an educator, performer, choreographer, and facilitator of Brown's repertory and vision. Arcell leads many of the company's workshops and residencies, including the warm-up videos featured in this curriculum.

About AILEY and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

AILEY, or Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, is the umbrella organization of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, The Ailey School, Ailey Extension, and Ailey Arts In Education and Community Programs. It is housed at The Joan Weill Center for Dance on West 55th Street

and reaches people in theaters, studios, classrooms, and community centers around the world through performances, training, public classes, and community outreach programs.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was founded by Alvin Ailey on March 30, 1958, and is now one of the most acclaimed dance companies in the world. With a repertory that boasts close to 300 works by more than 100 choreographers, it has performed in more than 70 countries on six continents and has been designated a "vital American Cultural Ambassador to the World" by a US Congressional resolution.

Forged during a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was established to uplift the African American experience while transcending boundaries of race, faith, and nationality with its universal humanity. As the company grew, Mr. Ailey invited dancers of all backgrounds to be a part of his vision while reimagining his company as a "library of dance," a home for a wide range of choreographers' works that might otherwise be lost—the first modern dance company of its kind. He expanded the global audience for dance with his visionary model and technically dazzling works.

Before his untimely death in 1989, Mr. Ailey named Judith Jamison as his successor, and for 21 years she brought the company to unprecedented success before appointing Robert Battle to steward the Company from 2011–2023. In 2025, Alicia Graf Mack became the organization's fourth artistic director. A former Ailey dancer under both Ms. Jamison and Mr. Battle and a former dean and director of the Dance Division at The Juilliard School, Ms. Graf Mack brings her passion for dance and dance education to the continuation of the AILEY tradition.

Today, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater continues to bring joy and elation to audiences around the globe, while expanding its repertory with works by new choreographers and upholding Mr. Ailey's legacy for future generations.

GROUNDING THE WORK, CONT.

About Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs
Fulfilling Alvin Ailey's enduring belief that dance is for everyone, AILEY is deeply committed to bringing dance into classrooms and communities both locally and nationally through Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs (AAIE). Led by Director Dr. Rachel McCaulsky, AAIE's innovative programming includes AileyDance Kids for students Pre-K through 12, AileyDance Kids SOAR for special needs students, and National Residencies which offer students the opportunity to take dance classes prior to attending a performance by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater or Ailey II when the companies tour to their city. AileyCamp is a nationally recognized summer program for youth ages 11-14 that combines dance training with personal development workshops, all designed to nurture self-discipline, creativity, and self-esteem. Currently operating in 10 cities nationwide, AileyCamp is led by AileyCamp National Director Nasha Thomas. Additionally, AileyDance for Active Aging, spearheaded by AAIE Associate Director Heidi Miller, offers multi-week residencies to older adults in community centers and residences. The program is a thoughtfully designed progression of physical conditioning. The classes introduce basic dance concepts, teach dance phrases in a variety of styles, and offer participants the opportunity to engage in creative explorations. AileyDance for Active Aging welcomes older adults of all abilities, including those with wheelchairs, canes, or walkers, and those living with memory loss accompanied by their care partners.

About 92NY Dance Education Laboratory (DEL)
Jody Gottfried Arnhold founded the Dance Education Laboratory (DEL) in 1995 at the 92nd Street Y, New York, with Joan Finkelstein as Founding Director and Ann Biddle as Founding Faculty. Together, these three visionaries recognized the need for a practical and accessible professional learning program in dance education. Since its inception, DEL has provided a welcoming and inclusive community that nurtures and supports professional learning across the lifespan. DEL's comprehensive curriculum equips dance educators with the tools they need to succeed in the dance classroom.

DEL offers high-quality courses, customized workshops, and curriculum development for cultural institutions, community organizations, schools, and professional dance companies. Through this multifaceted approach, DEL prepares educators with the skills and confidence needed to bring meaningful, creative, and collaborative dance experiences to learners of all ages.

For nearly three decades, DEL's impact has reached thousands of teachers and, through them, thousands of children and communities. This work continues to expand through innovative programming, PK-12 curriculum development, the year-long DEL Institute Teacher Certificate Program, and partnerships with leading arts organizations such as Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs.

DEL Mission

DEL inspires dance educators to engage in creative, transformational, and ongoing professional learning centered in the artistry of teaching and focused on humanistic principles of equity and justice. DEL provides an inclusive, nurturing, and dynamic laboratory where dancers and educators from diverse communities gather to experience embodied exploration and discovery, collaborative dance-making, culturally responsive practices, and collective self-reflection.

DEL...art at the heart of teaching™

About Deborah Damast, DEL Curriculum Writer

[Deborah Damast, DEL Faculty, serves as Associate Professor and Director of Dance Education at NYU Steinhardt](#)

She was selected for the inaugural Steinhardt Mid-Career Leadership initiative and received grants that included Caring Culture, Innovation and Diversity, Faculty Challenge, and Internationalizing the Curriculum. She has served on NYSDEA (Past President) and NDEO and is currently on Dance Teacher, DEiP, Peridance, and Misty Copeland's BE BOLD boards. She has presented at numerous conferences and festivals in the U.S. including Dance Teacher, NDEO, CUNY, NYSDEA, UDEO, and internationally in Japan, China, Korea, and Uganda. Her choreography has been shown at over 40 venues in NYC, including the Ailey Studios and Radio City Music Hall. Deborah has taught for LREI, 92Y/DEL, Peridance, OBT, The Yard, NYCB, and has written curricula for Paul Taylor, Carnegie Hall, DEL, NYCB, and NYC DOE. Deborah is a recipient of the NYU GSO Star Faculty Award, NDEO Outstanding Dance Educator and Leadership Awards, Steinhardt Teaching Excellence Award, Dance Teacher Magazine Award, NYSDEA Outstanding Leadership Award, and the Martha Hill Mid-Career Award. She was a 2024-2025 Fellow at the Center for Ballet and the Arts, and a founding member of the World Dance Education Alliance in Beijing.

GROUNDING THE WORK, CONT.

"Grace, the luminous masterpiece that Ronald K. Brown made for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1999, ranks as one of the greatest and most enduringly spirit-lifting dance works of the past twenty-five years. The Ailey company revived it beautifully..."

The New Yorker, Brian Seibert January 13, 2025

Introducing Grace to Your Students

At a Glance

Choreography by Ronald K. Brown

Music by Duke Ellington,

Roy Davis, Jr., Fela Anikulapo Kuti

Costume Design by Omotayo Wunmi Olaiya

Original Lighting by William H. Grant

About Grace

Grace is a dance created by Ronald K. Brown in 1999 for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. It begins with a woman (Mother God) dressed in white who blesses the people of the earth. Dancers are dressed in red and white and strive for compassion, forgiveness, and grace. Some of the dancers are having difficulty finding their way, and Mother God steps in to guide the people on their journey. Eventually the community is healed through grace. The dance explores many emotions and as the dancers are in constant communication with each other. We see themes of transformation, healing, resistance, and compassion expressed throughout the dance and are taken on the journey along with the dancers towards a blessed state.



Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag. Photo by Christopher Duggan for Nel Shelby Productions.

Facts to Share with Your Students

- Ronald K. Brown is an artist, educator, and leader in the world of dance.
- He was born and raised in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York.
- Brown began dancing as a child, often at home with his family.
- When he was in second grade, he saw Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater perform. That experience inspired him to begin creating his own dances.
- He trained at the Mary Anthony Studio in New York City and later danced with Jennifer Muller/The Works, as well as many other companies and artists.
- Brown was influenced by the legendary dancer and choreographer Judith Jamison, who became his mentor and friend.
- In 1985, when he was just 19 years old, Brown founded his own company, EVIDENCE, A Dance Company.
- He chose the name EVIDENCE to reflect his mission: to tell the stories of everyday people and illuminate their lives through dance.
- In his first nine years as a choreographer, Brown created 30 works!
- His choreography explores themes of social justice, community, and spirituality.
- The style of Ronald K. Brown's choreography draws from years of study, travel, and respect for dances from the African continent and the African diaspora.
- His movement is polycentric (using multiple centers of movement in the body) and polyrhythmic (responding to multiple rhythms at once). He often includes gestures inspired by everyday life.
- Brown traveled to West Africa (Senegal and Ivory Coast), South America, and the Caribbean to study traditional dances and music. From these experiences, he developed his own unique voice—blending what he learned with his New York training and a human-centered vision of dance.
- He also incorporates social and club dances into his choreography.

GROUNDING THE WORK, CONT.

- Brown often collaborates with musicians, authors, actors, and designers to create interdisciplinary works.
- Some of the musicians he has worked with include Robert Een, Oliver Lake, David Simons, Don Meissner, Jason Moran, Arturo O’Farrill, and Meshell Ndegeocello.
- Brown believes that everyone should have the chance to dance.
- He teaches in both community and professional settings, welcoming students of all ages and abilities.
- His company, EVIDENCE, is based at Restoration Arts in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn—the same neighborhood where he grew up.
- When EVIDENCE tours, Brown makes it a priority to connect with the communities where the company performs. He believes dance is about people, not just performance.
- Throughout his career, Brown has received many awards for his artistic impact, including: a Guggenheim Fellowship, Bessie Award, Black Theater Alliance Award, Audelco Award for choreography in *Crowns* by Regina Taylor, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award, Doris Duke Artist Award, NYC City Center Fellowship, Scripps/ADF Award, New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, Dance Magazine Award, Dance Teacher Award, and the Ailey Apex Award. He was named Def Dance Jam Workshop “Mentor of the Year” and also received the inaugural United States Artists Rose Fellowship Award.
- Brown’s first work for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was *Grace*. Since then, he has created six more pieces for the company: *Dancing Spirit*, *Four Corners*, *Ife/My Heart*, *Open Door*, *Serving Nia*, and *The Call*.

“When a person steps into the world he represents his families, teachers and ancestors and must move forward with a sense of accountability and responsibility. To be evidence. I wanted Evidence, A Dance Company to present a sense of history and a reflection of the human condition, to be a company in which people could see themselves in stories, music and dance that celebrate who we are.”

- Ronald K. Brown, quoted in
[Jacob’s Pillow Dance Interactive by John Perpener](#)

For Teachers



Members of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Ronald K. Brown's *Grace*. Photo by Nir Arieli.

“Most contemporary dances come and go. But Grace has become part of the canon.”

-Gia Kourlas, *The New York Times*, 2019



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Ashley Kaylynn Green and Patrick Coker in Ronald K. Brown's *Grace*. Photo by Nir Arieli.

Guiding Questions For Teachers

As you move through this curriculum and beyond, consider:

- How do we embody grace in our daily lives?
- How do we engage grace as a pedagogic practice?
- How can we weave forgiveness, empathy, and spirituality into our pedagogy and personal artistic journeys?

Preparing Yourself to Teach *Finding Grace*

Here are some ideas for pre-impact work you can do to prepare yourself for teaching the *Finding Grace* curriculum:

1. Read "[Dance of the African Diaspora: Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE](#)" by John Perpener from Jacob's Pillow Interactive.
 - a. What themes were explored in this article?
 - b. What dance styles were referenced?
 - c. Have you explored any of these styles and genres of dance in your teaching?
2. Explore the [EVIDENCE website](#), and read Ronald K. Brown's Bio.
 - a. What do you notice about his history, legacy, and influences that are revealed in his choreography?
 - b. Investigate his lineage so you are aware of who his influences were.
 - c. Create an assignment for your students to read his bio and create their own bios.
3. Read EVIDENCE, A Dance Company's Mission Statement:
"Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE, A Dance Company seeks to promote understanding of the human condition through the dances and storytelling of the African Diaspora, and to provide sensory connections to history and tradition through music, movement and spoken word."
 - a. What words resonate with you? Highlight words in the mission that you connect with and improvise by yourself in the dance studio to physically connect with the mission statement.



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Ronald K. Brown's Grace.
Photo by Danica Paulos.

4. Visit the [AILEY Website](#) and read this quote:
"Making dances is an act of progress; it is an act of growth, an act of music, an act of teaching, an act of celebration, an act of joy." - Alvin Ailey
 - a. What resonates with you and your philosophy about making dances?
 - b. How does this quote align with your teaching practice and philosophy?
5. Read the [LA Dance Chronicle's review of Grace](#)
The author writes about Ronald K. Brown's musical choices for Grace, and his aim to make this piece a tribute to Alvin Ailey by using music written by Duke Ellington.
 - a. What music do you use for your classes?
 - b. How is your playlist shaped by your influences?
 - c. How can you create intentional playlists for your thematic unit plans?
6. Read "[For Ronald K. Brown, 'Grace' Endures and Brings 'Mercy'](#)" by Gia Kourlas for *The New York Times*
 - a. Read this quote from Ronald K. Brown about the works Grace and Mercy: "Some years ago, Mr. Brown was asked by a member of his board: What would happen after he died? What would his legacy be? "Grace will be there," he said. "I'm grateful that the work will live when I'm on the other side." It's not even so much about the dance itself. "It's so people can have a conversation," Mr. Brown continued. "What is grace? It's a word. And that's the thing about mercy. How do you dance this or how do we embody what that feeling is? I think that's a wonderful conversation to have."
 - b. How do you want to be remembered?
 - c. What is your legacy as a teacher?
 - d. How can you reflect on this personally and also think about how you express legacy to your students?

FOR TEACHERS, CONT.

7. Read this review of [*“Grace,’ Ronald K. Brown’s Celestial Groove, Turns 25 at Ailey”*](#) by Gia Kourlas from *The New York Times*
 - a. Read the reflections from the dancers Renee Robinson, Angelica Edwards, Solomon Dumas, Coral Dolphin, and designer Olaiya. How do the dancers interpret the dance? What do they have in common, and what differences do you see?
 - b. How do the costumes, music, and lighting contribute to the storyline?
 - c. Ronald K. Brown speaks about his stroke and how he lives the concept of grace in recovery. How can we encourage students to find opportunities for reflection and grace through hardship and tragedy?
8. Watch this [documentary about Ronald K. Brown from 2001](#) where he speaks about the importance of storytelling.
 - a. How do you embed storytelling into your dance curriculum? Think about this quote from the video, and center this as you enter into this curriculum: “In all my work and every experience that I want to share with the viewer, I want them to get a story—feel some kind of visceral, emotional, spiritual connection to the work.”
 - b. Listen to how he speaks about choreographing “Walking Out the Dark” and how each movement in the dance conveys meaning. Think about your own choreography and how to incorporate meaning into the movement that you create. What is the difference between miming movements and extracting essence?

Grace in Teaching Dance: A Teacher Reflection Tool

How can we engage the concept of grace in our classrooms? Think about these five ways that you can include grace in your instructional approach. Create a journal, a vision board, and/or a daily note to self-assess your progress.

1. Compassion and Empathy

Cultivating grace in the classroom begins with compassion and empathy. Educators are invited to approach students with understanding and forgiveness when they make mistakes or encounter challenges, which fosters a supportive and inclusive environment. Providing multiple opportunities for success honors the diverse abilities, learning styles, and developmental timelines of each student, affirming that growth unfolds at different paces for everyone.

2. Fluid Adaptability

Graceful teaching requires responsiveness and flexibility. Rather than adhering rigidly to a predetermined plan, educators can allow lessons to evolve organically in response to students' interests, questions, and levels of engagement. This adaptive approach, often described as emergent design, centers the learner's curiosity as a co-creator in the learning experiences.

3. Encouragement of Effortless Mastery

This tool emphasizes supporting students in developing confidence and ease through progressive skill-building. Teachers can acknowledge and celebrate small achievements, recognizing that mastery is a gradual process. By identifying and affirming each “rung” on the ladder of progress, teachers empower students to pursue the next step with motivation and self-assurance. We want to cultivate a mindset of embracing challenges that fosters enjoyment over aversion.

4. The Power of Yet

Drawing upon Carol Dweck's theory of a *growth mindset*, educators can nurture students' resilience and perseverance by emphasizing the potential for learning rather than fixed ability. Phrases such as, “I don't know this yet,” affirm that skill development is a continuous journey and that the capacity to learn remains ever-present. You may refer to this [Ted Talk by Carol Dweck](#) where she describes the Power of Yet in more detail.

5. Mindful Presence

A core expression of grace in teaching lies in mindful awareness. By modeling presence, breathwork, and emotional regulation, educators demonstrate how to navigate challenges with calm and composure. Mindful teaching practices—such as intentional breathing, visualization, and moment-to-moment awareness—help create a classroom culture grounded in patience, focus, and compassionate response.

Grace in Teaching Dance: Teaching Supports

Transferrable Concepts and Embodied Life Skills

Concepts such as resilience, flexibility, fluidity, spirituality, and community are central to both dance practice and human development. These are not only artistic ideals but *transferable life skills*—capacities that extend beyond the studio into relationships, leadership, and everyday experience. Dance educators can intentionally embed these concepts into instruction, making their broader applications visible to students through reflection, discussion, and embodied practice.

Movement Quality

Encouraging dancers to cultivate movement that embodies elegance, harmony, and effortlessness fosters both technical and expressive growth. The goal is to blend strength with fluidity—demonstrating control without rigidity. In works such as *Grace*, particularly in the opening Mother God solo, the dancer exemplifies seamless transitions, sustained flow, and refined presence. Teachers can guide students to observe and embody these qualities, aiming for movement that communicates grace through ease and integration rather than tension or force.

Resilience Through Setbacks

Resilience in dance parallels resilience in life. When dancers face mistakes, missed cues, or unsuccessful auditions, they learn to recover with composure and persistence. Through repeated practice, students internalize that mastery develops through challenges, and that temporary setbacks can open pathways to new opportunities. Educators can model this mindset by normalizing failure as part of growth, helping dancers maintain confidence, emotional regulation, and determination in the face of difficulty.

Connection with Spirituality

Drawing inspiration from Ronald K. Brown's integration of spirituality in *Grace*, dancers can explore their own sources of meaning and connection. This may include reflection on one's inner spirit, relationship to nature, ancestral lineage, or guiding values such as humility, compassion, hope, and forgiveness. As Brown asks, "How do you live your faith?" teachers might reframe this question in the classroom: *How do we embody grace, trust, and forgiveness through our movement and our relationships with others?* Such inquiry transforms dance into an avenue for both personal and collective reflection.

Community and Connection

Dancing with grace also involves honoring the collective. Within an ensemble, each dancer's presence contributes to the unity of the whole. Moving together fosters empathy, shared intention, and a sense of belonging. When dancers feel seen, supported, and interconnected, they reflect the spirit of community that lies at the heart of *Grace*. Through synchronized movement, mutual respect, and cooperative creation, the ensemble becomes a living expression of grace in action.

"At a time when atrocities in the name of religion dominate world news, choreographer Ronald K. Brown reminds audiences how faith can unite us, heal us and help us get through the worst that life and human nature can inflict."

-Lewis Segal,
Los Angeles Times

The Curriculum

Ronald K. Brown rehearsing Grace with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Photo by Claudia Schreier.



THE CURRICULUM

Curriculum Overview: The Experiences

Experience 1: Introduction

In this Experience, students are introduced to Alvin Ailey, Ronald K. Brown, and the foundational vocabulary for *Finding Grace* warm-ups and repertory elements. Students begin their exploration of grace through the accessible concept of gratitude, noticing how gratitude can be expressed through gesture, movement, and intention. This Experience establishes the idea that gratitude and grace are connected, and that movement can help us understand both. Later Experiences will build on this introduction as students explore grace more deeply.

Experience 2: What is Grace?

In this Experience, students will explore the concepts of self-awareness, self-management, and self-acceptance. Students will learn a warm-up designed by Ronald K. Brown and EVIDENCE, learn the Mother God phrase from *Grace*, and investigate the many meanings of the word grace.

Experience 3: Where is Grace?

In this Experience, students explore how to move with spatial awareness and care in their shared dance space, in their environment, and within the repertory material from *Grace*. Students will review the Hips, Shoulders and Chest Warm-Up; review the Mother God phrase; and learn the Shakara Walk phrase. Students will consider what it means to move through space with grace, and how to take care of themselves and others in the spaces they inhabit.

Experience 4: When is Grace?

In this Experience, students explore when grace appears in the choices they make and consider how they might respond to challenges with grace. Students investigate through movement how emotional regulation can extend grace, how grace in decision making can be shown through gestures, and how their movements and choices can embody grace. Students will learn the Plié Warm-Up Exercise and the Stop phrase from *Grace*.

Experience 5: How is Grace?

In this Experience, students explore how grace can be expressed through movement dynamics and effort qualities, intention, and relationships with others. They investigate how qualities such as power, clarity, patience, and support can show grace in action. Students perform the Plié Warm-Up and Hips, Shoulders and Chest Warm-up, and review the Shakara Walk Phrase from *Grace* to deepen their understanding, focusing on the concepts of constraint and freedom with bound flow and free flow movement qualities.

Experience 6: Why is Grace?

In this Experience, students investigate why people create dances about their stories, and how personal challenges create inspiration for artistic expression. Using choreographic tools such as ABA form, theme and variation, and repetition, students build dances inspired by moments of forgiveness, strength, or personal transformation. Students learn that grace can be shared through storytelling and choreography, and that their stories matter.

Experience 7: Putting it All Together!

In this Experience, students will synthesize all material learned, shared, and created in this curriculum, including the warm-ups, *Grace* phrases, and student-generated work. This Experience focuses on reviewing, revising, and organizing students' work to be shared with others.

Experience 8: Perform!

In this Experience, students will share their work from *Finding Grace* with others!

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

The Experience Format

Each Experience is designed to be flexible, inclusive, and SEL-informed. Teachers may adapt, re-order, or repeat Experiences, and Experiences can be taught over multiple periods as needed. Every session begins with a grounding affirmation circle and ends with gratitude or reflection, placing student voice, emotional wellness, and embodied inquiry at the center.

The Experience format is inspired by 92NY Dance Education Laboratory (DEL) lesson plan structure and includes the five elements of GRACE in every class:

G: Greeting and Affirmation Circle

Greet students with a warm welcome and create a group affirmation circle; present theme/topics of the day and learning objectives.

R: Ready for Dancing

Warm up with Arcell! Learn two warm up combinations designed to prepare dancers for learning Ronald K. Brown's repertory.

A: Active Exploration

Explore the repertory work, Grace, and thematic material of each Experience.

C: Creating

Each Experience will allow students to dive into the repertory work and thematic material with agency and artistic choice.

E: Ending Activities

Experiences end with sharing, reflecting, and gratitude.

Finding Grace Curriculum Videos

The *Finding Grace* curriculum features seven original videos created especially for this curriculum. These videos provide essential curricular context and offer students the opportunity to learn directly from renowned artists Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag. Through these materials, students experience Ronald K. Brown's choreographic vision and approach to Grace firsthand.

The video collection includes:

- A welcome video introducing the curriculum
- Two warm-up videos
- Three repertory phrase videos from Grace
- An interview with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag

Welcome

[Welcome to Finding Grace with Deborah Damast](#)

In this opening video, 92NY DEL Curriculum Writer, Deborah Damast, welcomes educators to *Finding Grace*. She introduces the goals of the curriculum and outlines how it can be used.

Warm-Ups

In these two student-facing videos, students will:

- Hear from Ronald K. Brown about the intention and insights behind each warm-up exercise.
- Learn from Arcell Cabuag as he teaches students the warm-ups step by step.
- Dance the full warm-up exercises with music, joining dancers from across the Ailey community.

Featuring: Dancers from Ailey Extension, The Ailey School, Ailey Student Performance Group (ASPG), 92NY Dance Education Laboratory (DEL), and former dancers from Ailey II and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

[Warm-Up #1: Plié Exercise](#)

[0:12-0:53](#) - Inside the Warm-Up: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown

[0:54-4:06](#) - Learn Warm-Up #1 with Arcell Cabuag

[4:07-7:46](#) - Now, Dance It with Music!

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Warm-Up #2: Hips, Shoulders, and Chest Exercise

0:12-0:53 - Inside the Warm-Up: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown
0:49-5:07 - Learn Warm-Up #2 with Arcell Cabuag
5:08-7:52 - Now, Dance It with Music!

Three Repertory Phrases from Grace

Students are invited to learn three phrases from Ronald K. Brown's *Grace*. Each phrase video begins with insights from Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag, followed by a detailed teaching segment and the opportunity to perform the phrase with music.

Mother God Phrase

0:17-3:00 - Inside the Phrase: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag
3:01-4:55 - Learn the Phrase! Taught by Angelica Edwards with Cheryl Rowley-Gaskins and Arcell Cabuag
4:56-6:06 - Perform It with Music!
Find the Mother God Phrase in [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Performance of Grace](#) at 34:53-35:55

Shakara Walk Phrase

0:19-1:56 - Inside the Phrase: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag
1:57-2:37 - Learn the Phrase! Taught by Cheryl Rowley-Gaskins, with Angelica Edwards and Arcell Cabuag
2:38-3:08 - Perform It with Music!
Find the Shakara Walk Phrase in [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Performance of Grace](#) at 48:30-48:51

Stop Phrase

0:18-1:45 - Inside the Phrase: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag
1:46-6:33 - Learn the Phrase! Taught by Arcell Cabuag with Angelica Edwards and Cheryl Rowley-Gaskins
6:34-6:58 - Perform It with Music!
Find the Stop Phrase in [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Performance of Grace](#) at 42:17-42:32 - Watch the dancers in red, facing one another

Interview with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag

In this interview, Ronald K. Brown, together with Arcell Cabuag, shares his creative journey and the inspiration behind *Grace*. The video offers insight into Brown's career, his creative process and inspiration, the origin of *Grace*, and what he and Cabuag hope students might take away from the work.

Interview Topics Include

- [0:19-3:25](#) - Tell us about how you got involved in the dance world.
- [3:26-6:37](#) - Tell us about how you created the piece, *Grace*.
- [6:38-9:48](#) - What was it like to dance in *Grace*?
- [9:49-10:25](#) - How does *Grace* show up in our lives?
- [10:26-12:35](#) - What do you want young dancers to learn from *Grace*?

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

The Music of Grace

“Come Sunday”

Composer: Duke Ellington

Performed by: Jimmy McPhail

By arrangement with G. Schirmer, Inc. publisher and
copyright owner.

“Gabriel”

Performed by: Peven Everett and Roy Davis Jr. Studio
Confessions (ASCAP) and Warner Chappell Music Ltd
(PRS). Licensed exclusively from Large Music, LLC. All
Rights Reserved. 1996.

“Bless It”

Composer: Paul Johnson

Recorded at Undaground Therapy Music Studios
Chicago, IL.

“Rock Shock”

Written and produced by Roy Davis, Jr. Published by
Roy Davis, Jr. Music ASCAP. Recorded at Undaground
Therapy Music Studios, Chicago, IL.

“Shakara”

Composer: Fela (Anikulapo) Kuti

Copyright Shanachie Entertainment Group

“Come Sunday”

Composer: Duke Ellington

Performed by: Jennifer Holiday

By arrangement with G. Schirmer, Inc.
publisher and copyright owner.

Spotify Playlist

[Finding Grace Curriculum:](#)

[The Music of Ronald K. Brown's Grace](#)

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Supporting All Learners

Please see the below best practices that support all learners, including those that support diverse learners, multilingual learners, early learners, and emergent readers.

Best Practices for Diverse Learners

Written by Dr. Rachel McCaulsky

Visual Schedules

Visual schedules support students in knowing what comes next in a class structure. The schedule consists of words and/or pictures that represent each activity of the class. The words and/or pictures can be made removable using Velcro, allowing them to be removed once an activity has been completed. Visual schedules are often used with students on the autism spectrum to support transitions, predictability, and understanding.

Ideas for Use: Once an activity is complete, invite the students to remove the word/picture from the schedule and place it in the “finished” receptacle at the bottom of the schedule. The visual schedule can support student engagement for students who are hesitant to participate. The visual schedule can also be made into a checklist, allowing the students to check or cross off each activity as it is completed.

[Click here for a *Finding Grace* Printable Sample Visual Schedule PDF.](#)

[Click here for the *Finding Grace* Sample Visual Schedule PNG.](#)

Schedule

G

Greeting and Affirmation Circle



R

Ready for Dancing



A

Active Exploration



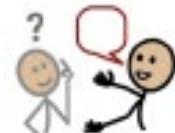
C

Creating



E

Ending Activities



FINISH

*Pictures from Unique Learning System Symbol Stix

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Tactile Schedules

Tactile schedules support students with low vision, blindness, and students with sensory needs. The schedule can be made simply with different textured materials you already have. Keep the schedule simple and minimal; too many textures can be overwhelming and confusing. For example, since the five elements of GRACE will be explored in each lesson/experience, you may consider organizing the tactile schedule into five sections, including the following: greeting and affirmation circle, ready for dancing, active exploration, creating, and ending activities. This will create consistency for students. Over time, the student will associate the texture with that particular section of the lesson. For example, the rounded texture may represent the greeting and affirmation circle, the bumpy texture may represent ready for dancing, the tacky texture may represent creating, and the smooth texture may represent ending activities.

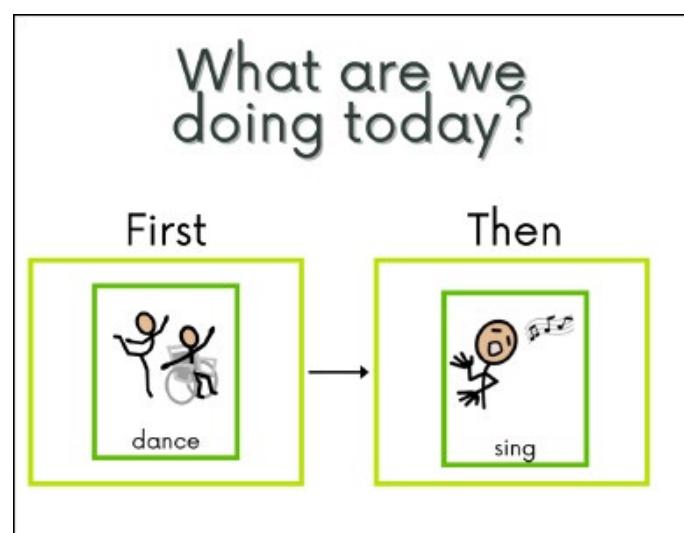
While a tactile schedule is great for students with a visual impairment (who are unable to see/access a visual schedule), it is also great for students with sensory needs. If you find that students learn well by touching, the tactile schedule can be a fun way to keep them engaged and on task with each activity.

Ideas for Use: For students with visual challenges, present the tactile schedule to them at the start of class. Guide them as you help them to feel each texture. Tell them what each texture represents. Before each activity, guide them to touch the texture and tell them what is next. For example: *Feel the smooth texture. Our ending activity is next.* Use the staff in the class to help them guide the student to feel each of the textures as the class progresses.

For students with sensory needs, you can allow the student to feel the texture while letting them know which activity is next. For example: *Feel the tacky texture. Creating is next.*

First/Then Boards

Much like a visual schedule, a first/then board can help support students to see what they are being asked to accomplish during the class. While the visual schedule is an excellent tool for the entire class to reference, the first/then board can support individual students who benefit from knowing in a simplified format what they need to do. For example, first dance, then earn the opportunity to sing our favorite song.



*Pictures from Unique Learning System Symbol Stix

A first/then board can help with:

- Reducing concerns and worries
- Promoting independence
- Improving self-regulation
- Facilitating transitions

Ideas for use: At the start of the class, present the student with the first/then board. Explain to them what they will be doing to receive an incentive of their choice. Use the staff in the room so they can help to guide the student and redirect them as needed throughout the class. Please note that the incentive should be an appropriate reward that has been decided on in collaboration with the classroom teacher and staff, ensuring it is available and part of the students' incentive plan.

Picture Vocabulary Cards

Picture vocabulary cards pair an image with a written word to support comprehension and retention. This strategy is beneficial for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, early learners, and emergent readers. The visual component provides a scaffold, helping students make connections between the word, its meaning, and its physical representation. Over time, students rely less on the picture as they become more proficient readers. Cards can be printed, hand-drawn, or created digitally and should be clear, simple, and large enough for all students to see.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Ideas for use: Below are some ideas for creating word walls and making the vocabulary memorable for diverse learners.

- **Create a class word wall:**

Collaboratively build a word wall by adding new vocabulary as you move throughout the lessons/experiences. Students can contribute by drawing a representation of the word or selecting an image. Personalizing the visuals increases engagement and recall.

- **Embody the vocabulary through movement and photos:**

Invite students to take pictures of their peers demonstrating a concept or shape related to a vocabulary word. For example, students might create a group pose that embodies “forgiveness” and photograph it. This makes abstract concepts tangible and community-oriented.

Spacing

Clear spatial organization helps all students, particularly those with disabilities or challenges in spatial awareness, understand where they should be and how to navigate the space safely and effectively. Consistent visual and physical cues reduce anxiety, support independence, and foster smoother transitions between activities. Depending on the teaching environment (dance studio, gym, cafeteria, auditorium, or classroom), intentional planning of student placement can make movement experiences more structured and inclusive. Tools like poly spots, floor tape, and chairs can create defined areas and pathways that support clarity.

Ideas for use: Prior to the lesson, decide where students should be throughout the lesson. Below are some ideas as a guide:

- **Designated Spots for Starting Positions**

Before class begins, place poly spots or tape marks on the floor where students should begin for warm-up or center work. For example, stand on your blue circle to start the warm-up.

- **Chairs for Formations**

If sitting in a circle is challenging for students, set up chairs in a circular formation to define the space and give students a physical anchor. You can also use chairs to create perimeters for group formations.

- **Color-Coded Pathways**

Use different colored floor tape to create movement pathways for traveling exercises or choreography. For example, move across the blue line for phrase 1. Stop at the red square for phrase 2. Then travel along the yellow line for phrase 3.

- **Shape and Formation Cues**

Combine spacing tools with visual aids like picture vocabulary cards for shapes or formations (circle, line, diagonal). For instance, when transitioning into a circle, hold up a circle card and say: Find your place in the circle.

Visit [Teach With Give](#) to access their free visual vocabulary

Movement Adaptations

Movement adaptations are modifications that make dance accessible to students with diverse physical, cognitive, or sensory needs. Adapting movement ensures that all students can participate fully, regardless of ability. Adjustments can maintain the integrity of the movement concept while honoring individual capabilities. Adaptations can also benefit students who are recovering from injury or require additional processing time.

Ideas for use: The movement can be adapted in a multitude of ways, including the following:

- **Seated Alternatives**

Perform movements from a chair or seated position to reduce strain while maintaining upper-body engagement.

- **Adjust Tempo**

Slow down the music or counts to allow for greater control and comprehension.

- **Reduce Complexity**

Break down phrases into smaller, manageable sections for step-by-step learning.

- **Chunk Material Across Lessons**

Spread one phrase over multiple lessons or experiences to allow repetition and mastery before adding new material.

- **Modify or Omit Specific Actions**

Replace movements that are inaccessible with alternatives that keep the intent (i.e. arm gesture instead of a leap).

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners (MLLs):

Written by Jennifer Stengel-Mohr for the 92NY Dance Education Laboratory (DEL)

The strategies below enhance two distinct areas of learning to support Multilingual Language Learners (MLLs): language and literacy development. We invite you to consider how you can integrate these techniques throughout this curriculum to best support your Multilingual Language Learners.

Language Scaffolds

A language scaffold is a specific technique implemented during instruction to help support student learning:

Scaffold	Description	Application
Modeling	Demonstration of a new concept, vocabulary word, or task in a concrete and tangible way.	Modeling helps students visualize practical applications of new information.
Pacing	Being mindful of the rate at which information is presented.	Language learners need additional processing time to build comprehension and make meaning.
Chunking	Breaking new information and concepts into smaller and more manageable parts.	Presenting information in smaller segments allows students to process and work on one thing at a time, which helps build comprehension.
Visuals	Using or displaying visual images to represent a concept or word.	The use of visual images helps students make connections between words and concepts through visual representation.
Realia	A 3-dimensional object or replica of an object that represents a concept or word.	Realia helps students connect words and concepts through concrete visual representation, which builds comprehension.
Repetition	Strategically readdressing keywords and concepts in meaningful ways, using multiple modalities and multiple-contexts.	Repetition amplifies information and helps with comprehension. Repetition can be modeled in a preview, view, and review instructional format.
Paraphrasing	Restating or elaborating on a concept in a different manner.	Paraphrasing can be teacher-directed or student-directed and offers another way to understand a concept or idea.
Making Connections	Relating new information to students' prior knowledge.	Making connections helps students draw meaningful connections to what they already know or to different subject areas.
Contextualization	Framing new concepts/information contextually to avoid random or isolated information.	A contextual frame connecting to students' prior knowledge helps build comprehension.

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Clarity	Being clear and concise with instructions to avoid extraneous verbiage.	Clarity helps students understand learning objectives and supports student engagement.
Leveled Texts	Having text with more than one readability/difficulty level relating to the same theme or topic within the lesson.	Leveled texts provide different access points for students as they encounter a text at an independent level.
Oral/Written Directions	Providing new information to students in more than one modality or format.	Oral/Written directions reinforce comprehension and offer multiple ways for students to understand learning objectives and expectations.
Adding Art Forms	Consider combining a visual art, music, or theater activity with a lesson to create additional context and meaning.	Arts learning enhances all learning and helps students make additional connections through different modalities.
Pre-Teaching Vocabulary	Explicitly introduce or front-load new vocabulary in context so that students can preview what is to come.	Pre-teaching vocabulary helps students build connections to new material.
Graphic Organizers	Visual tools that show how ideas, facts, and terms relate to each other and help students visualize new words and concepts.	Visual supports such as graphic organizers offer a valuable resource for students during the lesson or during work time.
Sentence Starters	Providing students with the beginning of a sentence so they can build on it.	Sentence starters give students an entry point into a conversation or a writing assignment.
Sentence Frames	Providing the entire structure of a sentence with some keywords missing. This allows students to create full sentences by just adding a few words. This is also referred to as CLOZE.	Sentence frames provide a sentence structure so students can focus on vocabulary and meaning.
Prompts	Providing students with an opening idea, phrase, quote, or image to help motivate and engage them around the topic they will discuss or write about.	This gives students an entry point into a conversation or a writing assignment and helps them build upon their prior knowledge and brainstorm possibilities.
Word Banks/Boxes	Placing keywords visibly within a lesson or task so students can refer to and select appropriate vocabulary as needed.	Word banks/boxes gives students an entry point into a conversation or writing assignment.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Prompts	Providing students with an opening idea, phrase, quote, or image to help motivate and engage them around the topic they will discuss or write about.	This gives students an entry point into a conversation or a writing assignment and helps them build upon their prior knowledge and brainstorm possibilities.
Language Buddies	Strategically pairing students together to increase language opportunities.	Students can be placed in partnerships based on language background or proficiency level as language buddies.
Collaboration	Providing tasks that require group participation and collaborative work.	Collaboration creates a supportive learning environment for language to develop and be practiced.
Varied Questions	Strategically planning open-ended questions in advance to ensure maximum interest and varied responses.	Varied questions avoids only having the same students always sharing and ensures that every student can connect to the learning and discussion.
Question in Advance	Providing the question first and then allowing students time to prepare a response.	Providing questions in advance lowers anxiety and can increase student response rates.
Increased Wait-Work time	Allowing additional time after posing a question to allow students to think, process, and respond appropriately.	Increased wait and work time can increase productivity and reduce anxiety.
Graphic Organizers	Thinking maps that help to visualize new words and concepts.	Graphic organizers can serve as a visual rendering to demonstrate comprehension and document the learning process.
Total Physical Response (TPR)	Allowing students to respond non-verbally to questions or prompts.	TPR takes the emphasis off speaking and allows for an additional entry point for students at lower proficiency levels.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Literacy Strategies

This second chart lists common literacy strategies that can be applied to dance

Strategy	Description	Purpose	Connections to Dance
Making Connections	Finding points of connection between the dance and your own life, another dance, book, image, or to the real world.	Making Connections allows for meaningful learning by providing different points of reference that are familiar to them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relating dance to students' lives • Connecting with other cultural dance forms • Making connections between dance and other disciplines (ELA, Social Studies, Arts, STEM)
Visualization	Creating mental images of words and concepts in one's imagination.	Visualizing can enhance learning and fill in gaps of comprehension as students interact with content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagining the dance sequence in your mind • Visualizing dance pathways • Notating a dance sequence with symbols or drawing
Questioning	Asking questions before, during, and after engaging with a dance to develop a deeper understanding of it.	Asking questions helps students reflect on the meaning of a dance, imagine possibilities, and go beyond surface-level comprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including reflection prompts throughout the dance lesson
Inference	The process of guessing something you don't know based on prior knowledge, evidence in the dance or image, and other available information.	Inference creates a deeper understanding of the dance and is used to predict meaning and "read between the lines" to increase comprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipating a dance-making sequence, such as what comes before or after a dance • Interpreting the meaning of a dance • Interpreting how a dancer feels through facial expressions and gestures
Determine Author's/Artist's Purpose	To determine the reason, intention, or point of view of the artist.	Determining the artist's purpose helps students connect to a dance beyond the literal level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting the meaning of a dance • Finding the artist's intention • Articulating and defending one's choreographic plan
Synthesis	Summarizing big ideas.	Synthesis helps students to comprehend the main ideas of the content and keep track of what was already read or said.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and describing the elements in a dance • Understanding the narrative structure of a dance • Identifying the most important themes of a dance

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.



Renee Robinson in Ronald K. Brown's Grace. Photo by Nan Melville.

Quick Links for Teachers: *Finding Grace* Experience Resource List

Finding Grace Videos

- [Welcome to *Finding Grace* with Deborah Damast](#)
- [Warm-Up #1: Plié Exercise](#)
- [Warm-Up #2: Hips, Shoulders, and Chest Exercise](#)
- [Mother God Phrase](#)
- [Shakara Walk Phrase](#)
- [Stop Phrase](#)
- [Interview with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag](#)

Performance Video

- [Grace, performed by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 2015](#)
- [Mother God Phrase 34:53-35:55](#)
- [Shakara Walk Phrase 48:30-48:51](#)
- [Stop Phrase 42:17-42:32](#)

The Music of Grace

- [Spotify Playlist: *Finding Grace Curriculum: The Music of Ronald K. Brown's Grace*](#)

["Come Sunday"](#), Composer: Duke Ellington.
Performed by: Jimmy McPhail

["Gabriel"](#), Performed by: Peven Everett and Roy Davis Jr.

["Bless It"](#), Composer: Paul Johnson

["Rock Shock"](#), Written and produced by Roy Davis, Jr.

["Shakara"](#), Composer: Fela (Anikulapo) Kuti

["Come Sunday"](#), Composer: Duke Ellington.
Performed by: Jennifer Holiday

DEL Resources

- [DEL Dance Framework](#)
- [DEL Dance Framework - Body](#)
- [DEL Dance Framework - Effort](#)
- [DEL Dance Framework - Space](#)
- [DEL Dance Framework - Relationship](#)
- [A Movement Sentence](#)
- [Action Words](#)
- [Exploration in DEL](#)

Other *Finding Grace* Resources

- [Definitions of Grace: Prompts for Student Reflections](#)
- [Key Words for Teaching the Mother God Phrase from Grace](#)

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Experience 1: Introduction

Experience Overview

In this Experience, students are introduced to Alvin Ailey, Ronald K. Brown, and the foundational vocabulary for *Finding Grace* warm-ups and repertory elements. Students begin their exploration of grace through the accessible concept of gratitude, noticing how gratitude can be expressed through gesture, movement, and intention. This Experience establishes the idea that gratitude and grace are connected, and that movement can help us understand both. Later Experiences will build on this introduction as students explore grace more deeply.

CASEL Framework:

Self-awareness, Social awareness

NCAS in Dance: Anchor standards 7, 8, 10

Blueprint Strands Addressed:

Developing Dance Literacy, Making Connections

Best Practices for Diverse Learners:

Click [HERE](#) for best practices

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners:

Click [HERE](#) for MLL supports

Materials

- Dance space: Open space for students to move freely
- Sound system and device to play music
- [The Music of Grace](#)
- Computer and large monitor to play web-based resources:
 - + [AILEY website](#)
 - + [A Portrait of Ailey](#)
 - + [EVIDENCE, A Dance Company website](#)
 - + [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Grace repertory page](#)
 - + [Grace trailer](#)
- Chart Paper and markers for baseline assessment
- [DEL Movement Sentence Chart](#)
- [DEL Dance Framework Chart](#)
- [Exploration in DEL Chart](#)

Experience Progression

Review GRACE Community Agreement:

- Give yourself positive feedback and allow for mistakes to be made and corrected.
- Respect other opinions, ways of moving, and interpretations.
- Accept yourself and your dancing today as where you are in your learning journey.
- Come with an open mind and be ready to learn.
- Explore, engage, enjoy!
- Any others?

G: Greeting and Affirmation Circle

- Begin with a group affirmation in a standing circle. Take 3 deep breaths and center yourself.
- Affirmation prompt: What is one thing you are grateful for today? Share gratitude around the circle using a word or gesture.
- In this Experience, we are exploring gratitude and how it connects to grace. Gratitude can help us notice what is meaningful to us, and grace can help us express that meaning through care, intention, and movement. In future Experiences, we will explore grace more deeply.
- Conduct a baseline assessment by charting student answers to the following:
 - + *What do you know about modern dance?*
 - + *What do you know about Alvin Ailey?*
 - + *What do you know about Ronald K. Brown?*
- Ask students to read [AILEY's Our Story page](#). An optional, in-depth documentary in eight chapters, [Portrait of Ailey](#), is also available to view.
 - + *Discuss: Alvin Ailey said, "Dance is for everybody. I believe that dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people." What do you think that means?*
 - + *Record student answers on chart paper as artifacts of learning.*
- Ask students to read [EVIDENCE, A Dance Company's mission statement](#).
 - + *What words stand out to you, and why? How did Ronald K. Brown get interested in dance?*
 - + *Record student answers on chart paper as artifacts of learning.*

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

- Visit the [Grace page](#) on the AILEY website and watch the [Grace trailer](#). Note the quality of movements in the trailer. Ask students:
 - What movements did you notice?
 - What gestures stood out? Can you describe that gesture? Re-create it with your body. What does it express to you? Does any one else interpret it differently, why?
 - What emotions or themes do you think the dance is expressing?
 - What do you think Ronald K. Brown hopes the audience will feel or understand?

R: Ready for Dancing

- Move into the general space and lead a simple warm-up that includes bending, stretching, twisting, reaching, balancing, swinging, and turning. These movements will be a part of the EVIDENCE warm-up sequences found in other Experiences. Your warm-up should introduce these concepts in a general format. Feel free to create your own warm-up that includes each of these movement concepts.

A: Active Exploration

- Return to the initial question in the greeting circle: What are you grateful for today?
- Ask each student to create a gesture that expresses their answer.
- After creating one gesture, ask students to create a second gesture about another thing they are grateful for. If time permits, repeat with a third gesture.
- Use the [DEL Guided Exploration](#) chart to scaffold exploration:
 - Can you try your gesture with a different body part?
 - Try your gestures on different levels (high, middle, or low).
 - Can you try your gestures with different tempos, some fast, some slow?
 - How else can you try your gestures?
- Gratitude can be expressed through movement. The way we shape our bodies, the energy we use, and the choices we make can help us show care, respect, and appreciation. These qualities connect to grace, which we will explore more deeply later.

C: Creating

- Dance-Making: Each student will create a gratitude [Movement Sentence](#) using the 2-3 gestures from their gratitude statements. Guide students to select a beginning and ending still shape.
- You may choose to have students write or draw their gratitude statements on a sentence strip or paper.
- Invite students to make choices on how to perform their Movement Sentences using the [DEL Dance Framework](#) vocabulary. Challenge your students to consider changing level, altering the timing or tempo, adding repetition, etc.

E: Ending Activities

- Students share their gratitude Movement Sentences either one at a time or in groups.
- Options for sharing include: adding music from Grace, or inviting students to verbalize what they are grateful for as they perform.
- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on the process, either verbally or in writing. What surprised you? What did you realize?
- Through our movement explorations today, what is one new thing you noticed or learned about the idea of grace?
- Consider: How did gratitude feel in your body? Where did you notice grace in your movement? In someone else's movement?
- Conclude with a gratitude circle. Go around the circle and invite each student to share one movement or word from their gratitude Movement Sentence



Members of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Ronald K. Brown's Grace. Photo by Danica Paulos.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Experience 2: What Is Grace?

In this Experience, students will explore the concepts of self-awareness, self-management, and self-acceptance. Students will learn a warm-up designed by Ronald K. Brown and EVIDENCE, learn the Mother God Phrase from Grace, and investigate the many meanings of the word grace.

CASEL Framework:

Self-awareness, Self-management

NCAS: Anchor standards 1, 2, 4

Blueprint Strands Addressed: Dance Making, Developing Dance Literacy, Making Connections

Best Practices for Diverse Learners:

Click [HERE](#) for best practices

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners:

Click [HERE](#) for MLL supports

Materials needed

- Dance space
- Sound system and device to play music
- [The Music of Grace](#)
- Computer and large monitor to play *Finding Grace* videos
- [Definitions of Grace: Prompts for Student Reflections](#)
- [Key Words for Teaching the Mother God Phrase](#)
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- *Finding Grace* Videos Referenced in this Experience
 - + [Warm-up #2: Hips, Shoulders and Chest Exercise](#)
[0:12-0:48](#) - Inside the Warm-Up: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown
 - [0:49-5:07](#) - Learn Warm-Up #2 with Arcell Cabuag
 - [5:08-7:52](#) - Now, Dance It with Music!
- + [Mother God Phrase](#)
[0:17-3:00](#) - Inside the Phrase: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag
- [3:01-4:55](#) - Learn the Phrase! Taught by Angelica Edwards with Cheryl Rowley-Gaskins and Arcell Cabuag
- [4:56-6:06](#) - Perform It with Music!

Find the Mother God Phrase in [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's performance of Grace](#) at 34:53-35:55

Experience Progression

Review GRACE Community Agreement:

- Give yourself positive feedback and allow for mistakes to be made and corrected.
- Respect other opinions, ways of moving, and interpretations.
- Accept yourself and your dancing today as where you are in your learning journey.
- Come with an open mind and be ready to learn.
- Explore, engage, enjoy!
- Any others?

G: Greeting and Affirmation Circle

- Begin with a group affirmation in a standing circle. Take 3 deep breaths and center yourself.
- Affirmation prompt: What is one thing you can do today that you could not do a year ago?
- Ask students to think of one challenging skill that they have mastered. Ask students to create a strong shape to represent that skill. Feel the groundedness, strength, support and alignment that makes you strong and unique. Look around at the strong shapes and feel the potential in this room!
- Explain that our bodies are all different and we each excel in different things. We should not compare ourselves with others. Give yourself grace to be YOU!

R: Ready for Dancing

- Warm-up: introduce the Hips, Shoulders and Chest Exercise warm-up. Adapt as needed for your student population.
- Today we are going to learn a warm-up created by Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag, that we will build on in each lesson.
- Use suggested music from the *Finding Grace* curriculum, or select music that has a steady beat and tempo that allows students to fully engage with the movements.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

A: Active Exploration

- Ask students: What does the word “grace” mean to you? What images, feelings, or words arise?
- Provide printer paper and markers. Instruct each student to take a piece of paper and markers/crayons, and draw or write what “grace” means to them.
- Find a partner. Share your words and images with your partner. Invite each partner to improvise movements in response to their partner’s share for 30 seconds. Switch roles.
- Create a gallery of student responses.
- Introduce the many definitions of the word grace. Refer to the [Definitions of Grace: Prompts for Student Reflections](#) resource. Invite an embodied response.

C: Creating

- Using the *Finding Grace* Mother God Phrase video, learn part of the Mother God phrase from the opening of *Grace*, exploring fluidity and initiation.
- Refer to Key Words for Teaching the Mother God phrase from *Grace* as you teach the phrase.
- Adapt the phrase material to suit your students abilities and content knowledge. Encourage students to each find their own way of interpreting the movements, and celebrate the many ways we can individually interpret the repertory. Explain that each dancer who has performed this solo brought their own lived experience, interpretation, and style to the role. No two dancers are alike!
- Ask students to select their favorite movement from the phrase (or sections of the phrase) that they have learned. Arrange students into groups of four. Invite each student to share their favorite movement from the phrase with their group. Ask groups to link the four movements together to create a Movement Sentence. Students write the [Movement Sentence](#) words on paper (for example: Walk, Tremble, Turn, Offer). Groups create a beginning still shape and an ending still shape and create transitions between each movement.

E: Ending Activities

Experiences end with sharing, reflecting, and gratitude

- Groups perform their Mother God Movement Sentence dances to “Come Sunday.” Depending on time and class size, each group can perform alone, or you can invite 2-3 groups to perform at the same time. Note how all dances share vocabulary and content but are different in design and interpretation.
- Watch [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater perform the Mother God section of Grace](#) (34:53-37:38).
- As you watch the phrase, notice which movements reflect the idea of grace, and how the Mother God dancer interpreted the movements with her own expression.
- Students return to their grace reflection papers from the beginning of this Experience. Finish with a one-minute improvisation inspired by their reflections.
- Thank the group and reflect. Sample reflection prompts:
 - What are ways you have shown grace with yourself or others today in class?
 - Acknowledge someone who has demonstrated grace in our class today.



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Ronald K. Brown's *Grace*.
Photo by Paul Kolnik.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Experience 3: Where Is Grace?

In this Experience, students explore how to move with spatial awareness and care in their shared dance space, in their environment, and within the repertory material from Grace. Students will review the Hips, Shoulders and Chest Warm-Up; review the Mother God phrase; and learn the Shakara Walk phrase. Students will consider what it means to move through space with grace, and how to take care of themselves and others in the spaces they inhabit.

CASEL Framework:

Social awareness, Relationship skills

NCAS: Anchor Standards 2, 5, 6

Blueprint Strands: Dance Making,
Working with Community and Cultural Resources

Best Practices for Diverse Learners:

Click [HERE](#) for best practices

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners:

Click [HERE](#) for MLL supports

Materials needed

- Dance space
- Sound system and device to play music
- [The Music of Grace](#)
- Computer and large monitor to play *Finding Grace* videos
- Chart paper and markers
- [DEL Dance Framework](#)
- [DEL Dance Framework - Space Chart](#)
- Chart paper with pathways, levels, and directions written
- *Finding Grace* Videos Referenced in this Experience:
 - + [Hips, Shoulders and Chest Exercise](#)
0:12-0:48 - Inside the Warm-Up: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown
 - 0:49-5:07* - Learn Warm-Up #2 with Arcell Cabuag
 - 5:08-7:52* - Now, Dance It with Music!

+ [Mother God Phrase](#)

0:17-3:00 - Inside the Phrase: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag

3:01-4:55 - Learn the Phrase! Taught by Angelica Edwards, with Cheryl Rowley-Gaskins and Arcell Cabuag

4:56-6:06 - Perform It with Music! Find the Mother God Phrase in [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's performance of Grace](#) at 34:53-35:55

+ [Shakara Walk Phrase](#)

0:19-1:56 - Inside the Phrase: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag

1:57-2:37 - Learn the Phrase! Taught by Cheryl Rowley-Gaskins with Angelica Edwards and Arcell Cabuag

2:38-3:08 - Perform It with Music!

Find the Shakara Walk Phrase in [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's performance of Grace](#) at 48:30-48:51

Experience Progression

Review GRACE Community Agreement:

- Give yourself positive feedback and allow for mistakes to be made and corrected.
- Respect other opinions, ways of moving, and interpretations.
- Accept yourself and your dancing today as where you are in your learning journey.
- Come with an open mind and be ready to learn.
- Explore, engage, enjoy!
- Any others?

G: Greeting and Affirmation Circle

- Begin with a group affirmation in a standing circle. Take 3 deep breaths and center yourself.
- Ask students the following affirmation prompt: How do you take care of our environment and the beings within it? Visualize and breathe into that idea.
- Today, we are going to focus on grace in relation to space. We will consider how we attend to space gracefully, and how we take care of ourselves and others in the spaces that we inhabit.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

R: Ready for Dancing

- Using the *Finding Grace* Video resource, review the Hips, Shoulders and Chest Warm-Up and build from prior experience. If you have already learned the entire warm-up, practice it. If you are adding on, include more material.
- Focusing on the concept of space in a warm-up can provide teachers with new teaching strategies. Have students face different sides of the room, changing their front. Students can also try changing the levels or directions of a movement in the warm-up to provide new perspectives within the dance space.
- How did changing your facing, levels or directions change your perspective on your environment and the people around you?

A: Active Exploration

- Guide students in a structured walking improvisation, including spatial cues and prompts using the [DEL Dance Framework](#): Walk through the space, traveling as if you are floating. How can you move quietly and smoothly, without sharp movements? Walk through the space while traveling backwards; sideways. Change your levels! Try walking on a high level, middle level, or low level. Change your pathway from a straight line to a curvy pathway, zig-zag, or a random pathway. What do you do when you come face-to-face with another dancer? Can you yield, shift, move around? Take care of the people and the environment around you. Move with awareness, avoid collisions, and share space gracefully. If there is a bump, share a smile and move on.

C: Creating

- Using the *Finding Grace* Video resource, review the Mother God phrase and have students perform the phrase in unison. Then, have students perform it with their own timing.
- Have half the class perform together with their own original timing, while the other half of the class observes. Switch groups.
 - + As a dancer: How does your use of space change when dancing with others in your own time?
 - + How do you negotiate personal space versus general space?

- + What choices do you make to move safely and gracefully in a shared space?
- + As an audience member: How does your perception of the space change when watching multiple dancers dancing with different timing?

- Character Inquiry: Mother God is the central figure in Grace. Based on the name alone, what qualities, roles or intentions do you imagine this character holds?
- Read aloud choreographer Ronald K. Brown's quote about this character: "The mother god comes down with angels...She rounds up people who are behaving as if they don't understand God's grace." (Kourlas 2024)
- Discussion prompts
 - + What do you think Ronald K. Brown is trying to communicate about Mother God through this quote?
 - + How do you imagine Mother God in Grace might take care of the people on earth?
 - + If you had a superpower, what would you do to take care of the people and world around you?
- Using the *Finding Grace* Video resource, teach the Shakara Walk Phrase from Grace.
- Alternatively, teach 4-5 movements from the Shakara Walk phrase and have students create their own order of the movements, making choices about sequence and repetition. This can be done in small groups, partners, or individually.

E: Ending Activities

- Full group discussion: How can we take care of the space we inhabit—our environment? Consider our dance space, our school, our home, our neighborhood, our city, our planet.
- Scribe student responses on chart paper.
- Inspired by this group discussion, invite students into a closing improvisation that embodies their responses.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Experience 4: When Is Grace?

In this Experience, students explore when grace appears in the choices they make and consider how they might respond to challenges with grace. Students investigate through movement how emotional regulation can extend grace; how grace in decision making can be shown through gestures; and how their movements and choices can embody grace. Students will learn the Plié Warm-Up Exercise and the Stop Phrase from Grace.

CASEL Framework: Relationship skills, Responsible decision-making

NCAS: Anchor Standards 1, 5, 10

Blueprint strands:
Dance Making, Making Connections

Best Practices for Diverse Learners:
Click [HERE](#) for best practices

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners:
Click [HERE](#) for MLL supports

Materials needed

- Dance space
- Sound system and device to play music
- [The Music of Grace](#)
- Computer and large monitor to play *Finding Grace* videos
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- *Finding Grace* Videos Referenced in this Experience:
 - + [Warm-up #1: Plié Exercise](#)
[0:12-0:53](#) - Inside the Warm-Up: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown
 - [0:54-4:06](#) - Learn Warm-Up #1 with Arcell Cabuag
 - [4:07-7:46](#) - Now, Dance It with Music!

+ [Stop Phrase](#)

[0:18-1:45](#) - Inside the Phrase: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag

[1:46-6:33](#) - Learn the Phrase! Taught by Arcell Cabuag with Angelica Edwards and Cheryl Rowley-Gaskins

[6:34-6:58](#) - Perform It with Music!

Find the Stop Phrase in [Alvin Ailey American Dance](#)

[Theater's performance of Grace](#) at 42:17-42:32

Watch the dancers in red, facing one another

Experience Progression

Review GRACE Community Agreement:

- Give yourself positive feedback and allow for mistakes to be made and corrected.
- Respect other opinions, ways of moving, and interpretations.
- Accept yourself and your dancing today as where you are in your learning journey.
- Come with an open mind and be ready to learn.
- Explore, engage, enjoy!
- Any others?

G: Greeting and Affirmation Circle

- Begin with a group affirmation in a standing circle: I have the power to extend grace to others and myself.
- Grace can be present when we make choices that support ourselves and others, and it can be missing when our choices do not reflect these intentions.
- How do we communicate with body language and gestures?
- How does your body respond when you are feeling trapped?
- Scribe student responses.

R: Ready for Dancing

- Today we are going to learn another warm-up created by Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag.
- Using the [Finding Grace Video resource](#), teach the Plié Warm-Up Exercise. Adapt as needed for your student population.
- Invite students to perform the Plié Warm-Up facing a partner, or divide the class in half and perform the Plié Warm-Up with groups facing each other.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

A: Active Exploration

- Watch [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's performance of Grace](#) from 41:35–42:50 (Note: The dancers in red facing one another perform the Stop Phrase from 42:17–42:32, which students will learn later in this Experience)
- After watching, ask students reflection questions to find connections between movement, choice-making, and emotional intention:
 - + *What stands out to you in the dancers' movements?*
 - + *What gestures do you notice?*
 - + *What feelings or attitudes do the dancers seem to express?*
 - + *How do their walks communicate different emotions or decisions?*
 - + *If you imagine the dancers facing a challenge, how do their movements show how they handle the challenge?*
- Scribe student responses.
 - + *Guide students through a walking exploration to explore emotional regulation as a way of extending grace.*
 - + *Now we will explore walking through the space. Walk like you are very tired, late, angry, sad. How do feelings change the quality of your walk?*
 - + *Discuss the difference between strong and light effort qualities. Explore walking strongly. Now, explore walking lightly. How do these two effort qualities feel in your body? How are they different?*
 - + *Our walk can show how our feelings affect our body. When we practice shifting from an angry walk to a calm walk, we are practicing how to regulate our emotions. This is one way to embody grace.*
- Guide students through an exploration of grace through gesture. Explain that gestures hold meaning, and that they are culturally relative. What means “come here” in one culture can mean “go away” in another.
 - + *Show a gesture that tells someone to leave you alone.*
 - + *Show a gesture that tells someone to be calm.*
 - + *Show a gesture that embodies grace.*



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Ronald K. Brown's Grace.
Photo by Danica Paulos.

C: Creating

- Using the [Finding Grace Video resource](#), teach the Stop Phrase from Grace.
- First, listen to Ron and Arcell describe the emotions and gestures from 0:18–1:45 in the video resource (“Inside the Phrase”).
- Teach the phrase or elements of the phrase depending on your students' capabilities.
- Have the class face each other and perform the phrase together, like a battle.
- Invite students to notice the expressive choices in the phrase:
 - + *How do you feel in your body when you dance this phrase?*
 - + *If you were making a story about this phrase, what would it mean?*
 - + *How does performing this facing someone change the intention?*

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Experience 5: How Is Grace?

In this Experience, students explore how grace can be expressed through movement dynamics and effort qualities, intention, and relationships with others. They investigate how qualities such as power, clarity, patience, and support can show grace in action. Students perform the Plié Warm-Up; Hips, Shoulders and Chest Warm-up; and review the Shakara Walk Phrase from Grace. Students will deepen their understanding of the movement, focusing on the concepts of constraint and freedom with bound flow and free flow movement qualities.

CASEL Framework: Relationship skills, Social awareness, Responsible decision-making

NCAS: Anchor Standards 2, 3, 5

Blueprint Strands:

Dance Making, Making Connections, Working with Community and Cultural Resources

Best Practices for Diverse Learners:

Click [HERE](#) for best practices

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners:

Click [HERE](#) for MLL supports

Materials

- Dance space
- Sound system and device to play music
- [The Music of Grace](#)
- Computer and large monitor to play *Finding Grace* videos
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- [DEL Dance Framework - Effort Chart](#)
- *Finding Grace* Videos Referenced in this Experience:

+ [Warm-up #1: Plié Exercise](#)

[0:12-0:53](#) - Inside the Warm-Up: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown

[0:54-4:06](#) - Learn Warm-Up #1 with Arcell Cabuag

[4:07-7:46](#) - Now, Dance It with Music!

+ [Warm-up #2: Hips, Shoulders and Chest Exercise](#)

[0:12-0:48](#) - Inside the Warm-Up: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown

[0:49-5:07](#) - Learn Warm-Up #2 with Arcell Cabuag

[5:08-7:52](#) - Now, Dance It with Music!

+ [Shakara Walk Phrase](#)

[0:19-1:56](#) - Inside the Phrase: Insights and Intentions with Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag

[1:57-2:37](#) - Learn the Phrase! Taught by Cheryl Rowley-Gaskins with Angelica Edwards and Arcell Cabuag

[2:38-3:08](#) - Perform it with Music!

Find the Shakara Walk Phrase in [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's performance of Grace](#) at 48:30-48:51

Experience Progression

Review GRACE Community Agreement

- Give yourself positive feedback and allow for mistakes to be made and corrected.
- Respect other opinions, ways of moving, and interpretations.
- Accept yourself and your dancing today as where you are in your learning journey.
- Come with an open mind and be ready to learn.
- Explore, engage, enjoy!
- Any others?

G: Greeting and Affirmation Circle

- Begin in a standing circle. Take three deep breaths and center yourself.
- Affirmation prompt: I move with power and peace. Have students say this prompt aloud as they create shapes that represent power and peace.
- Introduce the idea that movement dynamics can show how grace is expressed in our bodies. Discuss and demonstrate dynamic qualities, and bound and free flow. Refer to the [DEL Dance Framework - Effort](#) chart.
- Create a shape that shows being trapped. Now show a shape that feels free.
- How do these dynamics and shapes reflect emotions? How does each feel in your body?

R: Ready for Dancing

- Perform both warm-up phrases: the Plié Exercise and the Hips, Shoulders and Chest Exercise.
- Note the different effort qualities in the Plié Exercise versus the Hips, Shoulders and Chest Exercise.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

A: Active Exploration

- Using the [Finding Grace Video resource](#), review the Shakara Walk Phrase, or elements of the phrase depending on your students' capabilities.
- Watch the "Inside the Phrase" section (0:19-1:56) to understand the movement qualities of being bound and free, then dance along with the tutorial video of the Shakara Walk Phrase with your students (1:57 to end).
- Focus on the use of bound flow and free flow movements in the phrase. Bound flow movement is controlled and contained, using engaged muscles to create a sense of restraint. Free flow movement is continuous and easy to move through, difficult to stop, and moves with the feeling of a river.
- Consider how these qualities express ideas of constraint and freedom.
- Ask the following prompting questions:
 - + Where do you notice bound and free movement qualities in the phrase?
 - + What did Arcell Cabuag mention about being constrained then being free?
 - + How does moving with bound flow and free flow make you feel?
 - + What did you hear from Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag about people having an "edge," being "defensive," or showing "arrogance"?
 - + Do those qualities reflect grace, or something else?

C: Creating

- In preparation for partner dance-making that explores contrast and harmony, explain: Dynamics, flow and intention help dancers communicate meaning on their own, but they also impact how dancers relate to one another. In the next part of class, you will work with a partner to explore how contrasting or complementary dynamics and flow can create connection, tension, harmony, or contrast in a duet.
Ask students: How do we "listen" to each other when we dance together? What does it mean to sense a partner's movement without speaking? What happens when you don't communicate effectively?
- When improvising or creating with a partner, it is important to sense each other, respond nonverbally, support one another, match or contrast dynamics, and stay aware of each other's choices. These are all ways that dancers can express grace together.

- Students will now create short duets using movements from the three Grace phrases along with their own movement vocabulary, focusing on the dynamics and flow explored earlier in class. Each dancer creates an eight-count phrase that includes at least one bound movement and one free movement. You may draw from any of the Grace phrases or from your own movement ideas.
 - + After creating your phrase, teach it to your duet partner. Link your two phrases together and explore different ways to perform them. Try dancing in unison, or experiment with other possibilities to create something unique together.
- Encourage students to consider: Will your duet show constraint or freedom or both?
- Will your dynamics match or contrast one another?
- How does your intention help you relate to your partner?
- Teacher's Note: it will be important to have students remember their prior phrases and choreography because they will be utilized in later sessions.

E: Ending Activities

- Peer observation and feedback: Have the class observe each duet individually, or show several duets together.
- Guiding questions for observers: What emotions were expressed? What dynamics or flow did you see?
- How did the duets show constraint or freedom?
- What story did you see expressed in the duet?
- In what ways did the dancers relate to one another?
- Reflect on the collaborative dance-making process. How did grace show up in your cooperative dance-making process with your partner?
- Discuss how grace can be expressed through cooperation, compromise, and creating something together.
- End with a group prompt: Share one word or one movement that shows how grace felt in your duet today.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Experience 6: Why Is Grace?

In this Experience, students investigate why people create dances about their stories, and how personal challenges create inspiration for artistic expression. Using choreographic tools such as ABA form, theme and variation, and repetition, students build dances inspired by moments of forgiveness, strength, or personal transformation. Students learn that grace can be shared through storytelling and choreography, and that their stories matter.

CASEL Framework: Self-awareness, Self-management, Responsible decision-making

NCAS: Anchor Standards 1, 2, 3, 6, 10

Blueprint Strands: Dance Making, Making Connections, Developing Dance Literacy

Best Practices for Diverse Learners:
Click [HERE](#) for best practices

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners:
Click [HERE](#) for MLL supports

Materials needed

- Dance space
- Sound system and device to play music
- [The Music of Grace](#)
- Computer and large monitor to play *Finding Grace* videos
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- [DEL Dance Framework Relationship Chart](#)

Experience Progression

Review GRACE Community Agreement

- Give yourself positive feedback and allow for mistakes to be made and corrected.
- Respect other opinions, ways of moving, and interpretations.
- Accept yourself and your dancing today as where you are in your learning journey.
- Come with an open mind and be ready to learn.
- Explore, engage, enjoy!
- Any others?

G: Greeting and Affirmation Circle

- Begin in a circle with a breath and affirmation:
My story matters.
- Describe a moment of forgiveness, strength, or transformation. How might this experience become the seed for choreography?
- Take a piece of paper and a pen. Write about a time when you found strength in a difficult situation, experienced a personal transformation, or forgave someone for something they did.
- After writing, highlight a few words or phrases you wrote that are descriptive or that express action (verbs).

R: Ready for Dancing

- Using the [Finding Grace Video resources](#), review both warm-up phrases: the Plié Exercise and the Hips, Shoulders and Chest Exercise. Clarify any details for students, and invite them to perform it without you.

A: Active Exploration

- Using the *Finding Grace* Video resources, review all three phrases from Grace. Clarify details for students and identify student leaders.
- Introduce choreographic structures, including ABA, theme and variation, and repetition. Refer to the [DEL Dance Framework Relationship Chart](#) for specific ideas:
 - + *ABA form is like a sandwich: Phrase A is performed at both the beginning and the end, while Phrase B (which is distinctly different) appears in the middle. You may choose to add a small variation to the second A phrase; in that case, it becomes ABA' (read as "ABA Prime").*
 - + *Theme and variation begins with a short, basic phrase and develops alternative phrases that continue to reveal the essence of the original phrase. The theme is the core phrase. Variations build on this theme by altering certain elements, such as level, timing, direction, facing, or size. You can change which body part is featured or add ornamentation through turns, locomotion, or partnering.*
 - + *Repetition is simply repeating the same movement or phrase more than once. If there is a meaningful movement or phrase that the choreographer wants the audience to remember, it is helpful to repeat it—just like the chorus in a song.*

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

- Explore ABA: Invite students to perform the Mother God phrase, then the Stop phrase, and then return to the Mother God phrase.
 - + *Why would a choreographer use ABA in communicating a story?*
 - + *Where have you seen this form used in writing?*
- Explore theme and variation: Choose one phrase and invite students to create small variations by changing level, timing, direction, facing, or size.
 - + *Why might a choreographer use variations in communicating a story?*
 - + *What might using variation communicate about change or transformation?*
- Explore repetition: Students select a gesture or moment from one of the phrases and repeat it several times.
 - + *Why would a choreographer use repetition?*
 - + *What does it help communicate?*
 - + *How does repetition in a chorus of a song help reinforce the motif or message?*

C: Creating

- Students create short solo dances inspired by their grace writing prompt from the beginning of class. Now you will use movement and choreographic tools to share why your story matters!
- Return to your paper from the beginning of class, and create a short dance that expresses your own story. Student dances should:
 - + *Start and end in stillness*
 - + *Include at least three movements that express their own story*
 - + *Include one choreographic structure: ABA, theme and variation, or repetition*
 - + *Include a clear intention*
- Students may use: their own gestures, highlighted words from their writing, movements from the Grace phrases, and/or variations explored earlier in the Experience.

E: Ending Activities

- Share the dances with the class. Students may choose to speak and dance at the same time, suggest a mood for accompanying music, perform in groups or as solos, speak in their preferred language, or invite a peer to narrate the story they see as the dance unfolds. The possibilities are endless!
- Invite the audience to notice:
 - + *What story do you see?*
 - + *Where do you see grace expressed?*
 - + *What choreographic structure did the dancers use?*
 - + *How did repetition, variation, or returning to a theme deepen the meaning?*
 - + *Why do you think the dancer chose these movements?*
- Close with a reflection circle. Return to the writing prompt from the beginning of class. and ask: When you found strength in a difficult situation, experienced a personal transformation, or forgave someone, how did grace appear in that moment?
How did it appear in your dance today?
- Teacher's Note: it will be important to have students remember their prior phrases and choreography because they will be utilized in later sessions.

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Experience 7: Putting It Together

In this Experience, students will synthesize all material learned, shared, and created in this curriculum, including the warm-ups, Grace phrases, and student-generated work. This Experience focuses on reviewing, revising, and organizing students' work to be shared with others.

CASEL Framework:

Relationship skills, Self-management

NCAS: Anchor Standards 3, 5, 6

Blueprint Strands: Dance Making, Exploring Careers and Lifelong Learning

Best Practices for Diverse Learners:
Click [HERE](#) for best practices

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners:
Click [HERE](#) for MLL supports

Materials

- Dance space
- Sound system and device to play music
- [The Music of Grace](#)
- Chart papers with agenda and show order

Experience Progression

Review GRACE Community Agreement

- Give yourself positive feedback and allow for mistakes to be made and corrected.
- Respect other opinions, ways of moving, and interpretations.
- Accept yourself and your dancing today as where you are in your learning journey.
- Come with an open mind and be ready to learn.
- Explore, engage, enjoy!
- Any others?

Teacher's Note: This Experience is an opportunity to develop a sharing, showing, and/or performance that works best for the school. How will you share the story of Grace? How will you introduce this work to an audience? Consider how you will provide the audience with context, visual support, student voice, and "evidence" of learning.

G: Greeting and Affirmation Circle

- Begin in a circle and thank students for the hard work they have put into this process.
- Affirmation Prompt: We are artists. We are ready.
- Discuss the purpose of sharing our embodied knowledge of Grace with an audience. What aspects will we share? Why is it important? Assert that the students have done the work and should be proud to share their learning with others.

R: Ready for Dancing

- Have the dancers review the warm-ups.
- Set students' spots for the share.

A: Active Exploration

- Review the three Grace repertory phrases and student-generated choreography. If you completed this entire curriculum, you should have three Grace repertory phrases, duets from Experience 5, Grace solo movement phrases from Experience 6, and any other outcomes and artifacts from the *Finding Grace* curriculum that you would like to share.
- Teacher's Note: You may consider hanging artifacts on the walls, such as student drawings, poems, writings, and reflections.

C: Creating

- Create a show order and review it with your students. Ask students: How do transitions support the story? How does one section lead into the next? Invite students to contribute ideas for the order, flow, and transitions between sections.
- Consider groupings, patterns, and formations to create visual interest and emotional impact. Encourage students to help develop short scripts to introduce each section and speak about their experiences. Make notes of who will introduce each part.

E: Ending Activities

- Run-through the entire show order. Remind students about dynamics, spatial awareness, and intention.
- Reflect: How has your understanding of grace evolved? What have you learned about yourself as a dancer, collaborator, and choreographer?

THE CURRICULUM, CONT.

Experience 8: Share!

In this Experience, students will share their work from *Finding Grace* with others!

CASEL Framework: Self-awareness, Relationship skills, Social awareness

NCAS: Anchor Standards 5, 6, 10

Blueprint Strands: Dance Making, Working with Community, Lifelong Learning

Best Practices for Diverse Learners:
Click [HERE](#) for best practices

Supports for Multilingual Language Learners:
Click [HERE](#) for MLL supports

Materials needed

- Dance space
- Sound system and device to play music
- [The Music of Grace](#)
- Video monitor if you are showing videos
- Artwork, poems, writings, from students
- Photos from Grace to put on walls

Experience Progression

Review GRACE Community Agreement

- Give yourself positive feedback and allow for mistakes to be made and corrected
- Respect other opinions, ways of moving, and interpretations
- Accept yourself and your dancing today as where you are in your learning journey
- Come with an open mind and be ready to learn
- **Explore**, engage, enjoy!
- Any others?

Some ideas for how to share:

- Invite another class or age group to your classroom for an in-class sharing.
- Invite teachers, principals, and district administrators to a lecture demonstration.
- Create a workshop for other students and have your students lead the sections of the class.

- Have students prepare slide presentations to send home to families.
- Create a formal or semi-formal performance onstage with lighting and costumes inspired by Grace. Costumes can be as simple as white and red strips of fabric over clothes.
- Have students make a documentary about the curriculum and share with families and administrators.

Teacher's Note: The type of sharing will be determined by your own school environment and what works best for you.

G: Greeting and Affirmation Circle

- Begin with a final circle. Invite students to set intentions for the performance: What do I want to share with others?

R: Ready for Dancing

- Warm-up with the two set warm-ups from the *Finding Grace* curriculum.

A: Active Exploration

- Review show order and prepare slides, music, and costumes.

C: Creating

- Share the performance with invited guests. Emphasize process and growth.
- Record a video of the performance to watch afterwards with students. Consider sending videos to families, classroom teachers, administrators, and/or the Ailey Arts In Education team!

E: Ending Activities

- After the culmination of sharing, create a celebration circle. Invite each student to offer a word, phrase, or gesture that represents their learning journey with this curriculum.
- Option for keepsake activity: Write letters to future dancers or illustrate a memory from the process.
- Close with deep gratitude, breath, and joy.

Additional Curricular Materials



Alvin Ailey/American Dance Theater in Ronald K. Brown's Grace. Photo by Danica Paulos.

ADDITIONAL CURRICULAR MATERIALS

Written Warm-Up Sequences

Below, find the two warm-up sequences outlined step-by-step. Use these written guides alongside the corresponding videos to support teaching.

Warm Up #1: Plié Exercise

Section 1

- Start in a wide parallel, take a little bounce to relax.
- 8 counts: Circle the arms front-up-back, opening the chest and looking up to the arms. Plié and round the back, arms out front, hands facing up to the ceiling, pleading.
- 8 counts: Straighten the legs, reverse the arms, and open the chest. Keep the legs straight, look down, hover, curve the upper back arms round in front. Chest is soft.
- 8 counts: Look to the front, “push the clouds away,” open arms to second and down to sides.
- Repeat twice, for a total of three times.
- Shake it out.

Section 2

- Rotate to first position of the feet, arms in low fifth.
- 8 counts: Two demi pliés 1, 2; arms float to second 3, 4; rise, arms back down.
- 8 counts: Grand plié 1, 2, 3, 4; arms to second rise 5, 6, 7 arms back down to sides; arms up on 8 to high fifth.
- 8 counts: Parallel legs, open arms side and down. Contract and soften legs.
- 8 counts: Turn out to first position while down in contraction, round arms fifth low wide. Open arms to second and up to fifth high, straightening legs.
- 8 counts: Arms high fifth focus up front, reach right arm, left, right, left.
- 8 counts: Open the arms to second, down, lift through passing to fifth with relevé.
- 8 counts: high fifth focus up front, reach right arm, left right, left relevé.
- Repeat entire sequence in second position.

Warm Up #2: Hips, Shoulders and Chest Exercise

- Relax legs.
- 8 times: Circle arms back, then push front leaning RLRLRLRL.
- 8 times: Front kicks—flex, bent legs, arms meet at chest then open in opposition on the diagonal with right leg up, left arm high, arm low, let hands press/flick.
- 8 times: Side kicks—flex, bent legs, bounce, open leg to side. Hands holding a tissue box, move the box side to center in opposition to legs.
- 8 times: Back kicks—flex, bent legs, bounce, arms meet at chest then open on the diagonal as leg kicks to the back, let hands press/flick.
- 4 facing right, 4 facing left: Left leg down and rocking facing diagonal, legs parallel right leg front arms swing back/front while rocking forward/back on front foot.
- 8 counts: Rotate around on left leg, right leg pushing to rotate clockwise (backwards). Arms open to back, come to front, open to back come to front.
- 8 counts: Rotate around on right leg, left leg pushing to rotate counter-clockwise (backwards). Arms same.
- 8 counts: Rotate Big Circle—rotate around on left leg, right leg pushing to rotate clockwise (backwards). Arms circling backwards up and out (like beginning of warm-up).
- 8 counts: Rotate Big Circle—rotate around on right leg, left leg pushing to rotate counter-clockwise (backwards). Arms circling backwards up and out (like beginning of warm-up).
- 8 counts: Back it up—hold arms in front like you are riding a bicycle. Bent legs, arms directly in front extended with fists, pull back double with right leg and shoulder, repeat left, right, left moving back RRLLRRLL.
- 8 counts: Arms up overhead palms facing front slightly bent fingers outstretched, shuffle double step back RRLLRRLL.
- 3 counts of 8: Push and March—push palm of right hand forward and up while kicking right leg back in a hop on the left, march forward 3 steps. Repeat on the left side.

ADDITIONAL CURRICULAR MATERIALS, CONT.

Definitions of Grace: Prompts for Student Reflections

Find below seven definitions of the word “grace.” These definitions may be helpful when creating reflection prompts, homework, or creative writing exercises.

- Consider the following questions to ask your students:
 - + Which of these definitions resonates with you?
 - + How have you experienced grace in any of these contexts?
 - + Do you think people are born with grace or can grace be developed?
 - + Who do you know in your life that exhibits these qualities of grace? Write them a letter describing how they model grace.
 - + Create a personal plan to incorporate one aspect of grace into your life. How will you do this?

1. General Definition

- Elegance or beauty of movement: A smooth, refined, and effortless way of moving or behaving. For example, a dancer might move with grace.

2. Religious/Spiritual Context

- Divine favor or blessing: Grace refers to the unearned love, mercy, and favor to humans for salvation and spiritual guidance.
- A state of sanctification: Grace can refer to being in a state of favor with divine beings.

3. Social/Behavioral Context

- Politeness and courteousness: Grace can signify courteous goodwill and the ability to handle situations with tact and empathy.

- Mercy or forgiveness: Acting with grace may mean showing forgiveness or leniency, even when justified in being punitive or critical.

4. Dance and Art Context

- Aesthetic beauty and fluidity: In dance, grace represents controlled, flowing movements that convey elegance and effortlessness. Often connected with movements that have smooth transitions, or that have ease of movement and free flowing energy.

5. Time/Concession

- A period of reprieve or leniency: A “grace period” refers to extra time given to fulfill an obligation or avoid penalties. How do we give grace periods in grading and assignments when we also have our own deadlines?

6. Cultural Context

- Short prayer or blessing: A prayer said before or after a meal, asking for divine blessing or giving thanks. How many cultures do a type of prayer or blessing before eating? Do students have a tradition in their home before eating?

7. Personal Quality

- Self-possession and poise: The ability to maintain dignity and composure, especially in challenging situations. This is an excellent theme for teachers under stress, and also for students who are going through changes, challenges, anxiety, and fear. Students also might be applying for high schools or colleges and this can be helpful for auditions and job interviews.

Key Words for Teaching the Mother God Phrase from Grace

Ronald K. Brown used the following words to describe Mother God, the opening section of Grace. Some of these key words are concepts, while others describe movement.

Consider the following ways you might incorporate these words and concepts as students view the Mother God section:

1. List some of these words on chart paper before viewing and ask students talk to each other about what these words mean to them.

2. After viewing the first section of Grace, ask students to recall where they might have seen these moments in the dance.

Grace
Forgiveness
Angels
Acceptance
Love
Healing
Another chance
Divine connection
Hope
Mercy
Transformation
God as woman
Spirituality
Ancestors

Temptation
Honesty
Taking care of children
Praying
Compassion
Urgency
Please
Offer hand
Open your heart
Tremble
Watching
Keep eyes on children
Hand on heart

Additional Resources

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Christopher Taylor and Constance Stamatiou in *Ronald K. Brown's Grace*. Photo by Danica Paulos.



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"Arms slice, knees rise, and furious spins end with fingers pointed to the sky. Pelvis shifts change the body's shape. The dancing seems all whirl, plunge, and pounce. Yet the complexity lies in the patterns and isolated details of movement. [Ronald K.] Brown has given the Ailey dancers a new look and they are magnificent."

—Anna Kisselgoff, *The New York Times*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, CONT.

Glossary of Dance & Curriculum Terms (for Teacher Reference)

Affirmation Circle: A group activity used to begin and end class with intentional reflection, gratitude, or supportive statements, often spoken in a call-and-response format.

Anchor Standard (AS): Refers to the NCAS Dance Standards used to guide the structure and goals of dance learning.

Blueprint for the Arts: The NYC Public School framework guide for the arts, outlining five strands of learning, benchmarks at various grade levels, and curricular suggestions.

Canon: When dancers perform the same movement at different times, one after the other.

CASEL Framework: A model that defines five core competencies in Social Emotional Learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Choreographic Challenge: A creative task given to students to develop original movement, often with specific prompts or limitations.

Choreographic Intention: The purpose or message behind a dance or dance phrase; what the choreographer wants to communicate.

Dance Phrase: A short sequence of movement, like a sentence in dance; often repeated, taught, or manipulated in choreography. This curriculum introduces three phrases from Grace.

Dynamics: The quality of movement, including effort, energy, and timing; often described with terms like sharp, smooth, sustained, percussive, flowing, etc.

EVIDENCE, A Dance Company: Ronald K. Brown's professional company, whose repertory and philosophy are central to this curriculum.

Exploration: Exploration in 92NY Dance Education Laboratory is a core component of the DEL model of dance education. It centers guided inquiry and investigation to develop choreographic and dancemaking skills.

Gesture: A movement of the body or limbs that expresses an idea or emotion. Grace has numerous gestures that contain meaning.

Grounding: A somatic practice of centering the body and breath to create stability, awareness, and presence in movement.

Improvisation: Movement created spontaneously in the moment, which can be guided by imagery, emotion, or structure.

Movement Sentence: A movement sentence is a construct of the 92NY Dance Education Laboratory (DEL). Like a regular sentence, a movement sentence has a beginning, a middle and an end. It begins and ends in a still shape, and is a combination of two or more action words (verbs).

Reflection Circle/Gratitude Circle: A structured closing moment where students share something they've learned, noticed, or appreciated.

Repertory: A dance company's body of work; in this case, refers to Ronald K. Brown's choreography from the repertory piece Grace that is taught and explored in class.

Rotation: A type of movement or concept in dance that involves turning around an axis, either anatomically (e.g., shoulder joint) or spatially (e.g., rotating around the room).

Sabar: A West African dance and drum tradition referenced in Grace.

Self-Assessment: A process where students reflect on their progress, choices, and learning. This can be through journaling, conversation, and physical demonstration.

Spirituality in Dance: The connection between movement and deeper emotional, cultural, or spiritual meaning.

Unison: When dancers perform the same moves at the same time.

Warm-Up: A preparatory sequence of movement designed to increase blood flow, warm muscles, and prepare mind and body for dancing. Sets community norms and vocabulary that will be used later in class.

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Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Ronald K. Brown's *Grace*. Photo by Danica Paulos.

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“Arms slice, knees rise, and furious spins end with fingers pointed to the sky. Pelvis shifts change the body’s shape. The dancing seems all whirl, plunge, and pounce. Yet the complexity lies in the patterns and isolated details of movement. [Ronald K.] Brown has given the Ailey dancers a new look and they are magnificent.”

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