

News: Lessons Learned at the 2011 NYCAE Face to Face Conference

By Jenny Dalzell



In February, about 460 NYC-based arts-in-education program administrators and teaching artists attended the annual Face to Face conference, an initiative of the New York City Arts in Education Roundtable.

Among the workshops offered at the two-day conference was “Teaching a Choreographic Process.” It was led by Amanda Selwyn, artistic director of Notes in Motion Outreach Dance Theatre, an NYC outreach program that brings dance to students, elementary through high school. She shared a variety of activities to get kids dancing and creating movement. In one

activity that Selwyn calls “Magical Sculpture,” each student freezes in a different shape and one student dances freely. When touched, a frozen dancer also comes alive, initiating movement from the tapped body part. The two dance a duet for a moment before the tapped student settles into a new position. The activity focuses on stillness, movement initiation, isolations and partnering and can even lead to the development of more-formal duets. But Selwyn stresses that you can’t teach all of those concepts at once. “Take one activity and unpack it over the course of a residency,” she says. “Keep coming back to the same game structure, and each time you bring it in, you highlight different skill sets.” By manipulating the same activity over a period of time, students can really explore all the facets and gain a deeper understanding.

All workshops were geared to offer activities and ideas to bring back to attendees’ programs, no matter which artistic style they specialized in—visual art, theater, music or dance. Other highlights of the conference included the seminars “Marketing Yourself as a Teaching Artist,” “Moving through Literacy: Using Active and Imaginative Storytelling Strategies” and “Movement Activities to Fill Out the Emerging Teaching Artist’s Bag o’ Tricks.” For more info on NYC Arts in Education Roundtable, and for dates of the 2012 Face to Face conference, visit www.nycaieroundtable.org.

Photo: Karen Curlee offers exercises to add to teaching artists’ “bag o’ tricks.” (by Gabriel Gomez, courtesy of NYC Arts in Education Roundtable)