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### AFA Portfolio Paper 2: Active Learning Strategies

I use several active learning strategies in my classroom. I find this is easier in dance classes than traditional academic classes (like the COMM class I teach) because students are already up and moving around, out of their seats. So, the most obvious one I use on a daily basis is physical response and gestures. There are active learning strategies, too, however that I frequently use in classes. Below is a list of strategies I use and examples of what they look like in my classroom:

- I like to use **call and response** with almost any level of learners. I will clap or stomp a rhythm with my hands and feet, then the students repeat it back to me. This is a great way to pull the students back in, rather than shouting over them, if I have let them loose to work in small groups on a choreographic problem or assignment. It works from kindergarten to college.
- I also use **number response** to check comprehension quickly. I ask students to hold up their fingers with a number: one finger means "I'm confused and not understanding this; I need more information or practice to feel comfortable." Two fingers mean "I'm doing alright and I'm getting it; if we practice it together I can follow along and improve without feeling frustrated." Three fingers mean "I'm rocking this! I have it down and feel comfortable standing in the front to be a leader."
- I also use **teach your friend**. In this exercise, I will pair students who were in class the previous day with a student who was absent, and they have to teach the student who was absent a movement phrase we did. This way, the student who was absent learns the material and has a

chance to catch up, and the others review and recall movement because they have to talk about it and teach it to someone else. Obviously, I jump in if they are confused or if they are making mistakes, so that the information won't be taught incorrectly, but for the most part it makes students accountable while they are also fully engaged. (This is also a great time for me to mark the roll, while they are all engaged in review).

- One of my favorite active learning strategies is **apply the lesson**. I know that is not a very creative title, but it clearly identifies the strategy. I use this most with choreographic concepts. For example, if my lesson is on making shapes with positive and negative spaces, I might introduce the idea by writing the terms on the board and showing what they look like in visual art samples. Then I demonstrate what I mean with my body. Then I have all the students play a game using the concept (where one goes into the middle of a circle and makes a shape with a lot of positive space, then another student comes in and makes a shape in the first student's open negative spaces. Student #1 melts away and rejoins the circle while student #3 comes into #2's shape, etc). They have to be watching and paying attention, while also physically participating on their turns. After all of this scaffolding, it is time to "apply the lesson." The students break into groups of four or five, and they have five to ten minutes to make a choreographic study that they think reveals all of the major points of the lesson. Then we show each other and talk about the strengths of each study, as reflection. It is great because it requires 100% participation, engagement, and application.