

Dance Curriculum K-5

- In New Jersey, the dance standards fall under the Visual & Performing Arts (VPA) standards (not under Health/Physical Education). (NJ.gov)
- The dance standards are organized around the **artistic processes** (Create, Perform, Respond, Connect) and anchor standards (for work in dance). ([New Jersey Arts Standards](#))
- The “by the end of Grade 5” indicators give guidance on what students should have experienced and be able to do by then. ([Hainesport Schools](#))
- What you teach in each grade can scaffold toward those “by-Grade-5” objectives, gradually building complexity, independence, expressive ability, and critical thinking about dance.

Suggested Progression: K through Grade 5

Below is a scaffolded outline of what dance-related standards or processes you might address each year or in grade bands to build toward the end-of-Grade-5 expectations.

Grade / Band	Focus Dance Processes / Standards	Sample Skills / Activities	Notes / Progression
Kindergarten / Grade 1	<i>Explore (in Create), Perform (with guidance), Respond (basic), Connect (experience dance)</i>	— Move in response to music, rhythms, stimuli (e.g. images, sounds) — Explore basic locomotor (walk, run, jump, skip) & non-locomotor movements (bend, stretch, twist) — Use space (levels: low, middle, high), direction (forward, backward, sideways) — Simple group movement, mirroring, unison — Observe or watch simple dance and talk about what you saw (e.g. “What movement did you notice?”)	At this stage you are building movement vocabulary, body awareness, spatial awareness, and an openness to respond to stimuli. Keep tasks short, playful, and exploratory.

Grade 2 / Grade 3	<i>Create & Improvise more independently, Perform with more structure, Respond & Critique, Begin Connecting to contexts</i>	— Improvise short movement phrases in response to stimuli — Combine movement elements (tempo, dynamics, pathways) to solve a “movement problem” — Create simple choreographed phrases in small groups or pairs — Perform with awareness (focus, personal space, transitions) — Discuss or write about dance (what worked, what movement choices, what mood or feeling) — Begin to connect dance to stories, themes, or cultural contexts (e.g. a folk dance, or dance from a story)	Students should shift gradually from pure exploration to shaping their own movement, making choices, and being aware of expressive intent. You can scaffold more structure into improvisation and composition.
Grade 4 / Grade 5	<i>Refine Create / Choreograph, Perform with greater fluency, Deepen Respond and Connect</i>	— Develop original dances (solo, small group, or whole class) that communicate meaning or theme — Use more complex movement combinations, transitions, dynamic contrast, spatial design — Refine technique, transitions, continuity, and presentation — Respond / critique more formally (using criteria, discussing strengths & improvements) — Connect dance to cultural, historical, social, or cross-disciplinary themes (e.g. dance in different cultures, linking dance to poetry or science) — Possibly present a culminating performance or share work	By Grade 5, students should be able to show personal voice in their movement, make creative decisions, perform with coherence and expression, and analyze or discuss dance. These are aligned with the “by end of Grade 5” dance expectations in the NJ scope. (Hainesport Schools)

What the “By the End of Grade 5” NJ Dance Standards Expect

To make sure your progression aligns, here is a summary of what the NJ standards expect *by the end of Grade 5* (the end-of-band expectations) for Dance / movement. ([Hainesport Schools](#))

- **Create / Explore / Cr1:** Students explore and use stimulus materials (music, text, images, observed dance, and other sources) to generate movement ideas and choreographic content. ([New Jersey Arts Standards](#))
- **Create / Cr2:** Students manipulate the elements of dance (body, time, space, energy) to craft movement content (phrases, transitions, contrasts) that express intentions. ([New Jersey Arts Standards](#))
- **Perform / Pr4, Pr5, Pr6:** Students perform movement phrases and dances with technical clarity, transitions, spatial awareness, focus, energy, and expressive intent. ([New Jersey Arts Standards](#))
- **Respond / Re7, Re8, Re9:** Students evaluate dance works (their own and others) using criteria, interpret meaning, and discuss how movement communicates. ([New Jersey Arts Standards](#))
- **Connect / C10, C11:** Students relate dance to other disciplines, cultural and historical contexts, and personal experience. ([New Jersey Arts Standards](#))

By Grade 5, students should have had multiple opportunities in each of those processes so they can move fluidly among them.

Sample Yearly Mapping (K through 5)

Here's a possible mapping of what you might *prioritize that year* for dance in each grade, given limited time in a generalist's schedule:

- **Kindergarten:** Focus on *Explore / basic Perform*. Introduce moving to music, exploring body parts, spatial directions, mirroring, movement games, free improvisation to stimuli.
- **Grade 1:** Continue improvisation, but begin small structured sequences. Encourage students to pick tempo or dynamics. Watch dance videos and talk about what they see (Respond).
- **Grade 2:** Introduce short compositions in pairs/groups. Use more complex stimuli (images, poems) to inspire movement. Start informal critiques: "What movement do you like? Why?"

- **Grade 3:** Expand choreographic tasks (longer sequences, transitions), begin to require contrast in movement (fast/slow, high/low). Emphasize performance clarity (focus, spacing). Respond more with criteria (e.g. variety, dynamics, clarity).
- **Grade 4:** Students design multi-part dances, include transitions, linking phrases, possibly combine genres/styles. Peer critique using established criteria. Start cross-curricular connections (e.g. music, culture).
- **Grade 5:** Culminating choreography and performance projects. Students present original dances, revise based on feedback, discuss meaning, connect to contexts (historical, cultural). Ensure each student has experienced the full artistic process (Create, Perform, Respond, Connect).

K–5 Dance Scope & Sequence (NJ Arts Standards – PE Integration)

Grade	NJ Arts Standards Focus	Learning Targets	Movement / Skills	Sample Activities	Evidence of Learning
K	Create & Perform	- Students will explore different ways to move their bodies to a steady beat.- Students will follow and copy simple movement patterns.	Basic locomotor & non-locomotor (walk, hop, tiptoe, twist, reach, stretch). Awareness of personal space and levels.	– Freeze dance– Follow the leader– Movement to tempo (fast/slow)– Animal walks	Teacher observation, participation, ability to follow rhythm/pattern.
1	Perform & Respond	- Students will move with a partner or group to show rhythm and direction.- Students will identify and	Mirroring, unison, pathways (straight, curved), rhythm clapping.	– Mirroring games– Echo clapping and movement– Simple circle dances	Teacher checklists, verbal responses, movement accuracy.

describe
movements.

2	Create & Perform	- Students will combine movements to create short patterns.- Students will move in time to music and cues.	Simple sequences of steps, tempo control, spatial awareness in groups.	– Simple folk dances– Create a 4-step routine– Rhythm sticks / scarves	Observation of sequence accuracy, group performance.
3	Create, Perform, Respond	- Students will work with others to create a short dance phrase.- Students will describe how movements can express ideas.	Phrase building, tempo changes, direction changes, teamwork.	– Line dances– Simple choreography in pairs/groups– Tempo challenge	Peer feedback, teacher observation, reflection prompts.
4	Create, Perform, Connect	- Students will create and perform a short choreographed sequence that uses levels, directions, and dynamics.- Students will connect movement to a theme or story.	Phrase construction, transitions, expressive movement, timing.	– Cultural/folk dances– Choreograph 16-count routine– Connect dance to health theme (e.g., heart rate)	Performance rubric (effort, rhythm, teamwork), reflection discussion.

5	Create, Perform, Respond, Connect	- Students will collaborate to design, rehearse, and perform a short dance sequence.- Students will explain how dance can communicate an idea or feeling.	Choreographic intent, formations, coordination, performance readiness.	– Small group choreography projects– Hip hop/line/folk dance unit– End-of-unit performance	Rubric (coordination, expression, teamwork), peer/teacher feedback.
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How This Meets NJ Standards

This scope integrates the **four artistic processes** in a way that fits PE time:

- **Create** – students explore and build short movement sequences.
- **Perform** – students dance alone, with a partner, or in groups to music and rhythm.
- **Respond** – students reflect on movement choices (verbally or through action).
- **Connect** – students link movement to culture, story, or physical health.

 **By Grade 5**, students will meet the *end-of-band Dance expectations*:

- Create movement from stimuli
- Perform with control and expression
- Respond using basic vocabulary
- Connect dance to real-world contexts (culture, health, expression)

