

Teaching Philosophy:

Growing up in the inner city of Chicago, b-boying and the many influences of hip-hop culture sparked my interest to dance. At age ten, I watched guys at the park across the street from my grandparents' house defy gravity. Through trial and error, I learned my movement vocabulary: top rock, footwork, power moves, and memorized my postures. I eventually felt I was ready to enter the circle, a cypher created by the neighborhood kids. It was the summer of 1986 when I joined my first crew *The Waters Park Breakers*. I was ten years old and as a young kid, I had no idea that I was part of a movement and would have never imagined my career as a dance educator.

Hip-Hop's socially conscious message of overcoming life's obstacles in the hope of achieving a greater awareness and peace became a driving force throughout my life and work. I founded the company, *instruments of movement*, in 2001 and later *james morrow/ THE MOVEMENT* in 2010, as a conduit for a diverse group of dancers to explore our individual voices. I'm interested in creating powerful yet accessible mediums to communicate to multiple generations, multiple ethnicities, and to illuminate alternatives for an urban audience disenfranchised by the commodification of mainstream media and entertainment. Through educational outreach programs, residencies, and workshops, I focus on breaking down commonly known stereotypes and believed dance can explore these beliefs and help redefine them. I take this 30 year history into each classroom and attempt to find ways to articulate to my students the importance of the lived sustainable dance experience.

As a professor of dance my goal is to provide students with a supportive and challenging environment that is responsive to multiple learning styles, emphasizes learning through the arts, and integrates critical thinking throughout the curriculum. Coming from an urban dance background, I yearn to see the contemporary dance composition prevalent in concert dance integrated into the hip hop culture with which I am submerged. My body of work has become a fusion of modern, contemporary and urban dance styles. Because of this background I am able to expose and excite students to the "cool moves" taking place presently while showing their roots in traditional aesthetics, bridging both disciplines and generations.

I am interested in maintaining the artist's agency and empowering the individual student. I celebrate the over-all thrill of movement while teaching technique to strengthen the body and mind. Maintaining inclusion is important for all students but imperative for students just being introduced to dance for the first time. The classroom needs to be a safe, supportive environment where young artists can experiment with their individual voices through movement. I value a rigorous approach to the recognition of connections between one's own life and the larger society, a willingness to embrace paradox and ambiguity without rushing to conclusions and the ability to recognize multiple perspectives.

I continue to emphasize individual style, experimentation, risk-taking, interdisciplinary approaches, and the ability to draw from oneself the material for creating in the hopes of making new and essential connections. My goal by the end of a semester is for students to cultivate a healthy respect and awareness for the body's ability to communicate ideas. I structure my technique classes on one or two concepts at a time, gradually progressing in difficulty, timing, or musicality. I teach all levels of exposure to movement and feel everyone who is interested in dance should be given that opportunity to explore from within it. For beginning level classes I concentrate specifically on the joy of movement. Because my training comes from both an urban and contemporary background, I am able to build on a student's technique by blurring traditional and classical forms with urban and current aesthetics. The students become attracted to the "now" movement, while incorporating the necessity of contemporary technique. I focus on finding those connections within the movement throughout class. Technique class is more than a means to mold the body. It's a space to research and develop a practice in the hopes of transcending said technique. I want to give young artists the resources to explore, to act as a facilitator, improving not only their technique (making them powerful dancers), but also their ability to create and dance within work from multiple perspectives (making them critically thinking artists).

I work towards gaining the trust of the students through encouragement and positive reinforcement. I attempt to create an environment where individuals are not afraid to say what's on their mind, to speak their voice, to ask questions, to make mistakes, to respect each other, to create community in order for the class to learn from each other. I believe it is within these fields of interaction that teaching and learning happens, and is where our relationships form and grow. I search for methods and models of teaching and learning, regardless of subject matter that are grounded in interactive, creative, democratic, and call for or inspire imagination, responsibility, and agency.

I hold myself accountable and expect myself to uphold the same standards and expectations as my students. I continue to learn and work on my craft because I'm still learning. I'm dedicated to learning more about my art form as an educator and artist so that my teaching and art-work are both constantly evolving. I have passions for both teaching and creating and I have found a strong balance between the two. Both are extremely important to bring into the classroom and share with students. There is resilience in being an educator and dance maker. I still work on finding these connections and developing ways to articulate this to my students. Neither is an easy path to live but these career choices are both a necessity to my fulfillment. I have great passion for arts education and anything dance. I hope I have clearly demonstrated this passion and look forward to hearing back from the search committee.