



How are teachers thinking about disability and access now?

Episode 1 - December 2020

SPEAKERS

Jochelle Pereña, Alisa Rasera, Heather Stockton, Cindy Miner
Kapelke

Jochelle Pereña

Welcome to the dance inquiry podcast. I'm Jochelle Pereña, a dance teaching artist and Professional Learning Manager. And I'm joined by my co-host—

Heather Stockton

Heather Stockton, a dance teaching artist who teaches special ed and inclusion in Oakland Unified School District.

Jochelle Pereña

We're both with Luna Dance Institute, a dance education nonprofit in Berkeley, California, with a mission to bring creativity, community and equity to every child's life through the art of dance. The Dance Inquiry is a podcast featuring conversations between artist educators around what sparks curiosity, creativity and consciousness in their teaching.

Heather Stockton

In these inaugural episodes, we'll be focusing on access and disability issues in dance education. And this is our very first episode where we invite two of our colleagues, Alisa Rasera, and Cindy Miner Kapelke, who are fellow local leaders and advocating for access for children with special needs. Both are educators and dancers and both are alumni from Luna's Summer Institute.

Jochelle Pereña

Recently they co-facilitated a Luna Practitioner Exchange on Teaching Dance from a Distance: Special Ed and Inclusion, and it was from that conversation that the idea of this podcast was born.

Heather Stockton

Yeah, we wanted to give ourselves the opportunity to sink into a deeper conversation about what access and inclusion look like teaching dance during COVID.

Jochelle Pereña

What you're about to hear is a conversation that we had on December 4, 2020, with Alisa and Cindy. Let's all listen in and Heather and I will be back with some final thoughts.

Heather Stockton

Yeah, let's get into it.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

I am Cindy Miner Kapelke. My pronouns are she/her. I am an educational therapist in private practice in the Bay Area.

Alisa Rasera

My name is Alisa Rasera, and my pronouns are she/her. I am a dance teaching artist that wears a lot of different hats of what that means for me these days. And my interest is to keep bringing dance everywhere I can, and how do I identify myself within this art form these days? So it's more of a question. But just to give a little sense of where I'm coming from. I've been in the Bay Area since 1996, in the interest of being part of the dance community, and that's evolved in a million different ways in a lot of different directions. And I'm really grateful for all that richness and now have questions and choices about where to go from here and what to what to explore within my dance realm.

Heather Stockton

My name is Heather, my pronouns are she and they, and I have been a choreographer and dancer, dance teaching artist in the Bay Area for the last 10 years now. I am currently teaching on faculty with Luna Dance Institute, and I teach in partnership with Oakland Unified School District. All of my classes right now are virtual on Zoom.

Jochelle Pereña

Okay, friends, well, right now it is December 2020. And since March, the context of our teaching and learning has shifted dramatically, sometimes multiple times over. We've been teaching online asynchronously and synchronously on various platforms, with cameras on and off with kids at home, and pets in the background, with kids in learning pods. Sometimes there's spotty Internet, and very limited space. You've also been teaching in-person physically distanced, outside in groups and one-on-one. Along with our students and our communities, we as teachers have been dealing with some really big things with COVID, political and social divisiveness and unrest, natural disasters, racial inequities, and the physical, social, emotional impact of all of this. And the sense of uncertainty as we look to the future. Really, our teaching and learning environment has been turned on its head. The context for teaching and learning right now is really disabling for many, and I'm wondering how you are thinking about disability and access now. Have the definitions shifted or expanded?

Alisa Rasera

I think the definitions have shifted and are expanding and retreating all at once. I have been thinking a lot about, you know, what, what has changed as a dance teacher, you know, in thinking about access for all students in the way that we're doing it right now, which is without physical contact, without shared air without, you know, even eye contact in the same way, because there's a screen and God knows

how many miles in between. So taking this live art form, living art form and putting it into this different universe, I think could be working for some learners that, you know, rely on that kind of distance, even when we're live. And I think it is doing, you know, some injustice to those that really need to be physically sharing space, and having space to move in community, and having a container that they're being held in, that is safe, because they're familiar with it. And while there might be familiarity now, with what we do with our devices, I don't see how it can possibly hold the same value, given what we're trying to do as dance artists, for our students, all students with and without disabilities.

Heather Stockton

I, I totally agree with you, Alisa. I am noticing that the opportunities that feel fresh and new in the scope of a dance class is noticing the difference of engagement on a social-emotional level, particularly with students who, like you said, have difficulty connecting in a live space, in the physical space. So having the distance of the screen seems to be helping them in this way. But again, nothing can really capture the essence of what it's like to be in the same space dancing and breathing together and seeing each other from all angles, three dimensionally, hearing each other. And, yeah, it's I feel like it's been really interesting to kind of observe week to week, what's the smallest small changes of building a community in this way. And it's very different from being in a live physical space where you can all kind of like, come in with these expectations, and, you know, community agreements. On Zoom, there's different students each time showing up. And if they show up, that's great. We, you know, like you showed up, that's awesome. And also like, how can we build, continue to build this community and make it sustainable and move forward in the, in this context. It's, it's been pretty wild experience.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

I'm also adding on to your thoughts around that. I'm reflecting a lot on the all the invisible cues that we get by being each other's presence, and they're hard to even name. It's hard to even identify exactly what those are, but that allow us to, I think it's like you said, the three dimensions, the breath, how our breaths coordinate. There's so many cues that that get limited by the zoom or the technic, the technology experience. On the one hand, there's a loss there, but then always looking for the opportunity. And for me, I work one to one. So it allows, you know, fewer people that I'm trying to look at on a screen, there's just one person that I'm trying to connect with on the screen. But for those for whom being in an open environment may be where there's noise, or other people that they're sort of competing with for attention. For me, being in a in this kind of a contained environment, I wonder for them, how it allows them to maybe focus on some of the cues, or how it allows me to see what they may or may not be paying attention to you with sort of our nonverbal cues in the world. So I just try to draw that information in, in case there's something useful there. I know we started this by talking about sort of definitions of learning challenges. As an educational therapist, I think I always come through the lens of having a very broad definition that all of us are coming in with the things that we may or may not be conscious of that we do well or naturally, and the things that maybe require more effort or energy. And I have found on Zoom, that there's an invisible pull that's happening in terms of the amount of energy that I'm taking to try to move past the fact that I'm looking at a device. But there's a real human on the other side there, who has that, I have to kind of visualize and imagine the whole world around them and give extra benefit of the doubt in terms of what might be in their room or their space externally, or what might be going on for them internally, with all the forces in the world that could be pulling on them. So if there's something that's sort of holding them back around connection, connection,

or engagement, I, we just have to take these guesses on all those things, because we don't necessarily have the presence in person to overcome. For me, that is where getting into the body, embodied awareness around, that there may be these invisible things that we're holding. And so shaking it out and getting into movement actually has helped a lot of my students then come to center themselves for learning. I almost feel like that gives them a special relief. And I think that can be kind of universal, if we can access that with them. So it's so important this works.

Jochelle Pereña

Yeah, I want to talk about that more, Cindy. And I'm curious, yeah, just kind of to dig a little deeper into what you're saying about, like our own our own lenses coming in, and how it's so challenging to observe our students and to get the feedback that we, in the ways that we are used to. And I'm curious about some of those challenges and how you're finding different ways to be a responsive teacher right now—to figure out what the needs are of your students, and to respond to them. Because it's true, we can't, we aren't in the same room with them. We aren't like vibrationally feeling them, we don't even have our vision permitted to our periphery. We might be really tuning in, like right now I'm like, really listening for what I'm hearing through the voice. And I, like the front of my eyes are in pain, and looking at my screen, and really focusing and it takes, it takes a different kind of attentiveness. I think tending in and or tuning in. Yeah, so I'm curious about your perspective as a teacher and the things that are coming up, that are the big challenges for you to arrive in your better, a better place and your best teaching.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

For me, it's definitely when they're coming on the screen to try to stay very much in the present moment. They've had to transition into the screen, and I need to check in with them in terms of where they're at and see what they're willing to do or share. Or see if we can get ourselves on the same track. I talk a lot with my students about, okay, what, I was on this track, but it sounds like you're on that track. And so I'm always kind of trying to align to find some like, zing! place. And students showing up with things or things on their mind that they're, sometimes they come in, and it's almost like they're trying to hold control. And they're like, "Look, this is what's happening back here. Look, we did this with our decorations, or this is what's happening in my parents' house." And so I always try to leave space for that, rather than trying to shift them too quickly, but to get on their plane and space, before I move into asking anything of them. And whenever possible, I'm trying to key off of where can they go from here? Do we need to be in sort of a, do we need to do some things sort of mindful? Do we want to jump right into a task? Or do we need to move and release, or you know which level are they at so that I can match their level. So it's just really trying to pay attention to what they want to bring in. I had one student who started the other day with needing to spend like 10 minutes showing me his Lego pirate ship, and spending time talking with that about that. And then it's working with cueing off of that to then transition to the place we want to go. So for me, because I work with literacy, then we're able to bring in talking about some of the words that he's talking about and some of the sounds that those have and then doing playful narrative around that. So that's sort of a present moment connection thing for me. Alisa, were you gonna say something there?

Alisa Rasera

Yeah, but now I want to say something different! I really appreciate hearing that, that awareness that you're bringing to those moments, Cindy, because I know when all of a sudden those learners are appearing, I get a little freaked out of like, "Oh my god, here we are." And this can't be just like it's live. And every time I struggle with that, I'm like, "Oh, can I do this curriculum? Is it gonna work?" and yeah, some does, and some really doesn't. And, and part of that is just feeling the sadness and loss for myself, but I want to do it this way. And for them, you know, this is like one of their limited movement times during the day, most likely making an assumption there but, and creative moving at that. And yeah, I mean, that sharing piece of like, look at my dog, look at my bedroom, look at this, look at that, you know, or, you know, needing to share this, like their social time too.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

Yes, it is.

Alisa Rasera

The behavioral things that would come up live, whether it be because that, you know, that student, you know is working through a lot of stuff and that comes out in dance classrooms, you know, during the school day, and there's other adults in the room to help monitor that and hold that. And that becomes a really big focus. In this scenario, those things aren't happening, at least for me, or if they're happening, there's no addressing them, really, because you know, that that child might just kind of watch or step back, or you know, won't have that opportunity to be in that behavior that would not necessarily be as in you know, welcome live. So it's interesting, thinking about that. And I'm wondering who, you know, where those challenges are coming up? And how, how that is then maybe just being, you know, displaying beyond this moment I have with them? Where are they getting that space to be in that behavior? Or, huh, there's a little kitty! Or is that behavioral situation changing? And what will that look like, upon return? Will it be exacerbated and come back like at, you know, with a greater need? Or will it, was it really different? Those are questions—

Cindy Miner Kapelke

Upon return to school?

Alisa Rasera

Upon like, yes, live interaction with others. Because many of the students that I have worked with in different scenarios in special education, that I mean, that's so much of it is that social piece, and that how to be in this space, and, like, be physically in the space and cognitively in the space and emotionally in the space. And, you know, do all the things that are expected in school, of students, but also have creative play within that, and know that sometimes what that looks like, is chaotic. And that's okay.

Heather Stockton

I agree, Alisa, I'm thinking, right now, I'm thinking about how showing up on this Zoom class, and like really taking the time to notice every student or like, just say hi, or like, give them five minutes at the beginning of class so they could just like see each other. Because I think that in these enrichment classes is one of the only times they can see other kids from school, you know. And, you know, they

don't have that opportunity in recess any longer and I am intentionally leaving space and time for play in the beginning. And, and really my goals are, how can we continue to see each other and share our dancing with each other and move with each other and create. Yeah, it's less about the content and more about, yeah, just like really trying to make it as responsive to who is in the class every day. And yeah, like you said, Alisa, coming in with some kind of a plan. But I show up, and I really have to just pay attention to how each student is feeling that day and kind of go from there, and see what the mood calls for and make it playful and have fun, have fun. Like, for me the goal is for them to show up, right? And they show up and then where do we go from there? Okay, let's let's let's shake it out. Let's like get in our bodies. Let's dance together. Let's see each other. Let's play. A story that I wanted to share with you all is we were making a dance all together the other day and one of my students, who is usually very shy and keeps her screen off the whole time, and that's okay with me because she's doing what she needs to do. When it came time to show her dances, she purposely turned on her screen so she could show everybody her dance and then turned it back off. So she's finding an agency and like what can be seen in what she's sharing and still participating in that way. And those little moments are kind of what I'm building off of, like, okay, these are the moments that are thriving.

Alisa Rasera

A lot of success in that moment.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

Yeah. Yeah, the screen on, screen off power and agency it sort of gives them a sense of readiness for when they want to show themselves, which is empowering. But on a teacher side, we know how that can be hard when we're sort of maybe looking at nothingness or hearing anything back. And I'm trying to, I mean, I heard you all say so much. So I just wanted to pull, for me I just like to pull some of the messages, are how we're holding these sort of micro and macro goals. I mean, I don't know about you all with your teacher training. But I think it's common in teacher training that we come in with content and yes, standards and what we're going to deliver and what we want to do. We're planners, there's so much we want to share with our students, we know the time is short. So we have to hold that, at the same time as being ready to throw anything away, throw it all away. And I just remember learning that as an ed therapist, how that's a huge moment, is taking all those pressures out of the room to just focus on the beings before me. And to deliver what they need at that moment, not some other agenda that I'm attached to, or that came from some other worlds. It doesn't mean that that's not going to still come in, but it's all worthless if they're not ready to connect to it. So they have to be ready for the back and forth of that. You don't just get to dump it out there and know that it lands regardless of how they're feeling. And yet, at the same time, we may have a blank screen in front of us. And so we have to come forward with something that we're putting out there that we hope it's connecting, and we may or may not know that it is. I had a similar scenario this week with a student who had a screen off, microphone off and her—I'm lucky and that I get to be in touch with families, so I get a little bit of the background feedback from my parents or communities or caregivers. And that really helped me a lot too because I'll sometimes come off of a call or a meeting and be like, "Oh, wow, I've got to revisit this whole plan with this student. This is not working." And I get a text. And it's like, "That really helped her today. Thank you." And I'm like, "Oh, okay, good. Okay!" So then I can I calm down and myself and my own messages around what I'm thinking that I was supposed to get to, and know that just being present in the way that I was, with that being, sort of non-judgmental, bringing an openness, place for them to vent

or whatever is really valuable, and that that allowed her to emerge out of her room that day in a way that was different. And I was, of course, so gratified that it happened to be that I could get that message. You never know. And we kind of have to keep moving forward on the assumption that showing up and being present and doing like you're all mentioning the social piece, the compassion, the play, the joy, the movement, that there's going to be some nugget of something kind of some light in there, that gives them something and I so value, the social piece that we're giving, that they get this chance to see their peers, that's so important.

Alisa Rasera

I love hearing all the positives of what we collectively are seeing and experiencing as we're guiding students online. I am hearing that there's, you know, lots of nuggets to take back into live work. And I also am reflecting that a lot of that might have already been there, you know, like such as the, you know, looking at your lesson, all the plans, all the, you know, thinking and goals and values that, you know, we plan for, but we know that no matter what situation you get into, if it's not gelling and something else emerges, and it's gonna be really student-centered, child-centered, then that's gonna be more important. And so because we know that we're able to apply that now, even though it feels different, it's kind of the same thing, maybe. That's great. Yay. Success. I think we're also super lucky as dancers, movers artists, educators, because we know how to pivot.

Jochelle Pereña

That's right.

Alisa Rasera

Literally, we do we know how to just change direction. And while it isn't necessarily always super comfortable, we do it all the time. And many of our students with disabilities do it all the time. There's a flexibility muscle there that I think is not easy for every human. I'm not saying it's even easy for us, but we know how to access it. No pun intended.

Jochelle Pereña

Well, I'm wondering if there's anything you'd like to remember from this time as, obviously, as you think about going back to when we are teaching in-person, and some of these opportunities that have popped up. Are these practices, are there things that you want to remember to maybe bring back or try out in a different way, when we go back from online teaching, the opportunities that have arisen from this time, when we've had to pivot to look at things differently to stretch our creativity muscles?

Cindy Miner Kapelke

For me, I think about a translation of the sort of screen off mic off, go invisible for a minute, take things in, be in my own space, while I'm taking in all that's coming from outside of me. And then finding that opportunity to turn my screen and my mic on. Right, that notion, like Heather described that student when they're ready to come back, so that because I do think that somehow some kids learn that they can't be in it all the time, and then deliver, that they might need some space separate, to then be able to step in and deliver and know that they have, like you said, the agency of readiness and timing. When others need to be like, "Let's keep going, let me keep doing this, okay, now I can do it," you know. It's just everyone's got their own style of how they kind of move about in the world, whether it's a digital,

like an online technology world, or whether it's an in-person world. And so how do we make kind of little containers that are separate for different styles?

Alisa Rasera

I love that, Cindy, and I, you know, as you say that, I'm flashing back to pre-March 2020, where I would have loved to have, you know, whispered to my future self that that would be a nugget to apply that, hey, try it, you know, try it this way, because this student is not ready. And so there's a different path of getting there, I think that's it's really a thing to move forward with.

Heather Stockton

I love thinking about what are the pathways to learning for every student and that's so different. And, you know, I was telling this to a friend the other day, she asked me how, you know, how's it going, how's it going teaching dance online right now? And, and I just kind of very candidly was like, you know, what, I, I'm showing up for them, and I just based on like, sometimes I just straight out ask, like, "What do you want to learn? What do you want to do today?" And I think that's, that is maybe like, the most equitable piece of this time right now, is just like really asking the students like, "What do you need? Like, what do you want to learn? And how can I like, help make this happen?" And I think that going back into life teaching, you know, I'm, you know, I think, as teachers we all want and try to sense our students' needs. But I think that this is, this is something that I'm going to bring with me is like, "How are you feeling today? What do you want to do?" And using that, and using that information to really create a more equitable class based off of their needs for right now. Because every single day is so different. It's the first time we're living through a pandemic. Yeah.

Jochelle Pereña

Yeah, I'm hearing you really speaking up for children's voices and choices. And that because everyone's kind of learning environment is so different right now that they're in their homes, with whatever going on in the background, with whatever at you know, space, different things, obstacles in their way, we have to adapt and use our language, and consider what engagement looks like in many different ways. And I'm thinking about when we're all in the same shared space that there's a reminding ourselves of how we used our language to present choices and have those choices available to all learners. I'm thinking you know, like Cindy, you're saying that, and Alisa, and Heather, all of you were talking about the lights off and lights on, or the screen off and the screen on, and I think about like being behind stage or behind the curtain and prepping yourself and having like, does that mean we create spaces in our in our room where, in our dance space, where kids can kind of go behind the curtain and have their physical space? Or, like that's not always possible. Are there ways we can all practice? Like what does it mean to—Is it lowering our eyes? Is it like finding a pause in our movement where we give us a physical simple signal and let everyone know, like, I'm going in, and I'm doing my thing? And I'll emerge when I'm ready, just when I have something I want to share. And that we give them the opportunities to practice and signal to us about what they need, they may need, or, you know, give them giving, sharing vocal cues, and also physical cues.

Heather Stockton

Yeah.

Alisa Rasera

There is a beautiful authenticity that is emerging, I'm finding, with students that will, you know, grab a blanket like you said, and hide under it—and I didn't even give them directive! Or find they're finding the fabrics and materials to dance with. We weren't even doing a scarf dance! But I love that because I want to do that, I just don't want to be inequitable by saying, okay, go find a, you know, this or that, and then having that child not have that. I worry about that. But it's now, it's just kind of coming and kids are coming costumed. I mean, like, really, they're taking that agency to be where they're at, who they are. And it's comforting, because I think when you're in that, wearing those shoes, wearing that costume, whatever, you're more yourself.

Heather Stockton

Yeah.

Alisa Rasera

Maybe. I also just want to mention that, well, we kind of already did, about the access piece of what we're doing now versus being in real, real shared space. Um, I think, you know, we've named that there's access for, you know, students that might have a harder time being in group like, physically, that this might be more just doable for them. For others, that maybe have, you know, mobility challenges of being in the space or being in school, or getting from point A to point B, and how much work that is, there may be not having to go as far to hop on the screen and do a dance class. And also, you know, maybe not feeling the eyes so heavily on them. And I think there's some, something to be just mentioned about that piece of the, you know, we've talked about screen on/screen off, the hiding versus being seen, and the watching, the observing, how we observe each other in this space, versus when we're live.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

I knew myself as a learner that sort of auditory direction didn't connect for me as well. But by watching, I'd be like, "Oh, that's what they mean", and seeing someone do something. And having that opportunity, rather than sometimes I'd be like, "Wait, what did they just say? Wait, where are we going?" with, you know, some navigating and that was in live space. So to me, that's the type of thing where you're sort of observing, that's kind of screen off, in person moment. And then when you get to go, "Oh, now I see. I got this, my body wants to join in now", and so that you have this. So just that sort of, even that micro choice-making opportunity.

Alisa Rasera

Yeah, absolutely. And I've tried versions of this, but now I'm getting more ideas on how to make it work, actually using the screen up because when I say okay, you're gonna be audience and you're gonna dance, everyone's still dancing. And again, this is kindergarten, but you know, because they want to. They don't want to stop, there's still wiggling. And I, I'm like, you're not in trouble for doing that. Um, and the reflection is for all of us is show me a move that you saw someone do. What did you do? You know, just, like really getting back to that place of this is still, it's still teaching creative dance. It's got all the elements of, it's all there. It's just, has a different rhythm.

Heather Stockton

Yeah.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

I've been doing this structure with my sessions, and I think it's even helped me to have this kind of chunky container rather than, you know, feeling, it helped me to feel like, oh, these are my three touch points, and if I hit those, that was it. And I tell my students ahead. So I'm saying that we're going to do a review, a new, and a do. We're going to review something, we're going to talk about something new, and we're going to try to do something, and it just allowed this space. If the review extends the whole time because we need to, then I go, "Guess what? We stayed in review today. And that's okay. Oh, are you feeling ready for something new? Should we move on from review?" Then, then we have a shared language of these junctures and touch points, in terms of again, their readiness and how much I need to stay in one section, a review versus a new versus it's time to do something, we've been kind of working on an idea long enough. Now let's do it, do it. So that they feel it, and then I tell them at the end, "This is what we did for review. This is what we did that was new. And this is how you showed me that you could do. Nice job." So that they get to, we say it at the outset. I'm looking how it expands and contracts. They can tell me when they're ready for the next thing. And at the end, I get to tell them, here's what you just did. It's sort of just a little general structure that's helped me. So sometimes having that so that people have a sense of, "Oh, I know what section's coming next", or readiness or feeling of success that's really loose.

Alisa Rasera

I think I'm trying to remember how important ritual is right now as well, you know, the beginning and ending, and whatever happens in the middle, but, you know, just to be consistent there, because there's that need for, you know, expecting that you know, what's going to happen. I mean, I'm not holding up, like, what we're doing, I'm not, you know, doing all that I might do in the classroom, you know, it's more of like, okay, now we're gonna do this familiar thing. And then we're gonna do maybe some new things, some familiar, be created and all that. And then at the end, it's pretty familiar. You know, even if it's just like a high five, to this, to the camera, you know, imagine you're connecting to someone. But there's, I think those are some touch points too, right now that are helpful. They're helpful for me.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

Yeah, I thought of it when you mentioned the scarves, or the blankets that they were like, "Oh, it's time for Alisa, I better get a blanket because that's what she's going to do." The fact that they are retaining something that they're bringing in for you and you hadn't even asked, I think that's, I think that is so important. You're right.

Jochelle Pereña

Well, friends, do you have any final final thoughts you want to send out there?

Alisa Rasera

I just really appreciate this opportunity can continue these rich conversations that in another time, maybe we didn't have as much time for, or energy for, and, you know, to be able to connect with such wise people is, you know, it's golden. So thank you, thank you for making this happen, Jochelle. So thank you.

Jochelle Pereña

Thank you! Yeah, I love continuing to learn from all of you.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

Yeah, likewise, I just want to express appreciation and gratefulness for this community. Thanks for thinking of me. And I do appreciate Zoom for giving access to us coming together. And, and it's also just such a reminder, like to take care of ourselves and our community and our connection so that we can show up, sort of fully ready and connected and sort of inspired, at least on some level through taking care of each other. So thank you for that for offering that.

Alisa Rasera

Thank you, Cindy, for all that you're doing. It's, I love hearing that you're doing it because you know, we're not all as active as we want to be, doing all of the work we want to be doing. Because we can't right now. But this conversation is also a reminder that it doesn't just didn't go away, that it's still in us. You know, the passion, the work, that connectivity, I'm gonna cry! And I think, I know, as a dancer, and I imagine my dance colleagues can relate to this, that we go through those phases of identity. And you know, where do we belong within this career?

Heather Stockton

Yeah, yeah.

Cindy Miner Kapelke

For sure.

Alisa Rasera

So thanks for reminding me that I belong.

Heather Stockton

Wow, what a great way to end our talk!

Jochelle Pereña

Yeah, I know. Listening to this conversation again, I'm reminded of how much you and I have both learned from disability advocates, while we've been teaching at Luna. We've both organized and attended Luna's Dance and Disability Panels. We've been to workshops with Lighthouse for the Blind, autism researcher Pamela Wolfberg, and AXIS Dance Company. And you've been to the VSA Conference and have been teaching Special Ed and Inclusion dance classes at Grass Valley.

Heather Stockton

Yeah, I know my own sense of access has expanded. I look at space differently, seeing if bathroom doors can be opened and closed while someone is in a wheelchair, or if there's a working elevator. Or I think about my language when I'm teaching and how it can be inclusive to all bodies that are in the room and all abilities. Yeah.

Jochelle Pereña

You know, this conversation also reminded me that when it really comes down to teaching the kids in the room, you're teaching the kids in the room. So yeah, you really have to take the time to get to know the kids in the room. Teaching to children with disabilities, or teaching to all children really, teaching for access, teaching for inclusion—this is all just good pedagogy and good practice.

Heather Stockton

Yeah.

Jochelle Pereña

Yeah. And I mean, it requires the same skills in observing and listening to your students, it requires the same skills and cultural responsiveness and challenging your own biases and responding to student needs.

Heather Stockton

Yeah, yes. It's beyond the checklist of how the space is wheelchair accessible, which is important. Because inclusive teaching isn't just about checking things off a list to create access. It's not a separate add-on thing. It has to be integrated into how you're teaching. Really seeing about every class that you're teaching and how it can be accessible to every student body participant in the room.

Jochelle Pereña

Yeah, exactly has to be included to be inclusive.

Heather Stockton

Right, right. Well, Jochelle, we have more to talk about!

Jochelle Pereña

As always! Yeah, so stay tuned for future episodes when we'll chat with Special Ed and Inclusion teachers from Grass Valley Elementary.

Heather Stockton

Yes. Thank you for joining us and this dance inquiry!

Jochelle Pereña

Bye!

Heather Stockton

Bye!