



# Educational Materials



## *Extension Activities for Teachers, Students, and Families*

***How to Dance in Ohio*** is a “joyful and uplifting new musical” (*Time Out New York*) exploring the universal need to connect and the courage it takes to step out into the world. Based on a true story, this “feel-good milestone” (*The New York Times*) follows a group of young adults and their families navigating change and preparing for a spring formal dance— a rite of passage that breaks open their daily routines in Columbus, Ohio.



# Get to Know Your Amigos!

## Circle Up!

In *How to Dance in Ohio*, Dr. Amigo begins every session with a “Circle Up,” a chance for participants to share a bit about themselves or their day in order to form connections with one another.

During a scene in the show, Dr. Amigo utilizes a ball of yarn to help participants visualize this web of connection. With your students, form a circle around the room. Have students take turns stating their name and sharing something about themselves or their day before they “pass” to the next person.

Students could call on one another to share, or volunteer to take the next turn if they feel compelled to do so. You can choose to have students hold on to a piece of string to form a web of connection, or do this activity simply using words.

## Find Someone Who...

In the song, “So Much in Common,” Jessica sings about the interests that she and Tommy share. Use this next exercise to see what you and your classmates have in common - or to celebrate the unique ways in which you are different!

Using the template on the next page, or by creating your own grid, walk around the room and find someone who meets the criteria in each box. Once you have found someone, write their name in the corresponding space. See if you can get five in a row, just like in a game of BINGO! Bonus points if you are able to fill your entire page and get to know even more people!



# Find Someone Who...



<b>Listens to music</b>	<b>Has a driver's license</b>	<b>Enjoys the beach</b>	<b>Wants to visit Australia</b>	<b>Has written a story</b>
<b>Likes to dance</b>	<b>Likes to draw</b>	<b>Has ridden a bicycle</b>	<b>Has traveled to another country</b>	<b>Likes to sing</b>
<b>Has an older sibling</b>	<b>Has a cat</b>	<b>FREE SPACE</b>	<b>Plays an instrument</b>	<b>Favorite color is red</b>
<b>Likes watching movies</b>	<b>Plays a sport</b>	<b>Has a special talent</b>	<b>Likes to read</b>	<b>Has seen a Broadway show</b>
<b>Knows how to whistle</b>	<b>Plays video games</b>	<b>Likes dragons</b>	<b>Has a dog</b>	<b>Has a younger sibling</b>



# Pick My Brain

There are several ways you may have students engage in an activity like “Pick My Brain!”

In the show, Dr. Amigo has students write questions anonymously, then take turns picking one of the question cards off of a mannequin head to ask the group. We could also see this activity being useful as a review game or getting to know you exercise, where students have the opportunity to anonymously submit questions on topics they are unsure of, or provide prompts to further connect with their classmates.

Using the questions below from the ***How to Dance in Ohio*** Discussion Guide, consider placing students into small groups and having them take turns drawing question cards to facilitate conversation. You could also engage students in this activity by assigning each group one of the following questions to reflect on, then sharing responses out jigsaw style. Students could even work together to create a poster or take notes on their discussions to share with the rest of the class!

In **HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO**, the autistic characters participate in group sessions at Dr. Amigo’s center, in which they talk, share about themselves, set goals, and practice navigating social situations. Which of these activities are awkward, uncomfortable, or difficult for you? Which are easy or enjoyable? Did you relate to any of the characters as they worked at these activities? (Think about wanting to share last, being hesitant to dance in front of others, or loving to talk about dragons!)

School or formal dances are a common tradition in a lot of middle schools and high schools. Have you ever been to one? What was it like? If you have attended a dance before, did you feel like you were prepared for what would happen? If you’ve never attended, do you feel you know what to expect? How would knowing what might happen help you navigate the experience? How comfortable would you feel with being surprised?

Lots of the scenes in **HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO** illustrate moments when parents and children adjust to the child’s growing independence. Dr. Amigo sings, “We shelter our children because we care, but how long can childhood last?” Did any of the musical’s parent-child moments resonate with you? Which ones? Do (or did) you ever wish you had more independence from your parents? Do (or did) you ever wish you had less?

Throughout **HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO** we see characters negotiate the ups and downs of friendship. When have you had hard moments with your friends? Did you talk to someone about those moments? How did they get resolved?



Think about later in the production, when the newspaper article about Dr. Amigo and the dance comes out. The article says Dr. Amigo is being “poetic” when he calls the young people in his group “terminally human.” It also calls him “generous,” and refers to the autistic protagonists as “brave,” “differently abled,” and having “special needs.” Do you think the newspaper reporter understood Dr. Amigo’s message or the work he does with autistic people? What did the reporter get wrong? What did Dr. Amigo get wrong? Why is Remy upset by the article? Why do you think Remy says “the whole conversation needs a huge overhaul?”

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# Create a “Theme” Song

***How to Dance in Ohio*** dramatizes a familiar tradition for many young Americans: the formal dance.

For many, the high school “prom,” “formal,” or “homecoming” dance is hosted by a school or community group and is a **coming-of-age** ritual that marks a *transition from being a child to becoming an adult*.

In *How to Dance in Ohio*, we also see the musical’s protagonists (*main characters*) do other coming-of-age activities:

**Caroline** navigates her first relationship with a boyfriend.

**Mel** aspires to a promotion at work.

**Drew** applies to college.

**Tommy** tries for his driver’s license.

**Jessica** strives to become independent from her parents.

**Remy** shares their voice and creativity on a YouTube channel.

**Marideth** makes new friends.

Moments of growth like these can be challenging and overwhelming for everyone. But they can also be energizing, thrilling, comforting, and freeing.

If you had to write a play about your own **coming of age**, what moment(s) would you choose to highlight?

Use the the graphic organizer and the lines on the next few pages to plan and write your own “theme” song.

Get creative - singing your song once you’ve finished is highly encouraged!





# Brainstorming: My Theme Song

Big Event(s) in My Life	What I Did to Prepare	How I Felt
Who Was There	What I Learned	Who I Am Now

**Title:**



A series of 12 horizontal white lines spanning the width of the page, intended for musical notation.





# Guided Reading: *Interview with the Cast!*

## Teacher Directions:

Provide students with copies of the Playbill article, [Autism Isn't Something to Fear': How to Dance in Ohio Is Breaking Grounds in Autistic Representation.](#)

Together as a class, in small groups, or independently, have students read and annotate the article, keeping track of key details and the main idea.

Have students record their answers to the included discussion questions and writing prompts on paper, or use them to facilitate group discourse about the text.

## Common Core Standards:

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas
- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

## Discussion Questions & Writing Prompts:



- What is “remarkable” about How to Dance in Ohio on Broadway? How is this production unlike other shows throughout history?
- How did the lack of diverse representation of those on the autism spectrum previously impact actors in How to Dance in Ohio? How is the cast working to uplift other neurodivergent individuals in their roles?
- What message about autism does the cast hope audiences take away from How to Dance in Ohio?
- How did getting cast and/or playing the role of their characters in How to Dance in Ohio shift the actors’ experiences and understanding of their autistic identities?

# Key Vocabulary

## Ableism

Discrimination against people with disabilities. RespcetAbility, a disability advocacy non-profit defines it as, “the belief that people who have disabilities are somehow less human, less valuable, and less capable than others”

## Accessibility

Designing products and spaces to provide equal access for people with disabilities to engage, interact, and communicate.

## Autism / Autism Spectrum

The terms autism and autism spectrum are all used to describe a developmental disability that affects how a person learns, thinks, problem-solves, communicates, and interacts in social settings. As the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network notes, “There is no one way to be autistic. Some autistic people can speak, and some autistic people need to communicate in other ways. Some autistic people also have intellectual disabilities, and some autistic people don’t. Some autistic people need a lot of help in their day-to-day lives, and some autistic people only need a little help.” The “spectrum” part of the term ASD refers to this same idea: that each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges.

## Access Needs

Anything a person needs to communicate, learn, or take part in an activity.

## Disability

Any condition that can affect a person’s movement, thinking, learning, communication, seeing, hearing, social relationships, or other aspects of life.

## Sensory - Friendly

An event, environment, or activity that is intentionally designed to be less stimulating to the senses.



## Neurodiversity

The idea that brain differences are not deficits or disorders, but one of many kinds of variations among people. A **neurodivergent** person may have a medical condition, a learning difference/disability, mental illness, or a developmental disability like autism. A **neurotypical** person develops skills, like speaking, organizing, taking care of themselves, or making social connections at about the same time—and in about the same ways—as other people their age.

## Self - Advocacy

Being able to communicate one’s own needs and act in one’s own best interests. It can include building the confidence necessary to articulate access needs. It can also describe the use of tools that make learning, communicating, and participating in activities more accessible and meaningful. According to the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN), “Self-advocacy means taking control of our own lives.”



# Exploring Vocabulary

Using the Frayer Model templates below, define and describe words from *How to Dance in Ohio*.  
You can find even more vocabulary words in the glossary of our Discussion Guide!

Definition(s)	Facts / Characteristics
<div>Word: _____</div>	
Examples	Drawing

Definition(s)	Facts / Characteristics
<div>Word: _____</div>	
Examples	Non-Examples

# “Today Is” - Building Routines

A **routine** is a series of events followed in order (step by step).

In ***How to Dance in Ohio***, consistent daily routines are important to many of the characters. Getting ready for a special event, like the Amigo Spring Formal, however, can require changing your routine, which can bring about both surprises and challenges.

Consider **YOUR** daily routine. Use the template below to create a checklist that could help you “start the day right,” as Drew sings. You may even consider adding pictures or visual cues to guide you through each step. Teachers - consider adding a visual agenda to your classroom and reviewing each day’s schedule as part of your routine!

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A NEW MUSICAL BASED ON A TRUE STORY

[WWW.HOWTODANCEINOHIOMUSICAL.COM](http://WWW.HOWTODANCEINOHIOMUSICAL.COM)

**Lesson Plans and Classroom Activities**  
**created by Taylor Janney-Rovin**  
**in partnership with P3 Productions.**

*These Educational Materials have been adapted from the  
How to Dance in Ohio Discussion Guide,  
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