PEARSON NEW INTERNATIONAL EDITION

The Creative Arts: A Process Approach for Teachers and Children

Linda Edwards

Fifth Edition

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a regular classroom teacher who becomes actively involved in sensing your own feelings for creative movement:

> When children see adults working creatively, they understand this is something that people do in real life, something that gives enjoyment and satisfaction, and is not just a classroom exercise. In this way, children are able to move away from relying entirely on explanations and secondhand information, and have the chance to witness the behaviors and even the physical movements involved. (Dixon & Chalmers, 1990, pp. 16–17)

Again, it is important to remember that we are focusing on the process of movement, not on the product.

Following is a description of each term used in movement and dance.

Space This word refers to the manner in which we use an area for movement. This can be either a "personal space" that no one else can enter or a more expansive area of "general space," which is everywhere else. Children need to be aware that once they are in a space, whether standing or sitting, that space becomes occupied. In movement and dance the perception of space is viewed in relation to the body, the space of others, and the unoccupied place or general space.

You can help children define their personal space by asking them to extend their arms while turning around and around to make sure they cannot touch anyone else. You might tap their imaginative powers by asking them to pretend that they are moving inside a large bubble. Young children can carry their personal space with them as they move during locomotor activities. Leaping, jumping, skipping, and sliding are examples of locomotor activities that involve moving from one place to another.

Locomotor activities require a large, uncluttered space. You do not need a space as large as a gymnasium; a large, open area in your classroom or even outdoors is more than adequate. It is important to remember that your children need to hear you and your suggestions during movement activities. In a large, oversized room the children will have difficulty seeing and hearing you. If you find, however, that a large area is the only space available to you, you can easily solve the problem of the children not being able to hear you by using a percussion instrument (drum or tambourine) as a signal to children when it is necessary for them to stop and listen. Movement invites squeals of delight, laughter, and many other appropriate "child sounds." A signal can provide structure and predictability to music and movement experiences, both of which are important in establishing and maintaining a secure and trusting environment in which your children feel safe to explore the process.

Time Time is a quality of tempo or rhythm. A movement can be slow or fast (time) and a succession of muscular relaxations and rests (rhythm). The speed of movement can change from faster to slower. A child's sense of tempo can be facilitated by a simple percussion accompaniment that provides beats or a grouping of beats. In movement and dance, rhythm comes from two sources: either from music, wherein children hear rhythm as it is produced through sound, or from dance, wherein children create rhythm from their movements. Moreover, the tempo of a movement can be a series of rhythmic changes involving a total kinesthetic response by which a child organizes and interprets tempo and rhythm through both internal and external stimuli—that is, what they hear in the music and the spontaneous feelings and emotions they feel in their bodies.

Time for young children is not "keeping time" or "being in time" with the music. Rather, it is an opportunity for children to be involved in exploration and improvisation of the qualities of tempo and rhythm. Dimondstein (1971) cautions us not to ask children to "dance by the numbers." Allow children to respond in ways that they can control their bodies and broaden the scope of their rhythmic expression.

Force The concept of force is also important in movement and dance. Children experience light, heavy, sudden, or sustained qualities of movement that require varying degrees of muscular tension. As children explore different qualities of force, they can experience the difference between pushing and pulling and between heaviness and lightness. They become aware of balance and the transference of body weight. Most important, perhaps, is that through an exploration of force, children may begin to understand the idea of being "centered," or controlling their bodies from a place of balance from which energy is released and controlled.

The centering exercises provided in Chapter 3 will help children locate the place in their bodies where they feel most balanced. These centering activities can be extended here to help children realize how far they can lean or how they can move from a hop to a slide without losing their sense of balance. For example, sustained movements are expressed as smooth, easygoing flows of energy, such as lifting an imaginary heavy object. Swinging movements involve moving one part of the body around another, such as swinging our arms in a circle over our heads. Percussion movement requires a sudden, quick, sharp release of energy, as when we shake a hand or a leg or our whole selves. Percussion movement can be facilitated by using instruments that produce sounds by hitting or beating. Children can discover the amount of force they use when beating a drum or hitting a triangle.

Locomotor As the term might imply, locomotor is the quality of moving through space. Walking, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, leaping, sliding, and galloping are examples of locomotor movements. Nonlocomotor movements are stationary. Children move in ways that do not require them to move away from their area. Examples of nonlocomotor movement include stretching, bending, turning, twisting, swinging, and curling.

Throughout all of these expressive movement and dance encounters, children explore direction (straight, forward, backward, up, down), levels (high, low, or somewhere in between), relationships (above, below, over, under, through, around), and position of movement (horizontal, vertical, diagonal). Children also learn to organize the available space in relation to themselves and in relationship to objects and other individuals. As children experiment with and explore all of these different ways of creative movement, they are developing body control and confidence in the power and ability of their own bodies. Best of all, they are finding intrinsic pleasure in being the creator of movement and dance rather than imitating a prescribed "follow me and do as I do" approach.

Young children are beginners, and they are just beginning to make discoveries about the vast repertoire of expression that comes through movement and dance. There is plenty of time for them to take formal dance lessons in the next 20 or more years of formal schooling that lie ahead.

Interview a music specialist in a school near you to determine how often children in music classes are exposed to classical music. How does the music specialist introduce classical music to children? What kinds of classical music experiences are provided for the children? Bring your notes to class and report on your findings.

Selecting Songs, Fingerplays, and Instruments

Singing songs, moving to music, and transforming little fingers into birds, rabbits, or falling rain form the basis for many types of musical expression. Young children who have positive and pleasurable experiences with rhythm and movement will want to repeat these experiences. Young children sing spontaneously while they play. They make up nonsense chants and songs as they experiment with variations in rhythm, pitch, and volume.

For example, Jane listens as her teacher magically transforms his fingers into two little blackbirds, one named Jack and one named Jill. She attends to the story line and the actions of this fingerplay and begins to respond with a few words and finger movements of her own. When she moves to the outdoor classroom, she lifts her arms and flies around the play yard singing, "This is Jack and this is Jill!"

This four-year-old finds intrinsic pleasure in learning a new fingerplay, and the enthusiasm of her teacher and his seriousness about the process have transcended circle time. A simple fingerplay has become a part of this child's universal experience—in this case, that of flying around the play yard.

Singing with Young Children

Songs for toddlers should be short and easy to sing and should have a steady beat. Songs should also have a lot of repetition, as children will often remember the chorus of a song long before they learn all the words to the verse. When pitching songs for young children, be sure that the range is well within their vocal abilities. Try pitching songs in the range between middle C up to G, a fifth above. If you do not know where middle C is located on the piano keyboard, find someone in your class who can find middle C on a piano, or ask your professor to show you how to find a middle C chord on an autoharp. You can also find a piano and, beginning at the far left of the keyboard, count the white keys until you get to the 24th white key: this is middle C.

As children develop their singing voices, their range extends, sometimes by as much as an octave above and below middle C, and they can sing with a much wider vocal range. Remember that if your singing voice is not one that you are comfortable using or enjoy hearing, you can still introduce and sing songs with your children. Most people do not have beautifully trained singing voices, so if you do not have an image of strumming a guitar as you accompany yourself while singing to a group of children, you are most likely in the majority! Your children will always be more interested in the interchange and interaction than they are in your perfectly pitched, or unpitched, singing voice.

Young children enjoy a variety of songs and especially seem to like songs that have personal meaning, such as songs about their names, body parts, clothes, feelings, and special occasions such as birthdays. Songs about children's interests—home and family, things that happen at school, and animals and pets—are appealing. Songs about animals, in which children can imitate or make animal sounds, capture children's interest and encourage them to become involved in singing activities.

When you first introduce songs to young children, they will probably not sing every word or follow every phrase. If the song has repetition or a chorus, children will usually join in on the words or lines they hear most often. Do not be discouraged when

you first introduce a song and your children sing just a word or two or do not match your pitch or sing with your tune. By the time you have sung it several times, they will begin to pick up the lyrics and melody and will say, "Let's sing it again!" Develop a large repertoire of songs and chants available "in the moment." Teachers must constantly search for new songs and fingerplays, as they are an invaluable resource in the day-to-day happenings in the early childhood classroom.

Selecting Songs for Singing

Out of the hundreds of songs that you can introduce to children, several categories seem to be most often used in the early childhood classroom. Following are categories and examples of songs that you might consider learning before beginning your singing debut with young children. They also provide opportunities for enactive and iconic experiences as children begin to tap into their musical and bodily kinesthetic intelligence. You, however, are the only one who needs to know about the theoretical framework supporting the musical concepts at work. For your children, singing and moving must be a purely pleasurable experience and not a "teaching method" for activating budding young composers or maestros.

Old Traditional and Folk Songs Many traditional and folk songs come to us from all around the world, and most tell a story and convey a simple message that children can understand. Some favorites of mine include the following:

"Where Is Thumbkin?"
"This Old Man, He Played One"
"I'm a Little Teapot"
"Two Little Blackbirds"
"Miss Mary (Molly) Mack"

Nursery Rhymes The melodies of nursery rhymes are always favorites of young children. Because of their simple and catchy melodies, they are easy to sing and most appropriate for the young child.

"Mary Had a Little Lamb"
"Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"
"London Bridge"
"Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush"

Lullabies Lullabies are wonderful for quieting and calming children after active periods or before nap time. They are also useful when encouraging children to imagine that they are rocking a little bunny or a baby doll to sleep. I have spent many special moments singing lullabies to children and watching their sweet eyes close for some much-needed sleep.

"Hush, Little Baby"
"Rock-a-Bye Baby"
"Are You Sleeping?"
"Lullaby and Good Night"

Fingerplays and Action Songs

Fingerplays are, in a sense, a type of rhythmic improvisation. They have strong appeal to young children because there is usually repetition of melody, words, and phrases. There seems to be some magic in transforming a tiny finger into a "Thumbkin" or a rabbit, or in "shaking all about" during "The Hokey Pokey." In fingerplays and action songs, the words provide suggestions or directions on what, how, when, and where to move. In general, children enjoy the continuity of hearing and playing with the fingerplays and action songs from the beginning to the end. If the fingerplays are short (or led by a teacher) and action songs are simple and repetitive, children can learn the actions or movements after doing them a few times. With longer fingerplays and action songs, it is still important that children first hear the entire song. When children are familiar with the content, lyrics, and melody, you can always divide the song or fingerplay into smaller, more manageable parts. Echo chants and fingerplays, such as "Let's Go on a Bear Hunt," are easy for children to respond to because they are led by the teacher. The teacher chants a phrase and the children chant it back. Echo chants are popular among young children because they have to remember only one short line or simple phrase.

Fingerplays and other action songs can relate to curriculum development and can be used to enhance a young child's understanding of concepts. For example, the action chant "Let's Go on a Bear Hunt" reinforces the concepts of under, over, around, and through. At the same time, fingerplays and action songs that directly relate to the children can provide personal, concrete experiences that are relevant and meaningful to the young child. "Where Is Thumbkin?" is an all-time favorite of young children. Their fingers and arms are the center of attention and the stars of the play.

Children's abilities to learn the actions and words of fingerplay vary with age and experience.

Fingerplays and songs that encourage full body movement are also helpful when it comes to transition times. "Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Turn Around" can be used to redirect children's energies when they need help to calm down during transitions. The movement is fun, and children pick up cues from the words and move through transitions with ease and pleasure. The process is so much gentler to young children than ringing a bell or switching the lights off and on.

The traditional song "Come Follow Me in a Line, in a Line" is a delightful little tune that can also be used to assist children through transition periods. The teacher moves through a group of children while singing or chanting the verse in Pied Piper fashion and, one by one, touches the head of each child. As the children are touched, they join one hand and follow the teacher until they are all in a long, connected line. This is especially effective for moving children into a circle or to a different area of the classroom. This calm process of forming a line and moving to a repetitive song allows you and your children to gather together or form a circle without the confusion that this request often causes. Appendixes 2 and 3 include words and musical notations for these action songs and fingerplays, along with many others for you to use with young children.

We must not limit the use of fingerplays and action songs to very young children. Children's abilities to elaborate and expand their movements, actions, and singing abilities increase with age and experience. Three-year-olds may sing or chant short melodic songs informally as they move through an activity. These young children may not remember all the words or even understand the exact meaning of some words, but they often remember the feeling or affect they experienced during a song or fingerplay.

For the older child, fingerplays and songs offer great potential for learning new words, rhyming, and alliteration; developing language and verbal skills; and forming concepts. Teachers can also use songs and fingerplays to expand children's awareness of tempo, accent, rhythmic patterns, and intensity, all of which are part of the language and reading process.

Before using fingerplays and action songs with young children, you must learn and practice the words and movements until they are committed to memory. Fingerplays, especially, should involve a warm, intimate exchange between you and your children. This atmosphere can be lost if you have to read or refer to written notes during the play. You must be enthusiastic about sharing fingerplays and action songs with your children and be involved both with the play and with your children. Learn and practice a few fingerplays until you are totally familiar with the words and actions. Once you are comfortable with the words and actions, you can present them with the warmth, naturalness, and spontaneity needed to give them excitement and life.

Feel free to change or revise the basic forms to create your own versions or to accommodate the different age levels of your children. Approaching action songs and fingerplays from this perspective will allow you to use your own creative abilities and should limit the potential stereotyping of having all of your children doing the exact same thing at the same time. Your children should make their "Eensy Weensy Spider" move the way they want it to move and be encouraged to shake their "Hokey Pokey" in individual and different ways!