PERFORMING ARTS WORKSHOP

CREATIVE MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

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Performing Arts Workshop
Creative Movement Classroom Activities

Dance, perform, and create with your children – in your own classroom!

Included here are fun movement-based activities for you and your students to enjoy together. Performing Arts Workshop artists are professional actors, dancers, and musicians, but you don't have to be a pro to create art! These activities take place in three types of spaces – "Home", "Dance" and "Theater".

- In "Home" space, the child is stationary, either sitting or standing. Here he/she learns to focus, pay attention, and describe the world around them.
- In "Dance" space, the child is given a defined area to explore his/her movement selections as they respond to: 1) imagery 2) the rhythm, tempo and feeling of music, and 3) descriptive action words and phrases.
- "Theater" space is defined by a "watching area" where some students sit and observe, and a stage or performance area where other students show what they have learned.

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Before you begin…..

TIPS FOR ALL ACTIVITIES:

1. **Use of Language.** Use descriptive language that concisely describes the instructions for each activity. Be creative! Descriptions can be silly, and surprising – but must be very specific.
2. **Model activities and physical actions.** In the beginning, have your child follow along and imitate your actions. Eventually, when the child is familiar with the ritualized activity, have the child do it alone as you direct the action with words.
3. **Vary the dynamic of activities and physical actions**. Do them fast and slow, soft and flowing, sharp and percussive etc.
4. **Vary the energy and quality of your voice**. Play with pitch, volume, and qualities like suspenseful, excited, sleepy etc.
5. **Vary the tempo** of the movements and the use of your voice in calling out the next movement or when to freeze and hold very still.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS: Suggested Music for free-form dancing in Theatre Space. Music should be diverse, representing different cultures, tempos and rhythms. What music do you have at home? What can you add to this list?

Name of Tune	**Artist**
I Should Have Known Better	Beatles
Africa Unite	Bob Marley
I'm A Man Of Constant Sorrow	O Brother Where Art Thou
Variations on Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star K 265	Mozart
Vivir Lo Nuestro	India & Marc Anthony
Marmalade Sun	Adham Shaikh
La Valse D'Amelie	Yann Tiersen (Amelie Soundtrack)
Mupepe	Zap Mama
Popcorn	Little Red Caboose (Sally)
Pay and New Year Call	Wang Ai Kang (Arrangement)

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Let's get started!

"Home" Space
Create a safe, calm space on a rug or in a circle
Learning Goals: 1) Building focus and concentration through ritualized activities, and
2) Following movement and action sequences

- ACTIVITIES:
  1. **Magic Eye.** Each child has its own, very private and personal Magic Eye. It is located in the middle of his or her chest and it possesses special powers. Ask your child the color of his/her Magic Eye. Then have them shine their Magic Eyes in different parts of the room... and beyond before bringing them back to Home Space. Students can also be asked to shake, twist, or hide their Magic Eyes.

  2. **Fishing Exercise.** This exercise cultivates isolation of body parts, stretches, and muscle development. With children in a circle with their legs extended toward the center, guide them through a directed fantasy:

     - "Wave and wiggle your feet. They look like little fish. Look at them swimming.
     - Take a fishing pole with both hands and cast the fish line far out into the pond (the center of the circle. Their hands can stretch beyond their feet)
     - Pull them in. Grab the fish! (bring feet together to form a "butterfly" sitting position)
     - They're going swimming into the pond again! Go after them. (repeat the whole exercise a few times and then…)
     - Now let's eat them and see if they can swim around in our tummies (children undulate their stomach muscles to show how the fish are swimming. Comment on the different ways each student demonstrates how the fish swim)
     - Now give a big burp, and your tummy will be flat again."

- TOOLS:
  1. "Home Space" (a rug; a circle; a space in the classroom)

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"Dance" Space
Find an open space in your classroom or school where your child can move freely
Learning Goals: 1) Developing Motor Skills, and
2) Listening Skills & Imagination

- ACTIVITIES:
  1. **Imagination**. Students spread out in the space and are reminded to be aware of their neighbors when they move around the room. All students begin by acting like bears, but they must listen closely for your verbal cues to see what happens next. Tell your students: "The bears walk around the room, arms and legs stiff, and then…roll over on your backs (hit the drum if you have one). Look at that! You've turned into a lion! She's resting in the grass, waving her tail up in the air. Make one of your legs into a tail and wave it…and bring it down slowly…and now Ms. Lion is getting sleepy…so curl up…and shut your eyes…and we'll play Sleepyhead."

  2. **Sleepyhead.** "Pretend to be asleep. But when I come around and touch you, open your eyes—ssshh, not a sound…go tiptoe to where I point."
     - Direct them one by one into a circle around the last slumberer; lead them in a soft chant: "Sleepyhead, Sleepyhead, Wake up, Get out of bed."
     - Help Sleepyhead up. Sleepyhead leads the others in a line around the room, while they mime every movement Sleepyhead makes. Beat the drum to signal the end of the routine.

TOOLS: drum or tambourine to pace the movements. Also, music can be used for the Imagination and Sleepyhead exercises.

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"Theater" Space
Create a performance space in your classroom where your students can watch and perform
Learning Goals: 1) Understanding the audience/performer ritual, and 2) Performing a free-form dance before an audience

- ACTIVITIES:
  1. **Random Continuous Movement.** Have half of the class sit in the audience and half up on "stage." Tell students, "When the music begins, start moving and don't stop. Use any kind of motion that comes into your head. You don't have to use your whole body…you can use a part, change to the whole body…change to another part…or stay with just one part…just keep moving without pause."
     - Ask the audience: "Did it seem frantic, or were there some parts when it got quieter? Did any of the dancers relate to anyone else as if they were playing together?"
     - Repeat with the other half of the class.
     - Ask the audience: "Could you tell whether they were moving to the music?
     - Repeat the whole exercise without music.
     - Ask students: "How did it feel to dance in silence, compared to the music?"

TOOLS: Have them move to a range of music selections: classical, jazz, folk, pop. Keep the music simple, relatively few instruments, slow and soulful, fast and exciting, etc. Also select music that evokes images.

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More about the movement "spaces"…

HOME SPACE:

Home Space is the class assembly area where you will be learning the children's names through name games at the beginning of each class.

- It creates a small, intimate environment which feels secure and comforts the child; quiet things happen here.
- In it, the attention of children and teacher becomes concentrated, since everyone is close together.
- It is a place for communication, exchange of ideas. It can also be used for small isolation exercises.
- It is a quiet-down zone after big energy bursts in the **Dance Space;** a way to change the pace and kind of class activity.

Home Space is where the children are introduced to equipment and properties (drum, tape recorder, etc.).

DANCE SPACE:

The companion concept to **Home Space** is **Dance Space**. This is where gross motor, high energy activity takes place. Here, for the most part, each child is involved in its own creative statement, aware of the others only in terms of space and traffic patterns, although a few exercises do call for interrelating.

- The **Dance Space** is treated with friendly consideration, beginning, for the youngest children, with a ritual of greeting the room at the start of the class. These greetings start the process of learning respect for the place where they make beautiful shapes and movements.
- Later, in the **Theatre Mode**, the **Dance Space** will become the **Stage**.

THEATRE:

When we come to creative problems that involve both Players and Watchers, we will use the word **Theatre**. The **Dance Space** now becomes the **Stage**, the **Home Space** is now the **Audience**.

- As Players on stage, students experience the subjective process of art-making.
- As Watchers, in the audience, they learn to objectify, analyze, praise and encourage.

A note about **Theatre:** don't as a rule put the whole class on stage. Use the Stage mainly for smaller groups. There must be an Audience. That's the reason for the Theatre mode. The Watchers talk about what's been

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achieved and what hasn't. *Thus the next group up has a better chance to succeed*. The students gain from each other's creativity.

Just as the room-greeting ritual of the tiny tots lends an aura of special importance to the activities within the room, so the physical demarcation of the **Stage Space** and the special terminology of stage geography give weight to the activities that occur there. Assuming that you don't have an actual stage to work on, you must invent one. Walk along the imagined perimeter of a stage, placing shoes or other objects at the four corners. No one is allowed within these boundaries unless they are entering to perform. This is sacred territory.

SUMMARIZING THE SPACES

Home Space: for assembly, physical quiet, intimacy between students and teacher, previews of what's about to happen, concentration, small isolation exercises, quieting after excitement, departures and returns.

Dance Space: the greater part of the room, the area of action, of trials and efforts, chiefly in motor control and traveling movements: Usually the whole class but with personal inward concentration.

Theatre Space: for problem-solving. This is the first step towards communication in an art form.

Audience: for observation and analysis, encouragement, applause.

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More about arts learning and language…

THEATRE ARTS AND EARLY LANGUAGE INTEGRATION

Stage I: Playing with Sounds and Simple Movements
For 2 _ to 3 years of age, this stage emphasizes:
- playing with simple sounds
    1. single vowels and consonants
    2. repetitive syllables (ba-ba, ga-ga)
    3. syllable combinations (ba-da, ka-gi)
    4. breaking down words into sound-parts or phonics
- introducing movements
    5. shake, run, hop, jump, walk, crawl
- introducing body shapes
    6. twist, bend, stretch
- imagery and movement
    7. animal and insect movements
    8. animal and insect sounds and movement
- group interaction
    9. audience and performance ritual: show and watch

Stage II: Playing with Words and Movement—Labeling Play
For 3 to 4 years of age, this stage emphasizes:
- simple parts of speech
    1. identifying objects (nouns)
    2. identifying physical actions (verbs)
- complex parts of speech
    3. prepositions: in, out, on, off
    4. adjectives: big, little, hot, cold, low, high
    5. adverbs: fast, slow; here, there
    6. conjunctions: and, or, but
    7. articles: a, an; the
    8. pronouns: I, you, me, it, we; this, that
- spatial awareness
    9. relationships of shapes in space
- types of body shapes
    10. low, high, twisted, stretched, bent, small, large
- combining movements with sounds
    11. choosing movements for each sound or phonic of a word
- movement combinations with a Beginning-Middle-End structure (phrases)
    12. run/fall/crawl/jump/run

Stage III: Playing with Phrases, Sentences and Movement Combinations
For 3 _ to 4 years of age, this stage emphasizes:
- combining words into phrases and phrases into sentences
    1. Mary runs + to the wall
- substituting alternatives for the different parts of speech
    2. bill is in a twisted/low/blue shape
- expand modifiers into longer sentences
    3. the girl/the tall girl/the tall slender girl

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- substituting alternative phrase combinations
    4. the girl that ran by the boy
    5. the girl that touched the boy ran to the wall
- the order of difficulty for manipulating terms
    6. one-word substitutions and expansions
    7. multi-word substitutions and expansions
- making up more elaborate movement phrases with a Beginning/Middle/End
    8. low twisted shape/run/crawl/jump/swinging skip/fall/jump/high stretched shape
    9. use of tempo and contrast in movement phrases
- using past, present, future tenses

Stage IV: Improvisations—Telling a Story through Movement and Actions

For 4 to 5 years of age, this stage emphasizes:

- movement combinations and imagery—specific actions
    1. be a lion clawing an old tree
    2. be a dog stretching after a long nap
    3. be a snake coiling around the branch of a tree near a nest of birds
- movement and action sequence
    4. be a fox that stalks a mouse, captures it, carries it to its den and there eats it.
- involving children in conversation and discussions
- encouraging children to verbally describe their "acted out story"
- Cueing: word, sound and action cues
- Qualities of movement and imagery
    5. shake, swing, suspend, vibrate, percussive, continuous
    6. animals and qualities of movement
    7. animal actions and qualities of movement

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