

Introduction

Elementary music teachers often use dance and creative movement in the music classroom. Through the inclusion of movement, teachers can meaningfully build and reinforce coordination, music concepts such as pulse and musical phrase, and dance concepts that help children to express themselves more creatively.

Music and dance—or movements in dance's most basic form—are natural partners. Movement as a part of the music education pedagogy is a twentieth-century phenomenon beginning with the work of Dalcroze. However, it is more than a pedagogical tool; it is the basis for the development of physical coordination, expression, and musical literacy. Movement is an essential part of music education.



Dancing helps to emphasize the elements of music

[Enlarge](#)

Movement and rhythm are basic elements of nature and human activity: changing seasons, ebb and flow of tides, heartbeat, sleep

patterns, walking and running. The movement to rhythm and pulse plays an important facet in developing students' sense of coordination and body awareness. Young students are active and exhibit rhythmic movements from infancy. The physical response to music is an effective and satisfying way to teach the basic concepts of music.

Teaching Dance with Musical Concepts

Dance activities often help students distinguish between qualities, sharpen perception abilities, improve physical coordination, and introduce the following musical concepts:

- Loud and soft
- Fast and slow
- High and low pitch
- Sound and silence
- Pitch duration
- Basic elements (pulse, melody, harmony)
- Melodic and rhythmic patterns

For example, in guiding a student to respond physically to the pulse, the teacher can direct the students to use locomotor or non-locomotor movement. This kinesthetic reinforcement of beat helps make the concept of pulse more concrete and tangible. Patsch is an effective non-locomotor movement that any teacher can implement it in their classroom.

Rhythm

There are several preparatory activities to prepare students to move to a steady beat:

- Begin with body parts (tap head or shoulders) and non-locomotor activities
- Concentrate on a single bilateral motion (tap both hands on the head)
- Use language as the movement organizer (movement accompanied by descriptive rhythmic chant, "Tap, tap, tap your head")
- Begin first activities with students sitting while performing non-locomotor movements

After students have mastered many experiences with bilateral motions, they can experiment with moving to musical compositions that have a strong and steady beat. The teacher should follow the ability to move to a steady beat by instruction in more complex sequences of movement:

- Alternate motions with hands or feet
- Double alternate motions (with hands and feet)
- Combined double alternate motions (right hand to shoulder, left hand to shoulder; both hands to the waist; left toe tap; right toe tap; both hands clap)

Melody

Vocal warm-ups help to prepare students to focus on singing well.

Use of the hands and body can extend to show all types of melodic contour. Students can:

- Jump and skip as the notes move accordingly
- Move the hand up and down as the music moves

Teaching Dance with Musical Concepts (Continued)

Form

Forms—phrases, AB, ABA, rondo—can be illustrated kinesthetically. The teacher can help students decide on a different movement, activity, prop, or instrument for contrasting sections, keeping the same movement for the recurring section(s). Some suggested activities to depict form kinesthetically include:

- Using a variety of non-locomotor movements—bending-stretching, pushing-pulling, twisting-turning, swinging, bouncing, and shaking
- Using locomotor movements—running, walking, skipping, or sliding
- Creating a movement activity with props—scarves, streamers, hats
- Developing creative movements or dramas to tell the story or convey the mood(s) of the contrasting sections
- Playing instruments—accompanying with instruments of differing timbre

In songs, the phrase usually matches a line of text. Lower case letters describe the phrases. Phrases can be repeated, similar, or contrasting.

Expression

Dynamics (the loudness and softness of music), tempo (speed), and articulation are easy for elementary students to hear and identify. A physical response to music through movement helps to make the concept concrete and leads students towards a better understanding of the subtle nuances possible in the contrasts of these sub-concepts.

Before beginning a movement or dance activity, the teacher should examine the piece of music to determine which elements are the most useful for portraying imagery or conveying a sense of mood.

Classroom activities for the study of expression naturally combine with listening to music and kinesthetic activities.

The following are suggested activities that focus on instruction in dynamics. The students can:

- Develop movement portrayals of crescendo and decrescendo
- Conduct patterns and gestures to follow dynamic changes
- Find objects in the room that would make soft sounds and loud sounds

To study the concept of music becoming gradually softer or louder, students can clap the beat or step to the beat, responding to the increase and decrease in volume with their movements. This musical selection can be coordinated with Gene Baer's story *Thump, Thump, Rat-a-Tat-Tat* (Harper Trophy, 1989), a picture story about an approaching band. The students can join in on the repeated lines of *Thump, Thump, Rat-a-Tat-Tat* using the appropriate vocal dynamics.

The sudden dynamic contrast supplied by the loud chord in Haydn's *Surprise Symphony* is a favorite listening experience for elementary music classes. What movements would be evocative or expressive of these dynamic changes?



[Franz Joseph Haydn - Surprise Symphony](#)

Learning activities for articulation include having the student:

- Imitate animals that move in smooth or in disconnected manners
- Select movements or activities that portray a smooth, connected manner or movements, or activities that portray a disconnected manner

Students can listen and move to musical compositions that are performed in connected (legato) or disconnected (staccato) style. For example, selections with contrasting articulation can be played: "Barcarolle" from *Tales of Hoffman* by Jacques Offenbach (legato).

Other music that can be used for the teaching of articulation markings includes the following:

- Grieg, "March of the Dwarfs" (disconnected)
- Grofé, "Sunrise" from *Grand Canyon Suite* (connected)
- Prokofiev, *March* (disconnected)
- Saint-Saëns, *Dance Macabre* (connected and disconnected)
- Saint-Saëns, "Kangaroos" from *Carnival of the Animals* (connected and disconnected)
- Saint-Saëns, "The Swan" from *Carnival of the Animals* (connected)
- Tchaikovsky, "Dance of the Toy Flutes" from *Nutcracker Suite* (disconnected)

Action Songs and Games



Play party games are often tied to music

[Enlarge](#)

Many children’s songs are oriented toward movements and games. They are natural choices for all types of introductory movement instruction. Action songs are songs whose words indicate movement or rhythmic gestures. Action songs are often referred to as play party games.

While kindergarten or first-grade students sing “Suogan,” a Welsh lullaby, they could cradle an imaginary baby in their arms and rock back and forth to put the baby to sleep.

Suogan

Musical notation for the song "Suogan". It consists of two staves of music in 2/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is simple and consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Su - o - gan, do not weep, Su - o - gan, go to sleep,
Su - o - gan, Moth - er's near, Su - o - gan, have no fear.

Suogan

Enlarge

Or while singing "Teddy Bear," students could act out the words of the text.

Teddy Bear

Musical notation for the song "Teddy Bear". It consists of two staves of music in 2/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is simple and consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Ted - dy bear, ted - dy bear, turn a - round, _____
tie your shoe, _____
go up stairs, _____
turn out the light, _____
Ted - dy bear, ted - dy bear, touch the ground, _____
that say will do, _____
say your good prayers, _____
say good night, _____

Teddy Bear

Enlarge

An action song to which students would perform non-locomotor movements to a steady beat would be "Johnny Works with One Hammer."

Johnny Works with One Hammer

John - ny works with one ham - mer, one ham - mer, one ham - mer.
 two ham - mers, two ham - mers, two ham - mers.
 three ham - mers, three ham - mers, three ham - mers.
 four ham - mers, four ham - mers, four ham - mers.
 five ham - mers, five ham - mers, five ham - mers.

5
 John - ny works with one ham - mer, then he works with two.
 two ham - mers, then he works with three.
 three ham - mers, then he works with four.
 four ham - mers, then he works with five.
 five ham - mers, then he goes to sleep.

Johnny Works with One Hammer

Action Songs and Games (Continued)

To perform singing games, students make a circle or line or choose partners; then students perform a movement that matches the pulse or melodic rhythm of the song. "Ring around the Rosy" is an example of this type of singing game.

Ring around the Rosy

Ring a - round the Ro - sy, pock - et full of po - sies,
 Ash - es, Ash - es, we all fall down.

Students hold hands while walking in a circle. At "ashes, ashes," they clap their hands twice. On "down," they all jump down. The last one to go down must sit in the middle.

Ring Around the Rosy

 **Enlarge**

Other singing games are counting songs or clapping songs. An example of a clapping song is "Head-Shoulders." The verses have the following movements:

- Face a partner
- Tap your own body parts with both hands when named in the verse
- On "one," clap the partner's right hand with your right hands
- Clap your hands together on the rest
- Clap partner's left hand with your left hand on "two"
- Clap their hands together on the rest
- Clap partner's right hand with your right hand on "three"

Head-Shoulders, Baby

Head - shoul - ders, Ba - by, one, two, three; Head - shoul - ders, Ba - by,
 one, two, three; Head - shoul - ders, head - shoul - ders, Head - shoul - ders, Bab - y,
 one, two, three. *Coda* I ain't been to 'Fris - co, And I
 ain't been to school, I ain't been to col - lege, but I ain't no fool. To the
 front, to the back, To the front, to the back, to the si - si - side._____

2. Shoulders-chest, Baby, one, two, three; Shoulders-chest, Baby, one, two three;
Shoulders-chest, shoulders-chest, Shoulders-chest, Baby, one, two, three.
3. Chest-knees, Baby, one, two, three; Chest-knees, Baby, one, two, three;
Chest-knees, chest-knees, Chest-knees, Baby, one, two, three.
4. Knees-ankles, Baby, one, two, three; Knees-ankles, Baby, one, two, three;
Knees-ankles, knees-ankles, Knees-ankles, Baby, one, two, three.
5. Ankles-knees, Baby, one, two, three; Ankles-knees, Baby, one, two, three;
Ankles-knees, ankles-knees, Ankles-knees, Baby, one, two, three.
6. Knees-chest, Baby, one, two, three; Knees-chest, Baby, one, two, three;
Knees-chest, knees-chest, Knees-chest, Baby, one, two, three.
7. Chest-shoulders, Baby, one, two, three; Chest-shoulders, Baby, one, two, three;
Chest-shoulders, chest-shoulders, Chest-shoulders, Baby, one, two, three.
8. Shoulders-head, Baby, one, two, three; Shoulders-head, Baby, one, two, three;
Shoulders-head, shoulders-head, Shoulders-head, Baby, one, two, three.
9. That's all, Baby, one, two, three, That's all, Baby, one, two, three;
That's all, that's all. That's all, Baby, one, two, three. Coda (following verse 9)

Head-Shoulders

Enlarge

During the Coda, for the first four measures, students can create their own movements. On "to the front," students put their hands on hips, elbows out. They jump on both feet in the direction of the words. In some versions of

this song, the last four measures of the Coda are chanted. One version of this song is above.

Formal Dance Activities

Formal dance is the purposeful, choreographed, and rehearsed movement to music. In the elementary classroom, folk dance is the most common variety of formal dance. Through folk dance, the lesson can expand to include music, movement, and, if the opportunity presents itself, the music of diverse cultures.



Formal dance is appropriate for students of all ages

[↗ Enlarge](#)

Formal dance requires the basic student skill of keeping time with the music. Despite the fact that many elementary students in kindergarten through second or third grade will not have the coordination required to perfect structured steps and formations, the practice of folk dance steps and patterns will provide students with an opportunity to develop their sense of rhythm and time.

The dances traditionally associated with North American folk music are circle, line, and square dances. For circle dances, dancers are in one large circle or two concentric circles. Couples face each other in two parallel lines for the line dances. Square dances involve four couples positioned in a square. All three dances involve a caller who "calls out" the steps and actions for the dances.



American square dance requires many skills

Circle and line dances, such as the “Old Brass Wagon” and the “Virginia Reel,” are the easiest dances to teach beginners, especially those dances where the student can concentrate on his own movements rather than his relationship to a partner. Phyllis Weikert, in *Teaching Movement and Dance*, suggests this progression for learning dance: say (verbalize the movement); say and do; whisper and do; and do. Another teaching sequence is as follows:

- Listen to the music and respond in a creative non-locomotor way
- Chant the words to describe the dance movements in a steady rhythm
- Chant the movement words and perform the steps in a steady rhythm
- Perform the steps with the music



[Grade 2 Old Brass Wagon 2014 HMJDS](#)