

# Introduction

## Teaching a Music Lesson with Movement



Children observe a teacher's free hand movements

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There are many types and styles of movement activities that a teacher can include in the elementary music classroom. In addition to developing physical coordination, students can express themselves and may develop a clearer understanding of musicianship through the medium of movement. The framework of varied approaches provides a wide variety of movement activities.

There are two types of creative or interpretative movement:

- Free
- Structured

In free creative movement, students respond in an appropriate, individual way to music, and the movements may change with subsequent performances. Movements for structured creative movement are pre-determined by students, the teacher, or both together. The movements remain the same for all performances. Structured creative movement may be either:

- Abstract
- Dramatic

Abstract structured movements include activities such as snapping, clapping, or swaying. Dramatic structured movements include movements that are literal interpretations of the text or the programmatic idea of the music. Songs, particularly popular songs, are popular sources for structured movement.

The best music for creative movement are songs and pieces that:

- Tell a story
- Have contrasting sections or phrases
- Depict an event
- Portray a strong emotion or action

When planning creative movement activities for the elementary music classroom, the teacher should:

- Base the activity on a specific goal and established parameters
- Select movement activities that correspond with the physical skills and capabilities of the students
- Plan movements carefully so that they move easily from one to another
- Choose appropriate music that leads to creative movement through text or programmatic ideas
- Allow students to have input in the selection of appropriate creative movements

- Be sensitive to students' ages and what would be awkward or embarrassing for them to perform



Jumping and skipping are good coordination and dance activities

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All movement activities in the music classroom are either locomotor or nonlocomotor movements. Locomotor means to move from one place to another. It involves actions such as walking, running, jumping, hopping, galloping, skipping, sliding, leaping, lunging, and prancing. Nonlocomotor means to move within a stationary position and would include actions such as stretching, bending, swaying, pushing, pulling, shaking, twisting, drawing in the air, clapping, swinging, or bouncing.

The teacher should align movement and dance activities in the music classroom with a child's development of motor skills beginning with simple behaviors, such as walking, and progress to more challenging and complex activities. The spectrum of simple to complex guided movement experiences

is based on the premise that the body, mind, and emotions of the growing child are integrated into a natural rhythmic expression that will complement every facet of music learning. These activities can fall into four types:

- Introductory movement and musical experiences
- Movement that teaches musical concepts
- Creative movement experiences
- Formal dance activities

## **Guidelines for Movement Experiences**



Aztec Circle Dance

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There are numerous guidelines for the music teacher to keep in mind when planning movement activities. The teacher should:

- Provide sufficient room for movement.
- Model the movement or dance step first.

- Enthusiastically participate in the movement activity.
- Develop rules for movement at the beginning of the activity.
- Encourage the student's natural inclination to move and express thoughts and emotions.
- Encourage a variety of movements and skills, e.g. a variety of energy levels or gestures.
- Allow students time and space to practice the movements by themselves.
- Provide opportunities for students to experience and identify musical elements and concepts, e.g. contour of melody, repetition, and contrast.
- Be flexible and adaptable to accept the students' creative responses.
- Choose music that promotes immediate student response.
- Use a variety of music from distinctive style periods and cultures.

## **Introductory Activities**

Because movement and dance coordinate kinesthetic and cognitive development in music, students should begin movement activities early in their educational experience. An introduction to formal movement/musical activities would include opportunities for the students to:

- Become aware of the potential of their bodies to move in place (nonlocomotor) and in space (locomotor)
- Move as an expression of imagery
- Develop the ability to feel and move to a beat



Children can express themselves through movement.

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To create introductory movement activities, the teacher might ask the students to imitate a leader or to respond to movement commands. The game *Simon Says* is an appropriate introductory movement activity, with the teacher or leader creating expressive and interesting movements for the students to follow. Expressive responses required of the students might include some of the following:

- Draw a circle with one foot
- Make an “S” with your whole body
- Lift and lower your arm quickly/slowly

Another popular introductory movement activity is *Stop the Music*. Students move when they hear the music and then “freeze” when the music stops.

# Move in Place and Space

In developing the bodily awareness that allows them to move freely in space, without inhibition, students should participate in both locomotor and nonlocomotor activities. Beginning activities might include directing the students to mirror the teacher's movements or respond to statements, questions, or situations. For example, students could demonstrate how their arms can move while listening to a musical selection.

For simple exercises to emphasize movement in place and space, the teacher might:

- Ask students to walk in a specific manner (backward, forward, sideways) and then change direction or manner at a given signal
- Ask students to explore all the different ways to execute a particular movement; for example, different ways to walk—forward, backward, sideways, big steps, tiptoe, etc.
- Ask students to walk in straight, curved, or jagged lines to a recording or piano accompaniment
- Have students respond to music with appropriate fundamental movements, e.g. running, walking, clapping, waving arms, or patsching
- Perform simple movements in rhythm and ask the students to echo them. For example:

TEACHER: "Shoulders" (points to shoulders with both hands)

STUDENTS: "Shoulders" (point to shoulders)

TEACHER: "Tap, tap, tap shoulders" (taps both shoulders with hands)

STUDENTS: "Tap, tap, tap shoulders" (tap both shoulders with hands)

TEACHER: "Pat head" (pats head with hands)

STUDENTS: "Pat head" (pat head with hands)

# Move to Express Imagery

Expressive movement also allows a student to explore his or her own "space," as well as express reactions to music. A student's life experience limits the movement they can associate with imagery. For example, a lesson in which students are asked to move like elephants while listening to "The Elephants" from Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals*, would be preceded by a visit to the zoo to see the elephants or pictures and movies of elephants.

As introductory activities for creative and expressive movement, the teacher could:

- Ask the students to show how they would move if they were carrying a heavy load, or how they would move if their hand touched a hot stove
- Ask the students to use their entire bodies in a variety of free responses to coordinate with music
- Have the students move to imitate specific animals
- Play Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumble Bee" and have students move their fingers on their arms to imitate the bumblebee
- Play Debussy's "Jimbo's Lullaby" from *The Children's Corner Suite* and ask students to stretch slowly from one side to another or walk slowly, swinging their arms from side to side
- Sing "The People on the Bus" and have students create movements that portray the words