An Exploration of the Success of Implementing a Creative Movement Lesson in a Special Education Classroom

Kaleigh C. Schwarz
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An Exploration of the Success of Implementing a Creative Movement Lesson in a Special Education Classroom

by

Kaleigh C. Schwarz

January 1, 2011

A thesis submitted to the
Department of Education and Human Development of the State University of New York College at Brockport
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Education
An Exploration of the Success of Implementing a Creative Movement Lesson in a Special Education Classroom

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Director, Graduate Programs

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Children are active beings; they move, search, explore and inquire instinctively about their environment. These activities are essential in a child’s development of perceptions of the world around them. Using imagination and the body to express feelings, memories and ideas, fosters a greater self-concept and self-confidence. As a dancer for over twenty years, I have learned to express myself and grow through the art form. Dance allows students to move their bodies, minds, and spirits as they explore new concepts and relate instructional curriculum to movement.

When students watch others move and create, they can develop their own interpretations and ideas. Dance can be used among students of all ages and backgrounds to assist in education and language development. As an active learner and educator, I am aware of the need for movement in the classroom and often include movement in various lessons to provide students with a physical break, enhance the learning experience or as a creative outlet. For the purpose of this project, creative movement can be defined as any body movement or movement in space that is reflective of a given action or feeling.

With the various needs and abilities of students in elementary classrooms today, it is important for teachers to recognize the various learning styles of their students, and differentiate instruction by presenting lessons that address multiple intelligences. According to Beam, 2009, “Allowing for differences enables the classroom teacher to better determine not only how various types of students think, but what they enjoy, how they prefer to gain instruction, and what they need to be
successful” (p. 3). Teachers should also be cognizant of their personal learning styles, as it may influence their teaching style (Fielding, 1995). Recognizing one’s own strengths and preferences may allow for easier differentiation of instruction and adjustment of lesson presentation to better meet the needs of the students.

However, a teacher’s personal experience or learning style preference may not match or align with those of his/her students. For educators with limited dance training, incorporating creative movement into daily lessons may be difficult. Others may be reluctant to use movement for fear that the content of the lesson may be compromised. For teachers and educators who are reluctant to incorporate creative movement or are unsure as to how, a variety of lesson plans can be found through publications including *Teaching Elementary Physical Education* and the *Journal of Dance Education*.

Rather than using my knowledge of dance to create a lesson plan, and to act dually as the instructor and researcher, I selected an established lesson plan by Inez Rovegno from the publication *Teaching Elementary Physical Education*. For an individual with a limited dance background seeking to incorporate creative movement, the lesson appears accessible and could easily be implemented in a variety of educational settings. The lesson allows students to move and act like the animals and pond environment from the text *In The Small Small Pond* by Denise Flemming. Rich with descriptive words and actions, the text provides students with the opportunity to *swoop, twirl, lash* and *plunge* while learning about the pond habitat, its inhabitants and life structure. This lesson was also selected because it aligned with the
school district's elementary Science and English Language Arts curriculum standards, and the unit of study in my special education classroom.

By implementing the creative movement lesson in my special education classroom, I hoped to determine the perceived successes, and possible challenges, of implementing such a lesson in that particular environment. Research supports the use of creative movement and dance in the classroom, and its use often leads to positive results and enhanced learning experiences. Previous research reports the positive effects creative movement can have on students’ academic performance and social development (Brouilette, 2010; Cheung, 2008; Lobo, 2006; Skoning, 2010).

Beyond the potential academic gains and other developments fostered by creative movement lessons, I was interested in other positive effects a creative movement could have on a learning experience. Specifically, how do students feel about creative movement lessons? Videotaping the creative movement lesson and interviewing students following the experience helped to provided insight to the perceived successes of implementing a creative movement lesson. Questions addressed include: do students enjoy creative movement lessons; if so, what is appealing; and how do students respond both verbally and non-verbally to a creative movement lesson?
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Theories of Dance in Education

In any elementary classroom, one will find a variety of personalities and a range of abilities. Teachers should recognize the abilities and needs of each student to create lessons that are meaningful and engaging for the students. Students may use a variety or combination of abilities and intelligences to learn, including verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, logical/mathematical, and bodily/kinesthetic. Some students may display strength in effective language communication, verbal/linguistic intelligence (Friend, 2004). Others may effectively use their bodies through movement, dance or athletics, bodily/kinesthetic intelligence. According to Pica (2006), “children learn best through active involvement," (p. 31). Therefore, lessons that incorporate dance or creative movement should be appealing and engaging to students, especially for those whose strength is the bodily/kinesthetic intelligence.

In theory, dance and creative movement benefit students through cognitive, affective, physical and social outcomes (Gilbert, 1992). Outcomes may include the integration of learning through multiple curricular areas, expression of feelings, body awareness, and cooperation. Brouilette (2010) notes that children may develop collaboration and cooperation skills based on the sharing and turn taking required when participating in dance or dramatic play.

Dance can also be used to express emotion and establish connections between the performers and viewers as a tool for communication. Children as young as 4 years old have identified emotions of happiness and sadness when viewing dance
performances (Lagerlöf & Djerf, 2009). As children interact with others and experience various emotional states, their own understanding and interpretation of emotion develops, allowing for greater recognition of those emotions in others. In addition to emotional expression, children’s creativity can be fostered through movement. As children become more comfortable with their bodies and feel in control of their motor movements, they may express their bodies more creatively and demonstrate less imitation of others or of previously exhibited movements (Cheung, 2008).

Increased confidence and opportunities for success are possible benefits for students who engage in creative movement. Because the focus of dance education in a classroom should be on creative movement concepts, not simply the acquisition of skills and steps, there are limited rules and “correctness” of movement execution (Gilbert, 1992). This lack of restriction provides students with the opportunity to create something of personal value and make connections directly related to personal experience when in a supportive, trusting learning environment. These accomplishments can make children feel successful and reduce anxious behavior. When students feel successful with a task or activity, they are more likely to set higher goals and expectations for future work (Jones & Jones, 2010). Students that experience success with creative movement lessons in one lesson or content area may be more motivated to engage in future lesson in other areas to achieve similar success.
The Effect of Dance in Education

When movement within the classroom is accepted as an integral and essential component to the learning process, rather than a disruption or problematic behavior, teachers note positive results (Skoning, 2010). Teachers who use movement in the classroom and engage students with physical activities often see fewer behavior problems. Movement lessons may assist in classroom management and reducing undesired behaviors. In a study by Lobo (2006), 40 preschool children from a Head Start program were randomly assigned to participate or not participate in an eight-week dance program. Children participating in the program served as the experimental group while those not participating acted as the control group. Results indicate that the children who participated in the dance program made significant gains in social skills compared to students in the control group. Students in the experimental group also demonstrated reduction in behavior problems.

Academic gains are also evident when using creative movement in the classroom. According to Skoning (2010), a fourth grade student identified with a speech language impairment was not able to recall important events or characters after reading a grade level text and engaging in class discussions. When the student developed a movement theme to represent a character and watched other character movement themes, his ability to describe the character and recall events in more detail improved.

Creative movement can be used to assist in students’ early language development as well. In a study by McMahon, Rose and Parks (2003), a 20-session
dance-based reading curriculum developed by non-for-profit organization Whirlwind, was implemented in six public elementary schools with over 300 first grade students in Chicago, IL. Nine additional schools with nearly 400 first grade students served as the control group. Students in the experimental group used their bodies to physically represent alphabet symbols for various sounds and sound combinations in the English language. Students in both groups were tested before and after the program implementation using Read America’s PhonoGraphix Test. On some pretest measures, the control group scored higher than the experimental group, but at post-test, the experimental group performed better than the control group in all areas including vowels, phoneme segmentation and consonants.

In contrast to the positive relationships between academic performance and movement noted above, LaFee (2008) references a study conducted by Boston College professor Ellen Winner that argues the notion that classes in the arts improve students’ overall academic performance. Her study found no causal relationship between the involvement of students in art classes or programs and their academic achievements, though a correlation may be present. The belief that arts education and dance in schools can positively affect student performance is debatable.

**Dance and Special Education Students**

Children with developmental disabilities or physical challenges can also participate in creative movement or dance activities with some or no modifications to the creative movement lesson, depending on the population for which the lesson was designed. Children with visual impairments may benefit from feeling various shapes
and textures to recreate with their own bodies, while children with hearing impairments may clap or stamp their feet to express rhythms (Millar, 2003).

For individuals with disabilities, the arts can unite people sharing the same experiences and ways of life. Disabilities can be celebrated through music, art, dance and theater. Numerous organizations, troupes and clubs throughout the United States are composed or founded by members of the disability community (Spradlin & Parsons 2008). If a child is allowed to dance and move freely in the safe environment of his/her classroom, he/she may be more willing to join a group or organization in the community to continue experiencing creative success. This exposure can increase a student’s confidence and bring awareness to the many abilities of the disability culture and community.
Chapter 3: Applications and Evaluations

This study describes the experience of implementing a creative movement lesson in a special education classroom. The lesson was videotaped for further analysis by the researcher, and students were interviewed by the researcher following the lesson to detail their feelings about the experience. The researcher hoped to identify perceived successes and note possible challenges for the instructor and students when implementing a creative movement lesson.

Participants

Participants in this study were 3rd-5th grade students from a suburban elementary school in Western, NY. The district serves primarily working, middle class families, and all participants were in the mid to low socio-economic range. Each participant received special education services in a 12:1:1 classroom setting. In this setting, the amount of adult support is maximized for students’ academic needs because there is a ratio of 12 students to 1 teacher and 1 teaching assistant, and the class size cannot exceed 12 students. Disability classifications for the students included learning disability, speech language impairment and other health impairment. Student participants did not present with any physical disabilities or restrictions.

Participants of this study were chosen as a convenience sample; 14 students were invited to participate by the researcher, 11 male and 3 female. Nine students were from the researcher’s own class, and after consulting with another special education teacher in the building, 5 students from the 3rd grade 12:1:1 special
education classroom were invited to participate. Consent forms were sent home with each student, requesting parental permission for him/her to be videotaped during the lesson. Participants also signed consent forms. Further detail about the number of participants in relation to the number videotaped is in the Results section. See Appendix A for the parent consent form and Appendix B for the minor consent form.

Setting

The lesson and observation took place in the researcher’s classroom. This setting was either the participants’ primary classroom or the classroom across the hall from their primary classroom. All participants had met and interacted with the researcher in some form prior to this research study. The interviews were conducted at the back of the classroom in a private reading area at a small table. See Figure 1 for classroom setup. While the researcher was conducting interviews, the children were engaged in a word study activity at tables on the other side of the classroom. Four students exited the classroom for related services during the interview process. Those students had already been interviewed by the researcher and did not miss any part of the creative movement lesson experience.

Lesson Plan

The researcher used the lesson plan by Inez Rovegno as detailed in the article *Children’s Literature and Dance*, from the July 2003 issue of *Teaching Elementary Physical Education* (see Appendix F for the lesson plan). The lesson by Rovegno describes movement activities for students to do, while listening to the story *In the Small Small Pond* by Denise Fleming. Student participants listened to an initial
reading of the story, as read by the researcher, to become familiar with the story, look at illustrations and begin thinking about movement variations.

Figure 1. Classroom Set-up.

During the second reading, immediately following the first, students were asked to create movement to represent words and phrases in the story. For example, students spread their arms and shook slightly to represent the page picturing dragonflies over a pond and text reading, “hover, shiver, wings quiver” (Fleming, 1993, p.3). To emulate parading geese, the students marched in a line as they followed an assigned leader. The instructor provided positive verbal and nonverbal
feedback to the students during the second reading to encourage movement and used suggestions provided by Rovegno as needed. Following the second reading, the teacher brought closure to the lesson with comments and observations made during the lesson. The creative movement component of the lesson, including introduction, story readings and closure, lasted approximately 40 minutes. Interviews began after the instructor provided directions to students for the word study activity, and lasted for approximately 20 minutes, with individual interviews ranging in length from 1 minute 1 second to 1 minute 56 seconds.

This lesson plan addressed several content area standards at the students’ grade levels. Science content addressed in the book matched the district elementary science curriculum of environments and habitats. Animals that inhabit the fresh water habitat are described in the book. The movement style and actions of the animals reflect how the animals live and adapt to their environment. The students were expected to listen and speak for information and understanding throughout the lesson as part of the English Language Arts elementary curriculum. Alliteration, a literary device, is also used throughout the book. Students represented those alliteration phrases, adjectives and verbs through their body movements.

Data Collection

A video camera was positioned in the classroom to record the lesson and allow for an analysis by the researcher. The camera was in a stationary spot and angled to view only those students whose parents consented to have their children videotaped. Students who did not return parental permission to be videotaped
participated in the “No tape” zone. Prior to the lesson, the researcher sectioned off an area of the classroom where those students would remain. See Figure 1 for classroom set-up.

The classroom teaching assistant acted as the research assistant during the lesson. The assistant tallied the frequency of specific behaviors as identified by the researcher over three two-minute intervals: the first interval began after 10 minutes of the lesson during the initial reading of *In the Small Small Pond*, the second interval began after 20 minutes of the lesson during the second reading with creative movement (beginning of story), and the third interval began after 30 minutes during the second reading with creative movement (end of story) and closure of lesson. See Appendix C for observation recording sheet. The assistant also recorded anecdotal notes about specific verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

Following the lesson, students were interviewed by the researcher and asked a series of questions. See Appendix D for the interview protocol. At times, the researcher rephrased or asked clarifying questions when students did not provide clear responses. Students were given the option of speaking with the interviewer and could refrain from answering questions at any time. All of the students chose to speak with the researcher about the creative movement experience. The interviews took place in a quiet, private area in the back of the classroom. See Appendix E for transcripts of student interviews. Transcripts for only 11 of the 14 participants are available because 3 students did not provide the researcher with permission to videotape their interviews. Some comments or parts of the interview questions have
been redacted if not related to the interview questions, or if information would reveal any identity of the participant. The omitted content does not significantly affect the responses to the researcher’s questions. Following the lesson and interviews, the researcher reviewed notes, observations, and video tapes to identify successes and challenges associated with the creative movement lesson, as perceived by the researcher.

**Positionality of the Researcher**

As a dancer for over 20 years, it was the researcher’s belief that the students would both enjoy and benefit from the creative movement lesson. Previous experiences with creative movement and dance in the classroom have fostered strong, positive student reactions through engagement, self-awareness and content understanding. This preconception could have influenced the perceived successes and challenges of the lesson. The researcher also acted as the instructor, doing the movements and participating in the creative movement process, in addition to reading the story and providing feedback to student participants.

The researcher-instructor’s background in dance could also affect the generalizability of this study’s findings. For someone who has taught dance to children for several years and enjoys using movement in the classroom on a regular basis, the instructor could have appeared to be more confident and motivating to the students than an instructor who is not a trained dancer or one who does not enjoy creative movement. The positive attitude demonstrated by the instructor and comfort level with the lesson may have reflected upon the students’ reactions and enjoyment.
to the lesson. Their responses in the interviews following the lesson may have been altered or censored to “please” the instructor. This was taken into consideration as the researcher reviewed the videotape of the lesson, observational notes and student responses to interview questions in an attempt to identify perceived successes and possible challenges associated with implementing a creative movement lesson. The successes and challenges as perceived by the research instructor are reported.
Chapter 4: Results

Fourteen students were invited by the researcher to participate in this study; five students were in third grade, four students were in fourth grade, and five students were in fifth grade. Eleven participants were male and three were female. Parental consent for videotaping the students was required for all participants. Twelve of the fourteen potential participants returned parental permission to be videotaped; two parents did not agree to have their student videotaped. The participants also signed consent forms to be videotaped; three students did not agree to be videotaped. The two students whose parents did not agree to have their student videotaped did not sign the consent, and one student whose parent did agree to have the student videotaped did not sign the consent. All fourteen students participated in the lesson, with three students participating in a “no tape” zone as designated by the researcher. The area was marked off by tape on the floor and was not in the view of the camera. Eleven students were videotaped during their interview following the lesson, and three students were not videotaped during their interview.

An adult observer was present during the lesson to note the frequency of positive and negative, verbal and nonverbal behaviors demonstrated by the participants at three intervals. The first interval took place during the initial reading of *In The Small Small Pond* by Denise Fleming and while the instructor gave directions for the task. Intervals two and three took place during the second reading with creative movement, at the beginning and end of the story respectively. Table 1
displays the frequency of actions at each interval. Total frequency of actions for each behavior over the three intervals is displayed in the last row of the table.

Table 1

*Frequency of Actions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Verbal action</th>
<th>Nonverbal action</th>
<th>Verbal action</th>
<th>Nonverbal action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total frequency:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive actions during the lesson included smiling, interacting with peers, commenting to the instructor, and laughing. Positive verbal statements included, “This is fun,” and “I am a beautiful bird.” Negative actions included not looking at the instructor, showing minimal eye contact with the instructor and limited body movements.

While reviewing the videotape, students can be heard making sound effects in connection to the movements. For the parade movement, two students repeatedly say “cha cha cha.” Students make “click, clack” noises with their mouths when the instructor says “click, clack, claws crack,” (Flemming, 1993, p.19). On the page describing a chill breeze and winter freeze, students are seen chattering their teeth, and saying “brrrr” or “I’m so cold!” These verbal responses reflect the strong
engagement and urge to act beyond the kinesthetic creative movements. The students were making personal connections to the movements, as reflected by their sounds.

Every student videotaped is seen smiling at least once during the creative movement lesson. Four male students and one female student are seen smiling for the majority of the time; the others smile in response to the specific movement or instructor’s comments. Students are heard laughing at two points in the story, when the instructor reads “wiggle, jiggle tadpoles wriggle” and “waddle, wade, geese parade,” (Fleming, 1993, p. 3-6). In addition to smiling, students often used facial expressions reflective of the mood or tone set by the action in the story. Most of the students can be seen yawning when imitating turtles for “drowse, doze, eyes close,” (Fleming, 1993, p. 9). Some students scrunch their noses, squint and narrow their eyes or snarl when depicting a heron lashing and lunging.

During the interview process, students were asked, “Tell me about what we did during the lesson?” Student responses with frequency are presented below as initial and secondary responses. None of the students required further prompts by the researcher to answer the initial question, and ten students provided a secondary response without prompting from the researcher. Four students were prompted by the researcher to provide a secondary response by answering the question “What else did we do?” Table 2 displays the frequency of student responses.
Table 2

*Frequency of Student Responses – “What did we do during the lesson?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Secondary Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>danced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>danced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listened to a story</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>listened to a story</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or read a book</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>moved/acted like animals</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learned about a pond</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>learned about a pond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After reporting what he/she did during the lesson, students were asked, “How did you feel during the creative movement lesson?” Some students provided more than one feeling or emotion. The frequency of each stated emotion, separated by gender, is reported in Table 3.

Specific student responses included: “I felt excited because it was fun,” “Good, I like doing movements,” “Fun and happy because I got to do what they [animals] do,” and, “I’m happy. It was like the best thing this morning, getting to do some movement.” The majority of male participants responded with a happy or excited comment, while the female participants said that the experience felt good. An
equal number of male and female participants reported feeling good. None of the female participants reported feeling silly or funny. Two male students said that they felt silly or funny during the lesson. Those two students further explained that the acting was silly “because I did what the animals did and danced” and “it’s fun because we got to do silly movements.” None of the students reported negative feelings or expressed not liking the lesson.

Table 3

*Frequency of Student Responses – “How did you feel during the lesson?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to “How did you feel during the lesson?”</th>
<th>Frequency of response from male participants</th>
<th>Frequency of response from female participants</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>happy/excited</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silly/funny</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conclude the interviews, students were asked, “Would you want to do a creative movement lesson again?” All 14 students replied “Yes.” When asked, “Why or why not,” students replied with the following: “Because it was awesome,” “We got to do silly movements,” “It was really, really fun moving like everything in the story,” “I like to dance,” and “It felt good to exercise.”

With repeated viewings of the recorded lesson, several observations were made about the instructor’s experience. When in view of the camera, the instructor smiled six times. The majority of the instructor’s facial expressions were either
relaxed or reflective of the story content when instructing the students and participating in the creative movement. The instructor made 11 positive verbal comments to students during the creative movement lesson and closure. Comments included, but were not limited to the following, “I like that [name of student],” “I like how you’re specific movement],” “Oooo I see good [specific movement],” “You did a really good job,” “Yes!,” and “Oh, how wonderful!” When transitioning students between pages and actions, the instructor would say “stop,” “freeze,” or simply continue reading. When given a verbal cue, students followed the instructor immediately. The longest transition took only three seconds for all students to refocus. Only two students needed a second reminder to stop moving after the initial instruction, and were able to follow the second instruction within one second.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Observed Actions in a 12:1:1 Classroom

After further review of the results, it is evident that the creative movement lesson was successfully implemented in the special education classroom in terms of student enjoyment and engagement. During the lesson, the frequency of positive actions significantly outnumbered the frequency of negative actions with a ratio of 50 to 3, as tallied by the research assistant. The researcher attempted to tally the frequency of behaviors observed while reviewing the videotape of the lesson, to compare with the behaviors noted by the research assistant. Frequencies of actions observed by the research assistant and researcher are reported in Table 4 and Table 5, respectively.

Table 4

*Frequency of Actions Observed by Research Assistant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal action</td>
<td>Nonverbal action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total frequency: 9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

*Frequency of Actions Observed by Researcher*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal action</td>
<td>Nonverbal action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the lesson, the research assistant noted six more positive verbal actions, eight more positive nonverbal actions, and one more negative non-verbal action than the researcher noted while reviewing the video tape. This discrepancy can be attributed to two factors. First, the researcher was not able to tally the frequency of behavior for three students that participated in the no tape zone during the lesson. These students were in view of the research assistant, but their behaviors and actions were not recorded on camera. Second, not all student participants can be seen at all times during the tape because of the position of the camera in the room and students’ positions in front of the camera as we moved throughout the lesson. For discrepancies in the verbal actions, the research assistant and researcher could have slightly different interpretations of positive verbal comments, even though examples were provided. Overall, these differences are not significant. Both observations indicate that positive actions, verbal and nonverbal, occurred with more frequency than
negative actions. The total number of observed actions for the research assistant during real time, is 53 with 94.74% positive actions and 5.66% negative. The total number of observed actions for the researcher during video playback is 38, with 94.74% positive actions and 5.26% negative.

The student behaviors and actions of this lesson are highly positive, however the data is not compared to another creative movement lesson or a “normal,” non-creative movement lesson. Future research and analysis could determine if creative movement lessons result in higher frequencies of positive verbal and nonverbal actions, in comparison to standard, non-creative movement lessons. Based on previous research and the support for kinesthetic activities in special education classrooms, creative movement lessons will most likely yield positive results for student engagement and enjoyment, and higher frequencies of positive behavior.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. As previously mentioned, the researcher acted also as the lesson instructor for this study. Any personal beliefs or assumptions about the outcomes could have been translated to the students. It is difficult to determine if the students’ feelings about lesson enjoyment and their willingness to participate in a creative movement lesson again can be attributed to the creative movement lesson or the researcher’s involvement as the instructor. Further studies with instructors who are not familiar with the students or with creative movement material may provide more insight into how enjoyable creative movements
are for students and if students would be willing to participate in future creative movement lessons.

The student participants in this study were all selected as a convenience sample for the researcher from the same school within a suburban school district in Western New York. Future studies could include students from other 12:1:1 special education classrooms in the district, state of New York or continental United States. These participants were also representative of third through fifth grade students, and future studies could use the creative movement lesson for students as young as kindergarten. The ability to generalize results from this study is low because of the small sample of participants.

The results of this study are from an isolated creative movement experience. To develop a better understanding of students’ opinions about these types of lesson, multiple lessons should be conducted in various content areas over a longer period of time. Creative movement lessons can be employed at varying lengths throughout the school day for a variety of subjects and relating to various curriculums. Future questions of study could include: To what degree do students enjoy creative movement lessons in various subject areas? Does students’ perceived enjoyment depend on the content of the lesson? How much of an impact does the instructor have the perceived enjoyment of the creative movement lesson?

In addition to student enjoyment and engagement, previous research indicates that creative movement lessons can enhance the learning experience to improve students’ academic performance and increase content knowledge (Brouilette, 2010;
Cheung, 2008; Lobo, 2006; Skoning, 2010). This study did not determine if the students actually learned additional information about the fresh water environment and its inhabitants, but the purpose was focused on student enjoyment, engagement, and perceived successes. Further research could determine if students learn more or perform better when information is presented through a creative movement lesson or traditional lesson.

**Considerations for the Implementation of Creative Movement Lessons**

When implementing a creative movement lesson, specifically in a special education classroom setting, there are several points to consider. First, what are the academic needs and learning styles of the students in the class? Students should be physically able to complete the movement activities, or the activities should be modified so that students can actively participate to the best of their abilities. The participants in this study were all capable of completing the movement activities and were highly engaged in the creative movement process, responding well to the kinesthetic activities presented by the researcher-instructor. Little time was spent re-directing the students or transitioning between movements.

Second, the learning environment should allow for success in two areas: physical environment and social/emotional environment. The creative movement lesson should be implemented in a space where students are free to move about in their own personal space or interact with others if they so choose. The researcher moved several pieces of furniture in the classroom to create a more open space, and to create the no-tape zone for some of the student participants. The instructor also
provided positive feedback to the students during the creative movement process, encouraging their creativity and continuation of movement. Immediate, positive feedback supported the willingness of students to participate, and was reflected in their positive responses to feeling good and happy about the lesson experience.

Lastly, when implementing a creative movement lesson, the instructor should be willing to engage in the movement activities and support student learning. The researcher was smiling and participating in the creative movements, as well as instructing the students. For educators with limited dance knowledge or experience, creative movement lesson plans are widely available for implementation in publications previously mentioned. This study was successful because students were provided with a rich text, physically engaged in the lesson, and reported enjoyment; each component a goal of the researcher-instructor at the onset of this project.
References


Appendix A: Statement of Informed Consent for Parents

Kaleigh Schwarz is conducting a research study to identify the successes and challenges of using dance and creative movement in a special education classroom. She is a graduate student at the College at Brockport SUNY and is conducting the study for her Master’s thesis. Ms. Schwarz is a special education teacher at Kirk Road, and has permission from the building administrator to conduct the research in her classroom. If you agree to have your child participate in this study, s/he will be asked to participate in a creative movement science lesson and answer a few questions about the creative movement experience in the form of an interview with the researcher. The creative movement lesson and following interview will be videotaped by the researcher.

There is no personal benefit from being in this study. The information about the students’ experiences with a creative movement lesson may inform other educators about the successes and challenges associated with integrating dance or creative movement with content curriculum and implementing creative movement lessons in the classroom.

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participating in the study or not participating will not affect your child's grades or class standing. S/he is free to change her/his mind or stop participating at any time.

I understand that:

1. My child's participation is voluntary and s/he has the right to refuse to answer any questions. S/he will have a chance to discuss any questions s/he has about the study with the researcher before, during or after completing the lesson and interview.

2. There will be no way to connect my child to the interview or any data from the study. The lesson and interview video tapes will be watched only by the researcher. If any publication results from this research, your child would not be identified by name. Participation will have no effect on grades status.

3. There will be minimal personal risks or benefits because of participation in this project.

4. My child's participation involves answering a few questions with the researcher following the creative movement lesson. The lesson will take approximately 30-45 minutes and the interview will take 5-10 minutes.

5. Approximately 8-20 students will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a Master’s thesis by the primary researcher.
6. Data, consent forms and videotapes will be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets by the researcher and will be destroyed by shredding or erasure when the research has been completed.

You are being asked whether or not you will permit your child to participate in this study and be videotaped. **Please sign in the space below one of the two agreement statements, and return to your child’s teacher by: ______________________ (date)**

Remember, you may change your mind at any point and withdraw from the study. Your child can refuse to participate even if you have given permission for her/him to participate.

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to allow my child to participate as a participant in this project, and allow my child to be videotaped. I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction.

Signature of Parent/Date
Child's name ____________________________

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to allow my child to participate as a participant in this project, but do not allow my child to be videotaped. I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction.

Signature of Parent/Date
Child's name ____________________________

If you have any questions you may contact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Researcher</th>
<th>Faculty Advisor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name: Kaleigh Schwarz</td>
<td>Name: Jeremy Browne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Number: (585)966-4364</td>
<td>Department and phone number: Education and Human Development (585)395-5554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address: <a href="mailto:kaleigh.schwarz@greece.k12.ny.us">kaleigh.schwarz@greece.k12.ny.us</a></td>
<td>Email address: <a href="mailto:jbrowne@brockport.edu">jbrowne@brockport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Statement of Informed Consent for Minors

You are being asked to be a part of Ms. Schwarz’s project. She would like to read a story to you and teach you some creative movement. An adult will video tape the lesson so that Ms. Schwarz, and only Ms. Schwarz, can look at how you moved and danced during the story. After the lesson, Ms. Schwarz would like to talk to you and ask a few questions about how you felt during the lesson. The conversation with Ms. Schwarz will also be videotaped. By signing the bottom of this paper, you are agreeing to be a part of Ms. Schwarz’s project. You can decide to not participate or stop participating at any time. You will not be graded on your performance.

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to participate in this project and be videotaped.

__________________________________________
Signature of participant /Date

__________________________________________
Birth date of participant

__________________________________________
Signature of a witness 18 years of age or older /Date

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to participate in this project but do not agree to be videotaped.

__________________________________________
Signature of participant /Date

__________________________________________
Birth date of participant

__________________________________________
Signature of a witness 18 years of age or older /Date

If you have any questions you may contact:

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<td>Email address: <a href="mailto:kaleigh.schwarz@greece.k12.ny.us">kaleigh.schwarz@greece.k12.ny.us</a></td>
<td>Email address: <a href="mailto:jbrowne@brockport.edu">jbrowne@brockport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Appendix C: Observation Sheet for Three Intervals**

First Interval: minutes 10-12 initial reading of *In the Small Small Pond*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>student action not prompted by instructor</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positive verbal action (e.g. “I like this,” “This is fun”)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive nonverbal action (e.g. smile, laugh)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative verbal action (e.g. “I don’t want to do this,” “This is boring”)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative nonverbal action (e.g. non-participation, head down, limited body movement)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Second Interval: minutes 20-22 second reading with creative movement (beginning of story)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>student action not prompted by instructor</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positive verbal action (e.g. “I like this,” “This is fun”)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>positive nonverbal action (e.g. smile, laugh)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative verbal action (e.g. “I don’t want to do this,” “This is boring”)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative nonverbal action (e.g. non-participation, head down, limited body movement)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37
Third Interval: minutes 30-32 second reading with creative movement (end of story) and closure of lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>student action not prompted by instructor</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positive verbal action (e.g. “I like this,” “This is fun”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>negative nonverbal action (e.g. non-participation, head down, limited body movement)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Questions following lesson and creative movement experience. If student is prompted by interviewer to elaborate or clarify a response, the P will be circled.

1. Tell me about what we did during the lesson. P
   - danced
   - moved like animals
   - listened to a story
   - learned about a pond

2. How did you feel during the lesson? P
   - good
   - silly
   - ok
   - I liked it
   - I didn’t like it
   - it was fun
   - it was hard
   - I felt like the animal

3. Would you want to do a creative movement lesson again? P
   - yes
   - no

   Why or why not?

Additional Notes or Comments
Appendix E: Interview Transcripts

Participant A
Interviewer: Tell me about what we did during the lesson.
Participant A: We moved around like animals.
Interviewer: What else did we do?
Participant A: We read a book.
Interviewer: What was the book about?
Participant A: Animals.
Interviewer: How did you feel during the lesson?
Participant A: Um, good.
Interviewer: OK, why did you feel good?
Participant A: ‘Cuz I like doing movements.
Interviewer: Would you like to do a lesson like this again where you got to move?
Participant A: Yes.
Interviewer: Why?
Participant A: Because it’s fun.

Participant B
Interviewer: Can you tell me about what we did during the lesson?
Participant B: We did moves to make animal moves.
Interviewer: What else did we do?
Participant B: We um, were um, a like a partying in the book [pause] the frog was hibernating.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, he was!

Participant B: And the bird was trying to swoop down look for fish. What's a bird called? The big bird?

Interviewer: The heron?

Participant B: Yeah the heron I saw one of um, yeah at you know the big school where my brother goes at [name of school].

Interviewer: Oh, they were over there?

Participant B: Yeah there was like one there. A big heron.

Interviewer: How did you feel during the lesson?

Participant B: Uh, good.

Interviewer: How else did you feel, or why did you feel good?

Participant B: Um, happy.

Interviewer: You felt happy?

Participant B: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why did you feel happy and good?

Participant B: I like the, I like when we did the animals.

Participant C

Interviewer: Can you tell me about what we did during the lesson?

Participant C: We moved like animals.
Participant C: Read the story.
Participant C: Animals move.
Interviewer: How did you feel when we were doing that?
Participant C: Excited.
Interviewer: You felt excited. Why did you feel excited?
Participant C: Because it was fun and I was [voice trails off].
Interviewer: Would you want to do something like this again?
Participant C: [nods head yes]
Interviewer: Yes? Why?
Participant C: ‘Cuz it was fun.
Interviewer: What about it was fun? What did you like the best?
Participant C: The animal parts.

Participant D

Interviewer: Can you tell me about what we did during the lesson?
Participant D: We did the wiggles.
Interviewer: Mmhmm.
Participant D: And the duck, duck down and the thing when we jumped in the pond to make it splatter.
Interviewer: How did you feel during the lesson?
Participant D: Good.

Interviewer: Good. Did you feel anything else?

Participant D: [shakes head no]

Interviewer: Not really? Why did you feel good?

Participant D: So we could get lots of exercising.

Interviewer: Would you want to do a creative movement lesson like this again?

Participant D: Yes!

Interviewer: Yes. Why?

Participant D: ‘Cuz it’s my favorite thing to do, so it can make you exercise, jump up and down, and stuff like that.

Participant E

Interviewer: Can you tell me about what we did during the lesson?

Participant E: Um, read.

Interviewer: What did we read?

Participant E: Um, *In the Small Small Pond*.

Interviewer: Yep, and what else did we do?

Participant E: [long pause] Um, the animals.

Interviewer: How did you feel during the lesson?

Participant E: Happy.

Interviewer: You felt happy. Why did you feel happy?
Participant E: Because we’re doing the animals.
Interviewer: Would you want to do something like that again?
Participant E: Uh huh.
Interviewer: Yeah, why?
Participant E: Because it was fun.

Participant F
Interviewer: Can you tell me about what we did during the lesson?
Participant F: Um, we danced.
Interviewer: What else?
Participant F: Read a book.
Interviewer: How did you feel during this lesson?
Participant F: Happy.
Interviewer: Why did you feel happy?
Participant F: Because it was fun.
Interviewer: Would you want to do something like this again?
Participant F: Um, yes.
Interviewer: Why?
Participant F: Because it was really fun.
Interviewer: What was fun about it?
Participant F: Um, reading a book.
Interviewer: Did you learn anything in this lesson?
Participant G

Interviewer: Can you tell me about what we did during the lesson?
Participant G: We were like reading a book about animals and we had to get up so we can do how they were doing.

Interviewer: How did you feel during the lesson?
Participant G: I felt [pause] I felt funny.

Interviewer: Yeah, you felt funny? Why did you feel funny?
Participant G: ‘Cuz all the stuff we did was funny.

Interviewer: Why was it funny though?
Participant G: Because I look so silly.

Interviewer: Because you look silly. You look silly because do you normally move like that?
Participant G: No.

Interviewer: Would you want to do a creative movement lesson again?
Participant G: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah? Why?
Participant G: Because it was fun.

Interviewer: What was fun about it?
Participant G: We got to do a lot of silly movements.
Participant H

Interviewer: Can you tell me about what we did during the lesson?
Participant H: Uh, we read a book.
Interviewer: Yes.
Participant H: And we um, did like some moves that were from the book.
Interviewer: And what was the book about?
Participant H: The book was about the sea animals.
Interviewer: How did you feel during the lesson?
Participant H: Happy.
Interviewer: You felt happy. Why did you feel happy?
Participant H: Because it was like the best thing all this morning.
Interviewer: Why was it the best thing all morning?
Participant H: Because we got some movement stuff.
Interviewer: Did you like doing the movement?
Participant H: Yeah.
Interviewer: It made you feel good?
Participant H: [nods head yes]
Interviewer: Would you want to do a creative movement lesson like this again?
Participant H: Yes.
Interviewer: Why?
Participant H: Because it was awesome!
**Participant I**

**Interviewer:** Tell me about what we did today.

**Participant I:** We did um, we did dancing.

**Interviewer:** What else did we do?

**Participant I:** We did um, the movements of the animals.

**Interviewer:** Uh huh, how did you feel during the lesson?

**Participant I:** Happy.

**Interviewer:** Why did you feel happy?

**Participant I:** ‘Cuz it was fun.

**Interviewer:** What was fun about it?

**Participant I:** The animals.

**Interviewer:** What about the animals?

**Participant I:** We had to um, do the things that the animals did.

**Interviewer:** Would you can to do a creative movement lesson again?

**Participant I:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Why?

**Participant I:** ‘Cuz it’s so much fun!

---

**Participant J**

**Interviewer:** Tell me about what we did during the lesson today.

**Participant J:** Um, we read a book.

**Interviewer:** Uh huh.
Participant J: We, we acted like the animals in the book.

Interviewer: Yep.

Participant J: That was it [smiles].

Interviewer: How did you feel during the lesson?

Participant J: Happy.

Interviewer: Mmhmm, why were you feeling happy?

Participant J: ‘Cuz I was having fun.

Interviewer: Yeah, what was fun about it?

Participant J: I would have to say walking. Walking like the animals.

Interviewer: Mmhmm, would you want to do something like that again sometime, the creative movement?

Participant J: Yes [smiles].

Interviewer: Yeah, why?

Participant J: Because it’s really really fun. I guess I just really like it.

Interviewer: You like moving or you like listening to stories or what? That it was about animals?

Participant J: Moving. I just want to say everything [smiles].

Participant K

Interviewer: Tell me about what we did during the lesson today.

Participant K: We um [comment redacted] we jumped.

Interviewer: OK, what else did we do?
Participant K: We danced, we act like birds, we act like a lot of things.

Interviewer: Good. How did you feel during the lesson?

Participant K: Upset

Interviewer: You felt upset?

Participant K: No! I’m just kidding, happy [repeats “happy’ several times].

Interviewer: Why did you feel happy?

Participant K: [comment redacted]

Interviewer: Why did you feel happy when we were doing this though?

Participant K: [comment redacted]

Interviewer: Did you like what we were doing and moving?

Participant K: [nods head yes]

Interviewer: Yeah, did that feel good to you?

Participant K: [nods head yes] Yeah.

Interviewer: Would you want to do another lesson like that again where we did some movement stuff?

Participant K: [nods head yes]

Interviewer: What did you like about doing the movement and the dance?

Participant K: It was fun and we got to sleep.
Appendix F: Lesson Plan

Interdisciplinary Learning

Children's Literature and Dance

by Inez Rovegno

The lesson activities described in this article grew out of an earlier article in *Teaching Elementary Physical Education* by Theresa Purcell-Cone. Purcell-Cone (2000) described her ideas for using children's literature in dance lessons and she suggested several children's books that could be appropriate for such lessons. I took one of her suggestions, *In the Small, Small Pond* by Denise Fleming, and built a series of dance lessons for grades 1 and 2. This article presents a range of possible ideas and tasks for such lessons. From these suggestions, teachers can build lesson plans that best meet their curriculum objectives.

Criteria for Selecting Children's Literature

I selected *In the Small, Small Pond* for three reasons. First and foremost, the book provided a way to teach substantive dance content in support of the National Physical Education Standards 1 and, especially, 7. Although I am a strong proponent of integrating classroom subjects with physical education, I believe the integration should not trivialize physical education content. The dance lesson activities help children improve their competence in creative dance (standard 1) and have the opportunity for self-expression (standard 7). Critical dimensions of being a physically educated person. Second, *In the Small, Small Pond* gives children an opportunity to learn and express through dance their ideas about animal and insect life in a pond, topics of great interest to children. Movement is a way for children to come to a deeper understanding of important topics and vocabulary; that is, movement is a way for children to become more "literate" about the world. For example, children can understand "heron" (one animal portrayed in *In the Small, Small Pond*) in a deeper way having danced using the movement qualities of sliding and plunging inspired by the illustrations of a heron catching a fish. These aspects of literacy align lesson activities with English Language Arts Standards 1, 3, and 12 developed by the National Council for the Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (1996). In particular, lesson activities help children acquire new information (standard 1), apply a range of strategies to comprehend and appreciate texts (standard 3), and to use visual language for learning, self-expression, and exchange of information (standard 12). Third, the book is superbly illustrated and won a Caldecott Honor Award for the quality of its illustrations.

Steps in Planning the Lessons

Step 1: Reading the Story. To develop the lesson, I began by reading the story and summarizing the events and mood. *In the Small, Small Pond* is a picture book about a frog who encounters different animals and insects in a pond: tadpoles, geese, dragonflies, turtles, herons, minnows, whirligigs, swallowtails, lobsters, ducks, raccoons, and muskrats. Each page describes and illustrates how each of these animals or insects move.

Step 2: Identifying Major Dance Content. I then looked at each page and listed the literal and more abstract movement content in the text and in the illustrations. I also noted the emotions of the frog and the other animals and the shapes of the animals, plants, and water movement. I thought about events and movements of the animals that were implied but not directly described in the text. I listed movement ideas that the text and illustrations suggested and concepts from the Laban framework that were relevant. For example, one page shows a heron wailing and plunging its beak into the water and the frog looking scared, jumping out of the water just seconds ahead of the heron's beak. The text reads: "Lash, lunge, herons plunge." I generated the following list of movements:

- **Movements Illustrated and Described**
  - Lash: slashing movements (one of Laban's eight basic effort actions)
  - Lunge and plunge: thrusting movements (one of Laban's eight basic effort actions)

- **Movements of Herons Not Illustrated**
  - Wading, stalking, and searching for prey; stepping slowly and gently lifting knees high and touching the water (i.e., floor) first with toe then heel trying not to splash the water or disturb the soft bottom of the pond.

Step 3: Exploring and Expanding Movement Vocabulary. Next, I generated as many possible movement tasks as I could for helping children explore the movement concepts that would be the dance content for each page. I began with single movement concepts such as lashing and then expanded that concept by combining it with other concepts from the Laban framework: for example, lashing with different body parts, slashing at different levels, slashing while turning, and slashing to end in pointy shapes at high, medium, and low levels. I also thought about the feeling of the movement, and generated tasks that would help children focus on the kinaesthetic or emotional feelings relevant to the dance content. Slashing, for example, includes fast, strong, indirect movements and can feel angry and powerful. Finally, I considered the quality of the movement and listed possible refining tasks to help children dance more skillfully, be aware of the feeling of the movement, or better represent their ideas about the text.

Step 4: Determining the Structure of the Lesson and Culminating Dance. I then considered possible options for the culminating dance. Once I knew how the lesson would end, I could structure the lesson content to lead up to the culminating dance.
activity. I decided that for each page of the text children would first explore the movement ideas and then, whenever appropriate, perform a short movement sequence. This would take approximately two lessons. At the end of the second lesson, I would read the book and cue the children through a short sequence for each page.

Step 5: Making Connections and Engaging With the Text. The final step was to plan how I would help children engage with the text and illustrations in the book. I planned a series of questions that would

- Elicit children’s prior knowledge about the movements and ideas in the story,
- Help children make connections between the lesson content and their lives outside of school,
- Deepen children’s understanding of the story and vocabulary in the text, and
- Facilitate children’s aesthetic perception of the illustrations.

Table 1 answers questions other teachers and I have had about integrating dance and children’s literature. Tables 2-4 describe potential lesson tasks for most segments of In the Small, Small Pond. Teachers need to select tasks that they believe best match their students and setting. The lessons I have taught using In the Small, Small Pond all follow a lesson structure in which the students and I read and discuss one segment (typically two pages) and then explore the ideas in that segment through movement. We then gather together and read the next segment.

Table 1—FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions about Integrating Dance and Children’s Literature

Should I have the children dance to every page of the book? This is not necessary. Select the pages from the book that best match your dance curriculum objectives. If a segment does not seem appropriate for your class, your situation, or your objectives, then read it and move on without exploring the ideas in movement or skipping the segment entirely. You can simply explain to the children that you will be using only some parts of the book. The book is a stimulus for the dance lesson and need not dictate lesson structure. Reading teachers also select portions of a book to meet their objectives. It is critical that physical education content does not get lost or trivialized when integrating with classroom content.

Is it a problem if children respond with literal rather than more abstract representations of the text? Although typically in children’s creative dance we focus on more abstract representations, this does not mean that literal representations are never appropriate. Dance choreography, historically, includes dance drama and stories. I agree with Purcell’s position on this issue. She wrote the following:

“I believe that the creative process encompasses a full range of interpretative possibilities from literal to abstract. The role of the teacher is to help children explore the possibilities for their expression, not to make all the movement decisions about how to respond to the literature. The dance belongs to the children, and it is their meaning that should be expressed.” (Purcell-Corne, 2000, p. 153)

Do I need to coordinate this lesson with the classroom teachers? It is helpful when this happens, but not necessary. I have taught the lesson after the classroom teachers have read the book with the children and also when they have not. Sometimes political situations make collaboration difficult.

Table 2—Introducing the Book

The cover and first page of the book show a boy with his hands in a pond watching with surprise as a frog jumps out of and back into the water. I start the lesson by holding the book up and having the children read along with me. I ask several of the following questions. After a brief discussion, we proceed to segment one.

Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:

- The title of this book is In the Small, Small Pond. Put your thumbs up if you have seen a pond. Tell us when (call on several children).
- Denise Fleming wrote this book. Do you think she has written any other books? Yes. She has.
- Raise your hand and tell me what is happening here? What is the frog doing? What is the boy doing? What’s he feeling?
- What do you think will happen next? Could be, let’s read and see.

Table 3—Segment 1: Tadpoles

Text: “Wiggle, jiggie, tadpoles wiggle” (Book illustrates tadpoles swimming around the frog).

Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:

- Does anyone know what a wiggle looks like? Show us. While you are sitting, everyone wiggle.
- Have you ever seen tadpoles? What do they look like? What other animals wiggle?
- Have you ever wiggled when you weren’t supposed to and your mom said, “Stop wiggling?” Tell us when. Can you try to hold a wiggle inside and not let it get out? Now, we are going to do a wiggling dance.

Movement ideas:

2. Wiggly different body parts: Wiggle your fingers, now your hands, shoulders, toes, feet, legs, whole body.
3. Spreading wiggle: As you are standing a wiggle starts in one finger, then it spreads to that hand, then it spreads up your arm so your fingers, hand and arms are wiggling, now it spreads to the shoulders, now torso, now your whole body. Repeat. Let’s do it again, but this time start the wiggle in your toes and have it spread up through your whole body. Repeat.
4. Get in groups of 3 and hold hands. One person at one end start a wiggle in one hand and have it spread to your arm, shoulder, other arm, and now to the person next to you. The wiggle then spreads across the second person to the third person. Now all of you are wiggling. Repeat several times.
5. On your own, travel on a wiggly pathway, pause and wiggle, freeze in a wiggled shape. Repeat several times.
6. Wiggle sequence: In a group of three, travel on a wiggly pathway around each other, pause, person one wiggles and passes, person two wiggles and pauses, person three wiggles and passes, all wiggle and freeze in a group wiggly shape.
7. Jiggle like jellies. Instead of wiggling, let’s jiggle like jellies. Jiggle up and down, and now jiggle so much that you move about the space jiggling.

(continued)
### Table 3—Segment 1, continued

8. Jiggle different body parts: fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, feet, legs, whole body.
9. Rest. Can you try to hold a jiggle inside and not let it get out?

**Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:**
- Really wiggle all over. Really twist and make big wiggling movements.
- Wiggle everywhere around your personal space. Be sure every part of your body is wiggling.
- Make your wiggles real fast. Be loose and very jiggly.
- Think about how wiggling feels in your muscles.
- What does a wiggle feel like? Wiggle again and really concentrate on how the wiggle feels.
- What does a jingle feel like? Jiggle again and really concentrate on how the jiggle feels.

### Table 4—Segment 2: Geese

**Text:** "Waddle, wade, geese parade" (Block shows a mother goose leading her babies into the pond.)

**Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:**
- So, in the pond the frog saw wiggling tadpoles. What other animals might you see in a pond? Let’s see what the frog in this book sees.
- What’s happening in this picture?
- What are the colors of the mother? What are the colors of the babies?

**Movement ideas:**
1. Let's march! Stand up and when I beat the drum march all about the space. Really lift your knees high like this and swing your arms.
2. As you march, try different arm movements.
4. Now march and turn, add different arm movements. Try turning your feet in and out.
5. Let's try marching in a line. Everyone get in line behind me. Let's march to the beat of the drum.
6. Now let's divide the class into lines of 3 and each of you will have a turn to be the leader and lead your line about the gym.

**Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:**
- Really stand tall and proud when you march.
- Keep your heads up, lift your knees high, and swing your arms.
- Listen to the beat of the drum and try to march to the beat.
- When you march on an angular pathway, really make each change in direction sharp and precise.
- Try hard to stay on the same foot as the leader.
- What do you like about marching? What do you like about being the leader? What do you like about following the leader?

### Table 5—Segment 3: Dragonflies

**Text:** "Hover, shiver, wings quiver" (Block shows dragonflies hovering over lily pads. The frog is in the water looking up at a dragon fly.)

**Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:**
- Not only are there animals at a pond, there are insects. Let’s see what is at the pond. What’s happening in this picture?
- What are the dragonflies doing? What do dragonflies look like when they fly?
- What else hovers? Yes, helicopters, some boats called hovercraft.
- What do you think the frog is doing? How do frogs catch bugs?
- What kind of plants do you see growing in the pond? What are the shapes of the lily pads in this illustration?
- Pond grasses?
- Have you ever gotten into bed and it was cold and the sheets were cold? What do you do?

**Movement ideas:**
1. Shiver and quiver. Imagine you are getting into bed on a cold night and the sheets are cold. Grab yourself and shiver. Now just have your fingers shiver. Now just shiver with your arms, now one leg, now the other, now your whole body. Try extending your arms and shivering like dragonfly wings.
2. Darting and hovering. What do dragonflies look like when they fly? Sometimes they stay in place. This is called hovering. Sometimes they dart about quickly. Run lightly darting about the gym and stop on your toes when you hear the sound of the tambourine. Breathe in, lift your chest and arms, balance on your toes and hover.
3. Dart lightly about the gym, stop and hover when you hear the tambourine, look around, then quiver when I shake the tambourine. Run again.
4. Can you think of any other time you might shiver or quiver? Yes, when you are afraid. Now quiver by shaking and trembling very quickly.
5. Dart lightly about the gym, stop and quiver when you hear the sound of the tambourine.
6. How does a frog catch a bug? Sit, reach out one hand slowly stretching as far as you can into space. Then quickly retract your hand, bringing your hand back in. Slowly reach out again to a different spot in your personal space, and then quickly retract. Try reaching out to all areas of your personal space.
7. Sequence for older children: Divide the class in half. Half sit scattered on the ground as if on a lily pad, while the other half run lightly about the space. Children on the ground reach out, stretch, and then quickly retract their arms, runners hover, quiver, and dart again.

**Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:**
- Darting: Run as lightly as you can, feel like you are skimming over water.
- Hovering: Stretch your body tall. Breathe in and feel the lightness. Stretch the top of your head right to the ceiling.
- Quiver quickly and lightly. Tremble and shake.
- Dart quickly around the lily pads and frogs.
- How does it feel to hover over the pond? How does it feel to skim by the frogs?
Table 6—Segment 4: Turtles

Text: "Dive, doze, eyes closed." (Book shows three turtles moving along the bank of the pond and one turtle partially in the water. Frog is behind the turtle with his eye just about closed. Lily pads are in the background.)

Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:
- What do you think is happening in this picture? What do you think will happen next?
- How do turtles move?
- What do they look like when they sleep? What shape are the turtles?

Movement ideas:
1. Explore traveling in different ways very slowly at a low level. Transfer your weight slowly onto different body parts, travel on different body parts, move one body part at a time. Sometimes have your back on the ground, sometimes your belly, sometimes travel on hands and feet only.
2. Create a short sequence. Start in a curved body shape at a low level, just like a turtle in its shell. Travel slowly on different body parts; pause, look around for your favorite rock in the sun, travel to the rock, and sink down in a different curved shape as if you were taking a nap in the sun.

Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:
- Be sure to move very slowly.
- What does it feel like to move very slowly?
- How does it feel to curl up in a round shape?

Table 7—Segment 5: Herons

Text: "Lash, lunge, herons plunge." (Book shows a heron wading near the shore and plunging its beak into the water and the frog, looking scared, jumping out of the water just seconds ahead of the heron's beak.)

Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:
- What is happening in this picture?
- Have you ever seen a heron fishing for dinner? Where did you see this?
- How do herons try to catch fish? How do they move? Why do they move slowly?
- Have you ever played a tag game when you tried to run and jump to avoid being caught by a tagger? How does it feel when you just barely escape being caught?
- Have you ever played hide and seek? How does it feel when someone walks by you and you keep very still and he or she does not see you?

Movement ideas:
1. Slashing: Imagine you are very mad; when I beat the drum, lash out with your arms and legs, show in your body fast, indirect, strong movements; slashing movements. Twist and turn your body, jump in the air in a whirling action and land with a stamping movement. Slashing is one of Laban's eight basic effort actions. Slashing movements have strong force, fast speed, and travel indirectly through space, that is, travel in a roundabout way using a large amount of space.
2. Now combine slashing and thrusting in a short sequence. Do a slashing movement, then reach up and do a thrusting plunge down aiming directly down with your arms as you take a large step and bend your knee ending in a longe position. Pierce into the water. (Thrusting is one of Laban's eight basic effort actions. Thrusting movements have strong force, fast speed, and travel directly through space. That is, travel efficiently in a straight, direct way using a small, precise amount of space.)
3. Now alternate slashing and thrusting movements when I beat the drum. Try ending at a different level each time. Sometimes slash and lunge down pointing your arms down, then slash and lunge pointing at a medium or high level. Sometimes lunge in different directions or end in different shapes.
4. Walk about the space slowly stepping first on your toe then heel, feel your toes and feel sink into the floor, then reverse and peel your feet off floor by lifting your heel first, then sole, then toes. Then slowly step toe heel again. Try to show how a heron would stalk and search for prey in the water without scaring fish by making a splash or disturbing the soft bottom of the pond.
5. Put the two together in a sequence. Walk, slash, walk, thrust-plunge down. Walk on the soft beat of the drum, lash or lunge on strong double beat of the drum. Be very precise, slow, and deliberate as you stalk the fish, then attack suddenly with a lunge and plunge into space to represent catching a fish. Try to slash and plunge in a different way each time.

Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:
- Step very slowly and gently. Lift your knees high. Gently touch the floor first with toe then heel. Sink gently taking your weight onto your foot.
- Make your slashing movements very fast and very strong. Try to use as much space as you can.
- Make your thrusting movements very fast and very strong. Try to move directly to your ending position.
- Think how it feels to stalk a fish.
- How does it feel when you stalk slowly and then suddenly plunge down on the fish?

Table 8—Segment 6: Whirligigs

Text: "Circle, swirl, whirligigs twirl." (Looking down from above the pond, the illustrations show whirligigs on top of the water with expanding circles around each representing water ripples. The frog is under the water.)

Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:
- Let's see what else lives in a pond. Does anyone know what these are? Yes, insects. A whirligig is a beetle that lives on the surface of the water and swims in circles.
- There are lots of circles in this picture. What else has a round, circular shape?
- Put your thumbs up if you have ever tossed a rock into a pond. What happens to the surface? What shapes do you see?

Movement ideas:
1. Let's do circular movements. Try spinning on one foot. Now try spinning on different body parts.
2. Travel about the gym on circular pathways. Sometimes travel on large and sometimes small circles.
3. Now sometimes travel on circular pathways and sometimes spin on different body parts.

Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:
- How do you feel when you spin and spin?
- Where in this room do you see circles? What has a circular shape? When outside of physical education, do you travel on circular pathways?
### Table 9—Segment 7: Swallows

**Text:** “Sweep, swoop, swallow scoops.” (Book shows swallows swooping down, one skimming along the surface of the pond with its beak in the water scooping.)

**Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:**
- What do you think the birds are doing in this picture?
- Has anyone seen how birds swoop down to the water to catch fish?
- How many of you have seen swallows fly in the evening? What do they look like? What do their pathways in the air look like?

**Movement ideas:**
1. Reach up with one hand as high as you can, swoop down with that hand on a circular pathway down and back up. Bend your knees as you swoop down. Make your whole body swoop down and up with your hand. Now try the other hand. Now try both hands.
2. Now swoop leading with the tips of your fingers, now the side of your hands, now with your palms up and then down.
3. Now add traveling, run a few steps, reach high, swoop down sweeping your hand gently along the floor reach up and pause.
4. Try again, sometimes travel using a lot of steps; sometimes taking only one step.
5. Now try swooping to your side, now the other side.
6. Now add legs. Start standing tall and reaching with one hand. Lift one knee and swoop down and up with your whole body.

**Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:**
- Really stretch through your whole body just before you swoop. Take a deep breath in and feel the lightness just before you swoop down.
- When you swoop down, feel your body fall, collapse, let the air out, let go of the tension and when you get near the ground tighten up and swing up again—just like a swing.

### Table 10—Segment 8: Lobsters

**Text:** “Click, clack, claws clack.” (Illustrations show lobsters on the bottom of the pond with their claws open and held up.)

**Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:**
- What is happening in this picture?
- Have you ever seen a lobster? When you see them in the supermarket, they have big rubber bands on their claws. Why do you think this is?

**Movement ideas:**
1. Explore making clicking and clacking noises with your body. Click your fingers, clap hands, tap on different body parts, make clicking noises with your tongue.
2. Create a short rhythm sequence of different clicks and claps. This will be your own personal rhythm. Select three different sounds and put them together in a rhythm. For example, click your fingers twice, clap once, slap your thighs three times fast.
3. Now add movements to your click clack rhythm sequence.
4. Now teach your rhythm to a partner.
5. Let’s have a conversation with clicking and clacking movements. One partner make a rhythm and the other respond with a different rhythm.

**Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:**
- Listen carefully to your rhythm and try to repeat it in exactly the same way and at the same tempo.
- Try to follow your partner’s rhythm exactly.

### Table 11—Segment 9: Ducks

**Text:** “Dabble dip tails flip.” (Illustrations show ducks with their tails in the air and their heads underwater trying to catch minnows.)

**Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:**
- What is happening in this picture? What are the ducks doing? Minnows? Frog?
- How many of you have ever seen ducks diving for food?
- What is happening with the water?

**Movement ideas:**
1. Let’s work on dabbling movements. (Dab is one of Laban’s eight basic effort actions and includes movements that are fast, light, and direct.) Gently and quickly move your hands making dabbing movements as if you were touching something with a cotton ball. Now, skip over the spaces making light gestures with your hands. Do a light turning jump and continue skipping. Keep your hands light. This is a happy movement.
2. Let’s do a dabbling dance. Skip and do a turning jump, skip again making light gestures with your hands, jump and end with your head down looking between your legs with your arms up fingers pointing to the ceiling representing the ducks in the illustration.

**Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:**
- Skip lightly. Make it a happy skip, an excited skip.
- Make your hand movements quick, gentle, and soft.
- Make your turning jumps carefree, fun, and light.

### Table 12—Segment 10: Raccoon

**Text:** “Squash, splash, paws flash.” (Book shows a raccoon on the bank catching a fish in its paws with a splash. The frog is jumping away. There are cattails on the bank.)

**Ideas for introducing the text and making connections:**
- What kind of animal is this? What tells you that this is a raccoon?
- How is the raccoon catching fish?
- What kind of plant is growing on the bank? Does anyone know what is inside the cattail pod?
- Have you ever tried to catch a fish with your hands? What happened? Is it hard?

**Movement ideas:**
1. Let’s work on flicking. Flicking is one of Laban’s eight basic effort actions. A flick is a soft, fast, indirect movement—like flicking a fly off your arm.) Move your hands quickly and lightly all about your personal space as if they were twinkling lights.
2. Now do the flicking movements followed by a thrusting movement. Flick your hand in three different places in your personal space, then do a thrusting action by jumping and stomping while you extend your hands and fingers out. Hold that shape. Try it to the rhythm of the text: splash (flick), splash (flick), paws (flick), (flick), thrust, hold that shape.
3. Now, add traveling by skipping and hopping. Make happy, twirling, excited movements with your hands, arms, and head. Then do the rhythm to the text: splash, splash, paws, flash, and hold that shape.

**Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:**
- Keep your flicking movements light and quick. Your fingers should feel alive dancing all about your personal space.
- The thrusting action should be sudden and end in an unexpected shape.
- Make your skips light and happy. Swaying high when you skip letting your arms swing all about your personal space.
Table 13—Segment 11: End of story.

Text: “Chill breeze, winter breeze... cold night, sleep tight, small, small pond.” (The first illustration is of a goose, cattails, leaves, and snow blowing across the pond. The last page is snow falling on the pond at night and the frog curled up inside a den under the bank.)

Idea for introducing the text and making connections:

- Let’s see how the story ends. What is happening in these pictures? What shows you that the wind is blowing? Is the wind blowing gently or strongly? Do you think it is cold or hot?
- What do you think the goose is feeling? What do you think the frog is feeling?
- Has it been a long day for the frog? How do you feel at the end of a long day? What do you like to do when you feel that way?
- How do you feel when you are outside and the wind is blowing?
- What are some fun things to do when you are playing outside and it is very windy?

Movement ideas:

1. Imagine that there is a strong wind blowing. Travel quickly running, leaping, turning, and spinning about the gym, stop, and freeze.
2. Let’s do a sequence to end the story. Travel quickly and freeze three times, then slowly turn and sink down into a cozy den by making a round shape on the floor.

Refining tasks, questions to help children increase awareness of feelings:

- Really swing your arms as you leap and turn, swirl your arms around your body.
- Lift your knees as you do a turning jump.

Table 14—Culminating Dance

Children enjoy hearing stories over and over and they also enjoy repeating their dances several times. At the end of each lesson, the teacher can read the book, pause after each segment, and cue the children through a short, individual dance sequence for each segment of the book. The dance ends with all individuals sinking into a cozy den. Another option is a whole class dance representing what the frog sees, feels, and experiences. Have three children be a frog group and design a way to travel from group to group. Divide the rest of the class into 10 groups. Each group performs a sequence for one segment. The frogs travel to each group in order around the room and stop to watch each group’s sequence. The dance ends with all children performing an individual sequence for the last segment of the book, ending by sinking into a cozy den.

References


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Using Movement to Teach Academic Concepts

by Jill Givler

All over the country the following scene is played out with variations most school days: CJ, a typical fourth grader bursts through the front door after school announcing loudly, “Hey Mom! Dad! I’m home! Can I go over to my friend’s house to play until dinner?” CJ’s mother, who herself has just arrived home from work moments before, goes through her checklist in response: “Please don’t leave your shoes and backpack in front of the door! Who’s house are you going to? Are the parents home? What are you two going to do? Do you have any homework tonight?” By the time this ritual conversation is completed, CJ is off to play with a friend, and the parent is busy starting dinner and getting other house and family chores done. A little later the school day might be revisited with the question, “So, what did you do in school today?” The operative word here is “do.” There is an unstated presumption that students not only “learn” something during their six-plus hours in school, but that they are somehow or other actively engaged in this learning process.

While student engagement doesn’t necessarily have to include physical participation, it certainly presents an obvious opportunity to do just that. As physical educators, we’ve learned to include academic concepts with our physical activities whenever possible. For example, placing math skills such as counting repetitions, scoring, and timing, into a dance allows us to reinforce the academic concepts with the physical aspect of our lessons. Within a little encouragement (and support from our—physical educators), classroom teachers can likewise be encouraged to incorporate movement and physical skills in their classroom lessons.

“Active Academics” is a win-win situation. It provides a small measure of added daily physical activity for students as well as a refreshing change of pace from seated work to stimulate student interest and comprehension. Classroom teachers who have embraced this kinesthetic approach to teaching have reported other benefits such as better classroom management, more focused students, improved student recall and interest in material, and improved teacher attitudes toward students. Classroom teachers are often reluctant to get students up and moving because they are (a) unsure of student motor skill levels, (b) have little confidence in their own ability to manage students in a dynamic (often fast moving and noisy) environment, and (c) lack the training and/or resources to carry movement appropriately with academic objectives.

How can we help our classroom colleagues to create a more active learning environment? First, share your knowledge about student motor skills and development. Provide not only specific information about classes and individual students, but show others the benchmarks for various grade levels published by NASPE. Next, be sure your management methods and system for stopping and starting activity, handling equipment, and observing students is shared with your fellow teachers. Introduce them to web sites such as PE Central (and other sites that provide integrated lesson ideas) and be willing to suggest ideas when you come across a good idea that you think might be appropriate. Last, but not least, offer to help them try an active lesson (if your schedule permits). Be a mentor—use every opportunity to encourage classroom teachers to get their students moving.

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