Music and Movement:

Managing Mayhem and Building Community

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Humans need to move, and not just to get from place to place. When we move, especially when we cross the midlines of the body, our brains are engaged and are better able to process new information. With movement, we can focus extra energy and have opportunities to express ourselves kinesthetically. Adding music with a strong underlying beat to movement works on coordination, body and spatial awareness, reinforces keeping a steady beat and provides the framework for unison, choreographed movement.

The dances and games in this workshop are simple, yet complex – there are set steps and figures to complete, as well as opportunities to be creative, either alone or with a partner or small group. When students dance and sing together, they are building community and increasing cooperation. Dancing with different members of a class helps students realize that they don’t have to be best friends with their partner – they can work with everyone and help each other be successful. And of course, using good manners when choosing partners is vital! Plus, the smiles and the laughter and true enjoyment of the dances spills over into how students treat each other the rest of the time. As students learn the steps, relationships are built and strengthened and mayhem turns into order.

**Music, Movement and Dance in the Classroom and School**

* Use songs or chants to help memorize information
* Have students “piggyback” songs (make up new words to existing songs)
* Spend 5 minutes a day listening to classical music – the same piece for one week at a time
* Allow students to walk around or spin to process information
* Take movement breaks (brain breaks) as you transition from one subject to another
* Stretch or jump in the middle of a longer lesson to pump more oxygen to the brain
* Shake it out – cross the midlines of the body (front/back, side/side, up/down)
* Use a dance afternoon as a special treat/reward
* Dances can enhance different units of study – history, literature, language and culture, etc.
* Mix a contra dance into a school dance
* Sponsor a Community Dance Night for your grade level and parents/families

**Tips for Managing Mass Movement**

* Give clear instructions, no more than three at a time
* Sing or chant your directions
* Use visual and non-verbal cues, such as pictures or written directions on a board, a musical cue (ring-tone, bell, etc) for different activities, and remember: silence works wonders
* Use a variety of attention getters such as: “If you can hear me, touch your nose (clap once)”, clap or chant a pattern for student repetition (the “ch” sound works well)

Dances

Sasha! **-** A Scatter Mixer

*Sashay the Donut* (book and cd)

New England Dancing Masters Productions

[www.dancingmasters.com](http://www.dancingmasters.com)

Space Jam – 4-wall dance

CD: The Space Cadets

Chimes of Dunkirk - Longways Set

*Chimes of Dunkirk* (book and cd)

New England Dancing Masters Productions

[www.dancingmasters.com](http://www.dancingmasters.com)

Shapes

Sashay the Donut - Circle Dance

*Sashay the Donut* (book and cd)

New England Dancing Masters Productions

[www.dancingmasters.com](http://www.dancingmasters.com)

Blackberry Quadrille - Circle Dance

*Teaching Folk Dance - Successful Steps*

By Phyllis Weikart

High/Scope Press Educational Research Foundation

CD: Rhythmically Moving 2

Fjaskern (Hurry Scurry) -

Swedish Folk Dance (circle dance)

*Teaching Folk Dance - Successful Steps*

By Phyllis Weikart

High/Scope Press Educational Research Foundation

CD: Rhythmically Moving 2

Traffic Jam – Progressive Mixer

Steps given at AOSA Conference November, 2012

CD: Any Jig or Reel

[www.dancingmasters.com](http://www.dancingmasters.com)

**Recommended CDs for Early Childhood:**

Greg & Steve: Kids in Motion

Greg & Steve: Big Fun

Kids Dance Party

All-Time Favorite Dances

Kidz Bop (a series of kid friendly pop songs)

Laurie Berkner: Victor Vito

**Recommended Websites**:

<http://www.gregandsteve.com>

<http://www.laurieberkner.com>

<http://www.songsforteaching.com/index.html>

http://teacher-support-force.com

There are many examples of contra dancing posted on YouTube. Check them out!

**Recommended Books**:

Glynn, Carol. *Learning on Their Feet: A Sourcebook for Kinesthetic Learning Across the Curriculum K-8.* 2001.

Kodiak, Eve. *Feelin’ Free! Songs & Stories for Sensory Integration.* Sound Intelligence, 2005

Kodiak, Eve. *Rappin’ on the Reflexes.* Sound Intelligence, 2006

**Recommended Listening:**

Brummitt, David and Taylor, Karen. *Brummitt-Taylor Music Listening Program: a Non-Directed Listening Approach.* Tall Timbers Publishing Corporation, 1996