

THE ARTS PLAYBOOK

ARTS ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO
SUPPORT CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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ARTS REACHING & TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

BYU *arts* **PARTNERSHIP**

Develop the brain & body connection through the arts



The body is the primary instrument for living. Cognitive, physical, social and emotional indicators provide insight into how the body and the brain connect to optimize living and learning opportunities. This playbook presents arts activities through the lens of developmental indicators to illuminate student strengths and challenges.

The activities in this section reinforce developmental skills essential to learning through potentially pleasurable physical activities, including dancing, singing, acting, and drawing. Teachers can use these activities with the whole class in a relaxed and mindful way, reducing stress and improving learning readiness for every student. By observing students' performance in these activities, teachers can identify challenges and strengths,

mastery of developmental indicators, emotional regulation, and the effects of stress or trauma.

Full body engagement activated during arts experiences activates the senses and refines fine and gross motor skills, increasing physical and cognitive abilities. Reflection and metacognition of arts experiences increase social and emotional ability.

The arts activities presented here were selected to specifically address developmental indicators to nourish and relax all learners. Each can be done in 5-10 minutes as a simple ritual throughout the school day. In this way, all the art forms can be used as a type of "brain break" with a focus on essential skills identified as developmental milestones.

The arts, it has been said, cannot change the world, but they may change human beings who might change the world."

MAXINE GREEN

PLAYFUL MOVES

Foster the integration of students' motor skills and sensory input to awaken perception and coordinate movement.

TOUCH Pat, massage, and brush body parts to awaken the neuroreceptors in the skin and muscles.

SMELL AND TASTE Activate smell and taste with stimuli or from memory. Use oils, food, or items from nature for smelling or exploring textures. Incorporate stories to activate the memory of smells or tastes.

HEARING Listen to existing sounds found in the environment or introduce a selection of new sounds.

SIGHT Observe details within your surroundings. Scan the big picture and visually consider each element. Close your eyes, observing what you notice internally. Mentally recall the objects that surround you.

BALANCE & PROPRIOCEPTION Balance on one foot while doing axial movement (bending, stretching, swinging, twisting, rotating, or spinning). Notice your body parts in space.

KINESTHESIA AND SPATIAL AWARENESS

Maintain awareness of self and general space: actively visualize a bubble of safety around you, other people, and nearby objects as you move.

FLEXIBILITY Explore your physical range of motion. Breathe and lengthen muscle groups, reaching up into space or bending down to stretch towards the floor. Begin with very small movements, gradually expanding into open space as you continue to move, stretch widely, and twist in various directions.

COORDINATION Move through space with these locomotor movements: run, walk, skip, gallop, slide, hop, and jump.

BEAT Move to the beat of a drum. Or, use body percussion to create a beat. Keep the beat in your feet, in your hand, in your shoulders, in your fingers; see how many places the beat can continue within your body.

RHYTHM Play a call-and-response clapping or movement game, exploring rhythm and variations of fast and slow.

THE BRAIN DANCE The Brain Dance is a sequenced movement exercise built by Anne Green Gilbert based on her understanding of infant and child development, reflexes, and the potential for movement to support the brain-body connection.



PEOPLE PLAY

Support your students' emotional literacy and development of social skills through verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

FACIAL EXPRESSION Individually or as a group, list various emotions and express each emotion using your face. Invite students to feel and notice their faces as designated emotions are expressed.

GESTURE Students and teachers can feel and notice the body as each person expresses and feels various gestures and/or emotions. In your body, notice which comes first: the emotion or the gesture? Experiment both directions: begin by giving students an emotion and invite them to create a corresponding gesture. Then, try creating a gesture first and identifying what emotions the gesture provokes.

POSTURE AND GAIT Feel and notice your body as you stand, walk, run, or move in various postures. What does posture reveal about a person, animal, or character? Assign students an emotion; invite them to walk according to that emotion. Next, ask students' to move how they want and ask the students to identify what emotion is communicated.

MIRRORING Place students into pairs. Each faces their partner. Guide students to take turns leading and following each other as if each is looking in the mirror, reflecting the movements fo the other person. Start with simple expressions or gestures; large slow motions are best to start with. Can students take turns leading with nonverbal cues? Change partners.

FLOCKING Class members move together in unison, like a flock of birds does following its leader. Explore various leaders of the group. Evolve to the intuitive transfer of leadership. Allow subgroups to separate from and reconnect to the whole.

STORYTELLING Create pairs or small groups of students and invite them to share stories with each other. A time limit will help learners to distill the information into the essential information. Tell a story in character, using appropriate vocal and facial expression, posture, and gestures of a selected character in a specific setting.



VOCAL PLAY

Help students find their voice, listen to self and others, and develop vocal expression as well as auditory discrimination.

THINKING CAPS

Rub your ears from top to bottom to sharpen listening, filter sound, and relax.

THE OWL

Squeeze your trapezius (the muscle that joins your shoulder and neck) while turning your head slowly and vocalizing a sound.

ENERGY YAWN

Open your jaw and massage the joint gently until you yawn.

Brain Gym by Paul and Gail Dennison

KEEP A BEAT

Move to an established beat made with body percussion, drums, or music. Engage in creative movement, clapping games, social dances, and folk dances.

ROLLER COASTER VOICES

Use your voice to imitate the physical feelings of traveling on a roller coaster by exploring a wide range of vocal sounds and textures. Individually or as a group, use a call-and-response game: a leader vocalizes a pattern; the group repeats it. Follow the leader as their head moves up and down along the tracks of a rollercoaster.

MATCHING PITCH

Sing a pitch and invite students to repeat it back to you. Sing two pitches, then three, as the students repeat each sequence.

SING A SONG

Build community while focusing on pronunciation, diction, and articulation of sounds in a fun way. Skills rehearsed while singing can improve the quality of speaking and listening.



PENCIL PLAY

Encourage students' hand-eye coordination, visual discrimination, and fine motor skills.



LAZY EIGHTS Trace the figure of the number eight laying on its side. Go around and round with a smooth, easy glide, visually tracking the movement. Relax and practice holding your writing utensil with ease and comfort, noticing the texture of the paper. Use both your right and left hand. Lazy eights can also be drawn in the air with the eyes visually tracking the movement. Use each hand individually, then both hands together.

Brain Gym by Paul and Gail Dennison



DOUBLE DOODLES Hold a writing utensil in each hand.

Simultaneously draw doodles, creating mirror images. Practice holding the writing instrument with ease and feel the texture of the paper. Brain Gym by Paul and Gail Dennison

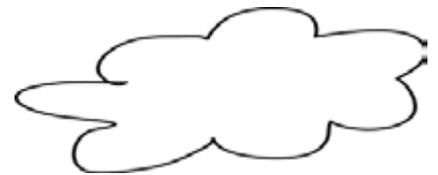
TAKE A DOT FOR A WALK Play with drawing lines. Make straight lines, swirling lines, dotted lines and explore how many types of lines you can make. Vary the thickness of the line with fat lines or thin lines.



TORNADOES Shade a triangular form from dark to light. Practice applying pressure as you draw. Use the pencil pressure to create different values and contrast. Identify the light and dark sections. This can be practiced with left-right progression for visual tracking.



BLIND CONTOURS Draw an object (hand, shoe, face, etc.) without looking at your paper. Keep your focus on the object being drawn and trace the image onto paper. Make a continuous line without lifting your pencil. In a modified blind contour, the student can glance back and forth between the object and the paper. This activity helps students see details and to feel and interpret line.



VISUALIZATION Form realistic or imaginary mental visual images, realistic or imaginary of an artistic product, desired behavior, or an image in a story being read or told. This activity nurtures cognitive development, prepares students for reading comprehension, and helps students visualize real world situations and solutions.

BRAIN DANCE

from "Brain-Compatible Dance Education" by Anne Green Gilbert

1. Breath - Nourish and relax

Deep breathing is essential for a fully functioning brain and body. The brain consumes one-fifth of the body's oxygen. All movements and rhythms are based on breath.

2. Tactile - Squeeze, tap, pat, scratch, and brush all body parts

A variety of touch leads to bonding, sensory integration, proprioception (knowing where the body is in space), and appropriate behavior.

3. Core-Distal - Stretch arms, legs, and fingers to open wide then curl up small

Actively reaching out with distal ends (fingers, toes, head and tail) connects us to the world beyond ourselves (interpersonal intelligence) and creates full-body extension. Curling back to the core (pelvis and trunk) returns us to our own self (intrapersonal intelligence), creating an awareness of core support for correct alignment and a sense of aliveness.

4. Head—Tail - Move head and tail front-to-back and side-to-side separately, then together

Awareness of the interactive relationship between the head and tail (pelvis) leads to a full use of both ends of our spine, propelling us through space with ease, both on- and off- balance. Releasing tension from the head to the tail enables our central nervous system to fully function. This pattern also strengthens the back, neck, and shoulder muscles used in sitting and writing and when focusing on a book, screen or blackboard.

5. Upper—Lower - Move and twist the upper body, then the lower body

Grounding the lower half by yielding the weight of the body into the earth allows the upper half to reach into space and relate with people. Grounding the upper half by focusing attention on the movement of breath in and out of the lungs allows the lower half to shift weight and travel through space toward someone or away from danger. Grounding and articulating body halves encourage emotional stability. We learn to reach for goals and set boundaries.

6. Body—Side - Move the right side of the body, then the left side of the body in various ways

Grounding the right side allows the left side to be fully expressive and vice versa. Right or left dominance is felt; left and right brain hemispheres are strengthened. Body-side movements also develop horizontal eye tracking necessary for reading.

7. Cross—Lateral - Move across midline: march, skip, walk, jog, run

Connecting body parts from opposite quadrants creates complex, three-dimensional movements such as spirals. Crossing the midline of the body connects both sides of the brain through the corpus collosum, essential for developing high-order thinking and reasoning skills. Cross-lateral movements also develop vertical eye tracking necessary for reading.

8. Vestibular - Move off-balance with swings, spins, tips and rolls (jump or focus the eyes on hands to recover)

Moving off-balance activates balance (or the vestibular system). Stimulating the vestibular system strengthens eye tracking, hearing, proprioception, balance, and coordination.

BRAIN DANCE BENEFITS

from "Brain-Compatible Dance Education" by Anne Green Gilbert

1. Breath

Deep breathing is essential for a fully functioning brain and body. The brain consumes one-fifth of the body's oxygen. All movements and rhythms are based on breath.

2. Tactile

A variety of touch leads to bonding, sensory integration, proprioception (knowing where the body is in space) and appropriate behavior.

3. Core-Distal

Reaching out with distal ends (fingers, toes, head and tail) connects us to the world beyond ourselves (interpersonal intelligence) and creates full body extension. Curling back to the core (pelvis and trunk) returns us to our own self (intrapersonal intelligence) and creates an awareness of core support for correct alignment and a sense of aliveness.

4. Head-Tail

Being aware of the interactive relationship between the head and tail (pelvis) leads to a full use of both ends of our spine for propelling us through space with ease, both on and off balance. Release of the head and tail creates an open path for our central nervous system to fully function. This pattern also strengthens back, neck, and shoulder muscles used in sitting, writing and focusing on book, screen or blackboard.

5. Upper-Lower

Grounding the lower half, by yielding the weight of the body into the earth, allows the upper half to reach into space and relate with people. Grounding the upper half allows the lower to shift weight and travel through space toward someone or away from danger. Grounding and articulating body halves encourage emotional stability. We learn to reach for goals and set boundaries.

6. Body-Side

Grounding the right side allows the left side to be fully expressive and vice versa. Right or left dominance is felt; left and right brain hemispheres are strengthened. Body-side movements develop horizontal eye tracking necessary for reading.

7. Cross Lateral

Connecting body parts from opposite quadrants create complex, three-dimensional movements such as spirals. Crossing the midline of the body connects both sides of the brain through the corpus collosum, which is essential for developing higher thinking skills. Cross-lateral movements develop vertical eye tracking necessary for reading.

8. Vestibular

Moving off balance develops the balance or Vestibular System. Stimulating the Vestibular System strengthens eye tracking, hearing, proprioception, balance and coordination.