Silent Moves

Originating Idea
Teachers observed that the children often finished their snacks and joined the large group at varying times. Because the children approach the large-group area gradually, the teachers need an activity that engaged a few children at first and accommodated a larger number of children as the transition was completed.

Opener
As children approach the large-group area, the teacher should make direct eye contact with them and motion, “Watch me.” (You can do this by mouthing or whispering those words and/or pointing to your eyes and then pointing to yourself.) Silently, perform a simple movement such as raising both arms above your head, and whisper or mouth the words, “Now you try it.” After the children raise their arms, continue the activity with a series of “silent moves,” stopping after each one so the children can imitate it. The movements could include placing your hands in your lap, rubbing your belly, or bending your knees.

Activity
Designate one child to lead the group, making sure the child stops after each movement. Other children could also serve as leaders, if time allows. Between the children’s turns, you can discuss the body parts that were moved and the ways the movements were carried out (e.g., fast, slow, smooth, jerky). Use open-ended questions and comments such as “Liam, what helped you decide where to put your hands?” or “Cole’s movements were different than Liam’s. What could we say about them?”

Transition
Once all the children arrive at large-group time, engage them in one last movement sequence. If possible, have this last sequence be a logical transition to the next activity in large-group time. If the children are kneeling, for example, have them put one foot on the floor, push off on that foot, then put their other foot on the floor. Now the group is ready for an activity that begins from a standing position.
Originating Idea
Teachers noticed that the children had a lot of energy to expend after sitting at snack time, and they typically began running around in the large-group-time area before a teacher was available. This activity was developed as a way for the teacher to join the children and turn their actions into an organized large-group experience.

Opener
Have children follow you as you run in a large circle, while you and the children sing or chant the following:

  We're running, running, running.
  We're running, running, running.
  We're running, running, running.
  And now we stop.

If you choose to sing the words, make up a simple melody or use a familiar tune such as “The Farmer in the Dell.”

Activity
Ask children to suggest different ways to move around the circle and have them demonstrate their movements. Imitate and describe the children's movements and acknowledge the ways they identify their movements. You may also add new vocabulary words to help them describe their movements. The exchange might go like this:

Teacher: What is another way we can move around the circle?
Tony: Hopping!
Teacher: Show us how that looks. (Tony demonstrates by jumping on two feet around the circle.)
Anna: That's not hopping. This is hopping. (Anna hops on one foot.)
Teacher: Tony said “hopping” and used two feet, and Anna used one foot. When we use two feet like Tony, we can say “jumping.” Let's try it Tony's way first. (Teachers and children sing, “We're jumping, jumping, jumping.”)
Teacher: Now let's try it Anna's way. (Teachers and children sing, “We're hopping, hopping, hopping.”)


Curriculum Content Areas
Language, Literacy, and Communication
The Arts
Mathematics

Materials
A piece of chart paper, with the rhyme “Hickory Dickory Dock” written on it

Originating Idea
Children have been listing words that have the same beginning sound as their names (e.g., “Henry” and “heart”). The teachers wanted a fun way to capitalize on the children’s interest in identifying the initial sounds of words.

Opener
Tell the children that you know a rhyme about a mouse. Ask them to pretend their hands are mice, and have them demonstrate how that would look. Read the rhyme “Hickory Dickory Dock” to the children. Have the children tap a steady beat on their knees as you recite the rhyme. When you say the line “The mouse ran up the clock,” have the children wiggle their fingers toward the ceiling. When you say the line “The clock struck one,” have children hold up one finger or make a chiming sound. When you say the line “The mouse ran down,” have the children wiggle their fingers back down to their laps. Finish the last line of the rhyme while patting the beat.

Activity
After saying the rhyme and doing the fingerplays a few times, tell the children that you are going to change the title of “Hickory Dickory Dock” so the words all start with the /b/ sound. (Children can identify “B” as the letter that makes the /b/ sound.) Recite the new version of the rhyme, “Bickory Bickory Bock.” You (or the children) can then suggest other letters and letter sounds. If you say, “The next sound we are going to use is the sound the letter ‘L’ makes,” the rhyme would become “Lickory Lickory Lock.” If you say, “Let’s try the first sound in the word ‘pumpkin,’” the rhyme would become “Pickory Pickory Pock.”

Transition
As you direct the group to the next activity, change the initial sound in the key words of your instructions and have children “correct” you. If you say, for example, “Now we are going to pick a gong from the gong gook,” the children would reply, “Pick a song from the song book.” You could also dismiss children from large-group time by saying their name using a different initial sound (e.g., “Benry” for “Henry”).

38  50 Large-Group Activities for Active Learners
**Curriculum Content Areas**
The Arts
Approaches to Learning
Language, Literacy, and Communication
Physical Development, Health, and Well-Being

**Materials**
A large whiteboard
An assortment of colored dry-erase markers

**Originating Idea**
Children have been drawing people at various times in the daily routine. Some of the drawings have distinct eyes, noses, mouths, arms, and legs, while others contain few distinguishable body parts. Teachers developed this activity to further the children’s awareness of body parts.

**Opener**
Introduce the song “Aiken Drum” by leading a discussion about the children’s drawings. The following illustrates how the conversation might proceed:

**Teacher:** I have noticed a lot of drawings of people these days (point out some pictures displayed on the walls). Some have eyes, and some have ears. If you were going to draw a person, what body parts would you include?

**Jonah:** Mine is there. (Jonah points to his crayon drawing on the wall.) I draw legs and feet.

**Teacher:** There are lots of parts to draw when you draw people. I have a song about someone who has some pretty strange parts to draw. It’s about a man who has food for body parts!

**Tomo:** Food!!

**Teacher:** If your hair was made of food, what sort of food would it be?

**Tomo:** Spaghetti.

**Teacher:** This man has spaghetti hair, and his name is Aiken Drum.

Being singing “Aiken Drum”:

I knew a man who lived in the moon,
In the moon, in the moon.
I knew a man who lived in the moon,
And his name was Aiken Drum.

And his hair was made of spaghetti,
Spaghetti, spaghetti.
His hair was made of spaghetti,
And his name was Aiken Drum.
Firefighter Story

Originating Idea
Children have been dressing up as and pretending to be firefighters at work time. This activity increases their growing understanding of a firefighter's job. Teachers developed this activity to give children ideas to use in their play during work time.

Opener
Tell the children that you would like to tell a story about firefighters, but you need help coming up with ideas. Ask them to tell you things that they know about firefighters and write their ideas on the chart paper. (The children might mention things such as hoses, fire engines, and fire poles.) You can also ask open-ended questions such as “How do firefighters know when there is a fire?,” “How do they put out the fire?,” or “How do they protect themselves?” Record the children’s answers on chart paper.

Activity
Have the children make up actions for some of their ideas, such as using hoses to fight a fire. You could say, “Show me how it would look if you were a firefighter squirting water on a burning building.” Have the children demonstrate other actions such as chopping with an axe and driving the fire engine. Tell a simple story using some of the ideas from the children. Have the children act out the story:

Once upon a time at Firehouse Number 72, there was a group of firefighters ready for action. One day the fire alarm went off because there was a large fire at the office down the street. The firefighters had to put on their coats, hats, and heavy boots. (Children pretend to dress.) They slid down the fire pole and jumped onto the engine. (Ask children to help you make the sound of the fire engine) When they got to the office building, it was blazing and smoke was coming out the windows. The firefighters climbed up their ladders and sprayed water on the flames. (Children pretend to use fire hoses.)

Transition
Tell the children that when they hear you make a fire alarm sound, they should pretend to drive their own fire engine to the next part of the daily routine.
Rub-a-Dub-Dub

28

Originating Idea

The children have shown a great interest in the Mother Goose book of nursery rhymes in the classroom. This activity provides an opportunity for children to better understand a familiar rhyme through a reenactment.

Opener

Tell the children that you know a rhyme about three people: a butcher, a baker, and a candlestick maker. Post the chart paper with the words to "Rub-a-Dub-Dub" and point to the terms "butcher," "baker," and "candlestick maker" as you say them. Talk with the children about each of the three occupations. The conversation might go like this:

Teacher: Butcher, baker, candlestick maker. Have you ever heard of those jobs?

Marijata: A baker bakes things. You know, cakes and cookies.

Tony: Like a bakery.

Teacher: Bakers work in bakeries making cakes and cookies. What does a butcher do?

Talia: I don't know. (Children shrug.)

Teacher: A butcher works in a meat market. He cuts up meat for people to buy. You might have seen a butcher at the grocery store. They work behind a counter. Sometimes they wrap up meat in paper.

Talia: Oh, yeah.

Teacher: The last person in the tub was a candlestick maker.

Marijata: He makes candles.

Teacher: Yes. He uses hot wax to make candles. So in the tub were a butcher, a baker, and a candlestick maker, taking a ride out to sea.

Activity

Place the ropes on the floor in an oval shape to create a "tub," a space big enough for three children. Choose children to play the butcher, baker, and candlestick maker and ask them to sit in the tub. They can pretend to row the tub with their "paddles" (blocks or shovels) as the rest of the children pat the beat and say the rhyme. Repeat the rhyme, giving other children a turn to sit in the tub. Ask for ideas on how to keep the steady beat (e.g., patting knees, tapping shoulders or head).
Originating Idea

One of the children in the class talked about doing yoga with her mom. Some of the other children became interested in yoga and wanted to explore it further. In an effort to connect with family experiences and to be culturally supportive, the teachers devised this activity based on yoga poses.

Opener

Ask the children if anyone knows about yoga. If so, ask those children to demonstrate some poses. (If not, explain that yoga is a way of moving and stretching your body that some people do for exercise.) The conversation might go like this:

**Teacher:** Jaliesa, you are posing your body.

**Jaliesa:** I am doing the butterfly. My sister taught me that one. (Jaliesa makes the butterfly pose.)

**Teacher:** Let's try Jaliesa's butterfly pose. I wonder what we will have to do?

**Gus:** We got to touch our knees.

**Jaliesa:** No, we make our feet go together.

**Teacher:** We make our feet go together and then we touch our knees.

**Jaliesa:** Then you flap your knees like wings.

Encourage children to attempt different poses. (For suggestions, see figures at the end of this activity.)

Activity

After the children try one or two yoga poses together, have them invent new poses. The scenario might unfold like this:

**Teacher:** We are trying lots of yoga poses. I wonder if we could make up some new ones.

**Gus:** I can do this. (Gus lies down on the floor and extends his arms and legs.) I do that in the snow to make angels.

**Teacher:** Let's try the pose Gus is showing us. We could call it the angel pose.

**Delaney:** I have one. Watch, it's the bear pose. (Delaney puts her hands and feet on the floor and lifts her head as her mouth opens wide.)

**Teacher:** We could try the bear pose like Delaney.
Continue the activity as children provide new ideas and copy one another's poses.

**Transition**
Tell children to perform their favorite standing pose a final time. Have the children hold the pose (as best they can) as they take giant steps to the next part of the daily routine.

**Variations**
- Try this activity using movements from ballet or other dances.
- Incorporate movements from different sports that children have experienced (e.g., children pose as if they are throwing a ball).
- Use movements from Karate or Tai Chi, if someone is familiar with those martial arts.

**Follow-up**
- Place visual representations of the yoga poses in the large-group area of the classroom.
- Make a book of yoga poses. If possible, take photographs of children holding the poses and include them as illustrations in the book.
- Ask children to invent a yoga pose at recall time to show what area they have played in and/or a material they used.

**Accommodations for Children With Special Needs**
- Yoga poses may be difficult for some children to hold. Accept all levels of ability in making and holding a pose.
- Provide cue cards with visual representations of the poses for children who have difficulty responding to verbal directions.
- Children who are physically challenged can attempt certain parts of a pose (e.g., children in wheelchairs can hold poses with their arms), or they can represent the pose through sounds (e.g., they can bark while attempting the dog pose).

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Movement Activities With or Without Music or Objects

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Going Through the Tunnel

Originating Idea
Several children have been engrossed in playing with the new trains and train tracks in the block area. Teachers have noticed the children using blocks to build tunnels for the trains. Also, the community has a rich railroad history.

Opener
As children sit on a carpeted area, tell them that you have noticed their interest in trains and tunnels. Encourage discussion as you model how to build a tunnel with chairs and a large blanket. Here’s how the scenario might unfold:

Teacher: Yesterday some children were building a tunnel for the trains with the small blocks. I have an idea for making a tunnel with chairs. (Teacher walks over to get several chairs from a work table.) To make a tunnel we need a lot of space in the middle. How could we get more space?

Vishnu: We could go like this. (Vishnu scoots back to the carpet’s edge.)
Teacher: So, if we all did what Vishnu just did, we would have more space?
Children: Yeah. (Children move with some encouragement from a second teacher.)
Teacher: (Places the chairs in a row on one side of the carpet.) Let’s count how many chairs we have in a row.
Children: (Counting with teacher.) 1, 2, 3, 4 ... we have 5!
Teacher: Now we need the same number of chairs to make another row next to it.
Cameron: We have to get some more.
Teacher: How many?
Cameron: Five more!

The teacher gets the chairs as the children count them. The teacher places these chairs parallel to the first row of chairs, leaving about a two-foot space between the rows for the children to crawl through. A second teacher brings out a large blanket:

Teacher 2: (To Chris, the first teacher) Chris, this doesn’t look like a tunnel yet. Tunnels are covered and dark inside.
Vishnu: We could put that blanket over the chairs and make it a dark tunnel.
Teacher 2: Chris and I will put the blanket over the chairs and make a tunnel that we can go under.

The teachers drape the blanket over the rows of chairs so the space between the chairs is covered and the blanket is raised high enough for children to crawl under.

Activity
After the tunnel is made, it is important for the teachers to ensure the success of the activity and the safety of the children by positioning themselves properly, one at the beginning of the tunnel and one at the end:

Teacher: (To Sue, the second teacher) Sue, will you help with the end of the tunnel? I will help with the beginning of the tunnel. (Sue moves to the end of the tunnel.) Olivia, will you be the first engine? (Olivia agrees to be the leader and crawls to the tunnel entrance.)

As the first child enters the tunnel, begin singing the following song (to the tune of "The Bear Went Over the Mountain"):

Olivia went through the tunnel,
Olivia went through the tunnel,
Olivia went through the tunnel,
And so did all the kids.
And so did all the kids,
And so did all the kids.

You may need to sing or chant the lyrics twice to allow enough time for all the children to follow the "engine" through the tunnel. Continue in this fashion, allowing other children to be the leader.

Teachers developed this activity after noticing that children were playing with toy trains day after day.
Parachute Popcorn

Originating Idea
Children had the experience of making and eating popcorn for a snack. They commented on the movement of the kernels as they popped. The teachers used that experience to develop this activity, which helps children explore cause-and-effect and spatial relationships.

Opener
Ask children to describe the steps taken in making popcorn using an air popper or a domed popper. The conversation might go like this:

Teacher: Yesterday we made popcorn at snack time. Do you remember how we made those hard, yellow kernels turn into fluffy popcorn?
Kerry: Yes, we put them in the machine. Then we turned the machine on. It had to get hot.
Teacher: Do you remember what the popcorn was doing in the machine before it popped?
Erin: It was shaking. It was moving around. There was air blowing it.
Teacher: What happened when the popcorn got really hot?
Erin: Pop! It jumped up.

Activity
Spread out the parachute and ask each child to hold onto a handle or the edge. Tell the children to pretend that the parachute is a giant popcorn popper, and you would like them to help you make popcorn. Place the paper towel balls in the middle of the parachute. Depending on the type of popcorn popper children are familiar with, pretend to add oil and/or turn on the heat. Begin playing the music selection “Popcorn.”

Have the children shake the parachute — slowly at first — to represent the sizzling popcorn before it pops. Accompany the motion with descriptive words such as rolling, bouncing, and jumping, and words that show direction such as over, under, in, and out. As the music intensifies, have children shake faster so the paper balls pop up in the air. When the balls fly off the parachute, encourage children to put them back on.
Fruit Basket Upset

Originating Idea
During large-group time, the children often crawled across the circle to sit with their friends. The teachers saw the children's need for movement and companionship. They designed an activity that incorporates crawling into a cooperative game while also providing a language experience.

Opener
Have the children sit on the floor in a circle. Explain that they will be playing a listening game, and when they hear a “special word” they must crawl across the floor to a new place on the circle.

Tell the children that your special word is a type of fruit. You may tell them the name of the fruit or you may give clues about it. If the special word is “banana,” for instance, the clues might be given like this: “The fruit I’m thinking about is yellow. Monkeys like to eat them. The name of my fruit starts with this sound, /b/. What fruit do you suppose I’m thinking of? The fruit I’m thinking of is a banana.” After you say the special word, encourage the children to crawl across the floor to a new spot.

Activity
Tell the children that you are going to try to trick them and that they should only move when they hear the special word. Begin by naming a few different kinds of fruits before saying the special word: “Is it an apple? Is it an orange? Is it a banana?” You can challenge the children by naming fruits that have the same beginning sound as the one you chose. For example, if the special word is banana, you might say, “The name of my fruit is b-b-b-blueberry!” You could also give clues that apply to similar fruits. You could say, “I know this fruit is yellow and grows on a tree. It must be a ... lemon.”

After the children understand the game, allow them to act as the leader. (It is likely that some children will immediately say the name of their fruit rather than naming other fruits. Be prepared to assist children if they forget their special word while trying to think of other fruits.)
Rhyme Time

What Children Do and Learn
Children listen to simple verses and move in different ways, depending on whether or not the last word rhymes with the end word in the previous lines(s). (This activity works best after children have had practice rhyming individual words.)

Story Starter
Brown Town had a poetry contest. When the ending words in a poem rhymed, everyone had to crawl to another carpet square. But if the words didn’t rhyme, they had to stay right where they were. Make sure each child is standing on a carpet square, and say Here’s the first poem. “I opened a book. And I saw a hook.” Do you think the people in Brown Town crawled to another square or stayed where they were. If you think book and hook rhyme, crawl to another square. Give children time to move. Here’s the next poem. “I opened a book. And I saw a fish.” Book and fish. Will you crawl to another square or stay on the same one?

Scaffolding Children’s Learning
After one or two repeats, encourage children to supply the last word. Accept real words and made-up (nonsense) words. Make comments such as I wonder if you’ll rhyme this time or not or Will you try to trick us? Expect some children to move at random or look to their peers for cues. Do not correct individual children, but comment on rhymes and movements for the class as a whole (e.g., We’re moving. Cook rhymes with book). After children have had practice with the activity, make an occasional mistake (e.g., crawl on a non-rhyme or stay in place on a rhyme) and see if they correct you. If not, say I don’t think I did that right. Can you help me?

Vocabulary words: another, crawl, ending words, poem, poetry, rhyme

Follow-up Ideas
Use rhymes at transitions (e.g., If your name rhymes with shoe, go to the snack table. Sue and Stu both rhyme with shoe. If the end of your name rhymes with head, go to the snack table. There goes Ed. Read books featuring rhyming, such as those by Dr. Seuss. When children are familiar with the book, stop now and then and encourage them to fill in the last word or phrase. Recite familiar poems and chants and encourage children to make up different rhyming endings (e.g., Row, row, row your boat/Gently down the lake/Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily/Life is but a _____. Accept and have fun with children’s real and made-up answers.

Content area:
Language, Literacy, and Communication

Time of day:
Large-group time

Materials
For each child and teacher: None
To share: Carpet squares spread on the floor (two more squares than the number of children and adults)
For backup: None