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MOVEMENT IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of University Honors Scholars Program

By

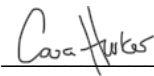
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The Honors College

University Honors Scholars Program

East Tennessee State University

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I. Introduction

Movement in Education explores the impact of movement on the quality of a student's learning experience in education. This thesis is the culmination of four years of study from 2019-2023 in East Tennessee State University's education and dance programs. Participating in these programs has provided me with many opportunities to explore the impacts of movement pedagogy in elementary education. The research portion of this thesis focuses on the educational benefits of incorporating movement into classroom activities and assessments. The experiential portion of this thesis focuses on both observations and data collected from students in a 3rd grade classroom who participated in movement activities and assessments designed and implemented by me and my experience choreographing a ballet based on *The Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Finally, I reflect on how these experiences have impacted my teaching philosophy for elementary education.

II. Personal Background in Movement

A. School Related Movement

As a homeschooled student throughout elementary, middle, and high school, my curriculum was not designed with movement in mind. For the most part, I read textbooks on my own, worked out math problems on my bed, and attended a few lecture-style co-op or dual enrollment classes. However, there are a few movement-centered experiences that stick out to me because they were unique, memorable experiences during my education. First, my mom took my siblings and me to Smoky Mountains National Park to participate

in a monarch butterfly tagging program. Rather than read about a monarch's migration in a textbook, my siblings and I got to experience the excitement of chasing down monarchs in a flowered and milkweed filled field, tagging the less fragile section of their wing with a sticker, and setting them free for the rest of their journey. I remember the park ranger teaching us to search mostly by the milkweed since that was a favorite plant of monarchs. The ranger also taught us to identify the sex of the monarchs we caught. Male monarchs had a tiny black dot on their wings and female monarchs had no dots, but they did have thicker veins than the males. Finally, I remember her talking about the long journey the resilient monarchs had to make to Mexico and how unexpected weather could impact their traveling. By the end of the day, I was happy, tired, and amazed by the wonders of butterflies, but I could not tell you anything else I learned that year in school.

Furthermore, my family toured many National Parks, National Historical Parks, National Historic Battlefields, and museums. We walked throughout the parks, listening to tours, watching reenactments, and sometimes even getting to dress up as historical characters. I remember learning that the phrase “bite the bullet” used to be quite literal as soldiers did not have much access to painkiller drugs. Soldiers would literally “bite the bullet” to endure a leg amputation or other serious medical procedure without screaming. Speaking of leg amputations, I learned that many soldiers had this happen because of an infection with gangrene. It was also during these experiences that I learned about some women disguising as men to be allowed to enlist in the war and fight for our country. I learned about Thomas Jefferson and John Adam’s disagreements, that Thomas Jefferson tore pages he did not like out of his Bible, and how Robert Carter III freed all his slaves. Not to mention, I remember being blown away by the beauty of President Harry Truman’s

presidential library and the interesting fact that President Taft bought a custom bathtub to fit his over 300-pound body. I could go on, but the point remains. Getting out of a seat, even if it was only to walk around a historic site, increased my personal engagement as well as ability to remember what I learned in school.

B. Extracurricular Movement

Although walking was the only movement I engaged in during my education, extracurriculars exposed me to a myriad of movement methods. I began dancing around the age of 8 years and did not stop until I was 20 years old. Classical ballet and pointe, as well as Aerial dance were the bulk of my training; however, I was also exposed to jazz, hip-hop, modern, improvisation, tap, and swing. The dance studio I attended prided itself on telling different stories through dance rather than the well-known ballets like *The Nutcracker*. We turned the stories of Prince Caspian, Rapunzel, and Ruth into ballets. Dancing allowed me to express the emotions of the different characters in a way I was unable to with only words. In college, I had the opportunity to create my own ballet based on C.S. Lewis' novel, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. It was interesting to analyze the story piece by piece and create ways to tell it to an audience without words. It required not only myself, but all my students, to deeply understand the characters in the story to represent them well on stage. I knew they understood the story and achieved this goal because audience members were touched by the courage, love, and familial bonds displayed in the story. Around the same time, I was beginning more advanced elementary education courses, including one on literacy. I began to wonder if all the storytelling I learned through dancing could be applied on a smaller scale in the classroom. Could

students learn more about story lines, character depth, and other literacy skills through dancing and other movements? Could dancing and movement be applied to other subjects as well? These thoughts are what began my research for incorporating dance and movement into elementary education.

II. Research on Movement in Education

A. Bringing Movement Back to the Classroom

Throughout my research on the effects of incorporating movement in a classroom, I discovered many educational benefits. First, movement gives young students a needed break from their increasing exposure to technology by helping them stay healthy, happy, social, and attentive. According to Pew Research Center, parent reports show that ninety-three percent of children from ages five to eight engage in watching television. Eighty-one percent engage with a tablet computer. Fifty-nine percent engage with a smartphone. Fifty-four percent engage with a desktop or laptop computer, and fifty-eight percent engage with a gaming device (Pew Research Center, 2020, pg. 2). This research shows just how prevalent technology is in the lives of children today. In fact, fifty-one percent of parents whose young child has a smartphone report that their children received the device between the ages of nine and eleven. The main reason for this was to make it easier for communication between the parent and child throughout the day. Seventy-eight percent of parents mainly wanted their children to be able to contact them, and seventy-three percent of parents mainly wanted to be able to get in touch with their child. On the other hand, only nine percent of parents' major reason for giving their child a smartphone was to do their homework (Pew Research Center, 2020, pg. 2). These studies show that

young children are being increasingly exposed to technology outside of the classroom, but what is their exposure to technology in the classroom? Emma Kate Fittes writes that in 2021, more than half of a pool of 846 teachers were using technology to instruct children for one to four hours of the school day. Only seventeen percent of the teachers used technology for less than an hour in the classroom, and a measly one percent did not use technology at all (Fittes, 2022, para. 2-4).

Although technology provides benefits like engaging videos, pictures, and games/apps about learning, it also has adverse effects on children that need to be considered. The increased use of technology by children results in a decrease in other activities such as playing outside or participating in sports and other physical activities (National University, 2021, para. 3-4). This has played a role in the increased obesity rates for children spending less time moving and more time sitting and eating in front of screens (National University, 2021, para. 3-4). As a result, incorporating movement in classroom activities and assessments is a simple and small way to begin fighting this problem. Movement in the classroom helps students stay healthy. According to the National Library of Medicine, obesity has been increasing among children across the globe. Normal development and growth of children is dependent on physical activity, yet many children are turning from sports to television (National University, 2021, para. 3-4), and if children are not supported and encouraged to live more active lifestyles, they will likely live less healthy, comfortable, and shorter lives (Hills et. al., 2010, pg. 543-549).

Technology also has an adverse effect on children's social development. Children learn to communicate with short texts rather than with audible conversations. The self-esteem

of children also suffers as they constantly compare themselves to the filtered and photoshopped displays by others online (National University, 2021, para. 5-7).

Technology use and technology interaction can quickly replace real, person to person, social interaction in children's lives which can delay or hinder their social development (National University, 2021, para. 5-7). Movement in the classroom often involves students working in small or large groups, and as a result, developing their social skills with classmates. Researchers at Pennsylvania State University agree, saying that both movement and play are imperative for a child's brain to develop and maintain neural connections. Early years of childhood are especially important "windows of opportunity" that should not be overlooked in favor of worksheets in a classroom (*The Body: A Tool of Learning for Young Children (Better Kid Care)*, n.d., para. 4-7).

Finally, technology also has a negative effect on children's attention span. This is especially important in school. Technology today is a system of instant gratification, and it teaches students to expect constant and immediate stimulation. This causes students to struggle to sit still and listen to a teacher, watch a demonstration, or even read a book (National University, 2021, para. 8-10). Children's attention is then further impeded as students come to school tired from using technology at home since it often delays bedtime and impacts children's quality of sleep (*Children and Technology: Positive and Negative Effects*, 2022, para. 13-14). Movement, on the other hand, is a great way to keep children engaged without technology. Movement helps further mature the inner-ear and cerebellar systems in children which, in turn, serves to help students pay attention for a longer duration (*Why Movement Is Crucial in the Classroom*, 2018, para. 16). Students are also more engaged and excited about participating in activities or assessments

involving movement. Not to mention, students' content retention is better (*Movement and Learning in Elementary School*, 2017, para. 1-2). Imagine a classroom where students come in excited for the day rather than with glazed over eyes and exasperated expressions.

B. Additional Benefits of Movement

Movement has other benefits for students as well. A study by *Frontiers in Psychology* shared research indicating that our mind and bodies are more connected than most people think. When students connect movement with words, it not only helps them recognize the words in the future, but it even aids them in remembering their meaning. In other words, movement helps strengthen students' memory (Madan & Singhal, 2012, para. 1-3). As a teacher, I know all too well the frustration of spending time preparing and teaching information to students only to have them forget it by the next morning. It turns out that lack of movement in the classroom could be part of the problem. The brain requires oxygen to function, and movement is a great way to ensure students are getting the proper blood flow they need to learn at the best of their abilities (*Why Movement Is Crucial in the Classroom*, 2018, para. 4-5).

A researcher at Harvard also has something to say about the benefits of moving.

According to MD Srinii Pillay in 2016, movement can impact feelings. Pillay explains that regular exercise can be as effective as medication and psychotherapies to improve mood disorders. For example, experiencing rapid heartbeat during exercise helps those suffering from anxiety not react as severely when they notice their heartbeat rising.

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity/Disorder (ADHD) is also positively affected by exercise.

It aids focused thought, increased energy, clarity, and happiness. Meditative movement such as yoga can help those with depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (Srini Pillay, MD, 2016, para. 1-5). Pillay also notes that, “Changing your posture, breathing, and rhythm can all change your brain, thereby reducing stress, depression, and anxiety, and leading to a feeling of well-being” (Srini Pillay, MD, 2016, para. 5). Although students cannot hop on a bicycle in the middle of the class, they can raise their heartbeat through other methods. For example, playing an on-topic song for students to sing and dance along with can quickly get their muscles burning and heart thumping. This can help students learn how to regulate their mood and relieve stress, anxiety, anger, sadness, or insecurity (Srini Pillay, MD, 2016, para. 1-10).

IV. Practical Applications in 3rd Grade

A. Researched Ideas

Movement has many benefits for students in a classroom, but teachers often feel at a loss for how to implement it in a practical, subject-related way. What are some ideas for implementing movement in the multiple subject area? One idea adds a twist to the traditional turn and talk activity in a classroom. In this movement activity, students are numbered into two different groups. A student numbered in the 1 group lines up and faces the students in the number 2 group. Then, the students take turns answering a question related to subject content. For example, how does the main character of the story change from the beginning to the end? Student 1 explains and then student 2 explains. Next, the teacher plays music, and all group 2 students move right down the line until the music stops. Students can dance instead of only walking to make the activity more fun.

Once the music stops, students repeat the activity with a new question and new partner (Ferlazzo, 2020, para. 6-12).

Furthermore, movement can be utilized to help students learn vocabulary words. Even students who are great at memorizing the meaning of vocabulary words to pass a test tend to have difficulty applying these words in speech or remember their meaning when reading a text weeks later. Movement can help! A teacher can give students in small groups a list of vocabulary words. Students must create a movement for each vocabulary word and then create a story using each of the words. The students will read their story aloud to the rest of the class while demonstrating the movements. Coming up with movements related to the vocabulary words forces students to think differently about the words' meanings, and in turn, this helps them gain a deep understanding of the words and retain that understanding for longer (Ferlazzo, 2020, para. 1-6).

A different idea from the teacher, Angelina Murphy in 2019, is having gallery walks. The teacher posts several different materials all around the room. Students walk around to interpret and analyze the materials. The students can answer questions about them, pick one that interests them to research, or compare them in a group discussion. Murphy utilized this in her classroom by displaying political cartoons, poems, and articles about power and oppression about the room for students to observe and reflect on. She explains that gallery walks are easy to prepare for and increase student exposure to the content being taught. Murphy also suggests having students choose whether they can walk freely or in a group. This activity gets students up, out of their seats, and moving around the classroom (4 Ways to Get Students Moving in Class, 2019, para. 5-7).

Incorporating movement in the classroom can be as simple as playing brain breaks for students. Brain breaks are fun videos and songs that lead the classroom in guided movement. Taking a break helps students return to their work with a rested and more positive outlook. Physical breaks are great for learning because they “improve students’ behavior, increase the effort [students] put into their activities as well as their ability to stay on task” (Terada, 2018, para. 6). Teachers can also have students do “the wave”, walk around the room to music before returning to their seats, do a whole-body stretch, practice a few yoga poses, or have a competition to see who can hop on one foot the longest (*More than a Dozen Ways to Build Movement into Learning*, n.d., para. 16-17).

B. Personal Implementations

How have I implemented movement in education in the classroom? Since my specific field of interest is in elementary science education, most of the opportunities I have had to implement movement in the classroom have been throughout science lessons for 3rd grade. These opportunities include teaching students about the three states of matter, magnetism, and Earth’s seasons. First, when teaching students about the three states of matter: solid, liquid, and gas, I had the students pretend to be the molecules moving around in each state. All the students stood up from their spots on the rug and waited for me to call out one of the states of matter. When I called out “solid”, students clustered close together and moved ever so slightly to mimic the way molecules in a solid act. Then, when I called “liquid”, students spread apart and started to walk around one another. Finally, when I called “gas”, students spread far apart from one another and began speed walking around the room.

We made it a game as I called each state of matter several times and in random order. Students were laughing and out of breath by the end. Later, when they completed an assessment requiring them to draw how molecules act in a state of matter, all students were able to correctly complete the drawings. As a result, I assessed that the movement activity successfully aided students' learning about the three states of matter. Not to mention, students had fun and were more focused during the remainder of the lesson after having a chance to move around. Even the students who are easily distracted were engaged in the activity.

Second, when teaching students about magnetism, I created an activity that required students to act as either the south or north poles of a magnet. For the first round of the activity, I had each student stand up from their spot on the rug, and I gave each one a square of either small blue paper square with an "S" on it (for the south pole of a magnet) or small red paper square with an "N" on it (for the north pole of a magnet). Then, I had students walk around the room and mix up their spots on the rug. When I clapped three times, students stopped walking and tried to find the other magnetic pole that their magnetic pole would attract to. For example, if a student had the blue, south pole square, they had to find a student who had the red, north pole square since the north and south poles of a magnet attract, whereas the south poles of magnets repel one another.

After practicing this once more, we moved on to round two of the activity. In round two, students still received only one square of either blue or red paper. However, they attempted to make a giant circle out of the entire class. For example, if a student had a red, north pole square, they had to find two students with a blue, south pole square to

stand to their right and left. Then, the students with the blue, south pole squares had to find one more student with a red, north pole square to stand on their other side. This way, the class was able to make an entire circle of magnet poles that would attract one another.

For round three of the activity, I handed each student a second small square of paper. As a result, some students had two red north pole squares, some had two blue, south pole squares, and some had one red, north pole square and one blue, south pole square.

Students held one square in each hand. Then, they were challenged to find a student with the magnetic pole that would attract with each hand. For example, if a student held a blue, south pole square in their right hand, they would need to find a student with a red, north pole square in their left hand. Then, if they held a red, north pole square in their left hand, they would need to find a student with a blue, south pole square in their right hand.

By the end, all the students were holding hands. We went around the room and each student called out the magnetic poles they had in their hands to double check that everyone completed the activity correctly. Evidence that this activity was effective showed when students played a magnetism jeopardy game that I created. Students were able to correctly answer all questions related to identifying the poles of magnets and when they attracted or repelled one another.

Third, when teaching students about Earth's seasons, I had two student volunteers come up to the front of the classroom. One volunteer stood in the center of the rug while holding a large, yellow sheet of paper labeled, "The Sun". Another volunteer walked around the sun holding a large piece of paper displaying a picture of the Earth with its axis tilt shown. While the "Earth" volunteer walked around "The Sun" volunteer, I had

the “Earth” volunteer pause at each right angle. Then, I asked the rest of the class to identify which season it would be on Earth in North America (above the equator). I had the class identify each season, and then we repeated the activity twice more using different volunteers. To assess students’ understanding of the Earth’s seasons, I later had them draw a diagram showing the physical model we tried out in class. Eighty percent of students were able to correctly draw the diagram without teacher assistance, and the remaining twenty percent of students were able to correctly draw the diagram with teacher assistance.

C. Ideas for Other Grades and Content

As a result of being placed in a 3rd grade classroom, I have been limited with the standards I can create movement activities to help teach. There are several other ideas I have created that can be applied in other grades and content areas. For example, when teaching about the life cycles of butterflies, or other animals, students could dance out their lifecycle as an assessment. To do this, students would need to understand that a caterpillar starts on the ground, curls into a chrysalis, and unfolds into a beautiful butterfly. Understanding of this would be easily seen through dance movements that start small and contracted but turn into big and wide movements. Science questions related to movement could surface such as, “Does a caterpillar move inside a chrysalis or stay still?” and “Do butterflies sometimes walk or do they always fly?”. This example shows how dancing could even be used to assess student understanding in a way that is less stressful for students than sitting down to fill out a quiz.

Another idea that could be implemented in mathematics would be using classmates as mathematical manipulatives. For example, when students are learning addition, the teacher could have eight students come up to the front of the class. Four students would stand to the right and three students would stand to the left. Then, the teacher would have the last student stand in between the two small groups of students holding a large “+” sign. The teacher could have students count how many total students there would be if the two groups were added together. This activity could be repeated several times using different student volunteers and the number of students. This activity would get students up and moving, as well as keep them engaged in learning mathematics.

Playing songs that give multiples of different numbers are often used by teachers to help students memorize their multiplication tables; however, this strategy can be even more effective! Rather than only singing the songs, the teacher could lead students in creating their own motions or dance moves to go along with the song. As mentioned previously in the researched benefits of movement, movement helps increase students’ memory (Madan & Singhal, 2012). Consequently, students can move around, have more fun, and be creative - all while memorizing their multiplication tables better than they otherwise would have.

Movement can also be incorporated into English Language Arts. Repeated reading of texts is often used in elementary school to aid students in increasing their fluency in reading, as well as comprehension of a text. Not to mention, students need to learn about different text types including poems and plays. The teacher could have a poetry assessment where students research and pick their own poem. Then, students must

memorize the poem and create movements to go along with it. Students would get to perform their poem for the class. This could help build their public speaking skills, and it makes learning poetry more fun. For shy or anxious students, the teacher could give students the option of working in groups and either reciting the poem together or taking turns reciting different parts while everyone demonstrated the movements together. This assessment could also be expanded by pairing students or student groups and having them teach their poem and movements to another. Just like with learning multiplication tables with movement, incorporating movement into poetry would help students better memorize the poem and have time to focus on prose when reciting it.

V. Practical Application in the Community

A. *Narnia* – Storytelling through Dance

Not only did I get to incorporate movement inside the classroom, but I was also given the opportunity to create and direct a local ballet performance. This ballet performance was a way for young boys and girls to learn about and share the inspiring work of C.S. Lewis in his book, *Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* with others in the community. I picked this book to interpret through ballet due to its themes of loyalty, truth, and courage. These are important values for a community that I hoped people would be inspired to reflect. Not to mention, the story is a well-known classic. I wanted both the dance students and the community members watching to be inspired to read more literary works and dive into the rich stories they offer. I believe that C.S. Lewis' story was enriched through the movement of dance because dance offers a way to portray emotion that it is hard to find the right words for.

Everyone knows a lot more goes on behind the scenes of a show than an audience sees on stage. What went on behind the scenes of the show, *Narnia*? First, before the dancers even auditioned for the show, I began planning for it. In order to maintain the integrity of the story and respect C.S. Lewis's authorship, I reread the novel from front to back. I wanted to familiarize myself enough with Lewis' original work that I could confidently portray it on stage in a way that was as true as possible to the heart behind his story. Realistically, I knew that limitations from our costume inventory, lighting/set budget, and other variables would make some changes necessary; however, I made sure to make as few changes as possible.

Next, I searched "*Narnia* inspired music", "winter instrumental music", "magical music" and more to find the perfect songs regarding length, mood, words, and tempo. I wanted to eliminate as much "cutting" of the music as possible, and I made it a goal to find as many songs as I could that we could use in their original version. Furthermore, I decided to write a narration script to help the audience follow along with the story. I did this in consideration of those viewing the dance performance who were unfamiliar with the story of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. A mom of one of the dancers volunteered to be the narrator. I wrote the script in first person with the mom pretending to be Lucy as a grown up telling the story of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* as a bedtime story to her daughter, and I chose one of the young dancers to narrate the role of Lucy's daughter. Below I have included a copy of the scene list, music, and cast list with all the different characters appearing in the show. The list also includes all the scenes I personally choreographed.

Narnia - Act 1

- Scene 1: The Lantern
Choreography: Liz Bosse
Music: “This Little Light of Mine” by J.J. Heller
- Scene 2: Hide and Seek
Choreography: Liz Bosse
Music: “Introducing Colin” by John Williams
- Scene 3: Lucy Discovers Narnia
Choreography: Studio Ballet Teacher
Music: “Courage and Kindness” by Patrick Doyle
- Scene 4: Flames of Deception
Choreography: Studio Jazz Teacher
Music: “A Narnia Lullaby” by Isaac Morales
- Scene 5: A Fawn’s Forgiveness
Choreography: Studio Jazz Teacher
Music: “Tender Strength” by Yu-Peng Chen, HOYO-Mix
- Scene 6: Edmund Follows Lucy to Narnia
Choreography: Studio Ballet Teacher and Liz Bosse
Music: “Epilogue” by Jóhann Jóhannsson
- Scene 7: Edmund and the White Witch
Choreography: Liz Bosse
Music: “The Last of Her Kind” by Peter Gundry
- Scene 8: The Pevensies in Narnia
Choreography: Studio Ballet Teacher
Music: “Harry in Winter” by Patrick Doyle
- Scene 9: Meeting the Beavers
Choreography: Studio Ballet Teacher and Liz Bosse

Music: “A Big Day Ahead” by Ari Posner, Amin Bhatia

- Scene 10: Statues in the Castle
Choreography: Studio Jazz Teacher
Music: “The Sound of Silence” by Disturbed
- Scene 11: Edmund and the White Witch
Choreography: Studio Ballet Teacher
Music: “Everybody Wants to Rule the World” - From “The Hunger Games: Catching Fire” Soundtrack by Lorde
- Scene 12: Good Creatures Defend the Pevensies
Choreography: Studio Jazz Teacher
Music: “Narnia – Instrumental” by Bleeze
- Scene 13: Santa and the Reindeer
Choreography: Studio Jazz Teacher
Music: “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” by Decca Concert Orchestra
- Scene 14: Sword Fight at the Waterfall
Choreography: Studio Tap Teacher and Liz Bosse
Music: “Run Boy Run” by Woodkid
- Scene 15: Flower Song
Choreography: Studio Ballet Teachers
Music: “Paperman” by Christophe Beck

INTERMISSION

Narnia - Act 2

- Scene 16: Aslan Forgives Edmund
Choreography: Studio Ballet Teacher
Music: “Steadfast Love” by Ghost Ship
- Scene 17: The White Witch Demands the Traitor
Choreography: Studio Ballet Teacher
Music: “Flameheart” by Thomas Bergersen

- Scene 18: Aslan's Sacrifice
Choreography: Liz Bosse
Music: "Last Words (Tenebrae)" by Andrew Peterson
- Scene 19: Susan and Lucy's Lament
Choreography: Studio Ballet Teacher
Music: "Man of Sorrows" by Ellie Holcomb
- Scene 20: The Final Battle Begins
Choreography: Liz Bosse
Music: "Ride to Victory" by Thomas Bergersen
- Scene 21: Aslan Resurrects
Choreography: Studio Jazz Teacher
Music: "Test Drive - From How to Train Your Dragon" by John Powell
- Scene 22: Death of the White Witch
Choreography: Liz Bosse
Music: "Splashdown" by Adam Young
- Scene 23: Kings and Queens of Narnia
Choreography: Liz Bosse
Music: "High King and Queen of Narnia" by David Arnold
- Scene 24: Hunting the Stag
Choreography: Guest Choreographer and Liz Bosse
Music: "White Stag" by Tim Sandberg

Cast
(In order of appearance)

Lucy – Level 6 Student

Susan – Level 6 Student

Edmund – Guest Artist

Peter – Guest Artist

Lantern – Level 6 Dancer

Snowflakes - Ballet Levels 1-3

Mr. Tumnus – Level 5 Dancer

Fire Spirit – Level 5 Dancer

Fire Sprites - Jazz Level 2

Icicles: Two Level 4 Dancers

White Witch – Level 6 Dancer

Wolf – Level 6 Dancer

Head Demons – Two Level 5 Dancers

Trees - Ballet Levels 4-6

Mr. and Mrs. Beaver – Two Level 4 Dancers

Snow Spirits: Two Level 5 Dancers

Flurries - Ballet Basics

Statues/Narnians - Jazz Levels 5-6

Fox – 1 Level 5 Dancer

Good Creatures - Jazz Level 3

Little Reindeer - Jazz Level 1

Father Christmas – Level 3 Dancer

Waterfall Ice - Tap All Levels

Flower Petals - Pre Ballet

Flower Nymph – Level 6 Dancer

Flower Blossoms – Two Level 4 Dancers

Demons - Jazz Level 4

White Stag – Level 6 Dancer

Although I pre-planned a basic outline of the movement and dancing, I desired the scenes I choreographed to give students a large voice in what they wanted to do. I worked with other dance teachers to cast students according to the parts that best fit their dance movement style. For example, the student cast in the role of the wolf was chosen because she excelled at sharp, strong movements that correctly portrayed the personality of a wolf. Overall, the experience was a great way to utilize the skills I learned in both dance and choreography as well as education. It was a capstone project that reflects how movement can be used to educate, not just in a classroom, but in a community as well.

B. Community Response

Audience response following the performance was positive. Many members in the community came to either me or the owner of the studio with compliments for the production. First, a lot of the community complimented the storyline. Oftentimes dance performances either have no theme or an abstract theme that is difficult for audience members who have never been a part of dancing to understand. As a result, the community appreciated having a storyline to follow, as well as narrators that helped translate dancing on stage to members of the audience. Second, several community members complimented the music. The performance had a mix of instrumental music and well-known, but not overly popular music. Many dance recitals use the same set of popular songs, and the community responded well to my decision to reach outside of this box and pull lesser-known artists into the mix as well. Third, the community

complimented how cute and fun it was to see little children throughout the whole production playing characters rather than only appearing in one dance. This compliment was meaningful because I specifically designed the performance to include all ages of dancers in many special roles rather than only highlighting the high school senior dancers. Finally, the last comment that meant the most to me was that several audience members said it was the best show they had seen from Trinity Arts Center in a while. The reason this comment was so meaningful to me is that at the time Trinity Arts Center was struggling to stay afloat. The next year it was bought by a new owner. I knew the students were struggling with all the changes, and I wanted to give them a last, special performance before all the changes took place.

VII. Reflection

A. Feelings on Teaching with Movement

There are a few objections to teaching with movement that I have heard other teachers discuss. One of these is that incorporating movement into the class takes up too much time. Teachers are constantly pressured to teach all the standards in a short amount of time, and they are assessed on their ability to cover content quickly and effectively. Many teachers believe that incorporating movement in the classroom will take time that they do not have to spare. Not to mention, if behavioral management is not strong in a classroom, it is easy to imagine students becoming out of control as soon as they are given the opportunity to move around. Teachers worry about students becoming too rowdy and having trouble refocusing on the content. Overall, teachers want to know for sure that incorporating movement in the classroom is realistic and beneficial.

In the personal implementations I shared above about my experience implementing movement in the classroom, I saw students increase engagement, memory, and understanding. There are several students in my third-grade classroom who are easily distracted and struggle to stay on task. Although worksheets and quizzes are important to prepare students for standardized testing they must complete, it is also important that teachers ensure students are genuinely learning, understanding, and retaining information rather than memorizing it for a test. When students are engaged in learning, they begin to see school and learning as something fun to look forward to, and they are inspired to learn as much as possible. In my observation, most children are naturally curious, and teachers can use this to their advantage. Every time I have incorporated movement into the classroom, students have become more excited about learning and eager to participate. Furthermore, my students were able to retain the information they learned in the movement activity and demonstrate it on a written or verbal quiz. As a result, I believe movement activities are more effective than the traditional methods of standing in front of students and explaining content to them. Movement activities are hands-on and exciting for students to participate in.

I have also not had any trouble helping students refocus after a movement activity. On the other hand, it helps give students with shorter attention spans a break, which in turn, helps them focus better following the activity. The classroom I am in has practiced many behavioral management routines like repeated clapping, giving me a thumbs up if they can hear me, or responding to a bell. These help students quickly refocus after an activity. Furthermore, I had a discussion with students before incorporating movement activities and explained that the more they showed me they could be in control during fun,

movement activities, the more opportunities I would give them to do them. This served as motivation to stay focused and on task rather than becoming rowdy during the movement activities. In my experience, movement activities are more rewarding than the time and effort they take, and the biggest reward is the classroom atmosphere of curiosity and a love for learning that movement helps create.

B. Teaching Philosophy

Movement in elementary education aligns with my teaching philosophy to foster student curiosity and learning in a rich, high-expectation environment. Many children are naturally curious. They love to touch, smell, and taste *everything*. They love playing, trying new things, and being creative. The world is full of things to explore, and I believe fostering this creativity is one of the most important things a teacher can do. The more curious children are, the more curious they will be as adults, and the more curious adults are, the more willing they are to take risks or push themselves to do something new - even if it is difficult. Curiosity builds perseverance and perseverance is foundational for success in life.

In addition, I believe students should learn in a rich environment. By rich, I mean a classroom environment that goes beyond worksheets and textbooks, a classroom experience that is hands-on, engaging, and requires critical thinking from students. I want students to learn more than what State standards require. I want students to go deeper and learn more. I want students to inquire about the world around them instead of telling a student, "Sorry, but we do not have time for that". I want to encourage them to dive into learning with me and share what they learn with others. I want students to have access to

high quality and various text resources to aid their learning, and I want students to have learning experiences outside the classroom in the real-world. I am passionate about giving these experiences to students because I was given the opportunity to experience them as a child. As a result of being homeschooled from elementary to high school, I was given many rich learning experiences, from helping my mom plant butterfly bushes and tagging the monarch butterflies that landed there to helping my dad plant strawberries and learning how they grow in a garden. A rich learning environment is something every student should experience.

Finally, I believe students should learn in a high expectation environment. During my field placement for elementary education, I have heard several students comment things like “I’m just not very good at math”, “I don’t have neat handwriting”, or “I’m just not as smart as that student”. This type of mindset can limit students from reaching their potential and pushing themselves to be the best that they can. Consequently, I believe in setting high expectations for students. High expectations mean challenging course work rather than making things easier. If work is too easy for students, they will either become bored, or they will think that all they are capable of is easy work. I believe students should be pushed to try problems that challenge, and even frustrate, them. This helps students learn perseverance and how to work through and learn even when the answer is not automatically apparent. Having high expectations for students will show them that I believe in them, and that I know they are capable of much more than they realize. Most things worth doing are difficult, and students need to learn how to utilize challenges for growth.

Movement is a great way to create a rich learning environment with high expectations. Movement creates a rich learning environment because it requires hands-on engagement from students as they use movement to demonstrate concepts, ideas, and their learning. Furthermore, utilizing movement requires students to use critical thinking because it is not something most students are used to doing. Worksheets are commonplace in a classroom, but students are not often asked to make connections between school content and movement. Both creativity and critical thinking are necessary for students to make this connection. Consequently, activities and assessments utilizing movement have high expectations. They require students to go above and beyond what is typically asked of them. Additionally, there is no way for a student to sit on the sidelines or let other students do the work for them. Movement activities and assessments require each student to actively participate and give their best effort. They will no doubt push some students outside their comfort zone, but I believe it is outside our comfort zones where growth begins to blossom, and this is why movement is an integral part of my teaching philosophy.

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