

Grade One Movement

The movement work begun in early childhood forms the foundation for the ways we will both nourish and make use of our bodies for life. Therefore, throughout the grades – and beyond – the central goals of the movement-circle are the same as those for the Kindergarten. These are detailed in the *Kindergarten Learning through Movement* book, included in this collection, and we recommend reviewing that material.¹

Central Movement goals:

- To activate and engage the breath, heartbeat, and muscles;
- To feed and strengthen the base senses and their integration;
- To explore and strengthen midline crossings;
- To develop fine motor coordination; and
- To develop or strengthen the physical sense of rhythm.

On this base, in Grade One we expand both kinesthetic skills and their use in the learning of academic content. This includes:

- 1) Stabilizing of midline crossings (and thus dominance), needed for sustained focus and later academic learning.
- 2) Kinesthetic experiences of academic material. **All academic concept is first introduced, and then digested and well anchored in the body, before it becomes thought.**
- 3) Walked forms for Form Drawing to help the child strengthen her spatial and geometric understanding through movement.

There are many ways to meet these goals. As was true in Kindergarten, a formal movement circle works well in the classroom. **For some families working with a morning circle will be a wonderful way to accomplish these goals. But even in this case, some adaptations to the actual activities will probably be called for.** For example, for two people to skip around a circle is rather dizzying and not all that integrating, so skipping around the room or the house, might better serve the goal at hand.

¹ See Learning Through Movement: seasons and skills - Kindergarten p.9

For other families, a formal circle will be an overlay on family life that wreaks havoc. Either way, although the core goals of circle are of central importance, as is described in the *Kindergarten Learning Through Movement* book, none of these need to be accomplished in a circle.² The addition of kinesthetic academic activities does demand some structured time, but these can be built into an end of the day family-time, or become a ritual just after a mid-day break, and so on.

² See Learning Through Movement: seasons and skills - Kindergarten p.7-8

Structuring the Formal Movement-Circle:

A formal circle takes 30 – 45 minutes, during which time the children have a chance to fully engage their bodies, work with new skills and concepts, and settle down. By the end of the circle time they should be well grounded and ready for more conceptually focused work. The following schedule of activities is recommended:

- One circle calling song
- One opening/body engagement activities
- One or two midline crossing activities
- One or two academic activities
- One base sense sequence - 1 spinning and 1 proprioceptive (may be within one activity or may need two)
- One to three foreign language activities (doing this will depend on the teacher's talents.)
- One Form Drawing walk
- One closing spiral in native tongue – changing with the season

Gathering Song: In a group circle situation it is important to come together to begin in a non-conscious manner that sets the mood for the whole movement-circle. In the case of a formal circle, singing and walking around in a circle, ready to take hands as others join, works well for this. The mood is somewhat that of the Pied Piper. Even if the adult has to collect the children, each and every one, doing so while singing is far more in the mood of circle than calling or announcing would be. They will settle in over time and come without even realizing it. It can work well to hum or “da-da” to the tune opening song, beginning with the words when all are gathered, or one might use a different song. Use of seasonal material helps connect the children to the world around them and lays the ground for both scientific observation and for use of poetic language.

Opening or Body Engagement Activities: Once the opening song has gathered the troops, the first physical focus of the movement-circle work is developing an individual and group rhythmic breathing through engaging the breath and heart. Sometimes these activities will also work with midline crossings, but what these should not challenge the child to the point where the rhythmic sense is lost – active rhythm is the all important aspect of the body engagement activities. On this base, not only is the child more awake and healthy, she is also better able to benefit from all the activities that follow – her body and mind are receptive.

Midlines Activities: Between the body engagement activities and the midline crossing activities, we want to challenge the crossing of all three midlines,³ strengthening the child's ability to move freely in all planes of both body and brain. In turn, this freedom in crossing midlines stabilizes the child's dominance (sided-ness), which is critical to sustained focus and complex conceptual learning. This is a vast topic and is covered in depth in the Enki Teacher's Guides.

Bean Bag and Copper Rod activities often challenge the midline crossings and can work well in this section. Although the child may struggle to cross a given midline, over time the repeated experience will open new pathways in the brain.

Academic Activities: Next, after about 15-20 minutes of these body engagement and midline activities, we work with academic activities. Number patterns and counting are introduced and practiced. For example, the children walk around the circle to a rhythmic verse that groups their steps in twos, threes, and so on. Verses with movement and gesture for letter sounds are worked with as the children move rhythmically around the circle, and so on. Academic activities often include Bean Bags and Copper Rods.

All academic content - Humanities/Language arts, Math, and Science - is introduced first through movement if at all possible. After that, the movement work is used to deepen and anchor the more conceptual learning. Short games, usually using song or verse, fit well into this section of the circle. **Although this part of the movement work is very short, it is also very powerful as the body comes to lend its abilities and its wisdom to the understanding of concepts and the mastery of skills.**

Balance and Base Sense Sequence: The academic section can be more fracturing than the other parts of the circle, with both rhythm and body engagement less in focus. Therefore, this is followed by brief work with the base senses. For the first grader, balance activities offer a much-needed challenge for integrating the proprioceptive and vestibular systems. First graders are often seen challenging their own balance; this formal balance challenge anchors and stabilizes this natural sensory nourishment.

This one to two minute activity is followed by a "spin and fold" (vestibular to proprioceptive) activity sequence, just as was done in the Kindergarten.⁴ Although it takes very little time, we have found that the regularity of the activity makes this brief undertaking have a deep impact and is very grounding for the first grader who is preparing for more intellectual focus in her work.

³ See Learning through Movement: seasons and skills - Kindergarten p.10

⁴ See Learning through Movement: seasons and skills - Kindergarten p.15

Foreign Language: All aspects of the movement work, *except* for the group forming, the academic work, and the closing can be done in a foreign language. As well, additional activities and games in the foreign language can be included in the movement period. It is far more affective to include a few songs and games every day, than to do longer stretches occasionally. However, even if the teacher is fully fluent, only part of the circle should be in the foreign language as this is a time for learning the art of the native language through verses, rhythm, and rhythm in the native tongue, too.

Form Drawing Walk: Just before closing the circle time, we spend about 3 minutes on our Form Drawing walk. Form Drawing is a structured, geometric drawing activity developed by Rudolf Steiner. In the Enki approach we work with form drawing as an extension of movement, bringing 3-dimensional movement into 2-dimensional drawing. This develops the child's spatial skills and lays the ground for strong geometric understanding. It works very well to do this towards the end of the movement period, as the body is already engaged and awake. It works well either just before or just after the Foreign Language section. Detailed information on Form Drawing is found in the Enki Teacher's Guides for the grades.

Closing Spiral: Finally, we close this period of movement work. In the first grade, this is well accomplished by walking a spiral (whether at home or in a group). The spiral is the kinesthetic expression, and experience, of coming into one's center, and is a very good way to transition to more mentally focused work. As well, many of the spiral verses echo nature phenomena, cycles, and stories, thus further solidifying the connection to nature. To do this, we simply walk around as though we were tracing a spiral, slowly moving from the outside to the center, and then back out again. The child follows, and the movement work is complete, with child and teacher ready to go onto the Morning Lesson work.

Sample Movement Activities

ELEPHANT DOUBLES/EDUK (R/L, VS, AD, T, HM)

(Demonstrated on movement video.)

The first verse activates the listening. It can be done very quickly at any moment when you feel listening needs to be activated (i.e., there is chaos or the children are spacing out/tuning out.) Simply wrap the fingers around the outside of the ears with the thumbs inside. Now use the thumbs to roll open the curl of the ear itself. Move down from the top area, against the head, to the bottom of the ear lobe.

The elephant sat with his ears so big.
Below the tree limbs cracked like twigs.
He opened his ears to all that he heard—
A jungle teeming with beast and bird
Biggest ears of all about
He rose and gave a mighty shout.

The second verse activates vision and affective eye tracking. Lemniscate - Stand with your ear on the shoulder of an outstretched arm, looking intently at the finger tips. Then, bending your knees to allow for swing, make large swooping lemniscates (figure eights on their sides). Make these very large. Move up and out so that when you cross the midline you are moving upward and you are going down at the outside edge. Switch hands if you do a second run-through.

Lifting his trunk up in the air
He sniffed about with greatest care.
Swung up toward the highest leaves
Circled wide among the trees
Then dipped his trunk along the ground
And sent right out his trumpet sound.

DANCING GNOME DIVIDERS

(good for recorder playing)

This requires a group big enough to be divided into smaller units several different ways. If you have a group with a number that doesn't work, have some sit out at first. They get to go in if someone else makes a mistake. It could be done with a small group, or even with one child, using manipulatives (stones or the like). However, this would not be a circle/movement activity, and should be done during a skills time. In that case just chant and clap, rather than dancing.

1) All hold hands in a circle and skip around singing quite briskly:

*We dance around the fir tree in every kind of weather
We dance around the fir tree, around we go together.*

2) The teacher sings the next verse fairly slowly, choosing a number that will divide evenly for the group size. The children must make themselves into the groups she has named before she reaches the end of the verse (you can slow it down dramatically if need be):

*Two big groups of 8 are we, two big groups of 8
Two big groups of 8 are we, two big groups of 8*

3) All hold hands in their smaller groups and sing the first verse again, dancing in their little groups, this is where they come back into a relaxed group cheerfully playing:

*We dance around the fir tree in every kind of weather
We dance around the fir tree, around we go together.*

This pattern repeats but the teacher changes the group sizes named in the second verse, and the children arrange themselves accordingly. Do all the groupings you can with your total number; don't forget to do, "___ tiny groups of one are we," and end back in the "one big group of ___ are we. . ." Always end with "We dance around the fir tree so the non-conceptual release ends the activity."

(AC)

DANCING GNOME DIVIDERS PART A



We dance a-round the fir tree - in eve-ry kind of wea-ther - . We



dance a-round the fir tree - , A - round we go to - ge-ther - .

DANCING GNOME DIVIDERS PART B



Two big groups of (eight) are we, two big groups of (eight).