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**A study of the effects of two types of movement instruction on
the rhythm achievement and developmental rhythm aptitude of
preschool children**

Blesedell, Darla S., Ph.D.

Temple University, 1991

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A Dissertation
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
Darla S. Blesedell
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ABSTRACT

A Study of the Effects of Two Types of Movement Instruction on the Rhythm
Achievement and Developmental Rhythm Aptitude

of Preschool Children

by Darla S. Blesedell

Doctor of Philosophy

Temple University, 1991

Major Advisor: Dr. Edwin E. Gordon

The purpose of this research was to gain information about the influence of preschool movement instruction upon rhythm achievement and developmental rhythm aptitude. The specific problems of the study were 1) to determine the comparative effects of Dalcroze-based movement instruction and Laban-based movement instruction on the rhythm achievement of three- and four-year-old children, 2) to determine the comparative effects of Dalcroze-based movement instruction and Laban-based movement instruction on the rhythm achievement of three- and four-year-old children (combined) with high and low levels of rhythm aptitude, and 3) to investigate the effect of movement instruction on the developmental rhythm aptitude of three- and four-year-old children (combined). Fifty-one children enrolled in two private preschools participated in the study. A pre-instructional and post-instructional rhythm aptitude score was obtained from each child. *Audie* (Gordon, 1989) was

administered by the researcher to all children individually. Intact classes were randomly assigned to the methods of movement instruction (Daicroze-based or Laban-based). Each class received ten thirty-minute lessons. Activities from the first, fifth, and tenth lessons were videotaped for subsequent evaluation. During the tenth lesson, all children were asked to individually perform micro-beats and macro-beats on a small hand drum to a researcher-designed criterion song. All performances were videotaped for subsequent evaluation. Following instruction, three judges independently used two five-point continuous rating scales to rate each child's movement abilities and rhythm achievement. Two two-dimensional MANOVAS were undertaken. The .05 level of significance was selected for all analyses. Although no significant interactions were found, there was a significant main effect for movement instruction in both MANOVAS. No significant main effect was found for rhythm aptitude or age. Significant univariates were found for both movement and rhythm achievement. A one-dimensional ANOVA was undertaken to investigate mean differences between pre-instructional and post-instructional *Audie* scores. A significant difference was found. On the basis of the data obtained in this study, it may be concluded that any type of movement instruction is beneficial for the musical development of preschool children.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Increasing numbers of children are being placed in United States day care and preschool programs. According to the 1980 population survey,¹ more than half of the nation's nine million three-, four-, and five-year-old children are enrolled in some type of pre-primary education program.² The U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics reports similar findings in 1987. Available figures for three-, four-, and five-year-old children in pre-primary programs depict an increase in enrollment during the last two decades. Those figures are shown in Table 1.

According to parent reports, thirty-three percent of three- to five-year-old American children are enrolled in a public pre-primary program, and twenty percent of three- to five-year-old American children are enrolled in a private pre-primary

¹1990 population survey information is not yet available.

²Lawrence J. Schweinhart. *Early Childhood Development Programs in the Eighties: The National Picture* (Michigan: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1985), p. 1.

program.³ The continuing growth of pre-primary education programs is often attributed to the post-war growth in the number of mothers employed outside the home or to single-parent families.⁴ Moreover, the greater the income and education of the parents, the more likely they are to enroll their children in some type of pre-primary education.⁵

Table 1. ENROLLMENT FIGURES OF 3-, 4-, AND 5-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN IN U.S. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS⁶

1987 Percentage Enrolled	3-year-olds 28%	4-year-olds 47%	5-year-olds 86%
1980 Percentage Enrolled	3-year-olds 27%	4-year-olds 46%	5-year-olds 93%
1970 Percentage Enrolled	3-year-olds 12%	4-year-olds 27%	5-year-olds 69%

³Lawrence J. Schweinhart. *Early Childhood Development Programs in the Eighties: The National Picture* (Michigan: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1985), p. 1.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Enrollment of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children in pre-primary programs, by level and control of program and by attendance status from October 1965 to October 1987. *Digest of Educational Statistics* 25th ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics, 1989), p. 57.

U.S. PRE-PRIMARY MUSIC AND MOVEMENT PROGRAMS

As the demand for pre-primary educational programs increases in the United States, music and movement educators are implementing programs in public schools, private schools, research-oriented settings, and commercial enterprises.⁷ Unfortunately, many of the nation's day care and preschool programs are housed in facilities with insufficient space for movement activities.⁸ Moreover, inadequate teacher training in the kinds of movement activities that are important to the child's development of gross-motor skills and body awareness results in either a movement curriculum that is lacking in appropriate movement experiences, or a movement curriculum that is non-sequential and arbitrary.

"Movement is the child's first language, reflecting subtleties of thought and feeling not captured by verbal expression."⁹ Because of that, movement is an integral part of most music curricula designed for use with preschool children. Young children learn through exploration and activity. Adults guide that learning by labeling the actions of children, and by asking questions that stimulate thinking.

⁷Andress, Barbara. "Forward" in *Promising Practices Prekindergarten Music Education* (Reston, Virginia: Music Educators National Conference, 1989), p. vii.

⁸Phyllis S. Weikart. *Round the Circle* (Michigan: High/Scope Press, 1987), p. 5.

⁹Elayne Metz. "Music and Movement Environments in Preschool Settings," in *Promising Practices Prekindergarten Music Education*. Barbara Andress, ed. (Reston, Virginia: Music Educators National Conference, 1989), p. 89.

Initially, children's movements are uncoordinated, but with movement opportunities and guidance, those movements become refined.

Opportunities for movement exploration and experience should be included in day care and preschool curricula. Gordon,¹⁰ Burton,¹¹ and Zukowski and Dickson¹² state the importance of movement exploration before structured activities. Children should be exposed to the music and movements of their culture through informal learning in order to acquire an accuracy of rhythmic perception. Brunner¹³ asserts that the basic concepts are out of reach of the young child if he has not first understood them intuitively and has not had a chance to explore them on his own.

Through movement activities children develop personal skills and abilities as they enhance their self-images and develop physical coordination. Music and movement educators have advocated that young children explore and experience moving their bodies with rhythmic movement while moving freely through space to their own beat and personal tempo during informal activities. Such freedom allows

¹⁰Edwin E. Gordon. *A Music Learning Theory for Newborn and Young Children* (Chicago: G.I.A., 1990), p. 6.

¹¹E.C. Burton. *Physical Activities for the Developing Child* (Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1980), p. 6.

¹²Ginger Zukowski and Ardie Dickson. *On the Move: A Handbook for Exploring Creative Movement with Young Children* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), p. 6.

¹³Jerome Brunner. *The Process of Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960; Vintage Books, 1963), p. 13.

each child to be "correct" in his natural response, instead of being "taught" a skill that he is not ready to perform in an adult manner.

PRE-PRIMARY CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND MOVEMENT INSTRUCTION

Research in child development emphasizes the importance of early childhood education experiences, especially in the development of nonverbal modes of cognition. In terms of intelligence, available data indicates that approximately fifty percent of development occurs between the time of conception and age four¹⁴ whereas approximately seventeen percent of "general learning" development occurs between the ages of four and six.¹⁵ Using those figures, one can hypothesize the profound impact of day care and preschool programs on the children of our nation. Preschool educators and parents must be aware of that importance and provide children with a variety of appropriate educational experiences.

Researchers report that movement is effective in developing rhythm skills.¹⁶ Pre-primary music educators use a variety of movement-based activities in their teaching of rhythm. The lack of a nationally standardized movement curricula requires pre-primary music educators to develop their own sequence of movement

¹⁴Benjamin S. Bloom. *Stability and Change in Human Characteristics* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964), p. 88.

¹⁵Ibid. p. 110.

¹⁶Edwin E. Gordon. *A Music Learning Theory for Newborn and Young Children* (Chicago: G.I.A., 1990), p.88; Phyllis S. Weikart. *Round the Circle* (Michigan: High/Scope Press, 1987), p. 94.