

Monkey Hear Monkey Dance

Monkey see monkey do, mimesis, mirroring, copy catting, is how animals learn a lot and humans learn most of all. What we have been forgetting over the centuries is that the whole person needs to be involved. We are likely to learn more and better and deeper by standing up and moving with others than we will learn sitting alone and thinking about it. Certainly as far as primary communication skills are concerned, moving together in time, touching periodically, feeling the pulse of the beat or music, getting in synch with each other, is the story.

Once upon a time, getting in synch with each other, keeping together in time, was the way we tuned ourselves to the natural environment. In classless gathering societies people dance the honey gathering, dance the rain, dance the hunt, dance to heal the pain, dance to be the birds, dance with vocables more than words, dance in emulation, dance in admiration, dance the creation. Kids (baby goats or baby humans) want to jump, frolic, dance the common glad impulse of their species.

In the moment, in the specific time and place and creatures present, dance.

I don't think this can easily be curricularized or programmed or coerced or taught. It has to be fun, play, pleasure that satisfies idle curiosity. As adults of our species we have heard about the “big bang” theory of our universe. It’s just a theory but a lot of scientists think that something like the “big bang” or super-rapid unfolding from a single point of energy will be at the center of a “Unified Theory” of how everything works. As adults we know something about evolution of life on this planet, from the first single celled organisms to the 5,000 mammal species of whom we are just one. As adults we know that we have a lizard brain inside us for movement and an old-mammal brain inside us that connects movement to emotions via two kinds of smell-sensing as well as a sound-bonding, play and nurturance center (see Chapters 3 and 4 in this Section). As adults of our species we can help children to explore these theories about the origins and facts of our existence via sound-bonding, play, nurturance – without a curriculum, without a program, with uncoerced, pleasure-seeking collaboration.

I keep stressing “as adults” because we really do have or can develop crucial understandings that children lack. We know, or are in the process of finding out, just how trapped we are in his-story and civilization. We know, and can learn more about, all the skills that have traditionally been used to keep together in time, to provide the patterns in sound that will help children dance the creation, dance evolution, dance triune brain integration, dance a daily life that creates a path out of his-story and civilization.

Books that help: [Earthdance](#) by Elisabit Sahtouris, [Spiral Dance](#) by Starhawk, [Keeping Together in Time](#) by William MacNeill.

Pat Campbell:

Of course we can have a curriculum based in primary communication! Why not? It would be laced in acts of *artistic doing*, bundled up in ways of understanding our natural world, offering lessons for ourselves and our children that celebrate the blessings of the earth. We could dance and sing for the joy of it. We could wail over what ails us, e.g. the loss of a species. Some school rooms might need a little more soundproofing, that's all. A pleasure-seeking after school drum&dance session could easily become an in-school knowledge-seeking science program.

Katie is a singer-dancer-player of guitar, flute, drum, bagpipes in the far-away land of New Zealand. She was working out of her van when I met her, spending Mondays through Thursdays at seven different preschools and early childhood centers; Fridays were hers to learn new music or to give concerts and residencies in elementary schools. Katie appears to some as a "free spirit", dressed in flowing skirts of many colors, her long hair hanging loose except for several thin braids to frame her face. She's a good musician with one of those fluid voices that move so easily through tunes, ornamenting them as she goes. She knows a broad repertoire of songs, and she's comfortable on the floor with the preschoolers. She is entrepreneurial, too, with a business sense about her to market and financially manage her work, and she can quote the New Zealand national standards for music and dance like she wrote them herself. Her units on trees, birds, fish, mountains, and mammals are brilliant, and the children glow in her presence, eager to learn from her, eager to please her. Katie's not certified, nor does she wish to be ("We're managing just fine at the fringes", she once explained) and yet her curriculum is one that could be, should be replicated in a million schools. Or is it Katie that should be cloned? For all the curriculum in the world, carefully conceived, is nothing unless it flows from the hands of capable teachers with the deep belief that they can change the world through the playful yet purposeful experiences they provide for children.

- Have you had a chance to peruse the following items as examples of integrated curricular approaches that weave music, the visual arts, dance, and drama into the middle of the study of language arts, social studies, and math and science?

Bartlett, J., C. McCoy, and K. Veblen (1997), Sound Ways of Knowing. New York: Schirmer;

Gallas, K. (1994), The Languages of Learning: How Children Talk, Write, Dance, Draw, and Sing Their Understanding of the World. New York: Teacher's College Press;

Goldberg, M. (2001), Arts and Learning: An Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings. New York: Longman/Addison Wesley.

Anderson, William M. and Joy E. Lawrence, 2003. Integrating Music into the Elementary Classroom, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth .