

On Your Marks!!

Encouraging mark making- developing writing



'Write Dance' 1: children moving and making marks

Write Dance is a well-established scheme, originally developed in Holland, to develop children's awareness of writing patterns through movement and dance.

Put simply, *Write Dance* is a series of ideas to help children learn the patterns of writing through stories, music, singing, rhyming, dance and movement. Each writing pattern has suggested stories, rhymes, songs and movements, and ideas for how children can transfer these movements into writing. As in 'Brain Gym' many of the activities encourage children to use both hands at the same time, and to move limbs across the 'midline' of the body.

Many practitioners and teachers in the UK testify to the major influence *Write Dance* has had on children's awareness of handwriting and handwriting skills. However many practitioners have found it necessary to adapt the programme, and particularly the music, stories and songs, to make them more relevant to UK children.

Here is an example of a session that we created for four-year olds in Luton.

Theme 'Circles and round shapes'

Vocabulary round/circle

Song 'The wheels on the bus' (on CD if possible)

Materials Various round objects in the class, hoops, a parachute, large sheets of paper and stubby crayons.

Activities

In class,

- Ask the children to go on a Treasure Hunt, and find as many round objects as they can. Emphasize the words 'round' and 'circle'.
- Sing 'The wheels on the bus' and emphasize the round movements we make as we sing.

In the hall,

- Make a circle and sing and play 'Ring a ring a roses'.
- Children sit in a circle as you introduce the parachute. Children sit with their legs out straight in front of them. Tell a story about being on a bike and the wind started to blow (children gently shake the parachute). 'Then the wind got stronger and stronger and stronger (the children automatically start waving the parachute as hard as they can!)... Then it stopped!'

Do this a few times, and ensure children do stop when you say so.

- See if they can pass the rim of the parachute through their hands so the parachute moves in a circular motion. Do this in both directions. Scoop the parachute up and put it away.

- Introduce the hoops. Demonstrate how the children might use their hoop as a steering wheel for the bus as they move around the room, or as a bus wheel by rolling it along the floor, but not letting go. Play the music and children move around the room.
- Put the hoops away. Give the children a large sheet of paper each, and two stubby crayons. Show them how to kneel on the edge of the paper so that it doesn't slide away when they are drawing. Show them how, by holding a crayon in each hand, they can make large circular patterns. Play the music. The aim is for them to fill their paper with large circles, using both hands, and moving in clockwise and anti clockwise directions.
- Finish the session by asking the children to show each other their paper and talk about what they have done.

Write Dance: a pre-writing programme for children 3 to 5
Paul Chapman Publishing www.paulchapmanpublishing.co.uk

For more information contact Michael Jones on 07743 665100 jonmic57@yahoo.co.uk