Enhancing Peer Relationships

Summary

In this activity students will work in pairs while addressing the social dilemma of who gets to be the leader and who follows, a common strain in relationships.

Main Core Tie

Social Studies - Kindergarten

Standard 2 Objective 1

Materials

- *Let's Be Enemies*
  , by Janice May Udry
  CD player
  Open Space
  Comfortable clothing
  Jon Scoville's music sampler CD

Books

- *Let's Be Enemies*
  , by Janice May Udry; ISBN 0064431886
- *Creative Dance for All Ages*
  , by Anne Green Gilbert; ISBN 0883145324
- *First Steps in Teaching Creative Dance to Children*
  , by Mary Joyce; ISBN 1559341629

Additional Media

Moore, T. [CDs] [Recorded by Tristan Moore] University of Utah's Children's Dance Theatre. Contact: www.TristanMoore.com

Scoville, J [CDs] [Recorded by Jon Scoville] Albert Bicycle Music, Olympia Station #221, Felton, CA Contact: foosounds@aol.com or www.albertsbicycle.com

Palmer, Hap [CDS,Cassettes, LPs] Composed by Hap Palmer, *Songs for Learning Through Music and Movements, Hap Palmer Recordings From Educational Activities*; Educational Activities Freeport, N.Y. Call 1-800-645-3739 or Contact: www.happalmer.com

Background for Teachers

At times kindergartners need assistance in making friends and learning how to get along. One strategy is to pair children up for activities. In this activity children work in pairs while addressing the social dilemma of who gets to be the leader and who follows, a common strain in relationships. Some children like to be the leader while others enjoy following. The children try both roles as they take turns being the leader; thus, learning respect for the other when they follow and building confidence when they lead. This activity can be repeated multiple times throughout the year allowing the children to change partners which gives opportunity to meet many more children as they explore new ideas. This is a creative dance experience. Don't be afraid to move with the students. Children are born to move and are full of energy. Dance is a wonderful art form that involves cooperation and social interaction along with creativity and coordination. In preparation, it would be helpful, but not necessary, to do some of the following movement activities with the class:

- Match Me
  - students match the teacher in simple, stationary movements

- Follow the Leader
  -- Teacher leads students around room in large motor movements such as skipping, jumping, galloping, sliding, crawling, etc. Students could take turns being the leader.
- Exploring Body Shapes
  -- Children walk randomly in the room then "freeze" in an interesting body shape. Encourage various levels: high, medium, and low. Use an instrument such as a drum to signal when to stop walking and freeze in their shape

If you are not experienced directing creative movement, remember that simple stationary movements work well as do large muscle movements. Move the way you are comfortable, then enjoy watching the children who are generally uninhibited and comfortable moving. Allow the shy or hesitant child to watch if she chooses. Don't force. Children need time to feel comfortable and watching is a form of participation. They will join in when ready. These children often make good stage hands by helping with props or music. There are many ways to participate.
Be enthusiastic and ENJOY!

Intended Learning Outcomes

2. Develop social skills and ethical responsibility.
3. Demonstrate responsible emotional and cognitive behaviors.

Instructional Procedures

Invitation to Learn
Follow the Leader
As you enter the gym have the children line up behind you. Instruct the children to follow you and do as you are doing. Proceed to do various large motor activities such as skipping, hopping, galloping, crawling, marching, etc. as you lead them along various pathways. If no gym is available, use the hallway or go outside then come back to a room with open space. Furniture may need to be cleared to create as much open space as possible. Comment on the fact that you are the leader and they are following. If time permits a few children could have a turn to be the leader.
Instructional Procedures

Read the book -- *Let's Be Enemies*. Gather the children close to you to see this small book.
Discuss the story -- ask questions: e.g. "Have you ever had a friend who always wants to be the leader?" "How does that make you feel?" "Do you like that?" "Do you want a turn to be the leader?" "Always or just sometimes?" "What happens when both friends want to be the boss at the same time?" "What could you do if both want to be the leader at the same time?" Allow children time to respond, using their comments to guide discussion.
Explain that good friends take turns -- there are times you can be in charge and do things your own way but there are other times when it is best to follow. You cannot always have it your way. Good friends take turns being the leader.
Introduce "MIRRORING"-- ask and discuss the following: "Have you ever looked in a mirror? What do you see? Yes, you see an image of yourself. What does that image do when you move? If you raise your hand what does the image of your hand do in the mirror? Yes, it does exactly what you do. However you move, your image will match. You are the leader when you are in front of the mirror. You lead and the image follows."
Explain activity -- "We are going to do an activity called 'MIRRORING.' Let's pretend you are in front of a mirror and your friend is your image. Watch me and my partner." Proceed to choose a child to be your partner and tell the child that you will be the leader first and they are to follow you. Face each other to begin. Instruct the child to move with you as if he were a mirror image. Match exactly. Keep the movement flowing with an occasional pause. Use different levels, making your movements rise and sink slowly in space. Then change leaders. (Name of child)

gets to be the leader and I will be the mirror and follow what he chooses to do. After you've modeled, invite four children to try this in front of group. Set clear rules and limits such as:

Stay within a specific area (determined by available space)
No running
Begin by facing each other
Can move forward and backward but not more then 10 steps apart

Have each pair of children first decide who will begin as the leader. Let them demonstrate for a short time. Stop and change leaders so the other partner gets to lead. Give them a few moments to demonstrate to the class. Make any necessary corrections so children clearly understand the activity. Complement, encourage and admire the movement done by the children. Give suggestions if needed.

Invite ALL -- direct the children to choose a partner then find a place in open area where they have room to move without being in anyone else's way. Stand facing each other and wait until everyone is ready. If there is a leftover child he can be your partner. When all children are paired have them decide who gets to be the leader first. Show by raising their hand. Each pair of children should have one person with hand up. Assist those who can't decide. Tell them we will start when the music begins.

Turn on background music-- e.g. "Creatures" by Tristan Moore, Music Sample [CD] and let them begin. Some children will have trouble following their partner. Gently remind them it is their turn to follow, try to match your partner. When ready to stop have them "freeze" in the position they are in. Look, notice and comment on interesting shapes they have formed.

Change roles -- have the new leaders raise hand to be sure they understand. Begin music, let the new leaders lead their partner. Comment and encourage. Point out some of the exciting movement going on.

Watch each other -- invite half the class to sit and watch. The other half performs in front of their classmates. Each pair must decide, again, who will be the leader and who will follow before you begin. When finished discuss with the children the interesting things you saw. Now change places and let the other half perform for their peers. When finished discuss with the children what they liked and why they liked it.

Discussion - Ask the class if they liked being the leader best or if they preferred following. Guide the discussion to emphasize these ideas:

Following is fun because you don't have to think of the ideas.
Leading is fun because you can do it your way.
We get along better if we are willing take turns being the leader.

Extensions

Curriculum Extensions/Adaptations/ Integration

This activity is very open-ended and naturally adapts to different abilities. The highly coordinated child will likely move faster and quicker, and may explore more complex movements. The child who is less mature physically may choose more simple movements. How the children are paired can help meet individual needs. Two highly creative children working together will come up with interesting body shapes and movement. A hesitant child who has a hard time thinking of ideas will respond better with a strong leader to follow. It is good to revisit this activity throughout the year so they experience multiple partners with a variety of abilities.

If you have a physically disabled student this activity is easily modified. For example, it can be done from a sitting position using upper body movements. The able bodied student would match the student with special needs as far as movement possibilities but each should have a turn to both lead and follow.

Math III-2. The children explore spatial relationships, specifically negative and positive space as

they create various shapes with their bodies. Positional words are used to describe where and what they are doing.

Language Arts I-1, VII -2, 3. As you read and discuss the story the children listen and respond to discussion about the text. They can use prior experience and make connections to the text. If you repeat this activity at a later time, they children can retell the story and identify key ideas. The book *Let's Be Enemies* can be placed in a browsing box in the room.

Content I-2. The children are developing gross motor skills as they explore a variety of movements. They must maintain their personal space and boundaries while moving. They are using the elements of dance which are time, space, energy, and body.

Family Connections

- *Let's Be Enemies*

could be sent home to read. The social problem of one person always wanting to be the boss could lead to a valuable family discussion. In addition, books on character education and peer relationships could be sent home to read and discuss with family.

Mirroring is a good activity to incorporate into a parent sharing time or program at school. After demonstrating the activity, invite the parents to come and partner with their child. Fun for all!

Assessment Plan

Assessments for his activity would involve listening and observing. Listen to comments made by children during discussions. Pay attention to their concerns with friendship issues. During the "Mirroring" activity observe the children. Watch for individual ability to lead and ability to follow. Observe those who choose a partner easily and those who struggle to find a partner. In addition to social skills watch for the student's creativity and large motor control.

The children assess as they watch one another perform. You could offer suggestions of what to look for as they watch, such as: "Is the partner following? Can you tell who the leader is? Do they match? Can you see interesting shapes they make together? What makes it interesting to watch?" etc.

Bibliography

Research Basis

Bredekamp, S. & Copple, C. (eds). (1997) Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs (rev. ed.). Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, pg.132.

Children should have daily opportunities for aesthetic expression through art, music, and dance. The arts can be the explicit focus of the activity or integrated into other areas of the curriculum. Children should be encouraged to express themselves physically, represent ideas and feelings and acquire fundamental concepts through moving freely and use large muscles in planned movement activities. The arts should be offered more often then a once a week diversion.

Gilbert, A.G. Creative Dance for All Ages: A conceptual approach (7th ed.). Reston, VA: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, pg.7.

Social outcomes from creative dance include the following: 1.) Learning to cooperate with others through partner and group work. 2.) Bonding with one another through positive physical contact and sharing of ideas and space. 3.) Increasing leadership skills through partner and group work. 4.) Discovering the value of individual differences through creative exploration.

Authors

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