



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #824: Movement-Based Poetry and Literacy

Overview

Combining movement with poetry and literacy creates multi-sensory learning experiences where rhythm, pattern, and physical expression reinforce language understanding. Students who perform a poem through movement, create a physical sequence inspired by a narrative, or use locomotor patterns to explore syllable stress develop a bodily understanding of language that complements traditional literacy approaches. This cross-curricular connection is particularly effective in primary settings where movement and language development are closely linked.

Key Teaching Ideas

Effective movement-literacy integration requires teachers to identify the specific language concept being reinforced and design the physical task to make that concept tangible. For example, students exploring syllable patterns can clap and step each syllable while walking across the space, making the rhythm of language physically felt. Narrative movement sequences where students create a short physical story with a beginning, middle, and end develop sequencing and structure in a way that transfers back to written composition. The physical experience gives students a concrete reference point when they return to the written task.

Practical Application

- **Syllable Step Sequences:** Students walk across the space stepping on each syllable of a word or line of poetry, pausing on stressed syllables and moving quickly through unstressed ones to feel the rhythm in their bodies.
- **Narrative Movement Stories:** Small groups create a short movement sequence with a clear beginning, middle, and end, then describe their sequence in writing using temporal connectives such as "first", "then", and "finally".
- **Emotion-Driven Locomotion:** Read aloud a short poem and ask students to move in a way that captures the mood of each stanza, then discuss how their movement choices connected to specific word choices in the text.
- **Rhyme Pattern Relay:** Students in teams each perform a movement that rhymes with the previous player's movement word. For example, "hop" followed by "drop" followed by "stop," building rhyme awareness through physical play.



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



- **Vocabulary in Motion:** Introduce new vocabulary words by assigning each word a movement; students perform the movement when they hear the word during a read-aloud, reinforcing word recognition through physical response.

Next Steps

Visit the [Active Education Australia website](https://activeeducationaustralia.edu.au) for resources on expressive movement-based literacy.

References and Research

1. Australian Curriculum: English - Connecting rhythm, pattern, and language structure to physical and creative expression.
2. Gallahue, D. L., & Ozmun, J. C. (2006). Understanding Motor Development: Infants, Children, Adolescents, Adults – Explains how movement skills develop across childhood and adolescence to guide appropriate teaching progression.
3. Kuczala, M. (2015). The Kinesthetic Classroom: Teaching and Learning Through Movement – Demonstrates how purposeful movement enhances engagement, cognition and academic learning.
4. Australian Sports Commission. Playing for Life – Promotes game-based, inclusive and student-centred approaches that maximise participation, enjoyment and skill development.
5. Australian Sports Commission. (2019). Australian Physical Literacy Framework – Defines physical literacy as the development of physical, psychological, social and cognitive capabilities that support lifelong participation in physical activity.