



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #837: Physical Literacy Through Music-Integrated Movement

Overview

Music and rhythm provide a natural scaffold for developing movement competence. They give students an auditory structure that supports timing, coordination, and spatial awareness. When locomotor skills, dance sequences, and ball skills are performed in time with music, students develop a deeper understanding of movement dynamics. Music also increases motivation, creating an engaging learning environment that encourages students to persist with challenging movement tasks and build greater body awareness over time.

Key Teaching Ideas

Integrating rhythm into movement activities gives students a clear structure for learning and practising movement skills. Rather than using music as background sound, rhythm becomes part of the task itself. Students might synchronise movements to a beat, change direction on a musical cue, or create a short movement sequence that fits a set number of counts. Exploring different tempos and musical styles encourages students to adjust their speed, energy and movement quality in response to changing rhythms. Comparing movement to a slow waltz and an upbeat hip-hop track also helps students recognise how music influences performance while developing kinaesthetic awareness, coordination, and creative movement skills.

Practical Application

- **Rhythmic Locomotor Drills:** Students match their locomotor movements to the tempo of different musical tracks, transitioning between walking, jogging, and sprinting as the tempo changes, developing timing and cardiovascular awareness.
- **Beat-Driven Ball Skills:** Students bounce or dribble a ball in time with the rhythm of a piece of music, performing a crossover dribble exactly on the heavy downbeat and a simple bounce on the lighter beats.
- **Collaborative Choreography:** Small groups are given a short piece of music and challenged to create a movement sequence that incorporates specific skills such as a jump, a balance, and a roll, performed in time with the music.



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- **Cultural Dance Exploration:** Introduce basic steps from various cultural dance traditions, allowing students to explore global rhythms while developing spatial awareness and an appreciation for diverse movement practices.
- **Expressive Movement Phrasing:** Use instrumental music to prompt expressive movement, asking students to use sharp angular movements during staccato sections and smooth flowing movements during legato sections.

Next Steps

The [Active Education Australia website](#) has resources on music-integrated movement and rhythm-based HPE learning. [Anywhere PD](#) covers locomotor skill development through beat-driven and choreographic tasks.

References and Research

1. Australian Sports Commission. (2019). *Australian Physical Literacy Framework* – Explains how physical, cognitive, psychological and social capabilities develop through purposeful movement experiences that build coordination, confidence and movement competence.
2. Graham, G., Holt/Hale, S. A., & Parker, M. (2013). *Children Moving: A Reflective Approach to Teaching Physical Education* – Provides evidence-based strategies for developing movement competence, coordination, creative movement and developmentally appropriate physical education experiences.
3. Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Version 9.0) – Supports the development of movement competence, creative movement, expressive performance and lifelong participation through diverse physical activities.
4. Whitehead, M. (2010). *Physical Literacy: Throughout the Lifecourse* – Establishes that varied, meaningful movement experiences develop the confidence, motivation, competence and understanding needed for lifelong participation in physical activity.