

# Beyond the Classroom:

The Implementation of Creative  
Movement and Music in Schools for the  
Disabled

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*"Movement and music are as necessary to mental and physical development as food."*

*-- Unknown*

*We sit in an uneven circle on the floor, a tangle of legs and bodies shifting furiously in the heat of the morning. They sit quietly waiting for the next activity and I become lost in a sea of eyes, eight sets staring curiously back at me. I reach behind me and grab the pile of colored papers. I lay them face down at my feet and pick up the first paper. Waves of purple crayon cover the center and move furiously across the page. The name reads "Fitu." "Whose name is this?" There is a silence and eight pairs of eyes struggle to solve the puzzle presented before them. "Fitu!" Iva yells along with some of the others muttering quietly, an echo of his voice. I point to each letter and have them spell out the name. They seem to have an easier time recognizing the individual letters; gathering up each piece of the puzzle and precariously sticking them together. "And what's this?" I say, letting my hand rest on the picture of a house I have drawn above the name. "Fale!" They yell breathlessly. "F-F-F-Fitu. F-F-F-Fale." I emphasize the letters, each sound bouncing off my lips and moving around the circle, as a chorus of sounds emerge, "F-F-Fitu...F-F-Fale." We move through each paper; dissect each name down to the core. By now, this is a familiar game, and when we have gone through the names, they stand up before I can ask them. I fly over to the music box and press play. The music envelopes the room, a mix of Samoan melody and drums and I watch them move around the circle of names I have placed on the floor in front of them. "Siva!" They laugh and dance around the circle of colors; Jumping, gliding, spinning. When I stop the music, they run in complete disorder, a stampede of legs and arms until they find their names and settle themselves in front of the paper. They make a sea of colors, a flock of bodies; each one recognizing what lies beneath them, each one reading their name...*

## Abstract

Creative movement and music are an invaluable means of creativity and expression. These art forms captivate children and nurture their growth, letting them experiment with body and sound. For students with special needs, the implementation of programs centered around creative movement, music, and dance are extremely beneficial. This study examines the effects of implementing a program based around creative movement and music in a school for the disabled in Samoa. This project is based around the observations and analysis of these activities and looks at the effects of such activities, improvements of the students, and the reactions of teachers and specialists. The administration of this program proved to be extremely significant. Through these activities, students exercised creativity, self-expression, and bodily consciousness. They developed physical and coordination skills, became confident and innovative creators, and participated in active learning, gaining knowledge of a variety of rudimentary subjects. The implementation of this project assisted in the physical and cognitive development of these special needs students, creating an energetic environment where growth and creativity emerged.

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## To My Family...

*For my Mother whose footsteps I will forever follow in and who gave me the courage to travel to far-off places.*

*For my Father who knows everything about anything. I can only hope to teach him something new through these adventures.*

*And for my brother, whose heart is bigger than his body, an inspiration for all...*

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## The Importance of Creative Movement and Music

Creative movement and music are an invaluable means of creativity and expression. These art forms captivate children and nurture their growth, letting them experiment with body and sound. They create unique forms of communication and self-expression, promoting and improving coordination, physical development, confidence, and in many instances, serve as effective learning tools. Movement and music are central to development from infancy. Children navigate the world through their senses and whether employing kinesthetic, visual, auditory or tactile senses, learning is continually facilitated.

Creative movement enhances movement development through the practice of locomotor and non-locomotor actions. Children use their kinesthetic sense to experience the motions and movements their body is creating (Loeffler 2007: p.1). As they move, visual and auditory senses are utilized as children react to the movements or objects they see and the music or sounds that they hear. Furthermore, learning is stimulated through tactile experiences, as they encounter movements on the floor, explore different objects, or become active participants in making music (Chalk 2007: p.2). Creative movement and music also promote social and communicational growth. Through these activities, children develop their individuality and realize the inimitability of others. They cooperate in group activities, continually learning how to express themselves and react to various movements within this interactive environment.

Creative movement and music “are centered around opportunities for non-competitive, success-oriented, and creative experiences” (Loeffler 2007: p.1). Movement and music stimulate cognitive and physical learning. The mind and the body are connected constituents and “the domains of child development – physical, social, emotional, and cognitive – simply do not mature separately from one another. There’s an overlap and interrelatedness among them” (Pica

2006: pp.1-2). The right side of the brain is central to music and creativity. The left side of the brain controls “sequential and logistical skills,” nurturing language and linear functions.

Learning is set into motion when a person makes use of their whole body and because of the “cross-referencing,” it is imperative that both sides be developed simultaneously (Loeffler 2007: p. 2). Learning that occurs in a particular area, significantly influences the other areas. Music and dance are important in this development process and when put into practice, benefit the child as a whole.

For handicapped youth, in addition to improving coordination, confidence, creativity, and physical development, singing and dancing are effective tools for learning basic skills and rudimentary lessons. Special needs students require an alternative and modified way of learning and more than anything, these students benefit most from unconventional teaching methods such as these creative movement games, dancing and music. “Research shows that movement is the young child’s preferred mode of learning – because they best *understand* concepts when they’re physically experienced” (Pica 2007: p.2). One can teach concepts such as numbers, letters, and language through movement and song and at the same time promote coordination, confidence, creativity and expression. Momoe Von Reiche, artist and owner of MADD gallery in Samoa, comments, “Disabled youth have specific ways in which they are handicapped, but often times, everything is inside of them; you must bring this expression out” (Von Reiche Interview, April 16, 2007). For handicapped youth, communication, expression, and fundamental learning are often a difficult task, hindered by their disabilities and everyday obstacles. For this population, creative movement and music is extremely valuable.

In Samoa, although arts education is increasing, programs centered around creative movement and music rarely include students with special needs and do not go beyond basic

singing and dancing in the classroom. Furthermore, such activities rarely use movement games, dancing, or singing to facilitate learning skills or fundamental concepts normally taught in the classroom. This study examines the effects of implementing a stronger program involving music, dance, and creative movement in a school for the disabled in Samoa. Research will investigate the benefits of creating such a program and will explore the various improvements and developmental outcomes that occur through the conduction of these activities.

### The Project

In order to examine the effects of movement games, dance, and music in schools for the disabled, a project was designed and implemented in Aoga Fiamalamalama, a school for the intellectually handicapped in Samoa. Although multiple schools for disabled youth exist in Samoa, research was limited to only one school so that consistency and familiarity could be established between the researcher and the students. After visiting the school in the months prior to research and showing interest in music and dance, Aoga Fiamalamalama was chosen to be the main site of research as the administration expressed interest in having such a program be implemented. Furthermore, research was conducted primarily in one of the two classes so that the students would feel more comfortable over time and so observations could be documented thoroughly and systematically.

A total of nine students participated in the program although attendance varied significantly on a day-to-day basis. These students ranged in age from 14 to 24, with the exception of a student who was 32 years of age. In order to ensure confidentiality, the names of these students have been changed for the purpose of this paper. Students presented a range of disabilities including Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Mild Mental Retardation, Epilepsy, Paralysis, Speech Impediments, and what many teachers label, "Slow Learners." Although these

disabilities appear on the students' records, most of these students have not been officially diagnosed. Disabilities are only known from old records and from various observations made by the principal and teachers.

Research was conducted over the course of three weeks for four hours each day. During this time, detailed observations were made inside the classroom and participation in various activities and lessons was also done. For one hour everyday, a program centered around creative movement games, dance, and music was administered, created and run by the researcher. The program was designed to promote and improve coordination, confidence, creativity, and physical development. Activities also combined movement and music with the instruction of numbers, letters, language, literacy, colors and other rudimentary subjects.

This project was based around the observations and analysis of these activities and looked at their effects, improvements of the students, and the reactions of teachers and specialists. Knowledge that such programs are extremely beneficial in the development of youth and in particular, special needs individuals, may have influenced this research; however, it did not encumber it. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal at Aoga Fiamalamalama, two teachers, and two other special needs and arts specialists. Interviews discussed how the current administration viewed programs based around creative movement and music and what educational outcomes and skill building might come from such activities. Interviews additionally assessed areas that students struggled in if current programs based around movement and music existed.

Several limitations affected the research and analysis. Initially, the time allotted to complete this project served as a constraint. The observations collected, the effects of the program, and the analysis of improvements would have been more comprehensive and

systematically documented if research had been conducted over a longer period. Furthermore, the sporadic attendance of students affected the results as the number of individuals present each day varied significantly. Finally, language was a limitation. It was sometimes unclear if the students understood what the researcher was saying and results might have been more accurate if activities could have been conducted entirely in Samoan.

### The Findings

#### **Physical Development and Coordination:**

*We sit on green straw mats in the small open garage, catching the waves of heat seeping in through wrinkled metal doors. The circle is broken and jagged, each student reluctant to make a close ring. I motion for them to move in and some of them do. I tell them that we will begin with stretches like we did the day before. I lift my arms above my head, bringing my body as tall as it can go. "Reach, reach, reach!" They smile and follow. "Now touch the ground!" I bring my arms down and reach across the circle. Valu stares straight ahead, perfectly still. "Valu, try to touch the ground!" I say vivaciously. He reaches his arms as far they can go, trying to grab the floor with both his hands. I stick out my leg and touch my toes. "Okay, which one is your right leg? Stretch it out!" A chorus of legs quickly emerge and copy me as we try to touch our toes. "Reach, Reach, Reach!" I watch them extend their bodies, using every muscle, testing their limits. "Now touch your knee!" They follow. "And your toes, and your knee and your toes..." I do the motions faster and faster until we are all a mess of actions and laughter. I stand up and motion for them to do the same, "Tu i luga!" "Stand up!" They jump to their feet and follow me as we reach for the sky. I watch as eight pairs of hands try with all their strength to reach the ceiling. We balance on each foot, we wobble, we catch ourselves and stand stronger the next time. We touch our toes, spin around, and move our arms in circles. They figure out which is their left and right side and we put each part of our bodies inside the circle and take them out again. We shake them all about and I laugh as their voices spill out in smooth waves. "We put our left leg in, we put our left leg out! We do the hokey pokey and turn ourselves around!" They dance around their spot in the circle—hands, arms, legs and heads rocking in every direction...*

Although movement games and dance and music activities were only conducted over a short period of time, the developmental benefits in terms of physical and coordination growth were clearly apparent. Physical development and coordination were central components within

the movement and musical activities. Basic stretching exercises, which were conducted at the beginning of each activity period, continually targeted physical development and coordination skills. Students would use their whole bodies to practice balancing and stability. They would stretch each inch of their body, moving each body part in different ways and responding to the motions and gestures. Each part of the body was explored; from the manner in which their heads moved to the motions made by the tips of their toes. Their bodily awareness and coordination were put into practice as they learned the different sides of their body, singing and performing the motions to songs such as “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” or “The Hokey Pokey.”

Students made shapes with their bodies and traveled at different speeds and heights. They practiced controlling their bodies using a mix of locomotor movements and immobile actions, holding their body shapes, and practicing movement changes. During a freeze dance game, students tested their rhythmic skill, strength, coordination, and vitality. When the music stopped and students had to freeze, they learned to switch their locomotor and non-locomotor movements quickly to stand still, further promoting their physical development.

Students were often asked to move across the floor in a variety of ways. Whether they were told to be a certain animal, a waterfall, a tree blowing in the wind, or asked to move low to the ground and then far above the ground, students practiced controlling their own body. They engaged themselves in creative expression and physical activity. Even during a game of “Red Light, Green Light,” students learned their colors while exercising their motor skills and physical dexterity. They would run when the green ball was held up, developing endurance and motor fitness and stop when the red ball emerged, exercising their coordination and bodily consciousness.

Movement games that involved throwing a ball additionally built up coordination. Students were asked to sit in a circle and when the ball was tossed to them, said their name and then a classmate's name, throwing the ball to the other individual after their name was shouted. Such an activity not only encouraged communication and language but at the same time, the actions of throwing and catching the ball developed coordination and exercised a more controlled form of physical activity.

It is difficult for individuals to develop motor skills, physical vivacity, body awareness, and physical adroitness without movement experiences. Thus, sitting predominantly in the classroom reduces physical awareness and the sensations that accompany such activity. Students appeared to change drastically the moment they left the classroom and began moving around. Many of these students have difficulties maintaining attention and after sitting for too long, lost interest or become bored. It is important to keep these students active, so learning and development was successfully facilitated through these energetic activities. Movement was imperative to help them understand fundamental concepts. They needed to make different shapes with their body, move high and low, big and small. They needed to learn about their bodies, and their existence in space. Through such active learning, these concepts were more easily understood.

### **Creativity, Expression, and Confidence Building:**

*We are clustered in a small group on the far side of the room and all attention is on Iva. She stands timidly, shoulders slumped forward, and eyes cast downward. I watch her as she memorizes each fracture on the cobalt floor tiles. I repeat the question, "What is your favorite animal?" She stares up at me and I place a hand on her back, offering an encouraging gesture. "Maile," she finally says, and grins copiously. "Dog!" I say. "I like dogs too. Can you go across the floor and show us how a dog moves?" She has watched the other students perform before her, gliding across the floor, moving their body like their animal, animal noises protruding from their lips. She hesitates and walks to the other side of the room and faces us. She stands and does not move, eyes once again navigating the floor. She finally*

*looks up and begins moving towards the group, arms bent like the paws of a dog and hollers, “Ruff ruff! Ruff ruff.” When she reaches us, a smile has covered her face, brilliant and jovial. I hold out the palm of my hand, “Maiska Lima!” I say, slapping her hand. A few days later, we do the same activity and Iva surprisingly saunters to the front of the group, motioning that she wants to go first. “What is your favorite animal?” I say, repeating this ritual. She answers differently. “Horse!” she exclaims and walks briskly to the other side of the room. Without vacillation, she dances across the space, galloping and spinning. “Nayy, Nayy!” she shouts, performing an imaginative imitation of the animal. When she reaches me, she smiles and holds her thumbs up in a questioning manner, asking for approval. I smile and return the thumbs up, and hidden in the shadows of the late morning, there is nothing but smiles...*

Predominant in the administration of movement games and dance and music activities was the development of creativity, expression, and confidence that such activities promoted. Many activities focused on building creativity, encouraging expression, and improving confidence. Activities asked students to exercise their imagination, create unique movements, and explore shapes and sounds innovatively. Activities required students to realize their inimitability and express their feelings through creative movement and music. Self-assurance is a significant part of creative movement and music and various activities were implemented to assist in the development in these areas.

When asked to become an animal and move across the space, students became inventive and creative and expressed themselves through movement and sound. Such a task helped to build self-confidence as students explored their creative limits and performed in front of their classmates. Individuals, who initially appeared timorous, thrived during these activities, building up confidence and buoyancy. Each time the activity was repeated, improvement was continually observed. Students’ expression and ingenuity increased and their confidence was significantly improved. As the days continued, they began to understand and experiment with movement and their bodies and gained approval from their classmates. Half of the class might play instruments while the other students moved across the floor to the music. Creativity was developed as

students constructed musical rhythms and creative expression was exercised as students created different ways to move within the space. All of these factors contributed in the development of creative expression and confidence building.

When students were asked to sit in a circle and come up with a motion to correspond with their name, creative expression continued to be employed. Students experimented with basic movements and used their imaginations to construct movement sequences to show the rest of the group. The freeze dance activity also promoted creativity and expression. Students could dance any way they wanted, and explored the various ways they could travel through space and express themselves through movement and music. They used their movements to express their feelings and ideas. Students were told, "Dance happy!" and on occasion a student might respond with a different feeling. "Sad," Valu once said and he moved his body sluggishly, making a distressing face to complement his motions.

Many times, students were told to move across the space as a particular object, entity, or feeling. They were asked to move around as if they were water, a mountain, or they were told to fly like a bird and move as if they were sliding on ice. In these particular exercises, students were required to be innovative creators. They as individuals had to come up with movements and gestures without the guidance of their classmates or teachers. This further promoted creative and expressive growth and self-confidence and self-reliance were constantly built up.

Developmental progression in terms of creativity, expression, and confidence were clearly observed as a result of these activities. After activities were run multiple times, children seemed to become more imaginative in their movement and musical creations and felt more comfortable moving around the space and performing in front of and with their classmates.

Students learned to express themselves in new ways, became inventive movers and creators, and began to believe in themselves, continually asserting confidence and poise.

### **Active and Alternative Learning:**

*We shift in the shadows of the open garage and I watch as they position themselves into a tangled row, a mixed-up procession of bodies as they each hold out their hands. I place a strip of paper in their fingertips and they hold up the narrow piece of color making a string of rainbow. I walk over to Lima first. "What color is this?" I ask. He stares at his blue paper and looks at me again. I smile, and wait. Lua eagerly steps towards me. "Blue!" Some of the others echo his response and Lima reiterates the answer. "Blue!" he says elatedly. "Good!" I say moving down the line. "What color is this?" I ask Iva. She twists the band of green around her finger until the ring of color is a tight coil around her hand. "Green!" she answers happily. "Red!" "Orange!" "Yellow!" We shout out the names of the colors until I am confident they understand the difference between the vibrant hues. I pick up a pile of the same multi-colored papers and tell them to turn around. They turn and face the metal doors and I throw the mass of colors into the air. They flutter about and settle across the sun-speckled room. I tell them to turn around and as the music plays, they dance across the floor, collecting the colored paper that matches the ones they already hold in their hands. The music becomes sluggish and rhythmic and I tell them to move their bodies slowly as they collect the paper. As the music beats faster, I watch as their bodies twist and twirl rapidly. I tell them to move their bodies quickly, making sharp gestures as they gather their loot. When the music stops, they run over and thrust their collections towards me. I line each pile up on the floor, a flawless row of separated colors. They stand in front of their piles, continuing to shout the colors, recognizing, learning, understanding...*

Hands-on discovery and activities that brought lessons out of the classroom in order to promote active learning were significant in promoting the comprehension of fundamental concepts. These activities showed that many students needed an entertaining and enjoyable way to learn. Participating in activities that moved away from the structured and classroom-oriented instruction facilitated learning and increased communication and language skills. Furthermore, these activities allowed students to build up basic skills in order to apply them to the more general subjects taught back in the classroom. These activities also seemed to promote more focused learning. Students often became bored and uninterested when sitting still for so long and

because students really enjoyed participating in the movement and musical games, they were able to successfully concentrate on learning various subjects.

During activities such as musical names, students examined the letters and sounds that made up their names. Individuals picked apart the colorful name papers with the help of their classmates, identifying each letter and building familiarity with the noise each one made. Recognition of these sequences of letters was made easier by the corresponding picture drawn, which began with the same letter as the name. Once students gained an understanding of these concepts, memorization and recognition were put to the test through movement and music. As rhythmic music filled the room, students danced around the circle of papers, creatively moving different parts of their body. When the music stopped, students were required to find their names, employing the skills they had learned earlier. Through such an activity, students developed physically, creatively, and were able to learn fundamental concepts that were once only taught in the classroom.

During activities such as “Color Pick-Up,” students practiced their color identification. Each student was assigned a specific color, which they had to initially identify, and after a cluster of paper strips were thrown across the floor, students scrambled to pick up their specific color as different kinds of music played. When the music played fast, students were asked to move their bodies in quick, sharp ways while finding their colors. When the music played slow, students were told to move slowly, extending each fragment of their bodies to reach the papers. This creative movement game promoted enjoyable learning. It allowed students not only to experiment with their bodies, become creative, and exercise their physical skills, but also required them to learn and recognize colors, continually participating in active learning.

Numerous activities also taught the concepts of opposites. Students passed around a ball in a circle slowly, then fast. They practiced the contrasting concepts of “up” and “down” through song and movement. While singing, “Ring-a-Ring O’Roses”, they fell to the floor and began to understand the concept of “down” and then moved around the room on their tiptoes, to experience the opposite feeling of “up.” They learned the opposite motions of “over” and “under,” jumping over a rope, and then crawling under. They were told to make their bodies soft like a pillow and then stiff as a tree. Such activities allowed the students to actively experience the concept of opposites, a subject that is often touched upon during classroom lessons.

Finally, number skills were successfully learned. Movement games asked students to recognize numbers and various songs required students to perform basic math. Students were given cards with numbers on them and had to repeat movements based on their given number as music played. When holding a “3” card they took three leaps, spun three times, and took three giant steps. Each student moved their body in repetitive motions, counting each movement aloud and developing a greater awareness of each number. When the music stopped, students had to run around and find their classmate who held the same number card, further developing their number recognition skills. They sang “10 Little Monkeys Jumping on a Bed,” and as they told of each monkey falling off the bed, they were required to exercise basic math skills, determining how many monkeys were left for the next verse.

These modified learning techniques allowed students to develop fundamental skills while creatively and physically expressing themselves through movement and music. Learning was active, hands-on and extremely enjoyable for students. Students were able to take the concepts they learned and bring them back to the classroom, continually facilitating their academic growth in a pleasurable way. Although such a program has never been strongly implemented at the

school, as activities continued to be conducted, teachers and other specialists began recognizing the benefits that such a program could bring. Their reactions are discussed in the following section.

### Reactions to the Project

Interviews with Sharon Suhren, the principal at Fiamalamalama continually demonstrated the contributions of the project. “Through dance, music, and movement activities, students are not only growing physically and creatively. They are learning all the things they learn in the classroom—colors, numbers, their names, the alphabet...” commented Sharon. “So many things are incorporated in what you are doing, which is why these activities are so important.” Sharon, who became the Acting Principal only a year ago, continually concentrates on changing and improving the school. “We need to focus on the small changes because if we start too big, we will go home and bang our heads against the wall...these activities, they show the teachers what else can be done to help the students” (Suhren Interviews, April 17, 2007 & April 30, 2007).

Sharon found the development of confidence and active learning, most important through the administration of movement and musical activities. Sharon’s goal is to move away from students thinking they can’t do something. “If they think they can’t do it, they won’t do it,” she says. She believed that the activities centered around creative movement and music gave students confidence in themselves, helping them to realize their own potential, and gave them the skills to interact with others. As students develop a more conscious bodily awareness, learn to express themselves creatively, and successfully learn fundamental concepts, Sharon believes that these students will develop a stronger sense of self-confidence and self-reliance. “They need to know they can do things on their own” (Suhren Interview, April 19, 2007).

Sharon further spoke about the importance of active learning through music and movement. “Special needs students need an enjoyable way to learn, rather than a structured, formal, classroom-oriented way.” Sharon felt that such activities helped the students focus on what they needed to learn. “They are learning but also really enjoying the learning.” She feels it is extremely important to build up basic skills before teaching the bigger concepts that need to be learned. One needs to show them the relationship of the first letter of their names before teaching the students spelling. “If you point to a letter in the classroom, they might not know what it is, but through these movement and music games, they are learning to recognize and associate letters with pictures or their names,” Sharon explains. “They are learning the concepts of up, down, over, and under. They are learning numbers. They are learning all the stuff covered in the classroom but out of their seats” (Suhren Interview, April 30, 2007).

Teachers at Fiamalamalama and other specialists saw the importance of active and alternative learning through movement and music. “We can’t always teach them here in the classroom,” said Suafalooa Mann, who has been teaching at Fiamalamalama for over 27 years. “They are not like other children; we need to find different ways to teach them.” She thought the importance of these activities stemmed from the active learning and academic improvements that such activities promoted. The program was so beneficial because it made students “strong in the mind and the body.” Suafalooa had run movement games with students before, but she felt that the current activities promoted more learning and growth. “Instead of a simple activity of rolling a ball, they are learning movement and music through games like musical names.” Writing and reading always need to be learned but it is often hard for many of the students to develop basic skills like writing their name. “I will bring objects over to them that go with their names. I bring over a cup and say ‘what’s this?’ ‘Ipu!’ the student will answer and I will show her that is the

same letter as her name. ‘Ipu, Iva, Ipu, Iva...’ I keep repeating it,” she says. The movement and musical activities that promoted this same type of learning through hands-on and enjoyable methods were the activities that Suafalooa found most helpful. Students were able to learn in a fun way and then bring this knowledge back to the classroom. “In your program, there are numbers, letters, and reading...they can now recognize their names and enjoy learning” (Mann Interview, April 30 2007).

Sina AINU’u, the current principal at SENESE (Special Needs Education Society), also voiced the importance of learning through movement and music. “Special needs students can’t learn with just a pen and a paper, they need to have that modified and alternative route of learning though things like music and dancing.” Especially in Samoa, special needs students need learning that is hands-on and exciting. Basic skills can successfully be developed through creative movement and music activities because such learning is active and out of the classroom. (AINU’u Interview, April 26, 2007).

Tafale, another teacher at Fiamalamalama further expressed these same ideas. These students are different from other students their age and can’t learn as quickly or remember concepts as well. Tafale was impressed with the improvements she observed from many of the activities. “They are learning from games like musical names and number matching,” she said. “Fitu knows what his name looks like and Tasi now remembers the letter that his name starts with” (Tafale Interview, April 24, 2007).

All of these individuals felt that physical and coordination development were significantly important. The Fiamalamalama principal has recently asked her teachers to create goals for the physical development of the students. The movement and musical activities helped demonstrate to teachers the kinds of areas that students are improving in and the physical or

coordination skills with which students still struggle. Such activities allow the students to learn about their bodies and the ways in which they can control or express themselves. The various activities conducted helped students to learn their left from their right, memorize different parts of the body, and move around in different ways. (Suhren Interview, April 30, 2007). It is imperative to have students be active and it is important that their energy and focus be kept up through activities like movement or dancing.

Sina talks about how critical it is to get students out of their seats and moving around, experimenting with space and others. “If you are trying to improve motor skills, you need to do activities that get their hands and body moving,” she said. (Ainu’u Interview, April 26, 2007). Tafale noticed the connection between the mind and the body that occurs during these activities and observed that dancing helped to develop students’ bodies and games that involved balancing or ball throwing contributed to the development of coordination. (Tafale Interview, April 24, 2007). Suafalooa reiterated the importance of having students participate in energetic activities that help develop their body and physical awareness. “We need to get them outside of the classroom. This is just what you have done.”

### Conclusion

“Creative movement [and music are ways] for children to know themselves and to see connections with the rest of the world. [They are ways] for them to understand themselves and their relationship with the world” (Chalk 2007: p.2). This idea illustrates the importance of implementing programs involving creative movement, music, and dance. For special needs students these activities not only promote and improve physical development, coordination, confidence, expression, and creativity but also effectively facilitate active learning. Learning through alternative methods is imperative in schools for the disabled. Effective teaching involves

using different strategies to reach a variety of students who learn in different ways. This is especially true of handicapped students. Momoe states, “We must look at the way learning is built and the construction of learning through experiences” (Von Reiche Interview, April 16, 2007). With disabled youth, it is imperative to look at the holistic view of learning.

Through the administration of this project, students gained knowledge and improved in a variety of ways. From the moment they stepped out of the classroom, each individual exercised creative expression and bodily consciousness. They improved their physical and cognitive skills and developed a strong sense of confidence and communication abilities. Every activity required students to activate both their minds and bodies and as a result, development, improvement, and growth were successfully achieved. Furthermore, these improvements were made in an exciting and pleasurable environment. Students needed to be active, participate in hand-on learning, and take what they learned in the classroom and apply it outside. It was through these activities that this was made possible.

The teachers and administration at Aoga Fiamalamalama continually noticed the effects these activities had on the development of their students. After conducting the activities centered around movement games, signing, and dancing, they were able to recognize the improvements being made in the areas students had struggled in before. As these individuals voiced and as this project demonstrated, implementing a stronger movement and music program in schools for the disabled is extremely advantageous. Many people are only beginning to notice the difference that such activities can make.

Creating such programs continues to be a daunting task for many teachers and administrators. “It’s not impossible,” Sina AINU’u comments. “It’s just a matter of figuring out how to do it” (AINU’u Interview, April 26, 2007). The principals at both SENESE and

Fiamalamalama explain the difficulties of implementing such a program in schools. Many teachers are committed to teaching lessons using traditional and conservative methods.

Alternative and modified learning techniques are not often practiced; change and the introduction of new methods takes a very long time. “It’s important to show teachers that alternative teaching methods are possible and should be used” (Suhren Interview, April 30, 2007). “People don’t realize that there can be modifications and that lessons do not have to be so strict” (Ainu’u Interview, April 26, 2007).

Before administering stronger programs with movement and music, it seems imperative to first show teachers that they can and should use whatever method they can to help students, even if such methods are unconventional. This project illustrated how important and effective such alternative teaching methods like movement and music are. These activities provided a group of remarkable students with an energetic and enjoyable environment and a place where learning and growth can continue to thrive.

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### ***Warm Up: Stretches***

***Objectives:*** To stretch and warm up the body, to improve and strengthen physical development and coordination skills, to promote bodily awareness, to practice balancing and stability.

***Materials Needed:*** None

#### ***Steps:***

1. Gather students in a circle, sitting on the floor.
2. Have students lift up both arms. Say, “Reach for the sky!” and tell students to stretch as far as they can go.
3. Have students bring their arms down and touch the ground, extending as far as they can go. Say, “Try and touch the person across from you!”
4. Ask students which leg is their right leg and have them extend it out into the circle. Tell them to touch their toes and then their knees. Continue this motion, moving fast and faster. Repeat with the opposite leg.
5. Have students move their heads in a circle, switching directions after one rotation. Ask students to move their head to the right and the left, then down and up.
6. Have students stand up and ask them to wiggle each part of their bodies starting from the tips of their toes and moving up to their heads.
7. Have students lift up both arms again. Say, “Reach for the sky!” and have students extend their bodies.
8. Tell students to touch their toes and have them bend over and touch the floor.
9. Repeat steps 6 and 7 several times.
10. Have students lift their right leg up and balance on one leg. Make sure to differentiate between the right and left leg. Jump using the standing leg, having students experiment with balance. Repeat with left leg.
11. Ask students to move their arms in circles, first small circles and then big.
12. Repeat this exercise several times.
13. Tell students to shake out their entire body.

## ***“Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes”***

***Objectives:*** To promote musical creativity and expression, to improve and strengthen bodily awareness, to develop coordination and flexibility, to learn the different parts of the body, to develop motor fitness and exercise physical vitality.

***Materials Needed:*** None

### ***Steps:***

1. Stand in a circle in the center of the room.
2. Point to each part of the body and ask students to name each part.
3. Have students touch their heads, then their shoulders, then their knees, and finally their toes. Then have them touch their eyes, ears, mouth and their nose. Go over this motion sequence, emphasizing each body part.
4. Have students sing the song “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.” As the students sing the song, have them place their hands on each body part when they are sung.
5. Say, “Do you think you can do it faster?”
6. Repeat the song and the motions three more times, moving faster each time.

### ***Song Lyrics:***

Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes! Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes! Eyes and ears and mouth and nose! Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes!

## ***“The Hokey Pokey”***

***Objectives:*** To promote musical creativity and expression, to improve and strengthen bodily awareness, to develop coordination, to teach the right and left sides of the body, to develop motor fitness and exercise physical vitality.

***Materials Needed:*** None

### ***Steps:***

1. Stand in a circle in the center of the room.
2. Go over the different parts of the body, paying special attention to differentiating between the right and left sides.
3. Place the right arm into the circle and move it out and sing, “We put our right arm in, we put our right arm out...”
4. Shake the right arm inside the circle and sing, “We put our right arm in and we shake it all about...”
5. Turn around in a full circle and sing, “We do the Hokey Pokey and we turn ourselves around...”
6. Clap both hands together three times and sing, “That’s what it’s all about!”
7. Repeat this for the left arm, the right and left hand, the right and left leg, the head, and the entire body.

### ***Song Lyrics:***

We put our \_\_\_\_\_ in, we put our \_\_\_\_\_ out, we put our \_\_\_\_\_ in and we shake it all about! We do the Hokey Pokey and we turn ourselves about, that’s what it’s all about!

\*Insert body part where appropriate

## ***“Name and Action Game”***

***Objectives:*** To promote creative expression, to experiment with movement and movement sequences, to strengthen bodily awareness and coordination, to make individual and unique movement choices, to improve confidence, to strengthen communication and memorization.

***Materials Needed:*** None

### ***Steps:***

1. Gather students in a circle on the floor.
2. Go around the circle and have each student say their name and create an action that goes with their name.
3. After a student says their name and performs a movement, ask the class to say who that student is and repeat their movement.
4. Move on to the next student and have them say their name and perform a corresponding motion.
5. Ask the class who that student is and have them repeat the action. Then ask them state the name of the first student and have them repeat their action.
6. Move on to the next student, having them say their name and do their movement. Ask the class to say the names and perform the actions of that student and then the previous two students, moving backwards.
7. Continue this pattern until everyone has had a turn and students have successfully memorized and performed all of the movements sequentially.

## ***“Animals Across the Floor”***

***Objectives:*** To promote creativity and expression through unique movement and sound, to improve confidence, to exercise imagination, to explore movement, shapes, and sounds innovatively, to explore creative and physical limits through performance, to strengthen bodily consciousness and physical vivacity, to teach basic animals.

***Materials Needed:*** None

### ***Steps:***

1. Gather students on one side of the room and ask each individual to think of their favorite animal.
2. Go around and ask students to explain their animal and how each animal acts.
3. Ask each student to go to the other side of the room and perform the sound that their animal makes in front of their classmates.
4. Start with the first animal and have the entire class move across the floor performing the motions and sounds that each specific animal makes. Repeat this for each animal. Make sure each student is using their entire body and exploring the whole space, exercising personal expression and reacting to the movements of others.

## ***“Old MacDonald”***

***Objectives:*** To promote musical creativity and expression, to improve confidence, to exercise imagination, to become innovative creators, to teach basic animals.

***Materials Needed:*** None

### ***Steps:***

1. Gather students in a circle on the ground.
2. Ask each student to repeat the animals they acted out during “Animals Across the Floor.” Then ask them to repeat the sound that each animal makes.
3. Explain to students that they will sing a song where they will each get the chance to make their animal noise.
4. Sing, “Old Macdonald had a farm, ee i ee i o...”
5. Pick the first student to start and sing, “And on that farm, he had a \_\_\_\_\_, inserting the name of the animal into the song.
6. Have the students make the sound of the animal and sing, “With a \_\_\_\_\_ here, and a \_\_\_\_\_ there, hear a \_\_\_\_\_, there a \_\_\_\_\_, everywhere a \_\_\_\_\_, inserting the animal sound when appropriate.
7. Repeat the song with each animal, giving every student a turn to participate.

### ***Song Lyrics:***

Old MacDonald had a farm, ee i ee i o. And on his farm he had a \_\_\_\_\_, ee i ee i o. With a \_\_\_\_\_ here, and a \_\_\_\_\_ there. Here a \_\_\_\_\_, there a \_\_\_\_\_, everywhere a \_\_\_\_\_. Old MacDonald had a farm, ee i ee i o!

\*Insert animal and animal sound where appropriate.

## ***“Red Light, Green Light”***

***Objectives:*** To improve physical development, to exercise motor skills and physical dexterity, to develop endurance and motor fitness, to strengthen coordination and bodily awareness, to learn basic colors.

### ***Materials Needed:***

1 small green ball  
1 small red ball

### ***Steps:***

1. Gather students on one side of the room and stand opposite them on the other side.
2. Hold up the red and green ball and have them identify the colors. Tell them that when they see a green ball, they should move forward, but when they see a red ball, they need to stop. Compare these actions to a traffic light.
3. Explain to the students that they want to be first to reach the person holding the balls.
4. Have the students stand in a horizontal line facing the opposite side of the room.
5. Alternate holding up red and green balls, experimenting with speed and variation in the order of colors held up.
6. When the first person reaches the ball holder, have them go back to the other side of the room.
7. Repeat the activity multiple times, having the students move and stop in different ways. Ask the students to jump on one leg, or spin forward when the green ball is held up, continually experimenting with different movements.

## ***“Color Pick-Up”***

***Objectives:*** To teach color identification and recognition, to experiment with movement and each part of the body, to exercise creativity and expression, to develop physical adroitness, coordination, and bodily awareness and control.

### ***Materials Needed:***

Colored Strips of Paper

Slow Music

Fast Music

### ***Steps:***

1. Gather students in a group in the center of the room
2. Hold up each strip of colored paper and have the students identify the different colors, making sure that they can recognize and differentiate between them.
3. Hand each student a different colored paper and have them identify it again.
4. Tell the students to spread out and turn around.
5. Scatter the remaining colored paper around the room, making sure to spread out the pieces.
6. Tell the students to turn back around and start the music.
7. Have each student collect the colored paper that matches the color they are already holding.
8. As they gather their piles, have them experiment with movements, moving to the music. When the music plays fast, have students move their bodies in quick, sharp ways. When the music plays slow, ask students to move slowly, extending each fragment of their bodies to reach the papers.
9. Have students experiment with other ways of moving while picking up their papers.
10. After all the paper has been picked up, place the different piles on the floor and have the students identify all the colors again.
11. Give each student a different color and repeat the exercise.

## ***“Musical Names”***

***Objectives:*** To improve memorization and recognition skills, to teach letters, spelling, and literacy skills, to promote creative expression and movement experimentation.

### ***Materials Needed:***

Colored Construction Paper  
Crayons or Markers  
Music

### ***Preparation:***

1. Write each student’s name colorfully on each paper with crayons or markers.
2. Draw a picture of an object that begins with the same letter of the name above each of the names.

### ***Steps:***

1. Have students sit in a circle on the ground
2. Hold up the first name paper and ask students to read the name aloud.
3. Have the students read out each letter of the name.
4. Ask students to identify the picture above the name.
5. Emphasize the first letter of the picture and the first letter of the name, making sure to point out that they have the same sound and letter.
6. Repeat this for every name.
7. Have students stand up and place each name on the ground in front of them.
8. Turn on the music and have students dance around the papers, experimenting with different movements.
9. Stop the music and have students try to find their name paper.
10. Start the music and repeat the activity.
11. After three rounds, have the students close their eyes and switch the location of the papers.
12. Start the music and repeat the activity a number of times.

## ***“Go Across the Floor and Be...”***

***Objectives:*** To become innovative creators, to promote self-reliance, confidence, and creative expression, to practice making movement choices and controlling the body, to experiment with different gestures and motions, to develop bodily awareness and coordination, to be engaged in physical activity.

***Materials Needed:*** None

### ***Steps:***

1. Gather students in a cluster on one side of the room.
2. Ask students to move across the space as a particular object, entity, or feeling.
3. Say, “Move like you are water!” and have students use every part of their body to feel and act out the motions that water might make.
4. Say, “Move like you are a mountain!” and have students put together a sequence of motions, continually experimenting with space.
5. Say, “Fly like a bird!” or “Move like you are scared!”
6. Continue asking the students to move through the space in different ways, repeating the activity a number of times.

## ***“Experimenting with Opposites”***

**Objectives:** To teach the concept of opposites, to experiment with movement, to develop physical dexterity, coordination, and bodily awareness, to promote active learning.

### ***Materials Needed:***

1 small ball  
1 rope

### ***Steps:***

1. Have students sit in a circle and ask them to describe what opposites are.
2. Name various adjectives and have students come up with their opposites. For example say, “hot” and have students come up with the opposite of “cold.”
3. Throw the ball around the circle and shout out different opposites. Have the person throwing the ball say half of an opposite (“Hot”) and have the person catching the ball say the other half of the opposite (“Cold”).
4. Repeat this exercise a number of times.
5. Have the students stand up and ask them to practice the motions of “up” and down.” Have students stand on their tiptoes and then crouch down low to the ground.
6. Sing “Ring-a-Ring O’Roses” and have students fall to the floor at the end of the song to understand the motion of “down.”
7. Have students move around the room on their tiptoes or move around jumping to practice the motion of “up.”
8. Lay out a rope on the ground and teach the students the concepts of “over and under.” Have students jump over the rope and then crawl under it.
9. Allow students to experience the feeling of different opposites. Say, “Make your bodies soft like a pillow.” Say, “Make your bodies stiff as a tree,” and have students experiment with changing their bodies in different ways.

### ***“Ring-a-Ring O’Roses” Lyrics:***

Ring-a-ring o’roses, a pocket full of posies. *ah-tishoo, ah-tishoo* (imitative of sneezing) We all fall down!

## ***“Music and Movement Making”***

***Objectives:*** To facilitate expression and creativity through the making of music and rhythm, to experiment with movement and space, to develop confidence, to work and communicate with others, to practice making movement choices and controlling the body, to develop motor fitness and exercise physical vitality, to be engaged in physical activity.

### ***Materials Needed:***

Various hand-held instruments

### ***Steps:***

1. Split the class in two groups.
2. Gather one group of students on one side of the room and let each individual pick an instrument.
3. Gather the other group of students on the opposite side of the room.
4. Instruct the students to play their instruments, having them experiment with different rhythm patterns and speeds.
5. Have the other group of students move across the floor to the music, exercising different movements and gestures and making use of the entire space.
6. Have the students switch groups and repeat the activity.

## ***“Number Matching and Experimentation”***

**Objectives:** To teach numbers and basic math skills, to develop memorization and recognition, to experiment with movement, to develop physical dexterity, coordination, and bodily awareness, to promote active learning through creative movement and singing.

### ***Materials Needed:***

Small pieces of paper  
Music

### ***Preparation:***

1. On each small piece of paper, write a different number.
2. Make an identical set of these number cards

### ***Steps:***

1. Hand each student a card with a number on it. Make sure to hand out the number cards so that two of every number exists throughout the group.
2. Turn on the music and have the students create movement sequences based on their numbers. Each student must repeat movements based on their given number. For example if a student holds a card with the number “3,” they must repeat each movement three times. Say, “Leap three times!” or “Take three giant steps!”
3. Stop the music and have students run around and try to find the person who has the same number as them.
4. Give students a different number card and repeat the activity several times.
5. Sit in a circle and sing “10 Little Monkeys Jumping on a Bed.” Have students exercise basic math skills to determine how many monkeys are going to be left for the next verse.

### ***“10 Little Monkeys Jumping on a Bed” Lyrics:***

10 little monkeys jumping on a bed, one jumped up and bumped his head.  
Mom called the doctor and the doctor said, “No more monkeys jumping on the bed!”

9 little monkeys jumping on a bed, one jumped up and bumped his head.  
Mom called the doctor and the doctor said, “No more monkeys jumping on the Bed!”

**\*Repeat the verse for every number all the way down to “1.”**

## *“The Name Game”*

**Objectives:** To develop coordination, to encourage communication and language, to strengthen motor skills, to participate in a more controlled form of physical activity.

### ***Materials Needed:***

1 small ball

### ***Steps:***

1. Have students sit in a circle in the center of the room.
2. Go around the circle and have every student say their name.
3. Begin throwing the ball around the circle.
4. Before a student throws the ball, they must say the name of another classmate and then throw the ball to them.
5. After the other student catches the ball, they must say the name of another classmate and pass the ball to them.
6. Repeat this exercise a number of times, until each person has had multiple turns to throw and catch the ball.

## ***“Freeze Dance”***

***Objectives:*** To promote creativity, to explore various movements, to experiment with space, to develop coordination and bodily consciousness, to exercise motor fitness and physical vivacity, to express feelings and ideas through movement.

### ***Materials Needed:***

Music

### ***Steps:***

1. Spread students out throughout the space.
2. Turn on the music and have students dance in a variety of ways, encouraging them to explore different motions and different ways of moving each part of the body.
3. Encourage students to use movement to express different feelings or ideas. Say, “Dance Happy!” or “Dance like you are sad,” prompting students to move their bodies in different manners.
4. When the music stops, students must freeze, keeping their bodies completely still.
5. Repeat this activity several times, continually starting and stopping the music.

## Appendix B:

### *Aoga Fiamalamalama*

Aoga Fiamalamalama, a school for the intellectually handicapped, is run by the Society for the Intellectually Handicapped (IHC) and was founded in 1979. Presently, there are 20 students enrolled but attendance varies from day to day. Although it has improved from last year, there are no more than nine students in a classroom at a time. Students are required to pay 20 Tala per term and are asked to bring in money to contribute to lunch each day. There are four teachers who take care of the students (two in each room) and students are divided into groups according to age and sometimes ability level. Many of these teachers have not been officially trained in special needs education. Currently, students range in age from five to 24 years of age, with the exception of an individual who is 32. Students possess a number of disabilities including Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Mild Mental Retardation, Epilepsy, Paralysis, Speech Impediments, and what many teachers label “Slow Learners.”

Teachers offer instruction in various academic subjects but also teach students everyday skills that will one day enable them to be independent. For example, students learn to cook their own food and participate in vocational periods each day, learning woodworking and other crafts. Although a more concrete curriculum was recently introduced, resources continue to be a problem. The school continually looks for funding and tries to bring in specialists to run various programs. Additionally, the school strives to promote community awareness, which they hope will help to increase enrollment at the school.