These activities are designed for teachers to use in their daily work with young children. The 5 to 10 minute activities can be used as warm-ups to literacy and math, for transitions from one activity to another, for class rewards, and just for fun. Children can learn much about themselves and others through dance and movement as they build social and emotional intelligence. Those actively involved in music also tend to have high self-esteem and are better at playing with others.

1. Movement and Dance
A. Early movement experiences are essential to the neural stimulation needed for healthy brain development. Movement activates the neural wiring throughout the body, making the entire body—not just the brain—an instrument of learning.
B. Movement and dance teach essential qualities such as imagination and self-awareness.
C. Dancing to music increases both fine and gross motor skills. Children are better able to control their bodies.
D. To safely move to music, start in-place motion and gradually allow students to move from place to place. Tell them to look for empty places in the room.
E. Always be firm that they are to move without touching each other and that any offenders must sit out for a short period if they fail to follow the rule. Reinforce listening (and your control) by playing a “Freeze” game: students move to a song or sound and freeze when it stops. You may play this as an elimination game so they are out if they move after the freeze command. This builds self-control in a fun way.
F. Scarves are helpful for movement. Students love swirling them in the air. This engages gross motor muscles, and helps with hand-eye coordination. Also suitable are pieces of cloth about 2 feet square or ribbons cut 2 ½ feet long.

2. Drama
A. Pre-school students experience drama anytime they play make-believe games.
B. Directed drama games include finger play, character representation (pretending with toys, puppets, and dress up), and narrative pantomime (where the teacher reads while students act out a story).

3. Singing
A. Young children need to sing. Singing reinforces language skills with rhyming, word rhythm, and repetition.
B. Students often will not sing unless the teacher gets them started, but teachers sometimes feel uncomfortable singing, saying they "don't have a good singing voice." However, children do not have pre-conceived notions of what is "good singing." They love and respect teachers. When teachers sing with them and often, they will only remember the fun.
C. Singing directions for activities is soothing to the ear and carries well, thereby actually saving the teacher's voice. For example, change Skip to My Lou to “Everybody stand and march to the door”. Signal clean up time with London Bridge “Time to put your toys away, toys away, toys away (repeat), quickly as you can.” Go Tell Aunt Rhody becomes “Go get your coat on, go get your coat on, go get your coat on and line up by the door” or “Let’s make a circle, let’s make a circle, let’s make a circle, and then we'll clap our hands.”
D. Choose a greeting song and a good-bye song and use them every day. The repetition ensures that the children learn the songs and provides daily routine.
E. Singing along with recordings of "children's music" is fine, but be aware that children's vocal range is high and light. Male full voices are usually too low for children to sing in tune. Try to use recordings of female singers or children - the ARTS Center has many recordings – come browse the library! Even so, male teachers are encouraged to sing with their children. They don't need to use falsetto, but sing with a light voice in their normal range.
F. As students get to know the songs, sing unaccompanied (without the CD). Once they are free from the structure of a recording, students can start making up their own lyrics and motions. Also, if a child is moving in a singing game, there will be no frustration of being "out of sync" with the CD.

4. A Word about Performances
A. "Less is more" - keep the program selections at or below students' abilities. Stay away from individual parts - have everyone do the same thing. Follow the song choice guidelines of the above paragraphs and if there are to be hand motions while singing, keep them simple and repetitive. Do simple dances like La Raspa - it has only 2 moves.
B. Practice early and often. Break it up into chunks rather than one long rehearsal. Notify parents well in advance.
C. Performance anxiety in students occurs because a show is often in a new location. Have the students visit the new site the day before and practice there.