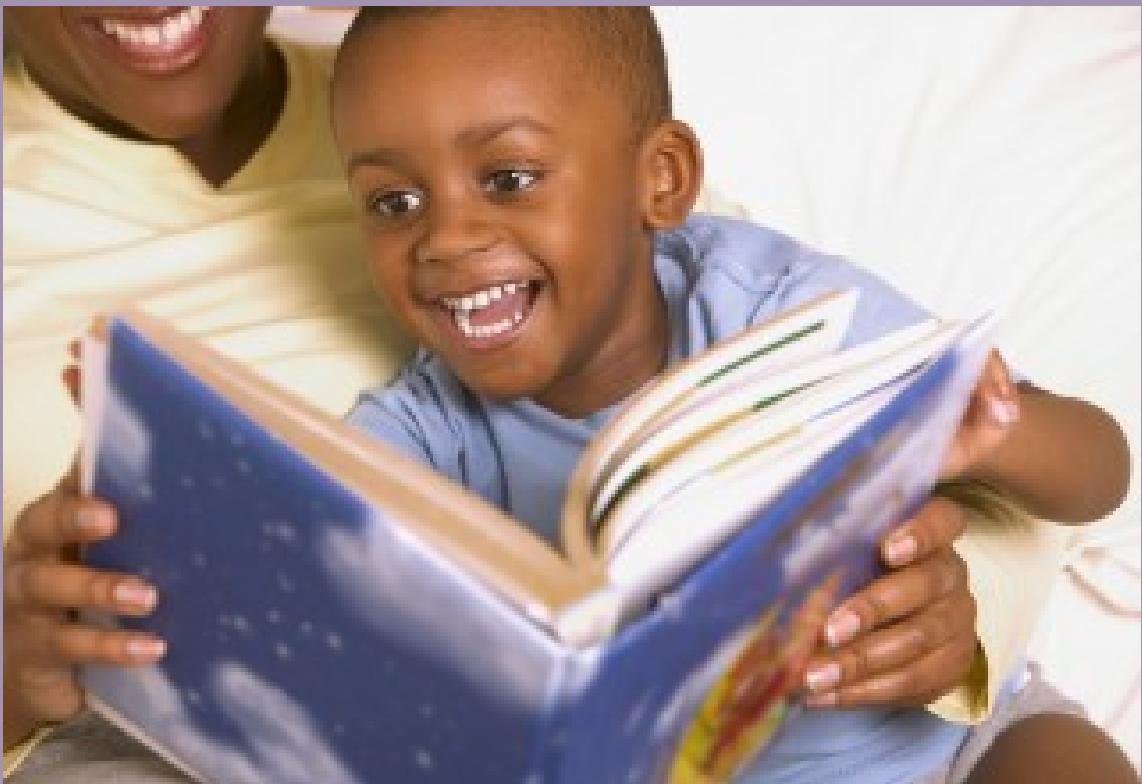


# *Emergent Literacy: Pre-Reading Fun!*



10 Activities That Foster the Directionality  
Necessary for Reading Success

We don't often consider directionality and spatial awareness when it comes to reading ability. But considering that we read and write from top to bottom and from left to right, it's a wonder that we don't!

Also, many a young child has gotten to 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade confused about the difference between a /b/ and a /d/, or a /p/ and a /q/! After all, the only difference between them is the direction in which the curved line is facing!

However, if they've had the chance to physically experience directionality and spatial awareness, the information becomes imprinted on the body and therefore in the mind. There's a scientific reason for this, but I just like to call it "magic."

Some of the activities that follow specifically involve cross-lateral patterns (moving the left arm and the right leg simultaneously, and vice versa). These patterns cross the vertical midline of the body (the invisible line running down the center of the body, from head to toe), requiring the left and right hemispheres to communicate across the corpus callosum. This is essential to reading and writing skills.

# Top to Bottom

This activity involves moving in a downward direction, which will help the children feel comfortable moving their eyes in that direction.

Invite the children to move the following from up high to down low:



- one (then the other) hand
- both hands together
- the nose
- a shoulder
- the belly button
- their whole body (pop up and do it again!)

# Top to Bottom II



For a greater challenge, when the children are ready, combine top-to-bottom spatial orientation with word comprehension by asking them to show you the differences among these words by moving from high to low positions.

Before starting, talk with the children about the meaning of the words.

- shrink
- melt
- collapse
- shrivel

# The Grand Old Duke of York

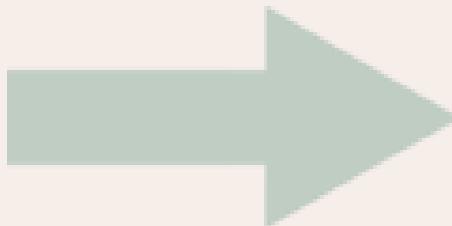
The more the children experience directionality physically, the more it is imprinted on their bodies and in their minds. The more comfortable children are with moving their body in a downward direction, the more comfortable they will be moving his eyes in that direction.

Recite the poem below to the children. Then recite it again slowly so they can act it out.

*The grand old Duke of York,  
He had ten thousand men.  
He marched them up the hill;  
He marched them down again.*

*And when you're up, you're up.  
And when you're down, you're down.  
And when you're halfway in between,  
You're neither up nor down.*

# Left to Right



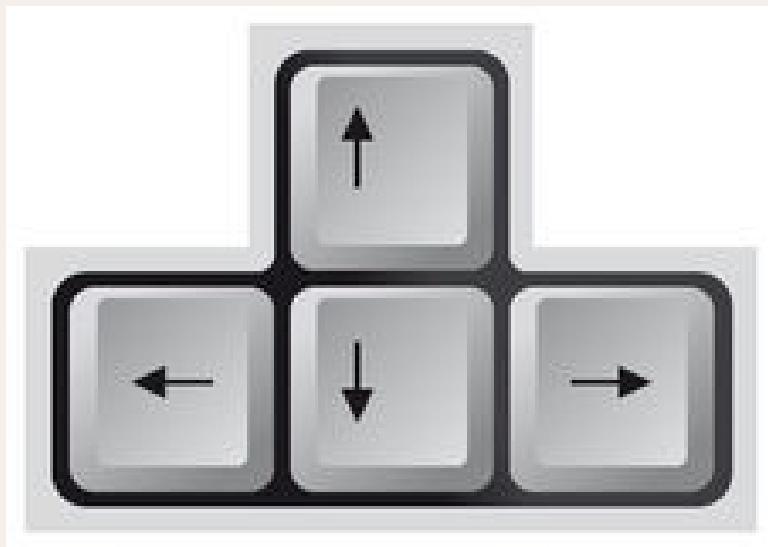
Stand facing the children. Then designate objects or places in the area to indicate their left and right sides. For example, the windows are on the left and the door is on the right.

As the children perform the actions below from their left to right, you will perform them from right to left, acting as a mirror image.

Invite the children to perform the following actions and any others you can think of.

- Turn the head.
- Draw a line on the floor with the big toe.
- Move both arms. Do this at various levels in space: at shoulder height, above the head, and below the waist.
- Move one arm at a time.
- Take several steps to the side.
- Jump (two-footed) or hop (one-footed).

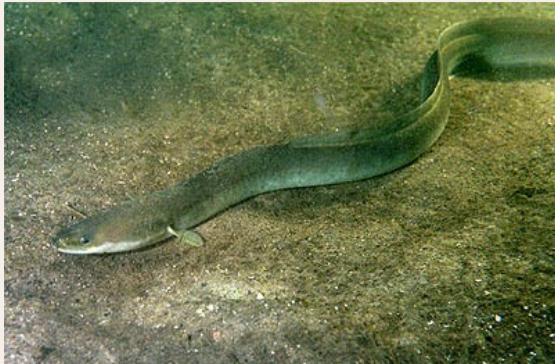
# Which Way Do We Go?



For this activity you'll need a large card with a large arrow drawn or printed on it.

Display the card with the arrow in one of four directions (up, down, left, or right). If it's pointed upward, the children should stretch toward the ceiling. If it's pointed downward, the children should crouch down. If it's pointed left or right, the children take a step in that direction.

# Cross-Lateral Creatures



Invite the children to move  
like a:

- dog
- snake
- spider
- rabbit
- eel
- cat
- turtle
- lizard



# Cross-Crawl

This is a Brain Gym exercise.

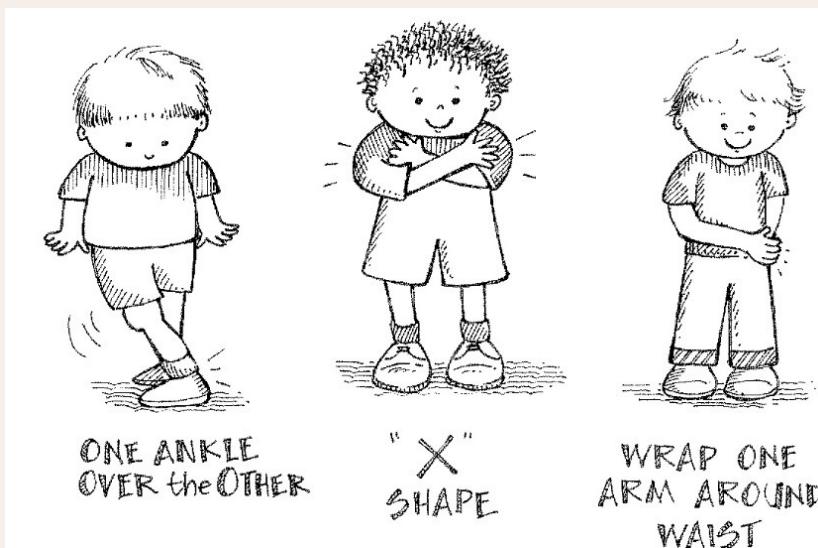
Stand with your back to the children and ask them to imitate you.

Slowly and repeatedly alternate touching your left elbow to your raised right knee and your right elbow to your raised left knee. (If the children have trouble bringing elbows to knees, they can touch a knee with the opposite hand.)

If the children have difficulty imitating your movements, turn around and face them, creating a mirror image for them to imitate.



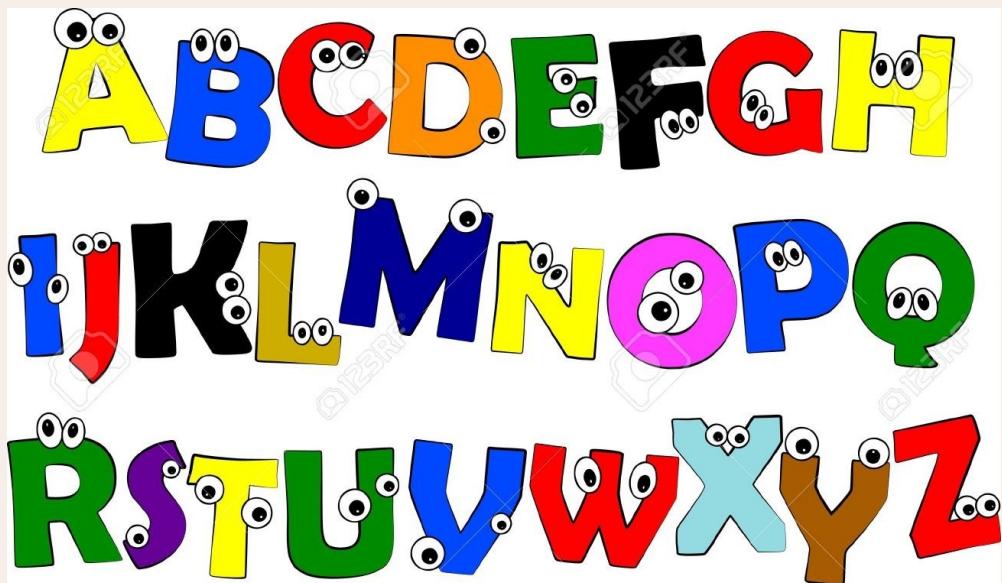
# Do As I Do



Stand facing the children and ask them to imitate your movements. Then perform actions such as the following:

- Pat the left shoulder with the right hand and vice-versa.
- Reach with one arm across the body.
- Cross and then uncross one ankle over the other ankle.
- Place the left hand on the right side and vice-versa.
- Make an X shape with the forearms. Uncross and repeat.
- Wrap one arm at a time around the waist, resulting in a hug.

# All About the Alphabet



Write the letters of the alphabet (lowercase, uppercase, or both, on a large piece of paper, or post them where all the children can see them.

Point out to that some letters have straight lines, some have curvy lines, and some have both. Then point to a letter (those with the fewest lines such as I, T, C, L, O, V, and X are the easiest to reproduce) and invite the children to make that letter with their body or body parts. Repeat with several letters.

# All About the Alphabet II



Sing the chorus of the song, “YMCA” slowly and invite the children to depict these four letters with you!

Later, when the children are ready, you can assign more challenging letters such as B, G, K, R, and P.

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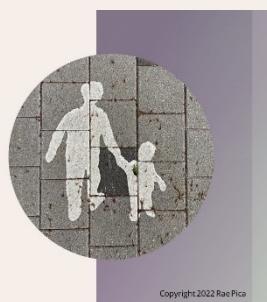
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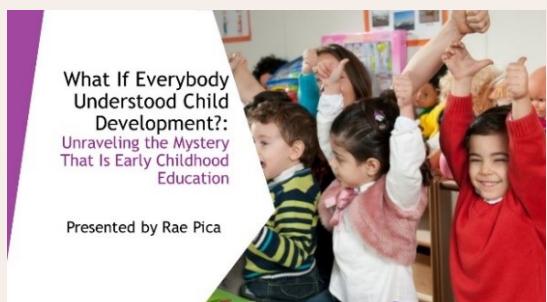
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CHALLENGING  
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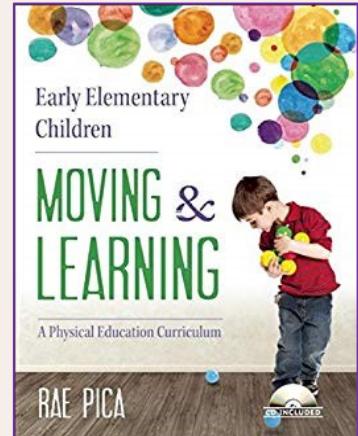
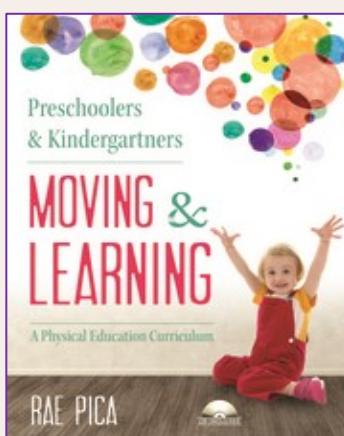
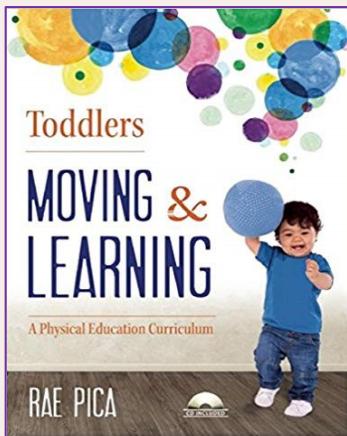
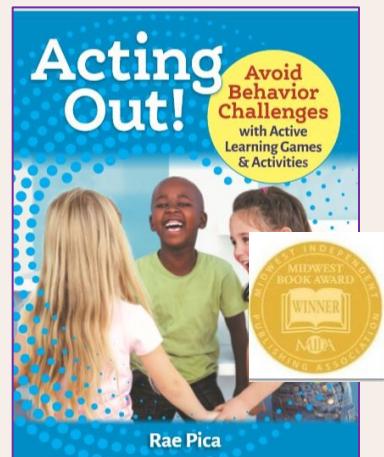
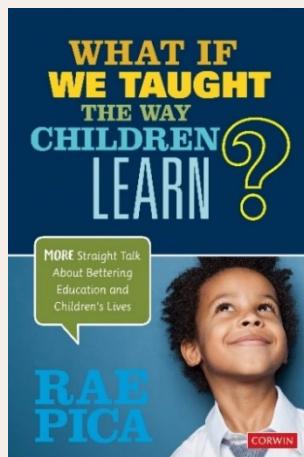
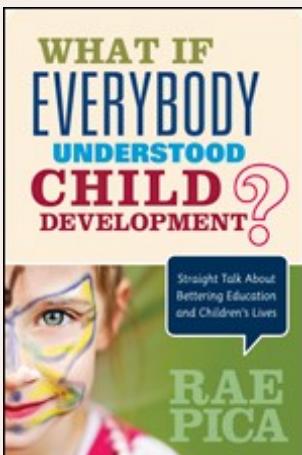
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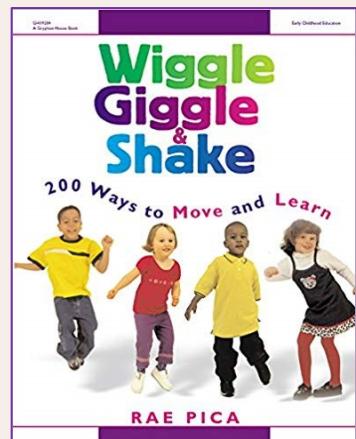
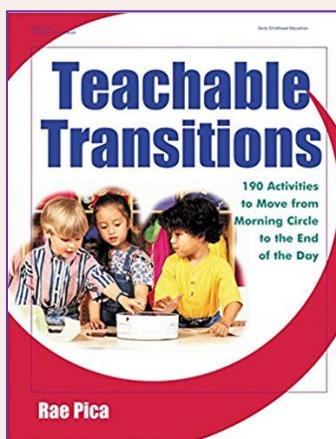
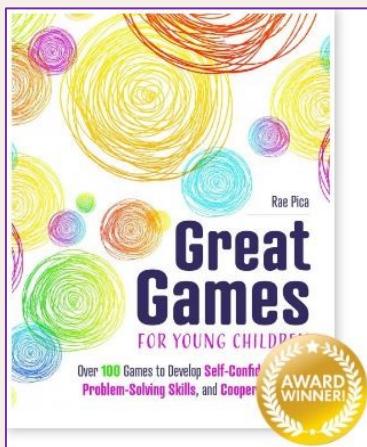
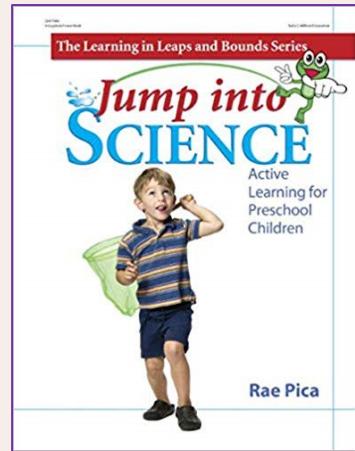
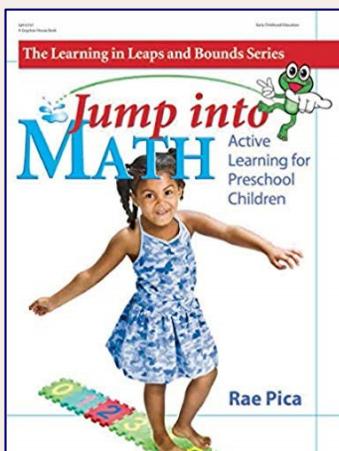
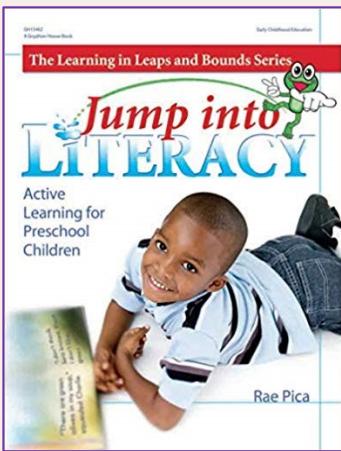
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# RAE PICA



Rae has been an early childhood education consultant since 1980. Dedicated to developing and educating the whole child, she is the author of 22 books, including the text *Experiences in Movement & Music* (in its 5<sup>th</sup> edition), and two of her latest, *What If We Taught the Way Children Learn?* and *Acting Out! Avoid Behavior Challenges with Active Learning Games & Activities*.

Rae is a former adjunct instructor for the University of New Hampshire and is currently a blogger, online course creator, and popular virtual presenter. The National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association for Family Child Care, Eric Jensen's Learning Brain Expo, state WIC organizations, education conferences, resource and referral agencies, and schools in 46 states and Canada are among those who have invited Rae to address their groups.

As a consultant, Rae has shared her expertise with such groups as

- ✓ Sesame Street Research Department
- ✓ Head Start Bureau
- ✓ Centers for Disease Control
- ✓ Nickelodeon's *Blue's Clues*
- ✓ Gymboree
- ✓ Hasbro
- ✓ Mattel
- ✓ Nike
- ✓ Bright Horizons
- ✓ Canadian Broadcast Corp.
- ✓ Chicago Children's Museum