

Fun with Cooperation



10 Activities That Promote Cooperation &
Social/Emotional Development

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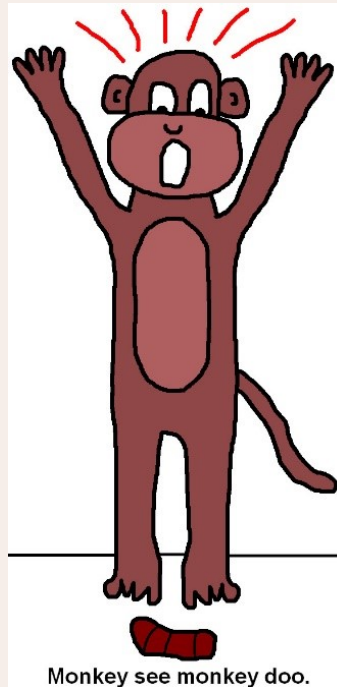
We focus a lot on competition with our children – in both academics and athletics. But did you know that when given a choice preschoolers prefer cooperative activities to competitive ones? And Alfie Kohn, author of the book *No Contest: The Case Against Competition*, explains that competition leads to antisocial behaviors, while cooperation fosters prosocial behaviors. He also informs us that the research shows cooperation

- is more conducive to emotional health;
- leads to friendlier feelings among participants;
- promotes a feeling of being in control of one's life;
- increases self-esteem;
- results in greater sensitivity and trust toward others; and
- increases motivation.

There may be times in our lives when we have to compete. However, if we consider the number of relationships in our lives – familial, spousal, community-related, and professional – we have to admit there are more opportunities over the course of a lifetime for cooperation and collaboration! In fact, a survey of employers identified teamwork ability as the number-one skill they want in 20-something employees.

But this skill must be taught in childhood, just as any other skill is taught! Following are partner activities for the children. All fall under the content area of *social studies*.

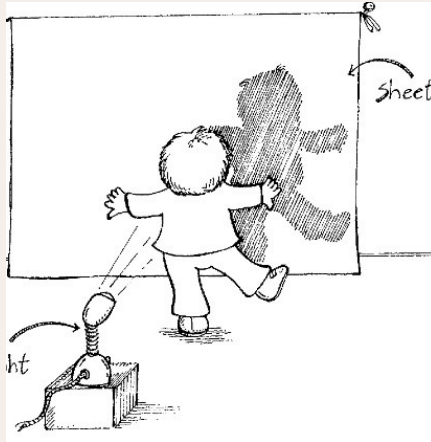
Monkey See, Monkey Do



Players stand about 12 inches apart, facing each other. One partner performs simple movements in place. The second player imitates his partner, like a mirror reflection. After a while, players switch roles.

Curriculum Connections: The ability to replicate physically what the eyes see is necessary to both *art* and learning to write (*emergent literacy*).

Me & My Shadow



This is similar to Follow the Leader but is played in pairs.

One player, the shadow, stands behind (and facing the back of) her partner, the leader. The leader performs various movements, both in place and while traveling. The shadow imitates the movements of the leader. After a while, the players switch roles.

Curriculum Connections: The ability to physically replicate what the eyes are seeing is essential to *art* and learning to write (*emergent literacy*). The concept of shadows falls under the heading of *science*.

Bridges & Tunnels



Talk to the children about bridges and tunnels. Discuss their shapes, as well as their similarities and differences. One partner then forms a bridge or tunnel, which the other partner goes over or under. That partner then forms a bridge or tunnel that is different from her partner's, and the process continues.

Curriculum Connections: A discussion about the role bridges & tunnels play in transportation adds an element of *social studies* over and above the cooperative aspect. These activities are also an exploration of shape, which is an element of both *art* and *math*.

Palm to Palm



Partners stand facing each other, arms extended and palms touching. At your signal, both partners drop their arms to their sides, close their eyes, and turn around. Then then try to once again touch palms with eyes closed! How many times can they manage to touch?

Curriculum Connections: “How many” is a quantitative concept (*math*), and the concept of “around” falls under both math (geometry) and *emergent literacy*.

Bicycle Built for Two



Explain the concept of a bicycle built for two.

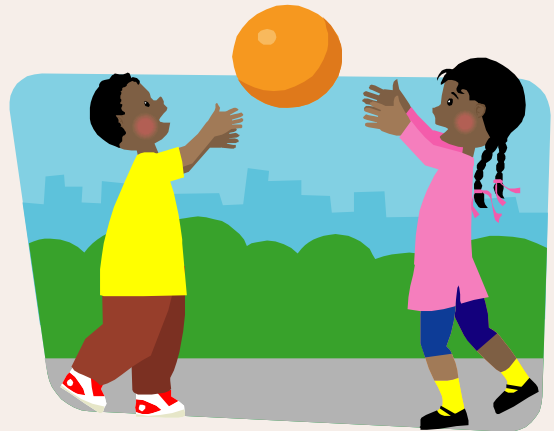
Partners sit facing each other. Then they lie on their backs, bend their knees, touch the soles of their feet together, and “pedal.” If you like, you can count how many times you can pedal a full turn without breaking contact.

Curriculum Connections: Bicycling is a form of transportation, placing it under the content area of *social studies*. Cause and effect is a *science* concept. Counting is a *math* activity.

Keep It Afloat

This activity requires an inflated balloon.

The goal is to keep the balloon in the air as long as possible, without either partner touching it twice in a row. (In other words, partners have to take turns tapping it.) If you like, you can count the number of times the balloon is tapped.



Curriculum

Connections: Flotation and gravity are *science* concepts. Counting is a *math* activity.

Matching Shapes



One partner moves to a different part of the room and creates a body shape of his choosing. The second partner then joins him and, facing him, assumes the same shape (like a mirror image). Once this is done, it's the second partner's turn to move to a different part of the room and form a shape, which partner #1 must match.

Curriculum Connections: Shape is a concept falling under the content areas of both *art* and *math*.

Thunder & Lightning



Talk to the children about thunder and lightning. Do they know that thunder is the sound that follows lightning?

The children pair off, with one partner first acting as lightning and the other as thunder. When you give the signal to start, the players separate and move around the room or yard, keeping their eyes on one another. When the partner acting as lightning “strikes” (moves in the way she thinks lightning moves), “thunder” responds by moving in the way he thinks thunder moves.

Curriculum Connections: Weather is a *science* concept.

Don't Drop the Ball



This activity requires one medium-size ball.

Players attempt to move while holding a ball between them without using their hands. They can balance the ball between their backs, tummies, hips, foreheads, shoulders, or other body parts!

Curriculum Connections: Both balance and body-part identification are *science* concepts.

It Takes Two

In this game, partners match and connect various body parts and then discover how many ways they can move without breaking the connection. Once they've had enough time to explore the possibilities, they try another set of body parts. Possible connections include:

- one or both hands
- one or both elbows
- one or both knees
- one foot
- backs!

Curriculum Connections: Body-part identification is a *science* concept, while “how many” is a quantitative concept falling under *math*.

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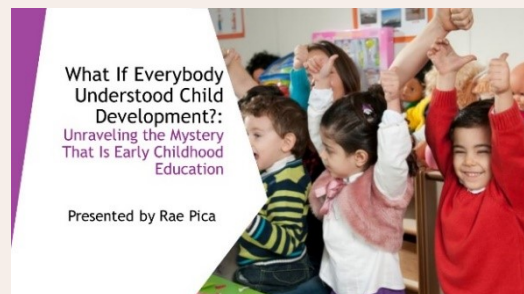
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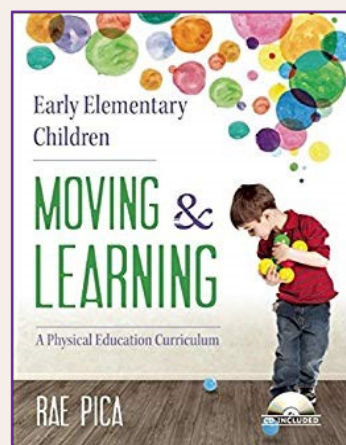
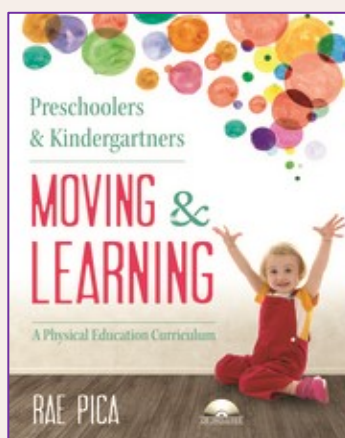
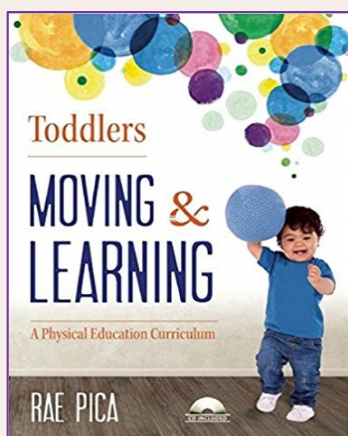
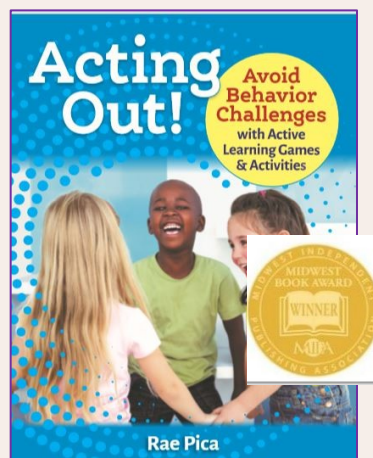
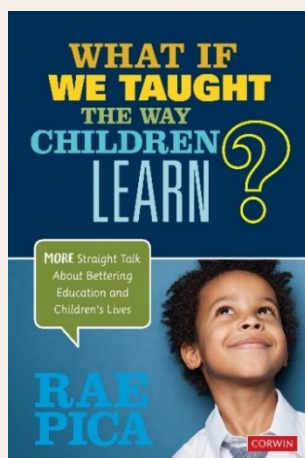
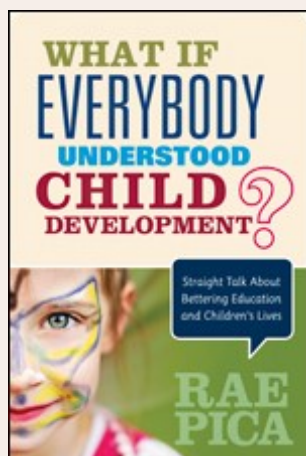


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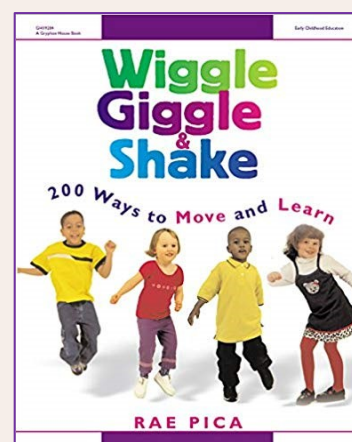
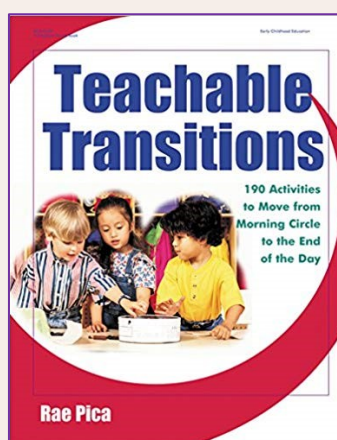
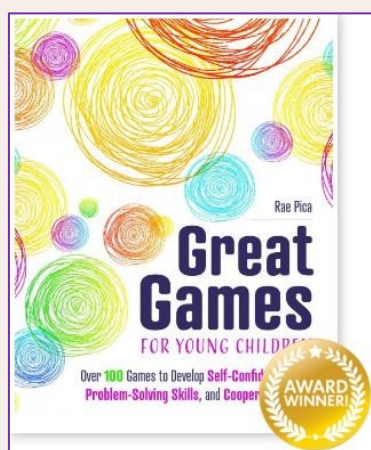
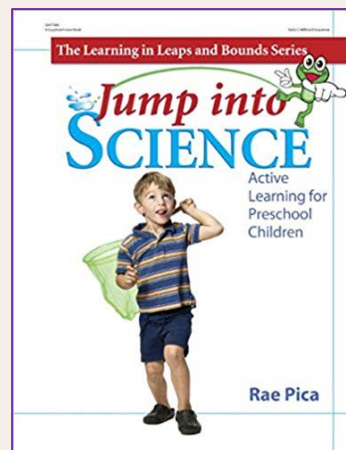
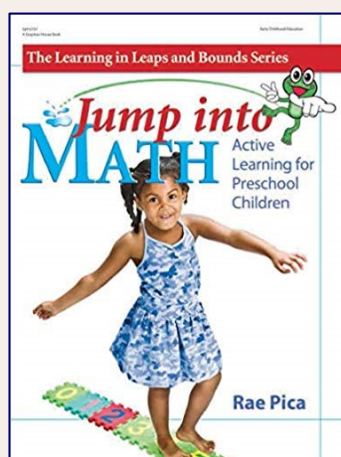
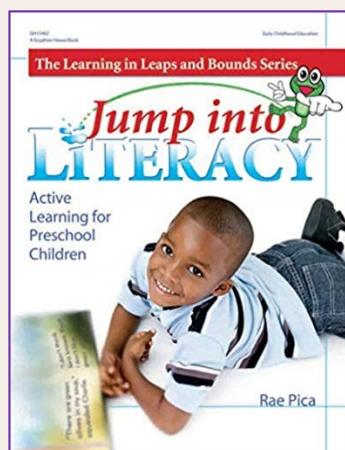
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RAE PICA



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 5th 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

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