

**GAMES AND DANCES**  
**for**  
**A SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM**

**A THESIS**  
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## CHAPTER I

REASONING BASIC TO THE INCLUSION OF GAMES AND  
DANCES IN A THIRD GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES  
CURRICULUM

The purpose of this thesis is to show that the inclusion of specific games and dances in a third grade social studies curriculum is valid to promote the aims of American education: to achieve self-realization, social relationships, economic efficiency and civic responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

The procedure to be used is as follows. We first state the purpose of social studies and a suggested sequence of learning for a social studies curriculum. Because this paper is concerned with the third grade child and his social studies curriculum, we include a description of each and the pertinence of games and dances to them.

The second chapter contains descriptions of specific games to be used with the areas studied. The ways in which the game contributes to the needs of the child are presented with each game.

The third chapter is devoted to describing the specific dances to be used with the areas studied in this social studies

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<sup>1</sup>Educational Policies Commission, National Education Association of the United States and the American Association of School administrators, Policies for Education in American Democracy (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association of the United States), p. 189.

curriculum. The contributions of each dance to the needs of the third grade child are given with the dances.

The fourth chapter is a summary of some learnings to be gained from the games and dances we have presented.

The fifth chapter presents conclusions and suggests further studies which might further contribute to fulfilling the stated aims of American education.

When games and dances are included by the teacher in a social studies curriculum for the third grade, they can provide valuable enrichment for the children's learning.<sup>1</sup> This paper will attempt to show that such learning helps to fulfill some of the aims of education. We believe that two of these aims are the development of the individual as an intellectual, physical and moral person and secondly, the improvement of the political, economic and ethical quality of society. These objectives can be met in part by a social studies curriculum.

#### Considerations in Presentation of Third Grade Social Studies Curriculum

The purpose of social studies is to increase the child's understanding of people, the world in which they live and the relationships between them. In understanding people, a child's learning begins with his first concern, himself. At birth he is his sole interest. His surroundings are important as they add to or detract from his comfort. The child begins

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur G. Miller and Virginia Whitecomb, Physical Education in the Elementary School Curriculum (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 247.

to know that his wants are satisfied by members of his family. He comes to know them and how they help him. He may meet other people such as doctors, clergy, delivery men, repairmen and storekeepers. He may encounter new institutions like hospitals and churches. When he goes to school the child becomes a part of a larger social unit and learns to adapt his needs, wants and abilities to this group. He must follow new rules and procedures. He gains in knowledge and understanding. One way in which he makes this growth is through the experiences he has in the school social studies curriculum.

A social studies curriculum may be taught in relation to an expanding community. First the child is introduced to helpful agencies of his immediate locality. He comes to know the means of service, production and distribution and the people who are concerned with them. This may include nurses, dentists, firemen, police, farmers, post office workers and storekeepers. From knowledge of life in his town he may proceed to learn the political and economic structure of his state. He may go on to study about his own country. He learns that he is a part of all these units and, as such, is dependent upon others who live and work within them. He can relate to these people because he sees the results of their work as they affect him. Some children will have visited various parts of our country and they may make reports on what they have seen. This helps to make their country real to all the children. Thus the child's relationship to these expanding areas is experienced either actually or vicariously.

As we attempt to teach him of the world beyond his own country, different kinds of experiences must be provided to promote understanding of people and life outside his native land. It is important that these experiences be of a physical variety because at this age, a child's understanding comes most easily through such activities. For a third grader, abstracts have little meaning. He may even learn a wrong conclusion from a concept presented only as an abstract.<sup>1</sup>

We must provide learning experiences about the world through the things the child knows. He is familiar with stories about his own life so we present literature of other people, their folklore, myths, poetry, and fairytales. He has heard music of his culture. Therefore, we have him listen to music of other people. He notes the rhythm, the instruments used, the tonal quality. He sees pictures of the actual instruments he has heard. The child, having seen our art forms, is shown the art of others. He observes the media, the subject matter and the form of this other art. He knows, through personal use, the products of his own civilization. Consequently, we teach him about the products of another country, using the actual products wherever possible. He handles, tastes and smells them. He learns the conditions under which they are produced and marketed. He has seen the means of transportation, the homes and the weapons of his own people. He can learn about these in other places by building or

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<sup>1</sup>Hollis L. Caswell and Arthur W. Foshay, Education in the Elementary School (New York: American Book Company, 1957), p. 101.

showing models of them. He has played games of his own people so he is introduced to the games of others. He has seen or done the dancing of his land. Now he learns the dances of others. In the learning of games and dances the child has an opportunity to do as people of another culture have done. Therefore he can share with them a like experience. This in itself has a special value to the third grade child because of his development as a being.

### Some Characteristics of a Third Grade Child

The third grade child is a being with great energy. This must be channeled into constructive activity so that his school days will be personally satisfying and he will learn well. He is in a period of slow and steady growth. He is physically able to undertake new activities. He still has a short attention span so that he learns best if his learning experiences are varied. If he can approach something in a new way, his enthusiasm remains high. This enthusiasm is natural because he has great curiosity and enjoys learning new things. He learns best through active participation. During his few years in school he has learned to get along with others. Now he enjoys playing with others and is concerned about the opinion of his peers and adults. He is better able to do those tasks which require large muscle coordination. His aesthetic sense makes it possible for him to enjoy songs and rhythms.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles A. Bucher and Evelyn M. Read, Physical Education and Health in the Elementary School (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), pp. 91-95.

### Values to a Third Grade Child in Learning Games

Games and dances have a special learning value for the third grade child. His physical skill development enables him to take part successfully in games and dances which are selected to meet his abilities. Through participation in these he can act in concert with his peers. He now feels the need to do this. Games fulfill his social need to follow rules and leadership. They satisfy his great curiosity and allow him to learn through physical experience, answering his physical need for activity of the whole body.<sup>1</sup> Further, they supply the rest and relaxation needed. Games have these values for the following reasons. A game is a universal form of expression.<sup>2</sup> Man has played games at all times and in all places. Therefore, games give a key to the past and to other cultures because they are a natural expression in the development of the individual. They fulfill a biological need to use surplus energy. They provide an opportunity for social activity.<sup>3</sup>

As the third grade child learns and plays selected games they provide him with special benefits. They correlate physical activity with intellectual concepts which leads to increased understanding.<sup>4</sup> For example, as a child imitates

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<sup>1</sup>Caswell and Foshay, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

<sup>2</sup>Sarah Ethridge Hunt and Ethel Cain, Games the World Around (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1950), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Bucher and Read, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>Charles C. Cowell and Helen W. Hazleton, Curriculum Designs in Physical Education (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 97.

an animal which lives in a particular climate, he can be taught that the climate has an effect on living things. Games provide both the motivation necessary for learning<sup>1</sup> and the material which the child is ready to learn. Physiological, emotional and intellectual elements of a learning situation are provided. Strength, agility and dexterity are acquired through the playing of the games. Social attitudes toward both peers with whom he plays and others whose ways he emulates are learned. The teacher directs his attention towards both these groups. He practices playing with others. He is taught the customs of foreign groups. In the process of this development he can be given the understanding that play is a part of life everywhere. And he is learning skills that he can use always for his relaxation and recreation.

#### Values to a Third Grade Child in Learning and Doing Folk Dances

Likewise the dance is a universal form of human expression.<sup>2</sup> Men have danced as an outlet for emotions such as joy, supplication, thanksgiving and grief. It is natural rhythmic movement.<sup>3</sup> It is often a social activity; the selected dances are all done by groups. From learning and doing these folk dances, the child can come to know rhythmic movements he will use in his daily life. They provide an opportunity for full physical activity, which is so valuable for the third grader.

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<sup>1</sup>Bucher and Read, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>2</sup>Ethel L. Urlin, Dancing Ancient and Modern (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 10.



He gains experience in sharing this kind of activity with others. He learns another form of recreational activity for himself and, by imitating the ways of other specific peoples, he gains understanding of them. He may learn an ancient form of communication, which the dance is. He may learn the folklore which was the origin or occasion for a particular dance. He can recognize the social and economic evolution of man from hunter to herdsman to farmer to town dweller.<sup>1</sup> All of these are important concepts to be gained by third graders from a social studies program.

"Man Affected by Climate" as Approach to Content  
of Social Studies Program for Third Grade

One approach to the content of a social studies program for third grade is a consideration of man's life as it is affected by climate. Man's adjustments are noted through a study of specific groups. To learn the effects of cold weather, the child studies the life of the Eskimos and Lapps who live in the arctic. To find the effect of hot climate on man, he investigates the ways of the Amazon Indians and the Congo River dwellers in wet areas and the desert dwellers (particularly in North Africa) in the dry regions. The influence of temperate climate upon life is observed in the customs of the North American Indians and the Swiss. This approach serves as the basis for the selection of the games and dances presented in this paper.

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<sup>1</sup>Miller and Whitcomb, op. cit., pp. 200-201.

We study the various foods eaten on different parts of the earth. In a cold climate the available food is meat and fish products. In a temperate climate, grains, fruits and vegetables grow and are eaten along with meat. In a hot climate, meat, fruit and vegetables are in ample supply.

Homes, too, vary as to climate. They are built to withstand the weather, and they are built of the materials at hand. In the frigid zone, earth, stones, ice and animal skins are used. The dwellings are temporary shelters because of the migratory life of the people. Their moving food supply requires that they follow the animals which comprise it. In the temperate zone, wood may be available. In some areas, stone or grasses are used for building. The permanence of these houses will be related to the kind of life of the inhabitants. Where grain can be grown and fields rotated, people remain and build more elaborate houses. Where land is not so fertile, man will erect temporary housing still using the materials at hand.

Clothing, too, is made to protect man from his environment and is made from the materials found in it. Animal skins may be used. The fur is left on and worn next to the body for added warmth in cold climates. The fur may be removed in a temperate climate and woven into cloth. Fabrics are also woven from indigenous plants such as flax and cotton. Bark from native trees is often made into cloth. Many layers of warm clothing are needed against cold. Fewer layers are needed as the climate warms. Protection from sun and blowing

sand calls for special clothing in the desert. Little is needed in areas of extreme heat and shade, such as the jungle and tropical rain forest.

Similarly, transportation varies according to climate. Runners on vehicles carry arctic dwellers over the top of ice and snow. Mountainous areas are served by donkeys and llamas. Deserts require travel by camels and horses. Where trees grow thickly, the easiest way to move is by boat on the rivers which flow between the trees.

The climate affects not only these physical needs but also the music of people which varies with different climates. This is so because their instruments are built from the existing materials. In the arctic, animals supply bones and skins for the drums. In warmer climates, wood from trees is often used to fashion woodwinds. Metal instruments can be developed only where men can procure and fashion the ore. The music themes may be imitative of the sounds heard in nature, such as of birds, animals and wind.

Just so is art related to its physical surroundings. The art will be formed out of indigenous materials: rock, clay, bone, grasses, dyes. The subject matter will be chosen from those things which the artist sees in his environment.

Folklore, too, has roots in climate. Tales of feats with and by animals depend upon the animals existing in the climate. Struggles with weather are the basis for other tales. Creation is explained by what can be seen in the environment. The deities and their powers are related to the way of life

and man's dependence upon nature. Hunters beseech the gods for a successful hunt. Growers ask for bountiful crops. Power over life and death is in the hands of the gods.

### General Relationships of Games and Dances to Climate

Games, too, are related to the climate in which the players live.<sup>1</sup> As our third grade children are taught to play the games of other people, they can be given the additional information of how these reflect the ways and climates of the people with whom they originated. Games vary with the way of life of those who devise them. They teach skills needed by adults in that society. The games are played by using materials which are available in the players' environment.

Dances, too, are related to the climate.<sup>2</sup> They are done at events important to the culture. These events may be related to the climate. They may be done in response to the forces of nature which control the basic economy and social structure. They may be religious in nature, thereby reflecting a belief of the people. The occasion and form of the dance may reveal social practices.

Dances are further affected by the climate in the steps done.<sup>3</sup> Climate affects the state of the earth. Frozen earth is hard and does not encourage a springy step or stamping. However, where the earth is soft, dancers do develop this kind

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<sup>1</sup>Victor P. Dauer, Fitness for Elementary School Children through Physical Education (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 56-57.

<sup>2</sup>Arnold L. Haskell, The Wonderful World of Dance (Garden City: Garden City Books, 1960), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

of step. Where a nomadic existence is necessary to follow the food supply, groups of people may meet, dance together, and exchange ways of dancing. Where they are isolated, their dancing will not be so affected by others. Where people are settled to grow their food, they develop their own patterns. The steps done are also affected by the clothing worn, as climate conditions demand.<sup>1</sup> Bulky clothing restricts movement. Heavy boots affect dance steps. Greater freedom of movement is possible where less clothing is worn.

There is a further relationship to climate through the music which accompanies the dances. Musical development is dependent upon the instruments. They in turn can be made of the materials at hand. The sound musically produced evolves from sounds heard in nature. The dancing is done to the developed music.

#### Specific Relationships of Selected Games to Climates of Chosen Areas of World

We shall consider these relationships by describing specific games of the chosen areas and noting the connection between these games and the climate in which they are played. There are the games played in the cold climate. Eskimos have developed pastime games which are adapted to their way of life. Included are a Guessing Game, Gegoudge and Toss and Catch Turtle. Games which provide training for adulthood include those which develop needed skills: Spinning Tops,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

Ha-Goo and their Hands and Feet Race. Valuable knowledge of an animal important to Eskimo way of life can be learned by playing Ooming muk. A game which demonstrates the use of available materials is Sandbag Ball.

Lapps also have their pastime games as may be seen by learning their two forms of Blindman's Buff. By playing Schlag Tag and Reindeer Herdsman, they learn skills which will serve them as adults. Reindeer Herdsman also provides a way of learning about an animal which is most important to the Lapps.

In hot climates, Amazon Indians play pastime games such as Tops, Wooden Dolls, Stilts, Sling Shots, Cat's Cradles, Kites and Plaited Animals. Training for adulthood is gained from Tag, Volley Game, Sling Shots, Miniature weapons and implements game, Kites, Hide and Seek, Stilts, Wrestling and Tug o'War. The materials available are shown in their Ball Games, Sling Shots, Holes in Board, Volley Game, Stilts, Tops, Marbles and Straw Dolls.

Another group who dwell in the hot climate are the Congo River dwellers. They play such pastime games as Qakela, Jarabadaach, Round Game and Nsikwa. By playing Simon Says, Stockade, Owl and Wolf, Hen and Wild Cat they gain abilities helpful in adult life. Their materials are shown in Game Trap, Stockade, Owl and Wolf, Hen and Wild Cat and Nsikwa. In the hot African desert, there are also pastime games: Puss in the Corner and Jarrah. Training for adulthood is provided by playing Blind Man's Buff, Taia-ya-taia, Playing

at trading clay-modelled products, Robbers and Deeb. Jarrah and Deeb especially reflect the resources of the climate.

People who live in the temperate climate play games related to their environment. The American Indians played a Guessing Game and a Bowl Game for a pastime. The Bowl Game, Kicking the Stick, Bas-Quoits and Dodge Ball developed skills helpful to them as adults. Available materials are shown by the Bowl Game, Kicking the Stick, Guessing Game and Bas-Quoits.

Swiss pastime games are Exchange and Hit the Bucket. Alpine Tag provides training in skills needed by Swiss adults. Materials available are used in Exchange, Hit the Bucket, and Alpine Tag.

#### Specific Relationships of Selected Dances to Climates of Chosen Areas of World

The dances selected and later explained have specific relationships to the climate of the areas studied and can be done by third graders. In the cold climate, Lapps dance a Sword Dance. This is interesting because the event at which it is danced reflects the emotions and the character of the people. It is related to the forces of nature which affect the lives of the Lapps. The steps done are affected by the terrain in which the people live as well as by the clothing worn to protect them from the climate. Their heritage is revealed by the relationship of this dance to similar ones done by people who also live in the area, showing the effect of migrations and nomadic life.

Eskimos also dance. Those who live near the Behring Straits have a special dance to insure reincarnation of the sea creatures they hunt for their livelihood. The dance is done for the special occasion at the end of the hunts. It reflects the effect of nature upon these people. Their lives are dependent upon the success of the hunt. Their movements, too, are affected by the terrain, by the clothing worn and by the music of the drums.

In the hot climate, dances of the Amazon Indians show the effect of climate on dance. Their Harvest Dance, Triumphal Dance of Thanks and Maize Festival Dance are done for the special events which are related to natural forces. The effect of the terrain is noticeable in the Maize Festival Dance. In all these dances, the music of the woodwind and the drum is related to the dances. The dances reflect the character of the people who do them.

Desert dwellers of the hot climates dance differently. The Arabic Horra is done for a special event and in response to a force of nature which controls life there. Dance movements differ in this terrain and the character of the people is shown in their dance.

To observe the dance as done in the temperate climate, we shall study first those done by American Indians, their Corn Husking Dance and Caribou Dance. These are danced for events important to these people. They show the effect of nature upon the people. The movements are related to the terrain in which they live. They are affected by the migrations of these Indians. The character of the people is



reflected. The accompanying music is related to the dances.

Of this climate, the Swiss are another representative people. The Swiss dances to be considered are the Swiss Changing Dance and the Grandmother Dance. The events at which these are done are indicative of events important in their lives. They show how nature affects them. Their dance steps developed as a result of their terrain and show a relationship to their geographical neighbors. Their musical development is affected by the land in which they live and the dance is related to it. The character of the people is shown in the dances they do.

Thus we see that games and dances will help provide valuable learnings for third graders. They can enlarge their learning of the people and places studied in the social studies program. They reinforce the learning which has taken place, and they are appropriate for the developmental stage of these children.