

Unit Four - Creative Movement

Students will gradually explore Laban's Eight Efforts (Laban n.d. as cited by Espeland, 2015) through movement and then apply and expand this concept into other disciplines. For example, students can explore how moving a paintbrush indirectly or lightly will create different patterns or write down how a familiar cartoon character moves using Laban's movement vocabulary. [Click this link for more information before beginning this unit.](#)

For younger students focus and explore the four components and elements of movement: direction, weight, speed, and flow.

For older students as they become familiar with the four movement components, introduce and explore Laban's eight efforts.

For students with movement differences adapt the movement prompts to suit their needs. For example, prompt students to move their wheelchairs, or focus on the body parts that students can move. Students can move with partners or have assistance moving with the prompts.

Unit focus and goals

- Introduce and familiarise students with the Eight Efforts of Laban movement
- Encourage students to explore different ways of moving their bodies
- Apply this style of movement to other mediums
- Use imagination and movement to spark creative ideas and emotion

Materials

- PowerPoint "Creative Movement" provided through the website
- Clear, open space for movement
- Clothing that allows lots of movement
- Projector, laptop, or smartboard to show short video clips
- Speaker to play music
- Scarves or pieces of fabric for movement
- Balloon or light ball
- A bell, shaker, or musical triangle. Something to capture student attention without speaking

Introduction – PowerPoint Slide (15mins)

Ask your students to watch a short video. As a group describe and make a list of the movements observed in the videos. Consider the camera movement as well as the video content.

- Video on birds suggested for younger students – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rX40mBb8bkU>
- Video of dancers suggested for high school students - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnUesmL-1CQ>

Warm Up Games (15 – 20mins)

“Go As _____, Come Back As _____”

- Students line up against one wall and the leader calls, “Go as (an animal or object), come back as (a different animal or object).” ex. “Go as a lion, come back as a balloon.”
- Students then cross the floor as the object or animal.

Balloon dance

- Students must dance keeping their balloon in the air.
- Alternate music with different tempos and styles.

Gravity Race (aka Moonwalk)

- A slow-motion race moving across the room without gravity - the last person wins!

Introduce the first four components of Laban movement - PowerPoint Slides 1 - 5

Initially, start with students exploring Laban’s four movement components and elements. Once students are comfortable with the main movements, they will then explore Laban’s Eight Efforts. Finally, students may apply Laban’s movement vocabulary to help expand their creative thinking, create versatile projects, feel comfortable within their bodies, and use a common movement vocabulary (Espeland, 2015).

Note – This unit is an **introduction** to Laban’s movement. More intensive and formal certification is provided through Laban movement institutions such as [Laban International](#).

Ask students to find a spot in the room with an arm’s length of space between themselves and other students. Explain to students that you will read out movement prompts. Students will follow your voice while moving around the room freely acting out your prompts. Take your time and let students fully explore each movement component. You can break this up into 2 sessions or more.

Read the following movement prompts for each component of movement.

Direction – PowerPoint Slide 6 (minimum 10 mins)

We are going to explore Laban’s first component of movement: Direction. Direction is divided into 2 elements: direct and indirect. Let’s explore how it feels to move directly. Act out the movements as I read them out loud, you can add your own

creative flare to these movements. Focus on your own movements, you do not need to interact with your classmates.

We are going to explore how it feels to move directly. Imagine you are sitting in your backyard, and you hear the familiar sound of the ice-cream truck. You jump up and walk directly to the sidewalk looking for the ice cream truck. You don't stop or wander around; you are taking the shortest route to the ice cream! Your steps are determined as you take the quickest path through your backyard gate, down your driveway and straight to the sidewalk. Notice how your arms are moving, how do they move directly? Are they swinging side to side or are they straight and at your side? Now imagine you are a train on a railway track, how do you move? You move forward and back from one station to another. As you are moving forward you notice a turn up ahead, how do you move directly in a turn? When I clap my hands, you are going to stop moving directly and return to your regular body. Give your whole body a shake, letting go of the feeling of direct. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, what did you feel when you were moving directly?

Now we are going to explore how it feels to move indirectly. When you move indirectly you wander around and you may not even know where you are going. Imagine you are a butterfly fluttering around the field, you move this way and that, bouncing from flower to flower. A breeze gently blows through the field, this may change the direction you move. Now imagine you are a toddler playing. How do you move your body? Can you walk or are you still crawling? You move from toy to toy, maybe you flop down or move your arms around in random circles. When I clap my hands, you are going to stop moving indirectly and return to your regular body. Give your whole body a shake letting go of the feeling of indirect. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, what did you feel when you were moving indirectly?

Discussion (minimum 5mins)

- Discuss with students how it felt to move directly vs indirectly. Ask students to think about different parts of their bodies and other examples of direct and indirect movement.

Get students to move around the room moving to the music. When you ring a bell students switch between direct and indirect movement.

Weight – PowerPoint Slide 7 (minimum 10mins)

We are going to explore Laban's second component of movement: Weight. Weight is divided into 2 elements: heavy and light. Let's explore how it feels to move weight in our bodies. Act out the movements as I read them out loud, you can add your own creative flare to these movements. Focus on your own movements, you do not need to interact with your classmates.

We are going to explore how it feels to move heavily. Start by sitting in a comfortable position. Imagine you are made from stone all the way from your toes to your fingers. Move your head, looking from side to side. Can you wiggle your shoulders? How does it feel to move your body when it is made of heavy stone? You begin to move around. Can you stand up? How does it feel to take a step forward or to lift your arm up? Explore how to move this heavy body around the room. Now imagine you are a giant. You are as tall as the biggest building in town and stronger than 6 elephants combined. You are trying to push a heavy boulder across the room. This boulder is heavier than you expected, and you must use all your strength to try and move the boulder. You push and push, using all your strength! Are you successful? When I clap my hands, you are going to stop moving heavily and return to your regular body. Give your whole body a shake letting go of the feeling of heavy. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, what did you feel when you were moving heavily?

We are going to explore how it feels to move lightly. Start by standing or sitting up straight. Imagine your body is filled up with helium gas. We use helium to inflate balloons. Bounce up and down on your heels, lightly bending your knees and shaking your shoulders. Start to move around the room. How does it feel to be as light as a feather? Suddenly a light breeze carries you across the room just like a leaf blowing down the street. What kind of person would move lightly? A young child? Someone who is extremely happy? Explore how it feels to move lightly around the room on your own. When I clap my hands, you are going to stop moving lightly and return to your regular body. Give your whole body a shake letting go of the feeling of being light. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, what did you feel when you were moving lightly?

Discussion (minimum 5mins)

- Discuss with students how it felt to move heavily vs lightly. Ask students to think about different parts of their bodies and other examples of heavy and light movement.

Get students to move around the room moving to the music. When you ring the bell students switch between heavy and light movement.

Speed – PowerPoint Slide 8 (minimum 10mins)

We are going to explore Laban's third component of movement: Speed. Speed is split into 2 elements: quick and sustained. Let's explore how it feels to move quickly in our bodies. Act out the movements as I read them out loud, you can add your own creative flare to these movements. Focus on your own movements, you do not need to interact with your classmates.

We are going to explore how it feels to move quickly. Start by moving around the room at a normal pace, not too fast and not too slow. Now, imagine you are

walking on a busy street full of people. You must move quickly if you want to get to class before the first bell. As you walk along the street you need to move past people stepping from side to side. How do you feel? Are you feeling rushed or excited? You quickly dodge people turning street corners and racing along the sidewalk. Now imagine you are a tiny frog deep in the Amazon rainforest. You quickly leap from tree to tree. You speedily bounce onto a big leaf which dips and sways. How do your frog feet feel bouncing and gripping leaves and branches? Explore how it feels to move quickly around the room on your own. When I clap my hands, you are going to stop moving quickly and return to your regular body. Give your whole body a shake letting go of the feeling of being quick. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, what did you feel when you were moving quickly?

We are going to explore how it feels to move in a sustained way. Start by moving around the room at a normal pace, not too fast and not too slow. When you move your body in a sustained way your body moves at an even, constant, and smooth tempo. Imagine you are sloth, crawling continuously along a tree branch. Move your arms slowly and steadily in big arching circles. Stretch your fingers all the way out in front of you. Perhaps you find something to eat? How can you use the same amount of energy for every single movement? Now imagine you are a sailboat steadily traveling in the open sea. You move up and down with each smooth wave. A light breeze is blowing straight ahead at an even speed. How can you use your breathing to help you move in a sustained way? Try to match your inhales and exhales. Explore how it feels to move in a sustained way around the room on your own. When I clap my hands, you are going to stop moving in a sustained way and return to your regular body. Give your whole body a shake letting go of the feeling of sustained. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, what did you feel when you were moving in a sustained way?

Discussion (minimum 5mins)

- Discuss with students how it felt to move quickly vs sustained. Ask students to think about different parts of their bodies and other examples of quick and sustained movement.

Get students to move around the room moving to the music. When you ring the bell students switch between quick and sustained movement.

Flow – PowerPoint Slide 9 (minimum 10mins)

We are going to explore Laban's fourth component of movement: Flow. Flow is split into 2 elements: bound and free. Let's explore how it feels to move quickly in our bodies. Act out the movements as I read them out loud, you can add your own creative flare to these movements. Focus on your own movements, you do not need to interact with your classmates.

We are going to explore how it feels to move with a bound body. Start by tensing all the muscles in your face, feel your jaw clench and your lips press against each other. Let that feeling go and relax your face. Now stand or sit up as high as you can. Try to engage all the muscles in your back and tummy. Try to activate all the muscles in your body at once. How do your hands feel when they are bound? Are they stretched out or held firmly closed? How does your belly feel? Try to engage your core. You can do that by trying to get your belly button to touch your spine. Notice what your shoulders are doing? Are they reaching up towards your ears? Try to keep all your muscles engaged but let your shoulders slide down so you aren't crunching your neck. Imagine you are wearing a full suit of armour. Move around the room with this full suit of armour on. This suit is a little bit heavy so you will have to use your full body to move around. Now imagine you are a judge. You are stern but fair. How would you move around the room like an important judge? How do you look around the room and use your neck in a bound way? Explore how it feels to move in a bound way around the room on your own. When I clap my hands, you are going to stop moving in a bound way and return to your regular body. Give your whole body a shake letting go of the feeling of bound. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, what did you feel when you were moving in a bound way?

We are going to explore how it feels to move with a free body. Let's start by moving our spines in circles. Let your shoulders and neck join in as you move your back around and around. Wiggle your fingers. Pull some funny faces, can you let your tongue hang out and blink your eyes open and shut? Imagine you are a bubbling brook. Your water moves around freely, bouncing and flowing this way and that. You feel as if you can move in any direction. How would a little fish swimming in this small stream move? Imagine you are this little fish. You move along with the water searching for some food. How do your fish fins move? Now imagine you are a tiny dandelion seed floating in the wind. Your movements go along with the wind, and you have no idea where you are going. Explore how it feels to move in freely around the room on your own. When I clap my hands, you are going to stop moving in a freely and return to your regular body. Give your whole body a shake letting go of the feeling of free. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, what did you feel when you were moving freely?

Discussion (minimum 5mins)

- Discuss with students how it felt to move in a bound vs free way. Ask students to think about different parts of their bodies and other examples of bound and free movement.

Get students to move around the room moving to the music. When you ring the bell students switch between bound and free movement.

Combo Dance - PowerPoint Slide 10 (30+ minutes)

Students explore moving with multiple movement prompts at the same time. Assign each component a number from 1 – 8. Students pick 2 numbers from a hat and as a group explore moving with the 2 movement prompts. For example: Steff picks the numbers 4 and 8. The class will explore how it feels to move lightly and free at the same time.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1 – Direct | 5 – Quick |
| 2 – Indirect | 6 – Sustained |
| 3 – Heavy | 7 – Bound |
| 4 – Light | 8 – Free |

Older students PowerPoint slide 11 - As students become familiar and comfortable with exploring multiple movement prompts you can begin exploring Laban’s Eight Efforts using the movement chart.

Laban Music - PowerPoint slide 13 (20mins)

In small groups or alone, students search and present on a piece of music that they feel represents one of Laban’s efforts. For example, the song Here Comes the Sun by the Beatles could be described as Laban’s effort Glide– direct, light, sustained and free.

Students present their rationale as to why the song they chose fits into a certain effort. Students may consider how the composition, lyrics, emotions, and instrumentation contributes to their chosen effort.

Students will listen to a portion (or full song) and ask their peers to guess which effort they chose. The presenters will then reveal and present on their chosen effort and music piece.

Literature Search- PowerPoints slide 14 (60mins) **Older students**

In small groups students will search and present on a piece of written text (poem or paragraph) that they feel represents one of Laban’s efforts. For example, the poem Backyard by Leonard Cohen could be described as Laban’s effort Wring– indirect, heavy sustained and bound. If your students are only familiar with Laban’s main components, they can choose 1 element. For example, Tigger could represent Flow - free

Students will analyse the written text and present their rationale as to why they connected the writing to an effort. Students may consider how the punctuation, vocabulary words, content, and emotional connection to the text contributes to their chosen effort.

Students will read their text aloud to their peers. Students' classmates will guess which effort student presenters connected to their text. The presenters will then reveal and present on their chosen effort and text.

Character Search – PowerPoint Slide 15 (30 – 40minutes) **Younger Students**

In small groups students will search and present on a fictional character that they feel represents one of Laban's efforts. For example, the character Tigger from Winnie The Pooh could be described as Laban's effort Flick– indirect, light, quick and free.

Students will analyse the character and present their rationale as to why they connected the character to an effort. Students may consider how the punctuation, vocabulary words, content, and emotional connection to the text contributes to their chosen effort.

Students will draw and present a picture to their peers. Students' classmates will guess which effort student presenters connected to their character. Presenter will then reveal and present on their chosen effort.

Processing Questions PowerPoint Slide 16 (15- 20mins)

- How can you use Laban's movements in other parts of your life?
- How could you use Laban's movements to enhance your learning?
- How does movement connect you to your emotions?

Larger Unit Project - Maze

Using Laban's Eight Efforts students will imagine, plan, and design a maze and travel vehicle.

Begin this larger project by discussing how students applied Laban's movement prompts to different mediums (text, music, and characters). Using this knowledge, students will practice using the eight Efforts as inspiration for a design challenge. In groups students will discuss, plan, and design a maze blueprint and vehicle prototype. Students can create a 3D version of their maze and vehicle or create detailed blueprints.

Begin by discussing and brainstorming how Laban's Efforts could be translated into creating a maze and the vehicle that will travel through the maze. Students may consider the following.

- Maze path
- Terrain
- Time limit
- Weight
- Movement of the vehicle
- Construction of the vehicle

Students must use at least 2 of Laban's movement components as inspiration for their creations.

Set up the classroom in gallery style where students have their own space to display their work. They may walk around the room and explore their peer's work.

As a group, discuss the following

- How did Laban's movement prompts inspire your design?
- What was challenging during this project?
- How can you use the eight efforts in other situations?
- How did you use divergent and convergent thinking to complete this task?