Activities

The Poppin’ Popcorn Game

Grades: Early Childhood, PreK–K, 1–2

Overview
Children imagine what it would be like to be a kernel of popcorn popping and make up movements.

Materials:
- masking tape
- bag of popcorn
- popcorn popper (optional)
- CD or tape player
- lively CDs or tapes

In Advance:
Place a large circle of tape on the floor in the area you use for movement activities.

Show children a kernel of popcorn and ask, “Do you know what this is?” Let children touch it and look at it closely. Then ask, “How does a kernel turn into popcorn?” Encourage children to tell you everything they know about the process. If possible, use a popcorn popper to make the snack.
Activity
Gather children in the tape circle and tell them that they are inside a pretend popcorn popper.

Invite children to pretend that they are tiny kernels of unpopped popcorn. Ask, “What do you think will happen to you when I turn the popper on?”

Narrate your actions as you pantomime turning on the popper. Then watch as children “pop” inside the circle like real popcorn. Encourage them to crouch down as low as they can, and to pop up as high as they can.

After this activity, invite children to sit in the circle so that you can teach them a song:

I’m a Piece of Popcorn
(to the tune of “I’m a Little Teapot”)

I’m a piece of popcorn in a pot
Heat me up and watch me pop.
When I get all fat and white, I’m done.
Popping popcorn is lots of fun
POP!

Invite children to stand up and “pop” with you while they sing. They might want to rise slowly and pop at the end of the song.

Now, put on music to inspire children to pop. When the music stops, ask the “kernels” to sit down in the popper and close their eyes. Announce, “When you open your eyes, you will be children again.”

For younger children: Take children outdoors to try this popping activity. It will be easier for them to move within a larger space than to confine their movements to within a taped circle.
For older children: Challenge children to move as other kinds of foods being processed. You might ask them to move as sizzling bacon, boiling pasta, or scrambled eggs.

Spin-Off
Invite children to dramatize the cooking process for their classmates. You might suggest they pantomime a pastry chef rolling out dough for a pie, a pizza maker adding toppings to a pizza, or a chef adding spices to a new recipe. See if children in the group can identify each activity being pantomimed.

- Subjects:
  Science, Heat, Food, Observation, Motor Skills, Songs and Rhymes