Nursery Rhyme Bean Bag Fun

Movements composed by Laurie Clark

These exercises help with spatial orientation, practicing of horizontal and vertical midline crossing, experiencing planes of space, auditory processing, directionality, body geography, balance, movement, tactile sensing, word concepts, impulse control, motor planning, rhythm, and speech with the wisdom and joy of traditional nursery rhymes. It is fun to begin these games by whispering each child’s name while tossing him a bean bag.

PAT-A-CAKE, PAT-A-CAKE

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake ........ right hand to left hand to right hand (same rhythm for next three lines)
Baker’s man
Bake me a cake
as fast as you can
Pat it ...................... pat bean bag
roll it ...................... roll bean bag with both hands
mark it with a b ... “draw” with pointer finger on bean bag
throw it in the oven .... small toss in the air and catch the bean bag
for baby and me .......... It is fun to substitute each child’s name for the word “baby.”

HEY DIDDLE DIDDLE

Hey diddle diddle ................ right hand to left and then left to right
The cat and the fiddle .............. right hand to left and then left to right
The cow jumped over the moon ........ palms up near knees—toss bean bag from
right hand to left hand over legs
The little dog laughed to see such a sport
And the dish ran away with the spoon .... right hand picks bean bag up and “runs”
with it and hides it behind the back

HICKERY DICKERY DOCK

Hickery dickery dock ........ bean bag goes from right hand to left hand to right hand
The mouse ran up the clock . right hand “walks” bean bag up left arm—bean bag is placed on head
The clock struck one ....... hold one finger up with bean bag still on head
Down he run ............... lean head forward, let bean bag drop into both hands
Hickery dickery dock ........ right hand to left hand to right
Tick, tock! ................. two light tosses and catch

LITTLE NANNY ETTICOAT

This rhyme is fun to do with a red bean bag.

Little Nanny Etticoat .......... hold bean bag up in both hands
In a white petticoat ........ hold the sides of bean bag between pointer finger and thumb with each hand
And a red nose .......... lean head back and balance bean bag on the nose
The longer she stands .......... hold bean bag up high in palm of right hand
The shorter she grows .......... lower bean bag slowly down
JACK AND JILL

Begin sitting with legs out front and bean bag in each hand, moving alternately up the legs to shoulders to the rhythm of the verse.

Jack and Jill went up the hill 
legs straight out in front—bean bag slowly “climbs” from toes to shoulders

To fetch a pail of water

Jack fell down and broke his crown.

And Jill came tumbling after

Up got Jack and off did trot as fast as he could caper

To old dame Dob, who patched his nob

With vinegar and brown paper

UP THE TALL WHITE CANDLESTICK

Start in the standing position, then bend down while holding bean bag on right foot.

Up the tall white candlestick crept little Mousie Brown

Way up to the very top

But he could not get down

So he called to his Grandma

Grandma! Grandma! Grandma!

So he curled himself into a ball

And rolled and rolled and rolled himself down

When the bean bag games are finished, a big basket can be placed in the center of the circle for each child to toss the bean bag into as her name is whispered. This helps auditory processing development. Another fun way to collect the bean bags is to have the children stand and put the bean bag on their heads. The teacher comes behind and touches the upper back of each child with the basket as the child leans the head backwards and tries to make the bean bag land in the basket. This encourages the sense of touch and vestibular sensing. Another way to get the bean bags to the basket is to pick them up with the toes and put them in. This helps ground the children by bringing consciousness down to their feet.

Laurie Clark is the co-author with Nancy Blanning of the two-volume series, Movement Journeys and Circle Adventures, the second of which was published by WECAN in 2016. She has been teaching Waldorf Preschool Kindergarten for 27 years. She mentors Waldorf teachers around the country and teaches in various training courses for teachers.