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Utilizing creative movement to enrich the growth and development of preschool handicapped children

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UTILIZING CREATIVE MOVEMENT TO ENRICH THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

by
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A THESIS

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Approved by

Professor

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ABSTRACT

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UTILIZING CREATIVE MOVEMENT TO ENRICH THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

April, 1997

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stanley Urban

Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this study was to determine whether exposure to a creative dance instructional program would promote growth in the areas of language development and motor skills with preschool handicapped children. Eight youngsters were selected to serve as an experimental group while eight others served as a control group receiving no formal instruction.

The Learning Accomplishment Profile (LAP) and the Peabody Developmental Motor Scales and Activity Cards Test and a Help Checklist served to assess levels before and after the program of instruction.

The results of the study indicated that growth in receptive and expressive language development as well as fine and gross motor skills was a function of exposure to a creative movement program. The outcomes, although encouraging, suggest the need for further study to completely validate results.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Chapter One

The Problem

Introduction

What does it mean to teach creativity through dance? To explore this question, various educational theories will be examined as the framework for researching the issues of creativity and dance education.

The term "creative movement" covers a wide variety of experiences such as improvisation, movement exploration and imagination. Regardless of terminology, whether the class is called "Creative Movement" or "Creative Dance," the use of movement as an art form and the ability to use the body rhythmically can enrich the life of a child and contribute to his/her comfort level and feeling of adequacy. Through participation in a well-planned movement program, children can realize their potential and learn to express themselves in ways that are free, creative, and meaningful.

Specialists in physical education as well as in general education agree that rhythmic activities should be stressed in the primary grades. The sensory-motor orientation is an important factor when teaching young children.

Children differ in their movement experiences from their earliest years. Some children show difficulty using both sides of their body inter-dependently. They may appear to be clumsy, often bump into things, and avoid activities which require total

coordination. They may have difficulty imitating a motor task that requires crossing the midline of the body. They may also be confused as to their own body orientation. A child who is confused with spatial awareness will have difficulty perceiving a constant environment.

Through creative dance activities, skills are developed without the threat of competition or embarrassment. Children can gain an awareness of their bodies and through this awareness develop a positive self-concept and body image. Concepts such as space, time, rhythm, weight, force, and environment are enhanced as the child uses movement to interact. The whole child is involved in the learning process.

Howard Gardner, a dancer and educator, has brought the term "bodily-kinesthetic" into the national discussion on educational reform. Gardner's theories in Art Mind and Brain a Cognitive Approach to Creativity (1982), gives us a solid springboard from which to look at dance teaching. Gardner suggests that kinesthetics provides a rationale for children's intuitive knowledge and that in teaching dance, particularly creative dance, much more is potentially being activated in the student than simply a dance vocabulary. We are potentially enlivening and reaching to all the intelligences in an active way. Students are able to gain an understanding of their feelings and express their inner thought through movement and then learn to control their bodies (kinesthetic intelligence) according to Swartz (1993). Children are thinking and making choices when they move.

If active kinesthetic feedback and visual perception are not properly integrated within the child, some deficiencies in perceptual-motor skills may result according to Swartz (p. 15).

Background Theory

Many dance artists and educators believe that in educating through art they are educating for life and drawing students' attention to awareness of oneself, others, and the environment. Barbara Andress (1991), a professor at Arizona State University, has expressed that movement, in addition to singing and playing instruments, continues to be one of the most important instructional tools available to the educator for setting an environment in which children learn to perform, describe, and create music. Movement experiences are a vital part of the educational program because they represent the sensing-doing stage of learning which is a means of understanding more abstract ideas.

Holistic curricula emphasizes the relationship between the mind and body with a view to sensing the connection between them. In the early 1900's, Isadora Duncan (1994), developed dance methods that encouraged a connection between the dancer's outer movements and inner feelings. Duncan stressed that "dance should not be an end in itself, but rather an outward result of inward awareness. Through dance one became inseparably a part of the great rhythm of the universe, and that the harmony between self and center of being resulted as a matter of course in harmonious living" (p. 27). In Dinonstein's (1971), recent holistic approach to dance for elementary school classrooms, the body is the center and children learn to express their feelings as they develop awareness of their muscles.

In conclusion, creative dance can help children learn to feel good about their bodies and their movements. If these outward expressions help children realize and interpret their inner feelings through the medium of the body, everything they do will be affected.

Need

The purpose of this research is to determine the practical importance of having a creative dance class in the elementary special education classroom. Creative dance can help children reach their full potential for it encourages the development of the whole child by involving the students physically, emotionally and intellectually by enhancing creative experiences and by facilitating emotional expression.

Research Question

Will preschool children with special needs who have taken a 20 minute creative movement class twice a week increase receptive and expressive skills and improve their motor skills while increasing self-confidence more than a preschool class with special needs who have not taken creative movement classes?

Value of the Study

Creative movement offers an alternative to processing cognitive skills, perception, memory retrieval, and language arts. According to Griss (1994), creative movement is effective for those who learn well in a bodily kinesthetic mode. Kinesthetic learning is described as a baseline from which all other learning takes place. For example, by using movement to explore themes in stories, children can act out a character from a book and experience the cause and effect of events which they can then verbalize. Creative

movement can also help them remember sequences of events or fill in the details of a story's setting.

The child's self-concept can also be improved through the mastery of self-act goals. Brown, Duer, Privette (1989), have indicated that dance has been used with children to encourage relationships between the child and the teacher or other children and enhance self-esteem. Dance or movement can reach many children who respond to something other than verbal communication.

Children with multiple level handicaps such as birth defects, injuries, illnesses, delayed motor development or hyperactivity can profitably channel activity into choreographed exercises and be helped through movement as a vehicle for developing relationships with the teacher or with other children (Brown, Duer, Privette 1989).

Limitations

This study was limited for the following reasons:

1. The sample was representative of eight preschool multiply handicapped children who are attending the Burlington County Special Services School District in New Jersey.

2. The time for teaching the creative dance class was twenty minutes in the afternoon, two times a week for six months, beginning October 1, 1996 through March 1997.

Definition of Terms

Arteriosclerosis: These are fatty deposits in the blood vessels that makes the arteries increasingly narrow and also more brittle and less able to expand. Both effects decrease

the amount of blood that can pass through the arteries. Arteriosclerosis sometimes affects a major artery, but more often, the arteries in which the blood supply is seriously reduced are the smaller ones that carry blood to the brain and legs (Kunz, M.D., 1982).

Creative Dance: Creative dance refers to bodily activities that enable the child to express their inner thoughts and feelings by using a wide variety of music. The preschool child uses movement and dance as an art form to enhance inner thoughts and feelings. It is the ability to use the body rhythmically, expressing oneself in a free, creative, and meaningful way through a well planned program (Clark, 1979).

Expressive Language: Developmentally, when the child has acquired a meaningful level of experience and when comprehension has been established, the child is ready to communicate with others; the student can then engage in expressive language (Johnson & Mykelbust 1967).

Receptive Language: The second facet of language is the auditory-receptive; the ability to comprehend the spoken word. Receptive language also encompasses reading so it is also visual. Receptive language is both spoken and read (Johnson & Mykebust, 1967).

Fine Motor: The primitive and rudimentary behaviors of reaching, grasping, and releasing during the prenatal stage and the first two years of life represent these developmental categories of the fine motor skills which are reflexes. Rhythmic stereotypes appear in the arms, hands, and fingers shortly after birth. The final stage is manipulation. Manipulation refers to skillful and refined use of the hands (Gabbard, C. 1992).

Gross Motor: A fundamental movement skill or a common motor activity such as walking, running, jumping or throwing with specific movement patterns (Gabbard, C. 1992).

Kinesthetic: This is the sensation of position, movement, and tension of various parts of the body perceived through nerve and organs in muscles, tendons, and joints (Clark, 1997).

Multiply Handicapped: This is a presence of two or more educationally disabling conditions. Eligibility for speech-language services shall not be one of the disabling conditions which forms the basis for the classification of a pupil as "multiply handicapped" (N.J. Administrative Code, 1996).

Preschool Handicapped: Children, ages three through five, who have an identified disabling condition and/or a measurable developmental impairment who require and would benefit from special education and related services (N.J. Administrative Code, 1996).

Chapter Two

Reviewing the Literature

Creative movement offers an alternative to processing cognitive skills, perception, memory retrieval, and language arts. According to Griss (1994), creative movement is effective for those who learn well in a bodily kinesthetic mode. Kinesthetic learning is described by Griss, as a baseline from which all other learning takes place. For example, by using movement to explore themes in stories, children can act out a character from a book and experience the cause and effect of events which they can then verbalize. Creative movement can also help them remember sequences of events or fill in details of a story's setting.

The child's self-concept can also be improved through the mastery of self-act goals. Brown, Duer, and Privette (1989), have indicated that dance has been used with children to encourage relationships between the child and the teacher or other children and enhance self-esteem. Dance or movement can reach many children who respond to something other than verbal communication.

Children with multiple handicaps such as birth defects, injuries, illnesses, delayed motor development or hyperactivity can profitably channel activity into choreographed exercise and be helped through movement as a vehicle for developing relationships with the teacher or with other children (Brown, Duer, Privette, 1989).

Griss found in her studies in the past twelve years that creative movement in the curriculum has been incorporated into topics as diverse as math, punctuation, science, literature, social studies, and other lessons that stress kinesthetic learning. The child is truly learning through the language of dance and movement. Before they enter school, many children experience and explore the world mainly through nonverbal language such as feeling, pulling, pushing, and throwing. No one has to teach children how to roll down a grassy hill or pound their fists or feet during a temper tantrum or jump for joy. Children react naturally to the world in physical ways. Griss suggests that to ignore this natural resource is a barrier to the process of education.

According to Flinchum (1988), the child's body grows and changes daily. There are sensitive periods when the time for learning a physical skill is optimum, usually between the ages of two and eight years. Also the period of greatest learning occurs from birth to approximately eight, at which time 80 percent of an individual's learning has occurred. If the environmental stimuli are provided at exactly the time of readiness, the learning will be more intense and complete than when offered at a later time. It is possible without carefully planned learning situations to miss these critical movements. Children who do not have intervention at these sensitive times may not develop their potential as fully as they might have.

Jerome S. Bruner (1973), supports this theory and further states that movement and active play adds another dimension to ideas, words and symbols and can assist the child in memory processing and retrieval which occurs when a child experiences movement activity.

Movement games foster interpersonal skills and help the child learn to cooperate with others. The teacher can capitalize on the cooperative aspects of partner games and teach children to become more sensitive toward their peers' feelings and teach responsibilities for one another. Swartz (1993), reported that through carefully planned movement experiences, one can make these elimination games of exclusion and rejection into games of inclusion and reinforcement. Through rhythmic movement activities, skills are developed without the threat of competition or embarrassment.

Good body handling skills give children confidence in themselves and help them meet other challenges. These neuromuscular processes are the basic tools for accomplishing such tasks as writing, painting, playing an instrument or throwing a ball. For example, a child can learn to throw a ball against a wall and catch it. The child learns that the ball will come back in the same place each time if it is thrown right. Through this simple exercise, children learn that they can control the outcome of their movement. Once they gain confidence in this skill, they will be more inclined to attempt other tasks. Success will build on other successes.

Brown, Durer and Privette (1989), have also found that children who score significantly below normal in the area of motor development are usually excluded from the games of their more highly skilled playmates. As a result, they are likely to experience problems in the area of peer relationships and self-esteem. Children who have not learned to perform fundamental movement skills may often experience frustration that require them to perform complex combinations of these motor skills.

Andress (1991), reported that the teacher's interactions and strategies for teaching a creative movement class influence the child's overt behaviors in movement.

Three properties that determine movement response are: modeling, describing and suggesting.

Modeling refers to imitating the body movement of another person. Younger children imitate their peers more than older children. Older children's imitations become more reciprocal or invitational in nature. The techniques of teacher modeling vary depending on the developmental stage of the child. When interacting with two-year-olds, Andress suggests using tactile modeling. In tactile teaching, the teacher takes the hands of the child and swings them back and forth to the music. More able or motivated children can imitate teacher modeling on their own resulting in the need for less tactile modeling.

The second property determining interactions in children's movement with music involves describing specific body movements. The modeling described earlier focused on body technique such as encouraging children to lift their feet or swing their arms. Many children need to learn how to describe or interpret their movement by moving their bodies with the music. The rhythm of the music used with children in the primary grades should cause them to want to move or dance, freely and unselfconsciously. The teacher, for example, could explain how a child should simulate the movement of an airplane and expect that body movement would be in accord with the tempo of the music played. This use of muscles, balance and transference of body weight in executing movement responses to music is called body technique.

Andress gives an example of how the teacher should aid the child by making the following remarks:

* Fast: "Look how fast Justin's plane is going."
* Slow: "Jess is moving his arm so slowly."
* Long-short rhythm: "You know how to gallop. You're putting one leg out in front."

These descriptions will help the child focus on how peers may be moving to the music and help improve natural movements in eliciting a music related response in an instructional setting.

The third technique used to elicit specific movement responses is "suggesting." Almost all suggestions ask for specific movement response ("Can you fly your plane in a circle?"). This approach is effective in attaining certain movement patterns. Age does not seem to be a factor in the ability to respond.

Andress suggests "that modeling alone does not increase music-related response unless it is combined with describing and suggesting. Modeling, describing, and suggesting help children differentiate between music and non-music related responses, which reinforce desired outcomes" (p. 24).

Many dance artists and educators believe that in educating through the performing arts they are educating for life by drawing students' attention to awareness of oneself, others, and the environment. Swartz (1993), states that, "kinesthetic intelligence underlies development of all the intelligences, and that by teaching dance we are potentially enlivening and teaching to all the intelligences in an active way." Movement

and play are important for total development. Healthy children love movement. Flinchum (1988), indicates physical activity is clearly apparent in children's play.

Beyond the joy of play, movement activity is vital to a child's physical health. Children who learn to enjoy movement and play activity in the early years will have a greater desire to continue physical activities as they grow older.

Interestingly, little research has been done in the area of preschool fitness. According to Atwood, Poest, Williams and Est. (1990), arteriosclerosis is now appearing in children at age five. Children need to exercise aerobically at least three times a week and eat properly to reduce the risk of this disease. Also, children do not participate in cardiovascular fitness during most childhood sport and recreation activities, recess or play time. Young children are especially weak in the areas of muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and body leanness. Furthermore, sixteen percent of all children are obese.

Swartz (1993), reported that the predominant pattern of the kindergarten scheduling is half-days. However, over one-third of the teachers surveyed in the ERS Report, (Educational Research Services), noted they engaged in full day sessions. Under these conditions, approximately two hours were spent in some form of play. Sixty-four percent reported structured physical activities. The survey indicates the need to teach early childhood educators movement activities so that time availability in the classroom can be used advantageously.

Designing and carrying out a developmentally appropriate movement curriculum will take time and effort. But it is worth the effort if the whole child is of concern. By

realizing the importance of working together and learning about and executing higher order thinking skills through dance routines, educators will become convinced about the importance of having a creative movement program in their curriculum.

As a result of the earlier findings, it is hypothesized that young children involved in a creative movement class, especially those with special needs, will perform better in language skills and fine and gross motor skills, and will demonstrate a more positive attitude toward school than students who are not involved in a creative movement class. These skills will be operationally defined by scores received on the Learning Accomplishment Profile (LAP), a teacher assessment using the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP Checklist) and a Peabody Developmental Motor Scales and Activity Cards Test.

Summary:

Dance is certainly not the only kind of movement preschool children want or need, but through the emphasis on sensory awareness and aesthetic experience, it can help give depth, richness, and texture to childrens' understanding of themselves and their world (Stinson, 1988).

Children can supply all the physicality needed for a successful lesson. The job of the teacher is to provide direction, guided imagery, permission to be physical, and encouraging smiles. The idea is not to have children imitate the teacher's movements, but have them discover their own physical language. Music, props, fabrics, a shadow screen, or beautifully illustrated children's books can also add to the stimulation and motivation of children.

Academic concepts can be thought through movement which makes learning more accessible and memorable for children. Movement also fosters creative and dynamic energy in the classroom. Griss (1994), indicates that "Besides learning specific curricular content from these kinesthetic activities, children exposed to creative movement as a language for learning are becoming more aware of their own natural resources."

Students can expand their concept of creativity and how they can use their own bodies in dance. They can learn through their own creations. The combination of discipline and imagination is an invaluable foundation for creative thinking which is embodied in activities involving movement.

Chapter Three

Design of the Study

Introduction

This will be a comparative study of two groups of preschool multiply handicapped children. One group of children will be designated the experimental group which will participate in a creative movement class in a year-long program while the second group, the control group, will not participate in the movement class.

Method of Sample and Selection

Population

Subjects will be drawn from the Burlington County Special Services School District in Mt. Holly, New Jersey. From the four existing special education preschool multiply handicapped classes, two classes will be asked to participate in the study. A sample comparative design for the research will be used. One class of eight children will be given creative movement instruction and the other group of eight children will not receive such instructions.

The class that participates in the study will be given a 20 minute creative movement class twice a week for one school semester.

Instrumentation

A Learning Accomplishment Profile (LAP) that measures functional age form birth to 72 months will be given as a pre-test and post-test to both the experimental and the control group. Items are listed by chronological age levels rather that skill levels to facilitate quick overall screening. The section chosen from the LAP examines the child's ability to perform the following functions of language: reporting, questioning, predicting and relating information, following and giving directions, describing actions, sources of actions and function, and expressing needs, feelings, and preferences. The test examines the receptive aspects of language as well as expressive aspects of language development. Receptive items are those which do not require verbal responses, while expressive items are those which require verbal responses. It is important to note that children who cannot give verbal responses are offered an alternative procedure to elicit a response, such as nodding, blinking and pointing. This type of assessment is intended to record the child's progress within the developmental areas of language.

A teacher assessment will also be conducted for each child after each class. Student performance will be reviewed by the teacher using a checklist to measure level of participation in terms of cognitive, language, gross motor, fine motor, social-emotional behaviors and self-help skills. However, the specific nature of the study will focus on examining the important aspects of each child's fine and gross motor functioning. This assessment will be compared to the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (Help Checklist). Skills/behaviors are assessed from 0 to 36 months as the functional age. The majority of

skills will be assessed through observation and play intervention. After recording the dates of initial assessment for each checklist page used for each child, the following sample symbols will be used for recording the child's mastery next to each assessed skill:

Example: + The skill was observed or appropriately absent

R The skill was reported by the teacher

- The skill was assessed but not observed or reported

E The skill appears to be emerging but not completely consistent or of good quality

Sample

Age	Item	Skill	Assessment Dates	Comments
3 yrs., 2 mos.	Ball Rolling	Gross Motor	10/19/96	Sits with slight support
3 yrs., 0 mos.	Tapping Alumni Sticks	Fine Motor	10/20/96	Bangs two marching sticks together

To check the validity of the teacher assessments, a Peabody Developmental Motor Scales Activity Cards Test with range from birth to seven years will be given to both preschool classes by the occupational therapist. This standardized test assesses the fine and gross motor skills of the preschool child and must be administered by a trained therapist. The Peabody assessment may require several sessions to administer but not longer than an hour each by the occupational therapist.

Treatment of the Data

A series of tables has been constructed to determine if the mean scores between the control and treatment groups at post-testing differ meaningfully.

Pilot Study

In Graph One, the LAP pre-test scores represent functional age scores in expressive language from both the experimental and control group. In Graph Two, the LAP pre-test scores shown reflect the functional age scores in receptive language in both groups of children.

Graph Five reflects the fine motor skills of each group of subjects and Graph Six identifies the gross motor skills of each subject as reflected in the Peabody Test.

Summary

At the conclusion of the study, the pre-test data and the post-test data of the two groups will be analyzed and compared in order to determine the effects that creative movement has on student achievement in the areas of language, gross motor, and fine motor skills.

Chapter Four

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

In September, 1996, the Learning Accomplishment Profile (LAP) was administered to two of the four preschool multiply handicapped classes at the Burlington County Special Services School District. The Peabody Developmental Motor Scales and Activity Cards Test was administered by the occupational therapist to assess the fine and gross motor skills. Both testing components would serve as the pre-test for the study to follow.

Both classes met in the morning hours and were comprised of eight children between the ages of three and five with varying levels of developmental delay. Each class had as its permanent instructor an experienced teacher who taught the same basic preschool curriculum. In effect, all conditions were generally the same for each group.

One class of eight children was designated as the control group, while the other class of eight was designated as the experimental group. The control group received no creative movement instruction during the full length of the study. The experimental group received twenty minutes of creative dance instruction twice a week (Tuesday and Thursday). The instruction consisted of activities that addressed fine and gross motor skills, eye/hand coordination, receptive and expressive skills, social skills and other areas

of concern (see Chart 1). Student attendance during the six months of instruction was generally good. The assigned teacher was present during the sessions to assist with management and modeling.

The designated room was typically used for sensory stimulation and could be considered a small gymnasium. In all, there were thirty-eight meetings with children in the experimental group. No formal assessment occurred at any time except the beginning and the close of the study. However, a teacher assessment using the Help Checklist occurred after each class. The main focus for this assessment was to analyze student participation, social interaction, and listening to and following directions.

During the week of February 23, 1997, the post-test was administered to the children in the experimental group which was a parallel form of the pre-test battery to include the LAP and Peabody. Additionally, the evaluator was to respond with a plus or minus to an array of skills which would reflect whether a particular skill was accomplished. The individual responses were then tallied and translated into a cumulative functional age. The resident Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant assisted with the assessment. In Graphs 1 through 8 (attached), the pre and post-test data are represented in functional age expressed in months for the control and experimental groups in the following areas:

Expressive Language
Receptive Language
Fine Motor Skills
Gross Motor Skills

Results

Chart 2 - **Summary of Results** - shows the mean functional age for each group in the various categories as reflected in both pre and post-tests. Growth change is noted as well as the net differences between control and experimental group in each category.

Summary

An analysis of the results of the formal measures and the informal measures (teacher observations) indicates that children involved in a creative movement class increase their expressive and receptive language skills and strengthen both fine and gross motor skills.

These findings will be elaborated further in Chapter Five.

Chart 1

Activity:

1. **Record:** Folk Dance Fun

   Song: Hi To You

Function/Goal:

This encourages children to recite their own name and meet a new friend in a group situation. The goal is for the children to interact with their peers using language.

2. **Record:** Toes Up, Toes Down

   Song: Toes Up, Toes Down

Function/Goal:

Children are seated in a circle identifying body identification. Example: Touch their nose, or raise their right leg.

3. **Record:** Toes Up, Toes Down

   Song: Toot

Function/Goal:

Children are sitting in circle, moving their arms and legs (large motor movements) in rhythm to the music and following directions given by the instructor to move either in or out of the circle imitating a train movement.

4. **Record:** Toes Up, Toes Down

   Song: Circle Round

Function/Goal:

Children are standing in a circle and moving counter clockwise. They are given directions to move in and out of the circle, jumping and clapping hands at the various beats in the song. The goal is to initiate spatial awareness.

5. **Record:** All Time Favorite Children's Games

Song: Through the Gates of Town

Function/Goal:

The teacher and one child become a gate holder, holding their hands up high together as the other boys and girls pass underneath their arms one by one until the gate comes down and one child is caught in their arms. At this point the child becomes the new gate holder with the instructor as the children move in rhythm to the music under the gate.

This activity provides fun and learning for all children and focuses attention span sequencing, behavioral control, listening skills and gross motor skills.

6. **Record:** Preschool Aerobic Fun

Song: B. B. Bounce

Function/Goal:

The children are seated in a circle on the floor, stretching their legs one at a time and then grasping them tight with both arms close to their chests.

This activity focuses on strengthening large motor skills, following sequential patterns, and signing along with the catchy lyrics.

7. **Record:** Preschool Aerobic Fun

Song: Chug Along Choo-Choo

Function/Goal:

The children, in a standing position, form a circle holding onto each other's waists and move by singing the lyrics and twisting in and out of different directions given by the instructor.

By listening to directions, the children are developing patterns and cooperating skills in order to move together smoothly in the various patterning movements. The goal is also to develop language skills.

8. **Record:** Simplified Rhythm Stick Activities

Song: The Wizard of Oz
Sesame Street
It's a Small World
Hi Ho Medley
Mickey Mouse March

Function/Goal:

Each child receives a pair of alumni sticks. Routines are first taught without the sticks. When a child has learned the correct pattern and rhythm, the sticks are given for practice. Children should have ample space for practice and be cautious in tapping their hands lightly with the sticks. Children need to learn how to hold the sticks still while listening for opening counts.

Simple routines are taught for each song. The children march around in circle formation to the music using the various routines taught for each song. This activity is excellent for developing perceptual motor skills and coordination.

9. **Record:** Beanbag Activities

Song: Pass the Beanbag

Function/Goal:

The children are seated in a circle taking turns passing a beanbag to the next child sitting in the circle. When the music stops, the child holding the beanbag needs to follow a three step sequence pattern and then pick up the beanbag when the music begins passing it on to the next child.

The activity helps to develop perceptual training and increases listening skills.

10. **Record:** Folk Dance Fun

Song: So Long, Farewell

Function/Goal:

The children stand in a circle holding each other and moving clockwise around singing to the music. When tapped on the head, they go over to a seat in the classroom and remain sitting until the last child is tapped on the head and has left the circle.

This activity is an effective closure to the day's activities. The children enjoy singing the lyrics and develop group cooperation, rhythmic coordination and movement control.

11. **Record:** One, Two, Three, Four, Look Who's Coming Through the Door

Song: Skimarink

Function/Goal:

The children sit at their chairs and are asked to wink, blink, and wave their arms to various sequential patterns in the music.

This builds vocabulary and teaches sequential steps. The lyrics are easily learned. children enjoy rhyming words, singing and moving in an enthusiastic and fun way.

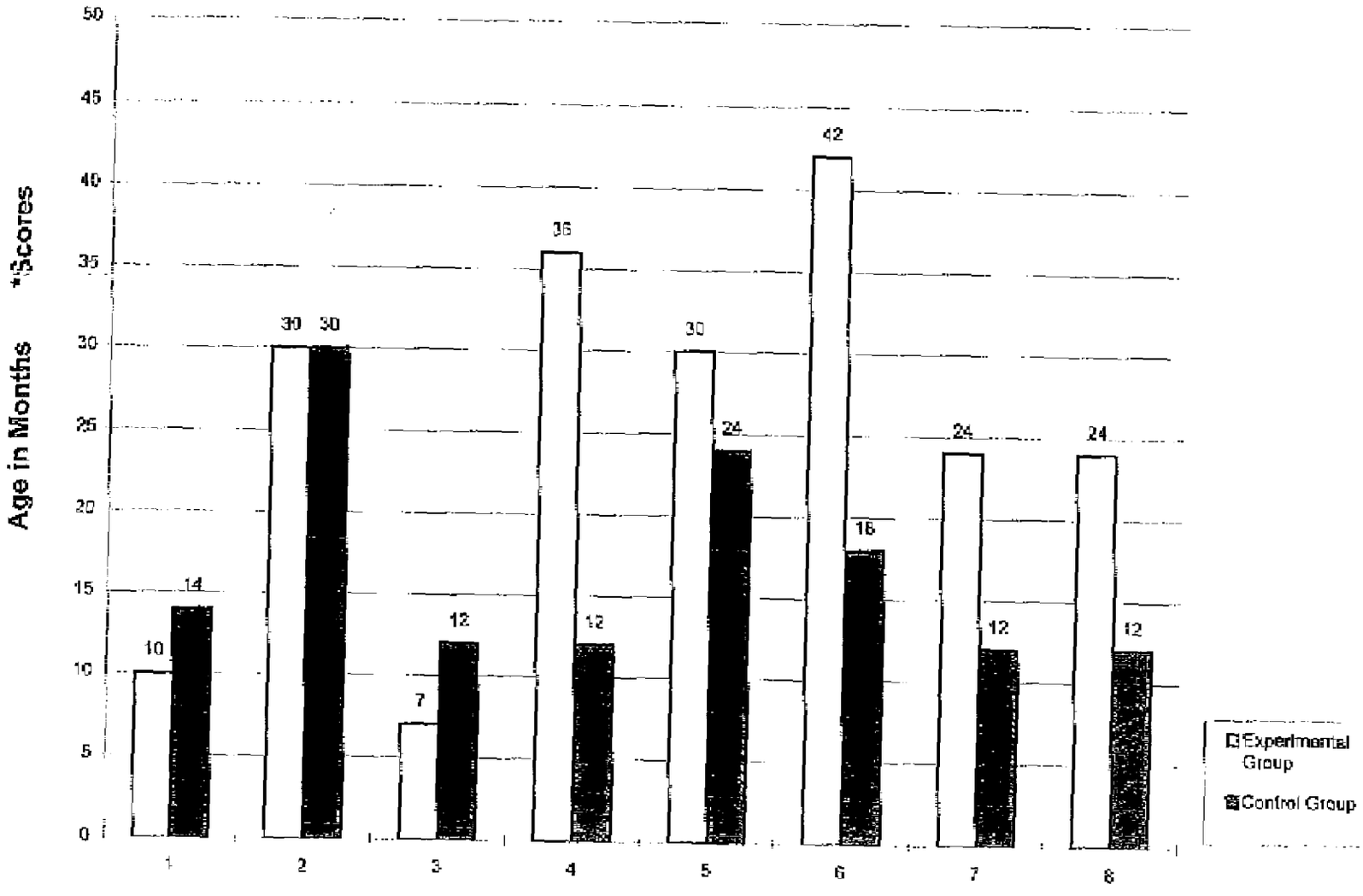
Chart 2

Summary of Results

Test	Pre (9/96)	Post (2/97)	Growth		Net Difference
LAP Expressive Lang.					
Control	15.75	17.50	+1.75		
Experimental	25.38	27.63	+2.25	→	+ .50
LAP Receptive Lang.					
Control	13.13	13.75	+ .62		
Experimental	19.25	21.50	+2.25	→	+ 1.63
Peabody Fine Motor					
Control	14.75	15.13	+ .38		
Experimental	28.80	29.75	+ .95	→	+ .57
Peabody Gross Motor					
Control	21.00	21.00	0		
Experimental	32.00	33.63	+1.63	→	+ 1.63

GRAPH ONE

Pre-Test LAP, Language Skill: Expressive

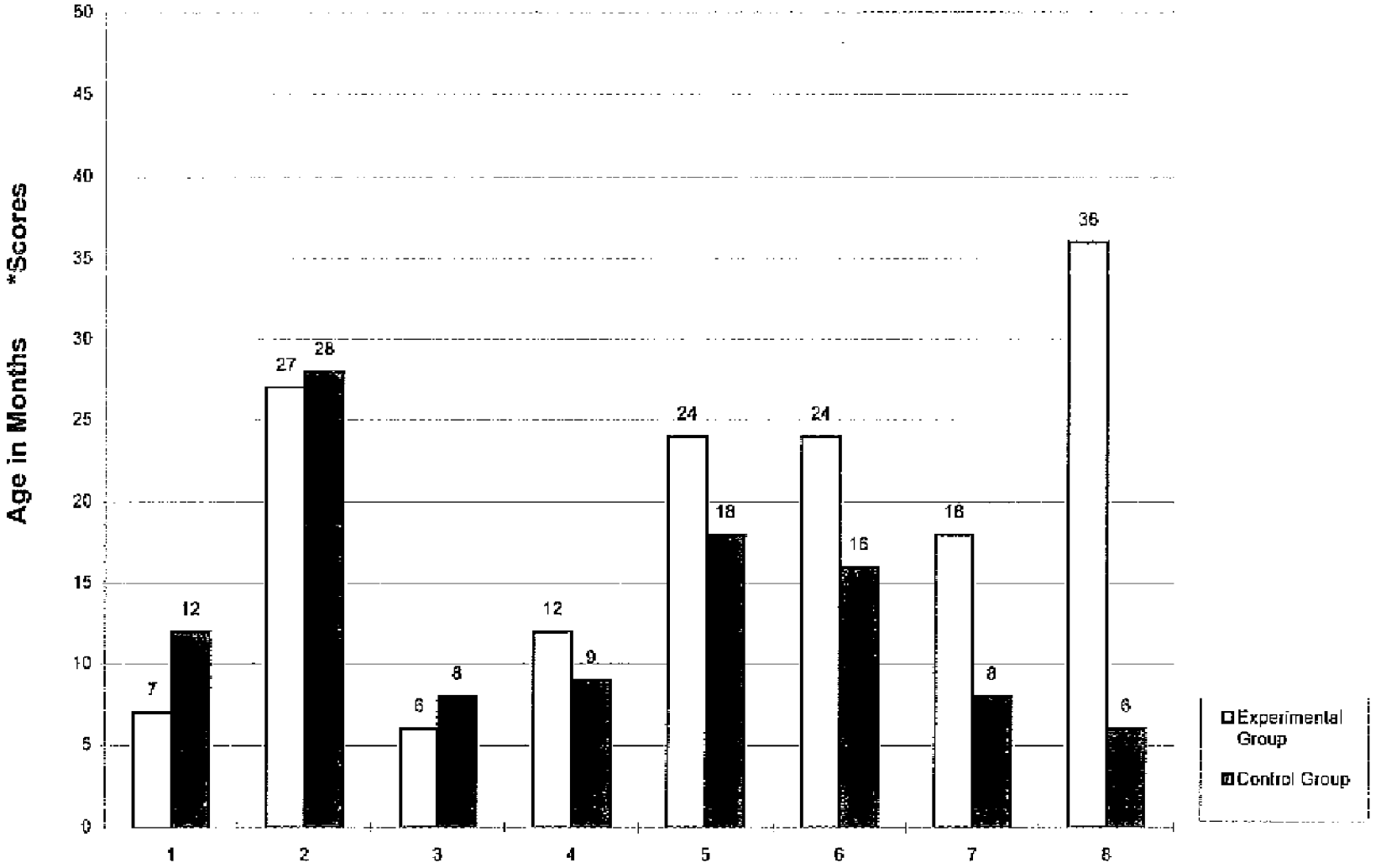


Subjects

*Functional Age Expressed in Months -- Test Given 9/96

GRAPH TWO

Pre-Test LAP, Language Skill: Receptive

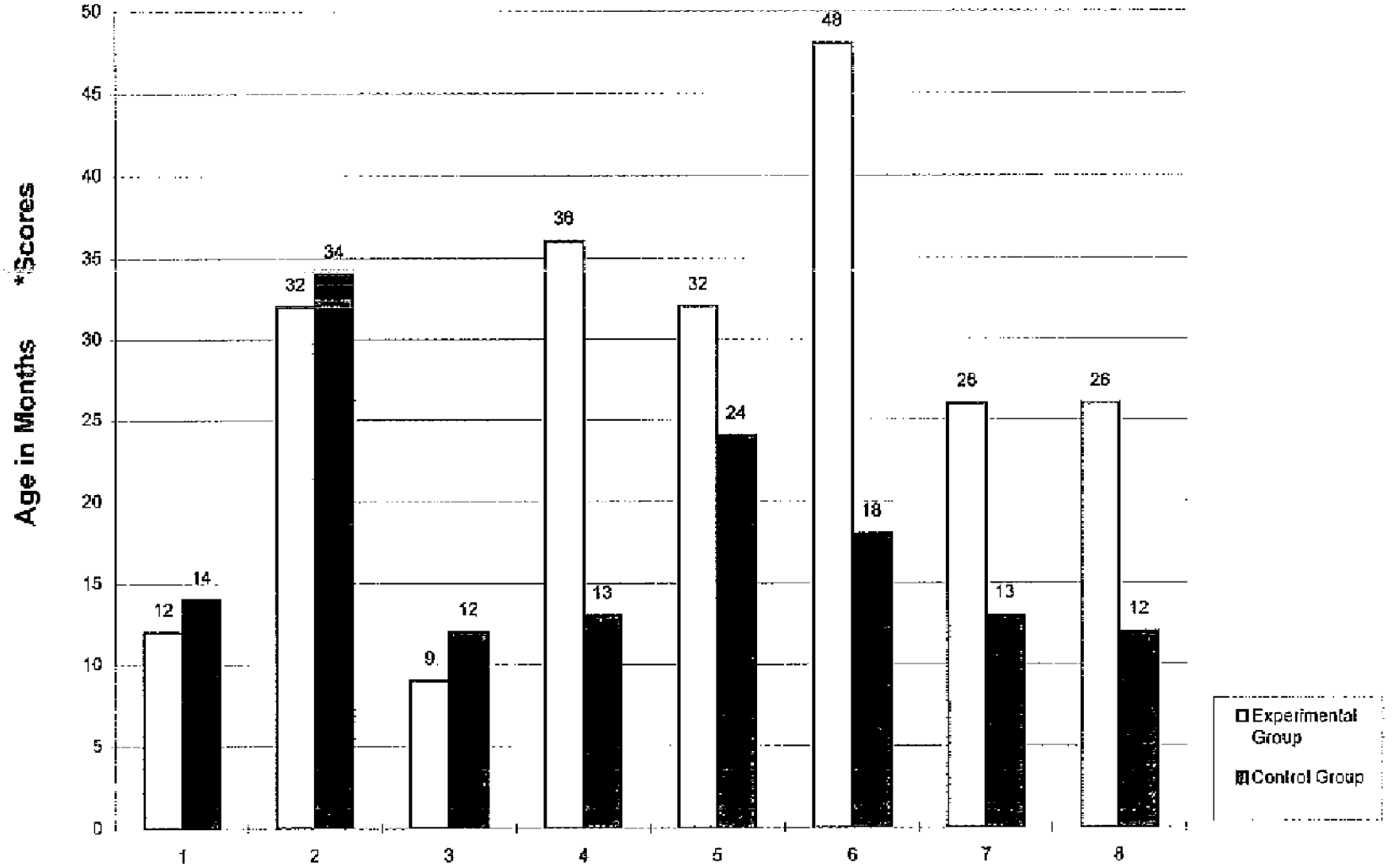


Subjects

***Functional Age Expressed in Months -- Test Given 9/96**

GRAPH THREE

Post-Test LAP, Language Skill: Expressive

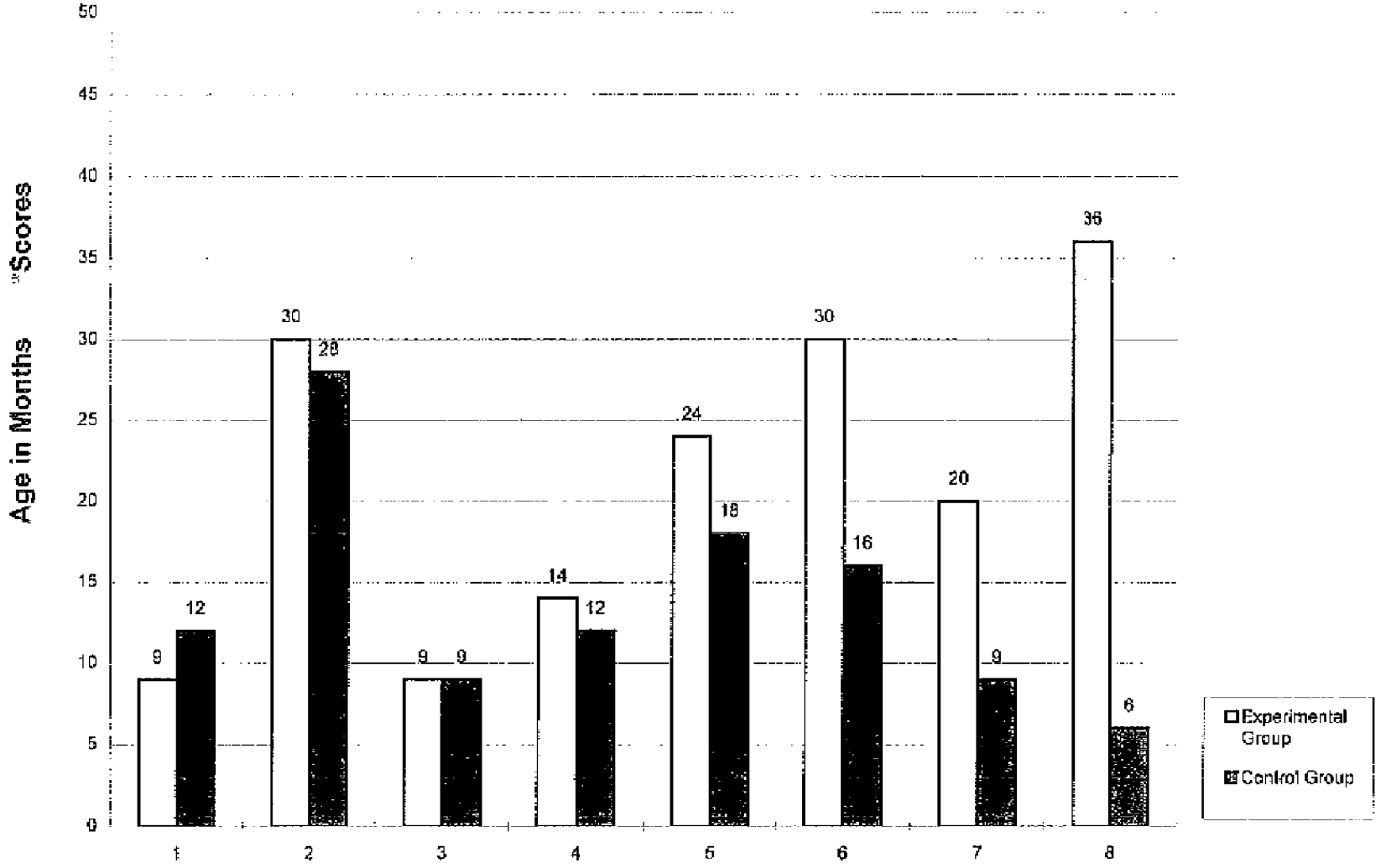


Subjects

***Functional Age Expressed in Months -- Test Given 2/97**

GRAPH FOUR

Post-Test LAP, Language Skill: Receptive

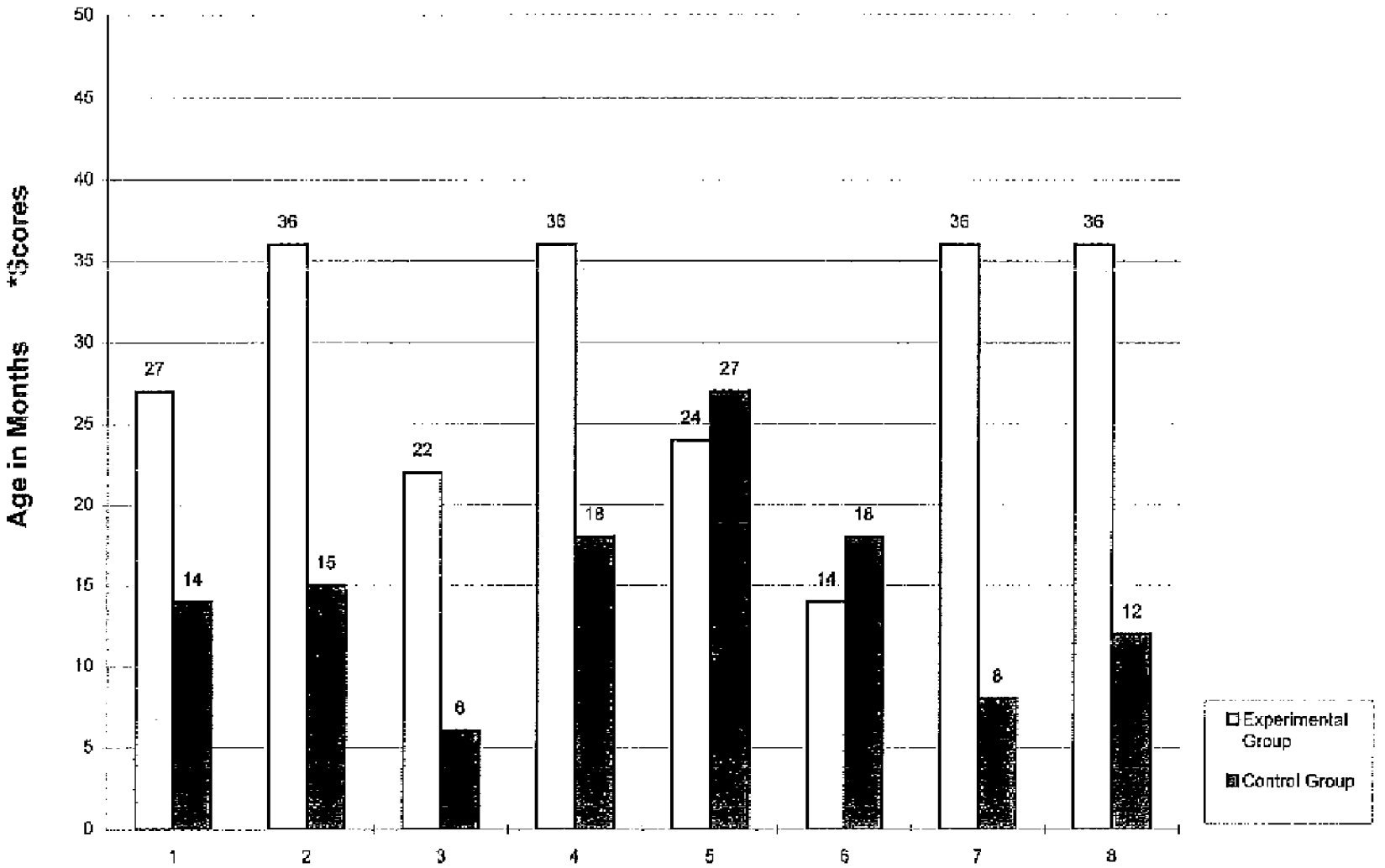


Subjects

*Functional Age Expressed in Months -- Test Given 2/97

GRAPH FIVE

Pre-Test Peabody: Fine Motor

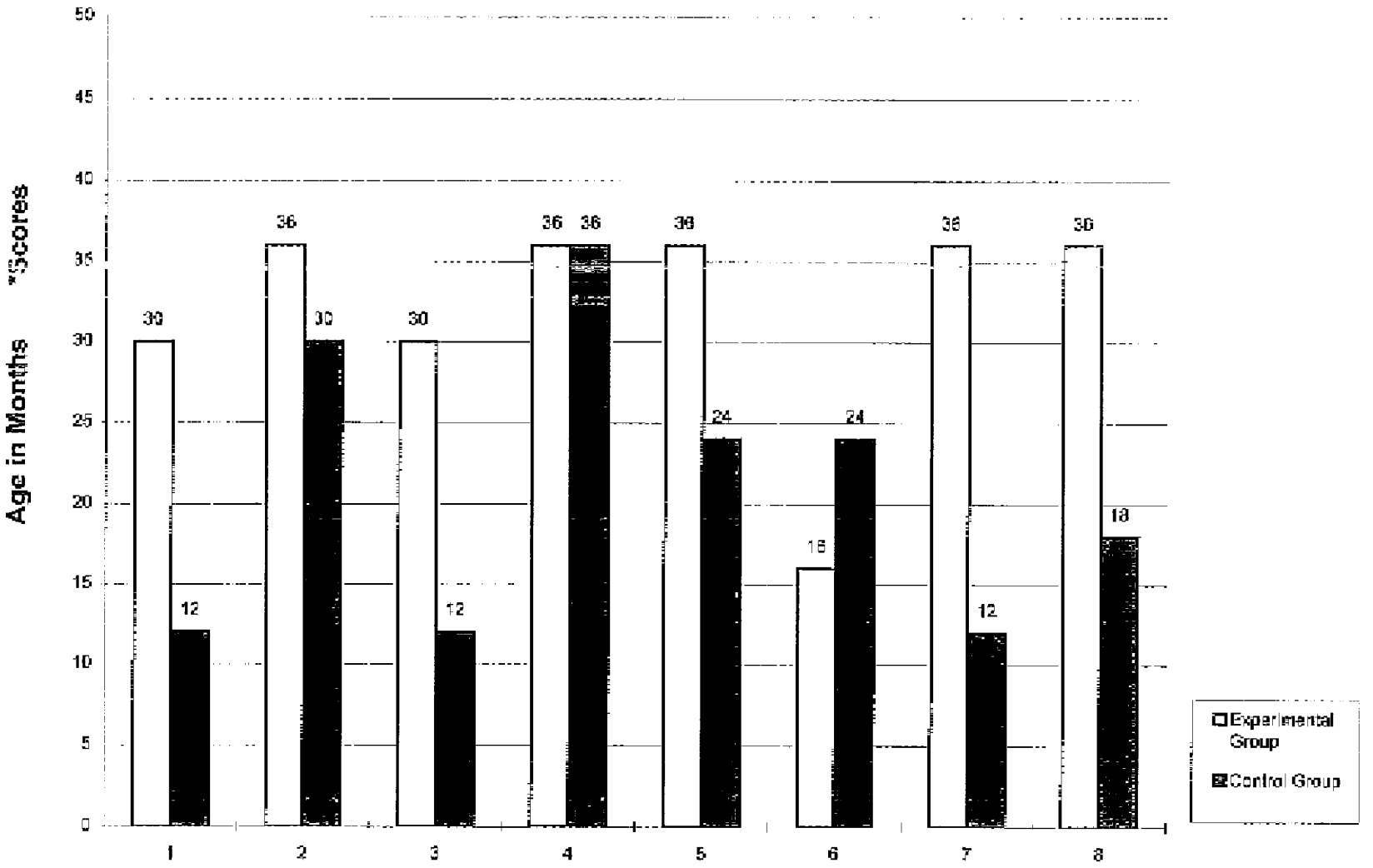


Subjects

***Functional Age Expressed in Months -- Test Given 9/96**

GRAPH SIX

Pre-Test Peabody: Gross Motor

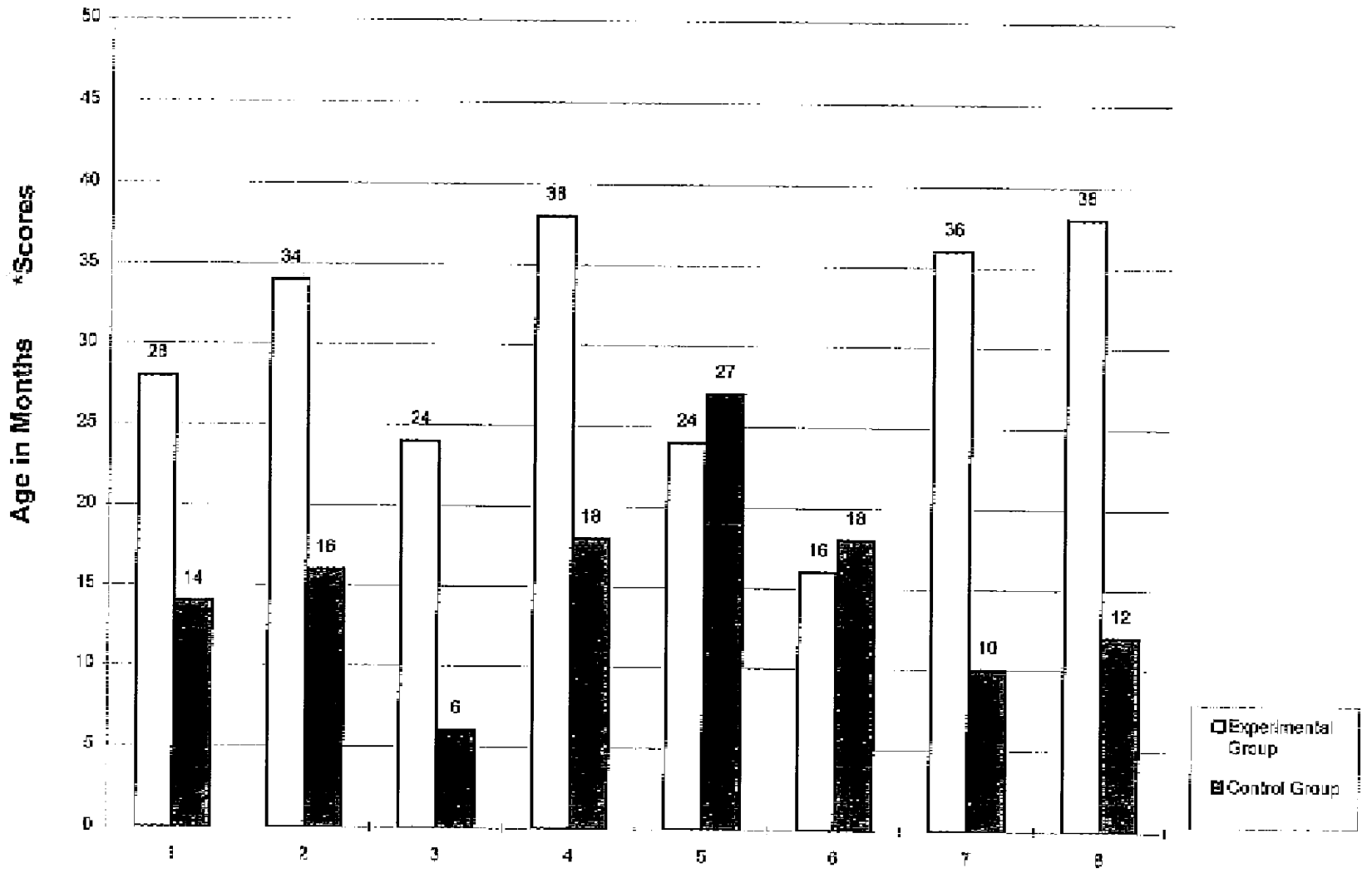


Subjects

*Functional Age Expressed in Months -- Test Given 9/96

GRAPH SEVEN

Post-Test Peabody: Fine Motor

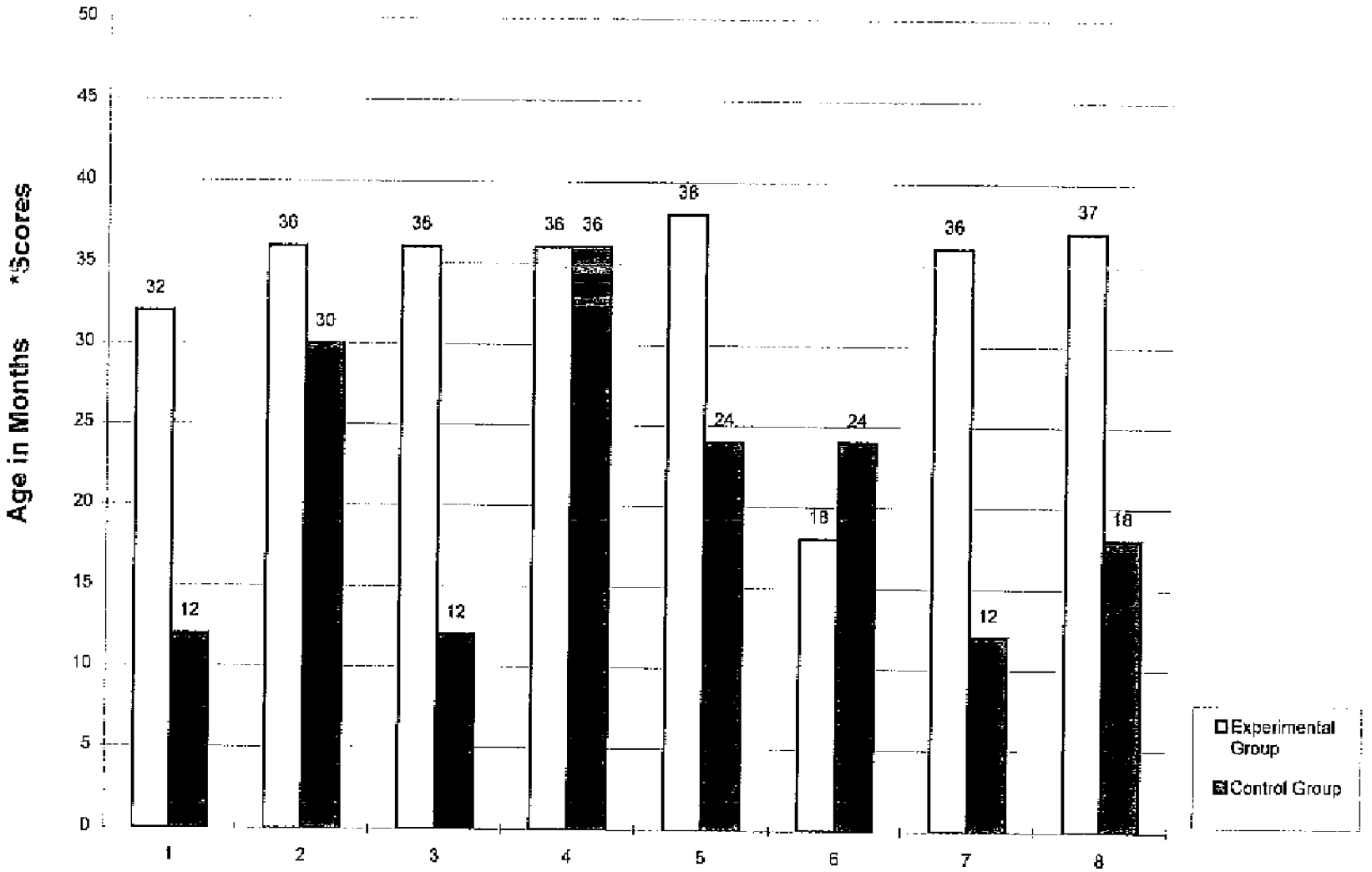


Subjects

*Functional Age Expressed in Months -- Test Given 2/97

GRAPH EIGHT

Post-Test Peabody: Gross Motor



Subjects

***Functional Age Expressed in Months -- Test Given 2/97**

Chapter Five

Summary/Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine that children with special needs involved in a creative movement class will benefit from activity in a regularly scheduled creative movement program in the areas of language and motor skills.

Eight children from two multiply handicapped preschools in the Burlington County Special Services School District in Mt. Holly, New Jersey served as the subjects for this study. The area could generally be considered a rural-suburban location in southern New Jersey. Students were selected for the creative movement class based on scheduling access and availability of facilities. A Learning Accomplishment Profile pre-test was given by the instructor to each child both in the experimental and control groups to determine the level of language aptitude. A Peabody Developmental Motor Scales and Activity Cards Test was administered by the occupational therapist to each child in both the experimental and control groups before the creative movement program began. A LAP post-test was administered at the end of the sessions by the same instructor to determine if there was an increase in receptive and expressive language skill levels. The Peabody Test was given to each group at the close of the study by the same OT instructor to determine the levels of fine/gross motor skill development. The teacher observed each

child's ability to listen, respond to directions, participate, and interact with peers. A Help Checklist was used to help assist with assessment.

Findings

The results of this study indicate that children who participate in a creative movement class gain confidence in verbal and nonverbal expression, increase their vocabulary, and learn how to explore using their bodies to express ideas, moods, music, and experiences as compared to children without the benefit of a creative movement experience.

Conclusions

The data from the formal testing and informal observations show that creative movement is of significant value and importance to children. The findings reflect that the practical importance of creative movement takes three main forms:

1. Children enjoy and benefit from creative dance activities and therefore become enthusiastic about learning.
2. Creative movement may be used as an alternative method of teaching children how to communicate when such children are non-communicative learners.
3. Creative movement can enhance whole child development.

The holistic curriculum emphasizes the special relationship between the mind and body. Thus, it is fair to conclude that creative dance is more than physical activity. It is an expression that involves the whole being. Creative dance facilitates children's

personal development by showing that situations have multiple meanings by encouraging experimental solutions to problems, and by inviting acceptance or rejection of ideas.

Teachers observing the creative movement sessions reported back that children responded with an excitement and concentration that was not seen in the regular preschool academic classroom

Discussion and Implications

While other factors may have influenced the language and motor skill improvement of the subjects in this study, the results seem to suggest that the children who participated in the creative movement class had a positive experience that impacted achievement in language and fine and gross motor skills.

Recommendations for Further Research

The results of this study show similarities to those studies in previous research findings. Susan Griss (1994), used creative movement for twelve years as part of her curriculum in elementary schools. Her work had been conducted through various artist-in residency programs, funded by the New York Foundation for the Arts. Griss found that representing academic concepts in physical ways made learning more accessible and memorable for children and fostered creative and dynamic energy in the classroom.

In like fashion, the children who participated in the study tended to show higher language skills and better motor skills than other peers who did not participate in such a program.

Based on this study, further research could be conducted to substantiate the results by:

1. Assessing the population in a regular education preschool classroom for expressive/receptive language and fine/gross motor skills and comparing rate of growth to the results generated from the study with the multiply handicapped population.
2. Assessing a larger sampling of students which would include students from other schools, different ethnicities, and socioeconomic classes to verify whether results are universally valid.
3. Increasing the length of the study to ascertain whether rate of growth is a function of time on task.
4. Utilizing other instructional strategies to determine whether techniques, type of instruction or materials directly effects growth.

In conclusion, it appears that continued research is necessary in order to determine the extent of impact of creative movement programs on language and motor skill development.

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