



The Suitcase Circus

Learning Extensions

- **Age: 3 through Pre-K**

Domain: PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

Content Standards: HPD1, HPD3

The children will:

- participate in a variety of gross-motor activities to develop control, balance, strength and coordination (HPD1)
- understand healthy and safe living practices (HPD3)

Activity: Our Own Class ‘Suitcase Circus’

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN....and teachers, too! That Puppet Guy demonstrates some amazing tricks with his circus gang, pulling everything out of a suitcase! You are going to be the ringmaster of your own preschool circus of students, using the playground for your stage, and you can pack just about everything you need into an old suitcase. After the show, tell your students that you are going to train them for the circus and show them your suitcase. Take your children and suitcase to the playground where you will set up a circus obstacle course using simple items you have at school. First, pull out a jump rope, and lay it in a straight line. Demonstrate walking straight, balancing on the rope, holding out your arms. Then let the students try. Next, pull out some paper plates and some rhythm sticks (or round blocks). The children will take turns trying to balance the plate on the stick. If you have hula hoops available, have one child hold the hoop while the others pass through. Red and orange crepe paper streamers strung from the top will make it look like they are jumping through fire. If you want, you could have the children take turns on the swings as their flying trapeze (sitting only), or shoot them through the cannon by making a loud bang (air in paper lunch bag) as they each go down the slide. Once the children know the course and the safety rules, they can easily repeat these activities on their own, with you being the ‘safety’ ringmaster. Teachers can add their own ideas to extend the theme, adding tunnels to crawl through, setting up cones for the tricycles to navigate, using echo microphones for ringmasters, and face paint for clowns. At the end of the circus theme week, invite parents or another class to watch your students put on a show. Make sure you serve popcorn and peanuts!

Domain: THE ARTS (CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT)

Content Standards: CD1, CD3

The children will:

- explore and use a variety of materials to develop artistic expression (CD1)
- use drama to express individuality (CD3)

Activity: Class Clowns

During a circus themed week, set aside a day that the children can clown around! Purchase (or make) face paint and let the children either decorate their own face by looking into a

mirror, or pair up with a friend to make each other a clown. Paint egg cartons red, and cut out each cup. String with a piece of elastic, or yarn tied in the back, to make a clown nose. Roll a large piece of paper into a cone and top off with a cotton ball or pom pom and let the children decorate their hat. Children can bring a stuffed animal on 'clown day' to perform a short circus act for the entire class, using some of That Puppet Guy's ideas from the show, or making up their own. Or have each clown perform their own trick, such as throwing and catching scarves, walking a tightrope while holding an umbrella, or lift weights made from cardboard tubes with balloons attached to the ends. Hang your parachute from the ceiling to create a circus effect. Invite parents or another class in to put on your show. Children can 'sell' tickets, usher the audience to their seats, or hand out popcorn and peanuts for the show.

Domain: MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Content Standards: MD1

The children will:

- begin to develop an understanding of numbers

Activity: My Circus Counting Book

You will need to purchase or make 15 small items for each student to make a counting book of their very own. You can get circus themed mini erasers, peanuts, red pom poms (for clown noses) or any other small items that represent things you may find at a circus. Make and duplicate 5 index cards (or use cardstock) labeling them 1-5 with numbers and large dots for each child. Slip each card into a sandwich bag so that all the children have bags with the numbers 1 through 5. Put out the small items you have chosen (or mix and match) for the children to use to put the appropriate number of items into the marked bags. When finished, the children stack their bags in numerical order. Teachers and helpers staple the set of bags together, covering the staples with masking tape or bright colored tape. If you use zip type bags, make the zipper part on the right hand side of the book so that the children can dump out the contents and count again and again. Children under 3 can make one large class counting book using gallon size bags and larger objects to prevent any choking hazards.