Hoops, Bean Bags and Parachutes
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Context for play:

To play......to engage in activity for enjoyment or recreation. We know the benefits of play. Activity stimulates the brain (release of endorphins) which allow the child to focus better on the upcoming curriculum. The NAEYC standards support both unstructured play (45 minutes a day) and structured play (15 minutes). Unstructured could be inside or outside space where in the child determines an activity, that allows her/him constant movement. In unstructured play, your center might want to establish “Zones” for activity (e.g., one zone walking or running, another kicking a ball into a goal, another jump ropes, another playground equipment, and another playing with ribbons). Though children can change zones during the unstructured play time, they must be in one zone or another throughout the designated time.

Structured play encompasses taught activities, teacher-directed, which focuses on skills need by the group of children (e.g., cooperation, colors, shapes, letters, jumping or running). The incorporation of ‘academic topics’ with movement allows those children who are kinesthetic learners to master topics in the manners their brain has chosen. Structured play should mimic the concepts being taught in the classroom.

Here are some activities which when used in combination with the classroom, reinforce concepts and enhance learning.
Hula Hoops-Hula hoops come in a variety of colors and sizes, the smaller the child, the smaller the hoop should be.

Travel to different lands........using the hula hoop as a spaceship or airplane start with the runway, fly to your destination and land. Read a short story, go find treasures, or do a dance about where you have landed before talking off and returning to home. You can do the same with space exploration and visit planets in the solar system.

Space exploration (high and low, in/out, over/under, around, within).....have the hula hoop on the ground, giving each child a hoop. Have the children explore their own hula hoop lifting the hoop high then placing it low (knees or lower), go in and out of the hoop when it is on the ground or when they are holding it. Ask them to jump in and out and over and around their hoop. Perhaps find another hoop and begin again.

Old time hoop rolling to space or partner.....placing the hoop on its edge and your hand on the top and roll the hoop across space, into walls, alongside as you walk or run, and to a partner.

Color games.....have children stand within a hula hoop with the hoops in a large circle. When you beat a rhythm have the children do a locomotor pattern around the outside of the their hoop. When you stop the music/rhythm the child returns to his/her hoop. This time have the children go around the larger circle. They must stop in a hoop of the same color but not their
original hoop. Try again but have the children stop in a color not the color of their original hoop.

Hula hoop on different body parts......around arm, other arm and switch back and forth, around waist.

Bean Bags-Bean bags come in a variety of colors, shapes, with numbers or letters.

Balancing on body parts...while standing still or walking. Add different implements like paddles or spoons to balance the objects on

Coding by color/shape/numbers/letters-have the children sitting in a large circle and put bean bags or color shapes (animal) in the center. A) Ask the children to come up and pick out one bean bag. Ask them to return and pick up another bean bag of the same color. Return again but pick up a bean bag on another color and repeat. Add a third round of bean bags of yet another color. B) Ask whomever has a red beanbag to stand and continue calling out every color. Each child should stand at least three times. C) Ask the children to each pick out one bean bag and put the rest behind them. Stand and ask the children to find all the other children who picked the same color to stand together. D) Use the color of the child’s clothing to sort be colors.
Broom Hockey.......buy several small brooms (child size) usually at the Dollar Store. Give the children a broom and bean bag and ask them to sweep it to a spot, into a goal first by themselves and then by sharing a bean bag between two children.

Parachute-remember the grip is a ‘claw grip’ with the back of the hand facing the ceiling.

- Up and Down
- Circle-up
- Popcorn
- Colors

Mushroom-have the children sit cross-legged even with the edge of the parachute. Bring up and down behind the back and sit in the parachute with your bottom. All children should be inside of the parachute.

Climb a Mountain- have the children on their knees with the parachute over their laps. Go up and down and have the children put the end of the parachute under their knees. All children should be looking at a high mountain. Carefully crawl to the top staying in your assigned color.