
Music Part 2

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Music (Part 2)

Part 1 of this edition of *News You Can Use* explored ways that music supports emotional, language/literacy, and motor development. In Part 2, we share some additional tips and strategies for using music with infants and toddlers during every day routines and experiences.

Using Music with Infants and Toddlers

Be Thoughtful and Responsive

Sally sits with the small group of children she cares for in her home. It is spring and the garden has been full of insects and especially bees. The



children have been fascinated with these “new” visitors to the garden. Now inside after outdoor playtime, Sally has a baby in her lap and a few toddlers near her. Another two children are in the block area. Sally cups her hands and begins singing with the children around her, ♪“I’m bringing home a baby bumblebee, won’t my mommy be so proud of me...” The toddlers around her join in the hand motions of the song and sing some of the words.

Be intentional with the music you sing when you are around children. Sally knows the children are fascinated with bugs and bees lately. She is “following their lead” and chooses her song thoughtfully because it reflects the children’s interests. Sally also knows that trying to gather all of the children in a “circle time” for songs is not appropriate for babies and young toddlers. Instead, Sally takes the opportunity when she is with a small group to sing a song with them. Children can choose to join in or can continue their own play. Sally knows that whether the children participate or not, they are often still listening and taking in the words and meaning of the song. Sally is not at all surprised when later that afternoon the children who were playing with blocks are singing the bumblebee song.

It is early in the morning and Janet is setting up her classroom. She is playing her favorite radio station. As soon as she sees one of her families coming down the hall she changes the music to classical music. She has noticed that playing classical music in the mornings is calming and comforting to babies. The music eases their transition from home to school.

Janet is careful and thoughtful about what music she plays and when. Through her experience and observation she has found that classical music in the mornings works well to ease the transition for her group of babies. After an hour or so she will turn off the music so that it doesn’t just blend into the background or interfere with children’s ability to hear and pay attention to what is going on around them. Throughout the day Janet makes careful decisions about how and when to use music with the children in her room.

Here are some things to think about when being intentional about the music you use:

- Observe and reflect on how music is enjoyed, or not, by each child. Some children love to drum along to a loud song while another child would find the noise overly stimulating.
- If you choose to play music make sure children have a place to go that is quiet.
- Choose music that reflects the cultures of the children in your care.
- Plan each musical activity as you would any activity in your classroom. For example, playing background music to accompany an art or movement activity would be intentional while just turning on music to play all day would not.

When Janet uses music in her classroom she almost always uses her own voice. She knows that children can follow along when she is singing. She sings more slowly and more clearly than most recorded music. She can also change her tone, speed, and volume to match her children.ⁱ



Music Includes Everyone

Amelia cares for fifteen-month-old Vanessa and twenty-two-month old Lisa in her home. The three of them are singing the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and doing the hand gestures together. Although Lisa is not yet talking, her Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) suggests using songs to engage her in language. Vanessa and Amelia share Lisa's joy as she moves her hands up as the spider and down with the rain. Lisa is even humming along.

Music can be a fun, comfortable experience for children who have motor, speech and/or language difficulties. Children can participate by humming a melody, doing hand gestures, or by adapting physical movements to their abilities.ⁱⁱ Music activities are easy to adapt to include children who are very different ages and have different abilities. Children are able to recognize songs and remember the gestures that go with them even if they do not say the words. Lisa knows the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" song and joins in the singing with her mother and home visitor. Music is an activity that can be adapted in a wide range of ways while giving children a sense of pride and accomplishment in their abilities. Musical activities also encourage peer interactions that may not otherwise happen, which strengthens all of the children's social-emotional skills.

One of the favorite activities for the toddlers in Debbie's room is to have a parade through their center. Each child may choose their own instrument and usually, the louder the better. One morning, Gabriella who has low muscle tone, chooses to carry and play a tambourine. Debbie finds a way for her to use it successfully. Debbie gives her a drumstick to beat the tambourine as she pushes her wheelchair.

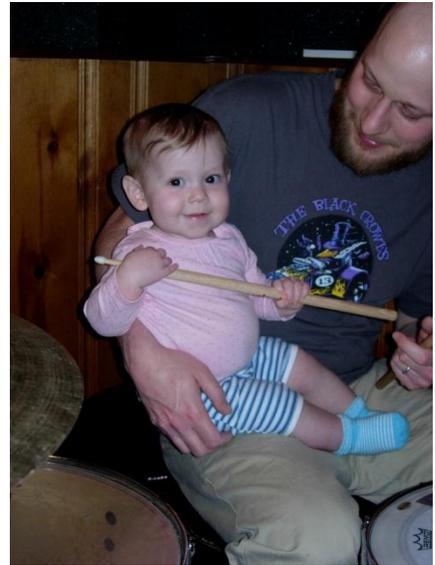
Debbie's group has not always done a daily parade. She noticed that Gabrielle seems to especially

enjoy and participate in musical experiences. She makes a point to use music throughout the day. Gabrielle is engaged in the music and Debbie always makes sure she can participate either by support of her positioning or finding the right instrument.

Music can make children feel special!

♪“Little Adam had a farm, E-I-E-I-O, And on that farm he had a...?” Eighteen-month-old Adam reaches for the horse and his mother and home visitor continue, ♪“horse! E-I-E-I-O”

Adam loves the song that is all about him! He gets to hear his name and choose which animal is on his “farm.” Hearing his name in a song also helps Adam learn to sing and say his own name because he feels connected to the music. His mother and home visitor like to put his name in all sorts of songs. During socialization times, the families sing songs for each of the children in the group. When everyone is singing about a child it helps the child feel a sense of importance – they are loved and important members of their family and community.



♪“It's time to change your diaper, your diaper, your diaper, It's time to change your diaper so you'll be nice and clean,” sings five-month-old Media's caregiver, Natalie, as she changes her diaper. Once she's done she sings, ♪“Now we've changed your diaper...and you are nice and clean!”

Natalie makes up songs all day about whatever is going on in the moment. She knows that by doing so, she is giving the children she cares for “permission” to be creative with their language. She can also introduce new ideas or activities, even visitors to the classroom, with a song that helps the babies feel comfortable about what is going on. She has also noticed that songs often help children transition from one activity to another—a challenge for many of the young children in her care.

Twenty-eight-month-old Diego is fascinated by the garbage truck that comes each morning. It's probably the highlight of his day! This morning as the children are going outside Diego starts singing a song, ♪“The garbage truck is coming, The garbage truck is coming.”

Diego is excited to be going outside because he knows the routine – they go outside and soon the garbage truck comes. Diego's parents and caregivers often sing made-up songs to him and he has recently started making up his own songs. Diego's song is a big milestone because it shows how he is now able to use his ideas and experience, along with his language skills, to create something entirely new: his own song. When children use language to make up new songs about their experiences, they are creating and sharing their own understanding of the world.



Little Voices for Healthy Choices

Would you like some great ideas for using music with infants and toddlers? There are some wonderful resources available through the Little Voices for Healthy Choices initiative from the Early Head Start National Resource Center.

Check out the webinar on Steady Beat here:

<http://www.ehsnrc.org/Activities/littlevoices.htm>

Conclusion

Infants and toddlers enjoy hearing, making, and moving to music. For them, music is play. And we know that music is play, too – and so much more! Be thoughtful and intentional in how you use music with infants and toddlers. Think about all the ways that music supports their development and connects them to their families and communities. Look for times during the day to share musical experiences with infants and toddlers. Express your delight in their musical play and exploration. Use the gifts of music to make positive differences in young children's lives!

ⁱ Elizabeth Carlton, "Learning through music: The support of brain research," *Child Care Information Exchange*, May/June (2000): 55.

ⁱⁱ Alice Sterling Honig and Holly Elizabeth Brophy, *Talking With Your Baby*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 67.