

Incorporating Music into your Program

Millie has 6 children in her family child care program, ranging in age from 18 months to 5 years old. They have been playing inside and it is almost time to transition to play outdoors. Millie already let the children know there were only five more minutes to play before getting ready to go outside. Millie moves to the bench by the



door and begins to sing Old MacDonald Had a Farm. A few of the children quickly join in. Millie asks one of the children which animal should be next and they suggest a horse. Soon all 6 children have come over near the bench and

are singing "E-I-E-I-O". Millie has placed a basket with toy farm animals next to the bench and each child takes a turn suggesting the next animal either by saying the animal name or choosing a toy animal from the basket. When the song is finished, Millie uses a quiet voice to let the children know that they are going to go outside to play now

The Benefits of Music Experiences

Experiences with music offer many benefits to young children. For anyone at any age, music makes you feel good (Salimpoor et al., 2011). Music during early childhood helps create the foundation for language, literacy, math, and social and emotional skills (Moyeda et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2014).

Benefits of music during the early childhood years include:

Infants: Music can be a source of soothing and promote bonding between infants and caregivers (Persico et al., 2017). Singing a lullaby such as Twinkle Twinkle Little Star can help an infant to calm. For older infants, music experiences support the development of language and rhythm.

Toddlers: Singing and movement songs with toddlers helps support their growing body awareness and the development of self-control (Belapurkar, 2017). It also encourages participation in the group. For example, Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes prompts children to connect the names of parts of their bodies with their movements. Singing it regular speed, then fast, and then slow gives children a chance to be silly together and pay close attention to the words and tempo.

Preschoolers: Participating in music experiences can help preschoolers with social interaction such as turn taking and sharing and supports their developing verbal memory skills (Belapurkar, 2017; Moyeda et al., 2006). For example, Old MacDonald Had a Band is a variation on Old MacDonald Had a Farm and each child can choose a rhythm instrument to play for the song (rhythm sticks, jingle bells, tambourine, maracas, triangle, etc.). Children may need to wait for a turn with the instrument they would like and will need to listen closely for when their instrument comes up in the song to play. At the end of the song when "everybody played at once" the whole group plays together.

Older Children: School age children can help lead songs for younger children. They can also be creative by coming up with suggestions for new lyrics or variations on well-known songs. For example, The Itsy Bitsy Spider can be changed into The Great Big Spider and sung with a "great big" voice.

All Ages: In addition to promoting overall well-being (Cohen, 2011), participating in music experiences creates a sense of community for children and adults of all ages. For example, songs that incorporate the names of the people participating helps each person feel valued and a part of the group. A "hello" song can be sung to the tune of Goodnight Ladies and the group can sing "Hello Millie, hello Millie, hello Millie, we're glad you're here today".



Music is also a great way to incorporate the home languages of families in your program in a way that includes everyone. Singing together in different languages supports connecting vocabulary between languages. For example, singing a “Hello” song in both English and Spanish helps everyone to feel their home language is valued.



After playing outdoors, Millie brings the six children inside and they have a brief group meeting where they talk about what they saw outside and read a book. The children need to wash their hands to get ready for lunch. Millie sings a fingerplay song, Two Little Blackbirds (sung to the tune of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star) to send them two at a time to wash their hands. Two thumbs up are used to represent the two blackbirds. Some children sing along and do the movements, and some just watch and wait for their turn.

“Two little blackbirds sitting on a
hill, one named Jack, the other named Jill”
(both thumbs up in front of you).
Fly away Jack, fly away Jill”
(thumbs go behind your back).
“Come back Jack, come back Jill”
(thumbs go back in front of you).
“Two little blackbirds sitting on a
hill, one named Jack, the other named Jill”

Incorporating Music Throughout the Day

Music can be used to support a transition. A song can give children time to stop one activity and move on to the next, such as finishing up playing with blocks indoors and getting ready to play outdoors.

Music can be part of daily routines. Singing a song can be a way to greet or welcome everyone to start a group meeting time. A song can bring everyone to work together on a task such as cleaning up. Music can also be used to help with washing hands or brushing teeth for an appropriate length of time.

Music can also be used for modeling language, movements, or emotions. One example is Jim Gill’s song *I’m So Mad*. Children can make the face and body posture to match each verse of the song: “I’m so mad I could growl...I’m so sad I could cry...I’m so glad I could laugh”.



Resources:

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