

HOME ECONOMICS

GUIDE

JUL 07 1980



*Published by the University of Missouri-Columbia
Extension Division
College of Home Economics*

Children and Music

*Phyllis A. Pirner
State Child and Family Development Specialist*

Young children respond naturally to the sounds of music. Music is an important aspect of play and can be a means of combining cognitive, affective, and motor development in young children. A wide variety of experiences in music are available for the growth and development of children, but it is important that the adult select appropriate materials and experiences to enhance this growth and development. The focus of musical experiences in young children is toward natural responses and perceptions which occur through play experiences in sound and movement.

Since music is one of man's most expressive languages, creativity should be part of all phases of musical activity for young children. Children need opportunities for imaginative expression in singing, playing, moving, and listening. It is essential that the adult consider some of the conditions for creativity within the environment. Physically, there should be space for freedom in movement and, psychologically, there should be freedom for explorations and manipulations of musical materials.

Infants

The development of "musical" children begins in infancy. Infants are attentive to musical sounds in their environment and soon begin to sort these sounds out from other sounds. What can adults do to nurture this attention and response that infants give to music? Since infants' first attention is to discriminate pitch and timbre, many experiences with sounds of different pitches and timbres should be provided.

Crib mobiles make interesting sounds when infants hit them or a breeze moves them. Rattles are probably children's first instruments and provide sound stimulation experiences. Music boxes are interesting with their contrasts in pitch and timbre. Rocking and singing lullabies to children also give opportunities for rhythmic and melodic experiences. Games and rhymes like "Pat-A-Cake" encourage attentive listening and participation.



Recordings of music played at selected times give pleasure to infants. All these experiences provided in an environment where music is valued by adults and children will lead to interest and awareness of music for young children.

Two- and Three-Year-Old Children

It is still difficult to have these young children keep time to music with instruments, but the instruments can be used to add sound effects to poems, chants, rhymes like "Hickory Dickory Dock." Sand blocks may sound like a train, cymbals may clash like thunder.

Singing is fun if adults remember that songs chosen for children should have a limited range, perhaps five or six tones, and intervals that are easy for children to reproduce. Folksongs fit these criteria and are good for children. Songs like "This Old Man" and "Skip to My Lou" are fun and also lend themselves to having the children make up their own verses.

Of course, many songs heard on television and radio by children are easy to listen to but may not be as easily sung. However, listening is important. Developing a listening skill helps the child with melody, rhythm, tone. Children should be exposed to a variety of songs for listening from classics to popular songs.



Four- to Six-Year-Old Children

These children may be able to sing songs with a wider range, and many songs offer opportunities for creativity as the children make up their own words to fit the occasion. Their language development has also increased. Concepts such as high-low, slow-fast, steps-skip may be introduced as children understand more about music.

Putting together physical movement and the rhythmic beat of music is also better developed. Tempo and volume are important factors. As children develop listening skills, they can readily discriminate fast-slow, loud-soft and respond accordingly as they improvise and respond to the music. These basic rhythmic concepts about beat and tempo can be experienced through many activities like clapping and drumming rhymes, chants, and songs.

Experiences with timbre help children identify and describe sounds they hear. To begin with children may only differentiate between speaking and singing songs, but gradually they will hear differences between string, wind, and percussion instruments if adults provide them the opportunity to hear and participate in music.

Creative Movement

At all ages children will respond in some way to music in a creative way. Movement to music may take the form of whole body movement which involves the use of the

whole body but not necessarily to transport the body and locomotor movement which is the use of large muscles to transport the body to another place. Some examples of whole body movement are stretching, bending, twisting, wiggling, swaying, rocking, and stooping. All these movements, whole body and locomotor, are basic to development and a fluidity of control which leads to greater coordination and integration of skills as children respond to all types of music. In providing an opportunity for children to respond to music with both kinds of movement, they will combine many kinds of movements and inter-twine them. As they have more opportunities and become more experienced, the combinations of movement will become more complex. Adults need only present a suggestion or use poetry, beat, music to provide opportunities for children. At all times children should be encouraged to individually react to the music.

As children participate in music they grow and develop in all areas. Cognitively, they learn listening skills and auditory discrimination; the understanding of directions (up-down, fast-slow); and the communication of feelings and ideas through words and actions. Affectively, they gain a better self-concept because there are no failures; a greater participation in a social group; and the appreciation and value that all may make to an enjoyable experience. Physically, they develop large and small muscle coordination as they move the whole body and parts of the body; respond to the music; and coordinate the music with the rhythm instruments.

Rhythm Instruments to Make

Drums

Tin can drum - rubber tubing stretched over both ends of tin can and laced with heavy yarn.

Round cereal box drum - bind top with tape; box can be painted with non-toxic paint and then shellacked to preserve painting.

Clay flower pot drum - sheet of heavy wet paper stretched tightly across top of clay pot and bound with elastic and/or gummed tape. Paper shrinks as it dries leaving tight surface.

Drumsticks/beaters - handles may be wood doweling or pencils (depending on size needed). Drumstick heads may be cotton wrapped and taped to handle. Wooden spoons also make good beaters.

Rattles, Shakers, and Cymbals

Tennis ball cans - filled with stones and painted, with covers taped to can.

Balloons - filled with sand, rice, beans or a combination of these. A little air blown in and knot tied in end.

Gourd - mature, dried gourds with seeds inside.

Rhythm plate - two paper plates stapled together and fastened with tape. Filled with rice or dried beans.

Tambourines - may be made from the top of round cardboard covers, aluminum pie plates, or paper plates. Shells, buttons, bells, or bottle tops may be attached with yarn and glue.

Two pan covers with knobs for handles

Wooden Instruments

Small wood blocks.

Sand blocks - two wooden blocks with sandpaper glued to larger sides.

Rhythm sticks - two slender pieces of sticks such as broom handles or doweling. Sticks should be about 12" in length.

Glossary

Beat—recurrent pulse or throb in music

Improvisation—process of spontaneous making up music

Interval—distance from one pitch to another

Pitch—lowness or highness of a sound

Rhythm—having to do with time in music, the patterns of long or short beats

Scale—a series of pitches, ascending or descending according to a prescribed pattern of intervals

Skip—an interval of more than one step

Step—an interval of one tone; from B to C

Tempo—the speed of music

Timbre—tone quality of a voice or instrument

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■ Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914 in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Leonard C. Douglas, Acting Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Missouri and Lincoln University, Columbia, Missouri 65211. ■ An equal opportunity institution.