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MUSIC IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Music and the arts have been viewed in many different ways throughout the history of education. Many times when schools experience budget cuts, the fine and performing arts programs are the first to be cut. This could lead folks to believe that music and the arts are not essential, but this could not be further from the truth!

Music is so many things. It can be an avenue for learning, a hobby, a passion, but most importantly music is a source of joy! Music is typically a staple in the early childhood education classroom. From naptime lullabies to silly finger plays, there are so many ways to explore music with children. Music can even help to aid in a child's development. Throughout this article, you will find quotes from educators about how they use music in their programs.



EXPOSURE OF MUSIC

The benefits of incorporating music into early childhood education spaces cannot be overstated. Music activities help support all areas of development. Young children typically enjoy hearing and singing the same songs over and over. This is actually a good thing! Although, it most certainly leads to educators having these songs stuck in their heads. This repetition helps children learn. Repetition of favorite songs or finger plays helps children with memorization and language acquisition.

Music also helps to build community in the classroom. Singing and dancing together is a great way for children to interact with each other. Older children can also work on turn-taking by each choosing a song to sing. Singing also promotes self-confidence!

Movement activities are another way to incorporate music into the classroom. Encouraging children to dance or act out different songs promotes physical development and gross motor skills. For our youngest children, movement and dancing helps to create spatial awareness.

“ In our center, we use music to teach concepts of loud and soft, mathematics, and patterns. Music helps get children’s attention. We exercise and take naps with music. - Junebug’s Little Rubies ”

“ I think music encourages physical movement, dancing, and jumping, and it changes their energy and helps their social skills through interactions with other kids. Music to me, is overall therapy for teachers and children. - Desire Bell ”

“ It’s so amazing soon as I say circle time everyone starts dancing. Right before the children go down for their nap they do music to yoga or 10 minutes of Kids exercise. We use different nap-time music each day also from YouTube. Lullabies and ocean sounds tend to drift them off to slumber. Music helps our day run smoothly. - Tiffani Banfield ”

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MUSIC ACTIVITIES

- Finger plays- This type of song is fun for any age. A bonus is that finger plays enhance fine motor skills. These are also great to have on hand for wait times. Below are a few popular finger plays. A quick search on YouTube will bring up videos of them.
 - o Baby Shark
 - o Five Little Speckled Frogs
 - o Going on a Bear Hunt
 - o Where is Thumbkin?
- Coloring to music- Give children paper and crayons, markers, or paint. Play different songs with various tempos and styles. Ask the children to color/draw to the music. Ask them how/what they drew for the different types of music.
- Movement activities- This is another one that can be done with any age. Give children some scarves or some ribbon sticks and let move to different types of music. Consider asking for donations of old silk scarves or you could make your own ribbon sticks like the ones below.



- Music wall- This is a great way to bring music outdoors. Create a music wall using items from around the house. Consider using pots, pans, muffin tins, bins, buckets, chimes, wooden spoons, or anything else you can find! You can attach items to a fence, wall, wooden pallet, etc. Below are some sample pictures.



- For our youngest learners, let them explore with age appropriate musical instruments. Older children can help out by creating homemade instruments. Fill empty plastic water bottles with different materials including beads, bells, pennies, etc. Be sure to glue the caps on the water bottles and make sure the instruments are secure and free from choking hazards.

Lastly, music is a great way to promote diversity in programs. Consider playing music from different cultures and encouraging children and families to share music from their own cultures. This could be paired with books, pictures, and videos from different countries.

There are endless ways to incorporate music into early childhood education programs. Below are a few more examples of how educators currently use music in their programs. We would love to hear about what you do in your program.



We listen to all types of music. Our favorites are Laurie Berkner, Pete the Cat, and Jack Hartman. We have a music wall in our outdoor space that the children can create their own music. We use Music for transitions such as nap and time of reflection and resting our bodies.

– Tressa Clemow



I am huge on music! Music makes our environment a much more happy place. We use a good morning song in English and Spanish. Music is a big part of our circle time / small group.

- Jessica Bellemare



I've used music during circle times for learning letters, numbers, colors just about anything we're learning we can use music it makes it more fun. Also for exercising and just getting the wiggles out.

– Rose Currington



Resources

- [The Benefits of Music Education- PBS Parents](#)
- [Now Sing This! Ella Jenkins - NAEYC](#)
- [Beyond Twinkle, Twinkle: Using Music with Infants and Toddlers- Zero to Three](#)
- [Putomayo World Music- YouTube Channel](#)
- [The Laurie Berkner Band- Youtube Channel](#)