

A Letter to Families about Music & Movement

Dear Families,

We do a lot of singing and creative movement in our program. Singing and moving to music give children a chance to hear and appreciate different kinds of music, express themselves through movement, and practice new skills. The children love our daily time for singing together, and it helps them learn to cooperate in a group. Here are some of the things we do to encourage a love for music and movement:

- We listen to many different kinds of music
- We play instruments to make our own music.
- We give the children colored scarves and paper streamers to use as they move to music.
- We chant during daily routines such as cleaning up.

What You Can Do at Home

You don't have to play an instrument or sing on key to enjoy music with your child. Taking a few minutes to sit together and listen to music can provide a welcome break for both of you. The music you share doesn't have to be strictly "children's music." It can be reggae, country, jazz, classical, rap, or any other music you like. Here are some ideas about enjoying music and movement with your child:

- Children love a song or chant about what they are doing at the moment, especially when their names are incorporated. While pushing your child on a swing, you might chant, "Swing high, swing low, this is the way that (your child's name) goes."
- Songs and finger plays help keep children occupied at challenging times, for instance, during long car trips, while waiting in line, or while grocery shopping.
- Songs can ease your child into tasks like picking up toys, getting ready to go outside, undressing for a bath, and so on. You might try making up a chant to the tune of "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush." Sing "Water is filling up the tub, up the tub, up the tub..." or "Pick up a toy and put it on the shelf, on the shelf..."

Simple musical instruments can be made at home easily. You (or your child) may have already discovered that cooking pots and lids make wonderful instruments.

Sharing music with your child is a wonderful way to build a warm, loving relationship. It's a gift that will last forever.

What Children Learn From Music and Movement

Literacy

Expand your child's **vocabulary and language** as you introduce new words, such as banjo, waterspout, weasel, or stream, in a song. Talk about what the words mean and act them out.

Strengthen their **phonological awareness** by singing songs that are full of rhymes and repetition.

Help your child gain an **understanding of books and other texts** by reading story songs.

Promote your child's **knowledge of print** and understanding of **letters and words** by writing songs on a large paper so they can follow along as they sing or listen.

Encourage your child's comprehension skills by using body movements to dramatize a story.

Mathematics

Help your child learn **number concepts** by singing number songs, rhymes, and chants.

Strengthen your child's ability to recognize **patterns and relationships** by clapping and repeating rhythmic patterns.

Explore **geometry** by matching around a circle. Support your child's spatial sense by having them move around, in, out, and through, or by holding a streamer in different positions (above, below, high, or low).

Teach concepts of **measurement**, especially time, as you or your child move quickly or slowly, or hold a note for a long time. Make comparisons in movement activities, for instance, by taking long steps and short steps, or by making yourself as tiny as a bug and as big as a giant.

Science

Explore **physical science** by experimenting with rhythm instruments or found objects to make sounds. Encourage your child to find ways of making high and low sounds, and loud and soft sounds.

Investigate **Earth and environment** by creating musical instruments from objects found in nature. Use streamers during movement activities to see how things move in the wind.

Social Studies

Learn about **spaces and geography** as your child participates in movement activities.

Teach about **people and how they live** by watching a professional musician or dancer.

Help your child to develop an appreciation of **people and the past** by introducing music and movement from different eras – ragtime, blues, waltz, and rock and roll. Show them dances that were popular when you were growing up.

The Arts

Introduce **dance** by having your child move in different ways to music. Play different types of music and explore movements that go with each.

Explore **music** by providing opportunities to listen to and appreciate a variety of musical styles.

Introduce your child to **drama** by providing props to re-enact familiar stories. Read stories to your child that lend themselves to creative drama.

Technology

Help your child develop an **awareness of technology** by learning how different instruments make sounds. Learn from a local musician how sounds can be changed or distorted using technology such as a mixer on an electronic keyboard. Discuss how the sounds of an electric guitar and an acoustic guitar are different.

How Music and Movement Promote Development and Learning

Social-emotional

Music and movement activities can be shared experiences that make children think of themselves as part of a group. Different kinds of music evoke different feelings and actions. Lively music can lift children's spirits and make them want to get up and move their bodies. Quiet, soothing music calms and relaxes children. Children use their bodies to express different kinds of emotions, e.g., excitement, anger, and sorrow. Sharing a song or a dance learned at home helps children feel good about themselves and their cultures. They develop social skills by playing musical games that require simple cooperation, such as "Ring Around the Rosy" and they progress to those requiring more complex cooperation, such as "The Farmer in the Dell."

Physical

Children work on gross-motor development (moving to music and participation in other movement activities) and explore the many ways their bodies can move (finding different ways to get to the other side of a line without stepping on it). Through movement activities (playing "Follow the Leader"), they can improve large-muscle skills, balance, and coordination. They strengthen small-muscle skills as they learn finger plays and play musical instruments.

Language and Literacy

Children develop and refine their listening skills as they notice changes in the tempo or pitch of music and adapt their dancing or clapping accordingly. They learn new words and concepts through songs and movement, such as by singing "Heads, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" or "I'm Being Swallowed by a Boa Constrictor." Responding to chants and songs, they practice following directions. They develop phonological awareness as they play with the sounds and rhymes of languages. They learn concepts about print as they look at the words of their favorite songs on charts and in books.

Cognitive

Children solve problems while engaged in music and movement activities. They use logic and reasoning to figure out how to make a scarf move as though blown by the wind, or which instrument can be used to make a sound like thunder. They create patterns with the words they sing or chant, with the motions they make with their bodies, and with musical instruments. Children learn about number concepts as they clap their hands and stomp their feet four times or as they sing number songs. They think symbolically when they pretend to walk like an elephant or hop like a bunny.

Frequently Asked Questions about Music and Movement

I cannot carry a tune or play an instrument. What should I do?

Don't despair! The important thing to remember is that your responsibility is to introduce your children to music and movement, and to create an environment where your child can explore. Your child will not focus on the quality of your voice; they just want to sing!

How do I encourage all children to participate in music or movement activities?

Some children have a natural inclination toward music and movement. They sing or hum throughout the day as they work and play. They notice the rhythm of a ticking clock or water dripping from a faucet. They experiment with their bodies by clapping, slapping their thighs, and making popping sounds with their mouths. They move and sway as they work on a puzzle or draw a picture. Turn on music, and they move to the beat.

However, your child may be reluctant to participate. They may not be performers or simply not like the music being played. Whatever the reason, do not force your child to sing or dance. Remember that even if they are not participating, they are still hearing the music and feeling the rhythm. Hesitant children may want to explore the materials on their own and more privately.