

Make Some Music, Add Some Movement, Have Some Fun!

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The brain, at birth, is undeveloped. As the brain develops, it organizes & grows sequentially starting from the lowest regions of the brain then processing up through the more complex parts of the brain. In order for the upper regions to be healthy, you must first develop healthy lower regions. The normal organization of the brain is “use-dependent”; the more patterned activity (think music, reading, conversation, etc.), the more the brain regions responsible for these tasks will organize and be functionally “healthy”. And guess what! The majority of this sequential and use-dependent development takes place in early childhood. In fact, by age 3, 85% of the brain has developed.

What does that have to do with music, movement & early childhood? Everything! We have this amazing window of opportunity in early childhood to help our little ones develop healthy brains. We need to capitalize on these early childhood years (infancy through 10 yrs old). As we teach young children, we need to match experiences to the child’s level of neurodevelopment: physical/motor, behavioral, emotional, social and cognitive. Play & exploration grow the brain—healthy play & developmentally appropriate exploration grow healthy brains.

To a young child (infant, toddler, and preschooler) music inherently has power and meaning that go beyond words. Music enhances listening; invites intuitive and steady beat responses; and aids learning of vocabulary, sound and pitch discrimination, emotional responses, creative responses, and memory. (Carlton, 2000) Music evokes an emotional response through the words, melody, pitch and rhythm of a song. Music gives us the ability to communicate with young children in a way that makes sense to them. An infant, who can’t yet sing along with you, is very capable of listening and recognizing many sounds especially the voices of the significant adults in his life. Toddlers will start to join in by repeating words or copying the rhythm of a song. Preschoolers begin to match the pitch and melody as well as remember the words to songs. Music is an amazing tool for aiding in the development of a child, with unlimited potential, as long as you choose to use it.

“It is the **doing**, in addition to the **listening**, that offers the greatest positive benefit in all aspects of learning, especially in music.” (Wilcox, 1999, pg. 31). Research tells us that stimulation of the brain is a significant factor in overall brain development. That stimulation occurs in movement and sensory experiences. Synapses, connections made between neurons in the brain, are strengthened when they are made by activity. Eventually, the brain will cut away weakened synapses sort of like you would prune away the dead branches on a tree. Therefore, when we combine music & movement we’re strengthening and bonding synapses in the brain- helping brain development. That’s great because kids love to move! In fact, kids need to move - so let them move! In addition to

aiding in healthy brain development, Music & Movement activities also promote physical well-being and fine & gross motor development. Plus, movement is just plain fun! Movement also gets the brain ready for learning. When we put Music **AND** Movement together, we get the **WHOLE** child caught up in the learning process.

Creating Music & Movement activities is very simple. You take a song and add movement to it. Kids naturally move to music anyway (observe your children when music is playing) so take that natural tendency to move and make it more purposeful. Start out by finding some “action songs” that have instructions for movement within the song. Growing your collection of action songs is much easier now, especially with the advent of iTunes. Give yourself a set amount of time each week/month to literally surf iTunes & the internet for new songs. The “set amount of time” gives you the freedom to run down bunny trails as you find them and just stop when your time is up. Without a “time limit”, you could spend hours surfing, to the point of neglecting other obligations you have. Also consider attending workshops and conferences that have sessions specifically addressing early childhood music & movement as well as sharing ideas with colleagues. Once you’ve acquired some new music you need to spend time learning the songs. If you have a recorded version of the song, listen to it, sing along with it, and move along with it – over and over again. This is a very important step. You have to totally know the song before trying to teach it to your class. After you are comfortable with the song and the movement you are ready to start teaching the song to the children. Another option is to take a song with a steady beat and fun words and add your own movements to the song. Maybe you want to work on gross motor activities; or maybe it’s just the opposite and you want to focus on fine motor activities (Finger Plays are wonderful for this). Sometimes you won’t need music for movement activities at all. You can come up with a game that keeps everything fun while helping the children with motor development, listening skills, sequencing, patterning, etc. Really you are only limited by your own imagination and Early Childhood Educators have great imaginations.

When you lead the children in Music & Movement remember that if you’re excited and enthusiastic, then the children will be. They feed off of your excitement and enthusiasm. The opposite holds true as well. If you don’t seem happy or excited to learn a song with them, then the children won’t be either. This is where you might have to take a step outside of your comfort zone (a big step for some of you) by going public with your singing & movement talents. You’ve got to let yourself be silly. And you’ve got to let go of any apprehension you have about what others might think of your “performance”. Just let loose and have fun with it. The more fun you’re having, the more fun the kids will have with you!

References

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Other Great Resources:

iTunes

www.songsfor teaching.com

www.writeoutofthebox.com

www.drjean.org

www.kathiehillmusic.com

<http://www.signingsavvy.com/>

<http://www.aslpro.com/>

www.gregandsteve.com

www.learningstationmusic.com

www.happalmer.com

ADDING SPECIFIC FINE AND GROSS MOTOR MOVEMENTS TO A SONG:

When I Was a Little Fish

**By Susan Salidor (“Come and Make a Circle: Twenty Terrific Songs for Kids & Teachers CD)
Available on iTunes**

When I was a little fish, little fish, little fish (*arms together, “swimming” back & forth*)

When I was a little fish swimming in the water.

My mama come and get me, get me, get me. (*stretch arms out in front & then bring in towards body*)

My mama come and get me and carry me home.

Ha-Ha this-a-way, Ha-Ha that-a-way. (*arms together, “swimming” back & forth*)

Ha-Ha this-a-way carry me home. (*cup hands together to “carry”*)

Repeat but change to “my daddy come and get me”

Repeat but change to “my grandma and get me”

(Modify to be a different animal, for instance “when I was a little frog hopping in the pond” or “when I was a little bunny jumping in the field”; or have other people “come and get me”; change voice and have a baby fish, little fish, mommy fish, daddy fish, etc.)

Slippery Fish

**By Freddy N Friendz (“Kazoo It!” CD)
Available on iTunes**

Slippery fish, slippery fish swimming in the water. (*arms together, “swimming” back & forth*)

Slippery fish, slippery fish - GULP, GULP, GULP! (*open/close arms to “gulp”*)

Oh no! He's been eaten by an... (*hands on cheeks with a big surprised face*)

Octopus, octopus squiggling in the water. (*move arms like you're swimming backstroke & wiggle fingers*)

Octopus, octopus - - GULP, GULP, GULP! (*open/close arms to “gulp”*)

Oh no! He's been eaten by a... (*hands on cheeks with a big surprised face*)

Tuna fish, tuna fish flashing in the water. (*hands together, move quickly the tuna is spastic*)

Tuna fish, tuna fish - GULP, GULP, GULP! (*open/close arms to “gulp”*)

Oh no! He's been eaten by an... (*hands on cheeks with a big surprised face*)

Great white shark, great white shark lurking in the water. (*arms out in front to open/close with fingers like teeth*)

Great white shark, great white shark - GULP, GULP, GULP! (*open/close arms to “gulp”*)

Oh no! He's been eaten by a... (*hands on cheeks with a big surprised face*)

Humongous whale, humongous whale spouting in the water. (*arms to sides, stretched out wide*)

Humongous whale, humongous whale - GULP, GULP, GULP! (*open/close arms to “gulp”*)

Oh no! (*hands on cheeks with a big surprised face*)

No more fish. (*hands out to the side*)

Green Eggs & Ham
By the Learning Station (“Rock-n-Roll Songs that Teach” CD)
www.learningstationmusic.com

Green eggs and ham, green eggs and ham (*criss-cross arms*)
I like mine fried nice and brown (*wiggle fingers back & forth like playing a piano*)
I like mine turned upside down (*quickly flip/flop hands*)
Green eggs and ham, green eggs and ham. (*criss-cross arms*)
Flip them, (*big, exaggerated “flip” of hands to one side*)
Flop them (*big, exaggerated “flip” of hand to the other side*)
But don't drop them!!! (*jump up and go down low to catch the egg & shake it back up*)

Continue as song repeats but gets faster each time.

ADDING SIGN LANGUAGE TO A SONG:

I Had a Bird
By Dr. Jean (“Dr Jean & Friends” CD)
www.drjean.org

I had a bird and the bird pleased me. (*clap hands or tap legs to the beat*)
I fed my bird by yonder tree.
Bird went tweedle-lee-dee! (*sign for “bird” – index finger & thumb together at mouth*)
I had a cat and the cat pleased me. (*clap hands or tap legs to the beat*)
I fed my cat by yonder tree.
Cat went meow, meow. (*sign for “cat” – pulling your whiskers*)
Bird went tweedle-lee-dee! (*sign for “bird” – index finger & thumb together at mouth*)
I had a dog and the dog pleased me. (*clap hands or tap legs to the beat*)
I fed my dog by yonder tree.
Dog went ruff, ruff (*sign for “dog” – slap side of leg & snap*)
Cat went meow, meow. (*sign for “cat” – pulling your whiskers*)
Bird went tweedle-lee-dee! (*sign for “bird” – index finger & thumb together at mouth*)
I had a pig and the pig pleased me. (*clap hands or tap legs to the beat*)
I fed my pig by yonder tree.
Pig went oink, oink (*sign for “pig” – wiggle fingers under chin*)
Dog went ruff, ruff (*sign for “dog” – slap side of leg & snap*)
Cat went meow, meow. (*sign for “cat” – pulling your whiskers*)
Bird went tweedle-lee-dee! (*sign for “bird” – index finger & thumb together at mouth*)
I had a duck and the duck pleased me. (*clap hands or tap legs to the beat*)
I fed my duck by yonder tree.
Duck went quack, quack (*sign for “duck” – index/middle fingers & thumb at mouth*)
Pig went oink, oink (*sign for “pig” – wiggle fingers under chin*)
Dog went ruff, ruff (*sign for “dog” – slap side of leg & snap*)
Cat went meow, meow. (*sign for “cat” – pulling your whiskers*)
Bird went tweedle-lee-dee! (*sign for “bird” – index finger & thumb together at mouth*)
I had a cow and the cow pleased me. (*clap hands or tap legs to the beat*)
I fed my cow by yonder tree.
Cow went moo, moo (*sign for “cow” – horn on head*)

Duck went quack, quack (*sign for “duck” – index/middle fingers & thumb at mouth*)
Pig went oink, oink (*sign for “pig” – wiggle fingers under chin*)
Dog went ruff, ruff (*sign for “dog” – slap side of leg & snap*)
Cat went meow, meow. (*sign for “cat” – pulling your whiskers*)
Bird went tweedle-lee-dee! (*sign for “bird” – index finger & thumb together at mouth*)

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle (*bend middle fingers down as you barely wiggle fingers and move hands up/down*)
Little (*bring palms of hands closer together*)
star. (*index fingers rub against each other as hands point up to the sky*)
How (*bring hands down around like forming a bowl*)
I wonder (*touch the side of your forehead with your fingertips*)
what you are. (*hold palms up to the sides*)
Up above (*stack hands and move top one up*)
the world so high. (*make W’s with both hands and circle one hand around the other*)
Like a diamond (*point index finger and touch ring finger with other fingertips*)
in the sky. (*hand moves in an arc to indicate sky above*)
Twinkle, twinkle (*bend middle fingers down as you barely wiggle fingers and move hands up/down*)
little (*bring palms of hands closer together*)
star. (*index fingers rub against each other as hands point up to the sky*)
How (*bring hands down around like forming a bowl*)
I wonder (*touch the side of your forehead with your fingertips*)
what you are. (*hold palms up to the sides*)

CHOOSE AN ACTION SONG AND FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS:

Following Directions with Exercise

By Mark D Pencil & Friends (“Learning with Hip Hop Today” CD, Available on iTunes)

Bear to the Left

By Billy Jonas (“What Kind of Cat Are You?” CD, Available on iTunes)

Children Fun

By Mary Jo Huff (“Gettin’ Loose with Mother Goose” CD, Available on iTunes)

Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes

By the Learning Station (“Here We Go Loopty Loo” CD, www.learningstationmusic.com)

Dance, Freeze, Melt

By Mr. Eric & Mr. Michael (“Rockin’ Red from the Learning Groove” CD, Available on iTunes)

Extra Movement Songs

1. *"The Cool Bear Hunt"* by Dr. Jean (Sings Silly Songs CD, www.drjean.org)
2. *"The Opposite Song"* by Dr. Jean (Keep on Singing and Dancing with Dr. Jean CD)
3. *"Boom Chica Boom"* by Dr. Jean (Keep on Singing and Dancing with Dr. Jean CD)
4. *"Jumping and Counting"* by Jim Gill (The Irrational Anthem CD, available on Amazon)
5. *"The Dance Along Gong Song"* by Jim Gill (The Irrational Anthem CD, available on Amazon)
6. *"The Goldfish"* by Laurie Berkner (Victor Vito CD, available on iTunes)
7. *"Popcorn Calling Me"* by Laurie Berkner (Buzz, Buzz CD, available on iTunes)
8. *"Button Factory"* by The Learning Station (Rock-n-Roll Songs that Teach CD, available on Amazon)
9. *"Body Boogie"* by The Learning Station (Get Funky and Musical Fun CD, available on Amazon)
10. *"Tarzan"* by The Learning Station (Get Funky and Musical Fun CD, available on Amazon)
11. *"The Freeze Dance"* artist unknown (Birthday Party Singalong CD, available on iTunes)
12. *"Hula Mula"* by The Happy Hatters (Exercise Party CD, available on iTunes)
13. *"The Balancing Act"* by Kevin Quinn (Kids in Motion CD, available on iTunes)
14. *"Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed"* by Stephanie Burton (Mathmagic CD, available at www.pandabooks.com)
15. *"Funky Chicken"* by Melinda Caroll (Girl Scouts Greatist Hits, Vol 6 Little Happy Campers, available on iTunes)
16. *"The Exercise Game #1"* by Mark D. Pencil & Friends (Learning with Hip Hop CD, available on iTunes)
17. *"Ding Dong"* by Brady Rymer (I Found It! CD, available on iTunes)
18. *"Head and Shoulders"* by Wendy Gelsanliter (Ants Wear Underpants CD, available on iTunes)
19. *"All the Fish"* by Sue Schnitzer (Wiggle and Whirl, Clap and Nap CD, available on iTunes)
20. *"Milkshake Song"* by Anne-Marie Akin (Songs for Wiggleworms CD, available on iTunes)
21. *"I Can Run as Fast as You"* by Tumble Tots (Actions Songs Vol 2 CD, available on iTunes)
22. *"Jump and Hop"* by Karyn Henley (Five Little Ladybugs CD, available on iTunes)
23. *"Dance, Freeze, Melt"* by Mr. Eric & Mr. Michael (Rockin' Red from the Learning Groove CD, available on iTunes)
24. *Walking Song"* by Have Fun Teaching (Fitness Songs CD, available on iTunes)