

## Music and 2 Year Olds

Music is one of many languages a child can communicate. Group time sing-alongs are a staple of the nursery and play group routine. Children sit in a circle with the practitioner singing away, mostly joining in with actions, often jumping up to move, especially to Sleeping Bunnies, sometimes requesting a favourite song. Music supports brain, heart and health development. It is soothing, makes us happier and supports not only listening skills but also physical coordination as children listen to music with their ears and muscles. But when music is confined to only adult led sessions, with some instruments available in a basket sometimes placed out of reach within the continuous provision then many rich opportunities for learning, self-expression and fun are missed.

**Music supports developing fine and gross motor skills.** Music helps to build a two-year old's coordination, strength and balance as they move to the beat, wiggle, stomp and jump up and down to songs.

Singing nursery rhymes aids brain development and is an essential part of a two-year old's preliteracy skills.

### A two-year old needs to:

**-Develop and practice fine and gross motor skills** by hearing different music genres that encourage them to move in different ways to music e.g. stride like a giant, zoom like a rocket in space, flutter like a butterfly waving scarves in both hands or even copy the family dance moves. Fine motor skills can be developed by playing percussion instruments e.g. tapping on a triangle or plucking a kalimba.

**-Develop language.** Singing nursery rhymes, which are full of repetition, helps a two year old to identify sound patterns, syllables and words. This is an important pre phonics skill. Nursery rhymes also expose children to language not used in everyday speech and so helps build up their growing vocabulary.



**Exposure to different types of music helps to create more pathways in the brain. This effect is increased with dancing. Try giving a drum or maraca to a dancing child and see what happens.**

**-Develop social skills.** Music can be a sociable experience where two year olds can play side by side, collaborate and turn take, listen, join in and develop confidence. Develop a sociable area with instruments on the floor or a low table and cushions.

**-An adult who values their musical explorations** by actively listening to their musical efforts, encourages music together away from group time, inviting children to perform and share their music with others.

## For an effective musical provision, practitioners can

- Offer plenty of opportunities for music and movement in independent play by providing scarves and ribbons to swish around, percussion instruments to play and explore and move freely with.
- Provide a good range of percussion instruments that allow children to tap, bang, scrap and shake. Avoid plastic toy instruments and go for the real thing and include home made instruments. Throw away or repair broken instruments. Ensure all triangles have string to hold and a beater.
- Create a musical wall with hanging pots, pans, dustpan lids, wooden and metal spoons.
- Store instruments in accessible baskets, shelving, trolleys for easy access with photographic labeling to support with tidying up.
- Set out a few musical percussion instruments with scarves, picture song prompts, puppets and cushions.
- Add musical instruments to the home corner.

- Hang bells and tambourines from trees or secret spaces for children to discover and explore.
- Develop a music display with large, colour photographs of children playing instruments. Invite parents to share musical photos from home to add to the display.
- Capture children's musical creations on a recording and play back to children and parents.
- Strike a balance. Know that having loud, background music on for long lengths of time can distract children from hearing environmental sounds e.g. airplanes above, bees buzzing which is also a crucial preliteracy skill.

### Observing musical play

Capturing children's musical play can be tricky. Unless recorded it is gone in a moment. Alongside a photograph you can record what you hear and see. For example, tune in carefully. When listening to children's music can you hear structure, tempo, energy, pitch and volume? Can you hear a clear beginning, ending and a steady beat? Can you see a clear sense of performance, of collaboration?

## Parent partnerships

- Share with parents the benefits music has on their two year old's development especially language development.
- Find out if your parents know the nursery rhymes being sung in your setting. If they don't provide them with a rhyme bank so they can sing with their child at home.
- Invite parents in to share nursery rhymes or music from their cultures.
- Encourage them to continue to share music in the home.

## On Reflection do the children have free access to...

- A mixture of musical instruments that reflect cultural diversity, home-made instruments and commercial instruments.
- Musical props to encourage movement e.g. ribbons, scarves, pom poms, lycra, dance props, microphones.
- A diverse range of musical genre and cultures e.g. classical, pop, dance, nursery rhymes, lullabies, music from different cultures.
- Opportunities to watch live performances. Ask parents or students from local school orchestras if they would like to perform.

