

# musical interactions

strand:..... communication and language

sub strand:..... communication and language anywhere

stage: ..... toddlers/pre-school

## aim

To recognise the importance of sharing musical interactions with children, to help develop their communication and language skills.

To recognise the different kinds of musical interactions and share ways to incorporate them as a part of everyday activities.



## topic key ideas *please use these alongside the strand key ideas*

Musical activities with children promote all aspects of children's development, including: communication and language; personal, social and emotional; physical; creative and *cognitive*.

Musical interactions are not just about singing or music.

Musical interactions often include patterns of focused verbal and non-verbal exchanges. These may be in the form of gestures, facial expressions, body language and changes in vocal pitch, tone and rhythm which convey messages and feelings. This is referred to as *communicative musicality*.

Children are often more attentive and engaged with musical interactions, and learn words more easily when they are part of a song or rhyme.

Children who find it difficult to communicate verbally often enjoy listening and responding to musical interactions.

Musical interactions (songs, rhymes, chants, vocal play, music, etc.):

- encourage communication through eye contact, gestures and sounds
- are reciprocal and allow for the communication of feelings and emotions as well as meaning through words
- promote *bonding* and *secure attachment*
- enhance communicative musicality through rhythm, *timbre* (tone quality) and narrative

- offer opportunities to be expressive and play with sounds and rhythmic movement
- allow children to explore sounds and vocal play which support speech and language development, concentration and attention
- increase children's awareness of the sounds used for language (*phonology*) which supports their early reading and writing
- help children learn about rhythmic patterns by hearing, moving, initiating and responding to patterns in songs, rhymes and music
- enhance watching and listening skills which lead to an understanding of language and increased vocabulary
- develop spatial awareness through moving their bodies and limbs
- help children to link words with actions through physical movement
- increase children's awareness of timing, a sense of order and being able to predict what comes next. This is particularly relevant when music, songs or rhymes are used to indicate that it is time for something to happen, e.g. tidy up time or lunch time
- offers opportunities to make up songs and rhymes, which helps children to express themselves and develop their awareness that they are independent individuals who can actively participate in the world (*sense of agency*).



## orim in action

*you can help parents and carers by:*

- sharing ideas for **opportunities** to enjoy musical interactions with their child.
- identifying how they can **recognise** and value the ways in which their child responds to musical interactions.
- encouraging them to **interact** with their child by using a variety of different kinds of musical interactions.
- helping them to **model** the rhythm and pattern of language through musical interactions with their child.



**talk time** *remember to use the **topic handout** to support discussions*



**ideas for questions:**

**'what is your child's favourite song/ rhyme/ chant /piece of music?'**

*Use this question to facilitate a discussion about musical interactions with children.*

Explain that you are first going to ask parents and carers for their child's favourite musical interaction, and then come back to gather reasons for their choice and where they share it. Emphasise that it can be any type of musical interaction as well as well-known songs or rhymes, and provide examples such as: a favourite piece of music, the theme tune of a programme, a made up song or chant, songs or music from their culture, etc.

Encourage every family to contribute their child's favourite musical interaction and make a list. Revisit each contribution and capture:

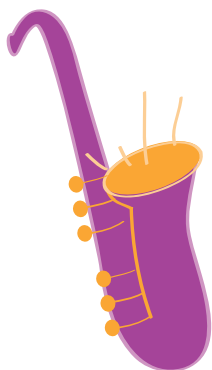
- why parents or carers believe it is their child's favourite? *(e.g. they always ask for it, she likes*

*the jumping part, it sends him to sleep, granny taught it to him, etc.)*

- where they tend to listen to or share their musical interaction? *(e.g. at bedtime, when in the car or going on a journey, when changing a nappy, etc.)*

This can be really useful for sharing ideas of when to use musical interactions. It is also useful for building relationships within the group and establishing an understanding of others.

Return to the list and facilitate a group discussion to explore how children develop their communication and language skills through sharing these musical interactions with others. Use the **key ideas** to support your discussion.





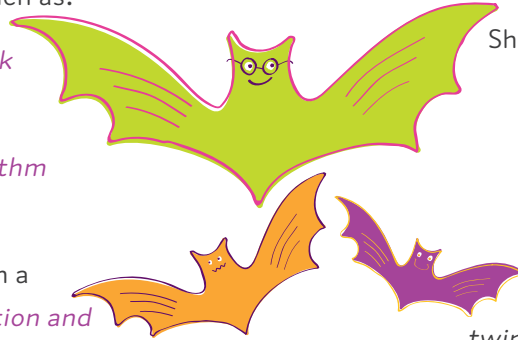
## start with a message - for example:

### 'children enjoy hearing and playing with different kinds of musical interactions'

Use this message to help families recognise the different kinds of musical interactions they can, and already do, share with their children.

Provide a variety of different kinds of musical interactions for families to listen to, and consider how each one supports children's developing communication and language skills, such as:

- an action song *to help children to link words with physical movement*
- a chant *to help children listen to rhythm and patterns of words*
- an adult calling a child in for dinner in a singsong voice *communicating emotion and feelings beyond the meaning of the words*
- a piece of gentle music *to convey a sense of peace and quietness*
- a nonsense song which uses sounds or words with no specific meaning *to practice and play with sounds*



Ask whether adults had considered all of these to be musical interactions, and discuss their responses. Highlight how adults often talk to very young children using a singsong voice, along with lots of non-verbal interaction to convey meaning which supports the words that they might not yet know.

Share with families how older children will enjoy playing around with songs and rhymes by changing the words or sounds in them, e.g. 'Twinkle, twinkle little bat, how I

wonder where you're at.' They can also have fun making up their own words for songs to familiar tunes.

Try changing a few words in a familiar song as part of the group discussion and see what you end up with.



## talk around an activity: musical interactions

This activity allows families to experience ideas for everyday musical interactions, and explore how they help develop children's communication and language skills.

Plan a musical session appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the children. Use *cued modelling* throughout to show parents and carers how to interact with their children. Suggest how to position them, e.g. face-to-face or sitting on their knee, etc.

Share what children are learning from each musical interaction and encourage families to contribute their ideas. Although the focus may be on communication and language development,

be sure to include other skills and learning that children are gaining. Use the **key ideas** to support the discussion.

Include a variety of different kinds of musical interactions such as songs, rhymes, chants, vocal play and music. The Peep song books can be helpful in your planning. Consider including musical interactions which support these ideas

- ♪ linking actions to words, e.g. *Ready and...*
- ♪ everyday routines, e.g. *Playtime's over* playing with sounds, words and repetition, e.g. *Today is Monday*
- ♪ using your breath and sound effects, e.g. *Rain game*

♪ rhythm, e.g. *It's raining, it's pouring*  
If you have a multicultural group, consider asking families to share musical interactions from their cultures and in their languages. It can help parents and carers to watch and listen to songs with actions being sung in other languages. This helps them to understand how children begin to link

actions to words. Highlight how you can often determine the nature of the song or music through tone, pitch and rhythm. It is also an opportunity to value the role of sharing songs in the child's mother tongue in the development of their home language and other languages.

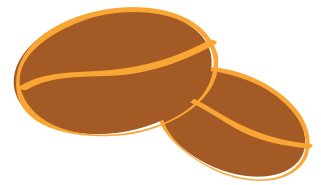


## songs and rhymes

Choose a variety of songs and rhymes which encourage children to use their voices to play with sounds and letters. Share with families how making these sounds when singing enables children to practice using their tongues, lips and breath to form different sounds. It is also lots of fun for them to explore the variety of sounds and noises that they can make.

Try these:

- ♪ *Baby band*
- ♪ *Bingo*
- ♪ *Dinosaur song*
- ♪ *Coffee, coffee*



## stories to share

Provide a variety of 'musical' books for families to explore, and choose an age-appropriate one to share. Highlight the relevant communication and language skills that the children are learning. Use *cued modelling* to demonstrate any key points such as linking words to actions or playing with sounds, etc. Your selection could include books:

- about nursery rhymes or familiar songs
- with accompanying media so that they can be played and listened to
- which have rhyming words and can be sung along to a familiar tune.



## things to do at home

*remember to look at the **topic handout** for more ideas*

Encourage families to use some of the ideas and activities that have been shared during the session, to consolidate their learning.

- Make up a song or chant with your child or

change some of the words in one that you are both familiar with.

- Try sharing some songs and rhymes with your child as part of your everyday activities or routines.



remember to look in the online **toolbox** for further information, resources, ideas and examples to support your delivery