

Growing with Music

A Kindergarten Readiness Outreach Workshop



Early Literacy Focus

Singing helps children with later reading skills because music slows down language and helps them hear words broken down into smaller sound parts which will later help them sound out words.

The Program

This is a workshop for the whole family to engage in a fun activity that also helps young children develop their ability to hear the sounds in words, which is called phonological awareness.

Overview

Activity	Focus	Time
Introduction	Share message	5 min
Book	Share a book that can be sung or that has a musical element	10 min
Share Research	Music helps children better understand the sounds of words and develop phonological awareness	5 min
Family Activity: Make an Instrument	Make your own maracas	10 min
Group Activity: Dance Loop	Learn a new dance from a computer science website	10 min
Group Activity: Music & Movement Dance Party	Share your favorite songs and get moving	15 min
Wrap Up	Reflect and Goal Set	5 min

The Details

Introduction

Welcome participants and deliver the following messages:

- This is a program for the entire family.
- We will do music-related activities that can help your child get ready for kindergarten:
 - We will make our own instruments, which is an activity that requires planning and a little engineering, and can help your child develop better executive function and STEM skills.
 - We will do a little dancing, which will involve following instructions – an important skill to master before starting school.
 - We will also get moving and use some fun props, which helps children develop gross motor skills and practice controlling their bodies.

Book

Sharing a book is a great way to introduce a concept to the group and model reading aloud to adults. Select a book with a musical element from your library to share with the group. Some books feature a repeated phrase that can be sung in a rhythm, which exaggerates each syllable and helps children understand the parts of each word. Other books can be sung entirely, which also helps children understand the parts of words. Being able to hear the parts in words is called phonological awareness, and is an important early literacy concept for kids to develop. Check out the book list below for ideas and recommendations.

Share Research

Below are several different research-based comments to share during this program. Choose one or two that you would like to focus on, and practice saying them out loud in your own words before the workshop. As you move through the different activities in the workshop, find ways to share the comments. All of these comments are based on Every Child Ready to Read (ECRTR) research and were written by early childhood expert Saroj Ghoting for the Idaho Commission for Libraries' long-running ECRTR workshops.

Family Activity: Make an Instrument

Supplies needed:

- Plastic spoons (2 per person; ICfL)
- Plastic eggs (1 per person; ICfL)
- Washi tape (ICfL – inside school supply kits)
- Long grain rice (1 bag; Library)
- Dried beans (1 bag; Library)

Rhythm instruments, like maracas, are a great way for kids to explore music and develop language skills. By using the parts of a word as the beats of the music, you can help kids hear how words are broken into syllables. To make the maracas, fill part of each egg with either white rice or dried beans (each family should make at least one maraca with each filling) and secure the egg with washi tape (found inside the school supply kits – one per family). Place two spoons on opposite sides of the egg (see picture), and wrap washi tape around the spoons and egg, and also around the spoon handle.



Photo credit:
whatsupfagons.com

After the maracas are finished, have families try them out. Is there a difference in sound between the instruments filled with rice and those filled with beans?

As they are wrapping up this activity, deliver these messages:

- Asking questions about whether or not something is alike or different this helps build STEM skills.
- Rhythm instruments help children hear the parts of words when they are engaging with music.

Group Activity: Dance Loop

Supplies needed:

- Getting Loopy dance cards (ICfL)
- Painters tape (to attach cards to wall; ICfL)
- Additional cards with the numbers 3 (x3), and 2 (x2) (ICfL)

For this activity, you will teach the group an easy dance from the website code.org, which is a great resource for learning about computer science. Attach the pictures of the dance to the wall with painter's tape. As you can see, several of the moves repeat. In computer science, when something repeats, we call it a loop. Have the group go through each of the moves once, and then once again slowly to see if they can find any loops. When they spot a repeated action, place a card with the number of times it repeats in front of the action, and leave up only one of the pictures of the action. So, if you have three images of clapping in a row, you would put the number three in front of the first image, and take the other two down, to indicate that you are doing the same action three times (which is a loop!). After the group has identified all the loops, go through the whole dance one more time together.

As this program is wrapping up, share these messages:

- Learning a new dance, or anything new, usually involves listening to and following instructions. This is an important skill for kids to develop before they start school.
- Identifying patterns and when a movement repeats, or creates a loop, is a fundamental computer science skill. Computer science is integrated into the educational curriculum for all Idaho schools, beginning in kindergarten.

Group Activity: Music & Movement Dance Party

Supplies needed:

Music loaded on a device of your choosing (Library)

Portable speaker to play music (Library)

Props (optional) like scarves, ribbons, egg shakers

The final part of this program is to do an abbreviated Music & Movement program. Play three or four songs with lots of movement, and incorporate props, like scarves or the maracas that you just made, if you are able. Try to start with a warm-up song that everyone knows (like *If You're Happy and You Know It*, or *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*), move into songs that may be new, and end with a quiet song to wind things down. Here are some suggestions to get your started:

Artists

Laurie Berkner
Casper Babypants
Jim Gill
Learning Station
Greg & Steve

Songs

Shake Your Sillies Out
Baby Shark
Monster Boogie
We are the Dinosaurs
List of Dances
Going on a Bear Hunt

Songs

Open Shut Them
Freeze Dance
Bean Bag Rock
Hokey Pokey
Run Baby Run
Dinosaur Stomp

Wrap Up

As the program is ending, deliver the following messages:

- Today, we did different music-related activities that are fun for the whole family and help get kids ready for school.
- Making instruments together was a fun way to use rhythm to hear the parts of words and experiment with different sound materials.

- The Get Loopy dance helped show the importance of following directions and we learned a little computer science.
- Dancing and singing in the last part of our program also helped children develop their language skills – singing slows down language and helps them hear words broken down into smaller sound parts which will later help them sound out words. We also used our bodies to develop your child’s gross motor skills.
- Check out the Vroom tip cards inside your child’s school supply kit for more ways to use music to learn.

As a final activity, give adult participants the parent survey to fill out and return to you. Give children the Growing with Music Kids Reflection Activity to work on while their grown-ups are filling out the survey.

Return completed adult surveys to Jennifer Redford at ICfL:

- Scan and email them to: jennifer.redford@libraries.idaho.gov
- Mail them to Jennifer’s Attention at ICfL: 325 W. State St., Boise, ID, 83702
- **Remember to count** the number of kids and adults who attend your program – you will need those numbers for your Summary Report

Supplies:

Plastic spoons (2 per person; ICfL)

Plastic eggs (empty – 1 per person; ICfL)

Washi tape (ICfL)

White rice (1 bag; Library)

Dried beans (1 bag; Library)

Get Loopy dance cards (ICfL)

Painters tape (1 roll; ICfL)

Portable speaker & device for playing music (Library)

Books:

“Pete the Cat: Four Groovy Buttons” by Eric Litwin

“Old Mikamba Had A Farm” by Rachel Isadora

“There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly” by Simms Taback

“Baby Beluga” by Raffi Cavoukian

“The Wheels on the Bus” by Jane Cabrera

“Monster Boogie” by Laurie Berkner

“Groovy Joe Disco Party Bow Wow” by Eric Litwin

“I Aint’ Gonna Paint No More!” by Karen Beaumont

Research-Based Comments to Adults

***Select a few of these comments to share with the group as they are doing the activities in the workshop.**

Singing and Language Development

When we sing with our children, we help them hear the smaller sounds in words. There is a distinct note for each syllable and this helps them hear words broken down into parts. Later, this will help them as they try to sound out words when they learn to read.

Some songs have interesting words in them that we would not use in regular conversation with young children. They can learn words from the songs, sometimes from the rest of the song, but sometimes they need us to explain the words for them to understand.

Some songs rhyme. When children hear rhyming words, they hear the smaller sounds in words which will later help them sound out words when they learn to read. After the song, you can pick a word and have children think of more rhyming words, even if they are nonsense words!

Lots of songs have the sounds of animals in them. When children are saying the sounds that animals make, that is the first step in hearing smaller sounds in words, called phonological awareness. This pre-reading skill will later help them sound out words as they learn to read.

Young children listen to the rhythm of language. Different languages have different lilts or rhythm. Songs emphasize the rhythm of language.

Clapping along to the words or syllables in songs helps children hear the rhythm of language and to hear the smaller parts of words. This skill will help them later when they are sounding out words when they learn to read.

Encouraging Singing

Putting words to music can help us remember things more easily. Singing might help us remember what we have to do, or it might help us remember the order of a story.

Have you noticed that when we sing with children, we capture their attention? Singing songs throughout the day can make even “old” routines fun—like setting the table, or getting ready for bed.

Don't worry if you feel like you “can't sing.” Try singing and see what happens.

With some songs (like *Down by the Bay*) you can have your children fill in a rhyming word. If they can't make the rhyme, you might give them a choice of two words, one of which rhymes.

Singing sets a mood. Soft songs sung slowly can soothe a baby to sleep.

Singing can make an irritating or tedious activity more pleasant. We can sing every day.

Sometimes we come across a song which sparks a memory. We might not remember all the words, but we remember the experience we had around the song. When you sing with your children, you are creating memories as well.