

Creating Songs for the Early Childhood Classroom, No Experience Necessary!

presented by
Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist

Aaron
Fowler



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Thank you to the following for their support of \$10,000 or more between July 2016 and July 2017.

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Support for Wolf Trap Foundation's education programs is also provided by the following Endowed Funds.

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Goal and Objectives

Workshop Description:

The power of music surrounds us everyday. It can bring us joy or move us to tears. It can also be a powerful tool in the classroom when used as a management technique with children. This unique tool can add novelty and fun to classroom management and transitions. Discover how to create simple songs and chants that will engage children while enhancing the flow of your classroom routine.

Goal:

To expand participants' classroom management techniques through the use of chants and music, and to provide participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to incorporate song and chant as a tool for giving classroom instruction for transitions, adding variety to story time and energizing classroom activities.

Objectives:

Participants will:

- Learn to take ordinary classroom directions and turn those instructions into chants or songs
- Explore and learn how to put new words to standard classic melodies that can instruct children on basic classroom transitions
- Learn how to write new melodies for classroom transitions
- Create three (3) transition chants/songs to be used in the classroom
- Illustrate how a theme or topic from a storybook can be put to music.

Tie-In to Curriculum:

Early Childhood Domains will be demonstrated during this workshop and will teach, give context, and prepare participants for small group work. Domains will include Cognition, Social/Emotional Skills (including self-regulation), Fine and/or Gross Motor Skills, Adaptive or Self-Help Skills, and Receptive and Expressive (Oral) Language Skills

Cognitive: Learning through active participation and exploration, using the imagination, sharing ideas, applying new knowledge.

Social/Emotional: Turn taking, following directions, listening skills, creating ways to empower and promote independence, exploring feelings and emotions, routines, 21st century skills (creative problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration).

Literacy: Descriptive language, phonological awareness, vocabulary development, comprehension.

Math: One-to-one correspondence, cardinality (counting instruments, matching instruments with numbers), math reasoning, comparisons, serration, patterns.

Science: Shapes, changing and growing, life cycles, animals, natural world and habitats, weather, senses and corresponding math and science vocabulary.

Music Connections: Chant, melody, call/response, singing voice, rhythm, musical phrases.

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Introduction

Most human development follows patterns through predictable stages, and although these stages are predictable, every child will go through the stages at his or her own pace. Heavily influencing the development stages is the child's environment: culture, siblings, parents, food, illness, trauma, education. Therefore, a child's development age may not correspond to his or her chronological age.

As far back as the 1940s, Dr. Arnold Gesell was pioneering his work in the field of music and early childhood education. He maintained that development does not follow a straight-line pattern. Instead, it follows a nonlinear process with growth alternating between stages of equilibrium (calm, restrained, compliant) and disequilibrium (wild, explosive, active). The intensity of these is determined by the child's temperament as well as environmental factors. Music can play a crucial role in this development.¹

Dr. Gesell's research is based on neuro-motor development. As the brain grows, perception changes and, as perceptions change, behaviors change. The use of music during this time helps the brain make connections needed for full development.

One research theory is what has come to be known as the "Mozart Effect," a term first coined by Alfred A. Tomatis when he used Mozart's music as a listening stimulus to "cure a variety of disorders." Later, experiments by Don Campbell suggested that listening to Mozart could temporarily boost scores on one portion of the IQ test, and although the study makes no statement of an increase in IQ in general, some thought this was the conclusion of the research.²

Listening to Mozart may or may not temporarily increase one's IQ, but human experience tells us that singing or humming to a crying child often brings calm. In her article "The 'Mozart Effect' and More: Why Music is Basic to Education," Kaye Myers reminds us that "parents know intuitively that music can soothe emotions and feelings of discomfort."³

Myers reports that researchers have identified "windows of opportunity" where music can have the greatest effect. This influence is at its peak between the ages of three and ten years old. Myers writes, "When a baby is born her brain is made up of two types of neurons. One type of neuron is 'pre-programmed' to control automatic responses such as breathing, heartbeat, and other body functions. The second must be 'programmed.' It is the programming of these neurons during early childhood that is so essential." Myers states that if these neurons are not stimulated, they die.⁴

The role of music in the cognitive development of young children is highly important. Harry Chugani, pediatric neurobiologist at Wayne State University, believes that early musical experiences are so powerful that "they can completely change the way a person turns out." Music experiences strengthen synapses in the brain as young children listen to soothing cadences in the music or play musical games that enhance cognitive, motor, and language development. The Journal of Neurological Research reported how spatial-temporal reasoning in three- and four-year-olds was affected by weekly piano lessons. Physicist Gordon Shaw of the University of California, Irvine suspects that in playing the piano, "you are seeing how patterns work in space and time." When sequential finger and key patterns make melodies, neural circuits that connect positions (keys) to sounds in space and time (the melody) are strengthened. "Music training produces long-term modifications in neural circuitry," says Shaw.

Experience counts in building vocabulary too, and at a very young age. The size of a toddler's vocabulary is strongly correlated with how much a mother talks to the child, reports Janellen Huttenlocher of the University of Chicago. Only “live” language, not television, produced these vocabulary- and syntax-boosting effects. Huttenlocher suspects that “language has to be used in relation to ongoing events, or it's just noise.” That may hold for other sorts of cognition, too. Information embedded in an emotional context seems to stimulate neural circuitry more powerfully than information alone. The face-to-face engagement through a musical experience builds these important connections in the brain.

In her article *Helping Young Children through Daily Transitions*, Tara Katz reminds us that “a little song puts everyone at ease and lets the children know what to expect without a lot of words. When we talk incessantly to children, we break their quiet and agitate their nervous system.” Music enters the mind of child in a different way than spoken words. Using music in your transitions creates a classroom that is calm and relaxing.⁵

In her thesis titled, “Comparing the Effects of Spoken Versus Sung Transitions in an Inclusive Preschool Music Class,” Jenna McGovern, MT-BC at Wichita State University, determined that 25-30% of a preschooler’s day is spent in transition. Musical transitions provide auditory structure through rhythm, harmonic structure, melody, and lyrics in the movement to the child’s next activity. Using musical transitions maintained and in many instances increased active engagement to the next activity, and transition time was actually less when accompanied by musical songs or chants.⁶

Works Cited

¹ Gesell Institute, Gesell Developmental Assessment.

² Kaye Myers, “The ‘Mozart Effect’ and More: Why Music is Basic Education’ Kaye Myers. *Alive and Well*: April 1998.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Tara Katz, “Helping Young Children Through Daily Transitions,” *Exchange Press*, March/April 2014.

⁶ Jenna McGovern, “Comparing the Effects of Spoken Versus Sung Transitions in an Inclusive Preschool Music Class.” Master’s Thesis, Wichita State University, 2015.

Marching to a Steady Beat with a Drum

A fun and simple experience is to have children find the steady beat. In order for children to feel the beat, the teacher starts with a simple steady beat (70 beats per minute [BPM]) on a drum. (Simple metronome apps can be downloaded to any smartphone.)

Start with the children finding the beat on their knees. Next, have the children move the beat to their feet. Finally, have them walk to the steady beat while the teacher plays the beat on a large drum. Start with that slow and steady beat (70 BPM).

Participants walk in a circle in the classroom to a drumbeat. Leader plays the steady beat while walking with the children. Increase the tempo slightly (86 BPM) and see if the children can follow (*one to one correspondence*). Slow the tempo down (60 BPM) and see if the children can follow.

You can change the beat to a gallop beat as well.

E.g. short long, s l, s l, s l.

See if children can put this gallop feel in their feet.

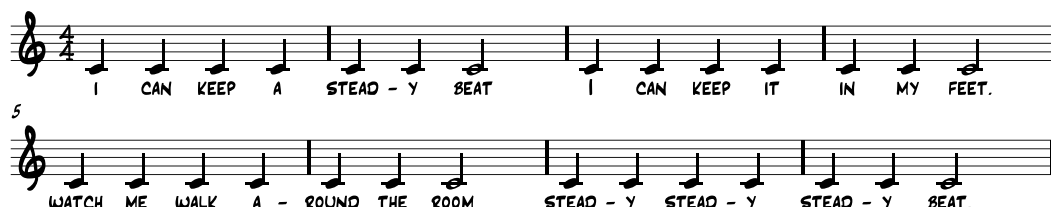
This is a place where the teacher can make up words as they are walking to the beat with the children.

E.g. "We're walking, walking, to the beat. | We're walking, walking, to the beat. |

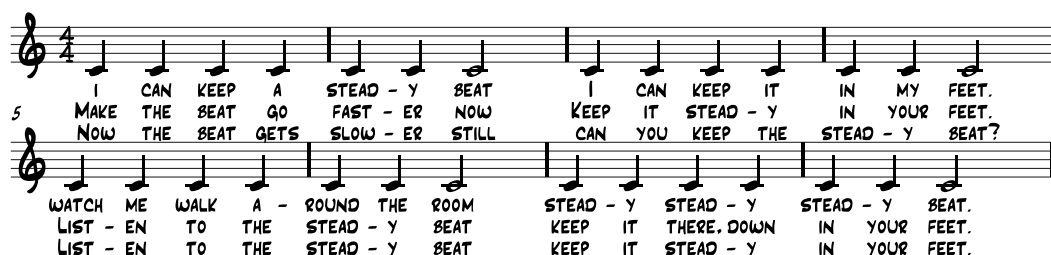
Now we walk a little quicker | Now we walk a little quicker

Now we slow it down _____ | now we slow it down _____"

WALKING TO THE BEAT



WALKING TO THE BEAT



Friends, Friends

Song

This is a great song to begin your morning. It utilizes the pre-reading skill of steady beat.

*Friends, friends, let's gather in the circle
Let's gather in the circle with our friends
Friends, friends, let's gather in the circle
Let's gather in the circle with our friends.*

You can add new words on the phrase "gather in the circle." An example would be "clap our hands together" or "tap our toes."

*Friends, friends, let's clap our hands together
Let's clap our hands together with our friends
Friends, friends, let's clap our hands together
Let's clap our hands together with our friends.*

*Friends, friends, let's tap our toes together
Let's tap our toes together with our friends
Friends, friends, let's tap our toes together
Let's tap our toes together with our friends.*

Other examples include: "Blink our eyes," "pat our nose," "line up at the door", etc.

FRIENDS, FRIENDS

AARON FOWLER

♩ = 90

FREINDS, FRIENDS LETS GA-THER IN THE CIR-CLE LET'S GA-THER IN THE CIR-CLE WITH OUR FRIENDS

5

FRIENDS, FRIENDS, LET'S GA-THER IN THE CIR-CLE, LET'S GA-THER IN THE CIR-CLE WITH OUR FRIENDS.

Learning Names

Chant

A fun way to have children learn names is to put them in a song! Using the traditional “Hi, My Name is Joe” song, have children input their own names. With younger children, you may go over just the first line for the first several times. Add additional lines as the children are ready to increase the complexity of this call-and-response chant. As you scaffold this experience, feel free to add more detail to the song. You can keep a steady beat with a drum or pair of claves/sticks (60 BPM).

For the children:

Hi, my name is _____ (Hi _____)
 I am _____ year old. (That's great!)
 My favorite color is _____
 And I like _____.

HI, MY NAME IS

Musical notation for the children's chant. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for the leader (CL) and the bottom staff is for the children (CL). The time signature is 4/4, and the tempo is marked as ♩ = 90. The melody is simple, using quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are: "HI _____ MY NAME IS AARON (THAT'S NICE) I AM 6 YEARS OLD (NO WAY!)S MY FAV - RITE COL - OR IS BLUE AND I LIKE ICE CREAM CONES!". The notation includes a 5-measure rest for the children's response.

For the adults:

Hi, my name is _____. (Hi _____!)
 (participants answer)

I work at _____. (That's great/cool/nice...)
 (participants answer!)

I teach _____ to (grade level).

I (say something about yourself) “have a wife, three kids and a dog named Bella.”

HI, MY NAME IS...

Musical notation for the adult chant. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for the leader (CL) and the bottom staff is for the adults (CL). The time signature is 4/4, and the tempo is marked as ♩ = 90. The melody is simple, using quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are: "HI _____ MY NAME IS AARON (HI AARON) I WORK AT ARTS PART - NERS (THAT'S NICE) I TEACH MU - SIC TO LOT'S OF FOLKS I HAVE A WIFE AND THREE KIDS AND A DOG NAMES BEL - LA.". The notation includes a 5-measure rest for the adults' response.

Name Game

Song

The “Name Game” song is a great tool for having children learn the first letter of their name. Have the children draw the first letter of their name in the air. With older children, you can use the first letter of their last name.

Teacher sings:

Name game, name game, whose name starts with A?

Children sing:

Name game, name game, whose name starts with A?

Individual child answers:

Aaron, Aaron, Aaron starts with A.

All children respond:

Aaron, Aaron, Aaron starts with A.

Repeat using all the letters for the children in your class.

If you wish to use all the letters in the alphabet, even those that do not have a child’s name starting with that letter, the response can be, *No one, no one, no one starts with ____*.

NAME GAME

AARON FOWLER

♩ = 90

NAME GAME. NAME GAME WHOS NAME STARTS WITH A? NAME GAME. NAME GAME.WHOS NAME STARTS WITH A?

5

AA - RON, AA - RON AA-RON STARTS WITH A. AA - RON, AA - RON, AA-RON STARTS WITH A.

Writing New Words to Preexisting Melodies

Look at a variety of children's songs (e.g. *Three Blind Mice*; *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*; *Mary Had a Little Lamb*; *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*) and find the rhythm of the words in each song.

TWINKLE, TWINKLE

♩ = 95

6

10

NOW IT'S TIME TO CLEAN THE ROOM EV - ERY BO - DY DO THEIR PART I'LL CLEAN MY PART
YOU CLEAN YOURS WE CAN FIN - ISH REA - LY QUICK. NOW IT'S TIME TO
CLEAN THE ROOM EV - ERY BO - DY DO THEIR PART

MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB

5

NOW IT'S TIME TO CLEAN THE ROOM CLEAN THE ROOM CLEAN THE ROOM
NOW IT'S TIME TO CLEAN THE ROOM LET'S ALL JOIN IN AND HELP.

Steps for Writing a New Song

1. Theme or topic: Each song has a theme or topic that ties the song together. In this case, it might be a clean-up song, or a come to the circle song, or a bathroom song. Alternatively, you might want to write a song based on a book. If this is the case, find the theme of the book.
 2. Key words or phrases: These are the words that link back to the theme or topic.
 3. Rhyming words: Not always necessary, but fun if you can make it work!
 4. Form: How we put the song together. How many lines, what is the rhyme pattern (if any), etc.
 5. Rhythm, beat, pulse: What is our tempo? Does it match the theme/action in the song?
 6. Melody: What is the mood of the song? Happy (major) or sad (minor).
- You do not have to do these steps in order—most of the time, you will be making up these transition songs on the fly! But if you want to create more intentionality in your classroom movement or add a song to a storybook, you might want to take some time to work through these steps.
 - As a way to remember your new melodies, you can record them with your phone or even with a cassette recorder. Shooting a little video is also a great way to capture your melodies.
 - Trust your inner teacher (the one who always finds the good in every kid).
 - There are no wrong notes!
 - You can use song as an assessment tool as well. Sing a question and have the children respond with a sung answer rather than just speaking it. Share an example of this.
 - JUST SING! Your heart will feel better when you do! And remember, you change the air when you sing.

Vocabulary

Beat: Main accent or rhythmic unit in music or poetry.

Beats Per Minute (BPM): Unit used as a measure of tempo in music. The BPM can be calculated by using a metronome or app on your phone.

Claves: A pair of wooden sticks that make a hollow sound when struck together.

Dynamics: The volume of sound produced by an instrument, voice, or recording.

Lyrics: The words of a song.

Melody: A sequences of single notes that is musically satisfying.

Singing range: Typical singing range starts at middle C or the D above middle C, and spans up one octave.

Steady Beat: Unchanging continuous pulse. This is different from the rhythm pattern of a specific song.

Tempo: Speed of the beat.

Transitions: Words or phrases that move children from one activity to another.

Rhythm: A strong, regular repeated pattern of movement or sound.

Resources

Websites:

www.aaronfowler.org - Aaron's website

www.singitout.org - Aaron's songwriting projects where students write songs based on the lives of community elders

<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/guide/3-to-4-year-old-milestones#1>

<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/guide/4-to-5-year-old-milestones#1>

Websites for children's songs:

<http://www.songsforteaching.com/nurseryrhymes.htm>

<http://bussongs.com/nursery-rhyme-songs.php?all=1>

<http://www.nurseryrhymes.org/nursery-rhymes.html>

<http://musicbus.com/resources/song-words/>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9FDA79DC8AB4A032>

Suggested Books

Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin by Lloyd Moss, 1995.

One Leaf Rides the Wind by Celeste Davidson Mannis, 2002.

One Wide River to Cross by Barbara Emberley, 1966.

There is a Bird on Your Head by Mo Willems, 2007.

We All Went on a Safari by Laurie Krebs, 2003.

Zero by Kathryn Otoshi, 2010.

Dinner at the Panda Palace by Stephanie Calmenson, 1991.

Ten Black Dots by Donald Crews, 1968.

The April Rabbits by David Cleveland, 1978.

Pete the Cat series by Eric Litwin.

One Love by Cedella Marley, 2011.

One Duck Stuck by Phyllis Root, 2003.

Over in the Meadow by John Langstaff, 1973.

Over in the Forest/Ocean/Jungle series by Marianne Berkes.

The Philharmonic Gets Dressed by Karla Kuskin, 1982.

Presenter's Biography

As a Kansas Wolf Trap Teaching Artist, “Mr. Aaron” specializes in the integration of music into early childhood literacy, math, and science. His workshops and residencies provide early childhood educators and parents with strategies that engage our youngest learners. Aaron received his Wolf Trap certification in 2009 and received continued early childhood training from WSU with Professor Dr. Elaine Bernstorf.

Aaron Fowler has earned education degrees from Friends University and Wichita State University, and was a founding Teaching Artist of Arts Partners Wichita (1997). Aaron brings 11 years of public school teaching and 21 years as a touring musician to his work. His Arts Partners residencies and programs include songwriting influenced by literature and storytelling, performance on several folk instruments, teaching pre-literacy skills through music, and a variety of teacher professional development workshops.

Aaron is the founder of ***Sing It Out***, a non-profit that seeks to educate, inspire and celebrate heritage and culture in disadvantaged and rural communities through the of music and the arts. He serves on the American Federated Musicians Local 1000 Executive Board and is on the Kansas Touring Artist Roster with the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission.



Research has proven that the arts are a powerful tool through which children can learn. The Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts was established in 1981 under a grant from the Head Start Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to support teachers' professional development and young children's learning. Through residencies and workshops across the country, early childhood professionals in partnership with Wolf Trap Teaching Artists learn arts-based techniques and strategies that empower them to link and embed the arts in all developmental domains of curriculum. Age-appropriate experiences in music, movement, drama, and puppetry foster a love of learning and help support young children's skill development in social relations, creative representation, initiative, logic, mathematics, language, literacy, movement, and music.

The Wolf Trap Institute offers a variety of services including:

Professional Development Workshops for teachers are designed to provide age-appropriate performing arts strategies that are linked to early childhood curricular learning outcomes.

Family Involvement Workshops offer parents and caregivers of young children an introduction to performing arts activities that can be employed at home, in the car, and even in line at the grocery store.

The Wolf Trap Institute operates successful programs across the United States and has taken its services as far as Singapore, Jamaica, England, Greece, Wales, Canada, Italy, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Brazil, and Mexico. With the support of local sponsoring organizations and Wolf Trap's Affiliate Programs across the country, the Institute serves more than 35,000 children, parents, and teachers annually.

For more information about the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts, please visit: wolftrap.org/Education.aspx, or call 703.255.1933 or 1.800.404.8461.

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