



## Music in the Early Childhood Classroom

Music is a natural human instinct, and formal training or knowledge is not required for harnessing its power.

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By now, the studies, programs and journal articles that promote music in the early childhood classroom are countless. Auditory cues are integral to learning communication skills. Music creates reactions in the brain, emotions, and body simultaneously, and is a major building block for development in speech, movement, and expression.

I see lots of articles that suggest teachers have music playing in their classrooms during quiet times, etc. While a wonderful practice, music can be more than a passive silence filler. For many teachers, aside from a good morning song and the ubiquitous “Clean Up” song, active, sung, music is absent from the classroom. And why? Music is a proven educational tool, one of the most powerful and universal available to date. Music is a natural human instinct, and formal training or knowledge is not required for harnessing its power.

By using song and movement regularly in the classroom, teachers can convey the invaluable understanding that music is a living, active, useful pastime.

Many teachers are concerned that they are not “musical enough” to use music actively in the classroom. This is not true! In fact the simple act of making music regardless of its “quality” is all that’s needed. Sing without judgement! As far as your little kiddos are concerned, there is no such thing as bad singing. Your vocal quality, and even your pitch matching, will not adversely affect your students. The act of singing, of making music in a joyous, non-judgmental way, will have a profound positive effect on your students.

Here are a few songs to help incorporate more music into your daily classroom experience. I have included songs for classroom management, to teach basic skills and knowledge, and to develop fine and gross motor skills.



## Hello Song

*by: Alina Celeste Hevia*

It’s Monday, it’s Monday and time to sing Hello.

It’s Monday, it’s Monday and time to sing Hello.

It’s Monday, it’s Monday I’m so happy to see you.

It’s Monday, it’s Monday I’m so happy to see you.

Hello to \_\_\_\_\_, Hello to \_\_\_\_\_ Hello to  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I’m so happy to see you.

It’s Monday, it’s Monday and time to sing Hello.

It’s Monday, it’s Monday and time to sing Hello.

It’s Monday, it’s Monday I’m so happy to see you.

It’s Monday, it’s Monday I’m so happy to see you!

I’m so happy to see you! I’m so happy to see you!

\*Alternate lyrics:

Hello to the boys, hello to the girls, hello to the teachers,  
So happy to see you!

Change the day of the week every morning!

## Snail, Snail

*Traditional*

A simple, repetitive ditty, Snail Snail is a great way to practice getting into line, or making a circle.

Snail snail, snail snail, going 'round and 'round and 'round.

Snail snail, snail snail, going 'round and 'round and 'round.

**Have the children stand in a line, with their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them (or the waist). The line leader takes the line around the classroom into tighter and tighter circles, forming a swirl shape. When they cannot get any tighter, all the children must turn around in place and the child at the back of the line becomes the new line leader, walking everyone out of the swirl.**

## Black Snake

*Traditional*

**Played like “duck duck goose,” Black Snake adds the thrilling element of a snake, that changes colors!**

Black snake, black snake, where are you hiding?

Black snake, black snake, where are you hiding?

Black snake, black snake, where are you hiding?

Don't you bite me, ouch!

**In an outdoor setting, this game can be played exactly like duck duck goose. The child who is “it” gets to choose the color of the snake. If someone is tagged, they have to sit in the middle until the next child is caught.**

**In the classroom, we have done the chase with the children “scooting” on their behinds. It is silly, cumbersome, and fun!**

**Another use for this song is as a cue to go back to desks. Because the “snake” is hidden, children must sing quietly as they move back to their desks, and should sit on “Ouch!” The days’s line leader could also be the one to choose the color of the snake.**

## Tommy Thumb

*Traditional*

**This finger play can be a wonderful tool to bring focus back to rowdy group, while keeping things light and fun.**

Tommy Thumb up and Tommy Thumb down

Tommy Thumb dancing all around.

Tommy’s on my shoulders, Tommy’s on my head!

Then my little Tommy goes straight to bed

**Next verses:**

Peter Pointer

Mary Middle

Ricky Ring

Petunia Pinky

Finger Family up and finger family down

Finger family dancing all around

Fingers on my shoulders, fingers on my head

Then my little fingers go straight to bed!

## Dr. Knickerbocker

*Traditional*

**An active and educational song from the Carolinas. The version I have written here is for classroom management purposes. It can be used to signal leaving separate work stations to gather on the rug, or at desks. The last call and response line, “Now I got the rhythm when I sit (On Down!)” signals to sit at each child’s designated place, and the last lines of the song can be used to wind everyone down.**

**Once the children have mastered this song, it can be fun to allow them to take turns being the song leader. Also, to improvise with different movements, i.e. “Now I got the rhythm in my elbows!,” etc.**

Dr. Knickerbocker, knickerbocker number nine,

I just got back and I’m feeling fine!

Now I got the rhythm of the hands

(Clap clap)

Now we got the rhythm of the hands

(Clap clap)

Now I got the rhythm of the feet

(Stomp, stomp)

Now we got the rhythm of the feet

(Stomp, stomp)



Now I got the rhythm in my hips

(Oooo weee!)

Now we got the rhythm in our hips

(Oooo weee!)

Now I got the rhythm in my knees

(Chee Chee!)

Now we got the rhythm in our knees

(Chee Chee!)

Now I got the rhythm when I sit

(On down!)

Now we got the rhythm when we sit

(On down!)

And I got the rhythm in the number nine,

A one, a two, a three four five, a six, a seven, a eight and nine!!

## Bingo

*Traditional*

There was a big dog, sat on a back porch and Bingo was his name.

There was a big dog, sat on a back porch and Bingo was his name.

B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O and Bingo was his name-o  
B-I-N-G-O!!!

**For the first line, all hold hands and walk in a circle, stop when you sing “name,” and walk in the opposite direction. On the first spelling of “Bingo” walk everyone into the middle of the circle. For the second, lean in and whisper. For the third and the line “and Bingo was his name-o” everyone walks back to reform the circle. Then drop hands and clap once for each letter, alternating front and back claps:**

B (clap in front)

I (clap behind)

N (clap in front)

G (clap behind)

O!! (Jump up in the air!)

**Repeat this game several times, speeding up and slowing down to explore tempo.**

## Bow Wow Wow

*Traditional*

**Also a round, Bow Wow Wow is a wonderful circle game that teaches coordination and patterns. The children never cease to be delighted with it.**

**The entire class should stand in a circle formation, facing each other in pairs (you will need an even number of children for this). Movements and lyrics are as follows:**

Bow wow wow (Facing each other, hands on hips, stamping feet three times)

Who's dog art thou? (Wagging a finger on the beat to partner)

Little Timmy Tinker's Dog!\* (With hands on hips, partners trade places)

Bow Wow Wow (Partners continue to face each other, now standing opposite of where they started, and stamp their feet three times again)

**Directly after they sing the final “bow wow wow” each child should do a “jump turn” (jumping in a circle so that they are facing the opposite direction). At this time, they will find themselves facing a new partner. The circle can go all the way around until children are with their original partners.**

\*This song can also be found with the alternate lyrics “Little Tommy Tucker's Dog”

## There's a Pretty Girl in the Ring\*

*Traditional*

**With younger children, this is a wonderful dance to get out your wiggles and follow directions in a fun and focussed way. With Kindergarten, it can be student-led as a circle game.**

There's a pretty girl in the ring, tra la la

(Stepping motion, with hands on hips)

There's a pretty girl in the ring, tra la la

There's a pretty girl in the ring, tra la la

She's sweet like sugar and plum!

Now cross the ocean, tra la la

(Arms move parallel, hands in fists, from side to side)

Now cross the ocean, tra la la

Now cross the ocean, tra la la

She's sweet like sugar and plum!

Now work up your calabash, tra la la

(Hands on hips, moving hips in circular motion)

Now work up your calabash, tra la la

Now work up your calabash, tra la la

She's sweet like sugar and plum!

Now show me your motion, tra la la

(Improvised dance move)

Now show me your motion, tra la la

Now show me your motion, tra la la

She's sweet like sugar and plum!

Now the rest of your motion, tra la la

(Improvised dance move)

Now the rest of your motion, tra la la

Now the rest of your motion, tra la la

She's sweet like sugar and plum!

Now run and find a dancer, tra la la

(The “it” child picks the next person to be in the circle. They hold hands and walk in a circle together until the end of the verse)

Now run and find a dancer, tra la la

Now run and find a dancer, tra la la

She’s sweet like sugar and plum!

\*For “Show me your motion” it is often helpful with younger students to decide on a few dance moves they can choose from before hand.

\*\*Born of the folk song Brown Girl in the Ring. When the “it” child is a boy, we say “There’s a handsome boy in the ring.”

\*\*\*For the younger children the last verse can be “Now dance how you wanna, tra la la”

## Old Brass Wagon (with shapes!)

*Traditional*

Circle to the left, Old Brass Wagon

Circle to the left, Old Brass Wagon

Circle to the left, Old Brass Wagon

But only one my darling

Oval to the right, Old Brass Wagon

Oval to the right, Old Brass Wagon

Oval to the right, Old Brass Wagon

How about two my darling

Square in the middle, Old Brass Wagon

Square in the middle, Old Brass Wagon

Square in the middle, Old Brass Wagon

Now there's three my darling

Triangle up high, Old Brass Wagon

Triangle up high, Old Brass Wagon

Triangle up high, Old Brass Wagon

That makes four my darling

Rectangle down low, Old Brass Wagon

Rectangle down low, Old Brass Wagon

Rectangle down low, Old Brass Wagon

Stop at five my darling!

**This new take on a square-dance classic is fun, catchy and full of class possibilities!**

**Do it with cut out shapes on a felt board, make the shapes with your hands and arms, perform it on stage with cardboard shapes that you can drop into a wagon.**