

**Developing Brains-
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Homemade Songs and Poems

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With a section at the end of songs/poems written by Participants in an Early Childhood Workshop March 29, 2008 at the Tapestry Conference, Vancouver, WA

We need music, now more than ever!

Many teachers want to bring music into their DAILY curriculum, but they don't know **enough different songs** to weave them into the children's current interests, a learning goal, or a theme that you are exploring.

What is it about music?

Most of us have heard about music being good for many forms of learning (math, self-regulation, etc.). However, music needs to be in our curriculum because of the value of music itself and how it brings people together.

Singing with children is a way to support a sense of community in your group. According to Daniel Goleman, "the more two people unconsciously synchronize their movements and mannerisms during their interaction, the more positively they will feel about their encounter - and about each other."¹ This synchrony happens in conversations, but it also happens in groups of people who are making music together.

When we sing, recite, or play music together, the neurons we are using to do this begin to "oscillate" together by "resetting over and over their rate of firing to coordinate with the periodicity of an incoming signal."² In other words, group singing and recitation³ connect us, brain to brain, as our neurons get firing in the same pattern. If we are having a good time doing this and we smile and laugh together, our good feelings become contagious -- we all feel great together!

¹ Daniel Goleman. *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships*. New York: Bantam Books, 2006, 31.

² *Ibid.*, 34.

³ By recitation I mean saying a poem or rhyme together as a group.

This kind of sharing helps us see each other in more and more positive ways. We make friends and build community.

I think we all agree that we want to build friendships and community, but what about not having enough songs or the "right" songs?

The answer to this dilemma is: *write your own!*

Here is my "formula" for writing songs and poems for young children:

1. Make a list of topics for the songs or poems.
 - a. What are the themes that are coming from the children?
 - what are the play themes you see?
 - what questions or topics have come up?
 - b. What do you know about your children's needs?
 - what skills or concepts are you helping individual children learn?
 - what goals do you have for the group as a whole?
 - c. What do you know about child development?
 - what are universal developmental experiences and challenges for the age group?
 - what is funny to the age group?
 - what is frustrating to the age group?
2. If you want to write a song, make a list of "stock" songs for available tunes to use.

Examples:

 - Muffin Man
 - ABC Song/Twinkle! Twinkle! Little Star
3. Pick your topic and brainstorm a list of ideas and words/descriptors that fit the topic, such as:
 - a. actions (riding a trike)
 - b. feelings
 - c. naming things (colors)
 - d. progressions (big to small)
 - e. characteristics of an animal, an object, etc.

4. Start writing! Have LOTS of scratch paper!!

Examples of Homemade Songs and Poems

Here are some examples of poems and songs I have written and used with success in groups of young children.

Songs:

Who is in Your Family? (tune: Muffin Man)

1. Oh, who is in your family,
 your family, your family?
Oh, who is in your family,
 And lives with you at home?
2. A mommy's in my family,
 my family, my family.
A mommy's in my family,
 And lives with me at home!

Ask, "Who else is in your family?", and continue.

My Bath (tune: The Eensy-Weensy Spider)

When I take my evening bath,
I like to chase the soap;
Or lean back very carefully,
And let my legs just float.

My wash rag is a big, dark cloud,
My hands squeeze out the rain;
And when the storm is almost done,
I let it down the drain.

Poems:

Ant

One day while I was playing,
 An ant walked by my foot.
I stooped right down, close to the ground,
 And gave that ant a look!

I waved my hand and looked real close.
 I thought the ant waved back.
And then it disappeared from sight,
 Into a sidewalk crack!

Too Short for the Sink

I simply cannot reach the sink;
Not to scrub my hands,
Nor to get a drink.

I cannot make an indoor pond,
By plugging the drain-
With the water on.

The bathroom mirror
Is up so high,
When I str--etch myself,
I see
Just
One
Eye.

How can I reach the bathroom sink?
Do you know a way?
Please, say what you think!

Action Poems:

My Lap (children should be seated for this one)

When I sit, I have a lap;
A lap where I can hold a cat;
A lap where I can set a cup;
But, where's my lap when I stand up? (children stand up)

Catsup

(Start by acting like you have a bottle of catsup and are trying to shake it to get it to come out)

Catsup
Is
So
Very slow -

Shake the bottle!
Make it go!

When it starts to move-
At last!

Whoops!
Too much!

-It came so fast---

Start children composing!

Get school-aged children to write their own poems and songs. Here is a favorite that I found years ago, and have read to preschoolers.

Worms

Have you ever looked
At a worm's face?
They have no eyes,
They have no ears,
Yet they see right
Where they're going.
I found one while hoeing,
And it looked like a blind snake
With no cane.

By Robert S. Babcock
8 years old

On the following pages are songs and poems that were written by the very creative participants in a 2 hour workshop at the Tapestry Early Childhood Conference in Vancouver, WA on March 29, 2008. Hopefully, these will inspire others to create their own songs and poems!

Feel free to use these songs/poems with your children, and add them to your personal music file. However, they may not be reproduced in any publication, print or electronic. They are reproduced here by permission of the authors and remain the property of the authors.

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Washing Hands

(tune: Row, Row, Row Your Boat)

Wash, wash, wash your hands,
Get them nice and clean.
Wash the fronts and wash the backs,
And wash the in-betweens!

The More We Work Together (a "clean up" song)

(tune: The More We Get Together)

The more we work together, together, together,
The more we work together, the happier we'll be!
'Cause your class is my class,
And my class is your class!
The more we work together, the happier we'll be!

I See a Frog

(tune: Muffin Man)

I see a frog upon a log, upon a log, upon a log.
I see a frog upon a log,
It likes to eat little bugs.

It starts out as a little egg, little egg, little egg.
It starts out as a little egg
It's slimy, wet and green.

The tadpole has a tail and feet, a tail and feet, a tail and feet.
The tadpole has a tail and feet,
To swim around all day.

A frog hops on a lily pad, a lily pad, a lily pad.
A frog hops on a lily pad,
It slurps up all the flies!

Rocking Babies (sung gently)

(tune: Twinkle! Twinkle! Little Star!)

Rocking babies in my hand,
Do as gently as you can.

Give a bottle, warm enough,
Then your baby will go night-night.

What Do You Do?

(tune: The Bear Went Over the Mountain)

What do you do in the morning?
What do you do in the morning?
What do you do in the morning,
Before you come to school?

I _____ in the morning, (ex. take a bath)
I _____ in the morning,
I _____ in the morning,
Before I come to school

What do you do in the daytime?
What do you do in the daytime?
What do you do in the daytime,
When you are here at school?

I _____ in the daytime,
Etc.

What do you do in the evening?
What do you do in the evening?
What do you do in the evening,
Before you go to bed?

I _____ in the evening,
Etc.

Who Brought You To School Today?

(tune: Mary Had a Little Lamb)

Who brought you to school today?
School today, school today?
Who brought you to school today?
Who brought you here today?

Who will come and pick you up?
Pick you up, pick you up?
Who will come and pick you up?
Who'll take you home tonight?

Falling Toys

(tune: London Bridge)

All our toys are falling down, falling down, falling down!
All our toys are falling down, what shall we do?

We all have helping hands, helping hands, helping hands!
We all have helping hands, to clean up all the mess!

New Baby

(spoken)

I have a baby brother, his name is baby Joe.
I put him in a bouncer to see if he will go!
He jumps up and he spins around,
To play a game with you.
To get a belly laugh,
You play peek-a-boo.

Washing Hands

(tune: London Bridge)

First you turn the water on, water on, water on.

First you turn the water on,

And get it nice and warm.

Next you squirt some soap on them, soap on them, soap on them.

Next you squirt some soap on them,

And get them nice and clean.

Then you rinse the soap away, soap away, soap away.

Then you rinse the soap away,

And wash the germs away.

Friends

(tune: The More We Get Together)

Friends and sharing go together,

Together, together.

Friends and sharing go together,

When you share you have friends.

When you share you feel good,

When I share I feel good.

So let's all share together

And we'll have many friends.

You Must Not Know About Me

(tune: improvise!)

You must not know about me,

You must not know about me.

I go to _____ (ex. Glenwood Daycare)

I know my A-B-C's!

Found a Cootie

(tune: Found a Peanut)

Found a cootie, found a cootie,
Found a cootie on the floor.
Teacher told me not to touch it,
So I touched it even more!

Wash my hands now, wash my hands now,
That's what teacher said to do.
Use some hot and soapy water,
Paper towel, then I'm through.

Use Your Words

(tune: This Old Man)

Use your words, not your hands.
This can help us understand,
Everyone has feelings, this is true.
Talking's good for me and you.