



Transcript for the video:

Supporting Children’s Music Development in Early Childhood Settings

Preschool teacher: *[singing]* When I was two. *[speaking]* What happened when I was two?

Child: I buckled my shoe!

Teacher: I buckled my shoe!

Teacher and children: *[singing]* On the day I went to sea. I jumped aboard the pirate ship, and the captain said to me, “Oh, you go this way, that way, forward, backward, over the deep blue sea.”

Supporting Children’s Music Development in Early Childhood Settings (0:18)

Julia DeLapp, Director, Center for Early Childhood Education: Research indicates that young children are primed to actively engage in music right from birth. So the question is: What can early childhood educators do to harness that innate joy of music-making that young children have? And it turns out that it doesn’t require being a musician to be able to support children’s music development. You just have to do a few simple things in the early childhood classroom.

Provide Music Opportunities Throughout the Day (0:49)

Teacher and toddlers: *[singing]* The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish. Swish, swish, swish, Swish, swish, swish.

Terry Surprenant, Music Educator: First of all, we want to make sure that children have access to music. So they need to hear music. So we want to play some for them, and we want to sing with them.

Julia DeLapp: Children should have an opportunity to engage in large group music-making every single day in the classroom. And they should also have an opportunity to choose to go to music during free choice or center time, where they can select music to listen to or play a variety of instruments.

Toddler teacher: *[singing]* We’re gonna shake, shake, shake, uh-huh. All day...

Teacher and toddler: *[singing]* Long!

Matthew Vizzo: I have a stage—just a block that’s used as a stage. The children get on the stage, and they have a microphone, just to get them expressing themselves freely, and that obviously is huge confidence builder.

Model Singing and Music-Making (1:47)

Teacher and Children: *[singing]* A rafi! A rafi! Guli, guli, guli, guli, guli, ram sam sam!

Terry Surprenant: It's also equally important that we model singing for them. So whether or not an adult feels that they have a wonderful voice, singing to and with children is very crucial. It doesn't matter to them if the adult who's singing with them does not do so perfectly. It's more important that we're sharing that experience with them and that we're modeling that this is a worthwhile activity.

Julia DeLapp: And it's important to sometimes turn off the recorded music and sing a capella – with no accompaniment at all.

Preschool teacher and children: *[singing]* Five and three make eight. Five and three make eight. Five and three make eight. Eight friends at school.

Julia DeLapp: We want children to grow up feeling confident that they can sing. And so they need to be able to hear their own voices, including the times when their voice may not match what everyone else is singing. And that's hard to hear if the music is always playing loudly.

Terry Surprenant: Also when we do sing with children we want to sing WITH them, not AT them.

Jackie and class: *[singing Itsy Bitsy Spider in Spanish]* Mas salió el sol y la lluvia secó.

Terry Surprenant: So adults don't have to feel like they have to perform for children; they could just explore their own voices, maybe even be playful, themselves, with their voices and explore music along with children.

Terry: Choo! Choo!

Encourage Playful Music-Making (3:15)

Terry: Can you help me sing that?

Terry and children: Choo! Choo!

Terry Surprenant: We also should encourage children to play with sound, and so they can do that through their voices, but also with their bodies, just clapping their hands, tapping their thighs. They can make sounds with their mouths, making different funny sounds.

Teacher: Quack, quack, quack.

Julia DeLapp: Being playful or even a little silly with music gives children an easy and fun way to start understanding basic music concepts like tempo and pitch.

Preschool teacher and children: *[singing in low voices]* A ram sam sam. A ram sam sam.

Terry Surprenant: One of the things that an adult can do is, when using a song over and over again, is we can emphasize different elements of that song. Children find really interesting learning about dynamics, because they find that exciting. And the one thing, though, that they have the tendency to do is, when you talk about loud sounds, is to yell.

Terry: *[singing]* Fly away quiet, fly away loud.

Children: *[yelling]* Fly away loud!

Terry: *[singing]* Come back quiet. Come back loud.

Children: *[yelling]* Come back loud!

Terry Surprenant: And that's great, because that's really showing that they understand the two extremes of what dynamics is about. But then I teach them that those are sounds, and they are loud and soft, but they're not singing. So singing in a loud, you know, really having them use a singing voice and doing so a bit louder, and then using that voice more quietly but still maintaining the proper pitch, is really challenging for them, but it's something that they really enjoy, and they can learn.

Encourage Spontaneous Music-Making (4:52)

Child: *[singing/chanting]*

Julia DeLapp: It's also really powerful when we can support children's spontaneous music-making. Many young children sing to themselves A LOT—sometimes with bits of songs that they've heard, but a lot of times with their own original compositions.

Terry Surprenant: When we really provide rich environments where children can develop their voices, we'll see that they play with songs and when they're playing with their toys, they'll spontaneously sing.

Child: *[Singing indistinct words to tune of "London Bridge"]*

Julia DeLapp: We should respond to this the same way we would to their visual art – mostly, with observation, but sometimes with open-ended questions. And not by saying, "What was that song you were singing?" But with curiosity, like, "That was a really interesting song. Can you tell me about it?" And we might even sing a little bit of it back to them and engage in a serve and return interaction with them.

Broaden Your Definition of "Children's Music" (5:54)

[Jazzy music]

Julia DeLapp: I think another thing that adults can do to support children's music development is to change the way we think about what kind of music is appropriate for children.

[Mysterious music]

Terry Surprenant: It's common for adults to provide for children, music that was created for children, kid's music, because it's simple and it's thought to be something that will be appealing to them.

Matthew Vizzo: "Children's music" is very basic. It has very basic chord structures and very basic rhythms. I mean, you look at the melody of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star and the ABC song and Ba Ba Black Sheep—they're all the same exact melody.

Julia DeLapp: There's a misconception that children can only make sense of music in major keys and in very simple rhythm structures. But if you look at other cultures, their music is not so "simple." And children are able to learn tonalities and rhythmic structures that are quite unusual by Western standards, and they do that at a pretty young age.

Matthew Vizzo: To limit yourself to one style of music or one genre, or, as a child just listening to those simple children's songs might limit you in your development with music. Then the first time you hear a minor chord, or you listen to jazz music and you hear the dissonance, it might make you feel uncomfortable, like, "I don't know how to feel, because I've never heard music like that before."

Teacher: You can go up high or down low, smoothly.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: We incorporate different cultures of music, different genres of music, so that children have a background. You know, they don't just know the music from their community or their culture. They know, you know, all types of music. They know reggae; they know jazz. We don't just play "Baby Shark" all day. We incorporate all types of different genres.

Julia DeLapp: We're born with the capacity to understand and make sense of the music of any culture, just like we're born with the capacity to understand any language. But if we don't engage with another language or another musical tonality, we lose the capacity to make sense of it. So exposing children to a rich diversity of music is really important. Not just "children's music." They need to hear music from Asia, from Latin America, from Africa.

Matthew Vizzo: It's important to be exposed to that as a young age, because all those developments in your mind start taking place at a younger age.

Share Your Own Joy of Music (8:31)

Cathy Tormey: *[singing]* Red, yellow, green, and gold, the leaves are falling down.

Matthew Vizzo: you don't have to understand music theory in order to teach music, or teach the joy of music to children. If you're excited about it, they're going to be excited about it. Music doesn't have to be this complex, mysterious thing that is only accessible to professional musicians. You just want children to get to the point where music becomes natural in their expression.

Matthew and children: *[singing]* I jumped aboard a pirate ship, and the captain said to me, “Oh, you go this way, that way, forward, backward, over the deep blue sea. Oh, you go this way, that way, forward, backward, over the deep blue sea.” *[slowing down]* “Oh, you go this way, that way, forward, backward, over the deep blue sea.”