

5-5 Music: using tunes and rhythms

Children love to move their bodies to music. If cheering a friend - 'Hip, hip hooray!' - or chanting - 'Pull all the way. Pull all the way' - they call out loud and move their bodies naturally. When musical activities and expressions are embedded in their everyday lives, as in engaging in fun games with rhythms and songs and trying to make sounds with musical instruments, children can develop their imagination and sensitivity to music.

Songs and rhythmic activities

Children love musical activities that allow them to sing songs while playing with friends, move to music, and dance with friends. These musical experiences teach children to feel fun with rhythms and songs, and can nurture children's sensitive, creative minds.

Japanese traditional children's songs, which have been passed down for generations, are sung by a group of children like fun chants during play. Japanese kindergartens incorporate many traditional children's songs and other folk songs (such as nursery rhymes and songs around the world) in their teaching materials, hoping these songs will form an integral part of children's lives.

A rhythmic activity in which children move their hands and body to a simple song gives children a fun experience to express rhythms physically while they are singing and this is one of the most popular activities at kindergarten. It is also a useful tool for teachers to draw children's attention or to introduce a relaxing mood to the class. Songs and rhythmic activities can be enjoyed solo, but with friends, these activities produce more excitement because children can communicate with one another through music, and share the pleasurable moment with friends.

..... Educational goals

- **Developing emotional stability and sensitivity, through the act of singing.**
- **Becoming familiar with different cultures, through enjoying a wide variety of songs.**
- **Developing an awareness of seasons and interest in festivals, by singing special songs associated with them.**
- **Increasing vocabulary by memorizing verses, through repeated practices and nourishing imagination by imagining what the verse means.**
- **Feeling a sense of community with others, through singing songs and playing rhythms with friends.**
- **Developing sophisticated rhythmic movements, through free bodily expression of the music.**
- **Developing musical expression skills, through putting one's feelings and thoughts into tunes and dances.**
- **Enjoying creative movements, by producing hand and bodily gestures to songs and with rhythms.**

Enjoying songs and rhythms



The lyrics of a new song are written on the paper to help children memorize it easily. The drawings associated with the image of the song help younger children who cannot read become interested in the song. The lyrics are displayed somewhere the children can always see, whenever they need to check.

A whole class is having fun with moving their hands.

Moving their hands and bodies to the song creates excitement for the children.



Children are rhythmically hitting their chests like a gorilla, chanting, 'I am a gorilla. Eh-ho-ho.'

Encouraged by the fun of singing this song with the teacher, some of the children came to the front and demonstrated the gesture to the class.

They are dancing to the music.

Children first shake hands and dance in pairs, then turn around at a teacher's signal to change partners.

Lots of hand-shaking and paring with different partners. What fun!

Children are dancing and shaking pompons to the music.

The teacher is also having fun dancing. Pompons make the dance more exciting.

Pompons are always available for play and children are allowed to play CDs or cassette tapes by themselves to dance.

Upon leaving, children get together and sing a good-bye song.

While playing the song on a cassette player, a teacher reminds them the verse by giving a prompt.

Sometimes a child who can recite the song comes up to the front and volunteers to lead the class.

Experience to lead the class develops children's self-esteem which encourages them to sing more lively.

Keep in mind

- It is important that you introduce to your class traditional folk songs passed down for generations in your region and country. Try to cherish your own regional culture, and other cultures, equally.
- By watching a teacher singing with full of expression, children can feel the pleasure of singing. Always try to be a model for children to sing cheerfully while focusing on proper vocalization, tuning, and rhythm. But at the same time, you should not overemphasize perfection to children. What is important is to get them motivated to enjoy singing.
- The accompaniment to a song, which is not crucial, can be anything around you. Clapping hands, tapping feet, rocking the body with the rhythm can create wonderful improvisation.
- Singing songs can always serve as an effective tool for classroom management. Relaxing music after an active play, for example, can make a smooth transition between activities of the day at kindergarten.
- When they are having fun with dancing and singing, children are enjoying their freedom through musical expression. Try to share the time with them by joining their song and dance.

Tips and suggestions

- Many songs can accompany various plays and actions such as drawing, bouncing a ball, and jumping a rope.
- Share with parents the songs you taught to the children. Singing songs with parents can not only become a pleasurable experience but also console and comfort children.
- Ask parents for volunteers to organize a choir and have them sing to the children. The beautiful chorus of parents will create a dazzling moment for the children.
- When introducing a new song to children, not only displaying the lyrics and their associated drawings on the paper but also using a paper puppet theater, dolls, and flannel board theater can make expressive presentation of what is sung in the song.
- It is fun to make a new song by inserting new phrases into children's favorite songs.
- Try to present many traditional rhythmic activities and dances from your country and region ,and other countries and regions, to the class.

Playing with musical instruments

Singing songs and playing musical instruments bring fun to children's lives and stimulate their imagination and creativity, which contributes to developing their emotional stability. By listening to music and watching a teacher playing musical instruments, children become interested in these instruments. Through touching the instruments and trying to play, children learn about different tones and grow a love for expression in music.

A wide range of musical instruments is available to children at kindergartens in Japan, particularly percussion instruments that even younger children can easily play (bells, tambourines, castanets, triangles, drums, and cymbals) and melodic instruments (wooden and steel xylophones, harmonicas, melodicas or wind instruments similar to the harmonica and accordion, as well as organs and pianos). Not only making a sound with instruments but also improvising a rhythm to music can be an exciting experience to children. Musical play that has started off from playing the instruments solo expands in scale and children will enjoy synchronizing tunes or rhythms with others and playing in concert joined by percussion and melodic instruments. With a careful selection of instruments, children of different ages can participate together in musical activities or in a more structured concert performance. Musical activities can be incorporated into a wide range of kindergarten programs to enrich children's experiences with music, such as playing a festival song at an event and performing a concert for friends and parents.

Educational goals

- **Expanding imagination and developing musical sensitivity and creativity, through listening to music and feeling the flow of tunes.**
- **Cultivating musical expression skills, by expressing one's thoughts and feelings with rhythms.**
- **Training musical and acoustic sensitivity through hearing different tones while playing musical instruments and expressing oneself with them.**
- **Realizing that there are different tones characteristic to each instrument, and cultivating creative attitudes and aesthetic sensitivity through trying to make sounds with various instruments.**
- **Developing interest in math through considering the number of musical instruments played together.**
- **Developing coordinated motor skills while learning how to play musical instruments and how to make sounds with them.**
- **Feeling the pleasure of participation and fulfillment in the shared musical experience, as well as nurturing friendship, by playing in concert with others while listening to their tunes.**
- **Developing cooperative attitudes, social skills and positive self-esteem and further feeling senses of achievement and satisfaction, through the process of playing a whole piece together.**

Playing with musical instruments



For children's convenience, bells, tambourines and other musical instruments are stored at a



A child loves his hand-made instrument that makes a maraca-like sound when shaken.

Out of curiosity about the inside of a musical instrument, children took a bell out of a basket and played with it.

The pleasure of synchronizing tunes with friends led to a creative activity to make a new instrument with the bell.

With colorful stickers on wooden bars for an easier recognition of the musical scale, children are practicing playing the xylophones.

Instead of reading a musical score, children learn to play by remembering the places to hit while a teacher tells them a particular note on the scale.

By jointly playing all the instruments that each child has practiced at home - such as bells, triangles, xylophones, drums, and cymbals - children can experience the pleasure to put everyone's part together to bring about a wonderful symphony.

Children are playing a Japanese drum. The drum is often played at a community festival and kindergarten events.

They feel the tense skin.

They touch and feel the tension of a skin and become familiar with the drum by striking it with a hand.

Children become interested in playing the Japanese drum, through learning that a resonant sound is made by a dynamic striking action using the whole body and that there are various way of striking the drum.

Keep in mind

- To stimulate children's interest and curiosity in music and musical instruments, provide numerous opportunities to listen to music and prepare various kinds of instruments that they can freely use in expressing their feelings.
- By watching a teacher enjoy playing the musical instruments, children will try to share the pleasurable experience. Instead of teaching children how to play, the teacher needs to respect their independent motivation to express themselves in their own way.
- Ensure that the particular musical instrument is suitable for the children's level of maturity, and that the pieces of music are familiar to children or appropriate for instrumental play.
- Naturally children strike rhythms and make sounds as freely as they can. A teacher can support them to develop self-control skills through being exposed to different musical experiences where they listen to as many different tunes as possible to compare and analyze which tune sounds more pleasing than another.
- Since playing melodic instruments requires understanding musical scales, children at first try to find the right note that they heard. If frustrated they will give up. A teacher, therefore, needs to support them by sharing exciting moments of play and emphasizing the importance of having fun in expressing themselves in music, regardless of how well they can play.
- Try to give sufficient instruction about how to handle fragile instruments and mallets to avoid possible accidents.

Tips and suggestions

- Tips for creative rhythmic instruments: Empty cans or boxes with pebbles and nuts inside, and twigs or wooden pieces can be fun to make sounds with.
- A wind instrument can be made by blowing into a hollow bamboo trunk or other wood.
- Children's usual musical activities can gain momentum if they are incorporated into special events at kindergarten, such as a field day festival and annual performance show.
- The musical activity can expand to a cultural awareness program in which children encounter and play a wide range of musical instruments from their own and other cultures.
- It could be an inspiring experience to listen to musicians invited from outside the kindergarten and play music with them.
- Leaves and reed pipes can make pretty tunes. Children will love them.