

LEADERSHIP BULLETIN

from the Early Childhood Connection

Music Education Promotes Readiness

Vol. 7, No. 4

Summer 2002

In a report from researchers at the FPG Child Development Institute in Chapel Hill, NC, Yazejian and Peisner-Feinberg (2002) state:

Music and movement experiences are often viewed as secondary to activities and material linked more directly with the development of language and cognitive skills--skills associated with conventional definitions of school readiness. Recent research, however, suggests that music and movement experience can promote these broader developmental competencies as well.

Research is now establishing the link between music education and school readiness, defined by the National Education Goals Panel across the following developmental domains:

1. Physical Well-Being and Motor Development -

As some of childhood's most active learning, music and movement activities promote fine motor skills as found in finger games, large motor skills as in dancing and marching to music, as well as the sensorimotor, eye-hand coordination skills required in playing small instruments.

2. Social-Emotional Development -

In an article about a highly successful early childhood public school in Kentucky, Linda Robinson (2002) writes, "Interacting with other children comes naturally in the course of singing and moving together . . . For children who have difficulty initiating an interaction with another child, music experiences provide the motivation and context for practice of this skill."

3. Approaches Toward Learning -

Robinson further states, "Children find music and movement to be a joyful, playful, and efficient way to learn. It should come as no surprise then that music and movement have been instrumental in creating an environment whereby that joy in learning might be generalized to all learning." Robinson's school principal, Kelly Sampson, adds, "First and

foremost we want to facilitate a love for music and movement and ultimately a love for learning."

4. Language Development - Commenting on her school's dramatic improvement in reading scores, Robinson says, "We have found that music activities which emphasize song texts, rhyming words, rhythmic patterns, steady beat, and dramatization of stories through movement and instruments have had a very positive effect on our students' literacy skills."

5. Cognitive and General Knowledge -

In explaining how concepts can be better understood through music, Robinson writes, "Children seem able to grasp these abstract concepts more easily when set in a musical context that engages their bodies with concrete objects. Children enjoy making and moving to music and are delighted to repeat the experience as many times as needed for comprehension." She concludes, "Music and movement have proven to be an ideal vehicle for children to experience the joys of learning, to learn how to listen and focus their attention, and to employ their naturally imitative abilities for building an understanding of language and concepts--skills needed for school success in school."

While there are varying views about why music and movement activities are so pivotal in early education, there is growing consensus that music education affects children's development across an array of domains. From the children's perspective, they are simply having fun and enjoying learning. From the schools administrator's perspective, music improves test scores and prepares children for school success. From the musician's view, early childhood music education increases musical aptitude. From the parents' vantage point, children are getting what they need as well as what they want from music education. And . . . if music's good for the children, then it's good for us all.

Early Childhood Connections
Foundation for Music-Based Learning
PO Box 4247
Greensboro, NC 27404-4247

ECC LEADERSHIP BULLETIN is published by the
Foundation for Music-Based Learning. Readers are
encouraged to photocopy and distribute this bulletin
for educational purpose.