

SOUNDS AND MOVEMENTS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

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Sounds and movements are important to the early childhood years as they promote development in all areas.

Singing to babies encourages speech and singing development as it is a type of communication since babies will respond by cooing and babbling (Bayless and Ramsey, 1991). Lullabies also encourage melodic perception, a sense of beat and expressiveness (Freierbend, 1996). A curriculum for babies must, therefore, include lullabies or other songs that lend themselves to a rocking motion such as “Hush Little Baby” and “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”.

Just as babies love listening to parents or carers sing to them they also love to hear different sounds. A curriculum for babies must also include sound-stimulation toys and experiences to encourage auditory development (Bayless and Ramsey, 1991).

However, babies are not passive recipients of sounds. They are active explorers. They will explore sounds through their voice and body (Bayless and Ramsey, 1991; Suthers, 1995). They make different sounds with their mouth such as cooing and gurgling. Using different movements of their body they can make other sounds such as clapping and stamping. They can play with toys or sounds makers to produce even more interesting sounds.

This means that babies are learning about sounds – what makes it and how to make it. A sound-making curriculum must include a variety of sound making experiences that include bought, made or found utensils such as shakers and kitchen utensils. These instruments are made available for free play. To encourage clapping, clapping songs such as ‘Pat a-Cake’ are played with babies.

Since babies are active explorers, they like to move. It is important to include movement experiences in a baby's curriculum so babies can gain control of their body parts, become aware of their body, to explore the space around them and discover what sounds they can make using body movements (Bridges, 1994).

As babies enter toddlerhood they have better control over fine motor skills when playing with sound makers and better gross motor control for a variety of movements such as jumping and turning.

Sound and movement games and songs experienced earlier are still included in the curriculum for toddlers. However, these games and songs can increase in complexity so that toddlers can experience and practice a wide range of movements and skills. For example, 'Indoor Obstacle Course' (games can be found in Larkin and Suthers, 1995) requires different types of movements and 'Jack be Nimble' requires jumping. Other games to introduce to promote development are listening games ('Follow the Sound'), following games ('Newspaper Game'), hoop games ('Musical Hoops'), rope games ('Snaky Rope'), passing games ('Balloon Tennis'), drama games ('Wet Washing').

During this period, toddlers make gains in vocabulary (Andress, 1998). They increase from 20 words to 500 words and there is a difference between their speaking and singing voice (Bridges, 1994). Having songs and singing in the curriculum for toddlers would help to increase and consolidate their vocabulary, speech and singing.

Preschool-aged children have a larger vocabulary with which to describe sounds such as loud, louder, long, short, fast and high (Bridges, 1994). However, they need to have these sound experiences in order to identify and label them. A curriculum with sound is central to this development of musical concepts.

Preschool-aged children are also beginning to play together. Musical and movement experiences are another fun way to encourage cooperation and social play such as 'One in the Middle' and 'Manual Road' (Larkin and Suthers, 1995).

Another characteristic of preschool-aged children's play is the addition of drama and fantasy. A curriculum with songs and movement experiences also encourages drama and fantasy in children's play. Examples of such activities include 'Miss Polly Had A Dolly' and 'Wet Washing' (Larkin and Suthers, 1995).

For children to be able to play an instrument properly they need to experiment and practice so they can control their movements and coordinate it with what they hear (Bridges, 1994). The preschool-age is the time for them experiment and practice. A curriculum for preschool-aged children, therefore, would need to have different types and sizes of the duff available.

Preschool-aged children are able to move in more controlled and in different ways such as skip, hop and climb. They must be encouraged to keep being active and move so that it becomes a lifestyle (Institute of Early Childhood, 2004). Activities to encourage this are obstacle courses, rope games, 'Find the Colour' and 'Little Grey Ponies' (Larkin and Suthers, 1995).

Children in the K-2 range are able to understand musical concepts and move in a variety of ways. However, not all children enter school with the ability to understand music or to control and coordinate their movements. This would be due to a lack of sound and movement experiences during their birth to 5 years. It is important here to include sound and movement experiences into the curriculum for school-aged children. The purpose of a physical education for these children is to increase their awareness of movement potential, to move competently and confidently, to understand and apply movement fundamentals, to become versatile movers and to value healthy play (Buschner, 1994). Activities to provide these experiences would include sounds and movements.

At these ages children like to play games with rules. It is crucial; to include games such as ‘tips’ ‘Red Light, Green Light’ and field games such as soccer into the curriculum for K-2 children.

Sound and movement experiences are important in the early childhood years as they promote physical, emotional/social, language, cognitive and ‘musical’ development. It is important to include them into the curriculum of early childhood.

Reference

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