



Acoustic Futures teacher toolkit

Supporting musical play in the Early Years



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Acoustic Futures

Acoustic Futures was a year-long pilot of professional development for Early Years Practitioners delivered by Barking and Dagenham Music Hub and Creative Futures, funded by Arts Council England.

The pilot ran for a year in three settings and explored different ways of embedding music in the Early Years Foundation Stage, strengthening the music skills of the Early Years workforce and their ability to create musical environments and use play-based approaches in settings. The children aged 4-5 were offered new opportunities to listen to and make music, including making and using instruments and creating musical environments.

This Toolkit for Early Years teachers is the culmination of the project. It is hoped that it will be used by settings both as part of continuing professional development for practitioners, and also as a resource that can be added to by individual settings. A lot of the material, guidance and links will also form the basis of the new Early Years section of the Barking and Dagenham Music Hub website.





Introduction to Early Years Music

Here's an example of music that you might see in your setting. '*What's that noise?*' is a film created by Sound Connections' London Early Years Music Network that shows music-making emerging from children's play in all areas of provision. It lasts around 15 minutes.

What's that noise?

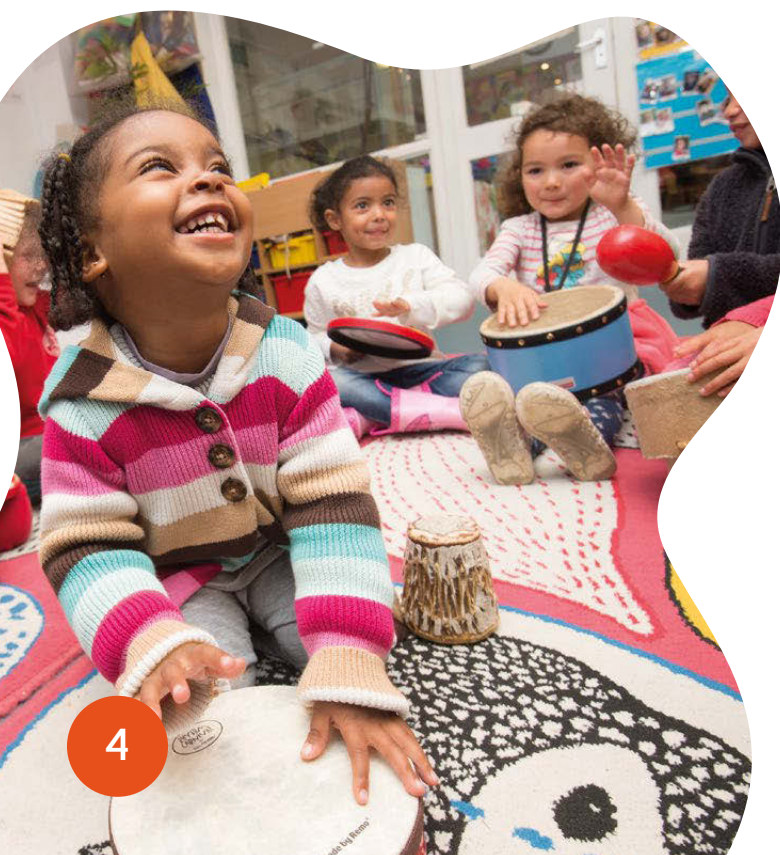


www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCdh1XDsydA

Do you recognise examples of these sorts of ideas in your own provision?

Here are some questions to help you reflect:

- ★ What does your current musical provision look like?
- ★ What resources do you already use?
- ★ How do you set them up?
- ★ What conversations do you have about music in your setting?



Musical Play

Musical play – what might it look and sound like?



Responding to children's musical play:

Listen to them ★ Be playful ★ Copy their musical gestures ★ Have a musical conversation – call and response ★ Record them (video and audio) ★ Describe what you see and hear ★ How does it make you/child feel – talk about it ★ Add a prop – toys, paper, scarves, puppets

Need time and space... a helpful acronym is:

Observe **W**ait **L**isten



Observe
Wait
Listen

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning in Music

- ★ Playing and Exploring
- ★ Active Learning
- ★ Creating and Thinking Critically

When provided with an enabling environment (e.g. spaces to explore, positive relationships) children will demonstrate the Characteristics of Effective Learning naturally within their musical play.

Below is a link that provides further information:

C of EL in music framework



<https://soundcommunities.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Characteristics-of-Effective-Learning-In-Music.pdf>





Elements of Music

Musical Terms/The Elements of Music

Pulse/beat: the steady beat in music that you can tap your foot along to

Rhythm: if pulse is the framework, rhythm is the mix of longer/shorter sounds (like the syllables of words in a song) layered on top

Tempo: the pace of the beat – faster/slower

Dynamics: degrees and contrasts of volume – quieter/louder

Pitch: higher/lower/in between

Timbre: the quality/character/description of sound (the ‘colour’ of music – see page 8)

For further definitions of musical terms, visit:

<https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/musical-terms>



Timbre and the Colour of Music

Talking About Music

Sad music, shady music, bright music, happy!
Strong music, light music, dancing music, clapping?
Sweet music, shining music, lilting music, jumping!
Then there's slow and scary sounds, watch out now it's bumping!

Music sometimes floats around, and sometimes music spins
Music sometimes lifts you up, and sometimes makes a din!
Music can surprise you and sometimes sound quite rough
When melodies sound like bird song though, I just can't get enough!

There's intense music, dark music and shaking music sounds
Music from the countryside and music from the towns
Music where you make it, so make it where you can
Music is a metaphor, so name your music sounds!

By Kate Comberti



Musical Identity – What is it?

We all have a musical identity, whether you consider yourself musical or not.

How to capture children's musical identity:

Talk to the children – what music do they like?

Talk to parents – discuss what music is listened to at home. When is it played? Where is it played?

Create a class playlist – write to parents asking what music is listened to at home

Create a poster to show all the different music you listen to in class, using home suggestions

REMEMBER – it's not all about nursery rhymes!

Watch this 2-year-old rapping with his Dad!



www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZh1_aaFqTQ

Reflection and discussion

- ★ Think about your musical preferences. What do you like? Dislike?
- ★ What did you listen to as a child? How has your childhood influenced your musical tastes?
- ★ Talk to staff about their tastes and experiences. Was there anything that surprised you?
- ★ Display your preferences in the setting



Using Recorded Music Effectively in the EYFS

Tune into Listening Excellence in Primary/Early Years award 2017

Findings from the research included:

- ★ Children ‘tuned out’ when music was played in the background, particularly when music was unfamiliar
- ★ When upbeat music was played, energy levels in the nursery increased
- ★ When slower music was played, children appeared to become calmer
- ★ Familiar music helped children to ‘tune in’

Read the full report



<https://macbirmingham.co.uk/mac-makes-music/teachers/music-in-the-early-years/tune-into-listening>

“Children can listen in many manner of ways – just like children can learn, in many manner of ways. Developing listening skills with children can be explored to find out their preferences for how they listen.”

Nicola Burke, 2017

Familiar music seems to be key to supporting children’s listening skills. Can you create a class playlist that includes suggestions of music from home?

What you can do:

- ★ Create opportunities to paint and/or draw whilst listening to music
- ★ Observe the responses of children when music is played in the environment
- ★ Use music for focused listening activities
 - ★ Encourage children to move freely to the music they listen to
 - ★ Play music while children have access to instruments and observe how they play



Listening to Recorded Music

On the following Spotify playlist are some examples that the schools who participated in the Acoustic Futures project listened to in their settings while the children were mark making:

Spotify playlist



<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0PL5laCuNiFqEMv9HgDFxG?si=C9fHGbupSKSY51clu2-ptQ>

What music could you use in your setting?

- ★ Ask the children in the class what they listen to at home
- ★ Ask other teachers in your school what their favourite music is and create a class playlist
- ★ Spotify is great for exploring all different types of music



“I feel like dancing! Happy! Exciting!”

Reception Pupil

Minute of Listening

Throughout the pilot, children listened to a lot of music and sounds. The *Minute of Listening* resource, which has over 200 tracks of 60-second recordings, was used to develop pupils' creative listening skills. Children listened while mark making, while moving and dancing, and when sitting still.

One of the teachers used a variety of tracks from Collection 1. They listened to the track – sometimes environmental sounds, sometimes music – and asked the children questions from the collection. The children responded with their ideas about what they'd heard.

After using *Minute of Listening* everyday for two months here's what the teacher said:

“The children had improved their vocabulary and they are able to listen more ably and think (and talk) about what they've heard, how it made them feel. Their imagination has grown, they have their own ideas...”

DB (Reception Teacher)

Minute of Listening



www.minuteoflistening.org



Enabling Environments – Outdoor Provision

- ★ How can you use your outdoor space to make music? How can you allow for children to be sociable as they make music?
- ★ Ask children what they would like
- ★ Ask parents if they can help with ‘junk’ instruments or if they can help to build any instruments
- ★ Ask local salvage yards/supermarkets, etc for crates, tyres, pots and pans, etc
- ★ Simple solutions – don’t need to cost a fortune

Examples of music ‘stations’:



“The best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky.”

Margaret McMillan c1925

Example of musical water play



www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDKZdS5PFDA

Enabling Environments – Indoor Provision

Create a space for exploring musical play and see for yourselves how many different ways your children listen, play and create on their own or in groups!

- ★ Lift xylophones off the floor to different heights so that children can move and play more easily
- ★ Set out instruments in different areas of the classroom and in different sound combinations
- ★ Add paper, toys and books to extend thinking
- ★ Source the best instruments you can or make your own

Enabling spaces are:

Exciting Inclusive
Authentic Actively involving
Engaging Inspiring
Positive and belong to
the children!

Arts Council 2017



Making Musical Instruments

Here are some links which demonstrate how to have a go at making your own instruments with the children:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5XpQ10haH8

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLesWSIGVWI

www.cbc.ca/parents/play/view/activity_musical_instruments

<https://zinginstruments.com/homemade-musical-instruments/>

<https://diyinspired.com/diy-musical-instruments-for-kids/>





Music and Stories

Mash up time with traditional stories:

Share out instruments and let them play along as you read, choosing for themselves who or what they want to be in the book. Great with the traditional stories e.g. Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk.

Dance a book:

Find a book with rhyme that has lots of action verbs or movement (e.g. *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle/*Doing the Animal Bop* by Lindsey Gardiner) and add your favourite dance track like Abba or Glen Miller and move all the actions from the book to a beat.

Add sound recordings and backing tracks:

Bring a book to life by setting the scene through music or sound effects, e.g. using natural sounds, or playlists on Spotify.

Sing or rap the book!:

Rhyming books work really well for this. Try *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Eric Carle for a sung book or *Llama Llama Red Pyjama* by Anna Dewdney to rap a book.

Add instruments to different play areas:

Let the children use them to add to their own stories.

Singing in Play – Ways to Explore

Child's Perspective

Children's **play** is often accompanied by their own song ideas as they **explore** their voices.

Listen out for fragments of songs, **chanting** and **humming** and sometimes 'pot pourri' songs when they begin with one song and end with another!

Using Familiar Songs

Try **changing** the words of songs you know to co-create new songs to use in different contexts. **Ideas:**

Twinkle, twinkle little star

Washing, washing, wash my hands

London Bridge is falling down

London Bridge is building up!

Rain, rain, go away, come again another day!

Clap, clap, clap my hands, I like clapping all day long

Some things to look out for

What are the children singing in their play?

Where are children singing during their play?

When are they using their voices?

For more ideas for ways to explore singing see https://soundcommunities.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SC_Singing-and-song-writing.pdf

Improvise

Explore opportunities to sing '**in the moment**' with the children about their activities. Keep it simple (2 or 3 notes) leaving space for the child to respond.

Ideas:

Sing a sentence commenting on what they are doing – '*(Name) is painting*'

Sing a question – '*How are you feeling today?*' Play with sung conversation as a natural activity in your setting.

Useful Links for Further Reading and Information

Musical Development Matters – the new Early Years music guidance document and accompanying online resource

<https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/musical-development-matters>

LEYMN – London Early Years Music Network – offering training courses and sharing sessions, you can sign up for emails at the bottom of the page

www.sound-connections.org.uk/what-we-do/early-years/london-early-years-music-network

SALTMusic – an action research project exploring shared practice between speech and language therapy and Early Years music practitioners

<https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/saltmusic-research-report>

Enabling Environments – report by Nicola Burke & Trish Power for LEYMN

www.sound-connections.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/N.Burke-T.Power-Instrument-Movement-Final-Report-2.pdf

Sound Communities website – an early years music resource by Creative Futures, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation

<https://soundcommunities.org.uk>

Facebook pages

Early Years training opportunities: www.facebook.com/groups/EYmusictraining

LEYMN: www.facebook.com/groups/LEYMN

KEYU (Keeping Early Years Unique): www.facebook.com/groups/548117901996416

Recommended Reading and Resources

Theoretical:

Music with the Under 4s – Susan Young

www.amazon.co.uk/Music-Under-Fours-Susan-Young/dp/0415287065

Ideas for songs/new materials:

Music for Early Learning: Songs and musical activities to support children's development – Linda Bance

www.amazon.co.uk/Music-Early-Learning-activities-development/dp/0415679214

Voice Play – Linda Bance and Alison Street

www.amazon.co.uk/Voiceplay-Songs-Children-Childrens-Voiceworks/dp/0193210614

Inside Music Early Years – Katie Neilson, Voices Foundation

www.voices.org.uk/shop

Partners



Creative Futures believes in the transformative power of creativity and the arts. We work with brilliant artist-educators, and with communities across London and the South East, particularly with very young children and their families in work that is strongly child-focussed, with music, story-telling, movement and play at their heart. Creative Futures is a registered charity.

Acoustic Futures was led by three of our most experienced Early Years music specialists:

Barbara Cavanagh is an early childhood researcher and practitioner, with an MA in early childhood music education, keen to involve teachers and parents in the wonderful world of children's music, and to promote its importance in children's lives.

Kate Comberti is a violinist, and researcher. She is a member of the Creative Futures Sound Communities programme delivering CPD and training in settings across the UK.

Fiona Long is a Music Artist, bringing her experience as an Early Years music practitioner, facilitator, teacher and musician to her project work with Creative Futures.



The Barking and Dagenham Community Music Service, the lead organisation for the Barking and Dagenham Music Education Hub, working in partnership with schools, academies, free schools and other settings to provide opportunities for every child and young person in the Borough to develop through music and to benefit from high quality musical experiences.

Jo Milne, the Primary Music Advisor, was the CMS lead in the Acoustic Futures pilot.

The CMS would like to thank the three participating schools for their commitment to the pilot and to the teachers involved for their hard work throughout:

Dorothy Barley Infant School

Manor Infants/Longbridge

Monteagle Primary School



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