



Singing and Dancing

Introduction

Children love to sing and dance. Turn on some music and you'll find that little ones move along to the beat, smile, and clap. When parents and caregivers expose their children to music and movement every day, they not only have fun together, promote healthy physical activity, and learn about cultures both near and far, they also build skills that will help children get ready for school. Through music and movement children learn about patterns and counting, develop listening and comprehension skills, build their awareness of sounds, and discover new words. For this reason, rocking out to a good song actually helps children succeed in math, science, and reading.

Singing and dancing also provides wonderful opportunities to connect. Whether it's a lullaby at bedtime, a song or dance from a parent or grandparent's culture, or an impromptu dance party, music and movement bring families closer together.

This parenting education workshop is designed to offer parents strategies and activities that will encourage them to sing and dance with their children throughout the day. Through discussions, hands-on activities, take-home resources, and the "Singing & Dancing" video, you'll find everything you need to:

- Communicate the importance of singing and dancing.
- Demonstrate examples of how singing and dancing lead to learning.
- Explore ways to bond and connect through music and movement.
- Offer ideas for making your own songs and instruments.
- Suggest music and movement activities.
- Suggest music from cultures around the world.
- Lead parents in reflecting on how they can apply what they have learned with their own children.
- Try out and practice new ideas with parents.

The Singing and Dancing workshop has been divided into the following sections:

The Joys of Singing and Dancing—This section focuses on the ways that music and movement can strengthen bonds and provide opportunities to connect with one another.

Learning through Singing and Dancing—This section shares the important learning benefits that come through singing and dancing.

Do It Yourself —This section offers ideas for making your own songs, dances, and instruments.

As you lead this workshop, you'll be using the “Singing & Dancing” video. In this 05:26 minute video you'll meet:

- Ronan (2 years) as he plays his harmonica.
- Siblings Aliyah (6 years) and Lamarques (3 years) and their cousin Rosonn (17 months) as they form an impromptu band.
- Baby Kash (4 months) as he listens to lullabies.
- Marcelo (20 months) as he sings the ABCs.
- Siblings Eloise (3 years) and Otis (16 months) as they get silly with music.

Music and movement not only means singing and dancing, it also includes finger plays, chants, and rhymes. In this workshop, you'll help parents engage in music and movement activities that will maximize both learning and fun.

Preparing for the Workshop

Before you begin, read the “Parenting Videos Workshop Overview,” which contains helpful tips and information about the workshop series. In addition, you will want to:

- Make copies of the following Parent Tips. Have them available for parents to pick up before the workshop begins or distribute them at the end.
 - *Good Books for Babies*
 - *Good Books for Toddlers*
 - *Listen to the Beat: Music and Toddlers*
 - *Songs and Lullabies: Music and Babies*
 - *Talk, Talk, Talk!*
 - *Additional Resources* (You may also want to display some of the books from this list.)
- Watch the “Singing & Dancing” video. Take notes as you watch (and as you read through this guide). Keep a notebook of additional ideas and questions. You know your group best and you will need to adapt the workshop to fit the needs and interests of the participants.

- Decide on an opening icebreaker activity. You may want to tailor the activity to the theme of the workshop. For instance, you might ask parents to name a favorite rhyme from their childhood or one that their child enjoys. You might also ask them to share something about their culture or heritage, as well as the language(s) they may have heard while listening to or singing lullabies and nursery rhymes.
- As much as possible, listen to popular children's music both online and from the library to familiarize yourself with the latest artists, bands, and songs.
- For the “Music Library” activity, bring in samples of children's music. You might include albums such as: *World Sing-Along* by Putumayo Kids, *Family Dance* by Dan Zanes and Friends, *It's a Big World* by Renee and Jeremy; songs such as “Science Is Real” by They Might Be Giants; and classics by Raffi, Peter Paul & Mary, Sesame Street, and others.
- For the “Meaning through Movement” activity, you'll need to know several finger plays and “action” songs. For “Count the Beat” you'll need to find some counting and rhythm games. (A good professional resource is *The Complete Book and CD Set of Rhymes, Songs, Poems, Fingerplays, and Chants* by Jackie Silberg and Pam Schiller.)
- For the “Do It Yourself” section, create a few made-up songs to use as examples.
- For the “‘Routine’ Songs” activity, bring in the “Brush Your Teeth” song by Raffi.
- For the “Family Music Parade” activity, bring household objects that can be used as instruments. You might include: dinner spoons, plastic water bottles, cereal boxes, rubber bands, lids from jam jars, uncooked rice, stocking “egg” holders, egg cartons, milk cartons, chopsticks, paper towel rolls, wax paper, tape, paper clips, rocks, dry leaves, sandpaper, and a broom.
- Gather other supplies, including pencils, pens, and paper, as well as refreshments.
- If you are providing a series of workshops, have a flyer ready with future dates and times.

Section One: The Joys of Singing and Dancing

Leading Your Group

Begin by sharing some of the ways that singing and dancing can be a wonderful opportunity for bonding and fun right from the start. You can mention:

- Children respond to music and movement.
- You don't have to have a great voice to sing out loud—your child will love your voice no matter what.

- Expose your child to many different types of music and let him see you dancing along to the sounds that you hear. This will encourage him to express himself and will build his awareness of his body.
- Singing is a fun way to introduce new vocabulary. Listening to a variety of songs allows your child to listen to new words and sounds.
- Singing and dancing is a great way to get active as a family and to celebrate together.
- Music and movement offers a wonderful opportunity to share your culture and family traditions with your child. It's also a great way to learn about new places both near and far away, and to learn some words in a new language.
- Music and movement can be a great way to “turn the mood around.” If your child is feeling frustrated or unhappy, put on a favorite tune and have a dance party, or sing a nonsense song to get her giggling.
- Singing is also a great way to comfort, calm, and soothe your child. A lullaby will help your little one to feel safe and secure as he falls asleep.
- Toddlers especially like silly songs and movement games.
- Many children like to show off by performing. Praise your child as she “puts on a show.” You'll be encouraging her creativity and letting her know just how important it is to sing and dance.
- Singing and dancing is something that everyone can do. Infants can coo and rock along with the beat, toddlers can jump and groove, parents and grandparents can show off their moves. It's an experience that will bring everyone together.

Chat and Share

Ask parents to think about the role that singing and dancing plays in their home. This will help begin a conversation about the benefits of music and movement. You can ask:

- What types of music do you enjoy at home?
- What are some of your child's favorite songs?
- What role does singing and dancing play in your household?
- When do you sing to your child—at bedtime? During transitions from one activity to another?

NOTE: Write down additional questions that you would like to include. Is there an anecdote from your own life that you can share? Add that, too.

Watching and Learning

Watch the entire “Singing & Dancing” video together. You will have an opportunity to return to the video throughout the workshop. Let parents know:

- In this video, we will see many examples of singing and dancing throughout the day.
- Notice how the children respond when they hear music.
- Notice how parents use music in their daily routines.

Reviewing and Reflecting

Lead a conversation about things parents noticed in the video. You might ask:

- In the video, Eloise and Otis immediately start to smile and laugh when the music comes on. Otis's mom mentions that Otis just can't help but move to the beat, and Eloise sings throughout the day. How does your child respond to music?
- Marcelo's parents use music to help make the transition from the house to the car. He gets excited to go for a drive when they let him know that he'll have the chance to hear the “ABC Song” during the drive. How does music help your child make transitions?
- Kash is soothed by his mother's lullaby. She also uses songs to expose her baby to her home language and family traditions. How do you use music during your daily routines or to share your cultural traditions?

Trying It Out

Music Library. Help everyone to build his or her music library.

- Mention that there are many ways to expose your child to a wide range of musical genres and styles.
- Remind parents that free sources of music include: CDs from their local public library, websites such as Spotify, Pandora, and YouTube, and local concerts.
- Recommend seeking out music from around the world. For instance, the Putumayo label produces collections from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and also highlights musical traditions such as Cajun, bluegrass, and jazz.
- On a large sheet of paper or white board, have parents list their children's favorite songs and artists, as well as songs that they used to love as a child. Encourage participants to add songs from their home cultures or from countries they have visited.
- Encourage participants to mention rhymes, chants, and finger plays, too.
- Now choose one of the songs on your list and play it on your computer, or play a favorite children's song that you have brought from home.

- Have a quick dance party. To help everyone feel comfortable, you might encourage participants to just sway or clap their hands.

Section Two: Learning through Singing and Dancing

Leading Your Group

Begin by sharing the learning benefits of singing and dancing. You can mention:

- Children build important math and literacy skills as they have fun singing and dancing.
- Songs are a great way to build vocabulary. Word meanings will be far more memorable when set to a tune.
- Songs also help children to hear the sounds of language and the syllables in words. These will become key skills as children learn to read.
- As children move to music, they'll begin to discover rhythm and how the beat of a drum or the strumming of a guitar actually makes a pattern. Patterns are a part of understanding geometry, arithmetic, and natural science.
- Music is full of number words and concepts. Whether it's the number of beats in a pattern or the number of "monkeys jumping on the bed," music means counting, adding, subtracting, and fractions. Music means math!
- Through dancing, children gain flexibility and strength and an awareness of the physical spaces around them.
- Through music, children also build listening and comprehension skills. These abilities become key to following directions and understanding others inside and outside of school.

Chat and Share

Encourage parents to think about the things children learn through singing and dancing. This will help them to reflect upon the academic benefits of music and movement. You can ask:

- What have you noticed your child learning as he sings and dances?
- Do you recall learning through music and movement as a child? What do you remember from your early experiences with music and movement?

NOTE: Write down any additional questions that you would like to include. Is there a favorite action song or finger play from your own life that you can share? Add that, too.

Watching and Learning, Part 1

Play a clip from "Singing & Dancing." Begin at 01:33, as the cousins are singing "Five Little Monkeys," and end at 02:46, as Ronan and his dad play the harmonica. Let parents know:

- In the video, we'll see children building literacy skills through music.
- Notice the words and concepts that they are learning as they sing and dance.

Reviewing and Reflecting

Lead a conversation about things parents noticed in the video. You might ask:

- In the video, Marcello sings the ABCs. What rhymes, chants, or songs have you used as teaching tools?
- As Eloise and Otis sing "Ring around the Rosy," they actually move around in a circle. Moving to the words can actually help to teach word meaning and build vocabulary. Thinking about what you saw, what are some other ways that music and movement builds literacy skills?

Trying It Out

Meaning through Movement. Share songs that teach word meanings.

- Ask parents to volunteer names of songs in which you act out the meaning of the song as you sing it, such as "The Wheels on the Bus." If parents are willing, have them demonstrate how the song and hand and/or body motions go.
- Be ready to perform (or teach) additional examples of action songs, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes," and "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." You can also include finger plays such as "Where is Thumbkin?" and "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and knee-bouncing rhymes such as "Hico, Hico Caballito" or "Trot, Trot to Boston."
- Help parents think about how fine motor skills and coordination are developed and strengthened through finger plays.
- Have parents pair up and teach one another their favorite rhyme, action song, or finger play. If both parents know the same one, they can enjoy singing it together.
- Come back together as a group and invite the pairs to share their songs and chants with everyone. Brainstorm additional ways that songs can help children learn new words and meanings.

Watching and Learning, Part 2

Play another clip from "Singing & Dancing." Begin at 04:00, as Aliyah, Rosonn, and Lamarques are making their own beats, and end at 04:05, as their song ends. Let parents know:

- In the video, we'll see children building math skills as they sing and dance.
- Notice how music offers a physical way to explore numbers and patterns.

Reviewing and Reflecting

Lead a conversation about things parents noticed in the video. You might ask:

- In the video, it looks like the children are just having fun, but as they stomp and clap they are actually learning about math. What math skills did you notice?
- What are some other math skills that could have been taught or explored during their jam session?

Trying It Out

Count the Beat. Help parents discover the math in music!

- Clap out a rhythm and encourage parents to repeat the pattern.
- Using slash marks, make the pattern on a chalkboard or large piece of paper. Your pattern might look like this: / /// / /// / ///.
- Now encourage parents to count as they repeat your pattern, and draw their attention to the fact that the rhythm is actually 1,1-2-3; 1,1-2-3; 1,1-2-3.
- Explain that even if children aren't counting yet, they are building knowledge about numbers as they hear rhythms and move along to the beat.
- Distribute paper and pencils and have parents write their own patterns. Encourage them to trade their pattern with someone else in the room so that they can try to clap it out.
- Gather as a group and brainstorm counting and rhythm games that families might play together.

Section Three: Do It Yourself

Leading Your Group, Part 1

Discuss some of the many ways that parents can make up their own songs. You can mention:

- Children love hearing made-up songs. They especially love songs that feature their own name and familiar people, places, and things.

- One easy way to make up a song is to change the words of one you already know. You might use your child's name instead of "baby" in "Pat-a-Cake," add more body parts to "Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes," or sing about "The Wheels on Your Stroller" or "The Wheels on the Garbage Truck."
- You can make up your own songs to help your child remember the steps to everyday routines, such as brushing teeth, cleaning up, washing hands, and going to bed.
- Your made-up songs don't need to rhyme or even make sense. Your child will have fun listening to silly nonsense words.
- As you make up songs, your child will discover that he can make up songs too. If you want to, try making up songs using different styles of music—country, rap, rock, and so on.

Chat and Share

Encourage parents to share songs they sing at home that they've made up. This will begin a conversation of how easy and helpful it can be to make up songs. You can ask:

- Have you made up any songs at home? What prompted you to make up your own songs? What are the songs about?
- Are the songs helpful? Do they comfort your child or help with transitions?

NOTE: Be ready to share one of your own made-up songs in case participants are shy or don't have any examples to contribute. In your notebook, write additional questions that you would like to include.

Watching and Learning

Watch a clip from "Singing & Dancing." Begin at 01:00, as Ronan is serenaded, and end at 01:29, as he falls asleep.

Reviewing and Reflecting

Lead a conversation about things parents noticed in the video. Let parents know:

- We see Ronan's dad changing the words of a familiar tune so that the lyrics are all about Ronan and his day. Listening to the details of his own adventures soothes Ronan and helps him fall asleep. Ask: *What are your child's favorite bedtime lullabies? Do you ever make up new words to familiar songs?*
- What songs does your child like to hear when he wakes up? What songs motivate him to clean up a mess or eat his dinner?

Trying It Out

“Routine” Songs. Have parents work in small groups to come up with a song that will be helpful to their daily routines.

- You can suggest that they make up a clean-up song, a naptime song, a getting-ready-for-school song. Parents can set their song to a familiar tune such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." You can also provide an example of an existing song, such as “Brush Your Teeth” by Raffi, and have parents adapt the words to another routine.
- Ask the groups to write down the lyrics that they come up with.
- Encourage parents to share their lyrics and, if they feel comfortable, to sing their song.

Leading your Group, Part 2

Discuss some of the many ways that parents can create their own instruments. You can mention:

- The more children sing and dance with you, the more they will develop a love of music.
- Making music at home does not require any special instruments.
- Found objects and everyday household items can become instruments. Children will be just as happy banging a wooden spoon on a pot or creating a low whistle by blowing over a bottle as they would with drums and flutes.
- When children are encouraged to see everything as a potential instrument, they'll be empowered to make music everywhere they go.
- Before you "throw it out," see if it can make music. If it can, hang on to it. You never know when you'll need instruments for an impromptu family band!

Chat and Share

Ask parents to share ideas for homemade instruments. This will help them to brainstorm ways to make their own instruments. You can ask:

- Has anyone already made homemade instruments? What was your experience like? What materials were good to have on hand? Did your child help out?
- What are some ways that you have used your homemade instruments?

NOTE: Write down any additional questions that you would like to include. Is there an anecdote from your own life—or a homemade instrument—that you can share? Add that, too.

Watching and Learning

Watch a clip from "Singing & Dancing." Begin the video at 03:00, as Ronan and his dad are playing homemade instruments, and end at 03:16, as Eloise and Otis rock out by shaking spice packets. Let parents know:

- In the video, we'll see children playing homemade instruments.
- Notice other objects that might make good sounds.

Reviewing and Reflecting

Lead a conversation about things parents noticed in the video. You might ask:

- In the video, Ronan's dad suggests shaking a tin full of rice or beating on a pot to make a rhythm. What other instruments might you make using these same everyday objects?
- Eloise and her brother shake spice packets to make music. Homemade music can be a great way to occupy your child in the kitchen. How might you set up a music "lab"? Where would you put the lab? What materials would you make available to your child?

Trying It Out

Family Music Parade. Encourage parents to make their own instruments for a family band.

- Distribute everyday household items to the group. You can include: dinner spoons, plastic water bottles, cereal boxes, rubber bands, lids from jam jars, uncooked rice, stocking "egg" holders, egg cartons, milk cartons, chopsticks, paper towel rolls, wax paper, tape, paper clips, rocks, dry leaves, sandpaper, and a broom.
- Have parents work in small groups. Challenge the groups to create an instrument using the items that you brought and/or things they find in their pockets or purses.
- Encourage parents to share their instruments with one another and then with the whole group. Take turns having the groups lead a music parade. They can show off their homemade instrument as they lead everyone in moving around the room. As participants follow, they can copy the leader's sounds and actions.
- Encourage parents to lead a music parade at home. Their children will love being part of a family band!

Wrapping Up

As you say goodbye to your group, remind parents that they have everything they need to encourage their little ones to enjoy the benefits of singing and dancing. You might say:

- Right from the start, children love music and love to move.
- Singing is a wonderful way to soothe your child, ease transitions, and celebrate together.
- Music and movement provide opportunities for sharing your culture with your child.
- As children sing and dance, they gain math and literacy skills that will help get them get ready for school.
- You don't need anything special to make music. Homemade instruments and made-up songs will be fun for all.

If possible, leave time so parents can mingle and chat with one another, talk with you individually, and browse the books, CDs, and other materials you've brought.

MASSACHUSETTS EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

The Singing and Dancing workshop has been designed to meet the Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers. The purpose for these guidelines, developed by the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children for the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) in 2010, is to provide a comprehensive view of the development of infants and toddlers while documenting the experiences that support this development. The guidelines are for parents as well as early education and care professionals.

The first three years of life are a time of rapid brain development and learning. This time becomes critically important for infants and toddlers as they develop foundations for learning. As their children's first teachers, parents have the greatest impact on their children's lives.

Early learning and development are multidimensional. Developmental domains (categories or dimensions of children's learning and development) are highly interrelated. Development in one domain influences development in other domains.

For more information about the guidelines, including definitions of terms, visit <http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/curriculum-and-learning/>.

The Singing and Dancing workshop aligns with the following guidelines:

FOR BABIES (0-15 MONTHS)

Language and Communication Development

- Demonstrates the meaning of language by listening.
- Develops expressive language.
- Engages in social communication.
- Develops in multiple language acquisitions when considered a dual language learner.

Cognitive Development

- Refines reflexes into purposeful actions.
- Develops memory skills.
- Performs simple actions to make things happen and displays a beginning understanding of cause and effect.
- Discovers creative expression through music, drama, dance, and art experiences.

Social and Emotional Development

- Relates to, trusts, and becomes attached to consistent educators.
- Acts as a social being by engaging with others and the world around them.
- Experiences and expresses a range of emotions.

- Develops a positive sense of self.

Approaches to Learning

- Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner.
- Becomes intentional and persistent in their learning and discovery.

FOR TODDLERS (12-33 MONTHS)

Language and Communication Development

- Demonstrates understanding of spoken (or signed) language.
- Develops expressive language.
- Engages in social communication.
- Develops in multiple language acquisitions when considered a dual-language learner.

Cognitive Development

- Develops increasing memory of past events and knowledge.
- Discovers creative expression through music, drama, dance, and art experiences.

Social and Emotional Development

- Relates to, trusts, and becomes attached to consistent educators.
- Experiences and expresses a range of emotions.
- Progresses in regulating own feelings and behavior.
- Develops a positive sense of self.

Approaches to Learning

- Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner.
- Becomes intentional and persistent in their learning and discovery.