

# How Young Children Learn Music: Immersion and the Power of Play

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We believe that children learn music in the same way they learn a language.

- Listening
- Exploring/Babbling
- Imitation
- Composition/Improvisation
- Reading/Writing

Immersive music classes prompt skill development and prepare young children for future “formal” music instruction.

## Immersion Checklist

- Hello/Goodbye Songs
- Pitch Exploration
- Fragment/Echo/Call and Response Songs
- Simple Songs
- Solo singing
- Songtales/Ballads
- Movement Exploration
- Movement for Form and Expression
  - Fingerplays (Chants)
  - Action Songs
  - Circle Games
  - Movement to recorded music (Flow movement; Phrase Movement; Beat Choreography)
- Beat Motion Activities
- Transition Songs
- Songs Without Words
- Pattern Practice
- Instruments (shakers; jingles; tone blocks; shape drums; etc.)
- Listening
- Iconic Notation
- Audiation
- Multiple Tonalities and Meters
- End of class wrap-up



**Children learn through play!**



## Descriptions:

Opening Song (to establish routine) – Using an age appropriate opening song at the beginning of each class creates community and immediately reminds students that this is a time for music.

Multiple tonalities (at least 2 tonalities per class) – Most American music is in major. It is important that children be exposed to other tonalities (minor, Dorian, Mixolydian, etc.)

Multiple meters (at least 2 meters per class) – Most American music is in duple meter. It is important that children move, chant and sing in other meters (triple, 5/8, 7/8) or activities with mixed meters.

Pitch exploration – Children need to experiment with their voices as a first step toward excellence in pitch matching. Consider including a short pitch exploration activity at the beginning of each class.

Movement exploration – Learning to move in a beatful and artful manner is critical to internalizing beat and phrasing. Include as much and as many varieties of movement as possible in each class.

Beat movement – Beat movement songs, games, activities and choreography to recorded music helps students develop beat independency. Make sure to include microbeat, macrobeat, and hyperbeat movement.

Flow and phrase motion – Artfulness is linked to moving in a continuous flowing motion and moving to musical phrases. Such activities can be linked to recorded or sung music. Songs without words lend themselves well to this.

Songs Without Words – Songs without words provide an opportunity for students to focus on pitch without the distraction of lyrics. Songs without words often support flow motion or tonal pattern activities. They are also accessible by children with speech delays and ELL and ESL students.

Patterns and/or literacy component – Research about the use of short patterns that focus on a particular tonal or rhythmic element quickly lead students to mastering musical grammar (Neutral syllables only for Grades K and 1). Sequential literacy steps used in proper order easily lead students through the skills of decoding, creating, reading and writing music.

Creative component – The 2014 Music Standards and the Sunshine State Standards mandate that students engage in some manner of creative process.

Songtales/Ballads – encourage musical listening and provide students with an excellent musical role model. This is a time for the teacher to sing FOR the students.

Opportunities for **solo singing/chanting** – Used for assessment purposes and opportunities to hear themselves in comparison for others.

Audiation – provide opportunities for students to “hear music in the mind with understanding.”

Iconic notation – Use pictures to represent phrases and macro/microbeats. Iconic notation can be used to prompt audiation, sequencing, creating, and rhythmic decoding.

End of class wrap-up – a very quick review of any target musical element.

**Sample class. This session was designed to be a first class for K/1.** It purposely has limited locomotor movement and there is more emphasis on listening (learning by immersion) than in successive classes.

*Such a Making a Circle* (major; duple) Transition song. Continuous flow motion. Reinforcement of sol/do. Resting tone.

Musical Cutoff Sign

Vocal Exploration: Glissandos. Illustrative and asynchronous movement.

Magic Microphone

Duple Patterns (neutral syllable) Prompts immediate response/participation. Vocal inflection. Preparation for a future chant using iconic notation to prompt rhythmic decoding (Class 6).

*Hello Song* (major; duple) Echo song prompts immediate singing. Preparation for solo singing.

Transition to Sitting—*Everybody Have a Seat* (major/duple). Beat and hyperbeat movement.

*It's So Good to See You* (major; duple) Preparation for introducing audiation and learning motions for future movement choreography (Class 4). Beat movement. Learning to follow a prep breath.

*No More Pie!* (minor; duple) Echo song prompts immediate singing. Preparation for solo singing. Illustrative movement.

*Chop! Chop! Chippity Chop!* (chant/triple) Combines chanting, beat movement, creativity, solo singing, continuous flow motion, song without words, reinforcement of sol/do.

*Frog in a Meadow* (major/duple) Simple song sequence prompts listening and singing. Illustrative movement.

*Walk When the Drum Says Walk* (duple) Listening. Walking and stopping. Audiation. Spatial awareness. Following directions.

*Higgle Haggle* (Mixolydian; duple) Beat and asynchronous movement.

*Old Obidiah* (major/duple) Listening. Anticipation and hyperbeat movement

Transition Song *Look to the Window* (Dorian; 5/8)

*We're Floating Down the River/Riding in a Buggy* (major; 6/8 and duple)(Extra activity if necessary) Beat and Hyperbeat movement. Contrasting meters

*Three Bears With a Beat* (duple) Listening. Vocal exploration and inflection. Beat movement. Musical cut off sign assessment. Immersion in complex rhythms.

End of class wrap-up.

