



Using Music with Young Children During Daily Routines

By Petra Kern

You have most likely noticed that young children often accompany their play with singing, chanting, rhyming, dancing, listening to music, or playing their favorite instruments. For instance, young children can often be heard making loud motor noises while playing with toy cars, making up rhymes while dressing dolls, or inventing songs while playing in the bathtub. Music is a natural way for children to explore the world and to interact with their social environment. As such, music is an exceptional medium and motivator for encouraging and supporting young children's learning and development during daily transitions and routines.

Music can also encourage and facilitate inclusion. It can be used to create opportunities for children with disabilities to successfully participate in daily life. It should be noted that children with disabilities are not necessarily disabled

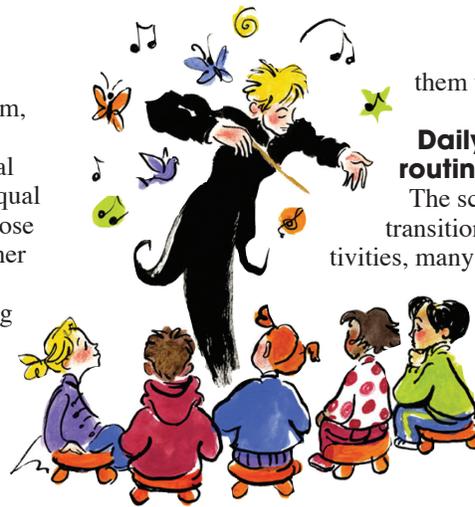
in their musicality. Children with autism, for example, often demonstrate musical aptitudes that are equal to or higher than those of children with other disabilities or their typically developing peers. Because of children's natural affinity for music, adults often incorporate music when they are spending time or working with children. Parents hum lullabies while rocking their babies, many early childhood educators use music to structure classroom activities and enhance learning, and, as a music therapist, I often plan musical experiences for specific purposes such as prompting through routines or cuing transitions from one activity to the next. Music can be used in countless ways to capture children's attention and guide

them through the day.

Daily transitions and routines

The school day is filled with transitions, routines, and activities, many of which are repeated throughout the day. For many children — both those with and without disabilities — transitioning from one activity to the next can be a challenge. One of the

most obvious transitions is the transition from home to the Head Start center or other child-care location. In addition, children and teachers also need to follow routines such as cleaning up after free play, hand washing before breakfast, settling down for circle time and getting ready for outdoor play. These routines require children to memorize and follow a sequence of steps. In order to help manage daily transitions and routines successfully, children need structure, predictability and





Music during Daily Transitions & Routines can be used to:

- Cue an activity or event
- Prompt a sequence of steps
- Stimulate learning in all developmental areas
- Distract from undesired behaviors
- Reinforce positive behavior
- Create a stimulating or relaxing environment

consistency. Expectations should be clearly conveyed to them and ideally repeated by all of the adults in the same manner. Music and sounds are excellent cues that can be used to signal and structure transitions and routines. Music can also be used to convey a message or a sequence of steps that needs to be memorized and recalled in different situations. When applied intentionally and used in a systematic manner, music can be a wonderful tool for helping you manage the classroom and enhance children's learning. Song interventions can easily be embedded into daily routines with minimal time and effort but with tremendous results. As an early childhood professional, allow yourself the freedom to tap into your natural affinity for music and add a little harmony to the day!



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This article has been summarized by the editor, Elan Forman. The full length article is available in the "Children & Families, 22 (2) issue."



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