

# 🎵 Sing into Reading! 🎵

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nancy@nancymusic.com

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**W**hy sing? Quite simply, children *need* music to fully develop, and these days children have fewer and fewer opportunities for singing in their lives. Using songs in story times is a wonderful way to involve even the youngest children in language, and to model that involvement to parents and caregivers. By encouraging adults to sing with their children every day, you are helping them build relationships and a love of language.

- 🌀 **Music Powers the Brain:** Simply singing with a child connects neural pathways, and increases the ability to retain information. In other words, it builds memory. Music builds a strong sense of rhythm, which leads to a better ability to understand and produce language. Singing develops spatial reasoning, which allows children to recognize patterns and later helps in problem-solving. Songs are rich in vocabulary and by nature build phonological awareness.
- 🌀 **Music Influences Us:** Advertisers know this! That's why they spend millions of dollars on jingles. You can use music to influence children in positive ways. Using music, you can change a mood, stimulate creativity, and direct energy toward movement or stillness.
- 🌀 **Music Connects Us:** Because music *is a language*, it can bring together a diverse group of people, and by simply singing together, give them a shared experience. You don't need to know what the words mean to understand the intention of a song. Until recently in our human history, people and cultures were connected by the songs passed down from one generation to the next. This also built a feeling of community, from work songs to lullabies, nonsense, and story songs.
- 🌀 **Music Transports Us:** Music transports us in time and emotion. It can take us to far away lands, or back into our own childhoods. As we sing and do fingerplays, we are brought into the child's world, where everything is newly discovered.
- 🌀 **Music Comforts Us:** Repeating the same songs in story time give children security, and memories that can be called on to comfort for a lifetime. Starting your story time with a theme song, singing a lullaby, and using an ending song are just some of the ways you can provide this musical comfort. All human beings find comfort in the familiar.
- 🌀 **When parents and caregivers** sing with their babies and children, *they are calmed and comforted as well.*

"Advanced brain-scan technology reveals that when children participate in music, the brain 'lights up like a Christmas tree' in many different areas."

- *Young Children*, March 2006

## What Are The Six Early Reading Skills?

- ❖ **Vocabulary-** Knowing the names of things
- ❖ **Print Motivation-** Being interested in and enjoying books
- ❖ **Print Awareness-** Noticing print, how to handle a book, how to follow words on a page
- ❖ **Letter Knowledge-** Knowing letters are different from each other, knowing their names and sounds
- ❖ **Narrative Skills-** Being able to describe things and events and tell stories
- ❖ **Phonological Awareness-** Being able to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words

## How Does Singing Help Teach Children These Skills?

- ❖ Our brains are uniquely wired to respond to music, from *before* the time we are born.
- ❖ Because singing is interactive, it involves even the youngest children in language.
- ❖ Children learn language through repetition, and as songs are repeated the rhythm of the words is internalized.
- ❖ Singing brings a natural awareness of words, as each syllable or sound in a word gets a different note.
- ❖ Nursery rhymes and finger plays present a wide vocabulary, and teach sentence structure, story concepts and comprehension.
- ❖ The only things we remember word-for-word from our childhoods, are childhood songs and some rhymes!
- ❖ Children learn oral language before written language, and the more experience they have with oral language, the better prepared they will be for interpreting written words.
- ❖ Active participation in music (singing) increases retention, builds memory, and actually helps grow the brain in young children!
- ❖ Because children naturally love to sing, there is no “teaching,” just doing!

## How Can I Help Children Build Early Literacy Skills Though Singing?

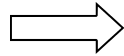
This is the fun part! You are probably already involved in activities that will lay the foundation for early literacy. So just sing and have fun!

- ❖ Sing throughout your day. Research shows that the more music a child experiences, the greater the benefits.
- ❖ Play “complex” music in the classroom. Examples of complex music are classical music or singing rounds. There are some wonderful classical recordings available just for young children.
- ❖ Make up songs, or sing familiar songs like “The Wheels on the Bus” using children’s names.
- ❖ Make up songs about the foods as you prepare them. Emphasize and exaggerate the letter sounds.
- ❖ Collect or make rhythm instruments, and use them to reinforce syllables and keep a steady beat as you sing. The same can be done with clapping.
- ❖ Use “books that sing” often as a daily part of your circle time (suggested titles on resource page). Ask your children's librarian to help you find them in the picture book section.
- ❖ Sing traditional folk songs with your children, as they bring with them a knowledge of our culture and language. Expand on them. For example, if you sing a song from another land, get out a map or globe and show children where the song comes from. Ask questions, and use the opportunity to build those narrative skills!

## Language Acquisition to Early Literacy

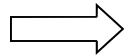
## The Role of Music

Babies develop sense of hearing while still in the womb



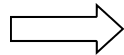
Babies hear and respond to music, which is their first language

Babies are drawn to oral language through rhythm, repetition, and rhyme.



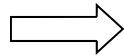
Songs have rhythm, repetition, and rhyme built in.

Babies and young children retain language based on repetition. Finger plays teach vocabulary



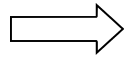
Songs have repetition built in  
Finger plays sung invite children to join in, vocabulary is better retained.

Young children begin to learn that words are made up of smaller sounds



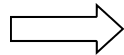
Melodies divide words into smaller parts, and present language in patterns that make sense to the brain example: Alphabet makes no sense until presented in a song where the letters are learned and retained in a pattern

Young children notice print, understand it links to words they hear; follow print to learned nursery rhymes and songs to connect the two.



Children already know melodies to nursery rhymes, and can participate in "reading"  
\*example: children are more likely to sing *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, than say the words if simply read from a book

Children learn sounds of letters and phonemes in preparation for learning to read



Songs naturally divide words into syllables and sounds, so they are internalized. The built in repetition and rhyme increase understanding and retention.