

# The Power of Language: Music and Dance

Music and dance create many learning opportunities for children. Music supports a child's understanding of sounds, patterns, the meaning of words, and memory. When children dance, they are exploring how to control of their bodies as well as developing motor skills and engaging in a form self-expression. The combination of music and dance help the mind and body work together by stimulating connections in a child's growing brain.

## Strategies for Infants and Toddlers

- Play different types of music and invite babies and toddlers to dance and move freely to the music's rhythm/beat while exploring items like scarves or streamers.
- Singing Nursery Rhymes like "Row, Row, Row your Boat", "Humpty Dumpty", "Old McDonald", etc. help children learn sequence, vocabulary, sentence structure, and more.
- Playing simple instruments while listening to music supports their understanding of patterns and rhythm, hand-eye coordination, and language development.

## Strategies for Preschool-Age Children

- Using fingerplays such as "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider", "Wheels on the Bus", "Open Shut Them", "Five Green and Speckled Frogs", etc. help a child learn language, increase vocabulary and increase motor skills.
- Using music or song to transition from one activity to another can support the change in energy level, provide predictability, and make the task fun.
- Playing the music of artists like Ella Jenkins, Raffi, Putamayo Kids, etc. and allowing the children to play instruments, sing, and dance along can help foster self-expression, develop motor skills, explore rhythm and patterns, and increase vocabulary.



## Strategies for School-Age Children

- Using music for activities like "Musical Chairs" and "Freeze Dance" supports gross motor, self-regulation, spatial awareness, and communication skills.
- Having musical instruments, dance props, and various types of recorded music always available for exploration/free choice.
- Invite a guest performer in or have children prepare a performance to share i.e. show & tell, talent show, play, or storytelling.

More ideas and more can be found by accessing the New Mexico Early Learning System: [www.nmels.org](http://www.nmels.org).