

A Song in Your Pocket

Fifteen tried-and-true, song-based imaginative and playful activities
for meaningful inclusion of minimally- and non-speaking children
in an elementary general music classroom

Text by Jessica Corwin
jcorwin@communitymusicschool.com

Artwork by Josephine Silva
Song Index pp. 8-10

May 2023

Child's Bill of Rights

[excerpt]

The National Association for Music Education (formerly MENC) believes that every American child should have the following rights to instruction in music and urges that these rights be recognized and guaranteed by educational funding authorities, school administrators, and the public:

1. As their right, all children at every level must have access to a balanced, comprehensive, and sequential program of music instruction in school taught by teachers qualified in music.
2. As their right, all children must be given the opportunity to explore and develop their musical abilities to the fullest extent possible through instruction that is equal to that provided in the other basic subjects of the curriculum and is responsive to the individual needs of each child... (NAfME, 2016)

Introduction

The National Association for Music Education (USA) established in 1950 that every child has a right to a quality music education that is responsive to their individual needs. Many teachers prepare for and realize careers in elementary general music classrooms using methods and approaches that heavily emphasize active music-making through singing like Kodaly, First Steps in Music, Songworks, and Orff. A heavy focus on singing activities in teacher preparation may leave some educators at a loss for what to do with children who are minimally- and non-speaking due to disabilities including autism, cerebral palsy, selective mutism, hearing loss, neurological disorders, brain injury, intellectual disabilities, and physical impairments (Kennedy Krieger Institute, 2023). There are many textbooks on teaching music to children with disabilities and some of them even include sample activities, but among music education publications there is a distinct lack of “plug and play” volumes of activities for meaningfully including non-speaking children in song-based activities. This volume seeks to start to fill that gap and provide models from which music teachers can start envisioning adaptations of their own favorite classroom activities.

All children have the ability to be musical. Being non-speaking does not in any way mean that children are lacking in musicianship or musical capacity, and they deserve a robust musical education that meets their needs. Speech is not required for playing instruments, dancing, moving expressively, or playing many types of games that are typical and appropriate for children. Some non-speaking children will vocalize wordlessly with music and musical prompts like vocal exploration activities (vocal slides with visuals or props), and some minimally-speaking children will engage in echolalia where they eventually sing back partial or complete songs that they enjoy. Meaningful inclusion for these children happens when they are in no way separate from their classmates; they get to participate to the best of their abilities and

interests and have as much fun as their peers. All of the activities in this book, sometimes with the assistance of choice boards/cards for communication, can reach this goal and help able-bodied, minimally- and non-speaking children develop their musical potential without the use of speech or singing with words before they are ready.

Why Songs?

Each of the activities in this document centers on a song with rhythm, pitch, and lyrics. This is a very intentional choice. Songs are important because they can be replicated without instruments or technology and are used in daily play. The artful nature of these songs and the natural repetitions in a classroom are conducive to enhancing language learning, including receptive language, expressive language and vocabulary. Lyrics engage the imagination, helping to support other cognitive development. Songs are cultural artifacts that help singers and listeners to better understand and experience the song's culture of origin. Most importantly, all of these activities will help to build a sense of community and connection in music classrooms and support minimally- and non-speaking students in full and meaningful participation in Inclusion and sub-separate settings.

Songs are the first way that children carry music "in their pocket" for easy access in everyday life. While this charming phrase is borrowed from a classic children's song, it has a true foundation in studies on children's songs and musical cognition. Anagnostopoulou et al (2013) summarize "it is a well-established fact that the notion of "song" plays a fundamental role in both children's educational and performance practices." (p. 40) These researchers observed that children's songs generally involve short phrases, simple melodic lines, symmetries, circularities and repetitions. Beaman (2018) notes that we tend to mentally replay music with a faster tempo and that is "less unusual in terms of... melodic contour, that is, the pattern of rising and falling of pitches within the tune [is] more in line with established Western musical norms." (p. 15) In combination, these studies suggest that children's songs are rich and appropriate material for repeated audiation outside of music classrooms, extending students' musical learning in time and space.

The use of songs with minimally- and non-speaking students is also an important tool for supporting ongoing and future language development. Echolalia, the act of imitating vocalizations, is a phase that many neurotypical and neurodivergent children go through as they develop functional language (Gillespie, 2022; Marom et al., 2018). In neurotypical children this habit typically fades out by age 3 but in autistic individuals it may persist into late childhood and beyond (Gillespie, 2022; Marom et al., 2018). Echolalia serves to teach rules about linguistic structure as well as tone, intonation and word choice (Gillespie, 2022; Marom et al., 2018). Dr. Heather Gillespie further notes

When looking at music and its role in aiding memory, as well as the ease of retaining melodic information compared to words, it seems to generally take much less effort for someone to process the information included in a sentence or phrase when paired with a melody. This propensity for remembering melodies may be more prevalent in those with ASD because these individuals' deficits in

language processing necessitate the use of music to overcompensate. (2022, p. 4)

These findings taken together suggest that children's songs are powerful tools to help minimally- and non-speaking children develop receptive and expressive language, both through inner hearing and external echolalia, which may develop into true expressive language.

Criteria for Song Inclusion

The activities in this book were carefully selected from among the "greatest hits" of the Adaptive Music Program (AMP) in Springfield, Massachusetts. We know that all of these activities can be successful with a range of learners. Each activity includes the necessary supporting visual materials like choice boards, which are ready to print and use. Several of the songs are in Spanish from various Central American and Caribbean countries and territories to reflect and include the cultural heritage of many of our students. Background information from trusted sources is provided. The songs in this collection all meet the following criteria:

- Song-based:** a musical figure with pitch, rhythm and lyrics gets repeated during the activity.
- The song engages the **imagination** by referencing specific images and/or activities not necessarily present in the classroom. [Note: the hello song Do You Hear My Voice is a necessary exception in this book.]
- The activity involves child-like **play**.
- The activity **does not require students to speak or sing** in order to fully participate in play.
- If the activity requires a **communication tool** like a choice board for non-speaking full participation, the choice board is included. Ready-to-print supporting visuals related to song content are also included.

The songs in this document were encountered by AMP staff in a variety of ways— our own childhood experiences, printed teacher resources, teacher training workshops, web-based teacher resources (often encountered on social media), observing other teachers, and one original composition from a former AMP Teaching Artist.

Choice boards and choice cards

A choice board is an activity-specific pictorial menu of options that someone may choose from, typically by pointing to their preference. This book includes several choice boards that are specific to particular song-based activities. Choice boards not only serve as a communication tool, they help students access their visual memories of prior experiences in a way that verbal suggestions or prompts can't. This makes it easier for a student to make a choice, which is itself

a skill. Because of this, the use of choice boards does not inhibit expressive speech, but actually helps in many cases to stimulate verbal expression.

Some younger students may find a full choice board overwhelming. The choice board may present an excessive amount of information to process at once. Sometimes the issue is not visual processing but making a decision between a large number of choices. For these students, we recommend cutting up a choice board to create choice cards and offering 2-3 choices at a time.

Non-speaking students are generally taught by their special education teachers how to use these tools by pointing or grasping a choice card. The verbal cue for this action varies between instructors; in different classrooms you might give the instruction to “point,” “touch,” “choose” or “pick one,” possibly also accompanied by a pinching hand sign that mimics the selection of a card. Coordinating your language with the child’s other teachers can help them be successful in using this skill. If a child’s use of choice boards is in an emerging stage, you may need to help model the process by moving a card to touch their hand, then praising them for making a choice. If you must do this, try to notice where the child is expressing interest with their eyes so that you truly are affirming their choice and not just making a choice for them. This can be a bridge to their full inclusion, but beware that it does not become a habit that removes their agency or substitutes for their own choice-making. Some students may require generous wait time to express their choice.

About Inclusion

Non-speaking students are entitled to a high quality musical education that supports their musical development. All children learn best through play, including when it comes to building foundational musical skills like matching pitch, developing a sense of tonal center, keeping a steady beat, discerning rhythms, and becoming sensitive to musical expression. Students do not need to speak or sing in order to grow in these areas! What they need most is aural and physical engagement with strong musical models. All of the songs and activities in this book facilitate that foundational growth. These activities are not selected for teaching any particular musical concept, just to experience joy through music, which lays the foundation for future music learning and making.

The activities in this book can generally be used with non-speaking students in either an Inclusion or sub-separate class grouping, although the abilities of any particular group should be considered. For example, a sub-separate Special Education class may or may not be ready to walk around a circle to play A La Ronda Ronda. Peer models can be powerful for all sorts of learners, so do encourage all students to participate to the best of their abilities. In other words, students who want to and can sing along or for the class should be encouraged to do so! The important thing to remember is that every student should be welcome to participate to the degree that they are willing and able. No one should be left out of communal musical joy because of their abilities.

Remember that one of the best approaches to meeting the needs of students with disabilities is to offer a variety of ways for them to engage with a lesson. Sometimes watching and listening, or even parallel play within earshot and/or sightlines of a music lesson is the best

way for a kiddo to engage. Maybe they want to do movements but only sitting down, even if there is no physical limitation for standing or locomoting; that is still appropriate engagement. Using a choice board is offering a choice. Offering a choice board does not mean that a choice needs to be made nonverbally; in fact, minimally-speaking students will often speak their choice while pointing to an image on a visual menu.

One other note on inclusion: everyone benefits from taking breaks from demand at times. Some of the activity suggestions are one-kid-at-a-time activities like playing a single instrument (others can still sing/move) or doing a solo action (taking a walk during Riding in a Buggy). These are opportunities to organically build in breaks for peers as well as for the music teacher to connect with individuals. "Waiting my turn" alternate activities like patting a steady beat are possible, but should be weighed against the value of individual breaks.

About Materials

One critical tool in our kits never interacts directly with our students but is nonetheless essential: a [home laminator](#). The home laminator typically costs \$30-60 USD and requires the separate purchase of [laminating pouches](#) for ongoing use, but produces a sturdier final product than large school building laminators that are commonly found in teacher copy rooms. The pouches are slightly larger than a piece of printer paper, making it simple to laminate a choice board for durability. Visuals that are going to be handled less by students (for example, the apple for A La Ronda Ronda or the snowflake for Dancing Like Snowflakes and Make a Snowball) can be laminated or stored in a three-ring binder [sheet protector](#). Printed materials often don't survive their first school day without protection so we usually laminate everything!

Creating choice cards from a choice board requires a few additional steps. The most functional and durable choice cards are made by taping a cutout image from a choice board onto a card-sized rectangle of construction paper, and laminating these cards with ample margins between them inside a lamination pouch (usually four cards in one pouch). Cut them out with extra sealed lamination material around each edge, otherwise the laminating material may pull apart and you will need to start over.


There are two primary ways that we use instruments in these activities. Some activities expect that every class member will have their own small percussion instrument, like a shaker egg for Sitting in the Soup. Other activities recommend the use of a harmonic instrument like a guitar, ukulele or autoharp. (The most common accompaniment instrument on our team is a tenor ukulele or a concert ukulele with low G tuning, either of which provides a fuller sound than traditional ukulele tuning, but is more easily portable than a guitar. While we often sing a cappella, the use of accompaniment instruments by teachers helps to introduce complexity, variety and compelling rhythms to the musical worlds of our students.) As long as students' actions don't risk breaking strings, they are welcome to strum these instruments however feels right to them: one finger, multiple fingers, finger pad, fingernail, with or without hand-over-hand assistance, etc. We manage the chord changes for them (with one exception for some students: the chorus of El Coquí alternates tonic and dominant chords, which some students are able to manage on autoharp with minimal support). Strumming should line up with the sung melody of a song. Ideally the student will play a steady beat, but if their pacing is irregular, the chord

changes and melody should follow along to give the student maximum impact on the musical performance.

Another interesting tool for including non-speaking students is a recording button, commercially known as a Big Mack, although affordable off-brand [alternatives](#) are available. This large, single, free-standing button can be held down to record up to ten seconds of audio, then pressed again to play it back as many times as needed. A pair or set of these can be used to give students choices, similar to a choice board (e.g. press the red button to say “cow” or the green button to say “cat”). The recording on the button can also be a musical phrase, which allows a student to “sing” on cue in a song. Try using the refrain that is the final line of a song like “down by the bay,” “E-I-E-I-O” or “all through the town.” This allows the student to demonstrate their listening and musicianship through their timing.

Song Title ☀ = an all-time favorite	Doc Page	Recommended grades	Language	Activity	Materials
Do You Hear My Voice?	11	All	English	Hello song to begin class. Prompts students to provide grounding sensory input to themselves.	None
Old Favorites: Old MacDonald Had a Farm and The Wheels on the Bus	12	PK-3rd	English	Many variations of classic children's songs. Students select farm animals using choice board. Students accompany song with instruments. Students "sing" by using recording buttons or ASL.	Farm animal and bus choice boards (pp. 13-14). Maybe: recording buttons, strummed instrument.
Icky Sticky Bubble Gum ☀	15	PK-3	English	Movement scarves represent sticky bubble gum that gets stretched and "stuck" on various body parts, chosen by students.	Body part choice board (p. 16), movement scarves.
Making a Snowball	17	PK-3	English	Scrunch up a movement scarf into a "snowball," count to three and throw it vertically in the air.	Snowball visual (p. 18). Movement scarves.
Spinning Like Snowflakes	19	PK-3	English	Teacher sings and accompanies while students spin and dance until "all fall down."	Snowflake visual (p. 18). Accompaniment instrument.
Itty Bitty Bat	20	PK-3	English	Teacher sings and accompanies while students fly, balance on one foot, bounce, and more.	Bat visual (p. 22). Accompaniment instrument.
A La Ronda Ronda	23	PK-2	Spanish (Mexico)	Students walk around the circle and fall down at the end of the song.	Apple visual (p. 25).
Cheki Morena ☀	25	PK-8	Spanish (Puerto	Shake a chosen body part. At the end of the song, all yell "¡ue!" and jump to form an X with	Body part choice board (p. 16).

			Rico)	your body. For older students, an additional verse employs simple dance steps.	
San Serení	26	PK-3	Spanish (Mexico)	Students act out chosen occupations like builder, farmer, and stylist.	Occupation choice board (p. 27).
El Coquí 🌟	28	PK-8	Spanish (Puerto Rico)	Students take turns with engaging frog puppet. Students take turns accompanying or performing on instruments.	Maybe: frog puppet. Harmonic and melodic color-coded notation (pp. 30-31). Accompaniment instrument (autoharp etc.). Melodic instrument (boomwhackers etc.).
Leak Kanseng	32	PK-5	Cambodian	A scarf is hidden by the teacher and found by a designated guesser. May be hidden with classmates or under cups/bowls.	Scarf. Maybe: three cups or bowls.
We Are the Dinosaurs	33	PK-3	English	Students act out dinosaur behavior like marching, eating and sleeping.	Teacher accompaniment instrument.
Riding in a Buggy 🌟	34	PK-3	English	Students select a mode of transportation and take a walk around the classroom with teacher.	Transportation choice board (p. 35).
Fruit Salad (The Fruit Canon)	36	PK-3	English	Students select a fruit to place on top of an imaginary fruit salad. They play shaker eggs with singing and freeze when directed.	Fruit visual & choice board (pp. 38-39). Shaker eggs.

Sitting in the Soup 	39	PK-3	English	Students respond to alternating slow and fast sections by playing and resting shaker eggs.	Shaker eggs. Teacher accompaniment instrument.
--	----	------	---------	--	---

Do You Hear My Voice?

a hello song

Neuba Silva

Do you hear my voice? Reach up high. Do you hear my voice? Reach for the sky.

5
Do you hear my voice? Then wave hel-lo. Hel-lo, hel-lo! Hel-lo, hel-lo!

Origin: Neuba Silva is a Brazilian-born music educator who holds an MMT and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts. She is also a former Teaching Artist for the Adaptive Music Program. This song is used with permission.

Notes: This is one of our favorite hello songs that is built into the weekly routine of many lessons with non-speaking students. It signals to students that Music is beginning and it gives sensory input to help promote grounding and self-regulation. This is the only song in this book without an element of imagination– the lyrics are strictly instructional– and is provided as an option for meaningful inclusion of non-speaking students in essential routines.

Activity: At the beginning of class, this song is used as a warmup. “Let’s check on your listening ears.” Teacher sings 2-5 verses and models the actions for students to join. Substitute other actions for reaching high: give a squeeze (hug yourself), drum on your legs, take a big breath, tickle yourself, stretch out wide/reach to the side, rub your face, rub your hands (together), hammer your hands (fists), squeeze/stretch your hands, etc. Altered verses might not include rhymes and may introduce a new action in place of waving, for example: “Do you hear my voice? Give a squeeze. Do you hear my voice? Give a squeeze. Do you hear my voice? Then sway hello. Hello, hello! Hello, hello!”

Old Favorites: The Wheels on the Bus and...

Old MacDonald

American folk song

G C G D7 G C G D7 G

Old Mac-Don-ald had a farm, E I E I O. And on that farm he had a cow, E I E I O. With a

5 moo moo here and a moo moo there; Here a moo, there a moo, ev-ry-where a moo moo!

7 C G D7 G

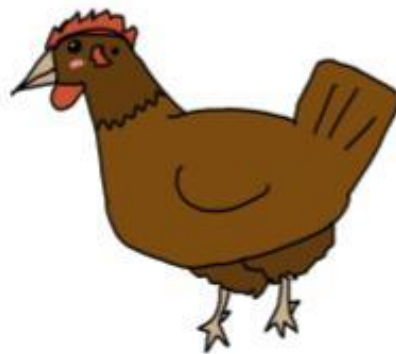
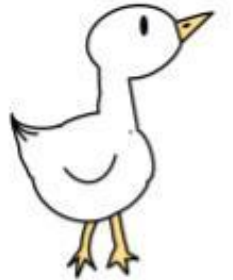
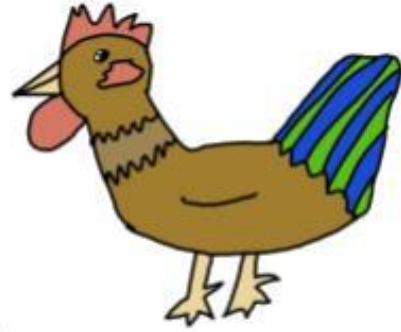
Old Mac - Don - ald had a farm, E I E I O!

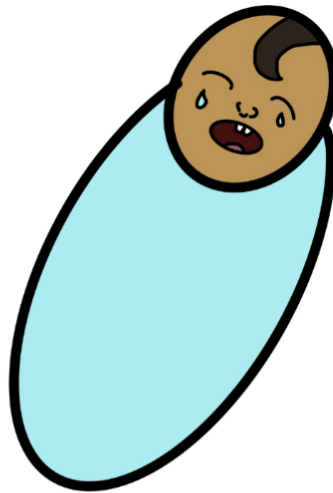
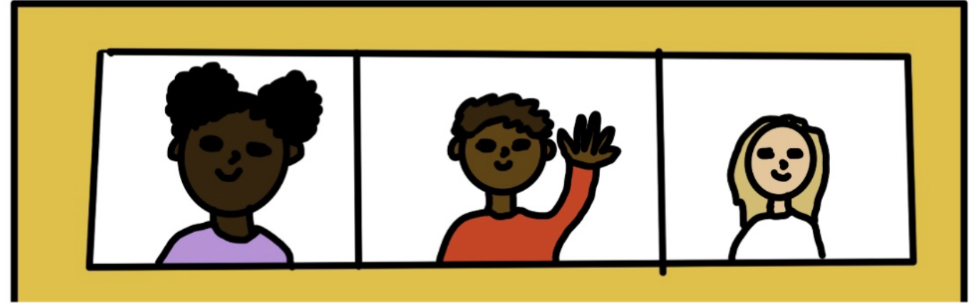
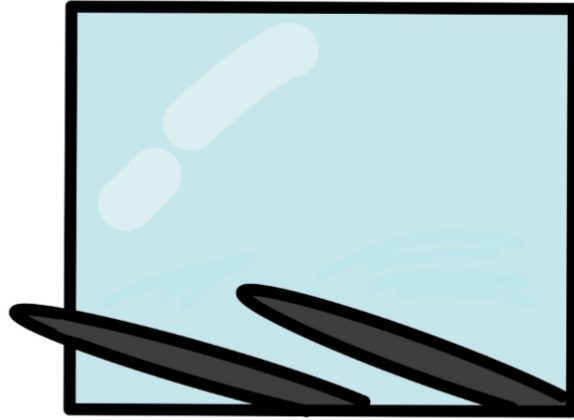
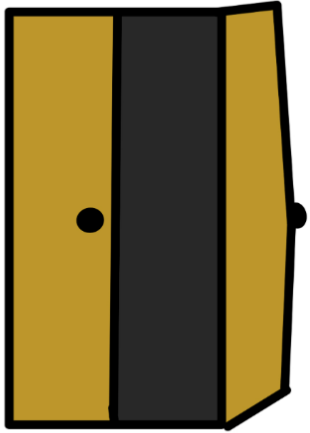
Origin: The original version of this song was [probably](#) written for an opera by Thomas d'Urfey in 1706. The version provided here is a standard American variant.

Notes: Sometimes using familiar music is a great hook to engaging students in a new classroom setting. We often use Old MacDonald and [The Wheels on the Bus](#) (not included due to copyright restrictions) to start the year and build relationships with students. The repetitive nature of these songs can be helpful in developing speech.

Activities:

- Students use the farm animal choice board (included) to request animals for Old MacDonald. Teacher sings the requested verse. Students sing as they are able.
- Students use the bus choice board (included) to request verses of The Wheels on the Bus. Teacher sings the requested verse. Students sing and participate in corresponding fingerplays as they are able.
- Students request verses to either song and strum the teacher's instrument while the teacher manages the chord progression.
- Teacher records an animal name (sung at pitch) OR animal sound on a Big Mack button. Student presses the button at the appropriate moment in the song. If multiple buttons are available, each button can play the name/sound of a different animal and be labeled with an image from the choice board.
- An activity mashup: use the farm animal choice board to select animals to ride the bus! "The dog on the bus goes woof, woof, woof..."





Icky Sticky Bubble Gum

David Landau



I got that i - cky stick - y oo - ey goo - ey bub ble gum, bub ble gum,

5



bub ble gum. I got that ick - y stick - y oo - ey goo - ey bub ble gum and it's stuck to my

9

Slow and dramatic



head! So I pull and I pull and I pull it off!

Origin: David Landau is an award-winning Wisconsin (USA)-based children's entertainer. His work can be found online at happytrails.biz, [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#). [This song](#) is used with permission.

Notes: This is an all-time favorite of our students!

Activity: Every member of the class is given one movement scarf, which is their pretend bubble gum. Students use the body part choice board to select a body part. (Note: for this activity, cover or remove the "tongue" option from your choice board or card deck!) For the first eight measures of the song, each person [stretches and collapses](#) their "gum" in a clapping motion. On the ninth measure, everyone sticks their gum to the chosen body part. After the fermata, one hand holds an end of the scarf to the body part while the other hand dramatically pulls the other end away. On the final note, the scarf releases from the chosen body part,



Make a Snowball

Katie Norregaard

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first two lines of the song. The second staff contains the melody for the final line, including a triplet of eighth notes and a three-measure rest.

Fill your hands with snow, Squeeze it 'round like so,

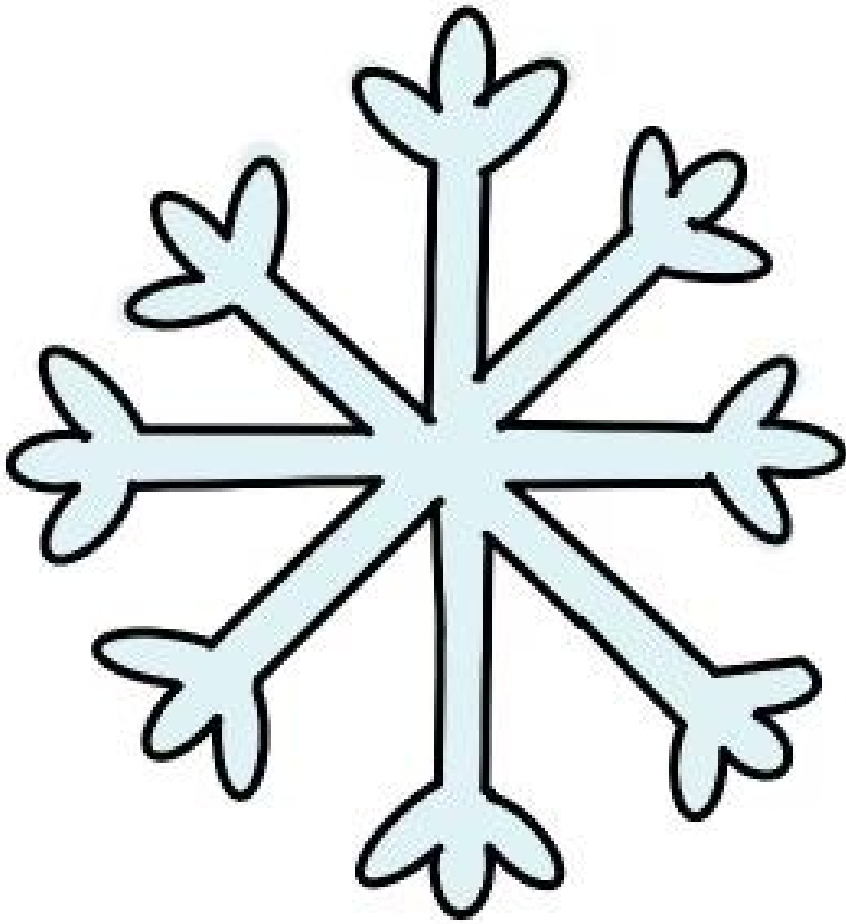
³
al-most time for us to go... One, two, three, and throw!

Origin: Katie Norregaard (aka "Miss Katie") is a children's music songwriter, performer, and teaching artist based in Chicago. Her songs, videos, and resources can be found online under @MissKatieSings and at misskatiesings.com. [This song](#) is used with permission.

Notes: This is a great activity for developing joint attention and motor skills! Students are highly motivated to throw their "snowball."

Activity: Every member of the class is given one movement scarf, which is their pretend snow. During the first three measures, everyone gathers their "snow" into a snowball contained in their hands. On the final note everyone throws their scarf straight up in the air (not at other people).

- Once the song is familiar, ask different members of the class to count to three.
- Students may choose different countdown numbers (i.e. "one, two, three, four, five, throw!")



Spinning Like Snowflakes

Jenny Focht, MT-BC

Brightly, with swung sixteenth notes

C F G7

Spin-ning like snow flakes, spin ning like snow flakes, round and round and round.

3 C F G7

Spin-ning like snow flakes, spin ning like snow flakes, round and round and round.

5 F Em7 Dm7 G7 C F Em7

Spark-ling and danc-ing and twir-ling as they fall, Lots and lots of snow flakes and

8 Dm7 G7 C

lots of fun for all! Spin-ning like snow flakes, spin ning like snow flakes

11 F G7 C

round and round and round, Spin-ning like snow flakes, spin ning like snow flakes

13 F G7 Dm7 G7 C G7 C

round and round and round un - til they all fall down! Ker - plop!

Origin: Jenny Focht is a music therapist and teacher in Minneapolis, MN. She provides early childhood music classes in childcare centers and teaches piano, flute, and ukulele in her home studio. Her work can be found on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Youtube](#). [This song](#) is used with permission.

Notes: Pair this with Make a Snowball for a snow-themed lesson.

Activity: Teacher plays and sings the song, incorporating dramatic tremolo on the two fermatas. Students spin for measures 1-14 and fall to the floor on measure 15. After a dramatic pause, teacher plays a rolled G7 chord as a signal to get back up and repeat the activity. In subsequent repetitions, change verb to “dancing” and “floating like snowflakes” [tiptoeing] in measures 1, 3, 10 and 12.

Bitty Bitty Bat

Stephanie Leavell

$\text{♩} = 120$

I'm a bit-ty bit-ty bat A bit-ty bit-ty bat Fly-ing a-round I'm a

bit-ty bit-ty bat I'm a great big bat A great big bat Fly-ing a-round I'm a great big bat I'm

FLY - ING I'm FLY - ING I'm a bit-ty bit-ty bit-ty bit-ty bat I'm FLY - ING I'm

FLY - ING I'm a bit-ty bit-ty bit-ty bit-ty bat I'm a bit-ty bit-ty bat A

bit - ty bit - ty bat Fly - ing a-round I'm a bit - ty bit - ty bat

Origin: Stephanie Leavell is a board certified music therapist, an experienced music educator, a seasoned performer, and a mom based out of Boise, Idaho, USA. She shares her extensive work online at musicforkiddos.com and on social media. [This song](#) is used with permission.

Notes: This activity fits well into Halloween themed lessons but gets requested by our students all year round! We ask the students to listen to how we play the chorus (“I’m FLYING...”) and figure out whether they should show us bumpy flying or smooth flying (correct answer: smooth). [Click here](#) to read Stephanie’s blog post about this activity.

Activity: Teacher sings and accompanies the song. Students move expressively as bats as indicated by lyrics. Additional verses (mm. 1-9 as notated) substitute other B words that suggest different movements: balancing, bendy, bouncing, blinking, breathing, etc.



A La Ronda Ronda

Mexican folk song

A la ron - da ron - da cuan - do el vien - to so - pla

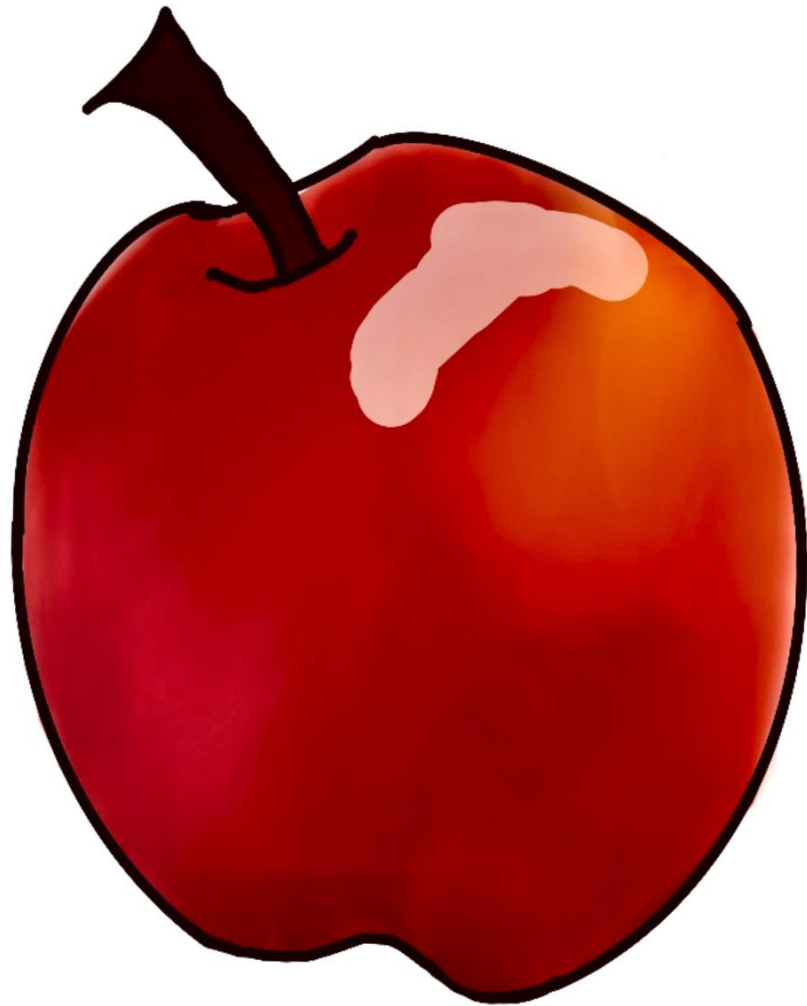
3
en la huer - ta de Don Juan las man - za - nas cae - rán.

Origin: This Mexican folk song is found in the book *De Un Fandango* (Guzmán García, 2021). The words mean “Around and around, when the wind blows, in Mr. Juan’s orchard the apples will fall down.”

Notes: Similar to *Ring Around the Rosy*, this song naturally encourages students to move to the beat and expressively fall down on the final note. Use the included apple visual to remind students about the meaning of the lyrics/activity and practice saying the Spanish word “manzana”.

Activity: Students line up behind the teacher at the edge of the meeting area. Teacher sings and leads the line in a circle. Everyone playfully falls down on the final syllable of the song. In subsequent repetitions, it may not be necessary to line up behind the teacher in order to get the students walking in a circle.

- Plan how to fall down— onto one knee, two knees, hands and knees, knees and elbows, bottom, belly button, etc.
- Teacher changes the duration of the second-to-last note. Students listen carefully for the final pitch to know when to fall.



Cheki, Morena

Puerto Rican folk song

Che-ki, mo-re - na, che-ki. Che-ki, mo-re - na, jue. ¿Qué a - don-de es-tá e-se

6
rit-mo ca-ram-ba de me-re-cum - be? Un pa-si-to a - lan-te y o-tro pa-ra

12
trás y dan - do la vuel - ta, dan - do la vuel - ta ¿quién se que - da - rá? ¡Jue!

Origin: This Puerto Rican song is found in the book *Roots and Branches* (Campbell et al., 2009). The lyrics translate loosely as “Shake it, brown girl, shake it, hey! Where’s that flashy rhythm of the merecumbe? One small step forward and another small step back. Going around in the circle, who will be next?” *Morena* is an affectionate word for a girl with brown coloring. The *merecumbe* is a popular dance.

Notes: This song is another all-time favorite of our students, some of whom recognize it from their parents and grandparents. With preschoolers and other students who benefit from simplicity, we sometimes abbreviate this song to be only the first eight measures plus the final *¡jue!* (“hway”). We always teach this activity backwards, practicing the final X shape with our bodies, then walking the circle plus the X, then stepping forward and backward and around and making the X. Finally, we go back to the beginning and add the body part shaking.

Activity: Everyone stands in a circle. Students use the body part choice board (p. 18) to select a body part to shake. (Shaking hips is traditional.) Everyone shakes that body part while the teacher sings the first eight measures. At “un pasito alante,” everyone takes four small steps forward/into the circle. At “y otro para atrás,” everyone takes four small steps backward/out of the circle. At “dando la vuelta, dando la vuelta, ¿quién se quedará?” everyone walks around the circle counterclockwise. (Alternately at this line, for simplicity or social distancing, everyone turns or walks a small personal circle, ending up facing back into the class’s circle.) On the final *¡jue!*, everyone jumps and extends their arms and legs into a giant letter X while yelling the word if they are able.

San Serení

Mexican folk song

San Se - re - ní de la bue - na bue - na vi - da, Ha - ce a - si, a -

4
si el a - gri - cul - tor. A - si, a - si, a - si, a - si me gu - sta a mi.

Origin: This song is from Mexico or New Mexico and is found in *Roots and Branches* (Campbell et al., 2009). The lyrics translate as “San Serení of the good, good life. Farmers do it like this. I like it this way.”

Notes: Motions may be suggested by the teacher or supplied by the students.

Activity: Students take turns selecting an occupation from the choice board or from their imaginations. Everyone acts out a repetitive motion from the occupation while the teacher sings, substituting the Spanish job word for *agricultor* in the song.

Agricultor(a) = farmer

Constructor(a) = builder

Costurero/a = seamstress

Estilista/a = stylist

Panadero/a = baker, Cocinero/a = chef

Pintor(a) = painter


Programador(a) = programmer

Músico/a = musician



El Coquí

Puerto Rican folk song



C F C G7 C

El co - quí, el co - quí a mi me en - can-ta. Estan lin-do el can - tar del co - quí.

8 F C G7 C

En las no-ches al ir a-co - star-me, me a-dor me-ce can - tan-do a - si. Co -

17 G7 C G7 C G7 C G7 C

quí, co - quí, co - quí quí quí quí. Co - quí, co - quí, co - quí quí quí quí.

Origin: This song is from Puerto Rico and is found in *First Steps in Global Music* (Howard, 2020). The coquí is a frog native to the island that is named for its nightly call. Here is [a video of a coquí frog](#) that is safe to show students. The lyrics translate to “The coquí, I love the coquí. The song of the coquí is so lovely. In the evenings when I go to bed, the singing rocks me to sleep. Coquí, coquí...”

Notes: This song is another favorite. Children benefit from hearing many repetitions. This song provides an opportunity for exploring a variety of instruments and even alternative music notation. The chorus (final eight bars) of this song simply repeats the word “coquí” and so can be relatively simple for echolalic and non-Spanish speakers to pick up. The chorus also alternates between tonic and dominant chords, which opens opportunities for students to learn to accompany themselves. Color-coding is an important support to provide for many learners. Adding color to the C and G7 buttons on an autoharp can be done with carefully trimmed Post-it note edging, permanent markers, or nail polish.

Activities:

- Use a [frog puppet](#) to introduce the song, demonstrating the frog singing its name during the chorus. Pass the puppet around and give every child a chance to explore the puppet for a full repetition of the song. Some children may, with or without support, operate the puppet as designed, but examining the puppet is also valid!
- Students hop like frogs while the teacher plays accompaniment and sings the song.
- Students take turns playing a steady beat on a [frog guiro](#) while the teacher sings.
- Students take turns strumming the teacher's instrument while one or both sing.

- Students use color coded visual to play C and G chords (autoharp) or chord roots (boomwhackers, piano, resonator bells, etc.) of the song chorus (mm. 17-24).
- Students use color-coded melodic instruments to play the melody of the song chorus (mm. 17-24)

El Coquí



G

C

G

C

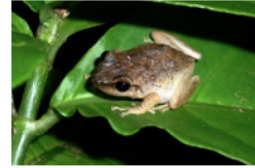
G

C

G

C

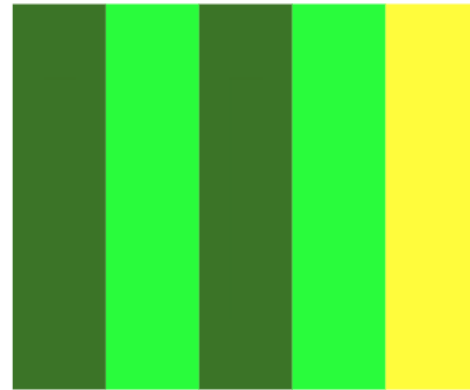
El Coquí Melody



G F



G E



G F G F E



G F



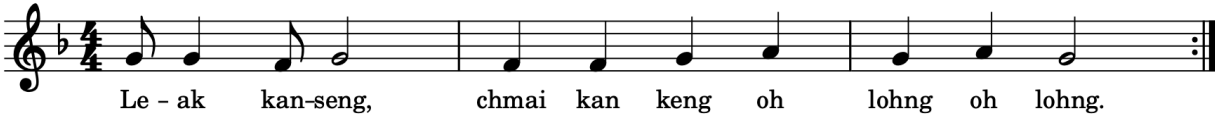
G E



G F E D C

Leak Kanseng

Cambodian folk song



Origin: This Cambodian folk song is found in the book *Roots and Branches* (Campbell et al., 2009). In Cambodia, a scarf called a *krama* is a common article of clothing. A [video](#) on YouTube of a tour guide's explanation gives more background and is safe to share with students. Another [video](#) shows children playing the game and singing the correct pronunciation of the lyrics. The song translates to "Hide the scarf! The cat is biting their heel! And drags the leg." The uneven rhythm at the beginning of the song represents the limping cat.

Notes: With a range of only three notes, this is a simple melody for early pitch matching.

Activity:

- In the original version of the game, children sit in a circle and sing the song while one student walks around the outside of the circle with a scarf. That child drops the scarf behind a classmate, and that classmate must pick up the scarf and chase the scarf-dropper around the outside of the circle and back to their original spot, a la Duck Duck Goose, while attempting to tag the scarf-dropper.
- A less-competitive but interactive version has the students sit in a circle, while a designated guesser steps away from the circle and covers their eyes. While the designated guesser can't see, one student secretly hides the scarf in their hands or under their legs. The class or teacher sings the song, and the guesser uncovers their eyes and tries to figure out who has the scarf, traditionally in three guesses.
- In another modified version of the game, a scarf can be hidden under an inverted cup for a designated guesser to find. This works best if there are three cups of different colors, and something like a guitar case that can function as a screen while the teacher hides the scarf.

We Are the Dinosaurs

- [Original video](#)
- [Chords and lyrics](#)

Origin: Laurie Berkner is an American musician whose work can be found online at <https://laurieberkner.com/>. We were unable to reach her to obtain permission to notate her work, so links to other sources are provided above.

Notes: Dinosaurs are a common topic of childhood fascination! Add in the joyful minor key and this becomes an often-requested tune. This activity provides musical structure for expressive movement of children acting as dinosaurs.

Activity: Teacher plays and sings the song. Students act out marching, eating and sleeping as indicated in the song.

Riding in a Buggy

American folk song

Gently swung eighth notes

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the song 'Riding in a Buggy'. The first staff is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It contains four measures of music. The second staff starts at measure 5 and contains four measures, ending with a double bar line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

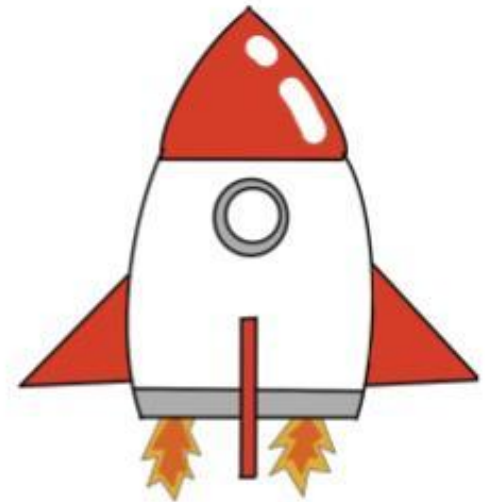
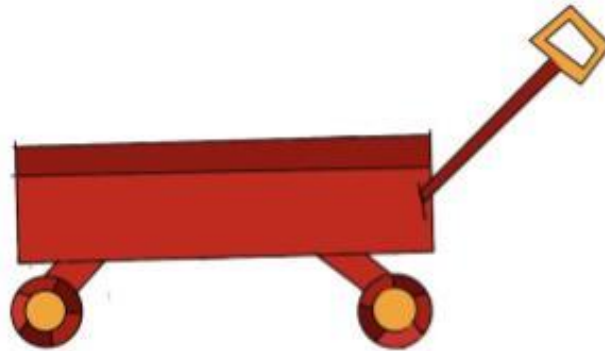
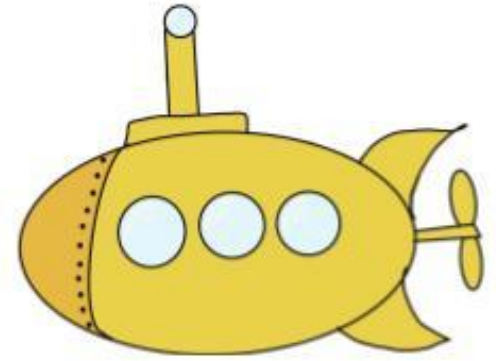
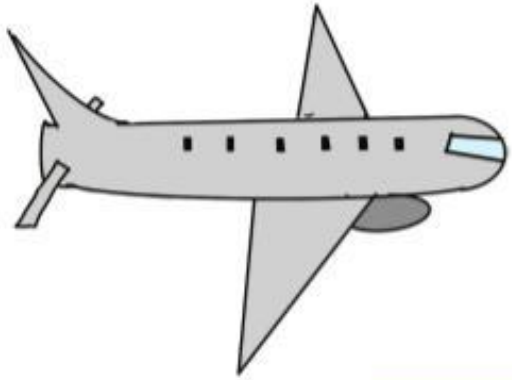
Ri-din' in a bug-gy, Miss Ma - ry Jane, Miss Ma - ry Jane, Miss Ma-ry Jane.

5
Ri-din' in a bug-gy Miss Ma - ry Jane. I'm a long way from home.

Origin: This is an old American folk song. It is found in *The Book of Simple Songs & Circles* (Feierabend, 2000).

Notes: This is another all-time favorite! We don't know if it's the catchy tune or the imaginative modes of transportation or hearing their own names sung in a song or all of the above, but we often see autistic children make enthusiastic social connections with this activity.

Activity: A student chooses a mode of transportation from the choice board. If they are willing, they hold the teacher's hand and both take a quick walk around the classroom while the teacher sings, substituting the chosen transportation and the child's name in the song.



Fruit Salad/The Fruit Canon

unknown origin

Joyfully



Mang - go mang - go mang - go mang - go mang - go mang - go mang - go!

5



Ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi ki-wi!

9



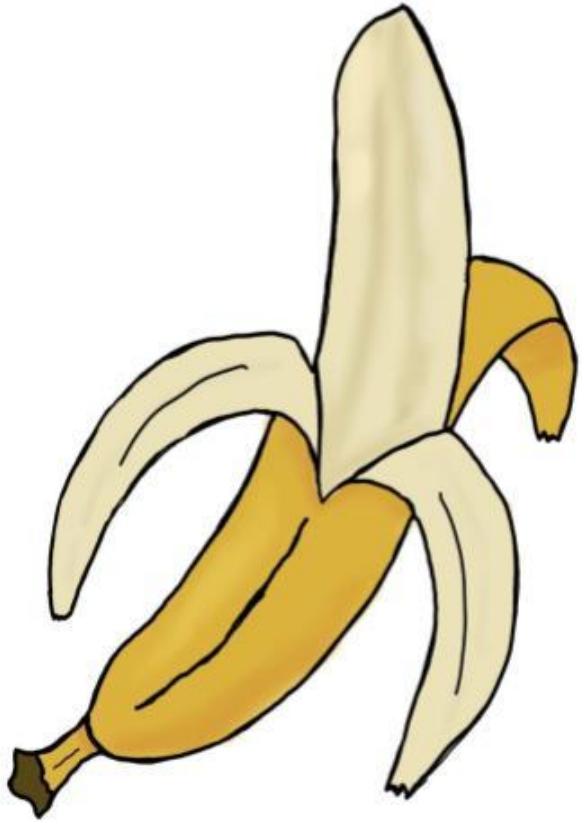
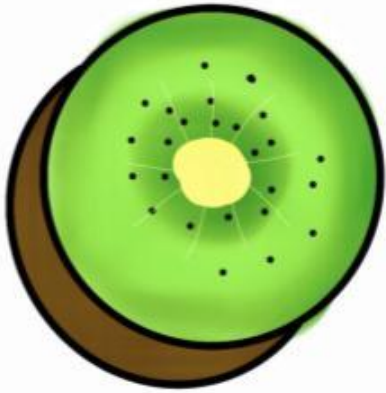
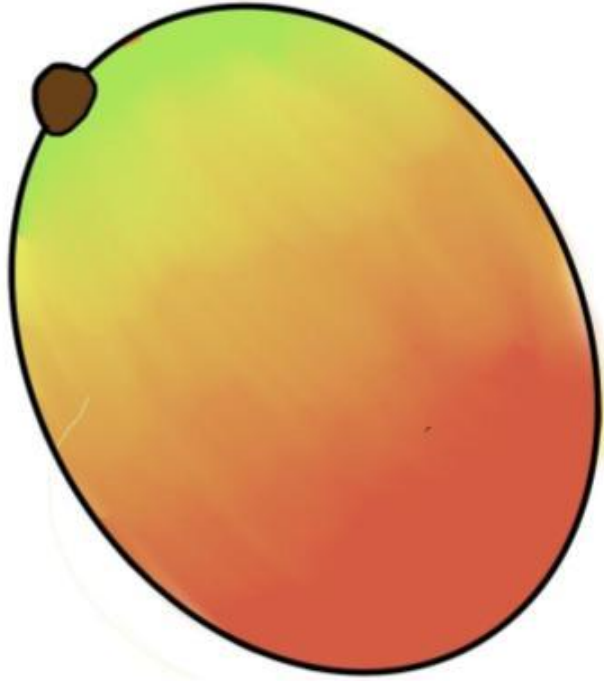
Ba - na - na ba - na - na ba - na na!

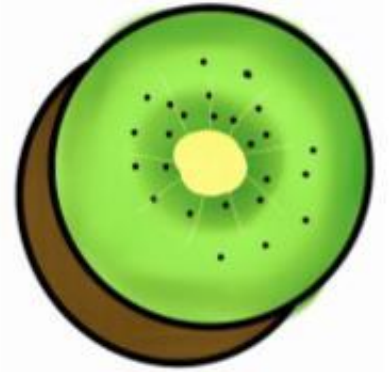
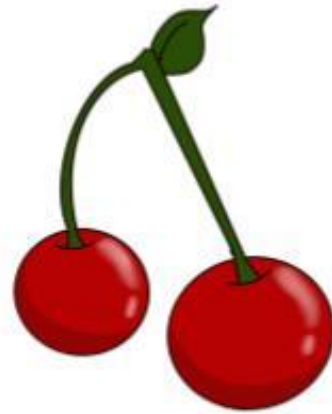
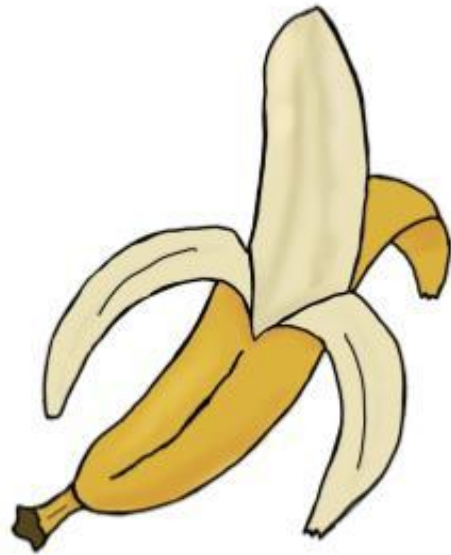
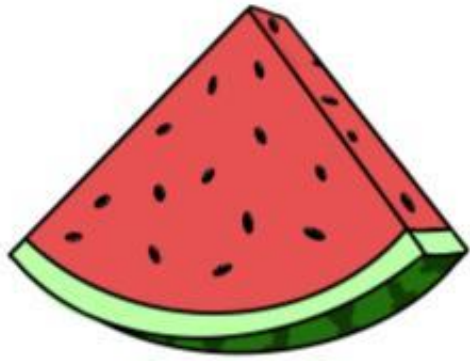
Origin: We learned this song from colleagues at the Berklee Institute for Accessible Arts Education. Internet searches indicate its popularity but not a definitive origin. As many other educators have said when sharing this tune: if you know who wrote it, please contact us!

Notes: This is a three-part canon, although we do not typically use it in canon in our classrooms. Each line ends with at least one big beat of rest; we use this to recruit joint attention by sometimes dramatically announcing FREEZE in that rest. Typically this happens after the second iteration of each repeated line before moving on to the next line, but variability adds to the fun once students are familiar with this song. Students particularly love the kiwi line, which is very fun to sing. [Fruit shakers](#), when available, add to the delight (but we use regular egg shakers).

This song is introduced by saying “we are going to build an imaginary fruit salad. It’s going to have mangoes, kiwis, and bananas, and we need you to pick which fruit goes on top.”

Activity: Students and teachers each get 1-2 shakers. One student chooses the final fruit of the imaginary fruit salad from the choice board, which will be called out at the end of the song. Students play while the teacher plays/sings, and freeze silently when the teacher says “freeze” during a rest at the end of the line. At the end of the song, the teacher calls out the chosen final fruit and everyone raises their hands and plays shakers over their heads. For example, the final line might sound like this: “Banana, banana, banana, GRAPES!”





Sitting in the Soup

Sarah Pirtle

Lazily
C G C C G C C F C G C Fine

Here we are sit-ting in the soup, sit-ting in the soup on Sun - day. Now

5 Energetically
C G

jump like jum-ping beans jump like jum-ping beans
shake your - self like salt shake your - self like salt
twist that pep-per out twist that pep-per out

7 C F C G C

Turn up the heat, bo - il those beans and jump like jum-ping beans. The
Turn on the stove, siz - zle up hot and shake your - self like salt.
Twist and twist and twist a - gain and twist that pep-per out.

9 F C G C

beans are jum - ping in the pot, start to gig - gle, start to shout.

11 F C G rit. C

Spin a - round and they all jump out. Run, come a - gig - gle on home.

Origin: Sarah Pirtle is a singer-songwriter, author, minister and activist based in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, USA. Her extensive work can be found online at sarahpirtle.com. [This song](#) is used with permission.

Notes: Although the full version of this song contains many verses of expressive movement instructions, we typically use an abbreviated version focused on the imaginative verses, as notated above, with shaker percussion. The slow/fast contrast elicits strong joint attention and expressive responses from children! Before playing, students practice demonstrating “busy eggs” (fast shaking) and “quiet eggs” (no shaking). Often we introduce this by talking about soaking dry beans overnight to cook soup, and how the beans are peaceful when they’re

soaking but active when they're cooking in boiling water. These correspond to the quiet and busy sections of the music.

Activity: Teacher sings and accompanies the song. Students play shakers actively during the “energetically” sections and rest the shakers during the “lazily” sections. The song ends with the “lazily” section.

Works Referenced

- Anagnostopoulou, C., Giraud, M., & Poulakis, N. (2013). Melodic contour representations in the analysis of children's songs. In *HAL (Le Centre pour la Communication Scientifique Directe)*. Le Centre pour la Communication Scientifique Directe.
- Beaman, C. P. (2018). The Literary and Recent Scientific History of the Earworm: A Review and Theoretical Framework. *Auditory Perception & Cognition*, 1(1–2), 42–65.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/25742442.2018.1533735>
- Campbell, P., McCullough-Brabson, E., & Tucker, J. (2009). *Roots & branches: A legacy of multicultural music for children* (2nd ed.). Plank Road Publishing.
- Communication / Speech / Language Disorders*. (n.d.). Kennedy Krieger Institute.
<https://www.kennedykrieger.org/patient-care/conditions/communication-speech-language-disorders#:~:text=Some%20causes%20of%20speech%20and,and%20vocal%20abuse%20or%20misuse.>
- Feierabend, J. (2000). *The book of simple songs & circles*. GIA Publications, Inc.
- Gillespie, H. (2022). Utilizing echolalia in music therapy aids the language development of individuals with autism spectrum disorder. *Intersect*, 15(3).
<https://ojs.stanford.edu/ojs/index.php/intersect/article/view/2169/1491>
- Guzmán García, G. (2021). *De un fandango: Sones, juegos y cantos para el salón de clase* (Primera edición). Ediciones del Lirio.
- Howard, K. (2020). *First steps in global music*. GIA Publications, Inc.
- Marom, M. K., Gilboa, A., & Bodner, E. (2018). Musical features and interactional functions of echolalia in children with autism within the music therapy dyad. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 27(3), 175–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08098131.2017.1403948>

National Association for Music Education. (2016, March 10). *Child's Bill of Rights - NAFME*.

NAfME.

<https://nafme.org/my-classroom/journals-magazines/nafme-online-publications/childs-bill-of-rights/#:~:text=As%20their%20right%2C%20all%20children,by%20teachers%20qualified%20in%20music>.