

Explorers Preschool Curriculum

Let's Explore Making Music



Developed by
Marcy White
Program Coordinator

Arkansas State University Childhood Services
JoAnn Nalley, Director



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Thank you to the following colleagues who supported the development of Explorers Preschool Curriculum.

Contributing Author

Growing Every Day: Supporting Social-Emotional Development

Carol Evans
Conscious Discipline Coach
A-State Childhood Services

Reviewers

Janice Carter
Program Coordinator
A-State Childhood Services

Mandi Edmonds
Program Specialist
A-State Childhood Services

Sandra Withers, APRN
Healthy Child Care Arkansas
UAMS

Editor

Diana Courson
Associate Director
A-State Childhood Services

Let's Explore Making Music

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If Explorers Preschool Curriculum is new to you, or if you would like to review big ideas about this curriculum, see the Using Explorers section at the end of this packet.

An expanded Getting Started guide can also be found under the resources tab at www.ASUChildhoodServices.org

Let's Explore: Making Music

Music can be gentle and soothing, or loud and exciting. Musicians can perform solo or join in with friends. Children are excited to get a close-up look at instruments they've seen from afar and discover that music can be made with everyday objects, too.

This topic might be a fit for you if...

- The music center is a popular play area.
- You've heard children asking questions or wondering aloud about music and musicians.
- You've noticed children experimenting with drumming on objects or making spontaneous music in other ways.

Let's Talk About Music

Use words like these during everyday conversations with children.

audience
band
beat
call-and-response
chord
conductor
duet
instrument
musical note
musician
orchestra
rhythm
tempo
upbeat

Genres of music: rock, jazz, classical, blues, country/western, and so on.

Words to describe music: loud and quiet, fast and slow, high and low

Names of specific instruments: keyboard, tuba, cello, snare drum, and so on.



Music Collectibles

Gather some of these interesting objects to investigate with children. Families can help!

sheet music
musical instruments
headphones
wind chime
metronome
microphone

Preparing to Explore Music

1. With your teaching team, think about, and discuss the following questions.
 - What experiences have our children had with musical instruments and musicians so far? What background knowledge do they most likely have?
 - What resources could be helpful as we explore this topic with children? Are there any special places we might go, or special people who might visit our classroom, as we learn about making music?
 - What are some things that children might learn and do as we explore music? What new words or concepts could they begin to understand?
2. Let families know that the group is interested in musical instruments and musicians. What can they tell you about their family's experiences with music? Think together about ways that families can be involved. For example, an older sibling might be eager to demonstrate a band instrument or an aunt or uncle might be part of a musical group.
3. Gather books and materials to add to learning centers and to use during small group experiences. You'll find suggestions on the pages that follow.



Learning Center Extensions – Making Music

Here are some examples of materials that can be added to learning centers to support children’s exploration of music during daily free play times.

Not all materials need to be added at the same time. Choose materials based on what you have available and the ages, interests, and abilities of the children in your group. You may also choose to add more – or different – materials over time during your investigation.

For more information on incorporating materials into your classroom, see the *Learning Everywhere* section at the beginning of the Getting Started packet.

Music Area

- Lap harp, ukulele, guitar
- Maracas, egg shakers, castanets, tambourine
- Handbells, large and small jingle bells, cowbell
- Hand drum, ocean drum, tom drum, bongo drum, woodblock with mallet
- Guiro, rasp, washboard
- Chimes, wooden and metal xylophones
- Keyboard
- Sheet music
- Music player with different genres of music
- Realistic photos of musical instruments and musicians, such as the ones available on our curriculum website

Dramatic Play Area

- Music player with lullabies, baby dolls, blankets, child-sized rocking chair, doll bed
- Band uniforms, ribbons, instruments for the band
- A small stage made of sanded pallets, chairs for an audience, tickets, microphones, and instruments

Block Building Area

- Commercial or homemade blocks filled with beads, pellets, or sand
- Audible loose parts, such as unused metal bottle caps or large washers

Art Area

- Corrugated (bumpy) cardboard and/or sandpaper with chalk or crayons
- After being introduced to children, materials from the **Painting to Music** small group learning experience may also be offered for free choice use.

Science Area

- Metronome
- Old record player with full-sized paper plates and markers. Punch holes in plates so that they fit on the record player, then make marks as the plate spins.
- Rainstick
- Collection of dried gourds and/or seed pods that rattle
- Sound matching game
- Factual books about musical instruments such as:

Welcome to the Symphony

Carolyn Sloan and James Williamson, Workman Publishing, 2015

Welcome to Jazz

Carolyn Sloan and Jessica Gibson, Workman Publishing, 2019

Fine Motor/Table Toy Area

- Different colors and/or sizes of jingle bells with tweezers, to sort by size or color
- Marble run toys with bells, click-clack tracks, and/or chimes

Sand Play Area

- Audible material such as plastic pellets or fine gravel, along with wide-toothed combs, empty bottles, scoops, and funnels

Book Area

Add some of these books and/or your favorite books about music and musicians.

88 Instruments, Chris Barton and Louis Thomas, Knopf Books, 2016*

Because, Mo Willems and Amber Ren, Hyperion Books for Children, 2019*

The Carnival of Animals, Jack Prelutsky and Mary GrandPre, Knopf Books, 2010

Drum City, Thea Guidone and Vanessa Brantley-Newton, Dragonfly Books, 2015

Drum Dream Girl, Margarita Engall and Rafael Lopez,
HMH Books for Young Readers, 2015

Giraffes Can't Dance, Giles Andreae and Guy Parker Rees, Orchard Books, 2001

I've Got Rhythm, Connie Schofield-Morrison and Frank Morrison, Bloomsbury USA, 2014

Ketzel, the Cat Who Composed, Leslea Newman and Amy June Bates, Candlewick, 2015

Libba, Laura Veirs and Tatyana Fazlalizadey, Chronicle Books, 2018

The Man with the Violin, Kathy Stinson and Dušan Petricic, Annick Press, 2016

Marsh Music, Marianne Berks and Robert Noreika, Millbrook Press, 2011

Old MacDonald Had a Band, Scarlett Wing and Dan Taylor, Cottage Door Press, 2015*

Play This Book, Jessica Young and Daniel Wiseman, Bloomsbury Books, 2018*

Sound: Shh...Bang...POP...BOOM!,
Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv, Chronicle Books, 2020

Squeak, Rumble, Whomp, Whomp, Whomp,
Wynton Marsalis and Paul Rogers, Candlewick, 2012

This Jazz Man, Karen Ehrhardt and R.G. Roth, HMH Books, 2015*

Trombone Shorty, Troy Andrews and Brian Collier, Harry N. Abrams, 2015

Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin, Lloyd Moss and Marjorie Priceman, Aladdin, 2000*

***Recommended read-aloud to share with groups of children.**

Talking About Books

As you share books with individuals, small groups, or larger groups of children, ask questions like these:

- **Beginning:** Will you help me (rhyme/count/clap/make sounds)?
- **Middle:** Let's think about what has happened so far...
- **End:** What was your favorite part of the story?

Talking together about books is an important part of every preschool day!

Conversations about Making Music

Use prompts like these as you talk with children throughout the day. For more information on incorporating planned conversations into your daily schedule, see the *Learning Every Day* section in the Getting Started packet.

Music Conversations

daily - during meals, play times, transitions, or group times

Try asking one or two questions like these when you have opportunities to talk with individuals, small groups, or the larger group of children.

- What are some things you know about making music?
- What are some things that you wonder about making music?
- What is your favorite song?
- Do you know anyone who plays a musical instrument?
- If you were in a band, what instrument would you like to play?
- Exploring onomatopoeia: What word would you use for chimes? Drum? Maracas?
- How do musicians take care of their instruments?
- How is a xylophone like a piano? How is it different?
- What kind of music do you like best?
- What are some jobs that people do at a concert?
- If you composed a song, what would it be about?

At least once a week, make a chart to write down children's answers to a question. Talk with children one, two, or a few at a time to collect answers. Later, read the written responses back to the group. Post the chart where it can be viewed by children and families.



If you composed a song, what would it be about?

Butterflies - Jervae

Baby shark - Ava C.

A sleepy song for my baby - Kaylin

Superheroes and bad guys - Donovan

Dinosaurs - Alexander

My birthday - Ben

Chasing on the playground - Bella

Cowboys and cows - Sofia

My daddy - Mason

My Nana's little swimming pool - Sam

A backhoe and a front end loader - Eli

Playing t-ball - Grace

Baby birds in a nest - Ava W.

All my friends being silly - Ajay



Conversations About Making Music

Music Polls

1-3 times per week – at arrival or group time

Choose a question from the list below or think of one of your own. Make a chart with the question and two possible responses, using picture cues when possible. Invite children to write their names or place name cards to respond.

- Would you rather perform solo? Or in a band?
- Would you rather play keyboard - or drums?
(Repeat with other pairs of interests of graph favorite of several.)
- Would you rather perform on a stage? Or in a parade?
- Have you ever been to a concert?
- Which do you like better - music that is quiet or music that is loud?

Would you rather perform solo or in a band?	
 solo	 in a band

Sharing Experiences So Far

Several times a week - during meals or play times

As you talk with individuals and small groups of children, tell about your own, positive experience with music. You might talk about playing in your school orchestra, listening to a musician at a farmers market, or singing along with music on your car stereo.

Listen attentively as children tell about their experiences, too. Help children make connections between shared experiences. (“I think several of you have sisters or brothers in the band at the junior high or high school.”)

Songs, Rhymes, and Games about Music

These playful songs, rhymes, and games can be incorporated into group times and transition times.

Johnny Plays on One Drum – *to the tune of Johnny Works with One Hammer*

Johnny plays on one drum, (mimic playing a drum with one hand)

One drum, one drum.

Johnny plays on one drum,

And then he plays on two. (hold up two fingers)

Johnny plays on two drums, (mimic playing drums with both hands)

Two drums, two drums,

Johnny plays on two drums,

And then he plays on three. (hold up three fingers)

Continue to add three, four, and five drums as you tap one foot, then march with both feet, and finally nod your head. Now, you'll be doing all five motions at once!

As an interesting extension activity, look at a photo of a drum set. Children will discover that it is true that some drummers do play on five drums, and some drummers use a foot pedal, but they don't actually play drums with their heads!

Clapping Patterns

Clap a simple pattern. Children can listen, then repeat the pattern by clapping their hands.

Try patterns of fast and slow claps:

Clap, clap, clap-clap-clap

Clap-clap, clap, clap-clap

Once children have the hang of the game, add in other movements such as stomping feet and patting tabletop or thighs.

Name That Tune

Hum a song that children are familiar with, such as *Baby Shark* or *Happy Birthday to You*. Can children guess the song? Once they've figured it out, invite them to sing the song while you hum. Older preschoolers may be able to hum songs for you and their classmates to guess.

If you're a skilled whistler, try whistling a song for children to guess. Children will be eager to attempt to whistle.

Old MacDonald Had a Band – *to the tune of Old MacDonald Had a Farm*

Old MacDonald Had a Band, EIEIO
And in that band, he had some drums, EIEIO
With a boom-boom here, and a boom-boom there (pretend to play drums)
Here a boom, there a boom, everywhere a boom-boom
Old MacDonald Had a Band, EIEIO.

Invite children to suggest instruments and think of fun sounds for them. If desired, you can substitute each child's name for "Old MacDonald" on their turn.

Moving to Music

In 1886, French composer Camille Saint-Saens wrote 14 classical movements inspired by animals.

Try listening and moving as you listen to samples of the following pieces:

- Prowl and strut to movement I, "Marche Royale du Lion" (March of the Lion).
- Stomp and plod to movement V, "L'Éléphant" (The Elephant).
- Hop to movement VI, "Kangourous" (Kangaroos).
- Flutter like small songbirds to movement X, "Volière" (Aviary).

This experience offers an excellent opportunity to talk about tempo – the pace of a piece of music – and dynamics. Try dancing with scarves or moving your bodies in other ways to different pieces of music.



Making Music Playlist

Let's Listen to the Band – Ella Jenkins
You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song – Ella Jenkins
Charlie Parker – Frances England
Music Time – Rhythm Child
If I Had a Mariachi – 1, 2, 3, Andres
Drum Roll Call – Uncle Devin
When I Play the Drums – Uncle Devin

In addition to these songs about making music, provide opportunities for children to hear different kinds of music. Possibilities include - but are not limited to – blues, bluegrass, electronic, folk, jazz, rock, show tunes, and traditional music from around the world. Always preview music to ensure that lyrics are appropriate for a group setting.

Small Group Learning Experiences – Making Music

Share learning experiences like the ones on the following pages with small groups of children each day. Groups should usually consist of three to seven children, rather than the whole group at once. Small group experiences may take place as children choose to join a teacher during free play time, or there might be a special small group time included in the daily schedule.

Use these questions to guide you as you choose daily learning experience.:

- **What is it about making music that these children seem most curious about?**
This broad topic offers many possibilities to zoom in on areas of special interest. One group might be especially fascinated by stringed instruments, while another group is more interested in creating a stage and props for musical performances. Choose experiences that invite children to pursue their interests and seek answers to their questions.
- **What are our learning goals for individual children and for the group as a whole?**
Choose experiences that support specific objectives for learning. Strive to create well-rounded plans that support all domains of development.
- **How can we extend children’s thinking and learning?**
Choose activities that can be connected to children’s experiences so far. Remember that it is often appropriate to re-run planned experiences. Offering an experience two or more times over a few days or weeks invites children to gain expertise and deepen their understanding.

Pair planned learning experiences with ample opportunities for open-ended, free choice exploration in the classroom and outdoors.



Meet the Music Maker

Let's look, listen, and learn as musicians show us their instruments and demonstrate how they are played. Repeat this experience as often as possible to enable children to meet many different musicians, see their instruments, and hear a variety of music.

Materials/Guests

- Large, blank index cards
- Dark ink pens or markers

As you plan this learning experience, look for people who play musical instruments. This could include a parent in a musical group, a sibling who participates in band or orchestra, members of a community band, or your elementary school's music teacher. You may think of other possibilities, too.

Invite one musician at a time to bring their instrument(s) to demonstrate for children. Explain to each musician that they will interact with a few children at a time. Plan enough time so that every child has a chance to visit.

Before the guest arrives, invite children to think about questions they would like to ask. Write each child's question on one side of an index card and have them write their name on the other. Remind children that they will visit with the musician a few at a time. They will all get a turn if they would like one.

The musician will become a special learning center during a scheduled indoor or outdoor play time. As children take a turn to interact with the musician, help them find their question cards and ask their questions. Stay near to provide supervision and support. After a child's question is answered, ask them what they would like for you to write down on their card so that they can remember the musician's answer.

Later, during group times, use the cards to invite a few children at a time to share their questions and answers with the group. What did they learn from the musician?

Helpful Hints

Children may find the music irresistible. They may want to move near before their turn or linger afterward to listen and dance. Have the musician sit or stand in a spacious area, such as the large group gathering rug.

To reduce crowding, place 3-5 chairs that can be used by children on their turn. Behind the chairs, make a line on the floor with blue painter's masking tape. If a child would like to listen before or after their turn, they may stand or sit behind the blue line.

Meet the Musician (cont.)

More Helpful Hints

Chairs and tape lines also help children avoid crowding the musician. Remind children not to touch an instrument unless the musician gives permission to do so. Some instruments are fragile, and children should not touch the mouthpiece of any instrument.

If the experience of visiting with guests a few at a time is new to children, they may worry about being left out. With consistent opportunities to interact with guests this way, they will come to trust that everyone will get a turn to visit with the guest and ask their questions.

Including Every Explorer

While some children are drawn to the music, others may find it uncomfortably loud.

Headphones or ear muffs can help soften the sounds. If you notice that any child seems distressed, gently remind them that they can move away to play somewhere else.

If weather permits, consider interacting with your guests under the shade structure of your outdoor play area. This may provide more room for children to listen from afar if they prefer.

More to Do (optional)

- If the musician is interested in doing so, invite him/her to play name that tune with children and/or lead a sing-along.
- Take photos of the visit to add to a class book.
- Plan visits from as many musicians as possible. Think together about similarities and differences between musicians. Perhaps you'll have two guests who play drums, or perhaps children will discover that one musician has been playing for a very long time and another has just begun. Some musicians may be willing to visit several times.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Language Development – LD 1.1, LD 2.1, LD 3.1

Emergent Literacy – EL 1.1, EL 3.1, EL 3.2, EL 3.3

Social Studies – SS 1.1

Creativity and Aesthetics – CA 1.1

Making a Rhythm Instrument

Let's follow picture and word instructions to make a simple musical shaker.

Materials

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic spoons – 2 per child in the small group | <input type="checkbox"/> Beads or small pebbles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hinged, hollow plastic Easter eggs – 1 per child | <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of rhythm instrument instructions found in this curriculum packet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Several roles of masking tape or washi tape | <input type="checkbox"/> Ten-frames* (optional) |

Invite children to think about what they know about musical instruments. Who makes musical instruments? Who repairs them if they are broken?

Show children the pictorial instruction sheet. Explain that a rhythm instrument helps keep the beat in a song. The instructions show how to make an instrument that a musician can shake. Would children in the small group like to give it a try?

As you work through the instructions, involve children in several of the following ways:

- Counting out beads or pebbles. Use ten-frames if desired.
- If you're using pebbles or beads that do not look like the ones in the instructions, thinking together about the meaning of the word, "substitute".
- Giving each other a helping hand. Sometimes difficult tasks are easier when a friend helps out.
- Noticing the numbered steps and thinking about the sequence of the instructions. What did we do first? What did we do next?
- Looking at the symbol for "around" on the recipe. What do children think it means?
- How is the "around" symbol different in the fourth step than in the third step? What could this mean?

When children have finished making their rhythm instruments, put on some music and shake, shake, shake!

*Ten-frames are two-by-five rectangular grids that can be paired with objects for counting, comparing, and subitizing.

Making a Rhythm Instrument (cont.)

Helpful Hints

Plan to have some extra spoons on hand, just in case any get broken. It is also ideal to have plenty of Easter eggs so that each child has a choice of color.

If you don't have Easter eggs, substitute very small water bottles.

Including Every Explorer

With younger, less experienced children and children with limited use of hands, omit the spoons and make simple egg shakers.

Challenge older, more experienced preschoolers by having a friendly colleague ask, "Can you teach me how to make one?" Children will work on sequencing and precise language as they give instructions.

More to Do (optional)

- Decorate your rhythm instruments with stickers and/or permanent markers.
- Investigate a basket of musical instruments that are played by shaking, such as maracas, commercial egg shakers, gourd shakers, cabasas, and baby rattles.
- The instructions called for 10 beads. Make a few more shakers – one each with one bead, five beads, 10 beads, and 20 beads. Can children tell by listening which of these shakers matches theirs? Can they sequence the shakers from fewest beads to most beads? This is a good opportunity to talk about half and twice as many.

Did You Know?

This isn't an art project; it's a craft. Crafts should usually be avoided because they do not help children use critical or creative thinking. In this case, the instruction sheet elevates the activity by encouraging children to sequence and interpret illustrations. Even so, activities where children have few opportunities to make decisions should make up only a very small part of the overall curriculum.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

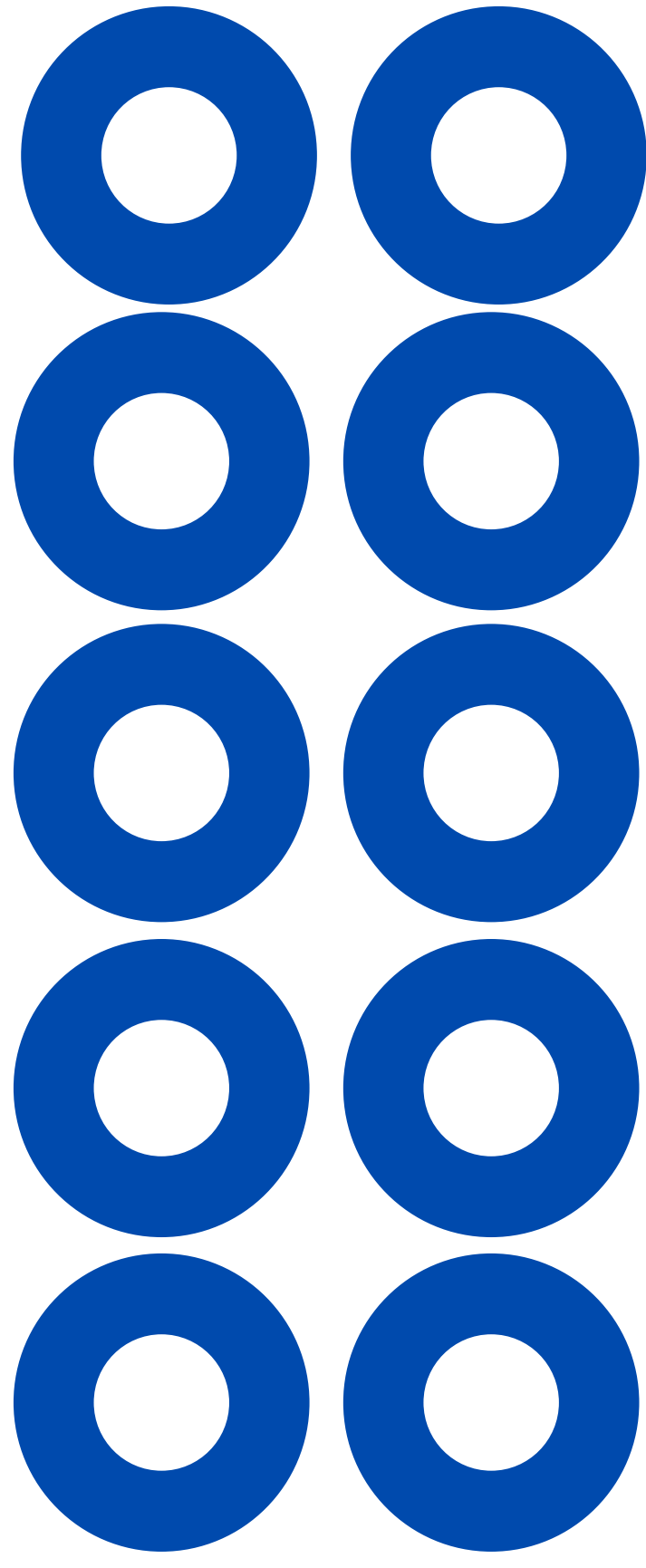
Physical Health and Development – PH 2.1, PH 2.2

Emergent Literacy – EL 1.1, EL 3.1

Mathematical Thinking – MT 1.1, MT 1.2, MT 4.1

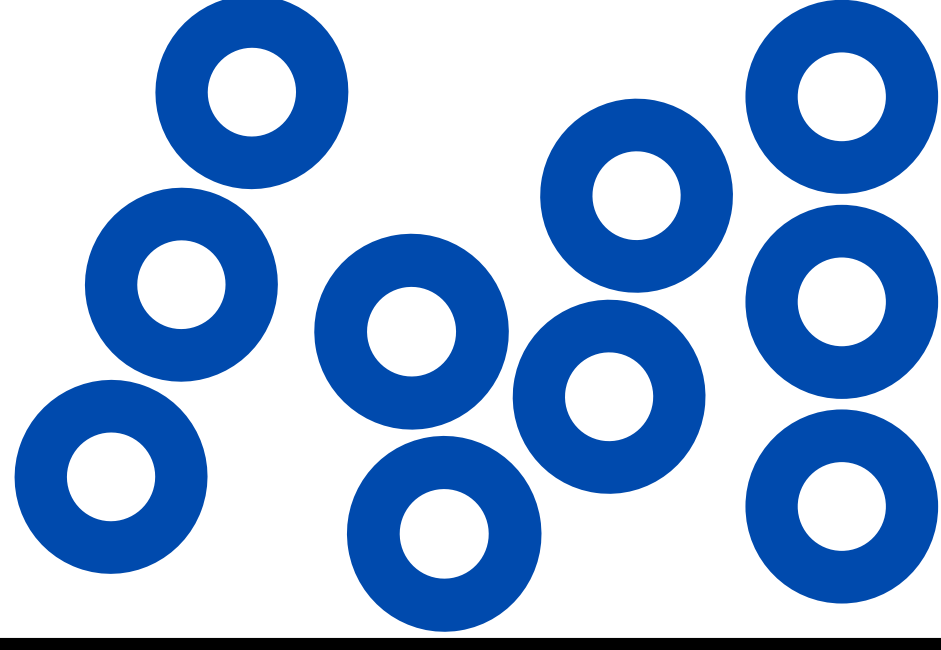
Making a Rhythm Instrument

1.



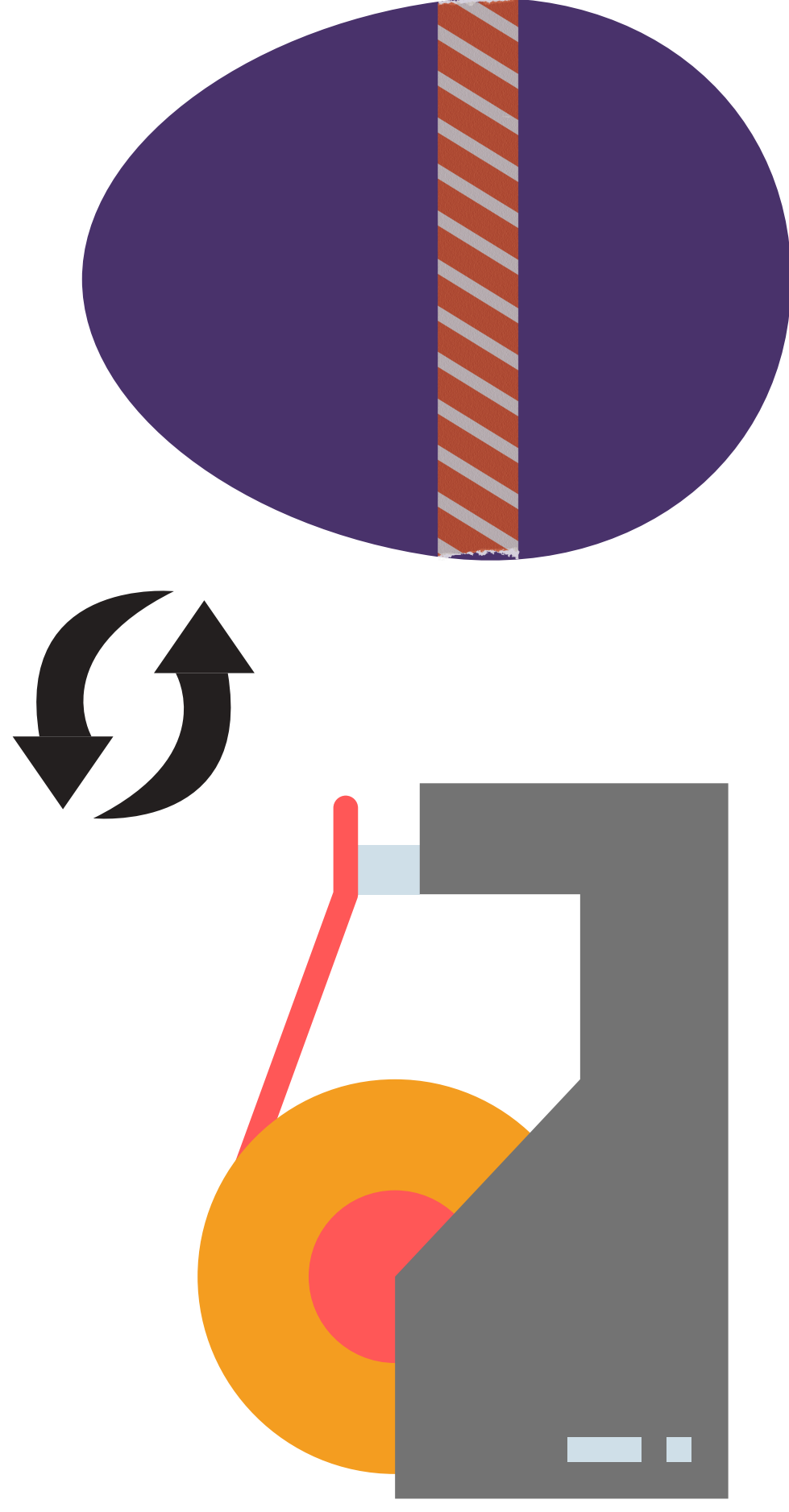
First, collect 10 beads.

2.



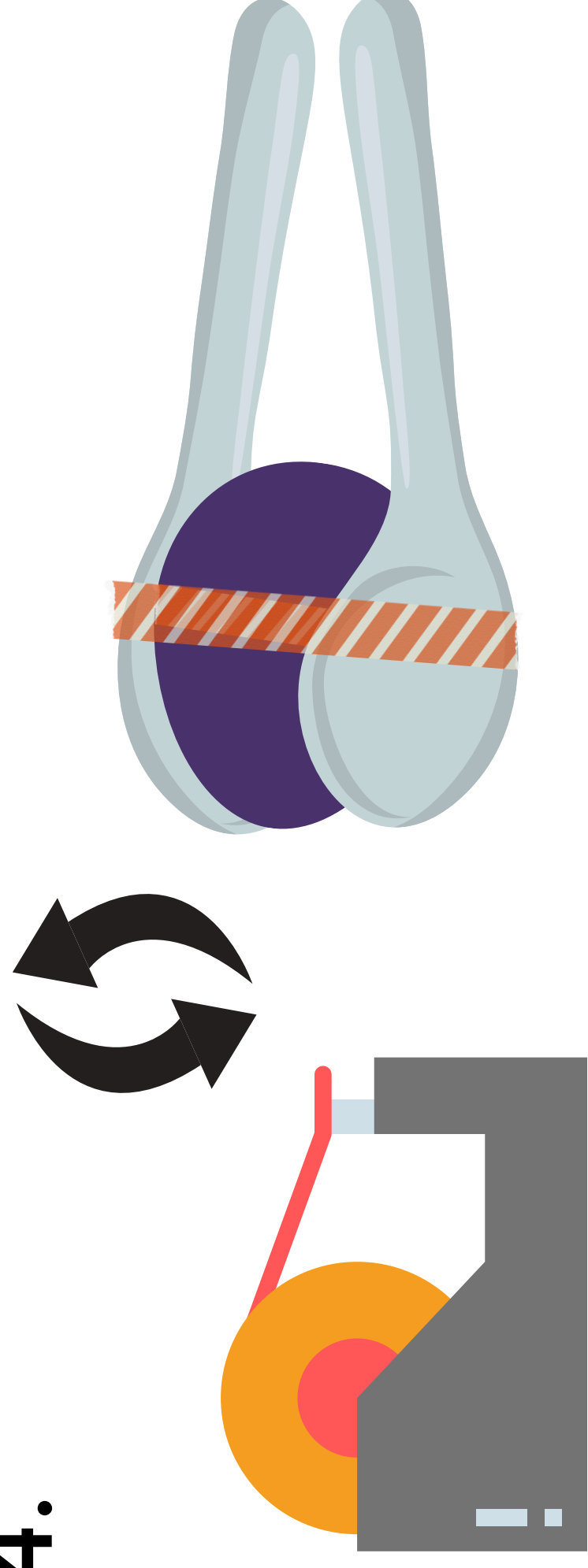
Put the beads in the egg.

3.



Next, tape the egg closed.

4.



Last, add 2 spoons and
tape again.

Painting to Music

Let's listen to classical music while we make a painting.

Materials

- Liquid watercolors or watercolor trays
- Cups of water for dipping paint brushes
- Paper towels or washable cloths for blotting paint brushes
- Large sheets of paper
- Large t-shirts or paint smocks to protect children's clothing.
- Music player and a recording of classical music.
Recommended: Carnival of Animals movement VII, "Aquarium" and/or movement XIII, "Le Cygne" (The Swan).

Prepare an uncluttered, well-arranged space for painting.

As children join you, think and talk together about how music can evoke feelings and moods. Can children think of a song that feels exciting? How about a song that feels sleepy? How might a mad song or a sad song sound? A happy song?

Explain that you'll play some music while children paint. If needed, review painting guidelines – such as rinsing brushes – before you start. You don't want to disrupt children once you start.

Before you pick up paint brushes, listen to about a minute of the song. What mood(s) or feeling(s) does this music evoke for children? This could be a good time to try out words like *peaceful*, *tranquil*, and *elegant*. Children can paint a picture of something if they would like, but they may just want to move their brush around on the paper to create an abstract design.

Have children prepare to paint. Begin the song again as children begin painting. Because these are short movements, you may wish to repeat several times while children work.

Place finished paintings in a safe place to dry.

Painting to Music (cont.)

Helpful Hints

You may wish to curate the colors of paint offered for this experience. For example, try offering shades of cool blue, green, and purple. Some educators share that children seem calmer and more focused when working with an analogous color scheme.

If you have a small group set of wireless headphones, consider using them for this experience.

Including Every Explorer

Try offering a range of broad and fine-tipped paintbrushes for children to try. Chunky, broad-tipped brushes are easier to hold but delicate, fine-tipped brushes offer more control.

Finger paints can also be used for this experience. For children with limited use of hands, try offering paint in a silicone feeding tray that attaches with suction to a flat surface.



More to Do (optional)

- Create a slide show of children’s paintings, accompanied by the music that they listened to while they worked.
- Re-run the activity with a different piece of music. How about a warm color palette and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumblebee”?
- Explore tempo and dynamics as small groups of children play with musical instruments. If you wanted to compose a song for a party, how might that sound? How about a soothing song for a friend who was having trouble going to sleep?

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Social and Emotional Development – SE 2.1

Physical Health and Development – PH 2.1, PH 2.2

Language Development – LD 2.1, LD 3.1

Creativity and Aesthetics – CA 2.1, CA 2.2

Observational Drawing: Musical Instrument

Let's look closely at a musical instrument. We'll notice interesting details to add to our drawings.

Materials

- Blank paper
- Drawing tools such as crayons, colored or regular pencils, or markers.
- Musical instrument (see note below)

It is ideal to offer children an authentic instrument to investigate and draw, rather than a toy one. A classroom staff member, colleague, or friend of the classroom may be willing to loan an instrument for this experience. Possibilities include - but are not limited to – guitar, lap harp, clarinet, snare drum, or trumpet. Borrow an instrument stand, too, if possible.

Create a comfortable, attractive drawing space where your small group of artists can easily see the instrument. Begin by looking together, describing the lines and shapes that you see. Try leaning in close or looking from different angles. Children may touch gently during this step, but remind them that playing the instrument is not the goal right now.

Invite children to draw what they see. An observational drawing is a way to tell about what they notice. Explain that they can look back and forth from the musical instrument to their paper as they work. They can work carefully to show things about the instrument that feel important to them.

Each child should be allowed to work at their own pace, ending when they feel finished. You might suggest, “Let’s look at the (instrument) one more time. Is there anything else you would like to add to your drawing?” – but refrain from making specific suggestions.

After children have finished drawing, invite them to tell you about their work. Ask if there are any words that they would like for you to write on their paper, or if they would like to write words of their own.

Helpful Hints

Many musical instruments are fragile. Dents and scratches can be costly to repair. Even though you and the children will be careful during this activity, only accept loans of well-worn instruments that are safe for the busy classroom environment.

This experience can be especially meaningful when children draw instruments that they have seen and heard being played. Consider linking this experience with **Meet the Musician**.

Observational Drawing: Musical Instrument (cont.)

More Helpful Hints

Many teachers find that it works best to introduce children to observational drawing using black markers or regular pencils. Children focus first on replicating the lines and shapes that interest them.

Older/more experienced preschoolers can draw with fine-line permanent marker first before adding color with watercolor paints during a second session.

Avoid the temptation to instruct or show children how to draw. Drawing is far more meaningful for children when their role involves thinking, interpreting, and deciding – rather than simply copying.

Including Every Explorer

Some children’s drawings may not be identifiable to adults yet, but every line on the page has meaning to the child. Acknowledge effort and invite all children to tell about their work. Avoid judging or comparing one child’s work to another’s.

More to Do (optional)

Pair children’s drawings with photos of the instrument from several angles. Use these for a wall display or classroom book.

Did You Know?

Often, children engage in imaginative drawing. They use art materials to create characters or tell a story. This type of drawing promotes creativity and self-expression. It may also lead to open-ended scientific exploration as children mix and manipulate art materials.

Observational drawing encourages children to draw what they see. It promotes communication, logical reasoning, and mathematical thinking as children observe and replicate shapes, sizes, textures, and lines. Both imaginative drawing and observational drawing offer big benefits for learners!

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Physical Health and Development – PH 2.1, PH 2.2

Emergent Literacy – EL 3.1, EL 3.2, EL 3.3

Mathematical Thinking - MT 1.1, MT 3.1, MT 4.1

Investigating Stringing and Strumming

How do stringed instruments work? How do adjustments to the strings change an instrument's sound? Let's investigate!

Materials

- Variety of containers that are open on one side, such as cake pans, candy tins, plastic food storage containers, and/or small buckets
- Lots of rubber bands in various widths and sizes
- Guitar picks (optional)

Talk with children about what they know about stringed instruments like guitars and harps. Together, inspect the collection of containers and the different rubber bands. Children may want to sort the rubber bands by size.

Invite children to explore freely by wrapping rubber bands around the containers. They can play the strings with their fingers or a guitar pick. Children will learn through trial and error that smaller rubber bands work best on smaller containers while larger rubber bands work best on larger containers. Some containers – such as a rectangular cake pan – may accommodate large rubber bands in one direction or smaller rubber bands in another.

As children work, notice aloud ways that they experiment and solve problems. Children will discover that rubber bands can break. That's OK. Encourage them to notice signs that a rubber band is stretching too tight. Can they look for a larger band that will fit?

Listen and describe the sounds made by different rubber bands and containers. Look for natural opportunities to count, compare quantities, and notice patterns. What else do children notice?

Encourage children to share strategies with one another. There may be opportunities to support children as they practice social skills related to negotiating the materials and workspace. When children feel satisfied with their work and are finished exploring, encourage them to carefully remove the rubber bands to make the space ready for the next group.

Investigating Stringing and Strumming (cont.)

Helpful Hints

Sturdy containers – like metal pans and wooden bowls - work better for this activity than cardboard or chipboard boxes.

Before inviting children to use the materials, experiment to ensure that there are at least some rubber bands that fit well on each container.

Including Every Explorer

This activity requires a higher degree of fine motor strength, control, and coordination. It could be challenging and rewarding for some preschool-aged children, but overly frustrating for others. Use your observations to decide whether your group is likely to have a satisfying experience. Alternatively, an opportunity to strum and compare the sounds of several stringed instruments would be a rich, engaging experience for all preschoolers.

More to Do (optional)

- What if some tiny rubber bands won't fit on any of the containers? Can children find a material in the room that might work? You could end up with a stringed instrument made from a bottle cap, scalloped sea shell, or other small item.
- Add broken rubber bands to your art area. They are interesting to cut and glue.
- Place several of the rubber band instruments and guitar picks in your classroom music area.
- Research by looking at photos or talking with a guest. How are your rubber band instruments like a guitar? How are they different?
- Questions may naturally emerge about acoustic and electric guitars. These are rich vocabulary words for children and there's a lot to figure out. Can you find a guest to demonstrate both kinds of guitars?

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Cognitive Development – CD 1.1, CD 1.2, CD 2.1, CD 3.1

Physical Health and Development – PH 2.1, PH 2.2

Language Development – LD 1.1, LD 2.1, LD 3.1

Mathematical Thinking – MT 1.1, MT 1.2, MT 2.1, MT 4.1

Sound Walk

Let's sit quietly and listen to the world around us.

Materials

- Clipboard, paper, and drawing tool for each child
- Optional: camera

Explain to children that you'll be going on an outdoor walk to listen to the world. First, you'll walk for a little while, and then you'll pause to do something special.

Children may begin to notice and talk about sounds as soon as you begin your walk. Take time to respond to their curiosity as you lead the group to a place where you can comfortably sit. Children should sit at least several feet apart from one another. Once you've settled into your spots, take a few deep, calming breaths together. Breathe in through your noses and out – long and slow – through your mouths. Focus on calming your own tone and body language.

Invite children to close their eyes, make their body quiet, and listen to the world. After a moment, ask children to open their eyes. What are some things that they heard?

Invite children to close their eyes again. This time, they will point with their finger in the direction of each sound that they hear. After a few moments, ask children to open their eyes. Again, talk briefly about the things that they heard. Were there any new sounds?

Pass out clipboards. Listen to the world again. Children can make marks or drawings to represent what they hear. You may want to step back to take a photo of the small group at work. Later, this photo can be displayed or placed in a book with their sketches.

When you return to the classroom, spend a few minutes debriefing. Which sounds were made by humans? By animals? By machines? Were there any sounds that they couldn't identify? Children may want you to write – or help them write - descriptive captions on their sound sketches.

Helpful Hints

Timing is important during this activity. If children don't have enough time to walk before they sit down, they may feel restless and distracted. If children have walked too far, they may feel tired and ready to go inside. Plan your route to offer the sound mapping activity at just the right time!

Sound Walk (cont.)

In warm weather, plan this activity for the cooler early morning and/or look for a shady place where your group can sit.

Including Every Explorer

Think of ways to provide extra supervision for children with more impulsive behavior. This could be a good opportunity for family volunteers. You may wish to omit the drawing portion of this activity with very young or inexperienced groups. The listening activity alone can be powerful and valuable.

Older and more experienced preschoolers may be interested in making a sound map. Have each child write their name or place a dot sticker in the center of their paper. This represents themselves. As you listen to the world, children can make marks or simple drawings on their page to represent where they hear sounds in relation to themselves.

More to Do (optional)

- Explain this activity to families and encourage them to repeat it with their child at home on their steps, stoops, porch, or patio.
- Many musicians are inspired by the sounds of the world around them. Listen to how brass players make the sound of trains in Duke Ellington’s “Daybreak Express” or woodwinds bring morning birds to life in Ferde Grofé’s “Grand Canyon Suite”. What other examples can you find?

Did You Know?

This sound walk activity supports the child’s ability to recognize the sounds of individual instruments within a band or orchestra.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Language Development – LD 1.1, LD 2.1, LD 3.1

Emergent Literacy – EL 3.3

Science and Technology – ST 1.1, ST 3.1

Social Studies – SS 2.1, SS 2.2

Investigating Found Instruments

Let's explore the possibilities of making music with objects that are usually used for other purposes.

Materials

- Assortment of objects such as a grill grate, muffin tin, pie pans, exercise ball with stand, large painter's bucket, empty water jug, woven basket, milk crate, and/or cardboard packing tube
- Assortment of items that can be used for drumming, tapping, and scraping, such as unsharpened pencils, wooden spoons, flat spatulas, whisks, and/or metal spoons

Before inviting children to the workspace, arrange objects on the table and place "drumsticks" in baskets, small buckets, or bins.

As children join you, look together at the collection of objects. Children may be interested in sorting them by material - metal, plastic, etc.

Are these things usually used as musical instruments? Or are they usually used in other ways? Name and describe the function of one or two of the objects. ("This is a grill grate. It can hold hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill when we cook out.") Children will be eager to share what they know about the other objects on the table. Enjoy an informal conversation, noticing opportunities to introduce new words in authentic ways.

Wonder aloud, "Even though these aren't usually musical instruments, I wonder if we could use them to make music?" Invite children to share ideas. Provide uninterrupted time for children to work, staying near and showing interest but not taking over. There may be opportunities to support children as they practice social skills related to asking for turns and making trades.

After some open-ended investigation time, encourage children to talk with you and with one another what they have discovered so far. Give each child in the small group a chance to demonstrate a favorite combination. Describe what you see each child doing: "CJ is striking the sides of the exercise balls with two wooden spoons – whomp, whomp, whomp." And, "Taryn is rubbing a spoon back and forth along the side of the basket. It makes a soft, clackity-clack sound." Call special attention to times when children use the same object in different ways.

Offer a few more minutes of unstructured play time with the materials before concluding the activity. Children may be interested in trying one another's techniques.

Investigating Found Instruments (cont.)

Helpful Hints

Play with materials as you plan this experience for children. How many different ways can you find to make interesting sounds? Strive to offer a diverse collection of materials with many possibilities to explore.

Including Every Explorer

This will be a loud experience. If a child in your group is sensitive to noise he/she may be uncomfortable - even when playing elsewhere in the room. Headphones or ear muffs can help reduce noise. Also, consider taking this learning experience outdoors!

More to Do (optional)

- Make a short video clip of each child playing a found instrument. Zoom in to focus on the child's hands. A tech-savvy friend of the classroom may even be able to create an arrangement by mixing some of the video clips.
- Attach pots, pans, grates, and/or chimes to an outdoor fence to create a music wall. Look for aluminum materials that will not rust. Attach plastic zip ties through natural openings/hanging holes, secure tightly, and trim the ends of the zip ties. Wooden spoons can be used to play.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Physical Health and Development – PH 1.3, PH 2.1, PH 2.2

Language Development – LD 1.1, LD 2.1, LD 3.1

Mathematical Thinking – MT 2.1, MT 3.1, MT 4.1

Creativity and Aesthetics – CA 1.1, CA 3.1

Loud, Louder, Loudest

Let's notice the differing sound levels of homemade drums.

Materials

- Sturdy cardboard box
- Large metal mixing bowl
- Large bucket*
- Mallets, wooden spoons, or drumsticks – all the same
- Sound meter app (optional)

Prepare the area by turning the box, bowl, and bucket upside down, spreading them out on the table or floor. Place a container of mallets or drumsticks within sight, but not where children can reach them right away. As children approach the play area, they will probably guess that this will be an invitation to drum!

Ask children if they think these objects could be used for drumming. Which drum do they predict will be loudest? Why do they think that?

Which drum do they think will be quietest? Arrange the drums from quietest to loudest according to children's predictions. Give each child in the small group a chance to test their prediction. Were they right? Invite children to rearrange the drums if they feel they should.

This experience may provide a natural opportunity to talk about how the drummer must strike each drum with an equal amount of force to test them fairly. (In other words, striking a cardboard box very hard could make a louder noise than striking a metal bowl softly, even though the bowl is actually the louder instrument.)

If you have a sound meter app, explain that it is a tool that measures the intensity of noise. Soft, quiet noises will only move the needle of the meter a little bit, while louder noises move it more. Invite children to watch the decibel meter while you strike each of the drums in turn.



Children may urge you to play even louder. This offers a chance to discuss how very loud noises can harm our ears. Children may have noticed landscapers or construction workers wearing special ear muffs to block out sound and protect their ears.

Before you conclude this activity, children may also want to take turns to play a short musical arrangement using all three of the drums grouped together. Others in the small group can act as the appreciative audience, drumming on their thighs and clapping at the end.

*Look for 2 and 5-gallon plastic buckets in building supply stores. These make fantastic drums!

Loud, Louder, Loudest (cont.)

Helpful Hints

There are several good decibel meter/sound meter apps to choose from. Since you want to use this app with children, select one with a simple, colorful, easy-to-see gauge. Be sure to test it out before using it with children.

Collect all of the extra drumsticks before placing the tablet computer or phone with the sound meter on the table. Better safe than sorry!

Including Every Explorer

This will be a loud experience. If a child in your group is sensitive to noise he/she may be uncomfortable - even when playing elsewhere in the room. Headphones or ear muffs can help reduce noise. Also, consider taking this learning experience outdoors!

Foam can be taped to drumstick handles to make them easier for a child with limited use of hands to grasp.

More to Do

- The gauge of the sound meter measures sound in decibels – kind of like how a ruler measures length in inches. Be on the lookout for other measuring tools around the space you share with children. Children can look for measuring tools with their families at home, too.
- If children express interest in repeating this activity, make predictions and test collections of different materials, such as maracas and other shaker instruments.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Mathematical Thinking – MT 1.1, MT 3.1

Scientific and Technology – ST 1.1, ST 3.1, ST 3.2, ST 3.3

Creativity and Aesthetics – CA 1.1, CA 3.1

Musical Symbols

Let's make musical arrangements to read while we play instruments. This is a very simple introduction to composing and reading music.

Materials

- Musical note and rest cards found in this curriculum
- Sheet music (optional)
- Egg shakers, maracas, or rhythm sticks

Prepare for this activity by printing or copying and cutting out the musical note and rest cards found in this packet. If desired, the cards may be mounted on chipboard and/or laminated or covered in clear contact paper. Mix the cards in a pile.

Show children a card with a musical note. Read the word on the card – *note*. Explain that when a musician sees a note on a piece of music, they know to play their instrument.

Show children a card with a musical rest. Read the word. Explain that when a musician sees a rest symbol on a piece of music, they know to wait and not play their instrument.

Invite the children to help you sort the cards into two pile: notes and rests. This will almost certainly spark a conversation about these two, familiar words. Children may have taken a note home about an upcoming classroom event, and they know that they rest when they feel tired. Play is another familiar word. When a musician plays a note, does that mean that they run around like a child on a playground? Explain that in music, *play* means “make the instrument make sound”.

Distribute instruments to children and allow them to explore freely for a few minutes if they would like. Next, arrange four of the cards in a row: note-rest-note-rest. Tap your foot to establish a beat. Can children remember what the two symbols mean? Try reading and playing the arrangement. Next, arrange the same four cards in a different way: note-rest-rest-note.

Would any of the children like to construct their own arrangements for the group to play? Children may begin to experiment with longer and longer patterns. Celebrate together after each attempt. There may be natural opportunities to count, compare quantities, and recognize patterns.

Let the children know that the cards will be available in the music area for free choice play.

Musical Symbols (cont.)

Helpful Hints

As you carry out this activity with children, have them sit or stand in front of you. Place the cards so that the words appear upside down for you, but right-side-up for children.

If you're concerned that the cards may get damaged or lost in the busy music play area, try adding them to the table toy area instead. You can place them in a basket along with a couple of egg shakers or other gentle instruments.

Including Every Explorer

To support younger and less experienced investigators, consider using a highlighter to color code the cards. Highlight notes with pink and rests with blue, or use another combination.

More to Do (optional)

- During informal conversations, continue to think and talk about homonyms – words with more than one meaning. Examples include ring, jam, stamp, rock, and star. These can be playful conversations.
- Notice how children use the cards for free choice play and notice if musical notes begin to appear in children's drawings.
- The symbols on the cards are quarter notes and quarter rests. As children look at sheet music, they may notice other notes and symbols. If you have experience reading music, you'll be able to explain these to individual children who seem interested. If you don't have much experience reading sheet music, children may want to ask visiting musicians. Remember that it is always OK to say to children, "I don't know, but let's find out!"
- If children show interest in exploring the pitch of different notes, try the classic water xylophone activity. Many examples can be found online. Older, more experienced preschoolers can use non-toxic paint daubers or dot stickers to compose arrangements for others to play.

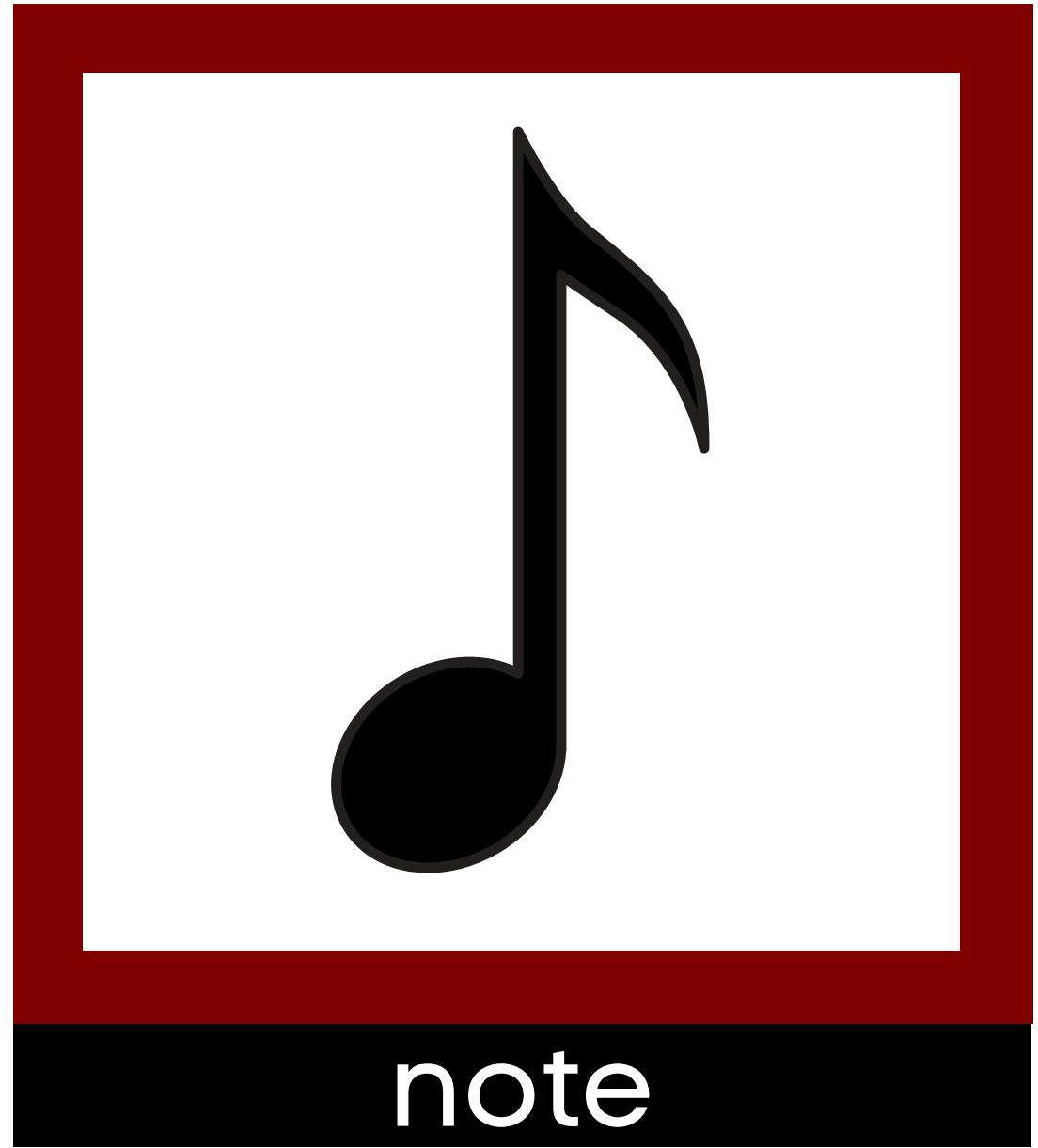
This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

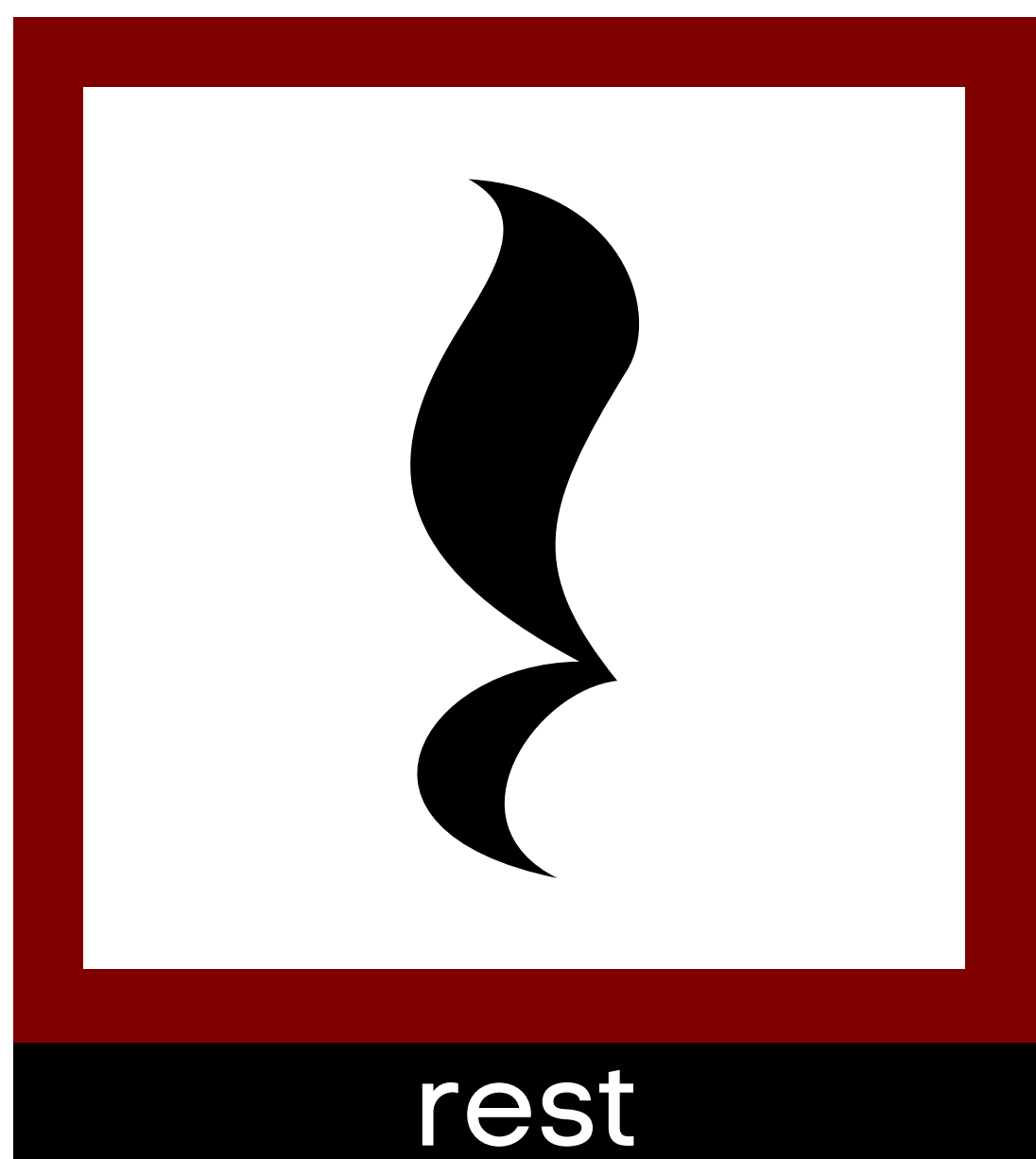
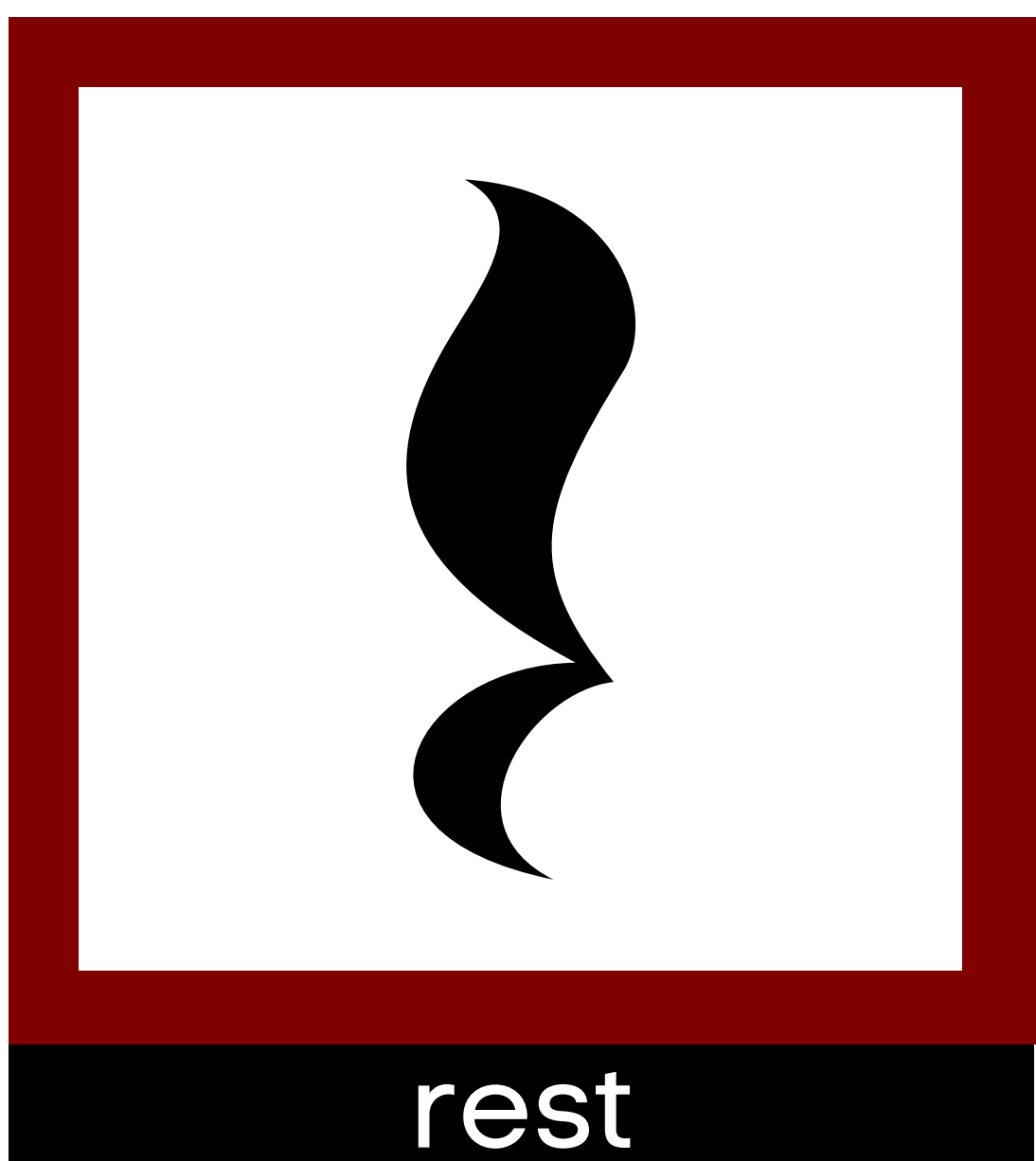
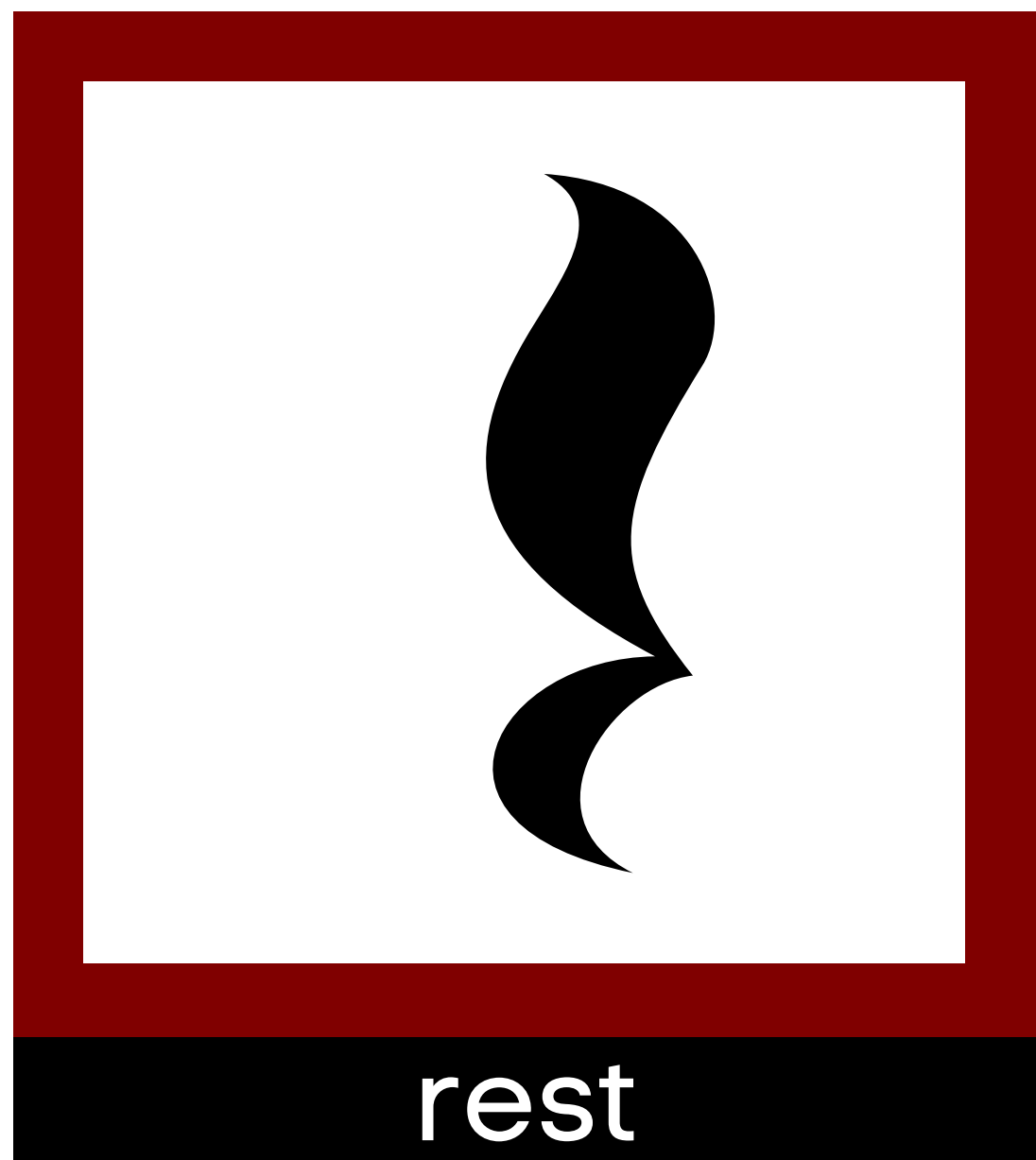
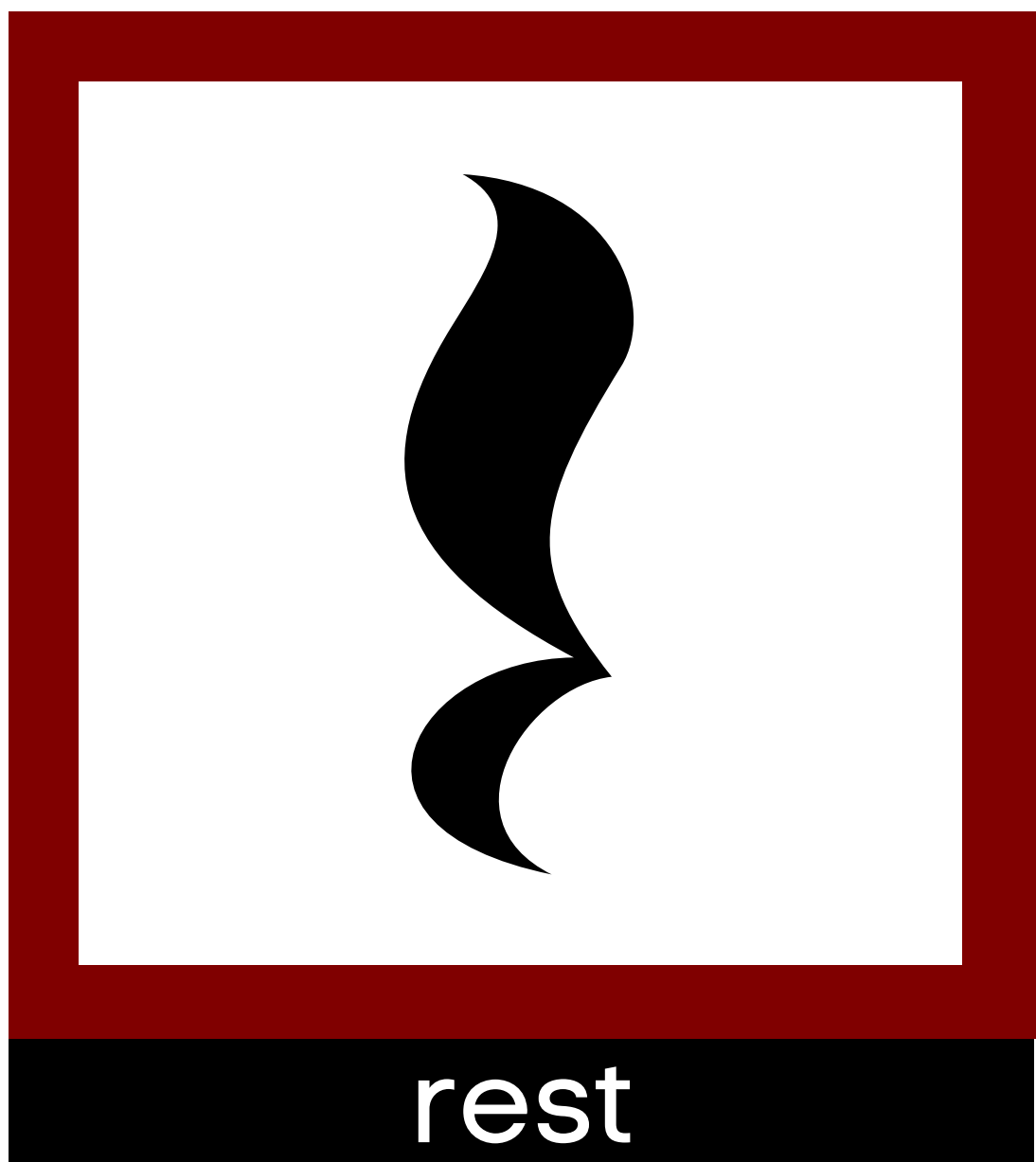
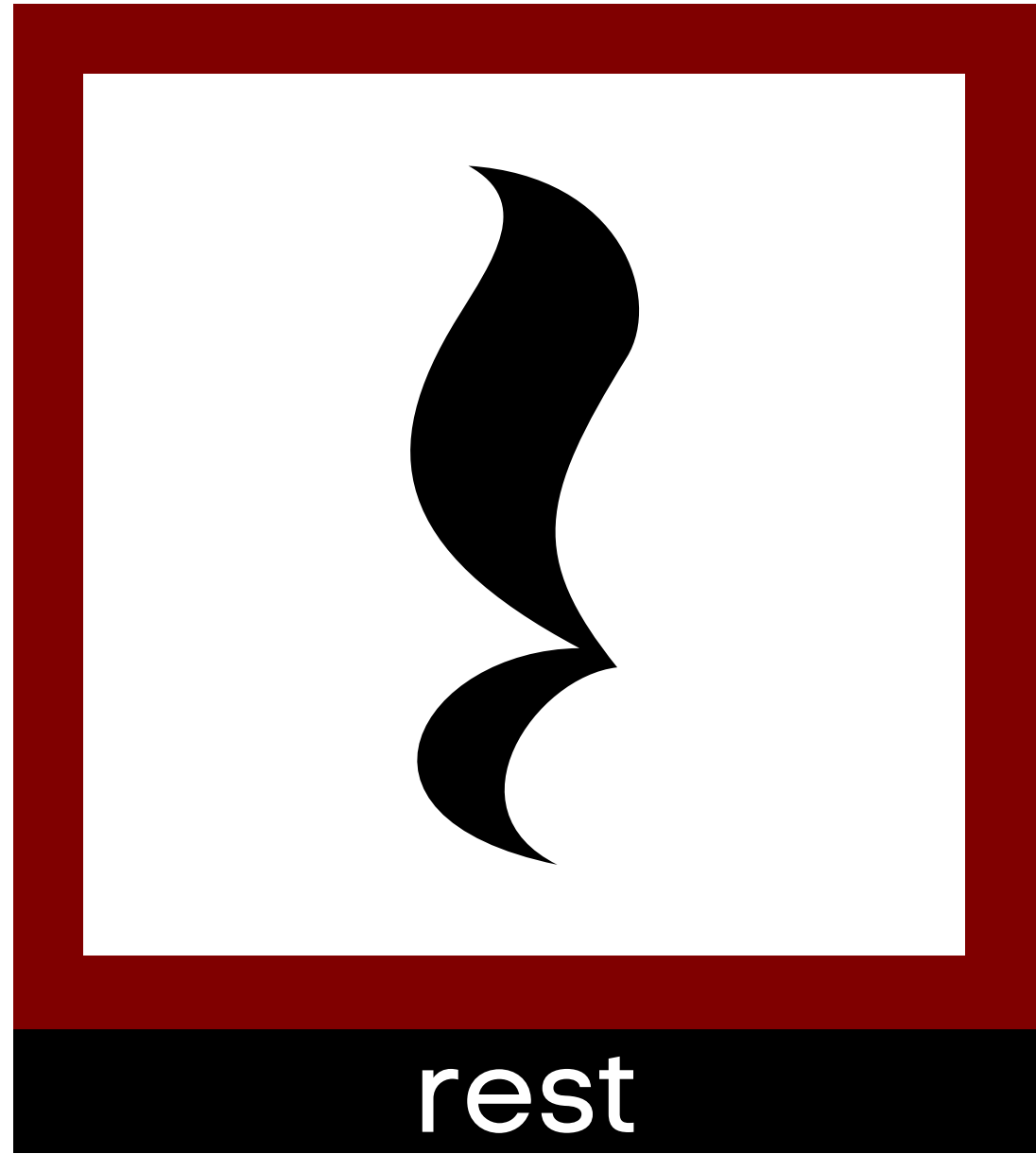
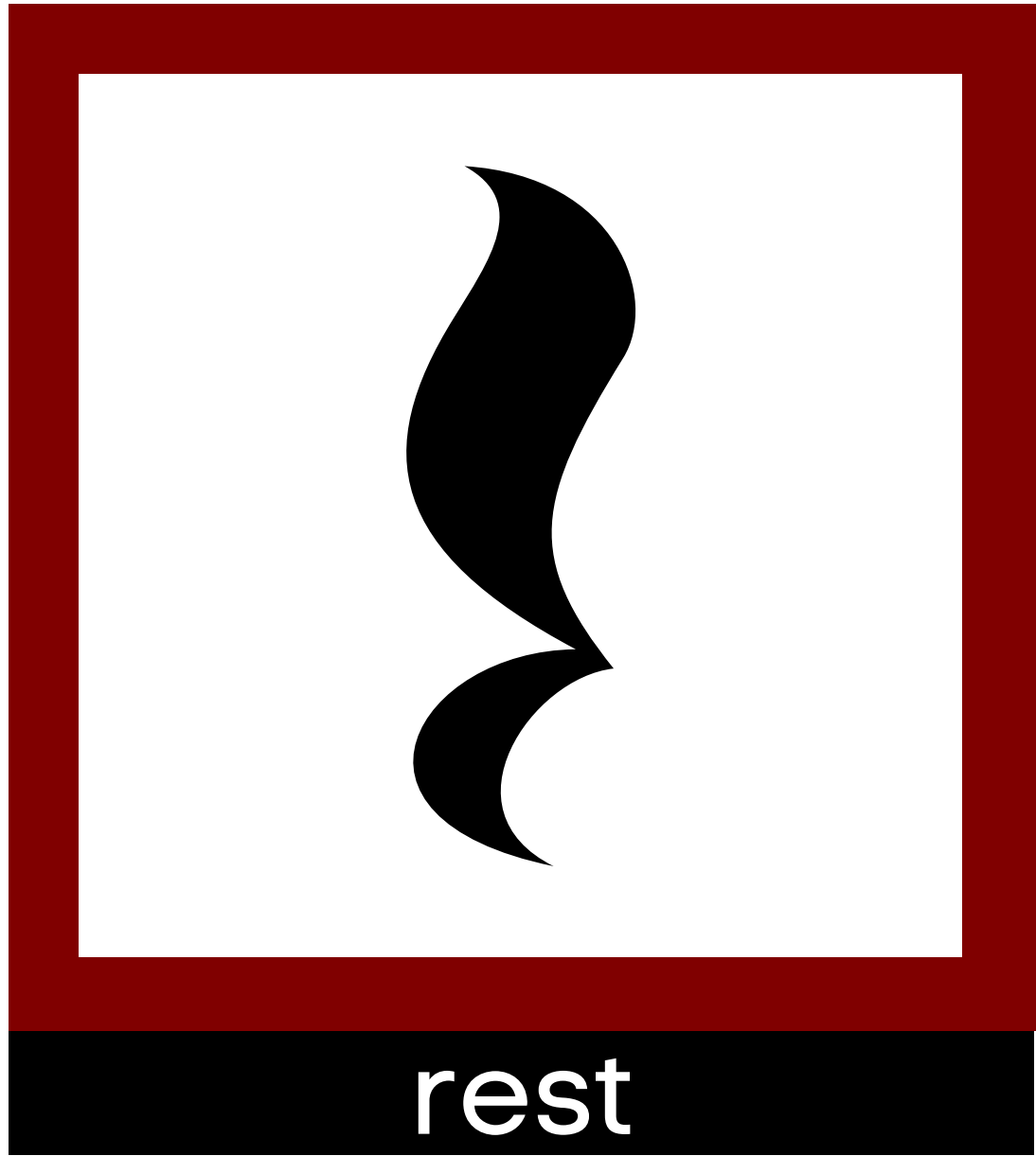
Cognitive Development – CD 1.1, CD 2.1, CD 2.3

Language Development – LD 1.1, LD 2.1

Mathematical Thinking – MT 1.1, MT 1.2, MT 2.1, MT 3.1

Creativity and Aesthetics – CA 1.1





Designing Instruments

Let's use found materials to create our own, unique instruments.

Materials

- Collection of clean, reusable materials (see list below)
- Art supplies such as scissors, markers, yarn, tape, glue, paint, chenille stems, craft sticks, paper plates and bowls, construction paper
- Large t-shirts or smocks to protect children's clothes
- Index cards or sticky notes
- Photos of musical instruments, printed or on a digital device (optional)

Before the activity begins, gather a large collection of clean, reusable materials. Possibilities include, but are not limited to:

- aluminum foil
- cardboard tubes
- jar lids
- oatmeal and coffee canisters
- paint stirrers
- ribbon
- rubber bands
- small and medium cardboard and chipboard boxes
- wax paper

Provide these materials alongside more traditional art materials and tools.

Begin by talking with children about what they've learned so far about musical instruments. If they could create an instrument, what kind would they create? Their instrument could be realistic, or they could use their imagination to invent something new.

Show children the collection of materials and explain that these can be used to construct any sort of instrument that they want. Children may wish to draw diagrams on paper before they get started.

If problems with materials occur, don't solve them for children but support children as they think of solutions. For example, if rubber bands won't fit around a larger jar lid, the child might opt to swap it for a smaller jar lid.

This may be a multi-day project with children coming back to paint or decorate with markers once the glue has dried. Have an individual conversation with each child, inviting them to tell about what their instrument is called and how it is played. Write down exactly what they say on an index card or sticky note.

Designing Instruments (cont.)

The completed instruments and dictations from children can be displayed in a very special place in the classroom.

Helpful Hints

Educators sometimes refer to reusable scrap materials as “beautiful junk”. Families and colleagues can help collect these materials throughout the year. Activities like this one connect visual arts with STEM skills.

If desired, children might sign up for a group at the beginning of this experience. Would they like to make an instrument for shaking, an instrument for tapping, or an instrument for strumming? If many children want to make the same type of instrument, split that group into two or more smaller groups. This allows children to work together to research a particular kind of instrument.

Including Every Explorer

Not every child will want to make an instrument. Some children may prefer to create other things, and that is OK.

With children with disabilities, offer adaptive and easy-to-grasp tools. It may help to cut pieces of tape to hang along the table edge for children to use when they want them.

More to Do (optional)

- Take photos of children with their instruments to share with the musicians who have inspired your group throughout this investigation. Photos can also be used to create a class book.
- Children may wish to incorporate their instruments into imaginative play. However, creations like these can be fragile. Have a group meeting to decide whether using the instruments for imaginative play feels like a good idea. If it does, what guidelines can children think of to help everyone have a positive experience?

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Cognitive Development – CD 1.2, CD 2.1, CD 2.4, CD 3.1, CD 3.2

Physical Health and Development – PH 2.1, PH 2.2

Creativity and Aesthetics – CA 2.1, CA 3.1

Active, Physical Play – Making Music

Invite children to join in activities such as these during outdoor play times. Some children will want to come and play, while others will prefer to continue with their own, free choice activities. Some activities found in this section may also be appropriate for indoor gross motor play or active group gatherings.

Move and Freeze

Use a music player to different kinds of music. Children who wish to join in the activity can run, dance, or move in other ways. When the music stops, children FREEZE! They may move again as soon as the music starts.

Bouncing Balls

If your outdoor play area includes a low-traffic concrete or rubber-tiled area, listen to the sound that a basketball or playground ball makes when you bounce it and catch it. Can children bounce their balls to a steady beat? Start off slow and then get faster. This activity is fun alone or bouncing back and forth with a partner.

Big, Big Drums

Create a drumming station with 5-gallon builder's buckets, large plastic barrels, or other sturdy, weatherproof, repurposed materials. Children will build strength and coordination as they use their whole arms to play large drums. Enjoy a loud, active drumming session with a small group of interested children.

Musical Parade

Bring out sturdy instruments for a marching band. Help band members plan a route that will take them around the edge of the outdoor play area, well away from wheeled toys and climbing equipment.

More to Do

- As interest in the band grows, add scarves and ribbons for band members to wave as they march.
- Consider building a low, sturdy, weatherproof stage for performers.

Growing Every Day Supporting Social and Emotional Development

Carol Evans, A-State Conscious Discipline Coach

Mrs. Beth's group has been investigating music for several weeks now. Today, Garrett has decided that it is time for a show! He instructs his friends: "Jessica, you play bass guitar. Michael, you play drums. I'll do the lead guitar and be the main singer."

Heated negotiations ensue as Jessica protests that Garrett shouldn't get to be the "main singer" and play lead guitar. Michael is sure that he doesn't want to play the drums. Ms. Beth moves near, knowing that the children might need her to help them talk this through. She's delighted when the three children begin to negotiate on their own about fair roles in the band. In the end, they work out that Garrett will keep the lead guitar, Michael will play the bass, and Jessica will play the drums. They'll all take turns to sing.

Instruments take shape from art materials and interlocking building toys. When the trio grows frustrated with the crowded space where they are working, they present a proposal to Ms. Beth: How about using the large group rug for their performance? Garrett reminds her that she always tells them, "When something doesn't go your way, change something and try again." Ms. Beth agrees that it's a great idea, and soon a stage is under construction on the largest rug in the room.

More children join in. The band adds a keyboard player and a second drummer. Other children set about arranging chairs and cutting tickets for an audience. Ms. Beth observes the children with wonder and surprise. This group of children hasn't collaborated like this before. There are challenging moments, but the children work through them. Ms. Beth documents many instances of children resolving conflicts and working together.

When she relays the events to a colleague, he replies, "Wow – your hard work is paying off!"

Ms. Beth supported the children's social and emotional development when she:

- Modeled calmness, fairness, and kindness daily.
- Consistently helped children build social and emotional skills every day.
- Was prepared to scaffold on this day, but did not step in too soon.
- Provided flexibility as children's ideas took shape.



Even More Experiences with Making Music

- Encourage children to notice how music is used for many different purposes. Their class might put on upbeat music for exercise, or a lullaby might be used to soothe a cranky baby at home.
- Consider adding a DJ to your classroom helper chart. This person could choose recorded music to play at a particular time of day, such as after rest time.
- Use a gentle chime or an interesting percussion instrument to help gain children's attention at transition times.
- Hang wind chimes in your outdoor play area or outside your program's entrance.
- Is it possible for your children to watch a marching band practicing or attend children's musical theater? Activities like these might spark even more investigations!

Notes:

Concluding Your Music Exploration

1. With your teaching team, think about, and discuss the following questions.

What experiences have children had with making music during this exploration?
What new knowledge and skills have developed?

Do the children seem ready to conclude this exploration? Have their questions been answered? Is their interest waning? If children are still excited about this topic, think about ways to continue and extend the exploration.

How can we document children's learning and help children share what they have learned with others?

Your making music exploration might end with one of these activities.

- Creating a book of photos or children's drawings. The book can be added to the classroom library and/or copies can be made for each family.
- Hosting a family engagement event. For example, the music exploration might conclude with a family celebration with a sing-along and/or children's parade.
- Inviting children to serve as experts to others. In this case, preschoolers might create a basket of musical instruments to give as a gift to a younger classroom. Can they explain what the instruments are called and how they are used?

2. Talk with children about their favorite memories about making music. Model gratitude by creating thank you cards or letters to the families, school members, and musicians who supported your exploration.
3. Where will you go next? Use your observations and conversations with children to help you plan your next exploration!

Using Explorers Preschool Curriculum

Explorers Preschool Curriculum (EPC) is designed for early childhood educators and preschool-aged children. It can be used in any setting, including private preschool programs, public school programs, and family child care homes.

EPC Guiding Principles

1. Children are naturally curious and eager to understand their world.

The *Explorers* curriculum promotes authentic, enjoyable, first-hand experiences in a vibrant and encouraging environment.

2. Domains of child development are interrelated and are all important.

Physical, cognitive, communicative, social, and emotional development are all vital for success in school and life. *Explorers* supports the *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards (CDELS)* with engaging experiences that promote learning across all domains.

3. Children are trustworthy partners in learning.

Explorers is inquiry-driven, guided by children's interests, questions, and ideas. Children take on meaningful decision-making roles and responsibilities as a part of each investigation. The child's right to play is protected and supported as fundamental component of every day.

4. Each child, and each group of children, are unique.

Explorers offers choices and flexibility for children and adults. Individualization to include children with developmental differences and special needs is integral to the curriculum.

5. Learning happens best within the context of family, community, and the natural world.

Explorers strives to promote positive connection between preschool-aged children and their school, community, and environment. Diverse and meaningful opportunities for family engagement are given special importance.

For professional development support with Explorers Preschool Curriculum, please contact Marcy White, MWhite@AState.edu

Big Ideas from EPC

Explorers may be different from other curricula you've used in several ways. Understanding these differences will help you use the curriculum successfully.

Explorers includes a collection of topics for investigation. These topics include, but are not limited to:

- Bubbles
- Day and Night
- Farmers' Market
- Insects
- Making Music
- Ramps and Tunnels
- Songbirds and Squirrels
- Trees

Each topic supports children's real-life, firsthand experiences.

Topics of learning – known as investigations – do not have to occur in a predetermined order. Instead, educators are urged to observe, talk with, and think about children in their group. Which of the topics would be most interesting and engaging to this group of children? Decisions may also be guided by the resources that are accessible to the program. Programs may choose to participate in any of the investigations, in any order.

Within broad topics, individual groups are urged to “zoom in” and focus most intently on areas of special interest. For example, one group taking part in a *day and night* investigation might be most interested in city lights that shine though the dark. A second group might be more interested in nighttime creatures like crickets and moths. Although both groups have the same, broad focus, conversations and planned activities in the two rooms may differ greatly. Some activities in the topic packet may be skipped, and different high-value activities may be offered to support children's interests.

Educators are expected to “re-run” books and activities that especially interest children. That means that the same activity will be shared again over the course of several days or weeks. Through repeated opportunities to explore, children gain expertise, test new ideas, and work in increasingly complex ways. Repetition helps children build confidence and construct knowledge.

Investigations are not limited to one week. In fact, groups may focus on the same topic for two, three, or four weeks – or more! It is believed that deep, comprehensive investigation of any interesting topic is more beneficial to young thinkers and learners than a “sprinkling” of many different topics. Thus, children and adults are invited to continue their investigation as long as it sustains children's interest. An investigation concludes when educators observe that children's questions have been answered. Children seem satisfied and ready to move on to other topics of interest.

EPC Daily Practices

A resource packet is available to support each investigation topic. These packets support learning throughout the day in these eight ways:

1. Learning Center Extensions

Free play is a crucial part of every day! Learning Center Extensions are play objects and other materials that support the topic. These can be added to the indoor play areas that children use every day. The items in this section are examples. Educators may implement their own ideas, as well.

2. Books for Sharing with Groups

Suggestions for books are listed in each packet. It is not expected that programs will purchase the entire book list. Rather, the list may provide guidance and inspiration as educators select books from their storage area and/or their local children's library.

These may be added to classroom book areas and can be shared informally with one or a few children at a time during play times. Some of the books on the list are also designated as *** recommended read-alouds** for sharing with larger groups of children.

3. Topical Conversations

Conversations can occur within the context of play or daily routines. Especially with older preschoolers, some conversations may also occur during whole group meeting times. In addition to informal conversations throughout the day, *Explorers* encourages educators to routinely use two additional strategies each week:

Response Charts

The educator talks individually with each child and writes down exactly what they say. This interview process takes place during play time or other informal times. Once all of the children have had a chance to respond, the chart is posted where everyone can easily see it. The educator reads all of the responses aloud during a group meeting. Written response charts are recommended at least once a week.

Polls

Children and adults respond to a question by writing their name under one of two choices on a chart. Younger or less experienced groups may opt to place name cards on the chart instead. The polling process takes place with one, or a few, children at a time – perhaps as part of the morning arrival routine or as children finish breakfast.

During a group meeting, children and adults look together at the chart. It is recommended that children are invited to complete polls 1-3 times per week.

4. Playful Songs, Rhymes, and Games

These simple activities may be incorporated into group gathering times or used as transition activities. Many are “piggyback songs” – meaning that they offer new words to tunes that children may already know.

5. Active, Physical Play

Most of these activities are intended for the outdoor play area. Some are also suited for indoor gross motor spaces – such as gyms – or active group gatherings.

Educators are encouraged to invite children to join in activities such as these daily. Many children will want to participate, while others would rather continue with their own, free choice gross motor play. When two or more adults are present, one can lead the activity while others supervise children elsewhere in the play area.

6. Growing Every Day

These vignettes highlight strong, positive guidance practices. Educators are reminded that the most valuable learning occurs when adults model, coach, guide, and encourage children in the context of everyday interactions.

7. Small Group Learning Experiences

Ideas for small group learning experiences make up the bulk of each resource packet. These learning experiences are intended to be carried out with groups of 3 – 5 children at a time.

This means that educators will complete each activity with several small groups. For some activities, some children may participate in the morning and some may participate in the afternoon. A few activities may even take place over the course of several days. Using lists or sign-up sheets can reassure children that everyone will have a turn.

You'll find a key to small group learning experiences on the following page.

8. Concluding Your Exploration

This final section of each resource packet invites educators to reflect about whether children are ready to wrap up and move on to another topic of investigation. It includes ideas for culminating events and documentation.

Key to Small Group Learning Experiences

Each double-sided small group learning experiences idea sheet has specific components to assist you with planning and facilitation:

<p>Exploring with Flashlights Let's investigate flashlights and go on a low light adventure!</p> <p>Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Basket of assorted flashlights (at least one or two more flashlights than children in the small group) <p>Talk with children about what they know about flashlights. Flashlights are lights that we can carry in our hand. They are usually powered by batteries, and they are tools that let us see in dark places. What experiences have children had with flashlights? They might talk about using flashlights when camping or when the lights go out during a thunderstorm.</p> <p>Invite children to investigate the flashlights in the basket. Notice together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How flashlights switch on and off.• Which ones are brightest, and which are dim.• Which ones have a narrow beam, and which ones have a wide beam.• Other differences and similarities related to size, shape, color, and function. <p>This may be a good time to support children as they learn to ask for turns and trade materials – "May I use the tiny flashlight next?", and, "I'll trade you the blue flashlight for the green one."</p> <p>After a period of open-ended exploration, invite each child to choose a flashlight to take on a walk. You'll go together to another area where the lights are dim, but not totally dark. This could be another room, a hallway, a gymnasium, or any other child-safe space where you can turn out the lights. Invite children to investigate by walking around and shining their lights on things that interest them.</p> <p>When you return to the classroom, talk with children about what they noticed while exploring with flashlights.</p> <p>Helpful Hints Ask colleagues for help building a collection of flashlights. Families may be happy to help, too.</p>	<p>Title</p> <p>Materials: Things to gather and prepare</p> <p>Procedure: How to facilitate the activity with children</p> <p>Helpful Hints: Tips for a smooth, successful experience.</p>
<p>front of page</p> <p>Including Every Explorer: Ways to individualize and adapt for children with special needs.</p> <p>More to Do: Suggestions for extending learning, creating displays, and engaging families.</p> <p>Did You Know?: Fun facts and/or background information for teachers.</p> <p>Build and Strengthen: Connection to AR Early Learning Standards (CDELS)</p>	<p>back of page</p> <p>Exploring with Flashlights, cont.</p> <p>Including Every Explorer Some children are frightened by dark places. If a child seems worried, invite them to hold your hand or walk next to you.</p> <p>Some children may require one-on-one support to have a safe, satisfying experience outside their familiar classroom. If this is not possible, find a way to explore inside the classroom.</p> <p>More to Do (optional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hang pictures of nighttime (nocturnal) creatures in the place where children will explore. Have fun spotting owls, bats, opossums, and more!• Create a flashlight exploration space in your classroom with the basket of flashlights and a large, open appliance box that children can crawl inside.• To challenge older or more experienced preschoolers, place one flashlight without batteries in the basket with the working flashlights. When children discover the non-working light, encourage them to investigate. Offer two different sizes of batteries when they realize that batteries are needed. They'll figure out which size is correct and install them in the flashlight. "I fixed it!" <p>Did You Know? This exploration may seem simple to adults, but we have far more experience with flashlights and dim places than children do! Children may investigate many different things, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How a flashlight beam moves when they move their arm.• What happens when light shines on a window or mirror.• How a beam of light changes as it moves closer to a surface that it is shining on. <p>This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social and Emotional Development – SE 1.2, SE 2.1, SE 2.2• Cognitive Development – CD 1.1, CD 2.1• Science and Technology – ST 1.1, ST 3.2