

Discussion Guide

Discussion Guide for Module 15: Early Music Experience

Module run time: 25 minutes

Estimated time to complete the module with discussion guide: 45-60 minutes

Below are recommended stopping points and suggested questions to use in your group's discussion. Please feel free to follow your group's lead and discuss topics and questions that are of greatest value to the group!

Key points:

- The brain learns musical information very early in development. Infants learn from listening to music in their environment and culture.
- Research suggests that infants have a sensitive period when their brains are particularly primed to learn the basic structure of musical components.
- Music and language share some key elements, such as pattern and rhythm. Practice with musical patterns and rhythms may help young children learn language patterns and rhythms.
- Musical experiences may help children build other skills, too. For instance, music training has been linked to executive function skills, and moving to a beat in time with another person can help build social-emotional skills.

Module synopsis:

Page 1: *Title Page – Early Music Experience*

Page 2: *Acknowledgments*

Page 3: *Music is a Universal Phenomenon*

Page 4: *Elements of Music (video)*

Page 5: *Culture, Music, and the Developing Brain*

☞ Recommended stopping point

- What kind of music do you listen to in the classroom or at home? Do you incorporate music into circle time, transitions, or routines?
- As we just learned, each instrument has its own timbre and pitch. How might you guide your students in exploring these properties, or other musical elements like beat and pitch?

Page 6: *The Brain Incorporates Musical Information from Culture (1)*

Page 7: *The Brain Incorporates Musical Information from Culture (2)*

Page 8: *The Brain Incorporates Musical Information from Culture (3)*

Page 9: *Music and Social-Emotional Development*

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✦ Recommended stopping point

- Consider the results of the study we just heard about – that children who listened to music for 20 minutes everyday were able to hear meter changes in foreign music. Previous studies with language have found similar results – that children who have regular experience with a foreign language can tell the difference between sounds in that language. Why might this be? For instance, what features do music and language share? How are they different?
- When infants and children play or listen to music, they typically share those experiences with others. How might adults use music time to build upon children’s social-emotional skills? (For instance, consider eye contact, back and forth interactions, or group play.)

Page 10: *Early Music Training*

Page 11: *Practice Changes the Brain*

✦ Recommended stopping point

- Practice, or working on a new skill over and over again, changes how the cells in our brain are connected to each other. The more often we do something, the stronger the connection between the brain cells, and the easier it becomes. Reflect on a new skill that you are trying to learn. What was your experience like when you first started? What is it like now? How do you think your experience will be one year from now? Share your thoughts with the group.

Page 12: *Language and Music*

Page 13: *Music Training and Speech Sound Processing*

Page 14: *Music Training and Speech Sound Processing (video)*

✦ Recommended stopping point

- We just learned about two studies indicating that regular music-learning sessions can boost children’s ability to hear and detect sounds and rhythm in language. Why do you think music can help children learn certain elements of language? How could you use music to help children learn language or languages?
- In the study with 9-month-old infants, in addition to listening to the music, parents rocked and bounced their children to the beat. Do you combine movement and music in your home or classroom? How might movement to music help children’s learning?

Page 15: *Early Music Training and Neural Networks*

Page 16: *Music Training and Executive Function (1)*

Page 17: *Music Training and Executive Function (2)*

✦ Recommended stopping point

- How might you incorporate music into your classroom in a way that helps children practice executive function skills like flexible thinking, controlling impulses and focusing? Brainstorm some potential games or activities.
- Executive function skills are not only used in playing music, but in many other everyday tasks. What are other activities children can do to practice their executive function skills?

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Page 18: *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes*

Page 19: *Musical You!*

To learn more about the relationship between music and learning, take a look at these resources:

[NAEYC | Articles for Families on Creative Arts and Music](#)

This resource from the National Association for the Education of young Children (NAEYC) includes musical activities to do with infants and toddlers to help support children's developmental skills.

[NAEYC | Our Collection of Children's Songs](#)

NAEYC curates a collection of children's music to enjoy in the classroom or at home.

[Music Improves Baby Brain Responses to Music and Speech](#)

Read more about I-LABS research on music and early childhood development.

[National Association for Music Education | Position Statement](#)

The National Association for Music Education position statement on music in early childhood.

[Office of Head Start | News You Can Use: Music](#)

This article from the Office of Head Start's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center discusses how music can be used to support children's development across learning domains.

We are constantly working to improve our materials. Do you have suggestions about topics to add to this guide? Did your group discuss something we didn't suggest? We'd love to hear from you! Please email your thoughts to us at ilabsout@uw.edu.

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