



## STORY-MAKING

### Imagining Gives Meaning to Music for Young Children

Peggy D. Bennett

Story-making prompts young children to imagine meanings for the music they hear. In simple, guided ways, children make the music their own.

#### Story-Making and Imaginations: Eleven Suggestions

1. **Story-making:** Any song and any piece of music can become meaningful for children when it is situated into the context of a story or a simple image. Story-making for songs and music classics helps children feel connected to the music. Simple, brief, story-making is most effective, because the main emphasis is remains on *music-making*.
2. **Play-Making:** Playfulness is an attitude toward others and activities that opens us to a wide array of possible responses. When we approach children with twinkles in our eyes and smiles on our faces, we invite them to join us in playing. Nearly any activity can become playful if we approach it that way.
3. **Choice-Making:** Choices empower children: when they make choices (colors, animals, directions, and so on), the activity or song becomes *theirs*. And, they get to see the consequences of their choices, the power of their words, and the effects of their language, when their choices are incorporated into a song and game
4. **Expressiveness:** Practice vocal expression (varying the pitch, pace, and volume of your voice) to model and convey a story-telling attitude.
5. **Conversations:** Be conversational with children when you ask them to imagine. Convey your interest and curiosity in your face, your eyes, and your voice. . . just as you would speak to a dear friend.
6. **Questions:** Ask "fat" questions: What do you think? What could it be? What do you choose? What happened then? How could we do that?



7. **Neutral Responses:** When an answer seems "off the wall," or one that you don't understand, you can say: I never would have thought of that! What an imagination you have! That sure gives me a picture in my mind! I have never heard that before!
8. **Cultivate Imagination:** Ponder what teaching behaviors and strategies might stifle imaginations, then minimize or avoid these when you are working with imaginations.
9. **Responsiveness:** Be responsive to children's imaginations rather than evaluative of them. Observational feedback simply states what you see and hear. . . sometimes with wonder, sometimes with surprise, sometimes with thoughtful, nonverbal silence (and facial animations that reflect these responses).
  - To show interest or recognition: *"What an interesting way of thinking about that!" "As you explained your idea, I could picture what you mean!" "I see your idea."*
  - To encourage: *"I have never thought of that interpretation before. Tell us more about your thinking." "You are really making connections. Keep imagining!"*
  - To describe: *"Your explanation was so vivid that we could imagine ourselves in that scene. We saw ships, water, activity on the shore, and the main character of the song." "Your movements were such a surprise! We saw you coordinate them with the music and correlate them with the meaning of the words."*
  - To evaluate: *"That is a clever idea and one that I hadn't thought about . . . such imagination you're using! You gave us an excellent description, because you used words that helped us picture your idea."*
10. **Reading as a Puzzle:** Treat reading activities as a fun puzzle to figure out rather than a chore to perform . . . and get right. Accept reading performances with encouragement and ready (if needed) vocal or physical assistance rather than "solving the problem" for young children.
11. **Music-Making:** Do not forfeit joyful music-making for learning *about* music. These two goals are not mutually exclusive!

## Selected References

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### Books & Articles

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### **Principles for Teaching and Learning**

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from  
SongWorks 1

1. Students have the right to be treated with respect and dignity for their ideas, skills, and stages of development.
2. Students deserve an engaging learning environment in which they feel safe enough to demonstrate freely their understandings and skills through various types of participation.
3. Student learning is the responsibility of both teachers and students.
4. Learning is holistic and constructive.
5. A teacher's attitudes, behaviors, and methodologies should be compatible.
6. Accurate and constructive feedback helps students become independent learners.
7. Quality of life is enriched through music and singing.

### **Principles for Teaching and Learning Music**

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from  
SongWorks 2

1. The major goal of music study is the development of a responsiveness to music.
2. The musicality that is critical to music performance is just as important in music study.
3. The fundamental skill in music behavior is listening.
4. The way music sounds rather than how it looks guides the selection and presentation of patterns for study.
5. A distinction exists between skills and concepts that are musically easy and those that are musically simple.
6. Song provides direct involvement for making music and studying sound relationships.

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[www.musicedventures.org](http://www.musicedventures.org)

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