

# Singing

Young children's voices are light and small. Singing becomes more accurate and expressive as they sing alone and with others (Hackett & Lindeman, 2004: 110). Singing can be one of the most popular activities in the early years and is usually accompanied by a backtrack, an instrument or the teacher, parent or caregiver's own voice. Since singing is an important means of expression for young learners, songs should be included as a part of their day (Moomaw, 1997: 9).

Learners in the early years should experience the following:

- *Independent* singing on pitch (notes going up and down) and in rhythm (the regular and irregular patterns of the beat) with appropriate timbre (tone colour), diction (pronunciation) and posture while maintaining a steady tempo (the speed of the music);
- *Expressive* singing with appropriate dynamics (the volume of the music being performed. Younger learners should be able to distinguish between loud and soft, while older learners should also experience music becoming gradually louder or gradually softer), phrasing and interpretation;
- Opportunities to *memorise* a varied repertoire (musical collection) of songs representing diverse genres and styles;
- Singing *ostinato* (produced by embellishing a bourdon with extra notes, transforming the original bourdon into a freestanding accompaniment pattern), *partner songs and rounds*;
- Singing in groups, blending vocal timbres, matching dynamic levels and responding to the cues of a conductor (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2014: 433).



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## Singing in early childhood

Vocal exploration can include storybooks or made-up exercises that engage the imagination (Mason, 2014: 4). To sing is to turn interests, experiences and feelings into a personal musical expression. When learners imitate and personalise the songs they have heard, they bring joy to themselves and to those who listen. Not all learners sing accurately in tune although the great majority of children are capable of it. Children who sing daily at home or in school develop in-tune singing around eight years old. A series of siren-like sound effects can be modelled and then imitated to extend the range of children who drone on one or two pitches or who sing below the appropriate pitch (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2014: 71, 86).

## Resources

- Campbell, P.S. & Scott-Kassner, C. 2014. *Music in childhood: From preschool through the elementary grades*, 4th ed. South Melbourne: Shimer Cengage Learning.
- Hackett, P. & Lindeman, C.A. 2004. *The musical classroom: Backgrounds, models, and skills for elementary teaching*, 6th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson.
- Mason, E. 2014. Sing, play, and create: All in 20 minutes! *General Music Today*, 28(1): 3–7.
- Moomaw, S. 1997. *More than singing*. St. Paul: Redleaf Press.
- van Vreden, M. 2020. Teaching Foundation Phase learners about Music. (In Naudé, M. & Meier, C., eds. *Teaching Life Skills in the Foundation Phase 2*. Pretoria: Van Schaik. pp. 199-249. ISBN: 9780627037245



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