

Youth Music - Communicate Through Sound Project **Term 6 Summer 2024 Report**

Key

ML - Music Leader

Aim: To improve communication skills and to help improve communication between the child and their wider family unit or social setting. All of the children taking part will have some form of communication delay/need.

Group Sessions Overview:

The group sessions were conducted at Marlow Opportunity Playgroup over 12 weeks. Participants included children with speech and language delays, emotional difficulties, autism spectrum condition (ASC), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), Down's Syndrome, visual impairments, genetic and neurological difficulties, English as an additional language (EAL), and learning difficulties. Each session accommodated up to 15-18 children.

Theme for Term 6:

The theme for Term 6 was 'Nature,' featuring weekly sessions focused on where we find nature, such as in the garden, lakes and rivers, the seaside, and mountains.

Structure of Each Session:

Each session followed a musical structure, including:

Hello: Utilising vocal greetings and sounds.

Familiar Song: Engaging with untuned percussion using a song that changed animal sounds and actions depending on the weekly theme.

Group Playing and Singing: Using various instruments to sing, make sounds, and communicate.

Moving to Music: Incorporating movement with props like pom-poms and dance ribbons.

Drumming: Playing Djembes or claves to encourage responses.

Listening: Engaging with quieter sounds and vocal responses using chimes and triangles.

Goodbye: Using voices and sensory props to signal the end of the session.

Participant Diversity:

Participants included children from the playgroup and their support workers. The children have complex needs, requiring 1-1 or 2-1 support when needed.

Engagement and Comfort:

Many children were excited about group music sessions even before they began, often showing anticipation by moving towards the Music Leader and her equipment. During sessions, children were supported by their 1-1 or 2-1 assistants, enabling the Music Leader to give attention to each child while ensuring they had support during group activities.

Variety in Activities:

Each week, the familiar song would change to include different animal sounds and actions, while retaining repetition for the rest of the song. This allowed some verbal children to anticipate and join in various parts of the song, both unaided and assisted. The use of different props to represent parts of nature introduced new and exciting instruments for the children to explore. By week three, children had learned to wait their turn, reducing agitation.

Individual Participation:

Each week, the Music Leader included 1-1 sections, allowing children to explore an instrument, sound, or musical command in their own way. For example, a visually impaired child was guided to explore an instrument by feeling and understanding its parts through vocal descriptions. The Music Leader adapted songs and instruments to meet the children's needs.

Observations:

Observations highlighted the need for many children to lead, guide, and control their musical interactions. These opportunities were beneficial for emotional, communicative, and musical learning. The Music Leader adapted her approach, stepping back from teacher-led activities and supporting the children's musical interactions and preferences. Music became part of everyday play and movement, utilising different resources children interacted with to support further participation, engagement, and learning.

Observations from the ML include ...

Child L - Mitochondrial Disease (FB1X4)**Initial Engagement:**

L seeks out the Music Leader (ML) with enthusiasm when she enters the room, shouting and pointing loudly. She is very excited that the music session is about to begin.

Participation During Sessions:

Throughout the sessions, L remains engaged, looking at the ML and following simple instructions. Although she can get distracted by other children, she quickly regains focus due to the short activities designed for the group.

Musical Interaction:

L sometimes makes a rhythm using the provided instruments while listening to the ML. She particularly enjoyed the texture and pattern of the rain stick, placing her hands on it and moving it from side to side. Upon hearing its sound for the first time, she expressed excitement by forming an 'O' shape with her mouth. During the group activity, when singing "Rain is Falling Down," she moved rhythmically with the rain stick.

Vocal Expressions:

L is very vocal during group sessions, making various sounds. She often imitates animal, environmental, or transport sounds throughout songs when encouraged.

Rhythm and Response:

L can imitate a simple beat using the instrument. While it sometimes takes her a while to respond, she does so when she is ready and focused.

Overall Progress:

Throughout the term, L has shown significant progress in confidence, strength, and expressing her ideas and preferences. She has also learned to engage for longer periods without being distracted.

Child Z - Hydrocephalus, ACC, L1CAM

Support and Participation:

Child Z is supported by his 1-1 carer during music sessions to help him hold and grasp instruments and resources to make sounds.

Emotional Response and Engagement:

Z appears to be happy for most of the music sessions, making vocal sounds to familiar songs, giggling during humorous moments, and moving his body to the beat or variety of sounds. He enjoys listening to the music, which seems to be his preference.

Instrument Interaction:

When asked if he would like an instrument, Z sometimes closes his hand or turns away, indicating he does not want one. He remains thoughtfully engaged by listening, moving, and making sounds throughout the activity. The instruments can sometimes be overwhelming or distracting for him. Occasionally, he will play an instrument but then throw it to indicate he has finished with it.

Specific Preferences:

Z likes to play the drums with his hands, often tapping or pulling his hand into a fist. However, one song, which involves a crescendo called "Drum Clap," visibly upsets him. The anticipation and increase in volume provide sensory overload for him.

Respect for Preferences:

Z is very clear about his preferences and choices, which the Music Leader (ML) respects. The ML works with Z's preferences to enable him to engage and enjoy his music sessions.

Child N - ASC

Initial Engagement: Child N runs to the Music Leader (ML) upon her entering the room, making verbal squeals of delight and trying to grab and play her guitar. He clearly enjoys music and looks forward to it every week.

Verbal and Musical Interaction:

N puts together few words conversationally, but during music sessions, he sings whole sentences and parts of songs. He constantly watches the ML and often tries to get ahead of her, calling out vocal parts before it's time.

Instrument Interaction:

N enthusiastically plays all of the instruments offered and often needs reminders to use gentle hands because he is so excited to hear the sounds and feel the textures.

Attention and Focus:

Although N runs around for most of his time at playgroup, he sits unaided in a chair for the entire music session and requires little one-to-one support. His attention and engagement in music are remarkable, showing his desire to be heard, engage, and interact with the ML.

What we have learnt

Objective: To understand the impact of the Communicate Through Sound curriculum on children with communication difficulties, and to document any differences or similarities among various groups of children.

Key Findings:

- Impact of Visual Cues:

- Visual aids such as puppets and Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) symbols played a crucial role in enhancing children's understanding and communication.
- These aids enabled children to identify animals or objects clearly, helping them communicate without the pressure of immediately understanding signs or words.
- In mixed-ability groups, visual cues facilitated communication for all children, particularly those with communication delays. Over time, children who initially relied on sounds began to develop signs and words, thanks to consistent use of visual aids.
- The use of visual cues significantly influenced communication responses and fostered inclusive interaction among participants.

- Role of Gestures and Facial Expressions:

- Gestures and facial expressions were vital communication tools, enabling interaction without verbalisation.
- Sessions followed the child's lead in preferred communication methods, fostering a supportive and respectful partnership.
- Puppets representing book characters with distinct sounds and signs helped children remember and use them repeatedly, even outside of sessions, reinforcing learning and continued engagement with communication skills.

- Effectiveness of Musical Instruments:

- In Term 6, musical instruments such as an ocean drum and splash sounds proved more effective than props or puppets in promoting vocal sounds.

Skills Required for Music Leaders Working with Children with Communication Delays

- Listening Skills:

- Attentive listening to children's thoughts and ideas.
- Consideration of parents' feedback and suggestions.

- Facilitating Communication:

- Allowing extra time for vocal responses.
- Providing opportunities for one-on-one interactions.
- Supporting children to participate comfortably in any part of the room.
- Understanding and accommodating various communication methods in response to musical activities.
- Using instruments as visual and sound cues to evoke communication responses.

- **Flexibility and Patience:**

- Allowing children the freedom to move and process information as needed.
- Demonstrating patience by giving ample time for responses.
- Adapting the curriculum to meet the evolving needs and interests of the children.

- **Resource Management:**

- Ensuring a diverse range of resources to support different needs, such as various sound makers.
- Designing a curriculum that supports varying needs, allowing each child to succeed.

- **Acceptance and Praise:**

- Accepting each child's unique response and positively praising their efforts.
- Effectively using Makaton and other visual aids.

- **Structural Considerations:**

- Structuring the curriculum to accommodate a large group, ensuring adequate resources for each child.
- Allowing children to dip in and out of sessions as needed.
- Collaborating with the centre's team to encourage participation and understand children's needs.

- **Supportive Environment:**

- Providing time and space for processing information.
- Facilitating child-led activities to foster trust and respect.
- Maintaining eye contact and offering praise to each child in the group.
- Incorporating repetitive tidy-up songs to encourage independence and social skills.

- **Focus:**

- Allowing ample time for children to explore instruments thoroughly, ensuring they have sufficient time to experiment with different sounds and engage fully before transitioning to the next activity.

Future Direction of CreateED's Curriculum

- **Promoting Focused Interaction and Attention:**

- Consistent opportunities for focused interaction and attention through the use of instruments and sensory resources were a priority.
- Providing ample time for children to actively listen, explore, and experiment with new instrumental sounds elicited a range of vocal responses, including expressions of curiosity and inquiries about the mechanics behind the sounds.

- **Encouraging Exploration and Engagement:**

- Sufficient time and space for exploration led to increased interactions among children, as well as between children, the Music Leader (ML), and families.

- This approach fostered individual curiosity and engagement and facilitated collaborative learning experiences.

- **Outcome:**

- Emphasising unhurried exploration proved instrumental in promoting active engagement, communication, and social interaction within the sessions, demonstrating the importance of a flexible and responsive curriculum adapted to the needs and inputs of children and their families.

Feedback from MOPS

At MOPs the needs of the children are very diverse which is why we choose to support them 1:1 during their morning. The one activity which brings all the children together is our music sessions and we see amazing progression in the children's development through observing these sessions.

I like that each week is different and different topics are chosen. Most of the children are totally engaged and enjoy experimenting with the variety of sounds. The 1.1 moments are beautiful.

