

# Practicing Skills Through Music

## ... The Universal Motivator!

Music is often a common denominator which pulls many people together in an activity of enjoyment! Music can be particularly motivating for children with severe multiple disabilities. It can provide non-verbal children with opportunities to **participate** through the use of...

- **Fine Motor Skills** - e.g., using musical instruments (sometimes with hand-over-hand or hand-under-hand assistance)
- **Communication Skills** - e.g., vocalizations, word approximations or simple voice output devices)
- **Gross Motor Skills** - e.g., movement of any body part (reinforcing suggested physio exercises)

Student can also work on specific **skills**, such as...

- making choices between songs or words within songs through the use of pictures or objects
- indicating they want "more" of the song or music when it is stopped, through their facial expressions, gestures or body tone
- using simple voice output devices (e.g., BIGmack or Step-by-Step Communicator) to provide within songs...
- holding onto musical instruments
- large movement of the body
- using power wheelchair for songs involving movement

Let's further explore some of these areas...

1. Participation Using **Voice** (vocalizations, word approximations or simple voice output devices)

- create a relevant **sound effect** throughout the song at appropriate times
- select or create one **word** that is repeated throughout the song and have the student provide this word through voice output, or vocal approximation
- select or create a **phrase** that relates to the theme of the song and have the student use this in between verses
- create a **question** that could be placed before the chorus each time in the song and record this on the voice output device
- record part of the **chorus** on the voice output device for the student to use

	
Give feedback using voice output	"More" music?

2. Participation Requesting "More" (student may demonstrate this through vocalizations, facial expressions, reaching, pointing, or changes in body tone)
- stop the music and ask if the student wants "more" music and wait for a response from the student
  - stop the music and just wait for any response from the student
  - stop the music on a tape and prompt the student to use a switch to turn the music back on (Note: switch and tape recorder are plugged into an AbleNet Powerlink)
  - have classmates periodically stop singing a song (with a hand gesture from the teacher) and ask the student if s/he wants more music (This is one way for the music teacher to see if the class is really watching as well).

### 3. Participation By Making Choices

- have the student make a choice about which song the class will sing next through the student's method of choice making (e.g., auditory scanning, holding up two pictures or representational objects for each of the two songs, or showing interest for the song of preference through facial expressions, etc.)
- using representational objects, pictures or words for key parts of a song, periodically stop and ask the student to make a choice about the next word for the song (e.g., Old MacDonald had a .... "pig" or "cow"?; The Wheels on the Bus - have the student select the "wipers" versus the "horn", etc.)
- have the student make a choice about which musical instrument to use to keep the rhythm for the song as background music.

	
Clapping hands with assistance	Choosing an instrument

#### 4. Participation Using **Hand** or **Switch** Skills

- have the student use a switch, tape recorder and Powerlink to stop and start music for **warm-ups** in the gym
- have the student use a switch, tape recorder and Powerlink to run **background** music for lunchtime, art projects, or independent research projects in the classroom
- have the student use musical **instruments** with physical assistance as suggested by your local occupational therapist
- have your student use **sign language or gestures** for some key words in the song

#### 5. Participation Using **Movement**

- have the student use his/her **electric wheelchair** in an open area to move to the music
- have the student stand in a **standing frame** during the music period
- have the student move different parts of the body with assistance, to the rhythm of the music

To locate a music therapist in your area go to: **<http://www.mtabc.com/findmt.htm>**