

They're Small, and Can Do It All

Concept-Based Early Childhood Music Activities

Emerson Oliver, Norcrest Elementary School

- These activities are all things I use with my ECSE Pre-K (Early Childhood Special Education - 3-4 year-olds, all with a diagnosed disability or developmental delay) classes, and also as introductory activities with my Kindergarten classes (and sometimes 1st and 2nd, depending on their academic need).
- In early childhood, **repetition with variety** is CRITICAL - it allows for comfort and engagement with the material, gives students with language delays more time to master the words, and variety lets students explore familiar material from a new perspective. Nothing included here is meant to be a “one-and-done”, and all have included ideas for variation. If you feel inspired and find another way to extend, I would love if you sent me an email so I can share it with my students as well!
- All of these songs and lessons are **concept-based** - they are focused on *observing, experiencing, performing*, or even *labeling* a musical concept. Students may not be developmentally ready for the vocabulary, but that doesn't mean they can't observe or experience it.
- Questions? Want to connect? emerson.oliver@browardschools.com OR oliver.em3rson@gmail.com

Sleeping Bunnies

Concepts: aural discrimination of sections, audiation, AB form

Nursery Rhyme

- Students will perform actions that match the words to the different sections of the song - “sleeping” during the A and hopping during the B - while the teacher provides the students with different levels of support:

- **Words:** teacher sings the words unaccompanied
- **With Accompaniment:** teacher sings the words while providing some kind of accompaniment (make a clear distinction between the A and B sections).

- **No words:** the teacher sings the song on a neutral syllable (la, doo, etc) or plays the melody with or without accompaniment
- **Accompaniment Only:** teacher plays only the accompaniment of the song, and students must listen to distinguish between the A and B sections

A Slowly

C F C G C

See the lit-tle bun-nies sleep-ing 'til it's near-ly noon. Shall we go and wake them

7 F G7 C

with a mer-ry tune. They're so still, are they ill?

B Faster

13 C F C G7 C

Hop lit-tle bun-nies, hop hop hop; Hop lit-tle bun-nies, hop hop hop; Hop lit-tle bun-nies,

18 F C G C G7 C

hop hop hop; hop, hop, hop hop hop!

This is My Singing Voice

Adapted from [“This is My Singing Voice” by The Shenanigans](#)





Concepts: singing/talking/calling/whisper voice, beginning student composition

Visuals

- The four voices cards I use are the last pages in this document. I use “calling voice”, but others use “shouting voice”, so I included both.
- I print each on a different colored paper (with the picture, this makes differentiation easier for pre-readers) and attach magnets to the back so I can do this activity on my board as well.

Level 1 - Echo Song

- Teacher models and has students echo each phrase:
Place each card on the floor/board (magnets)
as they are presented

			
This	is my	talk-ing	voice
This	is my	call-ing	voice
This	is my	whis-per	voice
This	is my	sing-ing	voice (solfege: S SS MR D)

- Add a walking bordun on C and G (teacher playing)

Level 2 - Composition

- Invite students to come up and “compose” by putting the cards in a new order
- Perform the song as above, and model observations about the students’ compositions (like “I noticed how that went from loudest to softest” or “I liked hearing the difference between whispering and calling because they were right next to each other!”)

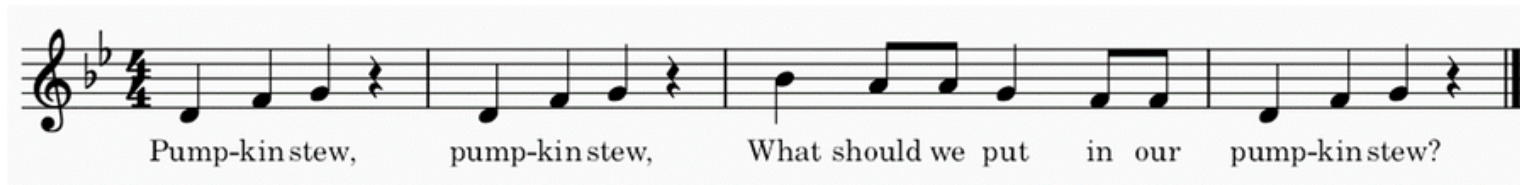
Level 3 - Identify the Voice

- Instead of an echo, the song switches to a call and response/guessing game
- In each voice the teacher asks “What voice is this?” (straight quarter notes), and students respond with the correct “This is my _____ voice” from above

Extension: Students Lead

- Students can do the teacher part at either level 2 or 3 described above
- Students could do one single voice, or some may be able to model all four in a row

Pumpkin Stew



Concepts: 4 voices, singing voice, singing alone

- Rote teach (whole song method): Students stir their “stew” while the teacher sings several times, and join in once they know it.
- Day 1: Taking Turns
 - Each student says what they want to put in the pumpkin stew using their talking voice. The teacher echoes back to them singing (using the D F G motive), and all students echo the teacher.
 - Intermittently (every 3-4 students), “stir” the things students have put into the stew by singing the original song
- Day 2: Singing Alone
 - Students put something in the pumpkin stew using their singing voice, and the whole group echoes.
 - Some students will say it in their talking voice - I ask once “can you do it in your singing voice?”, and take whatever their second attempt is, even if it’s in their talking voice.

I use a pumpkin that students pass to show whose turn it is, but this isn’t necessary.

A note about singing alone: I’ve had students put some BIZARRE things into the pumpkin stew over the years - spiders, eyeballs, shoes and hats. I’ve been put in the pumpkin stew several times, and once an entire class put in a series of Lamborghinis, Ferraris, and other cars, each utterly delighted that they’d pulled one over on me and gotten away with an off-topic answer. None of them noticed that I had a clipboard and was taking singing voice assessment data.

Something like a puppet, a prop microphone, a silly gimmick, or throwing stuffed food at my 5th graders (it was curricular, I swear), can make students comfortable enough to access skills like singing alone. And it’s just more FUN!

Adaptable Action Songs

These are three of my favorite, flexible action songs. They can be used to explore (with or without vocabulary):

- **Steady beat**
- Locomotor and/or non-locomotor movements (or a movement break)
- Stopping at the right time (premack principle)
- Instrument exploration and beginning instrument technique

Shake, Shake, Shake (Your Egg)

E. Oliver

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three staves of music, each with lyrics underneath. The first staff starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 5. The second staff starts at measure 6 and ends at measure 11. The third staff starts at measure 12 and ends at measure 16. The lyrics are: "Shake, shake, shake your egg, shake your egg shak-er! Shake, shake, shake your egg, shake your egg shak-er! Shake your egg shak-er, shake your egg shak-er! Shake, shake, shake your egg, shake your egg shak-er!"

Shake, shake, shake your egg, shake your egg shak-er! Shake, shake,

6 shake your egg, shake your egg shak-er! Shake your egg shak-er, shake your egg

12 shak-er! Shake, shake, shake your egg, shake your egg shak-er!

(Action Songs Continued)

Clap With Me

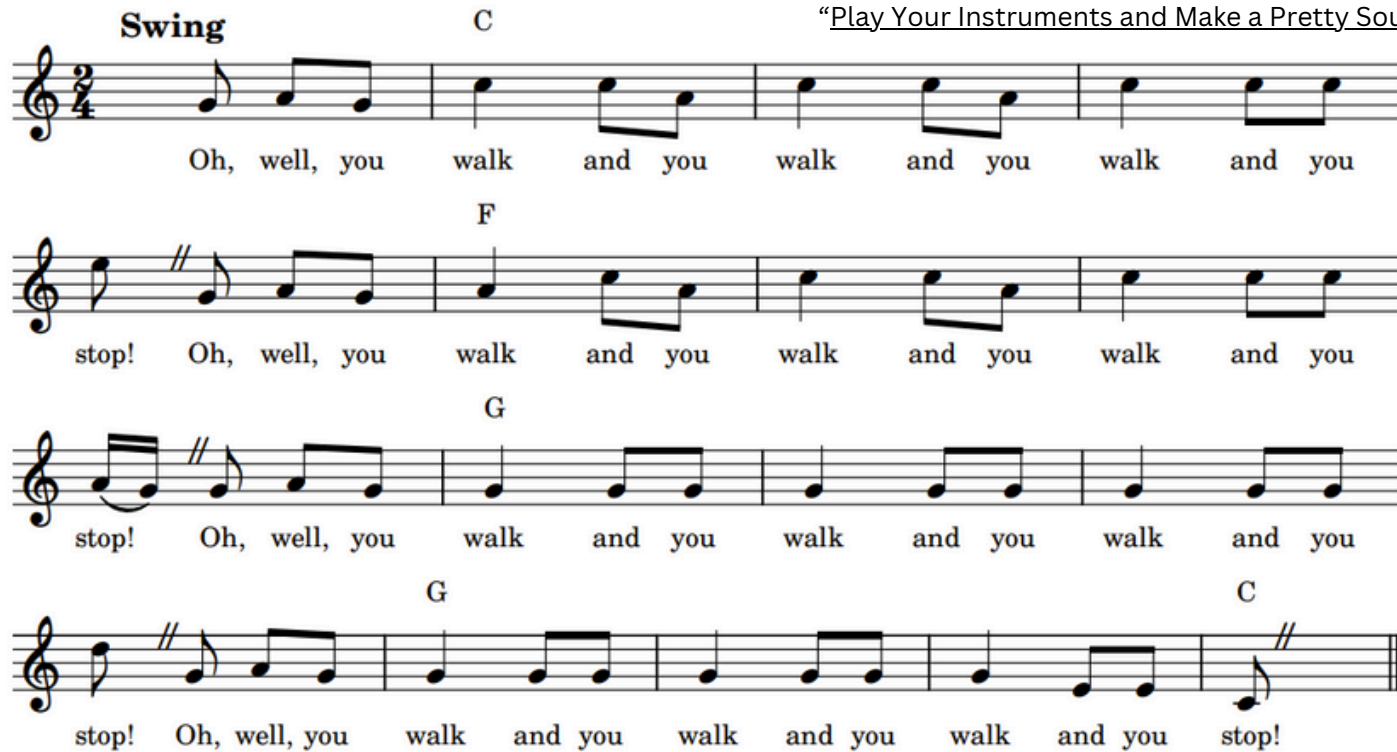
Swedish Folk Song



Clap with me, la la la la la Clap with me, clap and then we'll stop.

Stop and Go (Walk and Stop)

There are many variations of this movement song -
 This version was transcribed from Ella Jenkins' Album
 "Play Your Instruments and Make a Pretty Sound"



Swing C
 Oh, well, you walk and you walk and you walk and you
 stop! Oh, well, you walk and you walk and you walk and you
 stop! Oh, well, you walk and you walk and you walk and you
 stop! Oh, well, you walk and you walk and you walk and you stop!

F
 G
 C

The Birdies Fly Away

Melody based on “Ein Männlein steht im Walde”
from *Hänsel und Gretel* by Engelbert Humperdinck

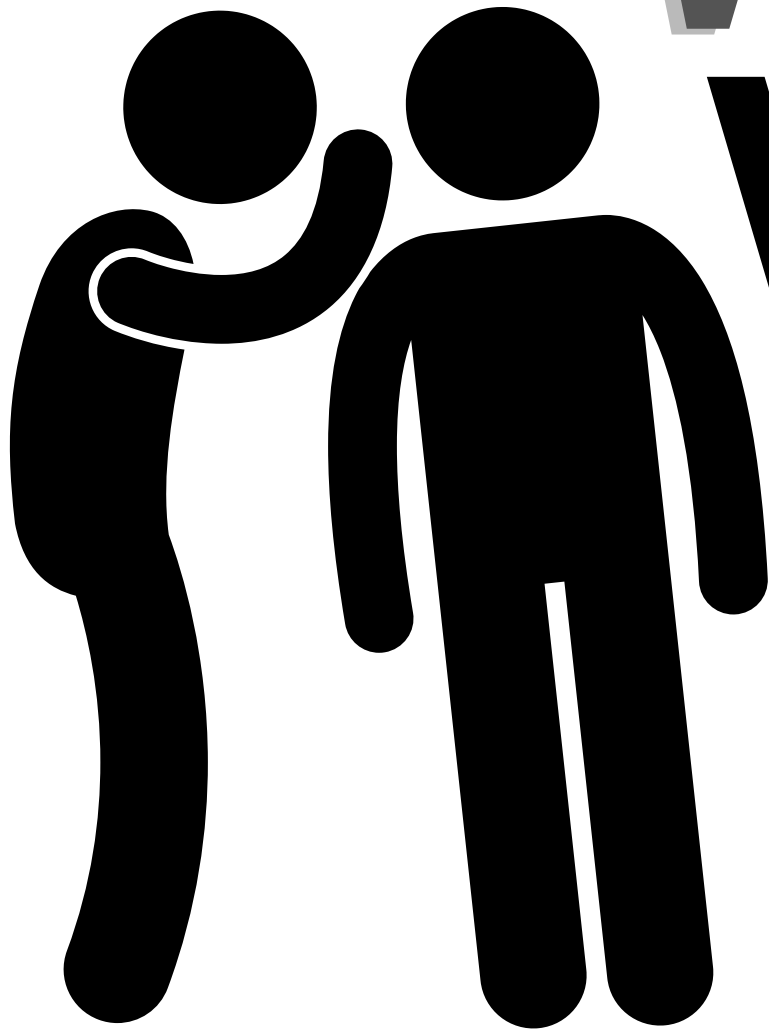
The bird - ies fly a - way and they come back home. The

3
bird - ies fly a - way and they come back home. Fly a - way, fly a - way,

6
all the bird - ies fly a - way, The bird - ies fly a - way and they come back home.

Concepts: Phrases/phrasing, tempo opposites (fast vs. slow), Do/tonic/home tone (2nd and above)

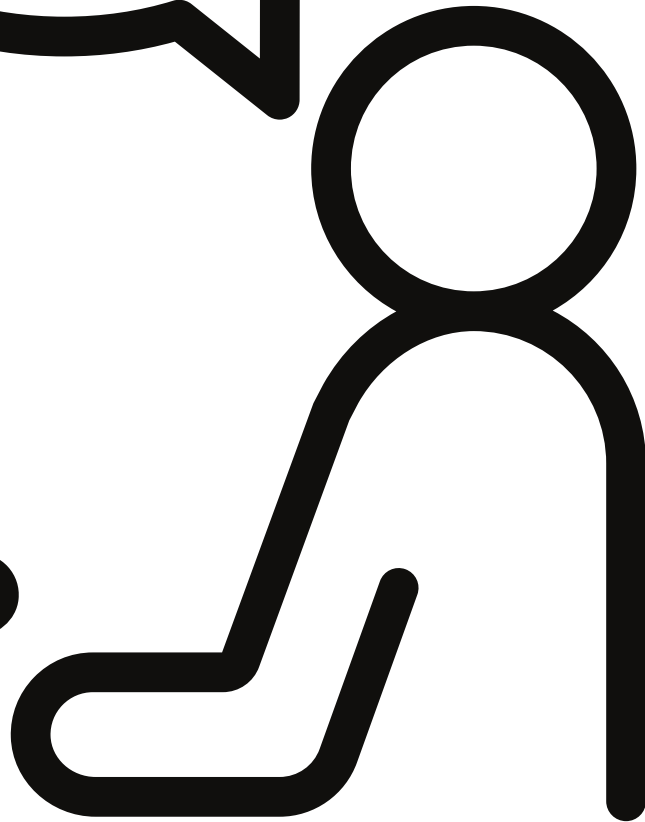
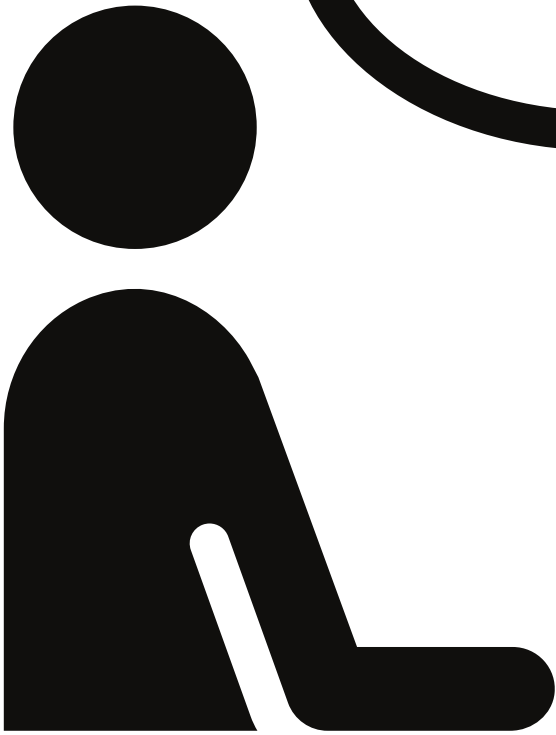
- Students make a bird with their hand, and make a nest with the other hand. While the teacher sings the song, students make their bird “fly” and land in the “nest” hand on the word “home”
 - How many times did the bird land? Did they always fly the same amount of time?
 - Praise the students who got there right on time, and weren’t early or late - they’re anticipating the phrase length
 - NOTE: All of my my Pre-K classes are ECSE (early childhood special education), and with them I start with just the first phrase repeated, then expand from there.
- From here you can expand infinitely, based on your students and space:
 - Choose different body parts to be the bird’s nest/home
 - Vary the tempo
 - Add a scarf as the bird
 - Stand to fly, and sit to land on the word “home”
 - Move away from their chair/spot, and return on “home”
 - Find a “nest” somewhere in the classroom
 - Have students come up with ideas



WHISPER
VOICE

TALKING

VOICE





SINGING
VOICE

CALLING
VOICE



**SHOUTING
VOICE**

