



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

Born to Sing!

*Baby shark dodododododo, Baby shark,
dodododododo, Baby shark dodododododo...*

If you've been around a young child lately, there's a good chance that you immediately recognized these lyrics and perhaps even sang along. There's also a good possibility that you've witnessed a child respond to this song with glee and dancing, and pleas to hear it again...and again.

Studies have shown that when children hear and respond to songs, it ignites ALL areas of their development and school readiness. In fact, singing is so important that brain scientists believe that even from birth, our brains are prepared to pay attention to, process and respond to music. The simple act of giving children opportunities to hear and sing songs activates multiple areas of their brain and supports the formation of important brain connections, which has life-long benefits.

Here are some specific ways that singing ignites children's development:

- ♥ **Cognitive:** singing enhances higher order thinking skills such as, imagination, critical thinking, and problem solving.
- ♥ **Language/literacy:** it helps children learn the meaning and sounds of words/language (phonemic awareness).
- ♥ **Social/Emotional:** it releases a chemical in the brain called *endorphins* which relieves stress, oxygenates the brain and boosts feelings of happiness.
- ♥ **Physical:** it strengthens their motor skills when children move, dance, and use motions to the song.



And the good news is that you don't have to be a gifted singer to sing with children! Children will listen, even if you're off key – and will love every minute of it!

In this newsletter, we will discuss ways infants, toddlers and preschooler respond to singing. We will also highlight three types of engaging songs to sing with young children– *lullabies*, *piggyback songs* and *playful songs*.

This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Studies have shown that infants will recognize a voice earlier than they recognize a face. Furthermore, they listen longer to a singing voice compared to a speaking voice.

One of the ways you can support your infant's development is by singing lullabies, to him. Lullabies, which are soothing songs, help infants develop an important skill called self-regulation. Infants do not yet have the ability to regulate their emotions and behaviors; therefore, they rely on caregivers to do this for them. When you help your baby transition from an active alert state to a calm state by rocking him gently while singing a soft lullaby, you are helping him learn how to regulate his emotions and behaviors, which is a skill highly related to later mental health and educational success. The experience of being soothed will help your baby learn to soothe himself.



Here are some of the other notable benefits of singing lullabies to a child:

- ♥ Lullabies are scientifically proven to lull babies to sleep;
- ♥ They stimulate language and cognitive development;
- ♥ Lullabies can strengthen the emotional bond between a parent and child

Activity for Infants: *Lullaby for Baby*

What You Need:

None

What to Do:

1. When it is time for your baby to sleep, softly sing your child a lullaby.
2. Some well-known lullabies include: *Hush Little Baby*, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, *Rock-a-Bye Baby*, and *You are My Sunshine*.
3. Insert your child's name where applicable. For example, "*Hush little Ethan, don't say a word...*"
4. Use songs from your child's cultural heritage. Here is a popular Hawaiian lullaby: *Pūpū Hinuhinu* (By Nona Beamer, 1950)

Pūpū hinuhinu (Shiny shells)
Pūpū hinuhinu ē (Shiny shells)
O ke kahakai kahakai eē (I found you by the shore, the shore)
Pūpū hinuhinu ē (Shiny shells)



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

Toddlers

There are many ways to enjoy singing with your toddler. One way is to make up a song for your child. A piggyback song is a song sung to a familiar tune, with new lyrics. For example, using the tune of *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*, you change the words to this song to: “*Brush, brush, brush your teeth each and every day; Brushing, brushing, brushing, brushing; Brush the plaque away.*”

Piggyback songs help toddlers with:

- ♥ **Familiarity and Memory.** When a child already has a melody in his head, he can focus on memorizing the lyrics. Learning the words becomes a lot easier, and soon he’ll be singing along, and performing the actions.
- ♥ **Predictability.** Singing the same song during routine activities (such as picking up toys) helps a child know what to expect and therefore, reduces his insecurities and resistance toward the activity.



- ♥ **Repetition.** Human brains crave repetition, patterns, and order. Piggyback songs provide a good predictable pattern through an easy familiar tune that our brains can lock on to

Activity for Toddlers: *Create a Piggyback Song*

What You Need:
None

What to Do:

1. Pick a subject or topic that you would like to sing about. For example, how to pick up toys.
2. Choose a familiar tune that you and your child know. For example, “*Baby Shark*”.
3. Make up words and sing it with the familiar tune. If it doesn’t fit, change the words or find another tune. For example:

“Clean up time dodododododo, Clean up time dodododododo”.... “Pick up trucks dodododododo...”, “Next it’s books dodododododo...”

4. Keep singing the songs that work well and your child enjoys, and continue to make up new ones. Remember, you can make up a piggyback song about anything

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Preschoolers

Preschoolers like to sing...just to sing! One of the best things about singing together is that it promotes joy and laughter! Laughing is a natural response to something funny, but did you know that laughing together has so many benefits? It builds connections with your child and that alone is huge, but it also promotes a good sense of humor. Research has shown that children with a good sense of humor are happier, healthier, more optimistic, have higher self-esteem, can handle differences well, are better liked by their peers, and are better able to handle the adversities or challenges they may face.

One of the ways you can laugh with your child is by singing playful songs together. Try singing the following types of songs:

♥ *Silly Songs and Nonsense Songs:* Enjoy old favorites like, “On Top of Spaghetti.”



♥ *Cumulative Songs:* Preschoolers delight in songs that build and repeat like, “The Green Grass Grew All Around.”

♥ *Action songs:* Dance and laugh together with “Tooty Ta.”

Activity for Preschoolers: *Handwashing with the Slippery Fish Song*

Adapted from Playworks Presents <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfqCOX-FocU>

What You Need:

Handwashing area: sink, soap, water, towel

Words to the *Slippery Fish Song* (By Charlotte Diamond)

What to Do:

1. Let your child know that you’ll be washing hands by doing the motions to the *Slippery Fish Song* (a playful song that kids love!)
2. Teach your child the following 3 motions:

Slippery Fish: slide hands together back and forth, and on top of each other;

Octopus: interlock fingers of both hands and wiggle them in and out;

Great White Shark: one hand “chomps” on each finger and thumb of the other hand, then switch hands.

3. Sing this fun song and do the motions while you wash your hands together.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Learn to use her body with intention
- ♥ Develops control of small and large muscles

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Develops self-regulation skills
- ♥ Develop a close bond with you

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and the use of descriptive language
- ♥ Connect words and sounds he hears with what he experiences

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop his creativity and imagination
- ♥ Increase his observation, comprehension skills, and attention span



Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show him how to handle items safely and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Praise his efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

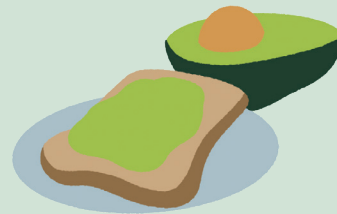
Avocado Toast

Ingredients:

Whole-grain bread, 2 pieces

1-2 avocados

Optional toppings: sprouts, grated carrots, tomatoes, etc.



Directions:

1. While doing this recipe with your keiki, sing *"This is the Way..."*, sung to the tune of: *"Here we Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush"* while completing each task, e.g., washing, mashing, and spreading the avocado.
2. Discuss the color and texture of avocado (prior to cutting). Together, wash the avocados and sing: *"This is the way we wash avocados, wash avocados, wash avocados; This is the way we wash avocados for our snack!"*
3. Slice the avocados in half lengthwise, and remove the pits.
4. Help him scoop out the fruit into a bowl and mash the avocados with a fork.
5. Toast the bread and cut it in half.
6. Have him spread two spoonfuls of avocado onto his toast. Sprinkle with optional seasonings and toppings.
7. Enjoy and sing together – *"This is the way we eat our snack, eat our snack.... Yummy avocado toast!"*

Resources

Baby Shark song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R93ce4FZGbc>

Hawaiian Lullaby CD

A 13-track collaborative album featuring musicians of Hawai'i, who share their favorite children's lullabies and other favorites in both the English and Hawaiian languages.

Piggyback Songs by Jean Warren

The author shares piggyback songs she's written to the tune of childhood favorites.

Songs by Greg and Steve

Greg and Steve hold the rank of the number-one children's music duo in the country. They have produced numerous albums with songs that have become favorites of children, parents and teachers for over 30 years.



Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Hush Little Baby by Sylvia Long

This best-selling version of the beloved lullaby Hush Little Baby is now available in a sturdy board book making it perfect for sharing with the youngest children.

Slippery Fish in Hawai'i text by Charlotte Diamond

Read and sing the popular Slippery Fish song with this board book that features colorful illustrations that highlight Hawaii's incandescent, vibrant underwater world.

Preschoolers

On Top of Spaghetti by Paul Brett Johnson

In this adaptation of a favorite silly song, a hound tells what happens when his beloved meatball escaped from a plateful of spaghetti. Includes a recipe for spaghetti and meatballs.

Shake My Sillies Out by Raffi

Animals and campers join together in the woods one evening and shake their sillies, clap their crazies, and yawn their sleepies out. Includes unaccompanied melody.



Learning to Grow is a project of the University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College, with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services. Visit our website at www.learningtogrowhawaii.org or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii