

In Practice: Developing an effective Early Years curriculum including Performing Arts

How to Develop an Effective Early Years Curriculum that includes Performing Arts to Support NQS & EYLF

At the beginning of 2009, a quiet and insecure five year old boy walked into a kinder room... He was very shy, but extremely clever and intelligent for his age.

"Why didn't he go to school?" asked some parents.

Only his mother and kinder teacher knew, that socially and emotionally he just wasn't ready to take this big step in his life. The first few months weren't easy... Puzzles and constructions were his main interest, but slowly he started participating and enjoying playing instruments, making music and gradually building up his confidence and friendships.

At the end of the year concert he was on a big stage with other children, singing and dancing their hearts out...He was overjoyed with excitement to perform in front of his family and a large audience. It was the time when this boy started to shine.

In February 2010 I was invited to a private party. Suddenly, a confident and happy six year old school boy ran towards me and wrapped his arms around me. He could not hold back his excitement as he shared his news: school was great, but he was also auditioning for a theatre kids company!

So, ...how do we develop an Early Years Curriculum that not only has interesting and educational experiences for children, but has life changing experiences too!

After teaching music to children for more than twenty-seven years, I can confidently say that music can change lives. I have seen shy children blossom and become leaders, I have seen emotional and hyperactive children learn to share and be patient, I have seen children with special needs start to speak and dance with partners...

So, what is music and why are we talking about performing arts and not just singing or playing instruments?

In my approach, music for children should be a blend of many art forms.

In the American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language we will read: "*Performing arts are arts, such as dance, drama, and music, that are performed before an audience.*"

Performing arts include music, dance, opera, theatre, magic, spoken word, musical theatre and even circus arts.

When working with children, we need to find a way to engage them and deliver a message in a fun and exciting form. That's when music becomes priceless...



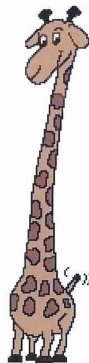
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In Practice: *continued*

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Incorporating music and performing arts in the Early Years Curriculum is easy. We just need to remember to always use age - appropriate material and songs which are fun, meaningful, not too long, have simple lyrics and a high quality musical content.

Songs which incorporate dancing routines and gross motor actions are very beneficial for brain development. Music material with use of Auslan or fine motor actions is also fantastic for all children, even young toddlers. Music pieces where children can be engaged through playing percussion instruments are extremely important for developing many skills. Storytelling through music leads to drama, musical theatre and can become a life changing experience for some children.



In every curriculum we need to look for a core, which I believe, always is the CHILD.

We need to focus on the needs of the child and nourish his/ her individuality and uniqueness through a variety of activities which include music, movement, speech, drama and many other forms of performing arts.

We all know that children have different abilities and learn when they are ready in their own way. However, it is our role as educators to improve and maintain educational programs for all children on a daily basis. It is our role to support and reflect the National Quality Standard and the Early Years Learning Framework and be driven by a centre or kinder's philosophy and values.

The Early Years Learning Framework is focused on learning and the role of the educator. It emphasises the essential elements of high-quality early childhood practice, including play-based pedagogies, intentional teaching and strong relationships with children and families.

Introducing music into a curriculum can help us design and promote the integrated and complex learning for all children, which stimulates their social, intellectual and

emotional growth. Sometimes, one single musical activity can develop a love of music, creativity, life skills and reflect all five Outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework!

Implementing music and performing arts in the curriculum will enrich the whole child, increase their learning capacity and enhance the quality of their life.



Galina Zenin (B Mus. Ed., Dip. Teach.) is a presenter, early childhood educator, qualified and highly respected music and voice training teacher, author, composer and storyteller. She writes her own music and brings to her music program a wealth of European and Australian experience and a high level of professionalism.

Galina has established herself as one of Australia's most innovative Music and Early Childhood Educators. Her most recent credits include presentations of her creative programs, "Music for Learning" and "Wellbeing Practices for Life" at the 2010 & 2011 DEECD Innovation Showcases. Galina has been invited to present a wide range of music and wellbeing topics at a number of conferences and seminars in Australia and overseas.

