

19 All Time Favorite Activities for Teaching Primary Music

Junior Primary Age by Sharla Dance

1. Bring Order to the Pictures - Choose appropriate pictures to illustrate the song. Display them at the front of the room in a mixed up order. Tell the children that you need help to put the pictures in order. Ask them to listen to the song and decide which picture goes first, which goes second, etc.. Sing the song. Receive the children's answers. Sing again as help for them to order the pictures. Once they are satisfied with the order of the pictures, sing the song again, pointing to each picture as it corresponds to the words of the song. (I don't ever put up pictures already in order, because they do not process them as well.) You can extend this activity by then asking them to close their eyes as you take away 2 pictures. Now ask the children what colors, shapes, objects, etc. were in that picture. They literally will then be implanting the picture on an inside chalkboard. Take away two more pictures, again asking the children details about the pictures. Now sing the song pointing to where the pictures used to be. (The children will see them in their heads instead!)

2. Concentration Picture Matching Game - Make at least 12 pockets and pin, glue, or use magnets to display them on a board at the front of the room. Prepare at least 12 inserts for the pockets with two matches of at least 6 different pictures that have to do with the song. (A good source for inexpensive gospel oriented pictures is the Sacrament Meeting program covers.) Cover the back of each picture or word insert with cardstock so that the children cannot see through to the picture. Insert the pictures into the pockets and mix up the matches, turning them face in toward the board. Tell the children that you are playing a matching game. As you sing the song, you will touch someone on the shoulder, then they will go up and turn two cards around to see if they match. If the two cards they turn around don't match, they must show them to the other children, then turn them around again and put them back in the pockets. If the two cards do match, they leave them facing outward. Sing the song over and over again as you touch a child's shoulder to signal it is his or her turn, and have the children find the matches on the concentration pocket board.

3. Windwands -Prepare enough windwands for all (or at least half) of the children. Ask the children to watch your windwand and figure out how many circles you make with the ribbons on each side as you sing the song and move the windwand. Sing the song and do the windwand circles for the song. Receive their answers. Have the children pretend to hold a windwand and make circles as you sing again. Pass out the windwands and have the children move to a place where their ribbons will not hit anyone else. Have the children freeze their ribbons on the floor while you give instructions. Practice the circles once slowly, then sing and do the circles together as you sing the song. (Remember...simple movements for this age.)

4. Scarves -This activity is for gentle, more reverent songs. Buy or cut enough scarves for all of the children. Ask the children to watch the gentle, graceful movements of the scarf while you sing the song. Sing the song and move the scarf in a gentle simple pattern as you sing. Ask about five children to come up and help you. Give each one a scarf and ask them to copy your gentle movements as you sing the song. Sing and move the scarves. Ask the children if they would each like to gently move the scarves with you while you sing. Pass out the scarves. Sing the song and move the scarves together.

5.Rhythm Actions - Decide on an appropriate simple rhythm action for the song (ex. clap hands twice, slap the thigh twice, etc.). Demonstrate it slowly for the children. Ask the children to follow your hands. Challenge them to follow you as you sing the song. Start the rhythm action to the beat of the song as you sing the song.

6. Hot -n- Cold -This is a review activity once you have learned the song. Choose an object or picture that has to do with the song (or you can use a cut out note). Tell the children you are

going to hide the object somewhere in the room, then our singing will help someone find it. If we sing very softly, the person is a long way away from the object. If we sing with loud full voices (but not shouting), then the person is very close to the object. Ask one child to go out of the room. Hide the object so that all the children know where it is. Ask the child to come back into the room. Begin singing. Sing more loudly when the person nears the object until the person finds the object. Play several times so that more than one child has the chance to go out of the room.

7. Draw the Song - On a blackboard or whiteboard at the front of the room, draw the song as someone else sings the song over and over again. Use different colors and shapes. (I use stick figures to illustrate many of the songs.)

8. Rhythm Instrument Steady Beat - Find some rhythm instruments like sand blocks (wood blocks with sandpaper glued onto them), rhythm stick dowels (dowels cut into 12" sticks), paper plates, maracas, or homemade guiros out of corrugated cardboard. Ask the children who would like to help play the steady beat of the song on a rhythm instrument as you sing. Demonstrate the steady beat on the instrument. Pass out the instruments. Sing the song and keep the steady beat on the instrument. You may want to use two kinds of instruments, half of the children on one and the other half on the other. Have the children switch instruments after you have sung and played once through. Sing the song and play the beat again.

9. Melody Map - Create a melody map for the song (see handout). Display it in front of the children and ask the children: What do you notice? What's the same? What's different? Receive their answers. Ask them what this map has to do with the song you will sing. Sing the song. Receive their answers. Direct them to particular details of the map: Why do you think this color is only here on the map? Why are their different sizes? What do you think this mark means? Sing the song again. Receive their answers. Sing the song again pointing to the map as it relates to the song.

10. Sign Language - Learn the sign language for the song. The Distribution Center sells an American Sign Language video tape for the new Primary songs from each year. Teach the children the sign language for the song and have them sign with you as you sing. You may want to try signing the song without singing once they have learned the song and the signs.

11. Video Clips - Find a short video clip that has to do with the song. Turn off the sound and play the clip, singing the song as you watch. Bear your testimony to the children.

12. Take it in, Take it out - This is a review activity once you have learned the song. Find a bell or wood block to use as a signal (or the signal can be turning the lights on and off). Tell the children that Olympic athletes spend almost as much time thinking through their sport in their mind as they do training their bodies and we can do that with singing. We will sing the song and when I give the signal, we will take the song inside and think it in our mind instead of singing it outloud. When I give the signal again, we will bring the song back out and sing it outloud. Sing the song and give the signal at the phrases. Take the song in and bring it out again. Tell the children you are going to do it again, only this time giving the signals faster. Sing the song again and give the signals faster, about two per phrase.

13. Swishes and/or Taps - Ask the children to follow the actions of your hands. Tap on your legs or swish your hands back and forth (whichever is appropriate for the song) to the beat as you sing the song. If you are tapping, begin tapping on your legs, then at the phrase, move to your shoulders (or some other place). At the next phrase, move to your head. At the next phrase, move to your stomach. The challenge for the children is to follow the position of your hands as they tap the steady beat. If you are swishing, move your hands up, down, side, other side, in, and out. Again, the challenge for the children is to keep the steady beat while they follow your hand position as you sing. The melody, words, etc. of the song sneak in the back door of the children's memory as they concentrate on keeping the steady beat and following your position.

14. Puzzle Picture - Cover a large picture with a piece of paper, taped gently over the picture. As you sing, begin cutting pieces of the paper away. Ask the children if they know what the picture is. Don't cut away parts of the paper covering principle figures in the picture until the very end. Keep singing and cutting until the picture is revealed. Ask the children to look at the colors and shapes of the picture and try to remember them because you are going to cover the picture again. Give the children 15 seconds. Cover the picture. Ask the children what color a particular object in the picture is. Receive their answers. Show the picture. Cover the picture and ask another question about a shape or color of the picture. Receive their answers. Show the picture. Sing the song again while showing the picture.

15. Magic Crayon/Magic Paintbrush - Tell the children that you have a magic crayon that draws large circles and it turns different colors. Right now your crayon is _____ (choose a color). Draw large circles and sing the song. Ask the children to take out their magic crayon and decide a color for their crayon. (Pantomime with them.) Sing and draw circles with your magic crayon. Ask the children what colors their crayons are. Receive their answers. You may want to repeat the activity, but have them change the color of their crayon. The magic paintbrush is much the same concept only you dip the paintbrush in an imaginary paint can and paint the room different colors with large brushstrokes. Each time you sing the song again, you dip your paintbrush into the magic paint can and come out with a different color. Pantomime the dipping and painting with the children as you sing.

16. Sway or march to the song - Decide whether the song has a swaying feel or a marching feel (the meter). Swaying (usually $6/8$ or $3/4$): Ask the children to follow your hands. Face the children and sway your hands in front of you from side to side as you sing the song. Say "Freeze" at the phrases and ask the children if their hands are pointed like your hands to a certain side. Resume singing and swaying. Marching (usually $2/4$ or $4/4$): Ask the children to copy the direction you are facing...turning to the side like you, then to the front, then to the other side as you turn. Now ask the children if they can keep their feet marching to the beat like yours while they copy the direction you will be face. Sing and march to the song, turning a different direction at each phrase. Occasionally call out "freeze" and see if the children are facing the direction you are facing.

17. Partner arm swings - (Works well with $6/8$ songs.) Ask an older child to come up and be your partner. Face each other and grasp your partners hands in front of you. Sing the song and alternately swing your arms forward and backward while holding hands (as if you were pushing and then pulling your hands forward and then pulling it back) to the meter or overall beat of the song. After singing the song and doing partner arm swings, ask that child to get another partner and you also choose another partner. Sing the song again as you swing your arms with your new partners. Ask each child to find a partner. Sing and swing arms again.

18. Action Word Actions - Make up actions to the words of the song. Ask the children to follow your actions. Sing and do the actions together. Repeat this activity at least two different weeks. This is a very strong learning style for young children. They need to do things with their body in order to think well.

19. Mirror Images - To be done with gentle and smooth songs - Ask a child to come up and be your partner. Tell the child that he or she is the mirror of your actions. Move slowly and have the child follow your movements like a mirror. Sing the song as you move. Now ask each child to find a friend. Have them decide which one is the mirror and which one is the mover. Caution the mover that their movements must be quite slow. Sing the song and have the children move. Now have them switch roles. Sing the song again and have them move and mirror.