

21 All Time Favorite Activities for Teaching Primary Music

Senior Primary Age

compiled by Sharla Dance

Picture Smart

- Draw the Song -** This can be done two ways...either 1. the teacher draws the song as someone else sings it a couple of times, or 2. the children draw at least once scene from the song as the teacher sings. 1. Ask someone to sing the song as you draw it on a whiteboard. (I draw with stick figures.) 2. Challenge the children to listen to the song and draw something from the song that could help teach the junior primary children the song. Pass out paper and markers/crayons and sing as the children draw. Collect their drawings. (I show them in one of the Junior Singing times to help me teach the song to the younger children.)
- 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.
- Concentration Matching Game -** Make at least 12 pockets and pin or glue them up on a board. Prepare at least 12 card inserts for the pockets. Prepare 2 each (matches) of at least 6 different words or pictures (or a combination of both) that have to do with the song. Glue or tape each one to a card insert. Mix up the matches and put them in the pockets, 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 to cards around to see if they match. If they turn around two cards that 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 may leave them facing outward. Sing the song and have the children find the matches on the concentration pocket board. (Also WordSmart)
- Melody Map -** Create a melody map for the song. Display it in front 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. (Also LogicSmart and MusicSmart).
- 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. (Also BodySmart)

Body Smart

- Hand Rhythms -** Decide on an appropriate hand rhythm action for the song. Demonstrate it slowly for the children. Practice it once or twice. Challenge them not to lose the action as you sing. Continue doing the rhythm action and sing the song. (Also MusicSmart)
- 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.
- Body Rhythms and Partner Body Rhythms -** Create a body rhythm appropriate to the song using patsches, stamps, claps, snaps, wrist crosses, and hand swishes. Slowly demonstrate the pattern to the children. Practice, then sing the song and do the pattern. Ask the children to find a friend and face them. Change the pattern to include cross clapping or forearm cross touches. Practice the pattern slowly once or twice. Sing the song and do the pattern with your partners. Ask the children to change partners. Sing the song and do the pattern once again. (Also MusicSmart)

Maori Sticks - This activity is for songs with strong beats. Get enough rhythm sticks or 12" lengths of PVC pipe (1/2", 3/4", or 1" according to your preference) so that each of the children have two sticks. Seat the children in a circle. Tell the children that they must act appropriately and pass gently or you will have to take them out of the activity. Give each child one stick and ask them to pass it to the right as you say the word "pass." Say "pass" in the tempo of the beat of the song. After the children have the rhythm going, begin to sing. Expand the activity by giving two sticks to each child and having them pass the sticks together. Expand the activity by having the children pick up the sticks, hit the sticks together twice, and pass the sticks. "Pick up, hit, hit, pass." Sing the song after the children get the pattern going. (Also MusicSmart and LogicSmart)

Windwands - Prepare enough windwands for all (or at least half) of the children. Ask the children to watch your windwand and figure out the pattern as you sing the song and move the windwand. Sing the song and do the windwand pattern for the song. Receive their answers. Move and sing again if the children need help in discovering the pattern. Write the pattern on the blackboard or whiteboard. Pass out the windwands. Have the children freeze their ribbons on the floor while you give instructions. Practice the pattern once slowly, then sing and do the pattern together as you sing the song. (Also MusicSmart and LogicSmart)

WordSmart

Eraser Pass - Choose the major words of the song. Find 2 or 3 synonyms/like words and/or opposites for each of the major words. List the major word and its like words together in a group (with each major word having its own group) on either a blackboard or whiteboard...if possible putting each group in a different color. Tell the children to listen to the song and erase the words that do not belong in the song. Tell the children there are 2 rules: 1. Pass the eraser to someone who has not had the eraser before. 2. Do not talk or give hints. Begin to sing and hand the eraser to one of the children. Help them understand that they erase words that are not in the song as you sing, then they pass the eraser on to someone else.

Envelope Game - Type out the major words of the song. Copy enough so that each group of 3 children will have one. Cut apart each set of words and place them in an envelope, one set of words per envelope. Ask the children to get in groups of three. Tell them to listen to the song and put the words in the envelope in order according to the order of words in the song. Pass out the envelopes and begin to sing over and over again as the children put the words in order. If one group gets done before the others, have them sing with you to help the others. (Also LogicSmart and PeopleSmart)

Scrambled Words - Choose 6 or more major words of the song. Scramble the letters. Write the scrambled words on the blackboard or whiteboard. Ask the children to unscramble these words from the song as you sing. Sing the song at least twice. Receive the children's answers.

Code Clues - Take the first letter of the words of the song. Group them according to sentences or phrases. Mix up the groups. Display that "code" in front of the children. Ask them what the code on the board has to do with the song. Sing the song. Receive the children's answers. Sing the song again, giving small hints if needed. Receive the children's answers. Ask the children to figure out which group comes first, second, etc.. Sing the song again. Receive the children's answers. Sing the song together. (Also very strongly LogicSmart)

MusicSmart

Beat versus Rhythm - Ask the children to keep the beat on their lap as you sing the song. Sing the song and keep the beat. Ask the children to tap the rhythm of the words with their other hand on their lap. Sing the song and tap the rhythm of the words. Split the group in half. Have half the group tap the beat and the other half tap the rhythm of the words as you sing. Switch and sing again. Now challenge the children to keep the beat in their left hand and the rhythm of the words in their right hand. Sing the song and tap the beat and the rhythm of the words.

Rhythm Instrument Patterns - 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, and guiros out of corrugated cardboard. Create a rhythm pattern appropriate to the song. Make a symbol for each sound (circle, star, tree, triangle, etc.) and write the pattern in symbols to display in front of the children. Ask the children who would like to help play a rhythm instrument pattern for the song you are going to sing. Demonstrate the

sounds for each instrument as you point to the symbol. Pass out the instruments. Practice the pattern once or twice. Sing the song and do the pattern. Have the children switch instruments. Sing the song and play the pattern again.

Bell Harmony Patterns - Find tone bells, hand bells, or chimes tuned to specific pitches. Using the chord markings above the melody in the songbook, write out the chords for the song, indicating which three notes are in each song. Make a symbol for each chord. Using the symbols, write the chords for the song on a poster board. On a different poster board, write each note that will be played and indicate the symbol(s) it will play. Ask the children if they would like to help you play the bells. Pass out the bells and practice the chords. Sing the song and play the bells. Switch the bells to children who have not played. Sing and play again.

Review Games

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. (PeopleSmart)

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. Tell the children that Olympic athletes spend almost as much time thinking through their sport in their mind as they do training their bodies. 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, perhaps two or three per phrase. (MusicSmart)

Clap Instead - Very similar to Take it in, Take it out. At the signal, the children clap the words of the song instead of sing them. At the next signal, they sing again, and so on. (MusicSmart)

Name That Tune and Throw the Box - This is a review activity once you have learned the song. Choose a child to come up and try to name the tune. Decide beforehand or roll a dice to see how many notes the child will get to hear before having to name the tune. Once the tune has been named, ask another child to come up and roll the box to see how we will sing the tune. Sing the song, doing whatever is indicated on the box. (MusicSmart)

The essential element of deciding which activity to do with which song is the essence or sense of the song. What activity would give the children the “feel” of the song, even if they don’t understand all of the words?