

Music for Socio-Emotional and Ethical Learning

Santhosh Raj K

The use of physical movements and gestures to develop musical abilities is beneficial at all stages but is most effective with students in the Foundational Stage (FS). Young students have a strong inclination for singing songs and poems, and dancing and moving to music. Musical activities that involve physical movements allow teachers to bring many variables into the classroom, such as:

- Tempo variations that demand uninterrupted focus from students
- Frequent collaboration with students in smaller and larger groups
- Realtime problem solving as students analyse the given activity and work out the *dos and don'ts* based on rules and instructions

Since the learning outcomes (LOs) associated with FS students address the development of Socio-Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEEL), exploring the LOs as part of the students' early musical journey is valuable. It can be done through activities that help students identify cues and practice a range of behavioural aspects and social demands while participating with their peers. When these activities are employed consistently as part of the designed

classroom plan, students can learn these values at an accelerated pace.

These activities help students develop various aspects of SEEL, such as social awareness and communication; relationship, cognitive, problem-solving, and decision-making skills; and self-management. Here are some suggested activities.

Activity 1: Pass the ball on beat-one

TLM: 3-4 footballs/large balls

Instructions:

1. Have the students sit or stand in one big circle or in smaller circles depending on the number of students.
2. If there are multiple groups, assign one student for each group to keep the scores, otherwise the facilitator/teacher can do it. The scores of different groups can be written on the blackboard.
3. To start the game, play a simple four-beat rhythm on a rhythm instrument, such as a drum or a tambourine. Ask each group of students to repeat, 'One, two, three, four,' with the rhythm played and pass the ball to the next person when

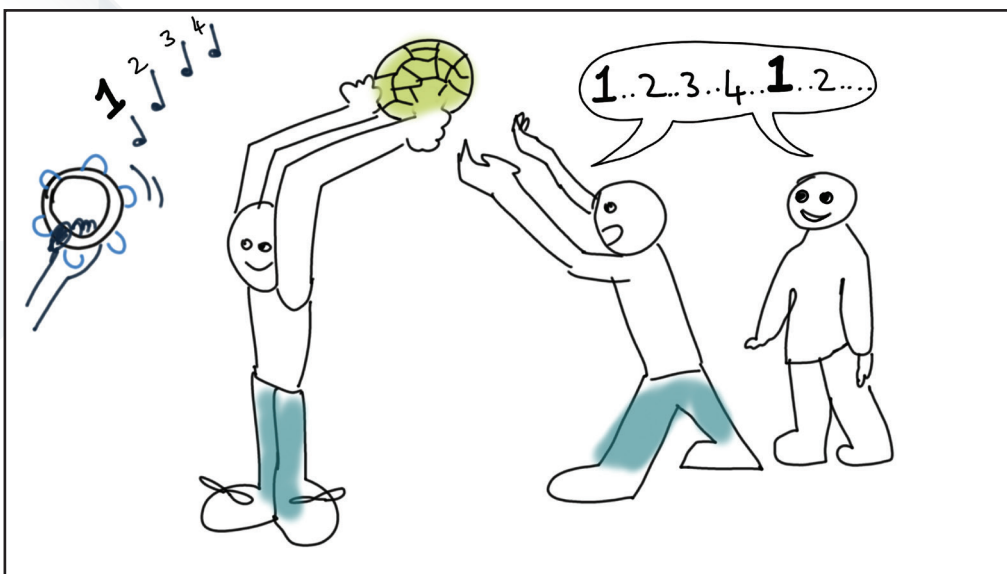


Figure 1. Author's illustration of 'pass the ball on beat-one' activity.

they get to the number/beat one. The score can be counted if a group drops the ball or misses passing it on beat one.

4. One round of the game can be played for a set time limit or when a group misses/drops the ball 10 times.
5. If the activity is done with a large group of students, there can be 6-7 rounds with an increased tempo of the beats, so that students get more chances to play and acquire the required skills.

Outcomes:

- Students develop patience by waiting their turn for the ball to come to them.
- They listen attentively to the facilitator's voice/ beats or for other cues throughout the activity which enhances their capacity to concentrate.
- Students sing/count a simple rhythm pattern repeatedly, such as 'One, two, three, four...' and stay alert for the right beat to pass the ball. This develops the students' sense of rhythm.
- Students develop a sense of anticipation, whether it is responding to a beat pattern or the movement of their peers.
- Gradually increasing the complexity of the beat pattern enables students to focus, predict, anticipate, and react, exercising their capacity for quick decision-making.
- The students who keep score learn to make quick and impartial decisions based on continuous observation.
- As students learn to enjoy the game, they overlook the mistakes of their peers, encourage and help one another play together.

Activity-2: Storytelling and music visualisation

TLM: A short story that the teacher can memorise and narrate and a musical instrument

Instructions:

1. Start by giving the students an overview of the story. Then ask them to get in position for the first act of the story, for example, a story may begin with '*The children wake up*' so, the students pretend to sleep and then wake up.
2. Narrate the story with vocal dynamics and play improvised music on the musical instrument.
3. Give students cues on when to move as the music is played. They can move as they like but with the rhythm/tempo of the music that is being played.
4. The music can complement the pace of the story, for example, slow music for slower parts of the story, such as walking, talking, etc.; fast-paced music for the more exciting actions, such as jumping or running; and sad/happy music for the corresponding emotions in the story. This suggests clues to the students on what actions they can perform, pushing them to be creative with their movements.

Outcomes:

1. The students listen keenly to the narration and respond thoughtfully without shouting or disturbing others.
2. They learn to respect others and give others a chance.
3. Children find it easier to understand the underlying meaning of some stories when they are set to music.

C-4.1 Starts recognising 'self' as an individual belonging to a family and community

C-4.3 Interacts comfortably with other children and adults

C-4.4 Shows cooperative behaviour with other children

C-4.6 Shows kindness and helpfulness to others (including animals, plants) when they are in need

CG-6 Children develop a positive regard for the natural environment around them

C-6.1 Shows care for and joy in engaging with all life forms

Source: National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage. 2.4.2 Domain: Socio-Emotional and Ethical Development. p. 60

Musical activities promote inclusion

With each subject demanding a certain set of large cognitive skills and a subset of those to be exhibited in smaller tasks, classroom transactions can sometimes overwhelm students with any kind of learning disability. But with the right set of activities carried out in the Music Room, students can express and explore their abilities. For example, in an activity like 'Listen and Clap', children listen to the rhythmic pattern the teacher plays and repeat the same pattern by clapping. While requiring no verbal response, such activity develops students' musical skills, encourages them to focus and participate freely and feel included among their peers.

Conclusion

I give students of class II short poems from their textbooks or magazines, like *Champak*, set them to music and encourage them to sing these, one after the other, in an uninterrupted sequence. We start with three songs and then add more. There are, in

the end, a total of eight songs that the students are able to sing without any reference to the text.

This choice of using short poems of four to five lines with printed TLMs lead to two favourable results:

Firstly, it directly corresponds to NCF competencies/ learning outcomes:

- Listens to and appreciates simple songs, rhymes, and poems
- Sings/recites songs/poems with two to three stanzas

Secondly, it allows me to engage frequently-distracted or disruptive students in a constructive way by giving them writing activities on the same songs through printed TLMs or textbooks. It helps them to focus their attention on one activity of their own along with the group-singing sessions. This takes care of the frequent challenges of FS classroom management, especially with certain students. This willingness to connect with other students in the classroom, slowly brings in aspects of SEEL, such as:

C-4.2 Recognises different emotions and makes deliberate efforts to regulate them appropriately

C-4.4 Shows cooperative behaviour with other children

C-4.7 Understands and responds positively to different thoughts, preferences, and emotional needs of other children

Source: National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage. 2.4.2 Domain: Socio-Emotional and Ethical Development. p. 60

There are several opportunities in the music class for many domains of FS to be explored. By bringing in ideas from the larger domains of both visual and performing arts, such as dance and theatre rather than just music, students can develop a cohesive un-compartmentalised and complete school experience through fun and inclusive activities

that enable cooperation. These interactions bring forth spontaneous participation, offer students the opportunity to refine their emotions through social interactions and towards a better recognition of 'self' amongst their peers, all of which support their development and awareness towards, 'doing what is right' in due time.

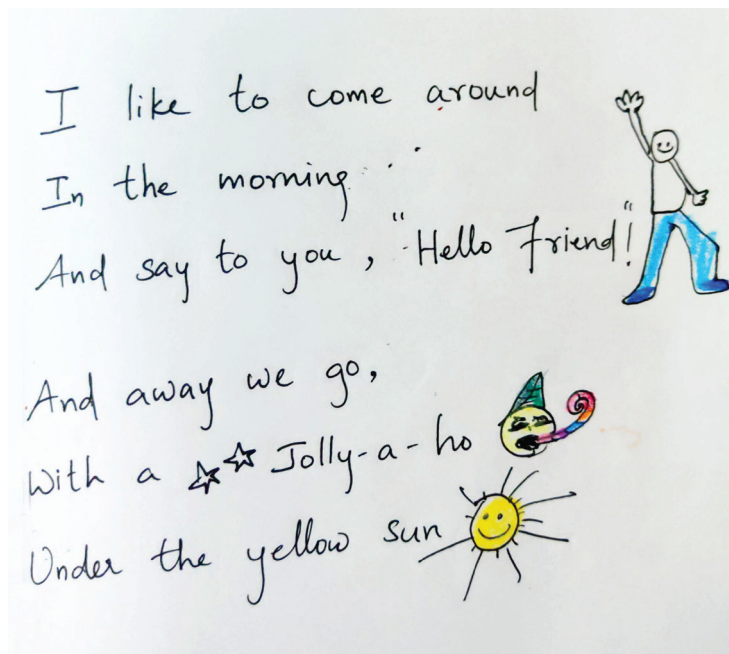
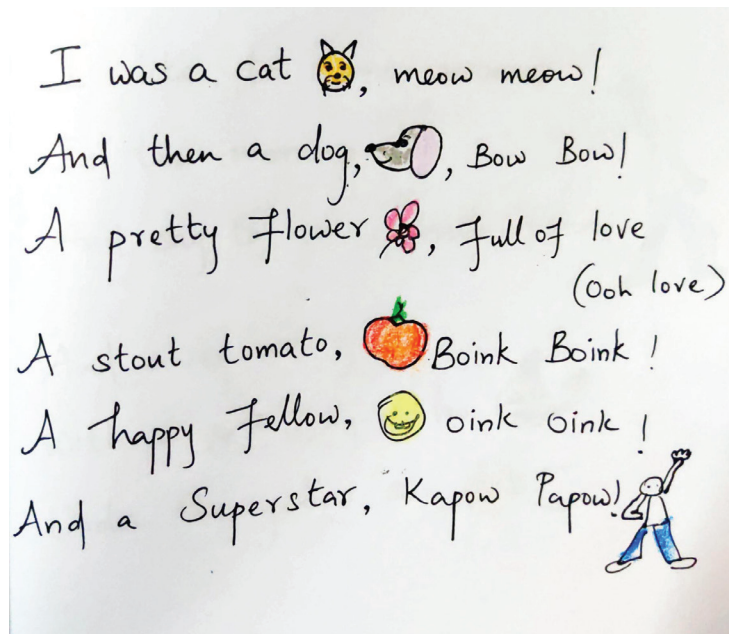
For more, you can watch this short video on music teaching at Azim Premji School, Barmer, Rajasthan:

<https://youtu.be/evuF-qhUfhM>

Scan to watch



Some songs that focus on SEEL competencies that can be used in the classroom:



Santhosh Raj K is a music and English Teacher at Azim Premji School, Barmer. He has a bachelor's in mechanical engineering from Anna University and audio engineering from K M Music Conservatory, Chennai. He has worked in several Tamil and Telugu movies as an Assistant Music Programmer/Guitarist and as an Ed-Support Strategist with *Make A Difference* in Nagpur, Vellore and Chennai. His areas of interest are music, language and documentary filmmaking. He may be contacted at santhosh.kumaravel@azimpremjifoundation.org