

# Active Learning through Music and Curriculum for Excellence

Regular participation in singing games benefits learning across the curriculum. In addition to teaching musical skills, it is an ideal medium for

Curriculum for Excellence:

## SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS

Literacy and communication skills  
Numeracy  
Memory Skills  
Listening Skills

## CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS

Confidence Building  
Emotional Development  
Spatial Awareness  
Coordination Skills  
Fine Motor Skills

## RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS

Friendship and Social Interaction  
Discipline  
Cooperation

## EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS

Imagination and Creativity  
Independence  
Taking the Lead  
Being Part of a Team

Highland Council acknowledges with grateful thanks the work and commitment of:  
Pupils and staff from Holm, Lochardil and Smithton Primary Schools, Inverness, especially Isobyl McLaggan, Val MacPherson and Annette Davidson.

Margaret Rae, Kodály specialist, The Highland Council  
Norman Bolton, Music Development Officer, The Highland Council  
David Eglinton, Jim Eglinton and Gordon Bolton of HCVF Ltd.  
Lucinda Geoghegan and Carole Allen of NYCOS

"After starting Active Learning through Music, we regularly burst into song in our classroom at all times of the school day!"

# Active Learning through Music – an introduction

This resource provides a repertoire of tried and tested musical activities for early years primary pupils. Designed as a training resource for teachers and support staff who may find the prospect of leading musical activities with their pupils daunting, it offers a comprehensive, structured and progressive music curriculum compiled by Kodály experts and endorsed by HMLe.

"I would advise other schools to give Active Learning through Music a try – you will enjoy it, and don't worry if you don't have a beautiful singing voice."

In 2010, The Highland Council purchased a licence from National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCoS) which gave all Highland early years primary staff, after relevant training, access to 60 Active Learning through Music (ALtM) Lesson Packs, compiled by Lucinda Geoghegan of NYCOS. Specifically designed to be delivered by class teachers and support staff, The Highland Council also offered training and on-going support from Kodály tutors and music staff.

These DVDs – developed in response to feedback from Highland early years staff – are an additional resource to the original Lesson Packs. The DVDs show short film footage of children in Highland schools taking part in each of the 60 lessons, led either by a visiting Kodály specialist, their class teacher, or their classroom assistant. We hope these will encourage early years teachers and support staff to make full and successful use of the ALtM lesson packs, by playing a crucial role in lesson preparation. The film footage shows how the lessons work with groups of children of mixed ability. **All activities in each of the 60 lessons are included in downloadable PDF format.**

"It really helps quiet, self-conscious pupils. Confidence grows throughout the programme!"

For further information on Active Learning through Music INSET training opportunities, please contact **Carole Allen**, Head of Education & Outreach at [www.nycos.co.uk](http://www.nycos.co.uk) or telephone **0141 287 2880**.

# Ten top tips for Active Learning through Music success

TOP TIP  
#1

## LITTLE AND OFTEN

Plan ALtM for a short period 2 or 3 times per week, rather than one long lesson once per week. In addition, many ALtM singing games/ rhymes are perfect for a 5 minute break from other classroom activities.

“SEN pupils have responded with enthusiasm and are able to participate during all of the activities.”

TOP TIP  
#2

## HAVE FUN!

Music-making is about having fun - so stick on a smile! The demeanour of all adults leading ALtM activities should reflect the enthusiasm and joyful delight which virtually all children of this age demonstrate when playing ALtM games.

TOP TIP  
#3

## PREPARATION

As with other subjects, music lessons need to be carefully prepared. Make use of these DVDs to learn the words and the melody of the songs ahead of your lesson, and watch carefully to see how the game is to be played. Practise in the car – or in the shower!

TOP TIP  
#4

## STARTING PITCH

Are you using the correct starting pitch? Many adults have a singing voice which is too low to be copied successfully by small children – whose vocal folds can only access a limited range of sung notes. Use chime bars or a recorder to make sure you are singing each song at a pitch to suit the children's voices rather than your own. Use the pitches given in the Lesson Pack pdfs, or copy the pitch used in the DVD.

TOP TIP  
#5

## SINGING IN

Get into the “singing in” habit. You'll notice in the DVD footage how often we sing “ready steady off we go”! This little snatch of preparatory song gives children a wealth of information - when to start the song, what speed the song is, what pitch to start at, and (often) a reminder of the melodic shape the opening phrase makes. Saying 1-2-3 just doesn't match up!

TOP TIP  
#6

## SING – THEN LISTEN

Adopt a gentle, unforced singing style which the children will copy. You are their singing model whilst the song is being learnt. Once they know the song well, sing them in (see Top Tip #5) and then LISTEN to the results. If you always sing with them, they will come to rely on your voice instead of developing independent singing.

TOP TIP  
#7

## IMPROVING THE SINGING

Please don't insist that the children sing louder as this will encourage inappropriate “shouty” singing. Saying “SING UP” usually has this effect too. Instead, listen to what happens if, during a song, you ask “who's that singing so beautifully?” or remark “I am hearing lovely singing voices today”.

TOP TIP  
#8

## PERCUSSION TIP

When a child is playing a percussion instrument with a beater (e.g. woodblock, lollipop drum) do make sure that the beater – and not the instrument - is placed in their dominant hand. With older children, remind them to put the beater in the hand they write with.

TOP TIP  
#9

## RELUCTANT SINGERS

What to do when a child just won't sing - some strategies to try. Try not to draw any additional attention to the child. Within the circle, place the child between two enthusiastic singers. Praise any and all musical participation from the reluctant singer – popping up the puppet, beating the drum, clapping the beat. In songs where individual singing is expected – eg Hickety Tickety – react to non-singing with a smile and a comment such as “not today? maybe another day.”

TOP TIP  
#10

## KEEP THE KEY CONCEPT IN MIND

At the top left hand side of each Lesson Pack, you will find the Key Concept of the lesson. Keep this in mind at all times and praise the children in relation to the key concept, e.g. in Swing Me Over the Water, the musical aim is for the group to keep the beat with the lycra – so your positive comments should relate to beat keeping, not how high the puppet flies at the end!

Compiled by Margaret Rae

“A fun and active approach to introduce beat, rhythm, and pitch to infant classes. Children love it – and it builds musical confidence in both staff and pupils!”