MUSIC

Music is central to the human experience and important in the lives of children. It can heighten listening skills, provide emotional release and increase self-esteem. Music aids cognitive and motor development and increases physical knowledge. Musical experiences foster appreciation and encourage cultural sharing.

In the Green Room, music (singing and movement in particular) is an integral part of the year-round curriculum. During the month of March, we focused more closely, and explored more deeply, the concepts of Sound, Melody, Rhythm and Movement.

The first week of our study was all about Sound.

We discovered that sound is produced through vibrations, or moving air, by: feeling our throats wiggle when we talked and sang; watching a guitar string move when we plucked it; moving a wooden ruler back and forth over the edge of a table while pushing it down and letting it go – we could see the ruler vibrate and hear the higher and lower sounds as it moved; and seeing Rice Krispies dance on the head of a drum when we hit it with the mallet. We listened to and identified animal sounds and other common sounds in our lives. The children were very interested in hearing their own voices as we recorded and replayed them talking, singing and telling stories. There was ample opportunity to explore many different sounds on real instruments such as xylophones, autoharps, and an electronic keyboard. We experimented with dynamics (loud/forte and soft/piano; fast and slow; high and low), and quality (sharp, soft, twangy, etc.) as we played and sang. Some new music games on our classroom iPads reinforced some of the concepts we introduced.
The second week focused on **Rhythm** and **Melody**.

**Rhythm** is a pattern and the driving force in music. It is all around us in nature and in our bodies. We introduced rhythm with 5 animals whose names create rhythmic patterns: Moose (half notes); Chipmunk (quarter notes); Bunny Rabbit (eighth notes); and Polar Bear and Woodpecker (mixed notes). We practiced the rhythms alone and with each other. We experimented with using two rhythms at the same time and spoke, clapped and stomped them to both familiar songs and different styles of music. The children practiced woodworking skills to make rhythm instruments such as Wood Sand Blocks, Tambourine Shakers and a Drum Set using recycled wood from the CMU wood shop, bottle caps, various round containers and an old drum cymbal.

**Melody** is the story line of music and can be made by singing or by instruments. Melodies go up and down. Again, the children had access to the electronic keyboard, autoharps and xylophones to play many different invented melodies. Groups of children played several musical games and painted to different styles of music. Painting notes on an enlarged musical staff created melodies. Experimenting with mallets (gently) on glass containers filled with different levels of water made various pitched notes. Singing, singing and more singing was done in circle time, during transitions, to karaoke music, and into recorders and microphones.
The last week of our unit was full of Movement activities and learning about some famous Musicians and their music styles.

Music can make your body move in different ways. You need to listen to hear, feel and respond to music. The children walked across a balance beam as they listened to the song “Across the Bridge.” The song suggests different ways to move on the balance beam. We discovered how different kinds of music made us move differently by dancing with scarves and painting to the music. The children made bell bracelets and experimented with how they sounded as they moved their arms. Musicians are people who make music, and there are many different styles of music. We listened to and compared different styles of music by several musicians. We listened to Ella Fitzgerald sing “A Tisket, A Tasket” in her distinct jazz style, read a book about the song, and played the traditional circle game. We watched several clips of Mr. Rogers interviewing and listening to famous musicians, including the famous American cellist, Yo-Yo Ma.
Throughout the unit, we had many discussions about how music can affect how you feel. There is happy music and sad music. There is music that makes you feel active and awake and music that is calming and can make you feel tired. Music can inspire and comfort.

Children use songs and rhythms as an outlet to express and work through emotions and to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Music for young children spans cultural, socioeconomic, and ability differences. We can all participate in the enrichment that music, in its many forms, brings to the lives of children.
Birthdays and Special Visitors

Andres’ and Charlie’s families came to school to celebrate their birthdays with music and stories.

Eric’s mom and sister read a story to the Peaceful Room group.