

# [The impact of music on language and early literacy](https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-of-music-on-language-early-literacy/)

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The Impact ofMusicon Language & Early Literacy: A Research Summary In Support of Kindermusik’s ABC Music & Me The Impact of Music on Language & Early Literacy: A Research Summary In Support of Kindermusik’s ABC Music & Me Introduction Earlychildhoodclassroom teachers believe in the power of music to engage children. What scientifically based research supports the use of music and musical instruction to build early literacy skills?

This research summary answers that question, providing support to educators who wish to integrate music and musical instruction into their early language and literacy programs in schools. This research summary reviews high-quality experimental studies conducted in classrooms with young children receiving musiceducation, plus relevant brain research that focuses on the impact of musical instruction on the brain.

The impact of music and musical instruction on early language and literacy development for young children is examined in the following areas: • ReadingComprehensionandVerbalMemory • ListeningSkills • Vocabulary, includingforEnglishLanguageLearners • PhonologicalandPhonemicAwareness • WritingandPrintAwareness • ImpactonChildrenwithDisabilities • FamilyInvolvement The research summarized below provides strong support for including music and musical instruction in the earlychildhoodclassroom.

Importantly, thisrecommendationismadenotjustforthevalueofthemusical experience itself, but also because of the impact music and musical instruction can have on young children’s development of language and early literacy. Music Instruction & Reading Scores Linked Readingcomprehensionisseenas“ theessenceofreading”(Durkin, 1993)andthedesiredoutcomeof reading instruction, including the focus of assessment on standardized reading tests starting in third grade.

Comprehensionisdefinedas“ intentionalthinkingduringwhichmeaningisconstructedthroughinteractions betweentextandreader”(Harris&Hodges, 1995). Anumberofresearchstudieshavefoundthatchildrenwhoparticipateinmusicinstructiontendtoscorehigher on tests of reading comprehension than children who do not participate in musical instruction. • Ameta-analysisof25correlationalstudies, someinvolvingsamplesizesofover500, 000students, founda“ strongandreliableassociation” betweenmusicinstructionandscoresontestsofreading comprehension(Butzlaff, 2000). Astudyof4, 739elementaryandmiddleschoolstudentsinfourregionsoftheUnitedStatesrevealed astrongrelationshipbetweenelementary(third-orfourth-grade)students’academicachievementas measuredbytestscoresandtheirparticipationinhigh-qualitymusicprograms(Johnson&Memmott, 2006). While these studies are appealing, one cannot conclude from correlational studies alone that the music instruction was the cause of the gains in reading scores. To answer that question, we turn to the experimental studies that involved pre- and post-testing of young children receiving classroom music education.

Theauthorsofaclassicstudy(Hurwitzetal, 1975)askedwhethermusictrainingimprovedreading performance in first grade children. The experimental group received musical instruction including listening to folk songs with an emphasis the listening for melodic and rhythmic elements. The control group consisted ofchildrenwhowerematchedinage, IQ, andsocioeconomicstatusandwhoreceivednospecialtreatment. Aftertraining, themusicgroupexhibitedsignificantlyhigherreadingscoresthandidthecontrolgroup, scoring inthe88thpercentileversusthe72ndpercentile.

Moreover, continuedmusicaltrainingwasbeneficial; afteran additional year of musical training, the experimental group’s reading comprehension scores were still superior to the control group’s scores. These findings provide initial support for the view that musicinstructionfacilitatestheabilitytoread. More recent research focuses on the specific impact of music instruction on the subprocesses involved in successful reading. Researchersbelievethatmusicinstruction impacts a student’s brain functioning in processing language, which in turn impacts reading subprocesses like phonemic awareness and vocabulary.

These subprocesses ultimately impact a student’s ability to read with comprehension. Music Instruction Improves Verbal Memory Research Into Practice: ABC Music & Me Kindermusik’sABCMusic&Mehelpsteachers engage young children in language- and literacy-rich musical activities that include playful instruction in foundational music skills andinstrumentexploration. Researchsuggests that engaging young children in these types of musical activities are correlated with later success in reading comprehension.

Anotherwayinwhichmusicinstructionmaypositivelyimpactreadingabilityisthroughincreasedverbal memory. The findings linking music training to verbal memory are important because verbal memory is essentialforreadingprintedwordswithcomprehension. Asreadingprogressestosentencesandtextsof greater lengths, verbal memory allows a child to retain material in memory as it is being read so that syntactic andsemanticanalysesnecessarytocomprehensioncanbeperformed.

Verbalmemoryisessentialforall childrenlearningtoread(Brady, 1991; StoneandBrady, 1995), andpoorperformanceinverbalmemoryhas beenassociatedwithreadingdisabilitiesforyoungchildren(AckermanandDykman, 1993; Cornwall, 1992; Scarborough, 1998). Recentbrainandpsychologicalresearchshowsthatmusicinstructioncanhaveapositiveimpactonverbal memory. • Astudyofninety6-to15-year-oldboysfoundthatthosewithmusictraininghadsignificantlybetter verbal learning and retention abilities. The longer the duration of the music training, the better the verbalmemory(Ho, Cheung,&Chan, 2003).

Afollow-upstudyconcludedthattheeffectwascausal. The authors suggest that the cause of the increase in verbal memory was neuroanatomical changes in the brains of children who were playing music. • Anotherstudyfoundthatlearningtoplaya musical instrument enhances the brain’s ability Research Into Practice: ABC Music & Me torememberwords. “ Adultswithmusictraining ABCMusic&Meengageschildreninactive in their childhood demonstrate better verbal music-making with a variety of musical memory,” accordingtostudyauthorChan. instruments both in the classroom and at Thisbrainresearchwith60adultsshowedthat home.

Researchsuggeststhatthisearly musicians have enlarged left cranial temporal experience may improve children’s verbal regions of the brain, which is the area involved in memory, an important factor in successful processingheardinformation. Asaresult, people text comprehension for later stages of reading withmusictrainingcouldremember17%more development. verbal information than those without music training(Chanetal, 1998). Music Helps Build Listening Skills “ Learningtolistenisaprerequisitetolisteningtolearn,” stressesresearcherMayesky(1986).

Listeningisthe first language mode that children acquire, and it provides a foundation for all aspects of language and reading development. Listeningisaverylargepartofschoollearning, withstudentsspendinganestimated50to75 percentofclassroomtimelisteningtotheteacher, tootherstudents, ortomedia(Smith, 1992). Despitethefrequencyoflisteningactivityinclassrooms, listeningskillsarenotfrequentlytaughtexplicitly (Hyslop&Tone, 1988; Newton, 1990). “ Mostteachersteach, assumingthatbecausetheyaretalking, their studentsarelistening”(Swanson, 1996).

Asaresult, manychildrendonotacquirethelisteningskillsnecessary to acquire new knowledge and information. Too often listening is thought to be a natural skill that develops automatically, but in fact developing good listeningskillsrequiresexplicitinstruction. “ Ifweexpectchildrentobecomegoodlisteners,…weneed to teach them to become activelisteners”(Jalongo, 1995). Directinstructioninlisteningskillsshouldinclude “ lessonsdesignedtospecificallyteachandmodelthe skillsnecessaryforactivelistening”(Matheson, Moon &Winiecki, 2000). Anexperimentalstudywithyoung English language earners showed that focused listening instruction can benefit listening comprehension for childrenlearningasecondlanguage(Goh&Taib, 2006). Musicalactivitiesarecitedbyresearchersaseffective experiences for building listening skills in the classroom (Hirt-Mannheimer, 1995; Wolf, 1992), forbothmainstream classrooms and classrooms with children who have disabilities. (Humpal&Wolf, 2003). Research Into Practice: ABC Music & Me EachunitofABCMusic&Megiveschildren not only the opportunity to listen actively to music, but also includes focused listening activities using music, non-musical sounds, andlanguage.

Classroomroutineshelp teachers focus children’s attention on listening todirections. Read-aloudstoriesandsongs give children opportunities to practice listening to extended discourse. Recentbrainresearch(Flohretal, 1996)showsthatmusictrainingchangesandimprovesbrainfunctioning relatedtolistening. Anexperimentalstudywithchildrenages4to6providedmusictrainingfor25minutesfor 7weeks, andthenmeasuredbrainactivity. ThosechildrenwhohadreceivedmusicaltrainingproducedEEG frequencies associated with increased cognitive processing and greater relaxation.

Music Can Build Vocabulary, including for English Language Learners Manyeducationalresearcherspromotemusicasawayto enhance vocabulary acquisition and comprehension, and emphasize music’s ability to engage children in instruction (FountasΠnnell, 1999; Miller&Coen, 1994; Page, 1995; Smith, 2000; Wiggins, 2007). Accordingtoeducationalresearchers, thereissubstantial evidence that children acquire vocabulary incidentally byreadingandlisteningtooralstories(Krashen, 1989). Duringthepreschoolyearsbeforechildrencanread, children rely exclusively on the oral language they listen to in order to acquire