

The impact of music on language and early literacy

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



The Impact of Music on 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 Early childhood classroom 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 music education, 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:

- Reading Comprehension and Verbal Memory
- Listening Skills
- Vocabulary, including for English Language Learners
- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
- Writing and Print Awareness
- Impact on Children with Disabilities
- Family Involvement

The research summarized below provides strong support for including music and musical instruction in the early childhood classroom.

Importantly, this recommendation is made not just for the value of the musical 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 Reading comprehension is seen as "the essence of reading" (Durkin, <https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-of-music-on-language-early-literacy/>

1993) and the desired outcome of reading instruction, including the focus of assessment on standardized reading tests starting in third grade.

Comprehension is defined as “

intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions

between text and reader” (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

A number of research studies have found that children who participate in music instruction tend to score higher on tests of reading comprehension than children

who do not participate in musical instruction. • A meta-

analysis of 25 correlational studies, some involving sample sizes of over 500,

000 students, found a “strong and reliable association”

between music instruction and scores on tests of reading comprehension (Butzlaff,

2000). A study of 4,

739 elementary and middle school students in four regions of the United States revealed

a strong relationship between elementary (third- or fourth-

grade) students’ academic achievement as

measured by test scores and their participation in high-

quality music programs (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.

The authors of a classic study (Hurwitz et al.,

1975) asked whether music training improved reading performance in first grade

children. The experimental group received musical instruction including

listening to folk songs with an emphasis on the listening for melodic and

rhythmic elements. The control group consisted of children who were matched in age, IQ, and socioeconomic status and who received no special treatment. After training, the music group exhibited significantly higher reading scores than did the control group, scoring in the 88th percentile versus the 72nd percentile.

Moreover, continued musical training was beneficial; after an 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 music instruction facilitates the ability to read. More recent research focuses on the specific impact of music instruction on the subprocesses involved in successful reading. Researchers believe that music instruction 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's ABC Music & Me helps teachers engage young children in language- and literacy-rich musical activities that include playful instruction in foundational music skills and instrument exploration. Research suggests that engaging young children in these types of musical activities are correlated with later success in reading comprehension.

Another way in which music instruction may positively impact reading ability is through increased verbal memory. The findings linking music training to verbal memory are important because verbal memory is essential for reading printed words with comprehension.

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As reading progresses to sentences and texts of greater lengths, verbal memory allows a child to retain material in memory as it is being read so that syntactic and semantic analyses necessary to comprehension can be performed.

Verbal memory is essential for all children learning to read (Brady, 1991; Stone and Brady, 1995), and poor performance in verbal memory has been associated with reading disabilities for young children (Ackerman and Dykman, 1993; Cornwall, 1992; Scarborough, 1998).

Recent brain and psychological research shows that music instruction can have a positive impact on verbal memory. • A study of ninety 6-to-15-year-old boys found that those with music training had significantly better verbal learning and retention abilities. The longer the duration of the music training, the better the verbal memory (Ho, Cheung, & Chan, 2003).

A follow-up study concluded that the effect was causal. The authors suggest that the cause of the increase in verbal memory was neuroanatomical changes in the brains of children who were playing music. • Another study found that learning to play a musical instrument enhances the brain's ability to remember words. "Adults with music training ABC Music & Me engages children in their childhood demonstrate better verbal music-making with a variety of musical memory," according to study author Chan. instruments both in the classroom and at home. This brain research with 60 adults showed that

Research suggests that these early 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 processing of heard information. As a result, people text comprehension for later

stages of reading with music training could remember 17% more verbal information than those without music training (Chan et al., 1998). Music helps build listening skills. “Learning to listen is a prerequisite to listening to learn,” stresses researcher Mayesky (1986).

Listening is the first language mode that children acquire, and it provides a foundation for all aspects of language and reading development. Listening is a very large part of school learning, with students spending an estimated 50 to 75 percent of classroom time listening to the teacher, to other students, or to media (Smith, 1992). Despite the frequency of listening activity in classrooms, listening skills are not frequently taught explicitly (Hyslop & Tone, 1988; Newton, 1990). “Most teachers teach, assuming that because they are talking, their students are listening” (Swanson, 1996).

As a result, many children do not acquire the listening skills necessary to acquire new knowledge and information. Too often listening is thought to be a natural skill that develops automatically, but in fact developing good listening skills requires explicit instruction. “

If we expect children to become good listeners, ... we need to teach them to become active listeners” (Jalongo, 1995).

Direct instruction in listening skills should include “lessons designed to specifically teach and model the skills necessary for active listening” (Matheson, Moon & Winiacki, 2000).

An experimental study with young English language learners showed that focused listening instruction can benefit listening comprehension for

children learning a second language (Goh & Taib, 2006). Musical activities are cited by researchers as effective experiences for building listening skills in the classroom (Hirt-Mannheimer, 1995; Wolf, 1992), for both mainstream classrooms and classrooms with children who have disabilities. (Humpal & Wolf, 2003). Research Into Practice: ABC Music & Me Each unit of ABC Music & Me gives children not only the opportunity to listen actively to music, but also includes focused listening activities using music, non-musical sounds, and language.

Classroom routines help teachers focus children's attention on listening to directions. Read-aloud stories and songs give children opportunities to practice listening to extended discourse. Recent brain research (Flohretal, 1996) shows that music training changes and improves brain functioning related to listening.

An experimental study with children ages 4 to 6 provided music training for 25 minutes for 7 weeks, and then measured brain activity. Those children who had received musical training produced EEG frequencies associated with increased cognitive processing and greater relaxation.

Music Can Build Vocabulary, including for English Language Learners Many educational researchers promote music as a way to enhance vocabulary acquisition and comprehension, and emphasize music's ability to engage children in instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999; Miller & Coen, 1994; Page, 1995; Smith, 2000; Wiggins, 2007). According to educational researchers, there is substantial evidence that children acquire vocabulary incidentally by reading and listening to oral stories (Krashen, 1989).

During the preschool years before children can read, children rely exclusively on the oral language they listen to in order to acquire