

From Music and A Child's Total Development in Early Childhood  
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## **Music and a Child's Total Development in Early Childhood Education**

### Chapter 1

#### INTRODUCTION

Current research on music and brain development has shown that early exposure to music can have positive effects on learning and development (Rauscher, 2003). Music helps children to learn phonemic sounds, increase vocabulary, and learn the grammar and the intonation of language (Campbell, 2000). A number of recent studies have also found an increase in spatial and cognitive development when a child is engaged in stimulating and developmentally appropriate musical experiences. Studies have found that music instruction provides long-term benefits to the development of a child's spatial-temporal skills that is necessary to understand ratio and proportion (Rauscher, 2003).

Another important effect of music is social development. Music can be used in the classroom to teach and support the development of social skills. As people sing together it helps them to relate to one another and when people sing the same songs together a sense of belonging is created within the group (Page, 1995). Music plays a very important role in the socialization and development of healthy human beings.

Music feeds the soul. It is hard to imagine what life would be like if there were no music in our world. No one would sing! No one would play an instrument! No one would listen to beautiful melodies or dance to beautiful rhythms. In a world without music, people might devote all their time to logic, mathematics, reading, writing, and

science. Music is a form of play which is central to feeling alive (Page, 1995)

Music plays a role of critical importance in many cultures around the world where music is not just *one* important aspect of life but rather music is life itself. Music is considered to be life itself because the act of singing and creating musical sounds that humans produce helps them to be more alive (Page, 1995).

For example, music has always had a central role in Hawaiian culture. In pre-contact Hawaii the *mele* or chant played an important role in remembering the myths of gods and the deeds of powerful people. Birth chants for the *alii* (chiefs) are examples of the importance of music to the *Kanaka Maoli* (Hawaiian Person). These birth chants would tell the *mo'olelo* (history or story) of the person for whom the chant was written for. The *Kumulipo* is an example of a birth chant that was written for the birth of Kalaninui'iamaomao, a Hawaii Island chief (Kame'elehiwa, 1992). The *Kanaka Maoli* people derive their identity from the *Kumulipo*. The *Kumulipo* is a great cosmogonic genealogy which connects every aspect of the creation of the Hawaiian world as being related to each other by birth, and as such every aspect of the Hawaiian world is interrelated to each other and belongs to one lineage (Kame'elehiwa, 1992). According to Lilikala Kame'elehiwa, this lineage expressed in the *Kumulipo* includes the land, the gods, the chiefs, and the *Kanaka Maoli* people that intertwine with one another, and with all the myriad aspects of the universe (Kame'elehiwa, 1992). Today the *Kanaka Maoli* people continue to utilize music as a means of defining themselves and to celebrate *aloha 'aina* or their love of the land.

Current research in the field of learning is demonstrating what indigenous cultures

such as the *Kanaka Maoli* have understood from the beginning: that music is much more than just a recreational filler in education and life. It has been found through a number of studies that music provides brain power. Music increases attention span, aids memory, and provides creative outlets (Page, 1995).

According to Gordon Shaw, a theoretical physicist, the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart may warm up the brain. It is suspected that complex music facilitates certain complex neuronal patterns involved in higher brain activities such as math and chess (Campbell, 1997). By contrast, simple repetitive music could work in reverse by slowing down the brain to reflect on new information that the brain is receiving (Campbell, 1997). Therefore, music is good for the brain, the body and the soul.

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