

**National Standards for Pre-Kindergarten - Excerpts from *The School Music Program: A New Vision*, MENC: The National Association for Music Education, 1994), Reston, VA.**

**Prekindergarten**

The years before children enter kindergarten are critical for their musical development. Young children need a rich musical environment in which to grow. The increasing number of day-care centers, nursery schools, and early-intervention programs for children with disabilities and children at risk suggests that information should be available about the musical needs of infants and young children and that standards for music should be established for these learning environments as well as for K-12 settings.

The standards outlined in this section reflect the following beliefs concerning the musical learning of young children:

1. All children have musical potential
2. Children bring their own unique interests and abilities to the music learning environment
3. Very young children are capable of developing critical thinking skills through musical ideas
4. Children come to early-childhood music experiences from diverse backgrounds
5. Children should experience exemplary musical sounds, activities, and materials
6. Children should not be encumbered with the need to meet performance goals
7. Children's play is their work
8. Children learn best in pleasant physical and social environments
9. Diverse learning environments are needed to serve the developmental needs of many individual children
10. Children need effective adult models

**Curriculum Guidelines**

A music curriculum for young children should include many opportunities to explore sound through singing, moving, listening, and playing instruments, as well as introductory experiences with verbalization and visualization of musical ideas. The music literature included in the curriculum should be of high quality and lasting value, including traditional children's songs, folk songs, classical music, and music from a variety of cultures, styles, and time periods 2.

Play is the primary vehicle for young children's growth, and developmentally appropriate early music experiences should occur in child-initiated, child-directed, teacher-supported play environments. In the prekindergarten, the teacher's role is to create a musically stimulating environment and then to facilitate children's engagement with music materials and activities by asking questions or making suggestions that stimulate children's thinking and further exploration.

Children also need group music time to experience the important social and musical aspects of sharing music and making music together. Ideally this should be delivered by

either early-childhood arts specialists employed as staff members in child-care centers and preschools or by visiting music specialists with training in child development to provide musicality and creativity and to serve as models and consultants for the child-care staff.

1. Effective music teaching in the prekindergarten should: support the child's total development--physical, emotional, social, and cognitive
2. recognize the wide range of normal development in prekindergartners and the need to differentiate their instruction
3. facilitate learning through active interaction with adults and other children as well as with music materials
4. consist of learning activities and materials that are real, concrete, and relevant to the lives of young children
5. provide opportunities for children to choose from among a variety of music activities, materials, and equipment of varying degrees of difficulty
6. allow children time to explore music through active involvement

### **Music Experiences for Infants and Toddlers**

Infants and very young children experience music by hearing it, by feeling it, and by experimenting with pitch and timbre in their vocalizations. Children should experience music daily while receiving caring, physical contact. Adults can encourage the musical development of infants by:

1. singing and chanting to them, using songs and rhymes representing a variety of meters and tonalities
2. imitating the sounds infants make
3. exposing them to a wide variety of vocal, body, instrumental, and environmental sounds
4. providing exposure to selected live and recorded music
5. rocking, patting, touching, and moving with the children to the beat, rhythm patterns, and melodic direction of music they hear
6. providing safe toys that make musical sounds the children can control
7. talking about music and its relationship to expression and feeling

### **Musical Experiences for Two-, Three-, and Four-Year-Old Children**

Two-, three-, and four-year-old children need an environment that includes a variety of sound sources, selected recorded music, and opportunities for free improvised singing and the building of a repertoire of songs. An exploratory approach, using a wide range of appropriate materials, provides a rich base from which conceptual understanding can evolve in later years. A variety of individual musical experiences is important for children at this age, with little emphasis on activities that require children to perform together as a unit. As a result of their experiences with music, four-year-olds should initiate both independent and collaborative play with musical materials, and they should demonstrate curiosity about music.