



The Champion Centre
TAMARIKI TOIORA

Notes from the Champion Centre Music Programme

Terms 1 & 2 2015



Time has been flying by this year and with a short first term, due to the early placement of Easter, this newsletter has been delayed. I hope though that you will accept it as reflective of your generous support across these first two terms.

The two stories below are of two young boys with Down syndrome in our Transition to School programme. They receive weekly individual sessions of music as well as weekly group music sessions.

Benson

Benson has a beautiful smile and a wonderful sense of humour and he knows what he wants when he comes to the music room. Several sessions ago, when he was offered a basket full of little teddies, he decided that sitting a teddy on the edge of the sound cradle and letting it fall in was a good idea for a game. Julie and his grandmother quickly saw how to use music to support and extend this idea, and so now both adults and Benson line their teddies up and then Benson cues the game with a wave of his hand just as a conductor would cue his orchestra. Julie sings "ready set" and Benson sings "Go" and together all three jump their teddies into the cradle before getting them back and doing it all again. This kind of musical play supports his communication, his ability to anticipate events and people, and remember a sequence of actions. And importantly, because he is in control (cued by the music) of what others do, it is supporting Benson (who has very few words or signs) to understand the value of communicating to others.



Another Benson game came about because he decided that he liked the look of a stack of chime bar boxes which contain the colour coded eight note scale of C major. He indicated that we should get them down and each have a set. When the boxes had been opened and the beaters carefully taken from each box, Benson proceeded to play the first large red low note. Julie sang 'red, red, red, red (the colour of the chime bar), he then played the next note up. She sang 'orange, orange, orange, orange (the colour of the bar). Benson slowly played up every note of the scale. The following week he chose the chime bars again and this time he sang most of the colours with tune approximation and using recognisable words. Over the next few weeks his words became clearer and he started to modify the game. One day, he held up the blue note and Julie and his grandmother sang 'blue' and played their blue chime bars. Then he did the same for the yellow bar and each subsequent degree of the scale. When he reached the top of the scale, he decided that the boxes had to be closed and returned to the cupboard.

Music making games like this provide playful opportunities for Benson to demonstrate his own musical ideas, create a plan, and complete a task. Julie's sung contributions to developing and establishing these games allow her to repeat useful words (such as colour names) without the repetition being tedious. She can also elongate and emphasise words as well as use gesture and movement to illustrate the meaning of words (e.g., 'up high' and 'down low' matched with pitch and body movement). And importantly, these joyful musical interactions help show his grandmother how to incorporate musical play into daily routines and play.

Ethan

Ethan loves coming to his individual music sessions and smiles broadly as Julie and his mother Claire accompany him down the hallway singing a little marching song. The song sets the tempo, and cues him to walk steadily. When he reaches the music room he heads for the keyboard, climbs up onto the chair, and gets his favourite book of illustrated nursery rhymes. As Julie plays and sings "The Wheels on the Bus", he swings his legs in time and watches the page intently.



When the song ends, he turns the page, skipping several songs to find one of his favourites including "Five Little Ducks" and "Hickory Dickory Dock".

Ethan finds the world confusing and anxiety provoking; so to help keep himself calm, he often rocks back and forth. His rocking is very regular and rhythmic and so rather than trying to stop him rocking, Julie has built the rocking into a musical activity and it has now become a kind of sitting dance in the music room. She began by singing what he was doing:" Ethan's rocking, rocking today, Ethan's

rocking, rocking today, rocking, rocking backward and forwards, now get ready to stop"! It took just a few sessions and Ethan smiled and stopped for the music cue. This game was then extended to having him sit on the large physiotherapy ball with his mother holding and positioning him, thus helping him to feel safe and supported in the predictable sequence of actions. Now Julie's song was "Ethan is bouncing on the big green ball, Ethan is bouncing on the big green ball, Ethan is bouncing on the big green ball and now get ready to stop". The song was gradually extended with new actions in the middle section (e.g., "Ethan's going from side to side, whoops you're going from side to side, Ethan is going from side to side and now get ready to stop"!)

Each song had the same words at the beginning and end with the contrasting actions in the middle section. Ethan listens intently, anticipating each sequence, chuckling with delight.

His parents take great joy in Ethan's musical accomplishments and join him with action and echo songs and musical games. At home, his parents use music to help him understand daily routines, social turn taking, and being able to take the lead.

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