

Progression in Composing (a)

Strand: Composing

Strand Unit: Improvising and Creating

| Infants | First and second | Third and fourth | Fifth and sixth |
|--|---|--|--|
| Select sounds from a variety of sources to create simple sound ideas, individually and in groups | Select sounds from a variety of sources to illustrate a character or a sequence of events, individually and in groups | Select different kinds of sounds (voice, body percussion, untuned and tuned percussion, simple melodic instruments, electronic instruments) to portray a character, a sequence of events or an atmosphere in sound stories | Select from a wide variety of sound sources (voice, body percussion, untuned and tuned percussion, melodic instruments and technology) for a range of musical purposes |
| Invent and perform short, simple musical pieces with some control of musical elements | Invent and perform short musical pieces with increasing ease and control of musical elements (e.g. story of a storm) | Invent and perform simple musical pieces that show a developing awareness of musical elements | Invent and perform pieces that show an increasing awareness and control of musical elements |
| Improvise new answers to given melodic patterns. | Recall, answer and invent simple melodic and rhythmic patterns, using voices, body percussion and instruments | Recall, answer and invent simple melodic and rhythmic patterns, using voice, body percussion and instruments | Recall, answer and invent simple melodic and rhythmic patterns, using voice, body percussion and instruments |

In the Improvising and Creating strand unit, there are three objectives at each level, which are spiral and developmental in nature. Each objective has a distinct 'focus'.

Objective 1: Select sounds from a variety of sources to.....

Children explore, select, organise and use sounds for different purposes and variety of stimuli or purposes can be chosen here.

At **level one** (infants), sounds are selected *'from a variety of sources to create simple sound ideas, individually and in groups'*. These simple sound ideas may involve using sound effects to accompany games, stories or poems, representing some aspect of the content. This can be seen as complementing the work on stories and poems, already being undertaken in infant classes. Stories and poems offer structures and stimulating ways into composing. Stories and poems that offer 'sound possibilities' that is, contain many occasions which lend themselves to being enhanced by sounds, will offer a good stimulus for composing activities. As children engage with stories they are encouraged to become more aware of the sound suggestions in the story and to think of ways in which these could be created. Teachers may be prescriptive at first, suggesting sound effects that could be used and then move to encouraging children to make choices around suitable sound sources and ways of using them.

[\(See PPDS website article Using Story as a Stimulus for Composing and Lists of Suggested Stories and Poems\)](#)

Children in **level two** (first/second), *'select sounds from a variety of sources to illustrate a character, or a sequence of events, individually and in groups'*.

Children continue to use sound effects to accompany games, poems, stories, pictures, as in level one. Stories are chosen for their 'sound possibilities' and are suitable to the children's level. At this level, composing becomes more focused and children now look at sequencing of events and how characters may be illustrated through sound, working individually and in groups.

At **level three** (third/fourth), opportunities are provided to *'Select different kinds of sounds (voice, body percussion, un-tuned and tuned percussion, simple melodic instruments, electronic instruments) to portray a character, a sequence of events, or an atmosphere in sound stories'*

The accompaniment of story and poem is undertaken in a more advanced way at this level. Children explore portraying characters (eg. a clown, an old man, a spy); they may look at sequencing events such as a walk in the jungle, an accident or a journey and they may explore portraying an atmosphere in sound around themes such as space, carnivals or the natural elements.

[\(Listen to the sound files on the PPDS website: Compositions on the Sounds of the Sea\)](#)

The fifth/sixth class children (**level four**) *select from a wide variety of sound sources (voice, body percussion, untuned and tuned percussion, melodic instruments and technology) for a range of musical purposes*. Their range of sound sources and purposes is extended at this level. Purposes may include accompanying a song, story, poem, riddle, joke, game; illustrating characters or sequences of events; conveying mood or atmosphere; illustrating an abstract concept such as fire, beauty, earthquakes, machinery or composing for particular occasions eg. east or festival, presenting a prize, saying goodbye, going to sleep etc.

Composing may be done as a response to a piece of visual art of children could be involved in composing a sound track for a piece of film or cartoon.

(Listen to the sound files on the PPDS website eg: Compositions in Response to Kandinsky piece).

Objective 2: Invent and perform short, simple musical pieces with some control of musical elements

Children at each of the four levels are given opportunities to invent and perform compositions, developing their awareness of the musical elements and exploring how the elements can be used to convey different meanings. Such exploration of the musical elements will enhance children's development of concepts in music.

The elements include Pulse(steady beat); Duration (long/short, patterns, rhythm); Tempo (fast/slow); Pitch (high/low); Dynamics (loud/soft); Structure (same/different); Timbre (tone colour); Texture (one sound/several sounds) and Style

(See explanation on PPDS website: Concepts Development (musical elements))

Initially (**at level one**) they show some control of musical elements through their compositions, progressing to developing awareness of the musical elements at the **middle levels** and showing this awareness and control in the pieces that they invent and perform at the **higher** levels.

How can this be achieved?

As children improvise and create for purposes such as accompanying stories or poems, they are encouraged to be aware of contrasts that they can include eg loud sounds for thunder; soft sounds for the rippling river etc. Degrees of contrast in dynamics and tempo can be shown.....getting louder; slowing down etc and compositions can be created solely based on the musical elements.

| | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Soft sounds | Sounds getting louder | Very loud sounds | Loud sounds | Soft sounds |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|

Texture and timbre may be explored through experimenting with how different sounds can be put together. Children explore structure in arranging the sequence of the sounds and investigate how sections can be repeated, changed etc. A pulse and contrasting rhythm may be part of the compositions also and pitch may be explored as tunes are incorporated into the compositions.

Objective 3: Recall, answer and invent simple melodic and rhythmic patterns

This objective aims to enable children to compose through the medium of melody and rhythm. It is closely linked to the Literacy strand unit of the Performing strand, and skills and experiences gained in literacy work can be further developed here.

In **level one**, children are enabled to improvise new answers to given melodic patterns. They are involved in:

- **Simple singing conversations**

For example:

How are you? Fine thank you,

What's your name? Mary

- **Call and response (question and answer) melodies**

CALL:

RESPONSE:

What is your name?

My name is Bren-dan/Mary/

s s m m

s s s m m

G G E E

G G G E E

Various sequences of notes can be used, depending on the children's experience, level of ability and vocal range. In infant classes, improvising rhythmic or melodic 'answers' to given 'questions' can take place as a natural extension of song singing,

In the subsequent level, (**level two**) children recall, answer and invent simple melodic and rhythmic patterns, using voices, body percussion and instruments. Voice is used in singing conversations, based on the notes with which they are familiar (and within their pitch range) and in vocal improvisations, using words/syllables in various sequences and arrangements. The patterns may also be explored using body percussion and instruments. This continues into the **senior levels**.

They are involved in:

- **Recall, answer and invent simple melodic patterns**- this may involve activities such as the following:

- ***Call and response (melodic instruments)***

One child plays a tune (on 2/3 CHIME BARS) and the other plays a response to it. They may follow a theme in doing this, for example, You are a shepherd on a hill and a heavy fog comes down; Send a sound message to your family (call). The family responds with a message/sequence of notes

(For other ideas-See PPDS website article: [Notes on Melodic Compositions](#))

- **Recall, answer and invent simple rhythmic patterns, using voices, body percussion and instruments-** this may involve activities such as the following:

- **Echo Clapping:**

| Lead | | | | Echo | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1 <i>clap</i> | 2 <i>clap</i> | 3 <i>clap</i> | 4 <i>clap</i> | 1 <i>clap</i> | 2 <i>clap</i> | 3 <i>clap</i> | 4 <i>clap</i> |
| 1 <i>Clap</i> | 2 <i>clap</i> | 3 <i>clap/clap</i> | 4 <i>clap</i> | 1 <i>Clap</i> | 2 <i>clap</i> | 3 <i>clap/clap</i> | 4 <i>clap</i> |
| 1 <i>Clap/clap</i> | 2 <i>clap</i> | 3 <i>clap/clap</i> | 4 <i>clap</i> | 1 <i>Clap/clap</i> | 2 <i>clap</i> | 3 <i>clap/clap</i> | 4 <i>clap</i> |

In this way, children develop the skills of recall and auditory memory. They progress to answering a pattern, that is, inventing a pattern that is responding to or related to the pattern that is given to them.

| Call | | | | Response may sound like..... | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 <i>Clap</i> | 2 <i>clap</i> | 3 <i>clap</i> | 4 <i>clap/clap</i> | 1 <i>clap/clap</i> | 2 <i>clap</i> | 3 <i>clap/clap</i> | 4 <i>clap</i> |
| 1 <i>Clap</i> | 2 <i>clap/clap</i> | 3 <i>clap/clap</i> | 4 <i>clap</i> | 1 <i>clap/clap</i> | 2 <i>clap/clap</i> | 3 <i>clap/clap</i> | 4 <i>clap/clap</i> |

Finally they build on these experiences to invent their own simple rhythmic patterns.

(See PPDS website: [Composing with Rhythm](#))

- **Body Percussion**

In a similar way, patterns using body percussion are developed, as echoes or new patterns:

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 <i>Clap</i> | 2 <i>slap</i> | 3 <i>clap/clap</i> | 4 <i>slap</i> | 1 <i>Clap</i> | 2 <i>slap</i> | 3 <i>clap/clap</i> | 4 <i>slap</i> |
| 1 <i>Click</i> | 2 <i>click/click</i> | 3 <i>click/click</i> | 4 <i>click</i> | 1 <i>click/click</i> | 2 <i>click/click</i> | 3 <i>click/click</i> | 4 <i>click/click</i> |
| 1 <i>Clap</i> | 2 <i>click</i> | 3 <i>slap/slap</i> | 4 <i>click</i> | 1 <i>slap/slap</i> | 2 <i>click</i> | 3 <i>slap/slap</i> | 4 <i>clap</i> |

- Composing an ostinato

An ostinato is a pattern of notes which is repeated over and over again. Children are encouraged to compose rhythmic ostinatos for familiar songs and to compose rhythmic ostinatos as a response to pieces of music.

A good place to start is to use songs that are familiar to the children and invite them to play an easily recognised ostinato, that is, take a short line or phrase from the song and repeat it

EG. 'Frere Jacques' : Play the rhythm of the line 'Sonn-ez le ma- ti- nez'



Repeat this over and over to the beat of the song, while the other children are singing the song.

With experience, they will begin to invent their own ostinato for the song or piece of music.

(See PPDS website articles- 'Melodic Compositions-some Ideas' and 'Composing with Rhythm' for further ideas)

In conclusion, the three objectives of the strand unit, Improvising and Creating are inter-related and while structured, also allow the teacher and child freedom to be spontaneous and creative in their compositions.