

Play Along by Music Together is a developmentally appropriate, research-based early childhood music and movement curriculum that raises the quality of a child's early care and education. Through enjoyable music activities, Play Along naturally supports and enhances the classroom learning environment, children's development in early learning domains, teachers' and caregivers' knowledge and skills, and family engagement.

Texas Rising Star Measures Supported by Play Along

Category 1: Director and Staff Qualifications and Training

Ongoing Professional Development

The Play Along curriculum provides caregivers with the tools, comprehensive support, and ongoing professional development needed to raise the quality of their work with children:

- Play Along professional development opportunities are unparalleled in the field. Resources include: in-person workshops, teaching videos, and written guides. Workshops qualify for continuing education units.
- Professional development opportunities, materials, and curriculum resources provide caregivers with guidance in developmentally appropriate practice and on integrating music into their daily work to support learning in other curricular areas and enhance the classroom environment. Caregivers also learn about early childhood music development.
- With Play Along, teachers gain musical tools to use in the classroom that are directly applicable to caregivers' daily work with children.

Category 2: Caregiver-child Interaction

As an adult-child music and movement program that views adult modeling and relationships as integral to the development of young children, Play Along supports and fosters healthy and positive adult-child interactions. The curriculum includes materials and resources that promote sensitive-responsive interactions and teaching skills, and build knowledge of children's developmental needs—for both parents and caregivers/teachers.

Warm and Responsive Style Assessment Measures

P-WRS-02	Uses frequent positive nonverbal behaviors to increase feelings of acceptance	<p>The Play Along curriculum gives caregivers a platform to practice using positive nonverbal cues.</p> <p>Caregivers learn how to use music as a teaching strategy and technique (e.g., singing to soothe a fussy child or to ease transitions.)</p>
P-WRS-04	Notices and attends to children’s needs and signals	<p>Play Along classes serve as a platform for caregivers to learn, demonstrate, and practice warm and responsive interactions with their children.</p> <p>Through the music activities, caregivers gain experience in recognizing, interpreting, and appropriately responding to a child’s signals and needs.</p>

Language Facilitation and Support Assessment Measures

P-LFS-01	Listens to children attentively and responds appropriately to their language, vocalizations, and non-verbal attempts at communication	Play Along activities provide caregivers with opportunities to recognize children’s nonverbal communications and practice nonverbal responses, all through music.
P-LFS-05	Uses specific labels and descriptors throughout the day	Singing songs in a group or dyad can increase the variety, depth, amount, and frequency of speech between a child and adult. This provides a child with a wider variety of labels and descriptors, fostering a child’s vocabulary development.
P-LFS-07	Provides children with frequent opportunities to talk with caregivers throughout the day	Many Play Along songs provide opportunities for children to share their own musical idea and for creative storytelling, supporting children’s creative thought and providing opportunities for expanded language.
P-LFS-08	Engages children in conversations (infants)	Play Along songs and activities provide caregivers with guidance on engaging in the musical nonverbal responses (such as coos and babbles) that support infant language development.

Play-Based Interactions and Guidance Assessment Measures

P-PBIG-01	Supports a playful attitude on an ongoing basis by creating opportunities for children to make believe, make choices, and adjust activities to their own interests	As a music curriculum built on the principle that young children learn best through play, Play Along classes support children’s self-directed learning and foster a playful attitude toward music learning—for both children and adults. Many Play Along songs also encourage sociodramatic play.
P-PBIG-02	Participates and expands on play initiated by children to reinforce language, ideas, and social development	During a music class, caregivers get the opportunity to participate in children’s musical play. Support materials provide guidance on how to extend this musical play outside of music class.
P-PBIG-03	Provides guidance when children are working to complete a task/play rather than using overly directive strategies	Play Along training, online teaching resources, and curriculum materials support caregivers’ skills in using guidance rather than directive teaching strategies and in supporting music participation rather than performance.

Support for Children’s Regulation Assessment Measures

P-SCR-01	Models and encourages emotional expression	Music in general supports emotional expression. Many Play Along songs expose children to those words, faces, and actions that are associated with certain feelings. Caregivers are encouraged to ask children to come up with their own words and movements that signify different emotions, and incorporate these verse variations into a song.
P-SCR-04	Encourages self-regulation by consistently implementing program rules and routines	Caregivers are given guidance on using music for transitions and to mark daily rituals, which is a more playful and effective way to assist children in following the daily routine. Play Along songs with tempo and dynamic contrasts, anticipatory endings, “freeze” moments, substitution opportunities, and lullabies naturally and playfully support children in managing their feelings, controlling impulses, sustaining attention, cooperating with others, and organizing their behavior, all skills that require self-regulation.

Category 3: Curriculum

Play Along is a comprehensive, research-based music curriculum that can be integrated into any early learning setting and complements a variety of early childhood philosophies and curricula. The Play Along curriculum aligns with standards set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines.

Each song collection includes songs, chants, and movement activities that support infant/toddler and preschooler development in key early learning domains. The curriculum includes teaching resources such as full lesson plans, activity suggestions, and instructional videos. These resources support teachers in using and adapting songs and chants to enhance classroom learning and curricular goals throughout the week.

Lesson Plans and Curriculum Assessment Measures

P-LPC-02	Social and Emotional Development (infant/toddler)	Play Along activities provide opportunities for caregivers and children to engage in reciprocal imitation, which is integral to children's social development and skill and knowledge acquisition. Music activities also support developing self-regulation skills.
P-LPC-03	Language and Communication Development (infant/toddler)	The repetition of words in many songs, the context that songs provide for understanding words, and the exposure to words in a playful environment (rather than an instructional one) promote vocabulary development.
P-LPC-04	Cognitive Development (infant/toddler)	Play Along provides tools for caregivers to support infant and toddlers' understanding of cause-and-effect, conceptual knowledge, attention control, and emerging math skills.
P-LPC-05	Social and Emotional (preschool)	Play Along songs and activities support children's self-regulation, self-confidence, self-expression, leadership skills, emotion knowledge, group process, and social competence.
P-LPC-06	Language and Communication	Play Along songs and activities support active listening skills and narrative and expressive language.
P-LPC-07	Emergent Literacy - Reading	Play Along songs and activities support phonological awareness, vocabulary development, sound-letter associations, and print motivation and awareness.
P-LPC-09	Mathematics	Play Along songs and rhythmic chants support emerging math skills (parts to whole, same and different, sequences, patterns, proportions.)
P-LPC-12	Fine Arts - Music	The Play Along music Curriculum supports children's rhythmic and tonal development.
P-LPC-15	Physical Activity and Motor Development (infants, toddlers, preschoolers)	Play Along songs and activities support gross and fine motor skills, locomotor and non-locomotor skills, coordination and balance, body awareness and control, spatial awareness, and provide for daily activity that is conducive to the classroom space.

Planning for Special Needs and Respecting Diversity Assessment Measures

P-PSNRD-01	Consideration for children in a Bilingual/ESL program	Some Play Along songs are in Spanish, and translations of all songs are available. For English Language Learners, the inclusion of “songs without words” (songs sung on vocables, e.g. phonemes) allow for their full participation while also supporting their language development.
P-PSNRD-02	Consideration for students with disabilities	The Play Along curriculum is inclusive, respectful, and accessible to a range of learning styles, needs, and abilities. Activity variations for teachers who work with children with special needs, either separately or in an inclusion classroom, are available.
P-PSNRD-03	Consideration for students from culturally diverse backgrounds	The music encompasses a wide range of musical styles and cultures so it is accessible, engaging, and enjoyable to children from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Instructional Formats and Approaches to Learning

P-IFAL-01	Staff supports learning through encouraging hands-on manipulation of real objects	Play Along songs and movement activities incorporate the use of developmentally appropriate props and instruments. Caregivers are mentored on how to facilitate children’s exploration of and experimentation with musical instruments.
P-IFAL-02	Intentional instructional activities that are both teacher and child initiated are balanced throughout the planned daily activities	Play Along songs and activities are developed to be both teacher and child initiated. Caregivers are trained in setting up opportunities for child-initiated substitutions in songs, chants, and movement activities, and in scaffolding these learning opportunities.
P-IFAL-03	Routine and transition times are used as opportunities for incidental learning	Play Along songs can be used during the daily routine and for transitions. Children’s learning and development are supported during these transitions since the music provides for deep and holistic learning.
P-IFAL-05	Repeated exposure of a new concept in different learning contexts across the day	Integrating Play Along into the larger curriculum is a great opportunity to reinforce the learning of a new concept in a different learning context and format. Incorporating other lessons and learning goals into the songs and activities helps to engage children who are multimodal learners (e.g. auditory, kinesthetic). Using music in different learning contexts can also be a “way in” for those harder-to-reach children who otherwise may not easily engage in the current lesson.
P-IFAL-06	Implemented learning activities are organized to build skills and knowledge progressively by moving the child from current developmental levels to the targeted developmental benchmarks	Through the Play Along curriculum, caregivers receive additional education and experience in developmentally appropriate practice, child observation, and scaffolding of learning.

Category 5: Parent Education and Involvement

Play Along by Music Together is a powerful tool in supporting family engagement because it is specifically designed to involve the parents and caregivers at home, creating a strong home-school connection. Through home materials, and online resources for families, the Play Along curriculum deeply supports parent education and family engagement by:

- Increasing the quality of the home learning environment through fun and accessible activities and that support anywhere, anytime learning through music.
- Facilitating consistent and ongoing two-way communication between caregivers and parents.
- Promoting family involvement in the classroom and at school events through music that is inclusive, non-threatening, and enjoyable.
- Providing schools with a multi-generational approach that can include extended family.
- Promoting parents' knowledge of their child's development and how to support learning at home through music.
- Supporting positive parent-child relationships.