



## Tuesday Tools: Musical Development - Acculturation

Hello Rock and Roll Community! Welcome back to another Tuesday Training Tools as we spend the month discussing musical development in young children.

Last week, we introduced the concept of preparatory audiation, the sequence of stages children (and adults!) progress through on the journey toward thinking musically and understanding musical communication. Today, we're going to talk more about the first three stages of preparatory audiation, which together are called **acculturation**, absorbing and responding to the music from your home culture. By understanding and recognizing children's relations and reactions to music, we can better understand where a child is in their journey, manage our musical expectations, and better design the child's musical environment and experiences.

The first stage of acculturation is **absorption**. These stages are not tied to chronological age, but the absorption stage tends to happen between birth and 18 months. In this stage, the child is focused on absorbing the music – they're just taking everything in. They may look at the source of the sound, they may not. They may stop their activity to listen, or they may continue playing. Sometimes you'll get an open-mouthed stare, almost like they're tasting or mouthing the music like an infant would mouth any other new object they come in contact with. We can support children in this phase with a wide variety of songs and sounds in different meters, tonalities, and genres. Recorded music is a great option, but the best stimulus by far is interacting with a musically competent adult.

After absorption, the second phase is **random response** which typically happens between ages 1 and 3 but could come earlier or later. In the random response stage, a child moves or babbles in response to the music, but not in relation to it. Responses may look like a short shake of a shaker, looking toward or away from the source of the music, bouncing, clapping, or some other gross motor movement, and flexing the hands and feet. Maybe a child turns shyly into the shoulder of a parent or caregiver. As teachers, we can continue to offer rich musical listening environments and opportunities to interact through music.

The child transitions into the next phase when moving from **random response** to **purposeful response** anywhere from before 18 months to after 3 years of age. Now the child has enough awareness of music to try and coordinate their body and sound with the musical example of the adult. Children might try to imitate singing a very short section of a song, or rock their own body side to side, or bounce or shake in relation of the music. It may not accurately match the tempo or pitch of the song, but the child is purposeful in their attempt to imitate and participate in the music, especially in the determined look they sometimes get in their eyes to be a part of the music making group.

When a young child says "bah, bah," we use our adult understanding of verbal and body language to interpret their intent and help them communicate. Maybe the child is reaching for a ball, or a stuffed sheep, or a bottle. Naturally, as fluent language users, we hand them the object and reinforce their understanding of its full name. "Bottle. Ball. Sheep." When a young child offers a similar musical response, we can validate and support them in our role as competent musical adults. In this way, we model how musical impulses are worthy of being followed, investigated, and played with.