

Jamming



Related strands of the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy:

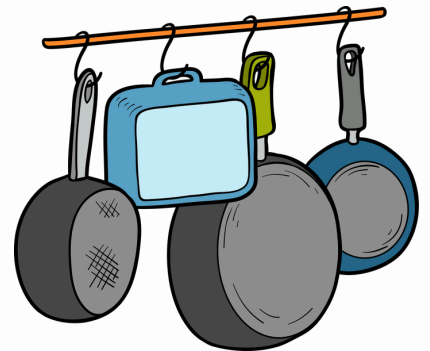
- leading for a culture of excellence
- enabling environments
- spiral curriculum
- harmonious relationships



Jamming

Jamming in music is playing, improvising, and having fun making music together.

In nursery free play it can happen anywhere: singing in the mud kitchen, drumming on fences, dancing with blocks.



Jamming could look like:

- Children using whatever is to hand (toys, pots and pans, blocks) and finding music in the everyday environment
- Songs repeated over and over, giving space for individual ideas to emerge and integrated into a new group version
- Children regulating together, switching from loud ensemble play to a dramatically quiet
- Child-led choices about what to play next, keeping the energy rooted in shared enthusiasm.

Whilst jamming adults can take on three modes of interaction:

- leading from the front
- leading from the side
- leading from the back

(Grocott, 2018)

What does this mean?



Leading from the front

Leading a song but leaving lots of opportunities for children to direct:

- what happens next (*sleeping lions instead of bunnies*)
- musical elements (*fast/slow, loud/quiet*)
- emotional or characteristic elements (*sad/scared/angry/happy/tired, baby/robot/witchy voice*)



Leading from the side

- An adult providing a pulse, rhythm or shape (using a drum, ukulele, recorded music, stop and go signs) and children free to join as they wish.
- The adult uses a drum to match the dance movements of a child.
- Or the adult dances in a way that matches the drum patterns of the child.



Leading from the back

Providing space, time and resources for children and standing back to see what happens (see also *enabling environments, instrument free play*)

Usually, we slide from one mode to the other:

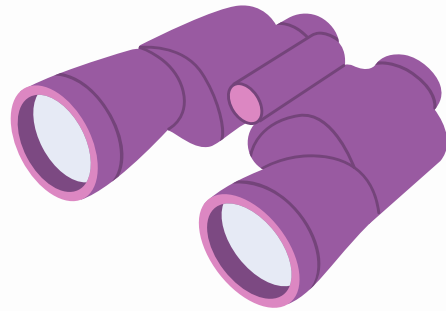
Judith was singing *Wheels on the Bus*, **leading from the front**, asking children to decide what came next: "Mummies!" "Wipers!" "Horn on the bus!"

Then she shifted towards **leading from the side**: children were personalising their suggestions: "I'm cuddling my teddy." And the following verse changed to "Esme on the bus is cuddling her teddy".

Aidan was clapping so the next verse lyrics were changed again, with Judith watching carefully to follow Aidan's clapping speed.

Taulant was still on the couch, book in his lap, watching intently. Judith noticed and incorporated him into the next verse: "Taulant on the bus is reading a book." Taulant smiled, and went back to reading.

Leading from the side comes from all sorts of noticing and following:



Jenna was bouncing on an inflatable peanut-shaped ball. Julia began strumming a ukulele to match her bounces exactly. Jenna smiled, then slowed her bouncing, Julia followed, matching Jenna's intensity. She giggled with delight, then sped up again. Julia continued to follow Jenna's lead.

Next time you're making music with children, notice which mode you're working in and see what happens when you play with shifting between them.

Reference:

Grocott, S. (2018) 'It is what you do, and it is the way you do it: improvisation and why it is an essential ingredient in early years music and education', *Early Education Journal*, 86 (Music in Early Childhood). Available at: <https://app.sheepcrm.com/early-education/journal/86/>

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