

**Transitions & Finger Plays:
Having Fun Throughout the Day!**

Presented by Melissa McKenzie

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Even the most well thought out schedule for a preschool classroom will have transitions. In fact, children start their day of preschool with a transition: leaving mommy/daddy and coming into your classroom. Being aware of the different transitions and arming yourself with a variety of activities/finger plays/songs will make you and your children happier, help your day flow more easily, and bring a relaxed sense of control to your classroom. Sounds appealing, doesn't it?

Are you aware of the transitions in your day? Take a look at your class schedule to see what transitions you have and if any of those transitions can be eliminated. Ask a co-worker to take an objective look at your class schedule and offer his/her opinion. There could be some easy changes that you may have overlooked. In addition to your planned transitions, count on having some unexpected opportunities to wait with your preschoolers too. Once you know what you need, you can load your arsenal with songs, finger plays & activities to help move you through your day.

Never underestimate the power of a good song or a fun finger play. You can take a hallway filled with (30) out of control 3yr & 4yr olds waiting for the bathroom and completely bring their focus back to you simply by singing a song. However, there are typically two obstacles that get in the way of you successfully using songs & finger plays with your children. First, your storehouse of songs & finger plays might be empty or the inventory could be dangerously low. Maybe you've been using the same songs/finger plays for years and haven't taken the time to learn some new ones. Or perhaps you're new to early childhood and the only songs you sing are ABC's and Twinkle Little Star (by the way – you can make these songs work for you too!). This is easily remedied if you simply challenge yourself to learn a new song or finger play every 2-3 weeks. One of the wonderful things about toddlers & preschoolers is that they love repetition; in fact, they need repetition to help them learn. So really, repeating the same song/finger play for a few weeks eases your load and greatly benefits the children. It's a win-win! You can choose songs/finger plays that are thematic, silly, active, or quiet. The more you learn, the more you have at your immediate disposal. While the first obstacle of building your inventory is fairly easy to solve, it's the second obstacle that seems to be more of a challenge. That's because the second obstacle is you!

Yes, that means you're going to have to work on changing yourself and not too many people like the idea of changing themselves. You can go to as many workshops & presentations as you want. You can listen to speakers, write down lyrics, and make notes on finger plays. You can create little pocket booklets of activities and transitions. But until you give yourself permission to get excited, be silly and just sing in front of a child, your vast warehouse of songs & finger plays isn't going to help you. Preschoolers don't care if you can sing well or not. In fact, they will most likely think you are one of the best singers in the whole world if you just give them a chance to hear you sing. The children in your class already have an emotional connection with you so give them that emotional connection to music and the learning that comes from music too. They know and find comfort in the sound of your voice. Listening to music on a cd is fine, but having you in the room singing to and with

the children has a much bigger impact. First choose the song or finger play you want to learn and start practicing it. If you have a recorded version of the song, listen to it and sing along with it. This is a very important step; you have to totally know the song/finger play before trying to teach it to your class. Once you've got the song/finger play completely memorized it's time to begin using it with the children. This is where you might have to take a step outside of your comfort zone (a big step for some of you) by going public with your singing talents. You've got to let yourself be silly. You've got to have over-the-top enthusiasm and excitement. And you've got to let go of any apprehension you have about what others might think of your "performance". Just let loose and have fun with it. The more fun you're having, the more fun the kids will have with you!

Why are Finger Plays so important???? First, Finger Plays give you yet another opportunity to have fun with children. That alone is reason enough to do a finger play with your kiddos. But there's so much more. Finger Plays help young children develop an understanding of rhythm in both speech and music. They also help build a child's vocabulary and aid in language development by encouraging children to participate verbally. Often finger plays have a sequence to follow and that sequencing is a great pre-reading skill. Finger Plays do an amazing job of incorporating fingers, wrists and sometimes bigger muscle movements into a fun rhyme which helps develop both fine and gross motor muscles. There are often movements in finger plays that also help the children develop "digit individuation" which means that children can isolate one finger singly and group fingers in precise patterns such as pointing, pincer grasp and holding a pencil/crayon. Digit Individuation is a prerequisite for the "tripod pencil grasp" so the more we can work on this skill the better. Finger Plays allow for self expression because a child gets to have his/her own response in the use of his/her own body & speech. But wait, there's more! Finger Plays also: help children learn to follow directions; increase children's attention span; develop children's listening skills; and often help teach number concepts (count 10 fingers, take 1 away, etc.). Really, the question should be: Why don't we do more Finger Plays with our children????!!!! Learn some finger plays and have some fun.

Benefits of Music & Movement: The brain, at birth, is undeveloped. As the brain develops, it organizes & grows sequentially starting from the lowest regions of the brain then processing up through the more complex parts of the brain. In order for the upper regions to be healthy, you must first develop healthy lower regions. The normal organization of the brain is "use-dependent"; the more patterned activity (think music, reading, conversation, etc.), the more the brain regions responsible for these tasks will organize and be functionally "healthy". And guess what! The majority of this sequential and use-dependent development takes place in early childhood. In fact, by age 3, 85% of the brain has developed.

What does that have to do with music, movement & early childhood? Everything! We have this amazing window of opportunity in early childhood to help our little ones develop healthy brains. We need to capitalize on these early childhood years. As we teach preschoolers, we need to match experiences to the child's level of neurodevelopment: physical/motor, behavioral, emotional, social and cognitive. Play & exploration grow the brain—healthy play & developmentally appropriate exploration grow healthy brains!

So much research has been done and is still being done that tells us that there is definitely a link between music education and school readiness. When you think of preschoolers you think of active learning. Music & movement activities promote physical well-being and fine & gross motor development. These activities also help to promote social/emotional development as interacting with other children comes naturally in the course of singing & moving together. Music activities that emphasize song texts, rhyming words, rhythmic patterns, steady beat, and dramatization of stories through movement & instruments help develop a child's literacy skills as well. Kids find music & movement a joyful, playful and efficient way to learn (they don't even know they're learning). When we nurture a love for music & movement, we're ultimately facilitating a love for all learning. To a young child (infant, toddler, and preschooler) music inherently has power and meaning that go beyond words. Music enhances listening; invites intuitive and steady beat responses; and aids learning of vocabulary, sound and pitch discrimination, emotional responses, creative responses, and memory. (Carlton, 2000) Music evokes an emotional response through the words, melody, pitch and rhythm of a song. Music gives us the ability to communicate with young children in a way that makes sense to them. An infant, who can't yet sing along with you, is very capable of listening and recognizing many sounds especially the voices of the significant adults in his life. Toddlers will start to join in by repeating words or copying the rhythm of a song. Preschoolers begin to match the pitch and melody as well as remember the words to songs. Music is an amazing tool for aiding in the development of a child, with unlimited potential, as long as you choose to use it.

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Other Great Resources:

Transition Time: Let's Do Something Different! By Jean Feldman

Teachable Transitions by Rae Pica

www.songsfor teaching.com

www.drjean.org

Circle of Songs with Hugh Hanley

Another Circle of Songs with Hugh Hanley

One More Circle of Songs with Hugh Hanley

www.kathiehillmusic.com

<http://commtechlab.msu.edu/Sites/aslweb/browser.htm>

<http://www.aslpro.com/>

Wiggle Them
by Dr. Jean (“All Day Long” CD)
www.drjean.org

Wiggle them, wiggle them, wiggle them so. (*wiggle your fingers in front of you*)

Wiggle them high, (*wiggle fingers above your head and use a high voice*)

wiggle them low. (*wiggle fingers down low and use a low voice*)

Wiggle to the left, wiggle to the right. (*wiggle them left & right – do opposite sides if facing children*)

Wiggle them, wiggle them out of sight. (*use a quieter voice, hide fingers behind your back*)

(*the original lyrics says "snap" but I use "clap" instead of the younger kiddos*)

Clap them, clap them, clap them so. (*clap hands in front of you*)

Clap them high, (*clap hands above your head and use a high voice*)

clap them low. (*clap hands down low and use a low voice*)

Clap them to the left, clap them to the right. (*clap hands left & right – do opposites sides if facing children*)

Clap them, clap them out of sight. (*use a quieter voice, hide hands behind your back*)

Open and shut them just like so. (*open hands then make a closed fist in front of you*)

Open them high, (*open/shut hands above your head and use a high voice*)

and open them low. (*open/shut hands down low and use a high voice*)

Open to the left, and open to the right. (*open/shut left & right – do opposites sides if facing children*)

Open and shut them out of sight. (*use a quieter voice, hide hands behind your back*)

Shake them, shake them, shake them so. (*shake hands in front of you*)

Shake them high, (*shake hands above your head and use a high voice*)

shake them low. (*shake hands down low and use a low voice*)

Shake them to the left, shake them to the right. (*shake hands left & right – do opposites sides if facing children*)

Shake them, shake them out of sight. (*use a quieter voice, hide hands behind your back*)

Wave them, wave them, wave them so. (*wave hands in front of you*)

Wave them high, (*wave hands above your head and use a high voice*)

and wave them low. (*wave hands down low and use a low voice*)

Wave them to the left, wave them to the right. (*wave hands left & right – do opposites sides if facing children*)

Wave them, wave them out of sight. (*use a quieter voice, hide hands behind your back*)

Special Me
by Dr. Jean (“Dr. Jean & Friends” CD)
www.drjean.org

(sung to the tune of "Twinkle Little Star")

Special, special, special me. *(clasp hands together at your chest & make a sweet smile)*
I'm as special as can be. *(point to yourself with your thumbs)*
There is no one quite like me. *(shake finger “no” back & forth in front of you)*
I'm as good as I can be. *(give 2 “thumbs up”)*
Special, special, special me. *(clasp hands together at your chest & make a sweet smile)*
I'm as special as can be. *(point to yourself with your thumbs)*

The Sun Goes Up, The Sun Goes Down
by Melinda Caroll (available on iTunes)

The Sun goes up, *(open hands & raise over head)*
The sun goes down. *(close hands as you bring them down in front of you)*
The world keeps turning round and round. *(“roll” hands in front of you)*
I love you *(point out to the children)*
and you love me. *(point to yourself with your thumbs)*
That's how simple life can be. *(palms up, out to sides)*

These Are My Glasses
by Laurie Berkner Band (“Whaddaya Think of That?” CD, available on iTunes)

These are my glasses, *(make eyeglasses with your fingers in front of you)*
this is my book. *(close hands in front of you like a closed book)*
I put on my glasses *(make eyeglasses with your fingers around your eyes)*
and open up the book. *(open hands, palms up in front of you)*
Now I read, read, read. *(hold “open book” and bounce book 3 times)*
And I look, look, look. *(finger eyeglasses and look 3 times)*
I put down my glasses *(carefully remove eyeglasses and put gently on floor)*
and Whoop! close up the book. *(close hands with a clap)*

We Had a Good Day
by Dr. Jean ("Kiss Your Brain" CD)
www.drjean.org

We had a good day. (*one "thumbs up"*)
We had a great day. (*two "thumbs up"*)
So pat yourself on the back. (*pat your back*)
We had a good day. (*one "thumbs up"*)
We had a great day. (*two "thumbs up"*)
So pat yourself on the back. (*pat your back*)

We thought a lot today. (*tap your head*)
We learned in many ways. (*open hands wide in front of you*)
So kiss your brain. (*kiss your fingers then "tap" the kiss onto your head*)
We thought a lot today. (*tap your head*)
We learned in many ways. (*open hands wide in front of you*)
So kiss your brain. (*kiss your fingers then "tap" the kiss onto your head*)

It's time to say so long and end with a song. (*point to your wrist like there's a watch*)
So wave good-bye to your friends. (*wave*)
It's time to say so long and end with a song. (*point to your wrist like there's a watch*)
So wave good-bye to your friends. (*wave*)

Ten Fingers
Original Author Unknown

I have ten fingers (*hold up both hands, fingers spread*)
And they all belong to me, (*point to self*)
I can make them do things-
Would you like to see?

I can shut them up tight (*make fists*)
I can open them wide (*open hands*)
I can put them together (*place palms together*)
I can make them all hide (*put hands behind back*)

I can make them jump high (*hands over head, use a high voice*)
I can make them jump low (*touch floor, use a low voice*)
I can fold them up quietly (*fold hands in lap, use a whisper*)
And hold them just so.

Baby Bear Story

This version by Karyn Henley ("Five Little Ladybugs CD, Available on iTunes)

There once was a Baby Bear (*index finger & thumb showing something small*)
Who lived in a cave in a mountainside (*make a circle with your arms stretched overhead*)
He had a Mommy Bear (*wiggle right index finger*)
And a Daddy Bear (*wiggle left index finger*)
Mommy Bear and Daddy Bear (*quickly wiggle right index finger then left index finger*)
When to brush his teeth (*shake & point right index finger*)
Told Baby Bear when to pick up his toys (*shake & point left index finger*)
And when to go to bed! (*shake & point right index finger*)
Baby Bear got tired of it! (*index finger & thumb showing something small*)
"Why can't I be my own boss??!!" (*cross your arms and make a grumpy face*)
"I'm going to RUN A-WAY!" said Baby Bear (*keep arms crossed and exaggerate "run away", then
make a scared face*)
So he walked along the rocky road (*pat your legs with your hands*)
And he walked along the stony path (*clap your hands*)
And he walked across the great, big bridge (*pound your chest with your fists*)
And he shuffled through the tall grass (*rub the palms of your hands together*)
And he squished through the mud (*squeeze your hands together making a puff of air*)
Then Baby Bear came to the end of the path. (*slow down and use a quiet voice to build suspense*)
AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE SAW?! A LION!!!
So he squished back through the mud (*squeeze your hands together making a puff of air*)
And he shuffled back through the tall grass (*rub the palms of your hands together*)
And he ran back across the big bridge (*pound your chest with your fists*)
And he ran back along the stony path (*clap your hands*)
And he ran back along the rocky road (*pat your legs with your hands*)
Until he was safe in his cave again (*make a circle with your arms stretched overhead*)
Baby Bear said, "I'm so glad God gave me ..." (*index finger & thumb showing something small*)
"a Mommy Bear" (*wiggle your right index finger*)
"and a Daddy Bear" (*wiggle your left index finger*)
"who will always take care of me." (*use a soft voice and bring your hands to your chest*)

King Kong
Originally by Dr. Jean (www.drjean.org)
Modified by Melissa McKenzie

King Kong (*strong muscle arms*)
Was just a tiny, little monkey (*little voice, with little fingers*)
compared to my love for you. (*hug and then point out to "you" with both hands*)
Your kisses & hugs are oh so sweet. (*blow a kiss*)
Loving from you can't be beat. (*hug*)
King Kong (*strong muscle arms*)
Was just a tiny, little monkey (*little voice, with little fingers*)
compared to my love for you. (*hug and then point out to "you" with both hands*)
You help me know God & to pray (*praying hands*)
in your soft & gentle way. (*"soft" – palms upward, the hands are opened & close gently*)
King Kong (*strong muscle arms*)
Was just a tiny, little monkey (*little voice, with little fingers*)
compared to my love for you. (*hug and then point out to "you" with both hands*)
I love you in the day (*circle arms over head for sun*)
and at night (*sleeping head on hands*)
my love for you is out of sight (*hug, point out to "you" with both hands, "look" out*)
King Kong (*strong muscle arms*)
Was just a tiny, little monkey (*little voice, with little fingers*)
compared to my love for you. (*hug and then point out to "you" with both hands*)

Couch Potato Pokey
by Dr. Jean ("Is Everybody Happy" CD)
www.drjean.org

(like the Hokey-Pokey but it's a simple Fingerplay you do sitting down)

You put your thumbs in, you take your thumbs out.
You put your thumbs in and you wiggle them all about.
You do the Couch Potato Pokey and roll your arms around.
That's (*tap knees*) what it's all (*clap*) about. (*snap*)
You put your noses in...
You put your elbows in...
You put your eyebrows in...
You put your chins in...
You put your pinkies, you take your pinkies out.
You put your pinkies in and you wiggle them all about.
Give a micro-wave with your pinkies (*that's a tiny wave*)
and say good-bye today.
Cause that's all we're going to play.

Ten Little Friends

Dr. Jean

www.drjean.org

(hold up your fingers & count your friends)

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 - Ten Little Friends *(wiggle each finger as you count it)*

Now hide them behind your back)

Ten little friends came out to play *(slowly bring your wiggling fingers from behind your back)*

On a bright and sunny day *(spread your fingers out and move hands slowly back and forth)*

They had a little talk *(face hands together and let fingers wiggle and "talk" to each other)*

Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk.

And they took a little walk *(face hands out & take turns moving them forward to "walk")*

Walk, walk, walk, walk, walk, walk, stop!

Till they saw a great, big hill *(lean your head & hands back and look up at the top of the hill)*

They climbed to the top *(take turns climbing hands to the top)*

Climb, climb, climb, climb, climb

And stood very still *(hold hand up straight, spread fingers out and don't move)*

Until they tumbled down *(roll your hands down)*

And fell to the ground, BOOM! *(drop hands to the ground)*

"We're tired" they said *(bring hands up from the ground looking droopy & tired)*

So they went home and went to bed *(count your fingers, tucking each one in as you count)*

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Shhhhh, they're sleeping, we'd better whisper *(now finish counting/tucking the other 5 fingers)*

6, 7, 8, 9, 10 *(hold closed fists together facing each other)*

Shhhhh *(still whispering and lay your sleeping fingers down to rest)*

The Alligator Chant

By Dr. Jean ("Sings Silly Songs" CD)

www.drjean.org

(This is an "echo song" - the children will echo back each line after you say it)

Alligator *(slightly open your hands for the alligator's mouth)*

Alligator *(open your arms from the elbows for the alligator's mouth)*

Alligator *(said much louder and open arms as wide as possible)*

Can be your friend, can be your friend, can be your friend too. WOOO! *("hug" index fingers, this is the ASL sign for "friend" and then fan hands for the "Wooo")*

The alligator is my friend. *(point your thumbs to yourself)*

And he can be your friend too *(point out to the kids)*

If only you could understand. *(tap the side of your head with your index finger)*

Don't wear him as a shoe! *(shake index finger back and forth for "no")*

Alligator *(slightly open your hands for the alligator's mouth)*

Alligator *(open your arms from the elbows for the alligator's mouth)*

Alligator *(said much louder and open arms as wide as possible)*

Can be your friend, can be your friend, can be your friend too. WOOO! (*"hug" index fingers, this is the ASL sign for "friend" and then fan hands for the "Wooo"*)

The alligator is my friend. (*point your thumbs to yourself*)

He likes to dance and flirt (*smile and wave open hands*)

If only you could understand. (*tap the side of your head with your index finger*)

Don't wear him as a skirt! (*shake index finger back and forth for "no"*)

Alligator (*slightly open your hands for the alligator's mouth*)

Alligator (*open your arms from the elbows for the alligator's mouth*)

Alligator (*said much louder and open arms as wide as possible*)

Can be your friend, can be your friend, can be your friend too. WOOO! (*"hug" index fingers, this is the ASL sign for "friend" and then fan hands for the "Wooo"*)

The alligator is my friend. (*point your thumbs to yourself*)

He likes to sing and dance (*move arms up and down in front of you*)

If only you could understand. (*tap the side of your head with your index finger*)

Don't wear him as your pants! (*shake index finger back and forth for "no"*)

Alligator (*QUIET VOICE - slightly open your hands for the alligator's mouth*)

Alligator (*MORE QUIET - open your arms from the elbows for the alligator's mouth*)

Alligator (*JUST ABOVE A WHISPER - said much louder and open arms as wide as possible*)

Can be your friend, can be your friend, can be your friend too. WOOO! (*BARELY WHISPER - "hug" index fingers, this is the ASL sign for "friend" and then fan hands for the "Wooo"*)

Slippery Fish
By Freddy N Friendz (available on iTunes)

(hands & arms together in a swimming motion back & forth, use a small voice)

Slippery fish, slippery fish, sliding through the water,

Slippery fish, slippery fish, Gulp, Gulp, Gulp!

Oh, no! It's been eaten by an ... *(hands on cheeks)*

(big arms "waving" backwards, use a goofy voice)

Octopus, octopus, squiggling in the water

Octopus, octopus, Gulp, Gulp, Gulp!

Oh, no! It's been eaten by a ... *(hands on cheeks)*

(hands together at wrists and open & close, regular voice)

Tuna fish, tuna fish, flashing in the water,

Tuna fish, tuna fish, Gulp, Gulp, Gulp!

Oh, no! It's been eaten by a ... *(hands on cheeks)*

(big, straight arms out in front and open & close, use a monster-like voice)

Great white shark, great white shark, lurking in the water,

Great white shark, great white shark, Gulp, Gulp, Gulp!

Oh, no! It's been eaten by a ... *(hands on cheeks)*

(make a big whale belly & use a big, slow voice)

Humongous whale, humongous whale, spouting in the water,

Humongous whale, humongous whale,

Gulp! ... Gulp! ... Gulp!

Oh, no! No more fish... *(hands on cheeks)*

Hello Song
by Kathie Hill & Darlene Abbott (“Songs & Chants for Antsy Pants” CD)
www.kathiehillmusic.com

Hello, hello this is how we sing hello.
Hello, hello, sing hello.

Hello, hello this is how we clap hello.
Hello, hello, clap hello.

Hello, hello this is how we jump hello.
Hello, hello, jump hello.

Hello, hello this is how we wave hello.
Hello, hello, wave hello.

TRY THIS: Once the children get familiar with this song start changing your “hello’s”. You might incorporate some hello’s that go with your current theme or season (i.e. animal hello’s, bug hello’s, snowman hello’s, etc.). You might want to work on some specific fine or gross motor movements (snap hello’s, wiggle 1 finger hello’s, finger to finger hello’s, move arms up & down hello’s, jumping jack hello’s, tip-toe hello’s, etc.). Include the children in the process by letting them pick some hello’s they’d like to try. This is a wonderful way to give kids ownership and encourage participation. It also lets them get creative & imaginative and work on some problem-solving. For instance, if a child wants to do a “dolphin hello” ask him/her what that would look like and have him/her figure it out.