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Music 'improves early learning', research project concludes

Music helps children as young as two to develop aural memory long before they master the same skills in speech alone.

That is the conclusion of a two-year study conducted by researchers from Northumbria University and funded by the charity Youth Music.

According to the research – just published by Youth Music and involving 400 0- to 5-year-olds – 'there is something about the music which assists the aural memory and enables even very young children to memorise and repeat lyrics'.

Children in the specified age group 'seem to find it easier to remember long strings of words, phrases and sentences when they are "attached" to a tune', it claims. 'They develop the ability to do this

through song before they are able to do it in speech.'

Among the skills identified as improving under the influence of music are: counting; vocabulary; understanding instructions; creative story-telling; numeracy; conversation and sentence-building; sequencing and patterning skills, and concentration span.

Although the research has dismissed the concept of a 'Mozart Effect' in the early years, the research contends that 'active participation in a progressive, expertly delivered curriculum can greatly improve a very young child's capacity to develop language and mathematical skills, giving them a great head-start before they progress to full-time education'.



Participation in musical activities 'also seems to benefit the children in their social, emotional and physical development', it adds. 'From the findings we have concluded that regular contact over a two-year period between a musician and young children (0-5) does impact on several areas of these children's development,' it continues.

But Youth Music was quick to emphasise that music and other arts 'have their own value regardless of whether or not they may have an impact on other areas of learning'.

'We should be careful of doing the arts a disservice by trying to make a case for their existence because of the way that they may support development in other fields,' it warns.

Early-years music-making is one of Youth Music's five policy priorities for 2005-2010. It has pledged £9.4m to fund music-making activities for 0-5-year-olds over the next five years.



www.youthmusic.org.uk
– Youth Music