

Assignment 2: Presentation.

Slide 1:

Good afternoon,

My name is Hannah Newman and my student number is 2216693. Today I would like to explore with you the benefits of songs and nursery rhymes in early childhood care and education as well as home environments to support young children's learning.

Slide 2:

I have an animation I would like to share with you for Welsh Government's Talk with me message - 'sing me a rhyme at any time'.

Slide 3:

I am sure many of us may have memories of nursery rhymes, either as a child, with our own children or in our settings. My own childhood at home was one filled with my mother's love for songs, always singing and dancing. During Meithrin and primary school, songs and nursery rhymes were encouraged, and the staff fostered a sense of creativity through singing and rhyming, connection to the Welsh language and a sense of belonging, Cynefin, and being patriotic to Wales.

Having attended a Welsh medium school, with no Welsh speaking family, I can see now that a lot of language, for me, was explored through the nursery rhymes, we sang daily and repetitively. These rhymes and songs helped me to connect with my parents through Welsh. My parents were not Welsh speakers themselves, but I can remember Welsh rhymes being a part of daily routines at home which allowed me to connect setting and school with my home life.

Furthermore, I have utilised nursery rhymes within my practice to encourage musical and language exploration and growth, providing a language rich environments in a playful, accessible way for children throughout the foundation phase. The songs and rhymes explored with the children in my practice have allowed the children to explore number, be curious about the world and develop speaking and listening skills to name just a few of the benefits seen. However, I have seen a growing number of children coming to setting with limited knowledge of nursery rhymes.

Additionally, within my current role as a family worker I have worked to promote the Welsh Governments Talk with me messages. The animation I have just shared with you which was tip 4 - 'sing me a rhyme at any time' - promotes immersing babies in songs and rhymes from as early as pregnancy, encourages song repetition and action songs to support language development (Talk with me, no date).

One way in which I promote the benefits of songs and rhymes with parents is within baby groups, where I find, a large number are embarrassed to sing and some report not knowing some rhymes, due to not having had any experience with them themselves as children. I also encourage the use of songs and rhymes with families I work with to encourage attachment and bonding.

Slide 4:

Dyke (2019) discusses Froebel's belief that songs and rhymes can be used to support relationship building and attachment which Dyke suggests is fundamental to babies later brain development and therefore learning.

This is also supported by the more current arguments of Poćwierz-Marciniak and Harciarek (2021), NSPCC (2021) and Shaw (2021) who state that attachment and bonding and children's well-being are enhanced through songs and rhymes.

NSPCC (2021) states that attachment and bonding and reciprocity creates a secure base.

Shaw (2021), Best Start to Life (no date) and Webber (no date) state that attachment and bonding are supported with interactions which pay attention to the babies' cues and responding to these, which can be achieved by using songs and rhymes, for example we could use lullabies to sooth a crying baby.

The English Association (2025) states that nursery rhymes act as part of children's culture, in that they are handed down from generation to generation. Within his work, Froebel created 50 songs to be used in everyday life at its time, with actions, for families to support child development by making sense of their worlds, in the home and within the pedagogy of his kindergartens (Lester, 2025). Dyke (2019) discusses Froebel's stages of rhymes and songs to support attachment and child development starting with:

Stage one – lullabies that can sooth.

Stage two – songs that encourage use of hands for example round and round the garden.

Stage three – songs to encourage finger movements for example un bys, dau bys or tommy thumb.

Stage four – songs that encourage crossing the midline for example wind the bobbin up.

Stage five – songs to encourage whole body for example head, shoulders, knees and toes.

Stage 6 – songs that encourage whole body movement and includes games for example the hokey cokey.

However, NSPCC (2021) states that without this attachment children may go on to develop behavioural issues such as ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder as well as struggling to form healthy relationships.

Lester (2025) argues that technology is taking the place of interaction with adults through song and rhymes and that screens are used to expose children to songs and rhymes instead of familiar faces. Additionally, Shaw (2021) states that songs and rhymes are not used so much with children over the age of 2, and it's possible that technology replaces this interaction.

Tip 4 of the Talk with Me messages explains that children love to hear their parents singing and rhyming, no matter the sound of their voice and tip 8 talks about turning tv time or screen time into time together or turning it off when parents are trying to interact with their child (Talk with me, no date) therefore arguing that the best way for children to develop speech and language starts with a reduction in screen time and listening to songs and rhymes in a face to face manner.

Slide 5:

Mullen (2017), Burke (2018) and Rosati (2024) support the social learning experience offered through music and song and using songs and rhymes to encourage young children to develop socially links to Welsh Government (2024)'s belonging development pathway, whereby it suggests support is given to allow children to play, alone and with or alongside their peers and to experience a joyful and curious approach.

This is additionally discussed in Department for Education (2022), Mahmood (2025) and Dyke (2019) who state that the playful nature and repetition within nursery rhymes make them appealing to young children and contributes to establishing a firm base for lifelong learning.

Moreover, the Curriculum's belonging development pathway states that children should be encouraged to take part in the routines of the setting (Welsh Government, 2024). Dyke (2019) states that using a singing voice is more likely to gain the attention of a child to facilitate smoother transitions in their daily routines and Hamilton and Murphy (2023) discuss practitioners support for using songs and rhymes for smooth routines in Early Years settings.

Furthermore, learning through play, supported by songs and rhymes is discussed within Talk with me (2023a) and Talk with me (2023b) which suggests activities to support learning through play with songs and rhymes, including regular, repeated exposure from birth to 18 months and moves on to including props and encouraging joining in for 18 month to 2 year olds.

Additionally, NDNA (no date) and Cbeebies Parenting (no date) state that nursery rhymes allow children to be immersed in a wider vocabulary than they would otherwise experience in everyday lives, supporting them to develop oracy skills and grow a large vocabulary as their use of language develops.

However, there is research to suggest that settings can favour academic learning over the creativity of songs and rhymes as within Hamilton and Murphy (2023) who state that the teaching of maths and literacy is being prioritised by settings.

Webber (no date) discusses the effects of nursery rhymes and songs on children who have disabilities. Webber (no date) describes using songs and rhymes as

supporting communication with teachers through gestures and facial expressions. And states that the singing allows expression within interactions, which engages the children. Families within the study whose children had profound and multiple learning difficulties reported many benefits to songs and rhymes including attempting to communicate and having a calming effect on them.

Moreover, the benefits of songs and rhymes on the language development of children from disadvantaged areas is supported by the Department for Education (2022) which states that by integrating songs and rhymes into the routines of the setting helps to provide language rich environments. Shaw (2021) argues that the Language and Literacy skills developed as children are important factors in healthy adult lives, more so than wages or occupations, which further enhances the linguistic benefits of exploring songs and rhymes with young children.

However, Pinnington (no date) discusses children coming to setting with little home experience of rhymes at home. Youth Music (2024) states that over a quarter of parents surveyed believe that nursery rhymes are out-dated. The English Association (2025) explores whether this could be, in part due to the nature of the rhymes becoming out-dated - that is the themes discussed being considered racist, hurtful or supporting negative behaviours such as stealing or lying; or that there is a reduced presence of nursery rhymes within today's society, such as rhyme time having been on the television in years gone by. Vazquez – Diaz de Leon (2024) found that, parents prefer to sing their own music choice to their children, over songs and rhymes, as this felt more comfortable to them.

Slide 6:

Rosati (2024) states that the use of songs and rhymes supports children to develop imagination and creativity which then supports the development of a wide vocabulary. Rosati (2024) discusses Bruner theorising that imagination and creativity support children to make sense of their world. Therefore, practitioners providing opportunities to support creativity and imagination, such as songs and rhymes, allows young children to link to their reality.

There is also support for the physical development opportunities within songs and rhymes (Cumbria County Council, no date; and Mullen, 2017) through music with movement such as the grand old duke of York or hop little bunny, as well as Maths and Numeracy skills through rhymes that include number or mathematical themes (Education North Tyneside, 2026; Education Endowment Foundation, 2026; and Mahmood, 2025).

Additionally, Mullen (2017), Burke (2018) and Rosati (2024) argue that music and song supports holistic child development, including emotional, social and cognitive development. Lester (2025) also states that songs and rhymes enable children to learn holistically with autonomy.

Therefore, rhymes and song in the early years supports Welsh Government (2024)'s calls for cross-curricular learning of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital competence, and the 5 development pathways of belonging, communication, exploration, physical development and well-being.

However, Pinnington (2020) and Mahmood (2025) also suggest that children are being hurried through academic work with little time left in the curriculum for fundamental elements such as rhyme and story time.

Moreover, Joshi (2022) argues that songs and rhymes have been forgotten about in settings since the pandemic and that this time has been replaced with catch up interventions for Literacy and Numeracy skills.

There is also recognition of full timetables and busy classrooms becoming a barrier to the use of songs and rhymes within classrooms, meaning that songs and rhymes can be neglected or used simply as transition or carpet time activities (National Literacy Trust, 2024).

Additionally, the importance of connections between home, community and setting is stated within Welsh Government (2024) with enabling adults creating environments and learning opportunities which engage and encourage young children to make connections between home life and settings. Welsh Government (2024) acknowledges the benefits of regular exploration of a range of songs and rhymes to support bilingualism and knowledge of the diverse cultures of Wales.

This also links to Lester (2025) who discusses Froebel's principles of unity and connectedness and the need for children to learn about their place in the world and the importance of enabling adults who encourage children to use the songs and rhymes to make connections to their world. Therefore, using songs and rhymes can support children to understand that they 'belong to a wider community' as discussed in Welsh Government (2024).

Additionally, Mahmood (2025) discusses the playful backdrop offered by songs and rhymes while Pascal, Bertram and Rouse (no date) state the importance of using sustained shared thinking to support these teachable moments which can occur in play. This links to Froebel's freedom with guidance as discussed within Lester (2025). Froebel also suggested enabling adults create a gathering space within the setting for children to come together to explore stories and rhymes, songs and movement (Adams and Short, 2022).

However, Millard and Menzies (2016) discuss the barriers felt by practitioners to implement oracy within their practice within settings, stating that some practitioners reported a lack of confidence in oracy pedagogy. Additionally, Mahmood (2025) and Zhong and Guo (2022) argue that training may be needed for practitioners to recognise the benefits to child development offered through the use of songs and rhymes within the classroom.

Slide 7:

Unicef (no date) states within article 28 and 29 that every child has the right to an education that supports them to thrive, by encouraging their personalities and talents, meaning that exploration of all forms of pedagogy, including use of music and song should be encouraged to ensure that every child is able to meet their full potential.

Mahmood (2025) talks of benefits of including songs and rhymes within pedagogy, from the perspective of American education, and argues that rhymes and songs support brain development socially. This is additionally discussed from a South African perspective within a small-scale study by Arasomwan and Daries (2025), who found that music and songs should be encouraged within pedagogy for children's socio-emotional and cognitive development. However, also found that practitioner professional development was needed for them to be confident at including music in their classrooms. With that said, this was a small-scale study with only 6 participants, therefore difficult to generalise the data with no limitations to the study acknowledged by the authors.

The holistic benefits to development are also written from a Canadian perspective and broken into their Early Development Instrument domains of Physical Health and Well-being, Language and Cognitive Development, Communication and General Knowledge, Social Competence and Emotional Maturity. Mullen (2017) states that the use of rhymes and songs can support development across all of these domains. Although written from a Canadian perspective this could be used in support of songs and rhymes to facilitate cross-curricular learning as is suggested by Welsh Government (2024).

In addition to this, another international context can be drawn from Te Whariki (Ministry of Education, 2017) which encourages the use of songs and rhymes to enable infants to make connections between their Early Years setting and their home, foster a sense of belonging and allow them to become familiar with routines and self-care. This is also supported by Ministry of Education (2026) and NDNA (no date) who also state that songs and rhyme can support cultural identity and social interaction which aligns with Welsh Government (2024)'s belonging development pathway.

Shakeel and Arslan (2023) argue that during the linguistic acquisition that occurs through repeated exposure to songs and rhymes, children also develop knowledge of ecology, environments, foods, animals, plants and are a tool that can be used to build an understanding of our responsibilities in terms of sustainability. WWF (no date) states that it is possible for children to learn and understand many environmental themes and skills through songs and rhymes.

Additionally, Rufaidah (2020) explores the moral learning opportunities offered through the exploration of songs and rhymes, from resilience to respect.

Furthermore, Davis (2017) found, through a review of research, that motivation to learn seems to be increased when practitioners include music and song within their pedagogy, and that this can be due to the effects of songs and rhymes in reducing children's inhibitions. Shaw (2021) also discusses that children are more likely to contribute to shared singing for learning rather than reading allowed as this is more comfortable to them.

Therefore, there is global recognition in support of the use for music, songs and rhymes in the learning and development of young children within the early years, to support their holistic learning.

However, with all that said, Hamilton and Murphy (2023) argue that there is little reliable research to support the beliefs of teachers and parents that exposure to songs, music and rhymes support children's Communication, Literacy and Numeracy development, and that these beliefs may come from their own exposure and biases based on professional discussions held to share their views of best practices.

This is supported by Davis (2017) who states that the beliefs of practitioners who advocate for the use of songs and rhymes to support children's learning do not seem to be backed by in depth research and that some of the research reviewed by Davis (2017) found that music and song in the classroom can actually distract a portion of learners who might disengage during this time.

This means that precaution should be taken with the addition of songs and rhymes, so as not to implement a one size fits all approach to learning, with practitioners remaining mindful of the learning styles of the individual children in their care.

Slide 8:

So, to draw my presentation to a close, there is much written about the benefits to children's overall, holistic development through interactions with songs and rhymes with enabling adults, but there seems to be a need for professional development to enable this to be more widespread within pedagogy and more research to investigate the impact on development.

Thank you for listening, are there any questions.

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