

Musical Moments: Pipe Cleaner Shapes

Wincey Terry-Bryant, Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist

*In this arts experience, **Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist Wincey Terry-Bryant** sings a playful **shape song** and invites children to use **pipe cleaners** to **create each shape**. This arts-integrated activity combines **music** and **hands-on creativity** to support **early math skills** like **shape recognition, spatial awareness, and fine motor development**.*

This experience is designed to provide educators with an opportunity to:

- Integrate music and hands-on play to support early math skills like shape recognition and spatial reasoning.
- Foster critical thinking and expand vocabulary by asking children to explain their reasoning and observations.
- Promote engagement and focus with singing, repetition, and visual cues.
- Help students develop critical skills such as fine motor and hand-eye coordination.

Target Age: Pre-K, ages 3 to 5

Key Vocabulary: create, shape, triangle, square, circle, rectangle, size, sides, vertices/points, same/different

***Connections to Early Childhood Learning Goals**

- **Language and Communication:** Child attends to and builds vocabulary. Child understands, follows, and uses descriptive words to talk about shapes and their attributes.
- **Cognitive Development:** Child uses pipe cleaners creatively to form and interpret shapes.
- **STEM/Mathematics: Geometry and Spatial Sense:** Child identifies, describes, and composes shapes.
- **STEM/Compare and Categorize:** Child compares, contrasts, and categorizes shapes based on attributes such as number of sides and vertices.
- **Motor Development:** Child develops control, strength, and coordination of small muscles and fine motor skills.

Arts Concepts Highlighted in this Experience

- **Music:**
 - Teacher adapts and uses a familiar song to introduce and incorporate key shape vocabulary.
 - Child responds to a simple song that incorporates key shape vocabulary and responds with appropriate actions.

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Song Lyrics

Sung to the tune of "Baby Bumblebee," a traditional song.

My friends are gonna make a shape for me.

A _____ 's the shape I want to see.

My friends are gonna make a shape for me.

A _____ 's the shape I want to see.

Extending the Experience

- Bolster vocabulary by engaging children with questions: *How many sides/vertices does our shape have? How do we know this is a triangle? How is a triangle different from a square? What is the same about a rectangle and a square?*
- Continue to develop vocabulary by introducing the terms *compare/contrast* in place of *same/different*.
- Enhance critical thinking skills by partnering or grouping children and asking them to connect their pipe cleaners to make larger shapes.
- Adapt/use familiar songs to teach other key vocabulary or during transitions and routines, such as cleaning up or focusing attention.

Getting Ready to Try this Experience with my Classroom or Group

- Is there anything I need to do to prepare children and adults for this experience?
- Where could I do this experience? Do I need to make adjustments to my space to make it successful?
- Do I need to have any special materials?
- When would this experience work best for my class or group?

Reflections for Inclusive Practice

- Do I need to adjust this experience for the mobility, sensory, or processing needs of children or adults in my class or group?
- Would I want to change the content or context of this experience to make it more relevant or accessible to the children and adults I work with?
- How can I implement this experience in a way that considers the language needs of the children and adults I am working with?

Resources

Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/interactive-head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework-ages-birth-five>

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District of Columbia Early Learning Standards

<https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2019%20District%20of%20Columbia%20Early%20Learning%20Standards.%203.17.20.pdf>

Notes from the Teaching Artist:

Wincey Terry-Bryant: “Actively engaging children by singing instructions is a playful way to help strengthen their executive functioning skills. Children are inspired to listen, remember, respond, and execute the request, all within the construct of a game. They participate in the sequence of events by 1) listening for the instruction, 2) performing the task, and 3) showing their creation.”

Wincey Terry-Bryant is a New Jersey-based music artist and Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist.