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# MUSIC NOTES: SINGING FOR CONNECTION

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There are many reasons why people sing. As a composer, music teacher educator, early childhood music teacher, parent, and human, my favorite reason to sing is to form and strengthen connection with others. The good news is that all of us can foster connection through singing; no training in music required. Even better? We can do this in many different settings, ranging from the home to the car to the neighborhood to the classroom. And we can sing for connection during all sorts of activities, such as going for a walk or drive, saying hello or goodbye, preparing a meal, or setting aside time specifically to sing together.

The singing experiences I remember most vividly were led by people fostering connection. The leaders were trained singers, amateur singers who were quite good, and, well, sometimes someone who would say they couldn't carry a tune in a bucket. But most importantly, we were in it together. They shared their vulnerability, and I felt seen. One way to foster this experience for young children is to be sure to sing sometimes without a recording. This way, you are freed up to play with the lyrics. A few of my tried-and-true methods include adding in students' names, changing the language of a phrase to represent students' cultural backgrounds, and inviting students to help decide what happens next in a song that tells a story.

Another great way to connect through singing is to share songs or recordings that are important to you. I have worked with a number of adults who fondly reminisce about singing along with a caregiver to music that was important to that caregiver (e.g. Beatles, Bon Jovi). While telling me about enjoying the music for its own sake, they have woven in how special it felt to have it shared with them. So what kind of music do you enjoy? Can you bring some of it into your work with young children? What about your students' families? What music do they enjoy that they can share?

There are so many ways to connect through singing, and healthy connection seems a lovely way to ring in this new year. Please feel free to email me to share ways that you connect with your students and/or colleagues through singing. I'd love to hear from you!