



Early Childhood Improvisation:
Creative Conversations through Music, Art, and Storytelling

Improvise (*v*): to compose, recite, play, or sing extemporaneously; to make, invent, or arrange offhand; to make or fabricate out of what is conveniently on hand.

Children are natural born improvisers. Every new stimulus they encounter in the world begs their input, curiosity, and implicit vocal or physical response. As arts-aligned educators, we can do our part to foster a child's natural curiosity, provoke new responses, and model positive collaboration.

- The first rule of improvisational acting is “*Yes, and...*”. Validate your collaborators’ ideas and add your own material for them to validate and build off in return.
- Reflect a child’s creative/musical output back to them (especially true for infants and young toddlers.) The child will feel you are listening to them and repeat their creation back. Be sure to reiterate any variations or slight changes they make, and, without overtaking their creation, make some variations and contributions yourself
- Facilitate fair and respectful team collaboration between children and adults. Promote equal creative ownership by accepting each individual’s ideas while ensuring there is room for each child’s input. Learning to *listen* is just as, if not more important than, learning to *create*.
 - o Model this attitude in your own interactions with adult members of your classroom team. Children will observe your teamwork and emulate this at their own level
- Leave larger creative projects open to variation and interpretation without a concrete endgame planned. Remember, we are looking for *process, not product*. Invest yourself in seeing what unplanned
- Be open to improvising activities and games in your classroom. Sometimes the work or activity you need most doesn’t exist yet. It takes courage and vulnerability to plow headfirst into the unknown, but you can surprise yourself with what comes out of your subconscious mind
- Give children space to play and improvise freely. If you see something interesting happening, keep your eye on the children’s progress but let them play uninterrupted to maintain their focus and creative spirit on their own
- Encourage deep, long periods of concentration, but be open to dropping the activity when a child loses interest. Forcing children to be creative is the death of creativity. It’s ok to drop something and come back to it later when a child is inherently engaged.