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Music activities and games designed to modify class climate in youngerschool aged children

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ekralova69@gmail.com**MUSIC ACTIVITIES AND GAMES DESIGNED TO MODIFY CLASS CLIMATE IN YOUNGER-SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN**Key words: *class climate, educator, music, music activities and games, after-school club***Introduction**

In this contribution we focus on music activities and games as means to modify class climate of younger-school aged children in after-school club. We believe in their emotional potency on children to enrich their experience, stimulate phantasy, creativity, develop their cognition, create space to build social communication, and release stress¹.

In this paper we provide the two examples of designed music activities and games that were applied in practice. The first one is aimed at painting and the second one at relieving the body by music, movement and drama. The application of music activities and games was based on the results of the projective technique – uncompleted sentences, where younger-school aged pupils from after-school club express their music preferences. The designed music activities and games are in agreement with the age peculiarities of children and consulted with the after-school club educator.

The first chapter deals with the music predispositions of younger-school aged children in after-school club. It deals with music abilities and predispositions, presents the essential characteristic features of mental and physical development of younger-school aged children, engaged in the development of musical predispositions. The second chapter describes the role of an educator in after-school club. The

¹ Eva Králová, *Hudobné aktivity a kvalita života dieťaťa. Music Activities and Quality of life of a Child* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci. Pedagogická fakulta, 2015).

third chapter provides a brief definition of terms relating to social climate and the factors that affect it. The fourth chapter introduces the projective technique of un-completed sentences with the results on the basis of which we designed the music intervention. The fifth chapter defines music activities and games, the distribution of music activities and their potency for younger-school aged children. We explain what their importance lies in. In the sixth chapter we offer the two examples of designed music activities and games.

1. Development of Music Pre-Dispositions and Skills in Younger-School Aged Children

The primary education continues in smooth and natural character of strengthening innate and acquired musical predispositions. Music activities and games belong to the thematic sphere Arts and Culture of National Educational Programme ISCED 1, and are realised through a variety of musical forms. In primary education there dominate the following music demonstrations and activities: vocal-intonation demonstrations, music and movement, instrumental (performing and creative), supported by music and drama and music perception. Music activities help to develop the emotional world of younger school aged children in the climate of happiness and love. To use games and music may deepen unconscious interest of children in music activities. We pay attention to the experience of children with music in the process of self-realization and success of every child². Repeated high-quality music activity contributes to the development of all the senses.

Eva Králová³ claims that by the transition to primary school, resp. elementary musical school there starts in a child directed music education and music action. Children can acquire musical skills and competences to develop their talents. There in Slovakia exists so called “preparatory school”, as we call preparatory music education. It starts already during the pre-school age (5-6 years). Music teachers accompany and teach children to play musical instruments, teach them to sing, and dance to acquire the basic knowledge of the world of music (to enter the world of sounds and tones). It is a music teacher, his/her passion for music art, creativity and individuality that has irreplaceable impact on children and their interest to dedicate their time to music activities.

The first grade pupils mainly focus on the correct singing habits, collective singing in front of audience, to build the capacity of active music listening and improve movement and motor skills needed to play a musical instrument through music. Their music perception can be developed by auditory exercises which stabilize and harmonize the voice and hearing of a child. Their perception becomes analogous, and it allows children to understand musical parts and units. Through listening activ-

² Juraj Hatrík, et al., “Štátny vzdelávací program. Hudobná výchova. ISCED 1. National Educational Programme. Music Education”, (Bratislava: Štátny pedagogický ústav 2009), accessed: 12.09.2014, www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/1stzs/vzdelavacie_oblasti/hudobna_vychova_isced1.pdf.

³ Králová, *Hudobné aktivity*, 134.

ity there is increased deliberate attention and children can listen to the most demanding compositions and are formed preconditions for musical ideas in them. Vocal intonation is necessary for the function, increase and capacity of music storage. In this period there is formed musical experience for the rest of life. If a child is properly educated, it means has acquired singing habits and systematic sings, his or her vocal range may increase. The suitable motivation for the 1st grade children of primary education can continue and develop their musical creativity and by leaving them free space, an educator can contribute to their self-realisation, and to development of imagination⁴.

Music predispositions and their degree are developed in educational environments in the age of younger school age when the differences between particular children are noticeable⁵. Music abilities are developed in the complex system of music activities (vocal, instrumental, musical movement, perception and musical and drama activities), while the content of their objectives (cognitive, socio-affective and psychomotor) and competencies is specified and available in National Educational Programme, Music – Annex ISCED 1⁶.

2. Role of an Educator in After-School Club

An educator, and also a teacher is a greater authority as a parent for younger-school aged children, he or she should therefore have positive impact on the development of each child and be a proper example. An educator should prepare pupils for their smooth integration into the life of work and society. In achieving the set objectives he or she can use and combine various methods, techniques, forms, and means to develop cognitive, conative and mental processes of children that form the basis of positive conditions for friendly climate that is required particularly in creative and humanistic pedagogy⁷. An educator should therefore respect the personality of every child, build personal relationship with every child, based on mutual trust, s/he should use the procedures, methods, forms and means to develop cognitive, conative and mental processes of pupils⁸.

For the successful production of desired social change should an educator dispose of the following properties: communication skills, sense of humour, honesty, empathy, creativity, authenticity, positive mood, accept a pupil, organisation of work, kindness, methodical amenities (register of songs, games, poems and ideas). General overview, education, culture and professional educational-methodical and psychological competence are also important prerequisites for positive and successful work of an educator⁹.

⁴ František Sedlák, Hana Váňová, *Hudební psychologie pro učitele* (Music Psychology for Teachers) (Praha: Karolinum, 2013), 364.

⁵ Mária Strenáčíková, “Dieťa mladšieho školského veku a hudobná klíma“, In Eva Kráľová, et al., *Hudobná klíma a dieta. Music Climate and a Child*, (Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2015), 74 (in Czech).

⁶ Hatrík, et al., *Štátny vzdelávací program*.

⁷ Milota Zelinová, *Voľný čas efektívne a tvorivo* (Leisure Time Effectively and Creatively) (Bratislava: Iura Edition, 2012).

⁸ *Ibidem*, 31.

⁹ Bedřich Hájek, et al, *Školní družina* (After-School Club) (Praha: Portál, 2003), 65.

According to Zelina¹⁰ an educator should be able to use effectively the following six educational methods: clarification, persuasion, pointing and demonstration, exemplification, exercises and their application, assessment and valorisation. Tutoring is primarily the task that requires creative and enthusiastic professionals.

3. Social Climate in After-School Club

Class climate is based on the patterns of students', teachers' and school personnel's experience of school life and it reflects norms, values, aims, interpersonal interactions, teaching and learning practices, examining and organisational structures¹¹.

Class climate includes norms, values and expectations that promote all partakers feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe. All of them, pupils, families and educators work together to contribute and live to a shared class, and school vision¹². Each of the partakers contributes to the efficacy of school, classroom as well as the care of physical environment, thus to the positive development of the four *dimensions of school climate*:

- *Safety* – refers to the emotional and physical safety of pupils, and to the rules and techniques in school, classroom to ensure pupil safety.
- *Relationships* – social support from parents and educators to pupils, but also the respect that pupils have for others; pupil and parental influence.
- *Teaching and Learning* – a positive and competent pupil teacher classroom/school relationship, social and emotional skills teaching – practice, positive encouragement for learning.
- *Institutional Environment* – the physical environment of the school¹³.

The principles of humanistic pedagogy and psychology should participate on drawing attention to the importance of the quality of class climate. Children in school classroom spend great deal of their time, educate and socialise. These principles highlight social relationships, understanding and acceptance of every child's, forming his or her self-esteem and self-confidence. The teacher takes the role of a facilitator, helper and guide.

Class climate can contain love, creativity, humour and satisfaction. Or, in another class climate may be present the feelings of fear, anxiety and general discomfort. Long-term process and work can affect the climate. Erich Petlák¹⁴ described the positive signs of class climate as follows:

¹⁰ Miron Zelina, *Teória výchovy alebo hľadanie dobra* (Theory of Education or Search of Good) (Bratislava: SPN, 2004).

¹¹ National School Climate Center. School Climate, 2014, accessed: 01 December 2015: <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/>

¹² Xin Ma, John Douglas Willms, "School disciplinary climate: Characteristics and effects on eight grade achievement", *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 50, 2 (2014): 169-188.

¹³ National School Climate Center. School Climate, 2014, accessed: 05 January 2015, <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/>

¹⁴ Erich Petlák, *Klíma školy a klíma triedy* (School Climate and Class Climate) (Bratislava: IRIS, 2006), 31.

- *Satisfaction of pupils with education* (children are bored or it is interesting for them),
- *'Fairness' so called objectivity* (emotional condition of a child and trust),
- *Innovative methods and forms* (pupils like designing projects and trips),
- *Informal approach of a teacher to pupils and parents* (empathetic teacher, always stands by),
- *Interest in education pupils* (consulting and advisory services, positive role model and creative tasks),
- *Organised school management*,
- *Meaningful activities for pupils*,
- *Friendly relationships and sense of fulfilment* (pupils are satisfied with school, acquire always something new),
- *Co-operation of a school with parents, other schools, centres and institutions.*

Factors that Affect Class Climate in After-School Clubs

An educator and pupils significantly contribute to shaping and regulating class climate. The educator should stimulate positive and welcoming environment during educational process. Rainer Winkel¹⁵ characterised the following types of educators with a negative impact on class climate:

1. *Hyper-motor educator*: With exaggerated, modern, eccentric and active behaviour who brings chaos to class.
2. *Educator under stress*: Constantly revises and checks, is focused chiefly on the results and meeting objectives.
3. *Educator full of anxiety and insecurity*: Causes in some pupils fear of failure, inability to solve problems, deal with conflicts and creatively participate in forming their life (values, attitudes, prejudices and others).
4. *Educator – "Scarecrow"*: Brings an atmosphere of fear to classroom, is explosive and presses pupils to work in highly demanding conditions.
5. *Indifferent educator*: Although he or she is present in a classroom, he/she is not present with his/her soul, is not interested in pupils, does not motivate and stimulate them.
6. *Disorganised educator*: Is not prepared for educational process which is random.
7. *Educator focused on pupil performance*: His/her fast pace causes a lack of time to practise and fix knowledge, skills and competences. Pupils are under pressure.
8. *Educator – "Weeper"*: Constantly complains and cannot manage the profession, fails to fulfil tasks and his/her responsibilities collect into a huge mass.

Not only an educator but also pupils can strongly influence class climate by their behaviour, attitude, claims, fulfilment of tasks and responsibilities. Beata Badziukiewiczova, and Mirosław Solasiński¹⁶ sorted pupils that regulate class climate according to their qualities, the class role, status and position to the following ones:

¹⁵ Rainer Winkel, *Theorie und Praxis der Schule. Oder: Schulreform konkret – im Haus des Lebens und Lerner* (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Hohengehren, 1997), 146.

¹⁶ Beata Badziukiewicz, Mirosław Salasiński, *Vademecim wychowawcy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, 2005).

1. *“Undisciplined – bad” pupil*: With a negative model in the family. Learning makes him or her tired, that is why he disturbs other pupils at school, hurts them and constantly disrupts class climate.
2. *“Larky” pupil*: Has inappropriate attitude to education, tries to excel at any occasion, and wants to have impact over whole class.
3. *“Class clown”*: If a pupil has the good sense of humour s/he can have significant positive contribution for class climate – to ease tight atmosphere.
4. *“Class leader” or “Class outsider”*: Has impact on class climate with undesirable behaviour. An educator has to be steadfast to explain him/her that change of behaviour is necessary. An outsider is usually forced out of class by classmates, because of his/her odd behaviour which is quite “freak” or because of class composition.
5. *“Class élite”*: Is a grouping of certain pupils in the class prior to common features, preferences, fashion or activities. The riots in a class begin when a certain group behaves in a patronising way to the other pupils.
6. *“Victim of the class”*: Usually exists in a class with dominating pathological behaviour of bullying which strongly affects class climate in a negative way. Feelings of well-being among classmates are then replaced by fear, weakness, dysfunctional relationships, aggression and arrogance.

4. Projective Method of Unfinished Sentences

Our main objective is to positively modify class climate in younger-school aged children in the selected after-school club by means of music intervention. We selected the technique of unfinished sentences to find out the interests and preferences of children in music activities and games (rhythmic exercises, dances, music and drama activities and games, songs, background music, instrumental and vocal-instrumental compositions, music games and others) that will be oriented on the development of imagination and phantasy, memory, thinking, attention, and mainly positive class climate in an after-school club. The selection and realisation of music activities and games was inspired and conditioned by the results of projective method.

The method of unfinished sentences was first applied in 1897 by Ebbinghaus who examined intelligence. The pioneer who used this method to diagnose personality was Tendler. The method offers many variants, all based on the same principle – the individual should finish the sentence by the first spontaneous idea.

An example of unfinished sentences:

I prefer listening to music by ... (write the name of a singer or a group) ...
Musical instrument, which I like most of all is ...
I listen to music, because ...

Description of results

Pupils were given simple instructions: Finish the sentences below by the first idea that you can think of. Do not think long! Write the first thought. Completion of the sentences lasted approx. 30 minutes.

The obtained data were processed in a qualitative way according to the content and were organised from the most frequent to the least frequent ones. Based on the survey results, 89 % of respondents believed that music was for them relax, rest and the way to “have a good frolic”. Therefore, we designed the music programme especially to support relaxation and stimulation of pupils. According to the obtained data, the basis of music activities was from the CD *Spievankovo (Singing Country)*, *Kristína, Adam Ďurica, Alvaro Soler and Christmas Carols*, who also perform folk and pop music. To the music activities were added playing the accordion, guitar, and keyboard. To other music activities were added the imitation and dramatization of a singer or a dancer – these were among the most frequent ones.

5. Music Activities and Games as Means to Modify Class Climate in Younger-School Aged Children

Music activities are considered at school the basic tool which can be used to develop musical skills of pupils. However, central for forming the musicality development is a child’s family environment. Mother’s voice and singing can develop emotional constituents, motivate a child to singing by means of imitation. Božena Balcárová¹⁷ claims that music activities are not the isolated part of the process of musical education. They form integral system of mutually interconnected activities that contribute to the development of musical abilities, skills and habits, are involved in the formation of musical interests, attitudes towards music, they enable the formation of musical taste that means they have an important place in the development of musicality.

Music serves in after-school clubs to the listening, dancing, elemental vocal and instrumental musical expression. Background music can be used to accompany other activities, such as drawing, cutting, folding and others. The task of after-school clubs is not to replace music lessons at school, but to awaken positive attitude to music in children through music activities and games. It is good for children to select music as the natural part of their lives, not another school subject¹⁸.

In after-school clubs there dominate the following musical activities: vocal intonation, music and movement activities, listening to music (music perception), instrumental, and music and drama¹⁹. An educator should be able to guide and facilitate educational process, so as that would increase self-confidence and self-esteem of students and bring joy to whole class, because in the younger school-aged children, there are originated musical experiences that remain for the rest of lives. Every music activity must be meaningful, achievable for pupils, for the most able pupils it should be stimulating, and it should encourage and support weaker students.

¹⁷ Božena Balcárová, *Alfa hudobnej didaktiky (Alpha of Music Didactics)* (Prešov: PHS Súzvuk, 2004), 240.

¹⁸ Eva Králová, Miriam Lanáková, “Musical Activities as Means of Relaxation and Rest For Children in After-School Clubs“, In: *Transgressions in Artistic Education, Person-Music-Art*, ed. Maciej Kołodziejcki (Jelenia Góra: Karkonosze College Publishing House, 2016), 66-94.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

Music activities operate in the following two planes:

- a) *Internal* (mental) – it is the process of music activity on the plane of phantasy, feelings, musical thinking, experiencing and other processes that restructure mental states, processes and qualities;
- b) *External* (instrumental-objective) – its product is a piece of music, performance, but also the experience of a percipient²⁰.

The relations between the two planes operate as one unit. It means, the external activity, for example experimentation with musical objects, musical elements and finding relationships between them, is internalised into the psyche of a child. And contrary, external activity can be transformed to internal one when the concepts, ideas and feelings of a child are materialised in a piece of music, or in a simple improvisation. In the both planes, internal and external, there is a change in psychic structure and in enrichment about musical notions and thinking, musical experience²¹.

Based on the definitions by different authors we present the following characteristic features of the game: It is immanent to every child; brings him or her joy and relaxation; by means of a game a child forms his or her cognitive abilities, acquires knowledge, practices his or her memory and thinking, trains working habits; important are not only results but also processes; it is a spontaneous and voluntary activity; it uses symbols, magic, fantasy and imagination – a child can have a break from real world activities and duties; they can develop emotionally in a game where they have a certain role – that develops empathy; a game has positive impact on whole personality of a child; it is specific and an individual realizes it from childhood to an old age; it belongs to the forms of education²².

Between younger school age, games end to be dominant, however, they do not disappear. The change occurs mainly in its form and content. As the result of a change of thinking (specifically logical operations), a child is interested in reality and therefore likes playing with what is meaningful for him or her. Within the class there are prevailing especially collective games, based on rules. Children are divided into groups and compete against each other. Their favourites are dramatic games, especially girls like the ones associated with singing and dancing. Children start to be interested not only in the process, but they also focus on the outcomes of a game. Therefore games require the guidance from an educator. In this period there start to occur so called games in rooms such as chess, dices, man do not be angry; and there prevail thematic games especially with the theme of school. In the 3rd and 4th years of primary school they are transformed and become the part of compulsory education²³.

²⁰ Peter Krbaňa, *Psychológia hudby nielen pre hudobníkov. Od hľadaniu vzťahu k hudbe k umeleckému majstrovstvu* (Music Psychology not only for Musicians. From the search of relationship to music to artistic mastership) (Varín: Elektro AB, 2008), 364.

²¹ František Sedlák, Hana Váňová, *Hudební psychologie pro učitele. Music Psychology for Teachers* (Praha: Karolinum, 2013), 390.

²² Roger Caillois, *Hry a lidé: maska a závrať* (Games and people: Mask and Vertigo) (Praha: Nakladatelství studia Ypsilon, 1998); Miron Zelina, Milota Zelinová, *Psychológia pre stredné pedagogické školy, pedagogické a sociálne akadémie a pedagogické a kultúrne akadémie* (Psychology for secondary educational schools, educational and social academies, educational and cultural academies) (Bratislava: SNP, 2008), 215.

²³ Marie Vágnerová, *Vývojová psychologie* (Developmental Psychology) (Praha: Portál, 1997).

6. Design of Music Activities and Games to Modify Social Climate

Music activities and games may be implemented in various forms of education in after-school clubs. It is important that they contribute to the harmonious development of every child aged 6-11 years. In particular, Bedřich Hájek²⁴ divides these activities as follows:

1. Recreational activity is characterised with rich activity within possible alternatives and usually is realised out. That helps the body from the workload during sitting in the classroom. For this age are suitable the games where children move, for example in the gym, or go hiking and various seasonal sports.
2. Relaxation activity should be quieter and not so demanding – easier to move. The most suitable it is to rank there the activities according to the preferences and interests of a child. The most frequent is drawing, collecting, viewing and reading books, listening to music and discussions. At present there are used special relaxation techniques used according to their requirements.
3. Spare-time activity is significant to explore educational, sports and transport activities. For pupils there is the space for the growth and development of psychomotor competences and also through the departments led by educators (hobby clubs).
4. Educational activity is often referred to as the preparation for education. Its task is to fix the acquired knowledge, revise, do the exercise, write homework and fix proper reading.

Music intervention was organized with the approval of the headmaster of elementary school. Music activities were carried out mostly in spare-time and relaxation activities of after-school club for 3 months. The selection and themes were designed based on the results of the projective technique of uncompleted sentences. Music activities and games were focused on the development of imagination and phantasy, memory, thinking, attention, and especially to modify social change, promote social feeling and strengthen friendships with children in after-school clubs. Conducting music activities was in agreement with the developmental particularities of younger school-aged children.

Example of Designed Music Activities and Games Aimed at Painting

Theme of meeting: Music in the Picture

Painted music (activity inspired by Miroslav Bartoš)²⁵

Music activities: Prevailing music activities are listening and artistic activities.

Aims: Respond to music composition and depict it with paintbrush and colours. Realise, perceive and experience music. Express music experience in artistic way.

Tools: Paper drawing A4, paintbrushes, tempera, CD with songs of various music genres (we selected for example: Mozart, A., W. – A little night music. Serenade Allegro, LMFAO – Party Rock Anthem ft. Lauren Bennett, GoonRock, Disney Fro-

²⁴ Bedřich Hájek, et al., *Školní družina (After-School Club)* (Praha: Portál, 2003), 65.

²⁵ Miroslav Bartoš, *Metodika výtvarnej výchovy (Methodology of Art)* (Turčianske Teplice PaSA, 2009).

zen Elsa Let it Go – In Real Life, Leo Rojas – Der einsame Hirte and Červené jablčko (Red apple, Slovak folk song – performed by Mária Podhradská & Richard Čanaky).

Procedure: Children sit in the classroom, dressed in protective coats, on the desks they have a mat with paper drawings, paintbrushes and tempera. Music sounds in 4-5 minute intervals. Children respond to background music by their spontaneous painting. First they applied paint to paintbrush, fingers, palms, or a piece of cloth. It is up to them what they use, and subsequently apply to paper drawing (each sample separately) – see fig. 1.



Mozart, W.A.
A Little Night Music 1



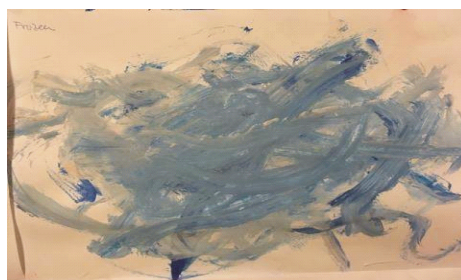
Mozart, W.A.
A Little Night Music 1



Mozart, W.A.
A Little Night Music 1



Frozen *Let I go 1*



Frozen *Let I go 1*



Techno 1



Techno 2

Fig. 1. Painted Music – pictures of artistic works made by children

In the end of the activity we were listening to short extracts from background music with finished works in children's hands. The children depicted how they perceived the whole process, talked about their feelings, thoughts, experience and "pictures".

Curious snail (Eva Králová – Martina Procházková)²⁶

Music activities: Music and movement; music and drama activities.

Aims: Relieve the whole body.

Tools: CD player, a composition: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – Wiegenlied (Lullaby).

Process: Children sit in the circle on the carpet, in their classroom.

Note: Motivational narration (MN) and the description of activities performed by children (DA).

MN: The snail hides himself in his snail house.

DA: We begin from the seating position on our heels, hands are placed next to our knees. Then we slowly bend forward with our foreheads toward mat. Our backs are rounded, palms face upwards and breathing is directed into our abdomen (fig. 2, picture 1).

MN: Snail is very curious and wants to know what is going out outside. That is why he first of all decided "put up his sticks."

DA: We slide out our hands forward, and raise our head. We are sitting on our heels, with a deep breath exchange into lying position on abdomen. We bent slightly our arms at the elbows and our shank is slightly bent (fig. 2, picture 2).

MN: Snail got out of his house and is feeling environment with his antennae (sticks).

DA: We drop prone on the abdomen in support – endure. Our hands are no longer bent, they are straight. Our shanks are still bent and our chins are oriented upwards. We gradually add movements by our heads to the right and left side (fig. 2, picture 3).

MN: Snail is tired, decided to have a rest.

DA: Along with experiencing breathing we continue in relaxing our trunks and we get again to the prone position. Our foreheads are directed to a pad and hands are bent in elbows by our bodies (fig. 2, picture 4).

MN: Finally the snail went in his house.

DA: From the kneeling position we continue getting into basic position. We relax while breathing into our bellies (fig. 2, picture 5).

This activity can be used as a motivation for children to relax – an educator can use a short video demonstration of a snail life, as a variation they can use puppets or a "shadow game" where the class can demonstrate the slow movement of snails. We tried to draw attention of children to slow and peaceful movement of a snail. We highly recommend to enrich relaxation with background music – the composition of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – Wiegenlied (Lullaby).

²⁶ Eva Králová, Martina Procházková, "Relaxačné hudobné aktivity v primárnej edukácii" (Relaxing Music Activities in Primary Education), *Hudební výchova* 9 (2015): 6-8.



Fig. 2. Curious Snail

Variation: Children can improvise, create their own composition, focusing for example on a tired snail, who is getting ready for bed.

Task: Design a story about a snail that is getting ready for bed (motivation pictures). You can work in groups and depict a family of snails (movement or pantomime). The form you select can vary from a scene, story to the picture that you can show – perform it to the classmates.

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