

# A Stage for the Playground

## An Outdoor Music Center







PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

**Building a stage** on your playground is a wonderful way to extend classroom learning to the outdoors. Thanks to a mini grant from the New York State AEYC, we built a beautiful cedar stage in a corner of our playground and created a music center.

**We read** *Max Found Two Sticks* and learned that there are many ways to make music and rhythm.



**We collected** chimes, bells, spoons, and driftwood and hung them in the corner of the stage. Then, the children experimented with the homemade hanging chimes and danced and jumped on our new stage.



**Families helped us** gather interesting items that we used to invent rhythm instruments to take outside. We put a big box in our entryway and collected coffee cans, hubcaps, pots and pans, cooking spoons, and all sorts of recycled items.





## picturing good practice

We focused on making drums and found lots of different ways to make them. Some ideas were very simple—like turning over galvanized metal cans and plastic buckets to try out different types of sounds.



We made big drums with construction tubes purchased at the hardware store. We covered these with gesso (a thin substance that primes the surface for painting) and then let the children paint them.



Drums come in different sizes. Coffee cans become little drums. We really enjoyed decorating them with colored tape!



The children made their own drumsticks from wooden spoons purchased at the dollar store.



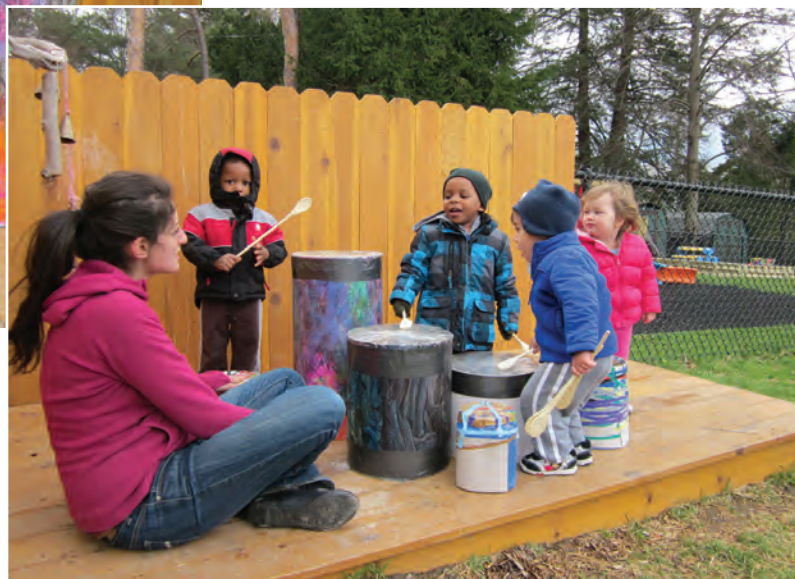




**We integrated drums and music making into our curriculum.** A musician, Uncle Rock, played music with us on our new stage. Everyone celebrated music and played our drums.

### What we learned

1. Playing drums outdoors is particularly enjoyable because it allows a great deal of freedom. Letting children experiment with rhythm is important, but it is often difficult to do indoors. Drums can be overwhelming (noisy) in the classroom. Our playground absorbs sound nicely, and children are free to explore both loud and quiet sounds and wild and controlled rhythms.
2. The stage itself creates a special sense of place. It inspires expression through dancing, singing, and acting out. Children behave differently when they step on the stage and become performers. The stage creates opportunities both to perform and to be an audience.
3. The playground is an extension of the classroom. We are excited about the potential that exists for integrating art, music, and creative expression into our outdoor play.



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[www.nysaeyc.org/grant/minigrant.asp](http://www.nysaeyc.org/grant/minigrant.asp)