

Building a Musical Storytime Nest *Playful, Predictable, Sensory-Supportive*

Using Music to Regulate, Connect,
and Keep the Ukulele Intact

Erin Cockriel & Sandra Schuffert
Smithers Public Library



Reading Rainbow

Music helps us arrive together
You're invited to move, hum, or listen



Who We Are

- Erin & Sandra
- Storytime facilitators & lifelong learners
- Passionate about inclusion, music, and families



Sensory invite

- **Comfort First:**
- Get cozy, get grounded—sensory tools encouraged



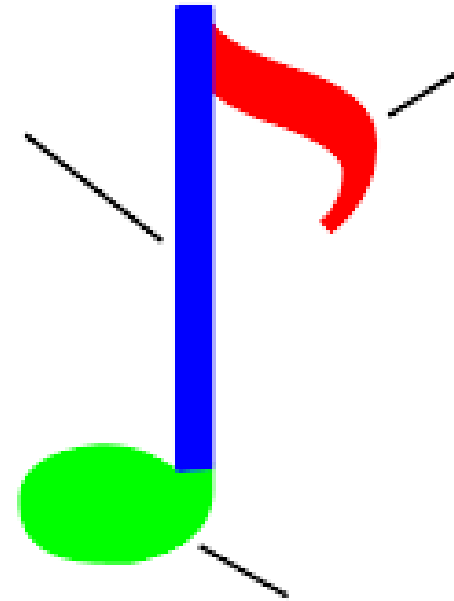
“Music is the shorthand of emotion”
- Tolstoy

- Music gives the body a way to feel safe, seen, and supported.



Music Is Sensory

- Music = sound, rhythm, vibration, movement
- It engages the whole body
- Naturally accessible and playful





Sensory Systems at Play

Music is a whole-body sensory experience:

Auditory

Tactile

Visual

Vestibular (balance & movement)

Proprioceptive (body awareness)

Using Music to Regulate

- Over stimulated → slower, predictable, calming
- Under stimulated → energetic, rhythmic, alerting
- Music helps shift states safely



Common Sensorimotor Props

- Scarves
 - Shakers
 - Parachutes
 - Wrist streamers
 - Stretchy bands
- *What else do you use? (Chat)*



Reframing Our Language: Meet Pete

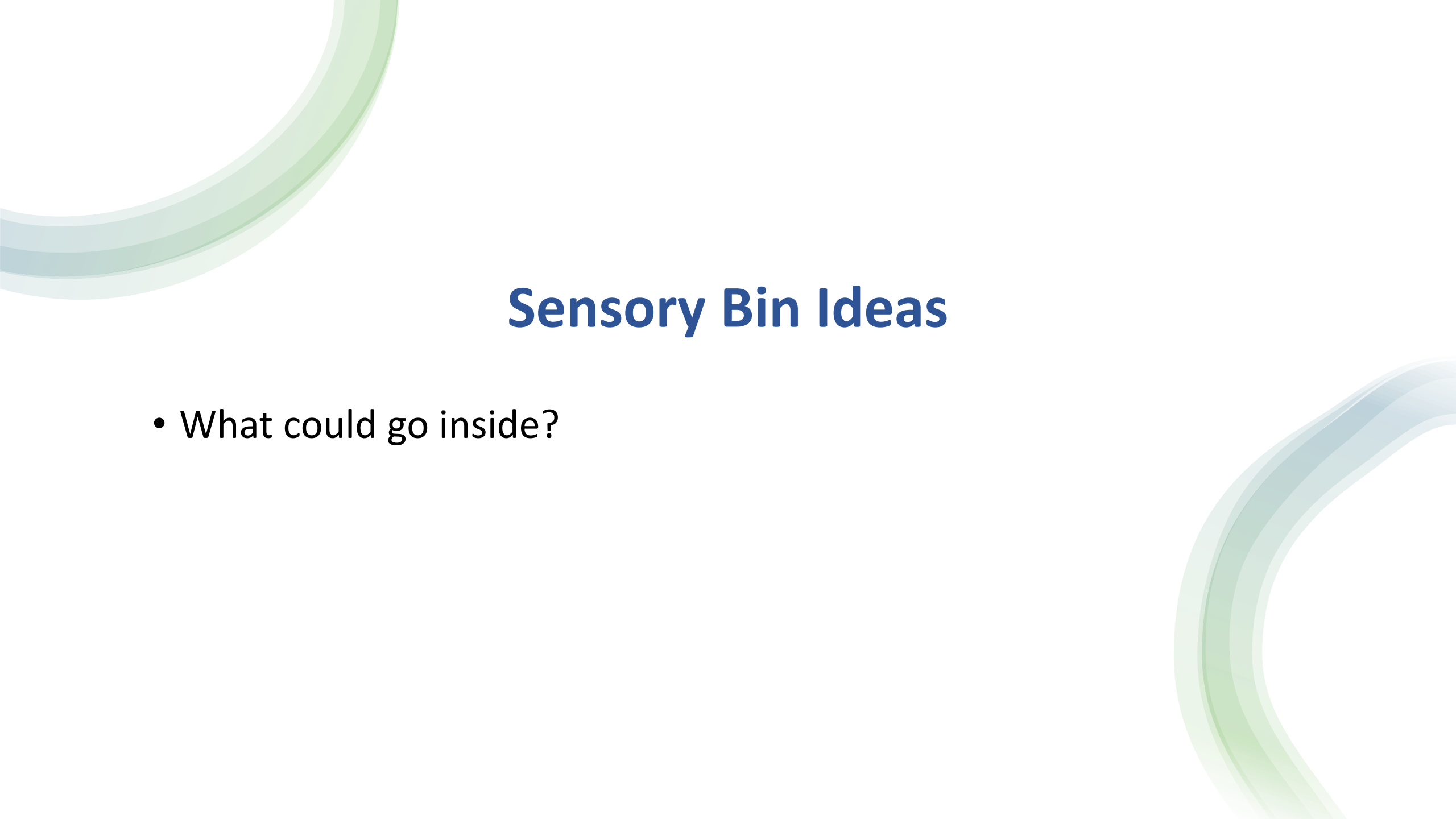
- Children aren't "choosing" dysregulation
- We describe what we notice
- We celebrate what their bodies need





Reminders & Values

- You don't need to be an expert (I'm not a music therapist!)
- We don't have all the answers—and we don't need to
- Brain differences are normal
- Different ways of engaging are all valid
- Avoid assuming children need help



Sensory Bin Ideas

- What could go inside?

What Families Say

- Love scarves and movement books
- Great variety of songs
- Meets children where they are
- Movement is welcomed and normalized
- “We like the touchy stuff”
- Tactile play + music = engagement
- Pete helps restless kids feel seen



Sensory Seekers & Avoiders

Look for Cues

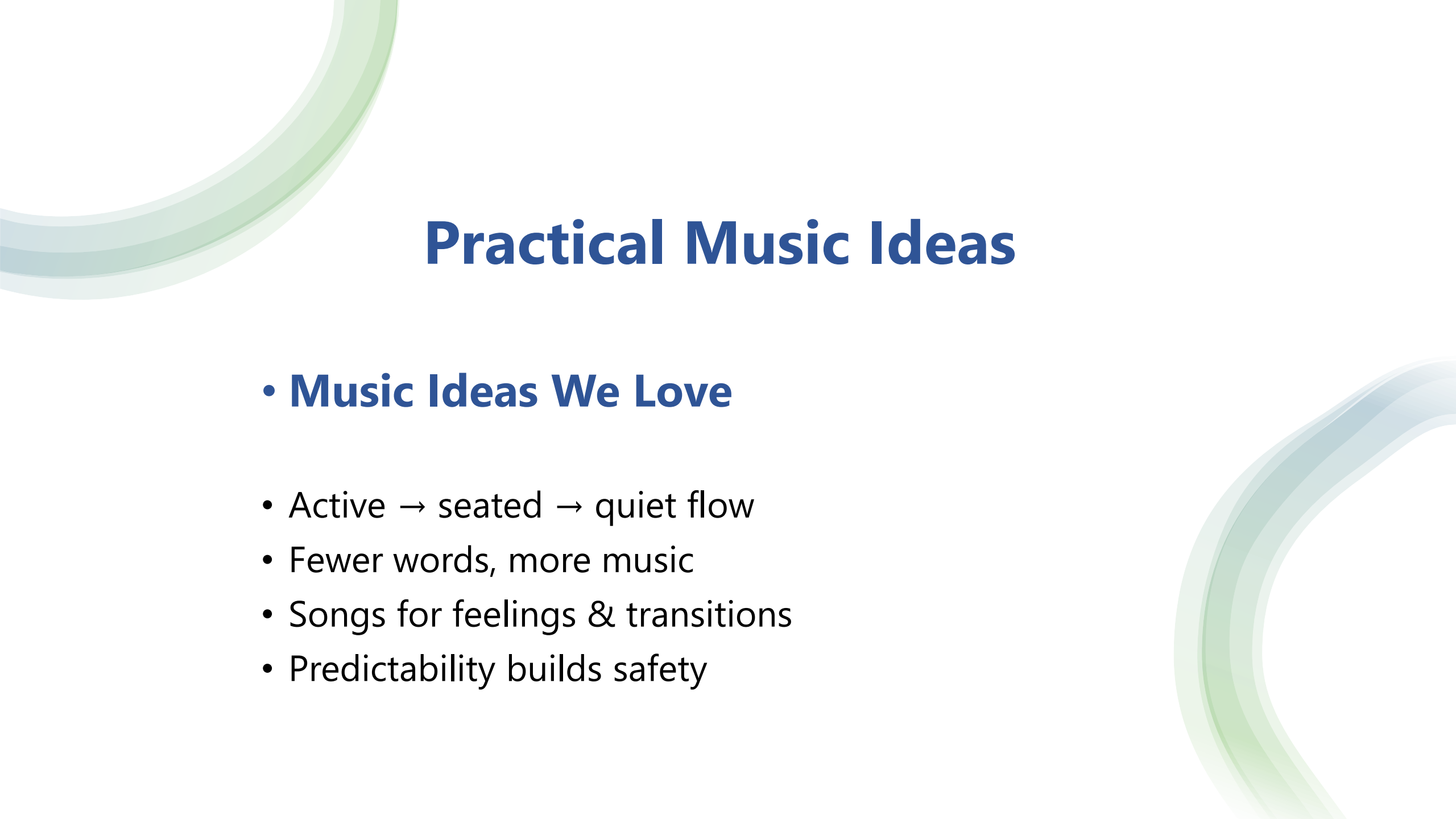
- Covering ears
- Wide eyes
- Avoiding or seeking movement
- ...

Observing in Drop-In Programs

- Harder to know your audience
- Songs you know by heart = observation time
- Snack/breaks offer great insight
- Other ideas?

Why Music Works

- Music supports:
- Sensory regulation
- Language development
- Social connection
- Fine & gross motor skills
- Family participation
- Repetition brings calm



Practical Music Ideas

- **Music Ideas We Love**

- Active → seated → quiet flow
- Fewer words, more music
- Songs for feelings & transitions
- Predictability builds safety

Sensory Regulation Strategies: Alerting vs. Calming

- **Alerting Ideas**

- Rub hands together
- Jump, stomp, march, clap
- Fast-tempo music

- **Calming Ideas**

- Grounding movements
- Strike a pose (small spaces)
- Press palms together
- Squeeze body parts



Thank you!

Over to Erin