

# Kids ‘Shake, Rattle & Roll’ at BPL

By Michael O'Brien

The library may be known for its tough stance on noise, but that didn't stop the young participants of Parents As Primary Teachers, Inc.'s (PAPT) Shake, Rattle & Roll from having a great time, screaming and laughing - and playing the steelpan.



"We provide training for parents who are home-schooling or complementing the conventional classroom education of their children," explained PAPT Executive Director Yoidette Erima, of the five-week-old program's objective. Shake, Rattle & Roll takes place every Thursday afternoon in the Brooklyn Public Library's Bedford Branch, located in Bedford-Stuyvesant at 496 Franklin Ave.

Each 90-minute session opens with story read by PAPT Storyteller Ibi Zoboi, followed by a science experiment and a music lesson. Each week, the children learn about a different musical instrument from a different part of the world - the djembe drum and the shekere of West Africa or the Chinese gong, for example - which ties in with the story and science lesson.

On April 5, 2007, the regional theme was the Caribbean. As Zoboi finished reading "Jump Up Time: A Trinidad Carnival Story" by Lynn Josephs (*pictured above*), Erima rolled out a large map of the world, on which the children located the small island nation of Trinidad and Tobago (*pictured at right*).



Keeping Shake, Rattle & Roll's musical focus in mind, Erima then set up for the experiment, which pertained to the science of sound. Using five same-size bottles filled with varying amounts of bright green liquid, she tapped the bottles' sides, one by one, explaining how the differing quantities of liquid lead to higher or lower sounds. As a further demonstration, Erima used Sesame Street puppets, distinguishing Elmo's high-pitched squeal and Cookie Monster's lower growl (*pictured at left*).

The instrument of the day was the steel pan, a Trinidadian pitched percussion instrument made from a 55-gallon drum of the type that stores oil. To teach the children, Erima recruited members' of the Sesame Flyers Steelpan Orchestra, a Brooklyn-based group that has-been-named Band of the Year for the last six years.

After a brief presentation and effortlessly playing songs like "Mary Had A Little Lamb," Sesame Flyers KJ and Elizabeth showed each of the kids - most of whom were toddlers and needed parental assistance to be able to reach inside the steelpan - how to play, much to their shrieking delight (*pictured at right*).



“Having the children have a hands-on experience is great, since they’re at that age where they just suck it all in,” said BPL Trustee Mable Robertson (*pictured at right with Erima and Weeksville Historical Society Board member Clarence Robertson*). “It’s a wonderful opportunity to explore the world of music. The instruments are so culturally important and fun to play!”



Despite a smaller-than-usual attendance due to the holidays, Shake, Rattle & Roll has a following of approximately 20 families, many of whom are regulars, such as Rosett McLean (*pictured below with daughter playing steelpan*). “Getting a chance to play the instruments, the kids really enjoy it,” said McLean, whose daughter, Leonora, a toddler with a big smile and stockings like Rainbow Brite, added, “It’s fun to play the drums.”



Something Mclean particularly likes about Shake, Rattle & Roll is the table of books, set up to let the parents know of all the BPL books available to borrow on the various topics covered on any given day ~ in the case of last Thursday, books about Caribbean culture, Caribbean cooking, carnival costumes and traditions, and percussion instruments. By borrowing these books, the kids are able to relate what they read to their experiences at Shake, Rattle & Roll, while consistently boosting the library’s circulation.

Erima also distributes “curriculum extensions,” handouts with supplemental lessons to reinforce the Shake, Rattle & Roll sessions. Sticking with the Caribbean theme, Erima passed out recipes for Trinidadian Bakes.

By making them with their parents, children develop grocery-related vocabulary; become familiar with cooking terms; follow directions; measure and observe the impact of time passing; and utilize several mathematical concepts, such as counting and measuring the quantity of ingredients, multiplying and dividing to adjust the serving size; and estimate fractions.



“The arts education element allows children to enrich their imaginations,” Erima said of her successful weekly program. “It allows them to hone their critical thinking skills and think outside the box.”

For more information about PAPT, email [parentsasprimaryteachers@gmail.com](mailto:parentsasprimaryteachers@gmail.com).