

# Our Song

A resource for early years settings



By Jackie Oates

## English Folk Dance and Song Society

The English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) is the national development organisation for folk music, dance and related arts, based at Cecil Sharp House, a dedicated folk arts centre and music venue, in Camden, North London. Cecil Sharp House is also home to EFDSS' Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML), England's national folk music and dance archive, which provides free online access to thousands of searchable folk manuscripts and other materials.

EFDSS creates and delivers creative learning projects for children, young people, adults and families at Cecil Sharp House, across London and around the country, often in partnership with other organisations. Learning programmes draw on the diverse and vibrant traditional folk arts of Britain and beyond, focusing on song, music, dance and related art forms such as storytelling, drama, and arts and crafts. [www.efdss.org/education](http://www.efdss.org/education)

## Hounslow Music Service

Hounslow Music Service is the lead organisation for Hounslow's Music Education Hub. They exist to support children and young people from across the borough to access a high quality, exciting music education, and to inspire and improve their life chances through music. Alongside their work in schools, they offer a structured programme of bands, choirs and orchestras on midweek evenings and weekends. They celebrate the wonderful diversity of Hounslow and ensure this is enshrined in everything they do.

## Croydon Music and Arts

Croydon Music and Arts is the lead organisation for Croydon's Cultural Education Partnership and Music Education Hub. They work to ensure children and young people in the borough have access to creative opportunities, and work as part of a network of local partners that include Croydon's schools, cultural organisations and services for children and young people. Their mission is to amplify young people's voices and enhance their lives and life chances through the arts. Central to their mission is recognition of the importance of culture and identity for engaging families, schools and communities.

### Resource credits

Produced by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), November 2021

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Images credit: Hannah Shaw (originally commissioned for the EFDSS' Fun with Folk resource)

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## About this resource

This resource introduces practitioners in Early Years settings to traditional folk songs that promote a sense of belonging for young children.

The material has been selected from archive collections of traditional songs that have been sung by generations of children and passed down through the oral tradition.

Each song is aimed at aiding child development and comes with a set of actions or games to encourage learning. The words and melodies to the songs have been adapted to relate to a modern setting.

Suggested activities for how to perform and enjoy the songs according to the ability and age of the children have been included. The songs are primarily arranged for unison singing, with accompaniment chords.

The accompanying audio and video files can be used alongside this booklet, as a guide or to sing along with for in-person sessions.

It is common practice to update the words of folk songs as times, communities, and situations change - so do feel free to adapt them to suit the children and context in which you teach. You are also welcome to change the key in which they are sung to suit voices and accompaniment. The beauty of folk songs is their flexibility and communal ownership - so enjoy making these your own!

To avoid gender stereotypes and normalise the idea that anyone can perform a job or task, regardless of their gender identity, we have removed gendered language in some of the songs and changed the words to “they” instead of “he” or “she”. Where a gendered pronoun has been given to an animal or plant, we have left the original words to maintain the poetic nuance. However, these can of course be changed too.

**This resource, with the accompanying audio and video files, is freely downloadable from the EFDSS Resource Bank:**

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## Part 1: Hello and Welcome Songs

Hello songs are a great way to begin a singing session with children in the early years. They can help settle a group and introduce them to the activity that they are going to focus on, allowing the whole group to warm up together. The songs are very simple and easy to become familiar with.

The songs provide social (greetings), emotional (waiting your turn), physical (moving to music), cognitive (language, concepts) and musical stimulus.

Hello and Welcome songs have been a part of English traditional singing for centuries and are especially popular in girl guiding and scout campfire collections.

Here are some easy Welcome songs that have actions and lots of opportunities for joining in.



## How Do You Do?

Hello, hello how do you do?  
 How do you do? How do you do?  
 Hello, hello, how do you do?  
 How do you do today?

If you're wearing blue, (or any other colour!) stand up  
 If you're wearing blue, stand up  
 Pat, pat, pat your knees  
 Pat, pat, pat your knees  
 Pat, pat, pat your knees  
 Pat your knees today

### Suggested Activity

Line	Action
Hello, hello how do you do?	Whilst seated, wave to the children around the circle whilst singing
If you're wearing blue	Gesture to any children wearing a chosen colour (e.g., blue first time, red second time, etc.) to stand up
Pat, pat, pat your knees	Gesture to all children to pat their knees in time to the song

A Hello song is ideal for starting a singing session with circle time. It gives the children the opportunity to say hello to each other, taking turns to stand up and join in with actions.

Each time round, the song can feature a different colour, pattern, or type of clothing.

# How Do You Do

D Em A Em A A D



He- llo he- llo how do you do? How do you do? How do you do?

D Em A A D



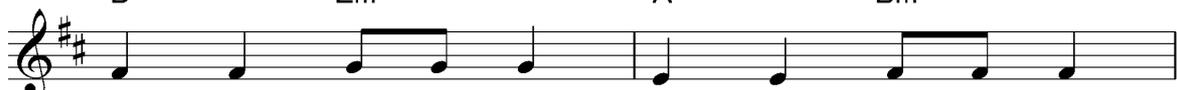
He - llo he - llo how do you do? How do you do to - day?

D A D D A D



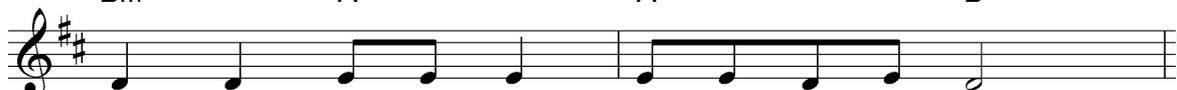
If you're wear- ing blue stand up If you're wear- ing blue stand up

D Em A Bm



pat, pat, pat your knees pat, pat, pat your knees

Bm A A D



pat, pat, pat your knees pat your knees to - day



# Farmyard

## Verse 1

Up was I on my little farm on a sunny morning early  
 Feeding of my little cows on a sunny morning early  
 With a moo!, moo! here, and a moo! moo! there  
 Here a moo! there a moo! here a loud moo!

## Chorus

Everyone come, come along with me  
 To the bright green fields of the farmyard

## Verse 2

Up was I on my little farm on a sunny morning early  
 Feeding of my little pigs on a sunny morning early  
 With a grunt! grunt! here and a grunt! grunt! there  
 Here a grunt! there a grunt! here a loud grunt!

## Chorus

## Verse 3

Up was I on my little farm on a sunny morning early  
 Feeding of my little sheep on a sunny morning early  
 With a baa! baa! here and a baa! baa! there  
 Here a baa! there a baa! here a loud baa!

## Chorus

## Suggested Activity

This song is a traditional version of the well-known 'Old MacDonald' nursery rhyme.

Children can choose which animal comes next and which noise they make.

'...feeding of my little pigs'	Leader pauses to allow a child in the group to suggest an animal
'...with a grunt! grunt! here'	Leader pauses to allow the children to make the animal sound
'..here a grunt! there a grunt!'	Leader encourages children to make animal sound as realistically as they can
'...here a loud GRUNT!'	Children can make animal noise loudly here!

# Farmyard

F C B $\flat$  C F



Up was I on my lit - tle farm on a sun - ny morn - ing ear - ly

F C B $\flat$  C F



Feed - ing of my lit - tle cows on a sun - ny morn - ing ear - ly with a

F C B $\flat$  F



moo! moo! here. And a moo! moo! there. Here a moo! There a moo!

C F C



here a lo - ud moo! Ev - er - y - one come, come a - long with me to the

B $\flat$  C F



bright green fields of the farm - yard

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## Part 2: Rounds

Rounds are songs with simple melodies and usually four lines of verse. Multiple voices sing the melody but start the song at different times. When each singer gets to the end of the song, they return to the beginning and start again.

They are a great vocal warm up as they encourage singing in tune and improve listening skills. They can be sung in unison while the children are learning the song. Once the song is familiar, it can be sung as a round. Rounds can build part independence and be an introduction to two-part music.

The tone, the act of working together, and the ringing melody as the voices die out makes this a lovely exercise.



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# Sing, Sing Together

Sing, sing together, merrily merrily sing  
Sing, sing together, merrily merrily sing  
Sing, sing, sing, sing  
Sing, sing together, merrily merrily sing

## Suggested Activity

- Divide your group into two or more sections
- The first group start the round
- At the end of the first line of the verse, the second group start from the beginning
- When each group gets to the end of the song, they go back to the beginning



# Sing Together

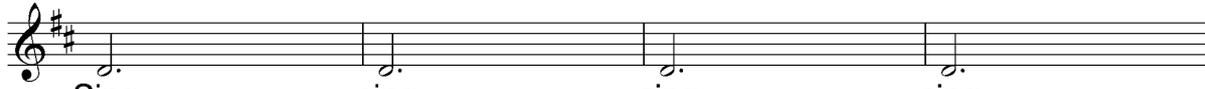
D
D
D
A
D


  
 Sing sing to - ge - ther mer - ri - ly mer - ri - ly sing,

D
D
D
A
D


  
 Sing sing to - ge - ther mer - ri - ly mer - ri - ly sing

D
D
D
A
D


  
 Sing, sing, sing, sing,

D
D
D
A
D


  
 Sing sing to - ge - ther mer - ri - ly mer - ri - ly sing



---

## Part 3: Action Songs

Once the group are warmed up, settled and ready to focus, action songs are a great way to build and enhance developing skills. Actions can stimulate hand-eye coordination and build self-confidence. Learning the songs aids listening skills and the ability to follow directions. Language skills are enhanced, and the actions can often act as a cue for retaining songs words. Dancing whilst singing and joining in with actions is a great way to build on social skills.



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## All Around the Daffodils

All around the daffodils  
One – two – three  
If you want to find a friend  
Just choose me!

### Suggested Activity

The children stand in a circle holding hands, and lift their arms up high to form arches or windows.

One child is chosen to hold the small bunch of daffodils, and then starts to weave in and out of the windows.

As the words ‘just choose me!’ are sung, the first child takes the hand of whoever is closest to them.

Then the first child continues to lead the second child in and out of the windows.

The song is repeated and each time a child is added until all the children are holding hands in a long snake.

Then an adult can make a bridge against the wall, and they can all go through and under the bridge for a last time.

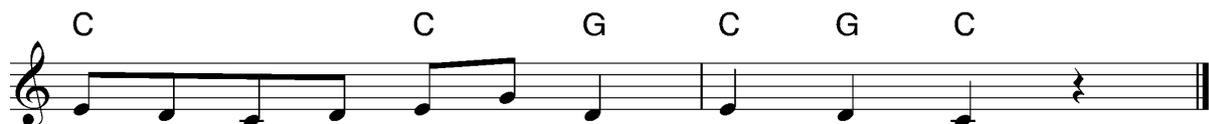
## All Around the Daffodils

C C G C G C



All a - round the daf - fo - dils one two three

C C G C G C



if you want to find a friend just choose me



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# Oats and Beans and Barley Grow

## *Chorus*

Oats and beans and barley grow,  
Oats and beans and barley grow  
Do you or I or anyone know  
How oats and beans and barley grow?

## *Verse 1*

First the farmers plant the seeds  
Stand up tall and takes their ease  
Stamp their feet and clap their hands  
And turn around to view the land

## *Chorus*

## *Verse 2*

Then the farmers watch the ground  
Watch the sunshine all around  
Stamp their feet and clap their hands  
And turn around to view the land

## *Chorus*

## **Suggested Activity**

One child is chosen to be the gardener and everyone else holds hands and sings the first verse, going round the gardener.

On the second verse, the gardener bends down and pretends to plant a seed, then stands up with hands on hips, stamps their feet and claps their hands, and then turns around on one foot, while placing one hand over his eyes as if looking far away.

Once they have completed the actions, they choose the next gardener, swaps places with them and joins the circle.

The song is then repeated to give everyone a go at being gardener. If the children are a little younger, everyone can do the actions together at the same time.

# Oats and Beans and Barley Grow

C C F G



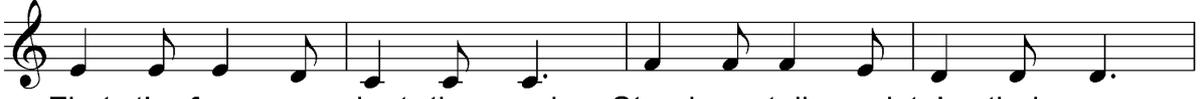
Oats and beans and bar - ley grow. Oats and beans and bar - ley grow. Do

Am C G C



you or I or a - ny-one know. How oats and beans and bar - ley grow.

C C F G



First the farm -ers plant the seeds. Stand up tall and take their ease.

Am C G C



Stamp their feet and clap their hands. And turn ar-ound to view the land.



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# The Posy Rhyme

## Verse 1

The daisy, the daisy  
She sits in the grass  
Where little birds nest  
And the little lambs pass  
She grows, oh she grows  
In a fine silver ring  
And when there are twelve  
It is the sweet spring

## Verse 2

The roses, the roses  
They grow up above  
Where no one may pick them  
To give to their love  
They grow, oh they grow  
All so sweet as any rose  
And sweetly they smell  
When that Summer is close

## Verse 3

The apples, the apples  
A hanging so red  
A bending their branches  
That bough overhead  
They grow oh they grow  
And are sweet to the tongue  
Apples, find apples  
When September be young

## Verse 4

The holly, the holly  
A-shining to sight  
His leaves they do glisten  
His berries are bright  
He grows, oh he grows  
At the ending of the year  
To cheer our house  
When Christmas be here

## Suggested Activity

Children form a circle and walk in a clockwise direction, swinging their arms whilst singing the song.



# The Posy Rhyme

F Dm Dm C



The dai - sy the dai - sy she sits in the grass where

Dm C Bb Dm C



lit - tle birds nest and the lit - tle lambs pass she

Bb Dm F C



grows oh she grows in a fine s - il - ver ring and

Dm Dm Dm C



when there are twelve it is the\_\_ sweet spring.



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# The Rattling Bog

Chorus

*Oh there's a rattling bog  
A bog down in the valley-oh  
A rare bog a rattling bog  
A bog down in the valley oh*

Verse 1

And in that bog there was a tree  
A rare tree a rattling tree  
And the tree in the bog  
And the bog down in the valley oh

*Chorus*

Verse 2

And on that tree there was a branch  
A rare branch a rattling branch  
And the branch on the tree  
And the tree in the bog  
And the bog down in the valley oh

*Chorus*

Verse 3

And on that branch there was a twig  
A rare twig a rattling twig  
And the twig on the branch  
And the branch on the tree  
And the tree in the bog  
And the bog down in the valley oh

*Chorus*

Verse 4

And on that twig there was a leaf  
A rare leaf a rattling leaf  
And the leaf on the twig  
And the twig on the branch  
And the branch on the tree  
And the tree in the bog  
And the bog down in the valley oh

*Chorus*

Verse 5

And on that leaf there was a nest  
A rare nest a rattling nest  
And the nest on the leaf  
And the leaf on the twig  
And the twig on the branch  
And the branch on the tree  
And the tree in the bog  
And the bog down in the valley oh

*Chorus*

Verse 6

And in that nest there was an egg  
A rare egg a rattling egg  
And the nest on the leaf  
And the leaf on the twig  
And the twig on the branch  
And the branch on the tree  
And the tree in the bog  
And the bog down in the valley oh

*Chorus*

Verse 7

And on that egg there was a bird  
A rare bird a rattling bird  
And the bird on the egg  
And the egg in the nest  
And the nest on the leaf  
And the leaf on the twig  
And the twig on the branch  
And the branch in the tree  
And the tree in the bog  
And the bog down in the valley oh

## Suggested Activity for The Rattling Bog

Children stand in a circle. For each word, there is an action -

Tree = standing up tall with arms raised straight above the head

Branch = right arm extended out to the side

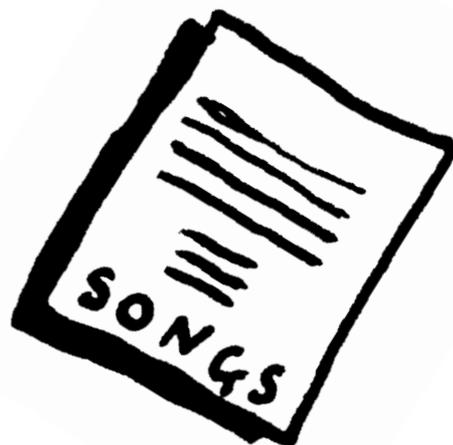
Twig = first finger pointed upwards

Leaf = palm facing upwards

Nest = hand curved with palm facing upwards

Egg = fingers forming an 'o' shape

Bird = arms moving upwards and downwards like wings



# The Rattling Bog

F Dm F C

Oh there's a rat-ting bog, a bog down in the val-ley oh, a

F Dm C F

rare bog a rat-ting bog, a bog down in the vall-ey oh. And

F F F C

in that bog there was a tree, a rare tree, a rat-ting tree, and the

v.2-7 Dm C F C F

tree in the bog, and the bog down in the val - ley oh.



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## Part 4: Songs with Puppets

As a singing session draws towards its final songs, using a puppet can help maintain or re-engage children's attention. The puppet can help them to visualise the meaning of the words. The accompanying songs can also enable them to develop language skills through repetition and the practise of social interaction.

Teaching a child actions using their fingers, or using finger puppets, can enable them to practice finger isolation and fine motor skills.



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# The Snail

## Verse 1

The snail crawls out with his house on his back,  
You can see where he's been by his shiny track



## Chorus

*Creep, creep, creep. Oh how slowly he goes!  
And you'd be the same if you carried your house*

## Verse 2

You can't see him, but you know where he's been  
He has fed on the leaves of the plants so green

## Chorus

## Verse 3

Still, still, still, in the dark of the night  
He slips away in the morning light



## Chorus

## Verse 4

With small black eyes, how he looks about  
The birds they must not find him out

## Chorus

## Verse 5

Tap, tap, tap on the roof of his house  
But the snail he stays as quiet as a mouse



## Suggested Activity

A puppet could be used to act out the story during the singing of this song, or the children could be encouraged to use their hands to make a snail shape and move in time to the words.

# The Snail

F F C F



The snail crawls out with his house on his back. You

C C B $\flat$  F



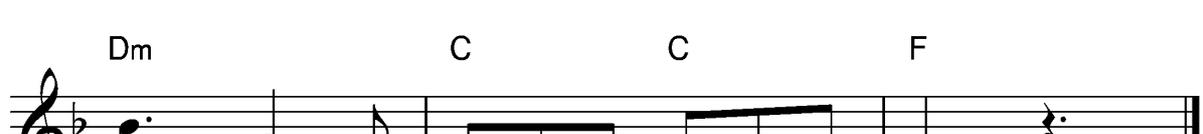
see where he's been by his sl - i - mey track

Dm F C



creep creep creep oh how slow - ly he goes. And

Dm C C F



you'd be the same if you car - ried your house.



---

## Part 5: Lullabies and Goodbye Songs

Singing a lullaby enables a collective feeling of calm and relaxation in the group before the end of a session.

Lullabies are typically repetitive and help to soothe and relax. The words are easy for children to learn as they don't need to remember lots of complex words and verses. The repetition of the melody can become meditative, allowing a child to empty their minds and focus on enjoying the moment.

Lullabies are often sung to a slow beat or rhythm and the rocking motion helps to reinforce positive emotions and a sense of security.

Goodbye songs are very helpful when anticipating the end of a group activity, helping the children to prepare themselves to move on to the next activity in their day.



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# Toy Lambs to Sell

Toy lambs to sell  
Toy lambs to sell



There's one for a penny  
And four for a pound  
The finest lambs  
In all of this land

If I'd as much money as I could tell  
I'd never cry 'Toy lambs to sell'.

## Suggested Activity

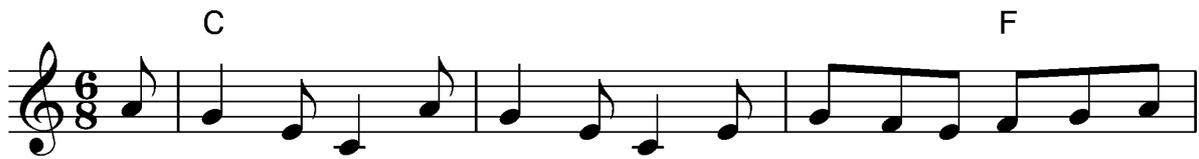
Good for gentle swinging or dancing, this song has a familiar but slightly unusual melody.

Children could choose different words for the toy they'd like to sell.

*This song used as a street cry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for a vendor selling toy lambs made with sticks and cotton wool.*



# Toy Lambs To Sell



Toy lambs to sell Toy lambs to sell there's one for a pen - ny and



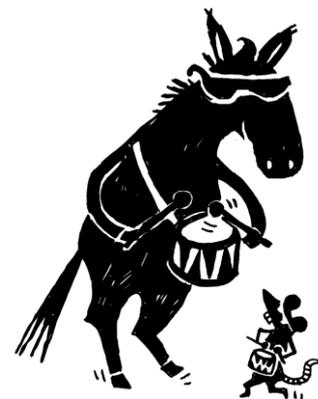
four for a pound the fin - est toys In all of this land If



I'd as much mo - ney as I could tell I'd



ne - ver cry 'Toy lambs to sell'



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# Singing So Well

Knock on the knocker  
And ring at the bell  
Give us a penny  
For singing so well  
Singing so well  
Singing so well  
What will you give us  
For singing so well?

## Suggested Activity

‘Knock on the knocker’ = a knocking action with the right hand

‘Ring on the bell’ = an action for ringing a doorbell

‘Give us a penny’ = an outstretched hand

‘Singing so well’ = an action for singing

*Wren’s Day is celebrated on St. Stephen’s Day, December 26th. Traditionally it was celebrated throughout Ireland. Nowadays, the tradition can only be found in a few Irish towns. The ‘Wren’s Day’ tradition is very similar to ‘Trick or Treating’ or carol singing.*



# Singing So Well

F B $\flat$  C F



Knock on the knock - er and ring at the bell

F B $\flat$  C F



What will you give us for sing - ing so well?

F Dm C



Sing - ing so well Sing - ing so well

F B $\flat$  C F



What will you give us for sing - ing so well

## Contributors



**Jackie Oates** Jackie Oates is a mainstay of English traditional music. Regarded as one of the country's best loved folk performers, Jackie's current focus is on collaborating with a diverse array of artists and commissions. Following the death of her much-loved dad five days after the birth

of her first child, Jackie's 2018 album *The Joy Of Living* reached beyond the past lives in folk song to the lived experience of all of us. The Guardian called it "utterly gorgeous... moving, depth-filled." Since then, Jackie has released classic covers with Scritti Politti's Rhodri Marsden, researched pagan Bath for the mavericks at Lush cosmetics, been Artist In Residence at the Twitter-famous Museum of English Rural Life, lent her voice and musicianship to CBeebies' Nick Cope's Popcast, and begun an ongoing mixed media work about the history of lace telling. Jackie Oates continues to bring elements of the English folk tradition to new people and places; in turn bringing a much-needed calm and joy to those who hear it. (Photo: Darryl Everitt)



**Camilo Menjura** is a Colombian guitarist, singer, choir leader and co-leader of EFDSS' London Youth Folk Ensemble. Camilo has won several *Latin UK Awards* (LUKAS) for his work in sharing Latin American musical culture through various projects in the UK. He has played with a number of bands visiting stages across Britain as well Europe, Asia, Central & South America. His guitar playing has been featured in films, TV shows, theatre productions and documentaries. (Photo: Thomas Farnetti)

## Resource Bank

Inspire learning with folk

Explore free online materials for using English traditional folk song, music, dance, drama and other arts in your teaching and leading.



Discover more learning resources  
[www.efdss.org/resourcebank](http://www.efdss.org/resourcebank)