Songs & Songboards: Tips & Tricks
(Musselwhite, 2007)

Rules for Generating Learning-Based Songs

Musselwhite (1992) has listed a set of rules for creating songs that support language, literacy, or content learning. Musselwhite also offers rationale and samples for each rule (pp. 16 – 18):

1: Less Than 10 Different Words
> This is especially important for songs supporting language learning, through speech, sign, or AAC system

2: Simple, Familiar Vocabulary
> Support students in learning signs, symbols, icon codes for words they already know

3: Highly Repetitive Words
> Reduce overload, and offer opportunities for practice

4: Simple or Highly Familiar Tune
> Reduce emphasis on the musical aspect, for both the student AND the staff!

5: Use Functional Words That Represent Learning Goals
> Focus on key words that support language or content learning

6: Include Iconic Signs / Symbols
> For beginning AAC users, include easily guessed signs / symbols

7: Include Active Participation Before / During / After Song
> Include choicemaking, filling in slots, etc. This increases cognitive engagement and offers a purpose for singing the song multiple times.

Musselwhite, C. (1992). *Signs & Symbols for Children*. Litchfield Park, AZ: AAC Intervention.   www.aacintervention.com

Tips for Creating & Assembling Songboards

Consider Which Words to Symbolize
Is it REALLY necessary to symbolize EVERY word in a song?
Depending on the purpose, you may want to symbolize only key words. You also may want to consider NOT symbolizing highly frequent, abstract words such as: the, and

Consider Color-Coding Symbols & Placing on Black Background

Goossens', Crain, & Elder COLOR-Coding System:

VERBS	words which tells action	OPEN, COME	(Pink)
DESCRIPTORS	adjectives and adverbs	PRETTY, SLOW	(Blue)
PREPOSITIONS	position words	IN, OFF	(Green)
NOUNS	person, place or thing	CAR, HAT, MARY	(Yellow)
MISCALLANEOUS			(Orange)
WH-words	questions	WHO, WHAT, HOW	
Exclamations	interjections, etc	UH OH, WOW	
Negative Words	negations	NO, DON'T	
Pronouns	personal, possessive	I, YOU	

Color-coding can be done for parts of speech.   For more information on color-coding, see the January, 2005 Tip at: www.aacintervention.com Note that separating symbols helps each symbol 'pop' against the black background.

Consider Placing Text in a White Box So It Will 'Pop'
Text can be made highly visible if it is relatively large, and placed in a white box, on a colored background, as shown below. This will support students in noticing text, so that it doesn't fade into the background. Also think about text. For beginning readers, Comic Sans is a great, simple text.