Toy Description Project
The Laugh & Learn Magical Musical Mirror

Introduction

The Laugh & Learn Magical Musical Mirror is meant for children 6-36 months of age. This toy is a relatively small pink vanity and it has lights around the outer edge of the mirror. The Magical Musical Mirror plays song and phrases. It has other smaller plastic components, such as, a comb, bracelet, and lipstick. It also has numbers and letters incorporated in the design. This toy promotes many developmental skills in infants. The Magical Musical Mirror encourages role play and thinking about cause and effect. Its many bright, colorful features also help stimulate the infant’s senses. In addition, it helps teach things like, letters, colors, textures, greetings and opposites (Fisher-Price, 2014).

Motor Development

As infants get older, they achieve many milestones. There are several motor milestones that come online during the Magical Musical Mirror’s suggested age range. Two important motor milestones are sitting up alone and the pincer grasp. When a child is approximately 7 months old they are able to sit up by themselves. When a child is about 12 months old they develop the pincer grasp. The pincer grasp is the ability to use your index finger and thumb to grasp something and is considered a fine motor skill.

Overall, I think that the Magical Musical Mirror toy is appropriate for the physical and motor skills of the recommended age. I think that 6 months is slightly on the young side, but for the most part I think that an infant of this age will have most of the necessary skills. Although a
child is not able to sit up on their own until around 7 months, I believe that an infant could play with this toy while lying on their stomach. At about 4 ½ months an infant is able to roll over from their back to their stomach. With this skill they are able to change their view and gain better access to the toy. The pincer grasp does not come online until 12 months. Before that, there is pre-reaching, reaching, and then the ulnar grasp. Pre-reaching is an infant reflex and drops out around 7 weeks of age. It is when a baby flails their arms in order to try and make contact with its environment; this is a precursor to reaching. Next, intentional reaching emerges around 3 months. Around 3 to 4 months of age the ulnar grasp comes online. The ulnar grasp is when an infant can roll their fingers into their palm to make a fist. Finally, the pincer grasp emerges at 12 months. While the pincer grasp is not functioning at 6 months, the child will be able to utilize reaching and the ulnar grasp to play and interact with the toy. Although the pincer grasp may be a useful motor skill it is not essential for most aspects of the Magical Musical Mirror. Generally, I feel that this toy is appropriate for a 6 month old infant considering the motor skills they have.

**Perceptual Development**

There are various perceptual and sensory milestones that occur extremely early on in development. Many of these milestones are important when playing with the Magical Musical Mirror. Touch is the earliest developing sense. It begins to develop about 7-8 weeks gestation, and by 13-14 weeks gestation touch can be sensed throughout the entire body. Another important sensory milestone is hearing. Hearing develops in the 3rd trimester of gestation (around 27 weeks). Finally, there is sight. Sight is the last to develop at 20 weeks gestation. Although sight does develop in utero, the retina does not fully mature until 6 months of age. At this point the infant can see the world clearly.
I feel that the Magical Musical Mirror is appropriate for the perceptual skills needed. The sensation of touch develops very early on in gestation. The whole body is sensitive to touch by 13-14 weeks of gestation. The toy has several different components that are different shapes and textures; therefore touch is extremely important and necessary for this particular toy. Hearing is also important and develops in the 3rd trimester of gestation. The Magical Musical Mirror plays songs and makes noise, so hearing is a vital skill. Finally, there is sight, which is fully developed at 6 months of age. One of the main aspects of this toy is a mirror, along with bright colors and lights; therefore, sight is very important as well. All three of these senses, touch, hearing, and sight, are present at 6 months of age. For that reason, I think that the Magical Musical Mirror is perceptually and sensory appropriate.

Cognitive Development

The sensorimotor stage is the main Piagetian stage that applies to the targeted age range of the Magical Musical Mirror. The sensorimotor stage is Piaget’s first stage of cognitive development and spans birth to 2 years. An infant is experiencing many new things and making many cognitive achievements throughout this stage. One achievement is intentional or goal-directed behavior, which emerges around 8-12 months. Prior to this many of the infant’s motions or behaviors are accidental. With this new cognitive ability, they are better able to coordinate their motion and thought to achieve their goals. They are able to put schemas together for simple problem solving (Berks, 2013). Another achievement is the formation of mental representations. Mental representations come online around 18 months of age. Mental representations include things such as deferred imitation and make-believe play. Deferred imitation is when a child can reproduce an action or activity that they have seen in the past; therefore it requires remembering and mental representations. Make-believe play is also possible because of the cognitive ability of
mental representation. An example of a limitation in this cognitive stage of development is dual representation. Dual representation is when a child can view something as both an object and a symbol. For example, a map is an object, but it also symbolizes a campus/city/state.

I do not think that this toy is cognitively appropriate for a 6 month old child. The Magical Musical Mirror has many different components, but one of its main functions is to be used for make-believe play. It is geared towards little girls, and can be used to imitate their moms putting on their make-up. This is an example of deferred imitation. The child must have a mental representation of their mother acting out this skill. Both make-believe play and deferred imitation don’t come online until 18 months of age. This is much older than the minimum suggested age range. An infant can’t even engage in intentional behavior at first, which comes online around 8 months of age. This toy also teaches the child things like numbers, letters and colors. These things require language and intentional thought which doesn’t emerge until 2-7 years of age, during the preoperational stage. Overall, I do not think that this toy is cognitively suitable.

**Language Development**

Language is an important aspect of development and is incorporated into almost all daily activities. A semantic milestone is that a child can comprehend their first vocabulary word at 6 months of age. There is a difference between receptive language and expressive language. A child is able to understand their first receptive word at 6 months, but they are not able to speak, or express, their first word until 12 months of age. A grammatical milestone is telegraphic speech at 18 months. Telegraphic speech is the formation of two word sentences. These sentences are often high in content and lack conjunctions or filler words.
I do not think that the Magical Musical Mirror is appropriate in relation to language development. Although a child can understand their first word at 6 months, their receptive vocabulary doesn’t reach 50 words until 13 months of age. This toy plays songs and phrases, so at 6 months of age they will not be able to understand that it is saying. Also, a child is not able to verbalize their first word until 12 month of age. The Magical Musical Mirror is meant to teach the child numbers, letters, and colors. They are not able to express these or any other words at 6 months of age.

**Summary**

Overall I think that this is a good toy, but maybe not for the intended age range. I think that it is appropriate in some areas and not as appropriate in other areas. I believe that this toy is appropriate for the motor skills needed. Around 3-4 months of age the ulnar grasp comes online. I believe that this skill is sufficient for this toy. The accessories that come with this toy can be grasped easily and don’t need very fine motor movement. An infant is also able to sit up by themselves at 7 months of age. Sitting up will be helpful in playing with this toy, but I do not believe it is essential. I believe that this toy is also perceptually appropriate for a 6 month old. An important factor of this toy is all of the different textures it has. Sensitivity to touch is fully mature at 13-14 weeks gestation. The infant will not have issues with their sense of touch. Vision is also an important aspect to the Magical Musical Mirror. Sight starts to develop in utero, but it is completely mature at 6 months of age. An infant has mature vision for the recommended age range of this toy. I do not think that this toy is cognitively appropriate for an infant. Two very important skills are intentional behavior and mental representations. Intentional behavior does not emerge until 8 months of age and mental representations do not emerge until 18 months of age. Mental representations are especially important for make-believe play and deferred
imitation. Also, I do not think that this toy is appropriate in regards to language development. A child does understand their first receptive word at 6 months of age, but they won’t be able to understand all of the songs and the phrases that the toy plays. Similarly, a child doesn’t produce their first expressive word until 12 months of age. The toy is meant to help infants learn their number, letter, and colors, but a 6 month old will not be able to produce them. Not until 18 months of age does the infant start to learn grammatical skills like telegraphic speech. In general, I believe that this toy should be geared at a slightly higher age range.

The first thing I would change is the size of the mirror. The mirror is quite small in relation to the rest of the toy. If an infant is sitting up, I feel that they will have a difficult time seeing themselves in the mirror. Increasing the size of the mirror will also help increase their visual stimulation. There will be opportunity for other object to come into the child line of sight. Another thing I would change is the mode switch button. First of all, it is a very small button and a 6 month old child would not have the fine motor skills to switch between the modes. On the current toy there is one roller in the front and when it is spun it makes different noises and sounds depending on what mode it is in, ABC learning, music, or imagination. I think a good alternative would be to have three rollers on the front; one for each mode. This way the infant does not have to switch from mode to mode; rather just spin the wheel for different learning experiences.

References
