



Play Along®

Music Together's Newsletter for Families

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Music Learning Supports All Learning

Wow! All proprietors should receive letters of complaint like the one recently sent to Music Together center director Frances Ghitis of Let It Be Music. After viewing the DVD

for new families—which discusses Music Together's program and philosophy—Music Together parent Deborah Posner of Cooper City, Florida, wrote in to her center director to say that, "while the DVD adequately addressed Music Together's undeniable capacity to cultivate musicianship early on in life, it did not do justice to all the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social benefits gained as well, and the real life-skills being actively taught through the program."

It is true that we at Music Together haven't always stressed the extra-musical benefits of our program. Our stance has been that music is important for its own sake. Deborah, however, is correct to point out that active music making is a uniquely integrative experience that has a profound impact on the very young. Simply put, music learning supports all learning.

Recent studies of preschool populations receiving the Music Together Preschool program seem to support this idea. While preschools have long understood that music can have value in the classroom, they are now confronted with an unintended consequence of the No Child Left Behind Act: an apparent need to focus almost exclusively on core subjects. In order to raise test scores, many schools concentrate primarily on reading, writing, and math, while cutting back on time for music and other arts.

But does it really benefit children to spend time only on the subjects that will be tested? In twenty-five preschool classes in Trenton, New Jersey, a study that was designed to understand Music Together's impact on school readiness and

long-term literacy calls this into question. Half the children received the Music Together Preschool program through the auspices of the Trenton Community Music School's outreach program, Music for the Very Young, while the other half did not.

Although current wisdom would predict that the music-making group, which spent less time focused on literacy and numeracy, would score proportionately worse on the assessments, this was not the case. The students who received the Music Together Preschool program performed at least as well, even though they spent less time "on task." Given that this group also learned important music skills through being joyfully engaged in creative music-making activities throughout their day, there seems to be no reason to take music out of the curriculum in order to make more time for reading and writing.

Another recent study was designed and evaluated by the Michael Cohen Group. It looked at the impact of the Music Together Preschool program on ten Head Start classes managed by Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD), an anti-poverty agency in Bridgeport, Connecticut, dedicated to finding ways to help children make academic and developmental gains. Jackie Jacobs, director of Music Together of Fairfield County, was asked to provide the Music Together Preschool program as part of ABCD's Total Learning Initiative project.

According to this landmark state- and federally-funded study, children in the Music Together Preschool classes made statistically significant gains in cognitive, language, and physical development on the Creative Curriculum Assessment used in Head Start. Although we cannot claim that all preschool curricula would show gains in their own as-

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Special PlayAlong Issue (see p3)

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

We are definitely excited about the research results described in the lead article. They are a gratifying validation of our continuous effort over more than two decades to promote the idea that music needs to be an essential and integrated part of a preschool's core curriculum, subject to the same quality standards as other areas of the curriculum.

Pioneered in the late 1980s, the Music Together Preschool program model goes far beyond what even dedicated preschools are usually able to offer due to limited funding or training. More than listening to CDs, learning a few songs, and perhaps being visited weekly by a singer with a guitar, Music Together® Preschool is designed to involve parents through home materials and school events, while helping classroom teachers find ways to incorporate music throughout the school day. Music making becomes a part of daily life, both at school and at home. Children learn basic music skills as naturally and as easily as they have learned to walk and talk.

Parents, classroom teachers, and other primary caregivers involved in Music Together come to understand that the program is not just for children. I think of it as quintessential quality time for grownups and children together. Reporting on the study of Music Together in Trenton, New Jersey, preschools, our Director of Research Lili Levinowitz, Ph.D., comments:

In addition to the school readiness and long-term literacy results, the study's executive summary reported that the Music Together curriculum model helps bring families together. In surveys, parents reported that since participating in the Music Together program, they sang more at home. This is particularly important as many parents note how difficult it can be for parents to make time to play with their children. In a survey, 96% of parent respondents said their children ask them to play the Music Together CDs sometimes or all the time.

Many of Music Together's outreach programs were started or are run by people who discovered the program with their own families and recognized its value for the neediest children. Twenty years ago, Music Together's first outreach project began at Union City Daycare's two locations in Union City, New Jersey. Director Dana Berry's personal experience of quality time as a Music Together parent led her to want the same for children in the urban bilingual childcare centers she was running. Almost two decades later, Charles Tisdale, director of Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD) in Bridgeport, Connecticut, attended a Music Together class with his grandchild and decided he wanted the same experience for the children served by ABCD's Total Learning Initiative. Similarly, Ronnie Ragen and Jackie Jacobs, now doing such great work as Music Together program providers in Trenton and Bridgeport, respectively, both began as Music Together parents.

As wonderful as it is to have a confirmation of the efficacy of Music Together Preschool in these studies, many benefits remain less tangible. Jackie Jacobs writes of "the joy in the children's faces while singing and dancing, watching the classroom teachers blossom in their musical skills, and observing the beautiful parent-child interactions at parent events. It is a shame that science cannot record and document the magic of music-making that we have seen, because that is the most valuable 'result' of all."



Kenneth K. Guilmartin
Founder/Director, Music Together LLC

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assessments by adding Music Together, the Head Start teachers, parents, and administrators who are part of the Music Together classes believe that music learning has greatly enhanced the children's overall learning.

Trina Carr, a site manager for the ABCD program, is surprised at the overall learning she sees through the Music Together Preschool program. "I have noticed more language among the children," comments Trina. "I have also noticed spatial concepts, more gross motor movement, and more imaginative play while they are singing and acting out stories and scenarios."

Jackie Jacobs has observed the program's effect on speech and language skills. "For instance, on numerous occasions, a child who has not been talking in class has begun speaking during Music Together time, giving verse ideas for a song or talking about a songbook picture," she says. "The classroom teachers are always astonished about how these children have begun speaking...during music time, and then it expands throughout the day."

Music making provides important social benefits, too. Through Music Together, children and parents build a community of music-makers and foster cultural connections. "I have a site that is culturally and economically diverse," says ABCD's Trina. "Yet Music Together brings [the families] together for a common purpose—their children. Parents who may never have spoken to each other at a supermarket are now sitting side-by-side in the class and singing 'Hey Lolly, Lolly!' Over time, the children feel a deepening connection to their home, school, and community."

There are many extra-musical benefits to be had in making music. Every day, in Music Together parent-child classes and preschool programs around the world, we see evidence of the cognitive, language, physical, and social development that Deborah Posner pointed out and that research studies affirm. But we'd hate to see children being offered music as if it were a plate of brussels sprouts—because it's "good for them." Our deepest wish remains to inspire children—and their grownups—to develop a love of music for its own sake. Learning to sing in tune and move with accurate rhythm unlocks the key to participating in the music of one's culture with ease and joy. Ultimately, it provides children with a means of creative self-expression that is uniquely human.

—Kate Battenfeld, *Music Together Contributing Writer and Center Director, Carlsbad, Oceanside, and Vista CA*

Ongoing Research and Development at CMYC®

The Center for Music and Young Children® (CMYC), developer of Music Together, was founded in 1985. CMYC is committed to helping families, caregivers, and early childhood professionals rediscover the pleasure and educational value of informal musical experiences. Rather than emphasizing traditional music performances, CMYC encourages family participation in spontaneous musical activity occurring within the context of daily life. CMYC recognizes that all children are musical and that every child needs a stimulating, supportive music environment to achieve basic competence in the wonderful human capacity for music-making.

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■ ■ Growing with Music ■ ■

Wiggling, singing, and laughing with your child is so much fun—it's easy to forget how much learning is taking place!

Our research-based curriculum not only develops music skills, it nurtures creativity, self-expression, and confidence while also supporting social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Because music learning is a cumulative learning experience, children continue to reap developmental benefits that build over time. That's why we encourage families to consistently participate for as many years as possible from infancy through kindergarten.

As Anita Wilson, Music Together parent from Akron, Ohio, writes:

"The baby was nine months when we began last summer. She's now 20 months and filling in one or two words in each line of our favorite Music Together songs.... It's as if she's been storing up all the lyrics for a year and is now surprising us by singing the words to songs we haven't listened to in months. To hear my kids spontaneously begin singing a Music Together song while playing, creating their own song lyrics and rhythms...



... makes me really happy. The quality of the music is unmatched by any other children's music... My children love the Music Together selections. They are the soundtrack of their childhood. Thank you!"

For more information on Music Together or to find a class near you, please visit us online at www.musictogether.com.

New "Lullabies" CD

(At Last! Music Together releases a lullaby CD!)

The single most frequent request from parents throughout the history of Music Together has been to bring all of the Music Together lullabies together onto one CD. Well, it's here at last—along with a beautifully illustrated booklet inside.

To help children unwind from the day and establish a bedtime routine, play the CD while they brush their teeth, put on pajamas, and get into bed. Then sing your favorite lullabies with them. The sound of your voice, even if not pitch-perfect, is always precious to your child.

A lullaby provides a time to be close to your child physically, emotionally, and musically. It bonds parent and child, lulling both singer and listener, synchronizing breaths and reducing stress.

The lullaby can also transform the bedtime hour into an oasis of loving calm. For babies and toddlers, it provides a comforting bedtime ritual. For older children, who are increasingly verbal, it is often the time they spontaneously confide their hopes and fears.

A lullaby is one of the most precious gifts a parent can give a child. Enjoy!

Special CD Release Offer — Free US shipping!

- Now through midnight, December 15, 2009 •

Order the new "Music Together Lullabies" CD (coupon code LULLCD) or the "Lullabies" and "Family Favorites" CDs as a pair (code LLFFCD) and receive free shipping at www.musictogether.com/FamilyFavorites.

These CDs make wonderful birthday and holiday gifts for all the special children in your life—and don't forget your families and friends!

Paper
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Calling all families to stay connected with us online...



At Music Together we've been exploring how best to build an online community to engage, educate, and serve Music Together families everywhere. This fall, we will debut two new digital publications—

- Quarterly Family E-newsletter
- Music Together Experts Blog

These will replace our paper newsletter, making this the last *PlayAlong* issue mailed to you.

How to stay in touch

In order to send you the new e-newsletter, we are **"Calling"** out for your email address. It's easy to **"Respond"** and send it to us—just visit us online at:

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P.S.

Do you have a question you'd like one of our experts to answer in an upcoming blog? Have a music-making story or photo to share? Send your questions or news items, plus name, city, and zip to us at:

news@musictogether.com

See you online!

Outreach

The lead article in this issue explores the ways in which music learning supports all learning. At the Migrant Education Even Start program (MEES) in Los Angeles, California—part of a federally-funded program for migrant workers offering academic, English-language, parent education, and nutrition classes—music learning is being used to support English learning. Music Together is a vital part of MEES's "English Literacy through Singing and Movement" initiative.

Each Saturday morning for the past four years, Music Together teacher Susan Wright has met a busload of preschool children, their moms, and their dads at the Second Street Public School in Boyle Heights, near downtown Los Angeles. At first her Spanish was minimal, but she did know several Spanish-language songs from various Music Together song collections. In addition to using those songs, she also incorporated many



songs without words, and used Music Together songbook illustrations to identify English words and phrases. "I was impressed with how quickly the children blossomed and learned the language, although really, it was the music that mattered," says Susan. "Truly, the classes became a community just like all Music Together classes."

This past session, the classes were taught by Music Together teacher Julie Ingram, while Susan continues to oversee the administration to ensure the program stays funded. She is proud of the way Music Together's national headquarters actively encourages and supports its licensed directors to take part in outreach, and she now hopes to start classes for migrant workers in other areas. "Music Together is a wonderful program," says Susan. "It's a way to give all children the music they deserve and to give their parents a joyful way of connecting with them."

Music Together® is...

a research-based, developmentally appropriate music and movement program for infant, toddler, preschool, and kindergarten children with their parents, teachers, and other primary caregivers. A curriculum pioneer since 1987.

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