

## The Importance of Family Music-Making: Now More than Ever

Most families in our community are aware of the educational value of music for young children—the topic is often covered in the media, and the United States Senate even passed the bipartisan Every Child Achieves Act (S. 1177), which includes music education in our nation’s core curriculum and ensures that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, will experience the demonstrable positive impact that music education has on learning.

Yet, to be musically prepared to join in confidently, a rich early environment and parental support is essential. That may sound daunting to some parents who don’t think they are musical, but research suggests that even parents who are not confident as musicians can provide their child the music experiences they need during the critical first 5 years. All parents can contribute enormously to the enrichment of their child’s music development.

Music is not only fun for youngsters to listen, sing, play, and dance along to, we know it also helps children develop important skills essential for success in school and in life, such as language, pre-literacy and pre-numerical skills, concentration, confidence, self-regulation, and self-esteem. What some people may not know is that all children are naturally musical. Just as we are all born with the potential to learn to speak and understand language, we also all have the ability, from birth, to be musical. And nurturing this innate ability as early as possible provides the foundation for later success in making music, whether it’s as part of the marching band or simply the confidence to dance at the high school prom.

At a critical time when our kids may be on screens more often than we would prefer and possibly experiencing fewer meaningful live human interactions, it’s even more important to make time for music with your children on a regular basis. Early childhood is a period of rapid change and development; it is also the most critical time in a child’s musical growth. Unfortunately, some parents avoid making music with their children in everyday life because they feel inadequate as music-makers themselves. This is a true loss for both generations. We all know people who say they are “tone-deaf” or “can’t sing to save their lives.” It’s true that some people haven’t yet “found” their singing voice. Yet research strongly supports the notion that even parents who cannot sing in tune can support their child’s music development through a combination of modeling and effective resource materials and experiences.

As a Music Together teacher for nearly twenty years and a mom, I can assure you that your young children do not care how well you carry a tune. All they want is to sing and “do” music with you! And, believe it or not, it’s the doing that truly makes a difference.

In early childhood music classes, such as those provided by the international music education program Music Together®, parents spend quality time with their little ones learning songs and music activities they can recreate at home all week long. Bring your children to the music events you enjoy- whether it is rocking out at...

By demonstrating your love of music by dancing along to a band at a festival, making up new lyrics to songs you learned in an early childhood music class, or singing heartily at church or in your living room, you are teaching the power and value of music to your child. The result: a joyful, musical child, enhanced family relationships, and a strong, musical community.