Pointers For Parents

Helping Children Learn Through Music

(NAPS)—If the thought of your children's development is music to your ears, you may want to share the joy of music with your kids—and it seems the sooner you do it, the better.

Exposure to music during the early years of childhood enhances the learning process by promoting language development, creativity, coordination and social interaction, according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The group says vocal and speech development can improve through singing; listening and concentration can improve with aural training; and the values of cooperation are reinforced by the sharing of instruments and encouragement of other students.

To help their children develop a love for music—and for learning—many parents participate in classes facilitated by groups such as Music Together. The organization developed a research-based curriculum that takes a music and movement approach to early childhood music development. It's open to infants, toddlers, preschoolers and kindergarten children, and their parents or caregivers.

"The whole purpose of our program is to enable children, as well as the adults participating with them, to become more comfortable with musical expression and to develop musically at their own pace," says Kenneth K. Guilmartin, founder and director of the group. "Childhood music development is a natural process, just like language development."

The program works in harmony with recent findings at an Early Childhood Summit stating that music education is basic education and therefore integral to the education of children at any age—a statement the U.S. Department of Education agrees with.

Smart Idea—Evidence suggests that experiencing music and movement at an early age can help children develop important skills.

The Role Of Parents

Guilmartin says an important key to his program's success is parental involvement. "The participation and modeling of parents and caregivers—regardless of musical ability—is essential to a child's musical growth," he explains. "Of all the programs available for preschoolers, it is the only one which has based its curriculum on that fact from the beginning."

Atmosphere plays an important role as well. Music Together works to create a playful, nonperformance-oriented environment that Guilmartin describes as musically rich, yet immediately accessible to the child and the adult. "We believe all children are musical," explains Guilmartin. "They can all reach basic music competence with the right help."

Classes are offered in more than 1,400 communities around the world. For information, visit the Web site www.musictogether.com.

Did You Know?

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