

Music Together Supports the Montessori Philosophy

A young child absorbs his environment effortlessly and without fatigue and becomes one with the environment in which he finds himself.

- Music Together understands that the most important time for music learning is between the ages of birth and six. This is the period of primary music development, a time when children's growing brains are most open to musical influence and growth. Exposure to a variety of music and movement experiences is crucial during this period, when the child learns so fast and so well.
- All children can achieve basic music competence—that is, learn to sing in tune and move with accurate rhythm—provided they have a sufficiently rich musical environment to stimulate music learning. With exposure and experimentation, the child's natural music aptitude can blossom and flourish.
- In cultures where group singing and dancing is still part of daily life, children typically achieve basic music competence around the same time they become competent in language—by age three or four. In our culture, however, because so many children lack the kind of active family music-making experiences that stimulate music learning, they often don't sing in tune or move with accurate rhythm until age five or six. Many never learn at all.

The power of the adult role model

- Music Together realizes that the participation and modeling of teachers, parents, and caregivers is essential to a child's musical growth. Participating adults are able to present the music and movements with enthusiasm because it is so much fun for them, too. The children absorb the adults' passion and joy.
- The music specialist comes to the classroom once a week to lead music, movement, and instrument activities. The guide and assistant participate fully, becoming musical models for the children during class and throughout the week, as they use Music Together activities in their daily classroom lives.
- Children "bring the music home" to their families with the Music Together CD, songbook, and Parent Guide DVD and booklet. Parents, too, become music-making role models—and knowing the same songs creates a profound sense of community among the children, their families, and their school.
- The Music Together program recommends having two all-school family events each semester. By participating and experiencing the joy of singing, moving, dancing, and playing instruments with their children, parents can be inspired to make music at home, too.

Belief in the child's inner guide

- The Music Together approach is non-performance-oriented, with each child participating at his or her own developmental level. With a sufficiently rich music environment, all children can learn to sing in tune and move with accurate rhythm as naturally and joyfully as they learn to talk and to walk.
- In the Music Together class, children experience an assortment of musical activities designed to stimulate exploration and discovery. Children's natural learning cycle of play, discovery, repetition and mastery is engaged.

Children's sensitive period for movement

- Because movement is an essential developmental tool for children, all levels of movement are found in the Music Together experience. Fingerplays, small movement, large movement, movement in place and through space (locomotor), group dances, movement that crosses the midline of the body, and movement involved in using rhythm instruments such as egg shakers and rhythm sticks are all utilized.
- Maria Montessori realized movement needs purpose. Moving to songs and chants both stimulates physical development and feeds the sensitive period for socialization. Movement enables children to communicate with others through song, have a sense of belonging in the culture, and explore and master physical expression at their own level of interest and ability.

The child's universal desire to belong

- Music Together activities are designed to be accessible and interesting for all styles of learning. The visual learner, the auditory learner, and the kinesthetic learner are all appreciated, respected, and supported, allowing each to feel a sense of belonging.
- Children's ideas and movements are "accepted and included" by the specialist. When a three-year-old sees his movement incorporated into a song activity—or leads the next movement for the whole class!—the feeling that "I belong" is affirmed.

Actions, not instructions

The children learn music through watching, listening, absorbing, and—when they are ready—participating. The Music Together specialist therefore introduces song activities simply by moving and singing, with no spoken instruction or directives.

Experiencing the whole first

A song is introduced by being sung in its entirety, with children free to join in at any time and in any way they wish. This allows children to respond according to their own developmental level. Music Together does not break songs into pieces and teach them a piece at a time.

Children's need for repetition

The music specialist recognizes children's need for repetition, yet will also introduce incremental variation—differences in tempo and dynamics, as well as simple substitutions—to provide experience over time with musical principles and improvisation.

Children's sensitive period for order

The music class provides certain ritual moments: the opening "Hello Song," the lullaby, and the closing song, "Goodbye, So Long, Farewell." These ritual activities provide a comforting predictability within the changing components of the week-to-week lesson plan.

What the young child experiences and takes in remains a part of the child, within his unconscious and conscious mind and memory for life!

- Music Together provides a rich musical experience, with twenty-five songs offered in each song collection. Children gain a repertoire of fifty to seventy-five songs a year—what a wonderful foundation for a life-long love of music and music-making!
- The Music Together curriculum builds a foundation for future music learning.

Musical comparing and contrasting

- Each Music Together collection includes a mix of original songs and traditional tunes from the folk, jazz, and world music traditions. This range of musical styles provides children with a rich music experience that stimulates and supports their growing music skills and understanding.