



Music Together® Aligns with the Strengthening Families Program

Music Together aligns with the Strengthening Families approach, which aims to reduce child neglect and abuse while promoting child development through enhancing families' strengths and fostering the following five protective factors:

Parental Resilience

- The Music Together curriculum provides parents with developmentally appropriate and fun music and movement activities and tools that support parent-child interactions, promote parenting skills, and build knowledge of children's developmental needs, fostering parents' sense of efficacy and confidence in their child-rearing abilities. By building a sense of empowerment through knowledge, parents feel they can interact with their children in healthy and promotive ways, even in the face of adversity and life stress.
- Research has shown that regular music-making can decrease depression, and that singing and movement can reduce stress and anxiety in both adults and children. The mitigating effects of music-making on these major mental health problems make participation in music activities an excellent supplement to appropriate mental health interventions and can even act as a preventive activity to relieve parental stress and foster resilience.

Social Connections

- The Music Together program builds "musical communities" by creating a link between the home, school, and surrounding community through participatory music classes that actively involve children, parents, teachers, caregivers and extended family members. Engaging in musical activities with other parents and children can help to build positive relationships within the family and surrounding community.
- Music Together can respond to the diverse needs of a variety of communities and populations. With the belief that music is an international language, the Music Together program has served families from many countries and cultures and incorporates a rich array of songs in each collection to represent the diversity in music and culture that exists across the globe. Translations of materials are available in multiple languages.

Concrete Support in Times of Need

- Music Together program providers have partnered with a variety of organizations and support services that work with children and families facing a wide array of obstacles and in need of various types and levels of support. Staff from these partner organizations are embraced by the Music Together teachers, and invited into the music-making community created through the curriculum. This inclusive model adds strength and cohesion in the total support system created through the Strengthening Families framework.
- Groups that have benefitted from the Music Together program include:
 - Teen parents and their infants
 - Mothers and children who are reuniting after separation due to abuse and neglect
 - Head Start/other preschool programs serving children from at-risk, low-income communities
 - Homeless families
 - Hearing- and speech-impaired children
 - Migrant workers and their families
 - Mothers and their infants born with fetal alcohol syndrome
 - Military families

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

- Through engaging and participatory music and movement activities, parents learn about child development and how to foster their own child's physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional growth, all in a fun and playful music environment.
- Music Together classes incorporate "education moments" for the adults, where teachers connect the Music Together curriculum with each child's current developmental stage. This provides parents and caregivers with helpful information on appropriate expectations and how to promote each child's development, both musical and overall.
- The Music Together program provides parents with the opportunity to interact with their child in sensitive and responsive ways, promoting the parent-child attachment relationship, which is essential to healthy child development.
- Supportive take-home materials give parents and caregivers accessible, important information about how and why specific music and movement activities are included in the class experience. Through this multi-week, multi-modal method of presentation, parents become aware of their own actions in modeling this music-making for and with their child. This, in turn, fosters their child's development musically and overall. These materials also enhance the learning environment at home.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

- As parental involvement is a cornerstone of the Music Together program, the curriculum supports young children's early development of self- and emotion-regulation by providing a platform for rich parent-child interactions through enjoyable music-making. These interactions support infants' and toddlers' developing self control and ability to self-soothe, and gives them experience in interpreting emotional cues from their parents or caregivers.
- Songs and rhythm activities engage children in experiences that develop their executive function skills, provide leadership opportunities and practice with turn-taking, and allow for self-expression, all while having fun in a non performance-oriented musical environment.
- Active engagement with music can have powerful positive effects on children's personal and social development that go beyond what can be measured. All children are musical, and being given the opportunity to participate in music at an early age and develop basic music competence allows them to experience the rewards of excelling in something early in life, nurturing self-esteem and motivation to learn. This experience can foster in children who have special needs or are at-risk academically a more positive outlook on their future.