



MUSIC MATTERS

A Newsletter for the Families Enrolled in the Music-in-the-Box Music Masters Program
WINTER SESSION 2008

“AS HE MASTERS EACH NEW SKILL HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE INCREASES...”

MARIA MONTESSORI

Celebrating Families

Music Matters At Home
Is a website for families with a musical twist!

www.musicmattersathome.com

We sell only the books, games and toys
that we have used and trusted
over the past 10 years.

If it says Music-in-the-Box, it's a product you can trust.

Why We Like Some Things More Than Others – A Look At Today's Books, Toys & Activities for Children Ages 0-6

By Ginger Acopiado & Meredith Haynes

TOYS: When we can, we choose Wood, Fabric and Metal. It's not that we don't like plastic, well - ok, we don't like plastic, but that doesn't mean we don't use it. We know it is relatively safe and more durable and makes children's toys easy to clean and inexpensive. It's just that we like natural toys better.

We like the look, feel and smell of wood - yes it has to be sanded smooth to avoid splinters, but it waxes nostalgic to see that little cloth lined basket filled with various shapes of wooden blocks just waiting to be transformed into the next sky-scraper or magical structure only a child's mind can see.

We love the gentle touch of felt, cotton or the cool smoothness of silk. Our scarves may need a little more care than their polyester counterparts, but which would you rather slide over that new baby's skin? Worth the time to put them into a lingerie bag and lay them flat to dry? We think so.

You may have noticed many of our activities include a felt set. We love felt for its washability and for the way all ages enjoy them. And

felt toys are so fabulously portable - just throw them in a little bag and you are good to go.



Natural fabrics and textures are an integral part of the world your children live in and part of the beauty around them. You can see a piece of raw cotton and talk about the transformation it makes to become the doll or

stuffed toy your child carries everywhere. You can show a child a tree and marvel at the wood the tree gives us - to saw, to sand, to carve until that little toy train is painted and put on the track. Metal allows you to use magnets and feel the cool surface that was created from something special in the ground. It's hard to do that with plastic. So for us, when in doubt, natural wins out!

BOOKS: It's hard not to love books, and any book that makes a child want to read is magical - whether it be a beautifully illustrated classic or a computer-generated mass-produced commercial character - we try hard not to be snobbish about books. We know that children who love books, want to learn to read books, and children who want to learn to read more often than not, read - read well - and go on to do well in school. But are some books better than others? We think so.

Musical picture books, song books and books that have a distinct rhythmic cadence are our first choice when choosing books for very young children. In fact, it has become one of the cornerstones of the Music Masters program.

**Many Park Districts Are Now
Registering Music Masters
For Summer
Don't Miss - Register Early**

**Libertyville, Barrington, Gurnee, Vernon Hills,
Lindenhurst & Lake Zurich locations only.**

A child's ability to become involved with a book is one of the keys to their developing a love of books at an early age. Children more easily memorize songs than prose, and gravitate for a reason to rhyming or repetitive books. These characteristics allow your child to be successful when "reading" to you. And studies show, the more the adults ooh and aaahhh over a child's reading, the more the child wants to read, and the love affair with books begins.

Beautiful art is a gift you give your child. Our age of computer generated artwork leaves out many soft and lovely details from the scenes within a lot of today's children's books. The publisher's goal is to produce books fast and inexpensively.



Notice the books in our library, while there will be a spattering of computer generated books - that make sense to us for their use of lyric or rhyme, you will find a lovely selection of beautifully drawn picture books that illustrate classic songs or poems from eras gone by. For example: The Dinosaurs Went Marching - a Music-in-the-Box, Inc. exclusive publication - is computer generated and lively - simple fun dinosaurs that will not scare or intimidate and are intended to help children learn to count from one to ten - with a few fun dino-facts thrown in to make learning fun for everyone. In contrast, the book My Favorite Things - an illustrated version of an old-fashioned classic song - embodies lovely art with beautiful music. Both are favorites of ours - but for completely different reasons.

Whether you create a library for your child with Barney or Eric Carle, we know you can't go wrong with books - when you listen to them, explore them, and especially when you share them - books are the best gift you can give your young child, along with your time together.

FIVE WAYS TO DO MUSIC AT HOME
By Meredith Haynes

We hope you take the activities from class and do them at home! Here are five ways to experience the Music Masters magic throughout the week:

1. Bring out your rhythm instruments and sing "I can shake adagio (egg shaker or bells) like this, oh..." and see if your child responds. Remember all the senses—how does it feel? Do you hear with your nose?! What is it's shape and color?
2. Use a mirror to play with emotions and body parts. "Show me a happy face! Show me a sad face!"
3. Wait an extra moment and see if your child will do the work themselves—When doing "Rain, Rain Go Away," hesitate and see if he will pull the scarf off himself.
4. One family I know uses the "See the Little Bunnies" song to go up the stairs to bed—what fun! The sleeping songs are an excellent avenue of mastery—just think of it...your child is able to control his body by laying down and jumping up on an exact beat. Incredible!
5. Don't forget to march! Put on our Clap, Clap, Clap from Carole Peterson's Sticky Bubblegum CD or any other rousing song and march around the house. Make it a parade with hats, instruments, and friends. Turn it into a chance for leadership by letting your child be the leader.

The Pre-School Dilemma
How Do You Choose?

By Ginger Acopiado

(This is an edited version of the Winter 1 Session article for 2004. We update and run this article each spring to help our moms during this challenging transition from home to school.)

What an adventure finding a pre-school was for our family! I really didn't know there would be such stress over what initially seemed such a natural and easy choice. In retrospect, I thought I would just pick the school my son's friends were going to attend or the schools attended by older siblings of those friends. In reality, something very different happened. I began to care about specific things for my son, things that were different from those of friends and family.

My sister wanted socialization for her children, but my son had a large weekly playgroup and several friends we saw almost daily. My neighbor wanted religion in school, yet that came naturally in our daily routine, so it became less important to my choice of school. I was concerned we needed diversity since my son was surrounded by children mostly like him and I wanted him to learn more about other people and their cultures.

As my son turned 3, I watched my reticent clingy toddler turn into a talkative, creative, and dramatic little boy with a sparkle in his eye and mischief in his genes. Which school would understand that child best? Who could spark his academic interest if I couldn't?

So I opened the phone book, made a list and started to grill anyone who would talk to me about pre-schools in the area. Weren't all pre-schools the same? Why were some so much more expensive than others? Someone suggested I visit some of the schools in the area to see what was offered. I am so glad I did.

Upon visiting the many centers in the area, I found vast differences in philosophy and practices:

- *Some schools parents are welcome visitors or aides, and others find parent disrupt the classroom flow.*
- *Some have you bring in your child. Some have you drop them off to a teacher in the drop off zone.*
- *Some schools foster social development while exposing academics in group settings.*
- *Some allow for individual development while exposing socialization in group activities.*
- *And some focus on academia, with social skills as a background side benefit, just for being part of a group.*
- *And the list goes on...*

I decided I needed a checklist of my son's strengths and weaknesses, as well as a "desires" list of my own.

After months of classroom visits, with and without my son, I finally found the school that was right for us. And though I did have to give in on one or two of the items on my wish list, I

found it to be the one that I could live with most or do more with at home. We were done. We had a school. And it was good for us.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE CLASSROOM:

CIRCLE TIME: Is it used for instruction or for group fun? Why is that important to you? Does your child get any current exposure to circle time in other activities? Does your child work well in group settings or require more individual instruction.

WORK TABLES: Are children placed at tables at the same time for instruction or free to explore other areas of the room when others are at the table? Is there enough space for everyone if it were required? Are they allowed to move on when finished or stay until all are finished? Which do you favor and why? *(Ex: Some parents feel waiting with the group teaches teamwork and self-control. Others feel it restricts a child's inner drive to explore their environment and continue learning when in a workflow.)*

ARTS & CRAFT: Do the children spend a large part of their school time on activities that produce great visuals for parents, but little benefit to development? Are art projects creative? Who does most of the work, the child? or the teacher in preparation? Art is a creative outlet. Look for schools that encourage creative expression if that is important to your family.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES: Are enrichments like gymnastics and music available to the children? Are they allowed to go outside, weather permitting, for a small portion of class time? If not, does your child need a physical outlet? Is this important to you based on your own lifestyle?

CREATIVE EXPRESSION: Are the children controlled by the environment, or does the environment welcome creative input or activity? *(Ex: Can your child take off their shoes and wear slippers? Are any parts of the day child-directed?)*

DISCIPLINE: How are children asked to resolve the issue surrounding the need for discipline? Socially? Consequentially? How is a disruptive child turned into a cooperative one? Is there a place a child can go to in order to regain composure? *(Ex: Do you want the room to have a quiet corner when a child feels they need to remove themselves or be alone to gain control.)*

LIFE SKILLS: Are the children active participants in maintaining the classroom, the items within the room and the world around the room? Are there live animals? Are there responsibilities each child is required to tend during a part of every day? Is this important to you? Are there allergies to consider?



CLASSROOM TOOLS: Are the “tools” in the classroom build on learning or development or are they play items? (Ex: Use of tongs to move items from one place to another aid in the writing muscle development. Eye droppers also do this. Tactile sandpaper for allows kinesthetic learners to connect touch with sound earlier than verbal instruction.)

Social play and relationship learning includes: doll houses, blocks, and other common toys found in the home. Do you already engage your child academically at home and prefer a social setting for building relationship skills? Are televisions in the classroom? Would that bother you?

QUIET SPACE: Where does a child go to separate themselves from group activities that are overwhelming? Is there somewhere with comforting items such as pillows and books? Does your child need this or do you want this for your child?

RELIGION: Is it an integral part of the curriculum? Do children learn about and acknowledge all religious holidays or just religions specific to one denomination? Is it the same as yours or similarly modeled? How important is this to you and your family?

AGE / TOILET TRAINING: Is there a minimum age requirement or a minimum toilet-learning requirement?

TIMES/LOCATION: Is the school in a location convenient to you for the times you need to be available to other children in your family or your work schedule? Are you allowed to pick your days or are they decided by age/ability? Do you choose your days and times, or is there an age-related schedule preset by the school?

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION: While observing the classroom with your child, did he/she immediately want to explore the room? Did you like what you saw? Did your child? Did you get a sense of “rightness” that fit your expectations? Or did something just seem “not quite right” to you? It’s a good idea to pay attention to your instincts - if something doesn’t feel right, ask

questions and don’t force yourself to dismiss your feelings because of friends or other people’s choices.

No one can tell you which school will be right for you, but many will try. Nod politely, take your time, make your checklist, visit the schools that are within your budget (and maybe one just a little outside it to see why) and trust yourself. You are the only one that can decide what best suits the needs of your family and your child.

Let us know if you found this article helpful or if you have a preschool search tip or success story you would like to share. Email us at info@musicinthebox.com.

We are looking for teachers for Fall 2008. If you know of someone who would be great at teaching a Music Masters program, please have them call us at 847-573-1901.

Teachers are especially needed in DuPage, Kane and Cook County as we continue to grow. The park districts are calling us - now all we need is you to make it happen. If you refer a teacher that we hire or you teach for us yourself, you will get both fall Music Masters sessions free! That’s up to a \$150 value!!!!



Group Instrument - A Great Way To Begin. In order to better make the transition from Music Masters to instrument instruction, consider Music Masters 4: Group Instrument program for ages 3-6.

The change in focus centers on smaller steps for mastery and allows every child to fall in love with the instrument they will play at the earliest stages of learning.

Based on the Suzuki philosophy of “Every Child Can”, we believe positive early successes lead to motivated musicians. With learning stations to entice participants who are waiting for their one-on-one lesson at the instrument, we ensure less down time, and more engaged children.

Our proven music games focus on notation, dynamics and muscle memory, easing the transition from developing the musical ear to reading notes on the page.

Take this class first, then sign up for your favorite private instructor. You’ll be amazed at how much easier and more fun it is when your child has bought into the idea that they *can* learn to play. Don’t have a favorite Suzuki method teacher, we’ll turn you on to one of ours!

For a location near you or to find out how to bring this class to your Suzuki Studio, call us at: 847-573-1901 or visit us online at www.musicinthebox.com

