



# SANTA ROSA AREA MUSIC TOGETHER NEWS

A newsletter for Music Together families in Santa Rosa, Windsor, and Healdsburg.

Volume VI, Issue I ♦ Winter 2010



**A Big Thank You** to all who purchased instruments last fall from Mudpie Productions. Your purchases helped our scholarship fund! Hopefully you're happy with your new instruments, and they'll give your children hours of enjoyment. Remember, private donations to the fund are always appreciated and needed also.

## How Babies and Young Children Learn (or, "Why doesn't my child participate in class?")

### A Life of Music

-by Lynne Ransom, DMA  
Director of Program Development, Music Together LLC

You, as a parent, are important to your child in many ways. In terms of music you have the potential to offer your child a hobby and artistic pursuit he or she can enjoy now and throughout life. Let's look at ways children participate in music, beginning with older children whose accomplishments are easily observable.

**Five- and six-year-olds** in the "Big Kids Family Music" class sing songs, make up rhythms and tunes, conduct the group during jam sessions, and improvise solos on cue. They have favorite activities—some like the challenging games and large movement activities, others like xylophones. If established early, their musical interests and preferences usually continue through high school—they wouldn't think of giving up music, because for them, making music has become a natural part of life. How do these musical accomplishments and preferences develop? They begin in infancy, and actually before birth.

**Infants** actually begin hearing from weeks 20–24 *in utero*. When born, they are both comforted and stimulated by music, especially when their parents sing to them. Infants are "all ears" until their sense of sight develops. They respond to the direction of music, the timbre and mood, the rhythm and pitch. You might see a baby smile, kick, babble, focus his eyes, or move his tongue when being sung to.

**Toddlers and twos** primarily imitate and explore, in contrast to **three- and four-year-olds** who play purposefully with music. These older children are often invited to pick songs to sing, choose instruments, make up verses, and help collect instruments. The older child's leadership is interesting to the infants and toddlers in the class. At ages three and four, music allows a child to express his developing personality.

And how about the adults who bring the children to class? Julie Roskies of Princeton, NJ says, "Music Together has given our whole family so many new songs to enjoy. We sing together at home, in the car...all the time!"



As young children, we learn by experiencing examples of life skills going on around us, then processing what we see, then attempting to imitate it. This imitation is really practice, and it's how we finally learn to master skills. Children really teach *themselves* through play, picking up what they're developmentally ready to practice and learn. With rich examples to draw from, this informal style of learning is the most powerful for a young child. This is true for language, too, and it's a process that takes time. Our class time provides the rich exposure needed for your child's own practice at home.

I often hear, "my child just sits in class, but at home he sings, dances, and does everything!" This is actually what we teachers expect our students to do. This is how your child will acquire music skills. It's less usual for a child to attempt his "skills practice" in class; this is usually done at home, especially when a child is new to the program (in the first year of classes). Sometimes children jump in and imitate us right away, but much more commonly they sit and watch, or move all around seeming not to pay attention! Please don't mistake this "lack of participation" for a lack of enjoyment; your child is just trying to process this stimulating experience to which he is being exposed. He'll show you what he is getting out of the class by his engagement with you musically at home! We never gauge a child's music development by what we see him do in class. If I want to know what's happening musically for your child, I will ask you "what's he doing at home?"

So, don't worry. If your child is not engaging musically in class but engages musically at home, he is right on track! Please, keep the music coming from YOU daily, and appreciate your child's learning without giving him verbal instruction. I invite you to trust the process, notice what your child is doing, and enjoy it!



### Re-registration News...

- **Spring Classes!** Spring session will run from Monday, March 29 through Monday, June 7 (10 wks). (There's an extra Monday because we're skipping Memorial Day.) We'll offer the same class schedule for spring as we have now.
- **Priority registration** has begun! Register by March 5 with priority status. If you register in this period, you will be guaranteed your spot for spring session. Pre-registration materials have been emailed, and will be available in class - read these materials carefully! You may pre-register by check or online. **If you wish to change your class day or time in the spring, registering early in the priority period will put you in the best position to get your first choice to switch.**
- **Why continue in music classes anyway?** Most families choose to keep their children in classes for several sessions, because the development of music skills, like language development, is ongoing; continuing to build in a deep way with focused experiences. Brain research shows us that music aptitude can actually increase or decrease depending on environment. In other words "use it or lose it!" The brain is making important neural connections in early childhood that must continue to be exercised so they're not "pruned". In classes, you can be sure your child will have exposure to a meaningful and powerful group music-making experience each week!

If you have questions regarding your child's musical progress please ask your teacher, or call me (Ginger). I love to help parents interpret what's happening for their children from a developmental standpoint - it's such an amazing journey to watch your child grow through!



Please look at the back page for important session dates.



## “Homeplay” Like homework without the work! Here are some ideas just for fun:

### I) Time out for play:

- This week, do “Rig-a-jig-jig” at home at least one time without the CD. Try making up some new verses for it, using things you do in your lives around home. Remember to just do it yourself, even if your child isn’t participating with you. It helps your child just to see your example of spontaneous music making!
- Play “Play Along” with instruments (if you don’t have many, use some “kitchen” ones), and watch your child’s reaction. Let yourself really listen to it and get into it, regardless of what your child is doing.

**Important:** When you do a musical activity at home, whether scarf-dancing, playing instruments, whatever, **see the song through to the end even if your child is not participating with you!!** If you stop, perhaps feeling frustrated that your child isn’t engaging in that moment, your child will notice!! This will teach two things: 1) making music isn’t something worth sticking with for your own enjoyment, and 2) your child will think his/her participation is the only reason you make music (it may actually be, but it’s better to send the message that it’s something **you** do for fun!!). You’re the role model!

### II) Fun with daily routines:

- At bath time, chant “The Snail and the Mouse” while crawling your fingers slowly on your child like the snail or fast and tickly like the mouse (or use a toy). Make up new words - think of other animals that move in contrasting ways to each other. Have fun with it!
- The next time you are picking up toys or doing some other repetitive motion, sing a rhythmic song such as “John the Rabbit” or “She Sells Sea Shells” and turn the job into a music time, popping toys away on the beat! Maybe your child will even join in with you...
- The songs “Sneak and Peek” and “Roll Over” can be very engaging for little ones. Try using one of them this week while you’re doing a diaper change-it may stop a wiggly baby or toddler long enough to do the job quickly! If your child is no longer in diapers, sing them while dressing or putting on shoes.

### III.) Songbook Activity:

- Point out pictures in the book that relate to this week’s class (instruments, animals, etc.) Talk about seeing/doing those things in class as you look in the songbook. Sing or chant a song or two while you’re at it!
- Sit with your child and your songbook, and find the “Pussycat” picture (pg. 22). Point out the different parts of the picture. Make up new words to the song from the picture. (“Little girl, little girl where I have you been?”, etc.) It’s fun to tap the beat onto the picture while you sing. Notice what’s on the wall in that picture; maybe you can recite “Hey Diddle Diddle” while you’re at it! Or, find any one of your favorite songs or rhymes in the book and sing it to your child while tapping the rhythm of the song or rhyme on the page. Point out the pictures that go with it too. You can do this while the song is playing on the stereo or not.



### Spring Song Collection

Coming up in spring we’ll be using the TAMBOURINE song collection. This is a really strong one (a fave of mine), with many songs sure to become huge favorites like “See the Pony Galloping” and “Old Brass Wagon!”

### Evaluations and E-mails

We love to hear how your MT experience is going, so I give out an evaluation form each session. To save paper, I send evaluations by e-mail, and I have also posted a form on the home page of my website you can print, fill out and bring in. Go to:

[www.santarosamusictogether.com](http://www.santarosamusictogether.com)

#### We hope to hear from you!

About e-mails, I occasionally send them; a link to the make-up scheduler, evaluations, etc. In a given session, I maybe send three. If I don’t have your email address and you’d like to be able to be connected this way, please tell me, so I can get you on the list. You can email me at [gingerparish@netzero.net](mailto:gingerparish@netzero.net) or give your teacher your email address in class. Thanks!

### Important end-of-session dates:

#### Monday, Feb. 22:

Start of Priority Registration for currently enrolled families for Winter 2010 session

#### Friday March 5:

Last day of Priority Registration for currently enrolled families for Winter 2010.

#### Monday - Friday, March 8-12:

Last week of classes for Winter 2010 session.

#### Wednesday March 17:

Make-up Wednesday for Star Tom’s canceled classes from Jan. 27.

#### Monday, March 29:

Spring 2010 session begins!

### Music Together Growth Charts

As our winter session nears its end, I hope you have had a wonderful time with the Drum collection. This winter you received the new Music Together Growth Chart from your teacher (if you somehow missed getting one, please ask!). I hope you will take the time to read through it and identify some of the musical milestones that you and your child may have experienced, as well as see what fun lies upon the path ahead.

As you can see, a child’s musical development takes place over the course of many years. This developmental journey is best supported in an environment that provides many opportunities for musical exposure and experimentation -and where their most cherished adults share in the fun as well. We are grateful that you have allowed us to be a part of your child’s journey and look forward to supporting it over the years to come. Our teachers are well-trained in the area of children’s musical development, so please do not hesitate to contact any of us if you have any questions or music development stories to share!



### Scheduling Make-Ups

Go to: [www.santarosamusictogether.com](http://www.santarosamusictogether.com)  
You’ll find where to click on the home page...

*Don’t wait!!* They get filled at the end of the session!! The scheduler is best, but if you can’t do it online, you can call Andrea McFadin at 836-7786 to set one up by phone (don’t email us for a make-up please!!) Thanks!