


ALL TOGETHER NOW!

A Guide to Teaching Mixed Ages

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This *Guide to Teaching Mixed Ages* provides information for music and movement classes for children ages birth to kindergarten. *All Together Now!* classes offer families with more than one child in this age group the opportunity to attend music class together. The classes are filled with a great variety of music and movement activities to meet children's developmental needs, to hold the children's interest in the group setting, and to bring families together.

Musikgarten instructions for mixed age classes begin with the core age group, ages 1 – 3, and then provide **Adaptations** for babies and **Extensions** for preschoolers. This Guide explains the format of mixed age classes and features adaptations and extensions that will make your classes for mixed ages successful.

Please consult the Musikgarten **Music and Movement Series** for detailed information about working with each age group: babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. The Teacher Guides

Family Music for Babies

Family Music for Toddlers

The Cycle of Seasons (for children ages 3 to 5)

cover areas of music learning and overall child development and contain many appropriate music and movement activities as well as lesson suggestions.

Introduction

All Together Now! offers parents, teachers, and children musical opportunities for sharing time with one another — in ways that are both engaging and appropriate to children’s development. Modern life can be overly complicated and stress-filled for parents and children alike. *All Together Now!* classes provide a relaxed environment for families to come together and “practice” what it’s like to enjoy being with each other. As music educators it becomes our privilege to help families rediscover the simple joys of raising children.

For Parents

Mixed age classes

- allow families with limited time to all come to the same class.
- help parents with early walkers feel more comfortable with their child who is no longer a lap baby, and not yet a solid toddler.
- are sometimes perceived by parents as having a broader acceptance level with fewer expectations. A wider span of ages brings with it a wider variety of behaviors.
- give parents an opportunity to observe their children’s behaviors with other children of similar and contrasting age.
- give families an opportunity to develop a shared repertoire of music and childhood games.
- meet the specific preference of some families who do not have childcare options for younger children.

For Teachers

Mixed age classes

- are ideal for new studios since teachers can offer mixed ages until they have sufficient interest to form classes of separate ages.
- present a welcome change of program for summer.
- add variety and new possibilities to existing programs.
- offer an expanded opportunity for building community among families.
- can be used as a recruiting tool that leads to regular classes.
- are an efficient way to add one more class.

For Children

Mixed age classes

- provide opportunities for younger children to learn more advanced language and movement possibilities from older children.
- give children a chance to learn social skills by seeing how various ages respond. Younger children can observe older children, which encourages preschoolers to develop leadership skills before going to school.
- allow children – whose various skills naturally develop at different rates – to feel comfortable in many areas.

Principles of Musikgarten Pedagogy

The primary goal for Musikgarten publications is to enable families to actively make music together in their homes. All children when given a musical environment will find their own unique ways to make music, especially when other family members join in. Playing together musically is the perfect medium for families to grow together, especially in our world so replete with be-alone activities.

Nothing pleases young children more than having a parent/caregiver share an experience; this positive contact and interaction with a caring adult is the single most important ingredient for the child's healthy development. The adult has the privilege of observing how the magic of music, movement, and song come together and realizing that the simplicity of activities is so very appropriate and enjoyable.

All children are musical.

All children have an inborn ability to sing and move rhythmically. Music is a part of every culture around the world, and, given the opportunity, all people sing, dance, and make music.

When children move to musical sounds, they are communicating something about their feelings and perceptions of the world. Body movement is a natural outlet for expressing their feelings and is probably closer to human expression than any other we know. Long before children can articulate this in language, they communicate much more effectively with body language. Observing the musical response in movement permits the observer a privileged glimpse of the inner world of childhood.

Research and experience tell us that the earlier a child is in an environment of active music-making, the more likely the child's inborn musical talent will be awakened and developed. Children feel encouraged to make music freely and naturally when surrounded by music and musical instruments.

Music meets the needs of children.

Music-making is active and joyful! Psychological studies tell us that positive motivation in a pleasant environment is the child's primary motivation for learning. Moving to music, playing instruments, and listening to music are all naturally joyful experiences for children and adults to experience together.

Play is the work of children! In Musikgarten publications we share with you a collection of songs and rhymes for musical play that children and adults have shared for generations. They come from our own culture and many others and have a natural attraction for children through their beauty and opportunity for movement.

Music makes a difference.

Music once again is being valued as part of a well-rounded education. Researchers, teachers, parents, and educational leaders are all coming to the same conclusion: music makes a significant difference in the lives of children. Music encourages overall development, decreases learning problems, and enhances brain functioning – all in a learning environment that fosters the building of community. Through music we address the whole child – body, mind, and spirit.

Make music with the whole family.

The time to start is early childhood; the place is in the family. Home is the first and most important school for a child, and involved parents are the most effective teachers for children.

Many well-meaning parents have been led to put their faith in sophisticated “things,” rather than to trust their own natural instincts. Things have supplanted the simple joys of being and doing together. In our time there is increasing public recognition of the benefits of music for children and their families, an exciting breakthrough for early childhood music. Music is an effortless and productive vehicle through which families can grow together musically.

Choose worthwhile music – music worth remembering.

In selecting music that exemplifies the best of childhood, Musikgarten is dedicated to passing on those cherished songs and rhymes of our shared heritages. We purposefully choose folk literature that has survived the test of time, giving today’s children traditional songs, rhymes, and games that will be remembered and are worth remembering!

Offer learning with a goal.

Music activities are chosen for the children’s enjoyment as well as for the purposes they serve in building a foundation for music learning and childhood development. From bouncing activities to dances and circle games, every activity is carefully considered for its function within the lesson. Teachers can be assured of the attention to detail as well as the balanced approach to childhood learning that is found in every lesson plan. Musical play and fun serve as ideal tools for fostering children’s overall and musical development.

Repetition is essential to learning.

Research has demonstrated that activities must be offered more than once or twice a week in order to impact a child’s development, making repetition of activities during the week imperative. Family materials are designed to facilitate this repetition, so encourage your parents to use these materials often – they *will* make a difference in their children’s lives!

“Follow the child.”

An intuitive observer of children, Dr. Maria Montessori wrote these words at the beginning of the 20th century. At the beginning of the 21st century, we acknowledge her wisdom once again and urge you to learn from the child in order to better understand the nature of childhood.

Practical Considerations

- Ages of children: from birth to kindergarten
- Accompanying adults: each child with an adult partner; siblings may be with one adult

- Number of children
 - Beginning teachers may wish to start with 3 or more families
 - Up to 12-15 children, each child/or group of siblings with an adult partner
 - For one teacher with an assistant, up to 20-25 children, each child/or group of siblings with an adult partner

- Length of lessons: 35 to 50 minutes
 - If the class is primarily babies and toddlers, 35-40 minutes is desirable.
 - If the class includes a few older children, 40-50 minutes including an instrument discovery time is practical.

- Room
 - Classroom size helps determine how many children can freely participate in class. There must be enough room for all to move around comfortably.
 - Establish a listening corner with CD player with good sound production.
 - Provide for storage of instruments out of sight and reach of the children. Baskets are ideal for small instruments.

- Equipment
 - Rhythm sticks – one pair for each participant
 - Rattles – one for each participant
 - Scarves – one for each participant
 - Jingles – two per participant (except babies, see p. 9)
 - Drums – as many as possible, ideally one per child
 - Resonator bars – at least d' and a', when possible a full D-Major octave, tenor range, on the Musikgarten tray
 - A variety of small percussion instruments for Instrument Time

- Scheduling
 - Most classes will be scheduled once per week; weeks per session are determined by each teacher. Musikgarten publications are flexible and easily accommodate 8 to 10 week sessions, as well as 12 to 16 week sessions.

For summer or vacation programs, consider the following possibilities:

- 2 lessons per week for 4 weeks (a one-month program)
- 4 lessons per week for 2 weeks (a more concentrated program)

Lesson Suggestions

Lessons are designed for children ages birth to kindergarten with an adult partner. Each lesson is 35-50 minutes long and provides a balance of structure and flexibility. When planning lessons, consider the following ideas:

- Carefully choose and sequence activities according to the developmental needs of the children.
- Intersperse active and quiet times to suit the children's growing capacities to listen, to inhibit their movements, and then to relax and move about.
- Attempt to achieve a balance of movement, vocal development, listening, and instrument playing instrument activities.
- Sing most songs unaccompanied.
- Choose moderate tempi to encourage active participation.
- Take as many suggestions from the children as possible.
- In most of the activities encourage interaction between adults and children; also include activities that encourage independence as well as group participation.

Lessons include the following important elements:

- Greeting Song in which each child is named.
- Variety of movement activities: bouncing, finger plays, body awareness, stationary movement, traveling movement, singing games.
- Unstructured dance to recorded music.
- Several activities that involve steady beat.
- Variety of vocal development activities: easy-to-sing songs, call-and-respond songs, songs for adults to sing for their children, voice building activities, chanting.
- Rhythm and tonal echo patterning games.
- Variety of repertoire in terms of meter as well as tonality.
- Listening experiences that include sounds from the environment, human and non-human voices, folk music, and classical music. See p. 14 for additional information about Concert Time.
- Playing instruments and working with accessories such as hoops and scarves. See p. 12 for additional information about Instrument Time.
- Ample opportunities for children to improvise through body gestures and ways of moving, adding verses to songs, and exploring ways to play instruments.
- Closing song.