



Family Music for Toddlers – Semester 2, Week 10 to 12

Dear Teachers,

Like any fun experience, when you are in the midst of it, you are barely aware of the time. So it goes for teaching toddler music classes. The class continues week by week with happy, growing toddlers, parents that have included music in their weekly schedule, and a curriculum that seems to come up with a new song just when it's the right time for it. By the middle of April I bet many of you are coming to the middle of the semester of teaching this program. Congratulations! I hope you can list the wonderful moments in your class as well as the experiences that became a learning opportunity for you as a new teacher. Often I enjoy writing down the sweet moments on my card so I can read my encouraging words year after year of teaching this program. I also love to write down unexpected or spontaneous variations of the activity on my activity cards, and I am then creating an ever changing, ever growing resource of music activities that will shape my classes and make them uniquely mine.

This is the time of year to consider your future classes. Sit down with your list of participants and ask this question, "What is next for this child?" Remember, retention is much easier than enrolling new families. However, don't assume your parents are holding a spot in next year's schedule. Now is the time to set up your schedule and then individually invite each family back to the program. After class I pull different parents aside and ask what their plans are for the Fall. I have been sending out communiqués this semester, and now I hand them my schedule for the Fall. I want to hear whether they are planning to include me. I say, "I really want YOUR children in my classes next year." Parents need to hear this. I have observed parents change their plans so they can continue to attend my classes. This can happen to you too. Some teachers place their Fall Class rosters on their studio wall and ask the parents to sign up for the class they wish to join. This way they can see where their friends are signing up and like lemmings jumping off a cliff, they sign up. HOWEVER, I then remind them by email to complete the registration by going online (I provide them with a link) and registering as well as paying the DEPOSIT to hold that spot in class. This is always the hardest part. Every parent is SURE YOU WILL REMEMBER THAT THEY PROMISED TO JOIN, NO NEED FOR A DEPOSIT.... DON'T FALL FOR IT! Make it clear, a deposit is the ONLY way they will reserve a spot in that treasured music class this fall.

But beware the family that asks you to create a class on Fridays at 2:15.... This is often code for, "Your class is low priority. We are booked to the max. I am interested in your class, but I don't know how to say no to any entertaining class I see." When I was a first time teacher, I would go out of my way to book this class, advertise, talk other parents into it and then when it came to starting, that particular family would not register. Your schedule can accommodate, but it also needs to fit your life and the normal flow of toddlers. Toddlers are ornery in the early afternoons. This being said you are welcome to try the pajama class or a class that coincides with an older sibling drop-off class after school.



The flow of classes should feel easier to you by now. There are fewer songs to learn all at once and you have a chance to repeat songs in class. New songs and activities are becoming easier to teach and expand. Here is what is coming up in the next few weeks:

Week 10

Dance With Me

Hey, My Kitten is a bouncing song that can explore side to side, forward and backwards, and rolling all the way to the floor. I repeat this often and the children love this song. *I Love Little Kitty* is a wonderful, calming contrast to this song and a needed breather between repeats.

Week 11

Cat meowing and cat purring - When I begin a listening example I like to make sure the children know what the sound is. "Can you hear that cat meowing? I bet that cat is hungry." Then I play the example and make no sound, also stopping myself from any restless movement. I make sure the parents also stop moving and talking. I do the same for the purring example. If I get a moment of silence I like to extend it beyond the example just for a moment.

I See you is one of many peek- a-boo scarf games. I like to let the children first explore the scarves, verbalizing what I see happening in the room. Then I bring the focus back to me hiding behind my scarf. I don't put it on my head but drape it in front of me. I do this for hygienic reasons. I hope you are regularly washing your scarves, and I find they last longer if I put them in a protective "lingerie" bag. The words, "Ti ra la" are my cue to hide behind my scarf and dance around.

Hey Lolly is such a wonderful stick play! It is fun to create a verse based on each child's name. I enjoy copying their special sound with their sticks if possible.

Week 12

Stretch Up High – Be sure you express each line in movement. Repeat this verse two or three times. Then silently speak the verse with the movement. Go slowly enough so that the children can follow.

Hey! Let's Dance Together – this song re-appears in the keyboard program. Although I love to find an opportunity for the children and adults to form a circle, often the children prefer to be up in their caregiver's arms. That's fine. We can still walk in the circle and tap the parts of the body as the verse directs.

Next time we will finish the lesson suggestions for Dance With Me.

Happy teaching,

Ellen Johansen