



Family Music for Toddlers – Semester 2, Week 1 to 3

Dear Teachers,

I hope you had a wonderful time teaching *Sing with Me*. What will you teach next? There is no particular order of units, so I am choosing to move on to *Dance with Me*.

Each program follows the same format (a weekly thirty-fourty minute lesson), with a balanced mixture of stationary movement, travel movements, body awareness, pattern games, etc. Some teachers choose to adapt and re-arrange the lesson suggestions. I have never found it necessary.

Will this semester be the same teaching experience as the last? It should feel more comfortable as your voice has shaped up, and the flow of the class takes a life of its own. Hopefully you have a core of families that will return for another set of classes, and they are also familiar with the pace of the program. I bet you are beginning to sense a pace that works in your room, and perhaps you have discovered that sharing music with toddlers and their families is just plain fun. You have handed out a new CD or downloadable music recordings, and the parents tend to sigh with relief. However, please continue to include favorites from last semester. Play the new music recordings as often as possible so that you are familiar to the song arrangements the children and parents are listening to at home. You may notice the tempos of some the songs are faster on the recordings than you will sing in class. Keep your tempos slower in class. I often have to SLOW my inner tempo and quiet my singing voice.

To help transition from old to new I have added a card in my lesson plan that says, "Favorite Song". On some weeks I ask the parents for a song suggestion from the previous semester. The parents are often more comfortable singing these songs in the midst of all new songs. On other weeks I choose a song that I feel like singing – it's a good model for the parents to choose a song to sing just because you want to! Singing a favorite song is part of the simple joys of being and doing activities together with children. And repetition is essential to learning. It is necessary for memorization, and children welcome and enjoy repeating an action, a song or a story because it allows them to experience it again. Children do not remember an activity if it happens only once. For toddlers "doing it again" is a real pleasure,.

Week 1

The Little Rider - Bouncing children to the beat on outstretched legs is an important steady beat development activity. This song gives us plenty of opportunity to bounce. First we bounce slowly and sing (lots of words in this song so make sure you rehearse this before class). Then repeat at tempo. Good luck finding a spot to take a breath! If you find it easier, bounce with the recording.

Round and Round the Garden – I enjoy singing this very quietly, focusing on the movement of my finger on my stuffed animal's hand. Quiet activities are powerful tools in a classroom of toddlers. As I sing



"one step, two step" I slow it down creating anticipation and then tickle my animal's chin for the final line. Learning to wait is taught in a fun way here. I usually repeat this finger play 6 or 7 times.

Do as I'm Doing - First sing without sticks and model actions that you will use with the sticks. You can model tapping with two fingers, rubbing, clapping and kissing the ends of the sticks. Then take out the sticks and give the children time to explore the sticks. Encourage the parents to verbalize what the children are doing with their sticks. "Tom, you are rubbing your sticks." "Mary, you are rolling your sticks." Then repeat the verses with the sticks.

I Went to Visit a Farm – can be introduced as a story. I enjoy telling the children that we are going on an adventure and we will need our splashing boots because the farm will have lots of mud. I will put on my imaginary boots and put on my imaginary coat and start walking to the farm. We walk, run, splash, hop, etc. and then as we are walking I sing the song. I stop and point to the animal I am singing about and then we all make the sounds. This can go on and on. I find the activity works better on our feet. However it can also be done sitting as a conversational type of event.

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep – is a familiar song, and I expect all the moms to sing along. For variety I like to change the color of the sheep.

Week 2

This week is essentially a repeat of week 1. It gives you a week to breath, and it gives times for the parents and children to become familiar with the new songs and activities. You can repeat each song exactly as you did them last week, or you can add extensions as described in the teacher guidebook. Either way, the comfort level should be higher in the room.

Below are some expansions you can consider:

The Little Rider – Last week we bounced with children on our out-stretched legs. Before I repeat this song I may ask the children if they want to go for a ride on a horse, or with older children, ask them what color horse they would like to ride today. Parents may need to encourage a response. I love hearing different colors from the children as well as the popular request for the elusive "Rainbow" horse. This week is an excellent time to use the recording by galloping along with child in tow. Expect groans from the adults. I also enjoy bringing out a wood block and giving the children turns playing the instrument as we sing along. Another expansion can be actually galloping around the room. I first like to experience different ways the horse can move: Walking, Trotting, Galloping. I like to end the movement with a long WOOAH! As we lean back holding our reins. This can be done standing or on the floor as we all roll back while gripping their imaginary reins.

Round and Round the Garden – When I repeat this fingerplay I may leave out the final word of the rhyme and let the children fill in the word. Don't forget to alter your voice to mimic the sound of a mouse or a teddy bear (high/low).



Do as I'm Doing – This piece can become a “regular” whenever sticks or bells or any instrument is brought out. It is what I call a fill piece whenever I need more time for instrument play in a class or for more large muscle movement. I will have the children walk, run, gallop, slide, twist, leap and rock to this piece. I like to change the final line from “follow follow me” to “play and STOP with me” and we all freeze. A great impulse game.

I Went to Visit a Farm – If you haven't introduced a story, here is a great chance to do this. I like to keep the story simple and repeat a line in the story like this:

Today we are visiting a Farm, what shall we wear? (Pause) I can put on my mud boots like this (demonstrate). I can put on my hat like this. (Demonstrate). What else can I put on when we go to the farm?

Today we are visiting a Farm. I can walk to the farm. Can you? I can run to the Farm, Can you?

Today we are visiting a Farm. I want to visit a Cow. Can you make the sound of a Cow?

What animal can we visit at a farm? Can you make the sound of that Animal?

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep – Repeating familiar songs are a wonderful way to encourage adults to sing along. This week I can ask for different colors for those sheep. If you wish you can also bring in a basic sheep picture (from a coloring book, perhaps) and make them a different color. This can be especially fun with older toddlers.

Week 3

All Around the Garden – When first introducing this song I stick to the directions in the guidebook. This is a great opportunity to get the children moving. Toddlers love jumping, climbing, running, swooping, etc. Later I will incorporate a story about planting in my garden. In between events I will add a verse of the song. I will describe how messy my garden is and I will hand out “rakes” and we will rake the ground while singing a verse. This works well when the children are older twos. I may mention after the activity that we do much more story telling in Cycle of Seasons, and it is so much fun!

The Rooster –I don't explain the song and its archaic lyrics. I simply sing it very sadly and slowly and take a ritardando in measures 7 and 8 putting a fermata at the end of measure 8. Then I sing the final measures joyously, as if the rooster suddenly came back to life. So don't get uptight about the content of this song. Children are naturally fascinated with the concept of dead. Parents are naturally upset about this song. So it goes.

After this reincarnation game stated above I add rattles or bells. In the beginning we lay the bell in front of us and sing to it. We look at it sadly as it lays there, so quiet and unmoving. Then.... we shake and rattle joyously for the second part. Sad – happy, quiet – loud, slow – fast. These are the concepts I explore in the song, not death. If a parent asks or complains later I will mention how folk music was created to reflect the life they were leading. Before the 19th century (half of the 20th century) most folks lived on farms, and the death of animals was quite common. If the song still bothers you, you can replace “dead” with “sleeping”. The rooster can do many other things as well. For instance, “The



rooster is jumping, jumping all around". "The Rooster is running, running all around". "The Rooster is flying, flying all around." In any song, when there is a chance for movement, take it and move the children. Replacing the word "dead" with other actions can make this piece "come alive" in a children's music class.

Like *Sing with Me, Dance with Me* has many songs and activities to keep your families coming back. The program is active and joyful. Most importantly it is shared with a favorite adult. "Positive contact and interaction with a caring adult is the single most important ingredient for a child's healthy development. Nothing pleases very young children more than having a parent/caregiver share an experience with them. Adults benefit as well, as they witness the magic of music movement, and song and realize just how appropriate and enjoyable simple activities shared with their children can be." (Page 7 of the Teachers Guide)

Happy teaching,

Ellen