



Family Music for Toddlers – Semester 1, Week 1 and 2

Dear Teachers,

You are receiving this monthly Enews because you have completed the Family Music training offered by Musikgarten. I bet you learned a lot about early childhood music and movement classes, observed classes in action and had fun sharing music with other teachers. Now is the time to put all that training into action. This program can come to life in your own classroom. It will take its own unique shape as you take each activity and blend it with your life experiences and the children that enter your classroom. I hope in the following months, I can ease the transition from teacher guidebook to the classroom.

Let's get started. I will go through the curriculum with you. Although I believe the program is best learned by doing it, sometimes it helps to have an experienced eye pointing out any tips or suggestions for making this program the best it can be.

Program: *Sing With Me* (These activities can also be found in *My Day* but will be in a different order.)

Ages: 15 months through 3 although the focus of the class is toward the Two year old Toddler

Week 1

The first song every week is the greeting song. Although the lesson suggestion mentions "Sing Hello", you are always welcome to replace this song with your favorite. I like "Sing Hello" because it is so direct and easy for the parents to learn quickly. It also emphasizes the "Do, Mi, Sol" pattern, which is fun to play within the tonal pattern time. For the first verse I sing, "Sing Hello together, together, together" and then each time I repeat I add a child's name and a new motion. Sometimes before the verse, I will start the motion and label it as I demonstrate the motion. I will ask the parents to join me as we label the motion. From the first lesson, I also want to get to know the names of the adults in the room so if I may also include their names. Choose a slower pace than your racing heart. I also make a point of going around the room naming the children by the order of the adults – they don't move around as much as the children and I have less of a chance of missing a child. It also doesn't hurt to ask, "Did I miss anyone?" This song is the first of many rituals you will create in music class for these children. If a child enters the class late, make sure you greet them with the song and then continue with the activity you paused from.

Bounce Along is in the same key. Just a side note: being in key is very important but don't sweat it in the early classes. Many teachers have a D resonator bar or some other tuned instrument to keep them from starting too low or in my case too high (my parents complain that as the semester develops so does my upper register). Start this song by inviting the parents to bounce their children on their knees and follow you. Be aware that the stuffed animal on your knee is a fraction of a child's weight on their parent's knee. If you see strained faces, time to slow down the bounce or take musical breaks. For



example, on the words, “smile at me”, STOP the bounce and smile at all the children. On “hold on tight”, you can prepare to “bounce up high” in motion and voice. Do the same for the “hold on tight, you’ll almost fly! Then resume the bounce until the end of the song. Between repeats, you can say, “Bounce, bounce, bounce,” In later repeats, you can use this song whenever you take out jingles, rhythm sticks or shakers and even scarves (which is my favorite repeat). How many times should you repeat the song? I find most parents are comfortable with 3 – 4 repeats. Watch the children. If they seem comfortable, repeat more. You can vary the speed, type of bounce and even change the bounce to “rock along” or “clap along”, which is another way to give your parent’s burning thighs a break. If done right, a parent should exclaim, “I didn’t realize this was a workout class as well!”

Duple Rhythm Patterns - move directly into the four basic duple rhythm patterns. I lately begin this activity with the announcement, “Be my echo.” Pause and give time for the parents to echo you. You may get a stunned look! Gently repeat the pattern and ask them to echo the pattern. The children will NOT echo you! And yet.... perhaps they will look up and show interest. This is a great first step. No microphone this week! Save it for class three or four. Comfort first. (Once the families start to play the music at home, the children will be hearing the patterns at home. Soon they will echo the patterns in the comfort of their car or home and perhaps in your classroom too!)

Ten wiggly Fingers can always begin by quietly wiggling your fingers. It’s also fun to count your fingers, slowly and clearly. As you speak the verse slowly and expressible, moving according to the text, don’t be afraid to have fun. When we “go for a ride” I hum the theme from “The William Tell Overture” (don’t ask me why). When the ten wiggle fingers wiggle round and round, I shout it so that the next line “don’t make a single sound” seems to make more sense. Play hide and seek with the children after that line and don’t forget to hide your fingers behind your back. I wait this way and then sing, “Where are your fingers? (Sol, mi mi sol mi) and then answer, “Here they are” (Sol mi do). They could repeat this line over and over and often I do. Again I am setting up tonal patterns I will use later.

Tap the Jingles – this can be adjusted to earlier in the lesson if you need to draw in the wanderers. I am slow and deliberate when I bring out my jingles. I silently bring them to the center of the room and without words, I count out two jingles. Then I stop moving and invite the children to take two jingles. I ask the parents to help them with this and I stay close to the basket to monitor how many they actually take. If I can, I prefer each child to have a jingle in each hand. Adults can also have that many if possible. It is worth the investment. Of course, you should introduce this song first with body parts, no jingles. Repeat 4 – 6 times and then add jingles. Make sure you let them explore the jingles before going into the song. Verbalize what they are doing. When it is time to return the jingle to the basket, think of a put-away song. I often use the melody of the hello song and sing something like, “time to put away your jingles, put away, put away”. I am sure you will come up with your own unique put away song.

Next, are tonal patterns. For this lesson and subsequent lessons, stick with the 4 patterns you see on your song card in whatever tonality called for. Later, you can expand these patterns and I will talk about this much later once you get your feet wet. It’s OK to repeat these patterns week after week until the



children are very comfortable with the patterns. Of course, you will be using “Bam” instead of the solfege language. You will never need to use the language in Family Music. It will be introduced much later when they join you in your older programs.

The first dance is **Glazunov, A: Waltz of the Cornflowers**. I suggest to the parents to carry their children through the dance. Some will wiggle to the floor but overall the toddlers are happier up high. Parents can feel awkward in that first dance will often cover this with a conversation with other parents. I want to keep their attention and not start a ritual of dance and gossip while children wander. I add simple directions to the dance such as,

- Stand in place and rock Side to side
- Make a small circle and then go the other way
- Let's make a circle and walk clockwise; change directions
- In and out, in and out
- Make curly designs on the floor as you move
- Walk and turn

By repeating a few of these simple directions I stay in charge of the class, set a fun ritual for the dance time and the parents learn to move with their child in a body to body position. As the parents get more comfortable moving, I will suggest other moves but not yet.

When I was a baby – I often make this a small story. “When I was a baby I was very, very tiny. All I could do was sleep and cry, “Waa, waa”. I rub my eyes and ask the parents to copy me. Then I sing the song. Then I play the sound of the baby babbling. “When I was a baby I was very, very tiny and I talked like this.” I do the same for baby laughing with the same introduction. I don’t do all the verses, just the first verse. I will save the later verses for other weeks. Instead, I segue into, “When I was a baby I was very, very tiny, and I loved to be rocked just like this.” I model rocking my bear. I ask the children rock with their parents in their favorite rocking position. I suggest a few different positions to the parents. After a verse of “Rock a Bye Baby”, I repeat it on “lu”. Even if a child or two begin to move and wander, I stay in my calm, rocking mode, quietly singing. I ask the parents to join me in a sotto voce.

Follow Me is such a simple game and so much fun. When I call a child, I call both child and adult by name. I call the names the first week and in later weeks ask the children to pick the next child/adult group. This expansion is more effective when the children are older and when they are more familiar with the activity.

In the Docks is a classic steady beat game. Before we begin, I introduce the sticks the same way I introduce the bells. I let them explore the sticks for a few moments before I begin the recording. I vary the motion in the song about every 16 beats as I go and I look around the room for ideas on how to vary making sounds with sticks. I tend to not focus on the children trying to build with the sticks. Instead, I



will say, "Samantha is making a sound by tapping the floor". My put away sticks song is similar to my jingle song.

Rhythm patterns are done in a group and I stick to the patterns on my card. No microphone yet. I save this part of the activity until class 3 or 4.

If you have gotten this far and have 10 minutes left, your pacing is too fast. Don't panic. Repeat an earlier song. How about Bounce Along with sticks? How about an encore of "Ten Wiggly Fingers", slower and more expressively? This is a good time to ask for a favorite song that the parents like to sing to their children. Be prepared to sing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star". There is nothing wrong with repeating. Don't be afraid!

Debka Hora – my circle games have a ritual song that says, "Let Us make a circle, a circle, a circle, Let us make a circle, nice and round." Yes, it is similar to the Hello Song, except the opening line is "do re, mi, fa, sol, mi etc." The next verse says, "Put the children between us, between us, between us, put the children between us so we can go around." I try to place children between adults to balance the circle. Touching is so important at this point. Many of the children may need to be carried or are not ready for a circle. Do the song with whoever joins you and start the game. I do 4 or 5 repeats.

We finish with a "Ring around the Rosy", the Greeting song as a goodbye song and I choose to end with small stickers placed on the top of the children's hands. I often give a spare sticker to the adult. Goodbyes are said until next week.

That's it.

Week 2

The lesson suggestions for week 2 are basically the same as Week 1 except for *Hands a-Washing*. This is done on purpose. It gives the children and the parents (and YOU) time to become more familiar with the flow of the class without too much new content. A few parents may even join in and sing with you! You are welcome to repeat EXACTLY what you did last week or try a variation. There is not rush.

Hands a-Washing; what a fun song! This piece can begin with looking at your hands and exclaiming, "Boy, are my hands dirty! Time to wash my hands. Would you wash your hands too?" As I sing I happily act out washing my hands. When it is time to dry my hands I look around for the towel, look up at the rack and reach up as I sing "high" and add an octave up. Then we all shake off that water for the refrain. Then I ask the children and the grownups, "What other parts of our body can we wash?" Yes, include the grownups in choosing parts. Don't forget to wait to give them all time to think! Some children may give you the answer non-verbally. Observe the action in the room and point out that action, "Billy, shall we wash our faces?" Then off we go to another hearty verse. Many parents mention in subsequent classes that this song is a great part of tub time.



All songs and activities can be repeated exactly the same way you did it last week or you may choose to expand the activity with more repeats and more variations of movement. This is totally up to you. As you expand the songs you will find you will fill out the time. My biggest problem is ending on time.

Next eNews will go into more of the ***Sing with Me*** curriculum and other tips to make your first experience teaching this program a great experience both for you and the families that are sharing music with you.

Yours in teaching,

Ellen Johansen

P.S. If you wish to have more resources at your fingertips, I highly recommend that you:

1. Join our Musikgarten Teachers group at Facebook. This was created by Musikgarten to support all licensed Musikgarten teachers. Amy Rucker and I administer the day to day in the group. You must be a licensed teacher to join this group. You may request to join and Musikgarten will review your request. This format is fun because the teachers share day to day successes with pictures and videos, share their latest marketing, discuss ongoing issues and answer any question that bubbles up.
2. Join Gartenloop, an email support forum for Musikgarten teachers. This group is independent from Musikgarten and I am the administrator. You do not need to be a licensed teacher of Musikgarten to join. This group has been active for over 20 years. There is a wealth of information in the archives as well as lots of files to look through.
 - a. To join:
 - b. Sign in to **Yahoo Groups**.
 - c. Open a **group**.
 - d. Click **Join Group**.
 - e. Set your membership info.
 - f. Click Send Request.