



EARLY CHILDHOOD
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ASSOCIATION

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Through this journal, the ECMMA (1) provides a network of communication, support, and information among the members of ECMMA, (2) encourages teacher development by fostering a free exchange between professionals in the field of music and other professionals in the field of early childhood development, and (3) advocates education of parents, classroom teachers, and administrators.

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Notable Notes for Parents & Teachers

By Julia Priest

Julia Priest's center, Music and Movement of Newton Massachusetts, provides Music Together parent-child classes seven days a week, serves seven preschools with custom curricula, and employs five part-time teachers.

The single, most effective behavior any of us can engage in for health, mental acuity, and longevity is to get moving. Our children need to move in order to learn! So why is it that at many preschools, many musical instrument lessons, and even a few parent-child classes, music is experienced almost entirely in the seated position?

Some of us fear we lack the skills or the energy to lead movement activities or are sure we have two left feet when it comes to dancing; others have injuries or aches and pains that genuinely require us to modify our participation. Nevertheless, with all our limitations, our movement leadership is essential for our children.

Even though many children are on the go all of their waking hours, they still need an adult role model for movement just as much as they need adult models for music, self-control, nutrition, manners, and every other domain. A language analogy is often useful: babies are born with a neural "language acquisition device" but they need a rich environment full of language users in order to learn the grammar and vocabulary of a specific language. Likewise, children are born with the innate urge to move, to walk, to run, but adult role models provide the grammar and vocabulary of movement.

When facilitating a movement activity at home, start with a simple bounce or jump in place, then progress to rocking, walking, jogging, or spinning. Depending on your child's age, you might hop, gallop, or even skip. If you'd like to enhance these already valuable elements, accompany

each footfall with a tap on a small hand drum.

Consider leading your child in march time and waltz time; stationary and locomotor movements; staccato and legato, tense and fluid; fast and slow; wild and organized; marcato and leggero; high and low levels; straight, angular, and curvy movements. Your children thrive on repetition and contrast. While they embody extremes of musical expression and phrasing, they are simultaneously increasing their array of self-regulation skills. Children with good self-control have good social skills.

We know that in early childhood, modeling affect or disposition is even more important than transmitting information or skills; therefore, one of the most valuable movement activities you can do is throw on a CD of your favorite up tempo music—whether big band, classical, or trance—and dance to the music with your child. If you have a scarf or ribbon handy, pick it up and make it into a visual representation of the flow you are feeling in your body.

In the Winter 2009 issue of Perspectives, Dr. Fran Rauscher told Dr. Suzanne Burton, "Rhythm is strongly connected with movement. Therefore I believe that the elementary teaching of tonal and rhythm patterns should always be accompanied by gentle movements, so that children can develop a linked representation of motor activities and metrical weight." Music should always be accompanied by movement—large, small, or barely perceptible. Indeed, movement and music are inseparable.



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