

Music and your child

By Kerry Mc Arthur, ECD Coordinator

Psalm 98:4

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.

Music is an integral part of a child's development. Singing and music in general interacts with many aspects of our lives e.g. culture, theatre, celebrations, movies etc. In the home, music should become part of our daily lives from birth. Parents instinctively use music to calm their babies, they engage and play with their children through songs and singing. It is important for parents to understand the value of music in the early years.

The brain and music

Studies performed in the 1990's showed that exposure to music from early childhood onwards helps children to speak more clearly and develop a larger vocabulary. According to Susan Hallam of the University of London's Institute of Education, speech and music have a number of shared processing systems in the brain. Basically this means that listening to and singing along to songs can lead to improvement in a child's understanding of language.

A 2016 study at the University of Southern California's Brain and Creativity Institute found that musical experiences in childhood can actually accelerate brain development. According to the National

Association of Music Merchants Foundation (NAMM Foundation), learning to play an instrument can improve mathematical learning.

Even with all this academic evidence to support the exposure to music it is equally important to take note of the other areas that music impacts, from social interactions, rhythm, balance and co-ordination, along with memory and other cognitive skills. Fine and gross motor skills are developed through movement, clapping, dancing etc. Creativity and maths skills are built through patterns in the rhythm of music, the movement that matches types of music etc.

Your toddler does not need to master a musical instrument or even start playing an instrument. There

are many ways that music can be integrated into their daily lives at home and at school.



Footprints into ECD - Music and your child



Music Games

To see the effect of music on children all you have to do is put on a catchy tune. Before you realise it they will start bopping, moving and clapping to the music. Music is in all of us without much effort. Children, without thinking about it, naturally make up songs and sing to themselves without any thought of people around them and this progresses to singing in groups or learning to play musical instruments. If your child is battling to grasp a concept or a behaviour pattern, putting it to music not only makes it fun, but cements the information without much work being put into it. There is value in the songs like "Clean Up, Clean Up" from Barney (I still catch myself singing it). With toddlers, the repetition is key to remembering songs and the concepts connected to them. Try playing games while singing a well know song like Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. Replace the word diamond

with tea tray or another similar silly word. Your toddler will soon pick it up and point it out making them laugh and build memories.

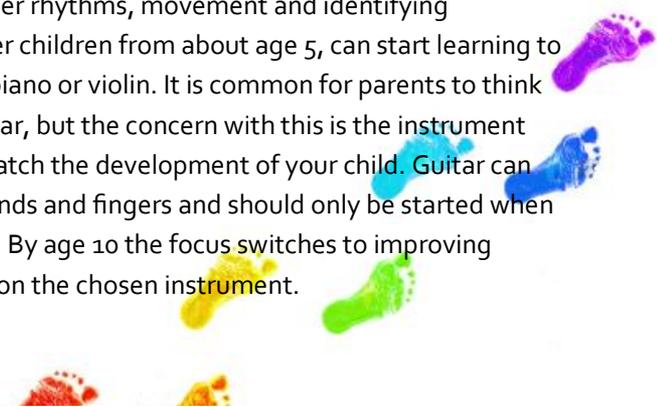
Additional Benefits : beyond fun and academic and into therapy and instruments

"I think music in itself is healing. It's an explosive expression of humanity. It's something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we're from, everyone loves music." – Billy Joel

Music therapy can help to relieve pain and reduce stress and anxiety and can result in physical changes including improved respiration, lower blood pressure, reduced heart rate and relaxed muscle tension.

Psalm 81:1-2 Sing for joy to God our strength; Shout joyfully to the God of Jacob. Raise a song, strike the timbrel, The sweet sounding lyre with the harp.

Children can start learning to play an instrument from as young as 3. However, the initial informal lessons should not be focused on the actual instrument, but rather rhythms, movement and identifying melodies. Slightly older children from about age 5, can start learning to play instruments like piano or violin. It is common for parents to think about introducing guitar, but the concern with this is the instrument that is chosen must match the development of your child. Guitar can be hard on a child's hands and fingers and should only be started when they are ready for this. By age 10 the focus switches to improving performance and skill on the chosen instrument.



Footprints into ECD - Music and your child

Why is learning an instrument important?

- Increases memory skills
- Teaches perseverance and creates a sense of achievement
- Improves coordination
- Improves Math skills
- Improves reading and comprehension skills
- Creates responsibility
- Exposes the student to culture and history
- Nurtures self-expressions
- Improves listening skills
- Improves social skills

Above all music is fun and everything linked to music from songs to movement and from informal sessions to formal lessons should be underpinned by a love for music and the benefits that surround it.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Colossians 3:16

Upcoming ECD conference...



Early Childhood Development Conference

Nursery school up to Foundation Phase

13 - 14 September 2019

Save the date

Register online at www.acsi.co.za 