

INTERACT MUSICALLY WITH YOUR CHILD

The Baby Maestro experience should get you off to an excellent start in creating a music-learning environment at home. Baby Maestro is proud to offer Music Pups®, an early childhood music education program that has carefully selected and created music to expose your child to a wide diversity of musical tonalities, rhythms, styles and textures. Just as importantly, our teachers are trained to model engaging ways to connect the children with the music, techniques that we hope will inspire you in your musical interactions with your child at home. The key element that only you, the parent (and other primary care givers), can provide in your child's learning environment is regular social interaction around the music. Researchers have uncovered many exciting connections between learning and social interaction. Social interaction is the key to bridging the gap between what your child can do on his or her own and what he can accomplish with adult help. This so-called "zone of proximal development" can be bridged so that your child reaches the goal of independent competency. Tools to help your child cross the zone are called "scaffolding." You can help your child achieve independent competence by incorporating the following strategies into your musical interactions with your child:

- Physical touch and intimacy. The power of physical touch is incalculable in stimulating neural pathways. In The Baby Maestro context, physical intimacy includes bouncing, snuggling, lifting, touching, tickling and dancing with your child during music times.
- A two-way dialog. Musically, this happens whenever there is an exchange of musical ideas, perhaps during an improvisational instrument "jam," or when your child's ideas are incorporated into the songs and activities you do together. It's not all your child's ideas, either. It's give and take, adult and child.
- Mirroring and validating. Closely observe your child and acknowledge his or her emerging musical expressiveness. This is especially important when your child is experimenting with new musical ideas. Imitate and enlarge upon his ideas to deepen the validation.
- Modeling. Provide a shining example by modeling an enthusiastic engagement with the music. Your child will learn by observing you, whether he imitates you, or not.
- Cheerleading. Celebrate with your child the achievement of learning the music and activities. Your non-verbal messages of support are as important as your verbal ones.
- Contextualizing. Optimal learning does not occur in a vacuum, but is embedded in a meaningful social context. Let the experience of music extend to all areas of your family's life, and The Music Class songs to suit your own purposes. Find new words to the songs, invent new activities, and create your own "musical culture" in your home.

Creating a rich musical learning environment is not simply about listening to the music, or singing the songs the way they are sung in class. Think of the recordings as a tool, not a template. If you wish, take the songs apart and put them back together again as you see fit! Connect music to meaningful events and routines in the life of your family. The essential thing is that you do this with your child, and that in the process, you create your own musical experiences and a rich environment for learning. There can be no better way to support the learning of your child.