

*Supporting Family Engagement, Teacher Development,
and Positive Adult-Child Interactions through Music*

18th Annual Birth to Three Institute
Washington, DC
Wednesday, July 30, 2014, 4:00–5:30 PM

Lili M. Levinowitz, Ph.D.
Professor of Music, Rowan University, Glassboro NJ
Coauthor, Music Together, Princeton NJ

Carol Ann Blank, MMT, MT-BC
Manager of Special Needs Services, Music Together LLC, Princeton NJ

Summary:

In this interactive session, participants will learn several easy and engaging songs, techniques, and strategies to use in their own early learning programs to foster family engagement and support positive teacher-child-parent interactions through music. We will also explore the impact of an early childhood music and movement curriculum implemented for two years in an Early Head Start center in Camden, NJ on indicators of family engagement, classroom teacher development, and adult-child interactions.

Learning Objectives:

1. Articulate the benefits of music (for children, teachers, parents, and the school community) when it is an integral part of an early learning program.
2. Implement strategies for using music to involve parents and primary caregivers in their child's learning and development in both the classroom and at home.¹
3. Use several specific developmentally appropriate and engaging songs and chants right away in their own early learning programs, and at home.

Family Engagement:

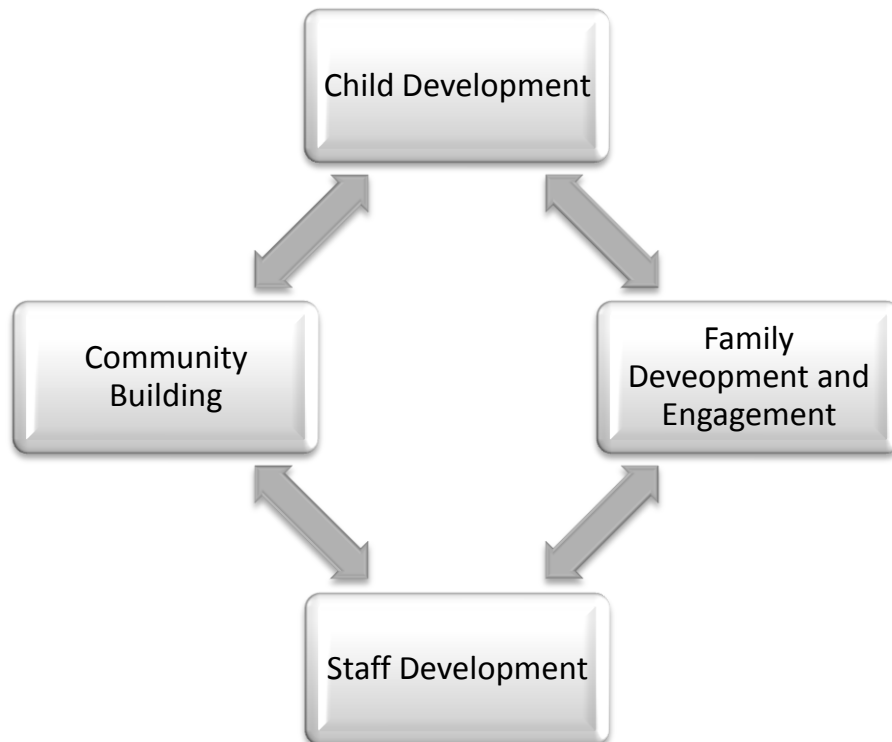
- Family Engagement: "an ongoing, reciprocal, strengths-based partnership between families and their children's early childhood education programs" (Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark & Moodie, 2009.)
- Greater parental involvement in urban public preschool classrooms was associated with higher math and social skills assessment scores and fewer problem behaviors (Powell, Son, File, & San Juan, 2010.)
- Kindergarteners whose parents talked more with them about school, practiced learning activities at home and had more frequent contact with school, showed greater self-control, prosocial skills, motivation, and higher scores in reading and math assessments (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen & Sekino, 2004.)

¹ All songs used in this presentation can be found on Music Together Family Favorites ® Vol. 1, Vol. 2, and Music Together Lullabies.

Project Overview:

- Project Partners: Early Head Start Camden, Rowan University, A&W Music Together, Music Together LLC
 - Four classrooms/32 families
- Project Questions:
 - Learn more about music as a tool in parent-child attachment
 - Learn how teachers use music to support their work in the classroom
 - Learn how music facilitates two-way communication between home and school
- Parent Focus:
 - Positive change in parenting and attachment
 - Use of music at home
 - Parents' engagement in their children's learning and development
- Teacher Focus:
 - Teachers' comfort level with music
 - Teachers' use of music in the classroom
 - Teachers' communication with parents with music

Relevance to the *Four Cornerstones of Early Head Start*²



² Please see "Supporting Early Childhood Organizations, Curricula, Philosophies, and Early Learning Standards" in the Music Together folder.

Child Development:

- Through participation in Music Together class, children have opportunities to develop skills in physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and language domains.
- Music Together classes accept and include the participation of all learners, making this a rich and accessible experience for learners with special needs.
- Active engagement with music early in life has long lasting positive effects throughout life.
- Children can participate in Music Together's curricula through early elementary school.

Family Development and Engagement:

- Music Together CD is given to each family. Parents are encouraged to play the CD often.
- Parents are encouraged to continue music making at home by following the suggestions on Activity Sheets. Completion of these could also be applied toward a family's In-Kind hours.
- Classroom teachers found that having Music Together CD at home gave them an additional point of contact with their families.

Community Building:

- Regularly scheduled Family Music Events are an embedded component of the Music Together model.

Staff Development:

- Weekly contact with the classroom teachers by the music specialist lead to deeper integration of music activities into the classroom outside of music class time.
- Twice yearly professional development events allowed teachers to become familiar with the music and how it could be used in the classroom as a vehicle for learning or classroom management, or to add to the classroom culture.

Intervention Description:

- Initial teacher orientation by Dr. Levinowitz, Rowan University
- Weekly (30 min) Music Together class in the EHS classroom facilitated by music specialist from A&W Music Together (two semesters of 15 weeks each over one academic year)
 - Teacher mentoring time
 - Follow up from previous weeks
- Families receive activity sheet weekly from classroom teacher
 - Early Head Start Camden/Music Together LLC
- Teacher workshop on songs at the beginning of each 15 week semester
 - A&W Music Together
- Survey parents
 - Music Together LLC
- Focus group with teachers
 - Music Together LLC

Project Findings: Parents

- Difficulty getting parents to complete the parenting assessment (N=14)
 - Expectations of Children
 - Parental Empathy Toward Children's Needs
 - Use of Corporal Punishment
 - Parent-Child Family Roles
 - Children's Power and Independence
- The posttest response was different for each child: two respondents (13%) showed a mixed change in the level of risk among the five constructs; two respondents (13%) showed no change in the level of risk for all five constructs; four respondents (27%) showed negative change in at least one category.
 - However, five respondents (33%) showed a positive change in level of risk for at least one construct. In particular, one respondent demonstrated a change in Parental Empathy from high to low risk.
- Parent Survey revealed high level of acceptability of Music Together materials:
 - 91% of the parents indicated that they listened to music with their child at least weekly.
 - 77% of the parents indicated that they listened to the Music Together CDs with their child at least weekly.
 - When asked about their reasons for using music in their family life, the parents chose statements that seem to indicate a preference for using music for interacting with their child:
 - "When I want to play and have fun with my child"
 - "To do an activity as a family"
 - "To teach my child about music"
 - Statements that reflect parenting during difficult moments:
 - "To distract my child when he/she is cranky" or
 - Statements that address benefits that are specific to the child:
 - "To help my child grow and develop in health ways"

The results of this survey indicate that the parents used the Music Together CDs more frequently than the Music Together Songbook. This makes sense; the CD is more "portable" and can be listened to in the car. In addition to listening to the CD and using the Songbook, parents reported engaging in an experience of music with their children at home by using the activity sheets sent home each week and speaking with their children's teachers about Music Together Class.

Example of responses from the survey:

- *Question 5: In what ways do you use music with your child*
 - *When my child is going to sleep or taking a nap – 56%, n=12*
 - *When I want to play and have fun with my child – 91%, n=20*
 - *To distract my child when he/she is cranky –23%, n=5*
 - *To calm my child when he/she is upset or fussy –50%, n=11*
 - *To bond with my child – 45%, n=10*
 - *To do an activity as a family – 68%, n=15*
- *Question 7: Please tell us what you think about the Music Together weekly flyers with activity suggestions:*
 - *The flyers gave me activities to do with my child – 45%, n=10*
 - *The activities helped me to have more fun with my child – 56%, n=12*

Project Findings: Teachers

- Teacher focus group at the conclusion of the academic year (N=6, 1 had not experienced Music Together)
- High degree of awareness of:
 - Music as a tool supporting learning and development goals (Creative Curriculum.)
 - Pervasive effect of Music Together songs and teaching support on their own ability to teach.
 - Ritualized start of day
 - Activity transitions
 - Learning academic concepts
 - Increased instances of singing by children (even infants.)
 - Communication between child and adult
 - Communication between children
 - Self-regulation, self-expression
 - Music to promote self-confidence – a key component to students' future success.
- Specialist's apparent knowledge and competence key to transmission of information
- Teacher-Parent relationship
 - Music became an additional point of discussion.
 - Some parents attended weekly Music Together class.
 - Parents reported what their children were singing at home, requesting instruments as gifts (children "own" the ability to be music-makers.)

Project is ongoing

Lili M. Levinowitz, Ph.D., is Professor of Music Education at Rowan University and Director of Research for Music Together. An authority on early childhood music, she teaches infants through graduate students. She is former director of the Children's Music Development Program at Temple University and co-author of the Music Together curriculum. levinowitz@rowan.edu

Carol Ann Blank is a board-certified music therapist and Level II Certified Music Together teacher. She earned her Master of Music Therapy at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA and is a doctoral candidate at Drexel University in Philadelphia, PA. She is employed at Music Together LLC in Princeton, NJ, and is responsible for developing training materials and mentoring for implementing the Music Together program models for Music Together teachers, center directors, and preschool program providers who work with children with special needs and their families. cblank@musictogether.com