

today's parents

Inspiring Forward-thinking Families

*Nurturing
Gracious Kids*
Why It Matters

TALKING POINT
Should Your 3-year-old
Be Wearing High Heels?

**CHOOSING
A CAREGIVER**
Weigh your options



April / May 2010 \$5.00

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Portraits contest!
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BOOST YOUR CHILD'S IQ

MUSIC CAN DO THAT, REPORTS DR LEE PEI MING

What can we parents do to help develop a smarter child?

Introduce your child to a music education. Yes, you heard me right. Research by Dr Laurel Trainor, Professor of Psychology at McMaster University has shown that "after one year of musical background, children perform better in a memory test that is correlated with general intelligence skills such as literary, verbal memory, visiospatial processing, mathematics and IQ." The Canadian-based researchers reached these conclusions after measuring changes in brain responses to sounds in children aged between four and six.

Besides developing the cognitive aspect of the brain, a child can benefit by having a longer concentration span and improved social skills, and the ability to think creatively, communicate better and form an empathy for different cultures. And these are just some of the numerous benefits of a music education.

What are some of the activities parents can do to stimulate our children at home? Firstly, we can help them to distinguish between the different rhythms and pitches. Give a child a spoon during mealtime and see her joy in creating a ruckus on the dining table! Replace the spoon with a mallet and a drum, we can show her the different rhythms and pulses to any songs we are familiar with.

Some children dance when they hear music, others start to sing. Children learn to use different dance movements or pitches to express their emotions. A parent can use a scarf to play peek-a-boo, flap it like a bird, wave it in the air like a parachute or squeeze it into a ball. These numerous activities with just a simple scarf can stimulate a child to think creatively. It also shows that there can be

several solutions to tackling a problem.

Singing to your child is the best way to introduce any form of music. A newborn baby is able to identify the voice of the mother after its 40-week sojourn in the womb: using the human voice gives your child a sense of security and is great for bonding. It will encourage your child to sing and may also help develop perfect pitch before the age of six.

Music is not only a tool to develop creativity, it is an expressive form of communication. Parents can detect the emotions of their children through the instruments they play. When children are upset, frustrated, angry or happy, parents are able to tell through their performances even though they may be unable to express themselves well verbally. As a teacher, I am able to learn about the character of children through the choice of their repertoires and the tone of their playing occasionally. It helps me to understand them on a personal level and teach them more effectively as a result.

Introducing a child to music in a group setting has its advantages. Not only can it develop social skills, it also enables the child to watch and observe other children. Playing in an orchestra teaches a child about teamwork and discipline.

If parents have little or no musical background, it is important to choose a suitable music programme for their child. The benefits of a music education are limitless, and we should not hesitate to introduce our children to the world of music.

Dr Lee Pei Ming is an Assistant Professor at NUS, and founded the curriculum for Staccato! Music at Horsecity for early childhood music. She is also a mother of two young children.