

Community Comment  
March 29th, 2018

My name is Katri Pitts and I am here to speak about the importance of early music education.

In addition to teaching music to school-age children, I have the wonderful opportunity to teach music classes for babies and toddlers. I began teaching at the Humboldt Music Academy sixteen years ago, and one of the classes I am fortunate to co-teach with my husband is a singing games class for the very youngest students. Every Saturday morning I get to experience the joy of tiny people immersed in music. Even after so many years, I am struck by the deep way young children experience music. As we sing and dance in a circle, babies who are not yet walking look around wide-eyed and rock their bodies to the beat. Toddlers bend their knees and bounce along as the grown-ups around them sing and move to the music. Young children sing out with their full voices, uninhibited, joyful, and beautiful. It is pure magic.

The magic going on for these young human beings is not just the good feelings everyone leaves class with, it is the incredibly complex work that is going on in their minds. I can almost see the synapses firing and the connections across the brain being made as they sing, dance, bounce, rock, and listen with all their might. Early experiences in music not only lay an incredibly important foundation for those who will go on to study music in more depth as they grow older, it also is an important element in their language development, motor skills, and more. Also, being a part of the circle and a part of the song gives everyone a strong sense of community. I think that these young children pick up on the powerful energy that comes from a group of people working together to create something beautiful.

I think it is important to remember how valuable it is to sing with our children. Singing in the car, singing in the kitchen, and singing lullabies at bedtime are all wonderful ways to make music part of a child's daily routine. And don't forget about saying nursery rhymes and playing clapping games. These small musical experiences that we can all provide for our children add up to a big positive impact on their cognitive development. Often people perceive the study of music as something to reserve for older children. I believe that the earliest musical experiences, from singing our children to sleep at naptime to patting gentle rhythms on their backs as we carry them are the essential foundation upon which later success is built.