



MUSIC MATTERS

A Newsletter for the Families Enrolled in the Music-in-the-Box Music Masters Program
Meredith Haynes and Ginger Acopiado, Owners
WINTER SESSION 2007

“AS HE MASTERS EACH NEW SKILL HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE INCREASES...”

MARIA MONTESSORI

We're 10 Years Old!

***That's right, Music-in-the-Box
Is celebrating our 10 year anniversary.***

What's in it for you?

Invite a new family to take a class with you
and we'll give you a \$10 gift certificate to use
In the classroom or on our new website

www.musicmattersathome.com

A musical catalog filled with gifts, books,
games and toys for the musical child.

OUR TRIBUTE TO MEREDITH HAYNES

By Ginger Acopiado

I've decided to get a little sneaky in honor of our 10 year anniversary and the fact that Meredith Haynes, founder of the Music Masters program, is off on a much needed family hiatus this week.

Ten years ago, when Meredith's son was just 9 months old, she found the music programs she explored were missing something and wanted more. Tirelessly she researched methods and programs, until she decided that three things she most wanted for her son was a love for music, a love for literature and a love for America, and so she began – the skeleton of the growing body that is now Music-in-the-Box's Music Masters program.

Studying child development and the way children learn, Meredith quickly discovered how to engage all the senses to engage all the children. Her instincts taught her that she must be willing to meet children half-way

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www.musicinthebox.com***

in their developmental needs – never requiring, yet always enticing participation among the littlest musicians.

I find it ironic that I started Meredith's class in a darkly lit warming house when my own son was also 9 months. It was as if fate was drawing us together. When my son was 18 months old, I approached this lovely, child-focused woman with a desire to help her teach and grow her program (we were always waitlisted – something had to be done!). And so we grew... Vernon Hills Park District became our second location. And now, 17 locations later nationwide, and still growing, we wouldn't be here if Meredith hadn't wanted something more for her child and ours.

Our founder, my partner, mentor and friend, Meredith Haynes gave her love of music to the world and makes our world and our children's worlds a little better because of her commitment to excellence. I am proud to have her in my life and can honestly say we are driven to sharing this philosophy with families everywhere.

The core belief in the power of music and commitment to family is shared by all who have joined us on this journey. This is evident in the women we choose to represent Music Masters with young children. Not only are they caring teachers, they are also terrific mothers. Their indomitable spirit and strength of character emboldens the spirit of the program and their desire to provide the best music experience for you and your child as inspired by the one who started it all, Meredith Haynes, in 1997. Below is a peek at what some of us are saying about Meredith behind her back!



“I call it the Meredith Magic. Like WWJD in Sunday school, I say WWMD in the classroom. ‘What Would Meredith Do?’ It's what I try to relate to our teachers in training when I ask them to ‘do it our way’ – to keep the experience consistent, I am really asking them to pull out the ‘Meredith’ inside them - to really see the whole child

and their needs. For WWMD, we need to connect in a way that shows we are happiest and focused at that moment for that purpose and that child."

*Ginger Acopiado, co-owner and
Lake Cty Motivator since 2002*

"I think Meredith is in her natural element and she blossoms in this particular field. She loves the music and the children and she thrives in this environment."

*Brian Haynes, Husband,
Contributor and Technical Advisor to MITB*

"I think that [my mom has] a very good business. and that it's going very well. I think she really likes the kids and the music. I am very proud of what she's accomplishing in her business and I think she should continue it."

*Robert Haynes, Son
and original Music Master student*

"I love what [Meredith] did [in the classroom], how she presented it to [my] kids and how they responded. I put two kids through the program and they both loved it! And I never had to force them to go. She knew what they needed and they wanted, and they are now playing music!"

*Sandy Berklan, Music Masters
Motivator Lake Cty since 2003*

"Meredith is so supportive of a mom's role. That it is important if a child is sick, everybody pitches in. She emphasizes that family is important and you don't have to put your job in front of the family."

*Barb Boes, Music Masters
Lake Cty Motivator since Fall 2004*

"Meredith one of the happiest and most at peace person you've ever met. You feel totally at ease with her the minute you meet her."

*Michele MacLennan, Music Masters
Lake Cty Motivator since Fall 2004*

"Meredith has a very gentle and caring way about her all the time. She's consistently a lovely caring person."

*Donna Weinstock, Music Masters
Lake Cty Motivator since Fall 2005*

"Meredith is such a gentle spirit, a gentle soul. She's so nice and truly loves children and loves her music; believes in what she's doing. I want to be like Meredith when I "grow up" [as a motivator]. When I'm in a situation I ask myself, 'what would Meredith do, what would Meredith say.'"

*Sara Zawila, Music Masters
Lake Cty Motivator since Fall 2006*

"Meredith is just so sweet, nurturing, caring and one of the kindest gentlest people I've ever met. She has one of the best dispositions and attitudes I've seen in a person. Her joy of music and teaching children shines through in everything she does."

*Lisa Shaw Suzuki Certified Violin
Lake Cty Motivator since Fall 2006*

"Meredith gives her all in everything she does, personal, business or anything. She is always willing to do anything she can."

*Tamara Berzin, Music Masters
Lake Cty Motivator since Fall 2006*

"I think [Meredith] is a natural, bubbly, happy individual who happens to possess the singing voice of a Nightingale. I found Meredith to be captivating for my children. She definitely catches their attention and stimulates them to participate and to grow with the program."

*Debbie Taagen, Music Masters
Licensed in Eagle County Colorado since Fall 2006*

So hats off to our founder, and here's to 10 more!

FIVE WAYS TO DO MUSIC AT HOME

By Meredith Haynes

We hope you take the activities from class and do them at home! Here are five ways to experience the Music Masters magic throughout the week:

1. Bring out your rhythm instruments and sing "I can shake a (egg shaker or bells) like this, like this..." and see if your child responds by choosing the right instrument. Remember all the senses—how does it feel? Do you hear with your nose?! What is it's shape and color?
2. Use a mirror to play with emotions and body parts. "Show me a happy face! Show me a sad face!"
3. Wait an extra moment and see if your child will do the work themselves—When doing "Rain, Rain Go Away," hesitate and see if he will pull the scarf off himself.
4. One family I know uses the "See the Little Bunnies" song to go up the stairs to bed—what fun! The sleeping songs are an excellent avenue of mastery—just think of it...your child is able to control his body by laying down and jumping up on an exact beat. Incredible!
5. Don't forget to march! Put on our Clap, Clap, Clap or any other rousing song and march around the house. Make it a parade with hats, instruments, and friends. Turn it into a chance for leadership by letting your child be the leader.

The Pre-School Dilemma How Do You Choose?

By Ginger Acopiado

(This is an edited version of the Winter 1 Session article for 2004. We update and run this article each January/February to help our moms during this challenging transition from home to school.)

What an adventure finding a pre-school was for our family! I really didn't know there would be so much stress over what initially seemed such a natural and easy choice. In retrospect, I thought I would just pick the school my son's friends were going to attend or the schools attended by older siblings of those friends. In reality, something very different happened. I began to care about specific things for my son, things that were different from those of friends and family.

My sister wanted socialization for her children, but my son had a large weekly playgroup and several friends we saw almost daily. My neighbor wanted religion school, yet that came naturally in our daily routine, so it became less important to my choice of school. I was concerned we needed diversity since my son was surrounded by children mostly like him and I wanted him to learn more about other people and their cultures.

As my son turned 3, I watched my reticent clingy toddler turn into a talkative, creative, and dramatic little boy with a sparkle in his eye and mischief in his genes. Which school would understand that child best? Who could spark his academic interest if I couldn't?

So I opened the phone book, made a list and started to grill anyone who would talk to me about pre-schools in the area. Weren't all pre-schools the same? Why were some so much more expensive than others? Someone suggested I visit some of the schools in the area to see what was offered. I am so glad I did.

Upon visiting the many centers in the area, I found vast differences in philosophy and practices:

- *Some schools parents are welcome visitors or aides, and others find parent disrupt the classroom flow.*
- *Some have you bring in your child. Some have you drop them off to a teacher in the drop off zone.*

- *Some schools foster social development while exposing academics in group settings.*
- *Some allow for individual development while exposing socialization in group activities.*
- *And some focus on academia, with social skills as a background side benefit, just for being part of a group.*
- *And the list goes on...*

I decided I needed a checklist of my son's strengths and weaknesses, as well as a "desires" list of my own.

After months of classroom visits, with and without my son, I finally found the school that was right for us. And though I did have to give in on one or two of the items on my wish list, I found it to be the one that I could live with most or do more with at home. We were done. We had a school. And it was good for us.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE CLASSROOM:

CIRCLE TIME: Is it used for instruction or for group fun? Why is that important to you? Does your child get any current exposure to circle time in other activities? Does your child work well in group settings or require more individual instruction.

WORK TABLES: Are children placed at tables at the same time for instruction or free to explore other areas of the room when others are at the table? Is there enough space for everyone if it were required? Are they allowed to move on when finished or stay until all are finished? Which do you favor and why? (*Ex: Some parents feel waiting with the group teaches teamwork and self-control. Others feel it restricts a child's inner drive to explore their environment and continue learning when in a workflow.*)

ARTS & CRAFT: Do the children spend a large part of their school time on activities that produce great visuals for parents, but little benefit to development? Are art projects creative? Who does most of the work, the child? or the teacher in preparation? Art is a creative outlet. Look for schools that encourage creative expression if that is important to your family.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES: Are enrichments like gymnastics and music available to the children? Are they allowed to go outside, weather permitting, for a small portion of class time? If not, does your child need a physical outlet? Is this important to you based on your own lifestyle?

CREATIVE EXPRESSION: Are the children controlled by the environment, or does the environment welcome creative input or activity? (*Ex: Can your child take off*

their shoes and wear slippers? Are any parts of the day child-directed?)

DISCIPLINE: How are children asked to resolve the issue surrounding the need for discipline? Socially? Consequentially? How is a disruptive child turned into a cooperative one? Is there a place a child can go to in order to regain composure? (*Ex: Do you want the room to have a quiet corner when a child feels they need to remove themselves or be alone to gain control.*)

LIFE SKILLS: Are the children active participants in maintaining the classroom, the items within the room and the world around the room? Are there live animals? Are there responsibilities each child is required to tend during a part of every day? Is this important to you? Are there allergies to consider?

CLASSROOM TOOLS: Are the "tools" in the classroom build on learning or development or are they play items? (*Ex: Use of tongs to move items from one place to another aid in the writing muscle development. Eye droppers also do this. Tactile sandpaper for allows kinesthetic learners to connect touch with sound earlier than verbal instruction.*) Social play and relationship learning includes: doll houses, blocks, and other common toys found in the home. Do you already engage your child academically at home and prefer a social setting for building relationship skills? Are televisions in the classroom? Would that bother you?

QUIET SPACE: Where does a child go to separate themselves from group activities when they are overwhelmed or need space? Somewhere with comforting items such as pillows and books? Does your child need this or do you want this for your

child?

RELIGION: Is it an integral part of the curriculum? Do children learn about and acknowledge all religious holidays or just religions specific to one denomination? Is it the same as yours or similarly modeled? How important is this to you and your family?

AGE / TOILET TRAINING: Is there a minimum age requirement or a minimum toilet-learning requirement?

TIMES/LOCATION: Is the school in a location convenient to you for the times you need to be available to other children in your family or your work schedule? Are you allowed to pick your days or are they decided by age/ability? Do you choose your days and times, or is there an age-related schedule preset by the school?

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION: While observing the classroom with your child, did he/she immediately want to explore the room? Did you like what you saw? Did your child? Did you get a sense of "rightness" that fit your expectations? Or did something just seem "not quite right" to you? It's a good idea to pay attention to your instincts - if something doesn't feel right, ask questions and don't force yourself to dismiss your feelings because of friends or other people's choices.

No one can tell you which school will be right for you, but many will try. Nod politely, take your time, make your checklist, visit the schools that are within your budget (and maybe one just a little outside it to see why) and trust yourself. You are the only one that can decide what best suits the needs of your family and your child. *Let us know if you found this article helpful or if you have a preschool search tip or success story you would like to share. Email us at info@musicinthebox.com.*

Group Instrument gets a Music-in-the-Box makeover. In order to better make the transition from Music Masters to instrument instruction, Music-in-the-Box has redesigned the Music Masters 4: Group Instrument program for ages 3-6.

The change in focus centers on smaller steps for mastery and allows every child to fall in love with the instrument they will play at the earliest stages of learning.

Based on the Suzuki philosophy of "Every Child Can", we believe positive early successes lead to motivated musicians. Our first class is winding up and we are already seeing the benefits of the changes.

With learning stations to entice participants who are not engaged in their one-on-one lesson at the instrument, we ensure less down time, and more engaged children.

Our music games focus on notation, dynamics and muscle memory, easing the transition from developing the musical ear to reading notes on the page.

Take this class first, then sign up for your favorite private instructor. You'll be amazed at how much easier and more fun it is when your child has bought into to the idea that they *can* learn to play. Don't have a favorite Suzuki method teacher, we'll turn you on to one of ours!