



The Three P's of Parenting-

P

atience
articipation
leasure

By Wendy Hollenbach Hellyer, B.A., M.A. Music

In today's world we see many instances of 'managed care programs'—managed care of the elderly, the sick and our children. But just as institutional care of our parents lacks the warmth and opportunities to express that pure love that is so healing to both the cared for and the caregiver, the notion that providing supervised schooling and professionally run extra-curricular activities or training for our children 24/7 means we are succeeding as parents needs to be more thoroughly examined.

Over the last 15 years researchers and musicalogists have proven that the effect of introducing music to children at an early age leads to higher academic achievement. According to the College Examination Board children involved in music or the arts test 100 points higher on average than other students in the same schools. In the Feb. 1997 issue of Neurological Research, psychologist Dr. Frances Rauscher and physicist, Dr. Gordon Shaw released their findings that among 3 control groups of pre-

schoolers—children given computer training, children given no special training and children receiving music classes, the children in the music classes performed 34% higher on tests measuring spatial-temporal ability than the others.

Why is music more successful than computers? It is certainly the human contact and parent participation in these classes that make the difference. Neuropsychologist, Carla **Hannaford, Ph.D.** states in her book, *Smart Moves: Why Learning Is Not All In Your Head*, "In order to learn something, there must be sensory input, a personal **connection**, and movement... Emotions interpret each experience and help us to organize it in terms of our view of the world."

So the very thing our 'Grannies' did was right on target!! A child who shares a music experience with a parent who is rocking them, singing with them or dancing with them is more likely to retain not just music auditory skills, but a rich heritage of bonding with their parents! And children with a **strong** parental bond **are** more likely to follow the values established by their parents and be ultimately successful.

I don't underestimate what an effort it is for these parents to attend with their children, but the rewards for both parent and child far surpass any sacrifice they make.

Besides the time, what does it require of the parent? First - **patience**.

A child who is 'grabbed' on the run from **Daycare** or 'hustled' out of bed without enough wake-up time and is 'dragged into class' will not be calm or expecting a joyful experience. Even in nursing my elderly mother, I found that I needed to allow enough time for her to mentally prepare for activities. "Tomorrow we're going to a **morning** concert. It should be a lot of fun!" Today we

need to get breakfast early so we can get to the concert. I'm looking forward to it." Make sure you prepare your child to expect good. Then remember, **more patience** will be needed if your child reacts negatively to **his/her first** class. (Note: It takes **most** children 4-6 weeks to get comfortable with a new routine, **group** of people and/or location.)

Next - **participation**. Even if you're not a great singer or dancer—sing or dance in the class with your child. This holds **true** in the car or at home, too where you can reinforce the **fun in class** (and their ear-training) by singing along to the class tapes **provided**. (**This** also applies to T-ball, soccer or anything else.) Your willingness to participate in a joyful manner and not your skill is what is important. If you are willing to laugh at yourself your child will learn to 'laugh-off' **his/her** own first attempts at a new skill and try again.

Last - **pleasure!** You will be discovering '**fun**' things you can do with your children and how to get them to co-operate with your requests without confrontation. For example: the same songs that are fun to do in class are also a great way to pass time in the car and prevent bored children misbehaving. You'll also be adding a treasure-trove of memories for you and your children to share for years to come. They may forget the computer game you bought them, but they will never forget the time you spend together. Make sure your child's memory bank is filled with **positive** moments!

Ms. Hellyer holds a B.A., M.A. in Music from Temple University and a drama degree from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in NYC. She is also the director of the Hellyer Performing Arts Center. Call 215-757-7775 to register for fall classes.