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**From promoting sleep to physical exercise, music enriches early childhood**

*Nicola Maguire, RECE*

Music can be employed in a myriad of ways throughout childhood, from lulling infants off to sleep, teaching toddlers colours, numbers or the names of their body parts or encouraging an impromptu dance party to burn off energy on a rainy day. Music plays an important role in children's development. A growing body of research examines the relationships between student success and music training. While not every child will participate in formal lessons, incorporating more music into children's daily lives in other ways can have significant benefits.

Singing with infants is a tried and true method to calm and promote relaxation, but it also an excellent way to foster language development. Because babies love to imitate, singing is a way to learn the rhythm of language and the repetition of simple words or phrases introduces new vocabulary. As children grow, the repetitive nature of songs helps to build memory skills. Singing to a familiar tune to signal transitions, as a reminder of morning routines, to memorize a home address or phone number, can help children retain information in ways that embrace the playfulness of childhood.

Listening to recorded music is another way to increase children's music exposure. Enjoying a variety of different music styles helps broaden children's experiences and develops individual tastes. Allowing children to cultivate personal preferences in music promotes a sense of identity and self-esteem. Exposure to different genres of music offers opportunities to learn about different countries, cultures and types of instruments. Discovering new music together can be an enjoyable bonding activity for the entire family.

Attending live music performances can be an ideal way to foster a lifelong interest in music. Now that summer is here there are many outdoor music events that are suitable for families and often offer free or low cost admission. These casual environments are perfect introductions to live music

and can be used to build 'good audience' skills and help parents gauge when their children are ready to attend more formal performances.

Music can have a tremendous effect on humans - evoking memories or enhancing moods as we listen. Bringing more music into your family's life can help to create shared memories while fostering an environment that values self-expression, diversity, and respect for others and particularly, provide opportunities for simple joy.

Also see: Locker, M. Time Magazine. *This is How Music Can Change Your Brain*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/3634995/study-kids-engaged-music-class-for-benefits-northwestern/> May 27, 2015.

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**Nicola Maguire, RECE**

Nicola has over 11 years of experience in early childhood education and over 9 years of experience teaching visual art to children and youth through the Toronto District School Board of Education, the City of Toronto and her own private art school. Nicola was a recipient of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario, London Branch (AECEO, London) Children's Service Award in 2001 for recognition of her dedicated work with children and their families and the Outstanding Student Award in 1990, when she graduated from Fanshawe College's Early Childhood Education program. Nicola is well known throughout her community for her extensive volunteer fundraising work supporting children's arts programming. She is currently enrolled at George Brown College in the Early Childhood Leadership Bachelor of Arts program.