

JUNXION

FOR RESIDENTS, BY RESIDENTS

Happy Tails

Jordan Reidenberg stays “pawsitive” and independent with help from his loyal service dog Jolly



Also Inside:

How artist Jay McClellan captures the canine spirit in his colorful portraits

A peek at TCHS senior Lexus McKinney’s souped-up monster Ford truck

White Dog Café Chef Michael Selser dishes on his favorite seasonal ingredients

raising great kids



By resident expert **Perk Musacchio**
and guest expert **Leo Zumpetta**



Blue Rocks PES chorus

Song and Dance

Perk Musacchio and Leo Zumpetta have tips to turn your child's inherent rhythm into their best teacher

Everything you need to succeed in life can be taught in kindergarten or music class! March is when many schools celebrate the importance of music. In fact, it has a name ... MIOS! Music in Our Schools. As a new teacher back in the 1970s, it was a big deal. There were all kinds of celebrations throughout the month. At the time, I didn't know just how important music is to "raising great kids!"

Don't you just love watching little kids dance? They jiggle their little tushes as they bob up and down to the rhythm of the music. No one teaches them how to do this. It just comes naturally, as they feel the music as it courses through their bodies. This stems from a natural rhythm or "internal timekeeper" that controls the brain. This sense of timing controls every part of our day: following directions, conversing

with others, reading and solving math problems, and even during athletic events.

In fact, many instructors play music during their lessons. Personal trainers and aerobics instructors play music that is energetic and will push the participants to get a great workout. Some teachers play classical music that has about 60 to 70 beats per minute, which has been shown to be beneficial when doing homework. It's always fascinating to watch the way certain pieces of music have a calming effect on students, and of course, other selections get them jazzed up and ready to move. This is called "entrainment," which helps people become more "in tune" with their own rhythm and the rhythms around them. Typically, the body's heart rate tends to sync with the tempo of the music, which is why music can cause us to chill

out or fall asleep while other music makes us walk faster or dance to the beat.

The best musicians never forget the primordial urge of movement to music. In fact, these individuals live through their music, even when away from their instruments. We encounter rhythms in the ordinary and every day: No radio or musical training is necessary. Speech patterns are a wonderful place to start. Even tone-deaf individuals can speak and chant.

Trace the natural rhythms inherent in a poem, picture book, or even from beloved sayings unique to your own upbringing. Become conscious of the rise and fall of the voice as it navigates syntax and meaning. Watch Italians as they gesticulate, as it's not just for show. Their hands act as type-setters, casting their spoken words in bold,



Vera Vandetty



Unionville High School Band

italics, parenthetical asides, and dramatic exclamations. Think back to your high school days and the iambic pentameter of Shakespeare. There are those stressed syllables that can be punctuated with movement. For children, claps and stomps are the most natural. Then there are those empty spaces where a series of gestures can serve as links between words. Some think of those empty spaces as "dead air," but musicians respect both sound and silence.

Movement is wonderful, but what about tactile stimulation? Props can also be used to experience the pulse and rhythm inherent in all music. Consider the simple act of rolling or kicking a ball. Add the bounce of a ball, the preparation needed to gain momentum, the moment of release, the rebound, and finally the act of catching before repeating the entire process, and here you have music in microcosm – a symphony written for the body moving through space.

Music plays a very important role in early childhood development. It can nurture and improve:

1. Brain development and cognitive function
2. Language skills and vocabulary
3. Sensory development
4. Gross and fine motor development
5. Auditory perception (the brain's ability to make sense of what it hears through the ears, which is

- very important for future reading and spelling skills)
6. Sound patterns (rhyming, rhythm, syllables, etc.). Sound patterns are the basis for all literacy and mathematical skills.
7. Memory skills
8. General well-being

Research is showing that children with ADHD, learning delays, autism, and other conditions often have differences in the parts of their brain responsible for timing and rhythm. Don't panic and think, "Oh, no! My child's brain isn't working properly, and nothing can be done." That just isn't true. The good news about our brains is that they can rewire themselves due to the concept of neuroplasticity. Training the brain and body to have better rhythm and timing looks more like play than therapy and is actually fun!

Activities to Improve Your Child's Rhythm and Timing

If you visit any early childhood classroom, you will often see the following fun activities, which are easily replicated at home. Many are oldies but goodies, and you may remember doing them as a child. They are actually critical to healthy brain development.

1. Nursery rhymes
2. Patty cake
3. Finger plays
4. Marching- left arm/right leg up, right arm/left leg up so to encourage crossing the midline, elephant footsteps march (thud, thud, thud), little mice scampering footsteps, hopping like a bunny rabbit
5. Dancing and moving to different kinds of music while mimicking the beat
6. Games with balls and bouncing balls to the music
7. Hula hooping
8. Jumping rope to all the old "diddies" Who remembers them?

And Straight from Mr. Zumpetta's Classroom ...

*Exploring high, low, and the space in between
Here's the beauty of this one: no need to worry about pitch or intonation. The lyrics are:
"I can sing up HIGH
And I can sing down LOW
And I can sing in the MIDDLE MIDDLE MIDDLE
And I can sing HIGH and LOW"
Just make sure you linger on HIGH, LOW, and MIDDLE. Illustrate that change with comically squeaky and gravelly voices, and support it all with dramatic hand gestures. Later, bring



Unionville High School Color Guard



•••

the full body into play by going on your tippy toe taps for high and flat feet to the ground for low.

**Tracing music through space*

What if you could **see** music as it swirls around you? Use a silk scarf for this activity. Play a piece of music and ask your child not just to *hear* the music, but to *see* it as it unfolds by using a silk scarf to follow the rhythm of the music. As a bonus, take various lengths of yarn. Lay them about the floor in various loops, whorls, and lines. Follow each piece of yarn with a finger, imitating the shape of each line with the rise and fall of the voice and moving the body, too.

Remember the “lazy eight” that has been referenced in former articles? A scarf or a finger can be used to trace an imaginary eight (lying on its side) in the air.

**Hep Cats Jazz Pants*

Recognizing patterns is an important foundational skill for most academic subjects. Kids love hearing the patterns in music. Start with clapping and patting your knees to the beat. Try some complex rhythmic patterns with support. Take a walk to music. Find the beat with the hands, feet, and body. Then, add a movement on beats two and four, what we in the industry call the “backbeat.” One may wish to only step on one and three to allow the body and mind time to process. We usually start with a snap, as jazz is far too cool for clapping. Replace that snap

with any other movement: full-body dips, little hops, shivering limbs, or even a vocalized shout.

Music isn't just for the younger crowd. The amazing talent and participation in the UCFSD k-12 music program is incredible. From choral and instrumental performances to the UHS marching band and other musical groups, our students have many gifts to share.

As we age, music can bring back memories and even language that has been lost. If you have ever spent time with loved ones who have dementia or Alzheimer's, they may not know what day it is or who you are, but where words fail, music speaks. When they hear that certain song from long ago, the memories are there, and their voices sing out like it was yesterday. Sometimes music is the only medicine that the heart and soul need.

Perk Musacchio is the co-author of No Manual, No Problem: Strategies and Interventions to Help Your Child Thrive in Today's World and A Student's Guide to Communication and Self-Presentation and the originator of the Peace Walk®. For more



Lillie Cobb

information, visit her website at skillstosoar.com.

Leo Zumpetta teaches music in the Unionville-Chadds Ford School District and is currently working towards a Doctorate of Education from Marshall University. He is a cellist by nature and performs with the Delaware County Symphony at Neumann College. The best compliment he ever received from a student was, “Being in music with Mr. Zumpetta is like being in the room without an adult.”



Maclin and Gracie Cobb



Thanksgiving Day Parade UES and PES choruses pre-Covid

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