

# Singing and Dancing: Exercise for Your Brain



When you and your child are singing and dancing in your Music Together class, did you know that you are exercising many of the most important parts of your brain? In particular, recent advancements in brain research present some strong evidence that active music participation can help develop the areas involved with language, reading, and the processing of speech. This is especially true during early childhood, when the brain is already rapidly developing through experience, and it may lead to some surprising benefits for your child.

A recent study found that preschoolers engaged in active music classes for one year showed better skills at hearing speech through noise and a greater resistance to being distracted by background noise.<sup>1</sup> Given that children are often in noisy environments, both at school and at home, the ability to “tune out” the background is certainly an asset for concentration and learning.

Other studies have highlighted the ways in which perception of pitch (tonal patterns!) and the rhythm of speech (rhythm patterns!) are associated with reading ability and phonological awareness. (Phonological awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds within a word.)<sup>2</sup> So the next time you and your child do rhythm and tonal patterns, remember: your child’s music and language development are both being supported!

Have a question for our research team? Email [news@musictogether.com](mailto:news@musictogether.com).

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1 Strait DL, OConnell S, Parbery-Clark A, Kraus N. (2013) Biological impact of preschool music classes on processing speech in noise. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, 6, 51-60.

2 Tierney, A. & Kraus, N. (2013). Music training for the development of reading skills. In Michael M. Merzenich, Mor Nahum, and Thomas M. Van Vleet (Eds.), *Progress in Brain Research* (pp. 209-241). Burlington: Academic Press.

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