



What to Expect at Musikgarten

Part 2: Our Classroom Community

- **Celebrate participation rather than performance.** We are here to make music together, not to win applause. Competition can be a healthy and important part of growing up, but it does not belong in a music class for very young children.
- **Help me eliminate the phrase, “Good job!” and replace it with “Thank you!”** Every child is musical, every child has something to contribute, and every contribution deserves to be acknowledged and appreciated. See above.
- **Realize that children learn in different ways.** Some will be quiet in class, simply observing. These toddlers may wait to do the activities at home. Other toddlers may be very active. They may not even appear to be “learning,” but they are, in fact, absorbing the tones and rhythms even as they move about.
- **Appreciate that letting go is hard.** Even mommy sometimes has a hard time letting go! What helps? Empathy, encouragement, and patience. Sometimes a toddler just isn't quite ready to part with an instrument or manipulative. I never turn this into a big deal. Instead, I simply skip over a child who “isn't ready yet.” When we begin a new activity or try another instrument later, the child will often lose interest and drop the first item on the floor. I have frequently watched this common behavior magically disappear over time as toddlers observe the other children, watch the instruments return from week to week, and learn from experience how to trust and let go.
- **Remember that a toddler is a work in progress and, by nature, unpredictable.** We've all been there, or we'll be there soon enough! *Undesirable toddler behavior is not a reflection of you or your parenting; it is simply the action of a young child who is temporarily out of sync with the expectations of the moment.*
- **Provide natural consequences.** The few “rules” in my class are for the good and safety of the group. For example: toddlers must be sitting when using the rhythm sticks lest they trip and hurt themselves; throwing instruments or using them to hit others is not acceptable. I find the most effective consequence is to simply *take the instruments away without comment*. If this provokes a loud reaction, then a temporary removal from the group may be in order. “Missing out” is a powerful consequence. Stand firm, let the consequence do the talking, and you'll earn the respect of the group who undoubtedly feels your pain!
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help.** Being a parent of a young child is not easy in the best of times. If you are going through something particularly challenging or need to talk to someone, speak to me after class. Immanuel Lutheran Church is here to serve you with caring parents, counselors, teachers, and pastors just down the hall.

