

Beyond discovery — some lessons need repeating

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Discovery and Exploration are part of the ongoing learning process for people of all ages — but especially for young children..

To support the latest research in child development, early childhood classes in many fields of study are now offered to

expose children to lots of learning experiences including baby sports, performing arts for babies and foreign language courses.

Often parents enroll their children in three or more activities bouncing from 8-weeks of soccer to 8-weeks of music, to 8-weeks of French and then 8-weeks of swimming and so on.

The challenge is to find a balance between exploring a new activity and getting any long-term benefit from it.

Just as exercising only 8 weeks of the year provides little long term benefit, short Sessions in any subject merely introduce the

student to the topic. Any true accomplishment or long-term benefit comes from consistent exposure and application.

This is particularly true of a child's musical development.

A child's auditory and musical aptitude are at their highest between birth and 5 years of age. It then starts to decline and by age 9 in tends to drop off the charts. The ideal musical learning experience for children is for them to participate in early childhood music classes from infancy through their developing years until seven or eight with instrumental lessons starting in con-

junction with these classes anywhere from five to eight (depending on the individual child and the specific instrument.)

At the North Jersey School of Music for example, children accepted into the Suzuki String program must take Musikgarten® early childhood music classes to continue their auditory development and musicianship in order to assure that a child's musical 'ear' continues to develop along with the newer skills of music reading and playing. Otherwise the child will often learn to read the music notes but not be able to 'hear' them (anticipate what they

sound like) without playing them on an instrument.

When child participates in music for one session without further reinforcement, the skills they started learning (the synaptic connections) will disappear to be replaced by the next activity. (It's like recording on a tape that already has something on it. You get the latest recording, - but lose whatever was on the tape before recording the new material.)

So when starting a new activity, ask the instructors questions about the long-term curriculum and its benefits so you may best assess which activities

warrant the most time and commitment. For information on the benefits of music studies in developing a child's general intellectual aptitude for other academic studies the following books will be of help: *The Mind Behind The Musical Ear* by Jeanne Bamberger; *Why Children Need Music and Mind Music* by Dee Coulter, Ph.D. *A Music Learning Theory for Newborns and Young Children* by Edwin Gordon, Ph.D., *Musical Growth and Development* by Dorothy McDonald and Gene Simons and *Readings in Music Learning Theory* by Darrel Walters, Ph.D.