

# Open heart for music opens mind for learning

By Galina Zenin

After nearly thirty years of teaching music I am still often asked the same question: "Why do you use music every day?"

To answer this question, I usually use quotes and let the research speak for itself:

*"...Preschoolers who took music lessons did better at spatial and temporal reasoning tasks than those who received computer lessons."*

*"Early exposure to music increases abilities in many other areas, including math and language."*

Recent studies have clearly indicated that musical training physically develops the part of the left side of the brain involved with processing language, and can actually wire the brain's circuits in specific ways. Early musical training helps develop language, reasoning, math, science, concentration, memory, self-expression, reduce stress and much more.

Some parents believe that music is good for musically talented children. But how many people actually know that the greatest scientist of the twentieth century, Albert Einstein, as a boy, did poorly in school?

He could not talk until he was three years old and could not read until he was eight. At the age of five, he began violin lessons and at the age of thirteen, he discovered Mozart's sonatas. Music became not only an outlet for his emotions, but also an inspiration for his mathematical and scientific ideas.

All children have different abilities and learn when they are ready in their own way. However, it is our role to inspire, enhance and support their learning.

*"All children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life,"* states Australia's first National Early Years Learning Framework. The framework also draws on:

"International evidence that early childhood is a vital period in children's learning and development".

From January 1, 2012 every service in Australia has been aiming to receive a rating of Meeting or Exceeding in all the elements in the National Quality Standard; which is comprised of 23 standards and 7 quality areas.

The main focus of the NQS falls on the 'Educational Program & Practice' (Quality Area 1) and the foundation of this first and most important Quality Area are the Five Outcomes of the EYLF.

Outcome 5: 'Children are Effective Communicators', clearly outlines *"Communication is crucial to belonging, being and becoming. The educators promote learning when they provide a range of resources that enable children to express meaning using visual arts, dance, drama and music, when they sing, and chant rhymes, jingles and songs, when they engage children in discussions about symbol systems, for example, letters, numbers, time, money and musical notation"*.

Bonkers Beat Music Kinder & Childcare Aspendale was selected as a pilot centre for the National Quality Standard and after going through the assessment; our team was excited to receive an outstanding result - Exceeding NQS.

Looking back I can confidently say that working together, believing in ourselves and providing high quality educational music and wellbeing programs made all the difference.

Many educators know that singing, body percussion, playing on a variety of both tuned and untuned instruments, movement, dancing and speech activities not only encourage active music making, but most importantly stimulate children's social, intellectual and emotional growth.

From our experience, we know that introducing music helped us achieve outstanding results with the NQS assessment, promote integrated and complex learning for all children and reflect all five Outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework.

In order to support and reflect the Early Years Learning Framework, most services are working hard and striving to improve educational programs for all children. However, some educators are still lacking confidence, educational resources and practical tools to incorporate performing arts into their daily activities.

I strongly believe, that with some professional training in music and movement, early childhood educators can build general knowledge and skills to incorporate performing art experiences into every day routines.

If everyone integrates music into an early childhood curriculum, it might help more children discover new mathematical formulas and breakthrough scientific theories in the future. But most importantly, it will promote a love of learning, enrich children's development and enhance the quality of their life.

**Galina Zenin is one of Australia's most innovative Music and Early Childhood Educators and has 30 years of teaching experience, from early childhood to VCE. Her most recent credits include presentations of her creative programs, "Music for Learning" and "Wellbeing Practices for Life" at the 2010 and 2011 DEECD Innovation Showcases Victoria. Galina has been invited to present a wide range of topics at a number of conferences and seminars in Australia and overseas.**

She runs **Bonkers Beat Music Kinder**, which provides outstanding pre-school kinder, music and wellbeing programs to every child, every day. Galina lives in Melbourne and can be contacted on +61 414 726 789 or galina@bonkersbeat.com.

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