



Chapter Five:

The Songs: A Teacher's Manual

DON'T TEACH SONGS; HELP THEM LEARN MUSIC

The curriculum features well balanced song collections with various meters and tonalities. However, listening to and learning the songs is not enough. You must use the songs as tools to introduce and reinforce musical skills.

When you help your child learn to walk, you do more than walk around him or show him videos of people walking. You hold his hands, give him safe places to pull up, practice balancing with him, and encourage his attempts including his failures.

In the same respect, you did not teach him how to walk by explaining theories and forcing him to move exactly as you do. You guided him as he learned. You let him find his own way and use his entire environment. You must do the same while he learns the most basic musical skills. This chapter will explain how to use the curriculum to do so.

**Don't push.
Trust in your
child's ability to
learn.**

USING THE MANUAL

Before you begin a season, read the manual for that particular season. Try to come back to the manual time and again throughout the season for reminders and new ideas.

Make notes in the lesson plans you are using with any details or ideas you want to remember. You may also want to make notes in the manual or in the Lesson Plans.

The Manual also points out development cues to watch for in your child. You may want to make notes your child's development in the forms provided in the appendix.

After a brief section describing common elements to each season, the songs are grouped according to season, and listed in the same sequence as the CDs and Children's Songbooks. Each song is cross-referenced and listed in the Index. You will find that often an idea for one song may be applied to several others, especially recommendations for a specific age group.

**Keep tabs in
the Manual and
Lesson Plans
for ease of use.**

**Photocopy the
lesson plans if
desired.**

**There is a
glossary of
music terms on
page 269.**



Finally, there are notes and ideas in the manual for different families and different people. Pick and choose what works for you. If your background in music is limited, don't be overwhelmed by the occasional use of musical terminology. Move on and work from where you are.

THROUGH ALL THE SEASONS

TONAL and RHYTHM PATTERNS

The lesson plans include practicing the echo patterns made popular in Edwin Gordon's research. These have proven beneficial in helping children develop competence and in assessing this development. They also seem to enjoy them quite a bit. If you are skilled in music, you can follow the directions below to create tonal and rhythm patterns for different songs. Otherwise, follow the cues of the CD. If you are unsure of your ability to lead the patterns, you can let the CD do that for now.

If your child echoes a pattern incorrectly, do not correct her. Simply echo her incorrect pattern back to her.

Most people find they intuitively "get" how to do these patterns. You are reinforcing the rhythms or tonalities of the last song. They are not random. Generally, rhythm patterns repeat the rhythmic pattern of one or two measures of the song at a time. Usually, these are used for the spoken rhyme. These are often performed with a "Ba" sound because it is a first sound for even young babies. Sometimes other fun sounds are used. The Tonal patterns consist of three interval patterns: tonic, atonic, tonic and a chromatic pattern, slurred together and ending on the resting tone of the song. If this doesn't make sense to you, don't worry. Just sing the patterns as modeled on the CD.

Do not force your child to echo the patterns. Encourage children 3 and up to try, but for younger children, simply sing the patterns and rest on the "echo". When listening to the CD, model echoing the patterns for the children.

RITUALS

Each class we teach in the classroom and each class you conduct at home, begins with *Good Day*. This song, together with *God Bless*, both to the tune of *Good Night Ladies*, provides a structural framework for class time and a consistency across the seasons. Both are easy to use in a child's day: beginning of homeschool, at the breakfast table, at bedtime, as a way to say "Good bye and God bless" when Dad goes to work, etc.

At the lesson

Sit down with the children (usually on the floor) so you are at their level. Slap your knees or thighs to the beat for a couple measures (4 – 8 times) Remember you are setting up the song, so try to start on a beat that will work once you start singing! Then sing naming everyone in the room. The meter shifts as it moves into the prayer. Fold your hands. For *Good Day*, sway to the new meter. This expresses the shift in meter nicely and models reverence in prayer. End with a reverent Sign of the Cross. Give the children some time to process before beginning the class prayer, or ending the session with a hug.