

Jitterbugs

— Jazz for Kids —

At Jitterbugs: Jazz for Kids, our goal is to create self-motivated, creative learners.

Through the means of positive psychology we can create a high-gain, low-risk environment for learning through play. We recognize and celebrate that every child has their own unique needs for learning and many ways to express themselves creatively.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

In positive psychology, a “flow” state is the mental state in which a child performing some activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity. You often hear professional athletes and other performers referring to this state as “being in the zone.” This feeling of exhilaration and accomplishment ties in with the theory that cognitive abilities are socially guided and constructed.

In short, culture and our experiences serve as a mediator for the formation and development of specific abilities, such as learning, memory, attention, and problem solving.

Understanding and adapting the activities to the ages of our young learners is also a major key to learning. At this stage in their development, we focus primarily on Trust, Autonomy and Initiative.

At Jitterbugs: Jazz for Kids, all of this is done through movement and music!

Creating lesson plans that engage our young learners to sing, dance, and play music is how we succeed in building a “flowing” learning experience.

The class involves a collaboration of professional musicians and students playing music together. From the moment your child walks into the Jazz Forum, they are “in the band!”

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“Education and experiences have led me to believe that positive psychology is the key to learning and retention.”

– Neal Spitzer

TEACHING PRINCIPLES

Core to Neal's own teaching principles is the philosophy of experiential learning.

The process of **I do** (teacher models how to play), **We do** (collaborative playing), and **You do** (students play independently) is the foundation for creating his lesson plans.

We learn by playing music together and base our work on the following ideas:

- All children are born musical.
- All children can achieve basic music competence – that is, they can learn to sing in tune and dance accurately to a beat.
- It's crucial that parents and caregivers participate in class and model music-making for their children in class and at home, regardless of their own musical ability.
- The environment that best fosters young children's musical growth is playful, musically rich, and developmentally appropriate.



NEAL SPITZER, JITTERBUGS EDUCATOR

The educator can learn from the students while practicing and playing together, and adapt the activities on an individual level.

Rather than focusing on a single measure of human cognitive ability, it is helpful to consider all of the different (and unique) mental strengths that an individual may possess. In that light, our lesson plans are designed to celebrate all learning styles that your children will bring to our program.

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NEAL SPITZER'S BACKGROUND

Neal Spitzer's education includes a BS in Biology from Brandeis University (1990), a MFA from The New School for Jazz Performance (1993) and a Masters in Education from Columbia University's Teachers College (2005). At Teachers College, Neal studied Curriculum & Training, concentrating on Early Childhood Education.

Neal has been teaching for almost three decades including 18 years as The Band Director at Washington Irving Elementary School in Tarrytown, NY. In addition to running the Instrumental Band Program for 130 students, he taught General Music to children with special needs (8-1-2 classification). Neal is presently the General Music Teacher at The Round Hill Nursery School in Greenwich, CT (Ages 18 months - 5 years).

Prior to his tenure in Tarrytown, Neal was the General Music Teacher at PS16 in the Bronx and at The Woodstock Day School. He was a teaching artist for the Learning through Expanded Arts Program (LEAP) between these two school residencies. Through Project Arts and many other grants, he trained over 150 classroom teachers in 20 elementary schools on how to integrate music and drama into their existing curriculum.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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REFERENCE MATERIAL

Learn more about Flow Theory

"Flow - Mihály Csíkszentmihályi"

[youtube.com/watch?v=iUsOCR1KKms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUsOCR1KKms)

Lev Vygotsky's Cognitive Development Theory

psychologynoteshq.com/vygotsky-theory

Erik Erikson's Stages of Development

verywellmind.com/erik-eriksons-stages-of-psychosocial-development-2795740