“Simple Gifts”
An excerpt from an article written by Dr. Jean Feldman

Children are like little miracles, changing right before our eyes! We live in a fast-paced world that is trying to rush them and push them. We are so busy trying to give children what we didn’t have that we are failing to give them the “simple gifts” we did have.

I mourn the fact that “childhood” is vanishing! Children need time to play outside, dream, and pretend! I guess I was lucky because I grew up before flashcards, educational videos, and computer games. I didn’t have many toys, but I did have lots of time to use my imagination. I wasn’t enrolled in any extra-curricular activities, but I had a whole neighborhood to run in and explore. I didn’t have a cell phone, but I had hours to sing and talk and read. And I was happy.

My mother never went to college or took an early childhood course, but she had so much common sense when it came to children. Although we didn’t have a lot of luxuries, we always had a swing, a sandbox, and a storybook for bedtime. Those “simple gifts” are the very things that brain research tells us children need. I love what Pat Wolfe (patwolfe.com), a leading expert in the field, says:

“Play is incredibly important for children. Activity is critical. Reading to young children and teaching them songs and rhymes is the most appropriate introduction to reading. It is interesting to note that these are things that most parents (and teachers) have always done!”

I think all of those sweet childhood memories have made me passionate about creating happy memories for children!

As I think about the kind of teacher I want for my grandson, it doesn’t matter where the teacher went to school or what kind of clothes he or she wears. I want someone who will give him the simple gift of a song, a story, and a hug. I want someone who will get down on the floor and play with him and make him feel special. I want someone just like YOU, who will give him happy memories that will last a lifetime!

Children may forget what you said and what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel! ALL children deserve to feel worthy, valuable, and capable! ALL children deserve to be cherished just the way they are. I celebrate you and thank you for the difference you make in children’s lives every day!
About Dr. Jean Feldman
Dr. Jean Feldman has been actively involved in education for over 35 years as a classroom teacher, instructor of adults, author, and consultant.

Dr. Feldman has a BA from the University of Georgia, a D.A.S.T. from Emory University, and a MA and PhD from Georgia State University. She is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Kindergarten Alliance, and the International Reading Association.

Dr. Feldman inspires teachers across the country with her engaging songs and creative activities that help make teaching and learning FUN!

About the Sing Along and Read Along with Dr. Jean Series
Make beginning reading and early childhood themes fun to learn with Sing Along and Read Along with Dr. Jean. Twelve popular Dr. Jean songs have been hand selected and transformed into delightful readers. The variety of early childhood themes chosen will appeal to young children. These fun and whimsical stories support early learning concepts and language development. Use the books in conjunction with the companion CD to allow student to listen to the story, or invite them to read along or sing along for a multisensory learning experience.

Sing Along and Read Along with Dr. Jean

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The skills/concepts listed for each title are supported by the National Early Literacy Panel for PreK students and demonstrate how these books and songs nurture alphabet knowledge, print knowledge, oral language, and “engagement and motivation”.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, MARCH 2004 (74-77)
Correlations of Preschool Skills or Abilities With Decoding or Reading Comprehension Measures

Alphabetic Knowledge:
• play with letters
• link names of letters with sounds
• work with rhymes and play language games
• draw and write independently for personal enjoyment

Print Knowledge:
• observe and follow along as adults track print from left to right
• contribute ideas for others to write down
• observe adults writing as they say words aloud
• participate in discussions about labels and signs
• independently look at books and draw and write

Oral Language:
• create sounds by singing and participating in music making
• listen and respond to music, stories, and discussions
• listen for various purposes including enjoyment, following directions, dialogue, and attending to patterns in language
• engage in oral language activities that are verbally stimulating

Music is the most convenient way to learn anything—Dr. Pat Wolfe

Top Ten Reasons to Sing:
1. Music is multi-sensory. The more senses you get going to the brain, the more likely the message will get there.
2. Music is powerful for prior learning. If children are exposed to concepts while singing it is easier for them to learn when formally introduced.
3. Music activities the brain. It can be used as an indicator to help children know what to expect and energize learning.
5. Songs and chants are a natural way to develop oral language and auditory memory.
6. Poems and songs lay a foundation for fluency.
7. Children are able to use their imaginations and create pictures in their brains when they sing; an important part of reading comprehension.
8. Repetition is key to learning. It is much more fun to repeat songs than worksheets.
9. Singing and dancing relieve stress and oxygenate the brain.
10. Through music and movement all children can feel successful. A community of learners is enhanced when teachers and children enjoy something together.