

News and Notes

April 2010

The purpose of Music Ed Ventures is to search for and practice ways of making music and interacting with people that preserve and celebrate the dignity of both. As a guiding principle, this purpose will focus our work on:

1. Practices that foster interactive, facilitative learning environments.
2. Strategies that empower the learner within the context of music experience and study.
3. Networks that encourage collaboration between diverse disciplines, professionals, and interest groups.

Are you interested in hosting a workshop or class in your area? Send requests to the email address shown above, to be routed to the appropriate presenters/coordinators.

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From Our President Marilyn Winter, Butte, Montana

Greetings!

Recently as I left our 2010 Conference, driving south toward Sacramento CA, I was extremely encouraged about the art of teaching and our particular role in promoting this art. I continued to be amazed at the multitude of talents and ideas that our small but dynamic group of educators has in its midst.

As I drove, my thoughts "wondered" back to our first gathering (before we were known as Music Ed Ventures). A dozen or so teachers who had attended multiple ETM courses felt the need to stay in touch. So we set to work devising a plan to make that happen. Spokane, WA was a central location for all of us in the Northwest and most of us could get there in less than eight hours and the hotel accommodations were priced right. So we began our first adventure in what ultimately led to the incorporation of Music Ed Ventures.

During that first gathering, we shared ideas of what was happening in our classrooms and in our personal lives. We realized just how much knowledge we held as a group and we all went home recharged to finish the rest of the year. We also took with us the idea of planning for another meeting the following year and a hope to form a lasting group.

As I reflected further continuing along I-5, I thought of Kari Wendroth's thesis of which she gave an overview during our recent Update sessions. In that thesis there is a quote from Mary Helen about our first meeting in Spokane. She states:

"You couldn't pry me out of that room for anything. It was intense, and gorgeous . . . I have hopes and the optimism to think that this session heralds things to come . . . I think altogether from those teachers in Spokane, it was the surest and the strongest evidence of competence and devotion to their profession that I have ever experienced in this work." (Richards, Mary Helen. "Delight with Interns' 'Project Update,' "ETM Newsletter, April/May 1989)

As I thought about this quote I knew that indeed it was a herald of things to come and that indeed we are a committed group with so much to share. Twenty years later we are thriving and **cannot know how many educators and children we have touched in those two decades.**

As I headed down the hill into the Sacramento Valley, I wanted to say thanks, Mary Helen for starting us on this journey AND thanks to **ALL** who have contributed to our growth as teachers, individuals, and as an organization.

Now, let's make a commitment to keep on **"keeping on"**.

Marilyn

News and Notes is the monthly communication of Music Ed Ventures, Inc. (MEI). Regular features will keep members and friends up to date on coming events and the latest teaching techniques, tips and strategies. Submissions are due on the 15th of the month prior to publication and may be submitted months in advance, indicating the month in which they are to be published. The committee reserves the right to select material to be published according to length and appropriateness. Articles should be 200-325 words. Visuals should be scanned and submitted as PDF or jpeg files. Submissions may be sent to PamBridgehouse@hughes.net and may be edited to accommodate space limitations.

Post - Conference 2010

Photos of the conference can be seen on the website

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

What a conference we had! Wasn't it fun to catch up on everyone's lives and to glean new ideas for our classrooms! You can view a slide show of events on the website under Conference 2010. Enjoy, although some of the photos are not of best quality. I was experimenting with my new Christmas camera.

On the behalf of Peggy, Anna and myself we wish to thank everyone who helped make this a fun filled, productive gathering of kindred spirits, educationally as well as personally. Everyone was most gracious in accepting our invitations to present at this conference. This made it easy and fun to coordinate. We loved being in touch with all of you throughout the year (the best part of this job) AND... Most of all we loved what you brought to share.

*Marilyn Winter
President, MEI*

Dear MEI Board Members,

Hello! I hope this all finds you well. I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciated this year's conference. It has uplifted me and inspired me to go and teach music to children with my whole heart and soul, just like all of you do.

Each session this year has given me ideas that will help me improve both as a musician and educator. I thought it was particularly important that the group had a session about autism, a rapidly growing concern in this nation. I currently work with two students with autism here and have taken information that I brought back from the session. We need more sessions like this on special education. I also loved the songs ideas brought for the Potpourri of Puzzles for Reading, Four Faces of A Song, and Singing By Heart. Dr. Langness' session was especially helpful for me since my current graduate project is on teaching techniques for children's choirs. Dr. Bennett's session inspired me to go read more books and ideas on music education (Can you believe a graduate student is saying that?!). And Dr. Bartholomew reminded me of how important it is to always look closely at the music (theory) and my teaching.

I would not have been able to go to this conference if it hadn't been for the generous travel grant that was given to students. So, from the bottom of my heart, thank you so very much. Please have a wonderful and blessed spring.

*Sincerely,
Kimiko Glynn
Ohio*

Follow up... from Dr. Peggy Bennett

In the June MEI Newsletter, I wrote about Daniel Pink's fascinating book and keynote address, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*. Here is a website where you can view the entire speech. Pink is very engaging and passionate as he reveals his futuristic thoughts. Peggy D. Bennett

<http://www.tmea.org/2009keynote/>

A Problem of Economy

by Pam Bridgehouse

Retired teacher of Music, Spanish and English as a Second Language

Scotts Mills, OR

At the recent Conference in Portland a perennial problem came up in several discussions. The MEI approach to teaching is too “messy” for many people who have authority over what happens in the classroom. Teaching through song games doesn’t look like their idea of education. In some classrooms, rules of conduct and teaching methods have been imposed that keep students firmly planted in their seats. Teachers and students feel stifled and frustrated. Teachers who have used the MEI approach understand its exceeding value in the development of the whole intelligence of the student, but not everyone sees it that way.

When I took a course in economics I learned that economy is the exchange of goods or services based on perceived values that are agreed upon by the buyer and seller using an agreed upon medium of exchange, or currency. I was astonished by the concept that the value of any given currency is subjective and essentially imaginary. (That was a liberating thought that instantly freed me from much distress over my personal budget.) The buyer and seller must agree on the currency and the value of the thing in order for the transaction to be satisfactory to both. The idea of the value of currency as it relates to perceived value keeps coming back to me, applied in different contexts, one of which is the classroom.

I believe the source of the problem as related to the MEI approach to teaching is a problem of economy. The money that pays the teacher and provides materials for the classroom is considered by many to be the sole medium of exchange. Teachers and students should interact in a way that guarantees the expected outcome. When consumers observe an active class where there is a playful atmosphere, they may perceive that they are not getting what they paid for. There is disagreement not only about the value of what is taking place, but also about the medium of exchange involved.

The economy of real education is based on a non-monetary currency. The currency of the classroom is complex and intangible. It is comprised of activities and interactions that build relationships and create an atmosphere of mutual respect between teacher and learners, and the cultivation of the habits of curiosity and critical thinking. When teacher and students apply such a currency to their exchanges, there is ample opportunity for both teacher and student to predict, explore, check, confirm, reflect, and record – to grow and learn. The value is in the process. There is not always a material ‘product’ by which the value of the education can be measured. There is no easily read ‘ticker tape’ giving a constant black-and-white measure of the educational value. The real product of the classroom economy is the person who is formed by the process. The MEI approach does not seek to prepare students only to parrot information to achieve a test score. The MEI approach seeks to develop the capacity of people to think and to reason, to inquire and study a problem from many vantage points in order to take appropriate action, and to interact with others in a peaceful, productive manner, showing respect for all, and to recognize and appreciate beauty. The value of such characteristics is difficult to express in dollar value or test scores.

Our challenge then, is to know our purpose (see page 1 of this newsletter), and to make it apparent to those who question the value of teaching through song, song games and movement. We must be prepared to articulate the value of the activities, techniques and strategies we use, in language educators and administrators can understand and relate to. Our challenge is to help those we perceive as adversaries to understand the long-term value of this way of teaching. Our challenge is to so respect and educate those who oppose our approach to teaching, that we all might somehow, as our purpose states, network with and collaborate in order to blend the very necessary considerations of the monetary economy with the economy of the MEI classroom. We must find ways to work together with them in the best interest of the children.

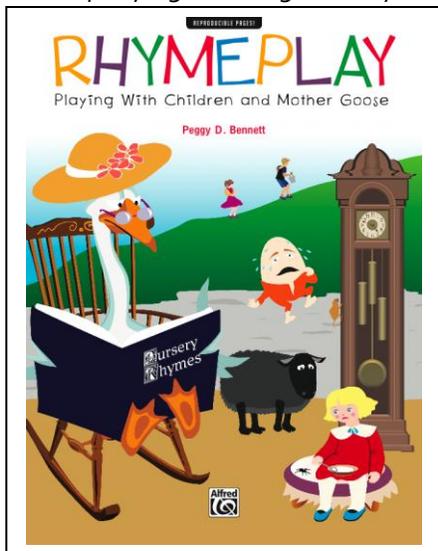
In Oregon, there was a time when lesson plans for any activity were required to include specific references to the state Course Curriculum Goals (CCG's). Yes, it was a major pain, but it also clarified my thinking about the purpose for every activity I used. Because I had to think about my lessons in that way, I found I was always prepared to defend my activities, techniques, and strategies as "best practices" according to what was expected by the state my administrators, parents, and the school board. (It helped that I was already very familiar with the CCG's for K-8 Music because I had been hired by the state to compile and format – by hand – the first rough draft.)

As you plan your lessons, you might take the time to write down all the educational and developmental outcomes that you are working toward through a specific activity* [I know – who has time for this? But it's worth the trouble at least to practice it a few times.] Anticipate the arguments of those who might be critical, and prepare your rational explanation, using current educational vocabulary – we must always communicate in a language the hearer can understand. By preparing in this way you may help others recognize the value of the currency and the product in the economy of your classroom.

* If you have such an exposition of a lesson that you would like to share please send it and we will publish it in this newsletter.

Announcing a New Book by Peggy D. Bennett

Charming the senses of young children is key to the spirit of *RhymePlay*. The simplicity and musical lilt of Mother Goose rhymes engage and enchant children as they play with language, dexterity and imagination. Accompanying the delightful rhymes are wonderfully photographed fingerplay movements, ready for immediate use. Reproducible Picture Cards enhance the lessons, making it easy to prepare and have students actively engaged in the lesson.



Designed for the early childhood classroom, *RhymePlay* includes a wealth of energizing and imaginative activities, focusing on building children's organizational, expressive, and memory skills.

"Storymaking" and "Playlets" allow children to develop expressiveness and understanding as they actively explore the imaginary world of the rhymes. "ReadingPlay" exercises lead children toward literacy. Each of the charming finger plays and activities in *RhymePlay* will captivate and enchant children while developing their senses, minds, and social skills. [back cover]

RhymePlay is written for parents, teachers, and early childhood caregivers.

Bennett, Peggy D. (2010). *RhymePlay: Playing with Children and Mother Goose*. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing. ISBN 10: 0-7390-6146-1 ISBN-13: 978-0-7390-6146-6

Cost: \$24.95

Order: Available February 1, from your favorite music store, Alfred.com, Amazon.com

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