



News and Notes

January 2011

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

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Recently we received a letter from one of our readers indicating that reading our newsletter made her realize that she needs to get back to our conferences.

During my years of teaching, I was SO aware of how I NEEDED our annual conference to continue as an effective teacher. Each year I left the conference recharged with a multitude of stimulating **ideas** to take back to my students.

There is little doubt that persons in this group became some of my best **friends** and most valuable **colleagues**. The district in which I taught offered very little opportunity for me to be in contact with other music teachers. I could not simply walk across the hall to share successes and struggles. Coming to conference filled that need for me. To this day, 13 years after retiring, many of my best friends are persons I met through this organization.

Coming to conference was also an opportunity to **affirm** my teaching practices and philosophies. As I watched master teachers in action at conference I could see likenesses in what I was doing in my classes and would then have confidence to continue along the paths I had begun.

With this in mind, I encourage you to fill out our registration form and make arrangements to attend our February conference. **I know you will not be disappointed.**

Marilyn

The annual board meeting of Music Ed Ventures, Inc. will be held at 8:00 a.m. February 25, 2010. The membership meeting will be held at 8:00 a.m. February 26, 2010. Both meetings will occur at the Red Lion Hotel Portland-Convention Center, 4th floor meeting rooms.

Be sure to see the Conference 2011 flyer and registration form in this newsletter or the link on the web site [www, musicedventures.org](http://www.musicedventures.org) Send in your registration by January 8 for early bird discount.

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.

Redefining Why We Do What We Do

Bonnie Davison

Bonnie is a Learning Resource Teacher, Music Therapist and Founder of Singing English Education. Over the past 4 years, she has facilitated Singing English Education Workshops for hundreds of teachers across Canada. To watch a free lesson video visit: www.singingenglish.com

Two more provinces in Canada, PEI and BC, have now moved to full day Kindergarten. I have recently been researching preschools for when my daughter turns 3. Both of these events have caused me to re-examine my own early childhood education philosophy. I find it fascinating the difference between the centers that I have visited. Some are all free play with no structured literacy or music time, while others I feel offer a curriculum very similar to that of grade one; and this is only preschool! It seems that there is an increasing focus on early literacy acquisition skills. Of course I obviously believe in early literacy but with two important considerations. Firstly, early literacy must be developmentally appropriate and secondly it needs to be fun and explored through music and movement.

How early is too early?

Recent research shows that the language center in the left hemisphere of the brain doesn't form in most children until they are between the ages of seven and nine and that it is often later for boys than girls. Boys Adrift, Leonard Sax, MD, Ph.D., 2007. This research suggests that teaching children to read before this age can sometimes cause problems in spelling and reading comprehension. Research also suggests that the part of the brain that allows the language centers in each half to communicate with each other also needs to be developed in order to complete a task.

In her article, How to Determine if Your Child is Ready for Kindergarten, Renee Lannan refers to research that shows that if children are taught to read before both hemispheres of the brain are both contributing to the act of reading, the brain adapts, creating shortcuts that could later effect how their literacy skills develop. Susan Johnson, a pediatrician and certified Waldorf educator, recommends using this indicator to determine your child's readiness for kindergarten: "If a child can move her opposite arm and leg at the same time, then the right and left hemispheres of her brain are communicating with each other."

How can we ensure early literacy is developmentally appropriate?

First of all, as early childhood educators we have to ask ourselves if our language programs are fun, and filled with movement and music. Singing English activities such as *Bumpety Yellow Bus*, where children are exploring the stressed syllable in their name and *Dotting*, a Singing English technique where students explore how the symbols they create on paper have a sound value, while having fun tracking and tracing the sound of the symbols they have created, ensure that young children are being exposed to early literacy skills that are both fun and developmentally appropriate.

There is new research developing every day. Visit my blog: www.singingenglish.com to read three interesting articles on recent early childhood development and brain research and to watch a video on how early childhood education happens in Sweden. They just might help you re-define your own teaching philosophy, challenge what you currently believe about early childhood education, and help you choose to participate in professional development opportunities that challenge you professionally. I believe it is important as educators to take time to read new research, learn new techniques and regularly redefine our teaching philosophy -why we do what we do.

A few reflections: by Marilyn Winter, retired music specialist, Butte Montana

I remember when my students received their first musical instruments. Recorders!!!! They were so excited they could barely contain their enthusiasm. The same thing happened when they were to play keyboards and guitars.

I have often thought of what happens with a student from the time he or she receives a musical instrument until the time he or she decides to continue or discontinue playing that instrument. What experiences encourage or discourage students in the process of learning to play an instrument? It should be noted that I include the singing voice as an instrument. Following are a few thoughts I have considered concerning this issue:

First, I believe students need to learn how to **show respect for an instrument**. For example, they need to know that a keyboard should not be pounded, that guitar/ukulele tuning pegs can break strings if turned too tightly, that blowing too loudly on a recorder can cause discomfort to those around them, and that yelling and screaming on the play ground can damage one's vocal cords.

Next the students need to **explore what their instruments can do** and share that with others (parents, classmates, teachers). For example:

1. One of the first things we did when we began keyboard study was to push buttons, play keys, explore various rhythm possibilities always taking care to treat the instrument with respect. We had discussions and demonstrations of what students had discovered.
2. Many of us do this same thing when we explore and give feedback while vocalizing. We discuss and explore what the voice can do. What might hurt it and how we can keep it healthy.

This exploration stage of music training can take more time than we as teachers would like but I believe it is very important not to rush this step in the learning process. Taking time will pay off and may be revisited from time to time. Missing this step may possibly be categorized in the "**discouragement**" column of experiences.

As study progresses, students need to be assigned tasks in which they can be **successful** while always having something **challenging** on the horizon. We could say we spiral from success to challenge and then back to success.

In many cases, **I believe we as music teachers introduce the reading of music far too soon** in our efforts to produce fine musicians. Let's consider the process of teaching one to play an unfamiliar instrument and to read music (a new language) at the same time. Can we be surprised that many young learners become discouraged and quit studying because they just can't do it all at the same time. They begin to believe that they must not be cut out for producing music. **This may be one of the biggest discouragers.**

There must be joy in the playing activities. Do we get so tied up with doing things perfectly that we **take all the joy out** of musical experiences? I often think of the joy in the children playing ukuleles in the video Anna Langness showed at the 2010 MEI conference. Were the children playing perfectly? Not necessarily. Were they having a wonderful musical experience? Indeed they were. This kind of experience leaves everyone wanting to do and learn more.

I recently took a class in watercolors. I was struck by the approach the teacher took in giving feedback about our work. There was no right or wrong way to do things. She reported what she saw in an attempt to draw our attention to aspects of the work. No praise or criticism just observation. We as musicians and teachers might **become more encouraging** if we took note of this approach to giving feedback.

These thoughts are but a few that have crossed my mind throughout the years. I'd love it if you would fill in the spaces or add new ideas concerning this issue.

Keep me posted. It would be wonderful to print some of these ideas in the newsletter.

A Song Game Anne Mendenhall (Minnesota) has used this game with Kindergarten children. The song and original game can be found in *Let's Do It Again!* published by Education Through Music.

Jump For Joy! (based on *Three in the Middle* Folksong)

Song lyrics:

One in the middle and you can't get o-ut.
One in the middle and you can't get o-ut.
One in the middle and you can't get o-ut. Oh, my lil-e-oh!

One in the middle invites someone.
One in the middle invites someone.
One in the middle invites someone. Oh, my lil-e-oh!

Two in the middle and you jump for joy.
Two in the middle and you jump for joy.
Two in the middle and you jump for joy. Oh, my lil-e-oh!

Procedure:

"Listen to my song. It tells a story."

(Verse **one** is sung.)

"What happened in the story?"

Class discussion.

"Listen to what happened next."

(Verse **two** is sung.)

Class discussion.

"Raise your hand if you can show us what it looks like to invite someone?"

"Here's how my story ends."

(Verse **three** is sung.)

"Why do you think they jumped for joy?"

"How might we play this game?"

"What if the two people in the middle invited someone else?"

"How many would jump for joy?" Four? Eight?



Teachers, broaden your scope of what gives voice to children!

Music EdVentures, Inc. presents

Giving Voice

A Conference for
Music and Classroom Teachers

Save the dates!

February 24-26, 2011 Portland, Oregon

Conference will begin Thursday at 1 PM and will close Saturday at 5 PM

Presenters include:

THE AUTHORS OF SONGWORKS I & II

(Singing in the Education of Children & Singing from Sound to Symbol)

**DR. PEGGY BENNETT, Oberlin Conservatory of Music
and DR. DOUGLAS BARTHOLOMEW, Montana State University**

*Workshops by SONGWORKS master teachers, professors, and emerging
education pioneers from Canada, the United States, and Japan*

**Vocal Health Children's Choral Literature
Storytelling Folkdancing New Song Games
SONGWORKS Philosophy & Practice
Children's Demonstration Class**

*SONGWORKS provides a foundation for general literacy and academic
skills in all languages, including English and music. SONGWORKS
workshops demonstrate how to partner effectively with children,
helping them release their singing voices AND their imaginations.*

For more information, visit www.musicedventures.org
Registration forms will be available at the website well in advance of the conference.



Giving Voice

February 24-26, 2011 RED LION INN
PORTLAND, OREGON

Conference begins Thursday, Feb. 24 at 11:30 AM
and closes Saturday, Feb. 26 at 5 PM

REGISTRATION FORM 2011 Music EdVentures Conference

**SIGN
ME
UP!**

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____ EMAIL _____

What is your profession? (Music teacher, Classroom teacher, etc.) _____

How did you hear about the conference? _____

CONFERENCE FEES: *Friday and Saturday lunches (with gratuity and tax) included in registration*

- _____ Members \$135
- _____ Non-Members \$175 *(See below: Become a member for only \$35!)*
- _____ Retirees \$ 80
- _____ Students No charge

ADDITIONAL MEALS: *Great opportunities to dine and share ideas with your professional colleagues*

- _____ Thursday luncheon \$20 *(includes gratuity and tax)*
- _____ Friday night banquet \$35 *(includes gratuity and tax)*

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

- _____ Regular \$35
- _____ Sustaining \$50
- _____ Patron \$100
- _____ Student \$10

www.musicedventures.org

*Stay in touch with the 2011 conference and
the latest from Music EdVentures.*

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION:

_____ I am enclosing \$ _____ (for scholarships to the Music EdVentures Conference)

SCHOLARSHIP AND TRAVEL GRANTS:

- _____ I'd like a scholarship to the 2011 MEI Conference. (Please send me an application form.)
- _____ I'd like a travel grant to the 2011 MEI Conference. (Please send me an application form.)
- _____ I'd like contact information for others interested in sharing hotel rooms.

*Please help the conference committee plan ahead. Mail your registration form and check by Feb. 1 to:
Anna Langness, MEI Treasurer 1179 Lilac St. Broomfield, CO 80020*

TOTAL PAID \$ _____ *(Deduct \$5 if mailed by Jan. 18)* **CHECK NUMBER** _____

Registration and store sales at the conference will be by cash or check only. For hotel reservations, contact: Red Lion Inn 1021 NE Grand Avenue, Portland, OR 97232.

Tel: 503-235-2100 Fax: 503-238-0132 E-mail: conventionctrsales@redlion.com

Mention Music EdVentures when making reservations.

Daily room cost - \$103.50 (\$92 + 12.5% tax) (Each room can sleep up to 4)