



# News and Notes

October 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

Dear Friends and Fellow Educators,

For the past few years Music Ed Ventures, Inc. has been in transition. Many of the old guard has retired and moved on to other endeavors. They have left with us an awesome legacy of teaching techniques and approaches to student learning. Thank you all for those gifts.

NOW! I AM SO EXCITED FOR OUR FUTURE! We can see on the horizon a new young group of educators emerging as valuable members of our group. These new individuals hopefully will become the leaders for our future. WON'T IT BE FUN TO SEE WHERE THEY MIGHT LEAD US.

Our conference planners, Judy Fjell and Kathi Smith are in the throes of planning our 2011 conference, "Giving Voice" which will be held once again in Portland, Oregon. This promises to be another AWESOME conference. You can peruse a synopsis of the conference on our website, [www.musicedventures.org](http://www.musicedventures.org). Application forms will be included in our November newsletter. **TAKE NOTE OF THE DATES (February 24-26, 2011)**. We will be meeting the last week in February rather than the first week of March because of conflicts with other organizations using the facility on our regular dates. We encourage you to register early so our organizers can plan more effectively.

If you need monetary assistance in coming to Conference 2011, please get your application to me at [wintermf@aol.com](mailto:wintermf@aol.com) as soon as possible so we can make plans to help you get to Portland. *See below for application.*

Now!!! Let's get on with the business of leading our students to new knowledge and most important to becoming productive citizens of our society. May we help them become human beings that value the rights of all others in our world. May we lead them to the knowledge of their value and place in the intricate system called "being human."

I'd love to hear of your successes and trials in your teaching days.

Keep in touch,

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](mailto:PamBridgehouse@hughes.net) and may be edited to accommodate space limitations.

I have had the opportunity the past three years to teach the Methods and Materials in Music class for classroom teachers, a one-credit class, at St. Catherine University, formerly the College of St. Catherine. The textbook that I use is the same one that Dr. Marty Stover used, *SongWorks I: Singing in the Education of Children* (Bennett & Bartholomew). I have also added *SongPlay* (by Peggy Bennett) as a textbook. It is very interesting to hear a newcomer's perspective of the SongWorks Approach. Some of the written assignments I have collected from my adult students as they dig into this approach have been eye opening and reaffirming. They have given me their permission to share some of their work with you. Enjoy!

Ellen Tronnes  
EDUC 7110  
February 20, 2010

### **Question 1: List (as many as possible) reasons why it is important/valuable to sing with children every day.**

Music and singing is a vital component of everyone's lives. Whether or not we are musicians, we use music continually in our daily lives: to soothe a crying baby, to teach/learn (the ABC's for example), to celebrate, to relax, to inspire, to display love or affection, to entertain, etc. Why is music so prevalent in our lives? How important is it to sing with children daily? Aside from being fun and enjoyable, research has shown that we can benefit greatly from music and singing:

- **personal skills** Song play builds creativity (when thinking of appropriate movements or alternative lyrics), listening and attention skills (used when following the song words, the teacher, and classmates), self esteem (through opportunities to be both a leader and follower), problem-solving skills (through making choices), a lifelong love of music, and cognitive development (through use of a multisensory approach to concepts such as high/low, loud/quiet, etc.)
- **social skills** Lev Vygotsky's research has shown that learning is social. As such, children can benefit greatly from song play. Also, children learn to take and wait for turns, acknowledge and be acknowledged, observe and accept ideas, express emotions, share thoughts, and demonstrate understandings within a group (Bennett p. 4)
- **movement** Song play allows children to coordinate and pace movement with sounds/words. Also, children explore body awareness through movement ideas (Bennett p. 4). Music when coupled with movement activities also improves balance, coordination, and pre-keyboard (or instrument) skills (Kindermusik literature).
- **language** Song play offers opportunities to describe ideas and actions. Children have the opportunity to listen/respond to language cues, challenges, stories, directions, etc. (Bennett p. 4). Also, singing can greatly enhance the learning of English. Through song, children can explore stressed/unstressed words or syllables, word substitutions, and natural groupings of words (*Singing in the Education of Children: Implications for Teachers of the English Language* by Fleurette Sweeney). Finally, "verbatim memory of language seems to be only one type of memory which can be facilitated by musical experience. Music has been shown to be an important element in contextual memory...and can have an effect on the learner's ability to recall information (*They're Playing Our Song: Language, Music and Memory* by Pam Bridgehouse).
- **musicality** Singing with children will provide a foundation that will serve them no matter what level of music education he/she is involved in: piano lessons, band, orchestra, choir, or simply enjoying a concert from the audience (Kindermusik literature). Through song play children develop speaking and singing skills; experience elements such as closure, beat, rhythm, structure, melody, and text; and sing for enjoyment (Bennett p. 4).

## ***Scholarships/Travel Grants for Conference 2011***

**Send your letter of application to Marilyn Winter at [wintermf@aol.com](mailto:wintermf@aol.com) as soon as possible. December 15<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for application. Notifications of scholarships awarded will be sent in January.**

**Your request should include:**

- **Your name and contact information,**
- **Information about your teaching position,**
- **Amount requested.**

**Scholarships may be applied to registration and/or travel expenses. (Note: There is no registration fee for students.)**

*This article has appeared on our website for several years. With school beginning, it might be a good time to review these thoughts. This way of approaching classroom behavior absolutely transformed my life as a teacher.*

### **Set Them Free: *Teaching skills of independence***

By Marilyn Winter  
Retired Music Specialist – Butte, Montana

Mrs. Anderson is at her "wits end." Although she has told her first grade students numerous times to come into the room quietly, they continue to enter in a loud disruptive manner. She is about to "chalk" them off as just a "bad bunch" of kids.

Gary's mom tells him to pick up his room and make his bed, but each day Gary is out the door without his jobs completed. Gary's mom wonders what she can do to make Gary a more responsible person. These scenarios are not unusual dilemmas within the walls of many school and homes.

I believe that, innately, children want to be "good," to do the "right thing," and to act in ways that are acceptable in the society to which they belong. "Why then," one might ask, "do children often act in ways that cause us to question their good intentions?"

Could it be that some youngsters do not know what "being good" looks like and have little opportunity to learn and practice doing the "right thing?" Could it be that the adults in their society neglect to teach skills of proper behavior and independence that will enable them to be free from constant adult hovering and guidance? Do we, with good intentions of raising responsible, productive children, fall into patterns of telling and controlling rather than teaching, modeling, and practicing and setting free?

In the school setting, teaching skills of independence may be one of the most important things we do with children. If that is true, can we afford to take less care in teaching these skills than we do in teaching math,

reading, or music? When we want our students to learn to add, do we "tell" them only once how to add and then expect them to comprehend and perform? Usually, we take great pains to teach the skills of addition. We write lesson plans, model, practice, and evaluate mastery of these skills. Then, we re-teach, practice, and polish them again and again, diligently focusing on the process, sometime for years. Can we then expect children to learn the skills of proper behavior in one "telling" of the rules?

To help children establish productive skills of behavior, we, the adults, must be proactive rather than reactive. We must think ahead with respect to the behavioral skills our students will need to be independent and successful in their school setting. Then we can incorporate the teaching of these skills into daily lessons. These skills need to be built and rebuilt:

- During the first weeks of school.
- After a break in the school schedule
- When new types of activities are being introduced (field trips, movement activities, working in groups, etc.)

After we have taught the skill of independence, we can then set our students free to try their wings. They may fall short of expectations, but we can always begin again, re-teach, and practice. Whatever the results, we must give them the opportunity to learn to fly on their own.

Let's think for a moment of the school setting and the behaviors we want our students to display. We want them to pay attention, do their work, think for themselves, and to act independently and responsibly. We want them to show regard for their peers, the adults in the school, and the physical plant. We want them to recognize the rights of others to:

- Learn, free from distractions
- Have a certain amount of uninvaded space about them
- Feel safe physically and emotionally

Following are ideas and lesson plans that helped us make skills of independence work in the music room at Whittier Elementary.

## **To Realize Skills of Independence**

Students must understand:

- What is expected.
- The need and reason for these expectations.
- They must want to learn the skill and believe they, personally will be better off if they learn the skill.
- What the desired behavior looks like. They need to see a model and to participate in the modeling process. Remember that humor and a lighthearted attitude can go a long way. For example, modeling behavior opposite from that desired can be fun and often can clearly bring a point home.

Students need to:

- Practice enough to internalize the skill.
- Receive encouragement and feedback as to how they are doing.
- Discuss, describe, and reflect upon what they did.
- Be held responsible for their behavior. If a student fails to meet the criteria, he or she needs to go through the process again. If a large number of students fail to meet the criteria, the teacher may choose to re-teach the skill to the whole class. **One rule should preside over these procedures: to hold a child responsible for an action, ask yourself, "Do I have proof that this student has been taught and has learned and practiced the skill for which he or she is being held responsible?"**

## **Transitions**

A most important time for students to act independently and responsibly is during transitional times; changing from one setting or activity to another. To accomplish the task of getting students into the music room and started on their work, I have used the following routine. Each morning instructions were written on the board for the whole day. As students entered the music room, they read instructions for their grade and began work. This freed me to take roll, check lesson plans, organize materials, or to visit with students. These assignments were always something the students knew well. Before asking the students to operate independently, procedures were taught, modeled, and practiced. The assignment board often read like this:

### **Good Morning**

**Second Grades** - Sit with your partner and quiz the line number of the hand staff

**Third Grades** - Gather mapping supplies and make four maps for the song, "Swing a Lady."

**Fourth Grades** - Pick up your recorder and without blowing, practice the fingerings for "Hot Cross Buns."

**Fifth Grades** - Begin playing the game, "Hop Up, My Ladies."

Song Starter, Ann.

First person go be "it," Andy.