



# News and Notes

August 2012

## IN THIS ISSUE

### From our President

Judy Fjell p. 1

### 2013 CONFERENCE "Refresh, Rethink, Refine"

Conference Flyer p. 2  
Registration form p. 3

### BACK TO SCHOOL IDEAS

#### First Day Back

Marilyn Winter p. 4  
Lisa Schoen p. 5-6  
Kate Smith p. 7-9

### Transitions

Leah Steffen p.10-11

### Freedom!

Danielle Solan p.12

### MEI Information

Purpose of MEI p. 13  
MEI Officers p. 13  
Board Members p. 13  
Chairs p. 13  
Save the date p. 13  
MEI Website p. 13  
Submissions p. 13

## From Our President

Greetings all,

As usual, summer is flying by. I hope this letter finds all of you in a period of rejuvenation. It's great to soak in these long days and the warmth of the sun. I hope that all of us, especially our full-time employed teachers, are taking plenty of time to reflect and relax before launching into the busy days of fall and winter.

Our Music EdVentures community is "coming of age" this year as MEI turns twenty-one! We certainly possess a richness that arises when a group of dedicated people have been working toward common goals over a number of years. I celebrate our shared wisdom.



Judy Fjell  
Helena, MT

One of our very meaningful sayings is "Many things, one song; one thing, many songs." When our 2010 conference planners chose the title "Four Faces of a Song" for a workshop slot that year in Portland, they were implementing the idea that one song can yield many opportunities for creativity, learning, and study. We all marveled at how those four presenters could present that one song in so many lights. We enjoyed the range of activities and learned at least four times as much from the same song!

"Four Faces of a Song" has been inspiring conference planners ever since and seems to be coming up again for next April. When I think of my own work as a teacher, I am so grateful for those folksongs which have been indispensable to the learning process. Where would I have been without the songs: Make a Circle, Here We Are Together, Hot Cross Buns, and Scotland's Burning, to name just a few?

And, it has been equally inspiring when presenters have brought new songs and games to our group. The other day, while immersed in the riches of the music section of a used bookstore, I ran across a Scottish folksong which was so singable and intriguing. Now I am wondering if it is one of those songs which would be useful to us in Music EdVentures and SongWorks. I plan to head back to the store to collect that song.

Summertime is a great time to reflect on these kinds of possibilities. Do you have a song in your library or your own repertoire for all of us to sing and play? You may have a gem at your fingertips which will inspire us next April in Minneapolis and be of benefit to many students in the years ahead. Keep your eyes and ears open to the possibilities!

*Judy*

# MUSIC EDVENTURES 2013 CONFERENCE

## MINNEAPOLIS APRIL 4-6



# SongWorks

## "Refresh, Rethink, Refine"

MUSIC EDVENTURES CONFERENCE 2013 APRIL 4-6 MINNEAPOLIS

### Refresh

Revitalize your passion for teaching through interactive song experiences and engaging discussions.

### Rethink

Consider the components of good teaching and observe them being modeled.

### Refine

Hone musical and pedagogical skills as you learn from masterful teachers: Dr. Peggy Bennett, Dr. Fleurette Sweeney, Judy Fjell, Mary Opland Springer, Dr. Anna Langness, Tony Williamson, Annette Coffin, and Dr. Douglas Bartholomew. Other featured presenters will include MEI members from Japan, British Columbia, and many states, including Minnesota.



Teachers of children with English as their second language, special sessions are planned just for you! *English EdVentures of Japan* teachers will masterfully guide song experiences which they have designed for teaching children to speak, read, and write English. Their models are adaptable to any language.



Sessions for elementary classroom and music teachers of children K-6 will inspire your teaching! *SongWorks* activities provide the context for student immersion in social interaction, movement, language, thinking, listening, and singing. You will see, experience, and evaluate strategies for students of varied learning styles.

*SongWorks I: Singing in the Education of Children* (1997, Wadsworth) and *SongWorks II: Singing from Sound to Symbol* (1999, Wadsworth) by Dr. Peggy D. Bennett and Dr. Douglas Bartholomew

***SongWorks* practices are built on the premise that students are at the center of, and actively involved, with music making and music study.**

***For further information, contact:***

Terolle Turnham (651)442-0584 or Anne Mendenhall (952)892-6997  
Music EdVentures, Inc. [www.musicedventures.org](http://www.musicedventures.org)



# Song Works

## "Refresh, Rethink, Refine"

MUSIC EDVENTURES CONFERENCE 2013 APRIL 4-6 MINNEAPOLIS

HOLIDAY INN BLOOMINGTON I-35W

Free Shuttle Ride to/from MSP  
and Mall of America

Conference begins 9AM Thursday, April 4  
and ends at 4PM on Saturday, April 6

### 2013 Music EdVentures Conference REGISTRATION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Prov \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

I teach  Music  Classroom  Preschool  ESL  Other (\_\_\_\_\_)

**CONFERENCE FEES:** (Luncheons included in this fee) (\$ amounts are the same whether paying in CAD or USD)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$170 **Members**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$210 **Non-Members**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$100 **Retirees**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 75 **Students** (Covers luncheons, gratuity, and tax)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$110 **One Day** (Includes sessions, luncheon, 1 year complimentary membership)

**FRIDAY NIGHT BANQUET:** Great opportunities to dine and share ideas with your professional colleagues

\_\_\_\_\_ \$40 (includes gratuity and tax)

**MEMBERSHIP DUES:**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$45 **Regular** \_\_\_\_\_ \$75 **Sustaining** \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 **Patron** \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 **Student**

**TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION:**

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

**SCHOLARSHIP AND TRAVEL GRANTS:** See [www.musicedventures.org](http://www.musicedventures.org) for application forms for conference travel grants and scholarships.

**OTHER:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I'd like contact information for others interested in sharing hotel rooms.

My diet is  No restrictions  Vegetarian  Vegan  Dairy Free  Gluten Free

Mail your registration form and check in USD by March 1. Send form and check to: Anna Langness 1179 Lilac St. Broomfield, CO 80020

TOTAL PAID \$ \_\_\_\_\_ CHECK NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ (Payable to Music EdVentures, Inc.)

**CONFERENCE LOCATION:**

Holiday Inn Bloomington I-35W, 1201 W. 94th Street, Bloomington, MN 55431

Direct Phone: 952-884-8211

Free shuttle to/from MSP airport and Mall of America Music EdVentures rooms: \$79+tax

Editors note: Several MEI members offer BACK TO SCHOOL Ideas. Their suggestions reflect the manner in which the Principles of SongWorks guide teachers' interactions with students and their care for students' well-being and learning.



Marilyn Winter  
Sun City, AZ

Marilyn Winter, Past President of MEI has been dedicated to this group for over 30 years. She is now retired from teaching, has recently moved to Phoenix, AZ, and looks forward to another winter of steady company trying to escape the bitter winters in the north. Marilyn, a beginning fiddler player, loves playing with her little amateur Blue Grass band and does watercolor painting in her spare time.

It's July! And I find myself reflecting on the "beginning of the year" rituals that over the years of teaching I learned were essential for my students' ability to be a class of productive learners in music and for me to be the teacher I wanted to be.

For a number of years, third grade music classes met in the cafeteria at Whittier Elementary. This gave lots of space to move about which was very inviting to Sam, one of the more lively students. Although an orderly entry had been requested by the teacher, Sam consistently ran into the room, and made a "home-base slide" into his assigned seat. It became a ritual. Each music class, Sam needed to be reminded NOT run and slide but each day brought the same results, a slide into home. What was to be done with Sam?

It seems Sam needed more than a verbal description and reminder for entering the room. He needed to know what it **looked** like to enter the room properly and to **practice** that behavior. Since recess was immediately after music class, it was an excellent time to spend time **teaching rather than just telling**. Sam and the teacher met as the other children left the room. They discussed what might happen if all the students ran into the room in a "slide into home base" fashion. They talked about an appropriate entry into the room and practiced walking back and forth and sitting quietly until Sam could do it independently. Then Sam was off to recess.

Happy to say, the undesirable behavior did not happen again. Now, some may say that Sam missed precious recess time and that is why he did not make a repeat run and slide, but I like to believe that it was because he had the opportunity to **learn and practice**. Perhaps it was a combination of both.

I have been reflecting on the "Sweet Girl" articles in recent MEI Newsletters written by several of our members with Peggy Bennett. How I WISH I'd had the opportunity to read these writings during my teaching career!

For many years, I struggled with the same issues they wrote about. Then one spring, I took a workshop that changed my life as a teacher. It was suggested we **teach** behavioral skills just as we teach Reading, Math, or Science. We need to envision the behaviors we want and then go about making that happen. We must make plans in which we provide **rationale for**, and **description and practice of** desired behaviors. Think about the act of teaching Addition in Math Class. Do we simply TELL students how to add and then expect them to KNOW how to do it and always do it? No, we teach, practice over and over and re-teach again and again. Should we do less to teach children classroom behaviors? During this class, we were encouraged to be innovative and make these lessons fun loving and to use **humor** whenever possible.

As you begin your new school year, I encourage you to approach classroom management in this way. For further thoughts on this subject, read the article, [Set Them Free: Teaching Skills of Independence](#) on the MEI website. (the link takes you there)

**Moving during the education of children**, for me, is "life giving" to our classes. However, moving 20-30 little bodies around a 20x20 foot classroom can become a nightmare for classroom management. You may want to revisit a sample lesson plan I compiled a few years back. The plan, [All Together Now! Moving in a Safe Manner](#) appears on the MEI website. The song recommended for this activity is "We Are Walking All Together" to the tune of "Here We Are Together" with the lyrics, "We are walking all together, together, together. We are walking all together, we walk and we stop."

I hope that sharing the idea of "teaching and practicing behaviors" has stimulated your ideas and enthusiasm for going back to school! My best wishes go to each of you who will be reaching out to hundreds of students each week! Have a wonderful year with an especially good beginning. §



Lisa Schoen  
Rosemount, MN

Lisa will begin her eleventh year of teaching K-5 music at Deerwood Elementary in Eagan, Minnesota this fall. She enjoys spending time with her husband and her six-year old and three-year old daughters. They are excited to be welcoming another baby to their family in December!

## Back to School!

I love the first weeks of school! Isn't it fun to work in a profession in which we get a fresh start each year? I always look forward to favorite activities and routines those first days back with children.

To kick off the first day, I choose a song that most of the students will be able to sing immediately, often picking a favorite from their music program the year before. A song with lots of actions and movement is especially fun, and allows all children to be engaged, even if they are new to our school. Last year my fourth graders did the musical, "Get in the Game" which has a great theme about trying your best, being positive, and finding your niche in the world. So with my fifth graders this year, I plan to do the theme song from the musical, and another song I threw in from *Music K-8* called "Possibilities." Both are catchy and fun to sing, include lots of movement, and have wonderful beginning-of-the-year messages.

As well as using familiar songs, I have a bunch of my own favorites I like to introduce at the beginning of the year. Most are silly, but some can lead to later musical study, and ALL are extremely fun for the children and get them singing enthusiastically. Hagdalena Magdalena, Apples and Bananas, Waddy Acha, Down by the Banks, Hello Neighbor, Let's Start the Day, When I Was One... these are some of my absolute favorites.

I like to use song games that help children learn each other's names, mix them up and allow them to move. "Hello, Hello" (sung to the tune of "La Raspa") is one of my favorites and works for all ages. There are only two real words, "hello" and "goodbye" – the rest of the words are simply rhythm syllables (di Du-da-di Du-di Du...), which makes the children giggle a bit. Students share their name and their favorite ice cream flavor (or whatever)

with their partner and then they play the game. On the "Hello, Hello" and "Goodbye, Goodbye," they do a quick clap of their own hands on the first syllable, then another quick clap of their partner's on the second syllable; on the "di-Du di-Dus" they elbow swing. During the interlude, students move to find a new partner, they introduce themselves, and the game begins again. I love that this activity involves a mixture of moving, singing, and conversing with lots of different partners. It also gives me the opportunity to chat with and learn the names of new students.

Whole group activities that allow for lots of practice with names are a must. For younger children, "Willowbee Wallobee" is wonderful. I have a little pet elephant (stuffed beanie baby) that travels around the circle meeting all the children, and when it's a particular student's turn to hold the elephant and pet his trunk, we sing their name in the song. Over the years I've created some pretty elaborate stories about Willowbee, and he has become quite a fixture in the music room.

For older students, the "Darby Town" ball passing name game is perfect. We sing the song and pass a yarn ball around the circle; at the cadence of the song we sing, "and see the same as Annie," replacing the usual ending ("and see the same as I") with the name of the student who has the ball at the end. She stands up and the song begins again. The next time the ball stops at Lucy, so we sing "and see the same as Lucy" (she stands up) and then sing "and see the same as Annie" (Lucy tosses the ball over to Annie). The song continues until all students are standing and we have to remember the order in which to sing the names as well as try to pass the ball to the correct people. It is highly engaging, especially to fifth graders – they can handle the ball passing and really get into the challenge of trying to sing all the names in the right order and seeing how many catches they can get during each turn.

I spend a brief time on the first day discussing expectations: what I expect of students and what they can expect of me. "Active Participation" and "Social Interaction" are the two key areas in which all students are graded in music class, so my rules follow the same guidelines. I try to keep my talking to a minimum, making the discussion fun and memorable by allowing students to give a few examples, as well as act out the "wrong way" and the "best way" to demonstrate how to participate actively or show respect.

The conversation might sound like this: "What does 'participate' mean? How do you think it would look to

actively participate?" Students share things like: "Joining in when we sing or play a game." "Doing your best." "Following the rules." "Playing fair." "Having fun." "Giving 100%." "Show me what it might look like if you weren't participating." Students' arms are crossed, they're pouting, not singing, not playing, sitting on the sidelines, not looking at anyone... "Which is funnier to act out? Which would be more fun to do every day in class? How do you think you would learn more?"

In turn, I have created a SMART Board activity in which students can move pictures on the board to reveal the special things that their class will do during the school year. ("Cool! We get to play recorders this year!" "We'll have our music program in the spring." "We have our world drumming unit in January." I also share what the students can expect from me: "I will greet you every day at the door with a smile. I will plan lessons that will help you learn more about your voice and how to use it. We will sing and move every time you come to class..."

I assign seating spots on the first day of class, putting most groups in circle spots. However, I have two grade levels that have music programs early in the fall, and for those I have a special "game" that has them creating their own row spots. I give them a timed challenge to line up shortest to tallest using no words. I then use that line to create their row spots with the tallest in the back rows and the shortest in the front rows. This is a fun way to check their cooperation skills as a class, and gets them arranged in a quick and playful way.

Once students have their spots, we practice! Students mix up in the room and see how quickly they can get back to their places; they pretend they are coming in the room at the beginning of class, and see how quietly they can move to their seating spots. We discuss what works and what doesn't work, and why it's important to transition safely and efficiently ("We want to use every second of class time to learn and have fun. We don't want to waste any time and we don't want anyone getting hurt!"). In my class, children won't stay in their assigned places for long, but it is nice to have a home base when needed.

The time invested at the beginning of the year to create an organized, familiar, and structured environment is extremely valuable. It makes for better transitions, and allows more quality time to experience music the rest of the year. §

*Far and away the best prize that life has to offer  
is the chance to work hard  
at work worth doing.*

*Theodore Roosevelt*



Kate Smith  
Port Coquitlim, BC

Kate retired from her teaching position as a K-7 Music teacher in Burnaby, BC after a 37 year career. She is enjoying time to sing with The Universal Gospel Choir, taking Irish penny whistle lessons, kicking up her heels at Scottish Country Dancing, and cycling the Gulf Islands. Kate delights working with Fleurette Sweeney's projects and serving as a Music Teacher On Call in Burnaby.

## Ready! Set! Go!

### Back to School Ideas for Music EdVenturers

Summer has arrived! Ah, the joy of two months of fun in the sun, time with family and friends, unwinding and relaxing. Vacation had just begun when I received a request from Peggy Bennett and Anna Langness to write a "Back to School" article for the August Music EdVentures newsletter! So, while memories are still fresh and days here in BC haven't quite warmed up enough to be off on bikes or out in our canoe, I will put pen to paper or fingers to computer keyboard and offer a few ideas for our return to the music education classroom in September.

Several different areas will be addressed in this article:

1. entrances and exits
2. formations: circle, scatter, partnering
3. name games
4. mixers
5. Playing With the Classics
6. Terry Fox and songs about Canada

## 1. ENTRANCES AND EXITS

### ENTERING THE MUSIC ROOM:

We all have our different styles of teaching and working musically with children. For many teachers, it is important for the students to enter the music room in a quiet, calm and organized way. **Is this a priority for you?** I find that if the class starts in this way, we are able to move ahead into the lesson quickly and with attentive energy. For each of the classes I teach from Kindergarten through to Grade 7, I pre-assign seating. I do this prior to the first class and seat the students in three rows in a girl/boy pattern. The students are informed in a very matter of fact way that in British Columbia, teachers are required by law to leave an accurate seating plan for any Teacher On Call (TOC) who might be called to the classroom. We also talk about how sometimes it is hard to do one's best in class if sitting beside one's closest friend. The students understand that often they will have opportunities to work with other partners in pairs or small groups but that we need an organized "arrival plan."

My students are very accepting of this system and many seem almost relieved that they do not have to "jockey for position" as they come into the classroom. They know that their "arrival place" will always be there waiting for them. I write all their names down on a seating plan which is kept within arm's reach until I have learned everyone's names. This simple system helps me to learn their names very rapidly. Once a term, we "scroll up" in the seating plan so that the first row moves to the back, the second row moves to the front and the students at the back move into row 2. This is a source of great anticipation and excitement!

### LEAVING THE MUSIC ROOM:

At my school, classroom teachers pick up their students at the end of music class. These teachers are always most appreciative if their students leave the music room quietly and calmly! Students are always required to return to "their spots" in their three rows at the end of class. I then look for a student to be "the chooser" - a coveted job! This student has the job of deciding which row will have the privilege of leaving first. It is amazing how quickly the students turn to face the door, line up quietly and stand calmly - a good example of self-regulation. I am able to stand aside and let the "chooser" and students create a quiet leaving atmosphere. Teachers are often amazed to arrive at the Music room to find their students standing quietly and calmly at the door ready to leave - with no teacher in sight!

## 2. FORMATIONS

### Have your students ever experienced difficulty forming a circle?

Here is an idea which seems to work very well with my students, saves valuable learning time and makes making a circle a game. Always with me in my class is my beautiful handmade aboriginal drum. I tell the students the history and meaning of this drum and then use it to help them make a beautiful round circle. A student is asked how many drum beats it will take to make a standup circle, hands free without discussion. The student is also asked to decide the tempo of the drum beats. The students may move into their circle

only when they hear the drum. To make this game even more suspenseful, I turn my back and wish them luck, spinning around quickly at the end of the drum beats. Invariably, the students are all in circle formation beaming happily! We keep track of how long it took and at the next class we try to beat our previous "record!" This seems to work even with Grade 7 students!

### **What about scatter formation?**

Often students are involved in music and movement activities requiring scatter formation. I have found that, although it takes a little time at the beginning of the year, it is worthwhile to teach the skill of getting into scatter formation. We begin with everyone off to the side of the room. One student at a time finds his or her spot and does the "scatter test" - arms held out to the side and a rapid 360 degree spin to check for no collisions! The little ones especially delight in "finding" spaces still available as more and more students go out onto the Music room floor. Although we start playing "Rig a Jig Jig" as an accumulative circle game, my students LOVE to play this game starting in scatter formation and moving freely around the room! Being able to quickly get into scatter formation makes this game and many others such a delight.

### **How do your students "find" a partner?**

#### **Do you often offer your students learning experiences where they need to quickly "find" a partner?**

One of the most helpful ideas regarding partnering comes from Marian Rose, Canadian author of "Step Lively," a wonderful resource for song games and dances. She teaches her students how to gracefully "find" rather than "choose" partners. Modeling first with a class volunteer, she offers "**the invitation:**" "Sarah, would you please be my partner?" The students learn about the importance of friendly, open body language, eye contact, a smile and how to "construct" an invitation -- the name of the student, a request (would you), the word "please" and the request. Students know that, if asked, one always accepts the invitation. In my class, we have great fun with a variety of "acceptances" accompanied often with hand gestures! You can create your own with your students! Here are some of ours:

"My pleasure!"

"I would be delighted!"

"How very kind!"

"Most certainly!"

"But of course!"

"What an honour!"

The next step of the process is to ask two students to model the invitation and the acceptance. They then go arm-in-arm onto the dance floor, sit down and wait for the rest of the students. This can be done with a great deal of drama and fun! I always make sure that students who might not be the first to be asked, go at the beginning. When about two-thirds of the class has been asked, everyone else is invited to move together to "find" a partner and join us on the dance floor. If there is one child left, he or she has the great privilege of making a threesome with a group of choice. Marian Rose also instructs students how to thank each other at the end of the dance and leave the dance floor, arm-in-arm engaging in "friendly conversation!"

### **What about two lines of students facing each other?**

#### **Have your students ever experienced difficulty forming two lines facing each other to play song games such as "Goin' Down the Railroad"?**

The first step is finding a partner. This skill has already been taught and practised. Students are asked to sit together with their partners off to the side of the room. Pairs are then invited to come forward and stand facing each other with arms stretched forward and fingertips touching. Sometimes putting masking tape of the two lines on the floor can be very helpful!! At first, students are strategically placed usually with a mix of boys and girls in their two lines especially if two sets of dancers are required. This does not seem to be a problem because the students have already "chosen" their partner!

### **3. NAME GAMES**

These games are so important at the beginning of the year so that you can learn the names of the students but, as importantly, they can learn each other's names! Here are a few suggestions:

Hickety Tickety Bumblebee (Bumpity Bumpity Yellow Bus)

Here We Are Together (The More We Get Together)

Skip to My Lou - the greeting game

The Farmer in the Dell - name game without and with place changes

Rain, Rain - name game



Bonjour, mes amis - great for English and French classes

#### **4. MIXERS**

These are a must for the beginning of the year! A favourite for primary children is “Bow Wow Wow” with the words “1 2 3, Who will it be? Who will be my partner now? 1 2 3”. For junior students, the mixers “I Let Her Go Go” and Marian Rose’s version of “A Big Black Dog Sat on the Back Porch” aka “BINGO” both work well. The “Step Lively” series offers many community dances which give students opportunities to sing and dance together.

#### **5. PLAYING WITH THE CLASSICS BY DR. PEGGY BENNETT**

Even though these delightful musical activities were designed with young children in mind, personal experience tells me that they can also work well with students of all ages. Indeed at our Music EdVentures conferences, the adult Music educators in attendance embrace these activities with joy and enthusiasm. I cannot help but smile as I remember a Grade 4/5 class responding to the challenge of being drivers in Paris as they were introduced to “An American in Paris.” When their teacher came to pick them up, I took her by the hand and told her that we were going to cross the street! The students assured her that they were “crazy but very careful”! Just prior to Christmas break, I found myself as a Music TOC with a double block of two classes of upper Intermediate students. Quickly I unearthed Dr. Bennett’s lesson for “Trepak” from “The Nutcracker” and made copies of a song map. What a hit! Volume II of this series has recently hit the shelves!

#### **6. TERRY FOX - A SPECIAL CANADIAN**

In schools across British Columbia and Canada, September is Terry Fox month. We learn about his life and legacy and sing songs in his honour. A well-loved song is called “The Terry Fox Rap” and is sung to the melody of “Hambone.” It includes body percussion and an Orff accompaniment found in the Share the Music series. The lyrics to this song were written by the Grade 4/5 students of Armstrong School in Burnaby, BC and guided by their Music teacher, Kay Norton. This rap is now a part of many school Music programmes during the early weeks of September. We also learn songs about Canada such as “This Land Is Your Land” (the Canadian version) and “Something to Sing About”. Students study and sing our national anthem, “O Canada” in both English and French as we prepare for a Terry Fox assembly followed by a school wide run to honour him and raise money for his Marathon of Hope. I would encourage you to learn more about his life and his efforts to raise money for cancer research. Simply Google Terry Fox, Terry Fox Foundation or go to [www.terryfox.org](http://www.terryfox.org).

#### **READY TO LAUNCH IN SEPTEMBER?**

The cool days of early July have now given way to scorchers as summer arrives in British Columbia. So it is time to head outside and away to refuel and re-energize. September and back-to-school will arrive soon enough! Hopefully the ideas and resources mentioned in this article will help you have a happy, musical

*Failure  
is simply the opportunity to begin again,  
this time more intelligently.*

*Henry Ford*

Editor's Note: The following submission is the list of ideas shared by Leah Steffen at the MN MEI meeting in June. Among their topics for sharing was "Transitions in the Music Classroom." Note the playfulness and humor with which the "procedures" are presented, practiced and carried out.

## Beginning the School Year

### Establish a concept for levels of behavior

Transitions (changing from one activity to the next such as getting in line after the closing activity) can eat up class time because asking students to do this quickly and quietly never seems to register with them. Having a predictable system in place to manage movement minimizes both student and teacher anxiety. This is especially helpful for children diagnosed on the autism spectrum, but it benefits all children. I find this extremely helpful for my right brain learners as well as EBD students. Spend time at the beginning of the year putting this in place with frequent rehearsals and examples so it becomes routine for the rest of the year.

Begin by creating a large chart listing these 5 behavior level names and descriptions:

#### LEVEL 0: NOT

These are all of the behaviors that are "not" OK. As a class, brainstorm what specific behaviors these would be.

*It is amazing how children are experts on this and could write chapter books on the subject!*

#### LEVEL 1: PARTICIPATING

The student is where he or she is supposed to be and looks ready to learn, however, is not 100% engaged.

#### LEVEL 2: ENGAGED

The student is where he or she is asked or expected to be, with:

Eyes on the person who is speaking.

Ears listening.

Minds thinking about what is happening.

Body parts in control. i.e. hands in lap, feet in an appropriate place, & knees not touching a neighbor, body parts doing the action demonstrated, etc.

*Level 2 is the level I hope to achieve most often. Be careful to not use the phrase, "Be at Level 2 or higher." Level 3 & 4 cannot always be achieved.*

#### LEVEL 3: RESPONSIBILITY

The student is showing that he or she knows what to do without being asked. He or she is being responsible.

*Sometimes students are not able to show Level 3 because they do not know what you are up to. A Level 3 transition happens when rehearsal and experience has allowed it to become a solid procedure.*

#### LEVEL 4: CARING STUDENTS WHO HELP & ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

This level encompasses all of the levels. Discuss how you would encourage and care for each other appropriately.



Leah Steffen  
Shafer, MN

The 2012 MEI President-Elect Apprentice, Leah teaches Music, K-5 at Taylors Falls Elementary. She has a Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of MN, a BS in Music Education and Music Therapy from Augsburg College, MN. She has been the Chisago Lakes Music Dept. chair for the past five years and is heavily involved in staff development for her district. She lives in Shafer, MN with her husband David and son, Jacob.

## Visual Icons

Display a visual icon on each wall that can be easily viewed and never changes from year to year. This could be posters of the sections of the orchestra with brass on the east, strings on the south, woodwinds on the west and percussion on the north. These make the beginning of the year set up easy and a no brainer! Once the students are familiar with these, they never forget them.

Label the walls North, South East, West.

These icons are helpful when you are organizing and giving instructions for stations, work groups, dance groups. i.e. partner 1 faces east, partner 2 faces west. You can easily reorganize your class from an activity by asking them to sit as a group facing one of the icons. i. e. the poster of "Fat Cat."

### **Establish groupings for instruction**

Assigned seating arrangements help with learning students names, grading and supporting substitute teachers.

Sit as a group. I think of this as a cluster of students near one another but not touching each other.

Use the 'eggshell' space idea. This arrangement leaves more space between students sitting in a group.

Sit in lines of 5 or 6 people. This looks like a column of students.

Sit in 4 or 5 rows across the room.

How do you look as you are sitting and ready to learn?

Legs in a pretzel when sitting on the floor.

Legs out in front of you with hands in your lap when sitting on a chair.

Legs to one side with your hands in your lap.

I explain that it is important to find the way that is the most comfortable. Depending on how your body feels you may need to change it up. However, if your hands are holding you up, you may be tempted to slide back and take a nap or get your hands stepped on!

### **Count for transitions**

Asking for Level 2, indicate that the students have 5, 10, or 15 seconds to make the transition depending on what you feel they need in order to be ready for the next activity.

If you count backwards towards the number 1, you do not need to remember the number you announced as the 'deadline!'

### **Lining up to leave class**

Place a visual prompt or icon above your door.

The line up area for the end of class is the "Silent Zone."

Establish a routine that students follow to show that they are ready to walk through the halls.

Hands at sides of your body.

Eyes looking forward at the visual icon.

A little parting grin.

### **Verbal cues to line up small portions of your class at a time**

Lining up is a transition that can be done calmly, helping students prepare to move out into the hall with self-control and focus. If small groups are called and there is an interesting idea to listen for and think about, there is a mood of respect and peace, a nice way to end your time together!

In the beginning of the year, line up by birthday months.

This way you can see the older students in the class who have October, November, December birthdays versus the younger students born in May, June or July. Take note of your boy versus girl ratio as well.

Look at the soles of their shoes and call off the kinds of lines and shapes you see.

Ask students to think about their kitchen at home and call out foods that might be in the refrigerator.

Go with weird foods such as capers, Dijon mustard, spinach or artichokes.

Call out what they might have had for breakfast.

This way you find out what kind of 'fuel' they put in their bodies.

Don't forget 'no breakfast' as an option!

Ask the students to think of one bathroom in their house and call out colors of the sink/toilet, do they have a shower/tub combo, tub alone.

Call out types of garages. One door, two doors, three doors, attached to the house, separate from the house, no garage.

Call out if there is no freezer in their home, if the freezer is part of the refrigerator, if the freezer is in the basement.

Ask them to think of their driveway. Call out: no driveway, long with trees, short with trees, short with grass and no trees.

Thinking about transitions before school begins helps to ensure that both students and teachers feel ready to live together happily through the school year.

Have a great year! And give your self some transition time, too! §



Danielle Solan  
Austin, TX

Danielle teaches General Music and after-school violin at Bluebonnet Trail Elementary in Austin, TX where she was named the 2008-09 Rookie Teacher of the Year. Danielle is an Oberlin Conservatory graduate with a M.M. from the University of TX at Austin. While at Oberlin she taught music in Panama for three January terms and in Japan one summer. Danielle spent one year teaching in Ecuador after graduating. For fun, she enjoys creative writing, exercising outdoors, and traveling.

## FREEDOM'S JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR "GOING BACK TO SCHOOL"

As July winds down and I scramble to fit in those last summer experiences, I find myself excited—and a bit daunted—by the reality of school starting soon. Why it's so nerve tingling can be summed up by one word: Possibility.

I love starting the school year knowing I have the freedom to be the teacher I want to be. In my career so far I've taught for four years at one school, and I've had the opportunity to reinvent the wheel each year. Every August, I redesign my own curriculum and plan concerts with fresh repertoire.

People are shocked when I tell them how much freedom I have as a teacher in this day and age. It goes against what they've heard about schooling. In the news, in school board meetings, and in staff lunchrooms, we hear so much about the top-down structure being overlaid on public education, strangling teacher and student spirits. Many teachers feel overwhelmed by school starting because of standardized testing, enforced curriculum, and state mandates.

That does feel true sometimes. But let me ask you this: Have you ever had a burst of inspiration in the middle of class that lead to a novel way to play a game—or to an entirely new game? If your answer to that question was Yes, that's your cue to appreciate the spontaneity and creativity that are part of the daily life of teaching.

For me, these innovations usually start with kid watching. Every day in the classroom, I live in the moment and try out new ways of interacting with kids. If I see an intriguing, unexpected reaction from kids in a game, I go with it on the spot!

We cherish our own classroom as the place where the magic happens. But the truth is that our schools and district music departments also have this potential for open-ended possibility.

When I started my job, the music program in my district (consisting of a dozen music teachers) was uniformly mediocre. But over a four-year span, several "fire cracker" music teachers joined the district (myself included).

We have each had an awesome presence in the classroom, put on rousing

performances, partnered with each other, and earned negotiating power with our administrators. The kick-start in the music program has been obvious to everyone, from parents to the superintendent. I'm proud of our successes: We have started a district-wide after-school violin program and Honor Choir, and we have convinced the school board to fund a middle/high school Mariachi program, choral programs, and our district's first ever orchestra program. Let me point out that we are a Title I district burdened by Texas's national-news-making budget woes, and all of this change started from the ground up with positive teacher momentum.

The three-part recipe seems to be, Lead by Example, Project a Positive Attitude, and Make Good Partnerships. With that strategy, you can be an agent of change in your school and in your district. My personal goal this year on the district level is to contribute to positive momentum and to keep planting the seeds of new ideas regarding the principles and practices of SongWorks.

Whatever your goals are, let us toast the arrival of the 2012-2013 school year by saying, "Cheers to Possibility!"

P.S. As a side note, if you haven't yet had instruments or teaching materials funded through the Donors Choose organization, check out their website! <http://www.donorschoose.org/> §

**The Purpose of Music EdVentures, Inc.** 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.

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NEW DATES

## **2013 MEI CONFERENCE**

April 4, 5, 6  
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Read articles, get ideas, and learn more about Music EdVentures, Inc. -- a great way to teach and a fun way to learn!

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**News and Notes** is the monthly communication of Music EdVentures, 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 [alangness@comcast.net](mailto:alangness@comcast.net) and may be edited to accommodate space limitations.