

MCALLEN ISD
McAllen Texas
January 24, 1997

ENJOYING EDUCATION: BOOSTER THOUGHTS FOR MUSIC TEACHERS

Peggy D. Bennett
Director of Music Education
Texas Christian University

ELICITING FOCUS: ENGAGEMENT AND INTRIGUE

When we are *engaged*, we are more than participating, more than involved. We are “hooked up” to the object of our focus.

When we are *intrigued*, we are more than interested. We approach a topic with eagerness and wonder, a magnified curiosity.

When we are *focused*, our attention is funneled into a mental spotlight, concentrating our senses (eyes, ears, and body) toward the object of our focus.

Ideally, *listening* is active and focused. Meaning can come from recognition, imagination, accomplishment, connection, and social interaction.

Our teaching settings require that we select and shape learning activities for our students that are *context appropriate*. Context appropriateness can be affected by

Physical Attributes	Size of room, size of class, temperature in room, equipment in room, shape of room, seating arrangement, who brings students to music room.
Temporal Attributes	Time of day, time of year, frequency of class meeting, length of class, time interval between classes, what preceded class, special events.
Teacher Attributes	Familiarity with students, number of classes/subjects taught per day, length of time in same school, length of time in teaching, access to training, freedom to explore/create versus follow prescribed standards.
Student Attributes	Familiarity with classmates; mix: gender, ethnicity, language, economic, cultural backgrounds; age; developmental levels; abilities: physical, mental, social, disabilities; background experiences; view of schooling.
Community Attributes	Administrative support, support of colleagues, expectations for public performance, parental participation, community activities that shape or support teaching expectations.

(Bennett & Bartholomew, 1997, p. 217)

Taking into account all the factors affecting our teaching settings can help us realize our most important achievements. This occurs when we have *accurate perspectives*, from when we make *informed choices*, in order to offer our students *appropriate learning opportunities* that match their needs as well as ours.

ENJOYING MEANING IN SONGS

1. Some retooling (for you and your students) may be necessary if questions in your classroom are asked primarily for the purpose of getting right answers. Questions that elicit imagining are not fact questions, they are thought questions.
2. Questions to elicit imaginations should be "mistake-proof." Although some answers may warrant further explanation or elaboration, questions such as, "What do you think?" "What might happen then?" "What could that mean?" "What did you hear?" "What might you see?" and "What would you do if . . .?" *have no wrong answers.*
3. "To get the most out of questioning strategies, we must become more interested in students' thinking, learning, and understanding than in getting right answers." (Bennett & Bartholomew, 178)
4. As students offer imaginative descriptions, our neutral responses can facilitate continued participation. Informative feedback rather than lavish praise is preferable. "Planning informative, constructive feedback while observing and listening to students' answers trains us to be thoughtful, reflective, and progressive in building cooperative and constructive classroom interactions." (Bennett & Bartholomew, 181)

ENJOYING STUDENTS' RESPONSES

1. "Teachers can encourage independent thinking, provide for fuller and more detailed answers, encourage divergent thinking, gather more informations, and be more sure that students understand if they are careful about the way they respond to their students' answers." (Bennett & Bartholomew, 182)
2. Informative feedback may be used to show interest or recognition, to encourage, to describe, or to evaluate. (Bartholomew)
 - To show interest or recognition: *"What an interesting way of thinking about that!" "As you explained your idea, I could picture what you mean!" "I see your idea."*
 - To encourage: *"I have never thought of that interpretation before. Tell us more about your thinking." "You are really making connections. Keep imagining!"*
 - To describe: *"Your explanation was so vivid that we could imagine ourselves in that scene. We saw ships, water, activity on the shore, and the main character of the song." "Your movements were such a surprise! We saw you coordinate them with the music and correlate them with the meaning of the words."*
 - To evaluate: *"That is a clever idea and one that I hadn't thought about . . . such imagination you're using! You gave us an excellent description, because you used words that helped us picture your idea." "For me, your description was a little difficult to understand. Let us observe as you demonstrate your idea. The combination of words and movements may give us some additional clues."*
3. When discipline problems begin to surface during your lesson, look first (a) to your own *energy level*, then (b) to the *clarity* of behavior expectations for the activity, (c) to the level of *interest* that the activity holds for the students, and (d) to the *potential for success* that students feel toward the activity.
4. *Animation* is the extent to which we use the various categories of nonverbal communication: posture, body language, facial expression, eye contact, tone of voice, and use of space. Too much or too little animation can have undesirable effects on students' behaviors.

5. *Be aware of the perils and profits of praise.* "Praise can have potentially negative rather than positive effects on a student's learning, motivation, and self-concept." Feelings of embarrassment, manipulation, inferiority, and superiority can be generated when a teacher uses lavish and indiscriminate praise in the classroom. (Bennett, 1989)
6. *Be aware of the perils and profits of rewards.* "Once good habits are established, it is harmful to praise a person every time." "It is possible to erode a person's love of something [such as learning] by handing out too much reward at the end." "If people find internal reward in a task, too much external reward will weaken the internal motivation." (McGinnis, 1985)

ENJOYING NOTATION

"The musicality that is critical in music performance is equally important in music study."
(Bennett & Bartholomew, 1993)

What makes music musical? Although the words are inadequate, musicality can be described as the spirit, flow, life, shape, and grace that is inherent in music. If music study is hard work without the grace and charm that musicality brings, it can have disastrous effects:

- It can desensitize young children to the flow and beauty of music.
 - It can cause resistance and animosity toward studying music.
 - It can stunt young people's musical growth.
 - It can construct barriers between experiencing music and studying music.
- (Bennett & Bartholomew, 1993, 16-17)

The way we plan for, think about, and react to our behaviors and our students' behaviors can make a difference in the energy, enjoyment, and satisfaction we feel as we pursue the principles and practices that help us be the teachers we want to be.

(Bennett & Bartholomew, 1997, p. 161)

REFERENCES

1. Bennett, P. D. and Bartholomew, D. R. (1997). *SongWorks 1: Singing in the Education of Children*. Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth.
2. Bennett, P. D. and Bartholomew, D. R. (1993). *SongWorks 2: Studying and Teaching Music Through Singing* (A Working Manuscript). Bozeman, MT: SongWorks Press. [To be published 1998 by Wadsworth Publishing.]
3. Bennett, P. D. (1989). Is praise always positive? *TMEC/MENC Connection*, 3(2), 12-13.
4. Bennett, P. D. (1988). The perils and profits of praise. *Music Educators Journal*, 75 (1), 22-24.
5. Bennett, P. D. (1986). Confessions on classroom management. *ETM News*, 3 (4).
6. McGinnis, A. L. (1985). *Bringing out the best in people*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.

For further information, please feel free to contact

Dr. Peggy D. Bennett
Music Department TCU Box 297500
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth TX 76129
817-921-7602 Ext. 6626

VOCAL HEALTH

(Bennett & Bartholomew, 1997, 75)

AIMING FOR VOCAL HEALTH

POSTURE

- Cultivate**
- A tall alignment of the body for both sitting and standing by lengthening the spine.
 - A lifted rib cage, shoulders down, jaw not too high or too low.
- Avoid**
- Any tension created by a straight, rigid posture.
 - A sunken chest with shoulders forward and jaw hyperextended.

BREATH ENERGY AND MUSCLE

- Cultivate**
- Supporting your voice with breath energy and airflow.
 - The balance of breath and muscle in vocal production.
 - Using more breath when your voice is tired.
- Avoid**
- Forcing your voice with muscle and inadequate breath.
 - Loud whispering with an already hoarse voice.
 - Speaking in quiet tones with a lack of breath energy—for example, talking on the phone with a fatigued sound.

VOICE USE

- Cultivate**
- Variety in pitch, placement, pace, loudness.
 - Teaching strategies that allow vocal rest. Use nonverbal attention-getters, and schedule periods of silence.
 - Warm-ups before extended voice use: sigh glides, breathing, hissing, tongue flutters, or buzzing with lips.
- Avoid**
- Excessive coughing, raucous laughter, throat clearing.
 - Shouting or talking over loud backgrounds: recess, cafeteria, music ensembles.
 - Overuse in singing or speaking: too loud, too soft, too high, too low, too long.

GENERAL HEALTH

- Cultivate**
- Drinking adequate amounts of water: 8 glasses daily; urine should be pale. Do not rely on thirst for drinking liquids.
 - Proper nutrition and exercise.
- Avoid**
- Antihistamines and conditions that dry your voice and your environment.
 - Smoking.
 - Large amounts of alcohol and caffeine: These are diuretics that dehydrate your body.
 - Touching your face with your hands: Germs and viruses are easily spread to the mouth, eyes, and nose.

JINGLE BELLS

A Play Party Game

“Though danced when Santa is just around the corner,
[this activity] can also be used to ‘cool things off’ at parties in July.
The most fun is when a tiny ‘jingle’ bell is worn on each wrist.”
(Rohrbough, 1940, p. 115)

Formation: Single circle of couples, all facing into the middle.

Song	Movement
1. Dashing through the snow in a one horse open sleigh	1. All walk into the center 4 steps and back out.
2. O'er the fields we go, laughing all the way.	2. Slide quickly to the left around the circle 8 slides.
3. Bells on Bobtail ring, making spirits bright.	3. Everyone into the center and out again.
4. What fun it is to ride and sing a sleighing song tonight.	4. All slide 8 to the right around the ring.
5. Jingle bells! Jingle bells!	5. Facing partners, clap own hands 3 times in front and 3 times behind the back.
6. Jingle all the way!	6. Clap own hands 4 times in front again and, on 5th clap, strike both hands of partner (moving to melodic rhythm).
7. Oh what fun it is to ride in a one horse open sleigh.	7. Swing partner (two hand swing or elbow hook), ending facing your corner (with back to partner).
8. Repeat 5, 6, 7 with the corner partner, this time ending the swing so that each person has a new partner on his or her right side as all face the center.	

Rohrbough, L. (1940). *Handy dandy play party book*. Revised by Cecilia Riddell 1982. Printed and published by World Around Songs, Inc., Rt. 5, Box 398, Burnsville, North Carolina 28714.

About Play Parties

Around the turn of the century in America, the play party was one of the most popular forms of social gatherings and entertainment. Similar to the folk traditions of Scotland, England, Ireland, and Germany, play parties were simple social occasions which drew young and old to a common gathering place to sing, play, and dance together. The fellowship, frolicking, and celebration that the play parties provided helped balance the stark isolation and lonely existences that many of the pioneering Americans felt, especially those in rural settings.

No instruments or equipment were needed for the play parties. Participants accompanied their games by singing, and this simplicity was well suited to the lives they led. The emphasis on play and the focus on singing to accompany that play also paralleled the strong currents of religious conviction that shaped many social occasions in those days. Quakers, Disciples, Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians all agreed that both dance and the fiddle were instruments of the devil. Therefore, the play party fit well into the social fabric of the 1900s, providing an acceptable venue for the innocent and unsophisticated singing games. “So it came that these charming dances, carefully referred to as ‘play parties,’ brightened life on the American frontier.” (Rohrbough, p. 3)