

Priorities and Principles

by Patricia Bourne

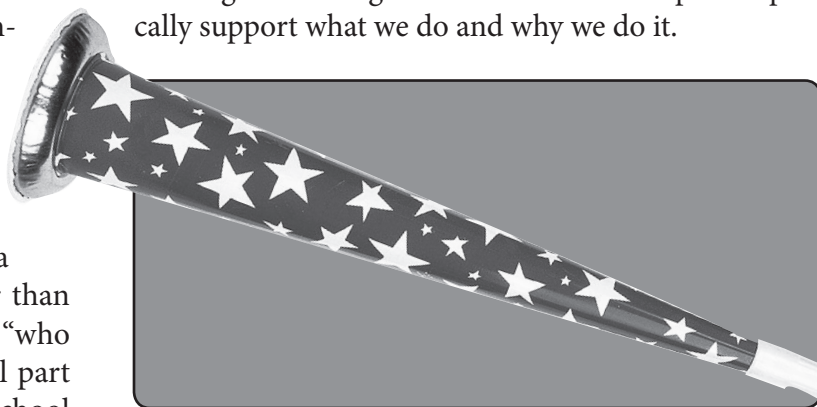
While the rest of the world looks at their 2008 calendars and sees the eighth or ninth month, a teacher looks at August and September and sees the beginning of a new year. The rituals associated with a teacher's "new year" aren't that different than non-educators: resolutions are made, goals are set, priorities are established, and steps are made to create a better year than last. Our "calendars" are plan books that begin to fill with important dates, key events, and favorite lessons. Hailing in the "new year" is normally very exciting!

Our new year—the first day, week, and month of school—normally surges with energy and optimism from all constituents. It is especially gratifying for those who've remained in the same building long enough to recognize and celebrate the growth in our students. As a matter of fact, one of the best parts of teaching elementary general music is witnessing this childhood passage first hand. What an honor! At the start of each new year, I strive to make this year each child's best.

What are some steps we might take to create a learning environment where each year is better than the previous? Establishing the "what we do" with "who we have" for "how long we have them" is a vital part of a music educator's new-year ritual. Once the school year begins, we want to have more than a clear idea of what we will teach, when we will teach it, how we will teach it, and in what ways the students will show what they've learned. This calls for instructional priorities.

Why priorities? If you're like me, I do not want to waste instructional time. My time with my students is short enough as it is! Each new school year, I want to become more effective, more efficient, and ignite student learning in ways that accompany a child's passage in my classroom. Priorities, like goals, help me review what I believe to be educationally beneficial during a student's time with me, whether it be one year or seven.

Instructional priorities are based on principles of belief. This belief is fueled by a pragmatic view of one's skills, passions, and experiences as a teacher. I think we'd all agree that educators do a better job teaching those things they truly believe to be valuable, irreplaceable, and worthy of time, both theirs and their students'. Priorities guide strategies for instruction that philosophically support what we do and why we do it.



My priorities are pretty simple. Each new year, I review them to see whether they still provide an anchor for my curricular choices, whether they still reflect what I believe to be instructionally valuable, and whether I

can continue to devise lessons that support these philosophical principles.

Based on who I teach, how often I teach them, and the resources we have available, I've decided on these pretty simple priorities:

A. Students will receive instruction that results in “in tune” singing.

What's the belief? That 99.9% of my students can sing in tune!

What are the key strategies?

1. Select warm-up activities and vocal repertoire that fit the developmental, physical, and emotional levels of my students.
2. Encourage singing with appropriate posture, position, air, resonance, and joy at all ages.



B. Students will interact with a wide variety of musical styles.

What's the belief? That the world's music is immediately accessible and helps students relate to people, places, and time periods in profound and authentic ways.

What are the key strategies?

1. Listen! Use iTunes and Smithsonian Global Sound.
2. Discuss! Discuss what is heard and how it relates to something relevant in the students' life experiences.
3. Engage! Move with it, play it, sing it, create a listening guide to it, read more about it.

C. Students will have a pleasurable and memorable experience playing a classroom instrument.

What's the belief? That pleasure motivates learning like nothing else will.

What are the key strategies?

1. Allow children to use instruments in ways that lead to learning.
2. Provide instructional guidelines that help students distinguish “sounds” from music making.


D. Students will interact and interpret musical notation.

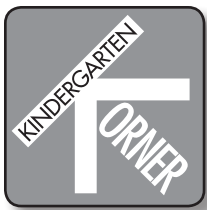
What's the belief? That notation systems are varied. Yes, we have a symbolic system containing the staff, the quarter note, the clef, etc., but we also have compositions with invented notation. Is one system more crucial than the other?

What are the key strategies?

1. Guide students to use musical notation to communicate their own musical ideas.
2. Remind the students that 80% of the world's music is not written down. While printed music provides us a means to understand what a composer intended, it alone does not make the music.



These priorities work for *me*, and as a result, work for *my* students. The process of establishing priorities is an individual exercise, and one I strongly encourage. Celebrate the new year with a resolution to exercise and stretch your instructional framework by establishing priorities. (By the way, Happy New Year!) 



Time for Music

by Denise Gagné

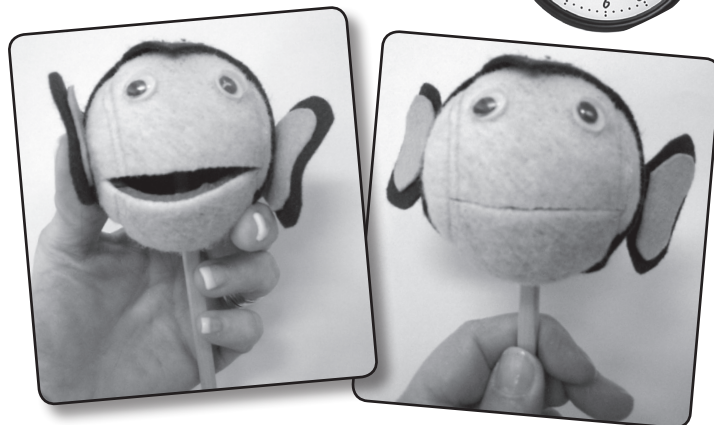


Suggested Grades: Pre K-1

Target Concepts

Beat competency
Body percussion
Instruments
Opening song
Inner hearing (optional)

Perf. Acc.



Using a tennis ball character like this one is a fun way to help your students learn when to sing out loud.

play finger cymbals, play the shakers, etc. Have the students think of new ways that they could keep the beat: tap your head, lift your knee, touch your nose, etc.

- Play the start-stop game to help the children develop inner hearing. Glue eyes to a tennis ball, draw a nose, and cut a horizontal slit for a mouth. Give your tennis ball some hair or a hat. Use the tennis ball to tell the students when to sing out loud and when to sing the song “inside their head.” When the tennis ball mouth is open, they sing. When it’s closed, they “think” the song.

Beat competency is a major goal in kindergarten. Using this song each week as an opening to your class will give the students the opportunity to practice beating accurately by imitation with body percussion, movement and instruments.

Process

Teach the song by rote. As you teach the song, show the actions suggested by the words.

Extensions

- Create new verses for the song. Substitute other instruments for “drum”: play the bars, play the sticks,

Time for Music

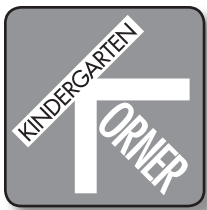
Denise Gagné



- Time for music, pat your knees! Pat your knees! Pat your knees!
Time for music, pat your knees! Pat your knees with me!
- Time for music, tap your toes! Tap your toes! Tap your toes!
Time for music, tap your toes! Tap your toes with me!
- Time for music, sing out loud! Sing out loud! Sing out loud!
Time for music, sing out loud! Sing out loud with me!
- Time for music, flap your arms! Flap your arms! Flap your arms!
Time for music, flap your arms! Flap your arms with me!
- Time for music, play the drum! Play the drum! Play the drum!
Time for music, play the drum! Play the drum with me!

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This song was inspired by a visit to Jan Scott’s kindergarten music class in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. It will be part of the new *Musicplay for Preschool* music program for schools and private parented preschool music classes.



Hello Song

by Denise Gagné



Suggested Grades: Pre K-1

Target Concepts

Echo singing
Learning names

Perf. Acc.



Process

Teach the song by having the students echo you. You can teach only the English words the first week, and as the students become more confident, teach them the

Spanish and the French words for the song. Insert the children's name where there are gaps in the recording.

Extensions

- If you have children in your class whose parents speak a language other than English, Spanish or French, create a version of the song in that language.
- Try playing the words of the song on instruments. The teacher would play first and the students echo.

Hello Song

Denise Gagné

Leader: Hel - lo. *Class:* (Hel - lo.) *Leader:* How are you? *Class:* (How are you?) *simile* I'm fine. (I'm fine.) Thank

All: you. (Thank you.) Hel - lo, hel - lo, hel - lo, hel - lo to

*Leader:** you. Hel - lo, Car - ly. Hel - lo, Shan - non. Hel - lo, Car - ter. Hel - lo,

All: Jane. Hel - lo, hel - lo, hel - lo, hel - lo to you.

* *Optional:* Class may echo the leader's part on beats 2 and 3 during this section.

2. Bonjour. Comment ça va? Ça va bien. Merci.
Bonjour, bonjour, bonjour, bonjour à toi.

Bonjour, _____. Bonjour, _____. Bonjour, _____. Bonjour,
_____.
Bonjour, bonjour, bonjour, bonjour à toi.

Pronunciation

bon-JOOR. koh-MOH sah vah? sah vah bee-ehn. mehr-SEE.
bon-JOOR.... ah twah.

3. Hola. ¿Como estas? Muy bien. Gracias.
Hola, hola, hola, hola a ti.

Hola, _____. Hola, _____. Hola, _____. Hola,
_____.
Hola, hola, hola, hola a ti.

Pronunciation

OH-lah. KOH-moh ays-TAHS? mooy byehn. GRAH-see-ahs
OH-lah.... ah tee.

4. Repeat verse 1 (English version)

Clear Unison

by Karen Bodoin and Phyllis Wolfe White

Adapted by Kris Kropff

Suggested Grades: 2–4

Target Concepts

Listening and singing
Singing like each other
Making unison meaningful

Music

Frère Jacques

Alleluia, by W.A. Mozart

May Peace Be Always With You

Perf. Acc.

5 6

7 8

9 10

The songs and activities in this unit are designed to help students value and understand the idea of singing the same tune in the same way at the same time.

Sing

Because we don't assume that unison is an understood concept, we suggest first establishing a music context by playing *Frère Jacques* while your students listen. Then ask them to sing it with you. Ask the class, "Is it important for all of us to sound like one voice? Why?"

Move

Have a small group plan unison movement to *Frère Jacques*. Ask them to perform the movement while the class sings. Ask the class, "Did the movers begin together, stay together, and end together?"

Discover

Encourage open-ended discovery by asking:

- How are walking together and singing together the same?
- Do you have to listen carefully to do this?
- Can people sing and listen at the same time?
- What kinds of things can we listen for when we sing together?
- Is it important for all of us to start on the same note?
- Is it important for all of us to change to the same note?
- What does it mean to be sharp or flat? How can you tell?
- Why is how long we hold notes important?

Add your own discovery questions until you feel intonation is understood and simultaneity has been reinforced.

