

All-State: Eurhythmics

by Mary Ann Bashaw

The following is a list of concepts drawn from Eurhythmics, cognitive psychology, neurology, personal experiences and Timothy Caldwell's presentation.

The body is the original instrument. Learn to “play the music with your body” first, then go to the instrument.

All learning is based on prior learning. The brain automatically relates all incoming information to stored information. If students are asked to engage in musical activities in which they have no prior experience, it will cause frustration for both the student and the teacher.

We learn what is worth knowing. “Learning occurs when we discover or determine what we do not know.” (author unknown)

Extrinsic rewards don't work. (In fact the extrinsic reward system usually backfires because the student keeps raising the ante.) It is often better to praise the effort of students than to give them empty praise. Students are aware of the difference!

Just because the student's body is present, do not assume the student is “there” (Robert Abramson). All of us come to rehearsal with

many daily distractions. Using physical movement and making music are two of the best ways to help the student pay attention and ultimately find learning.

Music teaches music whether playing scales, practicing warm-ups or performing a simple piece; making it as musical as possible will engage attention and the sensibilities.

First the experience, then the symbol (Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi). Without the experience, the brain has no place to put the symbol. For example: The student asks, “You said that is a quarter note. What is it a quarter of?”

Anyone can give instructions; teaching can occur when the student has a problem (Emile Jaques-Dalcroze). When a student has a problem, it should not be regarded as failure but an opportunity for learning. In reality, this provides a teaching moment that can lead to new insight for the student

and the teacher. Attitude about problems and mistakes is a key element to learning. Be positive and present the teaching in a positive manner.

What the student discovers, the student remembers. If the teacher wants the student to remember, use imagination to set up the process and be patient as the student “discovers” his/her own solution. Perhaps the student will even discover something other than what the teacher wanted.

Teach to the behavior. What behaviors are necessary for a successful musical performance? The list could include body, mind, ear, internalized beat, clear phrasing, the sense of movement and direction, and technical details by the performer. These musical behaviors must be internalized. As teachers, we need to observe the behavior and then work to get a unison behavior to create the performing group. †