

ALL-STATE TEACHERS WORKSHOP

Here are some brief summaries of the All-State Teachers Workshop sessions that didn't fit into the fall issue of String Notes.

Teaching Doesn't Look Like It Is and Isn't Like It Looks

Jim Hainlen based his presentation on four “p” words: Politics, Personal, Parents and Possibilities. In the Politics of school, other faculty sometimes envy us because we “get to” travel to other schools and because appreciation is shown to us at concerts. They don't see the effort we put into planning wonderful activities to keep students signing up for our classes. The 2nd “P” is Parents. Sometimes that can be a positive but often it is a negative. The 3rd “P” is Personal. We must work as hard on the inside of ourselves as the outside. Jim believes that we need to continue to work on ourselves as human beings so that we can authentically relate to students because they will want to gain our knowledge. This leads to the “P” of Possibilities; to keep students engaged, we need to be continually curious and changing our teaching. Jim recommends that we do a SWOT analysis of ourselves to ascertain our strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T). The six most important things we can do are: have monthly meetings with the other music teachers; always eat lunch with other teachers (not in the car, on your way to another school!!); enjoy hall duty; go to workshops; be more imaginative; be curious.

Reported by Kristine Granias, Cynthia S. Johnson, Brenda Lund and Beth Becker.

Foundations for Music Reading

Faith Farr's curriculum is for students who have had a year or two of playing experience and a “tossed salad” experience with note

reading. It takes them from a “look-say” note reading experience and gives them tools to figure out even crazy passages.

When students know the order of the note values (♩ ♪ ♫ ♬ ...) they can then easily remember that any note value is worth two of the next one (e.g. ♪ = ♫) and the “Rule of Three” for dotted notes (e.g. ♪ = ♫). Beat boxes, (a bracket under each beat), define the beginning and end of each beat.

In teaching pitch, Faith led us through some fun and effective drills for note names, saying them in different rhythms, starting on note names other than A, saying note names forward and backward. Faith presented many of her easy-to-remember rules. The “note pad” rule for correct stem direction tells you all notes look like “p” or “d,” never like “q” or “b.” If students learn that “babies cry” and “elephants forget” they will always remember the notes that do not have sharps in between them without having to worry about the piano keyboard.

Reported by Beth Benshoof, Kristine Granias, Cynthia S. Johnson and Ed Schaeffle.

Tone: The First Consideration

Doris Preucil emphasized that tone is control. Her mottos are Perfect Postures Prepare Positive Performances and Firm Foundations Forge Fluent Fiddlers. Doris talked about well-adjusted equipment, posture and left and right hand control. For posture, the feet should be shoulder-width apart and across from each other, not the left foot in front. For left hand, the thumb

and the side of the hand should touch the instrument in addition to the fingertip, thus creating a three-point contact. Use independent (not blocked) fingers as early as *Twinkle* and *Lightly Row*. “The bow hangs from the hand and the hand hangs from the bow.” Start with the bow arm in the “L” shape. The “push-pull” spot on the right wrist helps flexibility. The elbow leads the down-bow, and the wrist leads the up-bow. For tone production and bow speed, play the telephone number game — use the entire bow and hold the note as many beats as each number. Use bow distribution both for keeping the tone even, and for varying the tone for proper phrasing.

Reported by Kristine Granias, Cynthia S. Johnson, Brenda Lund and Beth Becker.

All Purpose Fiddle Style / Playing By Ear

Peter Ostroushko emphasized the importance of listening to different kinds of music, and trying to mimic it. In order to fully understand a fiddle tune, students must also learn the backup. When they understand the chords and the rhythmic foundation, they can explore the tune and make it their own. Once students can play a melody, they should try changing it, beginning to improvise. There are over thirty styles of fiddling in the U.S. and they all give the player freedom to express themselves even if the music is written down. The expectation is that the player will change the tune

Reported by Ed Schaeffle, Kristine Granias and Beth Becker. ‡