

All-State: Teaching Strings in Today's Classroom

by Rebecca MacLeod

This session provided an overview of a sustainable teaching model that incorporates musicianship, instrument technique, motivating activities to engage every student, and the importance of cultural awareness. In Phase 1, Dr. MacLeod outlined three skill areas to be developed separately, but concurrently to one another: Musicianship/Reading, Left Hand Development, and Right Hand Development. This is a summary of the Rhythm and Pitch portions of the Musicianship/Music Reading area.

Rhythm

Steady Beat: Have students do a variety of movement activities to demonstrate steady beat.

Pulse Game 1: Find the beat anywhere on your body while listening to music. Have different students lead. Practice finding big beats and small beats.

Pulse Game 2: Have the students sit in a circle and pass the ball to the beat of a variety of songs around the circle.

Meter: At a basic level, music is grouped into macro and micro beats of 2s and 3s.

Meter Game 1: Does it sound like a triangle or square? Students should trace the shape of a triangle or square to the pulse that they hear. Students answering correctly may trace on the board, or with a flashlight.

Meter Game 2: Have students draw a row of dots on a sheet of paper. They should circle the number of dots they hear in a group.

Find the Downbeat: To understand meter, students must be able to feel the downbeat. Practice finding the big beat on your body, with a ball, or revisit the passing game and have students only pass on the downbeats.

Beat Placement: Using a ball, bounce on a predesignated beat. The teacher may call out 1, then students will bounce on 1 and catch on 2, etc.

Rhythm: Students need a basic grasp of pulse and meter before learning rhythm. As students begin learning different rhythm patterns, have them maintain a steady pulse on their body.

Imitate: Echo the teacher: While keeping

a steady beat, simply echo different rhythm patterns modeled by the teacher or student leader. These patterns should use a neutral syllable.

Echo the teacher: Once students can maintain a steady beat and repeat rhythm patterns on a neutral syllable, have them echo using words, rhythm syllables or even numbers.

Create: Improvise: Students may improvise almost immediately by making up rhythms for their own names.

Partner Activity: Have students engage in a rhythmic conversation/dialogue with a friend.

Notate: Rhythm Reading 1: Students can begin reading rhythmic notation on flash cards in patterns using rhythm syllables, words, or numbers.

Rhythm Reading 2: The teacher performs and students identify the rhythm pattern on the board.

Pitch

High or Low: Before students can match pitch, tune, or perform intervals, they need to be able to identify high versus low.

High or Low 1: The teacher can model random pitches in pairs asking students to draw what they hear. This activity can be done in reverse where they write a pattern and play back what they see.

High or Low 2: Echoing open strings is an excellent way to practice high and low.

Step or Skip: Music moves either stepwise or skips.

Step or Skip 1: Students can identify through movement whether they hear a step or skip.

Step or Skip 2: Using iconic notation (or lines at different levels), students can identify pictures that look like what they hear.

Pitch Contour: Imitation is crucial to ear training. Have students sing simple melodies.

Imitate: Sing Your Favorite Song: Some students are resistant to singing initially depending on the age of the student. Allow students the opportunity to choose the song and sing in groups.

Sing Three Note Songs: Have students sing three note, four note, and five note songs. Begin with songs that move by step before adding skips.

Create: Improvise: Students may improvise almost immediately by making up melodies for their names.

Partner Activity: Have students engage in a conversation/dialogue with a friend using only stepwise motion. Repeat this activity using skips, then both steps and skips.

Notate: Draw the Melodic Contour: An excellent pre-reading activity is to have students draw what they hear using iconic notation.

Use Pitch Flash Cards: The most ideal way is to have students sing. You can also play timed games where they identify notes. A really fun online game is Staff Wars, <http://www.themusicinteractive.com/kbe/Chromebook/index.html>.

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