

A Guide to  
Lesson Planning in a Kodály Setting

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## An Overview of Long Term Planning Based on the Kodály Approach to Music Education

Long Term Planning involves deciding what belongs in the curriculum to be taught and planning strategies for teaching the individual curricular components.

The Kodály approach encourages the teacher to continuously address the following questions:

What musical skills should the children possess?

What do the children already know; what can they already do?

Based on the above information, what should be taught, and how should it be taught?

The first two questions are best addressed by the teacher based on assessment of the class and other factors (see page 14). The third question can be answered by examining the three ideas central to the concept of long-term planning for musical skill development in a Kodály-based curriculum: *Preparation, Presentation, and Practice*.

### Preparation

During this phase, the children are introduced to repertoire containing the specific melodic or rhythmic components to be introduced. They are invited to sing, dance, play and move to these materials. Nothing conscious is mentioned about the note names or rhythms. Over a period of time, the children are asked to deduce certain things about the note patterns contained in the repertoire. Is there a new note or rhythm in relation to those which are already known? Is it higher or lower? Is it faster or slower? The use of iconic representations of the notes or rhythms in the form of pictures from the songs is often used as a precursor to the understanding of the real musical symbol.

### Presentation

When the teacher feels the children have an understanding of the new note or rhythm, and can express this understanding through accurate performance, the sound is tied together with the written symbol and it is given a name. This is sometimes called "making conscious" because it

brings all that the children already know on a sub-conscious level to a more conscious realm. In contrast to preparation, the presentation of a musical skill occurs during one lesson.

### **Practice**

Sometimes referred to as "reinforcement", this is the time period during which the children's understanding of the rhythm or melody grows, solidifies and deepens. First the newly named pattern is practiced in well-known materials and familiar contexts. Later it is reinforced in unknown song materials and increasingly difficult musical contexts.

**A Brief Word About Assessment and Evaluation:** Both the teacher and the class must be involved in the continuous assessment of *ALL* three phases of long term planning. This is crucial in that the three phases are interdependent. The practice of an early skill becomes the basis of preparation for a later skill. Therefore the class must be secure in their ability to perform the earlier skill in order to learn the next.

Simultaneously, the teacher must be assured that the class can handle any part of the process of preparation, for example, of each skill before continuing on. Further, the children must feel their success and also sense some of their own responsibility for the success. This can only happen when the teacher allows the children to learn and doesn't do the learning for them. The teacher must ask, "*Can the class accomplish whatever the task without my help?*" If the answer is "yes", then the teacher may begin to think about moving ahead with instruction.

There are numerous evaluative tools that the teacher can use to determine if the stated objectives have been achieved. Simple charts can be kept (see samples in Appendix 3) and modified to meet the objectives of each individual teacher.

## On the Road to Daily Planning: Applying the Strategies

### How is a music lesson put together?

Based on strategic long-term planning and continuous assessment of the children's skills, one must first decide what the objectives are for the lesson. Secondly, each objective must be developed into an appropriate activity that uses suitable material. Lastly, the individual activities must be arranged in such a way that the lesson flows, has a beginning, middle and end in and of itself AND within the larger scheme of planning.

### What are the components of one music lesson?

Generally, each music lesson should include the practice of known songs, skills and/or concepts; the introduction or preparation of new songs, skills and/or concepts; and age-appropriate supporting material that requires less concentration on the part of the children while still complementing the skills and concepts to be learned.

Each lesson should include a variety of activities requiring varying degrees of concentration that are woven together in a way that makes them a cohesive musical unit. Achieving a balance of varied activities that fit together and flow is the key to good lesson planning. According to Taba, "The impact of teaching lies not alone in its single acts but in the manner in which these acts are combined into a pattern"<sup>1</sup> This simple statement should apply to individual lessons as well as curriculum planning.

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<sup>1</sup> Hilda Taba, Samuel Levine and Freeman F. Elzey, *Thinking in Elementary School Children*. San Francisco, California: San Francisco State College, 1964; 55.

## DESIGNING A FOCUS

A "focus" is one of several activities that make up a complete lesson. Each focus basically has three components:

- Review-* a brief summation of what was previously learned that is pertinent to the pedagogical point
- Point-* usually stated as a behavioral objective
- Reinforcement-* the immediate practice of the point, using the same material

The key to a successful focus is using what the students already know as the *review* to get to the *point* as quickly as possible, and then immediately *reinforcing* it before moving on to different material in the lesson. This is best accomplished with one song or exercise rather than many.

### HOW TO BEGIN

#### WHAT'S THE POINT?

Decide what the "point" is and state it as a behavioral objective. In order to determine what an appropriate behavioral objective is for any class, the teacher must decide where in the process of preparation, presentation or practice the class falls in relation to the specific musical skill. While behavioral objectives have varying names (behavioral objectives, learning objectives, and sometimes performance goals), it is commonly accepted that they indicate the immediate outcome or new behavior that is expected from the learning in a way that can be easily measured or observed.

In order to design an effective focus, one must first state a very specific objective. For example, simply stating "...the children will practice rhythm" is neither specific enough to be measurable nor to design a focus around. However, "...the children will sing and clap rhythm names to a well-known song that is written on the board in stick notation..." is *very* specific, and almost dictates the activity. Being this precise is necessary for designing a focus that gets to the pedagogical point without getting side-tracked. It is suggested that readers look to an instrumentation of

Bloom's (1956) and Krathwohl's (1964) taxonomies written by Metfessel, Michael and Kirsner (1969).<sup>1</sup> This helpful tool for designing educational objectives according to the hierarchy suggested by Bloom and Krathwohl gives examples of infinitives and direct objects that should enable teachers to precisely state objectives for all hierarchical levels of learning, from simple factual knowledge to generalizing, synthesizing and evaluating what is known.

### What questions should be asked?

"It is essential for every teacher to keep in mind at all times that the purpose of questioning - and all teacher pedagogical techniques- is the facilitation of student participation in learning the material at hand. The way you ask a question, as well as the place that question has in the overall sequence of questions, is an important factor."<sup>2</sup>

Getting to the point will often involve using the review as a starting place and moving through a series of questions to arrive at the point. Once the framework has been determined, one of the most difficult aspects of writing a focus is deciding which questions to ask in what order.

In order to know which questions to ask it is imperative that the teacher know exactly what is to be achieved. A clearly stated behavioral objective should accomplish that. For example, "The students will identify the words or syllables in the song *Bounce High* that contain more than one sound on a beat" is very clear and specific. The questions needed to accomplish the objective can (and often should) almost be a rewording of the objective. What questions are asked and how they are phrased may have as much effect on the learning outcome as the careful sequencing of objectives. In a 1981 study, Mannett identified fourteen qualities that characterize effective teaching. Two of these involved the use of questioning. According to Mannett, the teacher's ability to use easy questions with a high success rate and the

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<sup>1</sup>Metfessel, Newton S., W.B. Michael, and D.A. Kirsner, "Instrumentation of Bloom's and Krathwohl's Taxonomies for the Writing of Educational Objectives," *Psychology in the Schools*, 6, 1969, 227-231.

<sup>2</sup>Hyman, Ronald T., *Strategic Questioning*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1979.

ability to respond in a manner that encourage students to elaborate upon answers both contribute to overall teacher effectiveness.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of planned questioning, especially for beginning teachers, should not be minimized. Although one cannot always predict what will happen during the learning process, teachers are encouraged to carefully examine the chosen objectives for clues to formulating key questions. Beginning and student teachers are especially encouraged to write scripts that plan both the exact questions they hope to ask and the anticipated responses from the children.

If, for example, the objective is "*The children will listen for a new note and identify that it is lower than previously conscious notes.*", the key questions could be

1. "Do you hear a note that is different from the notes we already know?" (yes)
2. "Is this new note higher or lower than our other notes?" (lower)

After planning both the "point" and the key questions, the teacher may return to the beginning and begin to plan the review.

#### REVIEW:

Once the point is clear, the teacher should determine what the children already know that can act as a vehicle to reach the pedagogical point. It is important here that not EVERYTHING the children know be covered, but only the latest learned material that is relevant to the point.

The following example of a focus activity is a straightforward one using only one key question.

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<sup>1</sup>Mannatt, R.P. *Mannatt's Exercise in Selecting Teacher Performance Evaluation Criteria Based on Effective Teacher Research*. National Symposium of Professionals in Evaluation and Research, Albuquerque, New Mexico: November, 1981.