

To:gartenloop@yahogroups.com
Date:Fri, 11 Apr 2008 17:32:39 -0500
Subject:[gartenloop] Re: Classroom Management in Music Makers

Laura, I put together a post last year that is a compilation of ideas I implement and many of them come from fellow teachers. I've cut and pasted into this e-mail and updated it with new info. Some of these suggestions come from elementary music teachers, and will work well for those who teach choirs. Please note that all capital letters are for emphasis only. :)

Many wonderful posts on this topic are in the archives, so be sure to check there, too. Here's a link to it.

<http://musikgarten.1.forumer.com/index.php?>

The following links are to websites that deal with classroom Management & child behavior.

http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/behavior/behavior_management_tips.htm

<http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/articles.aspx?ArticleID=167>

<http://www.responsiveclassroom.cc/rc/articlelibrary/index.asp>

<http://www.ecewebguide.com/discipline.html>

<http://tinyurl.com/5gt68x> (ideas at www.musick8.com)

Do a search for "classroom management" at www.drjean.org.

Here are the ideas; I hope you find them helpful!

1. Clap this pattern du de du de du du, which says to the students, "Give me your attention." They clap it back to you by saying, "Here is our attention." It's quick, easy and short.
2. Reward good behavior and compliance with positive consequences.
3. Use pictures on a poster showing the behaviors you want. These could be pictures you take, drawings or cartoon characters.
4. Find a way to work toward a reward, rather than taking something away. For instance, start each rehearsal off with 5 points. Take a point away for really obnoxious stuff, but add a point when they do something well. It might be very basic at first, but **CATCH THEM BEING GOOD!** When they earn 100 points, have a popcorn party, or something else that's fun, then start all over again. It doesn't take long for them to jump on board.
5. When you see a child joining in and behaving appropriately, make eye contact with them and hold up a "V" sign with your hand.

Give the signal while you're talking or singing, etc. . . . The student quietly goes to the VIP station. This helps the other students straighten up and pay better attention because they want you to notice their good behavior. For some of them, just getting their name in the bucket is an honor.

The student tears off a ticket, writes his/her name on the blank side, then drops it in a little silver bucket, known as the "VIP" bucket. At the end of class, shake it up, and everyone does a drum roll on their laps. The current VIP will draw a name out and announce the new VIP person to the class. Do the "Tony the Tiger" celebration for them ("you'rrrrrrrrre great!"), and punch your fists in the air!

Buy a plastic basket at the dollar store with 3 different compartments - one big one for the roll of tickets, one small one for pencils, and one for double-sided tape and little paper badges that say "Music VIP" (create these on the computer). You can buy the roll of tickets at Wal-Mart; the tickets are blank on one side.

One person might get 3 or 4 tickets in one class period, but most children will get just 1 or 2 tickets. It makes each student accountable for their personal behavior. Not everyone gets their name in the bucket every time, but they don't complain about it. Most of them take it very seriously and will work harder the next time.

You choose what the special honors are for the VIP person. E.g. They get to sit by a friend, become the teacher's aid, choose the next song you sing, be the first in line, etc. . . .

6. Make Good Rules

A.) Tell them what you WANT them to do instead of what not to do. E.g. 'Walk inside. Keep your hands to yourself. Use respectful voices', instead of saying the usual, 'don't run, don't hit or don't yell'.

B.) Get their help in making the rules; then help them remember what they said. E.g. Have a discussion about what some good rules would be, and write down their answers. Make this list into a usable poster for all to see.

C.) Choose a few good rules that really matter, not a bunch of little ones. I Choose the big, important rules that matter the most to everyone and that address the need for respect for self, others, property, and safety.

D.) Create rules that you are willing to enforce, to teach and to model yourself. Know what the purpose of each rule is. Children can sense if you are confident about enforcing the rules.

7. Be a Great Rule Enforcer

. Don't just give out stars; 'shine' instead: Children will learn best by

following your lead: watching what you do and how you do it.

. Encouragement works wonders: No one likes criticism! So be smart, and give a little love each time you correct. Find something good to say, too!

. Stand firm, yet gentle: Tough stands can be made with gentle words. Your consistency and follow-through will show where you really stand.

. Give appropriate challenges: Set children up for success by knowing their strengths and weaknesses; then help them make good choices.

. Help children work it out themselves whenever possible: the more you coach, and the less you referee, the more children will learn.

8. Present rules to the students as "consequences for irresponsible behavior", as opposed to the word "punishment" .

9. Do shoulder rolls or take several deep breaths when they become antsy.

10. If you need the children to line up, have them line up and move to the beat of the hand drum.

11. Use counting down also, but don't vocalize it. Give the instruction; then hold up your hand, and close your fingers one by one until just your pointer finger is up for one (the kids are always silent by that time).

End with your pointer finger over your lips like a "shh"). Even in very large chorus groups, just put your hand up, and start closing fingers. They get it! It saves your voice and keeps your level of frustration at bay. :)

12. Say, "1,2,3, eyes on me." and they respond, "1,2, eyes on you." This works great with 1st - 3rd grades. Always use your gentlest voice, and insist that they respond in the same manner. Having them speak back to you in a calm and gentle voice puts that same feeling into their body.

Please Note: Always count DOWN, not up! Counting up (1, 2, 3, etc.) gives the impression of infinite time; however, counting down implies a definite end to the allotted time. Use a 3-count for getting quiet (3,2,1, INSTANT SILENCE), a 5-count for getting back to their seats/places (5,4,3,2,1, Seated in Silence), and a 10-count for finding partners, getting into position, etc. Always give directions like "Back to your chairs in 5, in 4, in 3, in 2, in 1, and we're Seated in Silence". Never count down to 0 or they will say "Blast off!" Your quiet moment will be gone. :)

13. Sing your directions to the students. Singing seems to magically quiet them down and make them pay attention. "Miss Teresa's talking" (SSSSS-M), etc. . . .

14. Choices! Choices! Choices! In MG, you would say, "Do you want to play with these shakers or pretend shakers?" (When they are throwing or

mistreating the instruments) . In choir, "Do you want to sit by Tommy, or by yourself?" You get the idea. This is a positive way of saying, "No".

15. For E.C. children and early elementary ages, distract them by changing the subject in the form of a question to them. This works great when someone begins to whine. :)
16. A carpet square or a mat is the place where they are allowed to run, roll, jump, whatever (as long as it's quiet!). Say "If you want to run, you can run on your carpet square in the corner." It's just no fun to run, roll, etc. . . in one place! This is called the running mat, the jumping mat, the rolling mat, the crying mat, the pouting mat, the watching mat or whatever the current behavior is. You can also call this "the thinking spot". Be sure to locate this is a place that is behind the children, so they are not distracted by it.
17. Claire Clarke says that if a child can get slightly off balance swaying with arms out like an airplane, or spinning in place, the brain will satisfy its "running need". Doing the airplane when seated works, too.
18. Sing the melody for "shave and a haircut" (sssls--du du de du du) and they clap and sing "two bits!" (td--du du). If you're using instruments, use them.
19. When things get chaotic, try whispering and freezing.
20. When running, have them use inside running feet--tiptoe or "mouse feet".
21. LOTS of "I see Jennifer understands, I see Adam understands! " And "David, come and hold my hand. Walk with me. Make your feet match my feet."

Or in extreme cases: "Please stand by the wall and watch what is happening... .. There, are you ready to try the same thing? Come back in and let's try it again."
22. Model for them the behavior you are seeking in them. E.g. If you want quiet behavior, you speak quietly or whisper and use little body language, rather than excitedly presenting the activity.

Here are some other suggestions from previous gartenloop posts.

*******A. From Mary in Westmont, IL:**

"Sometimes some of the children are a lot more energetic than at other times, and act "deaf" to what the teacher is saying to them. I do have a couple of suggestions to help them "listen" to you and follow through.

1. Change their game plan. They want to see you upset, so stay calm. Start to whisper and change to another activity as soon as you see you 'lost them.'

2. Be positive in the directions you give. Instead of saying, 'No touching,' say: 'Hands down!' or 'Hands on your own body.' Instead of saying 'Do not hurt each other.' say something like: 'Be kind.' Children remember the last thing they hear. They don't hear the 'No', only the word/phrase 'touching,' or 'hurt each other.'
3. If you feel they are old enough, take time to come up with class rules and consequences with them. Then, when they make the choice to ignore the rule, they are also making the choice for the consequence. All you have to do is remind them of the choice they are making, and you are no longer the 'bad guy.'
4. Change your expectations of your 'wild' students. If you see them as wild, they will act wild. If you see that they can control their bodies, they will."

*******B. From Carolyn in Oregon:**

"Divert and redirect is key. If these kids are new to you, they will test the limits! Most children, however, do not put the teacher through this, which is good, or we'd all be insane by now! lol

I have found a couple of things that worked really well for me. For the instigators, I put them to work on a task for me. Any number of things could be appointed to them to do, that would be constructive and purposeful.

It positively reinforces the 'good' behaviors, diverts and redirects their energy while automatically disallowing for the disruption that has occurred with these 3 or 4 kids. They are, quite frankly, yanking your chain! And they do know it. It's their way of getting attention, albeit negative.

. . . Stop the class (because it is disrupted at this point anyhow!), and everyone does jumping jacks to a little song I made up several years ago. It's called 'Jumping Up and Down and Counting To A Hundred' (sung to the tune of 'Ten Little Indians', which we DON'T sing anymore, because it is politically incorrect). All the while the kids are doing jumping jacks they are singing this counting song. They get an aerobic break . . . and then can refocus. I can't think of a time when it failed. I call a 'time out' and tell the kids that it's time to 'get our beans out'. All benefit . . . no one is shamed or humiliated (one of the statements in my discipline policy has always been that I don't discipline through humiliation, which is important for the parents to know, as well). After they are worn out doing the Counting To A Hundred song, jumping and clapping (each clap overhead is one number), I have them do a couple of slow, deep breaths in and then out, stretching arms overhead and lowering slowly. It really is a great activity for transitioning. . . even though it also works well when you're 'losing' the class because of a few that are being disruptive."

*******C. From Tammis in Maine:**

"I also typically use lots of dramatic voices. . . like Uh Oh! and Oh No! and quietly whispering 'guess what!' and varying my voice a lot so it catches their attention."

*****D. From Betsy Grizzell in Naperville, IL:

"Another way to limit madness is to talk as little as possible. You must be very prepared. Have all of your activities lined up, know your songs."

"It's helpful to do activities seated the first time, then the following week add some movement (just the arm swinging part). The minute, no the second, that anyone starts acting up, stop, give him an "I mean business" look, and firmly say "sit down" to him. Continue the activity, and after one verse, ask the sitter if he's ready to join the group. Doesn't always work with a determined class clown, but most children respond to it."

Talking Drum works well. Tap a drum (only one for the teacher) and chant, "walk, walk, walk, walk, ready stop". Repeat. Then "tip-toe.... ..ready stop". Change the volume of the tapping. March, jump, gallop, etc. Wean the vocal part until just the drum beat is announcing the movement. Vary the length of the chant. Avoid any that are too raucous. Praise the children who listen to the drum. I often make a big deal out of the drum talking. Out of the clear blue, I begin "What? Yes, I know you want to play, but these children aren't ready for you? What? No, I don't think they know how to march." Then I pull the drum off the wall and talk to it or whisper to it. Gets 'em every time.

Another way to limit madness is to talk as little as possible. You must be very prepared. Have all of your activities lined up, know your songs, have all your gear ready. There is no need to say, "Now, children, lets sit down and sing a song." You sit and sing. Motion to them to sit. As you sit, grab the most active kid to sit next to you. When done, jump right up into the next activity. Exhausting, but effective.

My son has been diagnosed with hyperlexia, which is right in there with ADHD and what Anita describes. When he was little he used to ask to have a time out. He knew what he needed. As he went through school, we told his teachers to let him have a time out if he needed it. Now that he's a teen, we're working on adult forms of time out. For my classes, I always give children the choice. "Do you need a time out?" Unfortunately, most children are taught that time outs are a negative. But giving them the choice puts it in their hands, and gives them that time to collect themselves.

*******Marina Goldin writes,**

Also, rhythm sticks always work very well for my classes as an emergency "quieting down" device: kids sit, their hands are busy, all the sticks are exactly the same (no fuss around who gets what...) and rhythm itself is stabilizing. As soon as you "break" unhealthy motion mood, you can move on to something else."

*******Eyremar99 writes,**

I often use "Walk and Stop" for a good movement control activity. Even with the very little ones, they quickly learn to stop no matter what movement we are doing. Sometimes I add a "SHHH" and put my finger to my mouth. We can use this song to march, jump, bounce, sway, clap, etc. etc. Of course, the children love "run and stop" best and its a good way for them to learn to control their movement and not get too crazy. Later this translates into more fine motor control when playing instruments and learning rests. Hope that helps.

*******Dorothy Denton writes,**

Ah yes! Those "rainy day" classes..... think of organized movement and rhythm work.

I don't waste any time reaching for my resonant Djembe drum to start those children moving in a no- nonsense way that organizes them. I have a lot of games that require listening, starting, stopping and responding to the "directions" of the drum or the piano (turning, jumping, tip-toe, etc.) . This is often the most important part of any class! The ears will not be "WITH" you until the body is prepared to listen.

Any child that is pushing, shoving etc. gets to sit on the bench until they feel their body can co-operate. Most of the time the children are motivated to move and not be left out.

If you get out a ball to bounce and pass you will have every child with you....make sure you know ahead of time WHAT you will present with the ball and how to organize the game. Keep it simple and try for rhythmic passing. Don't make it too complicated for 5-7 year olds.... many are inept with balls. You can pass, sitting, with tennis balls or try a volleyball size to bounce pass in a standing circle. I refer to Dr. Bob Abramsons Book "FEEL IT!" for presentation, although many of the activities I have to simplify for Music Makers. A Dalcroze way of working can't be beat.

I also have some bigger therapy balls ; the moms with babies can bounce on them and the 5-7 year olds can go "rolling, rolling, rolling along". It is just difficult to store these AND so popular it's tough to put away. Save them till the end.

(Note that the true hyper-active child may always be attempting physical contact or be always moving/ shoving/ bumping/touching) I don't hesitate to work them until they are sweating; and then I gradually slow the pace until we are laying on the floor and rolling or looking at the butterfly on my ceiling. You are helping the children modulate and transition to a quieter, more receptive state. Then their ears are hopefully ready to listen.

I also have a stack of yoga mats. I often ask the children to roll one out

for themselves at the beginning of class....rolling and unrolling the mat is a movement lesson all unto itself ! The rule, they know from the start, is to stay on their own mat/ space. I have a repertoire of "Yoga Stories"

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most of them directly tied into the MMKRS 1 curriculum - that we say and do with fluid yoga movement. The concentration and control that "purposeful movement plus story" asks

- 1- focuses attention w/ the routine of the mats, the story line, the space restriction
- 2- gives outlet to the energy but organization to the movement effort
- 3-slows down the breathing patterns of the children
- 4-enhances the curriculum
- 5- warms up bodies in prep for sitting and subsequent moving.

*******Ellen J. writes,**

Many of my children attend yoga classes. I watch the children do asanas in the shapes of animals. With that said, I notice what seems to be moving on their body. If the child is sitting but their feet are in the air, I guess they need a back roll or some kind of rebalancing, so we take a rolling break or we do a down dog. If they seem unfocussed, can't make eye contact, I do shoulder rolls or we do a brain gym exercise or I take ten yoga breaths and I ask them to lay on their backs, close their eyes and make pictures in their heads as I tell a story (this may have to be followed by a discussion what they saw or a time to draw it). If they are touching each other, I figure they need some kind of couple game, swinging arms or jumping with a partner. If they are all under the piano having a private conversation, I do a quick game of Grey Cat. If they are lying on their bellies (usually a clear sign of exhaustion), I let them.

Hey, this is just the result of observing children, trying out a movement and then observing again to see if it seemed to satisfy the need.

When it is time to sit, I sing a circle song to make a circle and sometimes I add counting at the end and we notice how many counts it took to get to the circle. I urge them to assist their friends to come to the circle. If it takes 5 - 10 seconds , I say, lets try that again. We may repeat it a few times and again I assess where their bodies are at. Are they focused? Can they follow a direction? Do they need to use the bathroom?

Then I use a chant, "Quiet your body (my arms flow

from my head to my feet as I sit quietly), Quiet your voice (I place my finger on my lips gently). Open your ears I have a (story to tell, a sound to hear, song to listen to, etc). I use this chant from 3 up so the children are quite used to this and know what is expected. A child that STILL can't get it together is gently picked up and placed on my lap as I whisper to them a reminder that they are special and it is time to quiet their body.

This takes less time then it looks.

In Cycles we did Crystal's Drum Story and they sat quietly for the entire story. They also did the same for the Tortoise and the Hare. In Music Makers they sat quietly for the Squirrel's Tale. In MMAW:K they sat for the entire story of Fionn Mac Cool. In Keyboard they sat quietly while each shared their pieces. From the larger perspective, this process of assessing, matching and satisfying a child's space has many far-reaching rewards.

Have a great weekend, everyone!

Making melody in my heart,

Teresa Kelley