

KESNE KEYS: August
THE KEY TO A LIFELONG LOVE OF MUSIC

*"Often a single experience will open the young soul to music for a whole lifetime.
This experience cannot be left to chance. It is the duty of the school to provide it."
Zoltan Kodaly, Children's Choruses, 1929*

Teachable moments do not always happen in the classroom. The school year provides the music educator with many opportunities to engage students outside of the classroom setting. By doing so, we also make these opportunities available to our faculty, school and community. When we invite parents to participate in the music program, they become more invested in the child's development and the growth of the music program as well. It is our job to create opportunities for all members of our community to become involved with music on a continuous and consistent basis throughout the day, the month and the year. Following are ten ways to enrich the musical growth and development of your students, your school and your community while providing opportunities that just may capture the soul of the young child for a lifetime.

Morning Music (\$30)

Set the tone for the day by playing music through the school intercom as students, parents and teachers enter. There are many collections of quality music of all genres. It is suggested that you play the same program for the entire week. This will allow time for the students to become familiar with a composer, style, or piece of music. You can use this opportunity to reinforce a grade level theme (Mexico), a celebration (Black History), a particular genre (Jazz) or a specific composer (Beethoven). Parents often ask me about the featured selection and follow through by acquiring them for home.

All School Sing (\$30)

Twice a month we gather together for an old fashioned sing-a-long. Sharing common knowledge fosters a sense of community. This is a wonderful time to bring out those call and response songs or great old camp songs. Invite other teachers to lead a song or play an instrument. I would recommend the resources of Peter and Mary Alice Amidon (*This Pretty Planet, All I Really Need, Songs for the Singing Classroom*), Jill Trinkka (*My Little Rooster, Bought Me a Cat, Little Black Bull, John the Rabbit*) and John Feierabend (*Book of Echo Songs, Book of Call and Response Songs, Book of Children's Song Tales*). On special occasions I make transparencies from a folk song picture book and everyone sings along while looking at beautiful pictures (*Mommy, Buy Me a China Doll* by Harve and Margot Zemach) or we might have a guest visitor read the book, *Duke Ellington* by Brian Pinkney and Andrea Davis Pinkney, while his music is playing in the background. We all go out humming and tapping our toes.

Ask Me Notes (\$0)

These weekly notes home highlight a mastered song or activity that the child can then teach to their family. It is an excellent way to inform them about your curriculum and extend the music learning to the home. This is also an effective way to show integration among subjects by highlighting a thematic connection. If a grade level is studying a specific country, send home a note highlighting the corresponding song, finger play, instrument, listening lesson or dance that was introduced in your classroom.

Family Folk Dance (\$30)

Invite the students and their family members to come for a folk dance. This gives parents the opportunity to share a rollicking joyous musical evening with their child free of distractions and interruptions. This can be combined with other school functions such as a Spaghetti Supper, Open House, or an Autumn Fair. Put it on the school calendar and start sending home reminders the month before. Have several dances of various types and difficulties ready; circles, longways, partner, and play parties. I would highly recommend the resources of Peter and Mary Alice Amidon (*Chimes of Dunkirk, Listen to the*

Mockingbird), Martha Chrisman Riley (*English Country Dances for Children*) and anything from Sanna Longden, and Phyllis Weikart (*Teaching Folk Dance: Successful Steps*, and *Rhythmically Moving CDs*). I also include expressive dances from *Move It 1* and *Move It 2* by John Feierabend and Peggy Lyman.

Parents and Babies Classes (\$37)

Look for a "Parents as Teachers" program, a "Baby and Me" class or talk to your local library or fitness center about creating infant and toddler classes. You can meet weekly or even twice a month. This provides an opportunity for the parents and the youngest members of your community to share structured music time together. Knowing what we know about early childhood, it is an asset to the community, the parents and these children to experience music under the guidance of a knowledgeable music educator. I would highly recommend John Feierabend's *First Steps in Music for Infants and Toddlers* series (*Book of Bounces, Book of Wiggles and Tickles, Book of Tapping and Clapping, Book of Simple Songs and Circles, Book of Lullabies*).

Pre-K Music (\$30)

Are there preschool classes in your building or neighborhood? Weekly meetings would provide an opportunity for the young members of your school community to share music in a developmentally appropriate classroom. Those students who have had the benefit of this type of program emerge as leaders in kindergarten. I would recommend John Feierabend's *First Steps in Music for Nursery and Preschool* (*Book of Pitch Exploration, Book of Echo Songs, Book of Call and Response, Book of Children's Song Tales, Book of Beginning Circle Games, Book of Steady Beat Activities, Book of Finger Plays and Action Songs*).

Parent Participation/Demonstration Classes (\$0)

I always look forward to this week. Everyone has a lot of fun while learning a great deal about our curriculum. Each March (Music In Our Schools Month) I invite all parents/family members to come and share a typical music class with their child. It is a wonderful opportunity for the parents to see how their child is developing in music and equally as important, to learn about our curriculum. I sincerely believe that this is the most effective way to seriously educate parents about what music development is all about. They invariably come away with respect not only for their child's involvement and ability but also for the curriculum and its importance in the life of their child.

May Day Festival (\$206.00 to create the May Pole; \$0 ever after)

Each May, everyone gathers outside while all the students sing and dance traditional dances around a May Pole. The eldest grade has the honor of weaving the May Pole. These songs and dances grow out of our curriculum, so no additional "practice" time is needed. Parents are invited to bring blankets and lawn chairs. Many classrooms then invite the parents back to have lunch and special festivities for the day. I have seen May Pole kits advertised for as much as \$1000.00. I bought 200 yards of 2 1/4 inch gross grain ribbon for \$140 (50 yards of each of four colors). I made 24 ribbons of 8 yards each (6 of each color), created a head decorated with artificial flowers (\$36), used a 12 foot PVC pipe (\$30) and secured it into our badminton stands (for years I used an old free-standing flag pole). Dip the ends in glue so they NEVER unravel. I now have a sturdy, maintenance-free May Pole ready for years of celebration. There are many variations on this, including using an actual tree. One year the PTA bought T-shirts to match the ribbon colors for the students to wear as they were weaving. Again, I use the resources of the Amidons, Sanna Longden, Martha Chrisman Riley, and Phyllis Weikart. The video "Maypole and Mexican Dances" by Sanna Longden is an excellent resource.

Summer Music CD (initially expensive but pennies per child ever after)

Consider making a CD of favorite songs from the school year for your students. It will help ensure that the students will be singing in tune and moving to the beat throughout the summer and be better prepared for their next grade in the fall. Masters and copies can be made with a commercial company, your own school system or your local university but I recorded my first master myself many years ago and used that for

quite a while. Consider asking your PTA for a one-time grant/gift to cover this cost. Once the master is made you can use it for years. I purchase sleeves, make inserts and write the child's name on each CD. I hear comments year after year about how much fun it was "sharing all the songs with Granma" or "singing all the way to Cape Cod." I have even been told that once they arrive at a destination, the silliness and singing continues with everyone joining in.

Music Lending Library (Expensive and worth every penny)

Folk song picture books, books about music/musicians, videos, and CD's are in this collection. It is housed in the library and is for the students to take home and share with their family. This collection originated and has been augmented through the years through the generous efforts of our Parents Music Group and my yearly budget when possible. We find that the students wear the materials out and that parents become so interested that they often buy these resources for their home. A quick sampling: (Videos) *Fantasia*, *Tubby the Tuba*, *Stomp*, *Carnival of the Animals*; (Books) *Erie Canal*, *A Huntin' We Will Go*, *Hole in the Bucket*, *There Was a Little Man*, *My Aunt Came Back*, *Mommy Buy Me a China Doll*, *How to Make Musical Instruments*, *Lives of the Composers*; (CDs) *Mozart's Magic Fantasy*, *Musical Life of Gustave Mole*, all CDs by Jill Trinkka, and all CDs by the Amidons, to name just a few.

By providing so many opportunities for the student to become involved with music we are meeting Kodaly's challenge. Any one of these activities has the potential to open the young soul to music, and they all took place outside the typical music classroom. We are also offering opportunities to our colleagues and our community to be a part of the gift of music. Choose just one new idea and implement it this year. Think of how many lives will be touched if each of us provided just one opportunity and how many chances for the gift of music to be given. Any one of these experiences may ignite the spark and capture the soul of a child for a lifetime.