

**Suggestions on How to Accommodate Both Rote Teaching
Methods and Phonics Teaching Methods for Comprehensive
Music Literacy in Music Education**

**Erin Moon-Kelly
Adjunct Professor of Music
University of South Carolina Lancaster
Lancaster, SC**

Common Excuses for Band Students Not Practicing

- I had chores to do.
- I had homework.
- It's music! This is supposed to be all FUN (and a automatic 100% grade)!
- I am not ready for the playing test. My mom forgot to buy me reeds, valve oil, pencils, etc.
- Oh, you actually want us to play OUT LOUD in front of people?!!!!!
- My head hurts.



Most Common Middle School Band Student Question-Do we HAVE
to play today?

Sound familiar to anybody?

Rote Teaching vs. Phonics Teaching

Rote Teaching

- Memorize and repeat material back “in a mechanical way.”
- Model/ imitate actions of teacher &/ classmates.
- Reproduce through trial and error. Little meaning applied.
- Quickest short term results. Very limited long term results.

Phonics Teaching

- Apply MEANING to every action involved in learning.
- Apply current and previous knowledge to new material.
- Better long term memory and problem solving skills.
- Seek music education opportunities outside classroom.
- Better long term results.

Useful Elements of Rote Teaching for Large Music Ensembles

- Constant Practice through Repetition...**Muscle Memory-** memorization of specific combinations of movements/actions through kinesthetic, tactile, and aural (ear training) means.
- Scaffolding
- **Educational Scaffold** (Jerome Brumer)- temporary framework that helps students access meaning to the concepts that they learn. Eventually taken away as proficiency of assigned task increases.

Constant Practice through Repetition (Muscle Memory)

Advantages:

1. Students forced to play both melody and harmony.
2. Students forced to apply both “known” and new “unknown” material through a gradual increase in complexity.
3. **Forced Internalization (ear training and muscle memory).**

● **Typical Music Class Etude Book Structure**

- 1. The concept is introduced in isolation and played in unison for the first three exercises.
- 2. The concept is applied to a traditional children's song, folk song, or some other traditional song that is familiar to the students. This exercise is also played in unison.
- 3. The concept is applied to a new unknown melody that is also played in unison.
- 4. The concept is applied to a new melody that also incorporates concepts from the previous units. This exercise is also played in unison.
- 5. The concept is applied to a new melody that incorporates concepts from the previous units. This time, the exercise is a duet- both parts are completely independent of each other.

Scaffolding

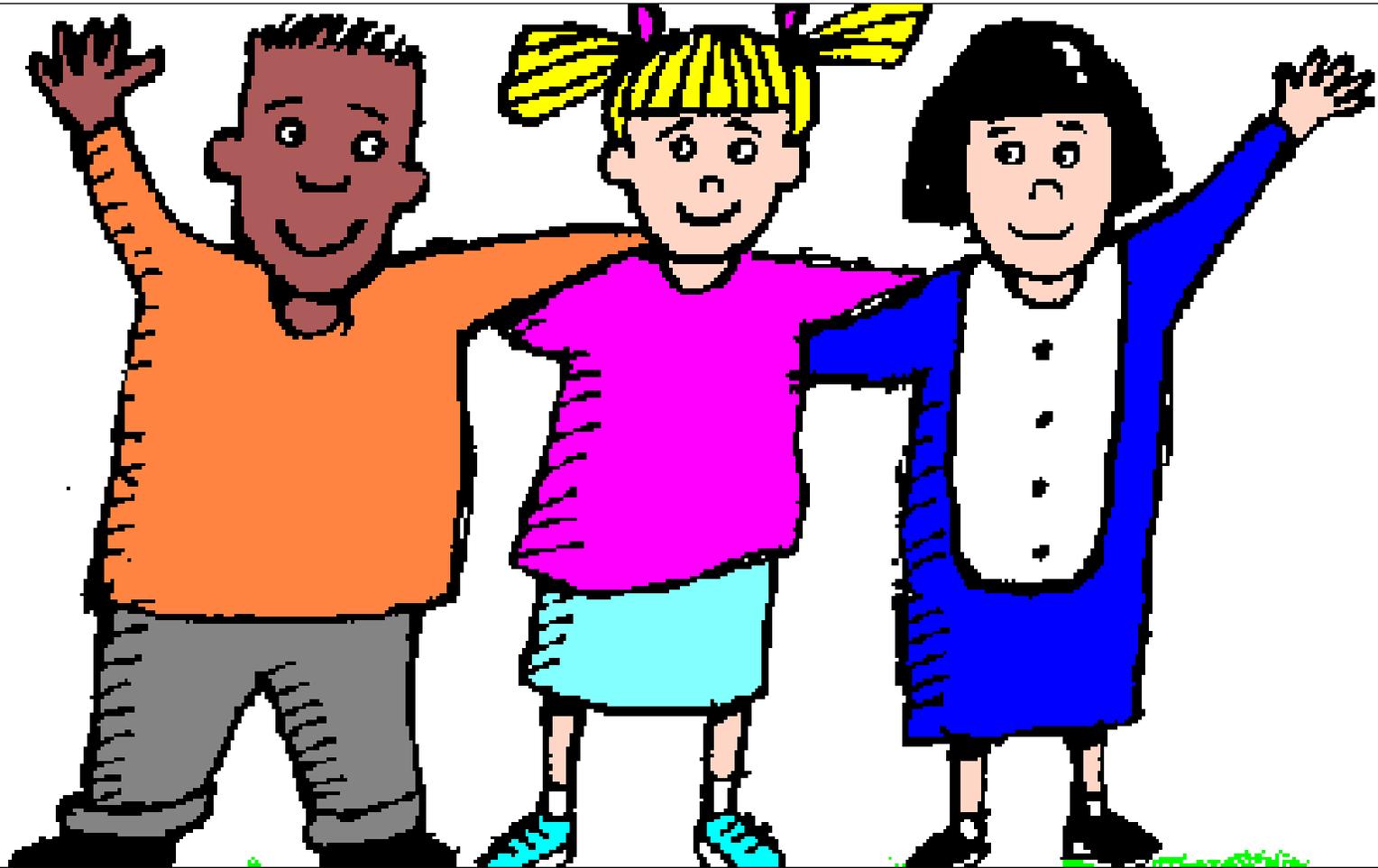
1. High amount of scaffolding used at elementary school and middle school level. Scaffolding remains up for most of the lesson. Music teacher is more of a facilitator.
2. Educational scaffold taken away much earlier in lesson at the high school and college levels. Some students can't function without the educational scaffold permanently in place.

• **Typical Music Class Etude Book Structure**

- 1. The class reads the directions and music notation (rhythms, rests, and note names) from the text or the etude book (visual).
- 2. The music teacher sings or plays the pitch (or asks a student volunteer to demonstrate for the class). In a band or orchestra class, the music teacher explains the fingering positions to the students (aural). Sometimes, the music teacher has an advanced student in the class demonstrate the correct fingering position for his or her classmates in his or her section (visual).
- 3. Through mostly trial and error (some students will use the fingering chart provided by the publisher), the students manipulate the instrument until they come close to the pitch and/or rhythm pattern demonstrated by the music teacher or their classmate (tactile).
- 4. The students perform the new concept as a class in unison (tactile, kinesthetic, and visual).
- 5. The students play increasingly more complicated exercises that force more of the educational scaffold to be removed (all learning modalities used).

Why doesn't Rote Teaching Yield Long Term Results?

- Responsibility for establishing meaning in the information presented is placed on individual student.
- Successful students apply meaning. Students who struggle do not apply meaning without permanent scaffolding provided by a mentor.



Crowd Sourcing

Use of problem solving skills to collaborate as a group on a solution to a problem.

Two Primary Learning Categories of Music Students

Aural/Modeling/Scaffolding (AMS) Learners (Rote Teaching)

- **The student tries to recreate the final (performance) results immediately through trial and error.**
- Process the piece through muscle memory, which is obtained through imitation and/or repetition of a mentor's actions through tactile, aural, and kinesthetic means.
- These students normally do not make it to the production stage.

Phonics Learners (Music Literacy)

- **Processing "unknown" information in smaller chunks before trying to recreate the final performance results.**
- Process the information through rhythm analysis, pitch analysis, and playing the difficult passage with a metronome at a **DRASTICALLY** reduced tempo gradually increasing the tempo after 3 to 5 repetitions (**comprehensive memorization**).
- Once the students' parts are locked into muscle memory, they can listen to the other parts in the ensemble to determine how their part fits in with the intonation, balance, dynamics, and artistry of everybody else's part.

Two Primary Learning Categories of Music Students

Aural/Modeling/Scaffolding (AMS) Learners (Rote Teaching)

- Generally Favor Rote Teaching
- Prefer permanent scaffolding or the constant guide of a mentor or resource (recording).

Phonics Learners (Music Literacy)

- Prefer attempting new music themselves first.
- Independence-Remove Scaffolding ASAP!



Split Part System

**An equal number of AMS Learners and Phonics Learners placed
on each part.**

Advantages of a Split Part System for a Large Music Ensemble

- Eliminates Ranking Among Students.
- Identities of Students' Learning Styles and Their Level of Professional Music Training Kept Hidden.
- All parts of the ensemble are covered equally well.
- AMS Learners constantly hear correct performances and learn the music theory (gaining meaning) of the selected piece through **forced internalization** and **participatory learning**.
- Phonics Learners forced to listen more to their standmates (improved intonation and balance).