

Harmonica Instruction for

Chapter 1:

Statement of the Project

This practicum is designed to teach beginning harmonica skills to sixth grade elementary public school children. The curriculum is designed to prepare students to perform simple, traditional folk songs on a ten-hole diatonic harmonica. Additionally, the curriculum will provide instruction on how to compose a four-measure melody and expectations for performing the melodic creation. This practicum also includes listening experiences in which students will be asked to recognize the harmonica in recordings of various musical styles.

It is the hope and expectation that adolescents who participate in this practicum will be inclined to take an easy-to-carry harmonica with them on outings and be able to either perform from memory or discover through pitch experiment simple melodies for their own enjoyment. It is also hoped that they will feel confident to improvise their own melodies as a result of the instruction received in the course of this practicum.

Development Characteristics of the Population

The curriculum of this practicum is designed for the adolescent learner approximately 11 to 13 years old. This age group can be characterized as upper-elementary or middle school students. Students in this population experience significant gender specific growth patterns which accentuate their gender differences in more socially pronounced behaviors. They have

basic level of literacy and computation competency and are ready to explore opportunities to discover their talents, abilities and values (Manning, 2000).

The integration of group and self-directed learning in this practicum's instructional design is meant to align with the adolescent need for more choice and decision as well as engage them in worthwhile play and activities that reflect their interests (Manning, 1998).

The students are eager to engage in their own hands-on experiences especially with new media. This is why a unit of study on the harmonica has generally good acceptance among adolescents. Their ability to grasp new concepts and apply previous knowledge promotes a positive culture of achievement (Allison and Cicco, 1997).

A unit of study on the harmonica is particularly well suited for adolescent learners because their intellectual development is more egocentric and they exhibit higher independence and need for personal choice. They are more curious and prefer active over passive learning activities. They also enjoy learning skills that can apply to real life situations (Wilmette, 2000).

The particular population of adolescents for whom this practicum is designed lives in a middle to lower-middle income neighborhood. The population is also racially diversified. Adolescents in this population may not experience a high level of support or urgency for academic excellence. The reading and writing scores for their school on the 1999 Colorado CSAP assessment ranked 54 and 22, respectively [Source: Colorado Department of Education]. Many families in this population are unable to provide their children with extra-curricular stimulation and academic preparation that is typical and more prevalent among students of middle and upper-middle class upbringing (Halle, Kurtz-Coster and Mahoney, 1997).

may encounter difficulty designing curriculum for this population of students because of the diversity of this group of learners (Wiles, 1999). Therefore, one of the aims of this practicum is to bring a new experience to a population of students who might not otherwise have the unusual experience of playing a harmonica and thereby broaden their cultural awareness and musical understanding.

Because of the diversity of the school population, culturally and academically, the administration and staff work concernedly towards full inclusion and establishing a cooperative atmosphere among students and the community at large (Slavin,1995b). Creating this instructional design constitutes my effort toward this larger goal, providing stimulation that can enhance the cognitive awareness of this diverse adolescent population.

Needs Assessment

Jefferson County R-1 School District has adopted music standards by which music instruction in the district schools should be framed and focused (Standards, 1998). The standards on which this practicum are based include:

1. Students, alone or with others, sing and/or play instruments, using a varied repertoire of music.
2. Students read and notate music.
3. Students create music.
4. Students listen to, respond to, evaluate, and describe music in relation to history and a variety of cultures.

There is an increasing number of instruction books, videos and CD's becoming available which teach the harmonica. For the most part they are designed for the adult learner who is expected to grasp several music theory concepts within the first couple of pages and then have a functional knowledge of music notation in order to proceed further. In a few cases, note reading is by-passed with an easier numbered-arrow harmonica tablature. But when notation is subsequently presented it is again somewhat overwhelming for a young beginner. All concepts proceed at a fast pace and quickly become too technical and/or *difficult* for the adolescent learner. This practicum endeavors to create a pace of instruction that can be applied in direct instruction group study and self-directed practice for the average adolescent learner.

The skills associated with this new information will be discovered step-by-step, encouraging students to apply formal operational thinking in their learning process (Slavin, 2000). The instruction of this practicum is specifically designed to coincide with this developmental period of cognitive growth. Enabling this process will be video and audio learning tools incorporated into the instruction in order to meet the needs of different learning styles. Because the instruction is centered around the aforementioned music standards, it addresses issues of curriculum that are not presented in commercial resources. These include creating and listening skills which go beyond the initial mechanics of performance. It is hoped that this focus on the music standards and a more deliberate pace of instruction will meet the particular needs of teaching a heterogeneous adolescent group of learners.

This practicum has a central purpose to provide a unique and challenging

experiences they have encountered in the earlier grades with a little more difficulty does not meet the needs of students (Manning, 2000). A unit of harmonica instruction presented at this juncture in their education with the components of listening, creating, and performing can provide a memorable musical experience and a satisfying, life-long skill.

Application Context

This practicum is designed for elementary/middle school students in a public school general music classroom. Classes consist of 25 to 30 students. The students in these heterogenous, non-tracked classes are eleven to thirteen years old. The general music classes are forty-five minutes in length and are usually scheduled during mid-morning. The first several lessons will be direct instruction oriented. During this period of time students will learn fundamental principles of harmonica performance in whole-group lessons. Listening activities will also take place during these early learning sessions. Instruction will also be presented on basic music composition in the Question & Answer format. After approximately seven lessons students will be given assignments and standards with which they will work independently toward building their performance and creative skills on the harmonica. Individual assessments will take place periodically and opportunities for individual or group performances will be made available.

During group lesson direct instruction, students sit in groups of six or seven on sets of Wenger portable, 3-tier risers facing the teacher. For individual, independent study activities, students can situate themselves in various places around the classroom or in the hallway close to the music room, work at a computer, or work at a listening or video station.

instruction, but rather it is a standard 30 x 40 foot elementary classroom converted to a music room. Besides the four sets of risers, the room contains two tables with four computers on each, an upright console piano, shelves for books and instruments and five free standing Orff xylophones.

The students have had previous musical performance instruction which has included both singing as a unison group and some two-part harmony, and instrumentally with rhythm instruments and recorders (a pre-clarinet, Renaissance instrument). Students are acquainted with American and ethnic folk songs from previous years of general music study. These tunes will be among those used to present the early performance concepts on the harmonica. Basic instruction in music notation has been included in their 4" and 5" grade recorder units.

Great effort has been made toward bridging the gap between the somewhat limited range of adolescent musical awareness and the larger world of musical styles and activities. This has born fruit, so to speak, and the sixth grade students show more enthusiasm for music class and willingness to participate in musical activities. Some of sixth grade students can recognize the sound of the harmonica when it is played in the ensemble and a few listen to harmonica music on a regular basis. Very few students have had previous experience with the harmonica, though some own one. For this practicum harmonicas will be provided by the teacher for in-class instruction. Harmonicas will be individually numbered and each student will have an assigned classroom harmonica. These harmonicas will remain at school and students are encouraged to purchase their own instruments to expand on their classroom experience. Most curriculum materials have been created by the teacher to fit the pace of instruction. This will help provide

self-directed portions of the instructional design. Some worksheets will be provided from reproducible resources (Adair, 1984 and 1987).

Prior Knowledge

As the lessons of this instructional design progress, it may become apparent that students have had some exposure to particular musical concepts. The population of students who attend general music classes in the school for which this curriculum is designed have had lessons in the 5th grade on the development of jazz and blues and a unit of study on the basic chord construction of a blues progression. As 4th grade students they would have had some experience playing the autoharp and used I IV V chords to accompany folk songs. Kodaly and Solfege would have been employed in music instruction since the first grade as well as recognition of to and titi rhythms. The terms octave, scale and triad and their construction concepts have been integrated into Orff studies, recorder and keyboard units, as well as singing.

The concept of Question and Answer melody form would also have been introduced in previous grades. However, the teacher does not assume that a practical working knowledge of this concept is in place in this highly transient population of students who generally have very little exposure to music performance beyond their general music class work. Students will be expected, as a result of this instructional design, to create Question and Answer melodies directly on the harmonica. Therefore, a thorough review is presented throughout the direct instruction portion of the lessons.

Curriculum Goals and Objectives

I. Standard 1: Students, alone or with others, sing and/or play instruments using a varied repertoire of music.

Standard 2: Students read and notate music.

A. Goal 1: When given a simple melody, the student will be able to accurately perform the melody.

1. Objective 1.1: The student will perform a C major triad and scale, using a ten-hole harmonica, playing one note at a time in correct order.
2. Objective 1.2: The student will generate five folk songs on the harmonica with smooth flowing, correct rhythm with at least 90% accuracy.

II. Standard 3: Students create music.

A. Goal 2: When given relevant information concerning the construction of a simple melody, the student will be able to create his/her own melody.

1. Objective 2.1: The student will create and perform a four-measure, 16-beat melody on the harmonica in the prescribed Question & Answer form with accurate notation and intonation.
2. Objective 2.2: The student will complete four music notation activities to reinforce previous note reading knowledge with 90% accuracy.

III. Standard 4: Students listen to, respond to, evaluate, and describe music in relation to history and a variety of cultures.

A. Goal 3: A student will understand and recognize the harmonica and its place in music

history and present-day applications.

1. Objective 3.1: Given several musical examples, the student will be able to identify the harmonica on a written evaluation as it is played and describe the performance setting in which it is played with at least an 80% accuracy.
2. Objective 3.2: Given the historical background of the harmonica, the student will be able to outline the development of the harmonica with at

Definition of Terms

- Adolescent** A boy or girl who is undergoing the physical and psychological developments associated with puberty. This transitional period between youth and maturity can extend from approximately 11 to 18 years of age. In this practicum and adolescent refers to the youngest of that age range: ages 11 to 13.
- Diatonic Harmonica** A small rectangular musical instrument consisting of two rows of thin metal reeds set behind air holes and played by exhaling or inhaling. Each hole produces two separate tones depending on whether air passes through the hole via inhaled air or exhaled air which vibrates the reeds. A harmonica is constructed to play in one diatonic key or scale. We will use a C major diatonic harmonica for this practicum. Harp and Mouth Organ are colloquial terms sometimes used for the harmonica. Another term for

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`blow' position notes of the diatonic scale harmonic is the Straight

Harp. The straight harp for this practicum is the C major scale

Lesson The core of the curriculum is the lesson format. The lesson is designed to provide instruction in 40-minute periods. These lesson periods include some group direct instruction learning, some constructivist self-directed learning, practice, and creative response. Lessons at various stages of the learning process include activities in listening, composition, and performance.

Scaffolding Support for learning and problem-solving. In this design it will include worksheets, video instruction and the help and examples provided by peers and the teacher.

Scale The primary "ladder" or succession of tones belonging to any key. In this unit of study the C major scale will be taught and practiced.

Standard The level of achievement expected to be met through instruction as assessed by prescribed evaluation.

Tempo An Italian word referring to the variations in speed.

Triad Any chord consisting of a root with its third and fifth above. For this unit of study the C major triad will be taught and practiced. The C "straight harp" is designed to play the C major triad when blown and the `draw' breath sounds a G7 chord

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