

Research Abstract
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Dr. Linda Rockwell High
School of Music
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC 27858
252-328-4277 Office
Highl@mail.ecu.edu

Dr. Michelle Hairston, MT-BC
Professor, Music Therapy
Chair of Music Education/Music Therapy for the ECU School of Music
252-328-4871
hairstonm@mail.ecu.edu

Dr. Linda High
Associate Professor, Music Education
Coordinator of Teacher Education for the ECU School of Music
252-328-4277
highl@mail.ecu.edu

Mrs. Susan Beck-Frazier, MM
Assistant Director for Student Services for the ECU School of Music
252-328-1265
beckfraziers@mail.ecu.edu

TITLE

Pitch and Beat: Developing Important Choral Skills in the Young Child

ABSTRACT

The two most important skills to be taught in the elementary music class are learning to match the pitch and learning to keep the beat. The purpose of this research poster is to evaluate and synthesize current techniques for developing pitch and beat skills in young children. To be successful in group organizations such as chorus, band, or orchestra, students must be able to maintain a steady beat when singing with a group or playing with a group. Young children tend to want to sing. But singing a song off pitch can be very disturbing and unpleasant to those around them. The same is true if one band or orchestra member is always ahead or behind the beat--it can be very disturbing to those around them. Developing these skills is important to each individual. Research has shown that these skills need to be developed by fourth grade. Elementary choirs are usually begun in the

fourth grade and need well-trained singers. It is at this age that peer pressure and acceptance become extremely important. Many times, children at this age can be very critical of their peers, especially those who appear awkward or out of place. If Johnny sings funny or moves awkwardly to the beat, his peers will laugh and make fun of him. If Johnny feels unsuccessful with singing or beat awareness, he will develop negative feelings about himself as well as music. When that happens, it is possible that Johnny will then retreat and never want to sing, play, or participate in music again. He will lose the opportunity to develop musically and experience a wonderful part of his life. He will probably never sing or play an instrument even as an adult.

According to research by Edwin Gordon, a child's musical aptitude is in a state of development until about fourth grade. Gordon indicates that musical aptitude is a child's ability to learn music. It is determined by a child's ability to audiate tonal and rhythmic patterns, and it is affected by a child's environment and innate ability. All people are born with a certain potential in music but the kinds of musical experiences they have from the time they are born until about fourth grade will determine how high their musical aptitude will be as an adult. After fourth grade the musical aptitude stabilizes and does not get any higher. One can learn more facts and reach a higher achievement level of information about music, but the musical aptitude no longer expands.

The public school music teacher should begin pitch and beat training in kindergarten and continue to reinforce this training throughout the school years, most importantly through the fourth grade. Suggestions from this research can be used to develop these skills, beginning with the kindergarten and first grade child.

Content of the Poster

The poster will offer a description of the research and many suggestions for developing pitch and beat skills.