



It Starts with Breathing (and Other Rhythmic Statements!)

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Goals for this Presentation about Rhythm

1. Share research results.
2. Challenge rhythm pedagogy.

Rhythmic Research



Survey Research
Self-reported
Teachers' Beliefs

Action Research
in General Music
Class and Private
Studio Piano
Settings

Survey Research

Self-reported



- Teach rhythm how?
- Self-Assessment about teaching rhythm
- Assessment about students' rhythmic skills and habits
- $n = 105$
- Global representation
- Type of teacher
- 50 or more students (43%)

Results

Teaching Strategies



- Specific rhythmic instruction 82.9%
- Teaching rhythm through a mathematical approach 61.9%
- Using numbers (60%)
- Using syllables (43%)
- Using words (24%)
- Using a combination (46%)
- Uses rhythmic instruments (40%)

Results



Reported Student Assessment

Rhythmic accuracy when learning new repertoire

- 75%-100% accuracy—44%
- 50%-74% accuracy –33%

Rhythmic accuracy when sight-reading

- 85%-100% accuracy –20%
- 60%-84% accuracy – 45%

Self-assessment

Teachers (87%) believe their instruction is always/often successful for their average students.



Discussion

Teachers self-reported:

82.9% of their students do NOT count without prompting when learning new repertoire.

Teachers self-reported:

84.3% of their transfer students can NOT count or play repertoire accurately.



Do we think we are doing a better job than we are?

Can rhythmic instruction/practice become a habit students' seek rather than avoid?

Action Research

Two or more classes for each grade

- Question: Better strategy for rhythmic duration? Counting in numbers / mathematics or in syllables by ear. Then reversed strategies.
- Question: Could 5-, 6-, or 7-year olds learn vocabulary and identification of meter? Sub-beats?
- Question: When learning performance repertoire was specific rhythmic drill important?



Private Lessons

Can rhythmic instruction or practice become something the student seeks rather than avoids?

Karen's Steps in Action Research



1. Introduce, read, & practice rhythm patterns from the song
2. Tap the beat while speaking the words in rhythm
3. Clap the rhythm while speaking the words
4. Add pitch to rhythmic patterns and/or words

Action Research Changed My Teaching



Teach Rhythmic Habit and Routine

- Provide specific instruction on rhythm
- Start each lesson with rhythmic drills
- Teach rhythm syllables in specific order
- Require student demonstration of new rhythmic patterns
- Require student to count aloud

Janet's Questions



- Why is it asked this way on tests?
- Why does the method book...?
- Where are meter and steady beat taught?
- What child thinks like this?

Janet's Statements. Not answers



- “+!” What does “and” mean?
- Rhythmic syllables work.
- Janet's concession: Counting by numbers

What are the rewards from rhythmic work?



1. Learn faster with fewer mistakes
2. Understand how much it helps in making musical decisions
3. Confident, feel like a musician
4. Grounded when performing by memory

Why Rhythmic Statements



Breathing

Meter

Duration/Patterns

Rock-solid Performances

Purpose is to lift the notes off the paper,
transforming them into an artistic experience (and
hooking those students for life!)

Besides, rhythmically responsible students make
for a lovely work environment for you.