

SATURATION ACTIVITIES

The purpose of saturation activities is to provide an aural environment rich in tonality and meter. The goal is the input rather than the output. Many of these activities are designed to stimulate babble both within the activity and at home with common toys, but how the child responds or if he responds is not the goal of the activity. Rather, the activity creates an excuse for delivering tonality and meter.

Many of the saturation activities involve children in "playing" with tonality and meter, by putting a prop in their hand--something to play with while being saturated. This something keeps them from being distracted by other things while creating play within the tonality or meter. These activities teach the child how to play with tonality and meter and are intended for imitation at home, initiated by the child. The only expected response is that the child "play along." Most of the activities in themselves invite babble while playing, but with or without babble, all children will be absorbing the essential tonality and meter.

These activities use a great variety of props, offering many opportunities for children to just hear and play with tonality and meter. Although some of the props may be more difficult to manipulate than others, and some may lend themselves more easily to advanced skill development, the sequence of these activities is determined by content rather than by prop. Any one of these activities could serve children of many levels of development by shifting the content. SWC provides a sequence of content for use with these activities.

GENERAL TECHNIQUES

1. The prime technique with these activities is to let the tonality or meter dominate the activity. Avoid talking altogether and let the music carry the activity. By the teacher modeling the activity, the children will know what to do without explanation. The delight of the activity itself will carry the children's motivation without verbal praise from the teacher. No instructions. Just do. The children will follow.

2. I recommend that with these activities that each child has a prop, but that may not be possible initially. When budget is limited, one prop for teacher and one for child is the next best way to go. The activities are attractive enough that children are anxious to wait in line for a turn with the prop. The purpose of these activities, however, is to involve the children in play that can then be carried on at home. The more direct/extended their experience, the more that will be accomplished.

3. The longer the activity, the better. The more children hear, the more they will want to hear and play. Extend these activities beyond what you feel would be appropriate. With the variations in content, any one of these activities could be carried on for 10 minutes.

4. Props can be handed out and/or collected within the context of the meter, extending the aural stimulation while dealing with logistics.

LESSON PLANNING

At the XO level of experience, saturation is the prime activity and should dominate the lesson plan (see plan XO). At the X1 and X2 levels, I include one saturation activity in every class, alternating weekly tonal and rhythm. With four meters and seven tonalities, the content is different every week and can be

expanded in difficulty as the children progress. With a handful of props, the activities vary each week, whatever the content.

OLDER CHILDREN

Saturation is equally essential for the older beginner. I use many fewer props with older children. One of the finest vehicles for saturating older children is the recorder and drum. These invite listening rather than singing along.

PROPS

The beginner is distracted by props. Every effort should be made to saturate without props, capturing the musical imagination with tonality and meter. Once the child has tuned into tonality and meter, props become vehicles for musical play. Prior to that, they are seen just as toys. These activities therefore are generally for the somewhat experienced.

RHYTHM

Hammers, sponge blocks, megaphones, bean bags, sticks, windshield wipers

TONAL

Baskets, straws, fire hats, fly swatters, Baby Birds, mirrors, (flowers, pumpkins, ice cream cones)

ACTIVITIES

RHYTHM

1. The teacher chants meter chants of SWC while manipulating the prop, modeling for the children chanting while playing with the prop in micro beats. Chanting is done on a neutral syllable. The activity continues for 5-7 minutes. The teacher may vary the activity somewhat by occasionally manipulating the prop in macro beats, or by playing with the prop in micro beats with creative ways to use the prop--most often initiated by the children.

X1--select one easy chant and chant repeatedly

X2--alternate several chants of the same difficulty level, repeating each phrase at least twice.

X3--alternate several chants of different difficulty levels, repeating each phrase at least twice, introducing chants of the next higher difficulty level with those of familiar level of difficulty.

2. The teacher intersperses verses of tonguing between chants, alternating phrases of tongued micro beats with phrases of tongued macro beats.

3. The teacher implements activity 1 above, but with rhythm syllables.

SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES

Hammers--best
Sponge Blocks--great movement
Megaphones--great tonguing
Bean Bags--more difficult
Sticks--
Windshield Wipers--paint sticks

TONAL

1. The teacher sings tonality songs of SWC while manipulating the prop, modeling for the children while playing with the prop. Songs are sung on a neutral syllable. The activity continues for 5-7 minutes. The teacher may vary the activity somewhat by occasionally playing with the prop in creative ways initiated by the children.

XO--select one easy song and sing repeatedly

X1--alternate improvised sections with song, or different songs of the same difficulty level, repeating each phrase at least twice.

X2--alternate songs of different difficulty levels, repeating each phrase at least twice, introducing songs of the next higher difficulty level with those of familiar level of difficulty.

2. The prop is manipulated to highlight the resting tone between phrases of the song. Something about short phrases, breath, resting tone, sing along.

3. The teacher implements activity 1 and 2 above, but with rhythm syllables.

SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES

Baskets--peek-a-boo
straws--breath
fire hats--resting tone
fly swatters--resting tone
Baby Birds--babble sing
mirrors--babble
flowers--breath
pumpkins--sing
ice cream cones--sing, microphone