

## Introduction to the Sessions

As you begin

- always **do** what you are going to do - there isn't much need to tell the children what they are about to find out anyway.
- keep your instructions simple and direct - after three sentences or so children think about other things.
- sing, move, play, interact all at the same time - teaching the words first, then the movement, then . . . robs the children of the chance to figure out what to do.
- begin each session with something that focuses the children and helps them be present and rooted in the here and now.

Except for Sessions 1 and 2, I have presented our "lessons" with the children in groups of two throughout our time together. In so doing, I hope that it will encourage you to embrace the idea that **repetition is valuable for children** because it is more than mere repeating. Rather, it is a doing again, an experience worthy of having many times throughout your time together. Don't fear this. Repetition is crucial to the development of what we call the "fluid intelligence" during childhood years. Varied activities with many repetitions assure the development of intelligence normally and securely.

I hope, too, to trick you into **slowing down your approach to the children**, if you need to. Many of us move too fast in our teaching. I battle it constantly. With limited time and potentially unsure attendance, it is very tempting to move quickly. Explain to your parents and others that repetition on your part is not because you can't think of anything else to do; rather, it is because you have chosen wisely from all that is available and want the children to develop understanding as well as experience. **Going slower is essential if children are to develop enough "attentionality" to read and listen.**

Let's begin!

## Session 1

1. Greet children and their parent/grandparent/child-care sponsor as they arrive. I have changed my mind about name tags. I don't pay close enough attention to faces when I can rely on name tags, so I really and truly try to learn children's names as they come in and attach them to a face as soon as I can. It was tough at first, but I am getting better! It has had the effect of really connecting that name and that person. Give it a try!

2. Sing the following song as you gesture with your hands to have the children and any parents with them join you, preferably in a circle on the floor:

Come, good Lord! Come, good Lord! Let your  
Ho - ly Spir - it fall up - on us now.

Text: Randal McChesney Music: Come Good Rain

I don't encourage you to pressure the children to sing with you yet. They may or may not - either way is just fine.

When you have sung and have gotten settled just a little, you may notice some children sitting on the floor by themselves, some nestled close to you or to any other parent or adult who has joined you. As long as you have a reasonable circle, be glad for it.

3. After a few singings of "Come, Good Lord" (not too many, you'll be using it again and again), sing the following song:

Oh, I know (Ma - ry!)  
Oh, I know (Ma - ry!)

High - ho the der - ry o! Oh,  
I know (Ma - ry!)

© Richards Institute. Used by permission.

As you sing, be careful to have both anticipation and delight in your voice without being overbearing. The effect should be, "Who will I sing about next?" The tune, of course, is "The Farmer in the Dell," the "national anthem" of childhood. The effect is "being known" by you, the teacher. Thus, you should have all the "turns" to singing about the various people in the circle, maybe even including you.

If you are lucky enough to have a teaching partner, pass the turn off to your partner. But keep the pace secure without being rushed. Cheer for each child as you get to the "Hi, Ho . . ." portion of the song. Simply circle your pointer finger above your head in a gesture of cheering for that whole child, fidgetiness and all.

You can pace yourself as you teach by "chattering" a little between turns. "Who do you suppose will be next? I wonder, Elizabeth, if my voice will find you a SECOND time!?" This helps children focus as they begin the long journey toward expanding their attention span. Young children do NOT have short attention spans, if they have opportunity and time to become interested and engaged. Musicians must develop an ability to focus and pay attention to sound. This is fundamental to being musical.

Again the children may or may not sing. They may "gait" - that is, "take it all in" without ever producing a sound or moving a muscle in class. This doesn't mean they aren't learning and fully participating.

