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Sensory Stimulation and Self-Concept

Children need training to make the best use of their five senses. Visual, auditory, and tactile or kinesthetic senses are of greatest concern in the music class. The following TIPS can help children improve their understanding and awareness of these sensations, can suggest acceptable ways of developing them, and can help develop a more positive self-concept for special learners who have low self-esteem.

Arrange students as partners, seated or standing back to back, to help young children develop greater sensory awareness and improve their ability to move rhythmically and respond to directions; to develop breathing, phrasing, and speech skills; and to develop auditory acuity. Have children imitate or echo each other's breathing sounds and movements. The leader breathes in patterns, and the other child imitates. The patterns can be fast (huffing and puffing as if running), slow (deep breathing, snoring, and yawning), or with pitch (humming, whistling, bird calls, and animal sounds, all of which can help students pronounce vowels and consonants).

With students facing each other, one child places a hand on the other child's throat or cheek to feel the vibrations. Students should feel the difference among whispering, speaking loud, and singing. This exercise helps students understand the source of the human voice and how a singing tone is produced. These exercises could be used to help with speech impairments, delayed speech, or to develop the singing voice.

Adapted from Carol Guymer, "Special Spectrum," *North Dakota Music Educator*, December 1984, 11-12.

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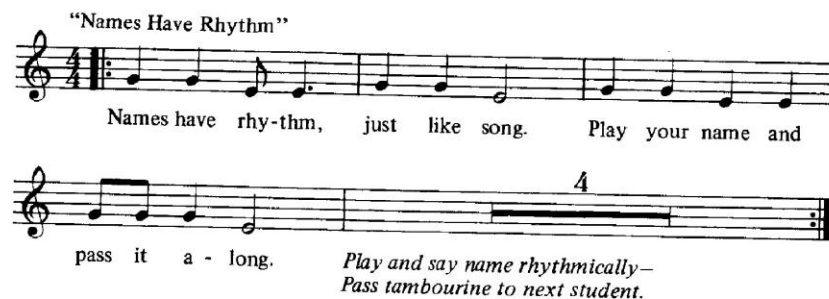
Make a mystery box by taking a small box with a lid and placing a mirror face up on the bottom. Tell the group, "The best thing in the

whole world is inside the box." Intensify the mystery of the box by saying that whoever looks in the box must keep what they see a secret. At the end of a class, reinforce appropriate behavior by allowing a student to look into the box. This reward is recommended as a tool for building self-esteem for people of all ages. Use it sparingly to build suspense.

* * *

Use a song like "Names Have Rhythm" (see figure 1) that incorporates students' names. After singing the song, several children take turns saying their names rhythmically while playing a tambourine or other instrument. Hearing their name, saying their name, and playing the rhythm that represents their name gives students individual recognition, momentarily focuses attention, and helps individual children feel important.

"Names Have Rhythm"



Names have rhy-thm, just like song. Play your name and

pass it a - long. *Play and say name rhythmically -
Pass tambourine to next student.*

Figure 1

* * *

Develop listening skills by filling pairs of boxes or small cans (such as plastic 35mm film containers) with various objects that make sounds (for example, salt, nails, or marbles). Have students select a container, shake it, and listen and then shake the others until a match is found. Have students continue until pairs for all the containers have been found. This activity is recommended for most populations, including educable and trainable mentally retarded students.

* * *

Set up five stations in the classroom and include a variety of sound producers in each. For example:

Station 1: metal objects (keys, spoons, triangles, cymbals, and pan covers)

Development of Skills and Concepts

The primary purpose of most music classes is to provide a basic music education that includes developing specific skills, broader understandings, and an appreciation for many types of music. The music class, however, is also an ideal setting for developing various other skills that handicapped children may lack. The following TIPS include suggestions for improving music skills and understandings as well as other abilities such as social skills and eye and hand coordination.

Music notation is one of the most difficult concepts for some mentally retarded and learning-disabled children to grasp. There are many ways to modify notation and decrease the amount of information presented so that these students can fully participate in the class.

1. Do not use staff lines. It also may not be necessary to use key signatures and time signatures. (A single number may be used to indicate the number of beats in a measure.)
2. Use bar lines to divide the music into measures and to distinguish patterns and groupings of notes.
3. Do not use rests when an instrument does not play for one or several measures; leave the space blank.
4. Color code single lines of rhythmic patterns for each instrument or voice, using bright and contrasting colors, so students can follow their colors when playing.
5. Color code melodic lines for each instrument.
6. Use shapes to represent the instruments (such as a triangle for that instrument, a circle for drums or tambourines, or crossed sticks for rhythm sticks), indicating each note or which instrument plays each line.