

# Music Literacy 13 Step Unit Plan

## Level 1

The Music Literacy Unit Plan is a 13 step process used to teach each rhythmic or melodic concept. Each concept is taught sequentially. A melody unit may be taught simultaneously with a rhythm unit as long as the songs in the melodic unit utilize rhythms the children already know. The activities in the 13 step process may require eight to ten fifteen minute lessons to complete.

The 13 steps for mastering each music concept are described below. Quality folk songs appropriate for the age of the child are provided in each rhythmic or melodic unit. Five songs from each unit should be chosen by the teacher and listed on the Unit Plan form. The Unit Plan Form, found after the Documentation and Assessment section, is used to track the 13 step process described below for teaching a music concept. For ease of use, completed forms for each rhythm and melody unit in this collection may be found after the Song and Rhyme Index.

### **PREPARATION**

1. **Songs - Rote** - Teach the first three chosen songs of a unit by rote until the children can sing them with confidence.

Technique:

- A. ECHOING - The teacher sings a short phrase and the students repeat it. The short phrases are combined to create longer phrases in turn echoed by the students until the entire song is sung by the teacher and then the class.

### **PRESENTATION - Discovery**

2. **Songs - Discover Concept Aurally, Present Syllables, Present Visually** - Isolate the sound of the new rhythmic or melodic concept aurally before presenting the visual symbol. The rhythmic and melodic syllables used in this program are provided in each music concept unit. Rhythmic and melodic teaching suggestions are described below.

**BEAT** - The beat is the basic concept from which the foundation of rhythm is built. Feeling and patting the beat while singing songs and listening to music with an evident pulse are fundamental activities from which all rhythmic concepts should evolve. Once the concept of identifying the beat through feeling the pulse is mastered, the next step is to follow a visual representation of the beat. A heart symbol is used to



metaphorically relate to the way a human heart beats. Songs in each rhythm unit have pictures of hearts in the music score to indicate beat (pulse).

**RHYTHM** - Rhythm concepts are taught having the students clap the words or word syllables in a song. Beat remains steady and does not change. Rhythm is different from beat in that it varies with long, short, or no sounds.

Techniques:

**A. Discover Concept Aurally - Present Syllables - Present Visually -**

**Beat** - Sing the words to the song while patting the beat. After the children have learned the concepts of the march and sway beat, ask the students to indicate if the beat feels as if it is marching or swaying to reinforce meter recognition.

1. Select a short phrase or measures that contain the unknown rhythm.
2. Use four large hearts cut from construction paper as a visual aid. Place them on a chalk board to represent each beat. Point to the four beats which include the unknown concept while the children sing the lyrics and pat the beats on their lap.
3. Repeat the selection clapping the rhythm and singing the words while pointing to the beats.
4. One beat at a time, stop and identify how many words (syllables) occur per beat and describe the sounds using terms such as long, short or no sound.
5. By each heart, select children as human notes to represent the rhythm of the words which occur on each beat (see below).  
A beat with no sound is vacant. Identify the known rhythms.
6. Sing the selection again using the descriptive words (long and short) while looking at the children.
7. Present the new rhythm syllables that correspond with the new rhythm.
8. Clap the rhythm using syllables while looking at the children.
9. Identify the traditional name and the visual notation for the new rhythm. Reinforce the name, syllable and notation for the rhythm at later lessons.

Song example: "See Saw" - (Use four beats of a phrase from the song).

				or	
$\frac{2}{4}$					
"See (long) doo	saw, (long) doo	up and (short-short) doo dee	down..." (long) doo		

Examples of rhythms taught in Level 1 are shown below.

Human notes:						
Rhythmic Syllables:	Doo	(rest)	Doo dee	Doo	(rest)	Doo dah die
Traditional Notation:	$\frac{2}{4}$			$\frac{6}{8}$		

With reference to meter,  $\frac{2}{4}$  will designate the march beat counting the long sounds

( ) in measure patterns of 2 pulses.  $\frac{6}{8}$  will designate the sway beat counting the 6 short sounds ( ) in measure patterns of 2 pulses. Guide children to realize each meter differs by the number of short sounds per pulse, two short sounds and three short sounds. The number of short sounds per pulse help to indicate the type of beat and meter. The first word (count) of every measure is stressed.

**MELODY** - Melodic concepts should be taught in a process similar to rhythm. Each sound should be analyzed and compared to one another.

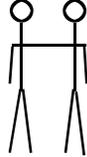
Techniques:

A.. **Discover Concept Aurally - Present Syllables - Present Visually -  
So - Mi**

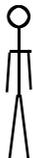
**Beat** - Sing the words to the song while patting the beat. Ask the students to indicate if the beat feels as if it is marching or swaying to aid in meter recognition.

1. Determine the known rhythms one beat at a time using children as human notes as previously described in the rhythm section.
2. To identify the sounds of *so* and *mi* - Since the children have already determined the rhythm, the teacher asks them to listen to how the sound is different from one word to another. The teacher repeats singing two words on the *so mi* sounds until the children determine one word sounds higher and the other lower. Once this is determined, choose one child to represent *high* and another to kneel for *low*.
3. Then, sing the four beat selection using the words *high* and *low*.
4. Next, sing the four beat selection using words of the song. Ask the children if the human notes look like the song sounds.
5. The teacher then tells the children musicians use a syllable for these two sounds. The teacher identifies the solfege syllable for the unknown pitches: *high* is *so* and *low* is *mi*.
6. The teacher then sings the four beat selection using the solfege syllables. The children repeat.
7. Curwen hand signs are shown after the pitches are identified. The human notes use one hand for the Curwen sign. The class then sings the syllables and move their hands for each pitch. A picture of the Curwen hand signs are shown at the beginning of each melodic unit.
8. Use a transparency of the beginning page of the concept unit to visually show the location of the *so (high) mi (low)* pitches on the musical staircase. Then, draw notes on the staff showing the *so mi* locations as being either spaces or lines.

Song example: "See Saw"

				
				
<b>2</b> <b>4</b>				
	"See (high) so	saw, (low) mi	up and (high-high) so so	down..." (low) mi

Examples of pitches taught in Level 1 are shown below.

		
		
Human Notes:		
Melodic Syllables:	mi	so

Curwen Hand Signs:

							
do	re	mi	fa	so	la	ti	do'

## LEARNING

### **3. Songs - Syllables (Teacher Guided)**

Techniques:

#### RHYTHM

- A. The teacher claps and sings (or speaks) a pattern, phrase or song with words. The students copy the teacher. The selection is then done with rhythm syllables by the teacher. The students repeat using syllables.

#### MELODY

- A. The teacher sings the melody of a phrase with words. The students copy the teacher. The selection is then done using solfege syllables by the teacher. The students repeat using solfege syllables.
- B. The teacher sings simple patterns using solfege syllables and hand signs. The students repeat.

### **4. Songs - Read (Teacher Guided)**

Techniques:

#### RHYTHM

- A. The teacher demonstrates the notation by clapping the rhythm using rhythm syllables. The students repeat.
- B. The students speak or sing the rhythm syllables or words to a familiar song while reading and clapping the rhythm.
- C. Identify the meter and what the top and bottom numbers represent.
- D. Clap the rhythm using a traditional method for counting rhythms.

#### MELODY

- A. The teacher demonstrates the notation by singing the melody using solfege syllables. The students repeat.
- B. Sing the song or phrase with syllables or words using Curwen hand signs while reading the notes on the staff.

### **5. Songs 1-3: Aurally Identify Concept Using Syllables (Teacher Guided)**

Techniques:

- A. The teacher claps and sings (or speaks) a song using rhythm or melody syllables instead of words. The students identify the song by thinking a song they know that matches the pattern heard. The children check an answer by singing it in their heads as the teacher sings or plays the rhythm or melody on an instrument. Once the correct song is identified, the student's sing the song using rhythm or melody syllables instead of words.

- B. The teacher sings part of a song using words. The children repeat using words. Then the section is sung again by the students using correct rhythm or melody syllables which represent the concept to be identified.

## 6. **Songs - Write** (Teacher Guided)

Techniques:

### RHYTHM

- A. Use a writing page that has only the unknown rhythm or phrases missing. Sing the song reading the known rhythms. Determine and write the missing rhythms in the music using a transparency and overhead projector for all to see and copy.
- B. Write the “counting” under rhythmic patterns using song material or work sheets provided in the unit.

### MELODY

- A. Use a writing page that has only the unknown pitch or phrases missing. Sing the song reading the known pitches. Determine and write the new pitch or phrase of pitches on the staff using a transparency and overhead projector for all to see or copy.
- B. Using the work sheets provided in the unit, the students copy the teacher learning the placement of the new melodic pitch.

## 7. **Songs - Read New** (Use songs 4 and 5, if applicable 6, from the chosen list.)

Techniques:

### RHYTHM

1. Identify the meter and feel of the beat.
2. Clap and read the rhythm using syllables and/or counts.
3. Read the lyrics slowly, sounding out unknown words.
4. Speak the words in rhythm while clapping the rhythmic notation.
5. Discuss the meaning of the words.
6. Teach the melody by rote.

MELODY - (Read the rhythm as listed above).

7. Identify the tonal center and starting solfege pitch.
8. Sing the melody using solfege syllables.
9. Sing the song or pattern watching the rhythm, melody, and words.

## 8. **Masterworks - Listen and Read**

Techniques:

- A. Listen to a masterwork while reading known rhythmic or melodic concepts.

## **9. Songs - Play Instruments**

Techniques:

- A. Play rhythm or melody instruments while reading staff notation.

## **10. Songs 4-5: Aurally Identify Concept Using Syllables**

Techniques:

- A. The teacher sings one or two measures of a song with the words. The children repeat the measure(s) using the correct rhythm or melody syllables.
- B. The students clap and sing (or speak) a phrase or song using rhythm or melody syllables instead of words.
- C. *Patterns* - Using neutral syllables or instruments, the teacher performs a pattern which contains the music concept. The students repeat the pattern orally identifying the music concept with rhythm or melody syllables.

## **11. Songs - Write (Assess)**

Techniques:

- A. The teacher sings a measure or phrase of a song using words while the students write the missing rhythms or pitches on given work sheets. (Writing pages with entire phrases missing are designated with an asterisk (\*) after the song's name on the song list).
- B. The students write the "counts" under the rhythms.
- C. The students write the solfege syllables under the pitches.
- D. Using the written form "What Do You Hear?", the teacher plays a pattern on a melodic or rhythmic instrument and the students circle the correct answer.

## **12. Compose / Perform**

Techniques:

- A. Using a designated number of measures, compose a simple musical piece using traditional notation of known rhythms and pitches within specified guidelines on work sheets provided in the unit.
- B. Use instruments and the voice as tools for composing.
- C. Have students perform each others compositions.
- D. Evaluate each other's composition offering positive reinforcement and constructive criticism.

### **13. Improvise**

Techniques:

- A. Students improvise a melodic or rhythmic pattern within a specified number of beats using known concepts. The improvised pattern may be played on an instrument and then sung or spoke with syllables.
- B. Students improvise a melodic or rhythmic pattern with syllables within a specified number of beats using known concepts. The patterns of several children are combined one after another to create an improvisation exercise.
- C. Using designated known rhythms or pitches, the teacher improvises a “question” with syllables. In response, the student improvises an “answer” to demonstrate their understanding of known concepts.
- D. Using designated known pitches, the student sings words that describe a subject or mood.

### **PRACTICE**

After a music concept has been learned, continue practicing the concept by repeating one of the 13 steps using a known or new song. Concepts will be reinforced in song material presented in subsequent units.