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Early Childhood Music Practicum
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Case Study

This semester I spent time teaching at the Bennett Center with my co-teacher Angela Girvan. This semester we encountered a class of diverse cultures, personalities, and musical experiences. Walking in and observing the first few days it became evident that there were very few musical experiences occurring within the classroom; however, due to our effort I personally believe that each child made a growth musically and the classroom has now become a musical haven. By comparing each child's behavior to the Gordon stages of preparatory audiation I am able to document each child's musical growth as well as my own teaching.

After the first initial observation and teaching I realized that many of the students began in the acculturation stage of Gordon's preparatory audiation stages. It appeared that after the first few weeks there were many students who remained in the absorption stage. However, there were two students, Maria and Sally who were moving ahead into purposeful response stages. These two students were constantly in competition with one another in trying to figure out who was performing the activity "correctly". They both were not performing it exactly correctly and were noticing this and consequently trying to justify their actions. There were also some children experiencing random response, especially the one child Mark. Mark appears to have a very high musical aptitude; however, I still cannot justify this statement. There are moments where Mark is clearly aware of what is going on and appears to be in the random response/purposeful response stage. Then there are days when he is either absorbing or not participating. In fact a few

other boys within the class become distracted based on previous activities within the day and this affects their mood during the music time and whether or not they decide to participate.

As a teacher we realized about halfway through the semester that we were doing a great job of keeping a flow with the children, but we were spending a lot more time on rhythm and not doing nearly enough tonal exercises with the children. Therefore, we decided to immediately shift our thinking and spent more time on neutral syllables with songs and also doing songs without words. During the improvisation section I also tried specifically harder to spend more time singing tonic, dominant, and subdominant triads for the students to echo or improvise over. After I made this shift I instantly noticed a difference in how most of the children were reacting. There was a huge increase in improvisation over tonal patterns as well as echoing correctly. It appeared that many of them were in random response. They were answering constantly with the tonic pattern even if it was dominant, but some were recognizing the shift partially as well. Either way I think right away when the shift was made.

Then in the rest of the year the students were making tons of progress and it appears that half of the class is in Imitation trying to shed egocentricity or break the code, with the other half absorbing or responding. I think that both groups are not in one consistent category I still think there are definite overlaps between categories right now. This is due to the children's own perplexities. First of all they are human and they, just like adults, have days where their moods change and I think this had a definitive effect on their behavior. I also think that while they are learning and taking in more material the

more they learn the more they lose at the same time; therefore, it is taking some much longer to move forward or be consistent in a specific stage of musical learning.

In regards to teaching I think that the flow between my co-teacher Angela and I was superb this semester and I thought that overall we did a really good job of working together and I cannot wait for next semester to continue this even further. Our biggest challenges were just finding the appropriate model, especially for tonal to demonstrate. This is still an area that needs improvement for next semester, but overall it did improve. The biggest bit of knowledge I did take away from this semester is by connecting more to my students I think they were able to improve more musically. If there is a wall built up between teacher and student, than no success will be made and this above all is what matters.