http://www.handbellmusicians.org/resources/ResourcePDFs/SeeItHearItDoIt.pdf

**See It, Hear It, Do It By Martha Avery**

There are three areas of learning applicable to all ages: cognitive (involving elements of perception), psychomotor (motor action directly proceeding from mental activity), and affective (relating to feeling or emotions). Directors should consider these elements in preparing effective rehearsals. Cognitive learning uses charts and notation; psychomotor skills are developed through clapping, foot stomping, knee bending, and other motor actions while affective responses can be seen in their emotional reactions.

Our concerns as directors should be comprehension and application of what we present.

Cognitive and psychomotor domains deal with items and actions that are overt, can be seen and recognized. The cognitive and affective domains overlap when the child is asked to explain how he/she feels about the music. He/she may use cognitive terms to describe the music, i.e., “this piece is in ¾ time, has echo strokes, dotted half notes,” yet use affective terms such as “dreamy,” “graceful,” or “quiet” in the description.

There are three areas of learning that have a relationship to the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains. These are: Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic. Ringing handbells or handchimes creates sound (auditory expression), and it uses the hands and body to do so (kinesthetic expression). As the ringer reads the music, he/she is also visually receptive and is hearing (auditory) and feeling (affective) what is being played as well (auditory and kinesthetic).

Visual Learners

Visual learners learn best when things are shown to them. They mimic whatever they see. In this group you can “show” them by use of the following methods:

* Overhead projector
* Chalkboards
* Demonstration

Characteristics of visual learners are those who:

* often use the challenge “Just show me!”
* often ask for things to be repeated.
* do not like excessive verbal description.
* require eye contact.
* give close attention to the appearance of the room and those in the room.
* respond best to such phrases as “Look at this” or “Watch what I’m doing.”
* may have difficulty hearing and distinguishing sounds.
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Auditory Learners

Auditory learners absorb and retain information best when they are told how to do something.

Characteristics of auditory learners are those who:

* are primarily listeners.
* love words and won’t mind your use of verbal instruction.
* love details and use them to learn.
* learn and memorize in sequential steps.
* chat a lot and tend to dominate a conversation.
* have behaviors that may disturb visual learners.
* often cock their heads slightly in what is known as “telephone posture.”
* respond well to phrases like: “Listen to this,” “Did you hear it?” or “What did I tell you?”
* can discriminate between similar sounds.
* want to hear the entire piece the first time through.

Kinesthetic Learners

Kinesthetic learners feel the music. They are the dancers and marchers and enjoy swaying to the music.

Characteristics of kinesthetic learners are those who:

* have exceptionally fine and gross motor coordination.
* have well developed eye-hand coordination.
* cannot sit still for long periods of time.
* are known as the “doers.”
* learn through the physical activity of creating the music.
* often sacrifice technique for the feel of the music.
* are sensitive to their environment,
* such as smell and temperature.
* tend not to tolerate too many words or demonstrations.
* will respond to questions such as “How does it feel?” or “Can you do this?”

To use all three styles of learning in a session, try the following: When teaching a rhythm pattern, have the students imitate what you clap. This allows the participants to feel the pattern. Next, put it on an overhead, chalkboard, poster board or flashcard so that they can see what that pattern looks like. Having felt and seen the patterns, verbally (hear) explain the note values, pulses and other elements.

When teaching dynamics, have the children ring a rhythm pattern loudly and then softly. Demonstrate the proper grip on the handle to achieve both loud and soft results. Draw the symbols on the overhead or chalkboard so that they can see the musical signs for loud and soft. Use the words crescendo and decrescendo. Show what these signs look like, and allow them time to experience ringing while observing these signs. Make up a matching game using the Italian terms and English translations. Teach the Italian pronunciations. These are only a few ways to cover the three learning styles.

Another important aspect to consider is the stage of development of a child. These are chronological age, intellectual ability, and past experience. Even though we know that each ringer is a separate individual with various learning styles, musical background, and life experiences in general, there are some basic similarities among young ringers.

Children ages 7-11 (3rd-6th grade) can reason, classify, define relationships, and create logical structure for their thoughts. They ask questions, give answers, use descriptors, and store facts. Children of these ages understand relational terms such as “younger than” or “ to the left of” and can arrange things in a logical order.

Children ages 11+ (7th+grade) can reason, analyze, generalize, and hypothesize in increasingly complex ways. They use deduction and induction, cause and effect, evaluation, and implication. They begin to investigate the abstract as well.

Grades 4 through 7 are the transition years. Younger children still want to please the director. They thrive on praise. As they enter middle school and junior high age, they may display insecurities, anxiety, sensitive feelings, or emotional outbursts. It is our responsibility to continue to provide an environment that allows them to feel a sense of worth and achievement. They need constant praise and encouragement.

Children are active learners; they want to experience ringing and not just be told how to do something. Keep the rehearsal at a rapid pace, leaving no time for them to lose focus. Children in junior high like to be included in the planning, which gives them some ownership of the activity. Have them assist in such aspects as a name for the group, attire, and anything that is age appropriate. Let them elect officers for their group and help with determining the rules they are expected to follow.

Mood swings are the norm in middle school years. Children will be excited about ringing one week and listless the next. Allow them time to share their feelings, before or after rehearsal. Help them understand that they will not all learn at the same pace or in the same manner. Teach them to work as a team. If one child is having a problem, appoint a mentor from the group to help him/her.

Be aware of the children’s musical background. Survey each child’s musical background at the beginning of the ringing season. Some students will come from strong school music or private instrumental programs, while others will come with no training. Consider these differences in your planning.

Maturity levels will vary and challenge you to deal with their attention spans effectively. Some students may concentrate on a piece of music for 15 minutes, while others will be ready to move on much sooner. Keeping the rehearsal pace moving will also quell discipline problems with restless children. Plan to include a variety of activities in each rehearsal.

Evaluate and consider their coordination abilities. Help your students become better ringers through coordination drills. The AGEHR has published several resource books that aid in the development of better coordination skills. Evaluate and consider the physical attributes of your ringers: the size of their hands, height, and strength. Provide boxes to bring shorter ringers to the proper table height.

Provide ringers with the proper glove size. Most young ringers in grades 4 and above can handle a three-octave set of bells, but be careful assigning the larger bells to those with the strength to lift and ring them without injury.

In addition to selecting your music and preparing assignments and your score, consider these learning styles and stages of development as you plan your rehearsals. There is one secret to teaching young and middle school ringers and that is—there IS no secret. And therein lies the excitement and joys of working with them. A thorough knowledge of handbell/handchime techniques, combined with an understanding of where they are in life, plus a hefty basket of patience and praise will reap a wonderful experience for all.