

GOOD, BETTER, BEST

A RHYTHM AND MOVEMENT LESSON FOR GRADES 4-6

OBJECTIVES

- Working with beat and divided beat through movement, body percussion, and instruments
 - Choreographing simple movement to elemental forms.
- Rhythmic and melodic improvisation and composition with elemental forms.
 - Arranging and orchestrating a performance piece.

Written by
Michael Chandler



Michael Chandler taught music and movement in Texas public schools for 16 years, most of them in the Lewisville Independent School District, where he was named Teacher of the Year at two elementary campuses. In 2005, 2007, and 2013 his student ensembles were featured performers at the TMEA Clinic and Convention in San Antonio.

Michael presents workshops and sessions at the local, state, and national level including for TMEA, TCDA, and AOSA. He has taught in Orff Schulwerk certification courses, and has served as President of the North Texas Chapter of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association (AOSA) and as a Regional Representative on the AOSA National Board of Trustees.

MATERIALS

- Unpitched percussion instruments including drums and temple blocks.
- Mallet instruments

PROCESS

Day One

- Students are scattered throughout the class space as the teacher plays steady quarter notes or eighth notes on the temple blocks or a drum. Students listen, react, and move through shared space to the rhythms played by the teacher, speaking the words *walk* or *tip-toe* and coordinating their steps to match the rhythms they hear played.
- Students find a partner and create a 4-beat clapping pattern consisting of quarter and eighth notes. Partners can use knee patting, clapping, or snapping, but at some point they must connect through a partner clap with one or both hands. Once the pattern is secure, it should be performed twice in a row for a total of 8 beats.
- Partners then create a separate movement sequence of 8 beats. They may move apart and come back together, trade places in some way, or go around one another returning to their original spot. The sequence will likely follow a 4+4 structure to make 8 beats, and it may include any other unique additions that make it look more interesting.
- Students perform the previous clapping pattern twice (8 beats) and then follow it with the 8-beat traveling sequence for a total of 16 beats. Practice until secure, and ask each half of the class to perform for the other half. Students select ideas from among everyone's to create a single partner dance for the entire class to perform together in pairs.
- Through echo imitation, teach the poem *Good, Better, Best*. The text may be spoken in unison or in a 2-beat canon after two beats.

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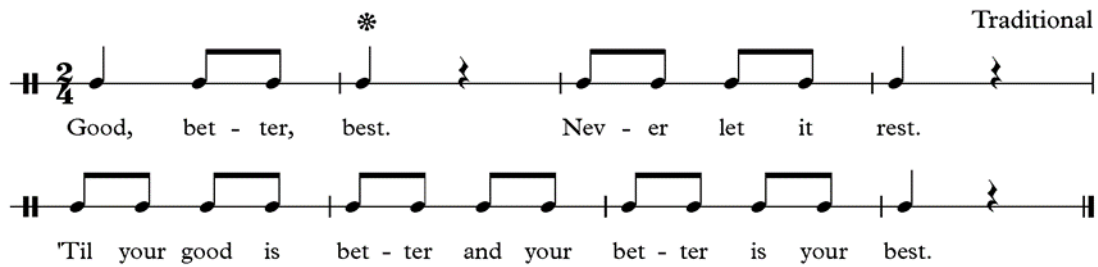
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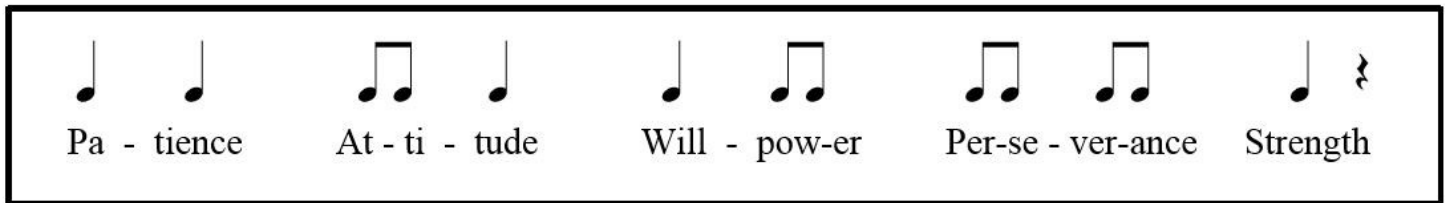
Good, bet - ter, best. Nev - er let it rest.

'Til your good is bet - ter and your bet - ter is your best.

- Combine the class-created dance with the text. The phrases of the text mirror the phrases of the class dance (4+4+8).

Day Two

- Present the students with five rhythmic building blocks using model words that demonstrate positive characteristics



Pa - tience At - ti - tude Will - pow-er Per-se - ver-ance Strength

- After imitating each word through rhythmic speech, students combine them in pairs at first and then improvising word chains of four to create an 8-beat phrase. One word should be repeated in each word chain, but two may be repeated for forms like *aabb* or *abab*. Avoid through-composed chains (no *abcd*).
- Students organize into three groups, and each group composes an 8-beat word chain that illustrates an elemental form. Once the form and the rhythm are decided, it should be performed twice for a total of 16 beats. Each group transfers its rhythm to unpitched percussion or hand drums and choreographs it with simple movement.
- Review and perform the poem *Good, Better, Best* through rhythmic speech. Teach the two accompanying speech ostinati separately (see below) and combine all three parts, allowing each group to experience each part of the texture. Assign a part to each group and perform the piece as a rondo with the poem and speech ostinati as the A section and each group's unpitched percussion composition as an episode.

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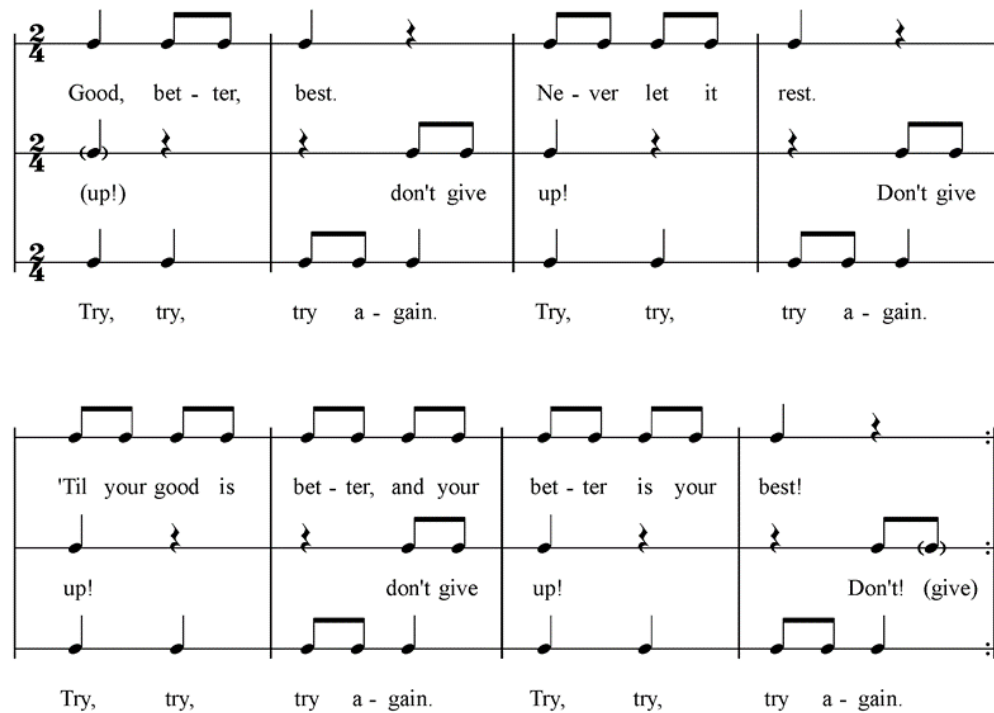


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Good, Better, Best

Traditional Text
Arr. by Michael Chandler



Good, bet - ter, best. Ne - ver let it rest.
(up!) don't give up! Don't give
Try, try, try a - gain. Try, try, try a - gain.

'Til your good is bet - ter, and your bet - ter is your best!
up! don't give up! Don't! (give)
Try, try, try a - gain. Try, try, try a - gain.

Day Three

- Students begin at mallet instruments and choose a pentatonic scale (*do*-based or any other pentatonic mode such as *re*- or *la*-based). Decide on whether to use the authentic range (tonic to tonic with 5th in the middle) or the plagal range (5th to 5th with tonic in the middle). This will depend on the scale chosen and which note is the tonic. Try to use a range comfortable for singing.
- Invite half of the class to perform the arrangement as created by the class while students in the other half find partners to perform the dance created earlier. To extend the form, the class can sing the melody once and then repeat it with the melody played on instruments only. Depending on the melody's range, it could be played on recorder (*do* Pentatonic on G in the plagal range, is great for recorder).
- Notate the final class arrangement with notation software, and give each child a copy. A copy of each class' arrangement can also be displayed for parents for open house.
- Students play the scale up and down and end on the tonic to hear its characteristic sound. Teacher claps a series of simple 4-beat rhythmic patterns for students to explore playing on the bars. Ask them to use specific areas of the scale such as the tonic to the 5th or the 5th to the tonic. If using the *do*- or *la*-based scale, use *re* only as a passing tone or as an upper or lower neighbor.

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Day Three (*continued*)

- Students review the text to *Good, Better, Best* and play it lightly with alternating hands on the tonic pitch of the scale selected by the class.
- Working one phrase at a time, allow students to improvise and share individual ideas that lead to a class-composed melody for the entire text. Make note of the class' final version so it can be notated later with notation software.
- Using primarily the tonic and 5th, ask students to work with a partner to improvise a 4-beat ostinato accompaniment pattern that can accompany the class melody. See examples in *Music for Children* Volume I, pages 82-83 and pages 86-87.
- Review both speech ostinati and transfer them to contrasting unpitched percussion parts (such as triangle and woodblock). Add these two parts to the texture of the final arrangement.

Extension

Using the previous arrangement as an A section in a rondo, students can use a rhythmic text, such as the one below, for improvised melodic solos. This text works well for melodic question and answer improvisation (8-beat question and 8-beat answer).

Traditional

If at first you don't suc - ceed, try, try a - gain.

'Tis a les - son you should heed, try, try a - gain.

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