

# CONN-SELMER keynotes Magazine



## **Music education topics of interest to stimulate motivate and inspire...**

It is the mission of Conn-Selmer, Inc. to provide an educational center, ongoing reference source, and support network for the professional growth of music educators. Communication between music educators is vital for the expansion of new ideas and techniques. By providing resources and opportunities that enhance the classroom experience, we hope to provide music educators with more time to focus on performance, more positive outcomes for teachers and student, and overall growth in music education opportunities.

## **Learning on the Ladder of Life - Don't get hung up on the rungs! by Fran Kick**

In our event-oriented society, which seems to always be looking for the next immediate gratification rung on this "ladder of life," it's no wonder that students are often frustrated with the academic world, sometimes referred to as the "educational obstacle course." They simply see it all as a giant maze to "get through" so they can get the diploma and go out into the real world. As educators, we sometimes even "sell school" as "preparation for life."

John Dewey, the American psychologist and educational philosopher, suggested that "education is a process." He believed that "education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." Yet, the mind-set most of us have is very event oriented. We tend to focus on the immediate future. We set our goals only on the next rung of the ladder and are disappointed when that rung isn't the reward we were hoping it would be. We arrive at our short-term goal realizing that there is yet another rung to be reached for. It is true that the more we learn, the more we realize how little we know. Each "rung" we achieve in this academic world moves us one "rung" closer to realizing there are a lot of "rungs!"

The ladder never ends because the learning never ends.

For people who have a "rung" oriented mind-set, this may appear to be discouraging news. However, the reality of life is how we see it, not necessarily how it is. Our perception is what creates the frustration for us. If we see the world as one "rung" after another, or one obstacle, or hoop, or wall after another; we will tend to become frustrated with the journey. We will not enjoy the progress we have made or look forward to the many opportunities ahead because we are too wrapped up in getting to the next "rung." And, once we make it to that next "rung," instead of appreciating our accomplishment, we get mad because the only thing ahead of us is another "rung!" "When will it end," we think to ourselves. It doesn't. The only time it ends is when we stop reaching and growing.

By increasing our awareness and maintaining a "ladder" oriented mind-set, we can begin to appreciate the fact that the ladder never ends. (This would really aggravate a person with a "rung" mind set.) Life is a continuing educational journey. We are constantly learning and therefore growing. Without growth, there is death. By continually reaching for each "rung" our journey becomes more successful in the sense that we are continually arriving at new places along the ladder, learning from them, and reaching even further. With this mind-set, or perception, we will have become more process oriented in the sense that we see a need to cover more distance than just the next "rung." Our perspective becomes more aware of where we've come from and where we are going to. We may even be able to see another ladder that reaches in a new, exciting direction. (Who said you have to stay on the same ladder all your life?)

Don't just stand there on that rung

A step-by-step, rung-by-rung approach is the surest, safest and smartest way to move on a ladder, just don't get hung up on the rungs! Balance is probably the most important skill needed in climbing a ladder, and in life. A balanced perspective between the ladder and its rungs is the key to becoming more process oriented, while appreciating each event along the way.

It is important to "stop and smell the roses" along the way of life, just don't get stuck. Did you ever try to stand on a ladder in one place very long? You can do it, but you'll start to get tired, the arches of your feet start to hurt, your hands get sore, and you begin to fidget for a more comfortable position. We were physically made to move, and moving on a ladder is more comfortable than staying on one "rung."

Enjoy the process, appreciate the events, move along your ladder of life and learn, so that you can help someone else with their journey on the ladder of life.

FRAN KICK has been inspiring people to KICK IT IN® and TAKE THE LEAD since 1986. With a B.A. in Education, a M.A. in Educational Psychology, and three children of his own, Fran knows What Makes Kids KICK!

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