

INSTANT HOLIDAY CAMPS FORMULA

Daily Timetabling Transcription

A few years ago, one of Australia's most recognised and awarded music educators and one of my personal mentors went for a job interview for a position in a private school. The very first question that this proper headmistress asked her was, "What is your philosophy on Music Education?" Way to start huh! My mentor, her answer was just one word. She knew her philosophy, which guided the activities she taught, what she put in the books she wrote, the way she interacted with the children, the songs she wrote. Do you know what that one word was? "Fun". Just one word. Simple as that. But she knew that this simplicity is everything that children's educational experiences should be. It needs to be fun! And, fun is now the business you are in.

From the moment the children walk through those doors in the morning there needs to be fun going on for all to see. A good routine is to have a table to be set up by the door, which has the children's name tags arranged alphabetically (if you have time). Each nametag has a different coloured sticker designating which group they are in, which makes things very easy for the kids and leaders. At the same time, the team leader is there ticking off the names as they arrive, saying hello, making sure everyone's happy. The kids dump their bags to the side and join the dance warm up that is going on to fun, loud, party music - with just a quick wave good bye to mum. And so the awesome day begins. Straight off into fun, and it will be that way right up until they leave.

Groups are best arranged according to age. The number of children you have attending the camp will impact on the number of groups you will need. I find the following age guide best 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12. Four groups, with a possible fifth depending on numbers, you might have more 7 year olds so you would have a group entirely of 7 year olds. I have provided timetable templates that vary according to the number of groups - check it out in the template section later. These flexible timetables have also been modified to allow for special events, compressing some sessions to make room for fun activities like the Tuesday Disco Party, but feel free to discover what works best for you.

Children like predictability. They like routine just as they like reading their favourite book 400 times. As boring as it might sound, the camp day is best designed just like a school day. Kids are used to going to library for 40 minutes, music for 40 minutes, having 30 minutes for recess and 50 minutes for lunch. Keep things the same. By sticking close to a school day timetable, the kids will be relaxed and you know that they will be fed on time and have adequate playtime to relax. 30-40 minutes is more than enough time for the children to be doing one activity, any more than that and we all tend to go a little stir crazy!

And just as you would like to know what is coming up, so do the kids. Print off a big poster with the daily timetable so that the kids can see what activities their group will be having that day. This is just another way of reducing anxiety and

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making the camp a more relaxed place. The Team Leader of the camp is responsible for making sure that all activities run perfectly on time. I bought what I called foghorns, sports air horns that you can buy (again online in bulk to save money) which make a sound large enough to cut across even the loud music the dancers will be moving to right across to the kids playing soccer on the oval. The kids love pressing this as a treat and is more fun than a whistle! Two quick spurts of sound and the kids rotate to the next activity like a round robin.

As you know, my niche was “We Give Kids Confidence”. Everything, right down to the timetabling was designed to facilitate and promote confidence in the children who were at the camp. Every afternoon, after lunch and all their morning sessions, the children would go to their elective singing, acting or dance choice before all coming back to the hall for the last 40 minutes of the day. This is the most beautiful time of the entire day. With everyone facing the stage in the hall, each group would get up and perform something that they did in their sessions today, something they learnt. So the green group would do the first 30 seconds of the dance they had learnt, the red group would sing a verse of their song, the yellow group would play a drama game. The benefits of doing this simple activity are incredible. Firstly, and most importantly, it gets the children used to performing. Every afternoon, they are up on stage performing for their peers, on the same stage that they will be performing on in the Friday showcase. This daily repetition of getting up and performing in the afternoon was the absolute secret to my success in eliminating stage fright and boosting confidence in children. The kids were so used to performing to people in a really supportive and encouraging and loving and fun environment that by the Friday when they had to do it in front of a real audience, it was a total breeze. It also created such a lovely team environment amongst the camp participants. Everyone clapped and cheered each performance, no matter how little it was. This is the whole point. Because the children were performing in a relaxed environment, mistakes were ok - we really enforced that this was just a little demonstration and that we knew they had just started.

By getting used to performing without the pressure of perfection on their little shoulders, the children were allowed to become firstly just comfortable with just being on stage. This little secret will be transformational for the children you teach. You will watch them blossom before your eyes, and the amazed eyes of their parents. This is one of the greatest gifts we receive. Some of the most personally satisfying moments of my life have been during a Friday Showcase, watching not the children on the stage, but the faces of the parents in the audience. The smiles and tears of joy of the parents are equally as beautiful as the beams on the faces of their children.

Oh, and by the way about my mentor. She got the job.