

# Handchime Curriculum for Schools

by Marilyn N. Lake



a resource for members of  
**Handbell Musicians**  
OF AMERICA

## **Handchime Curriculum for Schools**

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# Introduction

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This curriculum is based on the nine content standards in music education: (MENC)

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
5. Reading and notating music
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
7. Evaluating music and music performances
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Each lesson is designed to accommodate any length of music class, as well as any grade from kindergarten through sixth grade. Performance pieces are included throughout.

Handchimes are set up in chromatic order, either on padded tables, using specially designed handbell and handchime pads; or using carpet squares on tables or on carpeted floors (See fig. A). The black chimes (accidentals) are placed slightly above the white chimes in a form like a piano keyboard. The students should be able to gently place the chimes side by side to discover which is the “long low left” chime, and thereby getting the chimes in chromatic order, left to right. Once they have established that the chimes are in the correct order, separate the chimes and move the black chimes towards the middle of the pad.



Throughout our interactive e-books, click on links in the sidebar to find more online, download supplemental documents, watch videos, contact the author, and more.

It is recommended that the lessons be taken in order, as they build on one another.

Assessments are typically taken at performances; however, there are many chances to observe your students while in solo and small ensemble situations. Rubrics are included with each lesson.

## Lesson 1

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### Let's ring!

Set up chimes either on tables, on carpeted floors, or on carpet squares. Prepare chord cards (CEG, FAC, GBD) using card stock. Prepare an overhead projector with "Tallis' Canon" or set up folders for each handchime location with a copy of the music. It is permissible, even desirable, to share folders in handchime choirs. Typically, CD4 shares with EF4, GA4 with B4C5, DE5 with FG5, AB5 rings by themselves, CD6 shares with EF6, and GA6 with B6C7, for a total of 6 folders or stands for three octaves of handchimes.

Teacher notes:

- The clapper needs to hit the tine and bounce back to make the vibration, the sound. While holding the chime with the letter so the student can see it, move the chime forward in a flicking-type motion. Students should be able to make a complete circle away from their bodies (See fig. B).
- Some techniques to avoid are pulling the clapper backwards away from the chime, hitting the chime on floor or other object, or hitting chimes together.
- Give each student a white chime—no accidentals—and let them experiment with the physical motion of making the sound, asking the following questions: Where does the



Fig. A



**Fig. B**



**Fig. C**

sound come from? Can you ring it loudly? Softly? Can you ring fast? Slow?

- In what ways can you stop the sound? Let the students experiment with damping the chime on their shoulders, on their pants, with their other hand, etc. (See fig. C)
- Reiterate value counting while ringing: Whole-note-hold-it-this-much-long-er, Half-note-hold-it, Quart-er, eighth. Help them to notice that the circle of the chime away from the body gets smaller as the notes get smaller in value.
- Echo ring rhythms, including rests and syncopations.
- Add in the Chord Cards: CEG, FAC, GBD. With very young students, you may wish to seat them in chord groups, but the preference is that they will become independent ringers and remain in chromatic order. While discussing chords, if they are in chromatic order, make note of the fact that they are not standing side-by-side with the chord members; they are skip-notes apart.
- Ring scales in both directions, giving each student a chance to ring a solo. Identify if each student has accomplished the technique and make suggestions when necessary.
- Ring a chordal accompaniment to familiar folk songs. Invite the students to sing along. Invite students to direct and change the chords. Ask when students know when to change the chord.
  - One chord songs: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" or "Frere Jacques"
  - Two chord songs: "Skip to My Lou," "Clementine," "Pick a Bale of Cotton," "Paw Paw Patch"
  - Three chord songs: "I've Been Working on the Railroad," "Home on the Range," "Old Suzanna," "She'll Be Coming Around the Mountain," "Happy Birthday"
  - For more titles, see *Get America Singing* or a similar reference book. Chords are typically listed above the lyrics.

- Share the history of Thomas Tallis. He was known as England’s main composer of church music in the 16th century. He was married but had no children. It is interesting to note that scholars do not know exactly when or where he was born. For more information, see:
  - [www.hoasm.org/IVM/Tallis.html](http://www.hoasm.org/IVM/Tallis.html)
  - [www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/a/l/allprais.htm](http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/a/l/allprais.htm)
- Performance piece: “Tallis’ Canon” by Thomas Tallis, arr. M.N. Lake (Download chord chart with the link on the right). Note that the chords in the accompaniment are a repeated ostinato. This accompaniment can be rung in any octave, giving all students an opportunity to ring the melody as well. Teach the melody first, then the chord ostinato. Divide choir in half and ring both parts. Ask the students the order they prefer: melody in the high chimes/chords in the accompaniment, or vice versa—or dynamic preferences, or tempo preferences.
- For older students, play the “Tallis’ Canon” relay game: All students ring the chord ostinato (IV, V, I, hold) four times, then begin the melody, also with all students ringing in unison. At the end of the melody, all students move two positions over (four diatonic notes), pick up the new chimes, and begin ringing the ostinato again. Each student, to be successful, will need to quickly identify the chimes in their hands and where they fall in the music. This game is a favorite of older students, from third grade to sixth grade. All students get to ring all positions and remain motivated. This also gives the ringers a chance to experience different sized chimes; some they will like more than others. The goal would be to play this without stopping at least six times in order to get through all three octaves.



Click [HERE](#) to download “Tallis’ Canon” and the accompanying chord flash cards.

## Other sources for materials to accompany Lesson 1

*Share the Music* textbook – McGraw-Hill - Grade 2 (dark orange)

Page 31: Play Your Name rhythm game

Page 66: Color Rhythms

*Share the Music* textbook – McGraw-Hill – Grade 3 (green), Grade 4 (purple), Grade 5 (orange), Grade 6 (light blue)

Songs with chords are included throughout these texts.

*Share the Music* textbook – McGraw-Hill – Grade 5 (orange)

Page 26: Peace Round. This tune has an ostinato accompaniment, using e minor, D, and B7 chords.

## Rubric (Lesson 1)

### Performing on handchimes

- 3 – Student rings handchime with correct technique
- 2 – Student rings handchime with correct technique 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to ring handchime with correct technique

### Reading notation

- 3 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchime
- 2 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchimes 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to read letter notation while ringing handchime

### Rhythm Performance

- 3 – Student rings correct rhythms
- 2 – Student rings correct rhythms 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to ring correct rhythms

## National Music Standards (Lesson 1)

- Singing alone, and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
- Composing and arranging music within specific guidelines
- Reading and notating music
- Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- Evaluating music and music performances
- Understanding relationships between music and the other arts and disciplines outside the art
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture



# Lesson 2

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- Review previous lesson and techniques.
- Offer opportunities for students to direct and change chord flash cards, while requesting sing-along and ring-along songs.
- Consider putting chords to your school song. For example:

C                    C                    C                    C

We are the Bron-cos the might-y, might-y Bron-cos

C                    C            C                    C

Ev-ery where we go – peo-ple want to know –

C            C            C            C

Who we are—so we tell them.

- Using rhythm flash cards, practice ringing and dampening the chimes. Include rests in the warm ups.
- Introduce accidentals: F#, C# and G#. Notice that those notes are black chimes, just like they would be if they were on the piano. The students ringing C chimes are also responsible for the C# chimes, using the same hand that would've been ringing the natural note.
- Practice ringing a white chime, putting it down, and picking up the black accidental chime with the same name. For example: Ring C, dampen on the table, pick up C# and ring, dampen on the table, etc.
- Identify four different reoccurring rhythms within the song, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame":
  - quarter, rest, quarter
  - quarter, quarter, quarter
  - dotted half note
  - half note quarter



Click [HERE](#) to download chart for "Take Me Out to the Ballgame."

- Divide the class into two "teams" and practice ringing two different rhythms at the same time, using only notes in the C chord, or only pentatonic scale notes. Add a third rhythm, and then the fourth.
- Share the history of the song "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." This classic song was written in 1908 by Jack Norworth. He wrote the lyrics on a scrap of paper while on a train to Manhattan. Albert Von Tilzer composed the music. Neither gentlemen is said to have attended a baseball game prior to composing this favorite tune! It is sung at nearly every ballpark in the United States during the seventh inning stretch. For more information see: [www.baseball-almanac.com](http://www.baseball-almanac.com)
- Performance piece: "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." Instruct students to ring their note when they see it over a word and try to observe the rests.

## **Rubric (Lesson 2)**

### **Performing on handchimes**

- 3 – Student rings handchime with correct technique
- 2 – Student rings handchime with correct technique 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to ring handchime with correct technique.

### **Reading notation**

- 3 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchime
- 2 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchime 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to read letter notation while ringing handchime

### **Steady Beat**

- 4 – Student rings steady beat
- 3 – Student rings steady beat 75% of the time
- 2 – Student does not ring steady beat
- 1 – Student does not respond

## **Rhythm Performance**

- 3 – Student rings correct rhythms
- 2 – Student rings correct rhythms 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to ring correct rhythms

## **Rhythm Reading**

- 5 – Student rings and speaks rhythm accurately while maintaining a steady beat
- 4 – Student rings and speaks rhythm accurately but does not maintain a steady beat
- 3 – Student rings and speaks rhythm accurately with hesitation and does not maintain a steady beat
- 2 – Student does not ring or speak the rhythm accurately
- 1 – Student does not respond to rhythm

## **National Music Standards (Lesson 2)**

- Singing alone, and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
- Composing and arranging music within specific guidelines
- Reading and notating music
- Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- Evaluating music and music performances
- Understanding relationships between music and the other arts and disciplines outside the art
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture

# Lesson 3

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- Review previous lesson and techniques.
- Offer opportunities for students to direct and change chord flash cards, while requesting sing-along and ring-along songs.
- Practice ringing and dampening the chimes in rhythm: ring—damp—ring—damp, etc. Use half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, and their equivalent rests.

## Chimichanga Chimes – Rhythm Ostinato

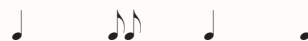
Divide students into ringing groups, per table, with three to four students per group.

1. Teach each rhythm to all students.
2. Layer rhythms—students may ring any black chimes.
3. Invite student directors to lead, showing them how to bring in a group, and how to cut off a group.
4. Invite new student-devised rhythms.

Rice and beans (quarter rest)



Deep – fried burrito



Meat (eighth rest) and cheese, ole!



- Instruct students to pick up only the black notes at their positions. These notes represent a pentatonic scale—a scale with five pitches per octave. This scale is very common all over the world. All notes sound good together.
- Ring, one at a time, up and down the pentatonic scale. Help them make every attempt to ring this scale with a steady beat. Use half notes, quarter notes, and eighth notes.
- Performance piece: “Pentatonic Peal” by M.N. Lake, using only the black chimes and reviewing the pentatonic scale.

## **Rubric (Lesson 3)**

### **Performing on handchimes**

- 3 – Student rings handchime with correct technique
- 2 – Student rings handchime with correct technique 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to ring handchime with correct technique.

### **Reading notation**

- 3 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchime
- 2 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchimes 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to read letter notation while ringing handchime

### **Steady Beat**

- 4 - Student rings steady beat
- 3 – Student rings steady beat 75% of the time
- 2 – Student does not ring steady beat
- 1 – Student does not respond

### **Rhythm Performance**

- 4 – Student rings rhythm to a steady beat
- 3 – Student rings rhythms 75% of the time
- 2 – Student does not ring the correct rhythm
- 1 – Student does not respond

### **Rhythm Reading**

- 5 – Student rings and speaks rhythm accurately while maintaining a steady beat
- 4 – Student rings and speaks rhythm accurately but does not maintain a steady beat
- 3 – Student rings and speaks rhythm accurately with hesitation but does not maintain a steady beat
- 2 – Student does not ring or speak the rhythm accurately
- 1 – Student does not respond to rhythm

## Other sources for materials to accompany Lesson 3

*Share the Music* – McGraw-Hill –  
Book 2 (Dark Orange)

Page 183, Make a Melody  
Page 236-237, Something Old,  
Something New

*Share the Music* – McGraw-Hill –  
Book 4 (Purple)

Page 84, Return to Rhythms

## National Music Standards (Lesson 3)

- Singing alone, and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
- Composing and arranging music within specific guidelines
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- Understanding relationships between music and the other arts and disciplines outside the art
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture

## Lesson 4

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- Review previous lesson and techniques.
- Offer opportunities for students to direct and change chord flash cards, while requesting sing-along and ring-along songs.
- Practice ringing and dampening the chimes in rhythm: ring—damp—ring—damp, etc. Use half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, and their equivalent rests.
- Ring C Major scale, pentatonic scale
- Ring pentatonic scale in a round, establishing a steady beat, start the scale repeatedly after every four notes:

C# D# F# G# A# C# D# F# G# A# etc.  
rest rest rest rest C# D# F# G# A# C# etc.

## History of Tower Bell Ringing

- In medieval times, the ringing of tower bells notified the townsfolk of births, deaths, fires, or war.
- Ringing the scale from the lowest to the highest notes signified an attack.
- The use of tower bells in a musical fashion began in the Netherlands in the 14th century.
- The carillon is the heaviest of all musical instruments, with the total weight being over 100 tons for the largest instruments.
- For more information, see the Guild of Carillonneurs website in North America ([www.gcna.org](http://www.gcna.org)).

## History of Change Ringing

- Change ringing was developed in England in the 17th century.
- Each ringer has only one bell, and typically there are only 6-8 bells in a peal.
- Each bell is numbered, beginning with the highest bell (called the treble), in descending order, to the lowest bell, called the tenor. Bells are tuned to a diatonic major scale.
- A bell round begins with the descending scale and continues with all the possible variations on that scale, with each bell only ringing once per round. A bell peal is 5,000 or more rounds, without breaks and without repeating a row. A bell peal takes more than three hours to ring. The first peal was rung in England in 1715.
- For more historical information, see the North American Guild of Change Ringers website ([www.nagcr.org](http://www.nagcr.org)).

## History of Westminster Quarters

- “Westminster Quarters” is the most common name for a melody used for clock bells to strike the hour. It is also known as “Westminster Chimes” or “Cambridge Chimes.”
- Each quarter hour a different phrase is rung, and follow-



Click [HERE](#) to download chart for “Westminster Chimes.”

ing the strike on the hour a bell is rung for the number of the hour: one strike for one o’clock, two strikes for two o’clock, etc.

- It was written in 1793 for the new clock in St. Mary the Great, the University Church in Cambridge.
- By the mid-19th century, the chime was adopted by the Palace of Westminster, where Big Ben hangs.
- For more information, see <http://mto.societymusictheory.org> and search author Daniel Harrison, title Tolling Time.
- Download notes and instructions for ringing the Westminster Chimes to the left.

### **Change Ringing Exercise: Cross and Stretch**

- Lay out eight chimes, from lowest to highest, C5–C6, diatonic scale.
- Each ringer is responsible for two chimes. You will need only four ringers for this demonstration.
- Ring a round of descending chimes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. (C, B, A, G, F, E, D, C—remember that a peal of bells is numbered from the highest note down.)
- Each ringer crosses their chimes on the table, releases their hands, uncrosses their hands, and picks up the chimes again, so that now the order is: 2, 1, 4, 3, 6, 5, 8, 7.
- Ring the round again, beginning with the right hand of the highest ringer and descending down.
- Each ringer now stretches their chimes across to their neighbors, with the outside two chimes not moving. The order is now: 2, 4, 1, 6, 3, 8, 5, 7.
- This continues until the chimes have completely woven their way back home.
- The goal is to ring this change, typically called a “Plain Hunt,” in tempo, without pausing.
- For more information, see [www.ringingpraise.org.uk/ChangeRinging.htm](http://www.ringingpraise.org.uk/ChangeRinging.htm)



## Rubric (Lesson 4)

### Performing on handchimes

- 3 – Student rings handchime with correct technique
- 2 – Student rings handchime with correct technique 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to ring handchime with correct technique.

### Reading notation

- 3 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchime
- 2 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchimes 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to read letter notation while ringing handchime

### Steady Beat

- 4 - Student rings steady beat
- 3 – Student rings steady beat 75% of the time
- 2 – Student does not ring steady beat
- 1 – Student does not respond

## National Music Standards (Lesson 4)

- Singing alone, and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
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# Lesson 5

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Click [HERE](#) to download chart for "The Star Spangled Banner."

- Review previous lesson and techniques.
- Offer opportunities for students to direct and change chord flash cards, while requesting sing-along and ring-along songs.
- Practice ringing and dampening the chimes in rhythm: ring—damp—ring—damp, etc. Use half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, and their equivalent rests.
- Ring C Major scale, pentatonic scale.
- The final performance piece is an arrangement of "The Star Spangled Banner." The students should be able to ring and sing at the same time. This piece can be used to open school assemblies and concerts, and should be accessible to most students in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades. Accidentals are prevalent and the students may wish to mark their music by either circling their notes, or using colored pencils. Teach this arrangement line by line. An introduction using the final phrase ("...the the home of the brave") is a nice addition to the arrangement.

## Rubric (Lesson 5)

### Performing on handchimes

- 3 – Student rings handchime with correct technique
- 2 – Student rings handchime with correct technique 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to ring handchime with correct technique.

### Reading notation

- 3 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchime
- 2 – Student reads letter notation while ringing handchimes 50% of the time
- 1 – Student is unable to read letter notation while ringing handchime

## Steady Beat

- 4 – Student rings steady beat
- 3 – Student rings steady beat 75% of the time
- 2 – Student does not ring steady beat
- 1 – Student does not respond

## National Music Standards (Lesson 5)

- Singing alone, and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
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a resource for members of  
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