

# workshop



## GENERAL MUSIC

### A Black Belt in Recorder Playing?

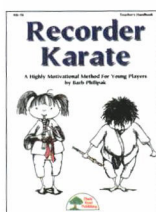
It all started eight years ago with a single method book, Barb Philipak's *Recorder Karate: A Highly Motivational Method For Young Players* (Plank Road Publishing). Today, it's an approach to music education that has been adopted in various schools and dojos (martial arts training centers) across the country. In a nutshell, Recorder Karate is a program in which music students earn belts as they learn new and progressively more difficult pieces and/or skills on the recorder. For example, successfully learning "White Cross Buns" will

get a student a white belt, while "Ode to Joy," a more complex tune, will yield a black belt. (The "belts" are often colored tassels that can be hung on the instrument; see page 63 for more details.)

Laneah Maddox, a music teacher at Kay Road Elementary School in Byron, Georgia, is an eager proponent of Recorder Karate. "This program allows students to learn leadership, cooperation, basic music reading, and notation skills," she says. "It allows them to move at their own pace and level, it gives opportunities for students to assist and teach others, and it rewards progress often."

Maddox first began using the program out of economic necessity. "My district was unable to afford an expensive curriculum resource for my school," she explains, "and Recorder Karate just happened to be affordable for me and my students. In fact, I purchased the Teacher's Handbook [which sells for \$34.95] myself, and the student book and recorder were available for only around \$6 per pupil. Students who were unable to purchase both the book and recorder could get just the instrument for \$3."

Currently, Maddox has a Recorder Karate program for her students in grades 3-5. One of its most positive aspects is that it teaches students how to work in groups. In a typical Recorder Karate exercise, she says, "a 'starter' counts off the music, a 'stopper' stops the ensemble if he or she hears a mis-



take, and a 'fixer' corrects the error." All this, of course, helps students grow both musically and socially.

Not surprisingly, Maddox has found that the students respond well to the program, with its satisfying system of rewards: On a 12-inch bulletin board, each student's name is written on a

small card and attached to a strip of colored fabric that represents the belt he or she has most recently earned. "They're having a great time earning their belts and having their names displayed as they progress in the program," she says. "In fact, one of my third-grade students was assigned a paper about her favorite part of school, and music class was what she chose to write about."

Most important, given less than ideal circumstances at school, Maddox was able to find an excellent new way of teaching music. She says, "The frequent rewards for positive feedback to the students, curriculum content, and affordability of this program made it the right choice for me and my situation."

—Adam Perlmutter



## BRASS AND WOODWINDS

### Making the Switch to Baritone Saxophone

The importance of having a strong baritone saxophone player in an ensemble is often underappreciated. Finding capable and qualified students to transfer into that role can be a challenge. Thanks in