Grades K–6

Activate!
A general music resource by teachers for teachers

6 free lessons plus additional content inside!
Hi, I'm Mari Schay, general music teacher at Earl Boyles Elementary in Portland, Oregon and editor of Activate magazine. As a teacher, I'm what my friend, and Activate contributor, Patty Bourne calls a proud eclectic. As long as it’s great music that teaches my kids to be great, I’ll use it, no matter the approach.

What makes a great lesson?

It’s been classroom tested. I can always tell when a lesson was written by someone who’s in the trenches every day.

It does good things for young bodies and brains, which means it sings, plays, moves, or reads... or it puts those skills together.

It’s easy. Teaching is hard enough, so if I have everything I need for a lesson in one place, and I don’t have to create anything myself, I am more likely to give it a try.

These same things that I look for when developing lesson plans for my classes are what I look for when leading Activate.

Our lessons are written or adapted by teachers who are in the classroom every day. They share content their kids have tried and strategies that made the lesson successful.

Content has a primary focus of sing, play, move, or read, with many of the several dozen lessons in each issue having a secondary focus as well.

Everything you need for each lesson is included either in the magazine or at ActivateOnline, so you don’t have to create visuals, write out parts, or look for websites. Our writers and artists have done everything for you, including aligning with National Core Arts Standards, noting objectives, creating assessments, providing strategies to extend the learning, and designing all the manipulatives you need to make every lesson activate your kids’ learning.

Please dig in and use these sample lessons. As you flip through you’ll also learn more about what you can expect in each issue. Still have questions? Join our Facebook group to connect with a professional learning community where you can connect with our writers and me, seek advice, or suggest lessons.

Being an elementary teacher is challenging, but working together, we can give our kids the best music education possible!

Mari Schay
Subscribe Today for a year of great music

SING

Singing solidifies musicianship, builds community, releases endorphins, and develops vocabulary in students’ brains.

Every issue includes:

- Kodály-based lessons
- Singing games to teach musicianship
- Activities to encourage singing
- Choral octavo with teaching suggestions
- Demonstration and accompaniment recordings

Playing instruments provides deeper learning for kinesthetic learners, instills self-control, and exposes students to a wider variety of musical experiences for growing brains and bodies. Teacher bonus: ease of assessment!

Every issue includes:

- Orff-based lessons
- Drum circle activities
- Barred percussion ensembles
- Recorder lessons
- Play-alongs

Turn to page 2 for classroom-tested examples.

Turn to page 4 for classroom-tested examples.
It can be challenging to provide solo singing opportunities for older students. This fun strategy will get them singing independently without noticing that’s what they are doing.

Objectives
Students will sing a call-and-response sequence that provides an opportunity for group and solo singing.

During Your Prep
- Download and print the order forms from ActivateOnline. There are four to a sheet. Depending on how you choose to do the lesson, you will either need one quarter-sheet per student or you will need one quarter-sheet per repetition of the song.
- Sharpen pencils.
- Download accompaniment recording.

Lesson Sequence
1. Teach the class the song, emphasizing the call-and-response form.

   Rico’s Pizza Restaurant
   Solo Singing for Intermediate Students
   Loretta Mitchell
   Adapted by Mari Schay

   GRADES: 2–5
   NCA Standards: 1, 11

   MATERIALS
   Two phones as props (optional)
Pencils

   ACTIVATE ONLINE
   Blank order forms
   Orff accompaniment

   During Your Prep
   - Download and print the order forms from ActivateOnline. There are four to a sheet. Depending on how you choose to do the lesson, you will either need one quarter-sheet per student or you will need one quarter-sheet per repetition of the song.
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   Rico’s Pizza Restaurant
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   GRADES: 2–5
   NCA Standards: 1, 11

   MATERIALS
   Two phones as props (optional)
Pencils

   ACTIVATE ONLINE
   Blank order forms
   Orff accompaniment
2. Pass out a pencil and blank order form to each student. Ask the students to fill in their favorite pizza order, deciding on size, crust, sauce, and toppings.

3. Select an order taker who will sing the calls and a customer who will call in their pizza order based on what they circled on their order form. If you like, give each student a real or toy phone when it is their turn to take an order or place an order.

4. Have the class sing measures 1–8 together for the A section. In the B section, the order taker (or the whole class, if you prefer) will sing the calls and the customer will sing the responses. The whole class should sing “Thank you for your order” at the end.

5. Let the order taker and the customer choose new students to take their place and start again. They only have sixteen beats to be ready for the next order, so have a plan in place for how they will choose quickly.

Variations:
- Let students work in pairs and take turns as the order taker and the order placer.
- Choose one student to take the order, but let them ask different students to answer each question. (This gives more turns more quickly.)

**Tools to Check Understanding**

As students take turns on the solo singing, assess their pitch accuracy and tone quality.

*Add Donna Dirksing’s Orff accompaniment to this lesson for a little more color and interest.*
William Tell Overture
Barred Percussion Ensemble

Doug Edwards
Cottonwood Elementary School: Kennewick, WA

GRADES: 2–6
NCA Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
MATERIALS
Orff instruments or marimbas

ACTIVATE ONLINE
William Tell Melody
Link to Teaching Demonstration

This melody is probably Rossini’s most memorable theme. The “cavalry charge” has delighted audiences young and old. Performed in spectacular ways by symphony orchestras and bands, now it makes its way to the marimbas and Orff instruments. Use this mallet arrangement to enhance your study of the William Tell Overture. This arrangement is very accessible to your younger students if the melody is considered the teacher’s part. Older students can learn both the melody and the accompaniment.

Objectives
Students will perform a barred instrument ensemble arrangement of a classical piece.
Students will identify the form of the entire piece as well as the order of the phrases within each section.

Lesson Sequence
Accompaniment

This arrangement has an AABBAA form. Teach the two sections by rote, phrase by phrase. Draw the students’ attention to which phrases are the same and which are different. To aid your students’ memories, consider labeling these phrases with shapes or colors. Notice that the bass and treble accompaniments move together, so the same teaching strategies will work for both parts. (Log onto ActivateOnline to watch videos of Doug demonstrating how he teaches the William Tell Overture chord progression.)

1. Start with section A, which has four 2-measure phrases, each with a five-note pattern using this rhythm:

```
|  ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ |
```

Once your students can perform the rhythm correctly and consistently, they are ready for their pitch patterns.

Pattern one:  \[ \begin{array}{ccc}
G & G & G \\
E & E & E
\end{array} \]  \[ \begin{array}{ccc}
G & G & G \\
E & E & E
\end{array} \]  \[ \begin{array}{ccc}
G & G & G \\
E & E & F
\end{array} \]  \[ \begin{array}{ccc}
G & G & G \\
F & F & E
\end{array} \]

GRADES: 2–6
NCA Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
MATERIALS
Orff instruments or marimbas

ACTIVATE ONLINE
William Tell Melody
Link to Teaching Demonstration

See page 24 for accessing downloadable files.
2. Teach the B section, which has two 4-measure phrases, each with a nine-note pattern. The rhythm for the B section is:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
| & | & | & | & | & | & | & | \\
\end{array}
\]

Again, be sure the kids can perform the rhythm before you add the pitches.

Pattern one:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
E & E & E & E \\
E & E & E & E \\
\end{array}
\]

Pattern two:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
E & E & E & E \\
G & G & G \\
D & D & D \\
\end{array}
\]

3. Organize the patterns and sections in the correct order and the piece is learned.

**Melody**

The melody can be played by the teacher or by intermediate students with more experience. If your students are going to learn it, the process will be similar to the one used for the accompaniment. This piece is very familiar to most kids, so it should come pretty quickly to experienced mallet players.

1. Practice the rhythm in the A section first, noting that the melody starts with a pick-up beat, one beat before the accompaniment.

2. Have the students analyze the melody to determine what is the same and different. (The first, second, and third phrases have the same rhythms, but the second phrase has different notes.)

3. Have the students practice each phrase in the A section, one at a time, then put them together and practice the entire section.

4. Follow the same process for the B section (see music on page 36) and point out that, as with the accompaniment, there are two long phrases instead of four short ones. Lead the students to figure out that the two phrases are identical except for the fourth measure.

5. Give the students time to practice each phrase independently, then the two phrases together, until they can play the melody fluently.
Among the many noble and legitimate objectives and goals for music at the elementary level, I believe one overshadowing purpose must be kept in mind. Children need to experience the joy of music making. I believe we should provide as many opportunities as possible for kids to be engaged in this process through active participation.

**Performance Suggestions**

Create an introduction with the accompaniment only, then add the melody. Play the entire form two times through to extend the song.

For greater melodic variety, transpose the melody an octave higher on each repeat. For example, Section A melody would be played as written the first time and taken up an octave on the repeat. The same idea can be applied to Section B.

**Tools to Check Understanding**

Check your students’ understanding of the form by having them identify the chord progressions for each section. You can do this using I, IV, V or simplify it by choosing a color or shape to represent each chord.

Determine each students’ ability to apply the form with a performance assessment of the A or B section.

Consider adding unpitched percussion to the arrangement. Listen to the orchestral version of *William Tell Overture* for ideas.

A separate melody file is provided in the data files if students wish to learn it. The file is useful as a student practice sheet for in-class or at-home practice.

If your class is ready for it, a more challenging version of the arrangement can be found in the *To Bach and Beyond* collection by Doug Edwards, published by Heritage Music Press.
Multiple lessons in each issue tie into our Classical or Jazz Connection, which are also aligned with Carnegie Hall’s Link Up with Orchestra curricula.

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**William Tell Overture**

*Featured Composition*

**ACTIVATE ONLINE**
- Link to William Tell Play-along
- Link to William Tell Form Lesson
- Form Map Cards

The featured composition in this issue is William Tell Overture by Gioachino Rossini. Throughout the magazine, you will find lessons and suggestions for using this piece in a variety of ways for all grade levels.

**Sing the Melody**
Sing the melody with the silly lyrics on the facing page or make up your own. Once the melody is familiar, all the other lessons will be that much more powerful and memorable for your students.

**Read the Story**
Give your students some context for the story with the short picture book *William Tell of Switzerland* by Liz Tay, illustrated by Rubén Carral Fajardo. It is appropriate for all ages.

**Play the Ensemble**
See Doug Edwards’s arrangement for Orff instruments or marimbas starting on page 34. If the teacher plays the melody, the accompaniment parts are easy enough for second or third graders while the full ensemble will provide a fun challenge for experienced fourth and fifth graders.

**Play Along with Musication on YouTube**
Use the link at ActivateOnline or go to the Musication YouTube channel and find the William Tell Play-along. This condensed version of the overture features five visuals: red 🎼, yellow X, green ●, blue ■, and grey ▲. Choose five timbres of body percussion or unpitched classroom instruments. Assign one timbre to each shape and play along.

**Listen and Move**
Your youngest students can interpret the form with movement if you follow the lesson by Donna Dirkson on page 48, excerpted from *Listen, Wiggle, Move, and Giggle*.

**Create a Listening Map**
Download, print, and cut out enough copies of the William Tell Form Cards for each student or pair of students. Use the link at ActivateOnline or go to the Marvelous Musical Dell website and find the William Tell lesson. Using the first video on the website, have your students create listening maps for William Tell Overture with their icons. Once they are confident their maps are accurate, let them check their maps against the map on the second video on the site.

**Learn About Gioachino Rossini**
Use the lessons and writing or drawing prompts from Jenny VanPelt to teach your students all about the composer and his music. The worksheets are explained on page 72 and available on ActivateOnline.
Children learn most effectively when their bodies are moving! A variety of movements awaken the body and brain of young learners while crossing mid-line connects the two sides of the brain.

Every issue includes:

- Patterned movement and dance
- Creative movement activities
- Movement games

Reading music teaches growing brains and bodies how musicians communicate and remember, and reinforces linear tracking, creating better readers across subjects.

Every issue features a basic musicianship focus through:

- Activities that develop the focus skill
- Composer bios
- Subtub worksheets

Activate Your Teaching
Every issue, our writers—all of whom are teachers themselves—share strategies to develop your skills and inspire reflection about the art of teaching music.

TechTalk
Turn to pages 20 and 22 for classroom-tested examples!
I developed this little piece for my younger students as a way to help them transition from one busy activity to a calmer activity or to the end of class, while promoting a sense of mindfulness. I use it as a calming stretching activity to engage students and provide a quiet moment for reflection. This piece could easily be taught to your entire school and perhaps incorporated into morning meetings or announcements.

Objectives
Students will move to a song to calm their bodies.

Stars are twinkling in the night. Filling the sky with sylv'ry light. - - -

Clouds are drifting by and by. What a peaceful night-time sky. The

sun is rising in the east. Waking people, birds and beast.

This piece really doesn’t require teaching, per se. Think of it more as a moving and singing meditation. I invite the students to move with me as I perform the song and movements. The range and text is pretty demanding for this age group, so I wouldn’t expect the students to be able to perform it. That said, if you regularly incorporate this piece, they may just surprise you!

Take a deep breath and have a mindful day.

Begin with just the movement. Try not saying anything, but instead just begin to move. Chances are good that the students will automatically mirror you. If not, invite them to do so. Then, go back and add the melody.

Music connects our brains to our bodies to our hearts. It brings individuals together to share in a powerful, synergistic moment. I love developing a series of sequenced and spiraled lesson plans that ensure students will have pleasing and energizing experiences in my classroom. I draw upon the many methods and outstanding educators I’ve had the pleasure of interacting with throughout my life in music education.
Little Cloud
A Literature Connection

Katie Grace Miller
Lake George Elementary: Orlando, FL

GRADES: K-1
NCA Standards: 4, 7, 8

This is one of my favorite lessons to do with my little ones at the beginning of the year. It's an excellent way to get their hearing engaged and be able to tell who your “hams” will be for the school year!

MATERIALS
Copy of the book “Little Cloud” by Eric Carle

Objectives
Students will use movement to demonstrate their listening skills.

During Your Prep

• Get a copy of Little Cloud by Eric Carle. Check your school library, public library, or book retailer.

Lesson Sequence

1. Read the book to your students. Each time Little Cloud changes into an object, sing the refrain below. Students might sing along with you after the second or third time, and that's just fine!

```
\[ \text{\textbf{Little cloud, little cloud, you can't catch me.}} \]
\[ \text{\textbf{Please turn into something that I can be!}} \]
```

2. Ask your students what you did after Little Cloud changed into something (sang a song).

3. Starting with students in personal space, read the book again, but this time ask the students to move and create shapes with their bodies to show the objects that Little Cloud changes into. They can move as soon as you start singing, but when the song ends, they will turn back into children (freeze and stand in place). Singing \textit{rubato} at the end of the refrain will give kiddos who need extra time a chance to move into position and be ready for the next cloud change.

TAKE NOTE

I am very strict about having the kids stop at the end of the song because it keeps things in control. It's also a great way to tell who is listening carefully to the melody.
Tools to Check Understanding

Listen to each student sing the Little Cloud melody to assess singing voice and pitch accuracy.

Observe students’ movements to determine if they are able to predict the end of the melody.

In the next lesson, add a bordun on F and C as an accompaniment to the refrain. On the final note, have them *tremolo* on F.

For a performance, you could divide your class in half and have half of the students move and change into Little Cloud's objects while the other half play the ostinato. Then have them switch places!

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Music has taught me so much more than just music. It has taught me history, empathy, respect, tolerance, and so many more traits that created my personality as a human being. My motto in my classroom is "where musicians are made and music lovers are created." I think that music helps create a well-rounded human being, so I am making musicians and people that respect music not for music’s sake, but because I think it is necessary for the child’s sake.
Cake’s All Dough

Improvising a Rhythm Recipe

Deborah A. Imiolo

Heritage Heights Elementary School: Amherst, NY

GRADES: 2–6

NCA Standards: 1, 2

MATERIALS

Hand Drum or Conga

Unpitched percussion instruments

This rhyme is a great opener because it gets children up and moving plus it’s a fun way to create rhythms and build phrases. It also utilizes unpitched percussion with a built-in assessment so the lesson has something for everyone.

Objectives

Students will make a connection between the rhythm of speech and rhythm.

Students will create rhythmic interludes individually, in pairs, and in small groups and transfer word rhythms to unpitched percussion.

Lesson Sequence

Create a Cake Recipe

1. Play a steady beat on a drum and instruct the children to walk to the beat of the drum but NOT in a counter-clockwise circle. Remind the children to think of safety. Say something like, “Follow your own path. Keep your hands and feet to yourself, but make your feet match the drum.”

2. While the children are walking to the beat, ask them to echo “Cake’s All Dough” one phrase at a time, then the whole chant.

3. As they walk, ask the children to say the rhyme with a variety of expressions: sad, excited, frustrated, joyful, embarrassed, suspicious, etc. Consider changing the tempo of the beat to match the mood. This will provide plenty of repetition so the chant is memorized.

4. When the class can say the chant independently, ask them to sit down and think of fruits, candy, or any ingredient they think will make the cake dough better. Have them experiment with different rhythmic options for saying their ingredient. For example:

   Oh dear, oh. My cake’s all dough! How to make it better I do not know!

   Gum my worms. Gum my worms. Gum - my worms.
5. Instruct the children to stand again and walk to the beat of the drum and chant the rhyme. When the drum stops at the end of the rhyme, the students will stop, turn to someone standing nearby, introduce themselves and share their cake ingredient. They will then work together to combine both of their ingredients in a rhythmic way.

6. When it seems that each pair has completed the task, start the drum beat again. The partners will move together while chanting the rhyme. When the drum stops at the end of the rhyme, each pair will meet up with another pair to create a four-ingredient recipe. Have the group of four work cooperatively to decide how to say all four ingredients together rhythmically.

Create a Cake Rondo

1. Using the same groups of four, ask each group to stand in a square with their left palms facing up. Move the steady beat to a clapping pattern by patting the neighbor to the right’s open palm, then their own palm, saying “right – me – right – me.”

2. Once the clapping pattern is secure, have the class chant *Cake’s All Dough*. This will be the A section of your rondo.

3. Next, ask the groups to create movement or body percussion for their four-ingredient recipe. Give the groups time to refine and practice their recipe with the additional movements.

4. Perform *Cake’s All Dough* as a rondo by alternating the A section with one group at a time performing their recipe.

Tools to Check Understanding

With the students standing in a circle, place a variety of unpitched percussion instruments in the middle of the group. If necessary, demonstrate each instrument by playing the rhythm of *Cake’s All Dough*.

Tell the class you will clap the rhythms of the various ingredients they added to the cake. If the rhythm clapped matches their ingredient, they will choose an unpitched instrument and play their rhythm together on the teacher’s cue.

Put all the ingredients together to create a drum circle groove using the rhythms of the various ingredients and the unpitched instruments the students chose.

I love spontaneous music making! I love seeing kids smile genuinely. My teenage son said to me, “Mama, you are the teacher who lets kids be kids.”
Rocky Mountain Drum Game
Focus on Note Values

Artie Almeida
Bear Lake Elementary: Seminole County, FL (Retired)

Use this fun game to reinforce note values and subdivisions with body percussion or hand drums. Don’t be surprised to find a group of kids at your door the next morning waiting to show you they can do the whole game by themselves!

Objectives
Students will demonstrate whole-note, half-note, quarter-note, and eighth-note pulses to correspond to a folk song.

GRADES: 3–6
NCA Standards: 4, 5, 6, 7

MATERIALS
Hand drums and mallets for half the class

ACTIVATE ONLINE Body Percussion Diagram

During Your Prep
- Download and print Body Percussion Diagram.
- Practice the body percussion movements so you can demonstrate them fluidly.

Lesson Sequence
Body Percussion

1. Sing the song for the children. Tell them that this is only the A section of the song, and though there is more to the melody, we will only be using the A section for this lesson. (If you know the entire song and would like to sing it for the children, do so.)

2. Ask the students to close their eyes and listen while you sing the melody again. Invite the class to sing the song with you.

3. Instruct the children to sing the song with you and show the melodic direction of the song with their hands. Lead this effort, showing the general upward, downward, and repeated direction of the pitches with hand gestures.

4. Ask the children to tuck that melody in their “memory banks” for just a few minutes while you review some note values with them. Clap whole notes, then half notes, quarter notes, and eighth notes, discussing their lengths.
5.Lead the children in singing *Rocky Mountain* while clapping whole notes. When they finish singing, ask them how many whole notes they clapped during the performance. (4) Continue in this fashion, clapping half notes, quarters, and finally eighths. I always ask the students to predict how many half notes (then quarters, then eighths) will be needed. Given the number of whole notes, some should be able to mathematically figure this out.

6. Sing the melody four times through without stopping, clapping whole notes the first time, half the second, then quarter, and finally eighth notes.

7. Seat the children in two gender-specific rows: boys in one row, girls in the other, both facing you. Instruct the children to sing the song and to pat the first whole note with both hands on their legs, showing the other 3 beats of the whole note with gentle motions in the air. On the next whole note, they will move their hands over to the right, borrowing their neighbor’s left leg for their right hand while they pat their own right leg with their left hand. After that, children will pat both of their own legs again. Finally, they will borrow the right leg of their left neighbor, patting with their left hand on their neighbor’s leg and their right hand on their own leg. Practice the patting sequence while saying, “Your legs, one leg to the right, your legs, one leg to the left.” Please be aware that you will need to perform this pattern in mirror image to assist the children in accuracy.

8. Lead the class in singing while performing the patting sequence to the whole-note pulse. When they are ready, try using the half-note pulse, then quarter-note, and finally eighth-note pulse. Be prepared for giggles and chaos as they try to pat the eighth notes for the first time. I always say “The old lady can do it, can you?” (I usually have students at my door the next morning bragging that they have mastered singing the song and patting the eighth-note pulse, and wanting to demonstrate it for me.)

9. Tell the children that this patting activity will transfer to a hand drum lesson next week!

**Hand Drums**

This hand drum transfer is exactly like the patting game, but instead of patting laps, your students will be striking hand drums with mallets. If you do not have mallets for your drums, Orff instrument mallets work well. Even rhythm sticks work, if the children are careful not to strike too hard.

1. Seat the children in two gender-specific rows, facing each other and approximately ten feet apart. This will give you space to be in the middle and not too close to either row.

2. Remind them of the song *Rocky Mountain* and sing it with them.

3. Review the lap-patting activity, but note that the “left” and “right” verbal cues will not work very well, since the lines are facing one another. I usually just point to the side of the room to give the direction of our starting motion and it works out fine.

4. Tell the girls (or boys) that they are going to be the first drum team, while the other line will be the vocalists and patting models.
5. Distribute hand drums and mallets to the girls, and stand with your back to the boys. Instruct the girls to hold the hand drums in as level a line as possible (all drums held at the same height). Do the patting motions on your lap and instruct the boys to sing the song with you and join you in the patting. Tell the boys that their accuracy with the singing and patting patterns will greatly enhance the girls’ chances of success with the drum part. Tell the girls to sing if they can, and to play the patting pattern on their drum, the drum to their right and the drum to their left.

6. Perform the entire piece with the girls drumming and the boys patting, while you lead from the middle with patting.

7. Switch roles, with the boys playing the hand drums and the girls being the singers and body percussion models. This is very challenging for children the first few times and you will probably want to repeat the activity in subsequent classes.

Tools to Check Understanding

The Rocky Mountain Drum Game is self-correcting: if anyone goes the wrong direction at the wrong time, it will be very obvious. Keep the mood light and let the kids have fun. If there are lots of mistakes, slow the tempo down or go back to practicing with body percussion.

You can use Rocky Mountain Drum Game to assess your students’ ability to subdivide the beat, either through whole group observation or with an individual or small group performance assessment.

I have used this activity as a music theory informance in a concert setting. The children in the ensemble sing the song while a row of drummers (at the front edge of the stage) demonstrate the drum game. Add introductory speaking parts for the piece that include a little music theory lesson, teaching the parents about the diminishing note values.

A super-fun transfer is to have the drum team call their parents to the stage to take their place in the drum line. You can imagine how entertaining this is for both the performers and the audience!

Those of you who know me are aware that my theme for 39 years of teaching has been Heavy Academics: Delivered Joyfully! I like to plan my lessons based upon my instructional goals and rigorous standards, as well as looking through the lens of the children, to make sure the activities are joyful and child-friendly in nature.
SubTub
Rhythm Drawing

Need an activity for a sub that will work for every class? Get art supplies ready and keep plenty of these creativity starters ready to go. Leave some calm music for your sub to play while the class creates their artwork.

Rhythm Reproducibles

These rhythm-themed worksheets are perfect for quick assessments, sub plans, or quiet work while you do one-on-one assessments.
Tech Talk

Using YouTube in the Music Classroom

Russ Kleiner
Ventura Park Elementary: Portland, OR

I begin all Grade 3, 4, and 5 classes with a short music video. Often, the video is related to music we’ll be singing, playing, or discussing that day. Sometimes, however, I show videos just to expose students to creative, beautiful, and inspiring art. (That’s an important part of our jobs, too, right?) For younger students, engaging web-based resources function as great incentivizing tools: kids enjoy ending class with a fun music video or an interactive play-along.

Tips for using YouTube videos in the classroom

Change the tempo in YouTube videos
The “Speed” option has been an invaluable addition to using interactive play-alongs. Generally, I have my kids practice instruments at .75 speed until the majority of them have success, then I speed it up to 100%.

To change speed:
1. Click the gear in the lower right-hand corner of video
2. Select “Speed” Option
3. Choose desired speed
4. Restart the YouTube Video

ViewPure
www.viewpure.com

Many of us have had the experience of showing a video only to find inappropriate or annoying ads. ViewPure is a website that “purifies” YouTube videos by removing all ads and pop-ups. Simply select and copy the full YouTube url into the space on ViewPure homepage, then hit the purify button. Your clean video will appear in a moment.

If you want to use just a portion of a video instead of the whole thing, click the gear icon under the video and a box will pop up so you can enter the start and end times of the section you want to use.

Once you have “purified” a YouTube video, you can bookmark the page or save the ViewPure url to your digital lesson plan and it will show the clean version.
ACTIVATE YOUR TEACHING

YouTube Videos

**Stereotypes** by Black Violin

Are you or your students’ teachers discussing stereotypes? Virtuosic hip-hop violin duo Black Violin confronts stereotypes in this powerful and beautiful work of art.

As black men living in America, we understand challenges and we also understand the power of “I can’t,” yet we decide to live by and promote the power of “I can.” We realize that every opportunity to connect to our diverse fans is an opportunity to break down the barriers that separate us, empower individuality and encourage progress. [www.blackviolin.net](http://www.blackviolin.net)

The video speaks for itself, but it also provides an opportunity to speak with your students about the power of music to communicate.

**Marbles, Magnets, and Music** by Doodle Chaos

I am not ashamed to say that I have a Doodle Chaos addiction. The video Marbles, Magnets, and Music has become a student favorite. The mad geniuses at Doodle Chaos have designed a chain-reaction style maze that incorporates marbles, dominoes, magnets, Jenga™ pieces and even fidget spinners (ugh... I know), all synchronized to Tchaikovsky’s *Waltz of the Flowers*. Let the inevitable involuntary blurts about fidget spinners go during the first listen. Then watch again, guiding your students’ ears and eyes to a few specific musical phrases. After three or four repetitions, you’ll be amazed by the connections they can make!

**YouTube Channel**

**Musication**

Musication (music+education+gamification) is the brainchild of Jan Vink, a primary music teacher from the Netherlands. His channel has a variety of play-alongs for Boomwhackers™ as well as for percussion and handbells.

I am drawn to activities that are not only highly engaging, but also highly cooperative. Vink has managed to create resources that achieve both. Whether they are in 1st grade or 5th, my students absolutely love playing to these videos. The videos listed below are labeled as Boomwhacker™ play-alongs, but with a little creativity (and some color coordinating), mallet instruments and/or keyboards could be easily utilized. Here are three of my favorites, in order of difficulty:

- Pirates of the Caribbean
- Hip Hop Happy Birthday
- Rolling in the Deep

I believe that deep learning happens when students are actively engaged in meaningful, memorable, and authentic music making experiences. It is imperative students know and feel that the world of music exists outside the classroom walls. I am merely helping them “connect the dots” through teaching of fundamentals and aural guidance. A successful day is when students work hard, both individually and collaboratively, to overcome obstacles, when they exceed their own expectations by miles and miles. A successful day is when the power of music makes it impossible for kids not to sing, not to move, not to feel.
As the articles and lessons for this issue rolled in, I began to notice one thing almost all of them had in common: each writer focused on connecting the kids to the music they sing, play, move to, listen to, and read. Though “student engagement” has become a catchphrase in education lately, it occurs to me that music teachers have always placed a high value on this aspect of teaching. We work hard to find both content and strategies that draw the kids in. I suppose this is, in part, because we feel like we have to “sell” the kids on music. Or, it could be because we are passionate about music in a way most people are not about fractions or spelling. Music teachers are usually passionate about both the kids and the content.

Let’s look at what is in this issue of Activate and see how our contributors can help you and your students connect to all the essential parts of a well-rounded music education.

How do we connect our kids to singing in a way that is joyful and compelling? In Mandy Coffee’s Kodály-based Apple Tree lesson, the kids don’t just play the game and move on (like they did in my classroom last winter); instead, the song and game become a springboard for lessons about beat vs. rhythm, rhythmic notation, and melodic dictation. Loretta Mitchell’s lesson provides a fun way to “trick” intermediate kids into solo singing. In my experience, kids will typically sing alone if that’s the culture that has been built up over time, but if your kids are not yet confident enough to sing independently, Rico’s Pizza Restaurant will give them an age-appropriate scaffolded lesson to get there. And they’ll be having enough fun that they may not even notice they are singing alone. Read Darcy Morrissey’s and Katie Ballantyne’s complementary articles about Riu, Riu, Chiu by Linda Spevacek and you will find concrete strategies for drawing warm-ups from the octavo, connecting to all types of learners, moving from unison to harmony, memorizing lyrics, teaching kids to respond to the weight of the conductor’s beat, and helping young singers to understand the meaning behind challenging lyrics. The drummer in me read these articles and had multiple “ah-ha” moments.

That same internal drummer finds that playing instruments is a natural kid-pleaser, but with the huge variety of strategies, philosophies, and instruments available, honing in on what kids need to know and be able to do instrumentally can be difficult. Sometimes, it feels like throwing water balloons—throw enough of them and everyone is going to get wet, but sometimes it just becomes a free-for-all. The lessons presented here are simple without being simplistic and again, they are all about connections. Don Dupont and Brian Hiller have provided a social studies connection with their lesson for The Seven Continents. Not only does the lesson include a traditional Orff accompaniment, but it takes the essential Orff concept of canon and applies it both vocally and instrumentally. Paul Corbière’s original composition, Grey Day, gives us a sweet little recorder piece with classroom instrument accompaniment. Because it’s in Dorian mode, this simple piece sounds more complex. Paul offers suggestions for simplifying it further if the full arrangement doesn’t suit your kids’ skills or your pedagogical needs. Both of these pieces provide you and your students with an opportunity to extend the kids’ connection to the music by letting them create their own unique form.
One of the first submissions I received for this issue was Doug Edwards’s arrangement of *William Tell Overture*. He inadvertently sparked a mini-theme for the entire issue because there is so much you can do to connect with this piece, from this stripped-down ensemble to moving and singing to history and form lessons. This got me thinking about bigger connections to classical music and jazz. My own school participates in Carnegie Hall’s LinkUp to the Orchestra. It is a general music curriculum in which kids learn a set repertoire of classical or jazz pieces, both to sing and play on recorder (or violin), that culminates in a performance with a local orchestra. This program really connects my kids to the music in a deep and meaningful way. Because I’m so familiar with it, each of the remaining four issues of this volume will include a lesson that draws on a work from the LinkUp curriculum. If LinkUp isn’t an option in your area, this will simply be a series of great classical and jazz connections for your kids.

There is a phrase in neuroscience: “if you aren’t moving, you aren’t learning.” The movement lessons in this issue really support that phrase because they use movement as a pathway to stronger musicianship: connecting to musical form, demonstrating beat vs. rhythm, and connecting to children’s literature. In every case, the movement serves a greater purpose: to deepen kids’ connection to the music they sing, hear, and play.

Finding ways to connect kids to the more academic aspect of music, reading and writing standard music notation, can be the most difficult of all. Though worksheets can be an effective tool for practicing out of context, using too many worksheets goes against the evidence that learning is deepest when it is active and in context. As such, we have provided lessons to teach one concept—simple rhythms—many different ways: a game that get kids working collaboratively (*Splat!*), a percussion activity (*Rocky Mountain Drum Game*), steady-beat canons, and several activities for using rhythm cards. And of course, we have also given you a couple worksheets, because they do have their place, as well.

The curriculum director in my district has a phrase that really resonates with me: teaching is not about the teacher’s skills or knowledge, but about each student’s journey. I believe we owe it to our students to lead them down a musical pathway full of interesting sights and sounds. There will always be bumps in the road, but at the end of their journey, they should love music not just because they love their teacher or love to sing, but because they understand where they have been and where they can still go. I hope that the pages of this issue of *Activate* will provide you with all you need to create an amazing journey for each of your students.
We are excited to introduce ActivateOnline, a website that includes all the data files, recordings, and website references in one place. No more CD to keep track of (or try to use in your computer that doesn’t have a CD drive).

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Join the community!

Share Ideas
Have you come up with extensions or variations for one of our lessons? Did something in Activate spark an idea you think other teachers might be able to use in their classroom? Share it in the Facebook group so that we can all learn from each other.

Ask Questions
Is there something that didn’t quite make sense in one of our lessons? Are you struggling with a problem that someone else might have solved? Ask the Activate community, or even connect with our writers directly, to get suggestions or answers to your questions.

Activate Asks
Every issue, our writers will answer a question about how they handle different aspects of teaching general music. Help us generate those big questions by posing them to the community. Or, if you have a different answer than we published, let the community know. We would love to publish our readers’ answers!

Provide Feedback
Activate is intentionally eclectic. We try to predict how we can support you in your teaching, but if we are missing something, we want to know. Use the Facebook group to help us improve this resource so that it meets the most needs for the most people. We may not be able to take every suggestion, but we will certainly pay attention and try to improve.
Activate your students with engaging and eclectic ideas to get them singing, playing, moving, and reading! Each of the five issues in this year-long subscription has detailed lessons from general music teachers who work in school settings across the country and around the world. To save you time, each lesson includes the visuals, printable music, recordings, and worksheets that you need to teach it, now conveniently located on our ActivateOnline website. A subscription to Activate will enliven your teaching and deepen your thinking all year long.

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Our whole team of dedicated music educators understands kids and music classrooms, including our editor Mari Schay and writers Artie Almeida, Katie Grace Miller, Brian Hiller & Don Dupont, Patricie Bourne, Katie O'Connor-Ballantyne, Doug Edwards, Jeanette Morgan, and many more!
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