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Why Do We Need to Teach Music in Preschool and Kindergarten?

Today’s research demonstrates that our adult selves are the result of a combination of nature and nurture. Likewise, research in the field of music shows that individuals have different levels of natural music abilities (nature) and that experiences in music provide the skills to express that talent to its furthest degree (nurture). Although we are certainly capable of learning music skills at any age, they are most flexible and adaptable up until about age seven. Therefore, participation in a variety of musical activities in preschool and kindergarten is paramount. Quality musical experiences are essential in establishing the foundations of music, such as establishing and maintaining a steady beat, the ability to sing in tune, and the ability to match body movement to corresponding music.

Beyond the pure aim of helping students become the best musicians they can be, musical experiences benefit children in other ways. For example, there is a direct correlation between the ability to keep a steady beat and reading ability. In addition, students with musical experiences are more likely to be able to separate important sound from ambient sound—an essential skill in noisy classrooms!

Lastly, music is ideally a social experience. Children learn to share instruments, listen to each other, and express themselves in music class. Music provides a means to communicate verbally and nonverbally, to create, and to share a joyful experience with others.

What Are the Elements of Music?

At the preschool and kindergarten levels, there are three primary areas of music competence: singing, playing instruments, and movement. Each has musical and non-musical reasons for being included in a well-rounded curriculum.

Singing

Children develop the ability to sing by singing. With the exception of those who have a rare brain-based condition called amusia, everyone can learn to sing. Voice qualities vary, but singing is a skill everyone can master.

Students who participate in positive, relaxed singing experiences tend to develop a better sense of pitch, and are better able to modulate and control their own voices. As children sing, they receive and process sensory input from within and begin to hear their voices as distinct from those of the other students.

Perhaps best of all, students who sing (particularly in group settings) release endorphins, which leads to happier children—and teachers too!

Teaching Tips

- Included on the CD are audio recordings of songs utilized in this resource. Use these to familiarize yourself with any unknown tunes.
- Always encourage all singing—never ask a student not to sing.
Miss Mary Mack

Preschool Standards: 1.3, 3.3, 5.2, 6.4, 8.1,
MU:Cr1.1.PreKa

Kindergarten Standards: RF.K.2A, MU:Cr1.1.Ka

Give each child an instrument. The students should play three sounds together on the lyrics “Mack, Mack, Mack” and on the other rhymes that follow this same repetitive pattern.

Although some younger students can manage the traditional hand-jive pattern performed to “Miss Mary Mack,” it is better revisited when students are in first or second grade. If you choose to try, the hand jive is a four-beat pattern: clap hands together, cross-body to clap right hands with their neighbor, clap hands together, cross-body to clap left hands with their neighbor. If students struggle with the cross-body claps, ask the class to pretend to be your partner. As the students see you cross your midline, most of them will do so as well. Once the majority of the students are ready to partner up, circulate and identify anyone who is going straight across to the partner (right hand to left hand) and help him/her cross diagonally (right hand to right hand).
I'm So Glad to See You

Preschool Standards: 1.3, 2.1, 2.3, 4.3, 4.4, 6.1, 8.1, 8.2, MU:Cr1.1.PreKa, MU:Pr4.2.PreKa, MU:Re7.2.PreKa


This activity is in the child’s own space (no special formation), and can be stationary or locomotor, depending on the movements you choose to implement as described below.

Children typically catch on to this song right away, but it is often hard for them to be patient and wait for the counting to do the motion. Keep your own body very still until the counting, and students will typically follow suit within a couple of verses.

As students are becoming familiar with both you and the space, choose stationary actions, such as patting your legs, tapping your tummy, nodding your head, and sticking out your tongue. As students exhibit increased self-control, you can add jumping up and down; spinning around; and eventually, walking, skipping, or leaping.
After completing the first reading of the book, encourage children to “wokka-wokka” in all the ways suggested in the book. For an additional extension and loads of fun, allow students to move in their own “wokka-wokka” way.

Notes
This Ghanaian echo song is perfect for teaching cultural music, reinforcing steady beat, and getting students up and moving. The teacher should sing and pat each body part four times to the steady beat during the “call,” while the students sing and pat each body part four times to the steady beat during the “response.” Note that on the last phrase the movements are a bit different.

Refer to the CD recording for pronunciation of the lyrics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kye kye kule</td>
<td>(Kye kye ku-le,)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kye kye ko-fi-sa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(kye kye ko-fi-sa.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ko-fi sa lan-ga</td>
<td>(Ko-fi sa lan-ga,)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ka-ka shi lan-ga.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ka-ka shi lan-ga.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kum a-den-de</td>
<td>(Kum a-den-de,)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kum a-den-de, hey!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the class knows the song well, try switching roles and allow the class to lead the song while you echo.

For a special challenge, let students play the drums or other instruments as the echo, using the same rhythms sung in the song.