# Ukuleles in the elementary music classroom: Using technology for virtual instruction

by

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A REPORT

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# Abstract

The lessons demonstrated in this report are focused on using ukuleles in the music classroom using virtual instruction. Ukuleles are a growing tool that are being used in music rooms and that are popular instruments to give students an opportunity to grow in a variety of musical ways. These lessons incorporate a Kodály inspired approach using solfege, identifying the parts of the ukulele, playing a melody using the open strings, and then creating a composition with a variety of rhythms with the open strings on the ukulele.

Over the course of the past three years to complete my Masters' degree, some major developments I have made were expanding my knowledge and understanding of different methodologies used in the elementary music classroom and incorporating new technologies into my teaching instruction. When creating the ukulele lessons for this Graduate Report, I explored and used some technology tools that I have used in my classes over the summers. For example, during the Introduction to Graduate Studies class, we learned more about Garage Band and Soundtrap. These programs could be used for teachers to create background tracks to encourage student learning and practice and also allow for students to create musical compositions. For my lessons, I used it as a warm-up to reviewing the open strings of the ukulele. Another way that I incorporated technology was the use of Zoom. In our classes, Zoom was used a lot for class meetings. Upon further research into the program, I learned you could record and share on your screen. I used this resource then to virtually teach my lessons when we had no contact with students this spring. These resources have provided another way to connect and create with my students in my music classroom.

# Table of Contents

# List of Figures

# Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

As an elementary general music teacher, I come in contact with students at their early stages of life. They have a thirst for learning, exploring and wanting to understand what they see around them. When they come into our rooms, our job as teachers is to help grow and nurture them so that we can continue the engagement and interest throughout their educational careers and beyond. Music plays a major role in the development of a child. It allows them to be expressive, creative, social, and interact with other cultures and be life-long learners. All these qualities are important in developing a well-rounded human being and are the foundation of my music education philosophy.

Formal education is an important part of a person's development. The variety of subjects in a general school curriculum are meant to grow the child mentally, socially, and emotionally, which will help them become well-rounded individuals. Schools are supposed to provide students a chance to experience, explore, and learn about a variety of subjects that will assist and give them skills that they will use throughout the rest of their lives. Ultimately, schools are a growing base of knowledge, encourage and develop life-long learners which can lead to prosperity, and success.

Each subject that is covered in the school curriculum has an important function in impacting each student's education. Math and reading are building blocks to every other subject that a student will encounter throughout their education and into their adult life. They apply directly into the sciences and social studies subjects. Science begins to apply a higher level of thinking and exploration in a student's education. This is where students begin to develop problem solving skills and finding solutions. Social studies starts to connect to the history and cultures around them and all over the world. This class helps students see and understand the

world around them. Physical education helps the student learn how to be healthy and active. When students learn how to take care of themselves better, it influences their learning intake and development. Computer classes help students navigate and understand the technology influence that we live in today. Technology is constantly growing and changing at a rapid rate. When students understand how technology functions it will help them in the future with their encounters with technology. All of these subjects help students toward the goal of being a well-rounded individual.

With music education incorporated into schools curriculums, we are able to be a big part of the development of becoming a well-rounded individual, as well as contributing to students being life-long learners. We help them develop not just literacy and mathematical skills. Music is engaging their emotional expressiveness, outlets for them to be creative, an opportunity to develop their social skills and immerse them into multicultural experiences through that music. I have studied many philosophers including Estelle Jorgensen, who expresses this idea in her journal article, *School Music Education and Change* (2010):

> As musicians and teachers, we stand firmly against crass materialism and for a broad, liberal, and humane education. Even as we foster a love of music and the skills to make and take it in our students, we may also be able to contribute in important ways to a general education that goes beyond mere literacy, numeracy, and technical skills. We are in a position to imbue lived life with imaginative thought and practice and nourish the hearts, minds, souls, and bodies of our young and old alike. (pg. 23)

The impact of music education in a students' life is profound. Music allows students to learn and grow in new and different ways than in the regular classrooms.

One of the key ways of developing a well-rounded person is to learn how to recognize and express emotions. Many people emotionally connect to music and respond to music throughout their lives.  People often find an ease in expressing emotions with others through music across a variety of good and bad days. Music education affords students the opportunity to listen, respond, and develop this critical network of social emotional learning. By getting students to connect and express themselves emotionally, they are able to know themselves better, connect with friends and family, and better relate to their own communities. Zoltán Kodály (1985) has contributed greatly to this aspect of my music education philosophy:

>With music, one's whole future life is brightened. This is such a treasure in life that it
>helps us over many troubles and difficulties. Music is nourishment, a comforting elixir.
>Music multiplies all that is beautiful and of value in life. (pg. 9)

Music education naturally lends itself to giving students the opportunity to explore this part of themselves.

Bloom's taxonomy often refers to the highest order of thinking as the ability to create  (Anderson et al., 2001). Creativity is a necessary part of music education. As a well-rounded individual, creativity allows for maximum expression of well-roundedness. It helps them to think outside of the box when problem solving and coming up with creative solutions. It also connects to being able to express yourself to others. Music education gives students tools and skills to grow creatively as a musician and as a person. Within the music classroom, students are encouraged to take creative risks. Math and reading, on the other hand, have set rules and guidelines making it difficult to be creative. In the elementary music classroom, students are able to show their creativity in a variety of ways, through improvisational singing, playing instruments, movement, composition, as well as using technology as a vehicle for their creative

ideas. The opportunities are endless with a great variety of ways for each student to show their musical creativity.

Learning to interact with other people is an important skill we all need to practice and learn while we are in school. Each subject in the school curriculum offers opportunities to do so, but music is a subject that depends on social interactions. This may occur in large or small group activities, when students are performing or being audience members, or when students give feedback and ideas to musical discussions. Building these social skills in music will help students become collaborative and engaged learners in all areas of their life. It is a needed skill as students get older, progress through the rest of their education, and into their adult lives to be productive members of society.

Finally, music brings an important focus of multiculturalism in students' educational experience. The importance of this aspect of music is magnified as the elementary general curriculum is losing time and focus on history and culture in the world. David Elliott (2005) discusses the importance of multicultural music:

Additionally, teaching and learning a variety of Musics comprehensively, as music cultures, is an important form of multicultural education. Why? Because the process of learning and "entering into" unfamiliar Musics activates our self-examination and the personal reconstruction of our relationships, assumptions, and preferences about other people, other cultures, and other ways of thinking and valuing. (pg 9-10)

Since music is a very human component in our lives, it gives support to this when other classes can not. Music multiculturalism contributes to a students community, connecting with their identity, and the enjoyment that music brings. All cultures incorporate music and music is an important way for students to experience these cultures.

In our music classrooms, we have the opportunity to explore other cultures in many ways, such as dances, learning of the lives and impacts of composers, historical connections to folk songs that are found all over the world, patriotic songs, world instruments and how they are used in that culture, and musical styles and genres. Students connect more to music and what it represents when they have a better understanding and appreciation of where it comes from. In our schools, we have rich resources of many students and their families that represent a variety of cultures. Teachers can also provide opportunities, such as class or school talent shows, to allow students and family members to showcase music from their cultural background. Schools and communities are filled with many opportunities to support multicultural music and to help broaden the historical and cultural information for students to learn and experience.

In conclusion, my music education philosophy has been influenced by philosophers such as, Estelle Jorgensen, Zoltán Kodály, and David Elliot. My job as a music teacher is to help my students grow and nurture them, helping them to be expressive, creative, social, and to interact with other cultures, and last but not least become life-long learners. Overall, music is multidimensional and important in helping the students fully develop as people. Although music can be connected to other subjects, such as math and reading, it stands alone in developing the students expressiveness, creativity, social skills, and ability to relate to other cultures, and that is why these are such an important part of my philosophy and music should be a long stand academic subject included in school curriculums.

## How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

In this graduate report, my philosophy is reflected in the lessons in a couple of ways. Students are able to express their creativity when composing an open string melody on the ukulele. This opportunity gives them a chance to further explore and create musical ideas on a

new instrument. Also, within the lesson plans, the student's will have opportunities to socially connect and collaborate with their classmates when creating their compositions. They are able to develop social skills such as team work and communicating their ideas that will help them towards becoming a well-rounded person.

# Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s)

## Lesson Plan 1

**2014 Music Standards Addressed:** National Music Standards Addressed (2014)

**MU:Pr4.2.3b** When analyzing selected music, read and perform rhythmic patterns and melodic phrases using iconic and standard notation.

**MU:Pr5.1.3b** Rehearse to refine technical accuracy, expressive qualities, and identified performance challenges.

### Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students have already started to learn basic strumming up and down patterns, read and play the C chord, parts of the ukulele, and label the strings of the ukulele.

### Lesson Objective(s)

1. Students will strum a variety of rhythmic patterns on a C chord.
2. Students will play the melodic line in Apple Tree on the ukulele.

### Assessment of the Lesson

During this lesson, assessments that are used mostly consist of informal assessments. Students are observed during the lesson on the participation and progress made when singing the Apple Tree song and show the steady beat and also when strumming known and created patterns on the ukulele. At the end of the lesson, students have the assignment to practice the melody line of the song and to record themselves playing. This will allow myself, the teacher, to give a quick assessment on an individual's progress so that they know how to take the students where they are at for the next lesson.

**Instructional Resources, Materials and Technologies**

- Ukulele

- *Use Your Ukes* (Corbière, 2019, pg. 18-19)

- White Board

- Solfege Hand Signs Music Go-Rounds

- Apple Tree folk song

- Digital Spinner with strumming patterns (paper arrow visual - copy after lesson plans)

- Ukulele chord charts: C chord

- Lesson 1 Powerpoint that includes all visuals during the lesson.

## Lesson Sequence

**Entry Activity/Transition:** Echo sing the solfege do-mi-sol-la. Sing in 4 beat phrases and have students sing it back. After a few warm-up phrases, start to sing phrases from the song Apple Tree.

ssmssm - ssllssm - ssmmssm – ssllssd

**Activity #1: Apple Tree (introduce song)**

1. Rote teaches the words along with hand signs.

    a. 4 beat phrases

    b. 8 beat phrases

    c. Whole song

        i. Teacher sings song with hand signs, students listens and copies hand signs.

2. When the words are taught, create a steady beat motion with body percussion.

3. Create a few different body percussion patterns for students to try each time the song is sung.

    a. Pat - clap - pat - clap

    b. Clap - snap - clap - snap

    c. Pat - clap - snap - clap

4. Have students create their own pattern while singing the song.

**Assessment:** Informal assessment of students singing the song and showing the steady beat.

**Transition:** Teacher says, "Now let's pick up our ukuleles and get ready to add them to our song.

**Activity #2: Ukulele Strumming Practice on C chord**

1. Review through the different parts of the ukulele and left-hand finger numbers.

2. Review the C chord on the ukulele. Have students strum the C chord on the beat while they sing Apple Tree.

3. Review strum patterns (down, down-up, down-up-down, etc.). Use a digital spinner with different choices. Try each of the patterns with the Apple Tree song.

    a. Strumming patterns on spinner are:

        i. Down, down, down, down (↓ ↓ ↓ ↓)

        ii. Down, down-up, down, down-up (↓ ↓↑ ↓ ↓↑)

        iii. Down, down, down, down-up (↓ ↓ ↓ ↓↑)

        iv. Down-up, down-up, down-up, down-up (↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑)

4. After the students have practiced different patterns as a group, have them select their own pattern to play on their own when singing the song as a group.

**Assessment:** Informal assessment of students strumming their own patterns.

**Transition:** Teacher says, "Now we are going to take everything we have been working on today to play the solfege of our Apple Tree song on the ukulele."

**Activity #3: Transfer Apple Tree Solfege syllables to strings on Ukulele**

1. Review through the strings of the ukulele from the bottom to the top (A - E - C - G)

2. Review the solfege syllables with the song. Explain that sol will be the G string on the ukulele. Replace the sung sol with a downward thumb stroke on the G string. Continue to sing mi, la, and do when they occur in the song.
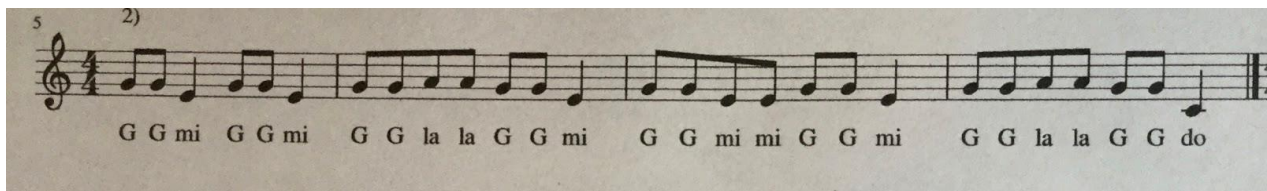


**Figure 2.1 Visual Example of playing the G string and singing solfege for the rest of the pitches.**

3. Replace the sung mi with the E string on the ukulele, played either as a downward thumb stroke, or an upward stroke with the middle finger, depending on student choice and ability. Perform the song, playing sol and mi, and singing la and do.
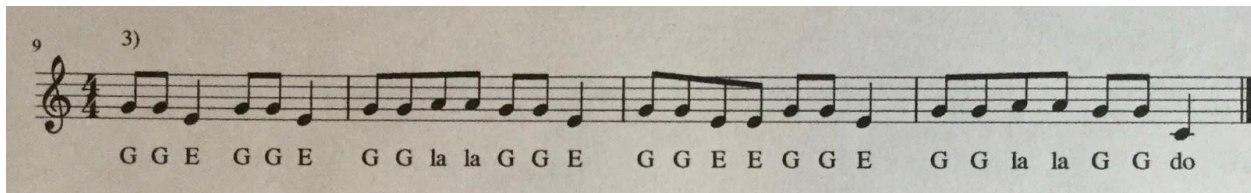


**Figure 2.2 Visual Example of playing G and E strings and singing solfege for the rest of the pitches.**

4. Replace the sung la by playing the A string. Perform the song, playing sol, mi, and la on the ukulele and singing the last note, do.
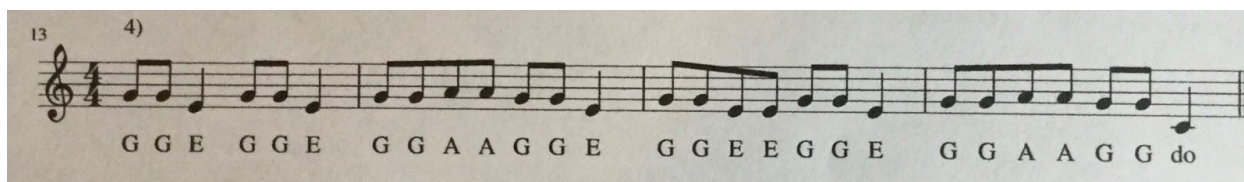
**Figure 2.3 Visual Example of playing G, E and A strings and singing solfege for the rest of the pitches.**

    5.   Replace the sung do with a downward thumb stroke on the C string. Perform the whole
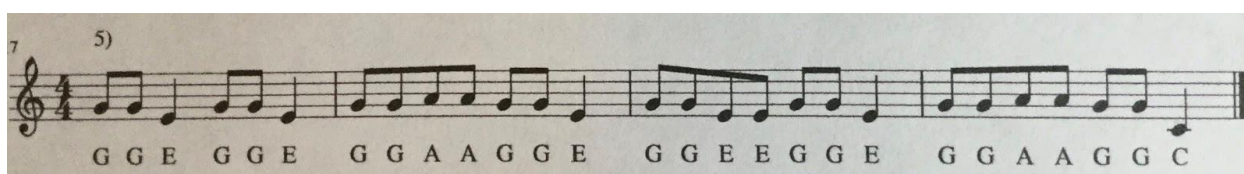
        song on the ukulele.



**Figure 2.4 Visual Example of playing all strings (G, E, A, and C).**

    6.   Add the words of the song while playing it on the ukulele.

**Closure/Summative Assessment:** Have students record themselves playing the melodic part and

send the video to the teacher. Teacher will assess on playing technique, correct notes, and

rhythm.

**Lesson Reflection**

       In this lesson, one of my goals was to apply principles I learned in my Kodály training

(Eisen, 2010). I did this by incorporating the singing solfege and using the hand signs to establish

the tone set that was going to be used in the lesson and connecting it to the ukulele. Along with

using my Kodály knowledge, I want to practice other approaches that could be used. This lesson

came from a book resource called *Use Your Ukes*, which had several contributing educators

create lessons for the book. The Apple Tree lesson that I used came from this source and was

written by an Orff certified educator, Aimee Curtis Pfitzner (Corbière, 2019, p. 18-19). I always

have the goal to find ways to incorporate other approaches in my instruction and liked how this

lesson was a new way for me to explore teaching ukulele. My final goal in this lesson was to

create a lesson that I can confidently use the ukulele and to continue to improve on my playing ability along with my students.

The students learned to take their prior knowledge of the melodic pitches (do, mi, sol, and la) and connect them to the open strings of the ukulele and the song Apple Tree. This gives students a chance to use songs from their 1ˢᵗ grade repertoire that use the same solfege pitches and now are able to play on the ukulele strings. They used prior knowledge of the rhythmic patterns when strumming their ukulele. With this lesson being used at the beginning of a ukulele unit, students continued to practice and play the C chord on the ukulele, identify the parts of the ukulele and play the open strings on the ukulele.

I used several instructional strategies in this lesson, such as rote teaching, echoing, hands on learning and modeling. Near the beginning of the lesson, I used rote teaching and echoing when teaching the song Apple Tree. This allowed students to learn the song multiple times and practice it in small amounts before being expected to sing the song themselves. It helped them also to establish the tone set that was used in the introduction of the lesson and prepare them for the ukulele portion of the lesson. Throughout the lesson, students had opportunities to have hands-on learning during the activities. Students used hands signs when singing the solfege, practiced rhythmic patterns strumming on the ukulele, and plucked the melody. Finally, modeling was used throughout the lesson when I was rote teaching the song, practicing the strumming technique, and when they learned to play the melody on the ukulele.

Moving forward and thinking about how to adjust this instruction for the future, I found that in this setting of virtual instruction that the pacing is different than a regular in-person classroom setting. During this lesson recording, there was not the give and take that you normally have when you teach. This allows you to know what students are getting in the moment

and what they are struggling with during the instruction. In the future, when I try this lesson again in-person with students, I will need to be aware that more time and possible repetition will need to happen.

This instruction has expanded my thinking and enhanced my teaching practice by enabling me to have an opportunity to connect my Kodály training with ukulele instruction. This lesson also made me think through the curriculum sequence I want to use when teaching ukulele. I have found resources that either focused on chords, finger picking, or a combination of both. In this lesson, I liked how it incorporates both approaches on the ukulele. *Use Your Ukes* recommends C as one of the chords to be learned by beginners (Corbière, pg. 18-19). My lesson is an introductory lesson on the individual open strings that gets them in the direction of knowing individual notes on the strings.

My teaching practice has also been enhanced through the virtual teaching approach. This lesson made me think of alternative ways to instruct and how to use technology in a new way. This process made me rethink my instruction and how students may perceive it through a computer. Also made me think about what visual, aural, and physical elements in my lesson so that all learners are engaged through the lesson.

## Lesson Plan 2

**2014 Music Standards Addressed:** National Music Standards Addressed (2014)

**MU:Cr1.1.3b** Generate musical ideas (such as rhythms and melodies) within a given tonality and/or meter.

**MU:Pr.4.3.a** Apply teacher-provided and collaboratively-developed criteria and feedback to evaluate accuracy of ensemble performances.

**MU:Pr.4.3.b** Rehearse to refine technical accuracy, expressive qualities, and identified performance challenges.

**MU:Pr.5.3.a** Perform music with expression and technical accuracy.

**MU:Pr.5.3.b** Demonstrate performance decorum and audience etiquette appropriate for the context and venue.

## Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students should already know the basic playing position, parts of the instrument, and strumming on ukulele. They will know how to play and strum a C chord and the open strings of the instrument. From the prior lesson, students will know how to play the Apple Tree melody on the open strings of the ukulele.

## Lesson Objective(s)

1. Students will compose an eight-beat rhythm that is transferred to a created melody using the ukulele open strings.

2. Students will perform a Rondo form using composed pieces on ukulele.

## Assessment of the Lesson

This lesson included a combination of informal and a formal assessment. The informal assessments include assessing students when they are divided into two groups: one group playing the Apple Tree melody and the other strumming the C chord. I also would informally assess them when they were in their groups creating the compositions. This would be able to give me a chance to give one-on-one or group guidance, answer questions, and give support. The formal assessment in this lesson is when students are performing the piece in rondo form. For this assessment, I created a rubric that would be used to assess the composition and growth the groups made.

**Instructional Resources, Materials and Technologies**

- Ukulele

- *Use Your Ukes* (Corbière, 2019, pg. 18-19)

- Background Beat soundtrack (SoundTrap)

- Apple Tree PowerPoint Lesson 2

- Apple Tree Composition Worksheet

- Apple Tree Rhythm Cards (Corbière, 2019, pg. 40)

- Pencils/Erasers/Writing Boards

**Lesson Sequence**

**Activity #1: Open Strings Review (w/ Beat Background)**

1. Review each of the strings, starting from bottom to top (A-E-C-G).

2. Add the Soundtrap Beat Background. Have the students play with you when you play each string for 8-beats steady beats each and have 4-beats in between to move to the next string.

3. Still with the Beat Background, have the students echo play what they hear from you on each string. Incorporate the upcoming rhythms that will be used later in the lesson (quarter note "Ta", paired eight notes "Ti-Ti", quarter rest "silent", and 2 sixteenth-single eighth note "Tika-Ti")

    **Assessment:** This will be an informal assessment while the students are echoing the patterns. Will be assessing the students playing the correct string.

 **Transition:** Echo play patterns of the Apple Tree Song.

 (GGEGGE - GGAAGGE - GGEEGGE - GGAAGGC)

**Activity #2: Review Apple Tree Melody**

15

1. Ask the students, "what was that song we worked on last time?"

   a. Answer = Apple Tree

2. Next bring up the slide that shows the written music that we needed the last lesson on.
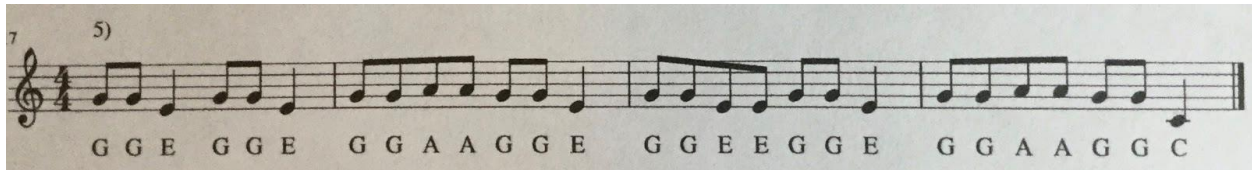


**Figure 2.5 Visual Example of Apple Tree melody played on ukulele open strings.**

3. Have the class play the melody on their Ukuleles.

4. Split the class into two groups, one group strum a steady beat on a C chord and the other group plays the melody.

5. Have groups switch parts.

   **Assessment:** Informally assess students when they are in the melody playing group on how well they accurately play the melody.

**Transition: "**Now let us use what we have learned with our open Ukulele strings and create our own patterns for our song."

**Activity #3: Apple Tree Composition (Teacher Example)**

***When going through each step, show students the Teacher Example. This will help give a visual for students when they go work on their own later.***

1. Speak and clap through the Apple Tree cards. Then create an eight-beat rhythm using the Apple Tree cards. When you find the pattern you want to use, write it down on your composition worksheet. *Refer to Figure 2.6 for the Apple Tree Cards and Figure 2.7 for the Composition Worksheet.*

2. Practice the rhythms by clapping and speaking the apple varieties.

3. Then transfer the apple rhythm to their ukulele's G string and perform the rhythm as a group.

4. Then add the G and E string to the rhythm, choosing which string to play for each apple variety.

5. Add the A string into the melody, along with the G and E string.

6. Add in the C string into melody if students choose to use it.

   a. Can recommend to students that ending on a C or G string would be two good choices to end on.

7. Give students some time to work on their own creations. Use a worksheet as a way for students to notate their ideas.

   **Assessment:** Informally assess students during their work time. Give comments, answer questions, and give any support as students compose.

**Activity #4: Perform a Rondo Form**

1. When the groups are ready to perform, explain the pattern of the Rondo Form (ABACA…). The A section is the Apple Tree song and the in between sections are the student compositions.

   A       Song* *(students can either strum C chord or play melody)*

   B       Group 1 Melody

   A       Song

   C       Group 2 Melody

   A       Song

   ect.

2. Assign the order of groups and perform the apple compositions as a rondo.

**Closure/Summative Assessment:** Summative assessment will assess the group

compositions and performance during the Rondo Form. Rubric (*Figure 2.8*) is provided after the

lesson plan will be used during assessment.

| | | |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| ♩<br>**Jazz** | ♩<br>**Rome** | ♫<br>**Gale** |
| ♫<br>**Cortland** | ♫<br>**Braeburn** | ♫<br>**Empire** |
| 𝄽<br> | 𝄽<br> | ♫<br><br>**Winesap** |
| ♫<br>**Fuji** | ♬<br>**Honeycrisp** | ♬<br>**Macintosh** |
| ♬<br>**Ginger Gold** | ♬<br>**Jonagold** | ♬<br>**Granny Smith** |
| ♬<br>**Jonathan** | ♬<br>**Cameo** | |

**Figure 2.6 EXAMPLE of Apple Tree rhythm cards used for composition.**

Name: _____          Teacher:_____

## Apple Tree Uke Composition

Follow the steps to create your Apple Tree Ukulele Composition:
1. Create a 8-beat rhythm using the Apple Tree cards. When you create the pattern you want to use, be sure you can clap and speak it confidently.
2. Then on the Ukulele, only use the G string and play the rhythm you created.
3. Next add the E string along with the G string. Begin to figure out when you want to play both these strings and write out your plan below.
4. Add the A string with E and G string. Do the same process as before and write where you want the A string to play.
5. Finally add the C string with the other strings.
   **Tip:** try to end your piece either on G or C string. It will help it more sound complete.

Figure 2.7 EXAMPLE of Apple Tree Composition Worksheet

| Apple Tree Composition and Rondo Form Performance Group Members:_____ | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **3** | **2** | **1** | |
| **Rhythm Accuracy** | All rhythms were played correctly and together as a group with no mistakes. | Most rhythms were played correctly and together as a group with only 1-2 mistakes. | Some rhythms were played correctly and together as a group with several mistakes. | _____ |
| **Melody Composed** | Composed melody was played together as a group with correct notes with no mistakes. | Composed melody was played together as a group with correct notes with 1-2 mistakes. | Composed melody was not played together as a group with several mistakes. | _____ |
| **Performance** | Performed A section and group section. Also respecting other groups during their performance. | Performed most of A section and group section. Little distraction during other groups during their performance. | Performed little of A section and group section. Distracted other groups during their performance. | _____ |
| **Total** | | | | **__ / 9** |

**Figure 2.8 EXAMPLE of Apple Tree Composition and Rondo Form Performance Rubric**

## Lesson Reflection

My main goal for this lesson was to get students to create and perform using the skills learned from the previous lesson. For example, students created a composition using the solfege do, mi, sol, and la on the open strings of the ukulele, created a rhythmic apple words pattern and then added it into a Rondo form. I find that I can get students to prepare, present and practice a concept, but I have been wanting to get them to the level of taking more ownership of what we have learned. I wanted this lesson to help them apply their knowledge and practice these skills to a performance level.

The students learned to create a melody using the solfege do-mi-sol-la, which are the open strings of the ukulele, and to combine them with a rhythm apple eight-beat pattern. After students created their composition, they performed it in a Rondo Form, which tied it back to the Apple Tree song.

There are a few instructional strategies in this lesson. I used direct instruction and modeling is used throughout the lesson, especially when I go through step-by-step of how students create their compositions. Hands on learning occurred during the lesson with students playing their ukuleles during the instruction. They worked on the skills that were going to be used when creating their compositions. Students used peer collaboration when working in small groups to create and practice performing their compositions.

One adjustment that I may make in the future is the amount of time students may need in groups to compose and practice composition. In a given 30-minute class, the video instruction takes about 20 minutes and the remaining 10 minutes may not be a good amount of time to fully complete the assignment. I would need to allow an additional class or two depending on how the class progresses through the composition.

This instruction helped expand my thinking and enhance my teaching practice by giving the students more accountability in their learning. It is difficult to let go as a teacher and let them take more control, but I have found that when I allow students to step up more, they will have more accountability and pride in what they create.

# Chapter 3 - Reflections

Over the course of the past few years working on my master's degree at Kansas State University, I have grown and expanded my knowledge of music education and how I can improve as an educator. This degree program has given me instructional guidance along with knowledge in music educational research and the music theories, philosophies and history that has shaped education to what it is today. I will be discussing the few areas in how my experience in this program has shaped my teaching, my students' learning, my students' learning by discussing how my thought process has changed and the effect my classroom environment.

When entering into the graduate program, I was finishing my certification in the Kodály Methodology. My training helped me with the short- and long-term sequencing and planning of my instruction, how to approach the melodic and rhythmic concepts, and how to be musical with my students. Through the K-State graduate program, I learned more about other teaching methodologies and approaches that are used in the elementary music classroom. I am always looking for other teaching approaches that can support my Kodály-based instruction and the methodologies class I completed in this program gave me a chance to learn and implement a variety of approaches in my instruction. Completing my half-note unit plans for the methodologies class helped me develop a Kodály-based unit that incorporated Orff-Schulwerk, Music Learning Theory, and Dalcroze methodologies (Lange, 2005; Mead, 1994). This class helped me better understand and approach these different methodologies and teaching approaches that I have little experience with.

The results of using my half-note unit this past year was exciting and challenging. I found that I challenged myself to teach in new ways that my students responded to and enjoyed. I was able to see creative expression from my students when they were able to explore musically. This

has given me the interest to look into other concept units that I have in my curriculum to see where I can continue to implement a variety of approaches to my instruction. I even want to look into more information about furthering my education with an Orff certification sometime in the next few years.

With my teaching instruction growing and changing through my experience, my students' learning was greatly impacted during this process. By learning about different methodologies and approaches, I have been able to give them more opportunities to be musical. Through my Kodály training, my students have developed more tuneful singing and literacy in reading pitches and they have also grown in their rhythmic reading skills when we use instruments, read music, and create compositions. In my half-note unit, my students explored more movement exploration with Dalcroze, they have created vocal ostinatos and Orff orchestration, and practiced using the Macro and Micro Beats and audiation with Music Learning Theory. By bringing more diverse teaching opportunities to my students, they have been able to learn and explore music in a variety of ways.

As a result of my graduate work, I have pushed myself to broaden and apply my knowledge of music education in my thought processes, especially as I plan my instruction and utilize my resources. In the World Music Pedagogy class, we had discussions and readings about authenticity and cultural relevance that now makes me look at music a new way and makes me reflect on my instruction and how present music to my students. I have started to evaluate the resources that I use and try to find the authenticity in the folk songs that I use so that I can represent songs as genuinely and culturally relevant as possible. When working on our final project in this class, I challenged myself to research and utilize resources I have never used before in my teaching career. It made me look at music from a different culture and try to see it

in a different perspective. With that perspective, I approached my planning of the unit in a new way and learned to value another approach.

During my Educational Research Methods course, I grew to have a better understanding and appreciation in the process and time that research has to endure. I learned how to utilize different research databases and resources that can further my own instruction and potential research projects in the future. This class has given me more confidence to develop and create my own research projects.

Since I travel from classroom to classroom on a cart, it can be difficult to reflect on how the classroom environment has changed throughout my graduate experience. I have constant change and need to have flexibility when I have to teach in a variety of classroom settings and even buildings. Even though it is difficult to define the physical classroom space because of the constant setting changes I teach in, what I have tried to bring into the different classrooms are the opportunities for musical growth that connects the curriculum to student lives. For example, when I was in early preparation of outlining and creating a ukulele unit for one of my 3rd grade classes, I was trying to connect some of the approaches that I had learned from my World Pedagogy, Research, and the Methodology class. Instead of just taking a single resource and teaching the students from that, I branched out through a variety of ukulele resources, method books, research and teaching articles, and looked into center activities that could relate and connect with the students more.

The opportunities and experiences I have gained from the graduate program are numerous. It has given me the resources and tools to continue to grow and work on my instruction, finding new ways to innovate my students learning in my classroom, challenge and

expand my thought process on teaching and music education, and continue to search for ways

that I can improve on my classroom environment.

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