

Understanding and identifying musical intervals:

A comprehensive K-12 curriculum

by

Thad Reist

B.A., Kansas State University, 2001

A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

School of Music, Theatre, and Dance
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2025

Approved by:
Major Professor
Dr. Peter Weinert

Copyright

© Thad Reist 2025.

.

Abstract

This report presents lessons from a curriculum designed to introduce the concept of musical intervals to lower elementary students, and to continue the understanding of musical intervals as students move upward by grade from K-12. I have both expanded upon others' games and activities and invented my own games and activities to teach the concept of intervals using music classroom materials such as buckets, boomwackers and instruments, xylophones and piano. I have composed short pieces and exercises to demonstrate intervals to all grades. This curriculum begins at the kindergarten level, when students are introduced to the concepts of two pitches being the same, different, higher, and lower. By the 12th grade, students will be able to identify all intervals between the unison and octave. I believe the recognition of intervals is beneficial to becoming a well-rounded musician and is one of the initial vital steps to unlocking musical potential. Consequently, many students learned musical intervals and were able to identify them in the music they were learning.

During my Masters' studies, I was exposed to multiple music education philosophies and theories of music teaching, all of which were new to me. I do not have a bachelor's degree in education, and during my first year of teaching I knew that I needed to acquire more knowledge to be a successful music educator. In learning music education philosophies, what resonated the most for me was Christopher Small's assertion that music is ultimately about relationships of many types. In my Organization and Administration of School Music Programs course, the overarching theme was also about relationships. This was of vital importance to my development as an educator because I have been building a music program in my district from the ground up. Crucial to this is the relationships that I, the sole music teacher, develop and nurture with students, their parents and the community. Furthermore, bringing people together for musicking,

with the goal of producing better people and societies, is important to me. In creating these lessons about musical intervals, my challenge was to build trust and make this activity fun for students. Students are naturally competitive, turning the learning of intervals into a game is a way to do so. In my goal to build a successful music program from K-12, learning foundational concepts such as intervals is critical to ear training, sight reading and playing, composition, and improvisation.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	vii
Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy.....	1
How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching.....	5
Chapter 2 - Lesson Plans.....	7
Key Goals for K-12:.....	8
Lesson Plan 1	8
2014 National Standards (2014) Addressed	11
Prior Knowledge/Skills	11
Lesson Objective.....	11
Assessment.....	12
Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies.....	12
Lesson Plan 2	12
2014 Music Standards (2014) Addressed	13
Assessment.....	13
Lesson Plan 3	14
2014 Music Standards (2014) Addressed	15
Assessment.....	16
Lesson Plan 4	16
2014 Music Standards (2014) Addressed	17
Assessment.....	17
Choir/Band Lesson Activities	18
Lesson Reflection	20
Chapter 3 - Reflections	25
References	30

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Bunny hop Motif	10
Figure 2.2. Nose Wiggle Motif	10
Figure 2.3. Tail Wiggle Motif.....	11
Figure 2.4. Buckets and xylophone set up for Unison, Perfect 5 th , and Octave.	14
Figure 2.5. Buckets and xylophones set up for diatonic intervals.	16
Figure 2.6. Buckets and bells set up for chromatic intervals.	18
Figure 2.7. Choir/Band diatonic intervals exercise.....	19
Figure 2.8. Band/Choir chromatic intervals exercise.....	20

List of Tables

Table 2.1. Lesson Plan 2 Assessment Rubric.	14
Table 2.2. Results after the initial run through of the lesson plans.....	21
Table 2.3. Results at the end of the year from multiple lesson plans completed.....	22

Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

To explain my teaching philosophy, I believe that sharing information on my musical background is relevant. I am the eldest sibling in a musical family. My brother and my two sisters both played piano from an early age, we are all blessed with perfect pitch. I started formal piano lessons at age 6 at a Catholic music conservatory, but my mother provided “lessons” prior to that. Every week my parents drove us to lessons, which were twenty miles away. By high school I played classic piano literature such as Beethoven piano sonatas. Additionally, in high school I got my first guitar and taught myself how to play by listening to the radio and figuring it out. Guitar has been part of my life ever since playing in rock bands, and now in the classroom every day. I attended elementary and high school in a very rural district in the northeast corner of Kansas. Band started in 5th grade, I chose to play the baritone, an instrument I continued playing from 5th to 12th grade. I enjoyed playing and took pieces to state competitions. I was also part of the school choir, sometimes singing, but I did some accompanying as well. As an undergrad, I continued piano and began organ as well. I did not pursue band in college except for two semesters, when I was part of a tuba/euphonium ensemble and concert band. My vocal experience as an undergrad was being a member of the Men’s Glee Club. After graduating, I became a church organist/pianist, which I continue to do. Piano and organ have always been my main instruments.

I have never thought of myself as a “band” or “choir” person, which gives me a unique perspective not only teaching music, but for this project. Music theory and intervals were easy for me because I visualize on a keyboard what I hear. I believe that learning music theory and intervals is easier for keyboard players because of the visual aspect of the instrument. One goal of this project was to establish a visual representation that students could associate intervals with.

I know most of my students do not have a keyboard background, but if they can begin to identify intervals in the music they listen to, I can build a foundation for a successful music program.

I teach music—kindergarten through twelfth grade. My goal for music in my classroom is three-tiered. First, music should be fun. This sounds simple, but getting caught up in the exploration of music philosophy and fun rarely comes up. Second, students should gain self-knowledge and self-growth from music. Last, music should allow students to better understand relationships. Music should be explored and analyzed through listening, ear training, participation, and performance. All of these aspects should be fun. I introduce music to kindergarteners as rhythm, feeling, and singing. For each consecutive grade, music should get a little more complicated. Something more complex should be added and explored. Band and choir are introduced in sixth grade. By twelfth grade, certain characteristics of music should be imprinted upon the students' minds. Students should be able to recognize simple forms, such as twelve bar blues. Additionally, students should also be able to match pitch and recognize intervals. I agree with David Elliott that the most important aspect of music is self-growth, and self-knowledge. According to Elliott (1995) "The central goal of each self is to order the self, or strengthen the self" (p. 113). Continuing further on that theme, Elliot (1995) writes "developing the knowledge required to meet significant challenges in a particular context of domain of effort leads to self-growth, self-knowledge, and enjoyment. These consequences contribute, in turn, to the development of self-esteem and happiness" (p. 119). I believe that self-esteem, happiness, and self-growth are possible through the avenue of music.

Of equal importance to that is Christopher Small's (1998) purpose for music: relationships. He writes:

...that the way people relate to one another as they music is linked not only with the sound relationships that are created by the performers, not only with the participants' relation to one another, but also with the participants' relationships to the world outside the performance space, in a complex spiral of relationships, and it is those relationships, and the relationships between relationships, that are the meaning of the performance. (p. 47-48)

One must know him or herself before being able to understand any other relationships, such as interpersonal relationships, individual to society relationships, group to group, culture to culture, and religious relationships. Small (1995) also coined the term “musicking”, which describes music as an action and not as a thing. Small defines musicking as “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing (p. 9). Relationships are created through the act of musicking. Combining these key components of self-growth, self-knowledge, and relationships found in of the music education philosophies of both Elliot (1995) and Small (1998) with the importance of music being fun is my objective of this report.

The general goal of education is to imbed critical thinking skills in students, thereby preparing students for adult life after school. Most students will end up having jobs, families, and be contributing members of society. Music education can foster critical thinking skills by building character, promoting working in groups, encouraging self-confidence, and becoming more culturally literate. Music builds character through the work that goes into it. Practice takes discipline, and being able to focus on a musical work builds character. Participating in music as part of a group imparts teamwork and cooperation with others. Getting up in front of people,

whether in a formal recital or in an informal gathering, builds self-confidence. Most people do not get up in front of people naturally, so self-confidence must be built up. Music is a good way to do that. Because music is so entrenched in our society and helps transmit societal values, music education is important because it teaches culture and a culture's values. This leads to students being culturally literate. Students would ideally be literate in many cultures through their music. Music also lends to self-examination as a student learns music, through looking at relationships with others, and opinions one might share (or not share) with others. Therefore, music education is critical to students becoming well-rounded members of society.

Music helping people to understand relationships is the most relevant part of Christopher Small's (1998) philosophy to me. Relationships with others throughout life are an ever changing, but constant thing. People will come and go throughout a student's life. There will be many types of people: good friends, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and jerks. Music teaching, in line with this philosophy, creates a social event. Social events are human interactions and relationships. When students musick, they explore relationships at a creative and performing level through a shared experience. This shared experience leads to communication, empathy, and finding common ground. Good relationships that begin at a young age through music lead to good relationships throughout life. Multiple good relationships create better communities and a better world. Relationships can also be not only about people to people, but relationships can be about people with cultures, or people with spirituality. There is no better way to get to know a different culture than through creative arts. The relationships a student has with classmates, participating together in music, will both enrich their personal lives, and enrich their relationships with others. Their ability to understand and empathize with others from different walks of life will improve.

I teach music because music is fun. Pep band is fun and adds so much to a sporting event. Singing is fun. Playing an instrument is fun, whether solo or in a group. Being part of a band or choir is fun. Being in a rock band is fun, there is no feeling like being in a garage or basement with three or four of your friends, creating your own music. Being in sync as a group is fun.

To me, learning about the nuts and bolts of music is fun. Learning chords, chord progressions, scales and intervals is fun. Being able to identify intervals, chords, and pieces of music by ear is fun, and something to be proud of. My job as an educator is to explain things to children so they can understand. Getting students interested in music is directly related to fun, especially for elementary students. If I can make music fun for kindergarten through fifth grade, then hopefully when they join band and/or choir in sixth grade, they will see the fun in these music groups. Hopefully they will also be eager to put the hard work into making their music as good as possible, and get the benefit of critical thinking, self-improvement, and fostering good relationships.

Listening and participating in music offers a unique emotional experience. Music promotes self-growth, self-knowledge and an understanding of relationships. A strong school musical program provides a foundation for success in life by first focusing on inward knowledge and then using that knowledge to understand other relationships in life. By making music fun, I hope for my students to participate in music for the rest of their lives.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

In my three years of teaching music, I believe I have cultivated good relationships with my students, successfully creating a safe space for learning. One of the greatest fears we all share is looking foolish in front of our peers. I have assuaged this fear for my elementary students by being the “fun” guitar playing teacher, not afraid to look or sound silly. For my junior high and

high school students, I greet them, I ask them questions, and am not overly critical. I let them be themselves in the classroom. Sometimes I show off my perfect pitch for them since it is an easy way for students to understand that I know what I am talking about.

Nonetheless, most students do not find learning musical intervals fun. This contrary to a tenet of my philosophy. During these lessons, I witnessed several students of various grades rolling their eyes. One way I have attempted to make these lessons fun was by using students' natural sense of competition. I have turned learning intervals into a game. Sports is a big deal at my school and I hear something about them every day. In dividing a class into teams, I have created interest. Nonetheless, competition in music class must always be friendly. On face value, learning intervals is not fun. However, by creating a safe space for learning and fostering friendly competition, it can become fun. The results are not only better musicians, but better people with improved critical thinking skills, sense teamwork, and self-confidence.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plans

Musical intervals are the foundation to melody, harmony, and music literacy. Walter Piston (1941) noted that:

The unit of harmony is the interval. This name is given to the sonority resulting from the simultaneous sounding of two tones, although it is more accurately applied to describe the “distance” between two tones, measured by their difference in pitch. (p. 3)

Learning and identifying musical intervals is not only crucial to becoming a musician, it is crucial to building a music program since it is a foundational skill for the understanding and performing of music. Intervals form the basis for understanding concepts of music theory such as scales, chords, and harmony. This knowledge develops a musical ear that enables students to analyze, compose, and improvise music successfully. The NAFME Music Standards (2014) do not approach intervals directly, but address them through singing, playing instruments, analyzing, and composing music. Music intervals are addressed in the classroom through the following processes:

- Creating: Students create, evaluate and refine musical ideas. These ideas will use musical intervals.
- Performing: Students select, analyze, interpret, rehearse and present music. This process involves the recognition and application of musical intervals.
- Responding: Students listen, analyze and interpret music. Identifying pitch relationships and intervals in this process.

Key Goals for K-12:

For this project, I have divided students into four levels of instruction. Level 1 is kindergarten to 2nd grade. Level 2 is 3rd grade to 5th grade. Level 3 is junior high, grades 6-8. Level 4 is high school, grades 9 to 12. The individual goals for each level are as follows:

- Level 1: All students will identify whether two pitches are the same or different. After hearing two pitches, all students will differentiate whether one pitch was higher or lower than the other pitch. A majority of students will hear and identify the following musical intervals: Unison, Perfect 5th, and the Octave.
- Level 2: A majority of students will hear and identify the following musical intervals: unison, major 2nd, major 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th, major 6th, major 7th, and octave. These are the diatonic intervals in a major scale.
- Level 3: A majority of students will hear and identify all musical intervals within an octave: unison, minor 2nd, major 2nd, minor 3rd, major 3rd, perfect 4th, tritone, perfect 5th, minor 6th, major 6th, minor 7th, major 7th, and the octave.
- Level 4: Like level 3, a majority of students will identify all musical intervals within the octave. A majority of students will understand select musical intervals application in their class literature, such as dissonance and expressive intent for example.

Lesson Plan 1

The objective of this lesson plan is twofold. The first objective is to develop basic pitch awareness. The second objective is to establish the concepts of same/different and high/low. This lesson plan is for level one students, Kindergarten to 2nd grade. Students are seated on the floor in rows of four.

We begin Activity #1 focusing on same/different notes. I put a xylophone on the floor in the front of the classroom. I do this to create a visual element to the same/different concept. I begin to play pairs of notes, both same and different. I question the students about what I am doing. Some students notice that for the same notes, the mallet hits the same xylophone tone bar; however, for different notes, the mallet hits a different tone bar. For assessment purposes, I ask random students whether I am playing same or different notes. After everyone has had a turn identifying same/different, I call on a student to lead the game. The student called plays notes as I did, calling on other students to identify same/different. After continuing this for a short time, I move the piano. We now play the same game, but since I am playing the piano and not the xylophone, the students cannot see my hands. The visual element is removed, meaning the students must rely on their ears only.

For Activity #2, I return to the xylophone and again play pairs of notes. This time, the focus is on high verses low. Again, the visual helps the students notice that high notes on the xylophone are to the right of low notes, and that low notes are to the left of high notes. I play pairs of notes, asking students which one is higher or lower, such as “Is the first note I play, higher or lower than the second note I play?” After all students have an opportunity to answer, I again go to the piano and play pairs of notes, continuing to call on students to identify high and low. Like Activity #1, this prevents students from solely relying on visual cues for the correct answer.

Activity #3 is “The Bunny Game.” This game is a popular elementary music classroom activity combining the concept of high/low with movement. The origins of the game are unclear, however, there are multiple versions by educators on YouTube. I have modified the game for my own use with high and low lessons. I am at the piano, playing motifs and narrating the events of

the game. The motifs I play on the piano correspond to high or low movement by the students. At the start of the game, the students are bunnies, hopping along in the woods (Figure 2.1).

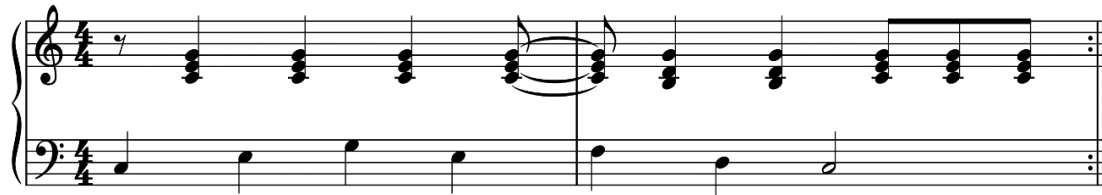


Figure 2.1. Bunny hop motif

The bunnies pause their hopping and wiggle their noses. I play a high-pitched piano line (Figure 2.2).

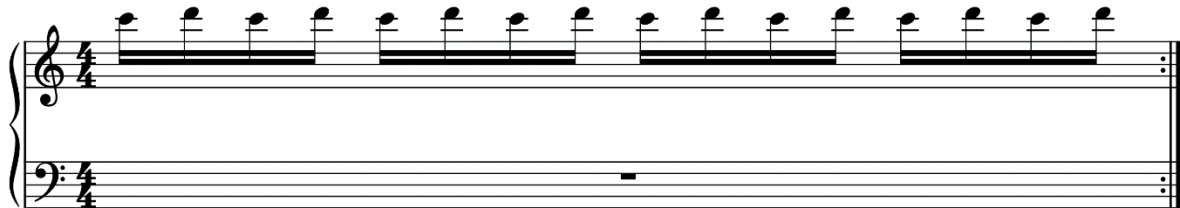


Figure 2.2. Nose wiggle motif (high).

The bunnies the stop to wiggle their tails. I play a low-pitched piano line (Figure 2.3).



Figure 2.3. Tail wiggle motif (Low).

Throughout the rest of the game, if I play either of these motifs, the students know to hop as bunnies or wiggle their noses or tails. The game continues with various high/low scenarios such as going to sleep, digging holes, eating carrots, reaching for the stars, and running from snakes. These activities are included in the narration of the story. I often improvise these activities on the piano, playing various up/down and high/low piano lines. The game ends as it began—with the bunny hop motif.

2014 National Standards (2014) Addressed

MU:Re7.2.2a: Describe how specific music concepts are used to support a specific purpose in music.

MU:Pr4.2Ka: With guidance, explore and demonstrate awareness of music contrasts (such as high/low, loud/soft, same/different) in a variety of music selected for performance.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Prior skills for this lesson are the ability to hear and move to music.

Lesson Objective

The objective for this lesson is to hear and identify whether two pitches are the same/different. Additionally, students experienced through movement the concept of high and low pitches.

Assessment

Assessment is observing student reactions to the pitches and music being played. This game appears to be enjoyed by everyone. Students often request to play this at different times during the year. Importantly, high and low pitches are easily identified by all students after this game is played.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

This lesson will require xylophone and piano.

Lesson Plan 2

This lesson plan is for Level 1 students, kindergarten through 2nd grade. Prior knowledge for this lesson is the ability to differentiate same/different and high/low. The objective is to identify the intervals of unison, perfect 5th, and octave. The materials needed for this lesson are buckets, boomwackers, xylophone, and piano.

I have created a game, “The Bucket Game”, to teach the musical intervals of Unison, Perfect 5th and Octave. Students are again seated on the floor in rows of four. In the front of the room I have three, 5-gallon buckets. The buckets are oriented with space between each, and are labelled from left to right as Unison, P5, and Octave. In each bucket is a single boomwacker with the pitches C, G, and C in ascending order from low to high. In front of the row of buckets is a xylophone (Figure 2.4). I have removed all the tone bars except for low C, G, and C and octave higher, resulting in only three tone bars on the xylophone. I place one student at the xylophone and one student at each bucket with the corresponding boomwacker. I am at the piano. I play middle C twice. I instruct the xylophone student to play the lowest tone bar twice, then I tell the student with the lowest boomwacker to play it twice. I repeat this process for the G and the octave higher C. I then rotate the students through the different stations.

After all students have played the xylophone and/or boomwackers in this activity, I explain that we are now going to play a game. I am going to play two of these notes. The first note I play will always be the low C. The students' job is to figure out the second note that I am playing. There are three options. If I play the first note twice, it's a unison. If I play the first note and the second note(G), it's a perfect 5th. If I play the first note and the last note (high C), it's an octave. Students are encouraged to use the xylophone and/or boomwackers to check their guesses. I repeat the intervals on the piano until students figure out the correct interval.

2014 Music Standards (2014) Addressed

MU:Re7.2.2a: Describe how specific music concepts are used to support a specific purpose in music.

MU:Pr4.2Ka: With guidance, explore and demonstrate awareness of music contrasts (such as high/low, loud/soft, same/different) in a variety of music selected for performance.

Assessment

I assess the students through direct observation. I recorded the percentage of correct identification of intervals three times during these lessons. Once during the first time the lesson was implemented, once at a halfway point in the nine weeks, and once at the end of the nine weeks. At the end of the game, we hum the intervals together as a class. The following rubric was also used for assessment:

	Emerging	Approaching	Meeting
Recognizing the given interval	Struggles to recognize or confuses given interval with other intervals	Sometimes recognizes the interval, may need some prompting	Almost always identifies the interval
Focus and Participation	Rarely participates and struggles to try	Participates but is sometimes hesitant	Actively participates and tries their best

Table 2.1. Lesson Plan 2 Assessment Rubric.

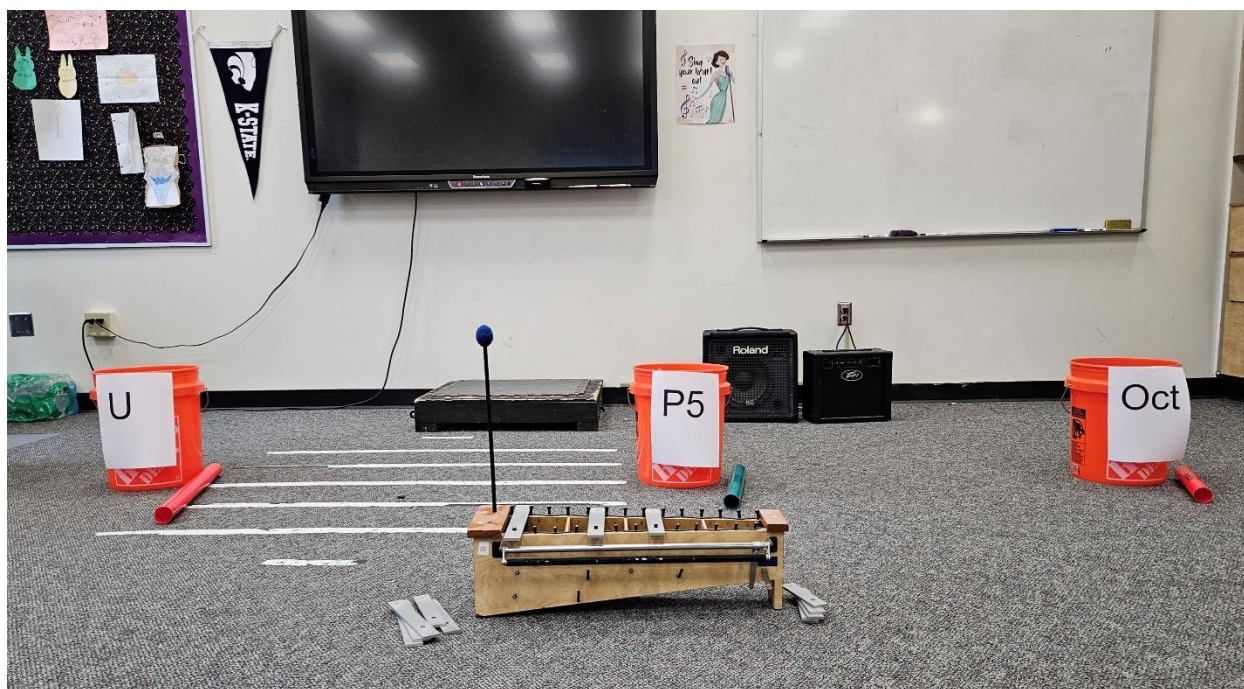


Figure 2.4. Buckets and xylophone set up for unison, perfect 5th, and octave.

Lesson Plan 3

This lesson plan is for Level 2 to Level 4 students (3rd-12th grades). This plan is a continuation of the game in Lesson Plan #2, when students identify unisons, perfect 5ths, and

octaves. The game proceeds by adding more intervals, thereby becoming more difficult. The lesson objective is to identify all diatonic intervals from a major scale. Those intervals are unison, major 2nd, major 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th, major 6th, major 7th, and octave. Instruction materials include buckets, boomwackers, xylophone, and piano. When students begin to consistently identify intervals, students can be divided into teams. The game continues with right answers counting as points for the team.

For level 2 students (3rd-5th grades), students normally sit on the floor in rows of four during class. In contrast, Levels 3 and 4 students no longer sit on the floor for class but sit in their choir and band sections. At the front of the room is the row of three buckets, along with the boomwackers and altered xylophone. We begin the same game, identifying the intervals of unisons, perfect 5ths, and octaves. After everyone has had a turn and I feel that most of the class has a handle on these intervals, I add two more buckets, two more boomwackers, and two additional tone bars to the xylophone. The two new intervals added are the major 3rd and perfect 4th. The game continues with these two new intervals. After most of the class can identify these two new intervals, three more intervals are added to the game (major 2nd, major 6th, and major 7th), along with the corresponding buckets, boomwackers, and xylophone tone bars. At this point in the game, a C major scale is represented (Figure 2.5). This includes the musical intervals unison, major 2nd, major 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th, major 6th, major 7th, and octave.

2014 Music Standards (2014) Addressed

MU:Re7.2.5a: Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how responses to music are informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context.

MU:Re7.2.Ka-MU:Re7.2.8a: Essential Question: How does understanding the structure and context of music inform a response?

Assessment

I complete assessment through direct observation. I recorded the percentage of correct identification of intervals three times during these lessons. Once during the first time the lesson was implemented, once at a halfway point in the nine weeks, and once at the end of the nine weeks. I also used the same rubric shown on Lesson Plan 2 (Table 2.1). At the end of the lesson, we hum the intervals together as a class.



Figure 2.5. Buckets and xylophones set up for diatonic intervals.

Lesson Plan 4

Lesson Plan 4 is for Level 3 and Level 4 students (6th to 12th grades). This is the most advanced level of The Bucket Game. The objective is to be able to identify all intervals in a chromatic octave. These intervals include unison, minor 2nd, major 2nd, minor 3rd, major 3rd, perfect 4th, tritone, perfect 5th, minor 6th, major 6th, minor 7th, major 7th, and octave. Prior

knowledge is the ability to identify all intervals in Lesson Plan 3. Instruction materials are buckets, marching band bells, and piano. The boomwackers and xylophone are not used for this lesson because they are not chromatic, but diatonic. The game is played the same as prior lessons.

2014 Music Standards (2014) Addressed

MU:Re7.1.E.5a: Identify reasons for selecting music based on characteristics found in the music, connection to interest, and purpose or context.

MU:Re7.2.E.5a: Identify how knowledge of context and the use of repetition, similarities, and contrasts inform the response to music.

Assessment

Assessment for this lesson is the same as for Lesson Plans 2 and 3.

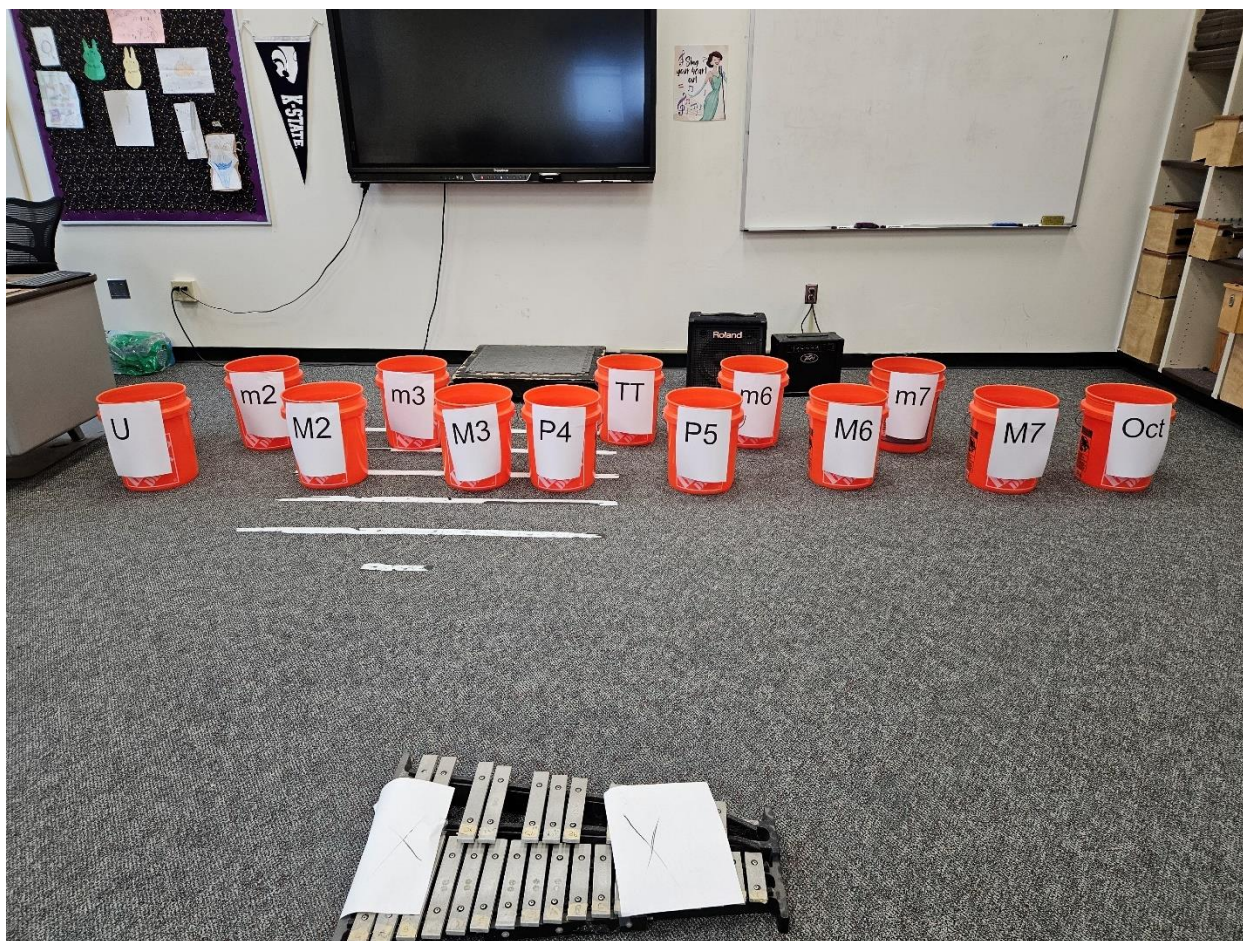


Figure 2.6. Buckets and bells set up for chromatic intervals.

Choir/Band Lesson Activities

This is not a full lesson plan, but a warm up activity that reinforces intervals for choir and band students in grades 6-12. These activities can be added to any junior high or high school choir or band lesson plan.

Basic singing skills are required for choir. Low singing voices can sing an octave lower than written. The only instruction material needed is a piano. Choir students sing the actual interval names for each measure. For example, on the first measure, students would sing “Un-i-son,” matching the rhythm of the notes. Divide the class into two groups. The first group always

sings the bottom note, while the second groups always sing the top note available. Run through this exercise, repeating so everyone gets to sing in both groups. Eventually have them try to sing them acapella.

For band, I have made these exercises in concert B-flat for all band instruments in all the correct keys and clefs. The exercises shown in figure 2.7 and 2.8, are for B-flat trumpet.



Figure 2.7. Choir/Band diatonic intervals exercise.



Figure 2.8. Band/Choir chromatic intervals exercise.

Lesson Reflection

Some of my goals for this project were met. A majority of students from 3rd-12th grades could identify the intervals of unison, perfect 5th, and octave. A majority of students from 6th-12th grades could identify the diatonic intervals from Lesson Plan 3. The first time these lessons were implemented in the classroom, the numbers of students who could successfully identify intervals was low. Some of the students said they were bored. Students at all levels improved each time we did the lessons.

I had more time available to work on intervals with K-5 students. The majority of junior high and high school music time had to be devoted to group and individual rehearsal. These lessons were completed in April and May of 2025. For all elementary classes, we worked on

intervals at least once a week for the last nine weeks of school, with some classes receiving interval instruction two to three times a week. For junior high and high school, we worked on intervals once every two weeks for the last nine weeks of school, usually on a Friday for a fun activity. My latter goals for high school (having students understand the application of intervals in their own literature) was not met. This was likely due to a lack of time to pursue those goals. In graphing the results, I began at Lesson Plan Two because nearly all students at Level 1 could distinguish between same/different and high/low by my assessment. The following tables illustrate the identification of intervals at the start of lesson implementation (Table 2.2) versus interval identification at the end of the year (Table 2.3).

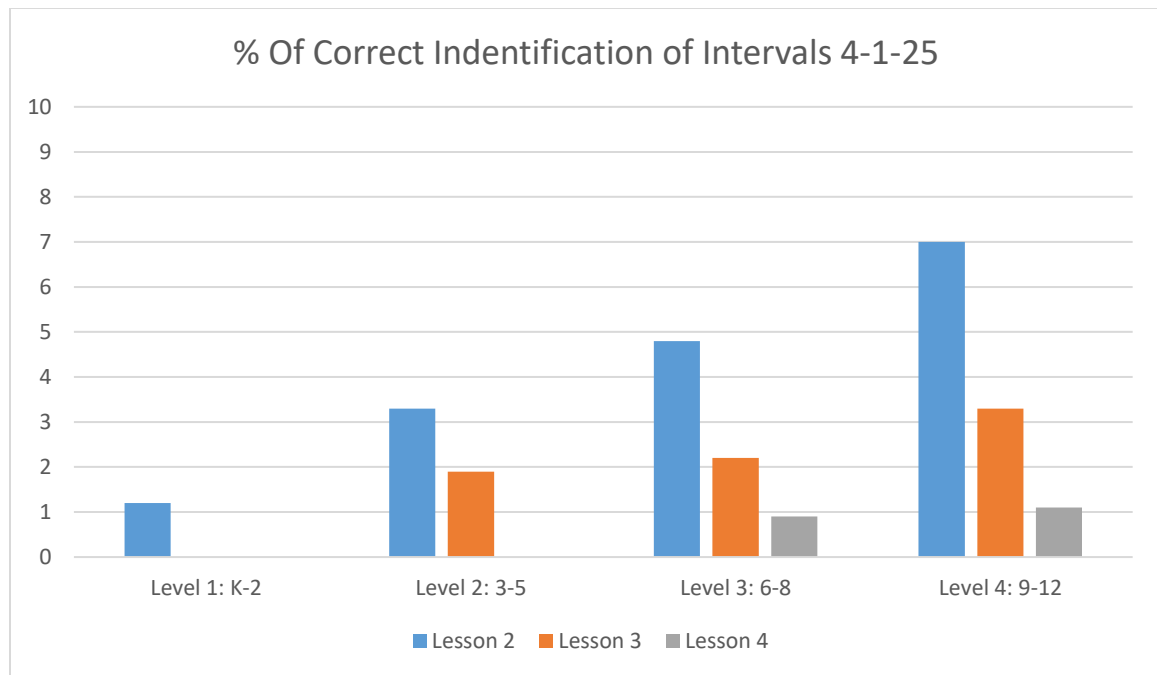


Table 2.2. Results after the initial run through of the lesson plans.

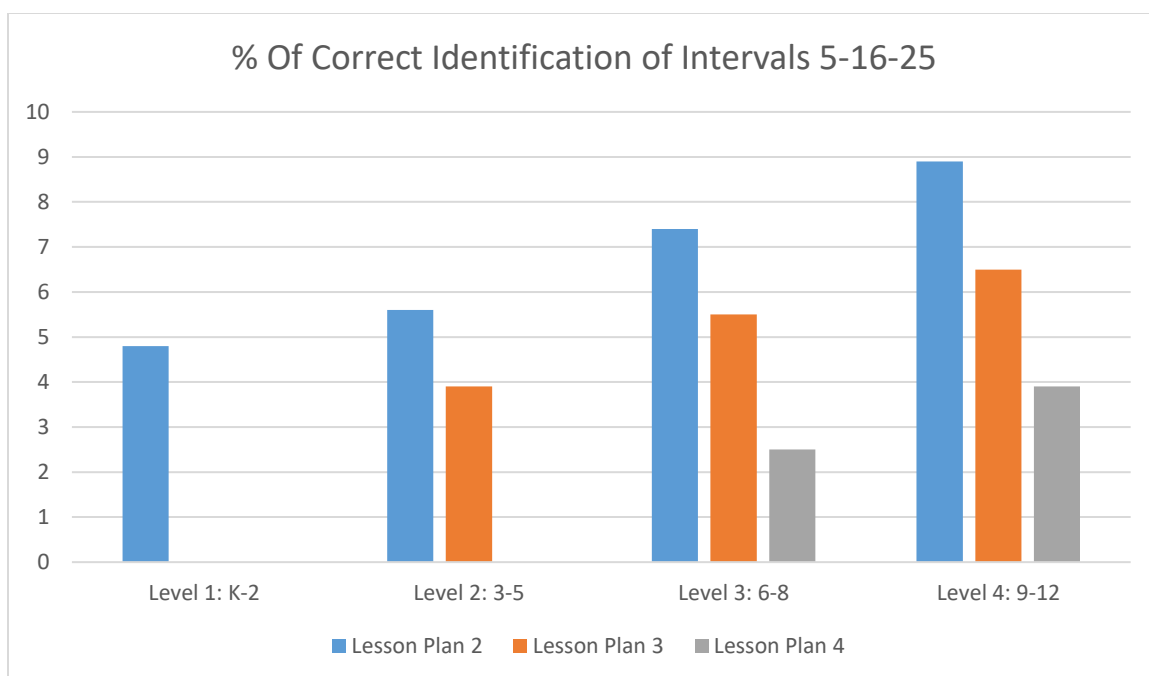


Table 2.3. Results at the end of the year from multiple lesson plans completed.

I also collected identification of intervals data from late April, roughly halfway through the nine weeks. Since there was little improvement from the results from Table 2.2, I did not include this data. Nonetheless, students went from being introduced to intervals to moderate success in identifying them. As more intervals were introduced, the more difficulty students had in identifying intervals in only nine weeks. As more intervals were introduced, students had more difficulty identifying them. I expected these results, considering that this concept was new to students.

These are lesson plans I will continue to use throughout an entire year. I expect better results from students after an entire year rather than just nine weeks. Using this foundation of intervals, more complex ideas in music theory can be introduced. For example, in junior high and high school, the identification of types of triads would be a next logical step. From these initial

goals of learning and identifying intervals, I believe that new goals can be made scaffolding off of this foundation. Possible new goals could include:

1. Creating: *MU:Cr1.1, MU:Cr2.1, MU:Cr.3.1, MU:Cr3.2*
 - Students using knowledge of intervals to compose and improvise music. As well as refining and presenting their compositions.
2. Performing: *MU:Pr4.1, MU:Pr4.2, MU:Pr4.3, MU:Pr5.1, MU:Pr6.1*
 - Playing or singing music with accurate pitch, demonstrating knowledge of musical intervals in the structure and interpretation of musical works.
3. Responding: *MU:Re7.1, MU:Re7.2, MU:Re8.1, MU:Re9.1*
 - Identifying musical intervals in a variety of genres of music and analyzing their role in a composer's expressive intent.
4. Connecting: *MU:Cn10.0, MU:Cn11.0*
 - Transforms the knowledge of musical intervals in music to deeper musical understanding across cultures. Using life experience to connect to music.

Upon reflection, I may in the future add color as a visual aid for teaching intervals. One way this could be accomplished is by having elementary students create their own game with different colors for different intervals. Bingo cards with intervals would also be a fun game. For this project I focused on hearing and identifying intervals, with the added visual of buckets and xylophone. In the future I would combine elements of music notation into the lessons, such as seeing what thirds, look like notated. Students would then be able to identify certain intervals in their band or choir scores.

I also will improve writing out my lesson plans for elementary music. During my plan time, I run through what I want to do for each class in my head, and only write generic notes.

Writing more down in deeper detail would help accomplish larger curricular encompassing goals. During elementary class periods, I do not really observe the clock. I try to closely observe and “feel” when things are working or not. I do not like holding “teacher-centric” elementary music classes, I would like for everyone to be involved. For junior high and high school, class periods most of the time have to be more traditionally teacher led because of the deadlines of concerts, league band and vocal meets, Kansas Music Educators Association, regional and state competitions.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

Prior to my teaching career, I worked for company that built pipe organs in Lawrence, KS. I have also had a second job as a church organist since 2009. Both of these jobs were more related to my undergrad degree, when I studied piano and organ. During my time working for the organ company, I began to feel unfulfilled in my career as an organ builder. These feelings were never related to my church organ positions, just to organ building.

In March of 2022, I took a hard, honest look at my strengths and decided to pursue another career, this time in education. After all, I have always been good at anything musical, I should be a great teacher (so I thought). Indeed, I had taught piano and guitar lessons to kids over the years. Additionally, my father was in education for 45 years and had a successful career.

Since I grew up in a rural part of the state, I thought that I would be more comfortable in a rural district. Looking back, I had so many excellent teachers in my K-12 experience. Even thirty years after graduating high school, I still would see and talk to several of my elementary and high school teachers when I visited my hometown. One teacher in particular I still talk to was not only my elementary music teacher, but my junior high choir, and then my high school principal. After a little research, I discovered that many rural schools only had one music teacher for the whole district. Such teachers taught elementary general music, all choir, and all band. This idea appealed to me because a single music teacher for one school could potentially create their own curriculum and implement it how they see fit, with administration approval of course.

Continuing in March of 2022, I began an email correspondence with an administrator at Emporia State. I inquired about their Transition to Teaching program. I enrolled in it and was scheduled to begin classes in the fall. In April of 2022, my current Superintendent called me out of the blue, requesting to meet and talk about the Music Director position at USD 251, North

Lyon County. He had gotten my name from the administrator at Emporia State, recognized my last name because he had formerly been a superintendent in a district in the northeast corner of the state, where I am originally from. He knew my father, who as I have stated, was in education for 45 years.

During my initial meeting with the superintendent and one of the principals, I learned the details of the position. Here was a small, rural district that needed a K-12 music teacher. The person who accepted this position would be walking into a music program at ground zero, with nowhere to go but up. I soon found out that the majority of students were not meeting national standards in music. I noticed that many, if not most of my students were not able to use standard notation, improvise rhythmic and melodic ideas, or understand rhythm, pitch or form. Most choir students couldn't match pitch or follow parts; in fact, they didn't understand the concept of parts. At least half of all band students had little understanding of proper mouth placement, intonation, breathing or posture.

During my first year, I soon realized that I needed to be better. This position demanded that I improve at relating to students and improve my classroom management. I also needed to be more comfortable in my own skin while teaching. If I was going to create a great program and be successful, I had to begin with me. My online classes through Emporia State were not helping me because they were not music education classes. At the end of my first semester of teaching, I knew I had to try something different that would help me get on a better track to being not just a music teacher, but being a great music teacher.

When I found the summer master's program at Kansas State University, I felt relieved. K-State is my undergrad alma mater, I bleed purple. A big selling point of the program was that

it is held in the summer instead of during the school year. I started the masters' program after one year of teaching.

My time in this program has laid a solid foundation for further growth as an educator. Teaching K-12, I chose a variety of courses to reflect that age and subject range. In my first summer of the Masters' program, I took Survey of Vocal Solos. Learning about vocal tessitura vs. range, gender appropriateness, and text meaning were all essential for me, a new choir director. I have used what I learned in that course many times over, sending vocal soloists to regional and league contests.

In the same summer I also took Improvisation and Composition in the Elementary Classroom. This course was an eye opener regarding the endless creative possibilities for music class. Elements of visual arts, including color, shape, space, and texture can be combined with music lesson plans to help students discover new ways of thinking and feeling about music. I have learned to tap into my own creativity and inspire students to be creative as well.

In History and Philosophy of Music Education, I learned that music education trends come and go in cycles. Music and the arts are often the first "unnecessary" subjects to be cut, seemingly at the whims of political shifts. I had the unique perspective of an inexperienced teacher, gathering useful and critical information on the differing philosophies. In the end, Christopher Small (1998) resonated the most with me. Building and maintaining relationships of all types is the most important key to not only building a successful music program (my job), but overall success as a human being. I was hired for this position because of relationships. This theme of cultivating relationships, combined with good planning and hard work, was echoed in Organization and Administration of School Music Programs. Jon Wefald (President of Kansas State University from 1986-2009) turned a university spiraling into irrelevance into a successful

and bustling powerhouse, forged to compete in the 21st century. Being a lifelong Kansan, pride in being a K-Stater is at an all time high.

In my second summer of the masters' program, I took the Theories of Music Teaching course. Through this course, I received validation on some of the teaching methods I was using. I was using constructivism before I knew what it was. I have always liked the idea of students having a hands-on approach to their own lessons. Students being actively involved in singing, moving, improvising, playing instruments, and listening are all part of my elementary classroom. For band, I had students lead their own sectional rehearsals, with gentle nudges from me. I identified with Piaget and Vygotsky, in that students learn through a series of stages, building upon what it already known. Interactions with the physical environment are just as important as social interactions in cognitive development and learning.

In World Music Pedagogy, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and Special Populations in Music Education, I was exposed to new ways of thinking about students from different backgrounds and cultures. My ways of thinking/teaching may not be the best for kids who have grown up much different than myself. Likewise, I began to consider how do students with various disabilities fit into the music education classroom. Their involvement in music is important not only to their communication and social skills, but to their emotional and cognitive development. They should not be considered "other." Special Education students give valuable contributions to my classrooms.

I am looking forward to Advanced Instrumental Conducting this summer, I do not have much experience as a conductor. I hope to learn invaluable skills in this class to be a more complete educator. The masters' program at K-State has remade me, a middle-aged inexperienced teacher, into a more informed, more thoughtful, and more knowledgeable person. I

feel immense gratitude. I always feel rejuvenated and inspired going into a new year after a summer masters' session. I spent many years stuck in a career with little personal rewards. Being a music educator is important because it touches and shapes so many lives. Building a music program at a small school is something I will proudly leave as a legacy.

References

- Piston, Walter. (1941). *Harmony*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Elliott, David J. (1995). *Music Matters*. Oxford University Press.
- Small, Christopher. (1998). *Musicking*. Wesleyan University Press.
- National Association for Music Education. (2014). *Core Music Standards*.
<https://nafme.org/myclassroom/standards/core-music-standards>
- songs to learn musical intervals*. earmaster. (n.d.). <https://www.earmaster.com/products/free-tools/interval-song-chart-generator.html>
- Spanswick, P. by M. (2025a, March 12). *Intervals – training or teaching? George Bevan*. Piano Educator, Author, and Composer. <https://melaniespanswick.com/2018/03/10/intervals-training-or-teaching/>
- Sheldon, L. (2023a, March 30). *6 ways to teach intervals that aren't "here comes the bride."* uTheory. <https://info.utheory.com/6-ways-to-teach-intervals-that-arent-here-comes-the-bride/>