

Utilizing body percussion in the elementary music classroom

by

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Abstract

For my project, I created a series of lessons to facilitate student learning in elementary music based on the principles of the Orff approach and the Music Learning Theory. These lessons formed a unit covering half notes in Western music notation and included both familiar and unfamiliar methods of instruction during my teaching. First, students echoed various body percussion patterns to expose them to the half note rhythm contextually within four beats. Afterwards, they echoed body percussion of an unknown song to become familiar with the rhythm prior to hearing the melody played on the piano, followed by adding the lyrics. Next, students were taught the rhythm syllables, and practiced using them through aural training to identify both spoken and played half notes. Finally, students were introduced to the Western notation and began reading familiar patterns and songs, as well as unfamiliar classical music. Students finished the unit by creating body percussion compositions to accompany a song on their upcoming concert. Teaching a song and rhythms using body percussion was new to me, and I was surprised at how quickly the students were able to transition to ear training as well as notation reading after including it in the preparation and exposure stage of the unit.

During my time in Kansas State University's Master of Music program, I gained clarity in my teaching philosophy, which specifically benefited my upper elementary and middle school general music classrooms. Prior to beginning this program, I struggled with knowing what to teach in the middle school classroom when the students were not preparing for a performance. As I completed various assignments and courses, it became clear that a design shift in the structure of the specific class was beneficial, and I used my knowledge gained through the program to create a new scope and sequence for the class. Students in my middle school music class now explore popular music through ukulele instruction, participate in a cover band project,

and complete a wide variety of projects that inspire their creativity and connectedness to music.

Changing up this class structure encouraged me to shift my mindset, trust my philosophy, and experiment with new methodologies and lessons even in my elementary music classroom.

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Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

When reflecting on my teaching practice, one of the keys to authentic reflection that leads to updates of my teaching choices is my teaching philosophy. The remarkable thing about this reflection process is that my philosophy shifts year after year. Although, the longer I teach, the smaller the changes become. While the scope of music education is vast, I attempt to whittle it down to a few key points to guide my curriculum choices throughout the year. These points reflect education in general as well as within the music classroom, that education is meant to prepare children to become the best citizens they can be in whatever capacity their future holds. I came to this conclusion by studying the role of education throughout history.

The purpose of current schooling is to prepare students for the foundational elements, interactions, and experiences of contemporary society. Since the dawn of time, humans have been teaching others, although the primary purpose of teaching was different. In the beginning, humans taught each other survival skills, including how to gather food and kill animals. Over time, education has evolved along with the quality of human life. Education moved beyond simply surviving, and its purpose shifted to teaching others how to thrive. As communities grew, the need for leadership emerged, requiring education on how to lead. I could continue along this line of reasoning, but I hope I have made my basic view clear: education's origins stemmed from the need for survival, evolving far beyond the dreams and views of our first ancestors. As long as we as humans strive to find ways to make our lives better and easier, the possibility of continuing education to improve basic living conditions is limitless.

While we no longer educate for survival in the primitive image, the purpose of education is to share knowledge and skills with another person for their betterment. From the moment a child is born to the time they leave their parents' home, the parents attempt to teach their children

the knowledge and skills they need to know when the child is grown and leaves the home.

However, the need to work outside of the home, coupled with the ever expanding knowledge base of the world, leads parents to realize they are not masters at everything, and require help from others in teaching their child the skills needed to succeed. These masters, or teachers, provide the knowledge they deem important for multiple children of the community, giving the children a more equal chance of surviving and thriving when they leave their parents' homes.

Within a country as large as the United States, a system of formal education ensures that regardless of location, financial status, or any other inhibitors, children receive a collectively agreed upon set of knowledge and skills by the time they graduate from the public school system around age 18. These basic skills would allow children to become autonomous over their own life, or what we consider adults. Schooling and education can continue well past the age of 18 of course, as colleges, apprenticeships, online courses, and even social media, exist for the purpose of sharing knowledge with others.

If the purpose of formal education is to create a foundation of knowledge and skills that allow a child to establish themselves as an autonomous, self-sustaining adult member of society regardless of the infinite possible futures, then we must assume certain aspects of the society to be true. First, we must assume that the knowledge base and skills set assumed for children to learn remains stable across a given distance, such as the district, city, region, state, and so on. Currently, people move cross-country for higher education, jobs, and other personal reasons. This foundational knowledge and skill set must be similar around the country for anyone to relocate successfully, meaning that they would not need to learn an entirely new set of skills just by living somewhere new. Second, we assume that the current members of society agree upon a set moral code. I mean that people generally agree that certain mindsets, habits, and beliefs need

to be taught to children with the intention that these beliefs improve the quality of life of society. For example, people generally believe that violence should be avoided as a first response to challenges. This belief must be taught and modeled for children to instill that belief in them. Finally, the last assumption that must be in place is that a society believes in the concept of wishing the good of another. A person who believes that others deserve happiness and success will view education as a positive impact on society, especially when the purpose is to help people develop knowledge and skills for success.

Having established why we educate children and what I believe to be core values and assumptions about education, we move on to the discussion of how music fits into formal public education. First, when attempting to discuss music unrelated to the people involved, it simply becomes an auditory experience. Even attempting to rationalize music apart from the person involved in creating or listening to it leads down a path of little substance. David Elliot said “the auditory events we call ‘musical works’ usually result from the actions of people,” (2005). Music itself requires the human element, whether that includes an emotional response or the performance, and without it, music becomes nothing. Therefore, I believe music must be viewed as both a noun and a verb due to the importance of the human element.

I find an analogy to art to be useful here to further explain my point. Visual art would not exist without the artist who created the piece, nor would it exist without a viewer. Art created solely for the artist, without an intention to share it with the community, is still received by the artist: they have taken on both roles of the creator and appreciator. Similarly, music would not exist without musicians nor an audience, and like an artist creating for themselves, a musician can take on both roles if they choose to create music for themselves. A working definition of create is needed here: when I refer to creating music, I mean to include the various musical

processes including but not limited to composing, performing, improvising, and singing. At this time, I am excluding the audience role from creating, as I believe listening has its own unique role within music. Someone could ask whether there's a difference between a toddler and a concert pianist in this picture. Using the art analogy, one could respond with a comparison of a finger painting and a Van Gogh. In these scenarios, the child is creating art and music for themselves, a parent, or a teacher, whereas the professional artist and musician have dedicated their lives to their craft for audiences of all ages. Both visual creations are considered art, therefore, both musical creations are considered music. Admittedly, the intended audience probably experiences vastly different emotions when presented with the toddler art and music versus the professional counterparts. I propose that music is an auditory experience, created by musicians using the tools or instruments they see fit to elicit an emotional response from a given audience.

Before finally discussing why include music in formal education, we must also explain how music affects the human spirit. Having discussed the creative side of music, let's attempt to describe how music affects the audience. Admittedly, most adults take on this role as they leave formal education when they include music within their lives, and the reasons for inclusion are primarily based on emotional responses. Within my own life, specific songs trigger memories from different areas of my life, whether it was a family trip, an elementary music performance, or the death of a classmate. Music has the power to unlock emotions, allowing a person to know themselves better. It opens the mind to the possibility of new perspectives and understandings both of yourself and how you relate to the world at large. Knowing that most students will unconsciously take on the role of audience, even with streaming their own music on their work time, the role of the audience member cannot be understated.

With this working knowledge of what music is, we can discuss the reasons why we include music in formal public education. First, we must state that the purpose of formal education is to create better citizens and a better society. Second, I believe that music opens someone up to new perspectives on life. By combining these two statements, I believe that the purpose of music education is twofold. First, we must teach students that music has the power to stimulate the mind, soul, and body. Second, music teachers educate students on ways to incorporate music in their lives to unlock the potential of that power. Since music has two sides of the human element, the creator and audience, that means that as music educators, we must include both elements within our instruction. Reimer described something similar when he outlined an experienced-based music education: “An experienced-based philosophy of music education is one that focuses on and cherishes all the many ways music can be experienced and all the many musics offering the special experience music provides,” (2003). Music teachers should attempt to instill in their students a belief that creating, performing, and responding to music all have value in their own right, and that each student can discover how to include music in their own life to increase the quality of their life. Perhaps through music education, a student realizes that composing music helps them understand their own emotions, or that when they listen to a certain genre, it creates an environment conducive to working. Alternatively, maybe the student experiences a sense of achievement while performing that they have yet to discover in other areas of their schooling, leading to the performing arts becoming like a home. Every situation described here leads to an increase in the student’s quality of life and encourages our children to become better humans. Ideally, as these students become adults and parents, they will begin sharing the power of music with their children, who will bring that positive experience to

their formal education years, leading to a continued cycle of an increased value of music within their lives and their education.

I believe that the purpose of education is to create a foundation of knowledge and skills that, regardless of the infinite possibilities of a child's future, they can establish themselves as an autonomous, self-sustaining adult member of society. Through the public education system, children across communities, cities, and states are more likely to achieve a similar foundation and be afforded similar opportunities regardless of location. Shifting our thoughts to music specifically, music is an outpouring of human experience and emotions, relying on both individual and shared experiences at every aspect of its journey, including creating, performing, responding, and every other act involved one can imagine. Music must then be included in formal education for a wide variety of reasons, but mainly because it allows a student to understand themselves and the world around them at a deeper level. By introducing students to the wide scope of music possibilities, including (but not limited to) composing, performing, and responding, they gain a foundational knowledge regarding music within careers, as well as the abilities to consciously engage with music beyond the classroom if they so choose.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

While never perfect, one of the first things I consider when planning out my lessons is how the lesson allows students to form a new perspective. Creating an open mind is beneficial for my students as it will lay a foundation for how they respond to any new situation that is outside of their comfort zone. Likewise, by experiencing challenges within new aural and visual elements of music, my students receive practice at emotionally working through those challenges. Specific to music, when I consider how I would like my students to engage with music after they leave my classroom, I intend to provide them with experiences that encourage

them to follow their preferred methods of music. This means that I have become more intentional about including composition and improvisation in the music classroom, as well as thoughtful listening and evaluation of music from various sources, including favorite songs from the students. Overall, my philosophy has helped me to keep the curriculum student-focused, and to cultivate a community that values music education and its benefits for the child, community, and humanity.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s)

Introduction

Before sharing my formal lesson plans presented for this report and presentation, I would like to present the full sequence of events in the unit plan, to provide the contextual information regarding some of the pedagogical decisions I made during the lessons presented. This unit covered the introduction of the half note to third grade students. We begin by training the ear to hear half notes, so the students echoed various rhythmic patterns containing half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, and quarter rests. One of the things I wanted students to internalize quickly was that the half note made a sound for two beats, so I chose to use body percussion as the main avenue to help students in this task. I introduced our game song using body percussion as well, and this game, Button You Must Wander, would come back as an assessment later. I discovered Button You Must Wander in the teaching manual for *Conversational Solfege* Level 2, and the game is a hidden object and passing game. Students sit in a circle, and one student is chosen to sit in the middle with their eyes closed. A small object, such as a button or similar, is hidden within the circle's hands. During the song, the button is passed around the circle, and the student in the middle tries to find it as it travels around. At the end of the song, the student has three guesses to find the button, and then a new student is selected to be in the middle. After a few days of echoing, I changed the task to decoding rhythms, in which I said a rhythm on a neutral syllable, or played it on an instrument, and the students would say the pattern using our syllables. I also chose to switch from our previous rhythm syllables (the Gordon du and du-de) to a number

system (1 2-and)¹. Once students were correctly identifying most four-beat rhythms, I had them isolate the rhythm to Button You Must Wander. They sang the song using the counts, rather than the words, and did well on the first try. At this point, the students used some body percussion manipulatives I created to compose their own body percussion piece, without notation.

After sharing their body percussion compositions, I knew the students had the half note ingrained in their ear, so I introduced the standard notation. After echoing only a few examples, the students were able to decode with ease, within four-beat patterns, known songs like Button You Must Wander, and even with unknown classical works like Kabalevsky's "The Comedians: Pantomime", also included in the *Conversational Solfege* Level 2 book. Our time was cut short before I could have the students copy, decode, and compose using standard notation, but I have no doubt the students would have done well in the culmination activities of the unit.

In this chapter, I will be sharing the specific lessons that incorporated body percussion in the aural training of the students' ears. First, I will present their "Day 2" lesson, in which they were first introduced to the counting syllables, and their review of the Button You Must Wander song. Then I will share a decoding lesson plan, in which I played the rhythms on a hand drum and students echoed back the counted syllables. Finally, I will present the body percussion composition lesson plan.

¹ Edwin Gordon's rhythm syllables of du for a quarter note and du-de for eighth notes promote each sound's function within the rhythm. The band teacher at my school uses a numbered rhythm system, so I choose to help students make the connections between the Gordon syllables and the counting system they will use in that setting.

Lesson Plan 1

2014 Music Standards Addressed

Pr.2.3.b When analyzing selected music, read and perform rhythmic patterns and melodic phrases using iconic and standard notation. (National Association for Music Education, 2014).

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students already know the following rhythms: quarter note, quarter rest, and barred eighth notes. They have also had one day of copying body percussion without speaking syllables and have copied body percussion based on a rhythm played at the piano.

Lesson Objective(s)

Students will copy body percussion patterns with correct rhythm syllables and perform a familiar song with the accompanying body percussion.

Assessment of the Lesson

First, I will informally assess the students as they copy my body percussion and syllables. When a student makes a mistake on the rhythm syllables or the body percussion, I quickly address it, copy the same pattern, and then move on.

Second, when performing the familiar song, I will observe students performing the body percussion and provide verbal feedback immediately following the performance and isolate individual phrases to repeat as needed.

Instructional Resources, Materials and Technologies

- Computer and projector with a slide of the lyrics to Button You Must Wander (see Figure 2.1)

Lesson Sequence

Activity #1: Students will copy body percussion patterns while saying correct rhythm syllables.

1. The teacher demonstrates 2-3 body percussion patterns without the rhythm syllables. Students echo the movements.
2. Without direction, the teacher begins speaking the rhythm syllables, and students echo both the movements and the syllables.
3. If students do not immediately say the syllables, ask what I added. Students will respond, then ask them to echo what I say and what I play.

Assessment: As students echo, give verbal feedback. When students perform at least 6 out of 8 patterns without mistakes, move on to the next activity.

Transition: Ask students to pay attention to the rhythm of the following patterns without syllables. Play through the 4-beat patterns of Button You Must Wander.

Activity #2: Students will perform a familiar song using a lyric sheet and the body percussion that aligns with the rhythm of the song.

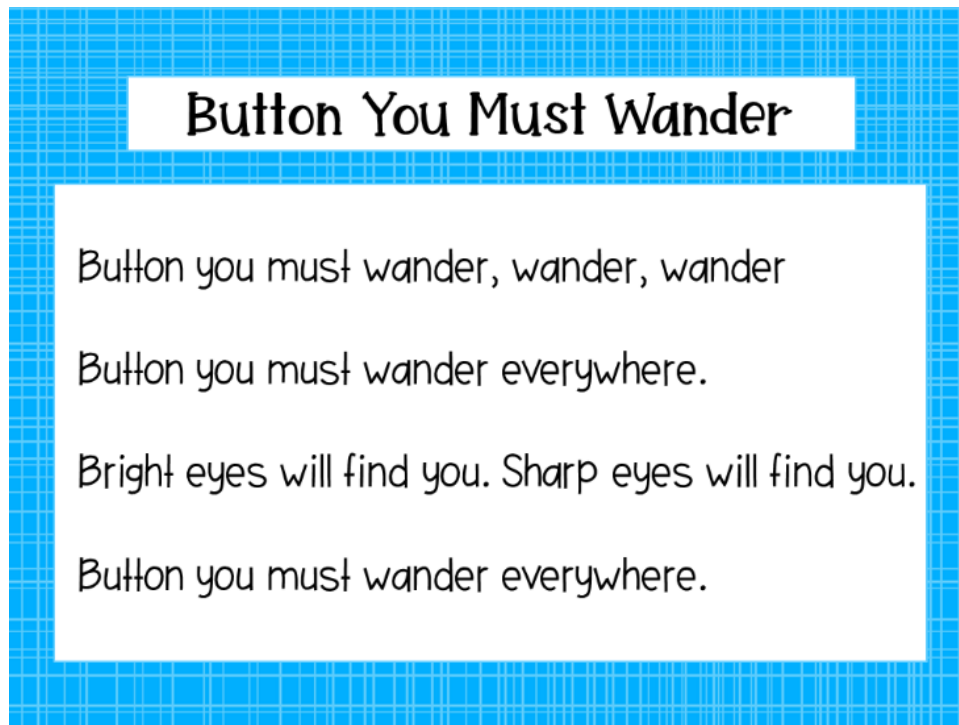
1. Ask students if they recognize the order of familiar patterns. It is okay if students do not recognize it.
2. Present the lyrics on the projector and ask students to sing and play the body percussion from memory, as I play the melody on the piano.
3. Ensure students hold the half notes within the song for 2 beats. Give feedback for the performance and practice any rhythms that need extra attention.

Assessment: Provide verbal feedback on the performance. What went well? What needs extra practice?

Transition: Once the performance is done with 1 or fewer mistakes, transition students to the circle to introduce the game.

Closure/Summative Assessment: Before allowing students to line up, challenge them to sing Button You Must Wander without the lyrics on the screen.

Figure 2.1 Button You Must Wander lyric sheet.



Lesson Plan 2

2014 Music Standards Addressed

Pr.5.3.a Perform music with expression and technical accuracy. (2014).

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students successfully echo 4-beat rhythm patterns containing half notes, both spoken and with body percussion. They also have aurally decoded rhythm patterns with quarter note, eighth notes, and quarter rests.

Lesson Objective(s)

Students will aurally decode rhythms containing half note when played on a hand drum.

Assessment of the Lesson

Immediate feedback will be given to the class regarding their performance of each 4-beat pattern. The teacher will record the activity and watch to count how many of the patterns the class performed correctly the first time to determine whether the students are ready to move on to the next activity in the sequence, or if additional practice is necessary to solidify the aural skills.

Instructional Resources, Materials and Technologies

- Hand Drum

Lesson Sequence

Activity #1 Objective: Students will aurally decode rhythms containing half note when played on a hand drum.

1. Explain to students that since they can echo patterns so well whenever the teacher is speaking the syllables, it is time to see how well they recognize them in other methods, such as playing the rhythms on a drum without the teacher speaking the syllables.
2. Give a practice example of what a pattern will sound like, then an example of how the students should respond.
3. Play a 4-beat rhythm on the drum. Let students know if they gave the correct syllables or not. If they are incorrect, give an additional try to fix the syllables, and/or give the correct syllables.
4. Continue for 8-10 examples. Either record the test to review later or keep track of the number of patterns the students answered correctly the first time.

Assessment: As a class, the goal is to say 75% of the patterns correctly on the first try. If students can decode the patterns at this level, the students are ready to decode a familiar song tomorrow. If not, then the students should have additional practice with echoing the patterns.

Closure/Summative Assessment: As students line up to leave, go back to body percussion only rhythm patterns. Have students decode and speak the rhythm syllables of the body percussion.

Lesson Plan 3

2014 Music Standards Addressed

Pr.2.3.b When analyzing selected music, read and perform rhythmic patterns and melodic phrases using iconic and standard notation. (2014).

Cr.1.3.b Generate musical ideas (such as rhythms and melodies) within a given tonality and/or meter. (2014).

Cr.2.3.b Use standard and/or iconic notation and/or recording technology to document personal rhythmic and melodic musical ideas. (2014).

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students have proven individually and as a class their ability to aurally decode a 4-beat pattern including half notes, as well as becoming familiar with various body percussion movements.

Lesson Objective(s)

Students will compose a body percussion piece at least 16 beats long that includes at least one half note.

Assessment of the Lesson

Compositions will be graded according to a rubric. The teacher will also encourage students to practice their compositions to share with the class, and informally assess students for accuracy in their rhythms during their practice. With less than ideal class time, only a few students will be able to perform their composition for the class, so those volunteers will see an additional mark on their rubric for their performance.

Instructional Resources, Materials and Technologies

- Body percussion composition sheet (see Figure 2.2)
- Plain colored paper
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

Lesson Sequence

Entry Activity/Warm-Up: Begin with the explanation of why students brought their scissors and glue sticks, and the assignment explanation.

Activity #1 Objective: Students will compose a body percussion piece at least 32 beats long that includes at least one half note.

1. With the body percussion composition page presented by the projector, demonstrate how each box contains 2 beats of music.
2. The teacher plays through the first line of body percussion, and checks for understanding.
3. Ask the students what each box is showing: clapping, patting, snapping, hand sliding, and stomping.
4. Have students read and play the second line of the body percussion page.

5. Explain that students must use at least 8 of the boxes in their composition, and 1 of the boxes must be the half note indicated by the hand slide icon.
6. Ask students what questions they have and answer them.
7. When there are no more questions, have 2 students pass out the materials and allow students to begin working.
8. While students work, walk around and encourage students to practice their compositions before gluing pieces down, to ensure they like it.

Assessment: As students practice, check how well they are sticking to the rhythms on the page. Ensure they have included the half note, and check that the beat boxes are equal for each line.

Closure/Summative Assessment: Depending on the time left, let a few students perform their compositions for the class. Collect the assignment for more to share in future classes. See Figure 2.3 for assessment rubric.

Figure 2.2 Body percussion composition cards

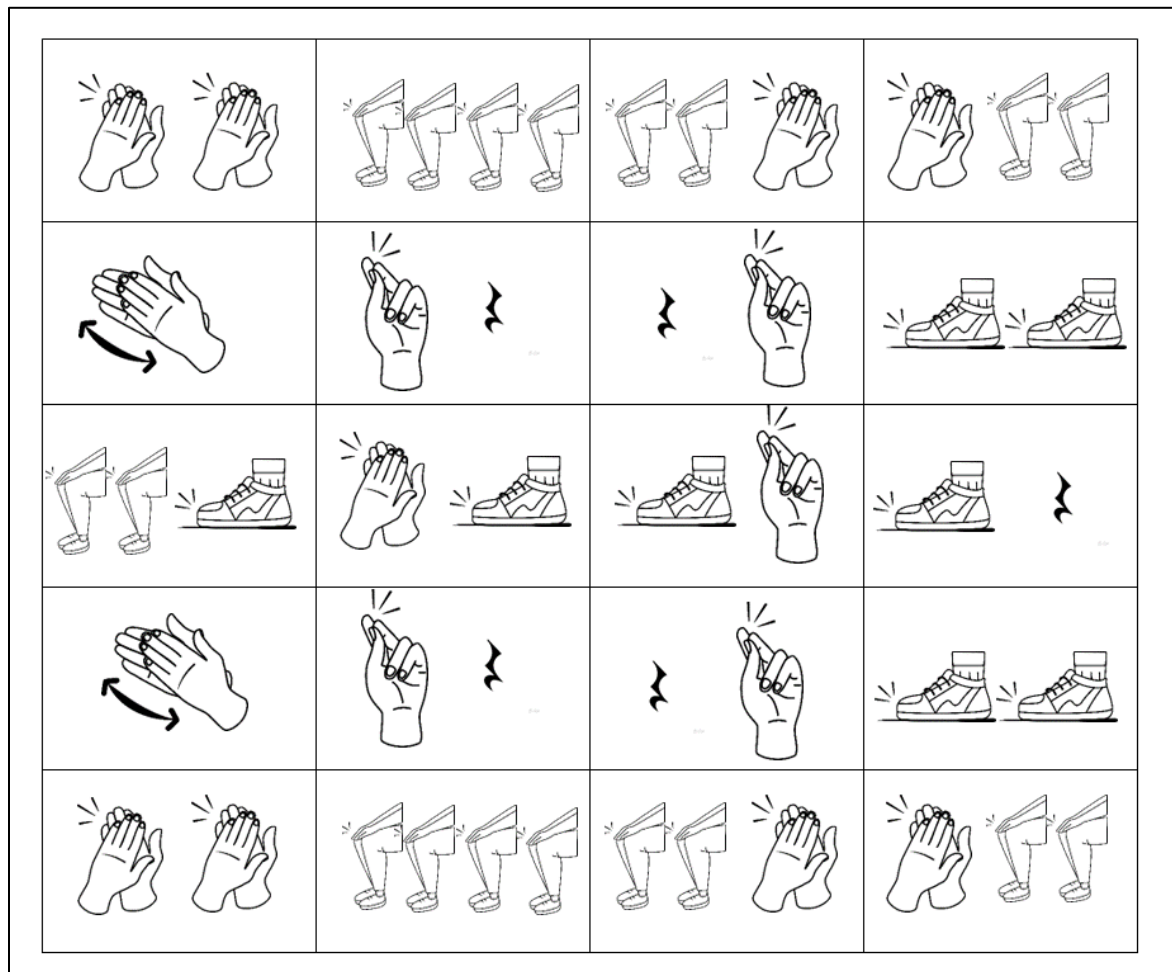


Figure 2.3 Composition assessment rubric

Category	1 point	0 points
Length of composition	Composition included at least 16 beats.	Composition included less than 16 beats.
Inclusion of a half note	Composition included at least 1 half note.	Composition did not include a half note.
Layout	Composition was grouped in even beats per line	Composition was grouped in unequal lines (one line 6 beats, and another 10, for example)
Bonus Point for Performance	Student performed with at least 75% rhythmic accuracy.	Student either did not perform or performed rhythms with less than 75% accuracy.

Lesson Plan Reflections

During these three lessons, my goal for the students was to be aurally proficient using the half note rhythms. Body percussion was my primary form of transmission of this rhythm, followed by utilizing rhythm syllables. Throughout this unit, I was unable to sing for the students, so I expected some challenges in teaching new songs. The teaching strategies I used were mainly whole class instruction, with one individual assignment.

During the first lesson, I forgot to add the rhythm syllables to the instruction, and I forgot to ask the students to listen to the patterns when I began playing the rhythm of Button You Must Wander. Fortunately, the students were able to recognize enough of the patterns to identify it. Watching my video, I realized I also forgot to change to the lyrics page, so the students proved they had memorized the song. I was pleasantly surprised by these results, as I had never taught a song using only body percussion and playing the melody on piano before. Since experiencing that quick internalization of the song, I intend to continue using body percussion to introduce rhythm concepts and songs for performance as a regular learning experience.

After a few days of instruction had passed, the students were ready for the next lesson I am sharing today, in which they were decoding rhythms I played on a hand drum. During my introduction of the activity, I realized that it would be difficult to demonstrate the difference between a half note and a quarter note followed by a quarter rest, so I adjusted and showed students how they would be able to tell my intent. This was met with mixed success, so in the future, I would choose a different instrument to play on, most likely some type of wind instrument or the piano, to limit the confusion. This was also my students first time decoding with a counting system rather than the Gordon rhythm syllables, so most of the corrections were related to the specific number students should use, rather than an incorrect rhythm. At this time, I

am unsure whether I would continue to introduce the counting system with my introduction of the half note, or if I would use the Gordon syllables until the students are in an older grade.

Finally, in my third lesson, students wrote a composition using iconic notation for different body percussion actions. Since this was the first composition I had done with these students, the instructions took some time to explain, and some time was used for clarification questions, but overall, the students did well at meeting my expectations for their compositions. They understood easily what each icon represented and performed some of the rhythms easily. Since I had chosen to use only iconic notation, sometimes the students would play 2 claps as eighth notes, and sometimes as quarter notes. When I include this in the future, I will wait until after I have introduced the standard notation and include that on the composition cards as well.

Overall, I felt that the students responded well to the aural aspect of learning the half note, and it seemed to transfer to reading it in standard notation well. The students read the notation quicker than I had expected, even in a variety of settings such as in unfamiliar folk songs and classical works. As I continue to explore new methods of instruction, I will continue to use reflection to adapt my instruction based on the observations of the students from assessment and classroom interactions.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

During my time studying in the Master of Music Education program at Kansas State University, my teaching improved tremendously, including both my mindset and beliefs about music education, to implementing new lessons within my classroom to promote student learning. My teaching, thought process, student learning, and even the classroom environment has changed, taking the focus from myself as a teacher and director, to making changes to my teaching to support my students, keeping them in focus at every step of the process. While focusing on student learning, I have implemented lasting changes in my sixth grade music classroom through an entirely new scope and sequence and experimented with using different methodologies in the upper elementary music classroom.

Within my own teaching, the most impactful change has been shifting my focus from idealistic lesson plans to planning with the focus on my students. When I first began teaching, my students were unknown to me, so my song choices were shots in the dark. I struggled to know how to change the plan in the middle of the lesson, because I did not have additional repertoire or activities in my back pocket to try. Since studying various teaching and learning theories in my first year, I have confidence in changing my plans mid-lesson based on the immediate feedback I receive from students.

When it comes to my thought process changes, the most notable change revolved around my sixth grade general music class. During the first year of the graduate program, one of the assignments involved revising one class's curriculum based on the current best practices. Knowing I struggled with keeping the sixth graders engaged throughout the full year, I chose to revise the curriculum for this class. In years past, I had focused on choir music the full school year, but the problem I ran into was that I could not teach them with the same sequence I taught

the seventh and eighth grade class, as the older class had additional performances. I began to think about the purpose of the class, and determined that ensemble skills including listening, reading, and part independence would be the main skills the sixth grade students should have before they continue to the seventh-eighth grade choir. By focusing on this goal, the methods I could incorporate become limitless, and I have experimented with different ensembles in the class with varied success. I will expand on those ensembles later in this chapter.

I would be remiss to exclude student learning changes from this chapter as something that has improved during my time studying at Kansas State University. Prior to my enrollment in the master's program, I struggled to articulate student learning, and using my lessons from one year to the next seemed impossible. Pacing and long-range planning were two skills I struggled to implement effectively. When pondering the student learning changes, I still struggled to articulate exactly what changes were made, however, those struggles were due to my own insecurities about others judging me for my mindset. Once I realized that, it became easy to share the learning goals I have for my students. Influenced by the teaching and learning theories of Gordon, the natural learning process, and play-based learning, my lower elementary music students in kindergarten and first grade primarily focus on enhancing their natural musical aptitude through a multitude of songs, games, and musical activities. As my students age, the goal shifts to understanding the various patterns found within music, from rhythm and melody, to form and expression. I provide different opportunities for students to successfully recognize these patterns, including ear training, reading standard notation, improvising, and composing. One of the composing opportunities to explore rhythm I have implemented during my time at Kansas State University was the body percussion piece discussed in Chapter 2.

During my first year in the graduate school at Kansas State University, I gleaned more information regarding teaching and learning theories than I had ever contemplated before, and it wasn't until recently that I realized how much I had implemented from that first year, from my own thought processes to things like the classroom environment I created. While this may seem simple, one of the ways my classroom environment shifted was where the students sit for my kindergarten and first grade classes. Prior to that first summer, students in every grade were given an assigned dot in a row to sit on, and while it would change throughout the year, the students would usually begin and end at that dot. After reading about these different theories and what the classrooms looked like, I decided to try having my kindergarten and first grade students sit in a circle and lose the assigned spots. I have enjoyed this experience for these students, and while I do have the students return to rows for concert preparations, and occasionally assign spots around the circle, it has taken one additional thing off my plate, and the students benefit from seeing everyone else's music making. Additionally, I have adjusted my pacing based on the research on brain-based learning and attention spans. I now plan five or six short activities for a 25-minute lesson for kindergarten, but by the third grade, I plan two or three, because the students have a slightly longer attention span, so we can go deeper into the concepts or ensemble. The last part of the classroom environment change I have implemented in the last three years involves the assessment data I collect throughout the year. I learned that individual data in the music classroom does not have to only be received through paper and pencil: it can be recorded in real time as students perform. Their performances are not always full-fledged songs, but even dictating a four-beat rhythmic pattern can be like a performance and provide data on the individual student's retention. I now aim to collect individual data on my students' musical

understanding and ability at least once every week, knowing that I won't put each assessment in the grade book.

I mentioned earlier that one specific class benefited the most from my time at Kansas State University, and that would be my sixth grade general music class. As noted, I designed the class as a chance for students to build ensemble skills prior to entering the combined seventh-eighth grade choir. Part of the desire for this change stemmed from a smaller class size. Students had the choice of taking music or technology topics, and the number of students enrolled fell between five and ten each year. I found in previous years that these smaller ensembles would learn the music faster than I would anticipate, and it would become stale by the performance. Students would also perform hesitantly, which made sense considering their elementary performances consisted of combined grade levels with over fifty students, or five to ten times as many. By creating these other ensemble projects, students became comfortable working together, making mistakes, and became confident in themselves and their voice, which has led to a stronger sound, even though the numbers have been similar year to year. First, students participate in a Boomwhacker ensemble. Given a list of songs, the group chooses one to work on and performs for a grade. This has been a fantastic way to start the year by reviewing pitches, rhythm, and allows me a chance to see how these students will work together: who the leaders will be and how often we will utilize team building ideas to strengthen their friendships are two of the non-musical goals of the project as well. Another project I have successfully implemented in the classroom has been completing a unit on the ukulele. Students learn basic harmony and practice accompanying themselves and others. This project has two musical goals besides the main goal: first, to train their ears to hear the whole chord, rather than just their part. The second goal is to give students a chance to sing solo or within a small group, so they can hear their own

voice and its qualities. Both projects are received well by the students, and they have the opportunity to present their performances at the vocal concerts for the community at the end of each semester. I could go on about the remaining projects I facilitate for the sixth grade students, but I must cut it short at these two projects.

The last reflection I would like to share regarding my learning during the master's program at Kansas State University involved including more culturally relevant pedagogy into my elementary music classes. On the outside, the students at my school do not see much diversity. They look the same, speak the same language, and most of the families in the community generally share the same beliefs. If I were to dig deeper, I suspect I would find more diversity, but I imagine most of the students I teach will not experience a different culture without traveling far away from their small town. I began introducing music from other cultures, as well as popular music they are familiar with, to connect with them, and instill in them a mindset that people may look and sound different from themselves, and that their culture should be accepted as they are. First, I attempted to introduce some music from the Hispanic culture, as I knew a few students were Hispanic. The younger students enjoyed the music making I prepared for their age, but the older elementary lessons will need some revising. Since then, I have introduced music from China and tinikling from the Philippines and the students were more interested in these cultures. Perhaps the seeds were planted with the first culture, and students may become more accepting of the different-sounding music and dances as we continue in the upcoming years.

While my time in the master's program seems short, for three summers, my students will reap the benefits for many years to come. Studying the theories, history, philosophy, and research in music education has prompted me to think about the why and how I teach, to find not

only the best practice, but more specifically, the best practice for my students. I have learned that education is always evolving, and that I should continue to be a student myself to continue to grow as a teacher.

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