

Northeast Bradford Elementary
Music
Dorothy Weir
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Elementary Music Curriculum Enhancement

Last year was my first year teaching elementary music since my student teaching thirty plus years ago. The curriculum being followed prior to my stepping into the position, was the series "The Music Connection," by Silver Burdett. Up until this point, students primarily worked from the books and did minimal interaction, movement and playing of instruments. I was fortunate to have gotten a level one Orff certification the summer before I began in this position. This was my first exposure to the Orff method of teaching and I was greatly impressed. I continue to use the series already in place to a certain extent, but use many other ideas I obtained through the level one Orff. You can take any materials you might have available and tailor them to what is done in the classroom. There was not much in place as far as instruments for the students to use.

The only thing from a melodic standpoint happening in music, were recorders in 4th grade and band instruments in 5th and 6th grade. My goal in writing the grant I received was to obtain a couple of Orff barred instruments. These are available in different voicings and in different materials such as metal, wood and a wood like material. They are designed with kids in mind, and are durable. The bars are all removable so there is the potential to use as few or as many as needed. We were able to obtain an alto metallophone and an alto xylophone. These are pitched in the same range as children's voices and are the easiest for them to identify with.

With the primary grades, kindergarten through second, my goal was that the students learned some of the basics such as how to hold their mallets, good posture to play and the understanding of simple specific beats and rhythms. Even the kindergarten students understood and could demonstrate a simple bordun. A bordun uses only the first and 5th note of a scale. In the 3rd through 6th grades, they could actually set up an instrument for a bourdon in a given scale without my telling them what notes they needed. These students were able to not only work with a simple bordun, but also a chord and broken bordun. Before we got into using the instruments, we did a lot of work with rhythms on percussive, non-melodic instruments and used a lot of body percussion. All grades worked first on learning the beginnings of solfege and identifying basic intervals. This was then later applied to the barred instruments. The learning support class learned as much as the regular classroom students did. They were able to do the things I asked with assistance.

In the 4th through 6th grades, students were able to begin reading music and transfer this information to playing the barred instruments. They were able to understand and demonstrate the various types of borduns. As the year progressed students were given the opportunity to improvise and come up with their own creations to go with a piece of

music we were doing, (singing or movement) given the parameters of the meter and the key.

The majority of the students were successful at doing the things that were worked on in class. Because we only have two of these instruments, I had to become creative in who got to play them. We had several rhythm games we played that would determine whose turn it was to play and then I kept record in my roll book so that every child got an opportunity. As we got further into the year, I was able to split the classes up, so some would do movement activities, some would sing, some would have specific rhythms they were responsible for and others would have the melodic responsibilities. Needless to say, rotation within the activities is necessary in order to be fair to all students. They still would argue over whose turn it was to play the instruments!

As this year will be my second year in this position, I will do some things differently. I hope to be able to find some different rhythm games to help the students in their rhythms and in choosing students to play. Another thing I plan to do is to take things at a little slower pace and be sure all students understand what is being taught. As in anything, some students are able to comprehend more quickly than others are. In order to do this I hope to re-look at some of the things I did last year and find other creative ways to do the same things but with a few different twists and keep everyone's interest while working with those students needing extra help. An important factor in the process is the continual "checking for understanding." Seeing every single child in the school brings its own challenges and attempting to know their strengths and weaknesses is sometimes overwhelming. Through all of this, my first and primary goal is for each child to have a basic understanding of all the many facets of music and to know it is fun, as well as a part of their life for the rest of their life.

I would be glad to communicate and/or assist anyone with questions, comments or suggestions. You can reach me at school 744-2521 or home 869-1508. My email address is dkweir@ptd.net.