

## “Rock On! Pop Music in the Elementary Music Classroom”

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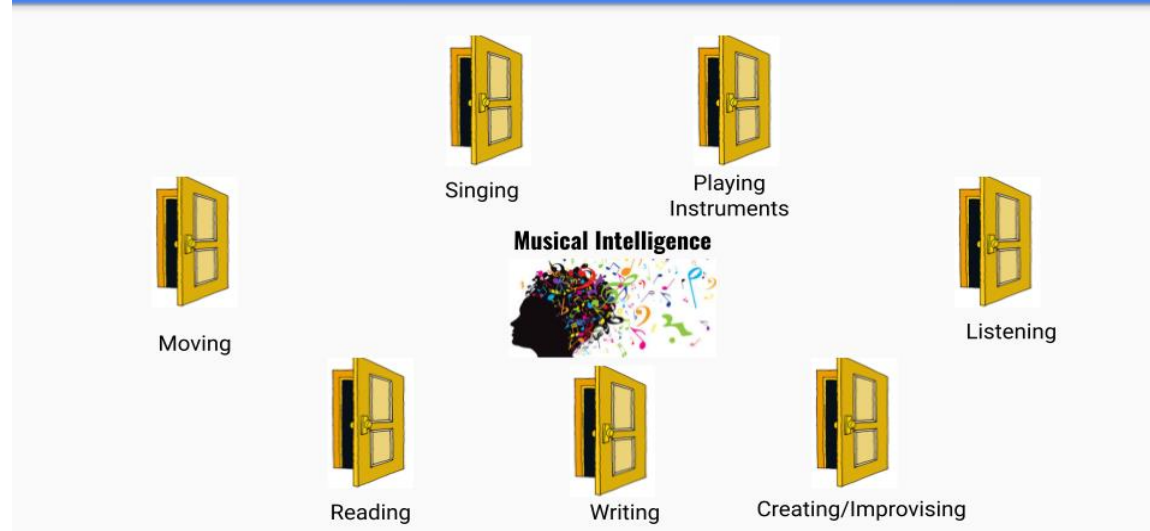
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### **Purpose:**

Educators know that students are more engaged in learning and more successful when they see themselves represented in the curricula. What has become increasingly clear is that, while essential to the elementary music experience, traditional and folk musics are not always sufficient to provide students with a comprehensive music education that actively affirms and validates their musical vocabulary, which is most often rooted in popular music. This session will provide participants with a wide variety of strategies for engaging elementary-aged students in joyful, active music making. Interacting with pop music allows students to demonstrate their “musical literacy” through a wide variety of modalities, with an eye towards fostering a more inclusive and equitable elementary educational experience for all students.

### **Doorways into Music Making**

Many Doorways into Music Making



### **Three Types of Pop Music Integration:**

*Listen and Respond:* students listen and respond to a variety of popular music. Response can take the form of critical response discussion, creative movement, or musical creation based on responding to a piece.

*Perform:* students perform any variety of arrangements of popular songs, whether it be whole or partial songs through a variety of media (vocal, instrumental, etc.)

*Popular Music Style:* perform and interact with more traditional elementary music repertoire or elemental music in various popular styles – adding popular instrumentation (guitars, drum kit, etc.), swinging rhythms, adding chord progression accompaniment

### **Move**

#### Comparative Movement

- Teacher invites students to trace sharp and smooth pictures
- Teacher invites students to trace sharp and smooth pictures as the music plays
- Teacher invites students to make smooth movements to smooth music, sharp movements to sharp music [“Velodrome” by Dessa, “Douha” by Fatoumata Diawara and Disclosure]
- Teacher invites students to partner and mirror and/or shadow sharp and smooth movements – switch leaders on the finger cymbal
- Teacher invites students to move to the speed of the music – plays fast song, slow song [“The Impression that I Get” by Mighty Mighty Bosstones, “Human Heart” by Coldplay, WE THE KING, Jacob Collier]
- Teacher invites students to do large movements to loud music, small movements to quiet music [“That’s It!” by Preservation Hall Jazz Band, “Wildflowers” by Wailin’ Jennys]

*Scope and Sequence: K/1 (comparatives) or older students if reviewing comparatives*

### **Move/Listen**

Meditation and Breath – “An Ordinary Day” from *Minecraft: Caves and Cliffs* by Kumi Tanioka (2021)

- Teacher invites students to breathe with breathing ball
- Teacher leads students through specific breathing or stretching sequence

*Scope and Sequence: all – social emotional learning*

### **Sing/Improvise**

Singing and B section creation to “If You Want a Song” by the Okee Dokee Brothers [2020].

- Preface lesson with reading of “Change Sings” by Amanda Gorman
- T sings v. 1 of “If You Want a Song.” Ss start to respond
- Repeat previous step

- Once students have become comfortable with the format, add v. 2 and 3
- T demonstrate UPP part ideas - give to Ss to play ostinati of their choosing:
  - Cajon
  - Shakers
  - Tambourine
- T continues to play guitar and switches to call/response of solfège:
  - Do-Re-Mi (echo), Mi-Re-Do, Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol, Sol-Fa-Mi-Re-Do, etc.
- This time, invite Ss to sing the OPPOSITE of what I sing
- Put melodic motivic ideas on board - “word bank.” Use them if you want, or not
- T sings a pattern, Ss simply answers with something DIFFERENT
- Partner: first person starts on Do and travels AWAY from DO, second person answers and travels BACK to Do
- Invite students to travel to barred instruments and take off B
- Explore the different melodic motives on board, make up some of your own
- T vocalizes a Question, Ss play and answer on barred instruments
- Partner with someone near you - decide who is Question, who is Answer. Explore

*Culminating Performance:*

- Remember that song we sang? Review first verse
- Final form: V1, V2, Improvisation section (back and forth with your partner x4), V3, V1

***Sing/Play/Create***

Chord progression performance and improvisation and part work – “Let It Be” by The Beatles [1970]. Note: same process can be used to explore almost any four chord pop song progression

- Teacher sings song, students learn chorus and sing. Next lesson, students also learn verse.
- Move – self space formation – show the levels of what I play on the xylophone (do’do’sol sol la la fa fa)
- Partner – show the levels of what I play, connecting to your partner somehow
- Students read solfège outlining roots of chord progression (do’-do’-sol-sol-la-la-fa-fa)
- Students sing and move roots while T sings verses [partwork]
- Students find a barred instrument or ukulele – learn how to play the progression. Visual shows solfège AND chord symbols
- Students perform outline while teacher sings verses, then students sing chorus while T plays chorus accompaniment
- Instead of playing quarter notes on barred instruments, students are invited to improvise rhythmically on each note and “make it fancy”
- Large performance form: VERSE [Ss play, T sings], CHORUS [T plays, Ss sing], IMPROV C section [T can support], Verse, Chorus, Improv, Verse, Chorus

*Scope and Sequence: 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> melody, 3<sup>rd</sup> rhythm improvisation, pop song form*

***Sing/Play/Create***

Reading, Singing, Playing, and Improvising with Pop Song – “A Little Bit of Love” by Weezer (2021) [Elements of this sequence prepared in collaboration with Alex Sinclair, 2022. Used with permission]

- Teacher plays chorus on ukulele or guitar and sings

- Teacher sings chorus several times, invites students to join
- Students sing chorus
- Teacher reads “I am Love” (Verde, 2019) – students sing chorus after every several pages
- Teacher prompts students to think about how they show love to others
- Teacher asks students to figure out how to fit a phrase about how they show love into a four beat phrase
- Students clap and say their phrase
- Students clap and say their phrase twice
- Students clap and say their phrase three times
- Students come up with another phrase as a b – put phrases into aaab
- Students clap their phrases only – sing “Little Bit of Love” as A, clap improvised phrases as B
- Teach several instrumental parts – chord progression to ukes, chord progression roots to BX, xylophone ostinato, rhythmic ostinato on unpitched percussion
- Other students take clapped improvised phrases to xylophones or unpitched percussion. Students either play their phrases on UPP or create with C Do pentatonic
- Put all together in large rondo form – chorus [everyone sings], chorus with instrumental parts, improvised solos, collective improv, pitched improv, unpitched improv – students help in arranging the completed piece.

*Scope and Sequence: 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> (pentatonic), 3-5<sup>th</sup> (pentatonic improvisation/composition)*

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