

Capstone Reflection

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Grades Taught: 4th

Location: Immanuel Lutheran School

Subjects Taught: Classroom Music

Brief Summary

While at Immanuel, I taught seventeen fourth graders. Most of the students were white, although there were three African-American students. There were eleven boys and six girls. After speaking with the music teacher, I learned that most of the curriculum focused on learning to sing songs for choral concerts and occasionally using Orff percussion instruments. I chose to focus more Orff percussion instruments and integrating basic music theory into the lessons, since it was something they were less familiar with. I chose a South American music theme to connect all three days of lessons together, and within that theme, I taught melody, rhythm, and harmony. I ended up changing a lot of my lessons during the capstone experience, mostly because they had a different textbook series than they thought. It was a great experience, especially because I had to be creative and come up with a new plan for the three days at the least minute.

Analytical Reflection

1. *Hook:* My hook was to read a book called “The Rainforest Grew All Around.” It can be spoken or sung, and has a refrain that I taught the students to sing after I sang the verses. I gave them a visual signal for the first half of the book so they knew when to sing the refrain. About halfway through the book they knew when to sing the refrain themselves so I could stop signaling. This book spoke a lot about the rainforest and helped the

students to be musically engaged. I think this was a great hook and it worked well. It helped introduce the South American theme and started the class with a musical activity. However I know that I could be even more enthusiastic and excited, so as to engage students even further.

2. *Tapping into prior knowledge:* Anytime we started a new concept I would start by assessing students' prior knowledge. For example, when the students worked on creating melodies, I asked them what the main notes of a song are called. I also taught them the word "ostinato," which is a repeating pattern of notes or rhythms. To use their prior knowledge, I asked them what it is called when there is a short repeating sequence, and when they said a pattern, I explained that in music, we sometimes use the word "ostinato" in place of pattern. I always tried to incorporate prior concepts they knew to help explain the slightly newer concept. When we learned how to do ostinatos on the Orff pitched percussion (xylophones, etc), they already had experience with playing the Orff instruments. I think overall I incorporated their prior knowledge very well. One thing that I could have done even further was speak to the students more about what they knew before I started teaching, especially because I had not ever been at the school before.
3. *Setting a purpose:* I set the purpose at the beginning of exploring melody and rhythm. After I read the South American story, I explained that we would be using South American music to learn more about melody and rhythm. This was also when I tapped into student's prior knowledge of the words melody and rhythm. Overall I think this went very well, but I could have expanded a little further on why studying melody and rhythm is important in music.

4. *Vocabulary strategy:* My vocabulary strategy mostly consisted of consistently reviewing students' knowledge of the words "melody," "rhythm," and "ostinato." Most musical terms are best taught by teacher modeling and student replication. Each time we focused on a specific vocabulary word, I first modeled the activity that taught the word, and then the students replicated the activity. For example, when learning ostinatos, I demonstrated examples by clapping a rhythm in a repeating pattern. Then I asked different students to come up with different repeating rhythms on a xylophone that they would continue to play during a song that I played on the CD player. I think the students learned these words fairly well, because we spent a significant amount of time on each word and concept.
5. *Comprehension strategy:* One comprehension strategy that I used was to teach the word melody. Each student was grouped around xylophones. I drew a line on the board that went up, down, and straight some of the time. I then asked students to play different notes on the xylophone that reflected the line I had drawn, which I called the melody. Then I asked for volunteers to draw melody lines on the board and have the class play them back. This helped students to understand that a melody is a series of notes that ascends and descends in different patterns and intervals. I think this really worked well. The students quickly caught on to the activity and students were eager to draw melodies on the board. I do think that I should have varied the melody lines I drew more, so that they were exaggerated and required the students to really explore greater range on the instruments.
6. *Methodology:* My general methodology was to start with a basic component of the concept and then to build upon the first part of the class for the following activities. For

example, to explore rhythm, I drew four short rhythmic patterns on the board and asked students to clap each one. After the students could clap each rhythm correctly, I would clap one of the rhythms and ask the students to identify which rhythm I clapped. Then I had students make up their own rhythms and clap one for the class to identify. After this activity, I used the original four rhythms to assign each one to a group of students. Each group was responsible for playing their own rhythm on the xylophone while I played a South American song on the CD player. I had previously removed most of the bars on the instruments so that only those which harmonically fit the song were on them. This activity progressed in difficulty and increasingly engaged the students. Starting with the basic concepts and then incorporating them into instruments and song is a standard music education method. Overall I was pleased with my methodology, although the first day was especially a little harried. I arrived at the school and learned that they had a different textbook series than the teacher thought, so all the songs I planned to use were not in the textbooks. I had to find different songs and change a few of my activities to different days so I could prepare for them with the new musical material. I know I need more practice in really combining elements and incorporating as many different concepts in music throughout a unit as is developmentally appropriate.

7. *Organization of Lesson Plans:* My original lesson plans were very organized and flowed very well. Because I had to change my lesson plan an hour before the first class, it was a little rougher than I had originally planned for. However, I still managed to retain the core of the lesson and concepts, and I feel that I did well. I then went home and reworked my next two lesson plans to better fit the music I had to work with as well as what I accomplished on the first day. I started out with more basic concepts on the first day,

became more detailed on the second day, and then incorporated all these concepts into lively, engaging musical activities on the last day. One music education method that is very important is sometimes called the “hourglass model”: first the larger, basic ideas are taught, then they are delved into more deeply, and finally, they are incorporated into more complex musical songs and activities that encompass all the components learned.

8. *Assessment:* All of my assessment was through teacher observation. Elementary music education is very kinesthetic and fun. The youngest grades learn through musical play, and as students progress in music education, they learn best by first sound, then sight. If students learn to use their ears first before reading music and note values, they will have better aural skills and a greater, more thorough musical understanding and ability. Thus, at the fourth grade level, there is not much written work that is very beneficial for student knowledge, besides having them write examples for the class or in small groups. My assessment, therefore, consisted of listening and observing what students were doing with their instruments. This is standard for music education classes. I do think that I should have assessed a little further at the end of each day, in verbal question form, what the main concept we learned was and how to define each.
9. *Class management:* Overall, the students were very well behaved to start. They were attentive and actively participated. The most problems I encountered were students that wanted to play their instruments when I was talking, after I had asked them not to play. However, for most of the lesson, students were engaged and listened well. My last day was the most difficult, because the music teacher left me with the class by myself, until the end of the class. This was also the day that could have been the most chaotic, because all students were given different musical instruments and we formed a parade around the

room, marching in time to different South American music that I played. Getting the class started took a little time, and they did get a little rowdier as the class went on. However, I was able to bring the class back on task.

10. *Pacing*: I felt that my pacing was overall well done. I allowed for flexible time on each activity so that if students needed more or less time on a concept, we could move on when appropriate. I also think that the pacing of the entire three-day unit was well planned and executed. On the last day, I could have included one more activity to really cement all the concepts.

Holistic Reflection

This experience gave me some confidence in myself as a teacher. I found that I was able to explain concepts and activities, as well as why the activities demonstrated the concepts. I also found that I was beginning to assess students as they played their instruments and listen to what they were having difficulty with. I was able to help students fix the problem they were having. I also felt good about my presence in front of the class. I felt that I was in charge and the leader of the group.

I did learn that I need to work on my enthusiasm in front of the class. I am a naturally introverted person and being enthusiastic in front of a group of people does not come easily to me. However, enthusiasm is incredibly important in teaching music and a key component of engaging students in learning and creating music.