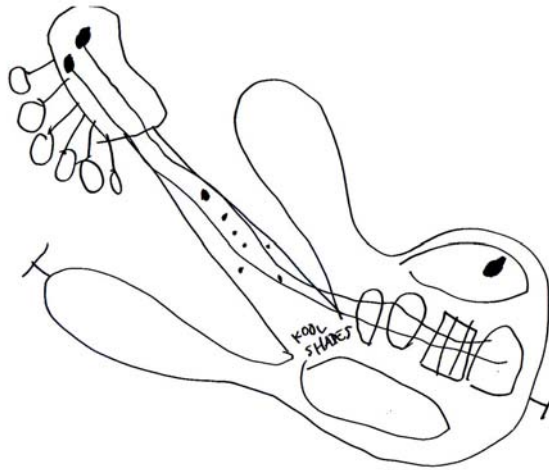


Studying Music

Preschool Classroom

January – May 2002

Overview



Beginning the Project

Music is part of our every day lives. Music also plays an integral role in early childhood education to give young students shared happy and positive experiences. As the University Primary School year opened, many guests shared and played instruments for the students. Some students were taking music lessons and brought in their instruments to play and share with the other children. Parents and other adults brought a variety of instruments to share and play at large group meeting time. Teachers purposefully and routinely integrate musical activities into all of the project investigations throughout the year. They also teach students a variety of songs from different countries and invite the families to share the richness of the cultures that are represented in the diverse group of students. The teaching assistant from Korea taught students songs in Korean. Some parents suggested to the teaching staff that music might be an engaging topic for further exploration.

The teachers agreed that the topic of music was broad enough to provide opportunities for students to explore their own interests and the investigation began. The teachers at a team planning meeting created a music topic web with all of their ideas about possibilities for study.

During the first phase of the project, teachers wanted to know more about what the students already understood about music. The teachers shared their personal stories of going to the symphony, attending the ballet and going to recitals. The children took turns sharing stories about their experiences with music. During large group meetings, students brainstormed what they knew about music to create the Student Music Topic Web 1. The teachers questioned students about all aspects of music: what types of instruments they knew, where they hear music, how they play it, and where they would like to go to expand their knowledge about music.

The teachers provided opportunities for students to make three-dimensional representations of instruments. Children used plasticine, coated wire, and play dough to create their representations from memories. Students began to ask questions at large group meetings. The teacher placed their questions on the wall for further exploration.



The teaching assistant plays her flute for the students at group time.



CB is sharing his Autoharp representation made out of boxes and junk during project/activity time.

Developing the Project

Teachers took the lead from their questions and categorized them to form study groups. In this way, the students explored different but related areas of music:

1. What is the relationship between music and movement?
2. What instruments make up an orchestra?
3. How are musical videos and songs produced?
4. What is the relationship between sound and music?
5. What is rhythm?

The teacher and her assistants organized field trips to help the students find the answers to their questions. Students collected data in many ways. Students made observational sketches to collect data on their field site tours. They interviewed invited guest speakers, made observational drawings of collections of instruments at school, took photographs to document their experiences, and videotaped some of their field trips.

Back in the classroom, daily choices during project/activity time included many music related experiences. The teacher put musical tapes with books in the listening center. Students brought in favorite CD's to share with others. Students wrote their own music using the colored hand bells and musical staff paper. They created instruments from boxes and junk in the art area. Some students formulated surveys about what instruments other students had in their homes. Teachers taught them how to tally and analyze their results. They watched videos about an orchestra since they did not have access to an orchestra playing during school hours. The videos were informative and spurred even further questions. Their data collection and group discussions contributed to new understandings about music and expanded their knowledge base.



The piano expert strikes the keys to demonstrate how the piano makes sound.



The maestro is teaching the preschool boys how to conduct in three beat measures.

Concluding The Project

To conclude the music project, the teachers and students invited parents, family and friends to hear the classroom orchestra, watch the interpretive ribbon dance, listen to the group sing a variety of songs, and most importantly read the display on the walls to see the story of how students studied about music.

One group created a mural of orchestra instruments on acetate to hang in the window. The students invited all of their guests to try the pipe organ that they created from boxes and PVC pipe. The teachers created a questionnaire for parents to help them understand how much knowledge about music carried over to the home. The staff was curious to know if students used new vocabulary or discussed musical experiences with their families.



During the culminating activity, EM is conducting the orchestra.



The project display wall for parents at the culminating celebration.

What did the children learn?

The children became familiar with the names and sounds of various instruments. They increased their vocabulary and developed clearer understandings of the various parts of the instruments. They reported, "All instruments make sound." Their observational drawings became more

detailed as the children looked closely for the various parts of an instrument. One group created a musical video for the whole class and demonstrated their knowledge about making a video.

Students had opportunities to associate music with feelings and moods. The students experienced vibration and learned how sound traveled. They applied knowledge of rhythm and improved their skills of echoing and following specific rhythms or beats. They also distinguished between high and low notes. They produced their own scores, composed their own music, and conducted it for the group. The students not only answered many of their original questions, but they became aware of instruments from other countries and found new ways to enjoy music in their world.



During project/activity time, a small group of students play music together.



GR and LB play the music they composed during project/activity time.