

Studying Music

Preschool Classroom

Phase 1



Students share instruments and music.

The head teacher and her two graduate assistants enthusiastically brainstormed their ideas about music before initiating the project investigation. The teachers' music topic web included ideas related to instruments, students making their own music, guest speakers who played instruments, music from around the world, and many other areas for possible investigations.

The teachers wanted to know what the students already understood about music. Students began exploring the topic by creating a web of knowledge (Student Music Topic Web 1). The teachers reviewed the students' web for similarities of ideas and experiences.

During a parent conference, one parent suggested a variety of ways that students could make music with their bodies. While creating the first student topic web, this parent's child mentioned several ways to make music with the body. Those included stomping, whistling and clapping. Students were also interested in the different ways that they listen to music such as a cassette, CD, radio, and television. They categorized those devices under listening. Their experiences also included trips to concerts or performances they had attended. These ideas were targeted as possible field trips.

For several weeks, students shared memory stories about music during large group meetings. Examples of their stories follow:

LB: One day I went to a symphony orchestra. My mom told me a spooky story. It was in Rochester. It was about Tchaikovsky. He just got old and died.

ME: Once in my neighborhood there was a music store. Pianos were there. My neighbors were singing songs on a piano at a music store.

CG: I got a guitar at my house in my closet.

WG: I don't remember but we have a guitar in the closet. We got everything-kid instruments. The music box has instruments. It has three guitars or eight guitars.

CG: I have a ukulele at home. It came to my home in the mail. I got a hula skirt. There's a flower for our hair.

NW: My uncle and aunt have a piano. It is really big. We used to play stuff on it. We play *Mary Little Lamb*. My uncle plays *London Bridge is Falling Down*.

IP: One time I have a book about Abiyoyo. I'll bring it to school.

The students enthusiastically brought all types of instruments and music to school to share with their peers.



CB blows his trumpet that he brought from home.



EC shares her glockenspiel that she brought from home.

One group of students wanted to find out where people listen to music. They also wanted to know what instruments other students had in their homes. To find out the answers to those questions, the teachers helped the students create a questionnaire. They asked the students what instruments they were curious to know if people had at home. Teachers listed the instruments as student brainstormed their ideas. Then the teachers asked the students to draw pictures as icons on the survey to represent those instruments so that they would remember them when they got home. Students took the survey home and asked parents to mark yes or no if they had the instrument at home.



RS student shares his “rock and roll” with the class.



Preschool students created survey and sent it home to all of their parents.

In Phase 1, students engaged in many activities designed to express their memories of experiences with music. During the activity/project time students chose to draw instruments from memory. Several had been to hear an orchestra. They created pictures detailing each instrument. Using tempera paint in the art area, children painted pictures of instruments. Some students cut pictures out of a magazine to show “things that made music.” Children were eager to bring music from home to share with the other students.



Students listening to music during project/activity choice time.



Collage of “things that make music.”

Teachers also created opportunities for students to have shared experiences with music. During the large group meeting, the teachers introduced students to rhythm patterns. They began by clapping a simple A B pattern. It progressed to include A, B, C and many body parts. Preschoolers could clap and tap on their bodies or the floor. They made use of every possible space. They extended their instrument of the body to rhythm sticks. Students created patterns and the group echoed their patterns with the rhythm sticks. Progressively students improved in their ability to mimic the patterns together.

Students drew many memory drawings of instruments. The teachers listened carefully for understandings or misunderstandings as they explained their drawings.



CC saw the drum at the parade.
The drummer was playing with
his hands.



"I played cello at home by myself."

The teachers added several different types of mediums to the art area. Students made flutes and drums out of play dough. They sculpted their memories out of colored wire and clay and enjoyed making drums, violins, and many different representations.



Representation of a
harmonica.



Plasticine representation of
a harp.

The teachers and students continued to discuss what they knew or had experienced with music. Discussion during large group included the following comments:

- CC: You can make all kinds of music.
- EG: There's music in a party.
- CC: You don't hear music.
- DS: Can we write music that's $\frac{1}{8}$, double and single?
- WG: They could be bongo drums.
- MP: You can use your hands.

Teachers noticed that several children had misconceptions. Some students were confused about differences between keyboards and pianos. Other students called parts of the trumpet and keyboard "buttons." KM said that he thought a person could carry a piano on a bicycle. The

children wanted to find out more detailed information about the parts of instruments and the differences between them. They asked more specific questions during whole group meetings.

1. Why do cellos have sticks?
2. How do trumpets work?
3. How do tapes in a tape recorder work?
4. I want to know why a drum has sticks.
5. How does a piano work?
6. How does vibration make sound?
7. How do you blow a French horn?

During the teaching team planning times, the teachers discussed possible ways to find answers to the students' questions. In the weekly class newsletter, the teachers asked if parents had expertise in music. Parents responded eagerly and the class began the second phase of the music project.

Teachers concentrated on main areas for investigation based on the students' questions. The teachers guided large and small groups of students in their explorations. Some students investigated questions independently. Fieldwork in phase 2 focused on the following questions:

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?