

Teaching Music Literacy in 5th Grade Beginning Orchestra

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Curriculum Project
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Teaching music literacy in 5th grade orchestra

Description: This curriculum will focus on how to teach reading music notation to a beginning orchestra. This is designed for second semester 5th graders who started playing their instruments in September of 5th grade. ¹

Time schedule: I see these students twice a week for 45 minutes: once in homogeneous instrument groups and once in a large ensemble. There are 30 students in the class. This curriculum will show how I teach music literacy in 30 classes, stretching over the first 15 weeks of the second semester and concluding at the spring concert.

Music course philosophy: My music classroom is a place where all students can grow cognitively, socio-emotionally, and morally. This environment is rooted in the idea that all students can grow through music by developing work ethics, refining fine/gross motor skills, learning music notation, gaining understanding of music theory, developing problem solving and critical thinking skills in personal practice, gaining skills working with other people and learning responsibilities of contributing to a group. Music helps students define their self concept and connect to their own emotions and emotions of others. Music provides an outlet for students to perform and create.

Course goals and objectives:

Prior to starting the unit:²

Students will be able to distinguish between duple and triple meter.

Students will be able to distinguished between major and minor tonality.

Students will be able to repeat rhythmic patterns on gordon syllables while maintaining a consistent beat with spider fingers on their legs.

Students will be able to repeat tonal patterns on solfege.

Students will be able to repeat rhythmic patterns by ear on their instruments.

Students will be able to repeat tonal patterns within the D major scale on their instrument.

Students will be able to play Hot Cross Buns, Au Clair de Lune, Mary had a Little Lamb, Boil em Cabbage Down, and Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. These will have been taught be ear and performed by memory.³

¹ Conway, 2003. Waiting to start music reading until second semester is based largely on Conway's 203/205 class at University of Michigan, and also the article referenced.

² Hopkins, n.d., Conway (2003). The prerequisites for reading music come from Hopkins "Developing Beginner" chapter as well as Conway (2003).

³ Hopkins, n.d. This repertoire comes from the Hopkins "Developing Beginner" chapter.

Course goal: The goal of this unit is to develop music literacy.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify eighth, quarter, half, dotted half, and whole notes/rests.
2. Students will be able to identify line notes vs space notes.
3. Students will be able to identify a staff, the clef for their instrument, and a measure in a piece of music.
4. Students will have knowledge of time signatures and be able to label how many of what kind of note are in every measure based on this.
5. Students will have knowledge of key signatures and know the order of sharps and flats.
6. Students will be able to identify and label their open strings on the staff.
7. Students will be able to chant rhythmic patterns by reading flashcards with aforementioned rhythmic values on gordon syllables while keeping a steady beat.
8. Students will be able to count beats while taping rhythmic patterns with aforementioned rhythmic values while keeping a steady beat.
9. Students will be able to read and sing D major scale patterns on note names and on finger numbers.
10. Students will be able to identify and perform piano (p) and forte (f) dynamics
11. Students will be able to compose 4 bar pieces for their instrument
12. Students will be able to dictate a familiar rote song with proper notation.
13. Students will be able to read String Explorers examples 38-109 over the 30 classes.

Benchmarks:

After 10 classes (5 weeks) students will be able to identify quarter notes and quarter rests, be able to distinguish between line notes and space notes on a staff, be able to identify a staff, the clef for their instrument, and a measure in a piece of music, will have knowledge of time signatures and know the order of sharps and flats, be able to identify and label their open strings on the staff, will be able to chant quarter note and quarter rest patterns by reading flashcards on gordon syllables while keeping a steady beat, and will be able to count beats while taping quarter note/rest patterns. Rhythmic assessments are incorporated. This will conclude in assessment number one.

After 20 classes (10 weeks) students will add eighth, half, and whole note values to their rhythmic chanting. Students will be able to read and sing D major scale patterns from open D to open A (first finger A on bass) on note names and finger numbers. Students will be able to perform String explorer 42-68. Weekly playing tests are incorporated.

After 30 classes (15 weeks) students will add notes B-D to their singing patterns. Students will be able to perform string explorers 69-106. Students will compose a 4 bar minimum piece for

their instrument. Students will be able to identify and perform piano (p) and forte (f) dynamics. Students will be able to dictate a familiar rote song with proper notation.

Requirements for facilities, equipment, supplies, budget, and scheduling:

- Projector or large flashcards for rhythms
- Speakers for playing backbeats
- Access to an orchestra room during lunch and after school

A list of resources to be used (books, recordings, etc.):

- String Explorer
- Garage band back beats

Sample teaching strategies

Reading with flashcards warm up:⁴

With a garage band back beat...

1. Have students repeat rhythms by rote without looking at notation
2. Introduce rhythmic value notation (i.e. explain what a quarter note is using syllables) and model
3. Ready now look and say before each new flashcard
4. Call on individual students
5. Move to a new flash card while they are still chanting, take away the ready now look and say before each new card and make it a continuous thread.

Reading an early example in String Explorer:

Students will...

1. Speak the rhythm on gordon syllables
2. Tap the rhythm while counting beats
3. Sing finger numbers in rhythm
 - a. Then finger while doing this
4. Sing letter names in rhythm
 - a. Then finger while doing this
5. Pluck
6. Air bow and speak bowings and finger
7. Bow

⁴ Hopkins, n.d. Flashcard reading activities are adapted from Hopkins "Developing Beginner Part II" chapter.

Lesson plan:

Week 6

Objectives:

- Students will be able to chant/play patterns with quarter notes, quarter rests, and eighth notes.
- Students will be able to sing and audiate D, E and F# in D major.
- Students will be able to play string explorer examples 42-46

Students will be assessed....

- Individually throughout when they are called upon
- Informally throughout as a class by watching for successful demonstrations.

Sequence:**Reading with flashcards:**

Rhythms with a garage band back beat:

1. Have students repeat rhythms (quarter notes/ rests and eighth notes) by rote without looking at notation
2. Introduce eighth notes notation and model
3. Ready now look and say before each new flashcard
4. Call on individual students
5. Move to a new flashcard while they are still chanting, take away the ready now look and say before each new card and make it a continuous thread.

Tonal patterns:

1. Have students repeat tonal patterns in D with notes D, E and F sharp without looking at notation
2. Introduce notation for E and and F sharp and model
 - a. Singing note names
 - b. Point out fingerings and finger while singing note names
3. Ready now look and say before each new flashcard
4. Call on individual students
5. Move to a new flashcard while they are still chanting. Take away the ready now look and say before each new card and make it a continuous thread.

String Explorer examples 42-44 :

As a class, we will

1. Speak the rhythm on gordon syllables
2. Tap the rhythm while counting beats

3. Sing finger numbers in rhythm
 - a. Then finger while doing this
4. Sing letter names in rhythm
 - a. Then finger while doing this
5. Pluck
6. Air bow and speak bowings and finger
7. Bow

Week 11

Objectives:

- Students will be able to play/chant patterns with quarter notes/rests, half notes/rests, and eighth notes.
- Students will be able to identify and perform forte (f) and piano (p) dynamics.
- Students will be able to play String Explorer examples 69-72

Students will be assessed....

- Individually throughout when they are called upon
- Informally throughout as a class by watching for successful demonstrations.

Sequence:

Reading with flashcards:

Rhythms with a garage band back beat:

1. Have students repeat rhythms (Half notes/rests, quarter notes/rests, and eighth notes) by rote without looking at notation
2. Introduce half note/rest notation and model
3. Ready now look and say before each new flashcard
4. Call on individual students
5. Move to a new flashcard while they are still chanting, take away the ready now look and say before each new card and make it a continuous thread.

Dynamics:

1. Take a familiar song (Twinkle) and play it though.
2. Try playing it quietly by..

- a. First, using less bow.
 - b. Next, using normal amount of bow but moving towards the fingerboard
 - c. Lastly, using less arm weight with a normal amount of bow in the middle bowing lane.
3. Experiment with these things and combine them. Introduce p notation
 4. Try playing loudly by...
 - a. First, using more bow.
 - b. Next, using more arm weight with a normal amount of bow in the middle bowing lane.
 - c. Lastly, using more arm weight closer to the bridge.
 5. Experiment with these things and combine them. Introduce f notation.
 6. Conduct through and show different dynamics, explaining what kinds of things conductors do to show dynamics. Preparation to have students lead this activity in a future lesson.

String Explorer examples 69-72:

As a class, we will ⁵

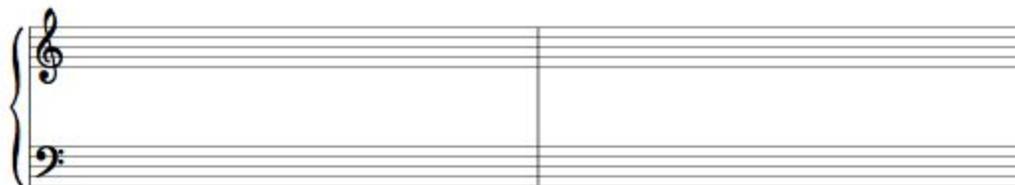
1. Tap the rhythm while counting beats
2. Sing finger numbers in rhythm and finger while doing this
3. Pluck
8. Bow

⁵ These steps are reduced from the set of steps in early method book reading to slowly remove music reading scaffolding. As Molly Baugh pointed out in her lecture on April 3d, if we keep all the scaffolding in too long students learn to memorize, not read.

Sample assessment procedures:⁶

Assessment number 1 (10 points total, 1 point per question)

1. What are the five lines that music is written on called (shown below)?



2. In the following example, write L above every line note and S over every space note.

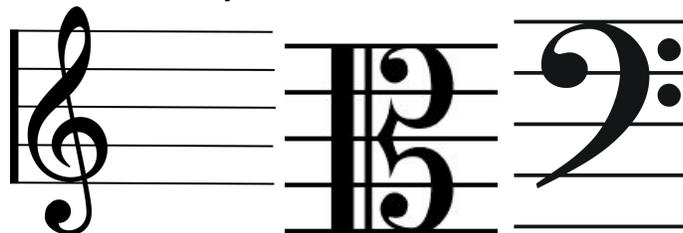
3. In the following example, circle the entire third measure



4. What kind of notes (rhythm) are in this example? _____

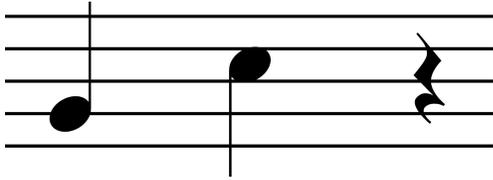


5. Circle clef for your instrument and write what it is called: _____



⁶ Pellegrino et al, 2015. Types of assessments used are inspired by this article.

6. What kind of rest is in this example below? _____



7. In the following example, *circle* the key signature and *draw a box* around the time signature.

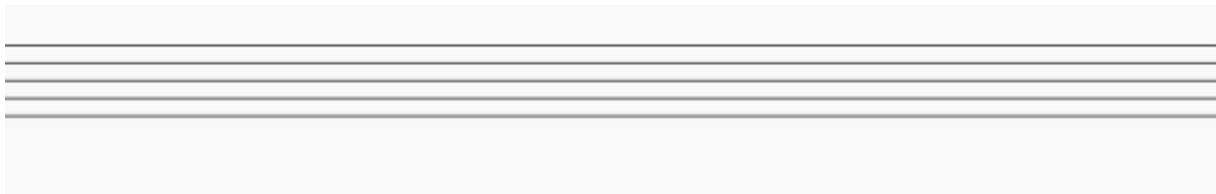


8. How many sharps are in the example above, and what are they? _____

9. In the same example, if the quarter note has the beat, how many beats are in every measure?

Bonus question What piece is the above example from? _____

10. On the following staff, draw the clef for your instrument and draw a quarter note where each open string is. Label it with the letter name directly above the note. Any order is okay.



Sample check mark system for rhythm:

Uses correct rhythmic syllables	(check or x)
Rhythm is correct	
Rests are silent	
Keeps steady time	

Playing tests:

Playing tests from the method book once a week, some done at home and submitted on google classroom and some done in small lesson groups. Score based on rubric with descriptions for each numeric value. Students will get a score and have the opportunity to submit a redo on google classroom for any test they wish to do better on. There will be times students can come record their examples during lunch or afterschool to ensure equity in access to resources.

	3- Always	2- A few mistakes	1- Incorrect/not steady
Rhythm is correct			
Rhythm is steady			
Notes are correct			
Bowing is correct			

Composition assignment:

This is a homework assignment with in class time to complete.

Compose a four measure minimum piece for your instrument. Include a clef, key signature, and time signature.

Things to consider first:⁷

1. Do you want your piece to end with a statement or a question? (provide example of what each sounds like)
2. What tempo do you want your piece to be?
3. What time signature will you use?
4. What key will your piece be in?
5. What mood do you want your piece to be?
6. How loud or soft do you want your piece to be? Will it stay that dynamic the entire time?

⁷ Conway, 2015. The framework of this composition assignment is based off of Conway chapter 10.

Rubric

	3	2	1
Includes clef, key signature, and time signature	Includes clef, key signature, and time signature properly	Clef, key signature, or time signature may be written incorrectly or missing one.	Missing more than one of either clef, key signature, or time signature or all written incorrectly.
At least four measures long	Four measures long or more	Four measures long but measures not clearly marked	Less than four measures long
Time signature used matches time signature of piece/ correct amount of beats in every measure	Time signature used matches time signature of piece	Time signature used matches time signature of piece with one or two mistakes	Time signature used does not match time signature of piece or inconsistent number of beats in every measure
Note stems are drawn correctly/ note head is clear.	Note stems are drawn correctly/ note head is clear	Note stems are wrong direction or side or some note heads are not clear	Note stems and note heads are very unclear.

References

Burton, S. L., & Snell, A. H. (2015). *Engaging musical practices*. New York: Rowan and Littlefield.

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