

TRY USING MUSIC IN YOUR NON-MUSIC CLASSROOM!

We have devoted most of this newsletter to ways music teachers can incorporate *strategies* into their instruction. We thought it only fair to spend a little time mentioning how the rest of us can successfully incorporate *music* into ours.

In this article, I will summarize a few of the ideas presented by Eric Jensen in his book, *Music with the Brain in Mind*. As many of you know, Eric Jensen has written more than a dozen books on learning and teaching. They are all very teacher friendly, and we recommend them as a great accompaniment to CRISS.

Remember as you go through the list of ways to use music, that you should never expect your students to be successful until you have explained and modeled how to incorporate the music into learning.

“Hook” Your Content to Music

- * Help students remember information like formulas or steps in a process, by having them set the information to music. Rap music or rap rhythms work well for this.
- * Encourage students to write their own lyrics, which summarize content information, to familiar songs or melodies. This works well as a group activity. First, have students write out key words and concepts they want to make sure to include. The process of connecting the words to music usually requires students to review and rethink the information several times. In itself, this review reinforces the learning.
- * Have students add appropriate and/or symbolic movements to go along with the music and information in either of the first two suggestions.
- * Model, then encourage students to do *concert readings*. This concept was

developed by Bulgarian educator Dr. Georgi Lozanov and is used much like a soundtrack for a movie. Students presenting information to their class select music which is adapted to the content of their report. Rather than just having the music in the background, the speaker uses the music for emphasis. The speaker’s voice rises and falls with the music, the speaker might pause and let the audience listen to the music to either set or change a mood, or the speaker might turn off the music to make a point. Lozanov discovered that this technique can “open gateways to learning, reach the nonconscious, create better understanding, activate long-term memory, and reduce overall learning time.” (Jenson, 2000, p.87)

Set the Classroom Mood

- * Set the scene when students enter your room. Play music which is uplifting and which sets a positive mood.
- * Transition students from one activity to another with music. Make it even better by having them stretch and move with the music. This energizes both the mind and the body.
- * Use specific pieces of music to change your students’ mental state. For example, the theme song from “Peter and the Wolf” promotes curiosity, “Sonata for two Pianos in D Major” by Mozart stimulates creativity, and the theme from “Jaws” or “Mission Impossible” sets a mood of anticipation. After tests, or when assignments are turned in, play celebration music.

Direct Student Activity

- * Provide background music, while

students work or while they write in their learning logs. Sounds of nature, like ocean waves and waterfalls, are relaxing and help many students to focus. The key to effective background music is that it does not distract the students from their work, and yet it covers up the extraneous noise of paper shuffling, foot tapping, and student-to-student comments. Don't use music with words or music with a large variation in volume. Baroque music is a good choice for background music because of its predictability.

- * Enhance student concentration by playing music in a major key which has from sixty-five to eighty beats per minute. It needs to possess a predictable rhythm and symmetrical form with a consistent volume level and no vocals. Many jazz and Baroque pieces meet these criteria.
- * Accentuate an art activity by having students listen to music which expresses the art theme or emotion. This activity is the same as Wendy Buehl's *Goblin Dance* "Fantasia" example, only here the art teacher is using music instead of the music teacher using art to enhance learning.

- * Accelerate clean up after a lab or hands-on activity by playing upbeat, fast-paced music. Imagine your students putting away supplies to a backdrop of the *William Tell Overture*!

I know, for many of you, the addition of music to your classroom seems frivolous or "cute-sy", but according to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, the *musical intelligence* is alive and well in many of our students. In addition, the current research being done on the learning brain supports the effective use of music as communicated by Jensen. While we teach our content, we need to expose our students to musical strategies, along with all the other strategies we use comfortably every day—those which address the other intelligences. As with all of the CRISS strategies, we introduce and model them to our students, then step back and let the students choose which strategies work best for them.

Jensen, Eric, (2000) Music with the Brain in Mind, published by The Brain Store, San Diego, CA. www.thebrainstore.com

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