

“Basic Skills and Pop Music with Classroom and Modern Band Instruments”

Ohio Music Educators Conference 2019

LeslieAnne Bird, North Olmsted City Schools: LeslieAnne.Bird@nocseagles.org
www.mrsbirdsmusicpage.org

Megan Stilla, North Olmsted City Schools: Megan.Stilla@nocseagles.org

The presenters will share examples of how to combine traditional classroom instruments with modern band instruments and ukulele to create engaging, high quality and musical experiences with popular music for upper elementary and middle school students in the general music classroom. We will demonstrate the process of teaching a complete song in the session. We will incorporate student leadership and choice as well as ways to thrive without "class sets" of each instrument, and how to structure classroom management while the children work. We will take you through the assessment and evaluation process as well as the means of gaining student feedback.

What is Orff?

Orff is a model for music and movement education that offers potential for active and creative music making by all children. This approach to learning, developed by Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman, builds musicianship through singing, playing instruments, speech and movement. Active music making is at the core of this philosophy supporting both the conceptual and affective development of children. Active learners develop a more thorough and better long-term understanding of the material and ideas involved. Children who regularly improvise and create their own dances and musical settings are uniquely prepared to solve problems in many other contexts

What is Modern Band?

The Little Kids Rock Foundation has developed a school music program called Modern Band. It teaches children to perform, improvise and compose using popular music. Modern Band music can be performed on virtually any instrument you have in your classroom. Modern Band is a complement to existing music programming and makes quality musical experiences available to children who might otherwise not participate in traditional music ensembles.

How to get started:

First, choose a song to work with. What to consider:

1. Is this song “school appropriate” in my teaching situation? (You may want to run your selections by an administrator.) Having several “approved” songs available and letting the children to choose what they want to play allows for “voice and choice” and instills ownership of the product.
2. Look at the chords. Is the progression repetitive? Do you need to transpose? Are the chords/melody appropriate for the instruments you have? Are there portions of the song that

should be left out? To assist with selection YouTube “play along” videos and the Little Kids Rock Jam Zone are excellent resources. <https://www.littlekidsrock.org/jamzone/> Purchasing a copy of the sheet music from www.sheetmusic.com is also a helpful.

3. Listen to the song, OVER and OVER again. Really listen and develop ideas.
4. Gather and create the resources necessary for the students to be successful with each part. (Keyboard cards, chord charts, printed music created in noteflight or whatever is available to you, chord “letter” charts, whatever gets the job done.) Have the materials created, printed and ready to go BEFORE you begin working with the children.

Process:

1. Listen to the song WITH the children multiple times. Move to the chord changes. Ask questions about what they hear. Identify the form. Why do they find the song appealing?
2. Decide where you want to start. LeslieAnne has the Orff instruments play the melody, which is usually the most challenging part to play. Megan starts with chord progressions on the keyboards followed by the melody part.
3. Find the children with “prior skills”. You will be surprised how many kids take guitar lessons or play bass or drums with family members at home. If you can find some time before introducing these instruments to the whole class, work with the kids who have skills. Then they can help with “teaching” in the “break out groups” later in the process.
4. At this step, Megan and LeslieAnne Have two different styles. Megan teaches all of the instrument parts to all of the kids beginning with ukulele chords. Next, the children transfer the chords to keyboards, and the keyboard players also learn the melody. The last step is to learn the bass guitar part. Then she maps and reviews the chords with the whole class. Next, the kids decide which instrument they would like to play. They work in 30 minute chunks and don’t add all the instruments together for several lessons. LeslieAnne decides who her “star Orff players” are first. Then we have a “meeting” and decide as a class who will play the other instruments in the band. Next, she has her “student leaders” help to get the break-out groups started while circulating and solving problems. When learning the melody on Orff Instruments we don’t spend the whole class on the song. Once we start break-out groups we work for the whole class period.
5. Trust your students and let them have choices. They will come up with wacky ideas, (Can I play my cello? I want to play the tubano! We don’t want to have singers, just an instrumental version. We want to have seven singers and divide up all the parts! I LOVE the tambourine!) Saying “yes” as often as possible will give the children ownership in the planning process and the final product. Sometimes the crazy ideas are awesome, and sometimes not so much. When they don’t work out ask the children how to make it better, they always do.
6. After all of the “parts” are reasonably well established, allow the class to create an original form for their final performance. The students are creating a class arrangement as the final step in the project.

Management and Tips:

1. Establish procedures for the proper handling and playing of the instruments BEFORE they make an appearance in class. If children do not follow procedures, they lose the privilege of playing that instrument.
2. Choice of which instrument they play is key to a successful program. Decide with the students how the class will work out who will play a particular instrument if there are more students who want to play than available instruments. You will generally have good instrumentation when offering choice.
3. When using the keyboard cards, start with playing one note per chord. Then add the “U” shape and the last step is to add three finger chords. Write the note names on the keys with dry erase marker or add stickers. Non-keyboard players can easily and quickly play along.
4. **Always** add the drum set last (if you have one.) IT IS SO LOUD! This is the one instrument where the teacher needs to make the final decision. If you have a fantastic drummer, great! If not, break up the rhythms and have several children play. One can play the bass, one the high hat and another the snare. If you don’t have a drum set use hand drums or tubanos and hit small cymbals with mallets or a drumstick.
5. It is ok if you don’t have a full assortment of modern band instruments. Use what you have, ask the kids what they have at home. Students will show up with guitars and ukuleles and keyboards that have been collecting dust at home because they WANT to play.
6. Modern Band is all about positive experiences making music in a group. Finger positions don’t have to be perfect and it is OK to let playing posture relax. Putting keyboards on the floor because you don’t have stands is fine. Just go for it and let yourself and the children have fun playing!
7. Sheet music is not necessary for all the children. Have it available for the kids to see. Write the letters of the root chords, or just chord charts labeled 1, 2 and 3. Whatever the child needs to be a successful participant in the band.
8. All of these steps and processes can be modified to accommodate younger students if you wish.
9. Basic Format:
 - a. Listen to song A LOT! Move to the changes.
 - b. Play one note on keyboards, add “U” shape, add three finger chords
 - c. Add ukulele and guitar
 - d. Add bass guitar to strengthen the beat
 - e. Add vocals
 - f. Add drum set
10. You can request up to five sets of keyboard Jam Cards for **FREE** from Little Kids Rock. To request your Jam Cards email johncarrano@littlekidsrock.org and include your school information.

Assessment/Evaluation and Student Feedback:

1. Pre-assessment can be questions about their perceptions about the complexity of performing popular music. Their comfort level with playing particular instruments, or their levels of engagement with music ensembles.
2. Don't wait until the end product to assess. Use intermittent "check-up" assessments for each break out group to measure progress along the way. Megan asks the students to play duets with her on the piano prior to adding their next instrument. The children can decide if they want to play harmony or melody. Best playing test ever and so many volunteers! LeslieAnne does "check-in assessments" with break-out groups.
3. The break out groups offer an excellent place for students to set individual learning goals and set personal learning targets.
4. About two lessons before the final performance, the class creates a rubric or checklist for the final product. The product is video recorded and the students self-assess their work using the evaluation tool they created.
5. Students are asked follow-up questions to gather information on their levels of engagement and how we can improve as their educational guide. Some sample questions are: Did you enjoy the work? Why or why not? What could I do as an educational guide to improve the learning experience? What was your favorite part? Why? What did you learn while completing this work?

Curricular Concepts/Content Standards:

1. Personal Choice and Vision: The students construct and solve problems of personal relevance and interest when expressing themselves through music.
2. Critical and Creative Thinking: Students combine and apply artistic and reasoning skills to imagine, create, realize and refine musical works in conventional and innovative ways and to understand the works produced and performed by others.
3. Authentic Application and Collaboration: Students work individually and in groups to focus ideas, create and perform music to address genuine local and global community needs.

Content Statements Grade 5:

1. 3CE: Identify terms related to form
2. 5CE: Identify elements of music including tonality, dynamics, tempo and meter, using musical vocabulary
3. 6CE: Differentiate between melody and harmony
4. 1PR: Sing varied repertoire with accurate rhythm and pitch
5. 2PR: Perform, on instruments, a varied repertoire with accurate rhythm and pitch, appropriate expressive qualities, good posture and breath control
6. 3PR: Improvise, compose and arrange music
7. 7PR: Demonstrate appropriate audience etiquette at live performances
8. 1RE: Justify personal preferences for certain musical pieces, performances, composers and musical genres both orally and in writing

9. 2RE: Discuss contributions of musical elements to aesthetic qualities in performances of self and others
10. 4RE: Defend interpretations of music via dance, drama and visual art using appropriate vocabulary
11. 6RE: Develop and apply criteria for critiquing more complex performances of live and recorded music