

Bring Literacy and Math Into Your Classroom!

We had a lot of fun at NCMEA this year! I did a session on [How To Bring Literacy Into Your Classroom](#) and one on [How To Use Math To Help Your Students Learn Music Better](#). Both utilized regular classroom techniques to teach music, but emphasized Arts Integration without sacrificing Arts Integrity!

[How To Bring Literacy Into Your Classroom:](#)

There are several picture books beyond the usual suspects that are perfect to use in the music room! Fun and colorful books can be used as a hook to grab students' attention and as a structure to help organize the information. What could be better?

The best way to start is to choose award winning stories and go from there. Example: The Three Little Pigs. You can take the repeated phrases "Little pig, little pig let me in"/ "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."/ "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down." and write out the rhythms. Take those rhythms and replace them with instrumentation, so that every time they come up in the story, the kids will play it on instruments instead of saying them.

This story is also in modified Rondo form. The phrase above is the reoccurring B section and the C, D and E sections are when each pig chooses material to build a house. The A section is the introduction. By showing the similarities, you can illustrate how literature and music are so alike!

Another favorite that we looked at is the story "Frederick" by Leo Leoni. I love this book!! It is a story about a family of mice that are preparing for the cold winter ahead. They are all busy gathering food and other necessary items, while Frederick is gathering colors and words. The others don't really see the value of his contribution until all of their supplies have run out and Frederick is left to feed their souls with poems and beautiful images. It is a wonderful advocate for the Arts!

Students can compose a piece to share with their classmates what winter sounds like to them. They can also share what summer sounds like to warm everyone up! This is a great time to play Vivaldi's Winter or Raff's Symphony 11 "Der Winter" to illustrate other composers' ideas.

There are so many beautiful stories out there. Ask your school librarian or go to your local library and peruse all of the wonderful ways to help convey music concepts in the months ahead!

[How To Use Math To Help Your Students Learn Music Better](#)

In this workshop, I spoke about utilizing math techniques to help children master what I call "Notation Sense", an intuitive understanding of how length of sound, relationships among the notes and rests interact and then how they are affected by expressive qualities and orchestration. For example, when you change the time signature on a piece, it simply means that there are more or less beats per measure, BUT, we know that the whole feel of that piece changes. Until children have a chance to explore time signatures and have many experiences hearing and playing them, how can they truly understand its function? Likewise, expressive qualities and orchestration choices serve other purposes. All play a part in the message that the composer wants to convey, but the clarity of that message depends on the composer's knowledge of what tools are available.

Read this month's lesson for an example to help kids explore Notation Sense!

Ultimately we can learn from what goes on in the regular classroom, just like they can learn from us. The more bridges we build, the better the connections will be made for the students. When concepts are learned as a whole picture, rather than in isolation, they are easier to recall and better understood. Everyone benefits!