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BUILDING BETTER LISTENERS:  
MUSIC LISTENING ACTIVITIES  
IN A SECOND GRADE MUSIC CLASS

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study documents the observed experiences of a music teacher and her class of twenty-five second grade students when using activities to enhance music listening. All participants in the study were involved in varied activities to strengthen musical concepts while listening to many different styles of music. The study examines the students' success in these activities and also the relation to the musical concepts that were continued throughout each class period.

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## RESEARCHER STANCE

### My Background

I grew up listening to all kinds of music: classical, church hymns, musical theater, and jazz, to name a few. My father is a musician, and throughout my childhood he shared his love for music with me. When the time came for me to decide what I was going to study in college, and after attending a choral festival late in my senior year, I realized that music was really what I wanted to pursue. I applied, auditioned, and was accepted to the only college that I applied to for music. I anxiously awaited that August, when I would set off on my journey.

I majored in Music Education. Throughout several methods courses, my classmates and I taught in elementary and secondary classrooms. We practice-taught general music and chorus rehearsals. I did not always see eye to eye with my professor and his philosophy of music, but did my best to learn as much as I could and teach as he expected me to. Throughout all of my undergraduate coursework, I do not remember ever discussing strategies for music listening during elementary music classes. I assumed that children did have exposure to varieties of music, as I had in my childhood, and so I was not concerned at this point.

Finally, I student taught in my last semester. I enjoyed both my elementary and my secondary placements, and both of my cooperating teachers challenged and encouraged me to form my own philosophy and teaching style. They both

seemed to teach in styles that meshed well with the ideas in my head. My elementary placement was in a small, rural, mostly middle class, white neighborhood. The classes ran very smoothly: the students were very nice, polite, and well behaved, and they were enthusiastic and excited about music class. My cooperating teacher began each class by playing music of varying styles every day, which tied into my love of listening to good music, and did a simple movement routine to the music. She did the same movement sequence every day, in every class period, with every grade level, no matter what the music. While the children did not seem to particularly enjoy the movement that she did, I thought, “at least they get to hear some good music!”

#### A New Teacher

When I began teaching elementary music in a large, diverse, suburban school district, I was quite unprepared for what I would be faced with when the children walked through the door. Since my cooperating teacher for my elementary student teaching placement had effective discipline strategies and classroom procedures in place prior to my time with her, these were things we never had discussed. Unfortunately, this meant that I was not prepared with these two necessities for my new environment when I began teaching. Many of my students, as I would learn, had relocated to our district from a large nearby city. Their experiences and attitudes were vastly different from the students that I had encountered previously. I spent much of my first year struggling to provide

meaningful music lessons while teaching four different grade levels of very diverse students, and choruses of 50+ children. I felt that I did not have anyone to turn to for advice or strategies; I really felt that I was fending for myself.

One of the things that I noticed in these first months was that my students did not enjoy listening to “classical” music. They would laugh and giggle at some, show boredom at others, and let me know that they did not enjoy or appreciate any of it. I was surprised, at first, since I had such a rich musical background growing up. However, the more I learned about my students and their home lives, the more I understood that since this simply was not a basic need, most of the children had not had the exposure that I had hoped for. About 50% of my students came from low-income families; many of their parents worked in the city and came home only on the weekends. Many of my students were left to take care of themselves during the week, and studying music was not a high priority for them. I began to wonder about ways I could incorporate listening into our classes more often so that they could grow accustomed to hearing music that they would not normally hear, and become more open-minded about music and cultures that are different than theirs. I began with this idea, but was still not sure where to begin incorporating this into my teaching.

### My Bright Idea

During my Master’s program at Moravian College, I took a course entitled “Drama in Education” to fulfill an elective requirement. I was immediately

impressed by the warm-up activities and team-building exercises that we did. I quickly realized that this course would have quite an impact on my teaching. One aspect of the class that struck me was that our professor always had soft music playing in the background. It seemed to help us to stay focused and calm amidst the excitement and nervousness that we all had, since we were engaging in activities that challenged us physically and mentally. My thoughts on incorporating listening activities on a daily basis began to take shape as we played games, did improvisatory drama activities, and movement activities. My idea finally came through in the form of warm-up activities to music, which I would introduce and we would discuss after the activity had ended. I knew that I would need simple activities for the primary grades I work with, and would also need varied and short listening examples. This summer class truly did turn out to be one of the most impactful and important classes of my Master's program!

Throughout the following school year, I implemented this idea in grades two and three. I used activities and games that could be done silently and would only take a few minutes. Most were taken from activities I experienced in the drama class, but modified for the ages of my students. After awhile, I became frustrated because the activities were not always related to the music lessons, nor were all of them done in response to the music. I identified the need to find activities that would reflect the music that the students would hear, and when possible, connect with the rest of our music lesson each day.

I decided to continue this idea for the next year. I researched various related topics, including listening lessons, movement activities, and music games. I decided to carefully plan the activities that I would do so that they corresponded with either the lesson or with the unit of study that the students would be working on.

With all of these points taken into account, my research question was: What were the observed and reported experiences of a second grade music class when activities were integrated with listening selections of varying styles and cultures in each class period?

I had hoped that the students would grow more open-minded to different styles of music, and I had also hoped that they would build better connections with the material that we studied during the rest of each class period.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

There is one music activity that seems to overshadow all others – an activity that plays a vital role in every phase of music education and is so integral a part of music that the art form could not exist without it. This activity is music listening. (Cappon, 1974, p. 41)

Music listening is one of many activities that take place in a music classroom. Its importance is made quite clear by experts in the field. Baldrige (1984) tells us that while many activities traditionally taught in the music classroom, such as “singing, listening, moving, playing, and creating/composing” (p. 79), do hold their own value and are an “important aspect of a music curriculum, the teaching of listening is an activity that permeates all of the others” (p. 79). There are many ways that music listening can be incorporated into classroom activities through the use of dramatic activities, games, movement, and creative writing. It is important while planning these activities to understand the intellectual and physical development of the students, to ensure that the activities are developmentally appropriate for the children.

### Music Listening

#### *Importance of Listening Activities*

Music listening is an integral part of music education. “Listening is one of the primary modes through which music is learned, experienced, and enjoyed”

(Sims, 1990, p. 38). While learning the technicalities of musical notation and the history of music are also of importance, music is an aesthetic art. One of its most valuable assets is its expressive import (Reese, 1983). Becoming intelligent, discriminating, and sensitive listeners allows students to understand what they are hearing, identify various characteristics of the music, and enjoy their experiences with music in new ways (Cappon, 1974; Sims, 1990). The early childhood and early elementary years are ideal for teaching music listening, as children at this age are accepting and receptive of varying types of music.

#### *Teaching Strategies and Methods*

There are several methods to guiding music listening in a classroom environment. Sims (1990) gives several guidelines for teachers to aid the process, including some basic classroom management tips, such as maintaining eye contact with the students and demonstrating attention to the music. Sims also suggests giving students a specific purpose or task to accomplish while listening, as they will be more likely to pay close attention to the music. These tasks or purposes may vary in many ways. “With a little student and teacher creativity, there are numerous possibilities for creating interesting and challenging listening lessons incorporating movement for students at all elementary school grade levels” (Sims, 1990, p. 40).

Reiterating the importance of active listening, a study was completed by Hughes (1992), where responses of high school students to musical excerpts were

carefully observed and documented to determine whether teacher affect influences students' responses to music. They also examined the differences in students' responses and behavior between active and passive listening. While there was not a significant difference in student response due to high or low teacher affect, the differences between active and passive listening were significant. Hughes concludes, "It may be assumed that regardless of whether or not the teacher uses high or low affect, the use of an active listening approach should be chosen for success in the listening lesson" (p. 18).

At the same time, Cappon (1974) states that as the exploration of music continues, concepts tend to become increasingly sophisticated. At the elementary level, the music concepts should include tone, rhythm, and form, while increasing basic physical skills through movement. Other traditional activities for music listening include use of instruments to play along with recorded music, use of Kodaly hand signs to identify themes or motives in the music, and various movement activities. The decisions on which activities to include should be made with student input, based on their interests and ideas (Palmer, 2001).

### *Listening Selections*

There is an abundance of music available for music listening activities. Sims (1990) reminds us that since the attention span of primary children is quite short, listening selections for instrumental music should only last 1-2 minutes, and a bit longer for selections with words. Activities that correspond with music

listening can allow the selections to be lengthier as well. She suggests selections from “Pictures at an Exhibition” by Modest Mussorgsky and “The Comedians” by Dimitry Kabalevsky, since each of these have several movements that are relatively short, and are also quite varied from each other. “Carnival of the Animals” by Camille Saint-Saens is another several-movement piece that provides various opportunities and styles for listening. Contemporary/popular music, such as “I’m Gonna Be (500 Miles)” by the Proclaimers and “Feeling Hot Hot Hot” by Buster Poindexter also allow for more creative movement and exciting listening experiences that the children are almost sure to take an interest in (Kim, 1995). Whatever the selection, it is important that the activities require the children to listen attentively for a specific goal.

### Activities for Listening

#### *Dramatic Activities*

While dramatic activities are typically seen as role-play, acting out characters, or creating simulations, there are many activities that do not require such in-depth role-play. These activities are geared towards establishing a sense of self, a sense of community and cooperation among students, exploring different leadership roles, and building negotiating skills (Swartz, 1995). These activities can be quite simple and short, or they can be complex and time-consuming. Some of the activities can be easily incorporated into music listening, such as “Magic Hand,” where the students would be moving in response to what they hear. This

type of activity encourages creativity, leadership, cooperation, and interpretation of the music, and can also be altered to fit various ages and abilities of students. Incorporating dramatic activities into music listening may take a bit of imagination and careful planning, but the results are quite profound.

### *Games*

Another activity that can take place with music listening is the use of games. While they can be quite similar in many ways to the dramatic activities discussed above, games can be more easily geared to specific musical concepts. Hotchkiss and Athey (1978) provide a model for designing games, with eight steps to follow to ensure that the game will be worthwhile. However, they also warn against allowing the games to become part of the curriculum. Games can be used to enhance skills or review material, but should not become the only means of communicating skills to the students. Several music methodologies concur with the belief that games can be valuable tools in the music classroom. The Kodaly philosophy, the Orff method, and the Montessori method all support the use of games to develop all of the sensory perceptions, to disguise potentially dull exercises, and to incorporate body movement (Hotchkiss & Athey, 1978). The use of games in music listening allows our students to utilize several modes of learning: visual, tactile, auditory, and kinesthetic. Vygotsky (1978) tells us that “it is impossible to ignore the fact that the child satisfies certain needs in play. If we

do not understand the special character of these needs, we cannot understand the uniqueness of play as a form of activity” (p. 92).

### *Interpretive Movement*

Perhaps the most valuable activity to accompany music listening is movement. While allowing again for multiple modes of learning, children are also developing physical mastery of skills such as balance, coordination, and strength. Their minds are working to connect their physical movement with symbols and sounds, and they are also working cooperatively with others (Palmer, 2001). “Movement is a very natural medium through which children can demonstrate and express music concepts . . . movement then becomes a way for the teacher to focus student attention and for students to demonstrate what they are hearing” (Sims, 1990, p. 40). Lewis (1998) speaks of the importance of movement from the perspective of a historian:

Elementary music teachers have received encouragement to incorporate movement-based activities in their instructional programs from the professional literature, workshop clinicians, supervisors, classroom teachers, and their own students. The prevailing opinion of advocates seems to be that participation in movement-based instruction is enjoyable for elementary music students and that it promotes their educational development in a

variety of ways (e.g., musicianship, creativity, academic, social, and physical development). (p. 113)

Another benefit of movement in music is that it will allow students another outlet for active participation, even if they have failed in another area. “Not every child excels in singing . . . . Such students often feel left out of the music period and withdraw from active participation. Movement to music gives these children an alternate musical path to explore, one in which they can be achievers” (Ludowise, 1985, p. 40). Movement is a natural reaction to music, and “a balance between aural, kinesthetic, and visual modes strengthens the listening process for a wide variety of learners” (Mueller, 2002, p. 56).

Andress (1991) suggests that there are three main ways in which the teacher can interact in students’ movement experiences: through modeling, describing, and suggesting. Stationary movements such as bouncing, swaying, patching, or other hand movements can be used effectively with beginning movers, and larger body movements can be incorporated rather easily. More in-depth activities can be created to accompany specific songs, such as movement with the use of scarves, lummi sticks, or paper plates, as each medium will suggest different variables of expression. Suggestive movements can also be included, such as moving like a robot or like a troll to a certain piece of music, perhaps to tell the story of the music itself (Weikart & Carlton, 1995). The possibilities for incorporating movement are almost endless. “Active involvement

through movement representation and through using hand percussion instruments enables students to understand and make connections within and among the various music concepts” (Weikart & Carlton, 1994, p. 14).

### *Creative Writing*

One final type of activity for listening is creative writing. Flowers (2000) also stresses the positive effects of writing to music:

Writing about music may provide opportunities for focused listening, development of music and other vocabulary, practice in writing mechanics, and communication skill. Writing about music is a good vehicle for integrating music with other academic objectives, and it seems to enhance rather than detract from music learning objectives. (p. 275)

Sims (1990), however, cautions against certain types of pencil-and-paper activities “if they do not necessitate listening intently to the music” (p. 41). She concedes that written materials can be quite valuable in enforcing musical concepts. For example, creative drawing to music might not be a listening activity, but drawing melodic contours or using colors to depict form are closely connected with the music being heard. She suggests making use of simple, uncluttered charts and maps for the students to follow along with. Written materials that require short student responses are also valuable, as they can listen and circle responses simultaneously while still paying attention to the music. For



older students, listening to music and writing creatively is also an effective means of written work to correspond with the listening, but younger children lack the developmental skills to accomplish such a task quickly.

### Elementary Students

#### *Intellectual Development*

One must take special care to examine the intellectual development of the students before planning listening activities. At the age of students in grades two and three, they are at Piaget's concrete-operational stage of development. They are interested in using props and visual aids as well as other manipulatives, and this physical manipulation aids in their mental processes (Weikart & Carlton, 1994). Students at this age have difficulty with the abstract, and since music listening can be quite abstract, teachers need to design activities that will allow the students to have a concrete understanding of the music. For example, the students will be able to identify form through the use of short musical examples and form cards or listening maps, but may not be able to identify form through listening alone. It is important to understand the intellectual development so that students do not become frustrated with activities that their brains are not equipped to handle.

#### *Physical Development*

Finally, "curriculum planners should carefully study the research of developmental theorists and movement specialists in order to better understand

the predictable movement characteristics of various age groups” (Andress, 1991, p. 25). The free movement of children will vary according to age group, and it is necessary to understand their physical development so that the teachers can avoid uncomfortable situations. Woolfolk (1998) brings up an interesting point: “During the elementary years, physical development is fairly steady for most children . . . there is tremendous variation, however . . . throughout elementary school, many of the girls are likely to be as large or larger than the boys in their classes. This size discrepancy can give girls an advantage in physical activities, though some girls may feel conflict over this and, as a result, downplay their physical abilities” (p. 99). Children aged 7-8 have developed the motor skills to skip, catch, draw, use scissors, and write. However, since their bodies are growing it is important to ensure that activities allow them to feel comfortable with themselves and to encourage types of movement that will ensure physical safety of all involved, since some may be quite out of control with their growing selves.

### Summary

The area of music listening is quite varied and complex. There are many different ways to incorporate activities to accompany music listening, including movement, games, dramatic activities, and writing. In order for these activities to be successful and interesting for the students, teachers must understand the intellectual and physical development of the students and plan activities that are appropriate for the age level. Listening selections are unlimited, and the children

at this age are receptive to many different types of music, which allows the teacher to explore various styles of music with their students. It can be an exciting avenue for teachers and students alike to explore.

## METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

In order to answer my research question and focus on listening activities in the music classroom, the setting and participants were taken into consideration. I used the procedures listed below throughout the course of the study.

### Setting

The elementary school in which this project took place is located in eastern Pennsylvania, near a major metropolitan city. The building houses approximately 800 students in grades 2-6. The socioeconomic levels of the students in the school are 50% lower class, 50% lower middle to middle class.

The classroom in which Music took place is the students' homeroom. It houses a closet area, a sink/cabinet area, a large open area with student chairs and desks, and a teacher desk. One wall has a long shelf running the length of it; two of the walls have blackboards; the remaining wall has an outside door and windows. The student desks are arranged in four groups of six to seven. Their homeroom teacher is usually not present during the music class. There is an overhead projector and screen in the room, and my music cart was present, which houses the necessary materials for any given class, including stereo and appropriate CDs, textbooks, keyboard, and other materials that I bring with me.

## Participants

The students I worked with on this project are in second grade. There were 25 students in the class, including 12 males and 13 females. The ethnic makeup of the class consisted of 12 Caucasian students, 7 Hispanic students, 4 African-American students, and 1 Asian student. Three of the students receive instruction in English as a Second Language.

This class had music twice in a 6-day cycle. There were 23 class periods during the course of this study. Class periods were 45 minutes long.

## Procedure

### *Permissions*

Following Arhar, Holly, and Kasten's (2001) ethical guidelines for teacher-researchers, I obtained consent from Moravian College's Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) (see Appendix A) and my building principal (see Appendix B) to conduct this study. I then approached my students with the project. Each student in the class signed their own consent form (see Appendix C), as well as having taken a consent letter home for their parents or guardians to sign (see Appendix D). Within three weeks, I had received permission from all of the parents of students in this class, and I was able to gather data. As a teacher-researcher and active participant in the classes, I used qualitative data-gathering methods.

*Activities*

The procedure for listening activities was similar from day to day. These activities served as an introduction or “warm-up” to our lesson. To encourage thoughtful listening and to allow the students to become comfortable with the activities, we used most listening selections and activities for two class periods.

We began each class period with a brief introduction to the music we heard, and an explanation of the activity. After listening and participating in the activity, we usually held a brief discussion to allow the students to give feedback on the listening activity.

Unit One: Singing Voice (two class periods)

Objective: Students will demonstrate proper use of singing voice by singing familiar and new songs.

Listening Selection	Activity
“Blue Skies” sung by Ella Fitzgerald	Group movement to song

Unit Two: Steady Beat (six class periods)

Objective: Students will demonstrate steady beat through movement, hand jives, and use of lummi sticks.

Listening Selections	Activities
“Eine Kleine Nachtmusik” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Steady beat movement
“William Tell Overture” by Giacchino Rossini	Steady beat movement
“Autumn” from <u>The Four Seasons</u> by Antonio Vivaldi	Movement with scarves (Weikart & Carlton, 1995)

Sample Lesson: “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Activity: Individual movement to music, demonstrating steady beat.

At the start of class, I introduced our listening piece, “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik,” to the students with brief historical and cultural information, including the time period in which it was written and the composer. I instructed the students to follow my lead as we began listening, and led the students in various movements that keep a steady beat to the song. After observing the students for about a minute of the song, I selected students who have demonstrated ability to keep a steady beat to lead the motions for the group.

Following the song, we discussed the movements that were shown to allow the students to decipher between those which showed steady beat and those that did not. We then moved into our main lesson for the day, where the focus was using a hand jive to move to the music of the song “Waddaly Atcha.”

Unit Three: Dynamics (five class periods)

Objective: Students will demonstrate understanding of various dynamic levels by singing, moving, and listening.

Listening Selections	Activities
“Symphony No. 2” by Sergei Rachmaninoff	Descriptive writing: students will write the characteristics of the music that they hear, ie. instrumentation, tempo, dynamics, emotion.
“Galop” from <u>The Comedians</u> by Dimitry Kabalevsky	Partner movement
“The Monster Mash” by Bobby “Borris” Picket	Partner movement

Unit Four: Rhythm (eight class periods)

Objective: Students will demonstrate rhythmic patterns, ostinatos, and read simple rhythms by clapping, speaking, identifying, and creating various rhythms.

Listening Selections	Activities
“Canon in D” by Johann Pachelbel	Partner movement



Listening Selections	Activities
“Firebird” by Igor Stravinsky	Clapping given rhythms (see Appendix E)
“Grasslands Chant” from the musical, <u>The Lion King</u>	Clap given rhythmic ostinatos (see Appendix F)
“The Surprise Symphony” by Franz Joseph Haydn	Tap rhythms with lummi sticks (see Appendix G) (Kline, 2001)

Unit Five: Form (two class periods during study)

Objective: Students will demonstrate form by listening to, describing, and categorizing songs.

Listening Selections	Activities
“Route 66” sung by Nat King Cole	Clap, step, pat, snap rhythmic ostinatos (see Appendix H)

#### Data Sources

Hubbard and Power (2003) stress the importance of triangulation in teacher-research. Triangulation is “the use of multiple sources to support findings . . . . [And to] build a compelling case for what you have discovered” (p. 124). To achieve triangulation, I have used several data gathering methods.

### *Observational Data*

According to Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001), “observation is foundational to all good research” (p. 142). Following their suggestions, I observed the students as they participated in the listening activities. I focused on their experiences during the activities, and any connections made during the remainder of the class periods. I also included teacher reflection as a part of the observational data, in the form of notes and reflective journal (see Appendix I).

### *Student Work*

Student work included a descriptive writing assignment during Unit Three. This work was done on a blank piece of paper. A worksheet entitled “Dynamite Dynamics” (completed during Unit Four) demonstrated the students’ understanding of dynamic terms learned (see Appendix J). Finally, a rhythm worksheet was completed at the close of Unit Four to demonstrate students’ understanding of note values (see Appendix K). All other student work was participation, and was carefully observed and recorded in the field log.

### *Survey*

Each student completed a survey at the end of the unit (see Appendix L). The survey asked the students’ opinions on the listening activities that we had completed, including questions about both the music selections and the activities themselves. It also asked the students to decide if the activities helped them to

learn the concepts taught, and whether they liked hearing the various types of music in general.

### Summary

I have carefully planned activities and music selections to correspond with regular curricular units of study for my second grade students. The students will be observed during class periods, and will have the opportunity to discuss their work at the close of each listening activity. In addition, the closing survey will lend insights into their thoughts and feelings about the activities at the completion of the study.

## TRUSTWORTHINESS STATEMENT

Trustworthiness is an important issue when it comes to teacher research. My first job is to protect my students, and my research comes second. Everything I do needs to be with their best interests in mind, which is truly the core of my study. This being said, there are some safeguards that I have placed that allowed me to conduct research while being a teacher.

First, I had the support of both my Moravian professors and the HSIRB, in addition to my principal. I sent home information and received back consent forms from the parents of my students, which allowed me to use data from their children in my published documents. The students also signed consent forms for themselves, and had the option to choose to withdraw from the study at any time (Arhar, Holly, & Kasten, 2001).

It is very important – crucial, even – to ensure confidentiality for my students. In this manner, student names have not been used, nor have the name or location of the school been identified. This ensures anonymity of the students involved in the study.

A trusting relationship is also important between the students, the principal, the parents, and myself. Along with self-reflection of the work that was done in class, trust is an important part of ethical guidelines for researchers (Arhar, Holly, & Kasten, 2001). I believe that this was accomplished simply by being professional: by doing exactly what I have said I would do, by keeping careful

notes of what occurred during class, and by being careful to avoid any showing any partiality or favoritism toward any of the students.

With this noted, a bias that I have as a teacher-researcher is that I have taught the majority of these students when they were in first grade. We already had a past history, and at times it was difficult for me to look at them through new eyes, laying aside any prior knowledge or experiences that I may have had with them in the previous school year. At the same time, my relationship with my students may have been stronger already since we did have this foundation already laid.

Furthermore, my relationships with the students and their parents can only be strengthened by the fact that I chose this study in order to make a more meaningful experience for my students. I believe that the parents and the students understood and appreciated that my goal was to make a better learning environment, and saw this study as a positive endeavor.

## THIS YEAR'S STORY

### Setting the Stage

When school began in late August, I was excited and energetic about beginning my research. I received class lists for my 18 classes, and quickly flipped through to find Mrs. Williams' class. Since I taught the entire first grade in music the previous year, I was confident that I would know most of the children in her class, although I was surprised by the high number of new students in her class. Of the 23 students on the list, I recognized 18 names, which meant that 5 were new to our school this year, and as I would find out, 2 more new students would join us before the completion of the study.

As my mind flashed back to these students a few months prior, I was flooded with memories of each of the 18 students. Amanda, Simone, Stacy, Dana, and Danielle were five very sweet girls who seemed to get along with everyone. They seemed to be matched well with male counterparts in the class: James, Nick, David, José, and Chris were also very nice students, if not a little energetic.

Tiffany was a charming girl who loved to give hugs and draw pictures for her friends and teachers. She was very low academically, but loved music and everything that we did in music class. Katina, who moved into our district at the end of first grade, seemed like a nice enough child, but was still a mystery to me. While there were not any names on the list that sparked particularly negative memories, I knew that there would be a few challenges ahead.

Jennifer was a headstrong girl who had proven many times that she liked having her way. Amir, I remembered, was a boy who was well behaved and quiet for the most part, but had his moments of apathy when he refused to do anything at all. When I saw Marcus' name, I recalled that he often made funny faces and came out with thoughts that sometimes he himself could not even explain. While I knew that music was not his favorite class, he was normally willing to go along with whatever we were doing.

Zamar and Michael both seemed to have the same attitude: they wanted to have fun and talk to their friends, but would deny doing anything wrong if confronted by the teacher. And finally, I remembered Rebecca as quite simply being a drama queen. She was a very needy little girl, and it was easy to tell that her parents doted on her quite a bit. She seemed to expect special treatment at all times.

I looked forward to meeting the other students whose names I knew without a face: Natalia, Allen, Timothy, Candyce, and Sydney.

I had decided that I wanted to begin the school year with our listening activities. This would help to set our routine for music immediately when the year started, and the research would not disrupt our class period too much. Also, since much of the first week of school is focused on setting rules and routines, I knew that this would provide an easy way to include music in our first class period right away.

## Off We Go

When I walked into their classroom that Wednesday afternoon, most of the children appeared to be excited to see me. Simone and Rebecca jumped up and ran over to me to give me a hug, while others waved hello from their seats. We discussed the things that would be different in music this year from last year, since they are in a different building and music is held in their homeroom instead of in a music room. I noticed that Michael and Rebecca were talking to each other a little bit while we were conversing, and Marcus and Amir seemed to have a hard time sitting still.

When I introduced the students to our listening activities, the excitement and enthusiasm continued among the students. I told them that we would talk a little about the song and the composer or performer, and that I would explain a simple game or activity to do while we listen. We practiced making a circle around the room, and then did our first listening activity. I introduced “Blue Skies,” sung by Ella Fitzgerald, and I led the class in a series of movements to show the steady beat of the song. Since our objective for the class period was to demonstrate different uses of the voice, the listening selection was performed by a famous singer. We started with basic motions, such as patting our legs, shoulders, and heads to the beat. The students followed well, and everyone participated without needing special encouragement.



At first, the children were slightly timid in their motions. They seemed to be self-conscious, since they did not know all of their classmates very well yet. I added some of the movements that were silly, such as John Travolta-style disco dancing, and they laughed and giggled when it was appropriate. The silly motions seemed to help the students loosen up and become more enthusiastic about moving to the music. They also enjoyed the upbeat, cheerful music that they heard, and giggled a bit when Ella started scat singing, which is improvising melodies using nonsense syllables to imitate instruments. I was encouraged by this enthusiastic start to my study.

The following poem was written from the point of view of Michael, a very active boy with a small attention span. Michael proved that this was true within the first ten minutes of class when he was talking to Rebecca rather than participating in our class discussion. The poem tells what I imagine would have been going through his head as we began our first music class, interjected with a things that he did say during our first class together.

Figure 1: *Poem: Second Grade is Weird*

Hey! It's Mrs. Stein! I remember her!  
HI, MRS. STEIN!  
Man, we had so much fun last year  
When I was in first grade  
She was my music teacher in first grade  
And now she's my music teacher again!

Now I'm in second grade.

MRS. STEIN, NOW I'M IN SECOND GRADE!

It's weird that we were in the other school

The small school

Last year when I was in first grade

And Mrs. Stein was our music teacher at the other school

In first grade

And now she's my music teacher

Here

In the big school

In second grade.

MRS. STEIN, WHY DO YOU . . .

MRS. STEIN, WHY ARE YOU . . .

MRS. STEIN, WE HAVE MUSIC IN HERE?

Why didn't we line up and go to the music room?

MRS. STEIN, WHERE'S THE MUSIC ROOM?

IT'S IN HERE?

WE HAVE MUSIC IN HERE?

That's so weird.

Second grade is weird.

Hey, where are my crayons?

REBECCA, YOU TOOK MY CRAYONS!

GIVE THEM BACK!

YES YOU DID, I KNOW YOU DID.

Oh, everyone is getting up.

Where are we going?

Are we going to the music room now?

What?

We're just standing here.

Mrs. Stein said we did a good job -

Good job standing?

What is she talking about?

Whoa...

There's some lady singing coming from the stereo.

Does it run on batteries?

How does that stereo work?

She just pushed it in here on that big table with the wheels on it.

It looks just like the stereo she had last year

In the little school

When we had music in her music room

When we were in first grade.

Why isn't there a music room here?

Second grade is weird.

The remainder of the class period was spent discussing rules and procedures of music class, during which time the students seemed to lose focus. They began talking quietly, playing with items hiding in their desks, fiddling with their pencil boxes, and looking around the room. We also began a new song toward the end of class, an African chant called "Funga." Once again, the students regained their excitement and sang with enthusiasm! We ended class with this song in our heads, and I introduced a stick game that we would learn in the next class. They audibly gave their approval and then waited quietly for Mrs. Williams to return to the room while I packed up my things. I was quite pleased with our

first class together. The children were very well behaved and enthusiastic about music!

### What's Scat?

The following Tuesday, we continued with the same listening activity that we did on day 3: steady beat movement to "Blue Skies." We practiced our procedure for making a circle, which they did very well. When we discussed the music, I gave a little introduction to jazz music, told them what scat singing is, and asked them to listen for the scat singing in the song. For the rest of the lesson, we were to continue practicing ways to use our voices, so the children were directed to listen to this special type of singing. Tiffany raised her hand and said that she was surprised that we were doing the same activity again, so I told her that it would help them to become better at the activities and to learn even more about the music. She seemed appeased, so we began.

I led the students in motions again, and they followed very well. Every student was at least trying to imitate what I did. I added some different movements than we did last time, and they seemed to feel a little more comfortable and not as hesitant. When we reviewed the five ways to use our voices (whisper, shout, hum, sing, speak), the students were quite eager to share their answers; I had to keep reminding them to raise their hands because so many children were calling out! We used our singing voices to review the song "Funga," practiced patting and clapping the steady beat, and then added lummi

sticks in rhythm with the song. The students easily adapted to these activities, and were very excited to work with a partner to tap their sticks. They switched partners several times, and were equally excited with each new partner. At the end of class, I invited some of the groups to demonstrate for the class. Almost all of the children volunteered to perform for the class! I took this opportunity to speak to the children about listening respectfully, and never making fun of or laughing at someone who is performing for us. While their classmates performed, the class did sit quietly and applaud for each group as they finished. When they went back to their seats at the end of class, Amanda asked, “Can we listen to ‘Blue Skies’ again?” Mission accomplished! My inspiration for this thesis was to get the children opened up to different kinds of music, so this was a perfect moment for me.

#### Who Knows Mozart?

I saw the students again almost a week later. I reminded the students about our listening activity and where they should go, and they quickly took their places in the circle. I briefly introduced “A Little Night Music” by Mozart, and asked them to raise their hands if they had ever heard of the song (3 hands raised), and if they had ever heard of Mozart (5 hands raised). As the music began, I asked them to raise their hands if they recognized the music, and almost immediately, 20 of the 23 students present that day raised their hands. Some of them showed recognition through facial expressions such as eyes widening, or through verbal

“ohhh!”s that I could hear. The students followed me through steady beat movements for about 3 minutes of the song, which served as an introduction to learning about steady beat in our lesson. They were a little noisy at times, when they reacted to the movements or if they had difficulty following the motions. However, all of the students actively moved to the music, and showed that they were trying to imitate my movements. Rather than stifle their enthusiasm, I made a mental note to remind them next time to stay quiet during the music so that we can hear it!

After the song, the students found a partner and we reviewed “Funga.” The students volunteered to remind us of the African words to the song, and brave David sang the song perfectly for us. I could tell that he was concentrating very hard, and he sang the song with perfect pronunciation, perfectly in tune, with a beautiful singing voice. I was so pleased, and even more so when the rest of the class applauded for David when he finished the song. Then all of the students practiced the song with their partner while I passed out the sticks, and we performed together as a group several times. They sang enthusiastically, and tried their best to click their sticks to the beat, as we had practiced moving to the beat in our listening activity.

When the song ended and the children went back to their seats, I called on Danielle and Chris to help pass books out. I instructed the children to open their books to page 4 when they received them and read the top of the page. I knew that

it would take about 2 minutes for books to be passed out, so I made sure to give them something to do when they got their book. However, the class began talking and fooling around, and were very noisy during this process. I had the whole class put their heads down and take a time out for 2 minutes, and told them that while I was happy that they were excited, they needed to follow the rules and directions that they were given. In retrospect, I also should have given them a task while they were waiting to receive their book!

We began the song on page 4 in their books: “Zudio.” We read the information at the top of the page, and listened and followed along in the books with the music. Some of the children recognized the song and told us about motions that they know. Candyce and Katina were quite anxious to show us their moves, so they danced for us while we sang the song. All of the students seemed very excited to learn the “Zudio” dance in our next class period. We quickly packed up the books, and I was on my way, feeling positive about our class today.

#### I Had a Little “Oops”

Two days later, I saw the class again for their second class in the cycle. I had a little “oops” at the beginning of this lesson – I started introducing the song the same way I had the class period before, not realizing that they had already heard the song! So, when I asked them who had heard of Mozart before, almost every single student raised their hand. When I realized my mistake, I chided them, “Well, then every one of you should have your hands up!” There were 2 or 3

children that were not paying any attention to what I was saying anyway, but I did get a few giggles.

I reminded the children again that there is no talking during our activity, since the most important thing is that we hear the music. We went over the procedure for how we would switch motion-leaders and allow others to make motions if they want. We decided that it would be best for me to call out “freeze,” and if they wanted a turn, they would raise their hand and I would choose one to continue, and so on. The music came on, and I began leading them in various steady beat movements as a reinforcement to our unit on steady beat. There were a few students who were starting to lose focus and not trying as hard as the rest. Marcus, Zamar, and Natalia just did not seem as interested today as they have been the past few classes. When it came time to switch, there were a few volunteers to lead motions. Dana, Jennifer, and Timothy were able to make motions that went right with the beat of the song, while José’s and Nick’s motions did not. They were being quite the class clowns, coming up with ridiculous motions and making a big deal out of being the leader. Tiffany’s motions were more appropriate than José’s and Nick’s, but she did not demonstrate that she could do motions with the beat if she were leading the motions. She had already proven that she could imitate the motions that someone else was leading, but when it was her turn, she had a harder time staying with the music.



The rest of the lesson consisted of reviewing “Funga” and “Zudio,” learning some moves to “Zudio,” and learning to sing “Down, Down Baby.” It was a very full class period, but the students did a much better job of listening and following directions than they had in the last class. They were very excited to continue working in partners, and worked very hard to get the hand motions to “Zudio.” About half of the class could do this difficult movement sequence, and about a quarter of them modified it so they would be able to do it. The other quarter just was not able to do it to the steady beat. However, when it was time to walk in place, to the side, and do the other motions to the song, almost all of the children were moving to the beat.

We had a little bit of difficulty in the end of class cleaning up and sitting quietly. This is something that Mrs. Williams had been working on a lot with the class, and the students just seem to be so excited all the time that they cannot contain their talking! This can be quite frustrating. I never realized until I started teaching elementary school that these were things that teachers really needed to drill into their children for the first few weeks of school – and then continue to enforce throughout the year. It amazes me how much time is wasted simply by excited children who have to talk all the time!

### Making Connections

A week later, we began class by getting in the circle and reviewing the rules for the listening activity. I reminded the students again that there should not

be talking during our listening activity, and that each should do their best to make their motions match the beat of the song. I gave a brief introduction to the “William Tell Overture,” started the music, and began leading motions for the group. We switched leaders with the word “freeze,” as we had practiced before. I have found that a lot of the same children volunteered to do motions – Jennifer, Dana, Simone, José, and Nick – which enabled me to pay closer attention to their individual progress. I noticed that their motions today were getting much closer to being “on the beat” than just being random movements. It could be due to becoming more comfortable with leading motions for the group, or because of the work we have done in class on steady beat. Either way, this is quite an accomplishment for some of them, especially Nick who truly enjoys being a child. I was very pleased that Simone volunteered so often; she is very soft-spoken, shy, and a little introverted. I love to see her come out of her shell in music class.

While I would have liked to see some other students volunteer as well, they may not have been comfortable enough with movement at this early point in the school year to volunteer to lead motions for the entire class. I knew that this was something that would come in time, especially for the students who were new this year, and did not want to push them too far.

As we listened to the music, I saw many eyes light up when the students recognized the main theme of the overture, and some even started singing along at times when that main theme was heard. I love when this happens, and I love

seeing the recognition on their faces when they understand that they have heard something before.

When the music ended, we had a brief discussion about our listening activity. Twenty-one of the 23 students present said that they had heard the song somewhere before. Tiffany said that she thought it sounded like a horse race; Zamar said that he had heard it on Bugs Bunny. I appreciate that relation to a cartoon. I find it interesting that while the children recognize the music that they heard on television, they do not often recognize that they are hearing “real” music until I play it for them and tell them about it. They often think it is just “cartoon music.”

When I asked about the movements that we did, most of the students said that the motions went pretty well with the music. However, Marcus was very adamant that some of the movements did not match the song. He said that they did not all “go with the beat.” When I asked him specifically which movements, he was able to point out a few movements that other children led that did not show the beat, such as walking around the circle, and he was right!

The remainder of the lesson consisted of reviewing “Zudio” and “Down Down Baby;” then we learned a new song, “Waddaly Atcha.” The students were very enthusiastic about singing and doing the motions that we learned to “Zudio” and “Down Down Baby,” especially Candyce and Katina. When we began “Waddaly Atcha,” most of the students were singing along by the end of our first

listening. This is an easy song for the children to learn, and they picked up on the fun almost immediately! The students explored the pictures on the page that depicted the motions to a hand jive, and we discussed how they thought the motions should go. Most of the class were very eager to decipher one of the pictures, but I noticed José and Jennifer talking to each other in hushed tones. I walked over to them and they immediately got back on track. This minor interruption is just one of many that I find I need to deal with almost constantly with this class. It makes it very difficult to keep the flow of the class moving when situations need to be dealt with like this one.

We rehearsed the hand jive for a while, as it was quite difficult for the students to sing and do the hand jive at the same time. Many of them could do one or the other, but not both. This is something that I have noticed is a struggle for other classes as well, but they still enjoy it, want to be able to do it, and keep trying. Many of them can, with practice, but some of them just never can get it. The students also counted while we “jived,” and discovered that we did the entire jive 10 times during the song. The discussion that we had after our listening activity came back at the end of class, as I told the children that they were doing a great job of doing the hand jive right to the beat of the song, like we had talked about earlier. They seemed very proud that they were able to do it – and knew exactly what I was talking about. I saw smiles on many children’s faces as I left the room, and I was pleased that the connection had been made.

## My Life is a Musical

The following class period, the students were waiting quietly for me when I came into the room. They quickly took their places in the circle. I asked them to raise their hands if they remembered the song that we listened to, and when I called on José to tell us about it, instead of giving me the title, he sang the main theme of the overture... “da na na, da na na, da na NA NA NA . . .” Several other students joined in the singing almost immediately, although some were just as surprised as I was that this spontaneous singing broke out! It was so cute that I had to struggle not to laugh. I had just been talking with an older class about musical theater, and some of them mentioned that musicals are unrealistic because singing and dancing do not just happen spontaneously. I made a mental note to share this episode with them! I applauded when my eager second graders finished singing the main theme, and then we reviewed the basic information about the “William Tell Overture.” I reminded them about “freeze,” and also reminded them that there should not be any talking during our listening activity.

We began doing movements to the song; I selected many other students to lead motions. Many more students volunteered today: Amir, Jennifer, Simone, José, Nick, Natalia, Tiffany, and Chris all led motions today. Almost all of their motions stayed with the steady beat of the song, and the rest of the class followed very well. When we discussed the listening activity when we were finished, the children agreed that most of the motions matched the song today; and they were

pleased with themselves that they were able to keep quiet for most of the listening activity! This activity tied in quite easily with our continuation of the steady beat unit that we worked on again for the rest of class.

Following our listening activity, we reviewed “Waddaly Atcha” by singing and adding the hand jive. The students continued to try to master the hand jive, and Tiffany and Sydney were very excited as the song ended because they did it!

The lesson continued with a quick review of all of the steady beat songs that we had done up to that point, including our warm-ups. We made a list on the board and sang bits and pieces of each song. The students eagerly participated in this discussion of things that we had done so far, except for Amir, who appeared to be looking for something in his desk. Again, it would seem that this was a minor disruption to our class period, but when I asked Amir to take his hands out of his desk, he asked, “What?” with a smile on his face, implying that he was not doing anything wrong. I replied, “Please stop whatever you’re doing in your desk and stay with us.” At this point, he had the attention of everyone in the class and the flow of our discussion was interrupted. I chose to continue on with our discussion before the children completely lost their focus, and Amir chose to continue playing inside his desk, while sneaking side glances at me to see if I was watching. When he saw that I was, he eventually stopped and took his hands out of his desk.

As we continued with our lesson, I explained to the students that our new song, “Springtime Has Come,” was different than any other song we had learned so far. The students were very excited to sing a song from Japan. We listened to it, and discussed the slower steady beat as opposed to the fast steady beat of “Waddaly Atcha.” Then we discussed how to follow the song in the book, since it had three verses and they had not seen a song like that before. They read each verse aloud all together, then we went back to our circle. We patted the beat on our legs while we listened to the song. By the end of the song, almost all of the children were patting correctly to the beat. Amir preferred fooling around, and Marcus kept whispering to the person next to him. We “put the beat in our feet” and walked slowly around the room to the beat of the song. The students did this very well when I did it with them, but I noticed that when I stepped out of the circle and they continued walking around the room without my help, some of the students were not able to keep the beat as well without me leading it. It seemed that some were taking faster steps and running into their neighbors! While the students returned to their seats, I promised that we would continue working on it next time.

### Spectacular Scarves

We did movement with scarves when we had class a week later. We listened to “Autumn” from Vivaldi’s Four Seasons. As I walked around the circle and handed out the scarves, a few students told me which color they wanted, and

a few complained mildly about the color that they were given. I had made the scarves out of strips of tulle – in red, orange, yellow, blue, and purple. They were audibly and visibly excited about the scarves. Michael shouted out, “We did this in first grade! In gym class! With Miss Morris!” When the music began, I showed the students how to move their scarves to the steady beat, reinforcing once again our concept for the unit. Most of the students followed my movements very well. Michael, Marcus, and Zamar had a hard time concentrating and following my movements. They just wanted to spin in circles and throw their scarves up in the air! I realized that I was becoming frustrated with these boys for fooling around, but maybe they felt the strong beats of the music and wanted to throw their scarves to show it. I felt that sometimes I give such strict guidelines – or I have such strict guidelines in my head – that I become frustrated when the children behave in ways that are not consistent with those guidelines.

About halfway through the song, I told the children that they could move their scarves however they wanted. They did not have to follow me, as long as they were with the music. I continued to move my scarf as well, and I noticed that Dana, Simone, Nick, Tiffany, and Stacy did continue to follow my movements. Others moved around on their own, basically doing the same movements that I had shown them earlier. Michael, Marcus, and Zamar were very excited for this opportunity to make their scarves move like rocketships, and they did! The entire class let their disappointment about the end of the activity known: “That’s it? It’s



over?” However, they class did a nice job of putting the scarves away and waiting quietly to review “Springtime Has Come.”

After our listening activity, we discussed what we did. Almost all of the students said that they would like to do it again, and would like to have more time for the activity. They really seemed to enjoy what we did. Michael said that it was “so cool!” and Marcus, ever insightful, thought it was “a good way to move to the music.”

Following the discussion, we reviewed “Springtime Has Come,” as promised. I reminded the students to try to move their feet with the slow beat, and watched as they moved and concentrated on this task. Many of the students were able to walk to the beat, but Zamar, José, Katina, and Rebecca still had difficulty.

The rest of the lesson consisted of reviewing our steady beat songs, and playing a game called Steady Beat Master. This is a fun game that allows me to assess which students are able to demonstrate the steady beat. Almost all of the students were eager to be the Master, and they all followed along with the motions very well.

#### Very Loud: Learning About Dynamics

Two days later, we did the scarf activity again as a final review of steady beat before we moved on to dynamics. The children did an even better job today of following directions, imitating my motions, and moving appropriately to the music when it was their turn to move on their own. I did not even notice the

“rocketships” as I had before, but noticed that those boys – Michael, Marcus, and Zamar – were doing motions that were more similar to what I had shown them.

For the rest of the lesson, we began our new unit on dynamics. I discussed six dynamic levels with the students, from very soft to very loud, and placed visuals on the board. We discussed different sounds or actions that would go under each one. For example, “clap” was placed under “loud,” while “whisper” went under “very soft.” Almost all of the children at least had their eyes up on the board as we discussed the sounds. They were quite anxious to demonstrate each sound and to tell us how loud or soft it should be. Only Chris appeared not to be paying attention, but this is unlike him. I wondered what was wrong that caused him to behave differently, but he seemed to come out of it after a little while and was his usual, cheerful self again.

Then, after passing the textbooks out, we learned a new song, “Circus Parade.” I took the dynamics cards off of the board and held them up at a point in the song where “boom, boom!” is sung so that the students could demonstrate the different dynamic levels on those two words. They did a great job and were especially enthusiastic when we got to “very loud!” After we sang a few times, we quickly collected books, put them away, and the students waited patiently during the transition back to their homeroom teacher while I packed up my equipment. I asked Chris to take the sound word visuals off of the board for me, and he smiled and did the job quickly.

## Amir

The next time we had class, it was 12 days later. Our listening activity was “Music Writing” to Rachmaninoff’s Symphony No. 2. I explained the activity to the children using a poster that I had made previously that included some questions to answer or prompts for them to think about while they listened. Since dynamics are felt and heard in music, I had hoped that the students would identify them in this selection, as we would continue learning about loud and soft during class. I passed out half sheets of blank paper and when the music came on, the students began writing.

Amir, however, took the first 90 seconds of the piece to sharpen his pencil, then made a “big deal” when his pencil fell in the garbage can. He went over to the sink and washed his hands, taking another 90 seconds. When he finally sat down, the song was almost over. His entire music writing consisted of: “the i slow.”

I realized at this point that I had not written in my observation log as much about Amir as actually happens during class. Amir is a constant struggle. He does not stay in his seat, he does not follow directions, and he does not open his book when he is asked to. His group seems to “always” be waiting for him to do something. He is a big distraction to me and to the other children. I had hoped that these warm-ups would also help him to be more motivated and interested in class, but this particular activity did not work for him. It is unfortunate that we have this

6-day cycle, because it seems that when I seem to make progress with Amir, it is lost because of the gap in between our class periods – especially this week, with twelve days in between. In Figure 2 on page 50, the pastiche compares Amir’s behavior and quality of work to that of another child in the class, Amanda.

Many of the students worked diligently and listened carefully to the music. There was a little bit of chatter among students while they were writing – Michael and James were sharing answers and discussing what they were each writing down. I reminded them to keep quiet, but as soon as I would walk away, they would talk again! I wondered if their collaboration was really a bad thing, so I let them continue without any more interruptions from me!

When the song ended, I invited those who wanted to share what they had written. About 15 of the students wanted to share their papers, so we took a few minutes to discuss what they heard. Many of them simply listed characteristics, such as soft and slow; a few named instruments that they heard. My favorite: a “thrompit and vilen.” Tiffany described it by saying, “It is like the leaves are fallin;” Stacy said it sounded like a “pranses” dancing.


During the rest of class, the children were very talkative. I wondered if physical activities were better for them than the Music Writing. They were almost always talkative, but today seemed really bad. Could it be because they had not been out of their seats for a while? Perhaps movement activities or games would better serve this purpose. I also wondered if Music Writing would be more

Figure 2: Pastiche: Amir vs. Amanda

How does interest in music affect understanding and behavior?

Amir's work is consistently sloppy and incomplete. He does not show understanding or recognition of musical concepts, and does not show that he is thoughtful about his work.

Directions: Circle each ♪ with red.  
 Circle each ♪ with yellow.  
 Circle each ♪ with blue.  
 Circle each ♪ with green.



Fill in each box with four beats.  
 Use ♪ ♪ ♪ and ♪

1.			5.
2.			6.
3.			7.
4.			8.

“Again, Amir proves to be a challenge. He is a smart child, but he chooses so often not to participate and not to follow directions” (observation log, October 17, 2005).

7. What kinds of activities would you like to do more of in our warm-ups?  
 eat

Theislaw

“Amir is a constant struggle! He does not stay in his seat, he does not follow directions, he does not open his book when he is asked to. His group seems to ‘always’ be waiting for him to do something . . . he is a big distraction to me and the other kids. I had hoped that these warm-ups would also help him to be more motivated and interested in class, but this particular activity is NOT working for him” (observation log, October 11, 2005).

Amanda's work is neat and accurate. She takes the time to complete her work thoughtfully and to the best of her ability. She shows enthusiasm for many activities that we do, and also demonstrates her understanding of musical concepts.

Directions: Circle each **T** with red.  
 Circle each **F** with yellow.  
 Circle each **B** with blue.  
 Circle each **A** with green.



Fill in each box with four beats.

Use ♩, ♪, ♫, and ♮

1.	♩♩♩♩	♪♪♪♪	5.
2.	♩♩	♩♩	6.
3.	♪♪♪♪	♫♪♩	7.
4.	♫♫♫♫	♩♩	8.

"Amanda and her partner were swaying slowly to the beat of the music, which was impressive since we had not done movement to a slow piece of music before. During discussion, she said that she enjoyed spinning to the music and thought that it was really nice" (observation log, November 2, 2005).

7. What kinds of activities would you like to do more of in our warm-ups?

Boy and Girl as partners  
Dancing to a song

I like it because it sounds pretty  
 it sounds soft and peaceful  
 I hear a waltz  
 it goes slow

"Amanda continues to volunteer to do everything ... to be a helper, to lead motions, to sing for us. When she does, she does so politely and with enthusiasm – and accuracy! She is a joy" (observation log, December 5, 2005).

interesting to the children if they wrote about a more exciting piece of music.

“Symphony Number 2” is very slow and calm.

For the remainder of class, we went over dynamics from last time and sang “Circus Parade” with the dynamics at the appropriate place in the song. We learned the Italian words for our dynamics, and sang the song again, this time with the Italian words as our guide for which dynamic level to sing. The students did a very nice job of singing the appropriate dynamic, even with the Italian words. James pointed out that it was easy to remember them because on the visuals, the words were the same color as their corresponding words in English.

#### A Small Breakthrough

Today’s listening activity was “Galop” from the Comedians by Dimitry Kabalevsky. We created movements to match the steady beat as a whole group. The students were immediately energized when they heard this song – it is very fast and exciting to listen to. They followed my simple motions very easily. While we did move to the beat, the music is quite loud and energetic, which would tie into our lesson about dynamics. Some of the children who I called on to create movements acted silly in response to the fast music, and others were able to match the beat.

Amir, who is normally hyperactive and even defiant at times, began doing movements that were erratic and did not seem to match the music at all. Since he was standing next to me, I was able to tell him to go with the music, and he

modified his motions immediately so that they showed the beat. I was very impressed that he was able to do that on the spot. Again, Amir proves to be a challenge. He is a smart child, but he chooses so often not to participate and not to follow directions. When he does participate, he is usually acting out for attention. And now here, he did exactly what I asked of him! I was encouraged by this short episode today; it was a small breakthrough.

After the listening activity when we discussed the music, I asked what made the music exciting, or how they knew it was about someone galloping. José and Michael, when called on, actually tried to sing parts of the tune for us, which is not easy with this piece! Simone said that it sounded more like horses galloping, not people. Overall, the students thought that it was very exciting and enjoyed moving to it.

For the rest of class, we reviewed dynamics again. The students were able to correctly pronounce all of the words, and mostly remembered their definitions. We reviewed Circus Band and Counting Up the Dinosaur, then did a square dance to “Do Si Dinosaur.” They were very excited to dance, but since the dance is done in groups of eight, some of them did not get a chance to dance today due to limited time. They were disappointed, but much happier when I told them that they would get their chance next time.



## A Bad Day

Two days later, the children took their places in the circle and we began listening and moving to “Galop” for the second time. They followed my motions well, and when I asked for volunteers, almost every student raised his or her hand, even some of the students who had not volunteered yet. Those who were picked to do motions did very well with staying with the steady beat of the music; the rest of the class did very well with following them. Their motions reflected the excitement and energy of the piece. After the listening activity, I asked them to return quietly to their seats, but it took them two entire minutes to do so. When I tried to review the words to “Circus Parade” with them, there must have been 15 students who were talking, or who shouted out the words to the song. José raised his hand and waited to be called on, but his good example went unnoticed by the rest of the class.

When we sang along with “Circus Parade,” I held up the dynamics cards as we had practiced previously. When we got to “Fortissimo,” (very loud) they yelled very loudly! Zamar even let out a very high-pitched scream. It took another few minutes following the song for the children to get quiet again so we could move on. We briefly discussed the dance that we did last time, and I asked them to raise their hands if they had a turn to dance last time. Immediately, arguing ensued. The students were so eager to prove each other wrong! Michael shouted

at Zamar, “You went last time!” Jennifer told José, “You already went!” And Amir to Stacy: “You had a turn!”

I quickly decided to abandon the rest of my lesson for the day. The children were too wound up already to try to do a dance, which always gets them even more excited. Instead, I found a very slow, very simple, calming lullaby in our textbooks to learn instead of learning another dance. But during the song when they were asked to sing along, Candyce and Nick started singing at the top of their lungs, and then everyone else imitated them, laughing and hooting and hollering across the room. I was quite frustrated by this point. The class was completely out of control, and nothing I did mattered. They absolutely would not focus on anything I had to say. So I abandoned that song, too, and all of the children sat with their heads down for the last eight minutes of the class.

I was very upset after our class today. We did not accomplish anything because the students would not stop talking. And even worse, they were being completely disrespectful. They were being very silly and quite out of control. I had not been this frustrated in a very long time. I honestly did not know what I was supposed to do with them. I really thought that the students had been making progress over the past few classes, and suddenly it felt like it all fell apart. I wondered if it was a full moon, or if the children were looking ahead to Halloween that would be the following week . . . anything that would explain

their wild behavior. I left the room quite confused and frustrated, hoping that the next class period they would return to normal.

#### Back to Normal, Whatever That Is

The following class period, I entered the room determined that the period would be more successful than last. The listening activity was partner movement to “The Monster Mash.” I explained to the students that they would take turns leading a partner with steady beat movements. The two would stand facing each other, and one would mirror the motions of the other and lead when they were instructed to switch jobs. The students were very excited again to get to be with a partner – and I was interested to see some of the pairings this time. They began to branch out and were no longer afraid to be with a partner of the opposite sex. I no longer saw boys with boys and girls with girls exclusively, although some continued to pair that way. Allen continued to have problems finding a partner. He would not go and seek one out, but waited by his desk for someone to notice him.

The students’ movements were quite silly to the song, but it is a silly song. For the most part, their motions were still keeping a steady beat. I almost giggled out loud when I saw Nick and Sydney start hopping to the beat and following each other around the room! They looked like bunny rabbits. As the song progressed, more of the students’ movements became random as they explored what it was like to have someone mirror their movements. We have not done this

type of movement yet, and it was very interesting to watch their reactions to someone so closely following their movements.

Following the listening activity, we discussed briefly what we had done. Most of the students said that they enjoyed moving with a partner, and really liked the song. Tiffany recalled a story about when she had heard the song, and Katina shared that she remembered this from a Halloween party she went to. Timothy pointed out that he thought their motions matched the song, because “it’s so goofy.”

We quickly reviewed the dinosaur songs that we had learned. We discussed the dynamics that we had learned, and almost everyone was actively involved in the discussion. I noticed that the same few children raise their hands frequently, and some children rarely do, like Allen and Natalia. I have tried to get to know both of these students, since they are new students in our school this year. Allen is a very intelligent little boy, but he moved from an Asian country this summer and does not speak English very well or very fluently. He seems to understand others, but cannot always respond, as though he does not know the right words to say. I try to help him by listening patiently and suggesting words for him, and he seems able to identify which words are appropriate to his thoughts. Natalia remains quiet and distant, and I have not been able to get much out of her.

The students completed a worksheet, entitled “Dynamite Dynamics,” where they needed to identify and label the six dynamic terms that we had learned (see Appendix M for examples of these). We ended our class with singing “Counting Up the Dinosaur” again while I collected their worksheets and they put their crayons and pencils away. I made sure to tell the students that I was very proud of them for doing a great job of following directions today, and also said that it seemed like they had more fun today, too. Several children nodded their heads in agreement.

I was pleased that class went much better today. Sometimes it seems that when the students know that their teacher was disappointed, they will remember to do better the next time! That is what I love about second grade, since the older students do not seem to have this same habit. This is a positive attribute that I need to remember when I get frustrated with them.

#### Let’s Boogie

Today’s listening activity went along very similarly to the previous day. Before we began, I did remind the students before they began to stay in one place and not roam around the room since there is just not enough space. I asked them for safety reasons to stay on their feet, since some of the students try to do things on the floor, like roll or make snow angels. I also reminded them to make their motions go with the beat, a concept that would be reinforced later on in our lesson as we added motions to our new song.

As I watched them move with their partners to “The Monster Mash,” most of the children did follow the extra instructions that I gave today. I found that some children still wanted to do silly, random movements to the song. I kept a checklist today to see how many students showed the steady beat during their movement time, and I found that 20 of the 25 did show the steady beat! That was much higher than I would have thought, and I was grateful for the use of the checklist today to help me look objectively at each student and what he or she was doing.

Following listening activity, we listened to a new song, the “Body Boogie.” They loved this song! By the end of the song, I counted 12 students who were already singing along, and 7 more who were also spontaneously creating motions to the song. We read the lyrics together and identified the different body parts mentioned in the song. Many of the students wanted to read for us and tell us what the body parts were. They were quite eager to learn this fun song, and when we sang it, they certainly sang with gusto! Every single child was involved in learning the motions and learning to sing it. I was thrilled! I gave them a big compliment at the end of class and told them how proud I was of them for doing such a good job this week.

### Ups and Downs

It was a week later when I saw the class again. After being introduced to partner movement with the “Monster Mash” in previous class periods, the

students today moved with a partner to “Canon in D” by Pachelbel. As we would begin our unit on rhythm in today’s lesson, this piece introduced many different uses of rhythm while still focusing on steady beat. I noticed many things today during the listening activity, both positive and negative. I had to ask Amir, Candyce, and Katina to go back to their seats for arguing or just not participating. José, Jessie, and Allen ended up doing motions on the floor, which they had been asked not to do. Then, José and Jessie were arguing as well about whose turn it was. Simone and David, instead of taking turns leading the movement, discussed quietly and decided together what they would do. Liz and Stacy were also swaying slowly to the music and twirling like ballerinas, while Marcus’s movements were erratic and did not go with the music at all. Rebecca and Zamar swayed and twirled to the music, but as the music came to an end, Zamar screamed across the room at Katina for making fun of him.

During our discussion, 20 children said that it was easier to move to this music than the Monster Mash, and 3 said it was harder. Nineteen children said it was a fun activity today. Liz, Chris, and James all said that they enjoyed spinning. Michael said he liked “EVERYTHING!” which prompted a few others to say the same thing. Rebecca said she liked the music because she liked hearing all of the instruments. Marcus liked dancing, but did not like the music because it was harder to make slow motions. Natalia said it sounded like “Barbie and Swan Lake.” Zamar continued his rude behavior during the discussion, making faces at

the other students and whispering comments to Timothy, who tried to ignore him. By the end of our discussion, Marcus was on the floor.

Following our discussion, I handed out rolls of Smarties as a reward for every student having returned their permission slips. I talked to them again about how much I appreciated their participation in my study and how important it is to me. They seemed quite proud to be a part of it! After a few minutes, I collected the empty wrappers and asked the children to put their candies away if they did not want to eat them then.

After this, we reviewed note values and listened to a new song, “In the Barnyard,” that uses several rhythm patterns in the song. The students were quite attentive and listening well during this time, except for Amir. He was sneaking his Smarties into his mouth and sticking out his tongue at other students. I took the rest of his Smarties from him, but he told me he did not understand why this was wrong. Incidents like these are the ones that frustrate me the most. He had been given plenty of time to eat them, and had been told to put them away since he did not finish them. Now, when we were singing and talking, he was eating them, when it became a safety concern. I do not enjoy moments like these.

We began learning to sing “In the Barnyard.” The children showed that they enjoyed singing by following along carefully with the music in the books, sitting up straight, and singing enthusiastically. After we had practiced singing the song a few times, we discussed the three rhythm patterns by identifying them in



the book and looking at visuals on the board. The students clapped each rhythm separately, and then we clapped along with the recording as each rhythm was heard. I was pleased that almost all of the students were able to clap the rhythms successfully. When we practiced singing and clapping at the same time, they also showed great success in performing both tasks! Even Amir showed interest by following in the book and singing and clapping quietly. I looked forward to the next class period, when the students would step to the rhythms and move like the chicken, duckling, and goose that we sang about in the song.

#### A Guest

A few days later, we warmed up with partner movement again to Pachelbel's "Canon." Michael was quite obsessed for the entire class period with a zooanimals plate that he had received earlier from a party, and kept taking it out of his desk and playing with it. Even during our listening activity, when he was moving with someone else, he still found his way back to his desk to take it out! Amir chose not to participate in our listening activity, but just sat in his seat, watching everyone else. While not happy with this decision, I was glad that at least he was not being disruptive. Zamar got mad at Katina again today; this time because she picked a different person for a partner than him! Timothy and Allen did the "robot" to the music, and they really did a great job of "roboting" to the beat. Imani and Liz twirled in many ways around each other. I had to remind Nick and James again to stay in one place. Matt and José were being quite silly – they

kept falling on the floor and swinging each other really fast. Simone and Sydney twirled like ballerinas.

Directly after the listening activity, we moved into reviewing our song from last week – “In the Barnyard.” During a review of rhythmic values, most of the children were quite attentive to the discussion, except for Marcus and Amir. Marcus kept moving his chair away from his desk, until he was halfway across the room, and Amir continued to appear disinterested in anything we did. We listened to the song, identified the three rhythm patterns, clapped them as we listened, then added the movements by stepping to the different rhythms. When we made a circle, all of the children quickly went to their places except for Amir. I asked him to join us, and he slowly went to his place as I practiced the rhythms with the rest of the class. When we moved to the rhythms along with the song, Amir did walk around the circle, dragged his feet very slowly, not in the same rhythm as the rest of the children were performing. The rest of the children did show that they were trying; most of them were successful at walking to the rhythms correctly. They showed enthusiasm when we discussed and added movements to show each animal that we are singing about – and moved like the animals in rhythm.

Class was rather skewed today by an extra person who was in our class. I did not know who this woman was, but when I went into the class, she was sitting at the table just watching. She remained there for the entire class. I did not know

who she was or why she was there, and Mrs. Williams did not introduce her to me. The children said that she was just a part of their class. I thought she might be a parent of one of the students, but I had no idea. I should have asked her myself, but I thought that Mrs. Williams would introduce her, and then the appropriate moment passed. I felt strange the entire class period. As I have learned from teaching in other teachers' classrooms, it is always a different experience to teach when someone is watching. I asked Mrs. Williams later, and she said that the woman is an observer from a nearby university who comes every week to observe. So, the students were used to her being there, and it did not appear to be weird for them. They just carried on as they normally do. But I am certain that I acted a little more restricted in her presence – because that is how I felt.

#### But I'm Not Done!

Our new listening activity in the next class period was clapping given rhythms to “Firebird” by Stravinsky. I handed out the pages of rhythms and instructed the children to practice each one carefully and quietly. Every student was working on this, and although Jennifer, José, Amir, and Michael had minor discussions on the side, they did practice the rhythms. When we practiced them all together, every student was following on his or her paper and clapping with me – even Amir, who had not participated at all in the previous class period.

I turned the music on and directed the children when to start clapping each line of the rhythm page. They worked really well, and I could tell that they were

all trying and concentrating, which was encouraging. However, they were not very successful! Whenever I stopped counting out loud, the students were not able to stay with the music. I found that I counted and clapped along with the entire piece so that the students would do it correctly, stay together, and keep with the slow tempo of the music. I am not sure that I would choose Firebird again as a listening piece for this particular activity. It is quite slow and does not have a clearly defined beat, which makes it difficult to clap rhythms.

During discussion, however, most of the children said that they enjoyed it. Nick pointed out that the music is slow. Amir said, “I loved it. It sounded like dead skeletons trying to chase me around.” Rebecca said that she almost cried because the music sounded so sad. Timothy also liked it, and said it sounded like footsteps of mummies! This possibly prompted Natalia to say that it reminded her of the movie, “The Mummy Returns,” to which many children agreed! David said that it “sounded like when the Green Goblin didn’t return – from Spiderman.” Simone said that it sounded like Harry Potter. I do love having these discussions. I love to hear what the children really think of the music. At this point, I was being more careful to take notes as we talked, and as a result I received more active involvement in the discussions, so much so that sometimes I have to limit the number of responses I will take.

For the remainder of the lesson, the children were very involved in the activities. We reviewed “In the Barnyard,” and every student (except Amir) was

up, moving, and singing. We passed books out and discussed a picture that accompanies our new song. During the discussion, Marcus was having the same issues with his chair as he had on Friday, moving away from his desk. He was told at the beginning of class to put his work away if he was done, but he left it on his desk. The children know that their desks should be clear for music. When I asked him again about the work, he said, “but I’m not done yet!” He took the direction very literally and would not put it away because he was not finished.

As we discussed the picture and identified the pattern of circles, each child was able to name something that was a circle in the picture. They listened attentively to one another and continued to study the picture to find each new thing that was pointed out. Towards the end of the discussion, the students lost focus, but when we completed the list and every child had named one thing, there were still hands up, very eager to share something that had not been pointed out yet! I was really proud of them for this. I was worried that they would not be able to stay attentive, but they really did and were very respectful of the others who were giving responses.

To close the class, we listened to “Little Wheel.” I asked the students to try to identify the pattern in the song as we listened. Every student followed along carefully in his or her book. Several children were singing along by the time we reached the final verse. We quickly collected the books, and the children waited quietly for Mrs. Williams to return.

## Finding Patterns

We did the rhythm activity to “Firebird” again the next class period to continue reinforcing the note values that we had learned. I was curious to see if the children would encounter the same difficulties that they had when we did it the first time. The students practiced the rhythms quietly when they received their rhythm page, and when I turned the music on, I made a conscious effort not to clap with them or to give them any direction. I noticed many children were not able to stay with the music, and many finished early. However, every student again was trying hard and concentrating on performing the rhythms.

We continued with “Little Wheel” that we began last class period. We reviewed our discussion about the pattern in the picture, and discussed how music makes patterns too. The students sang the song for me, and I was impressed by their enthusiastic singing. All of the students participated, and seemed excited about the song. We listened to a selection that also has repeated patterns, called “River Run.” The students sang along with it as well as soon as they recognized the repeated pattern.

We began learning a song for Thanksgiving, called “I am Thankful.” I gave the students a worksheet that had the words to the song on one side, and a picture of either a turkey or a leaf on the other side. They were quickly able to identify that there was a pattern to the song as well, and as I sang it for them, many of the children sang along after the first verse. They identified that it was

easy to sing because of the pattern that they found in the song. I was pleased that they made another connection made to our listening activity!

### A Fun Day

I started our listening activity by putting five rhythms on the board. The students practiced the rhythms diligently and quietly while I set up my materials. We listened to “Grasslands Chant” from The Lion King and the students clapped along while I pointed to the rhythms on the board. Every student was watching and trying hard to follow along while we listened and clapped. When we discussed the activity and the music afterward, Amanda said that she thought the clapping rhythms made sense with the music. Allen’s favorite rhythm was the two half notes. David thought that it must have happened in the movie right before Simba’s dad died, which prompted many other students to tell which part of the Lion King they thought this song was taking place in. While Marcus told us that he liked the music, Katina had a conversation with Zamar, which ended quickly when I walked over to them. With one day to go before Thanksgiving break, I wondered if I would be able to hold their attention with anything that day!

We continued learning “I am Thankful” that we started in the previous class period and discussed the patterns in the song. The students colored the pictures on the back of their song sheet, and wrote in each section of their turkeys or leaves what they were thankful for. We sang some other fun Thanksgiving songs to finish out the class period.

## Surprise!

After the Thanksgiving break, I saw the children for our last two class periods of my study. We were to spend this class period reviewing rhythms and finishing our unit on rhythm, so we would start with an activity that required the students to read and perform rhythms with sticks. As soon as I walked into class, Amir asked if he could finish copying a poem off the board. Instead, I asked him if he could help me out and put our rhythm posters on the board and then close the door. He was quite eager to help out! I thought that maybe this would be a way to keep Amir involved positively in our classes, and made a mental note to encourage him to help out more often.

The students practiced the rhythms that Amir put on the board, and I handed out rhythm sticks. I asked them to practice the rhythms using their sticks, and as I watched, I noticed that every student looked at the posters and practiced the rhythms. We practiced all together, and listened to the “Surprise Symphony” and tapped the rhythms along with the recording. They did very well! I watched as every single student was watching the posters and trying to tap their sticks to the rhythm. Zamar was not very enthusiastic, but he was participating by tapping his sticks quietly.

I selected a few students to collect sticks and asked the rest to stand in a circle. However, they were so noisy that I asked them to sit back down and try again. José squatted on the floor and did not go back to his seat, so he was asked



to sit out for the first song. As a class, we reviewed the motions, the rhythms, and the note values to “In the Barnyard” that we learned a few classes ago. Many children raised their hands to tell us about the types of notes that we used in the song. During this time, Amir moved so that he was standing directly in front of me, and I had to move him back to his spot. He called out of turn for every note, even though I encouraged all of the students to raise their hands to give an answer. For the last question, I called on Amir before he had a chance to call out, and he gave the correct answer. This was an important moment for me, because I realized that even though he does not always participate, and does not always participate in a positive way, he sometimes shows that he listens and learns what we work on.

We reviewed “In the Barnyard,” with the students singing and moving in rhythm. All of the students (except José, who I had asked to sit out) were participating in the song. Towards the end, James was very upset because Marcus passed him in the circle, but Marcus did not see anything wrong with his action. This is an example of another incident where I feel that I should be more patient with my students and remember that they are only children. It seemed like a silly argument to me – one that just wasted our class time and took away from the flow of our lesson – but it needed to be addressed so that James could move on with us.

For the rest of class, the students worked on a rhythm worksheet. I asked the students to work quietly so that I could turn music on for them while they

worked, and almost all of the class worked quietly. Marcus continued to make noises, and by doing so, was bothering the children around him. Several children in his group asked him to stop, and his answer was “N-O.” I went over to the group to try to solve the problem. When I asked Marcus why he would not work quietly, he said, “I just don’t want to.” I tried to explain to Marcus that he was bothering the others, but he said “I don’t care. I’m not bothering me.” It was apparent that Marcus just wanted to do his own thing, so I asked him to move his desk away from his group so that he would not bother them with his noise. He seemed happy to do this, and moved away without causing any more disruptions.

Amir had a difficult time staying on task while the students worked on the rhythm worksheet. He switched seats, and was trying to copy from Dana’s paper. He did not complete very much of his worksheet in the time that was given. As some children finished up, the room got a little chaotic for the last few minutes. Some children were done, but others had not even started the second page yet. Some of the children wanted to sing and dance, and others wanted to color. Michael did not complete the back of his paper because he was busy watching the others. However, some children were able to complete the worksheet very easily. Tiffany, who is one of the lower level students in the class, was the first one to complete her worksheet and she did almost all of it correctly! In order to avoid this type of chaos in the future, I need to have a specific task for the students to

complete when they have finished the worksheet. They need something else to keep their attention so that everyone has a chance to work in a quiet atmosphere.

### Our Last Chance

When I walked into class, Amir immediately asked me if he could be a helper again. Unfortunately, his desk was not clear, so I chose someone else to help put the rhythm posters on the board. Amir was not happy, but he did put his things away.

The students were visibly and audibly excited to have the rhythm sticks again. I reminded them of the procedures, including when they could tap and when they should be still. They practiced the rhythms alone and then we practiced them all together. When I turned the “Surprise Symphony” on, I pointed to the rhythms while they tapped their sticks. As I watched, I was very pleased that every single student was participating again. For the second day in a row, Zamar was the only one I noticed who was not enthusiastic about the activity, but he still participated. When the “surprise” chord sounded in the middle of the piece, Marcus, Zamar, and Katina feigned surprise and fell out of their chairs, evoking laughter from the rest of the class, but they quickly got back to their places and continued tapping their sticks.

Our discussion went very well. The students had a lot to tell me about the music and the activity today. Rebecca said that “the music was soft and quiet.” Sydney liked “the big boom in it!” Amanda told us that “it reminds me of Barbie

and the Nutcracker.” Zamar was not as enthusiastic: “I like the music, but the sticks are kind of boring.” I asked the students to raise their hands if they liked using the rhythm sticks, and as 22 of the 25 students raised their hands, Nick said that “it was kind of boring.” David, ever mindful of things he saw on TV, told us “it reminded me of the show Cat Scratch because of one episode and there was a campfire in it.”

Following the listening activity, I called on one helper from each table to collect their groups’ sticks. I asked the students to take out a pencil, and they completed a survey about the listening activities that we have done. I read the questions and answers out loud, and the students marked their responses. I thanked the children for being a part of my research study, and asked them to tell me whether they would like to continue doing the activities even though my study was finished by writing “yes” or “no” on the bottom of their survey.

When we finished with the survey, we continued with our lesson, which was learning a new song, “Old Dan Tucker,” and identifying AB form. Student helpers assisted in passing out books and A and B form cards. The class listened attentively to the song and followed along in their books. They were very excited to have the A and B cards in their hands, and were able to catch on quite easily to the concept of form. Most students quickly demonstrated the changing sections of the piece with their form cards. They sang enthusiastically and were very excited to learn the dance in the following class period.

As the student helpers collected the materials and the rest of the class settled down to ready themselves for the transition back to their homeroom teacher, I wondered about the responses on the surveys. I was anxious to find out mostly if they would like to continue our listening activities, and hoped that they had enjoyed them enough to want to continue them in the future.

## DATA ANALYSIS

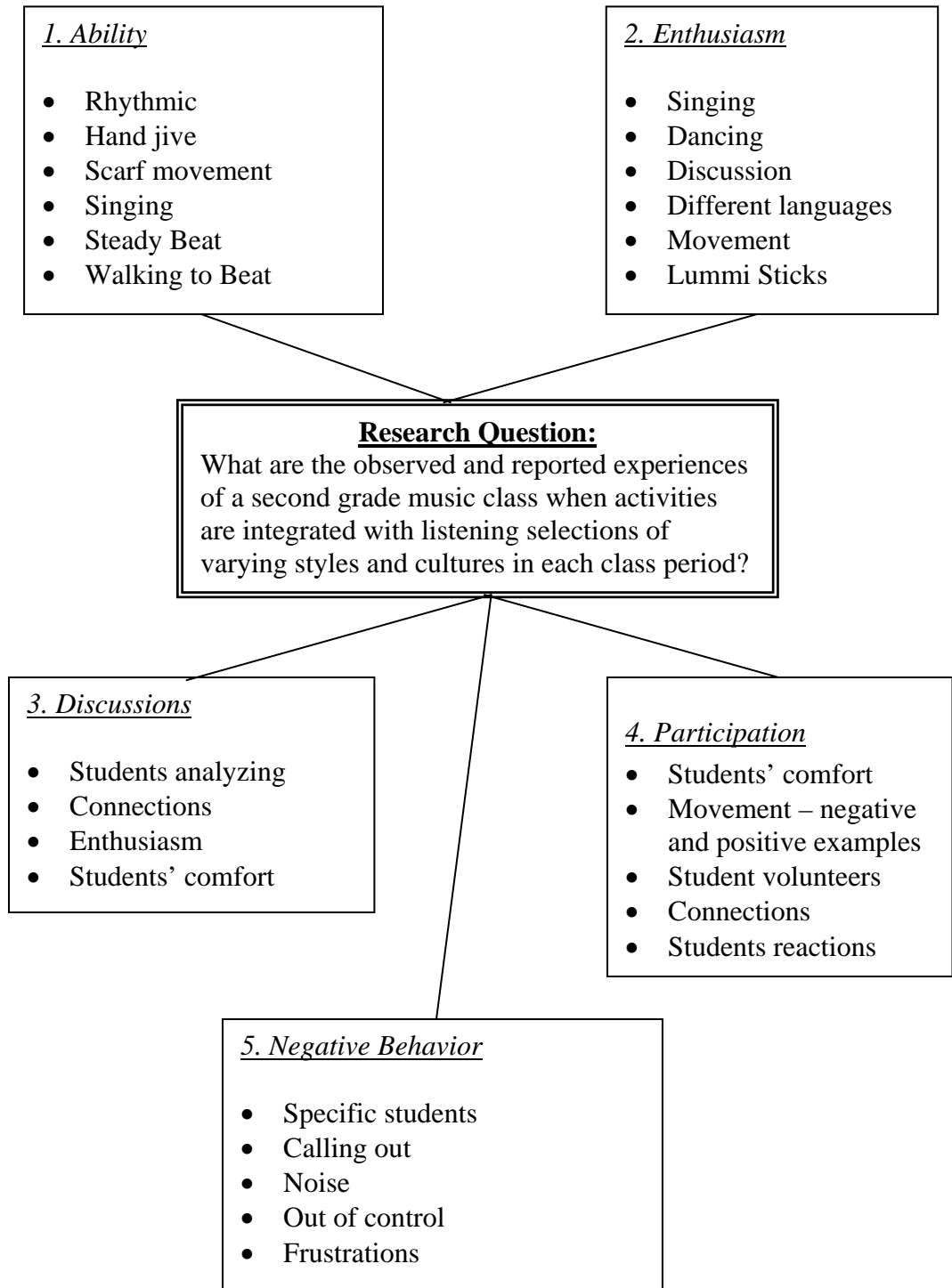
In order to begin analyzing my data, I frequently reviewed my observation log, my reflective journal, and student work samples starting after the first few class periods. Student work samples included a dynamics review worksheet, a rhythm identification sheet, and music writing. I also included and analyzed our class discussions that followed most activities as interview data. The students also completed a final survey telling their thoughts about each activity. I carefully read the data to identify main ideas, which I labeled as codes. According to Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing (1997), coding is described reading and rereading “a portion of data and provid[ing] labels – usually notes in the margins – that identify a meaning unit” (p. 162).

As the process of coding went on throughout the study, I concurrently made a list of all of the codes that I was identifying. I made a separate chart that documented the code along with its location and a brief description, so that I could further analyze whether the appropriate label had been given to it. I could also compare the codes to find themes that began to emerge.

When the observation log was completed, along with my comprehensive code index, I separated the codes into categories called bins. Ely et al. (1997) go on to say that the bins are the first initial sort of the codes. From here, “the next step would be to look for relationships among the categories and arrange them into some sort of organized form” (p. 162). As suggested, I linked the codes

together into similar groupings, and came up with five initial bins: ability, enthusiasm, discussions, participation, and negative behavior, creating a graphic organizer to visually organize the information (see Figure 3). Now I was ready to describe each bin with a theme statement, showing how the included codes were related. These theme statements formed the basis for the findings in my study.

Figure 3. *Bins*





## FINDINGS

### Introduction

My analysis of my field log, including observational notes, student work, and discussions, led to five themes that have emerged from the data: ability, enthusiasm, discussions, negative behavior, and participation.

### Ability

While student ability varied among activities and individual students, the listening activities strengthened and reiterated the concepts for mastery. On several occasions, the students realized that the listening activities connected to the music concept that we focused on. They became proud of themselves not only for realizing the connection, but also for mastering the concept that we had been working on. The majority of students commented on the concluding survey that they felt that the activities did help them to understand the music better, and that they enjoyed beginning our classes with them.

### *Performing Rhythms*

The students' ability to read and perform rhythmic patterns was enhanced and reinforced through our listening activities. These activities included clapping, tapping, and performing various rhythm patterns, which served to review or reinforce the learning of several note values that we had worked on in class. The level of student participation in these activities was high, and the students also showed high levels of interest in these activities. They concentrated on each task

and performed them with great success. During our music lessons, they participated in several additional rhythm activities, such as walking to different rhythm patterns and performing hand jives, during which they also showed high levels of success.

On a review worksheet, 19 of the 21 students who completed it were able to correctly identify the notes that we had been learning about. However, when it came to creating their own 4-beat rhythm patterns, only 9 students were able to create with any success. This showed me that the students were not up to that level of thinking, and we had not spent enough time with the students creating rhythms on their own.

#### *Movement to Music*

The students' ability to move to the steady beat increased with practice. As they gained confidence in their movement, they demonstrated more risk-taking behaviors by leading groups or partners in movement. Steady beat is one of the most fundamental concepts in music, on which many other activities are based, and therefore this increase in ability is a positive one.

The students also demonstrated an increased level of expression. They were able to listen to the music more attentively and express the music through movement. As they gained more practice in moving to the music, their movements were much more expressive of what they were hearing rather than basic movements that did not reflect the music.

### *Singing*

The students' ability and confidence in singing increased, even though we did not sing during our listening activities. They became more enthusiastic about singing both together as a group and alone, and did not hesitate to create music spontaneously when telling a story or answering a question. Several examples of this spontaneous singing occurred throughout the study, including José's rendition of the "William Tell Overture" when asked what music we heard the previous class period.

### Enthusiasm for Activities

Students showed a great deal of enthusiasm for many activities that we did, which led to greater participation and also some negative behavior. At times, this enthusiasm would cause the students to become very noisy and talkative, sometimes shouting out answers or discussing them with a neighbor. An important part of teaching young children is establishing guidelines for appropriate behavior, and helping them to understand how to behave in context of these guidelines, even when they are excited.

### *Singing*

As mentioned above, the students sang with increased confidence throughout the study. It became a very normal part of our music classes, and the students became quite comfortable with singing alone and with groups. They sang with great enthusiasm when asked to sing, and it quickly became a secondary

activity next to the concept for the day, meaning that I did not have to persuade the children to sing so that we could move on to the next step. In most instances, they sang very naturally and willingly, which made the rest of the lessons flow more smoothly.

### *Movement and Dancing*

Although somewhat hesitant at the beginning of the study, the students' enthusiasm for movement grew as their comfort levels and confidence increased. Their independence and creativity improved and enabled the students to more freely participate in other activities. Since we did spend quite a few of our listening activities on movement to music, the students did develop quite high levels of comfort when it came to moving or dancing to music. This was apparent in many activities. The students showed several times that they loved to dance. They helped to create motions to the songs and tried very hard to perfect the moves. Their enthusiasm ran high during several dancing activities, including our country dance to "Old Dan Tucker" and the hand jive to "Waddaly Atcha."

On the student survey that was completed at the conclusion of the study, the students were given an open prompt to suggest activities that they would like to do during our listening activity. Nine of the 25 students wrote that they would like to dance or move to the music, and they expressed that they enjoyed the different movement activities.

### *Rhythm Sticks*

The use of rhythm, or lummi, sticks enforced several musical concepts, including tempo, form, and rhythm. We used them for passing games to demonstrate increasing tempos; we also created rhythmic patterns to show form. The students loved having the sticks in their hands and found great success very easily with rhythm stick activities.

### Discussions

Discussions with the students following the listening activities gave many insights into their thoughts about the music and the activities, and helped the students to make connections. Most students could hardly wait to share their thoughts about the music. At times, I found that I needed to limit the number of responses that I would take because there were so many enthusiastic comments to be made. They were quite eager to tell me what they thought. While the students usually said that they enjoyed the activities, they also made connections to times or places when they had heard the music before, and could describe in great detail what was happening when they heard it. The discussions also allowed the children to use their imaginations and think more deeply about what they thought the music sounded like, or what story they thought the music told.

### *Student Analysis*

As the students were prompted to think more deeply about the music and the activities, they were better able to analyze the activities and their own actions

during the activities. In time, they were also able to observe other students and comment on their abilities and actions as well. For example, on one occasion, Marcus pointed out several movements that other children led that did or did not demonstrate the steady beat of the music. This encouraged the children to not only look at the other children and find new ways to move to the music, but also to evaluate themselves and to try harder to accomplish the task.

### *Connections*

On several occasions, the students did understand the connections between the listening activity and the lesson for the class. They showed in many ways that they were able to transfer the information or concept from one activity to another, and were quite proud of themselves when they were aware of this occurring.

### Participation

Students who participated positively had higher levels of success in the activities than the students who participated negatively or not at all. When the students participated in a positive way, by following directions and trying to accomplish the task, they showed that they were able to achieve more than students who fooled around or did not follow directions.

### *Students' Comfort Levels*

The students' levels of comfort with movement activities, singing, and general participation in other activities increased with time. The more we did movement activities, the more comfortable they became with it, which led to

increased confidence in other areas. Also, as the students got to know their classmates better as the first few weeks of school progressed, they became more comfortable participating in our music activities

#### *Positive Movement Experiences*

Many students tried hard to accomplish each task. Throughout the study, there were many examples of the students working hard, concentrating, and working together. For some students, moving to the music came more easily, but for others, they had to work harder to accomplish the same level of success. Most of the students were able to succeed at their movement activities, and had fun doing them.

#### *Negative Movement Experiences*

Some students demonstrated that they just wanted to explore movements in their own way. Regardless of the instructions that were given or what the specific task was, some students constantly pushed the boundaries. Nick, Marcus, and José often were the culprits of such behavior. Michael also joined in on the silly behavior when the students moved with the scarves. These boys threw their scarves in the air like rocketships, ignoring the instructions that were given. Numerous other times, one or all of them would be moving in ways that did not show the beat of the music or did not express the music, but that were erratic and random.

### *Student Volunteers*

In the beginning of the study, there were a few students who volunteered constantly to lead movement for the class and not many others that would. As time went on, however, many other students also began to volunteer as they became more comfortable with this activity and more confident in themselves. I was aware of this as it was occurring, and allowed the students to volunteer in their own time rather than push them and possibly cause a negative experience for them. By the end of the movement segment of our activities, it was evident that almost all of the students were comfortable with this type of activity, and they worked well in leading the whole class and a partner or smaller group.

### *Students' Reactions*

The students showed many varied reactions to the music that we heard. They showed excitement when they recognized the melodies of some of the selections, such as Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" and Barber's "William Tell Overture." They expressed monster-like motions when we moved to the "Monster Mash." These reactions were appropriate and even encouraging, as the students expressed their prior knowledge and experiences with each of these examples.

However, they also expressed some reactions that I would deem as negative in response to some of the music, or in imitation of other students during a lesson. Although it seems to be a natural reaction to laugh when something is



strange or new to us, I was disappointed when the students giggled when they first heard Ella Fitzgerald scat singing in “Blue Skies.” When I explained it the following class period and they got to hear it again, they expressed understanding rather than giggles, which was a positive change. Unfortunately, that was not always the case. During one class period, Nick and Candyce, who sat beside each other, began singing loudly and making fun of the song that we were learning. It was sung by a group of African-American women who had a different tone quality and manner of expression than much of the other music we had heard. Many other children decided to join in with Nick and Candyce. Perhaps it was because they looked like these two were having so much fun, or because the rest of the students wanted to be a part of the joke, but I was very disappointed that at this midpoint of the study, the children were reacting so negatively to a different style of music.

#### Negative Behavior

Negative behavior that was exhibited by students impacted teacher affect, student affect, and the amount of material that we were able to cover in class. There were several instances when students exhibited their frustration with other students who were not participating appropriately. I, as the teacher, also became frustrated, and found that it was quite difficult to carry on a lesson with enthusiasm when the students were behaving disrespectfully.

### *Calling Out*

Students were so enthusiastic to participate in discussions, that many times they were not able to wait their turn and would shout answers out. It becomes quite difficult to maintain control of a discussion or of a question-and-answer session when students call out and talk at the same time.

### *Noise*

In general, the students were very talkative throughout the entire course of the study, often talking to their neighbors or even to someone across the room. This type of behavior was observed during listening activities, during class discussions, during lessons, and even when the students were asked to sing. It seemed as though there was always someone talking. Among 25 children, it was often difficult to find the source and stop the behavior without making too much of a disruption to the class period.

### *Out of Control Behaviors*

Several students appeared to not be in control of their actions throughout the course of the study. There were several individuals who at times became quite disruptive to our class because of their behavior, but also, the entire class would lose control as well. It was often difficult to discern the reasons for these occurrences. Sometimes it seemed to be because of so much excitement and enthusiasm for the activity at hand, but other times it seemed to stem from

boredom. Some days there were outside circumstances that caused a change in their behavior, such as a pending snowstorm or an assembly.

### *Amir and Marcus*

Amir and Marcus are examples of two children who did not seem to be in control of their actions. They both proved to be challenges throughout the semester. Amir's level of interest varied from activity to activity, and his attitude would change completely in even a few minutes. He exhibited several defiant and attention-seeking behaviors. He did not follow directions very often. His quality of work was very poor, as evidenced in several of his work samples. He would often distract the other students and prevent them from working diligently.

Marcus made it very clear that he did not like music. He would often appear bored, and displayed his disapproval of many activities, but when called upon, would give quite insightful comments about the activities and about other students' abilities.

Both Amir and Marcus were distractions to myself and to the other students. They would cause arguments, play with items in their desks, talk to their neighbors, and make random noises throughout the class periods, which was very difficult to work through. While I sought advice from their homeroom teacher, followed the discipline plan that we had in place, and gave negative marks on their behavior charts, these methods had little or no effect on these two boys. Giving them extra responsibilities and positive feedback when they were

behaving appropriately also seemed to have no lasting effect. They also expressed on their surveys at the completion of the study that they were not interested in the listening activities, and expressed negative opinions about both the music and the activities.

### *Frustrations*

For myself and the students, we found that the negative behaviors made it difficult to keep the flow of our class moving. It was hard for all of us to stay on track with the concepts that we were learning about, and even more frustrating for me because many of the interruptions were nonsensical behaviors, such as students falling out of chairs or walking across the room. These negative behaviors made quite an impact on our daily class periods, and inhibited the students from experiencing more musical activities.

### The Survey Says

I carefully read through and tallied the results of the survey that the class took (see Appendix N). I was quite pleased to discover that 20 of the 25 students surveyed said that they did enjoy our warm-up activities, and the same number responded that they would like to continue the warm-ups in the future. While I was excited and pleased by these outcomes, I was also curious to find out about the students' opinions on the music that we had heard and whether or not the activities helped them to learn.

Some of the other questions did not yield such clear-cut results. When asked which activities they liked the most, the responses were quite divided. Only three students responded that they really liked writing about the music, while 16 students reported their enjoyment of the rhythm sticks. The other activities, moving alone, moving with a partner, clapping rhythms, and using scarves, all received about the same number of positive responses. Likewise, when asked which activities they liked the least, moving alone received 11 responses, while the rest of the activities received between five and seven. I am not surprised by these outcomes on the survey, and am content that the activities seemed to be equally enjoyed by the students.

Finally, I was most excited by the responses to the questions regarding students' previous listening and how they felt the music affected them. Fifteen of the students said that they little experience listening to these style of music prior to the study. Nineteen of the 25 students thought that the activities helped them to understand the music, and 20 said that they enjoyed listening to the different types of music. These responses were quite encouraging to read, and gave me a boost of confidence that the students truly did enjoy what we have done, and that they also felt that it was beneficial to them.

There were only two students who had negative comments on the survey about the study. Zamar informed me that he would like to play with toys during our listening activities, and that he thought that the activities were "cined of

stoop” (kind of stupid). I spoke with Zamar after the class period to better understand what he meant. He felt that the activities were boring and he did not like them. He also felt that I pick on him a lot and he is constantly getting in trouble during music class. While I had noticed that Zamar had been behaving poorly during the last few class periods, I had not realized that his behavior was continuously interruptive to our classes and that he might feel this way. We discussed the issues that we had been having and I reassured him that I would do what I could to help him be a more positive force in our class in the future.

The other student who responded negatively on the survey was Marcus. Marcus also responded that he would like to play games during our warm-ups, particularly with his Playstation. When given space to tell me anything they wanted to about the warm-ups, Marcus wrote that he would like to go home! I also spoke with him after the class period, and he admitted that his answers were silly and did not really mean anything.

Overall, I was happy with the results of the survey. Many students expressed their interest and excitement about the listening activities, and their positive remarks were quite encouraging as we finished the research study.

### Summary

I drew several conclusions from this research study. When evaluating the performances of different students, it became clear that the student’s interest impacts the level of participation, which then impacts comprehension of the

musical concepts. It is necessary to have effective classroom management strategies in place and to use them consistently in order for any activity to run smoothly. Students at this age level are receptive to various types of music and activities, and show a great deal of enthusiasm for them. Clear links between the listening activity and the music lesson help the students to transfer the skill or information acquired. As the students became more comfortable with their peers, themselves, and the routine of performing a listening activity, they found greater levels of success in both the activities and in the transfer of the skill to the music lesson. They showed that they grew to enjoy the listening activities, and often asked for them when we began class.

## NEXT STEPS

After the conclusion of our study, the students and I decided to continue with our listening activities. I continued to plan activities and listening selections that connected to the music lesson, and the students responded positively to the continuation of the activities.

One of the facets of the study was that the activities were designed to take only a few minutes of our class time. However, when put into the context of an actual class, many of the activities took longer than I had planned, especially when our discussions became quite complex. The time needed to explain the activities was not something that I had anticipated taking more than a minute or so, but when the activities were more involved, it did increase the overall time spent on the activity. This became a slight concern because I felt that I was losing curricular time, but since the activities tied into the objective for the day, I realized that the time spent on the activities was valuable.

In the future, I plan to continue to incorporate even more varied styles of music into our activities. I would like to continue exploring different activities that the students could perform while they listen to the music. I would also consider giving the students one specific item to listen for in the music, and then base our discussions off of that, such as identifying scat singing or listening for a certain instrument. Perhaps giving the students a specific listening task would help them to focus on both the music and the activity a little better.



## CONCLUSION

After researching listening selections and activities, carefully planning these activities to correspond with the music objectives, and trying them with a second grade music class, I have found the activities to be successful. The students' levels of interest and participation greatly impacted their success in mastering each skill. The students gave great insights during our discussions, and showed meaningful thought and analysis of each piece of music and each activity.

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## APPENDIXES

