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THE EFFECTS OF BACKGROUND MUSIC  
IN THE FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

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## **Abstract**

This qualitative action research study investigated the experiences of incorporating different genres of music into the classroom environment during math and journal writing. The three genres of music implemented into the classroom were classical, jazz, and Disney. Eighteen first graders participated in this study conducted at a high-achieving elementary school. Throughout the study, the researcher maintained an organized field log, while conducting and analyzing observations, student work, surveys, and interviews. These data were gathered and compared to show which genre of music produced the best work habits and classroom behaviors.

Findings suggest that when any genre of music is incorporated into the classroom, positive peer interactions increase. These interactions created a learning-enriched environment. Analysis revealed that with jazz music, students exhibited diligent work habits. However, classical and Disney music produced more off-task behaviors. Overall, with the implementation of background music, students produced detailed journal writing and achieved proficient scores on math tests.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
List of Tables .....	xi
List of Figures .....	xii
Researcher Stance .....	1
Literature Review .....	5
Introduction .....	5
Classroom Environment .....	5
Effects of Music .....	10
Summary .....	18
Methodology .....	19
Introduction .....	19
Setting .....	19
Participants .....	19
Procedures .....	20
Data Sources .....	31
Trustworthiness Statement .....	33
Summary .....	38
My Story .....	39

Through the Eyes of Miss Sergent .....	39
What's the Noise? .....	39
Exploring Space with Music .....	40
Disney Connection .....	44
Math and Music .....	47
Jazzing with Math .....	47
Classical Math .....	51
Disney World of Math.....	53
Standing Ovation for Math and Music.....	54
Through the Eyes of Miss Sergent .....	61
Writing with Music.....	61
Writing Results.....	66
How Does It Make You Feel? .....	70
What Makes You Work Better?.....	74
Data Analysis .....	80
Introduction.....	80
Analysis During Data Collection.....	80
Field Log Analysis.....	80
Coding Analysis.....	81

Student Work Analysis.....	81
Survey and Interview Analysis .....	82
Methodological Memo .....	82
Analysis of Educational Philosophers.....	82
Analysis After Data Collection .....	83
Field Log Analysis .....	83
Student Work Analysis.....	83
Survey and Interview Analysis .....	83
Bin and Theme Analysis .....	83
Literary Devices .....	84
Summary .....	84
Findings .....	86
Theme Statements .....	86
Next Steps .....	97
References .....	99
Appendices .....	103
A Human Subjects Internal Review Board Letter .....	103
B Principal Consent Form .....	104
C Parent Consent Form .....	105
D I Can Writing Prompt .....	106

E Student Questionnaire .....	107
F Time On-Task Checklist .....	108
G One-on-One Interview Questions .....	109

## List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Music Survey (First half of study) .....	71
2. Music Survey (Second half of study) .....	73

## List of Figures

Figure	Page
1 Exploring Space Layered Story .....	42
2 Disney Real-Life Connections .....	46
3 Dramatization of Card Games .....	48
4 Nate’s Shadow Log .....	50
5 Math Test Scores with Disney Music Pie Chart .....	59
6 Math Test Scores with No Music Pie Chart .....	59
7 Math Test Scores with Jazz Music Pie Chart.....	60
8 Math Test Scores with Classical Music Pie Chart.....	60
9 Sam’s Shadow Log .....	64
10 Journal Writing Results Bar Graph (First half of study).....	69
11 Journal Writing Results Bar Graph (Second half of study).....	69
12 Classical Music Interview Responses Pastiche.....	76
13 Jazz Music Interview Responses Pastiche.....	77
14 Disney Music Interview Responses Pastiche .....	78
15 No Music Interview Responses Pastiche.....	79
16 Graphic Organizer of Codes and Bins .....	85
17 Acrostic Accounts .....	96

## Researcher Stance

During my time as an adolescent, I was always considered to be an energetic and social student. Sitting still and staying quiet were always difficult rules for me to follow in the classroom, but I was always polite to all my classmates and teachers. Diligently, I would complete all my homework. Every year I worked conscientiously to maintain my status as an “average” student. I understood the importance of all my teachers’ classroom management plans, but could never fully obey all their expected standards. Every day I would try my best to make my teachers proud, but I lacked self-control. If I had an idea to add to the class discussion, I could not wait for my teacher to call on me. With excitement and eagerness, I would call out. These actions would disrupt my classmates’ learning. My teachers quickly lost patience with me because my body could never sit still for a long period of time. I needed to get up and move around the classroom.

Third grade was an extremely tough year for me. I was enrolled into a classroom that had strict expectations. Dewey (1997/1938) would consider this teacher’s main focus to be “keeping order.” Her classroom was arranged like that of a traditional schoolroom. Desks were in fixed rows and student movement was not encouraged. Shortly after the school

year started, I received my first detention. I broke the rule of being a good listener when my teacher or classmates were speaking. With a tear soaked face and sweaty hands, I waited anxiously for my parents to pick me up because of this consequence. As an eight year old, I could not understand why I had to suffer such a harsh punishment; as an adult, I still fail to understand.

As I look back at this moment, I question why my teacher would create a classroom environment that was not suited for third graders. Like Dewey (1997/1938), I believe most children are naturally “sociable.” The quietness of the classroom was like torture to my ears. I dreaded every day going to school and sitting in those seats for hours. My love for school was dramatically changed in third grade.

From that point on, my parents often received calls and notes from teachers informing them of my disruptive behavior during class. I wanted so badly to enjoy school, but never had a teacher who allowed me to be me. Then I entered my tenth grade Spanish class. It was like music to my ears, literally; there was authentic Spanish music playing quietly in the background. Our desks were pushed against the walls. We often stood in circles to review our Spanish words and recite Spanish commands we were taught. We worked in small groups to complete meaningful projects.

For the first time since second grade, I had that curiosity for school and a yearning to learn.

I found Mrs. Roman's teaching style to be dynamic and understandable. I wished I could share this style of teaching with teachers I had in the past. During my junior year of high school, I collaborated with my Spanish teacher, and we invented a program that is still implemented today. Once a week, my Spanish class would visit my former elementary school, and we taught second graders Spanish. We would teach the students Spanish by moving around the room to identify objects in English and Spanish. Music was often quietly playing in the background. As I looked around the class and saw the joy of learning on everyone's face, I knew I wanted to be a teacher.

Now, here I am, a first grade teacher. My classroom environment is open and friendly. We are often moving around the room to explore space. If you were walking past Room 127, you would hear students engaged in classroom talk. Our days, packed with exploration and discovery, frequently start with soft classical music playing in the background. I feel this is a wonderful environment for young children that fosters success while promoting self-discovery.

Every year I am faced with students who have similar difficulties as I

did. They work extremely hard to preserve the flow of the class. They show me respect and honor me as their teacher. However, the rules of being a good listener and staying in their seats are still hard to follow. Last year, I had a child who was extremely talkative and energetic. As I started to build a rapport with this student, I noticed his love for rock music. We would have discussions about his favorite song and band. I began to question if the implementation of rock music into my classroom would have an effect on his behavior.

The next morning, as a change in the daily routine of classical music, I turned on the radio. As the children entered the classroom, this change sparked an interest in all of them. It was the noticeable changes in my energetic student that made me want to explore the power of music and the effects it has on my students' learning. Therefore my research question is: what are the observed and reported experiences when different genres of music are incorporated into the classroom?

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Researchers like Giles (1991), Noddings (2007), and Dinsmore (2003) have studied the effects classroom environment has on student learning. Lang (2002) believes teachers' actions within their designed environments affect student achievement. According to Dismore (2003), the learners' behavior is also influenced by the environment in which they learn. Dewey (1997/1938) explains the noticeable change in classroom environments over the years.

The limitation that was put upon outward action by the fixed arrangements of the typical traditional schoolroom, with its fixed rows of desks and its military regimen of pupils who were permitted to move only at certain fixed signals, put a great restriction upon intellectual and moral freedom. (Dewey, 1997/1938, p. 61)

Teachers are altering their environment through the implementation of background music. Towell (2000), Koppelman and Imig (1995), and Chalmers, Olson, and Zurkowski (1999) researched the effects background music had on students' behavior and learning.

### **Classroom Environment**

The classroom is a complex place (Good & Brophy, 2008). A

teacher's classroom says a lot about the type of educator he or she is. A teacher's classroom space is closely associated with his or her teaching goals (Lang, 2002). Classrooms vary, just like students vary. Greene (2007) believes that classroom environment is a major component in the contribution of student learning. According to Dewey (1997/1938), students should be able to utilize their surroundings both physically and socially. Through this understanding of their classroom space, students will have worthwhile experiences (Dewey, 1997/1938).

It is in the classroom that students can be encouraged to have hope. Noddings (2007) agrees with Greene that environment affects the amount of success a student can achieve. This environment has an influence on the classroom management a teacher possesses (Dinsmore, 2003). In addition, Ayers (1993) wants educators to create spaces where children are seen, understood, and feel safe.

Noddings (2007) believes that a safe atmosphere created in teachers' classrooms, enables the students to feel a sense of care. From this feeling of care, students will strive for success. Noddings mentions that educators should want more than adequate success from their students. This success will not be produced if children do not feel they are cared for. A caring environment influences a child's desire for success

(Noddings, 2007). When a student feels cared about, the student will understand how to show care and love. If a child builds the ability to love, they will not be the ones who initiate disruption in the classroom (Freire, 2003/1970). Freire believes this learned behavior will ultimately contribute to their character as future citizens.

Ayers (1993) agrees that each student deserves to feel valued within the school classroom. By developing this type of environment, students will feel stimulated to broaden their range of talents and skills (Ayers, 1993). When music is incorporated into an environment, it acts as a device for self-management and self-regulation (Batt-Rawden & DeNora, 2005). When students have this self-discipline, educators have more time to focus on establishing goals towards students' strengths and skills.

The incorporation of background music creates this feeling of a safe environment. Giles (1991) believes music played throughout the day provides a positive environment for student learning. Music starts the day on a positive note, creates relaxation in the cafeteria, and provides a lift for the afternoon when students become bored and tired (Giles, 1991). Adding music to the classroom environment is an inexpensive way to produce this positive atmosphere.

Greene (2007) believes that by adding the arts back into the

classrooms, we will create atmospheres that encourage our students to have hope. School may be the only place our students experience this feeling of hope (Noddings, 2007). Good and Brophy (2008) discuss how classrooms allow teachers and students to delve deeper into their sense of identity and understand different cultures. The classroom environment helps us explore fairness and morality (Good & Brophy, 2008).

Classroom environment is one of the three areas that influences classroom management. Dinsmore's study on classroom management (2003) focuses on the areas of teacher preparation, teaching methods, and classroom environment. Within the classroom environment area, Dinsmore believes music creates an inviting learning environment. When observing the effects of student behavior within an environment that was influenced by music, Dinsmore noticed more on-task behavior. Dewey (1997/1938) discussed the importance of collecting more than just observations when conducting a study. The researcher needs to understand the significance of what students see, hear, and feel (Dewey, 1997/1938). After observing students' behaviors with background music, to ensure validity, Dinsmore conducted interviews with the students. When the students were asked how the music made them feel, they stated "comfortable, focused, and relaxed" (Dinsmore, 2003, p. 19).

Davidson and Powell (1986) altered their science environment by playing background music. They too found a positive effect with on-task behavior. The boys in this classroom were more affected by the background music. The girls suffered from the ceiling effect; they were significantly on-task before the incorporation of music. Davidson and Powell (1986) found it to be true that incorporating background music in the classroom environment can lead to more on-task behavior. This behavior influences better classroom management, which ultimately leads to more engaging classroom lessons. Noddings (2007) agrees that students begin to realize their teacher cares not only for the learned outcomes, but for the feeling the learners get when he or she is learning. Noddings says it best: "There is more to life and learning than the academic proficiency demonstrated by test scores" (Noddings, 2007, p. 68).

According to Griffin (2006), when incorporating background music into the classroom environment, it should be heard, but not actively listened to. Griffin (2006) found environments that implement background music induce fairly strong emotions. This integration will enhance learning through the emotional intelligence. Griffin concludes by stating, "Music can motivate and inspire learning, encourage reflection, reveal the affect"

(p. 39). This motivation and inspiration could ultimately lead to what Dewey (1997/1938) considers to be an educator's main goal. The final accomplishment teachers strive for is the creation of a young adult who is prepared for future responsibilities and success in life (Dewey, 1997/1938). If teachers incorporate this type of learning environment into their classroom, students will find that motivation and inspiration to learn.

### **Effects of Music**

Giles (1991) believes music has an unbelievable effect on the way human beings feel and act. Music has the ability to make humans happy, sad, calm, or relaxed. We listen to music in our cars, at home, in an elevator, and now its use is becoming more evident in classrooms. As Giles (1991) lists, there are many different types of music and all have influence on student learning.

Batt-Rawden and DeNora (2005) simply state that music has power. They believe it influences people's images of their body. Music affects how people emotionally feel about themselves and about others. Batt-Rawden and DeNora (2005) identify the power music has on situations; it can act as the soundtrack of any social action. School requires students to be put in social situations every day. Knobloch (2003) agrees with Batt-Rawden and DeNora (2005) that music does influence human's inner

feelings. Knobloch (2003) believes moods affect more than cognitive and inner processes. Moods impact everyday situations, performance, and social interactions. A student's mood can be directly related to how a student feels about the experience. According to Dewey (1997/1938), the quality of students' past experiences impact how they will react in future situations.

Media, such as music and films, has a strong influence on moods (Knobloch, 2003). Hendricks, Robinson, Bradley, and Davis (1999) researched the effect music would have on students in a depressed mood. Music had the ability to produce a relaxed mood, reduce stress, and create a positive stimulus for a mood change. In this study, the depressed students became interested in music and were more willing to participate in counseling sessions (Hendricks et al., 1999). According to Towell (2000), background music while reading a story will not only influence the mood of the child, but will set a mood and tone for the story.

According to Giles (1991), the music that produces a state of relaxation should consist of 60 beats per minute. As mentioned previously, Dinsmore (2003) believes this same tempo of music helps create a learning environment. Chalmers, Olson, and Zurkowski (1999) mention that this tempo develops relaxation. It is this relaxation that

promotes students' focus and concentration.

Dewey (1997/1938) describes children as being naturally sociable. However, there are certain areas in school that seem to create more noise and less focus and concentration. Chalmers, Olson, and Zurkowski (1999) researched the effect background music would have if implemented into the noisiest place in a school: the lunchroom. When classical music was playing, students' noise level dropped 7%. Even more impressive was the finding that when popular music was playing, the students' noise level decreased by 12%. All music had a positive effect on student behavior (Chalmers, Olson, & Zurkowski, 1999).

Another area where students can get quite noisy and misbehave is on a school bus. Giles (1991) mentions a study that incorporated music on a school bus. The students were more willing to stay in their seats and behave appropriately while background music was playing. The location of the students on the bus does not matter; it is the incorporation of this tempo music that causes the effect (Giles, 1991).

Hallam, Price, and Katsarou (2002) researched the influence a tempo over 60 beats per minute would have on a student's work habits. They researched how aggressive music and calming music would influence student learning. When students were exposed to calming

music, they established more correct responses to a memory task presented to them. In the classroom, Hallam, Price, and Katsarou (2002) observed with no background music. The students did not produce as many correct responses. When aggressive music was incorporated, students produced the lowest level of correct responses. This style of music produced the most negative social and interactive behaviors (Hallam, Price, & Katsarou, 2002).

On the contrary, Crncec, Wilson, and Prior (2006) disagree with the positive outcomes that background music adds to students' eagerness to learn. Crncec, Wilson, and Prior (2006) are unclear as to what the descriptive terms are for "calming" and "soothing." They believe the implementation of background music is effective with students who have special needs, but feel there needs to be more reliable evidence in past studies (Crncec, Wilson, & Prior, 2006).

Within Koppelman and Imig's (1995) writing study, there were both positive and negative results with different genres of music incorporated into the writing portion of the day. There was a positive effect on the students' writing when jazz and classical music were played. However, when implementing the Top 40 music, the students showed a negative effect on their writing prompt. Koppelman and Imig (1995) associate their

negative observation with the familiarity the students had with the songs.

When Top 40 music was playing, the outcome of student writing had a negative influence, but the students' moods were positively impacted. They were recorded as "dancing" and "singing" in their seats. The Top 40 style of music had many songs with quick tempos. The aggressive songs implemented within Hallam, Price and Katsarou's (2002) study all had tempos above 60 beats. Koppelman and Imig (1995) experienced a positive social outcome when introducing upbeat music; whereas Hallam, Price and Katsarou (2002) observed negative social behaviors.

Lum and Campbell (2007) realized different forms of music are seen throughout all levels of schools. The most obvious incorporation of music is in instrumental class, chorus, and music class. Beyond those classrooms, these researchers noticed a different form of music and its influence on student learning. According to the study conducted by Lum and Campbell (2007), rhythmic and melodic expressions and sounds can be seen in student engagement throughout the day. At play, students are incorporating chants and repetitive body movement to interact with one another. This similarity the students share produces more social interactions among young students (Lum & Campbell, 2007). They are participating in a form of art that is universal.

Participatory involvement with the many forms of art does enable us, at the very least, to see more in our experiences, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines, habits, and conventions have obscured. (Greene, 2007, p. 33)

The students have something in common. To have the ability to bridge a communication gap through the use of music is what Lum and Campbell (2007) call a musical conversation. The communication gap among students continues to grow. This understanding of interaction and freedom to speak was initially formed by the teacher, but now the teacher acts like a guide and allows the students to develop through their own intelligences (Dewey, 1997/1938).

Greene (2007) believes the arts help students to develop higher-order thinking skills. They are experiencing this communication through a fun chant or movement that can be directly related to music. Towell (2000) agrees with Greene (2007) that by integrating these various avenues of expression, students have a greater appreciation and understanding of the arts. This style of teaching allows the students to discover there is much more to their world and their place in it than they may recognize (Towell, 2000).

Towell (2000) emphasizes the importance of combining literature and music into children's education. Towell (2000) believes this combination develops students' creativity with expressing their ideas and emotions. This level of thinking can be associated with Sizer and Sizer's (2007) journal article on grappling. "Wise school people and parents should not underestimate the power that they can find in young minds, bodies and hearts" (Sizer & Sizer, 2007, p. 155). Through this creativity of expression, students will have the ability to create their own questions and compose their own answers to other's questions.

Sizer and Sizer (2007) and Paley (1997) believe children are capable to think and do far beyond what educators expect of them. In Paley's (1997) book, *A Girl with a Brown Crayon*, kindergarten students discuss imagination and music. The students are able to make connections between text-and-self. The thinking skills portrayed by her students are far beyond that of kindergartners. They have the opportunity to get up and do chants, and frequently move around the classroom. The class would be engaged in intellectual dialogue. Paley's (1997) students expressed how they felt about characters and they would even imagine what life would be like as certain characters. This style of classroom environment complements Noddings' (2007) article on teaching care. Paley (1997) is a

great example to students of how they can express care for self and others.

Paley (1997) incorporates Leo Lionni stories into her kindergarten classroom. The students begin to have a discussion about the main character, which is a mouse, and how she uses her tail as a flute. Paley (1997) continues to do movements and chants associated with the mouse to engage the class. When Paley (1997) turns around, the whole class was repeating the chant and mimicking the motions. The students felt in unison. They belonged to a group. This style of behavior is similar to Lum and Campbell's (2007) musical conversation. Paley (1997) is an educator who opened the doors for other educators who want to alter what seems to be the norm in school classrooms.

Both Paley (1997) and Dewey (1997/1938) understand the importance of movement. Dewey (1997/1938) believes that with the freedom of movement comes physical and mental health. This incorporation of music and movement, while at play, allows students to show their different abilities and intelligences. Lum and Campbell (2007) describe this type of action to be rhythmic and melodic expressions. Paley (1997) and Lum and Campbell (2007) notice influenced behavior when music was implemented into the classroom.

## Summary

Classroom environment has a major influence on student learning (Dinsmore, 2007). When background music is incorporated, the students' behavior and time on-task are affected (Davidson & Powell, 1986). Giles (1991), and Hallam et al. (2002) have researched the implementation of background music into the classroom and have reported a positive outcome. These researchers encourage more teachers to alter their classrooms with the use of background music.

Not all educators and researchers feel this incorporation has a positive effect. Researchers like Crncec, Wilson, and Prior (2006) do not think there are enough data collected to show background music has a positive outcome on student learning and behavior. "Our story never ends with a neat conclusion, our data is mostly unruly and insufficient, and our jigsaw puzzle is always incomplete because it is always fluid, always changing" (Ayers, 1993, p. 33).

## **Methodology**

### **Introduction**

In this study, I observed and reported the experiences in my classroom when different genres of music were incorporated. Students' behavior, time on-task, and academic work were areas I evaluated within this study. I was curious to know which type of background music produces the best all around work habits.

### **Setting**

My study was held in a school in the eastern part of Pennsylvania. This elementary school is located in an upper class suburban area. Our school is surrounded by many beautiful homes, a church, and the township's community center. We are a small school consisting of only two classes at each grade level. We shape the future for approximately 320 students. We are a high achieving, blue ribbon school, which means our test scores are high in comparison with other elementary schools in the state of Pennsylvania. Our staff continues to push our students to obtain high goals and expectations.

### **Participants**

In my first grade classroom, I have 18 students. There are 11 boys and 7 girls. Currently, my class includes four English Language Learners

(ELL). These four students are from four different countries, which reflects the array of languages spoken at home. One student is of Chinese descent. Another child just moved to America last year from Albania. She entered kindergarten halfway through the year, not knowing any English. One boy comes from a home where Vietnamese is the primary language. My final ELL student was just adopted from the Ukraine eight months ago. His Russian vocabulary was minimal. He had no English language when entering my first grade classroom.

Not only is the amount of known English vocabulary varied throughout my class, but also are the reading abilities. For instance, I have students who are developmentally reading on a fifth grade level. However, I also have students who are still associating letters in the alphabet with certain sounds. One student has an IEP and receives Occupational Therapy services, and continues to build his fine motor skills. Even though my first graders are developing at different paces, they all strive to be the best they can.

### **Procedures**

I received permission from Moravian College's Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) (see Appendix A). I received permission from my principal (see Appendix B) and students' parents (see Appendix

C). I received permission from my students as participants.

Week 1 (Classical)

**Day 1**

Introduce the concept of exploring space. Students will understand how to move about the room with the beat and pace of the music. They will change levels and speeds. (Observe)

Journal writing. Tell me about your weekend. Use words or draw a picture. (Student work)

Buddy share journals. (Observe)

**Day 2**

Journal writing: Work individually on sentence activity

Writing prompt: I can \_\_\_\_\_. Draw a picture to go with writing.

(Student work – see Appendix D)

**Day 3**

Explore space with music (Observe)

Complete Music Questionnaire (Survey – see Appendix E)

**Day 4**

Finish I Can prompt. Small group share sentence and illustration

(Observe)

Week 2 (Jazz)**Day 1**

Literature comprehension: Drawing activity (Student work and time on-task

– see Appendix F)

Buddy share (Observe)

**Day 2**

Math – Making 6 and 7 using white boards

Introduction into addition (Observe)

**Day 3**

Journal writing: Time on-task (Observe)

**Day 4**

Handwriting: Working on using blue, blue, red paper (Observe interactions)

**Day 5**

Quick note: Mr. B's curiosity

Complete Music Questionnaire (Survey)

Week 3 (Disney)**Day 1**

Exploring space. Students will understand how to move about the room with the beat and pace of the music. They will change levels and speeds.

(Observe)

Journal writing. Tell me about your weekend. Use words or draw a picture. (Student work)

Buddy share journals (Observe)

**Day 2**

Language Arts: Time on-task checklist

**Day 3 and 4**

Fall activity: Creating a fall setting using real leaves from trees (Observe)

**Day 5**

Math test (Observe and student data)

Week 4 (Classical)**Day 1**

Math: Using white boards to introduce + and = (Observe)

**Day 2**

Math observations

**Day 3**

Writing: Creating short a and i sounding words activity (Time on-task)

Week 5 (Jazz)**Day 1**

Exploring space. Students will understand how to move about the room with the beat and pace of the music. They will change levels and speeds.

(Observe)

Journal writing. Tell me about your weekend. Use words or draw a picture (Student work)

Buddy share journals (Observe)

**Day 2**

Writing: Literature comprehension activity (Observation)

Language Arts activity (Time on-task)

**Day 3**

Writing: Journal writing. Using your five sense tell me about the Fall season. (Student work)

Share with a buddy (Observation)

**Day 4**

Exploring space. Students will understand how to move about the room with the beat and pace of the music. They will change levels and speeds.

**Day 5**

Writing: Explain what you know about Christopher Columbus. (Student work)

Observe student behavior

Week 6 (Disney)**Day 1**

Math: Using snap cubes

Create real-life objects (Observe student interactions)

**Day 2**

One-on-one student interviews (see Appendix F)

**Day 3**

One-on-one student interviews

Week 7 (No music)**Day 1**

Math test results (Student data)

**Day 2**

Journal writing: Tell me about your weekend.

Illustrate a picture to relate with text (Observe)

**Day 3**

Complete journal writing with illustrations. (Student work)

Share with class (Observe)

**Day 4**

Halloween bingo: half with no music (Observe)

Halloween bingo: half with jazz (Observe)

Week 8 (Classical)**Day 1**

Math- Time on-task using counters

Quick images: Using an overhead kids duplicate the dot image card

(Observe)

**Day 2**

Math- Double compare

Using number cards, add total of two numbers (Observe)

**Day 3: NO music**

Writing- On-demand prompt: What would you do if the royal people came to visit you? From One Monday Morning (Student work)

**Day 4**

DOL (Daily Oral Language): Students individually correct mistakes in sentence on blackboard (Observe)

**Day 5**

Complete music questionnaire (Survey)

Week 9 (Jazz)**Day 1 and 2**

Math stations

Implementing three Investigations station around classroom.

1. Addition Bingo
2. Double Compare
3. PNW (Pictures, Numbers, Words) (Observation)

**Day 3**

Writing: Spelling words introduction

1. Look at the word.
2. Say the word.
3. Trace it with your finger.
4. Write it in the sky.
5. Flip paper and write the word without looking.
6. Check spelling. (Observation)

Week 10 (Disney)**Day 1**

DOL morning work (Observation)

**Day 2**

Complete music questionnaire (Survey)

**Day 3**

One-on-one student interviews (Interview)

**Day 4**

One-on-one student interviews (Interview)

Week 11 (Jazz)**Day 1**

Writing: language arts: Making –nd, -st, -nt, and nk words

Working with a buddy (Buddy observation)

**Day 2**

Math: Addition Activity, incorporating cutting and gluing

Working in small groups (Group observation)

**Day 3**

Exploring space. Students will understand how to move about the room with the beat and pace of the music. They will change levels and speeds.

(Observe)

**Day 4**

Complete music questionnaire (Survey)

**Day 5**

Math: Unit test (Student data and observation)

Week 12 (Apply all 3 types of genres)

**Day 1: No music**

Writing: How-To Make a Squanto snack writing activity

Final copy of overtime writing assignment (Observe)

**Day 2: No music**

Journal writing. Tell me about your weekend. Use words or draw a picture (Student work)

Buddy share journals (Observe)

**Day 3: Jazz**

Independent work habits:

Observe while working on morning work

Observe with free-time (Observe)

**Day 4: No Music**

Writing: Proofreading activity

Make corrections throughout pilgrim paragraph

Copy correctly (Observe)

**Day 5**

Complete music questionnaire on no music. (Survey)

Week 13 (Apply all 3 types of genres)

**Day 1: Classical**

Journal writing. Tell me about your weekend. Use words or draw a picture (Student work)

Buddy share journals (Observe)

**Day 2: Disney**

Math: Counting back using a number line

Developing subtraction skills (Observe)

**Day 3: No music**

Math: Complete unit test (Student data)

Observe test taking behaviors (Observe)

**Day 4**

Math: Complete unit quiz (Student data)

**Day 5**

Exploring space. Students will understand how to move about the room with the beat and pace of the music. They will change levels and speeds.  
(Observe)

Week 14 (Apply all 3 types of genres)

**Day 1**

Exploring space. Students will understand how to move about the room

with the beat and pace of the music. They will change levels and speeds.

(Observe)

Journal writing: Tell me about your weekend. Use words or draw a picture. (Student work)

Buddy share journals (Observe)

### **Day 2**

Christmas writing: Brainstorming

Whole class writing prompt

### **Day 3**

Rough draft: Christmas writing

Writer's Workshop

### **Day 4**

Final Copy: Christmas writing with illustration

### **Day 5**

Sharing of final writing activity (Student work)

## **Data Sources**

**Observations.** Time on-task checklist: Every 5 minutes students were observed for on-task behaviors. I then compared the time on tasks with every different genre of music played. I completed this checklist while

students were working alone or with a buddy. This information was implemented into a graph. The information supplied showed which type of music influences student learning the most.

Individual observing folder: I created an observing folder that consisted of four fold-over sections. Five students names were on each sheet. This way I had all students' names readily available for note taking. This observing strategy was used during individual work only.

Buddy observing folder: I created the same style of folder, but it corresponded to the children when they were paired up. I recorded dialogue and interaction that I thought was influenced by the background music.

**Student work.** I collected and evaluated the students' work. I analyzed the amount of effort put forth on class work. For example, I critiqued the amount of complete sentences written and the use of details incorporated into the illustrations. It is in the student work portion that I evaluated student achievement and growth. I continued to ask myself two questions when checking their work produced: Does the music affect their class work? Did I notice any changes in their class work? The work I collected was sentence and illustration activities, journal writing, and math assignments.

**Surveys and interviews.** I collected student questionnaires and conducted conferences. I feel this is an extremely valuable way to understand how the students truly feel about the background music. Since this study took place in the beginning of the year, my students were not developed writers. By having this one-on-one communication, my students had the opportunity to better express themselves. These one-on-one conferences allowed the students to speak freely and not worry what their friends might think. During mid-September, the students completed music questionnaires to the best of their ability. They were encouraged to use “kid writing” to express their feelings towards the different genres of music. I analyzed the students’ answers and compared the positives and negatives of their responses.

#### **Trustworthiness Statement**

As stated by Andersen, Herr, and Nihien (1994), in order to assure that I was gathering ethical data, it was essential my research was valid in the following areas: democratic, outcome, catalytic, process, and dialogic. The democratic validity will be obtained through clear expectations set for all participants involved. My action research proposal has been accepted by Moravian’s Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB). Through a consent form, I gained permission from my school principal to conduct

this study. All parents received a consent form explaining the study in full detail. I have gathered full participation from all students in the class. However, all parties understood a child may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. The parents and students understand the classroom environment will be altered with background music. This music was implemented during various times throughout language arts and math. All the data collected from this study were confidential. Students' actual names will not appear in any written report or publication of this study. All research materials were kept in a locked filing cabinet and destroyed at the conclusion of the study. On a regular basis, I received feedback from the principal, my teacher support group, students, and parents to gather as much data as possible to make this study valid.

The outcome validity was developed through persistent and prolonged observations and reflections. Hendricks (2006) assures that the *why* question can be answered with credibility when persistent observations occur. I obtained this information through a field log that was used to record all student behavior, engagement, and achievement. I reflected on the gathered data. My personal feelings were added into this section of my study. This process of reflection gave me the chance to change practices that were not working in the classroom. Catalytic validity

can be accurately measured through the process of reflection. Reflective memos are extremely useful during an action research study. I altered any issues as they occurred throughout the study, making my study valuable and useful.

Through a triangulation approach, I measured the process validity of my study. The three types of data I gathered were observations, student work, and student surveys and interviews.

We build triangulation into our studies by using multiple sources of data, multiple methods, even multiple theories to develop diverse perspectives. If . . . these perspectives converge, we are encouraged to believe that the findings of a study are credible and trustworthy. (Arhar, Holly, & Kasten, 2001, p. 207)

Furthermore, field logs were incorporated daily throughout my action research study. I administered two different types of observations. The first was an observational field log. As students worked individually, in pairs, or in groups, I recorded all behaviors and observed interactions. This log was formatted in a T chart. One side of the T chart represented observed behaviors. This side documented only what was seen and heard, while the other side contained my reflections. This part of the data collection was completed once the students were no longer in the

classroom.

The other form of observational data I gathered was a time-on-task checklist. As the students were engaged, I observed their behavior every five minutes. If a student was on task, he or she received a check mark in the “minutes” block. If the child was not on task, the box was simply left blank. I analyzed the data collected and created a chart to illustrate the varying on-task behaviors with different genres of music.

The second part of my triangulated data collection was composed of student work. I collected work completed during designated times in math and language arts. No child’s name was present on work collected. These pieces of work demonstrated work habits and effort while background music was incorporated.

The third piece of this data collection was done through student surveys and interviews. At the end of every week, the class completed a three-question survey. The level of questions varied from coloring in a smiley face or a sad face, describing how they felt when listening to that genre of music, and explaining why they thought their work habits changed with that particular music playing.

Also, I implemented one-on-one interviews with the students. I created a set of pre-designed questions to ask the participants. I kept

accurate records of student responses. To be sure I fully understood responses, I conducted member checks. “Member checks involve discussing your interpretations of data with the participants in your study. This allows you to determine whether your findings accurately represent participants’ actions and responses” (Hendricks, 2006, p. 108). I did my best to eliminate any biases I might have created when interpreting their responses.

As discussed in Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997), Richardson believed there are more than three ways to approach the world. Richardson considers gathering data as crystalizing rather than triangulating. The way we as researchers interpret data can be seen through many different lenses. As a researcher, I admitted my biases to my participants and teacher support groups. I explained my love and joy for all different types of music. I confessed the way certain genres of music make me feel. This openness demonstrated to my students that they too can develop their own feelings toward music.

It is through teacher support groups that I accomplished dialogic validity. I shared any questions, concerns, or accomplishments that arose during my study; positive feedback and constructive criticisms enabled me to adapt and establish the most success with my study. By incorporating

all these attributes into my action research, I consider myself to be a trustworthy researcher.

### **Summary**

Classroom environment has a major influence on students' learning and work habits. It is critically important for me to create a learning environment that is comfortable for my students. This study introduced new ways of implementing factors to create a positive learning atmosphere.

## My Story

### Through the Eyes of Miss Sergent

Wow, it's finally here! I have prepared extensively for this adventure I am about to travel on with my first graders. Excited, nervous, and overwhelmed are a few emotions I am experiencing as I press PLAY on the stereo. Breathe and remember, your main goal is to be the best teacher you can be while incorporating the best teaching practices, so all your first graders can succeed.

### What's The Noise?

As the students enter our first grade classroom, they become aware and curious when music is heard playing quietly in the background. Some feel comfortable in the classroom environment and walk over to examine the device through which this music is coming. Others proceed with their morning routine showing signs of curiosity. They engage by looking at the radio or staring at their neighbor as if to say, "What is going on?" Yet still all the students are unsure of how to react to this new implementation of "noise" in the classroom.

As I describe what will be happening for the next six months, many of the students become more interested. The students immediately ask if the

music will contain artists they enjoy listening to. Some students mention the pop artist Hannah Montana, while others indicate their interest in the radio station B104. As the students engage in small dialogue with each other, I begin to become excited as I observe the students' interests in different styles of music.

### **Exploring Space with Music**

As a way to expose my students to the different genres of music I would be playing, I explained a new form of movement called Exploring Space. This activity not only introduced them to the style of music we would be listening to that week, but it also helped build their comfort in our classroom environment. Within this activity, the students would move around the room quietly. They had a pace scale of 1 through 10 that I would adjust throughout their exploration. At the pace of 1, the students would move as if they were in slow motion. However at a pace 10, they would move quickly, but still stay cognizant of their surroundings.

Another attribute of exploring space was changing levels. The students would walk high on the tip of their toes and switch to the extreme of crawling on the floor. Also, I would instruct them to change direction as they were moving. This explanation would eliminate or lower any mimicking behaviors and increase independence.

Lastly, the students would be instructed to pause and imitate an object, color, action, and so on. This pausing and observing each other's motion helped develop vocabulary and its meaning. All the while, the students were subconsciously listening to our new genre of music in the background.

The first time I explained the rules and expectations for exploring space, the students' bodies were excited and fidgety. They were ready to get started. However, with first graders, I knew this would be a difficult activity to implement without any disruptions.

**Miss Sergent:** FIRST GRADE, PLEASE STAND AND PUSH YOUR CHAIRS IN. WE WILL NOW EXPLORE SPACE TO CLASSICAL MUSIC. FIRST, I WILL SHOW YOU WHAT I EXPECT WITH YOUR PACE, WHICH IS THE SAME AS SPEED, AND YOUR LEVELS, WHICH IS HOW TALL OR LOW YOU MAKE YOUR BODY. THEN YOU WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP YOUR OWN STYLE OF MOVEMENT. *Oh, I hope they all can control their behaviors throughout this activity. Will this be too much for first graders to handle?*

**Joe:** *Boy, I don't remember my brother telling me Miss Sergent did this in her class. When he had her two years ago, he said she did fun activities, but I never heard she lets us run around the room.*

**Miss Sergent:** WALK TO THE BEAT OF THE SONG. KEEP YOUR EYES ON ME FOR NOW, SO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN BY THE BEAT OR TEMPO OF THE SONG. *This is about the pace of 3.* LOOKS GOOD FIRST GRADE.

**Joe:** *Come on, this is too slow. Tell us to go at a 10. I want to run. Come on!*

**Miss Sergent:** JOE, PLEASE WALK TO THE BEAT OF THE MUSIC. NOW EVERYONE CHANGE YOUR DIRECTION. WATCH ME IF YOU ARE UNSURE OF WHAT I MEAN. *Good, everyone seems to understand. Please Joe I know you can do this. Who is he looking for?*

**Joe:** *Yes, now I can follow Paul. Where is he? Oh there he is. I have to run to catch him.*

**Miss Sergent:** JOE, THAT IS YOUR SECOND WARNING. ONE MORE AND YOU WILL NOT GET TO ENJOY EXPLORING SPACE. *Please control yourself. I know you can.*

**Joe:** *SORRY MISS SERGENT. Ok Joe, you have to control yourself. I am having such a good time with this I just cannot help it. I just want to run free with my buddies. Where are they? I see you Jimmy.*

**Miss Sergent:** WALK AT ABOUT A 6. LOOKS GREAT FIRST GRADE.

**Joe:** *6 that is running speed for me! GO!*

**Miss Sergent:** JOE THAT IS THREE TIMES. PLEASE SIT DOWN.

**Joe:** *WHAT DID I DO? Please do not cry. Just put your head down and your classmates will not know you are crying. It sounds like they are having so much fun. I am sorry Miss Sergent.*

Figure 1. Exploring space layered story.

This lack of self-control can be related to the impulses Vygotsky (1978) mentions that children face when at play. While children are in this state of play, imagination is created. However, with imagination can come spontaneous actions. Developmentally, first graders have not faced enough situations to understand there are certain consequences to their actions. As the study progressed, it was my goal to have all my first graders develop the ability to gain a sense of willpower.

### **Disney Connection**

Disney music was one of three genres of music implemented into our classroom environment. As I observed the students while Disney music was playing, I noticed an increase in social interactions (see Figure 2). Students were able to identify a certain song with a past movie they had seen.

Many of these interactions involved students who are often quiet and reserved. These interactions can be associated with the study conducted by Lum and Campbell (2007). These researchers studied how students have the ability to communicate through music. The students displayed this behavior when the song was of interest to them. In my case, the students were observed having a similar interest in the movie associated with the song.

Kyle, Samuel (Sam), and Bruce are ELL students who rarely speak in class. They are still building their English language and fear making mistakes when speaking. Disney music gave them the opportunity to discuss an issue they felt comfortable with. These songs encouraged a positive feeling, which in return produced engaged dialogue.

Even though these interactions were only a few moments long, the students were beginning to build relationships. At the same time, they were increasing their vocabulary in the English language.

However, the students were engaged in these interactions during instructional time. These mini-dialogues increased the off-task behaviors of Kyle, Samuel, and Bruce. These students became distracted with the task at hand and engulfed in their small conversations.

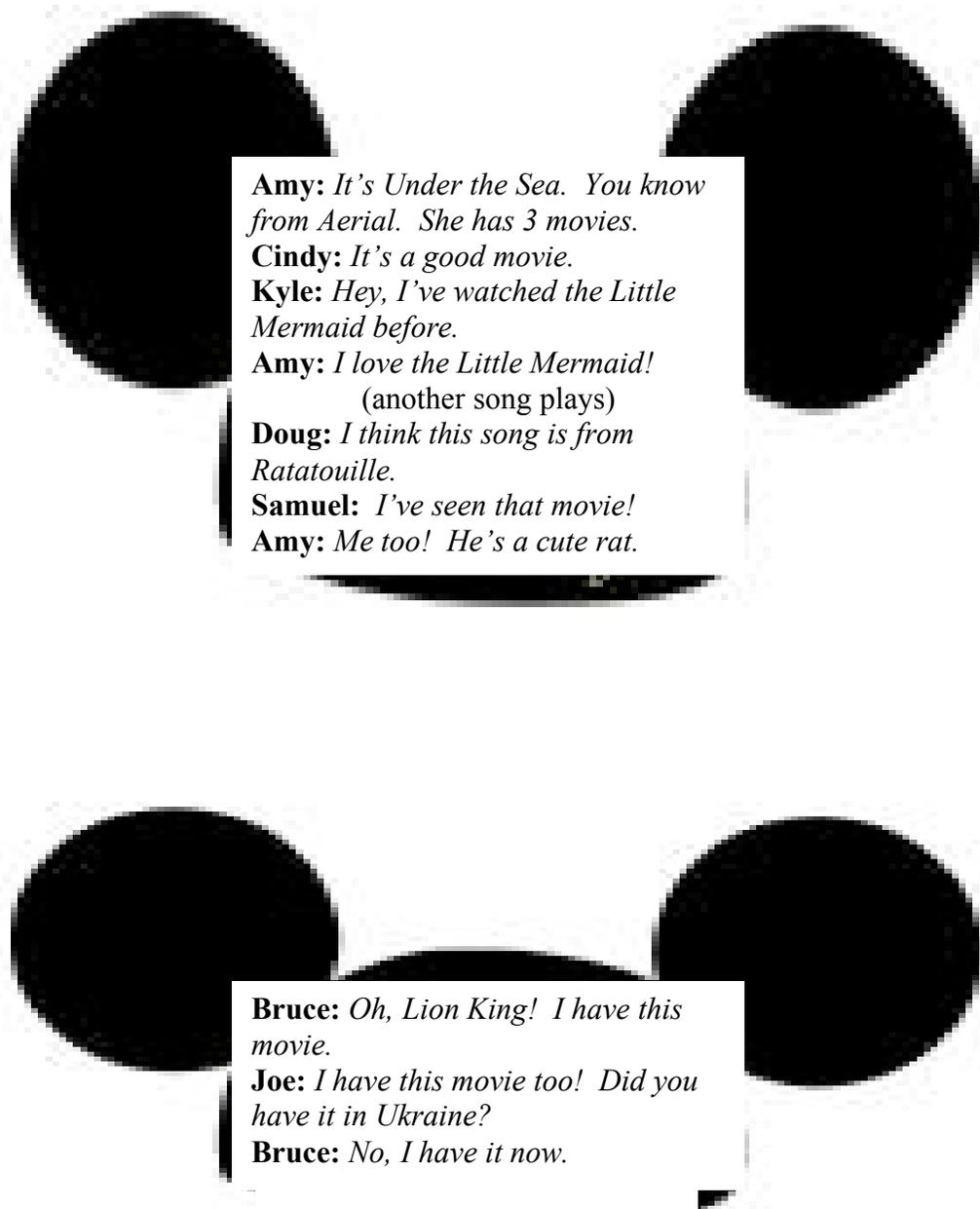


Figure 2. Disney real-life connections.

## **Math and Music**

In the primary grades, manipulatives are often used to ensure understanding in math. These hands-on curriculum enhancers often develop more on-task behaviors when students begin to implement them correctly. When combining manipulatives with background music, the students' behaviors and work habits were observed to have a positive effect.

**Jazzing with math.** Jazz is a genre of music that has a fast tempo. Many bold instruments, such as the saxophone and trumpet, can be triumphantly heard throughout a song.

As students were being observed, leadership qualities began to emerge. Some students demonstrated the ability to work independently, while others displayed problem-solving skills. The students exuded these qualities while participating in an Investigations math class.

The classroom was divided into stations. A group of four students were seated on the floor under a sign that read “Double Compare.” Students worked in pairs, facing each other, with a deck of dots cards in front of each child. You could hear the word “GO” and instantly each student would flip over two dot cards. The students would add up the total of dots on their cards. Whoever had the most dots would slap the ground and yell “Me!” This game encouraged the students to use their addition strategies that they have been taught thus far in math. A few strategies observed were: one-to-one corresponding, counting on, and using a number line.

**Lisa:** LET ME ORGANIZE MY PILE, SO WHEN I RUN OUT I AM READY TO START THE GAME AGAIN.

**Sharon:** *{Looking at Lisa organizing her pile of cards, starts to organize her pile, too.}* LISA I AM GOING TO ORGANIZE MINE TOO!

As I wandered around the room, I observed another group of students, who were engaged in the same card game. This group consisted of three students.

**Cindy:** ALL OF US HAVE THREE . . . *{Pausing and looking around to watch everyone count their cards.}* WAIT, SHE HAS FOUR. *{Pointing to another student.}*

The students engaged in eye contact for about 10 seconds, questioning what they should do.

**Nancy:** I’M SHUFFLING MY DECK OF CARDS. THEN WE CAN DEAL AGAIN.

The rest of the students followed Nancy’s behavior. They all shuffled their cards and dealt the cards again.

As I announced clean-up time, many different tasks were being completed at the same time. In an organized fashion, the workstations, with the manipulatives, were put in their appropriate places. Each child displayed a different duty that needed to be accomplished. Within a matter of minutes, all children were back in their seats ready to begin the next task.

*Figure 3. Dramatization of card games.*

The students demonstrated better organizational skills when working in a small group setting. They appeared to be more comfortable in their surroundings. It was as if each child was assigned a job, in order to get our classroom environment organized.

In math, jazz music had an incredibly positive influence on a challenging student in my classroom. Nate is a student who needs to work extra hard to accomplish many tasks presented to him. Nate has come to the conclusion that he will always be the last one to complete most assignments in language arts and math. He has received intervention through reading support, since the first week of school. I am currently advocating for Nate's educational placement, so that he can succeed throughout his educational career. As I continue to give Nate positive reinforcements, I begin to see little glimpses of hope and courage: hope to one day be the leader of our class, and courage to stand up and take on those leadership roles.

On one particular day Nate had his time to shine.

*There's the bell, time to leave daycare. I feel like I have been there all day and now I have to go to first grade and learn. Miss Sergent is such a nice teacher, but she works me so hard. She expects me to do things that are too hard. She says nice things to me that make me want to work hard, but I am not feeling smart today. I need to remember to stay in my seat, not talk, and, Wait! Where is my Diary of a Wimpy Kid book? Oh, no! As soon as I get in the room, I need to look for my book. And my glasses, look at my glasses, they are dirty, I need to clean them. Of course, I am the last one to get my things unpacked, but that's okay because I found my book and washed the smudges off my glasses.*

*Math time already . . . great here we go. Boy, I really do like that music playing. I think Miss Sergent said it was jazz. YEAH!!! We get to use white boards today. I love white boards. Oh, but that's right, we are doing joining. I am not good at this. Everyone always stares at me because I take so long. Today I will not be the last one done.*

*Miss Sergent wants me to make 9. 7 and 2 . . . 7, 8, 9. Yes, I have it. Hold up the board so Miss Sergent can see my right answer. Let me look around, does everyone have the right answer? Wait, I was not the last one done! Stay focused! Now she wants us to make 10. I can do that. 0 and 10 makes 10. I hope Miss Sergent sees this funny answer. I tricked her. Hold up your board Nate. WOW! I am the first one done. Let me sit up a little taller.*

*"You need to erase your board first before you write your next answer," I tell my classmates. That music sure does sound nice. I wonder if anyone else hears it. "This is fun math!" I hope Miss Sergent does more math like today.*

Figure 4. Nate's shadow log.

On this day, Nate displayed characteristics I had never seen from him before. His demeanor changed. The taller he sat, the more improved his handwriting became. As he became more engaged with the lesson, his behavior problems began to subside. Nate is often a student that demands much of my attention. With his improved work habits, I was able to spend more time observing other students rather than disciplining Nate.

The students developed independent working skills while engaged in these activities. They displayed implementation of strategies while working at math stations and developing their addition facts. Overall, the students seemed to excel while jazz music was quietly playing in the background.

**Classical math.** Incorporating classical music with math had its positive and negative outcomes. Classical music offers its listeners a calm and soothing experience. The tempo of the music implemented into my first grade classroom was slow and mellow. While this music was playing, following directions and student interactions increased, but poor work habits also increased.

As the students were being introduced to the plus sign and equals sign, they used white boards as the teaching tool so they could better understand the concept. A “wow” moment occurred during this

observation; all the students listened to the directions the first time. As a first grade teacher, I have become programmed to repeat myself two or three times when instructing. However, while the classical music was playing in the background and the students were busy at work, I asked them to clear their white boards. Everyone did it at the first time of me instructing them. This behavior continued throughout the lesson.

Another positive result observed was that all the students understood the concept of an addition sign and an equals sign. At the beginning, Douglas, who struggles in math, continued to have difficulty understanding the concepts. Through peer interaction and perseverance, Douglas began to develop an understanding of what a plus sign and equal sign stand for. Concluding the lesson, Douglas displayed a sense of accomplishment. He sat with confidence and had a smile on his face. I congratulated him on a job well done. His classmates noticed his enthusiasm and began to hug him and congratulate him, too. Hopefully, this interaction and feeling of success will leave a long lasting impression with Douglas.

The implementation of classical music led to a negative behavior observed. Many students demonstrated poor work habits. While creating our own addition flashcards, students were asked to work independently. As I was observing student work habits, small side conversations could be

heard. As these conversations continued, students began to focus less on their work. One student was observed cutting his flashcards randomly, instead of on the dotted line. When asked why his flashcards looked so sloppy, he could not answer.

Another student continued to forget to write his name on the back of the flashcards. This created an even bigger problem because his neighbors in the group accidentally grabbed some of his flashcards, thinking they were theirs. As the students counted their flashcards, they should have had 40 each. Instead, some students had 20, while others had 60. Now, instructional time was being wasted so we could organize flashcards throughout this group.

I concluded that classical music contributed positives and negatives when instructing math. During math, classical music did not have a strong influence on student work habits.

**Disney world of math.** When implementing Disney music into math I observed varying behaviors. The students continued to implement strategies to help them solve subtraction problems. Students were demonstrating how to use a number line to count back, while others were using counters to practice taking away.

An increase in social interactions was also observed. At first, these

interactions were categorized as, accountable talk. For example, while using snap cubes, students started working as a group to make a house. One student was building the door, while another was creating a chair. Another student was in charge of building a garage for the car. This collaboration and teamwork not only built social skills, but also increased their ability to work as a team.

However, at times, students' conversations would not be related to the curriculum. The familiarity to the Disney songs would remind students of their past experiences with that particular song. These real-life connections build future experiences, but often created a distraction while learning math. Discussion about families and friends were often overheard while Disney music was present.

The results of Disney music implemented with math varied day-to-day and song-to-song. The more familiar the song, the more off-task students' behaviors and discussions became. On the other hand, these social interactions helped build the students' vocabulary, friendships, and social skills.

### **Standing Ovation for Math and Music**

When math tests were given, a different genre of music would be playing in the background. The math test results varied when these

genres of music were implemented.

The first math test given had Disney music quietly playing in the background. At this time of the year, first graders were still developing their reading skills. In order to obtain success, I read aloud each problem and its directions to the class as a whole. I strongly advised the class to work at the same speed as I was reading the problems.

However, my students who typically master the concepts taught in math were observed working at a quick pace. This poor behavior in work habits resulted in careless errors. Even though a few students displayed poor work skills, the final outcome resulted in overwhelmingly high-test scores. Half of the class received 100%, while the rest varied from 97% to 80% (see Figure 5). The three lowest test scores were obtained by the three students who struggle daily in math. These “low” test scores still resulted that all the students tested at satisfactory levels in that content area, while Disney music played.

The next math assessment given had no music incorporated. Once again, I read the directions to each problem, so all the learners understood what the question was asking them to do. During this observation, the students continued to work at a quick pace. This style of behavior resulted in many skipped problems. The final grades consisted of a wide range of

scores (see Figure 6). A few students mastered the content and produced perfect work resulting in 100%. Other students could not implement strategies taught, which resulted in scores less than 79%.

As I analyzed these scores, I realized that my two students who succeed the most in math received an 89% and 82%. As a whole, the class did not implement the skills required to obtain mastery of the content taught. The curriculum continued to get more difficult, however, the students should have been developing how to use known information to solve or answer a question. I began to wonder if the “quiet” classroom had an influence on their test taking abilities.

Jazz music was incorporated into the classroom environment during the third math test. The observations of work habits throughout this assessment were wonderful. The students implemented strategies taught to them throughout the unit.

As the first graders were engaged, in order to accurately find the answers to addition problems, students independently made use of their number lines. This was one of many strategies demonstrated for them during the instruction on addition. With the completion of the tests, students were actively going back through their tests to double check their performance.

These positive work habits translated into proficient test scores (see Figure 7). The scores vary, but not as extreme as the results of the math tests with no music. The results with the implementation of Disney music had more students receiving 100% and no scores below 80%. Overall at this point, students were displaying a positive effect when background music was incorporated into the classroom environment.

The last math assessment had the influence of classical music in the atmosphere. Students possessed responsible work habits during this period of observation. Many students worked at an appropriate pace. Walking around the room, I noticed many students pointing to the directions as I was reading them aloud. Once again this habit created fewer skipped problems. As a result, they understood the impact that taking their time would have on any assessment or assignment.

On the other hand, once students completed their task, there was an increase in noise level. Prior to the test, they were instructed to get out a book and read quietly once they were finished. Many students engaged in side conversations, while only a few followed the instructed plan.

The final result of these math tests influenced with classical music was another that had a positive outcome. The students' grades varied from 100% to 80% (see Figure 8). More than three quarters of the class

received a grade above 90%.

All of the assessments that incorporated the use of background music resulted in test scores between 80% and 100%. When no music was implemented the students' test scores were between less than 70% and 100%. However, student work habits differed from assessment to assessment.

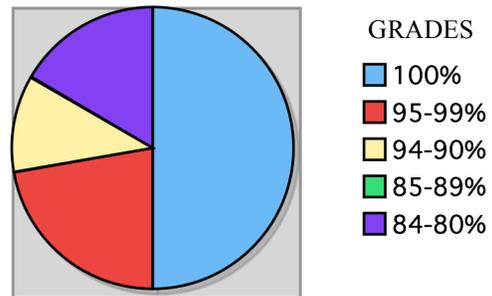


Figure 5. Math test scores with Disney music.

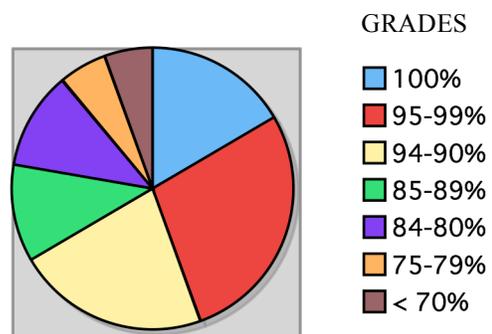


Figure 6. Math test scores with no music.

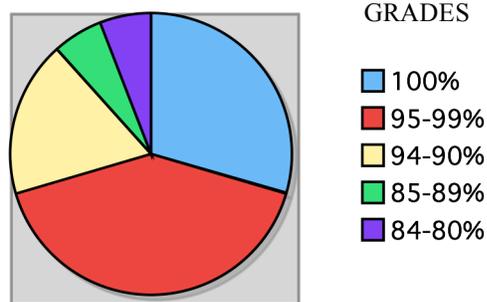


Figure 7. Math test scores with jazz music.

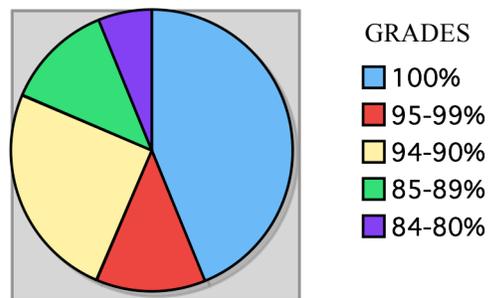


Figure 8. Math test scores with classical music.

### **Through the Eyes of Miss Sergent**

Hmmm... assessing first grade writing. How can I possibly observe the influence music has on their writing when they are still developing how to compose a sentence? Where do I start? How do I account for good writing as opposed to bad writing when they have never written before? Oh no, do not panic!

Listen to yourself. You can do this! You will develop your students into creative writers. You will explain to them the importance of writing down their thoughts. They will thrive from your energy and enthusiasm for writing. Then, they, too, will have the same motivation to become the best writers they can be.

Breathe and remember, your main goal is to be the best teacher you can be while incorporating the best teaching practices, so all your first graders can succeed.

### **Writing with Music**

As an educator, building a strong rapport with all of my students is a necessity. Every day, I make it a point to talk with each child individually, even if our engagement is only for a few moments. I inquire about what they plan to do after school or what they did the night before. This

curiosity of getting to know my students' lives inside and outside of school helped me to gain their trust.

As my class size continued to grow, this goal was becoming more and more difficult to accomplish. I began to question if there was a way I could complete content and inquire about my students at the same time. This is when journal writing came to mind. Students seem to be more actively engaged if they are writing about something that interests them. What could be a better topic that interests them than their own personal lives?

Journal writing about their weekend every Monday became a ritual in first grade. Students came into the classroom excited to write about the events of their weekend. As an extra incentive, five students' names would be pulled from the sticks jar. These five students would have the opportunity to read their entry aloud in the Author Chair. This activity developed their writing abilities as well as their speaking and listening skills.

However, one student never seemed to be interested in this activity. Samuel displayed the most frustration with composing a journal entry. He is a bright first grader, who possesses gifted qualities. Sam is a student who is extremely advanced in mathematics, but lacks almost all social

skills. When approached by other teachers, Sam often never spoke a word. Many times these behaviors were viewed as defiant. When an assignment in class was to write or draw, Samuel showed signs of not being interested. This behavior of not being engaged led Sam to act in off-task behaviors.

*Why does Miss Sergent always have that written on the board every Monday? I do not want to write about my weekend. I always do the same thing. Saturday... Chinese school. Sunday... church. I don't care about that music playing. It does not help me work any better. Why must she always play it?*

*Why can't we do math right now? I love math.*

*10 + 10 = 20. 20 + 20 = 40. 40 + 40 = 80. So that means half of 80 is 40 and 2 + 2 = 4.*

*3 6 9 12 15 18 21 24 27 30... that's the multiples of 3. I wonder if anyone else knows that?*

*HEY KYLE! DO YOU KNOW THE 3 TIMES TABLES?*

*Why is he ignoring me? What is he writing about?*

*Oh no, only five minutes left and I haven't written anything yet. Oh well, I don't like writing anyway. Ok, I went to church. Done!*

*5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90 95 100. I wonder if Miss Sergent will care that I have these numbers written all over my journal.*

*KYLE I DON'T WANT TO DRAW A PICTURE OF MY CHURCH. I am not a good drawer. Ok, maybe I will draw the roof to my church. Done! Back to my numbers.*

The following week

*Here we go again, writing. Now she wants us to write about what we can do. I think I will just throw my paper in the air and see what happens. She has that music playing again. It's like I always tell her, I work no different with the music on or off. But I know that I do not like music when I am sleeping. Every time she gives us those questions I write, I do not like music*

*at night. When will it be math?*

*I wonder what everyone else is writing. I see everyone is writing and drawing. Oh no Miss Sergent is coming over to me.*

*I know, I know there has to be something I can do. Miss Sergent is right, I can do math, but I don't want to write that.*

*2 4 8 16 32 64 128... I could write about numbers all day. What, time to turn in our papers? I haven't written anything yet. Oh no! Now I owe Miss Sergent my recess.*

The following week

*Great, another Monday to tell Miss Sergent what we did over the weekend. She knows I do the same thing every weekend Saturday... Chinese school and Sunday... church. But wait, this music playing sounds different than any other one she has played. Wow, jazz! But it is just music who cares.*

*But look at everyone. They are smiling and working. Look at Douglas and Brent, they are tapping their feet. I think everyone likes this music. Okay, so what did I do over the weekend? Over the weekend on Saturday I went to Chinese school. On Sunday, I went to church.*

*I am one of the first ones done. Good now I can work on my numbers. 7 14 21 28 35 42 49 56 63. Multiples of 7. What pattern should I write next and after that and after that?*

**Figure 9. Sam's shadow log.**

Even though Sam still continued to work on his numbers, he was able to work on completing the writing task first. Week after week, Sam would write about his trip to Chinese school on Saturday and church on Sunday. Sam's writing skills varied with each genre of music playing. The same work habits were demonstrated throughout the rest of my first grade class.

**Writing results.** After completing the first half of my study, I evaluated the students' journal writing (see Figure 10). The most important finding was that only four students received an Outstanding or above Satisfactory when no music was playing. Many students did not write complete sentences. There were journal entries that had no illustration to correlate with their writing. Most of all, their work was completed sloppily. As a result, almost half of the class produced work that was an S-.

When Disney music was implemented, the most Outstanding work was accomplished. However, on the other hand, Disney music also produced many papers resulting in an S-.

Overall, journal writing with the implementation of jazz music had the best influence on students' cumulative results. All the students received a grade of S or better. This result means that all the students had at least

one complete sentence telling about what they did over the weekend. Also, they incorporated a detailed picture that better elaborated on what they wrote about.

The same evaluation was conducted with journal writing during the second half of the study (see Figure 11). The criterion to receive the grade of an O or S+ had become more difficult. The students are now expected to write three complete sentences. Ideally, each student should have written an interesting beginning sentence, a detail sentence in the middle, and a concluding sentence to end. In addition, a detailed illustration was required to receive an Outstanding.

As the expectations rose, so did the amount of grades below Satisfactory. When classical and jazz music were implemented, no child received a grade of not satisfactory (N). To some degree, each child attempted to write one complete sentence with an illustration. However, with the incorporation of Disney music or no background music, a few first graders displayed poor writing skills. There were just three students who produced an N while these genres of music were playing. Their journal entries consisted of no complete sentences or poor conventions. They were observed using lowercase letters to start their sentences. There was an increase in the use of incorrect ending marks. These writing

conventions have been taught throughout language arts since the start of the study.

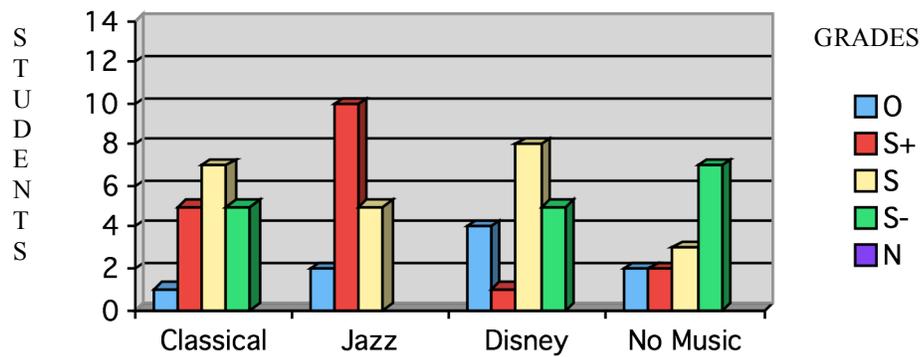


Figure 10. Journal writing results 1<sup>st</sup> half of study.

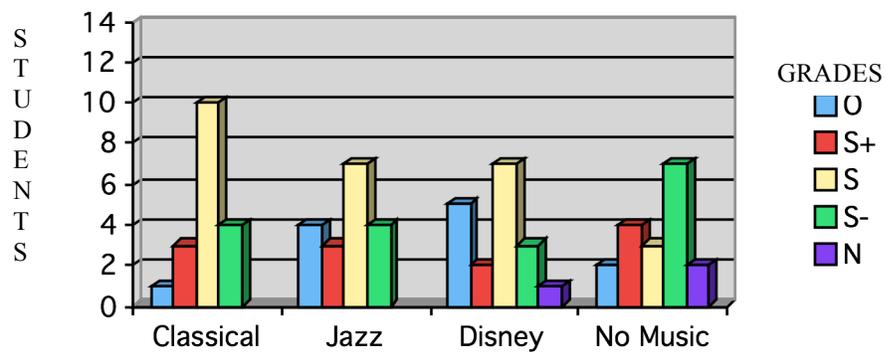


Figure 11. Journal writing results 2<sup>nd</sup> half of study.

### **How Does It Make You Feel?**

Initially, when the classroom environment was altered with background music, the students, being of such a young age, carried on with their day demonstrating rote behaviors. As my action research study progressed, my students' feelings towards the different genres of music began to develop. To fully understand how my students felt about the different genres of music, I conducted individual surveys.

The first section of the survey required my students to color in a face that resembled the way the different types of music incorporated into our classroom made them feel (see Table 1). Many of my students enjoyed this alteration in the classroom routine. On every survey, one particular student indicated that the music does not have an influence on the way he feels.

Overall, this first survey made me realize that the students did appreciate the change in the classroom environment. I was curious to see how their feelings would change once the novelty of background music in the classroom wore off.

Table 1

*Music Survey*

<b>Type of Music</b>			
	<b>Happy</b>	<b>No feeling</b>	<b>Sad</b>
<b>Classical</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Jazz</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Disney</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

*Note.* First half of study

The same student surveys were conducted after the second half of the study (see Table 2). At this point, the students became more aware of which sounds went with which genre of music. They were better able to associate a feeling with a genre of music. In addition to surveying their feelings with music, I surveyed my students on how they felt when no music was playing in the classroom.

I was amazed to see that no student felt sad when music was altered into our classroom. However, seven students recalled sadness when no music was implemented. In comparison to the survey conducted in the first half of the study, there was an increase in the number of students who implied they felt no change when different genres were playing. This “ordinary” feeling was felt by half of the class when there was no music. The students demonstrated strong feelings towards music incorporated into their first grade classroom.

Table 2

*Music Survey*

<b>Type of Music</b>			
	<b>Happy</b>	<b>No feeling</b>	<b>Sad</b>
<b>Classical</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Jazz</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Disney</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>No music</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>

Note. Second half of study

### **What Makes Me Work Better?**

As the study was being conducted, students were individually interviewed about whether or not they felt the music affected their classroom work. These interviews did not start to occur until half way through the study. This time period gave the students the chance to hear each genre of music for a period of time and allow them to adapt to the unfamiliar classroom environment alteration.

The students responded to the same question about work; however, each time the question was altered, it was associated with a different genre of music (see Figures 12, 13, & 14). Also, I inquired about the influence no music had on their work (see Figure 15).

The students' responses indicated that they felt they had worked better while music was playing in the classroom. Many students indicated that the different genres of music helped them concentrate while working. The comment, "It helped my brain work better" was a reoccurring response throughout all the genres of music. The positive comments far outweighed the negative when associating the "goodness" of their work, while background music was implemented.

When associating their work with no music incorporated, the negative comments were more apparent. The students described their work as being “normal.” They indicated that their brain did not work as well without the music playing. Overall, there was a negative connection with completed work and no background music.

The students made a connection with music and high-quality work. They associated positive feelings and diligent work habits when music is incorporated. Overall, the students believed that they produced the best work when music was playing quietly in the classroom.

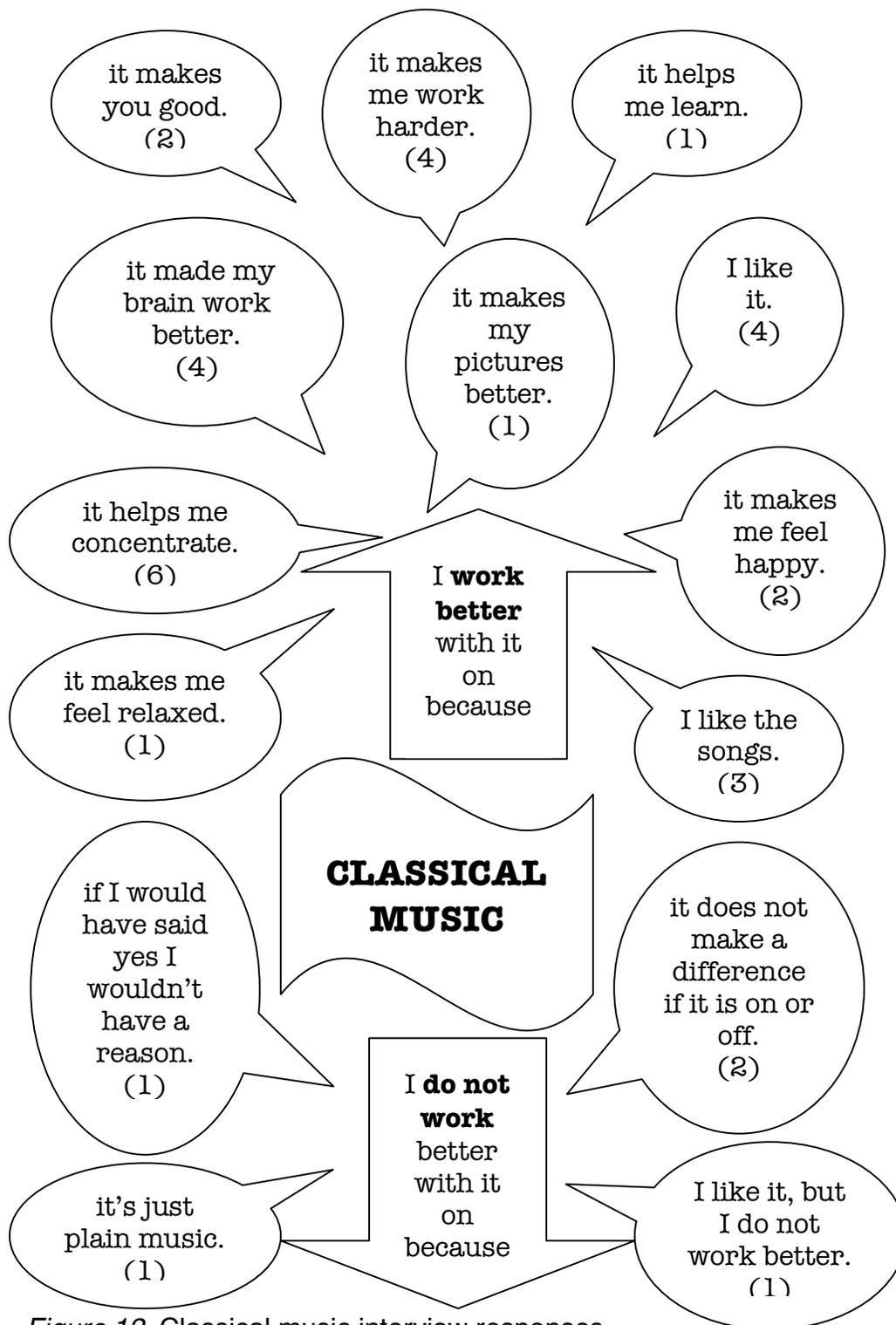


Figure 12. Classical music interview responses.

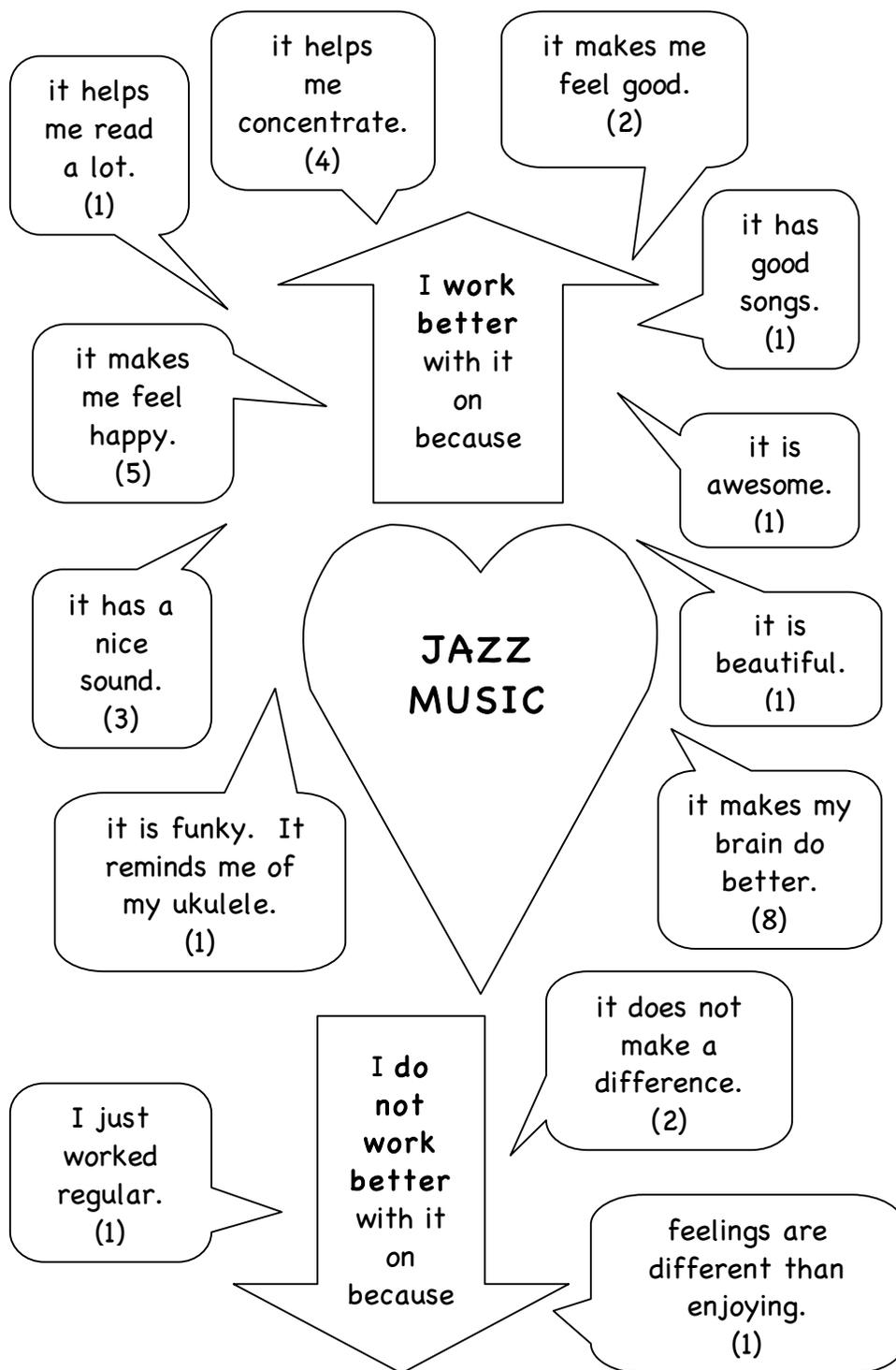


Figure 13. Jazz music interview responses.

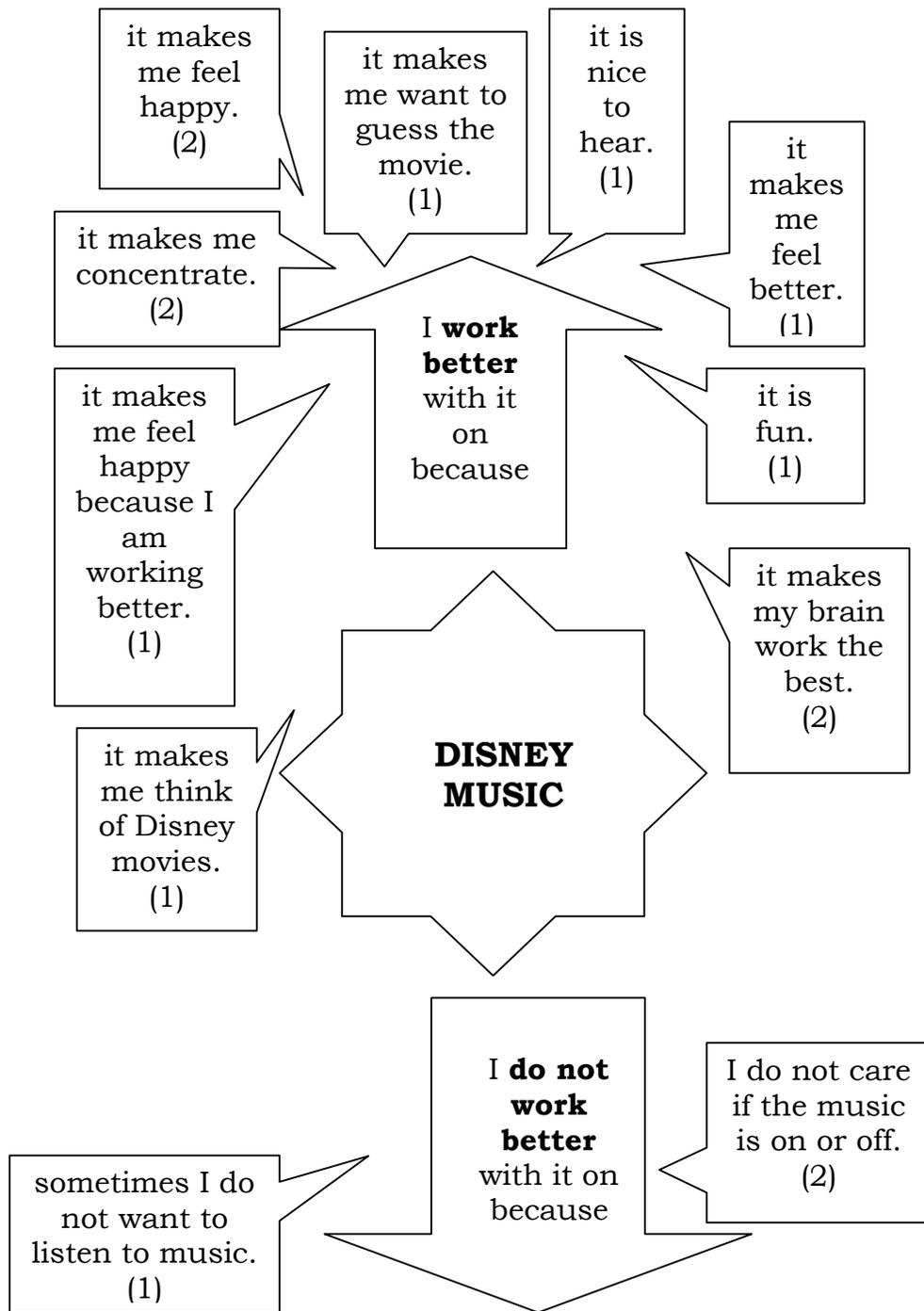


Figure 14. Disney music interview responses.

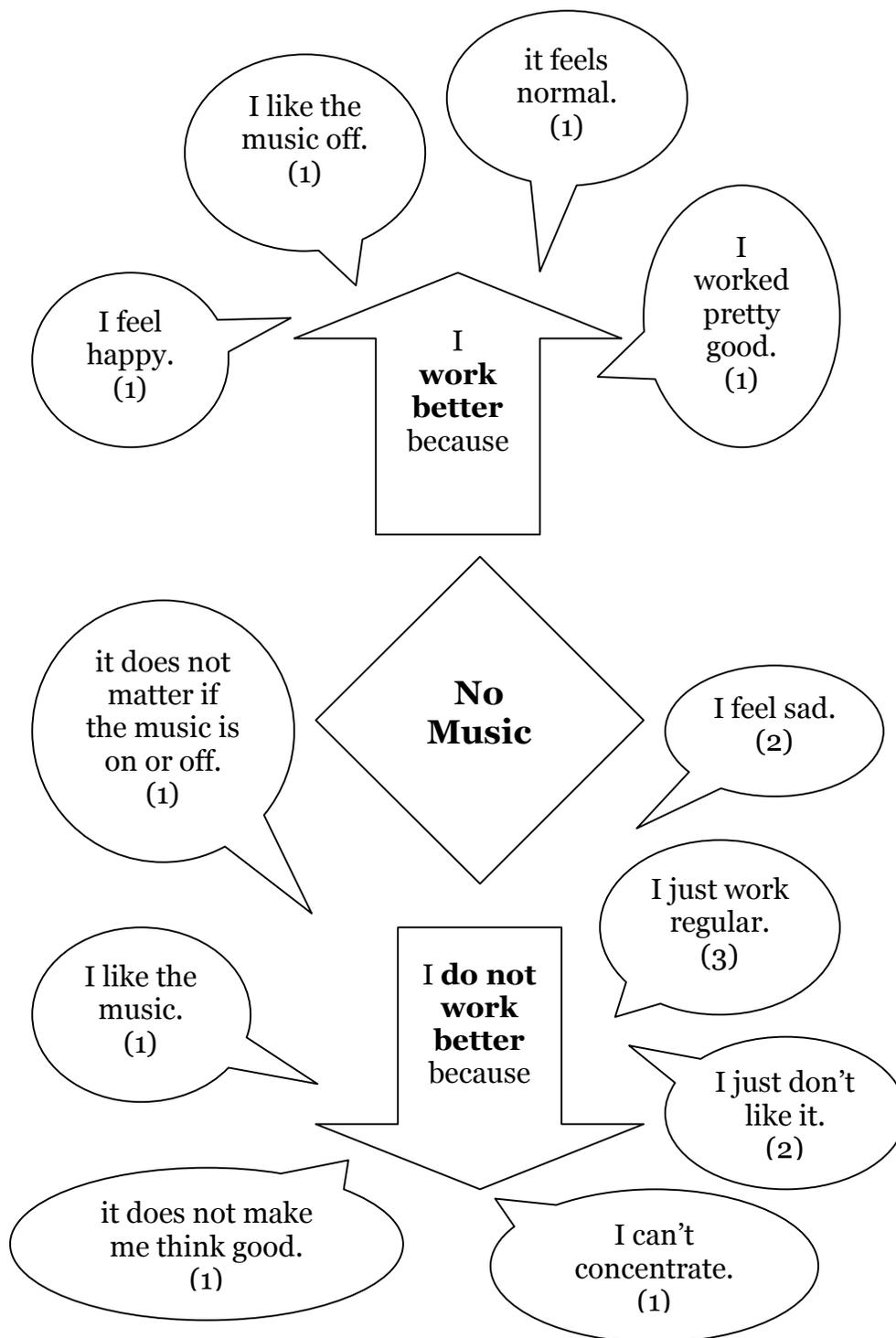


Figure 15. No music interview responses.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Introduction**

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), data analysis is a systematic process of searching and arranging field logs, student work, surveys, and interviews to increase understanding. It enables the researcher to have the ability to present this understanding and findings to others.

Analysis of the data collected throughout this action research occurred during and after the study. Within the field log, I assigned codes to the observations, reflections, student work, surveys, and interview data. I conducted a mid-study memo to reflect and analyze data gathered to that point. Reflecting on theories from educational philosophers was another method I used to analyze the data. Then I organized the data by categorizing them into codes and bins. Finally, I implemented my analyzed data into literary devices, which illustrated my data in an organized fashion.

### **Analysis During Data Collection**

“Analysis is not the last phase in the research process; it is concurrent with data collection or cyclic (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997, p. 163).

**Field log analysis.** The most consistent form of data collected was

the observational field log. Daily observations of students' behaviors, work habits, and interactions were conducted, while the different genres of music were incorporated. Concluding each observation, my personal reflections were added to ensure a more personal insight with all observations that occurred during the study.

**Coding analysis.** According to Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997), coding occurs when the researcher reads and rereads data, and then provides that section with a label. These labels give that portion of data meaning. As I read through the field log, labels, also known as codes, were noted and associated with varying situations. As I was interpreting the field log, the codes started forming patterns. As the study grew, these patterns indicated themes that were reoccurring throughout the classroom.

**Student work analysis.** Student work was another form of data that was analyzed during my study. Journal writing was collected daily and analyzed to determine whether the music had an effect on their work. The amount of complete sentences and quality of detail in the illustrations, each influenced the final analysis.

Math activities and tests were also collected and evaluated. The math scores reflected the positive or negative effects the music had, if any, on student work.

**Survey and interview analysis.** Surveys were conducted after each genre of music was implemented. Based on a happy face, neutral face, and sad face, students were required to answer how the music made them feel while they were working. My analysis of the data reflected the influence of music on students' moods.

Individual interviews were conducted throughout the study. Student answers were categorized based on the genre of music that they enjoyed listening to the most.

**Methodological memo.** A mid-year re-read of my field log was completed. I analyzed the amount of student work collected with each genre of music. The amount of surveys and interviews conducted were totaled and analyzed. Throughout the margins of my field log, I coded all the data gathered. This mid-study memo formatted a "blueprint" of what data have been collected and what additional data still needed to be gathered.

### **Analysis of Educational Philosophers**

In addition to maintaining an organized field log, I read about and reflected upon educational philosophers. The influential philosophers include Delpit and Dowdy (2002), Dewey (1997/1938), Freire (2003/1970), and Vygotsky(1978). I selected and analyzed quotes that were beneficial

to my study. I wrote reflective memos to create a connection between my study conducted in first grade and the philosophy of education.

### **Analysis After Data Collection**

According to Bogdan and Biklin (1998), all the data gathered up to this point is “rambling pages of data” (p. 157). Now, it was time to transfer those data into the final project, my thesis.

**Field log analysis.** After completing the data collection, I re-read the field log. I reflected upon all observations, student work, surveys, and interviews. Throughout the margins, I incorporated codes.

**Student work analysis.** I gathered and analyzed student work. In order to display the effects each genre of music had on student writing, I transferred journal writing data into a bar graph. I configured math tests into pie charts. These visualizations displayed what influence each genre had on student learning.

**Survey and interview analysis.** At the conclusion of every genre, I conducted student surveys and interviews. To demonstrate the impact of each genre, I compiled the survey answers and created tables. I analyzed and displayed the interview answers in pastiches throughout the thesis.

**Bin and theme analysis.** After completing the codes throughout the field log, I gathered the words into groups of similar topics. These groups

are what Ely et al. (1997) refers to as the “initial rough sort” (p. 162). With many replacements and transfers, I formed theme statements from these groups. These statements formulate the overall findings of my study.

**Literary devices.** Once all the data were analyzed, I transferred them into literary devices. These visual displays allow the reader to better understand the findings by looking at a graph, table, or pastiche.

### **Summary**

I constantly conducted analysis of data as my action research study was occurring in the classroom. This behavior of organizing, reflecting, categorizing, and labeling allowed me to have a better understanding of my findings. It increased my ability to explain my study to others.

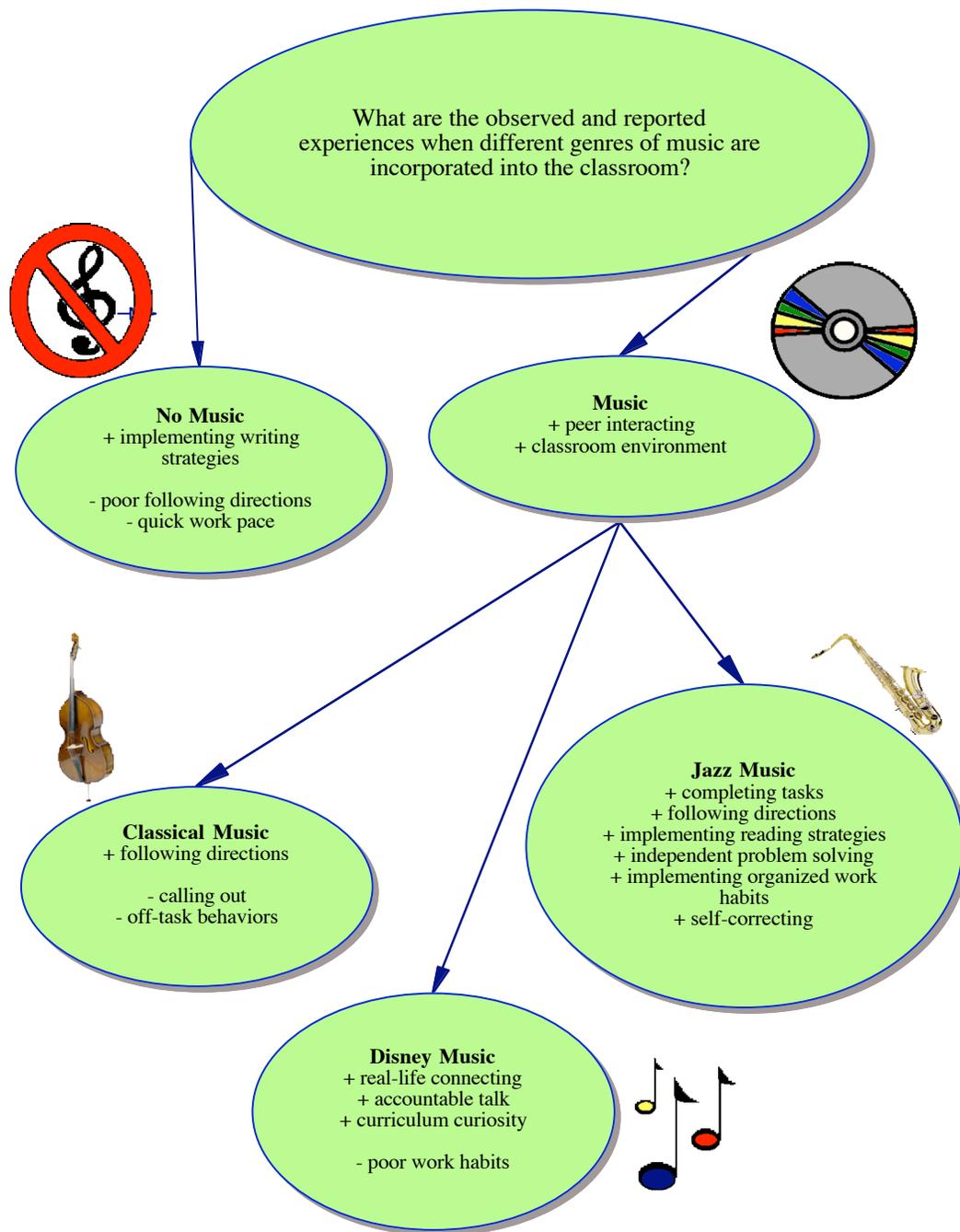


Figure 16. Graphic organizer of codes and bins.

## Findings

### Theme Statements

**When any genre of music was playing, positive peer interactions increased. These interactions produced a learning-enriched classroom environment.**

Students engaged in positive interactions with their classmates when any genre of music was playing. Students were positively reinforcing one another. The students were observed saying compliments to each other about their quality of work. These positive comments developed a feeling of care for all students involved. The students giving the compliments took on the role of leader. This role helped develop independent qualities that were implemented in all academic areas. The student receiving the compliments established pride in his or her work. This feeling could influence that child's future work habits. Noddings (2007) believes since these students developed this feeling of care, now they can strive for success.

If a child displayed anxiety or frustration, a classmate would intervene and engage in age appropriate dialogue. They would communicate with each other until they both had complete understanding of the problem. The students were observed developing their independent

problem-solving skills.

When different genres of music were playing, the communication between ELL students and non-language learners increased. The students became curious about what each other was creating, reading, or writing. This interaction reinforced understanding through explanation. The ELL students are establishing confidence when speaking. As a whole, the classmates are developing friendships. These interactions demonstrate the power music has on social settings. Batt-Rawden and DeNora (2005) agree; music is extremely influential.

Whether the music was classical, jazz, or Disney, the students displayed ease when communicating and interacting with one another. This behavior of low anxiety created a pleasant classroom environment. Giles (1991) agrees that music can provide this style of environment. The students produced the best work when given an environment they felt confident and comfortable in.

**When classical music was playing, following directions increased, but calling out and off-task behaviors were observed.**

During my study, students were exposed to classical music. Students were observed starting tasks when asked only one time. In math, students were provided with many different manipulatives to use in

order to better their understanding. Whether the students were instructed to use snap cubes, counters, or whiteboards, many were observed following directions of how to apply the appropriate manipulative for the most suitable math concept.

In language arts, the students were frequently asked to make corrections on Daily Oral Language sentences and write in their journals. When instructing them on the expected outcomes, many students followed the expectations that were set for them. They were often observed being good listeners while receiving the directions.

However, as students were working on their projects and assignments, I observed students calling out often. This behavior was noticed throughout math and language arts. These social reactions can be associated with Dewey's (1997/1938) description of students being naturally social. Many students were observed calling out to get my attention or the attention of their classmates. Our classroom is "four-inch voice" friendly, but the students would be observed screaming across the room. This calling out also referred to the students speaking without raising their hands. Many students were observed calling out the answers to problems being discussed. This style of behavior during classical music contradicts the findings presented by Dinsmore (2003). Dinsmore

believes students should display more on-task behaviors when background music is implemented.

Another off-task behavior I observed was that many students did not start their work until they were prompted more than two times. My repeated redirection with a few students created defiant situations, which lead to uninterested behaviors toward the curriculum. The students became preoccupied with unsharpened pencils, their neighbor's work, and other areas disconnected to what was being taught. Ultimately, these students were not engaged, developing, or learning.

**When Disney music was playing, students made real-life connections.**

The first graders had the ability to make many real-life connections with the Disney music playing. Some students made connections with the vacations they traveled on to Disney World. Other students were able to make a connection with a song and its correlating movie. Knobloch (2003) agrees that media contributes a strong influence on students' past experiences.

These real-life connections led the students to develop conversations with their classmates about personal interests. These musical conversations, like Lum and Campbell (2007) researched, gave my ELL

students the opportunity to engage in discussion with friends about items outside of school. ELL students had the opportunity to speak with a low level of anxiety about an issue they had interest in. These stress free situations create experiences students can value. This value will be connected with Disney music.

**When Disney music was playing, students engaged in accountable talk and became curious about curriculum. However, the students displayed poor work habits.**

While listening to students' dialogue with the implementation of Disney music, I heard talk about the curriculum. The accountable talk varied from student to student. Often, I observed one student assisting another student to the correct page and problem. Also, I heard students explaining to each other how they came up with their answers. This scaffolding among the students led to a better understanding of the curriculum being taught. Davidson and Powell (1986) agree that these on-task behaviors will enhance the overall classroom lessons. When students have the opportunity to truly understand the curriculum, they become interested and engaged in the content. This allows less time for off-task behaviors.

On the other hand, some students became too occupied in their

conversations about their past experiences. This engagement in conversation distracted them from the assignment or activity they were currently working on. This distracted behavior influenced students to concentrate less on creating beautiful work. The students started to display poor work habits.

Students were observed completing sloppy work. They were not cutting out papers on the lines or coloring within the lines. Handwriting is officially taught for the first time in first grade, so I am critical about neat handwriting. Students were not using their best penmanship. The implementation of Disney music had a negative influence on the first graders' work habits.

**When jazz music was playing, students exhibited diligent work habits.**

Jazz music created the best working environment in my first grade classroom. When jazz music was implemented, the majority of first graders completed the work and projects assigned to them. The students were observed following directions. These directions varied from being good listeners to reading the directions on an activity and completing it correctly.

During writing, many students were observed implementing

strategies taught to them. Orally, I heard students sounding out beginning and ending sounds of words. They were sounding out chunks and blends that have been incorporated into their vocabulary. Even though the students are continuing to develop these strategies, the students used them to the best of their ability to help them become more creative writers.

The students displayed a better understanding of what it means to be independent learners. When jazz music was playing, students developed skills that enabled them to produce work that could be completed independently. Students were observed gathering any additional materials needed for the project or activity assigned. They became more comfortable in their surroundings. Greene (2007) agrees that the environment in which a student learns has an influence on the work they produce.

Independently, students began sharpening their pencils to produce the best work. Dewey (1997/1938) indicates that the better a student understands their classroom space, the more worthwhile their educational experiences will be. Ultimately, this initiated the most valuable independent task students were observed performing. They began to ask classmates about any questions they might have from content previously taught. With the students implementing all these independent skills, it

allowed for more instructional time with students.

While developing these independent problem-solving skills, students began to demonstrate more organized work habits. Batt-Rawden and DeNora (2005) believe students will learn to self-manage in situations during school if music is implemented. Students started to self-correct errors they noticed in their work. They began to exude a sense of pride in what they were completing. They wanted their independent work to be of the best quality. At that time, I realized my study was achieving the ultimate goal; providing the best education possible for my students.

**When no music was playing in the classroom, students implemented writing strategies, but displayed poor following directions and worked at a fast pace.**

The students produced grammatically correct writing assignments when no music was playing. Many students developed how to incorporate capitals and correct ending marks into complete sentences. Students were observed implementing more detailed sentences in paragraphs written.

However, while I instructed the class on how to use these writing techniques, they demonstrated understanding, but with poor following directions. Many students would need to redo assignments because

certain criteria were not met. This could have been a result of the quickness in their work. Students were observed completing their assignments quicker, but with more errors.

### **Summary**

Overall, writing achievement was greater when music was incorporated into the classroom environment. When background music was playing, the first graders produced more creative and grammatically correct journal entries than when no music was playing. During journal writing, behaviorally the students consistently displayed on-task behaviors whether music was playing or not playing. At times, the familiar Disney songs would influence off-task conversations, which led to poor work habits. However, these behaviors were observed far fewer than on-task behaviors.

During math, students' were observed demonstrating on-task behaviors most frequently when jazz music was playing. The most astonishing finding was the increase in the amount of students who demonstrated a better understanding of math material taught when any genre of background music was implemented. The students obtained greater achievement when background music was playing than when no music was playing. With the influence of background music in the

classroom, student achievement increased in both writing and math.



## ACROSTIC ACCOUNTS



*Curious at first*

*Loved by few*

*Anxiety created*

*Self-correcting observed*

*Social interactions*

*Inappropriate behaviors*

*Calling out*

*Apprehensive*

*Little interest*

**Delighted**

**I**nteractions increased

**S**loppy work habits

**N**oisy environment

**E**very one connected to life

**Y**ou hear accountable talk

**J**OLTED ALL STUDENT INTEREST

**A**CCOUNTABLE WORK HABITS

**Z**IP GET RIGHT TO WORK

**B**UZZ IN THE AIR... WE LOVE THIS MUSIC



Figure 17. Acrostic accounts.

### **Next Steps**

Looking back on this whole experience, I realize the major influence background music had on my students' learning. Different genres of music affected each student's work habits and behaviors differently. However, the one area of my study that stayed consistent with much of the first graders was the influence the background music had on the students' performances on math tests.

I am curious to see the results if background music were played throughout all academic tests. Weekly spelling tests are aligned in the curriculum for first grade. These tests assess students' ability to spell different vowel sounds, chunks, and blends. When implementing these different genres of music into math, it helped students enhance their understanding of the concepts taught. Could it have the same effect on testing for phonemic awareness and vocabulary development?

Also, reading comprehension is an area strongly assessed in first grade. With the implementation of background music, Towell (2000) believes students can establish a mood and tone for the story being read. Will this implementation of music allow students to activate information taught throughout a certain book?

In the future, if I have the opportunity to move to third, fourth, or fifth

grade, I would love to see the effects background music has on PSSA testing. With a test of this magnitude, it creates a high level of anxiety for all students involved. So much of education today is focused on test scores. Students and teachers feel overwhelmed by the expectations for high-test scores. Teachers' classroom environment could be altered with background music to enhance a more comfortable atmosphere. Could playing different genres of background music be the answer to all these test score questions?

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## Appendix A



July 13, 2009

Nishida Kim Sergent

Dear Nishida Kim Sergent:

The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board has accepted your proposal: "Class Meetings: The Effects of Background Music." Given the materials submitted, your proposal received an expedited review. A copy of your proposal will remain with the HSIRB Chair.

The committee recommends, however, that you proofread your Informed Consent letters carefully as they contain a few grammatical errors.

Please note that if you intend on venturing into other topics than the ones indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB about what those topics will be.

Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this letter, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation.

This letter has been sent to you through U.S. Mail and e-mail. Please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone (610-861-1379) or through e-mail ([browerg@moravian.edu](mailto:browerg@moravian.edu)) should you have any questions about the committee's requests.

George Brower  
Chair, Human Subjects Internal Review Board  
Moravian College

## Appendix B

### Principal Consent Form

August 30, 2009

Dear

Currently, I am completing a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. My courses have enabled me to continue to learn the most effective teaching methods to implement in my classroom. An action research study is one of the requirements of this program. My study will take place from September 1, 2009 until December 24, 2009. Throughout these first two quarters, I will be focusing my research on the effects of background music on student learning and behavior. I anticipate that all of my students will benefit from participating in this study by becoming more on-task learners in a comfortable classroom environment.

As part of my study, students will be observed while background music is incorporated. I will focus on their behaviors while working in both language arts and math. I will collect data on both achievement and effort demonstrated in journal writing. Furthermore, students will provide their own thoughts and ideas on background music through surveys and one-on-one interviews. I look forward to gaining new insights about the positive impact of background music in the classroom from your child's thoughts and reflections.

Participation in my classroom research study is voluntary and will not affect the child's grade. A student may choose not to participate in this study or may withdraw at anytime without penalty. If that is the case, I will not use any information pertaining to that child in my study. Students who might be distracted by the music, as well as students who have not returned consent forms, will still be able participate in regular classroom activities but without background music. Only students who have returned informed consent forms will be required to perform classroom activities with background music.

All the data collected from this study will be confidential. Your child's name will not appear in any written report or publication of this study. All research materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

We welcome questions about this research at any time. Any questions you have can be directed to me, Nishida Sergent or to my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Zales, Education Department, Moravian College, 610-625-7958, [crzales@moravian.edu](mailto:crzales@moravian.edu).

Thank you for your help in completing my journey.

Sincerely,

Miss Nishida Sergent

## Appendix C

### Parent Consent Form

August 30, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Currently, I am completing a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. My courses have enabled me to continue to learn the most effective teaching methods to implement in my classroom. An action research study is one of the requirements of this program. The first two quarters, I will be focusing my research on the effects background music has on student learning and behavior. I anticipate that all of my students will benefit from participating in this study, by becoming more on-task learners in a comfortable classroom environment.

As part of my study, students will be observed while background music is incorporated. I will focus on their behaviors while working in both language arts and math. I will collect data on achievement and effort put forth in journal writing. Students will provide their own thoughts and ideas on background music through surveys and one-on-one interviews. I anticipate that implementing background into everyday lessons will lead to more on-task behaviors. The study will take place from September 1, 2009 until December 24, 2009.

All the children in my classroom will continue to be involved as I employ this new implementation of background music; however, participation in my classroom research study is voluntary and will not affect the child's grade. A student may choose not to participate in this study or may withdraw at anytime without penalty. If that is the case, I will not use any information pertaining to your child in my study. For those who might be distracted by the music and those who have not returned consent forms may participate in classroom activities without background music. Only students who have returned informed consent forms will be required to perform classroom activities with background music.

All the data collected from this study will be confidential. Your child's name will not appear in any written report or publication of this study. All research materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

We welcome questions about this research at any time. Any questions you have can be directed to me, Nishida Sergent, or to my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Zales, Education Department, Moravian College, 610-625-7958, [crzales@moravian.edu](mailto:crzales@moravian.edu). Any additional questions, you may contact the school principal.

Thank you for your help in completing my journey.

Sincerely,  
Miss Nishida Sergent

Appendix D

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can

Appendix E



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The Music

How did the music make you feel?



Did you enjoy this type of music? (Circle one)

YES

NO

Do you think you worked better with the music on?

HOW?

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## Appendix G

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### One-on-One Interview

1. Do you like when music is playing?
2. If the answer if no, why?
3. What type of music do you like?  
Classical, jazz, or Disney
4. If you could pick would you want music or no music?
5. How does jazz music make you feel?
6. How does classical music make you feel?
7. How do the Disney songs make you feel?
8. Do you feel comfortable in our classroom?
9. What makes you feel comfortable?