



Back to Basics: Singing Games and Dances for the Elementary Music Classroom

presented by
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February 18, 2022 at 9:00 AM
CASMEC 2022 Fresno, CA

The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) believes all young children “have the right to a musical childhood that includes play-based, developmentally appropriate musical engagement that is responsive to gender, ability, and culture, and provided, guided, or supplemented by a professional early childhood music educator.”

Considerations

- ♪ Play Party Games & Dances are in integral part to children’s musical learning
- ♪ Games that are age and grade appropriate
- ♪ Songs & Dances that are relatable
- ♪ Games and Dances are not limited to younger grades

Equipment/Materials

- ♪ Space- even if you push into classrooms you can still make space to do some games
 - consider going outside or using the gym/cafeteria if available
 - don’t use limited space as a reason not do games & dances
- ♪ Sound- an adequate sound system for dance music
- ♪ Materials- materials for games are easy and often do not cost anything. When possible use materials/items that are authentic to the game and origin
 - save items to use in games (yes, I am advocating for being a pack rat!)
- ♪ Practice- this is self-explanatory





♪ Share- share new games or dances with your colleagues at district PD days. Often times games that we play with certain songs are not written in stone. Many folk songs do not have specific game that was passed down but at some point a game was attached to it. Do the research to make sure it is not in opposition of the intent of the song or culture. Those that do have a specific game, authenticity is best. Sometime, however, we do need to ‘tweak’ it to make it accessible to all students.

Today’s Session

Bluebird- Simple game/dance perfect for K-beginning of 2nd grade. The class joins hands and ‘raises’ the windows. One bluebird flies in and out until the words ‘take a little partner’. The bluebird chooses a partner and ‘hops in the garden’. The song continues and now two bluebirds join hands and fly in and out of the windows. At ‘take a little partner’ they both find a new partner and ‘hop in the garden.’ The song starts again and continues with four bluebirds and repeats until all are bluebirds or time runs out.

My Paddle- Great song for 3rd or 4th grade. Although the song is not an authentic Seneca Nation song, the rock passing game is authentic. I also insert a question about the *number of different* rocks passing *through* their hands and it makes the students think! The song itself did not have a game and many teachers will use this with a partner song (Land of the Silver Birch).

The Troika- Dance from Russia. This is an old cultural dance that includes a trio; two women and one man. The term troika means ‘three horses’ and the steps are meant to replicate that of horses. The exact origin in Russia is unknown due to changing boundaries of old Russia and present day Russia. This is a social dance and the confines of two women and one man have been dropped to groups of three. This dance is quite involved and best for 5th and 6th grade. The dance steps done today are basic and taken from Phyllis S. Weikart’s book *Teaching Movement & Dance A Sequential Approach to Rhythmic Movement* (6th Edition).

The Cupid Shuffle- most of the steps are embedded in the lyrics of the song. This dance however, is one of those that gets ‘tweaked’ depending on the age and community who is dancing. It is also well-known and most of not all students 2nd -6th grade (even M.S. and H.S students) know the dance. A link to the music video is here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h24_zoqu4_Q

Ideas/ Take-Aways

- ♪ Games and Dances are fun! Their place in the elementary general music classroom is a MUST!
- ♪ Planning ahead and incorporating moments for students to play will pay off in dividends!
- ♪ Variations? Share? Questions?

THANK YOU FOR COMING AND DON’T FORGET TO PLAY & DANCE!

