

**Authentic Integration of “Popular Music” in the Elementary Music Classroom:  
Enhancing our Curriculum by using the Music and Learning Opportunities found within Popular Music**  
California Music Educators Conference  
February 3, 2024 – Sacramento, CA  
**Activity Handout**

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## **I. Student Created Playlists:**

### **Ask students what their favorite song is/ what music they like**

- Look for song titles, artists, genres
- Use Google forms, individual surveys, class conversations, etc.

### **Create a favorite song playlist to use in class**

- Use the songs for instructional use:
  - Comparatives (fast/slow, loud/ soft, etc)
  - Listening examples
  - Beat keeping
  - Movement Activities
  - Covers/Performance choices
  - Music as students enter/exit
  - Share with teachers and for school functions
  - Whatever other activities you would use recorded music for.
- Use programs like spotify, youtube, etc., to store and share playlists.

### **Other ideas for using playlists:**

- Students create playlists based on
  - Songs that make me feel...
    - Happy, Calm, Excited, etc.
    - Musical Emotions Map (UC Berkeley):  
<https://news.berkeley.edu/2020/01/06/music-evokes-13-emotions/>
  - Events (wedding, dance, sports, birthday party, etc.)
  - Specific people (family, friends, etc.)
  - My life soundtrack
  - To express their identity
  - Songs with meaning
- Have students write liner notes and explanations for why songs were chosen

### **Some Difficulties for student created Playlists**

- Time to compile
- Student knowledge of songs (who sings it, how to spell, the title of the song). Sometime students just know what it sounds like and can only sing parts of it
- School appropriateness
- Strong opinions of songs and respecting opinions

## 2. “Listening”

*Not Necessarily “Popular Music” Specific. Use songs from your playlist for these activities or to tie into any concept you are covering.*

### **Movement**

- Brain Dance by Anne Green Gilbert <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UH2xNx2t6Xw>
- Sevens <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjoZbgxg4ZY>
- Just Dance Video Game or Youtube Videos
- Laban Efforts (punch, float, glide, wring, etc.)
- Dance -instruction songs
  - Cha-Cha Slide by Mr C The Slide Man
  - Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae) by Silentó
- Dance-genre songs
  - Cumbia
  - Salsa
  - Line Dance
  - Swing

### **Form**

- Identify forms
  - A/B or Verse/Chorus
- Show forms though movement

### **Scavenger Hunt**

Have your students find songs with the following elements:

- “Millennial Whoop”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MN23IFKfpck>
- “Axis of Awesome” progression: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTYrkOZ5nCs>
- Trap Beat
- Whatever objective you are trying to prepare your students for

### **Discussion Question Examples:**

What makes a good song?

What makes a song bad?

What do you like about this song?

What do you not like about this Song?

How does the song make you feel?

What do the lyrics make you think of?

Why do you think the songwriter wrote this song?

What parts of this song would you take to use in your own song?

What instruments do you hear in this song? What timbres did you hear?

How is this song similar to other songs in its genre? How is it different?

Are there any similarities between these songs? What are the differences?

What would we need to perform these songs?

How would we begin to learn these songs?

What would you change about this song?

Was the voice high or low?

What is the form of the song? What is the form of the lyrics?

How would you use this song in a Movie? (describe the scene)

What sort of event would you play this song at?

Where are you most likely to hear this song?

What would a music video for this song look like? Why (describe the scenes)

Is it important to know about the artist when you like a song?

Does the artist's personal life/ problems affect how you feel about the song?

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### 3. Learn By Ear: Millennial Whoop

- So Mi patterns (sometime Sol La Mi) alternating notes
- Sing to students and have them echo (rote teach)
- Match patterns to specific songs

Examples of Millennial Whoop:

<https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=MN23IFKfpck>

### 4. Imitate/Approximate: “Seven Nation Army” by The White Stripes

**Teach the song with each part by rote.**

- Approximate with Voice/ Body Percussion (Imitate would use instruments or similar instruments. Approximate would use voice or different instruments)
  - Everyone learns each part, then divide the class to perform the different parts
    1. Drums- Body Percussion
    2. Guitar- Voice
    3. B section for guitar and drums- Voice
    4. Text/Melody- Voice

**Verse:**

I'm gonna fight 'em off

A seven nation army couldn't hold me back

They're gonna rip it off

Takin' their time right behind my back

And I'm talkin' to myself at night

Because I can't forget

Back and forth through my mind

Behind a cigarette\* (adjust as needed. Cheap corvet, silhouette)

And the message comin' from my eyes

Says, "Leave it alone"

### 5. Student-Directed: Jamming Via Circle Singing

**Layer Student Created Ostinatos**

- Divide Class into sections
- Choose one students from each section to create an ostinato
  - Decide what type of Ostinato they will use (pitched, body percussion, high/low, etc.)
- Have students loop their ostinato with another student acting as a conductor to add/ remove parts
- Add words/ Parts as desired.
- Record/perform if desired
- Change conductor/ leaders and start again

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## 6. Create: “Mad Lib” song

*From Music Will (possibly Mary Claxton)*

Create a song with the following Lyrics:

\_\_\_\_\_ It's What I Like

I like it cause its \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

- Have students fill in the text.
- Create/ Decide on the background music
  - Body percussion, instrument accompaniment, chord progressions, live loops (garageband) etc.
  - Can be performed by students, teacher, or created with technology (garageband/ soundtrap)
  - Use questions such as:
    - Slow or Fast?
    - What Instruments or style of music?
    - What chords?
- Give students a rhythm for saying/singing the text or allow students to create their own
  - Talk though what went well, what students like, what they would change.
- Let the background music play for students to practice singing/ saying their text on their own
- Go around the class and have student perform with the background music
  - Talk though what went well, what students like, what they would change.
- Final performance/ Record

### [Slide Show Presentation](#)



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