

K-5 Music Composing Strategies

Why Teach Composing:

- Student creativity
- Deep connections to curriculum and standards
- Rigor
- Real music applications
- Self-efficacy

Getting Started:

- Create a safe and supportive classroom environment
- Rhythmic and melodic improvisation
- Expressive and creative movement
- Large and small group learning activities
- Structured composing

Kindergarten:

- Rhythmic improvisation
- Melodic improvisation
- Movement improvisation
- Echo and call and response songs and activities

1st Grade:

- Improvisation activities: rhythmic, melodic, movement
- Call and response activities and songs
- Rhythmic composition: 4 beats with manipulatives

2nd Grade:

- Rhythmic composing with multiple types of manipulatives
- Melodic improvisation on a pentatonic scale

3rd Grade:

- Composing with ostinati
- Deedle Dumpling poem composing
- Drum ensemble
- Cell composing
- Continued opportunities for improvisation

4th and 5th Grade:

- Rhythmic composing project with age/grade appropriate parameters
- Composing with index cards
- CBA “Cat Food Commercial”

Additional Strategies and Suggestions:

- Use pentatonic scales
- Provide reasonable parameters
- Provide opportunities for scaffolding
- Allow students to work in pairs or small groups
- Invite composers to the classroom for interviews or composing clinic
- Use a story, photo, or video to inspire students
- Explain tonic to older students and remind them to start and finish with tonic
- Fill plastic containers such as eggs with rhythmic or melodic phrases and allow students to create a composition in small groups
- Integrate technology: iPad apps, smartboard, computer lab, etc.

Suggested Articles:

- 5 Steps for Leading Students in Classroom Composition by Katherine Strand. Teaching Music April 2007
- Teaching Composition Skills in General Music Class by Debbie Galante Block. Teaching Music August 2008
- Making Composition Work in Your Music Program by John Ginocchio. MEJ Sept. 2003
- A Virtual Composer in Every Classroom by Adria R. Hoffman and Bruce A. Carter. MEJ March 2013
- Take a Chance with Aleatory Composing by Laura Stambaugh. Teaching Music April 2003

Suggested Websites:

- www.blanksheetmusic.net
- www.teachingideas.co.uk/music/contents_compositionnotation.htm
- www.classicsforkids.com
- www.nafme.org
 - <http://music.ed.nafme.org/interest-areas/music-composition/tips-for-integrating-composition-into-elementary-general-music/>

Suggested Books:

- Music Outside the Lines: Ideas for Composing in K-12 Classrooms by Maud Hickey
- Minds On Music: Composition for Creative and Critical Thinking by Michele Kaschub

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Deedle Deedle Dumpling Explanation

(This can take a full month to complete, but SO COOL!)

1. On the first page, follow these steps with your students:
 - Draw a 4/4 time signature
 - Walk the steady beat while saying the poem
 - Draw a heart (beat) above every word where you take a step
 - Draw a bar line between every 4 hearts
 - Walk and say the poem again – draw a quarter note for every time there is one sound on a step, and eighth notes for every time there are two sounds on a step
2. On the top of the second page, follow these steps with your students:
 - Draw a 2/4 time signature or a cut time C
 - Walk the steady beat and say the poem in double time
 - Draw a heart (beat) for every word where you take a step
 - Draw a bar line between every two hearts
 - Walk and say the poem again – draw eighth notes for every time there are two sounds on a step, sixteenth notes every time there are 4 sounds on a step
3. On the bottom of the second page, follow these steps with your students:
 - Write the letters of C pentatonic on the board (CDEGAC)
 - Have your students remove the bars from Orff instruments that have different letters than those (F and B)
 - Ask your students to write a melody that they can play using the bars that are still on the instruments and utilizing the rhythms they have already written for the poem
4. Have the students each perform their melodies while the rest of the group chants the poem.

Deedle Deedle Dumpling Composition Project

(4/4 Time, Hearts, Bar lines, Rhythm Notes)

Deedle Deedle Dumpling My Son John

Went To Bed With His Trousers On

One Shoe Off And One Shoe On

Deedle Deedle Dumpling My Son John



(2/4 time, Hearts, Bar Lines, Rhythm Notes)

Deedle Deedle Dumpling My Son John

Went To Bed With His Trousers On

One Shoe Off And One Shoe On

Deedle Deedle Dumpling My Son John

(4/4 time, Pentatonic Note Names {Melody Notes})

Deedle Deedle Dumpling My Son John

Went To Bed With His Trousers On

One Shoe Off And One Shoe On

Deedle Deedle Dumpling My Son John