

THE BACK-SEAT MUSIC TEACHER: STUDENT-LED LEARNING

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Student centered learning is a phrase that has been in the forefront of educational best practice discussions for many years. However, the idea can be difficult to implement in the elementary music classroom due to curriculum, instructional time constraints, and class sizes. Today we will use strategies for integrating student led learning using student choice, creating, composition, and student directed lessons. By “sitting in the back seat”, your students can create movement pieces, compose contrasting sections in groups, write simple accompaniments, and even create entire “informances”.

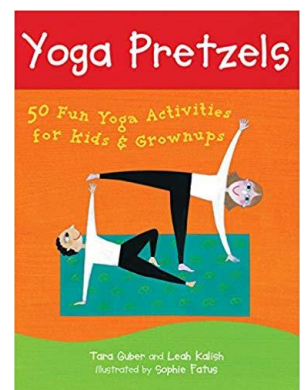
YOGA PRETZELS

Supplies: Yoga Cards

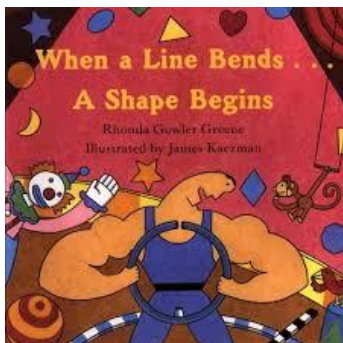
These cards are one of my favorite purchases! They're great for STAAR testing days, indoor recess stretches, and prepping creative movement. I've used them with big and little ones, and they constantly ask to do yoga again!

Process:

- Option 1 (younger students)
 - Go through cards as a whole class, holding up cards and having students make the shapes they see
 - Have students get into groups of 2-3 and choose their favorite two poses (come collect the physical card)
- Option 2 (Older students)
 - Set up yoga cards according to category—students rotate in groups of 3-4 around the room, trying out each card
 - Have students select their favorite 2-3 cards
- Students “morph” from one pose to the next on an aural cue. Play yoga/meditation music throughout.



WHEN A LINE BENDS, A SHAPE BEGINS – 2ND GRADE IMPROVISATION AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION



Shapes in the sky,
Shapes on the ground.
Shapes are everywhere,
Look around!

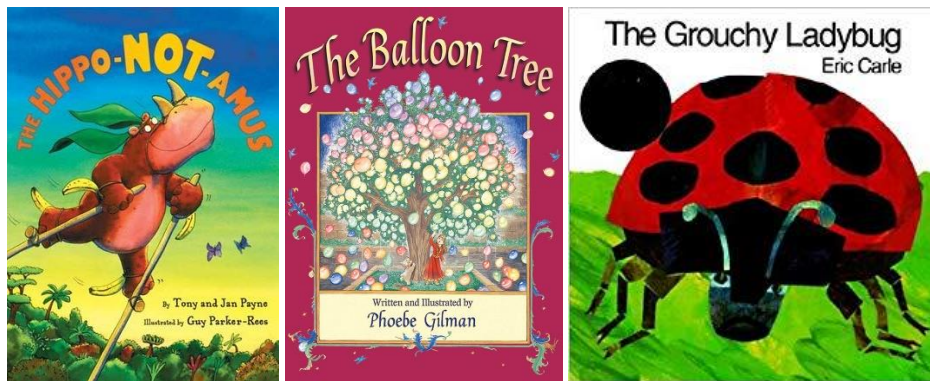
-Hazel Ross-Gonzales

Process:

- Read *When a Line Bends... A Shape Begins*. Make real world connections to shapes we see every day.
- Introduce poem by Hazel Ross-Gonzales, 2nd grade (2019)
- Pat rhythm of words to poem—transfer to barred instruments for melodic improvisation over poem- C pentatonic
- Creative Movement (contrasting sections)
 - In small groups, pick a page/shape from the book to act out silently
 - Choose two aspects of the page—morph from one to the next
 - May use props
 - Share—can others determine which shape, and what aspects of the page you chose?
- Final form suggestion: Rondo (A-Orff improvisation on poem, B/C/D, etc.- silent shape vignettes with pages being read)

BREATHING LIFE INTO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

This project began as a way of flipping my classroom for the last weeks of 5th grade music, in the hopes of surviving the woes that can be the “end of the year 5th grade”. The intent was to give my students a project that would be entirely their own creation, and to have the opportunity to share that creation with others. What began as an experiment to reengage 5th graders has become one of the lessons I look forward to most each year!



- Read selected children's books, discuss good places in each for a melodic song, a rhythmic piece, sound effects, and creative movement or acting scenes.
- Choose a book as a class to “bring to life”
 - In the earlier years of this project, I let students get into groups and choose a book, rather than one as a class. This allowed more freedom in the subject matter of their story, but less freedom in the medium of instrumentation—we only used Orff instruments and created one song per story. I found that I had more student buy-in when they were allowed broader horizons with instrumentation and drama.
- Assign groups based on student choice
 - Reader(s)
 - Actors
 - Melodic song with Orff accompaniment
 - Melodic song with ukulele accompaniment
 - Speech piece with NPP
- Readers and Actors:

- Readers—make sure they can pronounce all words, determine which lines are being read and which are being spoken by actors
- Actors
 - Which characters are necessary?
 - Where do we think sound effects would be appropriate?
 - What props do we need?
 - Assign roles
- Melodic and Speech groups:
 - Melodic:
 - Using rhythmic building blocks, create a four measure pattern in elemental form
 - Use a barred instrument in pentatonic, add a melody to their four measure pattern
 - Add lyrics to their song using a determined part of the book
 - Rhythmic:
 - Using rhythmic building blocks, create one 4 measure pattern and two 2 measure patterns
 - Assign lyrics to their rhythms using a determined part of the book

Names: _____ Classroom Teacher: _____

Writing a Song

- Using the rhythm building block cards, create a 4 card pattern you like using one of the following forms. Circle one:
 - ABAC
 - ABBA
 - ABAB
 - AABA
- Use the xylophone to add a melody to your rhythm
 - Set in either C or D pentatonic
 - Start and end on DO
 - Keep your repeating cards the same melody
- Is it singable?
 - Not too many jumps from low to high/high to low
 - Doesn't go above high DO
 - Memorable melody
- Once you have your final form, write the rhythms and note names below:

[A] [] [] []

Names: _____ Classroom Teacher: _____

Writing the Lyrics:

- Words should rhyme
- If you need to change a rhythm to fit a syllable, that's okay!!
- Your words for the "A" section can be the same, but they don't have to be. If they are, it will make the song easier to remember and sing.
- If you can't sing it, we won't be able to either :)

Writing the Accompaniment Part:

Orff Parts:

- Use DO and SO as your two notes
- Keep it simple--
 - Steady beat hands together
 - Steady beat hands alternating
 - Ostinato pattern, like "will you be my friend", or ta tadi
- You can use different high and low notes of your two notes

Ukulele Parts:

- Keep in mind the two chords that fit your song!
- Where do the chords sound right?
- Are you using a specific strumming pattern?

Sample Melodic Guidelines

- Come together moment! Time to teach the three songs to the rest of the class.
- Melodic groups:
 - Add in an simple Orff accompaniment to their song
- Rhythmic group:
 - Assign NPP instruments to each of the three lines
- Put the whole thing together!
 - Sent invitation to kindergarten and first grade classes inviting them to the performance
 - Students were in charge of everything—introducing and reading the book, acting out the story, writing and performing their original compositions, and deciding how it all went together.

Literary Materials:

- Yoga Pretzels* by Tara Guber, Leah Kalish and Sophie Fatus, ISBN-10: 9781905236046
- When a Line Bends...A Shape Begins* by Rhonda Gowler Greene, ISBN-10: 0618152415
- The Hippo-not-amus* by Tony and Jan Payne ISBN-10: 1862335141
- The Balloon Tree*, by Phoebe Gilman ISBN-10: 1616084545
- The Grouchy Ladybug*, by Eric Carle ISBN-10: 0064434508