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Music methods

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Music in The Classroom

            The classroom is very different today compared to what it used to be back in the day. Education regulations have skyrocketed and educators have been required to cover more and more in their units. It’s difficult for teachers to implement all of the required core information within one another. Teachers need to start correlating their lesson plans with one another. One such subject that could use a little more attention is music. Believe or not children truly enjoy music, but get very little of it. Music gives students a chance to be free and openly express themselves unlike any other subject. It can be very difficult though to try and correlate music methods into the everyday classroom. But with a little help from our friends Jacques Dalcroze, Carl Orfl and Zoltan Kodaly it can be very doable. The methods and reasons to include music education have forever been changed because of these three men.

Who was Jacques Dalcroze, and what did he do? Jacques Dalcroze was a professor of Harmony. He came up with a method of teaching music known as eurhythmics. Eurhythmics means good flow. Jacques was starting to realize that when he was playing piano or music with his students, they would tap their feet or swing their arms. Jacques took this opportunity and began having his students sway their arms or tap their feet to his music. Eventually his methods became very widely known. This is where two brothers by the last name of Dhorn helped Jacques open up his own school. In this school children usually did not wear their shoes, and most of the education was done with some type of locomotive movement.  After some time 3 main components emerged from his teaching.

The first one is the given, Eurhythmic which teaches concepts of rhythm, structure, and some type of musical expression through some type of movement.

The next component is Solfege. This helps to develop an understanding of pitch, scale, and tonality with activities that emphasize aural comprehension and vocal improvisation.

The last component is Improvisation, this develops the students understanding of form and meaning through random musical creation using movement, voice and finally instruments.

            One thing I’d like to point out is that Jacques really reminds me of the behaviorist approach to education. Jacques noticed that students were just tapping their feet or swaying their arms to music for no reason. What he noticed was just a natural thing that students do because they enjoy music. This is what behaviorists believe with some behavior. They think that certain behavior just happens because of random movement of stimuli, which causes the body to react in a specific way.

            There’s many ways that I could introduce the practices of the Jacques methods into my curriculum. He believed in movement and always having children do some kind of locomotive movement while they are listening to music. I would practice this method in a science lesson. I could have students do observations of the environment around the school on a sunny day. During the observations I would be playing music for the students to listen to. I would require the students to move around the school and explain the different environments around our school.  One such song I could use would be the Four Seasons by Vivaldi. This is such a moving song, that it would be hard for students to sit still and listen to while being outside.  Students would be required to list what type of animals they see around the school to keep their brains moving, what the environment around the school looks like, if they notice many types of different trees or just if there’s one specific type of tree.  One reason I would give the students so much freedom and let them roam around the school (with supervision of course) as this is when you will see students moving and acting freely. This will give me a chance to observe truly how they learn and what they enjoy doing. It would also be interesting to see how students go about moving, would they all be wild, calm, or have strategic movement while outside listening to music. It’s amazing what children will do when they have that much freedom! This is also a perfect example of divergent questions. The students get a chance to participate in coming up with their own creative answers to my questions.

             A man by the name of Carl Orfl created the next approach. He believed that music should never be alone, but with instruments and movement. He believes that children should experience music first then intellectualize. He believed that young children learn best when they are in their own learning zone, which in most cases happens to be when they’re playing with one another. From what it sounds like this approach allows children to begin learning with little to no guidance from the teacher. Once the students gets to play (learn) at their own pace for a little bit then the teacher will take over and build on top of what the students already know. He also goes on to say, “tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember involve me and I will understand.”(Carl Orfl)

            Carl reminds me of Vygotsky in a way. Vygotsky believes that students learn best when students first learn together in some type of culture or play. He believes that students have to learn in their natural state, which would be when they’re playing with one another. After students learn from playing, they will then take their decoded information they learned while playing and add to it when they’re alone to learn even more. This theory is known as the social development theory.

            This would be fairly easy to demonstrate in my classroom. I could design a play for students to perform. The key to this play though, is I’m not going to finish all of the sentences, I will be leaving some blank for my students to fill out. This will give them a perfect opportunity to work on their decoding skills. The students will be split into 4 groups. Each group will have 4 students in it, and each group will be required to finish each play a little differently, and each group will be required to select their own musical pieces to accompany the play.  This instructional practice gives the students the freedom to have fun, but also the structure to succeed in creating their own piece.

Zoltan Kodaly as of right now has to be my favorite education professor. He was born in 1882 and uses all of children's senses to educate them. He believes in having children sing; seeing a visual representation and children should also be moving while teaching new methods. This was originally just used in Hungary, but eventually it was used all over the world. I thoroughly enjoy this method because in my opinion students learn best when they have the opportunity to experience learning in more than one way.

If I had to tie this into a learning theory I would have to say it’s very close to Jean Piaget’s theory of learning. Piaget believed that there were stages of learning, and at each stage of learning there’s a new skill to be learned. Kodaly also believed that learning should start at a very young age, that’s what Piaget believes as well. To me this really makes sense because I’ve noticed first hand that children can learn to do anything at a very young age. Children are basically tape recorders. They can act and repeat anything they see and/or hear.

There are many ways I could include this in my classroom. Zoltan basically believes in engaging children in the musical learning experience anyway possible. To start with I would love to be very musical and visual with my student's learning. I would love to include pictures and music for every subject because it gives students a visual aid and an auditory learning experience. When teachers educate their students in more than one learning style, they learn more fluently. So here’s how I would go about teaching a math lesson to my class using Piaget’s theory and Kodayls method. To teach a lesson on addition and subtraction I would open the lesson with pictures of animals, I would ask the children how many animals they see. They should be able to answer the correct amount. I would then show them a picture with more of that animal and ask the students how many animals they see total now. After that I would have the children act out the animals, this allows them to be creative and have a little fun while learning. Then I would have each child be one of those animals and continue to add one animal at a time to each of their groups until it equals the amount of animals they see in the picture.  If I've learned one thing, the more exposure a child gets to a concept the better they will understand it.  After this I would have each student whistle, this whistling represents sounds that birds make. This would give them a general since of what birds sound like. After this I would tie it all together with a song that has animal sounds in the song. I would have the students count out the number of animal sounds they hear and then ask them questions such as, "What would happen if we added 3 more sounds, how many sounds would there be in total"?  I would also ask them questions geared towards subtraction like “Ok students we heard 5 birds in this song, say 4 of the birds flew home, and were taken out of the song. How many do we have left now?” This will spark conversations with the students and give them the ability to answer the question together. These questions would be examples of convergent thinking, because students will be required to answer the questions correctly. Another way I could teach this method in my classroom is with a guitar. I truly love playing guitar, I feel like there’s magic in every movement of the guitar. I could have the students watch my finger movement on my guitar for an entire song and then after the song, ask them this “How many different movements did you see my fingers make during this song”. Now this may seem like it could be a very difficult task for students of a younger age but, that’s why I slow it down for them. This way they get exposer to a little bit of math, and getting more exposer to the wonderful realm of music and its instruments.



            Most of the methods that we currently see being used in the classroom wouldn't be present today if it wasn't for these wonderful men. They all believed in using music in the classroom. I never really understood what was so important about music though when I was growing up. To me it was a really boring class that didn't have any meaning to it whatsoever. But, after being in this music methods class and doing some research on these fine men, I now realize just how important music is. Music truly gives students the opportunity to open up and be themselves. I've noticed during my practicum out in Sterling that there are some problem children out there that do not listen to their classroom teachers at all. However, when they go to music they give their full attention to the teacher and actually enjoy their time being in that classroom. That says something right there, that truly proves that music really is a key to a child's heart and ultimately the best way to get students engaged in their education.

Words Cited

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