Musical Playground

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A ONE-WEEK SUMMER EXPERIENCE FOR K-5 CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION
As collaborators, we provided content for and led a five-day summer program in Owen Park for elementary age students. The daily programming consisted of 5 stations with multiple activities, each lasting about 15 minutes of time.

ACTIVITIES
- Song Games
- Rhythmic Locomotion
- Using Instruments
- Constructing Instruments
- Kinesthetic Interaction

SONG GAMES
We used games to teach songs to students. These activities built a sense of community through learning each other’s names and singing together, which enforced a comfortable and creative environment.

RHYTHMIC LOCOMOTION
Using jump ropes, something not always seen in the lives of children today, we designed activities to enforce both internal and external beat. Beat is a foundation of music and is necessary to master before moving on to other elements.

USING INSTRUMENTS
Children need the opportunity to explore, play, and have autonomy. These activities allowed students to explore both familiar and unique instruments without as many boundaries as a traditional classroom.

CONSTRUCTING INSTRUMENTS
These activities allowed students to see how everyday objects can make music. Creating these instruments also allows students to have a deeper understanding of how the instruments work.

KINESTHETIC INTERACTION
Kinesthetic is often an under-utilized style of learning in the academic setting. Using parachutes, balls, and scarves we were able to help students reinforce music skills through touch and movement.

CREATION & COLLABORATION
We began the creation process in Spring 2018. Throughout the summer, we each spent time researching lessons and activities that would work for students in grades K-5. We knew that we had to plan for unpredictable ages, weather, developmental levels, etc., so we had to be ready to adapt our lessons day to day. We planned for 15 minutes of activity per instructor, per day; equating to roughly a full day of lessons each. Every day, one instructor was in charge of each category listed above, so being mindful of flow and transitions within and between categories was important to keep the students engaged. For each day, we made lesson plans, received feedback from Dr. Dunbar and revised.

After each day of camp, we debriefed as a group. We gave each other feedback and feedback, which we then took to further revise our future lesson plans. Our team of leaders collaborated well, encouraged, and supported each other during this process, resulting in a successful learning environment. As the camp progressed, we also became more familiar with each other and the students, improving our collaborative classroom management.

RESULTS & MOVING FORWARD
The first day of the camp was an eye-opening experience. We had to learn how to adapt and modify our lessons quickly. We also learned that routine and structure is critical for this age group; timing and pacing did not always turn out as we thought. The kids that participated brought unique behavioral traits and learning styles. We learned very quickly the basic needs of each child.

When we arrived on our second day, we were told the children gave positive feedback to their parents and were looking forward to the next day. As the week went on, we became more confident as instructors, resulting in the children having more fun. We worked better as a team, resulting in better flow each day. Overall, this year’s camp resulted in a fun learning experience for both the campers and leaders.

We hope that this camp happens again. In the future, we will advertise more and start planning earlier. Building upon the successes of this year, we will continue to play to the strengths of various instructors, maintain the well formulated structure, and keep the camp at Owen Park.

I learned that while planning is important, the ability to adapt a lesson on the spot is vital. Knowing this, working with a wide variety of ages and developmental levels is possible.

-Abigail Mason

I learned that beat competency is a concept that some students have lots of practice with, but not all have mastered yet. It was very interesting to see what students brought in terms of beat competency and comprehension from what they have already learned in their various music classes.

-Maya Fabian

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-Emma Cruciani

Throughout this experience, it was amazing to see the differences between what we had experienced as children and what current kids experience. Things like jump ropes, clapping games, chants/thymes, etc. were the basis of our childhood, and many of the kids we worked with had little prior experience with them.

-April Schneider

I enjoyed teaching games from my childhood, especially because I am from Colombia, which is different than what they are used to. I hope this can be an element of this playground in the future as I think it would be really cool to teach kids to associate their own experiences to different kids around the world.

-Nicolás Rojas-Cerón