

MUSIC MIND GAMES

From the Music Room of Selena

Hello! I teach grades K-6 in my school. When teaching Music Mind Games in my classroom, I use the same game concepts for all grade levels. I would like to share three experiences where I feel Music Mind Games has had a special impact in my teaching. The Cornerstones have impacted my approach to teaching.



Unit 1 class Fall 2009
Prince Georges County Public Schools
Selena is on the top row, 4th from the left

I. Newfound Confidence for a Young Student Teacher ...

During testing days at my school, some students require special circumstances. They are taken out of the classrooms and placed with a specialist (Music or PE) until their test facilitator is ready for them. When students come to me, they have the choice to complete work sent by their classroom teacher or to participate in my activities. In many instances, students choose to join in the Music Mind Games lessons.

On one specific testing day, a 4th grade student, I'll call him Jim, was placed in my class. He chose to start on his work, but after watching us play Fix the Order – Dynamics, he changed his mind and joined us. After the class left, he said he really like the game, understood it and was ready to help me if I needed it. I thanked him for the offer, and said it would be fine if he helped me with my students.

Moments later the next class came in and I learned there were two students, I'll call them Sam and Sara, who were going to be tardy because they were finishing up in another classroom. When they finally arrived, I was unable to fit them in my activity. Jim quickly got up and took Sam and Sara to another section of the room and started teaching them the game. As they were working with Jim, the rest of the class transitioned to another game, Fine! using Dynamics. When Sam realized this, he immediately brought his cards over to show me he was ready to join the class. When I got a moment to assess him, I realized he had forgotten a step. I explained to him that I would be over shortly. He told me I didn't have to come because the Jim would help him, saying, "Jim is a good teacher".

Not only did Sam go back and play the game and learn all the steps, he stayed with Jim when Sara transitioned into my group. When everyone left, I asked the Jim about his experience. His expression was priceless. He was beaming with joy and accomplishment.

On another testing day, Jim came in again and “switched” with a student who was assigned to help me that day. I found out later that Jim insisted I needed him to help me. On the last day of school, he asked if I was going to be teaching at the school for the upcoming school year. I replied, “Yes, are you coming back to school in the fall?” He replied, “Yes, this is the best school ever. I might even join the Chorus.” I learned that Jim had been in a different school every year, sometimes two in one year. This was the first school he was returning back to for a second year. I believe that his success in my classroom with Music Mind Games had a big impact on his newfound confidence and interest in learning and helping others.

Note on Jim and Sam: Jim was not actually the student you would want to give the responsibility of teaching other students. He was the extremely bossy type, which often caused fights within the group. He had trouble knowing what to do with the power he was given in a leadership position. He often took things way too far and many of the other students did not want to be in his group because of that. My exact words to him were that he could play with the other students if they needed another person to make the groups even. The male student, Sam, would be considered a busy body. You can tell this by my comment of him bringing his cards to me. All other students knew to raise their hand and wait for me to come over. If there had been a way to NOT put Sam and Jim together, I would have done it.

On another occasion, Jim jumped up when the students came in before I could give instructions. In order to keep the rest of the class on task and not openly confront Jim, I let it go and kept a watchful eye on the group. I really expected their personalities to clash, however, the class went much better than expected.

The next day when Jim was in my class, he told the PE teacher I had requested that he be my personal assistant and therefore would have to switch with someone. He had not been given those instructions by me nor the Testing Coordinator. Hopefully, you have a better understanding of Jim and why this was such a major accomplishment.

II. Blue Jello....

In my school, many families have students in multiple grade levels. This includes how I introduced Blue Jello.

During a kindergarten classes, one student was very vocal when a new rhythm was introduced, as if she had seen it before. When I asked if she played these games at her old school, she said “No”. This particular class went further than any other class I taught, even surpassing the upper grades.

The next day, while teaching a 4th grade class, I had a similar situation. One of the students seemed to know the new rhythms. I asked him if they played Music Mind Games in his previous school. He also said “No”.

At dismissal, the parent of those two special students came to speak to me. He explained the children were actually practicing at home, singing “Daily do” and playing “Blue Jello”. I was so pleased to learn that the siblings had been going home and teaching each other what they learned in my music class. That showed they enjoyed learning and wanted it to be part of their life at home.

III. Choral Warm-Up Made Easy

Since I use Music Mind Games in my general music classroom, it became natural to use it during my choral rehearsals. “Daily Do” has become an invaluable part of each rehearsal. Students take turns leading the warm-up and picking the “Forbidden Note” (Elizabeth Cunha’s idea). This is a variation on “Daily Do” and works this way: While singing, one pitch (such as all the *So* pitches) is signed but not sung. It is fun and helps with memory and hearing pitches internally. This gives me time to get set up with other Music Mind Games activities or take care of classroom details.

I have received several comments from teachers who have taken notice of what the choir is doing during rehearsals. They tell me that the choir sounds better this year (more in tune) and the students are getting more done during rehearsals. Since “Daily Do” packs so much valuable pitch, interval and triad into one short piece, it is giving us a lot of value in such a short time. My choir loves it and so do I.

Stories from Spring 2010