



Ideas Shared by Minnesota Colleagues – Teaching Elementary Music Outdoors

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Special thank you!

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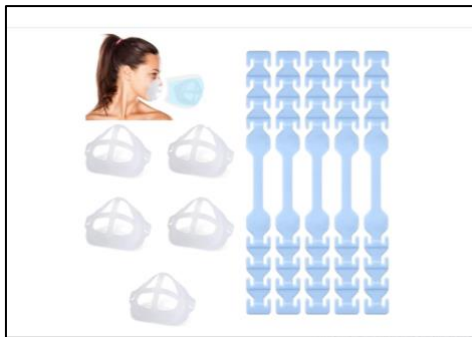
TEACHER HINTS

1. Being outside, much like a big empty gymnasium, seems to invite small children to run around. I'd suggest making some sort of **visible boundaries**.
 - You might check to see if the PE or high school athletic dept. has a field marking system (a chalk line devise, chalk spray, or lawn paint). I'd put a grid on the ground with a center dot in each section for a child to sit/stand on (or maybe strategic lawn mowing if you're on the grass).
 - Will students be having music on grass or cement/parking lot? Polyspots, spray paint, hula hoops can be used to help with social distancing.
 - Kids Playmat Baby Foam Play-Mat - 16 X-Large Eva Soft Tile, Toddler Infant Safe - Ideal Gift Play Area Child Room, Interlocking Puzzle Multi Color Flooring Exercise Yoga Pilates Game Yard Superyard. You can detach these for individual use. Each square is 12" x 12" (Around \$18/set)



2. What is the **protocol for outdoor music**? Can students be in a socially distanced circle or do they all need to be facing the same direction?
 - Circle games/songs/activities can be modified so students are not touching
 - A gator ball or coated frisbee can be used to "tag" in a singing chase game, if it's OK to be outside with masks on and to move close enough to tag. Note: Using pool noodles to "tag" is not approved at my school because noodles can't be disinfected properly.
 - Could a ball be used for a singing game if disinfected after use? At my school, pods (groups of students that stay together all day) sanitize their hands "in" and sanitize "out" of music. If we are using a ball, we have different balls for the different pods per day so the balls can be sanitized properly.
3. Have a short gathering/warm-up/**unifying song activity to start each lesson** with to put them in the mindset of "it's time to work on music learning now, not recess" and try to embrace the fact that children will be able to sing rather than just hum. Keep in mind, if students are singing with masks, you might not be able to hear them very well.

4. Develop a hand/body movement or an instrumental **cue system to signal**, rather than shout certain directions that are given daily (teaching outside is hard on your voice.)
5. For activities, it might be best with all students facing one direction in their own space:
 - Sing – a cappella or with ukulele or guitar accompaniment – unison, canons, part singing, songs with ostinatos, etc.
 - Sing – songs with movement in their own space
6. If you have access to an **amplification system**, use it! (Even the wind can be a factor now...)
 - This will benefit every learner so they can all hear you, as well as preserve your voice. Note: There are several portable amplifiers/headset microphones that are available for less than \$40 on Amazon. Many districts have money set aside from the CARES act to help schools adapt to their needs during COVID if teachers ask for it!
 - I bought a personal voice amplification device with microphone, with rechargeable batteries. Note: These are catching on and may not be as available as they were a few weeks ago.
 - My school purchased the SHIDU Original Voice Amplifier for teachers. It connects via Bluetooth to a headset microphone and to my chromebook so I can be heard and play music at the same time. The speaker has a strap I can wear crossbody or it can sit on my cart.
7. **Mask Extenders Adjustable Ear Saver for Mask Strap, 3D Face Nose Mouth Bracket**
I have heard from those who are currently teaching, that the brackets help with breathing, your personal voice volume, and comfort. (Around \$16 for everything pictured here.)



8. What **sound resources** do you have? CD player, iPad, Bluetooth speaker?
9. Focus on musical elements while using folk songs or similar easy **rote-learned songs** and broaden the study of them. Have students analyze what happens in the music (melody matching the lyrics, mood of song, tempo, etc.) and WHY they think those choices were made for the song. Sing it faster, sing it slower. Which version best fits the mood of the song? Which version do they like better? Make up a body percussion ostinato or one using found sounds. Where are the half notes? Signal each time you use a half note.
10. **Purchase chalk**. Be sure to have enough chalk for one piece per student because sharing doesn't work.
 - Students can draw notes, symbols – Make art using only the symbols you've given them
 - Use chalk for drawing either squiggles to use as vocal practice or rhythms

NAME GAMES

Name Game 1. The students have to tell me their name and then give me a food that starts with the same letter. Then I have to go around the group and name every one AND their food. They crack up and love to stump me. And sometimes, I remember their food until they leave my building. I had a student graduate from my building last year and I called him "Chris chicken" all three years I had him in class.

Name Game 2. “My name is _____. I come from _____, and I sell _____.

<https://share.icloud.com/photos/0tmjwL8PXBkMLHfSpl2bJKWag>

Name Game 3 – Za Cody Cody. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNzIE-SIRBE>

New actions:

1. Keep the game the same, just have students spread apart or standing next to desks
2. Students on the end of rows might need help knowing whose names to say
3. Can have students come up with new phrases to say instead of “za cody cody”

Welcome Back! activity. Rather than asking students about what they did over the summer, consider these questions instead:

1. What do you LOVE learning about?
2. What do you most LOOK FORWARD to this school year?
3. What are three AWESOME things about yourself?
4. What is one thing you’d like your teacher and classmates to KNOW ABOUT YOU?
5. What is SOMETHING NEW you’d like to make, create, try, build and/or learn about?

MUSIC-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Listening walk

- Students have a sheet to fill out as they walk and listen to/find nature’s music
- Follow the walk with discussion/reflection time
- Are there piece(s) you could listen to that were inspired by nature? (such as Vivaldi’s “Autumn” or “Autumn Leaves”)
- Connect your walk to the picture book *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers, illustrated by Alikei (early grades?)

Sound Scavenger Hunt

- Find something metal, something wooden, something that rattles, etc.
- Collect various leaves and make “leaf rhythms” (oak, ma-ple, oak, ma-ple | red, yel-low, red, yel-low)

Bucket drumming. Teach rhythms by rote or draw rhythms on the sidewalk using chalk.

Boomwhackers. Note: Boomwhackers can be easily disinfected.

- Add a boomwhacker accompaniment to a song.
- Divide students into small groups, give them pentatonic Boomwhackers and have them create a composition with movement.

Recorders. These can be played outdoors and students can practice in small groups. They might be able to hear themselves better than in your classroom.

Body percussion

- **Rhythm rondo.** Split the class into 3 groups. Each student experiments with a 4-beat body percussion pattern, then the group(s) decide which ones they want to use. Perform as rondo.
- **Small group compositions.** Depending on the size of your class, students could be spaced apart in lines and each person represents a beat. They get to decide on the rhythm they want in their beat. (Teacher can also limit which rhythms are available based on curriculum.) Let kiddos practice it a few times, then start putting it together. Repeat at a different tempo for variety. You can also add worlds. So many fun options!

- Make body percussion pieces – See *Rhythmische Übung* (Rhythmic Exercises) by Gunild Keetman or *The Body Rondo Book* by Jim Solomon.
- Add a body percussion ostinato to a song or a poem.

Beat vs. rhythm activities. Alternate between the two; have one side do beat while the other does rhythm. Are there any chants or poems from their classroom reading series you could use for this?

Ten Apples Up On Top by Dr. Seuss. We're going to read the book and play a game I made up. I wrote quarter and paired eighth notes on cut out apples. I randomly choose the rhythm apples, tape one to the wall, teach kids to read it aloud (I teach it like sight words). We continue to add one apple at a time as a class, with everyone reading aloud. When we get to ten, we wave our hands in the air and cheer "Ten Apples Up on Top!" to celebrate our success.

Rhythm Baseball or Ukulele Baseball. Bring kids out to an area that can function as your ball field. Line up in teams or just play as a class to see how many runs your class can score. One batter is "up." The pitcher:

- Grades K-1 – I usually "pitch" (say a rhythm)
- Grade 2 – I usually coach kids on how to read the 4-beat rhythm cards so they "pitch"
- Grades 3-4 – Students play ukulele chords in sequence as their "pitch"

After the pitch, the batter must immediately (no hesitation) repeat the rhythm by clapping and counting aloud. If it is correct, the batter advances one base. The only way to continue to advance bases is to be forced there by the next batter. You can keep track of "runs" scored or just play for fun. You could also do this with solfege or other skills you might be working on.

Musical Hopscotch. With a little sidewalk chalk, create a hopscotch board. What you put in each square depends on what skills you want students to practice.



- Solfege, for example. I created a hopscotch board with syllables of a Major scale and added So and Do in the spaces of 9 and 10.
- To warm up, we hopped and sang the syllables ascending and descending.
- When the game started, students would roll their rock onto the hopscotch board and skip whatever syllable it landed on. They hopped through the board singing each syllable except the ones that were covered.
- Challenging and so much fun!

What I discovered is that when I wasn't actively engaged with a group, their singing skills weren't very strong.

Freeze Tag. Make up a game of freeze tag where the person who is "it" can tag someone's shadow. To get unfrozen, the student will need to answer a music question. (Maybe one day the students can collectively make up the questions/answers, and then play the game the next day.)

Drum circles or culture circles. Look up information on drum circles or culture circles; they are meant to be formed/played outside.



STOMP! Find objects that make sounds – click, rattle, scrape, etc. and use to create a STOMP-inspired piece (layered ostinatos).

Nature's Xylophone. Make a pitched instrument using jars of various sizes that are filled with rocks, dirt, sticks, etc. to create different pitches.

MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Adaptable to outdoors instruction, too. These movement activities and folk dances have been adapted with new actions that can be done with students standing next to their desks, facing the same direction. The directions assume that the students are able to move forward, back, and side to side a LITTLE bit. It may need to be adapted per classroom. If there is no space, have students walk and move in place. It's a good opportunity to teach walking in place and taking tiny steps on the beat, which don't often come naturally to the little ones. Most of these could also be recorded on video and sent to online students to do at home.

Marching Band. Space students out and work on marching and staying in formation. If possible, follow up by learning about Sousa and/or different instruments.

The Drum Game

This is a game I play with kids to get them listening actively and to practice doing different motions on the beat. I always start with students standing in place, and normally advance to letting them move around the room, but will obviously be skipping that for now.

Directions:

1. Teacher has a drum. I use a djembe, but you could adapt for other rhythm instruments.
2. Students listen while I play a steady beat, and change their action depending on the sound I make with the drum. Layer in one sound at a time as they get better at the game.
3. Tone (playing on the edge of the drum): walk on the beat
Bass (playing the center of the drum- sometimes I use my fist instead of a flat palm to make the sound difference more obvious): jump on the beat
Drum roll: sit down in place
Brushing drum head with fingertips: lay down on the floor in place (you'll have to decide whether this is something that will be safe to do in your space- otherwise, sub it out for a different action like sitting in the desk chair or head down on desk)
Silence: freeze in place
4. As students get better at listening actively, change up your tempo. Great opportunity to teach fast vs. slow to little ones. I also add in accelerando and ritardando. Then pause and ask the kids "what happened to the beat" and see if they noticed the tempo change.
5. Older students could play the game and assign rhythmic values to what you're playing (eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, etc).
6. Advanced students could lead the group. Just consider sanitization if you have students touching the drums.

Goin' on a Bear Hunt. No adaptations needed! The actions are all done in place already.

Action video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZWam0qEtvQ>

Audio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wzlcu6tbEko>

Calming Movement Activity. No adaptations needed. This could also be done seated in chairs or adapted to use scarves. You could use a different piece, or just play the audio from this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XY6iJrSp43I>

"Let Us Chase the Squirrel." Teach students this song. At the end of the song, instead of a chase, have a race. You could take turns with students racing, or space them apart and race a little larger groups. Sing the song again in between each race.

Dalcroze Movement Stories. In the Dalcroze method, stories are often used with improvised music and movement to teach active listening and various musical concepts. While it's easier when students can move around the room, most of the actions can be done in place. It's easier with a keyboard, but work with the instruments you have (even voice and body percussion!). You don't have to be an excellent improviser- kids will

be so enthralled by the story that they won't notice any "mistakes". Just try to create some sort of sound that supports the concept you're teaching. Examples:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQkyzsuG38I>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yJk9eA_mL4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aR8BRri0OM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7jjVWidNfw>

Singing games. Play singing games that have [or can be modified for] social distancing.

FOLK DANCES

Here We Go, Zudio.

From PBS – <https://tpt.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/afriam.arts.music.zudio/africanamerican-culture-zudio/>

Teaching example – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arKEFo9xXdE>

This is my go-to outdoor song/game for grades 2-4. I teach the kids the song by rote and we sing it acapella. I plan to have them stand in a socially-distanced circle (I'll mark the ground with chalk so the kids know where they can stand) and we can "step back Sally" and then "walk through the alley" (the kids love to run back to their spots in the circle). There are a million different versions but this particular video was created with distance learning in mind so it's meant for kids to dance at home.

Irish Stew. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyhsg--fHWU>

New actions:

1. March in place - 16 beats (can also add clapping on the beat if you want)
2. Turn towards the back of the room and march in place- 16 beats
 - a. students have to actively listen to the music because they'll be facing away from the teacher!
3. Jump Jump Clap Clap x4
4. Walk forward (TINY steps)- 4 beats
5. Walk backward (TINY steps)- 4 beats
6. Repeat step 4-5

Sasha. Original: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cs9sha_huCU

New actions:

1. Same beginning, just speak and point while facing the front instead of a partner
2. Stomp stomp stomp
3. Pat pat pat (legs)
4. Clap clap clap
5. Snap snap snap
6. Ideas for the turn (8 beats x2):
 - Students turn around in place
 - Students walk in a tiny circle in their spot
 - Students walk around their desk, chair, or a small object on the floor
 - 4 beat box step (jazz square)
7. Ideas for the "find a partner" section:
 - Compose body percussion as a class
 - Have students silently wave to others around the room
 - Improvised movement
 - Movement with a scarf, either teacher-led or improvised

Heel Toe Polka. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yHDJSpy9H0>

New actions:

1. Tap heel toe, heel toe (right foot)
2. Walk forward- 4 beats
3. Tap heel toe, heel toe (left foot)
4. Walk back- 4 beats
5. Stomp stomp stomp
6. Pat pat pat
7. Clap clap clap
8. Snap snap snap
9. Turn (4 beats)
 - Much shorter than the spinning in Sasha
 - Turn in place or do a jazz square if kids are able
10. Skip the “trading partners” part- do an extra turn instead or create your own 4-beat action (or 4-beat rest to reinforce whole rests!)

Old Brass Wagon. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-jJ2GX6NeU>

New actions:

1. “Circle to the left” - walk in place facing the left or circle to the left in their spot
2. “Circle to the right” - walk in place facing the right or circle to the right in their spot
3. “In to the center” - walk forwards or in place facing the front of the room
4. “Back on out” - walk backwards or in place facing the back of the room
5. “Clap your hands” - stays the same
6. “Tap your toe” - stays the same
7. “Two hand turn” - see turn adaptations above in Sasha and Heel Toe
 - To make the “two hand” part applicable, you could have students do an action with their hands like clapping or calling out a body part to touch while they turn (hips, head, knees, toes)
8. “Do si do”
 - If space, have kids do si do around their desk or chair
 - Could place a small object on the floor for them to do si do around
 - If these are not an option, have students compose or improvise movement/body percussion for this section

Shake Shake Shake. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtYvofCG4Nk>

New actions:

1. Step slide x2 to the right
2. Stomp stomp stomp
3. Step slide x2 to the left
4. BIIIIIIIG Jump! (4 beats)
5. Repeat steps 1-4
6. Clap clap clap
7. Wave to a friend (4 beats) – Can sub out other actions here as well, like doing a little dance, stomping, etc.
8. Repeat steps 6-7 four times

The Kings and Queens Dance. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jakXG0tBUkw>

New actions:

1. Three steps forward, bow
2. Three steps back, bow
3. Then there are three different turns in a row, for 8 beats each. Please see ideas above for how you can adapt the turning sections.

4. Have Student A improvise a beat motion (patting head, clapping, etc.) for 8 beats. Other students then copy for 8 beats. For beginners, the teacher could do a beat motion and have all students copy. Advanced students could improvise an 8-beat rhythm either by clapping or playing a rhythm instrument. Could also do a 4-beat improvisation twice.
5. Repeat step 4 with a new student as the leader.

Chimes of Dunkirk. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZgcvDRZI5Q>

New actions:

1. Walk forward 4 steps
2. Walk backward 4 steps
3. 8 beat turn (see previous dances for ideas on adapting a turn)
4. Clap clap clap
5. Stomp stomp stomp
6. 8 beat turn
7. Clap clap clap
8. Stomp stomp stomp
9. Student A (or teacher) improvises an 8-beat steady beat motion or rhythm, other students copy
 - a. Choose a new student to improvise on each time through the actions

Kindergarten Reel. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QX8U8ukDbA>

New actions:

1. Three steps forward, clap
2. Three steps back, clap
3. Options for the turn section:
 - See “Sasha” for ideas for turning OR
 - If turning is too advanced for your students, have them sit/lay down and pretend to “sleep” during the softer section. Then, JUMP back up when the music picks up again.
4. Teacher does a beat motion for 8 beats, students copy
5. Stomp stomp stomp

Down in the Valley. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WZ6m99C5bo>

New actions:

1. “Boogie” down in the squatting position during the “down in the valley two by two” section. Can do the back and forth hand motion on its own or while holding a scarf.
2. Stand up on “rise Sally rise”
3. Ideas for the improvised motion section:
 - Have students be partners with a person directly next to them. They can face each other without moving from their spots. Take turns creating actions.
 - Have students choose their partners by making eye contact with someone across the room.
 - i. Practice in advance
 - ii. Might be difficult if there aren’t direct lines of sight
 - Choose one student to lead in an improvised action and have the whole class copy
 - i. Choose a new student for the next repetition

Seven Jumps. Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZmY35yfM84>

New directions:

1. Walk in place for 8 beats (could add a little hop on beat 8)
2. Clap clap clap, turn 180 degrees x2 (should face the front again after the sequence)
3. The rest of the actions can stay the same
 - Adapt to have students sit in their chair and rest elbows/head on their desk if you don’t want them to touch the floor

OTHER NOTES

- If students are wearing masks, make sure they take frequent breaks so they don't get winded with the mask on. Consider telling kids to sit down and take a break on their own if they begin to feel winded or light headed.
- Kids NEED to move. They will be sitting in their desk all day. By the time you get them, they will be bursting with energy. Create strong expectations for movement to keep them safe, distanced, and on-task.
- Know your space and your students. Is there room to move directionally? Are they experienced in moving on the beat in place? Are they capable of taking tiny steps without ending up too close to each other? What prerequisite knowledge do they need before you throw them into a folk dance?
- Make it social. Everyone is starved for social interaction. Folk dances are so important for creating social connections. It's harder when we have to stay apart. Try to create opportunities for students to interact during the lesson. Brainstorm new actions together; wave to a friend during a section of the song; air high-fives; have half the kids move while the others watch, and let them give constructive feedback afterwards.
- Mix up the music. Most folk dances just use 4-beat patterns or multiples of 4 beats. Lots of times, songs in 4/4 can be subbed in easily. Using traditional folk dance music can be beneficial, but it's not your only option. Using kid-friendly pop music can create a stronger connection between you and your students. Older students can suggest songs they'd like to use (for you to screen ahead of time). It makes the folk dances more relevant for them. You can also use music you're already studying in class. Composer of the month? Pick one of their pieces. A song they learned an Orff accompaniment for? Put half the kids on instruments and half doing the folk dance. This allows you to add movement to any lesson.
- Give the kids a "partner". Although we can't have people partners, try to brainstorm other items that can stand in for a person. Holding a scarf in two hands can mimic holding a partner's hands. Putting a stuffed animal on the floor gives something for the kids to do sit do around. Have them tap their desk or chair instead of a partner's hands. Just remember that if the students touch it, you'll need to find a way to wash it (or let it sit for 72-96 hours between uses).
- Have fun! The kids will be excited to be up and moving. If these folk dances are new to them, they won't know they're missing out on anything.