

Drumming With Young Children: Ideas and Inspiration for Rhythmic Activities

with Adam Issadore

Drumming is fun, it creates a sense of unity, and it is an easy way to have children create music together with a low level of skill sets or experience. Rhythm becomes intrinsic, and often when one person plays a steady beat, the group will be able to follow.

Sample Games & Activities

Freeze Drum: Instructor starts a rhythm, the group follows. When the instructor stops, the group must stop. Variation: Choose a student to lead.

Freeze Dance: Instructor plays a drum and the students dance. When drumming stops, the students must stop dancing. Variation: Combine with Freeze Drum; having the instructor play a rhythm, half of the group drums with the instructor while the other half dances. When the instructor stops, both the drummers and the dancers stop.

Call & Echo: Instructor plays a rhythm, and the group repeats (echoes). It is best to play short, simple rhythms (boom-boom-boom-rest) Variation: have a student “call”, and group echoes.

Play-a-long: Play a recording (MP3) that your campers like, and let them play- a – long! Variation: Incorporate Freeze Drum, when the recording stops, the drumming must stop.

Story Time: The instructor tells a story, and the students provide the sound track with drums and percussion. Example: “and the people in the village loved to play their music...” (The campers play their instruments to represent “music”).

Light Instruction Ideas:

- Counting quarter notes “1,2,3,4”
- Counting eighth notes “1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and”
- Demonstrating basic technique of how to play the four different groups of instruments; Drums, Wood, Metal, Shakers.
- Teaching a simple drumbeat (such as “We Will Rock You”).
- Working on a short group piece that can be performed.

Facilitated Jam Time / Group Play:

Jam Time can be the most fun and rewarding part of the session for children. Identify someone who can keep a steady beat, and have other students join in, playing rhythms that they improvise.

The instructor should establish body language cues for stopping and starting the group.

Cues:

Stopping: This looks like the “safe sign” in baseball. Cross arms in front of chest, and then swing them out quickly.

Starting: Count off “one-two-ready-play”. Or, start playing a beat and have the group join you.

Rolling: Move hands as if you were playing a fast roll on a drum.

Keep Playing: nod head yes, and wind one hand over the other in a fast motion, (as if you were wrapping string around your hand).

Volume Up: Hold your arms out, and lift your hands higher, with your palms facing up.

Volume Down: Hold your arms out, and drop your hands lower with your palms facing down.

Adding Structure:

Keep in mind segueing in and out of different sections. The facilitator’s role is to help the group reach its fullest potential, and to be mindful of the needs of the group. Consider adding sections of Rolling, Call & Echo, and starting, stopping, and starting again. Remember it does not have to sound “good”, the idea is for the students to be having fun, express themselves, and get a sense of what it feels like to interact as a group.

Resources:

Books:

Together In Rhythm, by Kalani

Drumagination, by Dave Holland

For more information and to stay in touch:

Please visit my website and receive more information from today's session.

Enter this unique url into your browser:

www.pathtorhythm.com/ECE

Happy Drumming!