

“Mother Drum”

Adapted by Angela Challis
(Taken from Marilyn Berrett who took it from Virginia Tanner – so I heard)



Math/Dance Grade 3
Core Concept/Art integration

Objective: The students will be able to understand note value by participate in movement, while a story is being told, that will teach about the whole note, half note, quarter note and eighth note.

3 Grade Core Curriculum Math Standard

Develop understanding of fractions as numbers.

Art Form Moving Standard 2

The student will identify and demonstrate the movement elements in performing dance.

Objective 1

Expand dance vocabulary with movement experiences in time.

Equipment and Materials needed:

Drum and drum beater

Big note value cards (2 sets of each note are fine)

Small note value cards (probably 40 sets so each group can have at least 5 sets – but it depends on how big the groups are)

Experience / Identify:

Tell the introduction to the story about “Mother Drum.” Stomp your feet and have the students join in stomping to the underlying beat. “Once upon a time there was a Mother Drum and she always kept a beat like this:” (stomp an even beat). “Well, Mother Drum had some children but they kept a different beat and it went like this:” (stomp double time). Over time those children grew up and they had children. Now Mother Drum had grandchildren and they kept a beat like this:” (stomp double time again). “Well, those grandchildren grew up and became teenagers. And teenagers sometimes like to do their own thing, so they kept a beat like this:” (stomp individual rhythms).

Explore / Investigate:

Continue on with the story that introduces note value. “Pretty soon there were so many people living in this village that one group decided they needed to move out. So they decided to move into the desert. It was hot in the desert but they didn’t mind. They moved slowly because of the heat and here is how they moved: Clap-stretch-stretch-stretch; Clap-stretch-stretch-stretch;” etc. “Then they decided to

come up with a symbol which represented who they were. The symbol looked like this:” O (a whole note – but don’t tell them). Try the movement again. “Meanwhile back at the village, the children kept growing up and the village continued to get more and more crowded. So, another group decided it was time to move out.”

Below are the groups that moved out:

Desert group: Whole note – “Clap-stretch-stretch-stretch” (above)

Mountain group: Half note – “Up to the sky, down to the earth” (clap and reach arms to sky, then clap and take the body over and look down to the earth)

Swamp group: Quarter note – “Swat-swat-swat-swat” (slap different body parts as if you are swatting mosquitoes that live in the swamp)

Volcano group: Eighth note – “ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow” (dance as if you are dancing on hot lava with quick feet!)

As you continue showing the symbols the children will eventually figure out that the symbols are notes. After dancing the four groups listed above (always going back to the scene of Mother Drum’s village), continue on with the story: “Every year all of the children and grandchildren would come home to Mother Drum and enjoy a big celebration. Each group would teach their own dance. Then, during the celebration they would combine all of the dances into one big dance. It went something like this:”

Create / Perform:

Have a child come up and rearrange the note cards. Now try that dance (use the same movement but the placement of the notes, and therefore the timing, has changed).

Let a couple more children rearrange the cards and try those dances.

Now let the children get into groups of 2-4. Pass out small note value cards to each group. Have them rearrange the cards and create their own dance using the same movement.

Next have them create their own “tribe”. Tell them to decide where they would move away and to create new movement that would represent each of the note value cards.

Connect / Analyze:

Have each group perform their “tribe” dance to the class.

Review the value of each note.