

Substitute

Lesson Ideas For The Music Teacher

**Classroom Games
for Fun and Learning**



Compiled & Edited by the Fun Music Company 2010

Introduction

Have you ever needed music lesson ideas at a moments notice?

Maybe you've been asked to give a relief lesson at short notice or you have to leave one for a another teacher, or perhaps you're just looking for some extra "time filler" ideas for your own music lessons.

Whatever the reason, this book was written with this intention in mind and was compiled as a result of a competition where music teachers explained the ONE substitute teaching tip or lesson idea that has gained them the most success in the music classroom.

Within "Substitute Lesson Ideas For The Music Teacher", you'll find inspiring ideas from music teachers worldwide. Teachers just like you. Ideas that have always worked in tried and tested group and classroom situations and will help you achieve your own teaching goals and outcomes with the least effort possible.

We hope that this little "Flip-Book" of ideas will be helpful . Some are suitable for small classes or individual tuition, and some for larger classes.

Instrument 4 Corners

For this game you will need four posters which represent the strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion instrument families of the orchestra.

Then you play an orchestral CD and when the students hear the instrument, they decide which instrument family it belongs to and they stand under the correct poster. If they guess the wrong poster, they are out of the game. There are some that will follow their friends, but it is a great listening game and something fun to do.

Aariss Curren

Suggested Resource: CD from Instrument Bingo by Cheryl Lavender. Available at Amazon.com

The Song Puzzler

For this activity, take a simple folk song and print it out without the words. (Like Bingo, Miss Mary Mack...) Then divide the students into two teams. You can then have the students look over the song to familiarize them with it. Ask them to find how many quarter notes?, half notes?, rests?, what's the time signature? The correct answer gives that team a point.

Next clap the rhythm as a class to help them get to know the song better. When the students feel confident you can collect the music sheets from them. Before the lesson print out the song on colored paper, cut it apart by measures and laminate each piece (like a puzzle). Create two identical puzzles in two different envelopes.

Choose a member from each team, have them come to a table in the front and hand them each an envelope with the song in it. When you say "Go" the first student to solve the puzzle gets their team a point. You can keep going with a new student until everyone gets a turn or you run out of time. A small token prize like a candy or a sticker as a token prize for the winning team is sure to go down well with this game.

Kelley Hutzley

Classroom Tic-Tac-Toe

For this activity set up 9 chairs in a 3x3 grid. Then divide the students into teams.

One team are the “O’s, the other team are the “X’s”. Then use a set of flashcards with all the musical instruments. Show one team the first card, and call a students name. If the student names the instrument correctly, they may choose a seat in the grid. If they do not know the instrument the other team may try to answer. The first team to get a row completed wins and we continue to play. You could use any flashcards at all - notes, symbols, rests or even composers! Its a good idea to take turns on which team starts the game each time.

Leah Taylor

Flashcards with musical instruments are available in Printable Music Lesson plans - Instruments of the Orchestra from the Fun Music Company.

Down On The Banks

This is a game using the traditional folk song “Down on the Banks”, however it can be done with any short folk song with a strong beat.

You have the kids get into a circle and they put their left hand out to their left side (face-up, like someone might give them five). Then they take their right hand and place it on top of their neighbor’s left hand (face up again). The teacher designates a starting position and when the song begins the starting person takes their right hand and slaps (gently!) to the person whose right hand is on their left hand. This continues around the circle in time with the music until the song ends. The person who got slapped last is “out” and steps out of the circle.

The circle comes together and the song runs again. The crowd that starts to form outside of the circle is so raptured by what is happening inside the circle that it is fun to watch and continue. The circle gets smaller and smaller until there are only two remaining. The two take their right hands and clasp them as if to play a thumb war (except you leave thumbs down). When the song begins the two make a motion with their hands (back and forth, as if they were working a saw). When the song ends the winner is pronounced - whoever has their arm straight (and not bent in) is the winner.

Rachel Barnard

The Rhythm Clock

Draw a simple analogue clock on the board, leaving space around it for 4 beat rhythm patterns. If you have magnetic 4 beat rhythm patterns prepared, stick one at each hour. If you don't have any, simply draw a 4 beat pattern in stick notation using whatever notation the class knows.

As soon as you put the patterns up students will be starting to copy them. Go round the clock starting from 1 o'clock. The teacher claps, then the class. Then the teacher and one student at a time around the circle. Then around the circle one at a time without the teacher. Then play guessing games "what time am I clapping".

Or give each student an hour that they have to clap. If they're too clever for this, combine patterns by playing times like "20 past 7" – the first pattern is the minutes, the second the hour".

And of course, if you have some simple percussion instruments you can hand them out and go round the clock with instruments. If you can play a simple chord accompaniment on a keyboard or have access to a recorded accompaniment this really helps them keep the beat.

Christine

Celebrity Heads

This is a version of the “Celebrity Heads” game.

Three students stand out the front of the class, wearing different labels on their heads (which can be pre-determined by the class), either musical terms, names of instruments, musical notes/symbols (depending on the current focus) or a combination of all.

The students take turns in guessing what their label says. The other students in class give the answer yes or no. If they answer no, the next student at the front of the class takes their turn. The winner is whoever guesses what their label says in the least number of questions.

Jane Forrest

Word Rhythms

You can quickly come up with a series of words to do with a topic eg Dog breeds. Start the students off with some rhythm combinations. Students match up the rhythms with the correct dog breed name. Students can then come up with other dog breeds and write down or match up the rhythms.

They can then go into small groups and put together a series of words with the rhythms and try to say or clap their rhythms at the same time. An offshoot of this idea can be to use body percussion for each of the different rhythmical ideas. If further time and instruments are available tunes can be created to go with the words and thus a silly song is created.

Mary Gentle

Note Races

This game can be played outside, in a playground or any area that is paved or cement. Have a few students draw five manuscript lines about 6-8 feet long with about 2-3 feet of space in between the lines. Next, divide the class into two teams and have them line up behind the bottom line. Once they are ready, call out a note name and the first student in each line races to the line or space of that note. The fastest student to the correct note the winner, give them a point, and then they go to the back of their team's line. The first team to ten points (or whatever you choose) is the winner.

Ashley Davis

Note Bucket Game

Make up a some large cards with a music notes or symbols that the class are currently learning, and tape them to a series of buckets.

Then set the buckets up in front of the class and make a line with tape on the floor about five feet from the buckets or less depending on the class. The idea of the game is to see how many bean bags the students can throw into the buckets. To receive points the students must be able to identify the notes they throw their bean bags into. The game can be played in two or three teams.

Karen Collier

Music Memory

Draw a collection of music symbols on the whiteboard and have the students name them as you do so. After that have them turn their backs (or turn the white board around) and erase one. They must name the missing one. Keep going until they are all gone.

Lonna Possehl

Music Treasure Hunt

Select four contrasting instruments (any that you like...for example a scraping sound, a hitting sound, a shaking sound and a pitched percussion or barred instrument) Each sound will represent a movement (left, right, forward, backward). Practice moving around the room to the sounds. Choose four students to play the instruments, one to be the "treasure hunter" and one to be the "conductor." The hunter should go near the door and close his or her eyes (you can use a blindfold too if you like). Then place something (stuffed animal, etc.) somewhere in the room to be the "treasure". Everyone else has a seat on the ground like a "rock" in the ocean. The conductor tells what instrument to play in order for the hunter to move around the room and find the "treasure" (while their eyes are closed!!!) If they bump into a rock, the game is over and new players are chosen. If they "find the treasure" they are the winners and you can play again if you wish.

This can be used especially when working on timbre...in older grades the students have brought in their band instruments....and we use a brass, woodwind, string and percussion instrument for the four sounds.

Musical Analysis

Photocopy a page of music and have students use different colored markers to identify particular intervals and articulations.

For example, you could make harmonic 3rds blue, melodic 4ths orange, and staccato marks-green. You can adapt this to whatever level and musical concepts the class is currently studying.

Dianne S. Cox

Dice Rhythm Game

Find some small round tokens, about the size of a large coin. On each token draw or print a combination of notes...i.e. 3 quarter notes, a whole note, a dotted half plus a whole...any combination up to a value of 10. Create approximately 50 tokens, with values from 1 count to 10 counts.

To play the game, divide the tokens between the students (or teams in a larger class). Then they take turns rolling a pair of dice. Whatever the dice count is, they must match that to the counts on the tokens. They can use as many or as few tokens on each turn. The game is over when they have to pass 3 times without matching counts, or when they have all their tokens gone.

Nicolene Turnbow

Note Sums Game

Organize the students in two lines facing the board. The first two players in line are given a mathematical equation that the final answer equals either 4 (whole note/rest), 2 (half note/rest), 3 (dotted half note) or 1 (quarter note/rest). Start the equations with only addition and subtraction and then you can move onto using multiplication and division. The answer must be drawn on the board in the form of a musical note. Give them 30 seconds after reading the equation twice and then it goes to the next person in line. Keep track of each teams correct answers and the first team to 10 points wins (or whatever). This game is most suitable for grades 3 to 6, and you can vary the equations based on what they have been doing in their classrooms.

Dorothy Weir

Maze Game

Construct a maze on the classroom floor from music textbooks or other objects. The aim is for one student to go through the maze blindfolded. Here is the fun part: Movement directions for the student are given through various instrumental tone colors such as sticks for right; triangle for left; ratchet for turn until the sound stops; hand drum for forward; or cabasa for backwards. If the blindfolded student's foot touches any part of the books in place for the maze, they are out. The student must remember what sound for what move and one sound is made for every step the student is ordered to take. Small steps are piano (soft) sounds and big steps are forte sounds. One student is appointed per instrument. A field judge is also appointed to be the one to determine directions or to make a judgement on whether the blindfolded student's foot touched a book or not. If the candidate makes it through, both he/she and the judge get a prize.

Pam D. Worley

Playing Musical Words

Using manuscript on a whiteboard draw up notes that spell out a word: (eg. “edge”, “dad”, “face”, “cabbage” etc..) one point is first allocated to a student or team who correctly identifies the word.

Then you can get the students to ‘play’ the word on an instrument. The first to accurately play the notes in correct octave position wins a point.

Stacey Smart

Conducting Game

I begin by asking if anyone can think of a two-beat song. If not I suggest 'Row, row, row your boat' (Or age appropriate if they are older) then I get the group to clap down on their knees for the down beat and click for the upbeat. Ask if they notice the difference in dynamics. Explain why the downbeat is louder.

Do the same for a three-beat song (eg. 'Happy Birthday') and four-beat (eg. Twinkle Twinkle)

Then I play some contemporary kids music and ask them to 'conduct' or clap/click the rhythm as soon as they hear it. When I see a child that has it I indicate they must stand and stop conducting. The game is over when all are standing. Play the songs in random order ie first a four-beat, then two-beat, then three-beat etc.

Audrey Reynders

Found Sounds

Anything can be found and used to make noise/sound, thus the term 'found sound'. Since children love to make noise, ask them to locate an item in the classroom and experiment with the sounds that item can make. Give them a short amount of time to experiment, explaining that at the end of the specified time, they will be given an opportunity (if desired) to share their unique instrument/'found sounds' with the rest of the class.

After everyone has shared, let the class vote on the 'found sound' they thought was most unique or made the most interesting sound. After this, if there is still time left in the class period, the teacher can extend this lesson by connecting 'found sound' to other subjects. For instance, students could write an article about their 'found sound', then read it to the class; a dramatic presentation could be written and acted out using one or all of the 'found sound' instruments; students could teach the how-to's of playing their 'found sound' to their fellow classmates; students could connect their 'found sound' with their favorite song/CD/IPOD recording and fit the two together creating a musical piece. Science and Math could work into this project. The ideas/extensions could go on and on.

Since students aren't usually given much time to be creative during an average school day, this 'found sound' lesson could be a catalyst to releasing a child's creativity. Ask for further ideas from the students and be pleasantly surprised at their ideas!

Kendra F. Beagles

“Stomp”

Have the class watch a portion of a dvd about the group STOMP. Afterwards, the kids should form small groups and pick out unique objects from a box and create their own verison of STOMP. Near the end of class each group has to perform their creation in front of the class. It covers the National Standards of playing instruments alone and with others, improvising, creating, listening, and showing respect for other’s performances

Joy Shreckengost

Looking for more?

“40 Lifesavers for the Music Teacher” contains more similar ideas, drawn from Music Teachers all over the world.

[Click here to find out more about it »](#)

The Fun Music Company exists to support Music Teachers with ready to use Lesson Plans, Worksheets and Games for Music Teachers.

[Click here to view the current catalog »](#)

