

# Instruments In The Classroom



©2007 Magna Systems  
Suite 301  
641 W. Lake Street  
Chicago, IL 60661

800.203.7060  
800.327.1443

[www.magnasystems.com](http://www.magnasystems.com)



# Instruments in the Classroom

## **Legal Niceties**

*The guide*

Copyright © 2007 Magna Systems

This teaching guide is copyrighted according to the terms of the Creative Commons non-commercial license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.5/>). It may be reproduced, in its part or its entirety, for classroom use. No part of this guide may be reproduced for sale by any party.

*The video*

Copyright © 2007 Magna Systems

This video program is protected under U.S. copyright law. No part of this video may be reproduced or transmitted by any means, electronic or mechanical, without the written permission of the Publisher, except where permitted by law.

## **Magna Systems Catalog and ISBN Numbers**

Catalog Number MG-2002-07

VHS ISBN 1-55740-849-1

DVD ISBN 1-55740-845-9

## **Close-Captioning**

This program is close-captioned.

## **Our Guarantee**

Please contact us with any questions or concerns at:

Magna Systems

Suite 301

641 W. Lake Street

Chicago, IL 60661

800.203.7060

800.327.1443

[info@magnasystems.com](mailto:info@magnasystems.com)

[www.magnasystems.com](http://www.magnasystems.com)



# Instruments in the Classroom

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Overview .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Introduction .....	2
Pentatonic Instruments .....	3
Call and Response .....	3
Rhythm Instruments .....	4
Instructional Goals.....	4
Complex Instruments.....	6
Involving Parents.....	7
Review.....	7
<b>Interactive Elements.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Questions for Discussion.....	8
Activity: Instructional Goals.....	9
<b>Additional Information.....</b>	<b>10</b>
For More Information: Books & Articles, Links.....	10



## SUMMARY

*“The first instrument I ever played was in kindergarten or pre-school. “*

*“Children need to know that music comes from humans, not from a CD player. “*

Musical instruments work well in the classroom, and you can learn how to use them successfully – even if you aren't a rock star. *Instruments in the Classroom* demonstrates the use of musical instruments in pre-school and kindergarten classrooms, and offers a wide variety of ideas to help you incorporate musical instruments into your curriculum. Any teacher, with any level of musical ability, can have fun and reach important instructional objectives at the same time, and this program will show you how.

### **Explore:**

- Who can use instruments in the classroom.
- What types of instruments work best with young children.
- What concepts a child learns from manipulating instruments.
- When instruments help – *and* when they *don't* work.
- Where the use of musical instruments fits within state-mandated instructional objectives.
- How teachers can use instruments to teach language, social skills, and math concepts, even if they have never studied music.
- How a teacher with rudimentary musical skills can incorporate melodic instruments into his or her curriculum.
- How teachers (or parents) with great musical skills can really get children excited.
- How musical instruments can be used to teach children with disabilities.
- How to emulate other teachers' successful instrumental activities.

## OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

Any teacher with any level of ability can use a variety of musical instruments in the classroom, both to have fun and to reach important instructional objectives at the same time. An instrument can be something as simple as a paper bag (or just about anything that makes noise) or something more complicated that takes a little practice and training to master, such as a guitar or a portable keyboard.

Young children delight in discovering that music comes from human beings, and not just from CD players. By seeing a teacher create sound and emotion with an instrument, students learn important lessons and skills that touch every aspect of their lives.

Children will make music with almost anything, and the most basic instruments to start with are generally those that create rhythm. The table, the chairs, the classroom doors – all of those provide a method for creating music.

Improvisation is a wonderful thing. Give children the opportunity and the encouragement, start with a simple rhythm, and watch them build on first the base rhythm and then on the rhythms of their classmates. Music is an activity which builds on itself, once it's begun. It unleashes creativity and builds community among those participating, without their even realizing it.

## PENTATONIC INSTRUMENTS

### Key Words and Ideas

Orff instruments  
pentatonic scale  
concordant  
discordant

Many schools these days use **Orff instruments**. Orff instruments are specially designed for younger or beginning musicians, and have removable bars. This aspect helps make instruments smaller and less intimidating for first-time users, but the real advantage is these instruments can be easily set to the **pentatonic scale**, a scale with a five-note octave. The pentatonic scale is found in musical culture all over the world. In the United States, you find it frequently in what we might call “cowboy music”. The beauty of the pentatonic scale is that it is very forgiving: no matter what the child plays, no matter what order the notes are in, the result will sound relatively pleasant. It produces **concordant**, or agreeable, tones rather than **discordant**, or disagreeable, ones. That’s a real plus for a teacher trapped in a room with several just-beginning Beethovens!

### **Tip:**

Let students provide the soundtrack to a story, perhaps about a historical event. As the teacher tells the story, students can improvise the sounds of rain or thunder, of flowing water or trotting horses, of a rattlesnake or a revolutionary musket.

Some instruments are better than others for classroom use. Instruments that children can shake or strike are often good because they take very little skill and are easily used to produce recognizable rhythms. Other types of instruments, such as woodwinds (flutes or whistles, for instance), are less advisable because they can easily spread germs. Some fun instruments for classroom use include marimbas, which are made of wood and have a mellow, soft tone, or drums, such as tongue drums or bongos. Instruments like these have several advantages. They can be played with mallets, which are always fun. And they not only produce sounds, but they vibrate. Children who aren’t playing can touch the sides of the instrument and feel the vibration, and participate in that fashion.

## CALL AND RESPONSE

### Key Words and Ideas

pitch

Call and response is an excellent way to involve children in improvisational music-making. One person provides the “question”, the other, the “answer”. There is no right or wrong. This technique allows children to work together to build something entirely theirs. It teaches concepts of rhythm and, if using certain kinds of instruments, **pitch**; that is, tone.

The activity can become more complicated as children become more attuned and involved. For example, the teacher may say that any “answer” must begin with the last three beats or notes of the “question”, or that it must follow the same rhythm. It’s possible to take this exercise even further and move from physical instruments to the instrument of the body – the voice. Once children are comfortable with rhythm and music, they may welcome the opportunity to sing back and forth.

### RHYTHM INSTRUMENTS

#### Key Words and Ideas

kinesthetic

Preschoolers and kindergarteners will be fascinated with just about every rhythm instrument that teachers give them – if for no other reason than that they can make a racket and be allowed, even encouraged, to do so. Children need to be involved and feel like they are a part of the music. If each child is given a different instrument – one a bongo set, one a rhythm stick, one a maraca – they will begin all on their own to orchestrate themselves within the group. They teach themselves how to put the different instruments together, and as they do so they inspire themselves.

Playing with rhythm instruments allows students to feel the beat, and learn rhythm and cadence. This in turn provides them with an invaluable **kinesthetic**, or bodily, connection to basic mathematical concepts of numbers and units that will be learned in more abstract form when they formally study arithmetic.

### INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

#### Key Words and Ideas

U.S. Department of Education  
national standards  
state standards  
concepts

With a little practice, a teacher can use rhythm instruments to reach important instructional goals. These goals vary by state; check the website of the **U.S. Department of Education** to find the goals for a particular state.

**National standards** are global in nature, and provide a framework for the states to follow when setting up individual state curricula. At the national level the frameworks are organized in tiers, listing what a student should know by the end of 4th grade, 8th grade, 12th grade, and “12th grade proficient” (otherwise known as “Advanced Placement” or “AP”).

**State standards** may be aligned by grade level, as they are in California. Other states have opted for a more general framework following the tiered national framework with its longer periods and less minute detail.

A typical example would be the curriculum framework for the State of California for a child in kindergarten. A kindergarten teacher can find out just what a five-year-old should know before moving on to first grade in his or her state. In this case, the objectives in music are actually quite specific. Before a student moves from kindergarten to first grade in California, he or she is expected to understand certain clearly defined aspects of music, including the basics of musical dynamics, the difference between loud and soft, fast and slow, and even high and low pitch. Kindergarten students in California are also expected to know and respond to the abstract symbols that communicate the basics of music. The framework in California suggests a child at this level “should be able to use icons or invented symbols to represent beat.”

**Tip:**

Drums, tambourines, and shakers are all good instruments on which to start young musicians. Children can shake them beside, behind or in front of themselves. They can move them from side to side or up and down. It's not necessary to teach one hand to do one thing while another does something else, as is the case with many instruments. Children can begin to learn the rudiments of music without the added worry and concentration of learning to operate a complex instrument.

It's easy to teach children various **concepts** using music and instruments.

- Starting and stopping: By playing a game such as “Red Light, Green Light” with simple musical instruments, children readily learn this concept. At the “green light”, everyone makes as much noise as they can by shaking or drumming or banging their instrument, as appropriate. “Red light”- everyone stops, all at once!
- Fast and slow: Use puppets or stuffed animals; for example, a turtle and a rabbit. Children can “shake, rattle and roll” very quickly when they see the rabbit, and slowly when they see the turtle.
- Loud and soft: Think about using voices for this one. Have the kids roar *loudly* as a lion, and then purr *softly* like a kitten.

Start simple, with simple concepts, and then build upon them.

One wonderful thing about children is they don't know what they're supposed to know or not know. They are very open to new experiences. Teachers can open doors for them, and let them just experience and enjoy. Let them experiment with instruments. As they do so, talk about pitch, dynamics, and timbre as the occasion arises – as it will.

### COMPLEX INSTRUMENTS

#### Key Words and Ideas

don't worry!  
autoharp  
cultural diversity  
percussive instruments  
woodwinds  
reading music

After you're comfortable using simple rhythm instruments in classroom, think about adding instruments that have pitches and allow students to explore primitive aspects of melody and harmony. A trip to a local music store will reveal a treasure trove of inexpensive instruments that you can bring into your classroom.

**Many teachers worry** that they lack musical experience, and wonder what they can bring to their classroom that would allow them to introduce music to their students in a way that doesn't require a music degree. The nice thing about music is that there are all kinds of ways to get involved on different levels. The whole idea behind incorporating music into the classroom is to make it fun and stress-free – for the students *and* the teacher. This doesn't have to mean recreating a night at the Pops. Music can be beautiful and fun in simple forms as well as advanced.

#### Tip:

If a teacher wants to move beyond simple drums and tambourines, but doesn't know how to play a guitar or doesn't have access to a piano, consider the **autoharp**. These are very common in schools and allow anyone to easily play chords. The nice thing about the autoharp is that all of the keys that sound good together are right next to each other. Unlike a guitar, where one must know how to create the chords, the autoharp player simply pushes a button and presto! – instant song back-up. And children enjoy pushing the buttons, too.

Another trick is to introduce instruments through addressing **cultural diversity**. Different cultures create and rely on different instruments in making their unique sounds of music. So not only can a teacher talk about rhythm and the concept of being part of a larger ensemble sound, but at the same time students can learn about global history and cultures.

Although **percussive instruments**, such as drums, are the most basic and easiest to start children on, there are plenty of other types of instruments that can enrich a child's education. Another such family of instruments is the **woodwind** class, which includes flutes, clarinets, bassoons, and oboes. A recorder is one of the simplest woodwinds. Blow into it, and it produces a noise. The sounds change as the player moves his or her fingers. Simple, but an excellent introduction to an entire new class of instruments.

Once the move has been made into instruments with pitch, it opens a new area – that of **reading music**. This can seem intimidating, but there are ways to “read” music aside from memorizing the traditional staff and notes. Some teachers use a color method instead: if the note is yellow, the child plays a certain key/chord/note. One doesn’t have to know it’s a “C” or an “E flat” to play it.

### INVOLVING PARENTS

Teachers don’t teach in a vacuum. They may be alone in their classrooms, but there may be other teachers in the school, or interested and involved parents, who have musical abilities or aptitudes. These other folks may well be delighted to be asked to collaborate with the teacher on musical learning projects and activities. Some children in the class may even have parents who are musicians. Consider inviting these parents to join the class for a day, or at certain times, to perform for or with the students.

And consider learning along with your students. For example, the recorder is a relatively simple instrument, and in the second or third grade children can pick it up quite quickly. If the teacher doesn’t know how to play, why not learn right alongside the students? There are many books designed for self-teaching, or perhaps another adult can come in to perform “basic training” – or even a student who comes from a musical family.

### REVIEW

You don’t have to be a virtuoso – or even have “talent” – to use musical instruments effectively in your classroom. You just need the desire to have fun and educate your young students.

Percussion instruments are especially nice for very young children, because they’re easy to play. These instruments are also helpful in teaching a wide variety of lessons, from learning how to respond to abstract symbols to exploring cultural diversity. They generally handily meet state standards and individual schools’ educational goals in a way that’s fun and creative for both teacher and students.

A variety of inexpensive musical instruments can also be found at neighborhood music stores. A wide selection of readily available instruments, ranging from xylophones to small plastic wind instruments, makes it easy for even the novice teacher-musician to play the basic tune of popular children’s songs. And such instruments can help students explore melody and harmony.

Autoharps and inexpensive electronic keyboards allow the inexperienced teacher to play chords almost immediately, and with a bit more effort, simple guitar chords are learned relatively easily too.

Teachers who bring musical instruments into the classroom enrich the lives of their students in many ways. Children who learn simple rhythms, patterns and melodies, and who sound them out on instruments, are developing mental abilities that will help them enormously as they begin to tackle more advanced skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you play any musical instruments? Which ones? How old were you when you learned to play, and who taught you, or did you teach yourself? What instruments do you not know how to play, but wish you did?
2. Do you find yourself spontaneously making music? What everyday implements could (or do) you use to make a sound, tap a rhythm, chime a tone?
3. What items do you see in the classroom today which could be used to make music? What sounds would they make? How could they be used together to create an 'orchestra'?
4. List some instruments you think would be useful and/or practical to have in a classroom. Why these instruments in particular? Which ones do you think would be most essential? Most instructive? Most fun?

## ACTIVITY: INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

Using the guidelines provided by your state, list the instructional goals you as a teacher will need to meet. In small groups of 2 – 4, brainstorm ideas for classroom lessons which will help you and your students meet these goals. Then discuss these with the entire class. How many different methods did you and your classmates devise? Which do you think will be most effective, and why?

## FOR MORE INFORMATION...

### BOOKS & ARTICLES

- Cotton, Maggie. (2005). *Agogo Bells to Xylophone: A Friendly Guide to Classroom Percussion Instruments*. London: A&C Black.
- Kleiner, Lynn. (2003). *Kids Can Listen, Kids Can Move!* Miami, FL: Warner Bros. Publications.
- Miche, Mary. (2002). *Weaving Music Into Young Minds with Education*. Albany, NY: Delmar Learning.
- Pugh, Aelwyn and Lesley. (1998). *Music in the Early Years: Teaching and Learning in the First Three Years of School*. London: Routledge.
- Sporborg, James Douglas. (1998). *Music in Every Classroom: A Resource Guide for Integrating Music Across the Curriculum, Grades K8*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.
- Storms, Jerry and Anne Griffiths, trans. (1995). *101 Music Games for Children: Fun and Learning with Rhythm and Song*. Alameda, CA: Hunter House, Inc.
- Traugh, Steven and Susan. (2005). *Mother Goose Brain Boost: Using Music and Movement to Teach Cognitive Skills (Early Learning)*. Huntington Beach, CA: Creative Teaching Press.
- Young, Susan and Joanna Glover. (1998). *Music in the Early Years*. Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis, Inc.

### LINKS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| American Orff-Schulwerk Association                       | <a href="http://www.aosa2.org/">http://www.aosa2.org/</a>   |
| Dallas Symphony Orchestra:<br>Music, Fun & Games          | <a href="http://www.dsokids.com/2001/rooms/DSO_Intro.html">http://www.dsokids.com/2001/rooms/DSO_Intro.html</a>     |
| Early Childhood Music and Movement<br>Association (ECMMA) | <a href="http://www.ecmma.org/">http://www.ecmma.org/</a>   |
| Music Together  | <a href="http://www.musictogether.com/">http://www.musictogether.com/</a>   |
| The National Association for Music Education              | <a href="http://www.menc.org/information/prek12/echild.html">http://www.menc.org/information/prek12/echild.html</a> |
| Percussive Arts Society                                   | <a href="http://www.pas.org/">http://www.pas.org/</a>   |
| Tobin Music   | <a href="http://www.tobinmusic.co.uk/">http://www.tobinmusic.co.uk/</a>   |
| U.S. Department of Education                              | <a href="http://www.ed.gov/">http://www.ed.gov/</a>   |