

NIXON SCHOOL MUSIC UPDATE

DECEMBER 2007

Mrs. Dooley, music specialist

Hello parents! I am new to Nixon this year and have been having fun getting to know your children. They are respectful and eager to learn. I'd like to tell you a bit about my approach to teaching general music. My teaching methods are based on singing--the child's "first instrument." I use mostly traditional Anglo-American and Afro-American folk songs along with a smattering of material from around the world. There will be several concerts during the year in which we will perform more contemporary music.

In general music class, we spend most of our time making music--singing, playing games, and playing instruments. Through the use of songs and games we develop musical literacy (reading music). We will follow a sequence of rhythmic and melodic elements, using "ta" and "tee-tee" rhythm names and melodic solfege (do re mi, etc.).

Sprinkled into the mix will be folk dance, listening to music from the western classical tradition as well as world music, and learning about composers and musical instruments. We will cover the standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. In all grades I have been working slowly through the curriculum to make sure that all students have a thorough understanding of the concepts presented.

Kindergarten

The two major goals for this level are singing in tune (matching pitch) and successfully keeping a steady beat. Every child sings alone each class and we encourage each other to use our best singing voice. Shy Puppy and Bold Puppy have helped us to become comfortable with this routine. The children are working on music for the January 16 concert (nursery rhymes and a lullaby) and have

been practicing skipping, galloping, hopping and walking to music. The concert lyrics will be posted on the website in the PTO/Specialists area.

Grade One

At this level we have been working hard on matching pitch. Every child sings alone each class; Shy Puppy and Bold Puppy help us to sing in tune and to hear elements of high/low, fast/slow, and loud/soft. We are learning a lot of song material and games which will help us later in the year with our formal study of pitch and rhythmic elements. We have just begun our study of the instrument families and will be listening to "Carnival of the Animals" in the new year. Many children already know the instruments--kudos to you parents!

Grade Two

This is a fabulous group of singers! They are very comfortable singing alone and are grasping concepts quickly. They enjoy playing games such as "Apple Tree" and "Tideo." We are working hard on our music for the January 16 concert and are learning about the slaves in America and how they used music to communicate and express their feelings. In February we will learn quarter notes and eighth notes and will begin our study of the musical scale with So Mi and La. You can find the concert lyrics posted on the website in the PTO/Specialists area.

Grade Three

As you know, the recorders are here! The children are very excited about playing recorder and want to learn lots of songs. At the beginning, however, we move a little slowly until everyone is comfortable with the fingering and can produce a beautiful sound! We are working with quarters, eighths, and are beginning half and

whole notes. Recorder books will be passed out after we have a little more music-reading practice. The children have enjoyed singing and playing games this fall, especially “Jump Jim Joe” and “Rocky Mountain.”

Grade Four

In fourth grade we have begun learning songs from different regions of the United States, such as “Erie Canal.” In January we will focus on songs of the south, especially slave spirituals. The students are composing with quarters, eighths, half notes and rests and will begin their study of scale solfege in the new year. They enjoy playing games such as “Rocky Mountain,” “Biddy Biddy” and “Zudio.”

Grade Five

These children are enthusiastic singers and dancers! They are enjoying games and dances such as “Down the River” and “Chimes of Dunkirk.” They have a solid grasp of some basic rhythmic elements, so we will move ahead in the new year with sixteenth notes and dotted rhythms. They have learned to conduct in meters of two and three and are just beginning their study of the scale. In chorus, which meets once a week, we have been working on singing with accurate pitch and beautiful tone and preparing for our concert January 16. The concert lyrics will be posted on the website in the PTO/Specialists area.