Using Song Picture Books to Support Literacy and Musical Skills in Kindergarten

An action research study by Kelly Schenbeck Riley

Rationale for the Study:

- Interest in arts integration
- Interest in showing a connection between my two licensure areas
- Elimination of music class from the kindergarten program
Research Questions:

How do read-aloud lessons using song picture books affect the musical skills and phonological awareness skills of students in a half-day, suburban kindergarten classroom?

What effect does integrating music content through the reading of song picture books have on students' literacy practices?

What effect does integrating music content through the reading of song picture books have on students' musical practices?

How do students interact with song picture books when reading independently?

Review of the Literature:

- Early music skills
- Literacy learning and phonological awareness
- Song picture books in the classroom
Early Music Skills:

- Unaccompanied singing in the head voice
- Narrow vocal range
- Movement and rhythmic skills
- Auditory discrimination of comparative musical sounds
- Developing musical memory
- Listening skills (Choksy, 1981)

Literacy learning and phonological awareness:

- Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words
- Phonemic awareness is the aural ability to segment words into phonemes and is essential to children beginning to read (Adams, 1990)

- Lamb and Gregory (1993)
- Gromko (2005)
Using Song Picture Books in the Classroom:

- A song picture book is a single song in picture book format (Lamme, 1979)
- Language play in songs encourages phonemic awareness learning
- Predictable text patterns and story structures
- Teach the song, link the song to print, and involve the children in literature extension activities (Barclay & Walwer, 1992, p. 78)

Action Research Methodology:

- Classroom demographics
- Action plan
- Sample lesson plan
- Sample annotated bibliography entry
- Data collection methods
Classroom Demographics:

- 20 kindergarten students
- 12 boys, 8 girls
- 2 students receive pull-out ELL tutoring
- 7 students receive an additional half-day of literacy intervention class (KLIP)
- Incomplete socioeconomic information is available

Action plan:

- Total of 8 school weeks
- Pre- and post-assessments of individual students
- Meeting and collaborating with the classroom teacher, Miss Butler
- The lessons: interactive read-aloud, shared reading, literacy extension activities, embedded music instruction
- Observing in the classroom
Sample Lesson Plan:

Lesson 2: March 10, 2009

Goals:
1) Practice matching pitch, good singing technique
2) Practice appropriate audience behavior
3) Practice identifying rhyming words
4) Practice patting the heartbeat of a song

Objectives:
1) The students will sing with correct posture and in their head voice.
2) The students will display appropriate audience behavior when listening to a song sung by the teacher.
3) The students will match rhyming words from a known song picture book.
4) The students will begin to hear and pat the heartbeat of a song.

Procedure Outline:
Greeting ⇒ “Hello, boys and girls” (so mi so-so mi)
“Hello, Mrs. Riley” (so mi so-so mi-mi)
Introduce listening icon and signal

Shared Reading ⇒ Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go (Langstaff, 1991)
Students put prepared sentence strips in correct order in pocket chart
Replace rhyming words, look at beginning sound, rime, rhyme
Sing each verse or partial verse, remind about technique using icons

Sample Lesson Plan
Continued:

Read-aloud ⇒ Miss Mary Mack (Hoberman, 2003)
Teacher introduces book, author, illustrator and sings aloud to class
Students display appropriate audience behavior
Discuss story, look closely at illustrations (student-led)
Practice singing first three verses for memorization; practice technique
Point out “juicy words” from book and relate to poetry learning
Teacher demonstrates how to pat heartbeat on legs; all practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Music Standards</th>
<th>Literacy Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑ Singing, alone and with others</td>
<td>☑ Phonemic Awareness, Word Recognition and Fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Performing on instruments</td>
<td>☑ Acquisition of Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Improvising</td>
<td>☑ Reading Process: Concepts of Print, Comprehension Strategies and Self-Monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Composing and arranging music</td>
<td>☑ Reading Applications: Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Reading and notating music</td>
<td>☑ Reading Applications: Literary Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Listening to, analyzing, and describing music</td>
<td>☑ Writing Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Evaluating music and music performances</td>
<td>☑ Writing Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts</td>
<td>☑ Writing Conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Understanding music in relation to history and culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Annotated Bibliography Entry:


**ISBN-13:** 9780525475705

**Subjects:** Animals, animal sounds, humor, inventions

**Vocal range:** Major 6th

**Music notation?** No

**High-freq. words:** a, and, on, he, here

**Notes:** In this new take on “Old MacDonald,” an aspiring scientist, Young MacDonald makes a machine that can combine two different animals. He makes a hig (horse plus pig), deese (donkey plus geese), and four others. This book is perfect for segmenting onsets and rimes, and children will enjoy figuring out what the new animals will be called.

Data Collection Methods:

- Literacy skills assessments
- Music skills assessments
- Observations and interviews
Results and Discussion:

- Phonological awareness assessment results
- Music assessment results
- Observational and interview data

Phonological awareness assessment results:

- Class PA skills average increased by 13%
- ELL students' average PA score increased 17%
- KLIP students' average increased 23%
- Students who were not receiving the above services increased 5.3%
- Specific skills showing the most growth were segmenting word parts (+21%) and deleting sounds (+20%)
Phonological awareness assessment results:

Figure 1: Phonological Awareness Assessment Results

Average PA task scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PA Task</th>
<th>Pre-assessment percent average</th>
<th>Post-assessment percent average</th>
<th>Percent change in average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blending word parts</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segmenting word parts</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>+21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blending sounds</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>+7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segmenting sounds</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding sounds</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleting sounds</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>+20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Music assessment results:

- Class musical skills average increased by 10%
- All students’ total scores increased or stayed the same
- Girls' average score increased from 77% to 81% (+4%)
- Boys' average score increased from 65% to 79% (+14%), but they still scored lower than the girls on all but standard 6
- 8 students who misidentified higher-lower on the pre-assessment, got it correct on the post-assessment
Observational and interview data:

- Song picture books enabled students to work independently during pocket chart centers
- All students chose to read the song picture books at some time, and they often read them with a buddy
- The funny and entertaining books were the students' favorites

Figure 3: Favorite Song Picture Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miss Mary Mack</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young MacDonald</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over in the Garden</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiddle-I-Fee</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knick Knack</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy Whack</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Wore Her Red Dress</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bear Went Over the Mountain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shake My Sillies Out</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knick Knack Paddy Whack</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young MacDonald</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Wore Her Red Dress</td>
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5/20/2012
Observational and interview data:

- During interviews, only 3 children did not sing the text when reading a song picture book
- More students sang in their head voices and were able to match pitch as the unit progressed
- The students usually remembered to use good singing technique when singing in other settings, not just during song picture book lessons

Recommendations and Conclusion:

- “It’s a rhyming book song, so you remember it in your head!” –Garrett
- 7 out of 8 Ohio English/language arts standards and 7 of 9 national music standards were addressed by the lessons
- Our kindergarten staff plans to use more song and rhyme books at the beginning of next school year in order to target PA
Recommendations and Conclusion:

• If kindergarten and music teachers in our district were made aware of both curricula and how to use song picture books as a means of instruction, the students would benefit from a more integrated approach.

• I hope that by sharing this study with other teachers and administrators, I can encourage more music integration and positively influence the musical and literacy development of more children in my school district.

Thank You!

For a copy of the complete reference list or any sample documents, please contact me at schenbeck-riley.1@osu.edu.