

My Beliefs

Philosophical Musings about Teaching Music

1

A bank of carefully selected songs can
---teach, re-enforce and celebrate:

- *what it means to be a Canadian, a citizen of a country
- *how to live in Canadian community
- *Canadian beliefs
- *what it means to be part of a world community
- *skills and ideas that are needed for the time in which we live

Choices of music reflect our beliefs and ethics.

2

Good music is not meant for a 1-time singing/hearing/playing.

Songs may be repeated in a variety of grades
to: build a store of "comfort"
and "mood" material for living
and to provide enjoyment.

One song may provide different kinds of learning
at different grade levels.

Music may be enjoyed more than once.

3

Language learning has 4 parts leading to communication:
listening and seeing, and then speaking and reading.

Music is a language, most easily learned
when melody and rhythm are experienced and then sung,
seen, and then read.

The brain's ability to assimilate language is most acute
at young ages, particularly between 2 and 6.

Wide and varied use of musical vocabulary, and music
needs to be a part of primary music.

Music is a language, languages are communication.

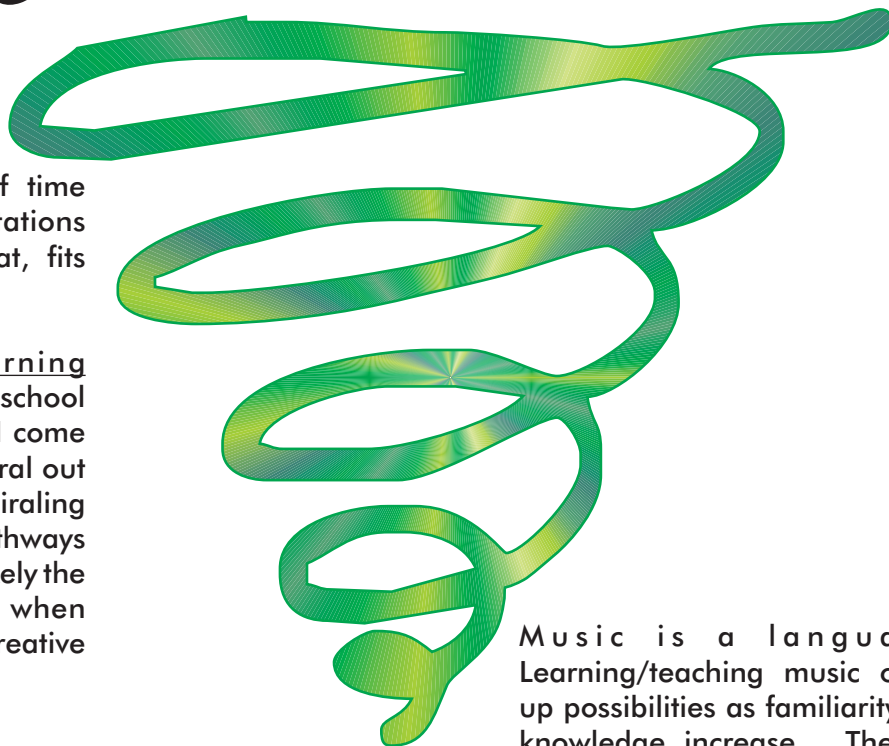
The Brain and Spiral Learning

Teaching music in blocks of time based on learning expectations e.g. pitch or keeping a beat, fits neatly into a yearly planbook.

I prefer to weave learning expectations throughout a school year. Time and time again, I come back to central ideas then spiral out and up into new ideas. Spiraling back to ideas strengthens pathways in the brain, making it more likely the ideas will be accessible when needed/wanted or in a creative process.

Some musical concepts e.g. beat, are highly dependant on development. Awareness of this is especially important in primary grades. A concept that a student seems oblivious to in September, may be integrated into use by the same student in April ---partially because of teaching, but also partially because of their own development.

Hearing, doing, reading and seeing music strengthens the connections between the sides of the brain. Studies have shown stronger physical pathways through the corpus callosum in musicians. So spiral teaching honours the way in which learning music can build brain connections, which in turn enhance all areas of our lives. My interest in right/left brain functions grew through the time when I regularly visited with people who had experienced a change in their brain function. People who would struggle to find words to say what they wanted could easily sing words to a song. Perhaps by encouraging musical lives, we are helping students build a safe place, in more ways than one, for changes that come to us all.



right brain *creating
left brain *analyzing
music combines both

Music is a language. Learning/teaching music opens up possibilities as familiarity and knowledge increase. There is data that may be taught a part of music, but the data, the facts are not the essence of the teaching. The essence of teaching music, is the music itself --singing, playing, listening, dancing, creating, dreaming as music becomes a way of hearing and communicating with others

Music Is ...

Music is listening, voicing, reading, creating and thinking. It crosses boundaries between countries, between people and between parts of the brain. Its study helps to develop pathways in the brain and provides opportunities to put ideas from other subjects into action.

Music is also a subject in and of itself. When children grow up, they may or may not choose to read books or do their own income tax, but chances are they will continue to experience music their whole lives. Exploring and learning about how music is made may add to their ability to enjoy and participate in music making now and in the future.

Music is an intrinsic part of being human. It can bring both comfort and challenge. Making music can draw us closer to each other in community, and open our hearts to what lies beyond us.

communicating
writing

Music is all about patterns, sets, intervals, halves and quarters,
so music is math.

science
patterns
creating

Music is all about communicating ideas, stories, questions and feeling,
so music is language arts.

language arts
social studies

Music is all about wave patterns, metal and wood, diaphragms and lungs, songs about the world and the creatures in it,
so music is science.

health
reading

Music is all about moving, breathing and dance,
so music is physical education.

math
listening
working together
physical education

Music is all about where we came from,
how we got here and where we are going,
so music is social studies.