

Meet Them Where They Are: Fostering Collaboration and Success Between Instrumental and Vocal Music Teachers

Miriam Capellan, miriam.capellan@apsva.us

Theresa Ducassoux, tducassoux@gmail.com

Brittany Gonzalez, britt.dietz@gmail.com

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I. Introduction

II. Collaboration: the key to a unified music program

- A. Share a common language and methodology (for us, this is the Feierabend approach)
- B. Team planning and team teaching
 1. Find common time to sit down to vertically plan
 2. Use Google tools to collaborate online (repertoire planning, pacing, concert programs, parent mailings, etc.)
- C. Attend rehearsals if possible
 1. Show students that they are not learning in a vacuum
 2. Strengthens relationships with students AND colleagues
 3. It is ALWAYS nice to have an extra set of eyes and ears to help out (accompany on piano, run sectionals, assist with classroom management)
- D. Use social media to celebrate success

III. The General Music Experience (pre-instrument)

- A. Tuneful. Beatful. Artful.
- B. **First Steps in Music, PK-1**
 1. Build foundational repertoire knowledge early on
 - a) What songs do you want them to learn on their instruments years from now?
 2. 8-part Musical Workout
 - a) Pitch Exploration i.e. warming up the voice (Slide whistle, toys, balls, scarves, books, Google Doodles)
 - b) Song Fragments (echo songs/call & response)
 - (1) Students sing as whole group & individually (informal assessment opportunity)
 - c) Simple Songs (ex:)
 - (1) Teacher as vocal model before whole group and finally solo singing
 - d) Arioso (vocal improvisation)
 - (1) Tools: Puppets, picture books, Rory's story cubes
 - e) Movement Exploration
 - (1) Develop movement based on Laban themes (space, time, levels, pathways etc.)
 - f) Movement for Form & Expression (fingerplays/action songs/circle games/Move its)
 - (1) A great opportunity to introduce future Conversational Solfege material in game form!

Favorites include: Snail Snail (C.S. Unit 4), Mouse Mousie (C.S. Unit 5), Closet Key (C.S. Unit 4)

- g) Beat Motions
 - (1) Teacher and student-led
 - (2) with/without unpitched percussion
 - h) Songtales (ex: Momma Buy Me a China Doll)
 - (1) Teacher as musical storyteller
 - (2) Great “ending” to a class
 - (3) Develop listening skills and more opportunity for modeling tuneful singing
3. Assess readiness for Conversational Solfege (see ch. 11 in Feierabend Fundamentals)

C. Conversational Solfege:

What we do:

2nd Grade: Level 1, Units 1, 2, & part of 3

3rd Grade: Level 1, Unit 3 & 4 **w/ recorder**

4th Grade: Level 2, Unit 5 & 6, **chorus/instrumental music offered**

5th Grade: Level 2, Unit 6+ **chorus/instrumental music offered**

1. 12 step music literacy program. Steps include:

- a) ****NOTE**** the CS binder provides MANY lesson ideas/games/activities for each of these steps and is an invaluable resource
- b) Conversation Solfege [CS]-Readiness
 - (1) Review or introduce songs you would like to be part of the core library. For example, at the end of second grade begin incorporating Mi, Re, Do songs that you would like them to be able to play on their recorders in 3rd grade
- c) CS-Rote
- d) CS-Decode Familiar
 - (1) “Translate” songs into rhythm syllables or solfege.
- e) CS-Decode Unfamiliar (*formal assessment*)
 - (1) Same as above but with songs that they do not know
- f) CS-Create (*formal assessment*)
 - (1) Students create original, oral compositions of rhythms or syllables (depending on the unit) **do not rush this step!**
 - (2) 85%+ of class should achieve mastery at this before moving on to **reading.**
- g) Reading-Rote
 - (1) Teacher reads, students echo
- h) Reading-Decode Familiar
 - (1) Reading familiar songs using solfege or rhythm syllables (i.e. reading Closet Key)
- i) Reading-Decode Unfamiliar (*formal assessment*)
 - (1) sight-reading!
- j) Writing-Rote
 - (1) Writing directly from the board or worksheet, focusing on proper stem direction, notehead placement etc.

- k) Writing-Decode Familiar
 - (1) Ex.: Writing the rhythm or notes of a familiar song (i.e. students copy notes on the staff given the lyrics to Closet Key)
- l) Writing-Decode Unfamiliar
- m) Writing-Create (*formal assessment*)
 - (1) Student created compositions. Can provide various parameters such as “your pattern must begin on Do” or “your composition must end with a quarter note”

2. Adapting for Recorder:

- a) Some teachers choose to wait until reaching Unit 4 (the first tonal Unit in CS) until incorporating the recorder but you don’t have to. If using the recorder in the rhythmic units, students may still decode patterns using any note of the teacher’s choice, either Mi, Re, or Do.
- b) Many CS songs are pitched in the key of F. Some teachers choose to stay in F, having students use BOTH left and right hands for FGA/DRM or transposing to the tried and true BAG/DRM.
- c) Chapter 10 in “Feierabend Fundamentals” covers how to use CS in an instrumental setting, including using it as part of a thriving recorder curriculum.

IV. The Instrumental Experience

Students start instrumental music (band and orchestra) in 4th grade

Builds upon the knowledge and repertoire students already have - same syllables, same songs

- A. Notes are introduced with two names, for example: Do = B-flat for Flutes
- B. Start with patterns and poems played by rote
 - 1. One note first, then add on as students are ready
 - 2. Easy to have students improvise using two notes playing a familiar poem
- C. Songs are introduced when students are comfortable switching between 3 notes (do, re, mi)
 - 1. Use the same songs students sang in vocal music!
 - 2. Instrumental song process is in 4-steps
 - a) Sing the song
 - b) Decode the song (sing with solfege)
 - c) Decode the song while fingering on the instrument
 - d) Play the song
- D. Music notation is introduced after the students are comfortable playing
 - 1. Rhythms first
 - 2. Do, re, mi next
 - 3. Start with patterns, then poems and songs
- E. Informance Style Concerts
 - 1. An *Informational Performance*
 - 2. The audience (parents, teachers, and administration) learns about the process, not only the final product
- F. Benefits to this Collaboration
 - 1. Students are musical from day 1! They play songs the same way the sing them - lyrically with phrasing
 - 2. Students read music fluently - rarely does a student say, “ but I don’t know how it goes”

3. All students - ELL, IEP, etc. - can be successful right away

V. Overcoming Collaborative Challenges

- A. Technology can help you collaborate
 1. Google Sheets to track repertoire
 2. Social media to share successes (also helps with advocacy!)
 3. Flipgrid - a video response tool for students to share their progress and practicing
 4. Communicate!

Resources

Books:

Feierabend Fundamentals: History, Philosophy, and Practice, John Feierabend, GIA Publications, INC.

First Steps in Music for Preschool and Beyond, John Feierabend, GIA Publications, Inc.

The Book of Movement Exploration, John Feierabend, Jane Kahan, GIA Publications, Inc.

Songtale books may be found on Amazon or GIA's website

Conversational Solfege Level 1, 2, 3; CDs, Flashcards and Teacher's Editions GIA publications

Websites:

GIA Publications: <https://www.giamusic.com/store/music-education>

Tools for Vocal Warm-ups:

Celebrating Garden Gnomes: <https://www.google.com/doodles/celebrating-garden-gnomes>

Whale Synth: <http://www.whalesynth.com/>

Social Media:

Facebook Group: Feierabend Fundamentals

Twitter: #tubeartful

Podcasts:

The Tuneful, Beatful, Artful Music Teacher

- Wonderfully articulated overviews and thoughtful interviews presented and hosted by Dr. Missy Strong

Music Teacher Coffee Talk

- Hosted by Carrie Nicholas and Tany LeJeune, two Colorado Kodaly elementary music educators

Links for Further Reading:

- Institute for Composer Diversity: <https://www.composerdiversity.com>
- Singing in the Band Room: Adventures in Conversational Solfege:
<https://offthebeatenpathinmusic.com/2019/01/20/singing-in-the-band-room/>
- Rhiannon Giddens and What Folk Music Means:
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/05/20/rhiannon-giddens-and-what-folk-music-means>

How to Find Us:

On Twitter:

@mrscapellan

@bdietzgonzalez

@TDucassoux

Pattern Set 4A Clarinet

C D E

Do *Re* *Mi*

1

2

Pattern Set 4C

Clarinet/Trumpet

1.

2.

Unit 4 Songs

Clarinet/Trumpet

Closet Key