

## Voice and Choice: Student Musicianship and Leadership in Elementary Music

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**“Favorite Phrase” activity:** “Oh, How Lovely is the Evening”

Song Source: Tacka/Houlahan, *Kodály Today*.

- Sing song in its entirety, in unison.
- Repeat song, and start to think about which phrase is your favorite.
- If the **first** phrase is your favorite, *keep* singing that phrase this time instead of continuing with the rest of the song.
- All decide on favorite phrase, and layer all three phrases together, repeating as desired.
- Sing song in 3-part canon.

### Why student-centered learning?

- National Core Arts Standards are based around process-oriented goals (what do musicians do?) that imply action rather than (necessarily) a product.
  - Learners must be actively involved in musical processes and experiences in order to understand them.
- Students construct their understandings of material in diverse ways, and they come into the classroom with valuable, diverse background information that can inform the learning of others (the teacher doesn't always have to be the expert!)
- Less teacher talk = less vocal fatigue

### Elements of Student-Centered Learning in District 112

District 112 Personalized [Student-Centered] Learning Element	What does it mean?
<b>Purposeful Learning</b>	Students take responsibility for their own learning by working toward standards-based learning goals.
<b>Engagement with Learning Tools</b>	Students use manipulatives, technology, and other learning materials to work toward standard mastery.
<b>Collaborative Environment</b>	Students learn from each other as well as the teacher, in large-group, small-group, and individual contexts.

<b>Learner Voice and Choice</b>	Students have choice in how they demonstrate their learning and the materials they use to work toward learning goals.
<b>Purposeful Instruction, Assessment, and Feedback</b>	Teachers and students use information from assessments to work toward learning goals.

**“Voice and Choice” - inspired by the following questions:**

1. What can learners do so they are constructing their own understandings of material?
2. In what ways can the teacher give students opportunities for choice and leadership?
3. Does the teacher always have to be front and center?

**How can learners have voice and choice in the music classroom?**

1. **Leadership in daily activities** (*What does the teacher normally do that learners can do instead?*):
  - a. **Students are in charge of singing once a song is learned.**
  - b. **Red Light/Green Light** piano activity
    - i. Goals: practice no sound/same sound/moving pitches.
    - ii. Students walk to the beat given from the piano. If the pitches are moving, students are walking around the room. If the pitch is the same many times in a row, students are stepping the beat in place. If the piano stops, the students stop.
  - c. **Post Office:**
    - i. Goals: aural identification of known melodic and/or rhythmic patterns.
    - ii. Play Post Office: students have a set of patterns in front of them. A leader reads one of the patterns (either singing/saying or clapping). Students identify which pattern was performed and flip that card over. “Leader” role can stay the same person for the entire activity, or switch for every pattern.
  - d. **Remote Control Game:**
    - i. Goals: rhythmic and melodic fluency.
    - ii. Play Remote Control Game: a known song is on the board in staff notation, along with a “remote control” icon that has buttons for “words,” “solfege,” and “rhythm.”
      1. Students sing the song on words, then on solfege, and then on rhythm.

2. Students sing the song again, but change what they are singing depending on which “button” the leader is pointing to on the remote control. Can switch *during* the song!
- iii. Once the game is understood, have students come up and lead.
- e. **Solfège ladder warm-ups** at the start of class
  - i. Students write the solfège ladder on the board and point as the class sings.
  - ii. Variation: one student points to the solfège ladder, another student stands at the back of the room and does the Curwen hand signs accordingly. Class faces the *hand sign* leader and sings from the hand signs.

## 2. Choice in Challenge Level:

- a. Break down clapping games with complex patterns:
  - i. **Four White Horses** (Source: Choksy/Brummit - *120 Singing Games and Dances for Elementary Schools*)
    1. Level 1: Students practice a basic clap-partner-clap-partner pattern with one partner.
    2. Level 2: Students practice the clap-partner-clap-partner pattern in groups of four. (One pair will have to tap hands above, the other below).
    3. Level 3: Students practice the following pattern in groups of four:  
\*Clap - partner - clap - side - clap - partner - clap - side

## 3. Choice in Part-Work:

- a. **Part-work choices:**
  - i. “Favorite phrase” activity from introduction
  - ii. Sing a known song several times, then try drawing part work options:
    1. Sing song in a 2-part canon
    2. Half class sings song, other half sings one line as an ostinato (students choose)
    3. All sing song while patting the steady beat
    4. All sing song while clapping a rhythmic ostinato
    5. All sing song while walking the beat
    6. All sing song while walking an ostinato
  - iii. Later, put these choices up on the board. Leave one blank (choose your own adventure!). Students work in medium-sized groups and choose one way to perform the song.

1. Can be fun to see what each group does, and then LAYER THEM ALL TOGETHER! :) Chaotic but can also turn out to be very cool.
- b. **Partner Song arrangements:** Students create group performances around a set of partner songs.
  - i. Lots of options for students (and these can be chosen by STUDENTS, or can be determined by the TEACHER depending on what students need):
    1. Number of people in a group
    2. Number of parts
    3. Can they use instruments? Does it have to be sung?
  - ii. Ideas of songs that pair well:
    1. “Canoe Round” and “Land of the Silver Birch”
    2. “Ah Poor Bird” and “J’entend le Moulin”
    3. Any two pentatonic songs of your choice, as long as their phrases are the same length. (e.g. “Ida Red, Ida Blue” with “Great Big House”)

**Final thoughts:**

- It is valuable to debrief after the first few times you try student-led activities.
- Ask students:
  - What did you notice?
  - When was it easiest to follow the leader? When was it most difficult?
  - How did you make your musical decisions in your group? Did you have to compromise?
  - What did you learn from a classmate today?

These conversations can promote valuable musical learning and discussion!