Poetry and Percussion:
A Demonstration of Learning Process
With Students from Boulevard Elementary
Cleveland Heights, Ohio
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From Wibbleton to Wobbleton
From the upcoming publication, Percussive Play,
by Roger Sams and Michael Vasquez
Anticipated Spring 2017

PATHWAY TO Literacy: Learning the rhyme through rhythm reading and body percussion
- Students clap the following red rhythm;
- Students pat the following blue rhythm;
- Students stamp the following green rhythm:
- Students perform the following color-coded score. Red notes are clapped. Blue notes are patted. Green notes are stamped.
Students perform the BP piece and speak the word “Wibbleton” every time they perform the clapping pattern in red.

Students perform the BP piece. They speak the word “Wibbleton” every time they perform the clapping pattern in red and the word “Wobbleton” every time they perform the patting pattern in green.

Students perform the BP piece and add to the clapping and patting words of “Wibbleton” and “Wobbleton” by saying “Fifteen miles” during the green stamping rhythm.

Students learn complete text by rote, or by reading it on the white board.

From Wibbleton to Wobbleton is fifteen miles.
From Wobbleton to Wibbleton is fifteen miles.
From Wobbleton to Wobbleton, from Wobbleton to Wobbleton, From Wobbleton to Wobbleton is fifteen miles.

Students perform in ABA Form.
A Section: Speak rhyme
B Section: Perform BP
A Section: Speak rhyme

Students reverse the ABA Form, beginning and ending with BP.

Transfer BP to UTP. If your students have experience, allow them to make instrument choices for the three different colored rhythms. If the students are new to this kind of choices making you may want to direct their choice making. We like red=wood blocks or rhythm sticks, blue=small hand drums, green=large hand drums or tubanos.

Students perform in ABA Form on instruments.

PATHWAY TO Part-work: Round

The class speaks the rhyme. You enter four beats later in a round.

Divide the class in half and have students perform in a speech round. Trade parts.

Students perform in ABA Form:
A Section: Unison
B Section: Round
A Section: Unison

- Review the BP and students perform as a BP round.
- Review UTP and students perform as UTP round.

**PATHWAY TO Part-work: Rhyme with ostinato**

- Model BP ostinato. Ask the students to watch you perform the ostinato at least three times and join you when they’ve figured it out.

- Students perform the BP ostinato. You speak the rhyme.
- Divide the class in half. Half performs the BP ostinato. Half speaks the rhyme. Trade parts.
- Transfer the BP to UTP:
  - Snap = triangle
  - Clap = hand drum
  - Pat = tubano or cajóns
- Students perform UTP ostinato with rhyme. Rotate students through instrumental performance options.
- Students transfer the rhythm of the rhyme to rhythm sticks, or other wood sound, and perform with the UTP ostinato.
PATHWAY TO MOVEMENT: Canonic Choreography

- As a class, choose two opposite walls of the room to be Wibbleton and Wobbleton. Helpful hint: Place a piece of paper with each location’s name on each chosen wall.
- Speak through the text and perform a movement (leaning, pointing, stretching) in the direction of each location when it is mentioned in the first two lines of the poem. Insist that they all remain facing forward while performing their movements.
Students come up with a gesture representing their confusion of all the directions (pointing, questioning, complaining) and use them during the third and fourth line. For an added challenge, students can decide to include a change of level while performing these gestures.

Students turn around in three steps and face the opposite direction every time the poem says "fifteen miles." Students may get confused about where each location is at when they turn. Remind them that they are always starting their movement on the same side of their body.

Perform the poem two times in a row and they will end facing forward.

Divide the class in half. Half of the class practices the choreography while the other speaks the poem.

Trade jobs and repeat.

Perform the poem and movement in canon at four beats.

ADVANCED CHALLENGE: Mix up the students so they are scattered around the room. This will make the canonic movement stand out more but requires individuals to be very confident with their part.

We’re the Heartbeat
From the upcoming publication, Percussive Play, by Roger Sams and Michael Vasquez
Anticipated Spring 2017

PATHWAY TO Literacy: Reading rhythmic notation

Students read the following rhythm, patting and saying rhythm syllables.

Students read the following rhythm, clapping and saying rhythm syllables.

Divide the class in half and put the two parts together. Trade parts.
PATHWAY TO Ensemble: Untuned Percussion

- Model the BP accompaniment ostinato with text. Ask the students to listen to the pattern at least three times and then join you when they are ready.

- Transfer this pattern to either hand drums or tubanos. If you choose hand drums and the students are capable, use this as an opportunity to teach or practice down and up strokes.

- If you choose tubanos, teach or practice “bass” and “tone.”

- Put the drum part together with the BP learned in the previous pathway.
• Transfer BP to UTP. The patting prepares the students to play instruments that require two alternating hands. This could be as simple as two rhythm sticks playing on the floor. It could be cajóns, conga drums, temple blocks, or any instrument that requires two hands to play. The top part can be transferred to any number of hand held percussion instruments such as rhythm sticks, wood blocks, guiros, or small hand drums.

• Put all three percussion parts together to form an UTP ensemble.

PATHWAY TO Movement: Exploring contrast in levels, body facing, and locomotor movement

• Students alternate walking and clapping four beats in place while you play the pulse on hand drum, temple blocks, or piano. Ask the students to change their level as they clap.

• Brainstorm different kinds of locomotor movement that can be used to travel to a new location. (march, tip toe, gallop, slither, etc.)

• Space out cue cards four steps apart with different locomotor movements around the room in a predictable pathway. All students line up at the first card and take turns moving from card to card while the teacher plays the pulse.
  • Then they move to the next card using the locomotor movement on each card they pass.
Students clap four beats in any level.

TEACHER TALK: Drawing focus to contrast

Getting students to explore movements is typically easy to accomplish. However, getting them to know why contrasting movements are useful is the challenge. Lead a conversation that helps them to understand that contrast in movement makes their movement more interesting for the audience to watch. Try using ropes to create more intricate pathways to place the cards on. This will force the students to have contrasting body facing changes and directions of travel. Frequently ask the class to freeze in their current position so they can scan the room for contrast. Students will typically notice areas of greater contrast.

PATHWAY TO Movement: Creating choreography for percussionists

- Small groups create movement to be performed while they are playing instruments.
  - Percussionists playing the bottom part create choreography that includes a change in level.
  - Percussionists playing the middle part create choreography that includes a body facing change during the measures of rest.
  - Percussionists playing the top part create choreography that includes locomotor movement during the measures of rest.

TEACHER TALK: Forming groups

There are two different approaches you can take to forming the groups for solving this movement challenge. You could take a whole class approach and have all of the students playing the same part work together. If you take this approach you’ll have three teams. Each team choreographs their own part, without paying attention to what the other parts are doing and you put the diverse parts together for an exciting reveal. The other approach you can take is to divide the class into small ensembles, probably six students in a group with two on each part. The ensemble then works together to create a single dance composition that has three different parts that work together. The second approach is more sophisticated and will, likely, produce more artful results. The first approach is easier for students who have minimal experience creating dances.

PATHWAY TO Composition: Composing 8-beat ostinati with rhythmic building blocks

- Students read the following rhythmic building blocks.

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• Using the interactive whiteboard, take the class through the process of selecting and arranging four building block cards to compose an 8-beat rhythmic ostinato. Transfer that ostinato to the UTP instruments that you are using in your ensemble.

• Small groups of students (all from the same instrument team) compose 8-beat ostinati to be performed on their instruments.

• Small groups share their rhythmic ostinati. The other groups use their rhythmic building block cards to play a notation game and notate their peer’s compositions, arranging their cards to match the rhythms played.

• Layer these ostinati as a contrasting section in ABA Form, or use them to create any form that you and your students desire.

PATHWAY TO Improvisation: Improvising 4-beat motives

• A small group of students who are playing an instrument that is played with two hands play the middle part and all other students improvise for four beats on BP or UTP to fill in the measures of rest.
• Use this structure as a contrasting section in a Grand Rondo. Consider solo improvisations.