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Melanie Stegemiller

Music and its Effect in the Classroom

Music has many effects on people. It can evoke emotion, reduce stress, and help people learn. If music has such a wide range of effects then I think it will benefit students who are trying to learn in the classroom. Music comes in many forms. Music can be sung, played, and listened to. Music is simple to add to an early childhood classroom just by playing it in the background for students to listen to. For my project I plan to play background music when student are working at their desk, reading, working at centers, and other appropriate times when students will not be distracted. I plan to play piano, classical, and jazz music. Playing background music in the classroom will positively affect the child's performance in the classroom.

The two sides of a person's brain are accountable for different functions. The left hemisphere is related to problem solving and ordered thinking while the right hemisphere is related to more creative processes (Wynter 18). By playing background music I will be activating the creative right side of a child's brain while teaching to the logical left hemisphere. This will be activating both sides of the brain at the same time. "Close interaction between the two hemispheres is needed for optimal functioning" (Johansson 413). Studies have shown that by activating both hemispheres of the brain improve cerebral cortex activity (Reimer 23). By increasing this activity it will increase the ability for my students to learn the most they can which I definitely want as a teacher. Activating both hemispheres through background music and teaching also improves memory (Reimer 23). This will allow my students to recall what I teach them, improving their performance in and out of the classroom. By activating both

hemispheres of the brain through both music and teaching I will improve my student's learning and memory.

Music is responsible for higher cognitive functioning. Studies have show that music cognitive functions share neural systems with nonmusical neural functions which “provide access for music to affect general nonmusical functions, such as memory, attention, and executive function” (Thaut 281). Music also affects temporal ordering, spatiotemporal reasoning, attention, and auditory verbal memory (282). Playing background music in my classroom is therefore a simple way to enhance the cognitive functioning of my students. I would expect my students to be able to think at higher levels with background music playing. This will help them perform better in the classroom, problem solve, ask questions, and explore; all things that are important in a classroom. I can also expect my student's memory to improve and for them to be more focused, both of which help a child perform better and get more done in class. Playing background music will raise my student's cognitive functioning and therefore improve their performance in class.

Music creates emotion in people. This emotion can help them learn. A student is more likely to be working productively if they are in a good emotional state (Matuliauskaitė 51). This emotional state can be influenced by the type of music I play in the classroom. If I put my students in a positive, relaxed emotional state by playing peaceful music my students enjoy I can help my students be more productive, which every teacher wants. “The productivity could be high after a working day of eight or twelve hours, if the person is fully satisfied and in great emotional and psychological state” (51). But how do I make sure that the music creates emotion in my students? Music itself naturally has emotional meaning (Krumhansl 45). This will make it easy to create positive emotions in my students if music already has emotion built into it. The

emotion that music creates a heightened involvement which generates a “stronger neural connection, which in turn makes it easier to remember information” (Davis). This is another way that music can improve my student’s memory. By playing background music I will be evoking emotion in my students which will help them be more productive, learn better, and improve their memory.

Many students are very stressed. This stress may come from school related activities or from at home. Students can not leave their negative emotion and worries at the classroom door. Studies show that students with more stress have higher “systolic and diastolic blood pressure and heart rate, which, in turn, means a decline of learning efficiency. Decreasing motivation to learn and appeal, analogically, leads to decreasing productivity” (Matuliauskaitė 54). Students with more stress are also more passive and can not focus (54). I need to avoid this from happening to my students in the classroom. If I could play background music that will reduce stress then these negative effects will fade and my students will achieve more in the class. Music affects people’s chemical composition. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter in the reward system of the body. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that makes people feel good. A final hormone that makes people feel relaxed is endorphin. Dopamine, serotonin, and endorphin are all released when music is played (Yehuda 88). These hormones will help my students relax and have less stress when I play music and will improve my student’s performance. Music not only releases stress reducing hormones but decreases the amount of stress hormones in the body. “Cortisol is the main stress hormone which is elevated in stress condition... Psychological stressor provokes strong emotional response and an increase in cortisol level, but exposure to music reduced the elevated cortisol level” (89). If I can play background music and decrease the amount of hormones that cause stress while increasing the hormones that make my students feel good then I

should see improvement in my students. My students should be ready to learn, productive, and able to concentrate because of the background music played.

Choosing the music to play in my classroom can be difficult. There is a lot of variety in music. I will have my students listen to some piano, classical, and jazz music. Students will be able to give me their feedback on whether or not they enjoyed the music or if they want to listen to something else. I can even allow students to share the music they like with me. I can listen to it, and if it is appropriate (not too loud, appropriate words) for the classroom then I can add it to a CD for the students to listen to. The goal is to have music the students enjoy listening to which should help their performance. If students dislike the music I am playing then the results may not be positive. I will play the background music when students are working at their desks, during reading times, during centers, and other appropriate times when the music will not be distracting students from the focus of the lesson. I will get the student's feedback to determine if they are enjoying music at these times or if it is distracting them from their work. I plan to put the music on a CD and play it in the classroom on a CD player or a computer. By working with the students to create a positive environment with music, the student's performance in the classroom should improve.

Music is something that is found everywhere. Music also has many effects on the people that listen to it. Music helps activate both hemispheres of the brain, increases cognitive functioning, creates emotion, and reduces stress. These effects in turn help a student focus, remember, and learn more. I plan to use these studied facts and play music in the classroom to help the students learn. I will play piano, classical, and jazz music at appropriate times in the classroom when students are working. By playing background music in a classroom I will increase my student's productivity, attention, and performance in the classroom.

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