

FIVE PROCESSES AT WORK: EXCERPTS FROM CARYN CLAAR'S TEACHER PORTFOLIO AT THE CONSERVATORY LAB CHARTER SCHOOL

The following photo essay represents an essential element of being a professional educator: the creation of a teacher's portfolio. Excerpts from Caryn Claar's portfolio not only reveal the artful work of a skilled teacher at an innovative school, but also show how standards for Learning Through Music are often best understood from the point of view of the teacher and her student's work.

Caryn Claar is a founding teacher at the Conservatory Lab Charter School, an Elementary School community dedicated to furthering the role of music in public school education. Although this school originated with the vision and support of New England Conservatory faculty, administrators, trustees, and overseers, it is the teachers and staff of the lab school who bring the vision of the school to life. Hence, the excerpts from this teacher portfolio illustrate more than promising practices of a laboratory school; they embody the premises of Learning

Through Music (illustrated in the table on the following page). Through Ms. Claar's work, we see music's equal role in the curriculum, music as a medium and model for employing the Five Fundamental Processes and Fundamental Concepts shared across disciplines, as well as music as a resource for social-emotional development, a tool for more expansive assessment of learning, and the building of a strong school community.

The following pages are also integrated with quotations from Caryn Claar's portfolio annotations as well as interview excerpts from members of the school and conservatory communities who attended the Making Music Work for Public Education conference. The interviews were conducted and first presented on the "Arts for Learning" website project sponsored by National Young Audiences, Richard Bell, Executive Director, and are now posted also on New England Conservatory's Music-in-Education website (nec.musicined.org).

INTERVIEW QUOTE

THE LEARNING THROUGH MUSIC "FIVE LEARNING PROCESSES" ARE FORMED BY LOOKING CLOSELY AT HOW MUSICIANS DEVELOP THEIR PRACTICE AND THEIR ARTISTRY. AS MUSICIANS LISTEN, PERFORM, CREATE, AND INVENT, THEY ALSO ARE VERY INVOLVED IN QUESTIONING AND REFLECTING ABOUT WHAT THEY DO. THUS, THE FIVE PROCESSES REPRESENT A DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION STANDARD FOR ENGAGING LEARNING ACROSS SUBJECT AREAS.

—Lyle Davison, Undergraduate Theoretical Studies and Music-in-Education Faculty, New England Conservatory

Teaching With The 5 Processes



Caryn Solomon
2001-2002

Teachers at the Conservatory Lab Charter School are asked every year to summarize their year's work in a teaching portfolio. Caryn Claar took this requirement as an opportunity to present hew view of the Learning Through Music Premises and to illustrate their practical application to a public school first-grade classroom.

This portfolio is designed to illustrate the premises of a Learning Through Music Classroom. The core concept of a Learning Through Music classroom involves a teaching style and curriculum that values music. Music is treated as an academic subject as well as a model for learning. One imagines a performer and the skills he/she must maintain and use consistently in order to learn a piece of music. These skills or fundamental processes are listed below.

Listening: observing, discriminating, perceiving, describing

Creating: inventing, transforming, improvising, and producing

Perform: demonstrate, interpret, and follow through, mastery of skill

Inquiry: question, investigate, analyze

Reflect: connections, self assess, establish goals, revise work

The teaching style and curriculum in my classroom value these processes.

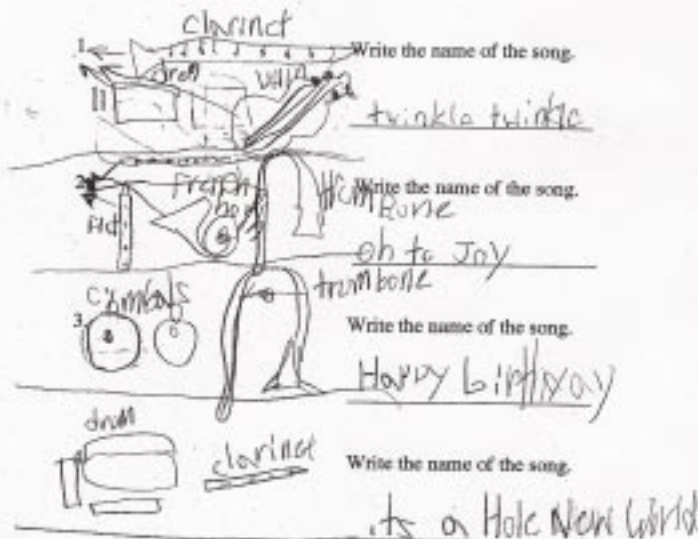


PHOTO ESSAY

Practicing Good Listening

We want children to become better listeners in first grade. Listening is important for learning. Children need to listen to lessons, listen to and follow directions, and participate in discussion which all require good listening. The children learn how to be good listeners by not talking, putting their eyes on the speaker, and by facing their body towards the speaker. We call this our school listening look position. To practice being good listeners we complete activities that require much listening and concentration. For this activity the children listened to the music and had to write down the name of the song and the instruments that they heard.

Listen to the music and draw the instruments that you hear.

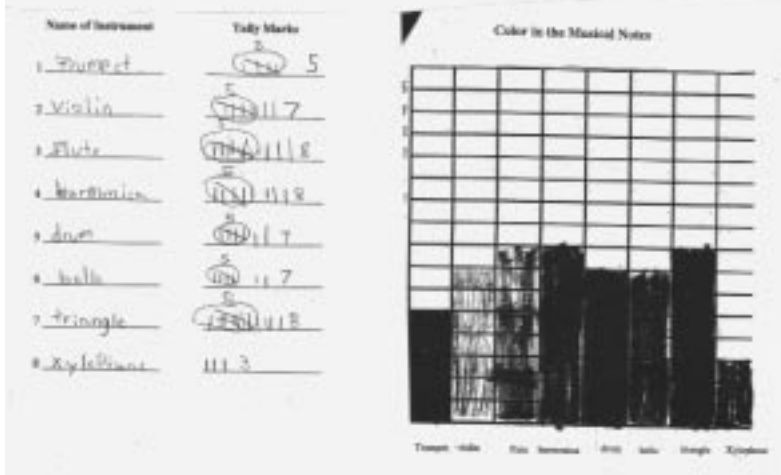


This page demonstrates how good listening is valued in the classroom as a skill for its own sake and as a tool for developing perceptual skills through music.

PHOTO ESSAY

Collecting Data

The Massachusetts Frameworks states that First Graders need to be able to collect and describe data. For this activity children were listening to music and recording the names of the instruments that they heard and how many times they heard specific instruments. The children learned how to use tally marks to record the number of times played. Following this collection of data, children were asked to graph their results. Using a bar graph, first graders were able to show which instruments they played the most and least of. Questions given to the children after the graph was completed showed their understanding of the data collected.



TEACHER QUOTE

CHILDREN ARE NATURALLY CURIOUS. THIS CURIOSITY IS WONDERFUL FOR THE LEARNING PROCESS. THROUGH A DISCOVERY PROCESS OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERING CHILDREN LEARN TO BE INDEPENDENT CRITICAL THINKERS. QUESTIONS ARE ASKED THAT REQUIRE THE CHILDREN TO RECALL FACTS AS WELL AS INTERPRET INFORMATION. CHILDREN IN FIRST GRADE LEARN THAT EVERY QUESTION IS A GOOD QUESTION AND THE APPROPRIATE WAYS TO ASK A QUESTION. STUDENTS ALSO LEARN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS. QUESTIONING CAN BE SEEN THROUGHOUT THE DAY IN BOTH TEACHER-LED AND SMALL STUDENT GROUPS.

—Caryn Claar, Conservatory Lab Charter School first-grade teacher (from her Teacher Portfolio)

PHOTO ESSAY

Feelings

In the beginning of the year we talk a lot about feelings. We talk about all the different emotions and situations in which we feel these ways. We also role-play situations that make us feel a certain way and how to make ourselves feel better. For example, we act out things that make us angry or mad and what we can say to our friends to help the situation. For this activity we listen to music and make a face to show how the music makes us feel. We talk about the elements in the music that make us feel a certain way. Listening to music and writing how we feel helps the children begin to start talking about their own feelings.

Music Listening

Music By Vivaldi—The Four Seasons

How would you describe this music?

happy joyful 😊 sad unhappy 😞 mad angry 😡

Song 1



Song 2



Song 3



Song 4



Song 5



The Music Listening Program at the Conservatory Lab Charter School is designed not only for children to be perceptive about the music, but also to be perceptive about themselves.

Sorting Instruments

The students' become really good at sorting objects by size, color, thickness, and by number of sides. Children watch their teachers and peers for new ways to sort at first. After a while, children are able to look at the properties of an object and begin sorting the objects by themselves. In this activity, children were sorting different instruments by the material they were made of, the sounds they made, and the orchestra groups they belonged to. Many children had to really think about the instruments and reflect upon its properties before deciding how to sort them.

**INTERVIEW QUOTE**

IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR HIGHER EDUCATION TO PROVIDE PRE-SERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS FOR CONVENTIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS. WE NEED TO INFLUENCE SCHOOLS AS TO WHAT KIND OF PROGRAMS WE ARE TRAINING OUR TEACHERS FOR. WE AT THE CONSERVATORY HAVE DECIDED THAT WE NEED TO IMPLEMENT LEARNING THROUGH MUSIC PROGRAMS TO SET A STANDARD FOR WHAT CAN BE DONE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND, AT THE SAME TIME, LOOK DEEPLY AT OWN PROGRAMS AND ASK, WHAT KIND OF EDUCATORS CAN OUR STUDENTS BECOME?

—Larry Scripp, Chair Music-in-Education, New England Conservatory and Founding Co-Director, Conservatory Lab Charter School

Making Patterns

Our math curriculum invites children to find patterns everywhere. We investigate the one hundred square, the calendar, our classroom, and our clothes for patterns. We make patterns with pattern blocks, our bodies, and with music. For this activity children made a pattern with pattern blocks. Next the children decided which instrument was represented by each shape. Children read their pattern block pattern as they played their instruments, creating a beautiful sounding pattern.



INTERVIEW QUOTE

WE ALWAYS ASK KIDS QUESTIONS THAT SHOW THEIR KNOWLEDGE. WE ASK THE KIDS TO REFLECT ON THEIR WORK, AND WE TRY TO HAVE THE KIDS ACTUALLY DOING ACTIVITIES SO THEY COME UP WITH GOOD FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE.

—Caryn Claar, first grade teacher, Conservatory Lab Charter School

PHOTO ESSAY

Number Stories

Children write number stories for both separating (subtraction) and combining (addition) situations. Children are capable of writing two sentences with information and then a question sentence. We discuss words like "altogether," "more than," and "least" so that children are able to answer word problems independently. For this activity children were asked to listen to a piece of music and write a word problem using the instruments they heard in the piece. Listening to music gave the children an exciting context to write about.

Word Problem:

I heard 8 Flute Beats then I heard
4 Trumpet Beats how many beats
did I hear?
00000000 + 0000 = 12
8 + 4 = 12 I heard 12 beats
all.

INTERVIEW QUOTE

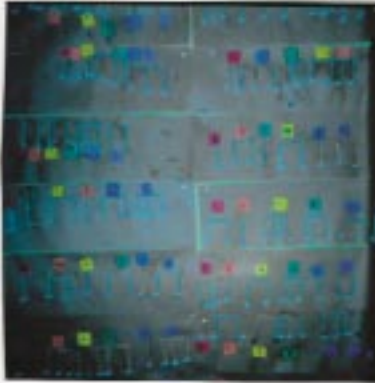
MUSIC IS AN EXTREMELY RICH KIND OF EXPERIENCE IN THE SENSE THAT IT REQUIRES COGNITION, IT REQUIRES EMOTION, IT REQUIRES AESTHETICS, IT DEVELOPS PERFORMANCE SKILLS, INDIVIDUAL CAPABILITIES. THESE THINGS HAVE TO BE DEVELOPED AND ALL HAVE TO BE SYNCHRONIZED AND INTEGRATED SO THAT, AS A PERSON LEARNS MUSIC, THEY STRETCH THEMSELVES MENTALLY IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. WHAT WE ARE FINDING IS THAT THE KIND OF MENTAL STRETCHING THAT TAKES PLACE CAN BE OF VALUE MORE GENERALLY, THAT IS, TO HELP CHILDREN IN LEARNING OTHER THINGS. AND THESE OTHER THINGS, IN TURN, CAN HELP THEM IN THE LEARNING OF MUSIC, SO THAT THERE IS A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF LEARNING.

—Martin Gardiner

PHOTO ESSAY

Patterns With Music Notes

The students wrote their own music using q-tips to create takis and chas. Following the creation of a music score, children were asked to play their notes on the xylophone. Students learn how to read their music at the same time as playing the instrument. Children listened carefully to each of the performances and were able to guess the pattern being played.



TEACHER QUOTE

CHILDREN BEGIN TO PERFORM AS SOON AS THEY LEARN TO CREATE. READING IN THE AUTHOR'S CHAIR, SINGING A FAMILIAR SONG, SOLVING A MATHEMATICAL PROCEDURE, YOUNGSTERS ARE SHOWING EXAMPLES OF HOW USEFUL PERFORMANCE IS THROUGHOUT THE DAY. STUDENTS' ABILITY TO PERFORM BECOMES MORE NATURAL AS THEY LEARN TO SPEAK IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE AND GAIN THE CONFIDENCE TO COMPLETE A TASK INDEPENDENTLY. STUDENTS PERFORMANCE BECOMES MUCH MORE MEANINGFUL WHEN THEY GAIN THE SKILLS TO PLAN AND DEVELOP THEIR IDEAS BEFORE THEY PRESENT THEM. STUDENTS ARE GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE DAY TO DEMONSTRATE AND SHOWCASE THEIR WORK, WHICH HELPS CHILDREN FIND THEIR VOICES. PERFORMANCE IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR DAY BECAUSE IT NOT ONLY SUPPORTS THE LEARNER, BUT ALSO THE OBSERVER.

—Caryn Claar, Conservatory Lab Charter School first-grade teacher (from her Teacher Portfolio)

PHOTO ESSAY

Reflection In The Classroom

We ask children to think about the class as a whole and their own individual behavior using rubrics throughout the day. First graders are starting to realize that their actions have consequences, good and bad, and that they can look at their behavior to improve themselves and the class. Children during the year learn how to rethink problems and question their beliefs. Students become self-reliant and motivated to improve their own work. Students throughout the year make connections by establishing goals and continuously revising their work.



Rethinking Cooperation

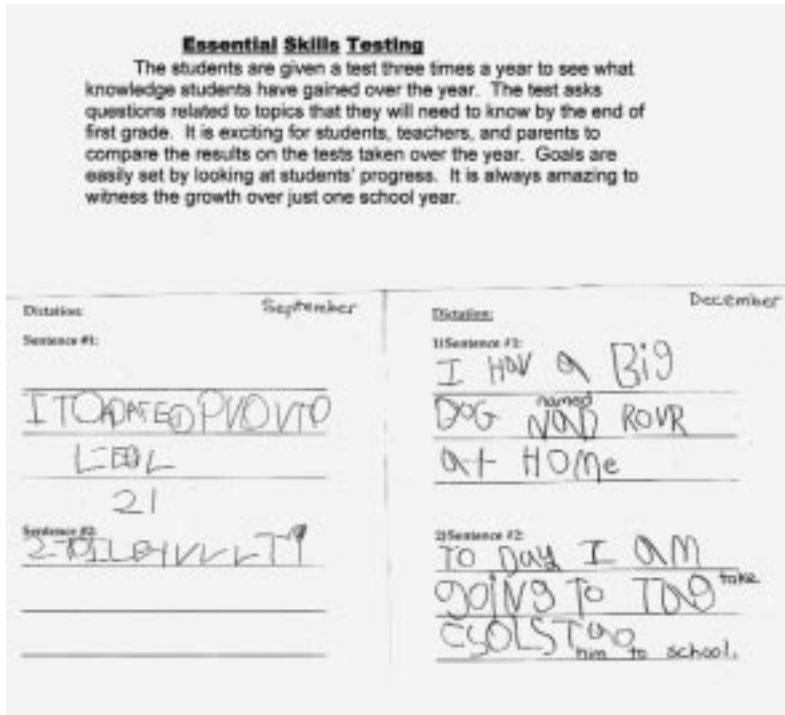
After reading the story, "Swimmy" by Leo Lionni, students are able to think about cooperation. Students are able to look at their day and think about when cooperation is necessary and what they can do to be a better team player. Students write their reflections on a small fish that eventually becomes one large fish.

INTERVIEW QUOTE

LEARNING IS COMPLEX ENOUGH THAT IT'S DOUBTFUL THAT WE'RE GOING TO SEE A DIRECT "CAUSE AND EFFECT" ONE-WAY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANY ONE FACTOR AND LEARNING, ESPECIALLY IN MUSIC, BECAUSE MUSIC IS NOT A SOLITARY THING THAT CAUSES LEARNING. ON THE CONTRARY, MUSIC ENGAGES A COMPLEX SET OF LEARNING PROCESSES SIMULTANEOUSLY, PROCESSES THAT CREATE INTERACTIONS AMONG OTHER KINDS OF AESTHETIC, PHYSICAL, COGNITIVE, AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL PROCESSES. INTERACTIONS SUPPORTED BY INTEGRATIVE LEARNING SHOULD BE WHAT INTERESTS US IN EDUCATION— THAT IS, CREATING OPTIMAL CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING SUCH THAT, IF YOU STUDY HARD IN ONE AREA OF THE CURRICULUM, IT'S GOING TO BENEFIT LEARNING IN ANOTHER.

—Larry Scripp, Research Center for Learning Through Music, New England Conservatory

PHOTO ESSAY



Reflection is a cognitive skill that includes the ability to self assess and understand progress over time. Whether using pre-post writing skills tests (above) or the use of invented symbols to notate music from one year to the next (see next page), Conservatory Lab Charter School portfolio samples provide a vehicle and an occasion to assess the relationship of music to literacy skills in math and language at the same time.