

Drumming Up a Better Brain & Creative Classroom Management

SCMEA Conference 2022

Mary Knysh ~ [Rhythmic Connections](#)



Slide presentation link: <https://bit.ly/MKDrummingBetterBrain>

Knysh shares brain based rhythmic activities designed to invigorate learners and to develop important mind-body connections. Learn to combine music and movement strategies that address student accountability, daily transitions, engagement, leadership, and higher order thinking. Participants learn sequential strategies for integrating rhythm, melody and harmony within a drum circle setting where barred instruments, small and large percussion, ukuleles, recorders, and boomwhackers can all be included.

Science continues to shape our understanding of the connection between music and neuroscience and the effect that rhythm and music have on brain neuroplasticity. The four key components for rewiring the brain are **making music, movement, creative play** and **numinous experience** (when many create as one).

A key factor for brain-based optimal learning is a **safe, supportive and empowering** environment wherein students can experience a sense of **belonging, identity, value, purpose and joy**. Students and teachers collaborate to co-create a classroom environment wherein all are held accountable, have “skin in the game” and are invested in its success. Some of the common challenges for teachers that we will explore include focus, engagement, listening skills, daily transitions, student apathy, student accountability, student buy-in, collaboration, accessing creativity and student leadership.

Exploring rhythmic strategies that **Focus ~ Connect ~ Redirect** students and to provide them with **strategies** and tools to **become an integral and vital part** of the **solution** to the classroom management problem!

“Environments Matter: Brains learn best when interacting with the environment. Environments not only directly influence our behaviors, but they can trigger long-term changes. Every environment has the capacity to enhance or impair learning.”
(Eric Jensen- Teaching with the Brain in Mind- '98)

Key Factors for creating **Optimal Learning Environment**: Safe ~ Supportive ~ Empowering

Creating a classroom environment designed for Optimal Learning



Where students can experience a **Sense of**

Belonging ~ to feel that you are a vital part of a community

Identity ~ knowing who you are within the community

Value ~ to be seen and heard and to feel important

Purpose ~ to be of service to others

Joy ~ to share in activities that are fun and engaging together

Brain breaks are essential. Mixing intellectual work with physical activities can activate the brain, provide stress release and energize the group. “Movement triggers the release of the body’s ‘good feeling’ drug, endorphin or the ‘challenge hormone’, adrenaline. Studies show that these are excellent for the brain. More motivation and enthusiasm can be achieved when the body is activated states of movement.” (Eric Jensen- Teaching with the Brain in Mind- '98)

Musical Pathways can offer a design for creating a focused, empowered, engaged and creative classroom.

- **Music Brain Breaks:** Rhythmic activities provide short brain refreshers and get students to explore relax, create and collaborate together
- **Community Building:** Strategies designed to create sense of trust, community, and equality
- **Team Building:** Structured rhythmic games to inspire students to work together more effectively as a team
- **Communications:** Exploring music as a means for non-verbal communications and self-expression
- **Creative Problem Solving:** Rhythmic activities that promote creativity & critical thinking skills
- **Learning to Lead:** Students learn basic facilitation skills and step into leadership roles
- **Brain Based Reflection** (GLP process, Grateful ~ Learned ~ Put into Practice): Students reflect upon the rhythmic experience and share/pair to gain insight & understanding as to how they can apply these new strategies to their everyday classroom learning experiences.

Music Interventions designed for **TRANSITIONAL POINTS** during the classroom day

- Greetings
- Focus/ Attention
- Bringing the Energy Down
- Bringing the Energy Up
- Collaborations
- Creativity and Risk Taking
- Making Student Groups
- Celebrating Successes

Greetings (Focus and Attention)

Primary Welcome Ritual

1. Breath to Boom!
2. Rumble to Freeze
3. Heartbeat Rhythm & *Hello Hello song*

Upper Grade Welcome Ritual

1. Breath to Boom
2. Rumble Firecracker
3. Home Rhythm & *Don't Worry Be Happy song*

Tap into heartbeat ~ listening inside - inner rhythm

- Bring pulse to movement in front of you
- Discover common heartbeat rhythm (entrainment)

Crossing the Midline Drumming ~ movement

- Forward/Back
- Side/Side
- Up/Down



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Collaborations ~ Musical Home

More than a rhythm pattern, the musical home is a short, repeatable rhythmic composition that includes timbre, articulation, and dynamics. Created and owned by the class through collaborative music making, the musical home is notated, shared, and given pride of place in the classroom. It's a musical family portrait, and each member of the family must be represented. The musical home is a safe and secure musical idea. With it, we can: come to attention, share our feelings, grow together, remember what collaboration looks and feels like, embrace and celebrate our communal identity, and explore new ways of thinking with a safe place to return.

Musical Home

- Exploration Phase
- Children choose their favorite
- Freeplay + listening
- Check in
- The result is your "Musical Home."

Creativity and Risk Taking ~ Groove 101

- Layer 1: Beat Keepers
- Layer 2: "Home"
- Layer 2 Exploration

Growing the Groove

- Layers 1 (heartbeat)
- Exploration and/or silence
- Exploration can be a third layer
- Exploration: solos/silence
- Home can be developed into a groove

MOVEMENT is a primary KEY for memory ~ Dancing Conductor

- The conductor (you, then a student) will lead the group by dancing
 - Feet: Step in place
 - Hips: Wiggle side to side
 - Hands: Shake, wiggle, gesture any way that feels natural
 - Head: Nodding
- The students will perform a sound connected to each movement, for example:
 - Feet = Drums (or a low vocal sound, or body percussion, etc)
 - Hips = Metals
 - Hands = Shakers
 - Head = Woods
- The crazier the dance, the more fun the music is!
- Reverse it! The conductor plays instruments, and everyone dances to match.

REDIRECT ~ Student Leaders

Drum Circle Leader's Toolbox skills:

Stop cut ~ Call to groove ~ Continue to play ~ Rumble ~ Volume up and down ~ Sculpting groups



For resource materials, clinics, workshops and teacher trainings

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