

Friends School Haverford

Music Curriculum Overview

2008-2009

The Friends School Haverford Music Curriculum is designed to encourage students to become skillful, enthusiastic music makers. Nursery rhymes, poetry, children's literature, and folksongs representing a variety of cultural traditions are at the core of musical experiences throughout the grades. Folkdance and movement elements of weight, space, flow and meter are explored in a variety of activities throughout the grades as well.

Pre-School, Pre-Kindergarten

Pre-schoolers and Pre-kindergartners have two 30-minute music classes each week in their classrooms. The basic elements of each class include the following: experimenting with vocal sounds such as whispering, sirening*, singing voice and speaking voice, vocal improvisations, singing short simple songs from memory, chanting, finger plays, practicing steady beat and playing a variety of unpitched percussion instruments along to music from a variety of different styles, cultures and time periods. Students also become aware of their bodies and how they can move through space, exploring movement elements based on Laban's* theory of weight, effort, time, flow and space.

Kindergarten

Kindergartners have two 30-minute music classes each week in the music room. Students continue exploring vocal sounds, movement elements, steady beat, singing and playing instruments. The first experiences of reading and writing rhythmic notation and of echoing pitch syllables are introduced using the Kodaly* system. Singing, movement, games, pitched and unpitched percussion instruments bring variety to the music class.

First Grade

First graders have two 30-minute music classes each week in the music room. Singing games are enjoyed and some simple American play-parties are introduced. Percussion instruments, most importantly the barred Orff* instruments, provide the opportunity to create music spontaneously, accompanying themselves with simple level borduns or improvising melodic patterns in a pentatonic scale. Kodaly* work encourages students to associate symbols with sounds and to differentiate tonal relationships in order to sing in tune. Material relating to social studies themes, and to other cultures, are also incorporated into the classes.

Second Grade

Second graders have two 30-minute music classes each week in the music room. The repertoire of folk music and rounds is extended as students are introduced to the idea of singing songs of many verses by following simple vocal sheet music. Students continue with play-parties* and folkdances with more complicated movement patterns. Students begin sight-singing simple tri-tone melodies based on *sol, mi la* and *do, re, mi*. Students learn rhythm patterns through a simple system of syllables assigned to note values.

Third Grade

Third graders have two 30-minute music classes each week in the music room. Music reading and writing skills, developed through the Kodaly curriculum, begin to be transferred to the staff. Children continue studying rhythmic elements and their mathematical connection as they learn about dividing the beat in various ways. They continue creative movement activities, folk dancing, and sight singing. Material relating to social studies themes, and to other cultures, is also incorporated.

Fourth Grade

In the fourth grade all students learn to play the soprano recorder. Music for recorder is taught both by ear and traditional note reading. Students continue developing their music literacy through composition, reading music, and melodic and rhythmic dictation. The classroom instruments are an integral part of the music making process, which is further enhanced by the addition of recorder. Students continue to build their Kodaly skills, learning to sight-sing new melodies and recognize melodic intervals and rhythmic values. Fourth graders have two 30-minute classes each week in the music room. Material relating to social studies themes, and to other cultures, is also incorporated.

Fifth Grade

Skill building to assure musical independence is the most important work for fifth graders through the year. We will use augmentation* and diminution* to learn how to read familiar rhythms in new notations. We also perform familiar rhythms in new meters. After considerable work in the major and minor keys, we also begin studying the Mixolydian and Dorian modes*. Harmony and the introduction of new chords are drawn from the analysis of melodies, and this understanding will lead to improvising new melodies over chord patterns. Creative movement and folk dance with more complex patterns are introduced and the soprano recorder is used in various instances throughout the year as students explore the music making process. Material relating to social studies themes, and to other cultures, is also incorporated. Fifth graders have two 40-minute music classes each week in the music room.

Sixth Grade

Sixth graders continue honing their skills to assure musical independence. A review of previously learned basic musical concepts through more challenging material, using the concepts but demanding higher-level skills best describes the overall musical training in sixth grade. Opportunities to solve problems and create in small groups and through the various means of performance the Orff-Schulwerk* approach provides are especially valuable at this level. We explore mixed meter, modal scales, more complex chord changes, and the 12-bar blues through movement, composition, improvisation, singing and performance. Material relating to social studies themes, and to other cultures, is also incorporated. Sixth graders have two 40-minute music classes each week in the music room.

Glossary of terms

Sirening— Students mimic the sound of a siren. This helps to expand developing vocal ranges and allows students to use (and perhaps find) their head voices.

Laban's Theory of Movement—a system defining all aspects of movement devised by Rudolf Laban. Drawing on his theories of effort and shape to describe, interpret and document human movement, it is a valuable tool in the music room for students to explore the ways their bodies move through space.

Kodaly Approach— Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), a prominent Hungarian composer and musician developed a comprehensive program to train basic musical skills and teach the reading and writing of music. At its core is singing and the use of solfege (do re mi ...) syllables to read notes on the staff.

Orff-Schulwerk—an approach to teaching music that involves four media: “singing, saying, dancing and playing”. Playing often refers to the playing of instruments or the child-like playing that occurs in an Orff classroom. A holistic approach to music education, Orff-Schulwerk encourages every student to create and share his or her own musical ideas in a relaxed setting.

American play-parties—typically the games, songs and circle dances that were first sung and played by children and adults as far back as the late 18th/early 19th century.

Augmentation—increasing (usually doubling) the value of a rhythmic pattern (or motive).

Diminution—decreasing (usually in half) the value of a rhythmic pattern (or motive)

Modes—a series of whole steps and half steps that preceded our modern day Major (Ionian) and Minor (Aeolian) scales.