

# Responsive Classroom and the General Music Classroom

## Workshop Presented by Matthew Stensrud

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As administrators embrace the Responsive Classroom approach, music educators have an opportunity to be on the forefront of its implementation in schools across the country. Participants learn more about this process based, community building, and exploration centered approach through playing, speaking, singing, moving and creating. Return to the classroom with a better understanding of the countless connections between Responsive Classroom and music education as well as a few phrases even your principal would be impressed to hear!

### **Energizer Time!**

- Dum Dum Dah Dah<sup>1</sup>
- Flowing Mirroring<sup>2</sup>
- Drum Roll
- Steady Beat Mirroring<sup>3</sup>
- Laughing Objects

### **Responsive Classroom (RC) Philosophy**

- An approach to elementary education that leads to greater teacher effectiveness, higher student achievement, and improved school climate by creating engaging academics, inspiring a positive community, ensuring effective management, and encouraging developmental awareness.<sup>4</sup>
- Studies have shown that Responsive Classroom increases student engagement, improves academic achievement, decreases discipline problems and leads to more high-quality teaching.<sup>5</sup>
- Music has an active and essential role in the RC approach through its use in morning activities and games, transitions, and student-created presentations.

### **Guiding Principles of Responsive Classroom<sup>6</sup>**

1. The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
2. How children learn is as important as what they learn.
3. The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.

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<sup>1</sup> This energizer can also be found in *Energizers! 88 Quick Movement Activities That Refresh and Refocus*, by Susan Lattanzi Roser.

<sup>2</sup> Music used for this activity: Traditions of Christmas, A Fresh Aire Christmas, Mannheim Steamroller, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Music used for this activity: Curumin (Bossa Nova Style), It Moves Me: World Music Warmups for Dance, Danaï Gagne, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Visit [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org) for more information.

<sup>5</sup> Visit <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl/project/responsive-classroom-efficacy-study> for more information.

<sup>6</sup> Visit [www.responsiveclassroom.org/principles-and-practices-responsive-classroom](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/principles-and-practices-responsive-classroom) to learn more about the RC Guiding Principles.

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4. To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn and practice specific social skills: *cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control*.
5. We must know our children individually, culturally, and developmentally.
6. Knowing the families of the children we teach is as important as knowing the children.
7. Teachers and administrators must model the social and academic skills they wish to teach their students.

### ***Energizer Time! Double This, Double That***

Double double this this  
Double double that that  
Double this double that  
Double this that

- Everyone in a circle, hands in front
- Silent mirroring
  - Double = palms forward
  - This = back of the hand forward
  - That = fist
  - Explore location: air, lap, neighbor's back
- Adding words
  - 'Double' 'this' and 'that' individually
  - Teacher = 'double'; Everyone else = 'this' and 'that'
  - Split, switch
- Face a partner
- Turn = a new partner!
- What else could we say?
  - Animal sounds
  - Foods
  - States
  - What is the rule to pick a word?

## ***Responsive Classroom Practices***

### ***Morning Meeting***

- Twenty-minute active gathering to start the day.
- Includes greetings, group activities, and a morning message (*like the one below!*).

*Dear Teachers,*

*Clapping and chanting and stomping, oh my!*

*Today we are going to learn about Responsive Classroom and how it can be used in the elementary music classroom. When you leave today's session, you will be ready to use energizers, understand the basic ideas of Responsive Classroom, and better communicate with colleagues and administrators on our own classroom approach! Think about something you have already taken away from this session.*

*Was it an energizer, a fact about RC, or something else?*

*Sincerely, Matthew*

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### Guided Discovery

- Focused, purposeful, and playful technique to introduce materials and concepts to students.
- Students explore an object, figure out what it can do, and then answer directed questions to discover its best purpose.
- “Guided experiences in spontaneous exploration of the materials under focus”<sup>7</sup> is a playful opportunity to explore new concepts in the classroom.
- In the general classroom: crayons
  - What do you think this is?
  - What do they do?
  - What else could we do?
  - Explore, Share and Care
- In the music classroom: xylophone bars
  - What do you think this is?
  - What do they do?
  - What else could we do?
  - Explore, Share and Care
- How else could we do this in the general music classroom?

### **Energizer Time! Alphabet People**

- When you hear the sound, turn your body into a letter
  - Uppercase
  - Lowercase
- Spelling
  - Name
  - Favorite food
  - Spell to beat, change tempo
- Groups
  - With partner, spell 2 letter word together, mirroring each other
  - Join pairs, spell 4 letter word mirroring (*keeping it appropriate!*)
  - Join groups, spells 8 letter word mirroring
  - Join again, spell 16 letter words, each person a letter (*examples given for assistance!*)

### Academic Choice

- Student-created final product, project, or presentation showcasing student learning.
- Incorporates natural cycle of learning: student-initiated goal planning, active working, and reflection on experience.
- We do this each and every day when students choose an unpitched percussion instrument for part of a sound story, improvise a B section on the xylophone, or create a rhythm from a selection of building bricks. As music educators, we often take it a step further when we ask groups of students to create an 8-measure creative movement piece or compose an ABA melody on the recorder with an unpitched percussion ostinato.

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<sup>7</sup> American Orff-Schulwerk Association (AOSA), visit [www.aosa.org](http://www.aosa.org) for more information.

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### *Use of Energizers*

- An energizer is a quick and exciting activity that engages the entire class simultaneously.
- They allow for fun, build community, and instill safety and comfort in the classroom.
- Energizers are most often used to:
  - Re-focus and re-engage students that are distracted by outside stimuli or plain boredom.
  - Aid transitions such as between lessons or from one part of the room to another.
  - Offer a mental and physical break when working on difficult material. Studies show that movement stimulates the brain and can increase student productivity.<sup>8</sup>
  - Review content of previously learned material in an engaging way.

### *How Does Music Education = Responsive Classroom?*

- Preliminary Play = Spontaneous Exploration = Guided Discovery
- Process = Scaffolding Teacher- Imitation to Student-Creation = How Students Learn
- Exploration to Composition = Structured Student-Led Risks = Academic Choice

### ***Closing Energizer! Soy Una Taza<sup>9</sup>***

A Spanish kid's song first introduced to me by Sofia Lopez-Ibor, this song is a hit, breaks a sweat, and even allows for some student composition (otherwise known as Academic Choice in the RC world!).

- Motions with teacher-created sound effects (increasing tempo)
- Echo spoken Spanish words with motions
- Adding music
  - During rests, add body percussion: pat, clap, snap, clap
- Discover all the kitchen utensils, and then create!
- Instead of these utensils, can you create new ones?
- Instead of utensils, try animals or even musical instruments!

### **Materials**

*Energizers!* by Susan Lattanzi Roser

*99 Activities and Greetings* by Melissa Correa-Connolly

*The Morning Meeting Book* by Roxann Kriete

*The First Six Weeks of School* by Paula Denton and Roxann Kriete

*Intery Mintery* by Doug Goodkin

A Complementary Combination: Responsive Classroom and Orff Schulwerk, "The Orff Echo", Spring 2014, by Matthew Stensrud

"5 Simple Ways to Incorporate Responsive Classroom Ideas into Orff Schulwerk," *Reverberations*, January 2015, by Matthew Stensrud

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<sup>8</sup> Visit [www.creativitypost.com/education/the\\_benefits\\_of\\_movement\\_in\\_schools](http://www.creativitypost.com/education/the_benefits_of_movement_in_schools) for more information on movement and student learning.

<sup>9</sup> Music used for this activity: Soy Una Taza, Grupo Encanto, Cantajuego Vol. 4, 2008.

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### **Notes**

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