Music .....An Effective Teaching Tool

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Today’s Net Generation is so sophisticated in terms of technology that they have been branded digital natives. “Digital” is their native language that they are “native speakers” of the language of computers, video games, and the Internet. Observing these students, we will notice wires coming out of every part of their body. Attached to these wires are MP3 players, iPods, iPhones or smart phones, iPad minis, PC’s and all other tools of the digital age.

Likewise, when they watch TV programs or movies, their feelings and emotions such as excitement, anger, laughter, relaxation, love, whimsy or even boredom are often triggered or heightened by the music playing behind the action. Their experience with the technology has enabled them to master complex tasks and make decisions rapidly. Classroom methods, strategies and exercises need to extend capabilities they already possess. In contrast to these digital natives, teachers are referred to as digital immigrants. They still have one foot in the past, and “digital” is their second language, which they continue to learn and sometimes struggle with. So, how can teachers use music as an instructional tool in ways that students will want music or CD soundtrack of their classes? The soundtrack is so powerful that they can listen to again and relive the experience. What is the learning value of music in the classroom? Here are twenty potential outcomes to ponder:

1. Grab students’ attention
2. Focus students’ concentration
3. Generate interest in class
4. Create a sense of anticipation
5. Establish a positive atmosphere/environment
6. Energize or relax students for learning exercise
7. Draw on students’ imagination
8. Build rapport among students
9. Improve attitudes toward content and learning
10. Build a connection with other students and teacher
11. Increase memory of content/concepts
12. Facilitate the completion of monotonous, repetitive tasks
13. Increase understanding
14. Foster creativity
15. Improve performance on tests and other measures
16. Inspire and motivate students
17. Make learning fun
18. Augment celebration of success
19. Set an appropriate mood or tone
20. Decrease anxiety and tension on scary topics

This evidence furnishes the foundation not only for how musician can be used as an effective teaching tool but more important, for music’s potential as legitimate, systematic teaching method for all K-12 teachers. Further, a Bulgarian Psychiatrist Lozanov explored techniques to use music to increase learning and memory. The use of background music lies at the foundation of his techniques. He created two very different but equally effective learning environments or concerts as active and passive. An “active” music activates the learning process mentally, physically, and/ or emotionally by playing an up-tempo piece of music and reading or reciting language phrases in time with the music. The music helps the students maintain focus and concentration. Likewise, background “passive” music can be played while students study read or write to increase attention levels, improve retention and memory, extend focused learning time and expand thinking skills. This music can also be effective during reviews and tests. Playing music this way can set the tone or mood for the entire day.

Music is a virtually untapped resource teaching the Net Generation and for drawing on their multiple intelligences as to increase the success of every student. The effectiveness of the music depends on the teacher’s creativity, imagination and artistic gifts, which will inevitably make the greatest difference in the classroom. Those gifts, moreover, must be accompanied by systematic planning and preparation. Clearly, music can be an effective teaching tool to better learning outcomes.

References:
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