

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Karen Laws

Observation of:

Kimberley Hemingway

Willard Model Elementary School

4th Grade Music Class

October 29th, 2020

9:50-10

DESCRIPTIVE

- Virtual learning. Zoom call with about 20 students. They spread across two pages of gallery view
- Fourth graders are mostly attentive as they long on, but all join with different video framing. Some are sitting at a desk, some are standing back from their device, others are laying down using their phone to call in
- Hemingway (teacher) greets the class by confirming that they are all from “Mrs. Dekatz’ class”
- Teacher calls out specific greetings so some students- “hello! your camera is blurry” or “Tristun looks well-rested! She got some rest!”
 - Personal connections are important. Doing some individual check-ups at the beginning of class seems to help children feel connected
- “I’m going to show you all a song while I take role” Teacher plays a Halloween cartoon video with singing. She kindly reminds students to stay muted
 - Teacher sings along to the video as it plays for extra engagement; there is a delay between the video and her voice, but the kids are bopping along and seem to be enjoying the song.
- “Last week we talked about a new musical term called meter. Does anybody remember what that is? Can someone raise their hand and tell me what we mean when we say meter?”
 - A few students try to answer, none quite hit the mark but they’re close!
- Teacher tells us “Meter is the way our beats are organized in a song. Remember the video with the meter monsters?”
 - Teacher re-explains the concept of meter with visual aids- they’ve used meter monsters to discuss meter before.
 - She calls on kids at random to discuss meter at random. Everyone participates when asked
- Teacher uses interesting counting method: Too, ta-ta, sa. Students say too for quarter notes, ta-ta for eighths, and sa for rests. Students are well-versed in this concept, and have been introduced to solfege.
- Next is a rhythm clapping exercise that students do along with a video
 - Teacher is participating and watching her grid of students, calling out to those that she sees not participating and clapping along. Some kids are really getting into it!
- Teacher asked questions and gave useful feedback:
 - “Did it make sense clapping the beats in the different groups like that?”
 - “Something that I think would help everyone, when she was clapping I saw Tristun nodding her head. That will help you feel the **steady beat**.”

- Teacher introduces the next activity: “So we’re going to look at something that we did last week, that I want to try again to see if we can do it”
 - She pulls up chrome music lab, which has monkeys on-screen that demonstrate strong and weak beats. For strong beats, a monkey hits a timpani. For weak beats, a monkey hits a triangle.
- “The way we can see how notes are organized, is a pattern of strong and weak beats. If our meter is two, which means there are two beats per group, we have one weak beat and one strong beat. The strong beat is the first beat, the weak beat is the second beat.”
 - Teacher demonstrates with the monkeys!
 - “So those are our beats in groups of two. Strong beat, weak beat. One, two, one, two”
- Teacher explains strong and weak beats for other time signatures as well, and demonstrates by clicking on the different monkeys to produce the strong and weak beats
- A student had a technical issue, so teacher stopped class to walk her through it
- At the end of the chrome music lab meter activity, teacher instructs students on how to find it on their own so they can practice themselves
- Teacher begins to introduce conducting patterns
 - Pulled up diagrams for 2/4 3/4 and 4/4. She follows the lines on-screen with her mouse as she counts the beats.
 - Student asks “do we need to write this down?” teacher says “you do not. You can if you want!”
- Teacher goes over conducting pattern in 2 with the class once, then told everyone that she needs more participation. She said a few students by name to encourage them to sit up and participate
- Teacher demonstrates conducting in 3, twice
- “For four, like I said, it’s even more fancy!” Teacher demonstrates 4/4 and repeats it for some time while giving comments to some kids, counting and giving examples all the time
- There is one final tech issue, and teacher stops class to help Faith resolve it.
- Teacher introduces me as the observer and has all of the students wave
- Teacher has a final treat- we watched the thriller music video!
 - “You can get up and dance if you want to but I’m not making you”
- Teacher says goodbye and students sign off

REFLECTIONS

- Right off the bat, teacher confirming which class is on the call is smart! There can be some confusion about virtual class schedules. Teacher touches base with students to make sure they’re in the right place
- Giving specific greetings to students encourages a connection, which can be difficult in virtual learning. Teacher does a great job of saying hello to students and replying to any of them that talk to her
- Teacher playing a song while she takes role is a good way to handle the issue of distracted/bored kids on a zoom call

- I like that she introduced the topic of meter by reminding students that they talked about it last week. Not only does that make a connection between classes, but it jogs their memory so they can be ready to learn more or answer questions
 - Teacher introduces the concept but doesn't explain it, instead asks students to tell her
- Incorporation of music monsters using the chrome music lab provides a visual aid for strong and weak beats
 - Teacher did not explain what website she was using when she began this portion of the lesson, which left me a little bit confused
- The rhythm counting method that they all seem to know "too, ta-ta, sa" is unfamiliar to me! I like the different consonant sound for rests, and it was nice to see students feel confident with something that they recognized so easily
- Teacher giving them the specific information to access chrome music lab is a good conclusion to that portion of the lesson. It's important to give students the tools that they need
- The rhythm video was engaging enough, though delay makes it difficult to follow along with teacher and video at the same time.
 - She uses feedback as an opportunity to talk about steady beat- NICE
- Teacher deals with interruptions gracefully. So smoothly. Whether it's a random student comment or a technical issue that someone presents her with, she is so patient and kind. You can tell she enjoys her job and it is heartening to see even through a screen
- Introduction of conducting in the 4th grade is smart!
 - The kids love participating and copying what teacher does. Her constant encouragements and energy made this a very fun section of the class. Great movement exercise, and knowledge of conducting patterns will be so useful for performances down the line!
- The treat at the end of class being a music video was choice. The students enjoyed it, and it can be argued that it educated them on popular music from the past! Very fun ending, and seasonally appropriate.