Teaching Music to Elementary Students

Teaching music to elementary students is a fun and worthwhile task. However, it can be challenging at times. As the music teacher, always have a game plan for every grade or skill level that you will work with. It is also good to have a backup plan in case the music lesson(s) are too easy, or in case they are too hard for the class. The basics of music should be established first.

Though you are not an instructor of choir lessons, but are instead teaching music to elementary students, the voice can most certainly be used as an instrument in class—but you will want to focus the students energy on other instruments as well. The children can easily be taught the basics in drums, blocks, triangles and other percussion instruments, and even their bodies to make music.

Here are some ideas to help you get started.

- Teaching music to elementary students for kindergarten and first graders:
  § When teaching music to elementary students, start the kids out with basic scales—but do not focus too much time on scales. Instead, associate the short lesson on scales with a simple song that, as you will tell them “uses the notes in a different order” Explain that notes are mixed up together and that is how people can make all different kinds of music.
  § As an example: use bells that are lined up in the order of your basic scale. Have the children line up with the bells and play their instrument, one ring at a time, first in order and then mixed up. Point to each child when it is his or her turn to ring his or her bell and have them create a simple song.
  § As they get older, teaching music to elementary students you should include more percussion instruments—it seems like percussion instruments were made for teaching music to elementary students, they are easy and fun.
  § One example: have them learn to keep rhythm. Using drums, wooden sticks, triangles, or have them clap their hands or stomp their feet to the rhythm. Use a “six-count” or “eight-count” beat so that they can count along at first.
  § Once the students can work without counting aloud—try to have them play using as complicated a piece as you feel they can handle. They can use their voices, too.
  § The hardest part of teaching music to elementary students of this older age group is discerning where there skill levels are strongest and base your lesson plans accordingly. By the end of the school year for students in second grade—the children should have become considerably more advanced than they were when classes began.

Here are some basics for the beginning of the year for teaching music to elementary students:

- Have some basic lesson plans made for each age group that will help you assess quickly what skill level they are and how far you want to take them that year.

- Make lesson plans flexible—sometimes kids can unintentionally guide a class—especially in the fine arts—let your class “go off on a tangent” if it is helping make the class more fun.

- For recitals, presentations etc. plan to have the group perform at a skill level that is a little bit below their actual abilities. This way they will do especially good in the performance.

- Ask the children to practice at home. Sometimes, teaching music to elementary students it seems like you don not have enough time to work with the students one-on-one and you know that what they need is one-on-one attention. If they are allowed to take their percussion instruments home—ask them to practice as homework with a parent or guardian. If not, there are exercises that they can do at home like making their own drum. Practicing clapping or stomping to a certain rhythm etc. If you have an especially large class, try to rotate which children you are able to help individually during class time.
Teaching music to elementary students is a challenging but very rewarding task.

Source: http://www.homeroomteacher.com/infoteachingmusicoelementarystudents.html