

5 Ways to Introduce a New Song to Elementary School Students

(Ref: <http://bit.ly/5waystointroducesongs>)

Teaching young students a new song can be tricky. They really need to hear it a few times before they try to sing it themselves, but what child wants to sit and listen for that long, and how much do they really pay attention when they do? And how can you get them to learn all the words without everyone getting a headache? Today I want to share a few of my favorite ways to introduce a new song to elementary age students that are engaging and effective.

1. Hand motions

This is my go-to for sure. I introduce new songs by first having them mirror my hand motions while I sing the song. Usually we'll practice doing this twice (reminding the students to keep their voices off) before I start having them echo me one line at a time to learn the song. Not only does this provide an engaging way for students to hear the song sung, but the motions also serve as a memory aid and help students focus on and remember the words. I wrote an entire post on this- [here it is](#) if you want to read more about how I use sign language for this purpose.

2. Movements

This one is similar to the last but often neglected- have students learn some type of full-body movement or dance while you introduce the song. This could be as simple as walking around in a circle on the beat, or you could get into complete choreography. A lot of times as music teachers I think we automatically teach the song first and then the dance/ movement, but actually in many cases it is more effective to teach the movements first and have them get familiar with the structure of the song that way, then have them learn the singing part afterwards.

3. Pictures

I don't use this strategy as often but it's a great way to mix things up. I will put pictures that represent the words to the song up on the board (or hold them up on pieces of paper) and have students guess what the song is about before I sing it to them to "find out if they were right". This is a great way to get students to really focus on the lyrics when they hear the song for the first time!

So for example, if I was introducing the song "Mary Had a Little Lamb", I might have a picture of a girl, a lamb, and a snowflake. Without knowing the song, students might assume that it has something to do with winter- when they hear the song, they'll discover that actually the snow reference is just to talk about the lamb's white wool!

4. Ostinati / accompaniment parts

This is another one that I think most of us would teach after students learn the song, but can effectively be used in reverse order! Start by teaching students a simple accompaniment or ostinato part on instruments, body percussion, etc. Then once they can do that independently, sing the melody for them while they perform the accompaniment part. A great challenge for older elementary students is to ask them to listen to hear what

the song is about while performing the accompaniment. It's a real challenge for their brains to focus on hearing the words without losing track of their part!

5. Play it first

My final suggestion works best along with the movement suggestions from the first 2 points here: play the melody on an instrument (live or from a recording). I most commonly use this strategy while also having students move with the meter- if it's in triple meter, they can do a basic waltz step around the room, or students could do a simple clapping pattern with a partner that fits the meter. Once they can do the movement with the song, then go back and teach the melody and have them perform the movements while singing.

These are just a few of my favorite strategies- it's fun to mix it up and try something different to keep all of us on our toes! What are some of your favorite ways to introduce a new song? I'd love to hear your ideas in the comments section!

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