

SUCCESS WITH DRUMS!

Tips and Hints for Success on Drums in the Elementary Classroom

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1. Figure out a system for students to set up the drums. Drums of equal size should be together so students can watch each other. If possible figure out a set up so that the drums are out at all times. Mine line 2 ½ sides of my classroom. Sitting is best. Standing or kneeling can work if you don't play for very long. My students sit on two 5 gallon buckets stacked together. My kindergarteners and beginning-of-the-year first graders stand as their legs are too short to rest on the floor when seated.
2. Think about how you want the students to do with their hands when not playing. My students are seated, so my expectation is that their hands rest on their knees until it's time to play. This is non-negotiable for me. For those who cannot/will not keep their hands on their knees, I simply set their drum 6 feet away from them. If they can show me what they're supposed to do after a few minutes the drum goes back.
3. Add words to rhythms. My students enjoy playing nursery rhymes. For younger students, they can think and play after practicing playing while saying. My older students like to explore with low and high tones with nursery rhymes. Sometimes my older kids don't like to use words. I tell them it's just a tool to help them learn the part. As soon as they can play it they can say the words in their heads instead of out loud. However, many kids, no matter what age, can watch you play a rhythm and are able to play it without adding words. Never underestimate what kids can do!
4. Understand drumming can be intimidating to some kids, especially newcomers to your school. Have a plan to help those reluctant to play. Sometimes if I can't get a student to play anything on a drum, they are okay with playing something on a woodblock or cowbell. Be creative!
5. It's okay if your students can't play every part in a drum ensemble. Do what you can! Modify parts so the "groove" isn't lost, but so the parts are easier for the kids to play.
6. Teach students to play quietly. It's about playing together and relying on each other, not about who can be the loudest. Playing an ensemble along with a pre-recorded song is a great tool to help kids learn to play quietly. Kids that pound too hard tire quickly! Which leads to...
7. Building endurance is important. Drumming is a rather physical activity. Help students build up their endurance by starting with small chunks of time!

8. Let your students come up with patterns for different drum parts. Explore how these parts sound together. Problem solve how to change what doesn't sound good. Add movement! Write down what they create and have them come up with a name!
9. Insist on good technique. Watch yourself play in a mirror. Your students will play like you, so make sure your own playing is excellent!

Helpful Resources for Drumming:

World Music Drumming 20th Anniversary Teacher Edition by Will Schmid
Beat Box - World Music Drumming 101 by Will Schmid
Global Grooves by Will Schmid
World Music Drumming - New Ensembles and Songs by Will Schmid
World Music Drumming - More New Ensembles and Songs by Will Schmid
Hands On - by Jim Solomon
Conga Town - by Jim Solomon
D.R.U.M. - by Jim Solomon
Happy Jammin' - by Paul Corbiere
From Bags to Riches - by Paul Corbiere
Skins, Sticks and Bars - by Paul Corbiere
Sing and Play the Global Way - by Mari Schay
Drum It Up! - by Sandy Lantz and Gretchen Wahlberg