

Incorporating Music and the Arts in Literacy Tutoring

Minnesota Literacy Council
Summer Reads (2014)



Greetings Enthusiastic Learners,

We are a team of Summer Reads Vistas, with an interest in spreading our love of literacy to all. Our summer employment with the Minnesota Literacy Council is what initially brought us together as a team. Though we all came from different backgrounds, our team formed quickly as we found a commonality in our appreciation for art and music. As a team we thought it would be interesting to research how art and music can be beneficial to children when practicing reading, writing and literacy skills.

Each of us was assigned to work at a Minneapolis public site (a school, library, or community center) to tutor/ mentor children ages 4-10. While we did have specific curriculum to adhere to most of the time, we were also given the opportunity to come up with creative enrichment activities to enhance our efforts in teaching language and literacy skills.

The activities we found could be performed with individual children or in small groups. As a team we decided to compile a packet containing some of the activities we performed, as well as some of the professional resources where we obtained research. Our hope is that our findings are informative, fun, and engaging to use with all children in an educational setting or at home! We hope you enjoy!

Sincerely,
Kiya, Anna-Claire, Vina, and Fabiola



Bios

My name is Anna-Claire Hubbard. I am a sophomore at Loyola University Chicago, majoring in Psychology and minoring in Vocal Performance. I've always had a passion for music and the arts, as well as finding ways to give kids an opportunity to grow in their education. Ever since I was little, I have participated in dance class, theater, art classes, and more. Music and art has always been a way for me to be creative and communicate what I'm not able to fully express. I have also volunteered at schools and the Minnesota Literacy Council, tutoring students and helping them excel in school. Recently I've become interested in finding out the ways in which students learn best, especially involving art and music. I think that finding artsy activities and lessons that kids can be involved in is very important and beneficial.

My name is Kiya Shafer I am a senior at Metropolitan State University majoring in Human Services, with a minor in Family Studies. As a child, I was very involved in the arts. I participated in many extracurricular activities such as, dance, theater, choir, and art club. I always enjoyed those activities because I felt they gave me an outlet to be creative and express myself in ways that I wasn't able to during the regular school day. In school, I remember dreading giving speeches in front of my peers for fear of not sounding as smart or articulate. However, when given a solo to sing in choir, that fear of being in front of others seemed to

melt away. The music gave me a feeling of calmness, and the words provided me with vocabulary that allowed me to confidently express myself. Of course, as a sixth grader I did not attribute the arts with having any profound impact on my educational experience.

Currently as a college student, I know art and music have helped me with memorization and has helped enhance my understanding of certain material. This project was particularly interesting to me because I've always considered myself "an unconventional learner." I'm the type of learner that could read material numerous times and not feel I fully grasped the concept. But, show me a picture, or sing the material to me in a song, and I'll retain the information. I wanted to see if the same concept could be helpful to any of the children I'd be tutoring this summer.

My name is Fabiola Gutierrez and I just graduated from Macalester College with a major in International Studies and a double minor in Computer Science and Anthropology. I joined this project because I had heard of the research that examined the benefits of art and music and its impact in learning. Since art and music programs are often the first to go during school budget cuts, I thought this matter deserved further consideration. Furthermore, this project was a perfect opportunity to see in action the impact music and art could have on kids who are learning literacy skills. I also joined this project due to my own personal experiences - although I am not particularly musically or artistically-inclined, I do love to listen to music and often listen to music when I am working, studying or doing homework.

My name is Vina Onyango-Robshaw, I recently graduated from South High School Minneapolis and now I'm off to St. Catherine University to study Biochemistry. I plan on continuing my education to graduate school to become a Biomedical Engineer. As you can see we have very diverse backgrounds and interests but we did find common ground in our interest of how fine arts can impact learning. Personally while I was in high school I played Euphonium for four years in band, and



trumpet in Jazz band. For me, art has always been my outlet, my passion, but most importantly, my home away from home. I joined this project because I fully believe that fine arts improve student performance and comprehension. There is an abundance of research out there that led to this conclusion as well. I also believe it brings creativity which brings fun to learning. I wanted to use this idea to try and enhance students' experience during summer school and still continue to learn.

Let's start at the beginning....

What exactly was our research topic?

How art and music can enhance learning reading, writing, and speaking skills. We conducted some research to give us a solid background on what our project was all about, and to learn more about the benefits of using music and art in the classroom.

Here's what is what the research says about the benefits of incorporating art and music in the classroom:

Benefits/positive outcomes of incorporating Music:

- Can increase memory
- Focus concentration
- Enhance imagination
- Accentuate theme-oriented units
- And our favorite - it can help to incorporate an element of FUN!

Benefits/positive outcomes of incorporating Art:

- Can enhance social skills
- Enhance understanding of material that words alone do not convey
- Enhances self expression/ creativity
- Increase hand-eye coordination

Of course....

There are many more benefits that we could have mentioned. The ones we chose to highlight were the ones we thought were the most universal and could be of value in any setting, not just in teaching literacy. The research we conducted proved many of these statements to be true with a diverse range of students. We thought it would be beneficial to share some of the activities we used to enhance our literacy curriculum and why they were effective.

The activities / ideas:

Art activities

Students can write a story or be given a story.

They can read through and replace each of the nouns with a drawing that represents that noun. It gives them a better understanding of what that word represents, as well as an

Kids' reaction:

The kids in the classrooms we were in responded really well to this activity. They loved being able to do something more than just write and if they didn't know what the word meant, helping them draw a picture of it really helped their understanding.

Make an alphabet book

Students can make a book filled with each letter of the alphabet, one letter on each page. They can draw objects that start with that letter, or anything that helps them remember the sound of it or what the letter is. It gives them a chance to draw and color while still learning the alphabet and how to spell certain words.

Creative Story Writing/Telling

Pick two colors, one for the students and one for the teacher.

Explain the objective, which is to create a story together, but the person with the most sentences that flow wins.

~The boys I worked with really liked this activity because of competition.~

Simply have the students start the story, and alternate, if the sentence doesn't make sense it's the teacher's turn to continue the story.

The teacher writes one sentence, however.

Read the story to the students ~they love this part.~

In the end draw the overall picture of the story/ a book cover-like picture together.

Artistic Interpretation

For this activity you can use anything, from paper folding, to play-doh, to many more.

Instructions

Weekly: Assign students a book to read and present to you. *~emphasizing that the more they read the book the more detailed the story will be.*

Tell the students they have to also prepare a question on any vocabulary they have.

Have them present the story to you.

Most of the students will draw pictures and work off of the pictures to tell you about the book.

After they present, it's a simple conversational presentation, have them ask any questions they had or words they stumbled upon.

(great time to work on vocabulary)

Recommendations

This worked best because we gave them books on Thursday and they had the weekend to prepare then present the story on Monday. Do give them time to work on it on Monday morning and help them with it. Students learned a lot of vocabulary this way as well because they'd ask questions when they didn't understand.

The activities / ideas:

Art activities

Students can draw a picture and then write or tell a story to go along with it, or vice versa.

They get really creative with these stories and drawings, and it doesn't matter too much which one they start with first. It allows them to be vocal and express themselves, while developing their narrative story skills.

Kids' reaction:

Students in our classroom really enjoyed this activity. They got really excited when they were able to write whatever they wanted to write, and draw something that goes along with the story.

Use connect-the-dot coloring sheets with “ABC Dots”

Connect-the-dot coloring sheets can be obtained from a simple Google search or websites such as:

- Bogglesworldesl.com
- Nickjr.com
- Abcteach.com

This activity is great because it gets young learner to start recognizing the alphabet, while also working on motor skills, and being creative. You can vary the type of connect the dots by focusing on a specific portion of the alphabet or by upper and lower case letters. You can also get creative by changing the theme for the season, or lesson plan.

Kids' Reaction:

The kids really loved this activity for the most part. This activity was most effective when I use characters the children knew such as Dora. Using the characters was an extra step that made the activity more exciting for the students.

Music Activities:

Sing a song

It is an added bonus if you can provide a visual aide such as a book or video to accompany you while you do the activity, this will give the children an extra source to draw from for increasing memorization of the material.

When choosing a song it's nice to tie it to a theme or relevant vocabulary you'd like them to learn, but the overall purpose is just to engage the children in another form of spoken language that may result in increased vocabulary skills.

Kids' reaction:

The children really enjoyed this activity because it was different than what they did most of the day. For the most part this activity was used in small groups, primarily with English Language Learners trying to increase their vocabulary. For these learners it seemed to be quite imperative to have the visual aid as well, because then I could ensure they were able to connect the words with images they already knew. A method like this could be useful to people of all ages trying to learn/memorize new material.

The I Love To Read Song

While this song was never tested by us in a classroom, we thought this was a creative song that you could be used as a segue into reading time, or as standalone song to just get kids excited about reading! The song is based on a poem by Jack Prelutsky.

(Sung to the tune of "My Bologna has a First Name")

I am a lucky person, because I love to read!
Reading gets me thinking and helps me to succeed!
Sometimes when I am lonely a book is all I need!
I am a lucky person because I love to read!

Music listening Workshops

These are activities offered but make sure you're adjusting them to your students because every student learns differently.

Music listening workshops are pretty simple, this works best when students are restless and you're trying to accomplish something with the limited time.

Select a piece of classical music *~the reason for picking classical music without any vocals is so that they can imagine and create their own words to the stories they imagine~*

First ask the students any questions to keep their minds actively thinking.

Tell them that you're going to play a piece of music for them,

Have them either write or draw whatever comes to mind. *~provide crayons and paper they really love the coloring~*

Students might be shy sharing the first time but they loved it by the last time.

I did this as a calm down workshop for my second and third graders. This is extremely helpful during assessments or interventions.

Articles/ Research Studies used and links to other information obtained

Harmony Project:

The award-winning Harmony Project gives free instruments to at-risk youth around the country, making a deal that if they stay in school, they can get free music lessons. The study found that those students who attended the lessons improved in their communication skills, attention, and memory. It also was discovered that this project could help close the academic gap between rich and poor students. Overall, the project found that by incorporating music and art into schools, struggling students and at-risk youth are able to excel almost to the same level as their peers.

Northwestern University:

A study was done by Northwestern University looking at the effects of music on the brain. Research revealed that musical training, or just the incorporation of music into education, could heavily influence one's speech and language, memory and attention, and conveying emotions vocally.

Music and Learning: Integrating Music in the Classroom (Article):

This is a fantastic article published by Johns Hopkins University's School of Education, highlighting some of the major benefits of using music in the classroom. As well as highlighting some examples of how you can incorporate music in your class.

<http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/Arts%20in%20Education/brewer.htm>

Listening to Music and Reading Comprehension (Article)

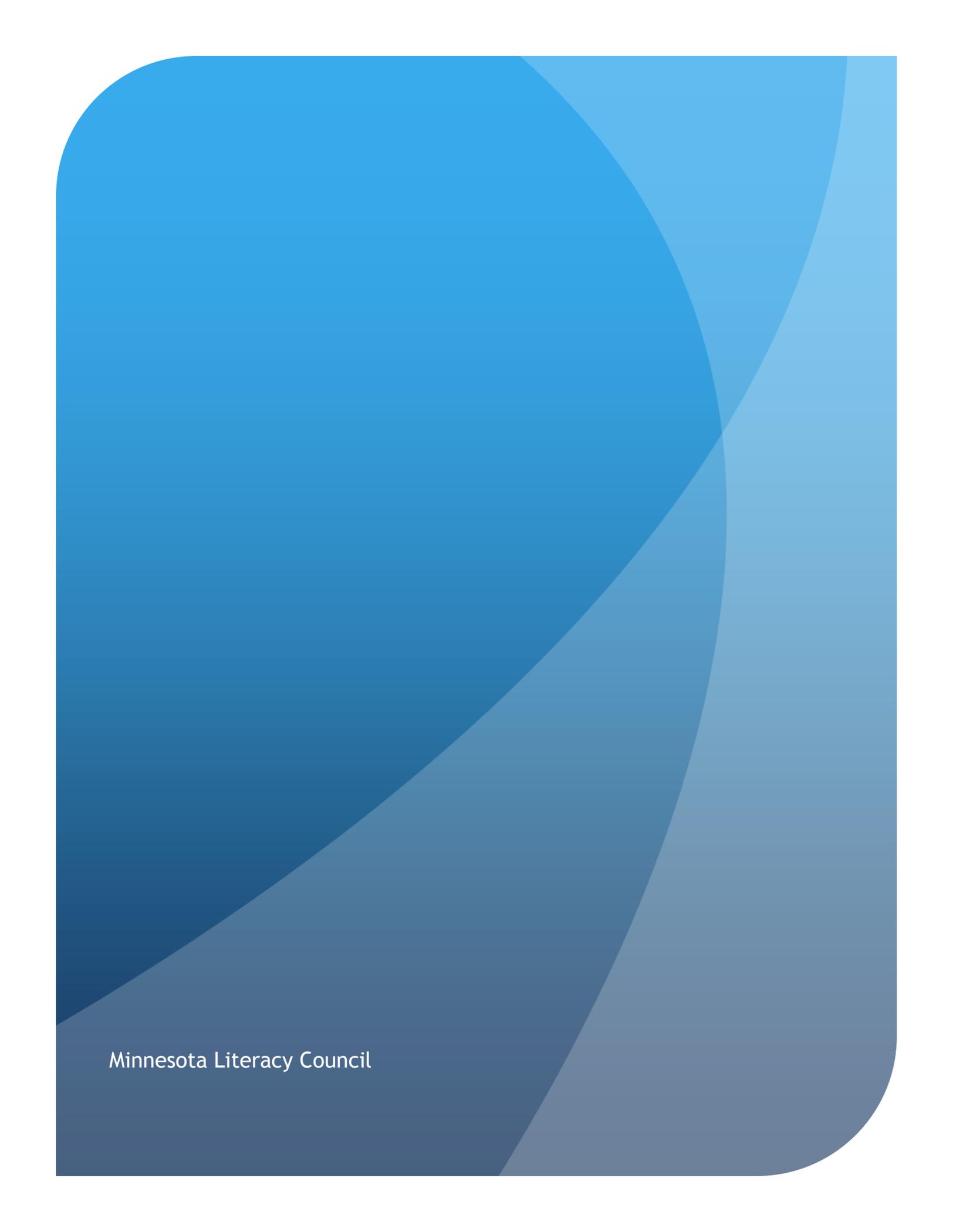
This is great article that focuses on the link between hearing music and what is going on in the brain and how it can enhance reading comprehension. The site also has some great links to other articles that cover similar areas of interest.

<http://www.edu-cyberpg.com/Literacy/whatresearch5.asp>

Additional Sources Used:

These are great sources to find more information on this topic or find additional activities to do at home! To see the list of URL links and find even further information please visit the Minnesota Literacy Council website.

1. <http://lesson-plans.theteacherscorner.net/music/>
2. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/03/090316075843.htm>
3. http://www.education.com/magazine/article/Can_Music_Help_Learn/
4. <http://www.aboutartschools.com/education/benefits/>
5. <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/10/using-music-to-close-the-academic-gap/280362/>
6. http://www.naturalnews.com/029324_music_brain.html
7. <http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/resources/famlit/howtokit/musiclit/musiclit.pdf>
8. <https://www.teachervision.com/music/reading-and-language-arts/54323.html>
9. <http://educationcloset.com/2012/07/17/integrating-music-and-literacy/>
10. <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/2002-05-20-arts.htm>
11. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9902EED9153FF934A15754C0A9609C8B63>
12. <https://www.missouriartscouncil.org/graphics/assets/documents/b657d9f1adfc.pdf>

The logo for the Minnesota Literacy Council features a stylized letter 'M' composed of overlapping, rounded shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from a deep navy to a light sky blue. The shapes are layered to create a sense of depth and movement.

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