

THE EFFECTS OF BACKGROUND MUSIC IN THE CLASSROOM ON
THE PRODUCTIVITY, MOTIVATION, AND BEHAVIOR OF
FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS

By

Kevin N. White

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Dr. Doris Layton, Divergent Learning Program Director

Dr. Polly LaRosa, Primary Research Advisor

Dr. Chris Burkett, Secondary Research Advisor

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this action research paper to my dad, Rodney White, my mom, Sherry White, my brother, Dustin White, and my extended family members. They have always been there for me. I wouldn't have made it this far if it wasn't for their continued support and encouragement!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose Statement.....	1
Importance of the Study.....	2
Definition of Terms.....	2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	3
Productivity.....	4
Motivation.....	9
Positive Behavior.....	11
METHODOLOGY	15
Participants.....	15
Materials	15
Procedures.....	16
Analysis.....	17
FINDINGS	18
DISCUSSION.....	24
Overview of the Study	24
Summary of Findings.....	26

Conclusions.....	26
Recommendations.....	26
Limitations of the Study.....	26
REFERENCES	29
APPENDICES	30
APPENDIX A: Classroom Observation Form	31
APPENDIX B: Music Survey.....	32
APPENDIX C: Background Music in the Classroom Student Exit Survey	33
APPENDIX D: Student Interview #1	34
APPENDIX E: Student Interview #2.....	35
APPENDIX F: Student Interview #3.....	36
APPENDIX G: Anecdotal Notes.....	37
APPENDIX H: Music in the Classroom Teacher Survey.....	38
APPENDIX I: Why Implement Background Music in the Classroom?.....	39
APPENDIX J: Informed Consent Form.....	40

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 1: Data from the student pre-test survey.....	18
Table 2A: Data collected during researcher and classroom teacher observations.....	19
Table 2B: Data collected during researcher and classroom teacher observation comments by dates.....	19
Table 3: Data from Music in the Classroom: Teacher Survey.....	23

ABSTRACT

Many students in a fourth grade classroom at Logan Elementary School are expressing numerous types of negative behaviors, are not motivated to learn, and do not stay on-task. In an effort to change these students, an action research study was conducted that implemented background music in the classroom. There were ten fourth grade students who participated in the study. The study was conducted over a course of three weeks. The researcher focused on four main points: does background music increase student motivation, positive behavior, relaxation, and staying on-task. The results suggest that the overall class met the project's main points. Implementing background music in the fourth grade classroom at Logan Elementary School has proven to be an effective tool.

INTRODUCTION

As the importance of the classroom setting has grown and evolved over time, teachers now have an opportunity and obligation to enrich and promote learning further than before. There are several approaches to teaching through which a teacher can positively affect the productivity, behavior, and motivation of students. One of the specific strategies now commonly used to supplement and enhance student learning is the use of background music. Research indicates that music plays an important role in culture and is a strong influence on today's youth. In response to this information, the focus of this study was to incorporate music in the classroom to promote student learning. Using music in the background of instruction or during independent work time has proven to have many benefits in the classroom in relation to productivity, behavior, and motivation.

This study was conducted at Logan Elementary School. Logan's student population consists of two hundred and six students, predominantly African-American. The school provides education to students from early child development through fifth grade. This inner city elementary school has made adequate annual yearly progress; however, the student population, as a whole, is at-risk. Logan Elementary has a significant number of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. The average class size for students at Logan is fifteen.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine how background music in the classroom affected the productivity, behavior, and motivation of students. The questions to be answered were: a. Does background music in the classroom lead to positive

behavior? b. Does background music increase student productivity? and c. Does background music motivate students to learn/work? By providing answers to these questions, the research will also answer the ultimate question: Does background music in the classroom make a difference?

Importance of the Study

The information from this study will be of great value to all educators. It will provide information pertaining to a different strategy that could bring positive results into the classroom. Implementing music in the classroom could help students and be very effective in several different ways that could lead to positive performance and/or an increase in test scores. It could help raise the students' level of motivation, increase positive behavior, and keep students on-task.

Definition of Terms

1. Background music - music without words that is played while students learn and work independently and in groups.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Classroom teaching styles often reflect linguistic and mathematical styles of learning. As Howard Gardner pointed out, however, these learning styles are merely two of nine or more distinct types (Milner & Milner, 2003, p. 360). Also among Gardner's multiple intelligences is musical learning. Development of the musical intelligence can be greatly aided by the use of music throughout the curriculum. Additionally, using music in the classroom will not only contribute to the development of musical intelligence, but also enhance the learning process overall.

Though not often integrated into the classroom, music can serve a vital role in the education of all students. Will Earhart, president of the Music Educators National Conference, stated, "Music enhances knowledge in the areas of mathematics, science, geography, history, foreign language, physical education and vocational training" (as cited in Morrison, 1994, p. 33). Clearly, the benefits of adding background music during learning are numerous and apply to more than just musical intelligence: "The implementation of the arts, specifically music, would help students raise mathematical achievement scores as well as enhance overall intelligence" (Bryant-Jones, Shimmins, & Vega, 2003, p. 28). Though music classes are not as valued as core subjects, the inclusion of music in all classroom settings is slowly becoming more widespread. "Music is also universal and can open wonderful doors to the education of children" (Behar, 2000, p. 26).

The question, "Does background music in the classroom make a difference?" is of primary interest to teachers considering using music in their classrooms. Current studies

suggest that incorporating background music into the learning environment may help to improve students' academic performance and create a positive effect on cognitive development. In schools today, educators are realizing that they need to use various strategies and resources to enhance the curriculum and learning of the students (Lewis, 2002, p. 3). One way to accomplish this is by “tapping” into the powerful link between music and learning.

Background music could also positively affect the brain. In 1996, Malyarenko studied the effects of background music in a preschool setting. He found “the music group members appeared to tire less easily than the controls” (Strickland, 2001, p.101). The study shows that music may indirectly enhance the learning and ability of a child, depending on which internal state is evoked (right or left lobe).

Aside from studying music itself, simply playing music in the background can have an effect on student performance. The job of educators is to do whatever possible, mentally or physically, to reach all levels of children. Music is one tool that can aid in improving children's academic performance. Some issues to consider about music in the classroom are how music can lead to positive behavior, how it might increase student productivity, and how it motivates students to learn and work.

Productivity

Integrating music in the classroom can greatly affect the students' productivity. The increase of their productivity could result in many beneficial aspects, such as staying on task, increasing retention of material, improving grades/performance, increasing concentration levels, and accelerating learning. “In recent years many studies have been conducted on the effects of classical music on learning. The results of these studies are

interesting and varied: increased I. Q., accelerated learning, greater retention of material learned, high test scores, and reduced stress and tension, to name a few” (Ketcheson, 2004, p. 35).

Music is used to create desired moods, foster enjoyment of movement and dance, boost energy, increase happiness, bring back powerful memories, and help relaxation and focus. Students revealed that “soft music makes them feel comfortable, focused, and relaxed” (Dinsmore, 2003, p. 19). One student stated, “It makes me feel good.... It was relaxing.... It helped me with my Journal” (McGovern, 2000, p.25). Teachers agree that playing music in their classrooms increases productivity by creating a calming atmosphere: “I can see that the students are more relaxed when...there is soft music playing in the background” (Dinsmore, 2003, p. 19). Kay Gardner, a fifth grade teacher in a small rural school, used classical background music and noticed that with the music on, her students settled down quickly, stayed on task, and went about their schoolwork in a calm and relaxed manner (Black, 1997, p. 22). Susan Cromer said, “It just kind of calms the children and helps them focus” (Keeler, 2003).

Students that are more relaxed and focused stay on task better. The music not only helps eliminate “white noises” but also creates a sustained supportive ambiance. As a result, it could reduce the students’ frustration levels enough to perform tasks effectively and efficiently. The more relaxed and focused the students are, the more they will stay on task and complete the assignment, which in turn improves grades. Staying calm not only helps the students stay on task and be productive with their school work, but it could also help them stay out of trouble. Ninety-three percent of students interviewed in one study said music relaxed them and helped them stay on-task

(Dinsmore, 2003, p. 18). This shows that using music can positively influence the likelihood of on-task behavior, which prevents the student from doing other things that are not relevant to the school work, for example, talking, playing, etc.

Obviously, the ability to retain information plays a key role in the education process. Retaining the material being taught is very important for the student and its outcomes could be breath taking. Behar reports that classical music has been shown to aid in memory enhancement, which helps with all courses of study, especially those that stress knowledge (Behar, 2000, p. 7). Music can improve the students' grades and performance, but most importantly the students will be gaining new knowledge. "When music is played during learning experiences there is more retention of the material" (Lewis, 2002, p. 3). The increase of retention could lead to better grades, completion of task and/or assignments, and increased participation in class.

Background music also "enhances spelling word retention" (Anderson, Henke, McLaughlin, Ripp, & Tuffs, 2000, p.6). "It has been found that using music to teach reading motivates and increases the reading ability of students"(Koppelman & Imig, 1995, p. 6). Furthermore, research demonstrates that "being exposed to music helps develop auditory and visual skills needed for reading," particularly among kindergarten and first grade students (Koppelman & Imig, 1995, p. 6). Teachers employed background music for each subject in order to promote higher student achievement. One teacher stated, "Not only do I rely on music to enhance children's reading and math learning's, but I also depend on it to enrich all learning that takes place in my classroom" (James, 2000, p. 37). But music does not only have an effect when played during core subjects; it leaves a mark on students of all ages, in all settings. "Hall found that music

played in study hall classes increased reading comprehension in adolescent students...music could prevent or calm intense situations...a music therapy program with fifth and sixth graders with socially unacceptable behaviors to produce a similar quieting effect” (Chalmers, Olson, & Zurkowski, 1999, p.1). Background music could help lead to higher levels of student productivity.

How does one know that music is increasing student productivity? One way to measure this change is by comparing test scores. In one study, eleven out of twelve students showed remarkable improvement in test scores (Lawrence, 2001, p. 2). It appears that students work more diligently and get better grades when listening to music while working (Lawrence, 2001, p. 3). This is remarkable – which would suggest that integrating music in the classroom is a must.

Adding background music in the classroom also contributes to decreasing distractions, and increasing concentration levels. For some students, background music helps cover up any distractions that they may have in the classroom, such as clocks ticking, pencils tapping, and chairs/desks moving. Ghassemi reports that “music functions like white noise, drowning out distractions” (Ghassemi, 2006, p. 2). Drowning out distractions could increase the students’ concentration levels. A third grade teacher said, in regards to the increasing concentration levels: “Calming, students more focused, appears to be more concentration, room quieter” (Lawrence, 2001, p. 3). When the students concentrate on their schoolwork it helps them to stay on task, complete assignments, improve grades, and accelerate their learning. It also makes the classroom a quiet place for all students to concentrate and learn. Behar stated, “Music has been shown to increase both concentration and comprehension” (Lewis, 2002, p. 15).

Comprehension scores would increase due to the higher concentration levels achieved by playing classical music in the background. When a few students were asked if music helped them concentrate, they said, “Yes it does. Why is because the music is good.... Yes, because it helps me get more into my work.... Yes, I think it helps me to concentrate...it makes it quiet in the room” (McGovern, 2000, p. 27). Another reflected, “I think it helps me concentrate and avoid daydreaming, which can be really distracting to me” (Ghassemi, 2006, p. 1).

Music is also a tool to accelerate students’ learning processes: “accelerated learning takes place in the presence of music” (Ohlhaber, 1998, p.1). Not only does the music speed up the learning process, but it also increases information retention, thereby aiding the learning of new languages. Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder state:

Tests at Iowa State University, for instance, found that slow Baroque music alone (without the full accelerated system) speeded up learning by 24 percent and increased memory retention by 26 percent. Teachers working for the Washington State Department of Immigration played the music during English classes for recent arrivals...it eased the trauma these older adults experienced at having to pick up a new language and use it in a very foreign culture. The music also accelerated their learning. (as cited in Lawrence, 2001, p. 2)

If background music can speed language acquisition, surely it can benefit students learning core subjects like English and math.

Background music could also help with the students that have Attention-Deficit Disorder (ADD). These students are distracted very easily. With the use of classical background music the students that have ADD could concentrate more on their studies,

thus improving their productivity. “[For those students] with attention-deficit disorder, who are constantly seeking stimulation, some distraction might be what they need to concentrate on their studies” (Ghassemi, 2006, p.2).

All students, including the mentally impaired and learning disabled also gain positive results from classical background music. These students need music and repetition in order to increase productivity. “Without music, these students normally made slow gains in achievement” (Bryant-Jones, Shimmins, & Vega, 2003, p. 45). Music unlocks the mind and allows for growth of all students, even in the most disadvantaged and learning-disabled children.

The use of music has been shown to increase the productivity of students. Using music will help the students feel comfortable, increase concentration, minimize distractions, and help keep them calm. “Music pulls the listener into the setting, stimulating interest, creativity, and more complex thinking”(Davies, 2000, p. 150). All of these factors contribute to the students’ productivity, leading to improved grades and performance in class.

Motivation

Music does not simply encourage passive learning in students; it also motivates them to become attentive, engaged, and productive. Increasing the students’ motivation in the classroom through music is extremely important, particularly for at-risk populations. Playing classical background music in a classroom helps positively enhance the classroom climate. This helps motivate the students to learn, gets students on-task quicker, and helps improve their concentration. “Classical music played in the classroom

has been used to create a better classroom environment to motivate learning and improve concentration” (Lewis, 2002, p. 19).

One teacher played positive songs to motivate students as they came into the classroom (McGovern, 2000, p. 15). Playing positive music in the morning while the students are entering the class and unpacking helps set the mood for the day. The best type of music to use in the morning is uplifting songs – songs that are upbeat, happy, and have a high tempo. This music also helps the students wake up and be attentive. When asked if the music motivates him, a student stated, “It makes me motivated and wakes me up” (McGovern, 2000, p. 28). The response to the music was dramatic as the pupils became calm and cooperative within minutes of entering the room (Lawrence, 2001, p.1). Beginning the day on a positive note could increase the students’ motivation, which could lead to an overall willingness to learn and work, make good grades, be productive, and stay on task.

A welcoming atmosphere is important for the students and one way it could be provided is through background music. Music could be used in multiple ways to make the school day more stimulating to students (McGovern, 2000, p. 9). Stimulating music could lead to increasing a student’s arousal that could produce positive moods and increase the students’ motivation to complete assigned tasks (Hallam, Price, & Katsarou, 2002, p. 113). Creating an inviting atmosphere could help students feel welcomed to participate in the learning experience, which leads to great attitudes, increased arousal and some tremendous motivation to learn. This helps motivate and prepare students for learning new tasks.

Motivating music was also used in the afternoons when the students were beginning to grow restless and unfocused (McGovern, 2000, p. 31). After lunch, the students begin to get tired and are ready to quit working, preferring to head home for the day. However, there is still work to do and things to learn. Providing the right music could motivate and assist them in getting through the remainder of the school day in an encouraging way.

Positive Behavior

Having positive behavior in the classroom is very critical for the learning environment. Background music can provide many enjoyable experiences for students throughout the school day. “Research shows that the playing of music helps to improve abstract and spatial reasoning, foster positive attitudes and increase attention” (Anderson, Henke, McLaughlin, Ripp, & Tuffs, 2002, p. 19). Also, “It has been shown that classical music can calm the behavior of children” (Lewis, 2002, p. 15). Calm students are not likely to disrupt teaching or distract fellow students. Thus, a classroom full of calm students should enhance learning, reduce stress, and inspire high levels of creativity.

Background music can also be used to manage behavior. It has direct access to the state of the student: “It affects the heart rate, the posture, and mental images of the listener” (Ohlhaber, 1998, p. 2). Music creates the mood and helps make learning more focused and effective by producing positive behaviors, which in turn lead to better performance on tasks. Students were asked specifically whether the presence of soft music playing in the background during work time helped relax them and lead to more on-task behavior. Overall, more than half of the students felt they were more relaxed and on-task with soft music playing during work time (Dinsmore, 2003, p. 17-18). Positive

behavior is an advantage because it permits students to accomplish numerous assignments, allows other students to concentrate, reduces stress levels for students and teachers, and helps provide a quiet classroom to learn in. In these ways, positive behavior sets the scene for motivation and productivity.

There are several factors of the classroom environment that influence classroom management to some degree; one such factor is background music. It has the ability to calm the body and alter one's mood, thus leaving the brain more receptive to receiving and processing information. According to one survey, fifty-nine percent of fifty-four students felt playing soft music leads to more on-task behavior, though the researcher suggests that the actual number is likely higher (Dinsmore, 2003, p. 19). The music in the classroom helps create a significant correlation between on-task behavior and a comfortable atmosphere. "Teachers are finding that music can help to create a positive emotional environment that is conducive to learning" (Anderson, Henke, McLaughlin, Ripp, & Tuffs, 2000, p. 26). This makes learning more focused, effective, memorable, and enjoyable to students.

Music is one way in which teachers can influence their classroom environment to have a positive impact on classroom management (Dinsmore, 2003, p. 19). A positive environment that enhances student interaction, as well as helps develop a sense of community and cooperation, can all be provided through the use of music. This benefits the students tremendously. It contributes to maintaining positive behavior within the classroom, which in turn cuts down on interruptions and allows students to learn and be more attentive to the teacher.

Some teachers at Brookewood Elementary School in Grovetown, Georgia used background music in their classrooms. They commented that the background music was “Very effective in helping children settle down quietly. More effective on the teacher.... During work time, the children were more attentive and quieter.... The students have to work quietly to hear the music, so the music helps to remind them to work and not talk” (Lawrence, 2001, p. 3). Playing background music not only benefits the students, but the teacher as well. It plays a huge part in managing and controlling the behavior in the classroom. This relieves pressure from the teacher, allowing her to relax and become more effective in the classroom. Having a classroom full of students staying on task, remaining quiet while working, and staying calm are all part of having a class with good classroom management.

Classical background music affects the behavior of students in several different ways. One such improvement is inspiration: “music suggested ideas for them to talk or write about significantly more often than those in silence” (Jensen, 2001, p. 9). Music produces a mood, aids relaxation, and inspires artistic endeavors. Using background music is especially important for those who have a tough time dealing with upsetting experiences.

Having classical background music in special education, for the most part, has the same effects as a “regular” classroom. The students display greater concentration levels and improved behavior. “Studies of children with special educational needs have also shown...[music in] the classroom setting has a calming influence on hyperactive children” (Hallam, Price, & Katsarou, 2002, p. 112). Music has a similar effect on

children with “emotional and behavioral difficulties” (Hallam, Price, & Katsarou, 2002, p. 112).

One thing to keep in mind is to play the right kind of music at the right time to increase the students’ productivity, relaxation, and happiness, as well as decrease their stress levels. In one study, five girls were working cooperatively in the block area. One of the little girls said, “When I listen to music, it makes me want to build” (James, 2000, p. 37). The little girls were listening to the *Star Wars* theme. This particular music boosted their motivation to build something grand and share the experience with their classmates.

“Throughout a child’s school years, music has been shown to have multiple educational advantages” (Behar, 2000, p. 20). Not only does music affect the students while in class, but it continues to influence them outside of class as well. Music can also promote desired behavior outside of the classroom. A pattern of inappropriate student behavior on a school bus was changed by playing music (Giles, 1991). The students began to behave and were willing to remain in their seats.

Background music can also be encouraged at home and it is the job of educators to “let parents know that music offers a sense of comfort and security to young children in this confusing world and creates a bond among members of the entire family” (Scholastic, 2000, p. 2). This same kind of feeling is what helps the child learn. The student can also obtain this same feeling in the classroom with the help of music. Background music is very beneficial for a classroom. Using music can help the students relax, increase their motivation to learn, and help them stay on-task.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Ten students from Ms. Kingsley's fourth grade class at Logan Elementary School in Columbia, SC participated in this action research project. The students ranged in age from nine to eleven years old. There were six male students and four female students in the class. The students came from mostly lower socioeconomic families. All attended 3rd grade in a public school. There were five African American males and one Caucasian male. Also, there was one African American, one interracial and two Caucasian females. Of the ten students, five students received full aid for the school's free lunch program and the other five paid full price for the lunch program. Many of the students in the class were raised by a single parent. The families included four dual-parent families and six single-parent families.

Materials

A pre-test survey (appendix B) and a post-test survey (appendix C) that measure students' attitudes towards music were administered to the subjects. The teacher kept observation notes (appendix A) regarding the effects of the background music in the classroom. The notes reflected the students' level of motivation, how they entered the classroom in the morning, their ability to stay on-task, how they worked independently, and if they expressed positive behaviors. Other materials used to gather and interpret data for this study included: informal interviews (appendix D, E, F) with individual students and small groups, and questionnaires (appendix H, I) for other teachers that used music in the classroom.

Procedures

At the beginning of this qualitative study, the researcher discussed with a fourth grade teacher the purpose of this study and asked for her assistance and cooperation in helping make the study become possible. The researcher informed the teacher and the subjects that the study would last three weeks. All of the subjects filled out a survey of the attitudes they held about music at the beginning of the study. Classical music played in the morning while the students were entering the classroom, while they worked independently, and in small groups (for example, while they read, wrote papers, and worked on assignments), and as they came in from lunch/recess. There was not any music playing during quizzes, tests, or teacher instruction.

Throughout the study, the students were closely observed each day. The researcher and classroom teacher recorded classroom observations regarding the effects of the background music on the students. The students' motivation, productivity, and behavior in the classroom were all noted throughout the study. The driving question was, "In what ways, if any, does the background music affect student performance in each subject?"

The study also included informal interviews, which consisted of a series of questions regarding what the students thought about the background music and how it affected their learning, productivity, and motivation. The interviews were held individually and in small groups. The interviews lasted no more than ten minutes.

Also, during the course of the study the researcher gave questionnaires to any teacher at the school who used music in his/her classroom. The questionnaires explored questions regarding the productivity, motivation, and behavior of their students.

At the end of the study, another survey was administered to all subjects to monitor change of response and the effectiveness of music in the classroom.

Analysis

The data consisted of pre- and post-test surveys, questionnaires given to other teachers who used music in their classrooms, classroom observations taken by the researcher and classroom teacher, and individual and small group interviews.

FINDINGS

The researcher found that by implementing classical background music in the classroom it is strongly linked to increased motivation to learn, the ability to stay on-task, and the production of positive behaviors. The classroom environment was completely different; the music created an inviting, calm, and comfortable atmosphere that promoted the motivation to learn and stay on-task.

The researcher designed a pre-test survey (Appendix B) for the fourth grade class to complete. One of the questions asked the student if they would like to listen to music while doing school work. Another question asked if the student thinks music could motivate them to do their work. Table 1 shows the responses to these questions by displaying the total number of students' responses.

Table 1: Data from the student pre-test survey.

Question	Yes	No
Would you like to listen to music while doing school work?	9	1
Do you think music could motivate you to do your work?	8	2

The researcher and classroom teacher observations and comments (Appendix A) show that it is evident that playing soft classical background music influences the students overall performance in the classroom in a tremendous way. The observations were made each day during the course of the three week study. In Table 2A it is outlined. In the “Yes/No” column the highest number would be fifteen—which is the total number of days the study lasted, and the least zero—which means during the three week study the student did not meet what was being looked for; it did not happen at all. The data

collected from these observations is summarized in Table 2B. It provides some responses and comments that were made during the study from both the researcher and classroom teacher.

Table 2A: Data collected during researcher and classroom teacher observations

What to look for:	Yes	No
Number of Days		
Students are motivated.	15	0
Students enter in AM quietly.	9	6
Students seem relaxed.	15	0
Students are on-task.	11	4
Students are expressing positive behaviors.	10	5
Students use independent work time well.	12	3

Table 2B: Data collected during researcher and classroom teacher observation comments by dates.

Observation Dates	Comments
9/11/06	-The students seemed like they wanted to get their work done correctly. -The students were saying nice things to each other. -They seemed to all be on-task. They were trying to get it completed. -The students were offering to help one another and were going from one task to the next.
9/12/06	-The students entered the classroom silently and got to work. -The students continued to work and as they finished one task they moved to the next one. -The students helped one another.
9/13/06	-The students came in talking but then got to work and hummed along with the music. -The students asked if they could go to the library so they could make their weekly reading goals. -Some students had to be reminded to get back on-task.

Observation Dates	Comments
9/14/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The students completed many tasks today. -The students came in talking and had to be reminded what the procedures were. Then they got to work. -Some students encouraged others to do their work. -The class seemed happy while working.
9/15/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The students were saying nice things. -The students seemed like they wanted to do a good job. -The students were working non-stop.
9/18/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The students entered the class quietly. -The music makes the class feel relaxed and calm. -The children were staying on task as well as kept their voices down.
9/19/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The students entered talking, but once they heard the music they calmed down and began working.
9/20/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The students were very motivated. Once they finished one task they moved to the next. -The students were relaxed. They worked quietly and not in a hurry. -They entered the classroom quietly and started their morning work.
9/21/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -While reading independently two guys sat beside each other in the classroom library and one male put his arm around the other while they sat and read.
9/22/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The students did everything correctly. Good day!
9/25/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Great day! The students did everything they needed to do, and did it correctly.
9/26/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Great day! The relaxing music really keeps the mood of the class motivated and calm. -Some students gave compliments to others when they do a good job. -Hard working students!
9/27/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The students speak very kindly to each other while working. The music makes the environment very relaxing and the children seem to be happy making the work more pleasant even when it is hard or the children get things incorrect. Awesome day!
9/28/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The students are excited to see each other in the mornings and need a reminder to get quiet. -Once the students get on task they stay that way. -The students' help each other unpack. -They say "Good Job" when someone does something well. -"It's tremendous to see how the class has changed in such a positive way! I thank Mr. White everyday for his graduate study!!"—Classroom Teacher.
9/29/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -“As these past three weeks have progressed the students progressed in their ability to stay on task and work independently. The music really helps motivate the children to be calm and relaxed. It’s been an awesome three weeks!” –Classroom Teacher.

In Table 2B, one could see the day to day effects of having background music in the classroom. More specifically, pay close attention to the dates when looking at the comments. As one could see as the study came to an end the results were astonishing. Each day the students were growing to the music and their outcomes confirm that the background music being implemented enhanced the quality of the participants learning experiences, as well as, had a positive effect on their social development. Their attitudes towards one another changed. Towards the end of the study the students were saying “Good Job” to students who were doing something well, they smiled a lot more—expressing positive behaviors, and their willingness to help one another increased.

Each student in the study participated in three different individual and/or small group semi-structured interviews. The interviews were held for the researcher to get a better understanding of how the student feels and thinks about background music in the classroom. In the first student interview (Appendix D) there were two questions the researcher was asking. The first question asked “Do you think background music helps you complete your school work/ assignments? Why? How so?” One student said, “Yes! It’s peaceful because it has all sorts of instruments playing in it. It also seems relaxful because you just feel like you’re at a special place!” Another student said, “Yes, because it helps me complete my work carefully. It helps me make a good grade on my work. It helps me concentrate.” Overall the data demonstrates that the students think background music helps them complete their school work.

In the second student interview (Appendix E) there were two more questions the researcher was asking. The second question, “Did the background music help you learn?

If so, how? If not, Why?” One student said, “Yes. It helps me concentrate on what I’m doing. It helps me write. It helps me stay calm and focused.” Another student said, “Yes. It makes me calm down. It helps me focus on what I’m supposed to learn.” One other student said, “Yes. It keeps sounds in the classroom from getting to me. It helps me understand.” There was only one student out of all of the participants who answered the question with a “no”. That student’s response was, “No. Because it’s not educational.” These results explain that a big majority of the students are learning more with the help of background music.

In the third student interview (Appendix F) there were three questions being asked. These questions mainly dealt with the student listening to music outside of the school setting and if so, Why? Where? When? The majority of students listen to music (or would if provided) while doing homework. Some reasons are: because it helps them focus and do the school work faster, it’s relaxing, helps their concentration, enjoys the way it sounds, and it would help them learn.

The student interviews discussed above allows one to see the amount of impact background music has on each individual and their feelings regarding it. The ability to meet with each student one-on-one and/or in small groups allow the student and researcher to form a relationship. It allows the researcher to get a better understanding of the participant.

The researcher designed two teacher surveys for the teachers who have used or presently do use background music in their classroom. One was conducted at the beginning of the study (Appendix H), and the other (Appendix I) was distributed halfway through the study and was placed in the teachers’ mailboxes. In Table 3 the results of the

True/False section from the Teacher Survey (Appendix H) are displayed. There were eleven teacher surveys conducted at the beginning of the study. The highest number each question could receive is eleven and zero being none. Undecided means the teacher did not circle true or false.

Table 3: Data from Music in the Classroom: Teacher Survey

Questions	True	False	Undecided
Number of Teachers Responding			
3. Background helps the students stay on-task.	9	2	0
4. Background music helps produce positive behaviors.	10	1	0
5. The use of background music in the mornings helps “wake-up” students.	8	0	3
6. The use of background music helps the students to concentrate.	9	1	0
7. Background music helps students to feel relaxed.	11	0	0

The results in Table 3, simply demonstrate how the teachers agree with the students in the study. These teachers have implemented background music in their own classroom, but yet still provide about the same results. This allows one to see that background music in the classroom is not only for fourth grade students at Logan Elementary School, but for other students as well.

DISCUSSION

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how background music in the classroom affected the productivity, behavior, and motivation of students. The researcher set out to show that having background music in the classroom would have a positive impact on each student, as well as, the class. The following questions were answered in this action research study:

1. Does background music in the classroom lead to positive behavior;
2. Does background music increase student productivity;
3. Does background music motivate students to learn/work;
4. Does background music in the classroom make a difference?

The fourth grade teacher was contacted by the researcher at the beginning of the study to discuss the purpose of this study. The researcher asked the fourth grade teacher for her assistance and cooperation in order to make this study become possible. The researcher informed the teacher that this study would last three weeks. A copy of the purpose statement as well as each appendix was provided so that the teacher had a better understanding of what was going on and what would be happening throughout the study. Two weeks before the scheduled start date each student received a consent form and was explained what was going to happen. Each student had to sign it and get their parent(s) to sign it in order to participate in the study. On the first day of the study each student filled out a Pre-test survey (Appendix B). Each day the researcher and/or the classroom teacher made comments and completed the observation form (Appendix A). Every Wednesday throughout the study the researcher interviewed students individually or in small groups.

Each interview or small group session lasted approximately five to ten minutes. Each student had to think about the following questions during their first, second, and third student interview:

1. Did the background music motivate you to do your school work? If so, how? If not, why?
2. Did the background music help you learn? If so, how? If not, why?
3. Do you think background music helps you complete your school work/ assignments? Why? How so?
4. What do you think about having background music playing while you do your school work? Explain.
5. Do you listen to music while doing homework? If so, why? If not, would you if it was provided or if you were able to? Why?
6. Where are some places you listen to music? In the car, at home, in your bedroom, in the kitchen, etc.? Why?
7. When do you listen to music? When you are with your friends going to bed, while you eat, while you play, etc.? Why?

During the last day of the study, each student completed a Student Exit Survey (Appendix C). Teachers that have used or do use background music in their classrooms completed both a survey and questionnaire throughout the study.

At the conclusion of the study, the researcher collected all teacher surveys and questionnaires, student interviews, and double checked that each student had completed both pre- and post-test surveys.

Summary of Findings

The researcher found that implementing background music in the classroom was very effective. The classroom teacher was very pleased with the results. Each student improved their behavior, motivation to learn, and their ability to stay on-task.

Conclusions

This evaluation of implementing background music in a fourth grade classroom, conducted by a Columbia College graduate student and teacher at Logan Elementary School, enabled a detailed review of the impact that the background music helps raise the students motivation to learn, stay on-task, and produce positive behaviors. The results suggest that background music in the classroom has a positive effect not just for the individual, but for the class as a whole.

Recommendations

One weakness in this research that could be taken care of in any future study would be to consider the students test scores. The idea that background music is very effective for the student to stay on-task, increase their motivation to learn, and have positive behavior patterns is important and great, but to see if their test scores rise would be something of interest.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted at Logan Elementary School in Richland County School District One and was limited to ten fourth grade students. One major limitation was the amount of time the researcher was able to spend in the room observing. Having the study in another teacher's classroom was hard due to the fact the researcher could not be in there all the time.

CHAPTER IV

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APPENDIX A
Classroom Observation Form

Classroom Observation Form

Date: _____

	<u>Yes/No</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Students are motivated.		
Students enter in AM quietly.		
Students seem relaxed.		
Students are on-task.		
Students are expressing positive behaviors.		
Students use independent work time well.		

Comments:

APPENDIX B

Music Survey

Music Survey

1. Would you like to listen to music while doing school work?
2. Do you like to listen to music? Why?
3. Do you think music could help you learn?
4. Do you think music could motivate you to do your work?
5. Circle the answer that applies to you BEST.

Having background music would help me do my school work.

Having background music would put me to sleep.

Having background music would help me concentrate.

I don't care if we have background music at all.

APPENDIX C

Background Music in the Classroom Student Exit Survey

Background Music in the Classroom
Student Exit Survey

1. Did you like having background music in the classroom? Why? or Why not?
2. Do you think it helps you to concentrate or not? Why?
3. Did the background music motivate you to work?
4. Did the background music help you learn?
5. Would you like to continue using background music in class this year? Why or why not?

APPENDIX D

Student Interview #1

APPENDIX E

Student Interview #2

Student Interview # 2

1. Did the background music motivate you to do your school work? If so, how? If not, why?

2. Did the background music help you learn? If so, how? If not, Why?

APPENDIX F

Student Interview #3

Student Interview # 3

1. Do you listen to music while doing Homework? If so, why? If not, would you if it was provided or if you were able to? Why?
2. Where are some places you listen to music? In the car, at home, in your bedroom, in the kitchen, etc. Why?
3. When do you listen to music? When you are with your friends, going to bed, while you eat, while you play, etc. Why?

APPENDIX G

Notes – Comments from Students about Background Music.

(Anecdotal Notes)

Notes—Comments from Students about Background Music.
(Anecdotal Notes)

APPENDIX H

Music in the Classroom

Teacher Survey

Music in the Classroom
Teacher Survey

1. Do you think using background music helps the students to learn?

2. Do you think using background music motivates the students?

3. Why do you (as a teacher) use background music in your classroom?

Circle T for True/F for False

3. Background music helps the students stay on-task. T F

4. Background music helps produce positive behaviors. T F

5. The use of background music in the mornings helps “wake up” students. T F

6. The use of background music helps the students to concentrate. T F

7. Background music helps students to feel relaxed. T F

Comments:

APPENDIX I

Why Implement Background Music in the Classroom?

Teacher Questionnaire

Why Implement Background Music in the Classroom?
Teacher Questionnaire

Please **explain your answer(s) in each question below *as much as you possibly can!* You may use the back of this sheet or/and staple another sheet to this one if you need to.

1. How long have you been using Classical Background Music in your classroom? (Please use years and months to explain your answer)

2. What made you implement Classical Background Music in your classroom? (ex. heard from other co-educators, a workshop, learned about it in a class you took, researched it, etc.)

3. How do you think Classical Background Music effects the students in your classroom? (helps them stay on-task and/or relaxed, motivates them to work, produces positive behavior, etc.)

4. Would you recommend implementing Classical Background Music to another co-educator? What are your thoughts about implementing Classical Background Music in all classrooms? **EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER(S).**

APPENDIX J
Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Researcher Contact Information

Kevin White

About the Study

I (Mr. Kevin White) will be conducting a study on the use of background music in the classroom. I will be collecting preliminary information on the behavior, motivation, and productivity the students produce or not produce with background music. They are two purposes for this study. One of the purposes for this study is the fulfillment of a required thesis for the researcher, Mr. Kevin White, who is working on a Master's Degree of Education in Divergent Learning at Columbia College. The second purpose of this study is to inform Administrators, Educators, Parents, and Students what the use of background music could do in a classroom. Research has proven the method effective.

Participation in the Study

If you are willing to participate in the study, it will take approximately one month. You will be observed, have short small group interviews, and fill out short surveys. The interviews and surveys will be questions regarding the use of background music.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or impact your grades in anyway. If you decide to participate in the study, you don't have to answer all questions on the survey, and may skip items that make you feel uncomfortable and move on to the next question.

Benefits

You may not directly benefit from participating in this study but your participation will help researchers to assess the ongoing use of background music in the classroom.

Risk of Participating

The study is **anonymous** and your answers from the surveys will be sealed inside of an enclosed envelope before collection, there is no perceived risk that anyone will be able to connect you to a particular survey. The short small group interviews will also remain **anonymous** and all responses and comments will not be connected to a participant's name.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study you may contact the researcher, Kevin White. If you have questions about the academic program--Master of Education in Divergent Learning at Columbia College you may contact Dr. Doris Layton, Program Director.

Consent

I have read this form. I understand that my answers to the questions will be kept confidential. I also understand that my involvement in this study is voluntary and that I don't have to answer any questions that I find uncomfortable. By signing my name below I agree to participate in this research project.

Signature of Participant _____ **Date** _____

Name of Participant (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s) _____ **Date** _____

_____ **Date** _____