

How To Use Music To Make Routines More Fun And Effective

Routines are the lifeblood of a well-run classroom.

But it's important they're viewed in a positive light. Because if you cue the start of a routine and your students sigh and roll their eyes, or grudgingly go through the motions, then misbehavior will surely follow.

No, your students don't have to *love* routines, but there should be an energy and bounce to their step. There should be a productive whirl of movement, of intent and purpose, of a job well done.

Much of this feeling comes from the way you **teach routines**. Highly detailed modeling, expressly defined steps, and consistent accountability go a long way toward making them brisk and efficient.

Your attitude, too, is important. A forceful or militaristic approach leads to boredom and dissatisfaction. The constant starting and stopping, the stern reminders, the hard stares and impatient body language . . . these teacher behaviors cause more problems than they solve.

In order to experience the wonderful benefits of routines – which include saving hours of learning time and making your teaching life easier and less

stressful – there must be a spirit of cooperation and liveliness among your students.

Many years ago, my friend Rick Morris of New Management shared with me a simple way to cultivate this spirit through music. The way it works is that instead of providing a verbal signal to initiate a routine, you would simply turn on a piece of music.

You'd click a link in iTunes or aim your remote at a boom box, and like magic your students would launch into action, putting away their work and lining up for lunch, for example, *exactly as they were taught*.

But what's so cool about this strategy is that the music both cues the start of the routine and sees to its conclusion. In other words, you choose the length of music to fit the particular routine. It acts as a timing device, moving students along as they hustle to complete their responsibilities before the song ends.

There is some planning involved in selecting the right music to match a routine, and you'll want to practice with your class before putting it in play, but once they've got it, they've got it.

When using this strategy for the first time, it's a good idea to start small. Choose a simple routine like lining up to leave the room and match it with a 60-second song.

Sound Project 2014 is a great resource. SP14 is a free bimonthly newsletter from Rick Morris whose purpose is to help teachers choose the best music for their classroom. Rick has teamed with freeplaymusic.com to offer

hundreds of songs that are both free for educational purposes and perfect for the classroom.

In his newsletter, Rick offers reviews, playlists, and categories based on how best to use each song. You can even take part by creating your own playlist to share with other teachers. Whether you're looking for music to inspire creativity, increase focus and concentration, or cue more efficient routines, SP14 is the place to go.

Another great resource is Televisiontunes.com, where you can find thousands of free songs from every television show imaginable. They're fun, students love and recognize them, and most have a length that pairs well with classroom routines.

The moment your students hear the first bars of *Yu-Gi-Oh*, *Doctor Who*, or the jazz tune with the cool thrum-beat you discovered through SP14, morale will lift, motivational engines will shift into gear . . .

And your routines will become less routine.