

# The Music Center Handbook

## 15 Do-It-Yourself Learning Stations for the Music Classroom

By DANIELLE BAYERT

### Table of Contents

16-Beat Heart Chart Composition .....	4
A–G Word Spelling .....	6
Find the Instruments Word Search .....	9
“In the Hall of the Mountain King” .....	10
Music Fortune Tellers .....	12
Music Symbols Crossword .....	14
“Rain, Rain Go Away” on Orff Instruments .....	15
Recorder Composition .....	17
Rhythm Boomboxes .....	18
Rhythm Flippers .....	20
SOL–MI Composition .....	22
Swat That Rhythm .....	24
Syllable Sorting .....	26
Treble Clef Card Matching .....	29
“Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” on Boomwhackers® .....	30

NOTE: The enclosed Enhanced CD includes reproducible PDF files. The purchase of this CD carries with it the right to photocopy these files. Limited to one school/organization only. NOT FOR RESALE.



Produced by  
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ISBN-10: 1-4706-2388-9  
ISBN-13: 978-1-4706-2388-3

## Dedication

Dedicated to music teachers everywhere. It is my sincere hope this book will inspire you to create a classroom alive with freedom for you and independent learning for your students. You can do it!

## Foreword

I have used centers since 2005, when I was first introduced to the concept by my student teaching mentor, Becky Bradley. She is a brilliant woman who works wonders with markers and construction paper. I was continually amazed by what she did with so little, and how the students related to the materials and activities she developed. In fact, they ate it up! After that, I went on to teach at a school with over 550 students and very few resources. My lack of budget generated innovation and I started to develop my own materials. Construction paper, markers, paint, poster boards—nearly every ordinary object was turned into a teaching tool. I started looking through secondhand bins, dollar stores, and office supply warehouses for resources to teach my curriculum.

At the same time, I was finding that many of the activities I had developed for whole-group instruction were more effective in a small group setting. And within those small groups, my students seemed to learn best when I gave them a short amount of focused time with one activity. Thus, I have continued to develop more centers every year. They include activities for all grade levels (K-6), numerous musical concepts, and various learning modalities, thus employing each of the National Standards for Music Education. Creating centers has become one of my professional passions, and new ones keep finding a home in my mind and classroom.

Contained in this book, you will find 15 of my favorite, “tried and true” centers. I chose to share activities that reinforce cornerstones of the curriculum and have been most successful with my own students. Each center has been used by hundreds of children. Some have even evolved over the years due to ideas contributed by my students. It has been a process of implementation, reflection, and change that has caused me to fine-tune the information you are about to use.

In my classroom, I have found that students of all ages love the days when they enter the room and see centers set up. It is not only fun for them to work in small groups, but also rewarding to experience so many different activities in such a small amount of time. The excitement of being self-guided for an entire music class is written all over their faces! They enjoy moving through so many different types of activities, and I see child after child proudly showing me what she or he can do at each center.

For this reason, I know the centers contained in the following pages will help your classroom come alive with independent learning for your students. Each child will appreciate being acknowledged as an autonomous being, one who can independently think and act. What’s more, the independence of your students will free up your expertise as a teacher to be used to manage the classroom. Problem solving, idea sharing, and self-control are side-benefits to your students moving through small group activities and successfully learning without teacher interference.

Get organized, stand back, and be amazed!

# The Logistics of Using Centers in the Classroom

## **What are centers?**

Dividing your class into small groups and rotating them through different activities.

## **What do I need for the centers?**

Each center is different—some involve multiple homemade components, a few include common classroom instruments, and others require nothing more than a few pencils and sheets of paper. Detailed instructions for preparing each center are included at the beginning of each lesson, along with step-by-step pictures of the process. And all needed worksheets and templates are included as reproducible PDF files on the enclosed Enhanced CD.

## **How many centers can be used at a time?**

I typically set up and run six centers at a time, knowing I will need two 45-minute class periods for the children to rotate through all six stations. This gives the children approximately 10 minutes per center, plus a few minutes of cleanup time before they rotate to the next station. It also allows time for teacher directions and rules, which can either be explained verbally or posted at each station.

## **How should I divide up my class?**

Divide the class into six groups of three to five students each. There are several methods for dividing them up. I sometimes have children pick a popsicle stick out of a cup as they come in the classroom. The ends of the sticks are painted, so the stick color determines the group. Another option is to have the children number off from one to six. Then call each number out loud, at which time they should go to the appropriate station.

For particularly difficult classes, I recommend dividing everyone up ahead of time. This way, you can separate children who do not work well together. In this case, record your groups on the bottom of the Centers Tracking Chart before class.

## **How do I keep track of everything?**

Use the Centers Tracking Chart (included as a reproducible PDF file on the CD). This chart has a lifesaver, helping me keep track of what has happened in a given class. I have also found the chart to be particularly helpful when I only have one day of centers and then a lapse in time before I see those same students again (i.e. school vacation, schedule rotation, special assembly, etc.).

# 16-Beat Heart Chart Composition

**Learning Objectives**

- Read and notate music
- Compose music
- Play a percussion instrument

**Musical Concepts**

- Rhythm

**Suggested Grade Levels**

- First through sixth

**Materials**

- Heart charts (one per student)
- Rhythm cards in envelopes (one set per student)
- Non-pitched percussion instruments (one per student)

## Preparation: Creating the Charts

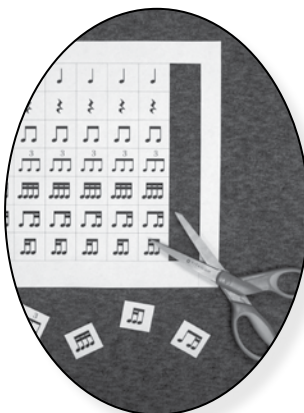
~ Supplies ~

- HEART CHART TEMPLATE
- Envelopes
- RHYTHM CARDS TEMPLATE
- Clear packing tape
- 11" x 17" paper
- Scissors
- Laminator (optional)

**STEP ONE** Begin by printing both templates onto the 11"x17" paper. The HEART CHART TEMPLATE should be printed in color. If desired, laminate for durability. For ease of use, I print each set of the RHYTHM CARD TEMPLATE onto a different color of paper, so that complete sets are easily identified when students mix them up.

**STEP TWO** Tape an envelope to the bottom center of each heart chart.

**STEP THREE** Cut apart the rhythm cards and place them into the envelopes on the heart charts. Depending on grade level, you may want to separate out and exclude the more complex rhythms.



## Procedure

### ACTIVITY

1. Compose four beats of music by placing one rhythm card on each heart (beat) in the first row.
2. Next, play those four beats on a non-pitched percussion instrument.
3. Repeat steps one and two until all 16 beats on the page are filled and you have a complete composition.

### Extensions

1. Play your composition on a different non-pitched percussion instrument.
2. Switch papers with one of your group members and attempt to play their composition.
3. Pair up with a partner. Have one person keep a steady beat while the other plays the composition. Then switch.
4. Select one student to act as a leader. Have them track the steady beat while the rest of the group plays the composition.



# A-G Word Spelling

(Treble or Bass Clef)

**Learning Objectives** • Read and notate music

**Musical Concepts** • Note names on the staff

**Suggested Grade Levels** • Treble clef staff: third and fourth  
• Bass clef staff: fifth and sixth

**Materials** • Paper plate letters (one set)  
• A-G word notecards (one set)  
• Five-line staff on the floor

## Preparation: Creating the Plates, Notecards, and Staff

~ Supplies ~

- PAPER PLATE LETTERS TEMPLATE (four copies)
- A-G WORD NOTECARDS TEMPLATE
- 4" x 6" notecards
- Scissors
- 28 black paper plates, 7" in diameter
- Clear packing tape
- Roll of male Velcro

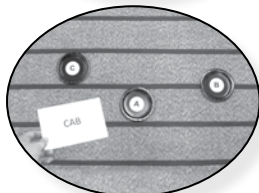
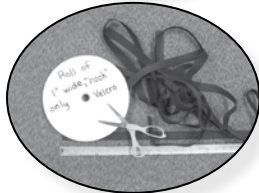
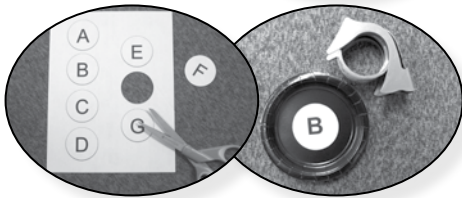
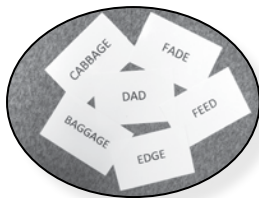
**STEP ONE** Begin by printing both templates.

**STEP TWO** Cut around the words on the A-G WORD NOTECARDS TEMPLATE and paste them onto the 4" x 6" notecards. Arrange neatly like a deck of cards.

**STEP THREE** Cut around the letters of the PAPER PLATE LETTERS TEMPLATE. Use the clear packing tape to affix each letter to the center of one of the black paper plates. You will end up with four plates for each letter of the musical alphabet (four As, four Bs, etc.).

**STEP FOUR** Cut five equal lengths of male Velcro. I cut mine to be six feet long. (You can find male (or "hook") Velcro online or at a fabric store. I use Velcro that is 1" wide.)

**STEP FIVE** Create a five-line staff on your floor using the cut strips of Velcro. Space your Velcro strips according to the size of your paper plates so that the plates nicely fit into the spaces. (If you have tile on the floor of your classroom, consider using black electrical tape instead.)





## Procedure

### ACTIVITY ONE

1. Select a card from the deck of notecards (every student).
2. One at a time, practice spelling your word on the staff using the paper plates.

### ACTIVITY TWO

1. Select a card from the deck of notecards (only one student).
2. As a group, take turns putting single letters on the staff using the paper plates. Continue around the group until the full word is properly spelled out on the staff.
3. Repeat steps one and two until everyone in the group has had a turn drawing a card from the deck.

