

In-Class Group Teaching Reflection

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Our group of three taught the class the “Ask an Axolotl” song that has become popular on TikTok and the internet. We also taught a handclap game to accompany the song in the premise that this would make for a great choir warmup due to its physical activity (practice for body percussion) and the act of singing (and modulating). We imagine that it would be suitable for grade 6 students all the way to high school, and that the difficulty of our exercise can be constantly adjusted as needed.

We prepared by carefully planning our lesson. We [created a shared document](#) outlining the items to be taught, their content, and the role each of our group members would play. Then, we rehearsed our lesson both individually and together to ensure we knew what we were doing but also what the others were doing. Handclap games were created, and decisions were made about whether to teach multiple verses or one, whether to do the modulation or not. A [slideshow](#) was created to aid the delivery of information.

Several things went positively. The class grasped the tune rather quickly and clearly enjoyed themselves during the handclap game. It may have been a smart decision on our part to choose a tune that may already have been familiar to many. We were able to deliver most of our lesson objectives without any big chunks of logistics falling apart. Several things were a little more challenging. One aspect was ensuring consistent group attendance during our prep meetings; every time somebody is absent, the amount of productivity possible decreases quickly. Another aspect was getting everybody onto the same page, as we found that occasionally my group members would be referencing different versions of the songs. Not all the teaching went smoothly either – there were some surprises.

Several things surprised me, personally. An obvious surprise was me cracking under the eyes of the rest of the class and momentarily forgetting what the handclap game was. It’s a reminder that I need to make it bulletproof whenever a “performance” of something is due. Another surprise for me was, in hindsight, actually an oversight. This occurred when asking the class to modulate by step while transitioning between phrases. While I had been able to teach the individual lines well, the connections between verses were a grey area I neglected to teach. This left the class unsure of the timing of their re-entrance (4 beats later? 2 bars later?), and my request for modulation only confused everybody more, which caused most people to drop out at the beginning of each subsequent verse.

The lesson I have taken away from this is to be careful of assumptions when teaching,¹ and this would be the main factor in how I would have taught this lesson differently. While humans are capable of extraordinary things, we must gradually ease people into topics when it's their first time. As such, I could probably have done with an extra demonstration of how the transition to the next verse(s) was to be done, and had the class practice it as an isolated section before putting all three verses together with piano and having everybody try to figure it and the modulation out on the fly. Then I should have practiced the handclap game more for a more compelling demonstration.

¹ Or when writing procedures. I'm sure there are plenty of videos of adults putting complete balloons inside their mouths because their child/student said "put the balloon in your mouth" while writing a procedure for how to blow up a balloon.