Using My Music To Teach Me To Multiply

Music is in almost every part of the lives of today’s students. They have music in their ears, as they walk down the streets. A study conducted by the Office of the Superintendent of Schools in California (Davies 1996) found that 90 percent of students who participated in a district-level study had radios in their bedrooms. They know the music. They listen to the music. They have a strong, often inexplicable, affection for the music (Lambdin 1994). Wells and Hakanen (1991,454) concluded that music is "a major media use" by young people. Lambdin (1994) put it best when he plainly noted that MTV and VH1 have special significance for students.

Despite this affinity for music, it is not widely used in classrooms (Palmer & Burroughs 2002). Nevertheless, many educators have suggested that using songs to teach can be an effective instructional technique (e.g., Burmester 1983; Delisle 1983; Hatt 1983). McMahon (1999) offers a host of innovative ideas for teachers on how to incorporate music into the curriculum. In an attempt to reach young scholars from diverse ethnic backgrounds, there is a strong possibility that music could be a useful medium. Somehow, music gets young people's attention, and it gives them an incentive to attend in a way that no other medium does. Smith (2003) presents a survey on the advantage of using hip-hop rhymes in classrooms, according to research conducted by the University of the First Age in Birmingham, England. Music can provide a "reality construct" (Davies 1996, 229) for students in a unique and captivating fashion. Maute (1987) suggested that the use of music in the classroom can help students remember key concepts better.

The Video

This video is the culmination of a Summer Scholars’ Academy geared toward preparing scholars from historically underrepresented populations for the coming year’s science, math and technology classes. The video is of groups of scholars singing songs they made up to help them memorize their multiplication math facts. There is a song for every set of facts, from 1 to 10. In addition to the songs, the scholars talk about how they use the songs to access the facts for math tests, and which songs they know the best, and enjoy the most. The video also includes a segment where parents of the scholars talk about the program in general, and the songs in particular. In addition to the video, the participants will be given the copyrighted copies of the songs and permission to use them in their classes.

Conclusion

Songs can spark students' interests and are resources with a great deal of potential for fostering learning. More importantly, when students create their own songs, they more readily remember the words and rhythms. In remembering the words, the memorize the math facts that are contained within them. There is no suggestion that all classes with all students should be addressed using this method, but it did work for this group, and with this subject.

REFERENCES


