

Encouraging Creativity Through Composition

by Roger Cichy



Our students have the right to learning experiences that promote and encourage creativity; unfortunately, much of our schools' current curriculum still leans too much to left-brain education.

Enter the Arts!

Here is where we are able to provide learning experiences not only for the right hemisphere of the brain, but both hemispheres of the brain. Daniel Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind*, clearly articulates six aptitudes that the right hemisphere of our brain handles, and the right hemisphere is where creativity is housed. The ability to think outside of the box, to synthesize, to see the whole picture, to empathize, to see broad patterns, to think metaphorically are all attributed to the right hemisphere of our brains. Our students simply need more opportunities to exercise this part of their brains; music, as one of the fine arts, provides these opportunities in abundance.

It is clear that music composition is great territory to incorporate in our curriculum: this is why it is identified as one of the National Standards of music education. The new Core Music Standards make it much clearer as to what our students can do in each area. The composition assignment that I have provided will address Common Anchors 1, 2 and 3 of the "Creating" portion of the Composition-Theory Strand, which are: Imagine, Plan & Make, and Evaluate & Refine. If you are not familiar with these, please take some time to read through the new "Core Music Standards" at <http://www.nafme.org/my-classroom/standards/>.

The following exercise is one that will promote creative thinking and can be structured to serve many different levels of students. Believe it or not, this is one that

Mexican Hand Clapping Song Traditional Mexican Tune

Original Melody

A B

C D

Re-compose music for each segment.
You will determine the length of each.

A B C D

I even use with my composition class at Providence College. Their assignment is to "re-compose" each of these bracketed sections of the given melody in the space provided. To make this assignment effective for younger students, I would encourage you to specify as many parameters as needed. For middle school students, for instance, you could dictate a set of rhythmic values and/or pitches to be used. If this were a high school assignment, those guidelines again would change – more advanced rhythms could be available. If this were an assignment for an elementary general music class, it's very possible to use this exercise by re-composing with just rhythms and not use musical pitches for the bracketed sections. Students could easily create their re-composed sections by clapping or tapping their rhythms. Depending on the level and setting of your specific class, YOU will have to determine the "specified guidelines" to allow for a positive and successful experience in composition. ♪

Roger Cichy is a freelance composer and arranger with over 300 compositions and arrangements to his name, writing for high school, university and professional bands, professional orchestras, and the commercial music industry. He holds Bachelor of Music and Master of Arts in Music Education degrees from The Ohio State University. He has directed concert bands and marching bands at the elementary, high school and college levels, serving at both the University of Rhode Island and Iowa State University. Roger lives in Scituate with his wife, Patricia.

