

But How Do They Feel?

Encouraging Singing Self-Efficacy in Early Elementary

Dr. Christina Svec, Ph.D.
The University of Kansas
csvec@ku.edu

Lara Larsson
Newark Central School District
lara.larsson@newarkcsd.edu



Key Concepts

Self-efficacy refers to a child's belief in their own ability to successfully perform a task; in this case, using their singing voice. Children with high singing self-efficacy are more willing to participate, take vocal risks, and persist through challenges. **Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy** (mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological states) all apply directly to early childhood singing contexts.

Why Self-Efficacy Matters

- When students believe they can succeed, they are more likely to stay motivated, persist through challenges, and engage deeply in learning experiences.
- Strong self-efficacy supports not only musical growth, but also broader academic achievement and emotional well-being.
- It plays a role in shaping how students interact socially and how they view themselves as learners, ultimately contributing to long-term confidence and success.

Self-Efficacy & Music Learning

- Self-efficacy refers to a student's belief in their ability to succeed in a given task or context, rather than their actual level of skill or development.
- In music learning, this means students' perceptions of their singing ability can significantly shape their willingness to participate, take risks, and grow as musicians.

Self-Efficacy in Singing

- Singing self-efficacy is developed through experiences that prioritize growth, exploration, and positive reinforcement rather than correctness or performance outcomes.
- When designed intentionally, singing activities can strengthen vocal development while simultaneously building confidence and trust within the classroom community.

Strategies for Building Singing Self-Efficacy

A balanced approach includes **vocal exploration, vocal slides, resting tone work, independent singing, and play-based experiences.**

Instructional Approaches

Vocal Exploration

- Vocal exploration allows students to experiment freely with their voices using their own sounds, ideas, and expressive choices.
- This type of activity removes pressure to "sing correctly" and instead emphasizes discovery, creativity, and ownership of sound.
- Students begin to build independence in a low-risk, highly engaging environment.

Vocal Slides

- Vocal slides provide an accessible way for students to experience changes in pitch, especially accessing the head voice.
- Because these activities feel more like play than formal singing, they are likely to be effective for engaging uncertain or reluctant singers.
- Over time, this helps normalize the use of a singing voice and reduces performance anxiety.

Resting Tone Activities

- Resting tone activities develop students' internal sense of tonal center ("home") and support audiation skills.
- Activities are intentionally accessible and flexible, allowing all students to participate regardless of their current vocal ability.
- Their play-based nature ensures that even "incorrect" responses still feel valid, reinforcing positive participation.

Independent Singing Work

- Independent singing opportunities allow students to begin taking ownership of their musical development at their own pace.
- When these tasks are optional and supported with peer modeling, they reduce anxiety while encouraging self-assessment and growth.

But How Do They Feel?

Encouraging Singing Self-Efficacy in Early Elementary

Dr. Christina Svec, Ph.D.
The University of Kansas
csvec@ku.edu

Lara Larsson
Newark Central School District
lara.larsson@newarkcsd.edu

☀ Instructional Approaches Continued...

Play-Based Singing

- Play-based singing creates a low-pressure environment in which students feel safe to experiment and participate.
- Teachers model desired vocal behaviors without demanding replication, allowing students to internalize skills over time.
- This approach reduces stress and increases engagement, especially for hesitant singers.

☀ Embedding Self-Efficacy in Daily Practice

- Self-efficacy can be reinforced through everyday classroom structures such as transitions, greetings, and routines.
- Incorporating vocal play into these moments increases repetition and normalization of singing behaviors.
- Modeling flexibility—such as trying a new vocal choice after an unsuccessful one—demonstrates perseverance and a growth mindset in action.

☀ The Teacher's Role

- Teachers play a critical role in shaping how students perceive their voices and abilities.
- Affirming **all vocalizations**—even unconventional or “silly” ones—helps students feel valued and safe.
- Reframing mistakes as “**different choices**” rather than “**wrong answers**” encourages continued experimentation.
- Gradually increasing expectations while maintaining a supportive environment helps students build independence over time.

☀ C-SASS (Children's Singing Ability Self-Efficacy Scale, K–2)

Development & Implementation Process

- The C-SASS was developed through a structured process including expert review, field testing, and pilot/retest phases.
- This process ensured that the instrument is developmentally appropriate and meaningful for young learners.
- The scale can be administered using platforms such as Seesaw, making it accessible and engaging for early elementary students.

☀ C-SASS Continued...

Participants (Pilot Study)

- The pilot study included first- and second-grade students, providing an initial dataset to evaluate the tool's effectiveness.
- The sample offered insight into how young learners perceive their singing abilities across contexts.

Next Steps

- Continued implementation of the C-SASS within larger studies will provide deeper insight into singing self-efficacy development.
- Future research will expand to older students and explore longitudinal trends over time.
- Ongoing revision of the instrument reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to student data.

☀ Select References

- Bandura, A. (2006). *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents*. Information Age Publishing.
- Dempsey, E., & Comeau, G. (2019). Music performance anxiety and self-efficacy in young musicians; Effects of gender and age. *Music Performance Research*, 9, 60–79.
- McPherson, G. E., & McCormick, J. (2006). Self-efficacy and music performance. *Psychology of Music*, 34, 322–336.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356606064841>
- Zelenak, M. S. (2024). Self-efficacy and music performance: A meta-analysis. *Psychology of Music*, 52(6), 649–667.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356231222432>
- Ritchie, L., & Williamon, A. (2010). Measuring distinct types of musical self-efficacy. *Psychology of Music*, 39(3), 328–344.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735610374895>
- Ritchie, L., & Williamon, A. (2011). Primary school children's self-efficacy for music learning. *Psychology of Music*, 59(2), 146–161.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429411405214>
- Fisher, R. A. (2014). The impacts of the voice change, grade level, and experience on the singing self-efficacy of emerging adolescent males. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 62(3), 277–290.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429414544748>



Movement in Methods: A Content Analysis of Elementary/General Music Methods Course Syllabi

Ted Hoffman, PhD
University of Montevallo

ABSTRACT

This presentation summarizes the results of a content analysis of elementary/general music methods course syllabi to determine the extent to which movement is being addressed in music teacher preparation programs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What course goals, objectives, and/or student/program learning outcomes are addressed and how is progress towards these objectives assessed?
- What student activities, tasks, and assignments are carried out?
- To what extent is movement taught and/or assessed in undergraduate elementary music methods courses?

COMMON MATERIALS

- *Music in Childhood: From Preschool through the Elementary Grades* (N=11)
- *First, We Sing! Kodály-Inspired Teaching for the Music Classroom* (N=3)
- *The Sweet Pipes Recorded Book* (N=3)
- Recorders (N=14)
- Barred Instruments (N=9)
- Ukulele, Guitar, Piano, Body Percussion (N=5)
- Technologies (N=11)
- Journal Articles (N=4)
- Tuning Fork (N=4)

BACKGROUND

The last few decades have seen a number of changes in the music education curriculum, among them the creation of the National Core Arts Standards, adoption of portfolios for assessment and certification (e.g., PPAT, edTPA), implementation of examinations for program admittance and/or matriculation (e.g., Praxis Core, Subjects Area Tests, PLTs) and a growing interest in non-traditional instruments and ensembles. Furthermore, traditional pedagogy and repertoire is shifting to accommodate innovative technologies, authenticity, and representation. At the same time, college methods courses where these and other contemporary issues and topics might be addressed remain largely unchanged (Hewitt and Koner, 2013). Critical and regular examination of the curriculum is both necessary and expected (Hewitt, 2013). This research seeks to understand how and to what extent college/university coursework prepares undergraduate music education majors for elementary-general music teaching.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

	Frequency	% of Total
Lesson Planning	21	91%
Repertoire	19	83%
Ped Resources	18	78%
Inclusion	18	78%
Age-Appropriate	17	74%
Diversity	17	74%
Musicianship	17	74%
National Standards	17	74%
Assessment	15	65%
Behavior Management	15	65%
Child Development	15	65%
Movement	15	65%
Singing	15	65%
State Standards	15	65%
Technology	15	65%

ASSESSMENT METHODS

	Frequency	% of Total
Lesson Plans	22	96%
Peer Teaching	21	91%
Quizzes/Exams	17	74%
Field Teaching	16	70%
Field Observation	13	57%
Attendance	12	52%
Portfolio/Notebook	11	48%
Recorder Playing	11	48%
Lesson Reflection	10	44%
Observation Reflection	10	44%
Song Analysis	10	44%
Workshop Participation	9	39%
Class Participation	8	35%
Unit Plan	7	30%
Reading Summaries	6	26%

METHODOLOGY

In order to better understand current trends in elementary-general music methods instruction, relevant course syllabi (N = 23) were gathered and an analysis of content was conducted by the researcher. According to Stemler (2001), content analysis is defined as “a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding.” This procedure revealed common teaching practices, instructional activities, materials, and assessment tools and methods, leading to a better understanding of what knowledge and skills are being addressed, and how that is being accomplished.

MOVEMENT

	Frequency	% of Total
Steady Beat/Pulse	22	96%
Tempo	21	91%
Folk	17	74%
Play (Instruments)	17	74%
Movement	15	65%
Game	14	61%
Dance	12	52%
Play Party	5	22%
Body	5	22%
Coordination	4	17%
Choreography	2	9%

Implementing the Universal Design for Learning in One-on-One Piano Lessons with Children

The problem:

UDL is a learning framework often applied in group educational settings. While some research exists on the use of UDL in one-on-one music lessons, its application has not been widely studied and is targeted at helping students identified as having learning differences. Application of UDL with all students in music lessons, regardless of identified ability or disability, is conspicuous by its absence in the literature.

The Solution:

Music educators need an easy to read, accessible guide to prepare for working with diverse learners in one-on-one music lessons.

Why is this a problem?

The lack of UDL in music lessons with all students creates some significant obstacles for successful music education.

1. Music educators will work with students who have not been identified as having a learning difference. Waiting until a learning difference is specifically diagnosed to implement accommodations and modifications to curriculum can hinder student comprehension, growth, and enjoyment.
2. UDL accommodates various learning styles, including visual, audial, kinesthetic, a combination of these, and others. Students who do not have identified learning differences will benefit from learning material in the way that best suits their comprehension and growth.
3. Utilizing UDL in music lessons with all students removes the danger of predictable learning variability. The learning environment and/or teaching methods are ready to be adapted after a need has been identified by the educator, rather than relying on labels to predetermine a student's ability.

Examples:

- Representation:
 - ♦ Tapping rhythms into poppits
 - ♦ Color coded scores
- Expression:
 - ♦ Allowing students to compose and perform compositions alongside or instead of standard repertoire
 - ♦ Demonstrating theoretical understanding aurally/verbally instead of written
- Engagement:
 - ♦ Finding music that interests students and addresses important techniques
 - ♦ Using games to teach theoretical concepts

Comprehensive Reference Guide

- Detailed explanations of each facet of UDL – multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement
- Examples of implementation strategies and techniques
- Descriptions of activities, exercises, and assessments
- Catered specifically to music educators and their students.

Definitions:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - an educational framework that guides the development of flexible learning environments so students can benefit from multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement
- Diverse Learners – refers to the broad range of abilities, cultures, backgrounds, languages, learning styles, and more seen in students
- Neurotypical – describes a person who thinks and processes information as expected for their culture, experiences, and environment
- Neurodivergent – a spectrum of cognitive differences in individuals
- Disability – long-term impairments that may serve as barriers to a person's full participation in society



Kylar Pagnac
kylar.moltzan@und.edu