

Exploratory Music

When I first arrived at Beth T'filoh I received a lot of kickback from the older students here. Most of them wanted to play the guitar and the drums. They did not want to learn how to read music, to play scales or standards. They were used to a curriculum of learning simple arrangements of popular songs. A good and fun exercise, but also a low-risk and low-reward one. They weren't being challenged.

I realized that the only way to develop a comprehensive program here was to get instruments in the hands of the youngest students. I pleaded with the lower school to allow me to teach a fourth grade class and start them on an exploratory curriculum. It took some convincing, and I managed to secure funds from a donor in order to buy the instruments necessary for this curriculum.

With the donated instruments and some goodwill from the school administrators, I was able to pull together an exploratory class for the fourth graders.

Now, many of my students in the fifth grade had never even seen a trumpet until they joined the band. Most young kids now don't have exposure to instrumental music, and in many cases they don't even recognize the sound. I knew this class would be crucial because it would give them a reference for what different instruments sound like and how they come together to make a symphony.



In this class we explore woodwind instruments, brass instruments, and the bucket band. I also give the students a brief introduction to reading music. This is one of my

favorite classes because once they get the instruments in their hands and hear the music, they're hooked.

Since I implemented an exploratory music curriculum in the fourth grade my fifth grade band sizes have doubled.

Moving forward, my hope is convince the school to let me start exploratory music with even younger students in the third grade, and get them hooked on playing instruments too.