

GETCA 2024 Teacher's Convention

Four Principles of Improv Drum Circles: Connect

Presentation for GETCA Teachers Convention

February 29th, 2024

Outline:

1. Drum Circle Warm-Up (10 minutes)
2. Four Principles of Improv Drum Circles (5 Minutes)
3. **Connect Overview:** LIMB (5 Minutes)
4. **Language/Voice:** rhythm languages (5 Minutes)
5. **Game:** Learn the Rhythm Quicker (5 Minutes)
6. **Activity:** 4 Part Improv Rhythm (15 minutes)
7. **Connect:** Internal Pulse (5 Minutes)
8. Questions/Discussion (10 minutes)

Community Drum Circle?

The Community Drum Circle is the use of a rhythm-based event as a tool for unity. It is NOT a drum class. It's NOT using culturally-specific rhythms. A community drum circle is a fun, family friendly event, where people empower each other in the act of celebrating community and life through rhythm and music – all with the help of the drum circle facilitator. People of all levels of musical expertise come together and share their rhythmical spirit with whatever drums and percussion they bring to the event. They don't have to be drummers to participate. Everyone has something to offer the circle, and everyone is welcome.

- Has an anatomy (beginning, middle & end)
- Mixed population (age, gender, status, religion, etc.)
- Intention to create community atmosphere through shared rhythmical experience
- Intention to allow emergence of group consciousness as determined by each member's contribution
- Self-selected participation (participants are there because they choose to be there)
- The Parts of a Community Drum Circle: Physical Space, Drums & Percussion, Players Facilitator

[Rhythm Rhythm Rhythm | VMC 3-DAY TRAINING](#)

Next Facilitators Training in Edmonton:

June 7th-9th, 2024

Drum Circle Facilitator Group!!!! Lead by Paul Flowers

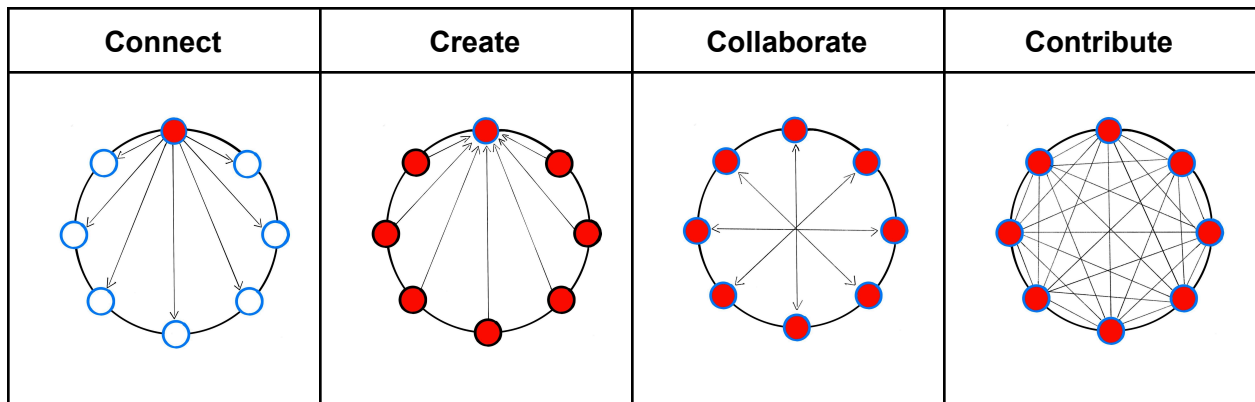
Mar 5, 2024 McLeod School 4pm

Four Principles Overview

What is the difference between a community drum circle and the “Four Principles of Improv?”

There are two fundamental differences between a drum circle in the classroom (4P’s) and a community drum circle:

1. Folks at a community drum circle are there because they chose to be. Participants are often willing to try new things, listen to the facilitator and work together with the other players. This is not always the case in the classroom. If you are in a classroom with conflict, limited social skills, or members that don’t want to be there, it is often very difficult to generate enough goodwill for students to be creative together. For this reason, each one of the 4P’s is paired with a social component that helps bring the music to life.
2. The second thing that separates the two is the wide variance in musical capacity. At a community drum circle there are often skills, adults and drummers with rhythmic expertise that can help hold a groove while the other players entrain to the rhythm. Music teachers are often alone and sometimes have very few students with musical expertise. The four principles use a multi modal approach to teaching rhythm as a platform for improvisation.



Connect: Facilitate connection by tuning into the class's relationship with you and your vision for improv. When the relationship is there, engage them with the modalities of improv drum circles; **L**anguage, **I**nstrument, **M**ovement & **B**ody percussion.

Create: Facilitate creation by using your “improv dial” to move the group from safety to risk. When the students are taking creative risks they can use the “imitate then innovate” model to build their creative capacity.

Collaborate: Facilitate collaboration by building the “collective trust account.” Collective trust will allow students to practice reciprocal communication and integrate their creative ideas.

Contribute: Facilitate contribution by building a culture of resilience and interdependence. When the students are able to overcome challenges by making social and musical choices that serve the group, they are ready to create without your help!

Connect: to the Music

“How do we connect? Look in, Look out!”

Look in: to our internal state of readiness. Our ability to understand and manage what’s inside, helps us connect to the music around us.

Look out: to connect with the language of Ensemble Improv. Facilitate connection to the rhythm by using the acronym “**LIMB**” to remember the four modalities. LIMB offers an integrated approach to teaching rhythm. It is a platform for group improvisation and provides students with many creative options when they begin to add their ideas.

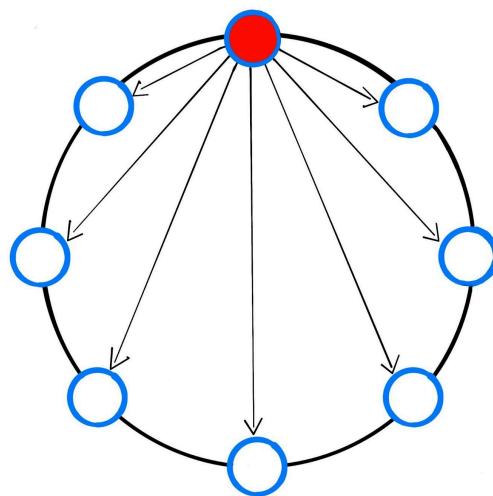
The four modalities:

Language and Voice

Instrument

Movement

Body Percussion



Language/Voice

All over the world, wherever rhythm is taught, a language is used to teach it. Language is a powerful tool to enhance group entrainment and helps students to FEEL the rhythm. Your rhythm language then becomes a platform for group improvisation while helping to maintain a core groove. Different rhythm languages offer varied benefits when it comes to improv. The languages for this book were chosen for the following reasons:

Mnemonic

These words and phrases are perfect for memorization and are even better if they have context. For example, if you're teaching "clave" you can use "I can play cla-ve." This teaches the name of the rhythm while providing a platform to improvise note selection and dynamics.

Challenge: mnemonics can have many interpretations. For example: "strawberry" can be represented as "tim ka ta", "tum ti ta", "ta ti ti."

Galin-Paris-Cheve

This system (now popularized by Kodály and Orff) is designed to represent the note values. This is great for improvising with specific rhythmic phrases and building an improvisational repertoire.

Challenge: some of the phrases are difficult to say and remember for young students.

Language Of The Drum:

Babatunde Olatunji's "Language of the Drum" represents the three notes played on West African djembe, as well as other new drums like tubanos and tubolos. Improvising with LOTD is great for when students already have a foundation of rhythms to use. This is for older grades who wish to go deeper into improv using djembe technique.

NUGGETS

VOICES SUCK! "I'm 12 years old, using my voice isn't cool anymore."

- Appeal to the intellect. Nearly all human cultures use some form of language to teach rhythm. [Taiko](#), [Takatina](#), [Galin-Paris](#), [Darbuka](#), [Carnatic Rhythms](#) - they must be on to something!
- Play games. Most of the games in this book require some form of language or audiation to memorize rhythms, improvise, or stay together. Games can be a great motivator to begin using words.
- Use mnemonics. Adolescents are more likely to repeat words that have ambiguous or no clear meaning, language of the drum, or strange phrases.

Game: “Learn the Rhythm Quicker”

Musical Goals	Learn to use words and mnemonics as a foundation for improv
Social Goals	Use body language to communicate with others in the circle
Goes With	NA
Facilitator Cards	NA

This game is for Grade K-9 students to teach them about the importance of using words and mnemonics when learning rhythm. This format can be used with any question/answer rhythm and made into a call & echo listening game (reverse poison rhythm).

Teacher: "learn the rhy-thm qui-cker when we use our"

Student: "WORDS"

- Question-Answer
 - (Teacher) Question: “I say: Learn the rhythm quicker when we use our...”
 - (Student) Answer: “You say: Words! (clap)”
- Step one - Teacher uses voice, no instruments
- Step two - Teacher uses voice and instrument
- Step three - Teacher uses just instrument
- Step four - Tempo change
- Step five - (Student) Just instrument (clap in this case)
- Step six - Bring back words and subtract parts (subtractive)
- Step seven - Call and echo - Reverse poison rhythm

Activity: 4 Part Improv Rhythms

Musical Goals	Use language as a foundation for improv
Social Goals	Listen to and support the creative choices of classmates
Goes With	NA
Facilitator Cards	Move to the Groove, 5 Steps, Imitate then Innovate

Teach each one of these rhythms individually. Younger students may only play the foundation, but as your older grades get more stable with each rhythm you can begin to layer the rhythms.

- Teach each rhythm individually using the “5 Steps to Create a Rock-Solid Rhythm”
- Demonstrate with call & echo a number of ways to play the rhythm
- Use the “Imitate then Innovate” chart to add creativity to each rhythm (individually)
- Have them choose their own creative ideas while saying the words and playing as a group
- For rhythms with rests use the “Move to the Groove” Chart to add some creative movements
- For a four part rhythm: start with the foundation (4 beat pattern), then add two complementary patterns, then add the eight beat pattern
- *In a typical school in a 3-5 session program I will do foundation with K-1, Complementary & foundation with 2-4, and four parts with 5-9
- Four part rhythm example:

The musical notation is set in 4/4 time and consists of four parts across two measures:

- Foundation (4 Beat):** Lyrics: "this is our jam song this is our jam song". The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, A4, B4, C5.
- Complement 1 (2 Beat):** Lyrics: "Make the toast 'go find some jam'". The melody consists of a dotted quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter rest.
- Complement 2 (2 Beat):** Lyrics: "'oh yeah' spread it on the bread". The melody consists of a quarter rest followed by eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, A4, B4, C5.
- Bass Rhythm (8 Beat):** Lyrics: "Wait! Wait! Get a plate please!". The melody consists of quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, G2, A2, B2, C3.

Five Steps to Creating a Rock-Solid Rhythm

(Co-authored by: Cameron Tummel)

Use the list of observational words and rhythms from the “Observe & Reflect” section.

1. Echo Language With Body Percussion

This can be done in the opening of your session to ensure the class is ready for the content.

2. Echo Language With Instruments

Continue to use voice with the echoes. Adjust your tempo to make it easier or more challenging.

3. Teach The Notes

Break down the notes by saying while playing “clap-clap-clap bass bass.” Use the safety to risk model to build confidence and active participation.

4. Move Between The Modalities

Have students continue to play and move between mnemonics, body percussion, and instrument until the rhythm is solid and to teach the transferability of the rhythm.

5. Create Space

By cutting the rhythm in half, playing for one measure with one measure of rest, the tempo will stabilize and allow students space to learn while staying in the groove.

Imitate Then Innovate

This technique will encourage small musical choices with the eventual goal of the participant being able to make *all* of them.

Choice	Description	Level
style	Have students keep the rhythm and the notes the same but add their own style	<i>Level 1/2/3:</i> Choose a style; the feeling, the look, the way they move
Emotion	Have students use the same rhythm but put a different emotion behind it	<i>Level 1/2/3:</i> Choose an emotion
Volume/Dynamics	Keep the rhythm and notes the same while creating variance and choice in the dynamics	<i>Level 2:</i> Choose a note as an accent note <i>Level 3:</i> Crescendo & decrescendo
Movement	Replace some or all of your notes with movements that land on the beat of the rhythm	<i>Level 1:</i> Move entire rhythm into a body movement <i>Level 2/3 :</i> Choose a note or some notes and replace them with a movement
Copy	Do a half group sculpt (P3.5) and have the half that stops find a rhythm to copy	<i>Level 1/2:</i> Find one person to copy <i>Level 3:</i> Find a rhythm to copy than add a complementary pattern
Complement (Change Notes)	Use the same rhythm but different notes	<i>Level 1/2/3:</i> Choose different notes, textures and body percussion (limit to 2 or 3 to alleviate chaos)
Complement (Add/Remove)	Add a couple notes or take some away while maintaining the structure of the rhythm	<i>Level 1:</i> Take or add one <i>Level 2:</i> Take a few or add a few <i>Level 3:</i> Play the first or second half of a 4/8 beat pattern

Movement “Move to the groove!”

In **Musical Space** movement is a natural modality to creatively explore rhythm. When students are leaving space in their rhythms encourage using movements to add to the creative experience and stay connected to the rhythm.

Time	Space	Force	Body
Slow, fast, sudden, sustained	Level, size, direction, pathway, big or small, raise, lower	Sharp, flowing, soft, light or heavy, float, sway, push	Head, shoulders elbows, arms, hands, hips, butt, knees, feet

Emotion	Like a...	Moves	Dances
Elated, joyful, peaceful, agitated, frightened, sad, hopeless *See <i>mood meter for more feeling adjectives</i>	Animal, martian, tree/plant, cloud teacher, car, machine,	Chop, roll, tap, bounce, skip, swing, stretch, wave, swirl, flex, hop	Disco, Twist, Whip and Nay Nay, Robot, I'm a little out of date...

NUGGETS

LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING If movements are weak have the students look at what they're doing. “Look at your fingers pointing to the sky and make sure your arm is straight like an arrow.” Often giving more attention to the movement will produce better results.

THE ANALOGY creating a visual connection to describe a movement or concept will give the students a point of reference and give the movement context. Float like: you're underwater or on the moon.

Curriculum Links

Grade 1

- Rhythm
 - Music may move to a steady beat.
 - Music is made up of long sounds, short sounds and silences.
 - There are strong and weak beats in music.
- Expression
 - The beat in music may be fast or slow (tempo).
 - Music may be soft (p) or loud (f), dynamics.
 - Music may express our feelings.
- Playing Instruments
 - Play a steady beat using rhythm instruments.
 - Echo rhythm patterns.
 - Play rhythm instruments correctly.

Grade 2

- Expression
 - Music may be fast or slow and may change from one to the other suddenly or gradually (tempo).
 - Music dynamics may change suddenly (accent <) or gradually crescendo; decrescendo (diminuendo).
- Playing Instruments
 - Play simple rhythm patterns (the beat and divisions of the beat).
 - Play rhythmic and ostinato patterns to accompany songs.

Grade 3

- Creating
 - Improvise, using instrumental and/or singing activities.
- Expression
 - Changes in dynamics add to the effect of music.

Grade 4

- Creating
 - Create new music in a known form (AB, ABA).

Grade 5

- Expression
 - New sounds may be created using instruments in new ways, by inventing new instruments or by electronic methods.

Grade 6

- Rhythm

- There are many kinds of rhythm; e.g., ethnic rhythms, dance forms such as the waltz, tango.

Drum Circle Facilitator Group!!!! Mar 5, 2024 McLeod School 4pm

Email Paul at paul.flowers@epsb.ca if you're interested and/or have any questions.