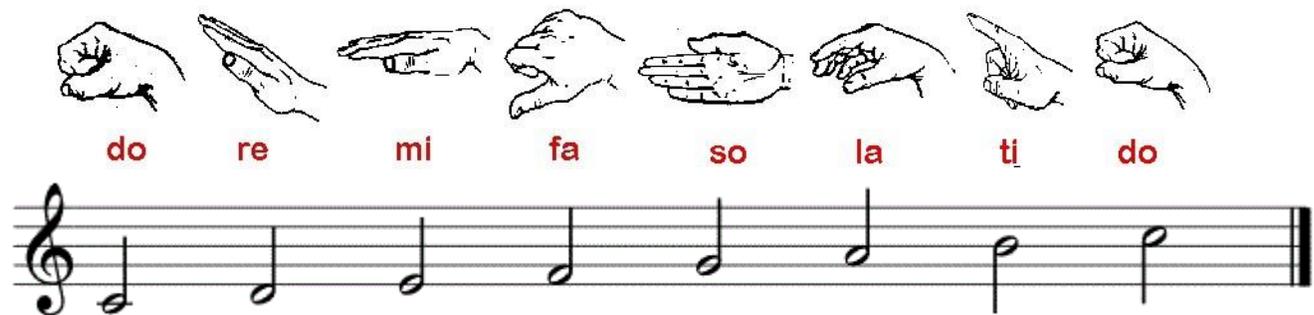


# Music at Helen Keller Elementary

Led by Chris Stroh

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Students at Helen Keller Elementary School come to music class twice a week most weeks, for 30 minutes at a time. The curriculum they study is based on the *Music Power Standards* and *Proficiency Scales* designed by Lake Washington School District. The focus is on singing, playing, performing, reading, writing, and creating, in diverse musical situations and styles.

## Music Literacy

There is a continuous focus on music literacy throughout elementary school. Music literacy at Keller is built around the ‘do re mi’ set of pitch syllables, known as **solfege**. Each school year, students gradually learn how to sing, then read, then write, and finally to create, using a subset of these solfege syllables. In younger grades we call this the ‘**melody code**’ and by fourth and fifth grade refer to it by its proper name, solfege.

1 <sup>st</sup> grade	<i>mi so la</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	<i>do re mi so la</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	<i>so, la, do re mi so la do’</i>
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	<i>so, la, ti, do re mi fa so la ti do’</i>
5 <sup>th</sup> grade	letter names

At the same time, students are adding on to their **rhythm code**. Students learn ta (♩), titi (♪), and rest (♩) in first grade. Each year, students expand their vocabulary, so that by 4<sup>th</sup> grade they are familiar with all of the basic rhythms one might encounter reading music. By 5<sup>th</sup> grade we refer to their actual names, such as quarter note and half note. Here is a chart showing the grade level, rhythm symbol, and its “**rhythm syllable**” name.

1 <sup>st</sup> grade			2 <sup>nd</sup> grade		3 <sup>rd</sup> grade				4 <sup>th</sup> grade		
♩	♪	♩	♩	♪	♩	♩.	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪
ta	titi	rest	too	tika tika	1234	Too-o	ti-tika	tika-ti	syn-co-pa	tom-ti	ti-tom

## Musical Styles

Students are exposed to a variety of musical styles in music class. I primarily rely on traditional folk music from North & Central American, Asian, African, and European cultures when working on music literacy. We also use classical, Broadway, jazz, and pop music from diverse genres.

## Performances

Students perform each year in a large group musical. These performances gradually increase in complexity to make a both fun and educational experience for the students. Preparation takes around 8 weeks, depending on the grade level. Many students look back on these performances as their favorite memories from music class.

## Instruments

Students get opportunities to perform on musical instruments throughout music class. In younger grades, they will often use hand drums, shakers, and other small instruments. In older grades, the **marimbas**, **xylophones** and **glockenspiels** are used in alignment with literacy and performance goals. Every year in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students begin learning to play the recorder.

Further instrumental opportunities are available outside of music class in **band** and **orchestra**. These groups meet before the school day starting in **4<sup>th</sup> grade**.

## Assessment

Students' progress in music literacy is measured by written pre-tests and post-tests delivered once a year. This test does not affect their grade (see below); it is used to guide my instruction by adapting to each class and student according to their needs.

## Grades

Students' grades are based only on their effort in music class, per LWSD policy. Students self-assess their effort after every class, and the monthly effort grade online reflects their input.

## About the Teacher

Chris Stroh is in his fifteenth year of teaching elementary music, band, and percussion. He currently teaches elementary music and private percussion lessons in the Kirkland, Washington area. He previously taught in Minnesota and South Dakota.

Chris has performed over 600 times with wind bands, orchestras, choirs, musical theater, school groups, rock bands, marching bands, and more. He has performed at Benaroya Hall, Safeco Field, Meany Hall, Columbia City Theater, The Crocodile, and The Tractor to name a few. He has been studying percussion for 25 years.

He serves on the Executive Board of Directors for OAKE, the Organization for American Kodály Educators, where he helps to promote the use of the Kodály method of music education nationwide. He has been active in the OAKE community since 2012. He earned his Master of Education Degree from Seattle Pacific University in 2016.