

MUSIC FOR TRANSITIONS – Middle & High School

Using a song or piece of music for transitions can be an excellent way to increase both the efficiency and enjoyment of transitions in the classroom. Choose a song and tell the students they will have the length of that song to complete a particular transition. An upbeat song can create a playful, positive atmosphere, but more importantly it takes the guesswork out of how long the kids have to complete the transition. You will find that as the song progresses, the students will start to speed up, because they know the song is about to end! No more hounding them to hurry or telling them they have one more minute. The song does all the work for you. Below are some tips for using songs for transition effectively, as well as 3 sample lesson plans for using songs for various transitions.

Tips From the Trenches:

- Transitions songs work best for daily or weekly routines that have the tendency to be chaotic as students draw them out longer than necessary. These include, but are not limited to, the first minute of class (getting seated, quiet, materials out and working quietly on the Do Now), cleaning up/putting materials away, packing up/readiness for dismissal, and mid-period brain-breaks.
- Once you choose a song for a particular transition, use that song for at least a month. Using the same song each time helps the students internalize how long they have, based on the anticipated end of that song. If you change the song every day, they can never anticipate how far away from the end they are or how much time they have left.
- If you want to use a 4-minute pop song, but you only want a 30 second transition, no worries. Just always play the last 30 seconds of the song or clip out a specific 30-second clip and always play just that clip. The kids don't have to hear the whole song, but they have to know when the song or clip will end. There are many apps that will allow you to edit songs down to exactly the piece and length you want.
- Choose a song you think your students will like. After the first month, when you are ready to choose a new song for a particular transition, let the students suggest songs to you.

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN #1

Teacher: Michelle T
Grade Level: High School
Lesson: Music for Being Seated

Lesson Objective:

My students will finish their conversations quickly during activities where they are standing and working in pairs, and get to their seats in a timely manner

Lesson Outline:

- ❖ My students do a lot of work in pairs, but they mess around and socialize when I tell them to go back to their original seats. So I will bring in the Mission Impossible theme song, which I edited in Garage Band to end after 40 seconds. I will use that as their transition song so they can have that 40 seconds to finish their conversations with their partner and get seated.
- ❖ I will play the song for them and tell them how we will use it.
- ❖ They will practice by getting up and talking to their elbow partner about their favorite movie for a minute and then I will put on the song and see if they can finish talking and get seated before it ends. We will do this a few times, with them getting into different pairs with different partners each time to talk about personal interests, so they can practice getting back to their seats in time and get used to the song.
- ❖ After that we will use it each time they are in pairs and I need them to return to their desks.
- ❖ If some students don't get back to their desks in time after the first day we practice it then the next day those students will lose 5 participation points every time they are late to their seats. If they continue to not follow the song correctly then they will get a phone call home and eventually a detention.

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN #2

Teacher: James K
Grade Level: Middle School
Lesson: Music for PE Transition

My Lesson: To put into motion the musical transition procedures in the hope of cutting down on wasted time. As the students enter the gym they tend to take their time changing into their sneakers and getting to their correct spots. I count down from 10 but it is not effective.

Aim: Students will learn to get shoes on and get to their assigned spots in a timely manner

Motivation: Have the entire class sit down in the middle of the gym. Ask “Raise your hand if you like to listen to music when you exercise?” Call on people that would like to share what types of music they like or why they like it.

Procedure: Explain to students that today we will be focusing on a new procedure and that it is going to become an everyday procedure and that we will need to follow it because too much time is being wasted in class.

1. Tell students that from now on from the moment they enter the gym the last minute of the song Eye of the Tiger will play (play song for them).
2. Put on song and tell students they need to get their sneakers on and run to their spots before the song ends. Put on song and have them try. Praise those that did well. Encourage those that did not do well to do better next time. Give them tips like “after taking off your school shoes, go to your spot first and then put on your sneakers.”
3. Take students to line up outside of gym and have them take off their sneakers and put their school shoes back on. Put on the song and have them try to get to their spots with shoes on and tied before it ends.
4. Show students the progress chart where I will keep track of students who get to their spots on time. Any student who gets to their spot on time consistently in a month (at least 4 out of 5 days each week) will get to come to a lunch time pizza party at the end of the month.
5. After a couple of days of practice start tracking students. Then explain to students that we will also use the song at the end of class, so they will have that minute from the song to change their shoes and get lined up quickly for dismissal. Practice this as well.

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN #3

Teacher: Grace D

Grade Level: High School

Lesson: Song for Clean-Up/Readiness

Instructional Goals:

- Students will clean up the floor, put materials away, straighten their desks, and be ready to focus up front by the end of a transition song.
- Students will become familiar with vocabulary, definitions, and ideas relevant to the upcoming group project on forms of government

Lesson:

- Introduction: Introduce the clean-up song, “Happy” by Pharrell Williams. Explain that the song has been edited down to two minutes exactly and that when I put the song on it means they have those two minutes to get their desks back into rows (from groups), clean up the floor around their desks, put their group materials away, and match the readiness photo at the front of the room.
- Practice: Tell the students we are going to practice by getting into groups and working on a simple cut & tape activity on forms of government for 10 minutes (cut out each definition, with your group decide if it is a form of democracy or autocracy, tape it under the correct heading and write one sentence under explaining why you think you have categorized it correctly). After 10 minutes I will put the song on and they will try to put their scissors and tape away, get their desks back in rows, clean up the garbage on and around their desks, and be seated in polite position by the time the song ends. Discuss and de-brief how well they did.
- Practice Again: Tell the students we are going to try again and try to do better with the clean-up (or equally as good). They will get back into their groups and they will have 10 minutes to use colored pencils to color code a set of vocabulary words for the upcoming group project: red for words they have never heard before, green for words they have heard before and know the meaning of, and yellow for words they have heard but don't really know the meaning of. After color-coding they will write in the definitions for the words they know, or use it in a sentence. After 10 minutes I will put the clean-up song on and they will try and put their colored pencils away, turn in their papers, get their desks back in rows, clean up any garbage (like pencil shavings) on and around their desks, and be seated in polite position by the time the song ends. Discuss and de-brief.
- Consequences and Incentives: Tell students that next week we will be starting a group project and they will spend several days next week working on it for the first half of the period. That is why we are practicing the clean-up routine this week. If during the project the class can follow the clean-up procedure correctly, at the end of the week they will receive 2 extra days (the weekend) to complete the project. But if they are not following it correctly, the project will be due that week on Friday. If only a few students (one or two groups) are not completing the procedure correctly, those groups will have their projects due Friday, while the rest of the groups will have until the following Monday.