

Rhythm-Reading Success Using Conversational Solfege

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Abstract : Conversational Solfege, a research-based, 12-step music literacy instructional method using the sound-before-sight approach, was used to teach rhythm-reading to 128-second grade students at a public school in the southeastern United States. For each step, multiple scripted techniques are supplied to teach each skill. Unit one was the focus of this study, which is quarter note and barred eighth note rhythms. During regular weekly music instruction, students completed method steps one through five, which includes aural discrimination, decoding familiar and unfamiliar rhythm patterns, and improvising rhythmic phrases using quarter notes and barred eighth notes. Intact classes were randomly assigned to two treatment groups for teaching steps six through eight, which was the visual presentation and identification of quarter notes and barred eighth notes, visually presenting and decoding familiar patterns, and visually presenting and decoding unfamiliar patterns using said notation. For three weeks, students practiced steps six through eight during regular weekly music class. One group spent five-minutes of class time on steps six through eight technique work, while the other group spends ten-minutes of class time practicing the same techniques. A pretest and posttest were administered, and ANOVA results reveal both the five-minute ($p < .001$) and ten-minute group ($p < .001$) reached statistical significance suggesting Conversational Solfege is an efficient, effective approach to teach rhythm-reading to second grade students. After two weeks of no instruction, students were retested to measure retention. Using a repeated-measures ANOVA, both groups reached statistical significance ($p < .001$) on the second posttest, suggesting both the five-minute and ten-minute group retained rhythm-reading skill after two weeks of no instruction. Statistical significance was not reached between groups ($p = .252$), suggesting five-minutes is equally as effective as ten-minutes of rhythm-reading practice using Conversational Solfege techniques. Future research includes replicating the study with other grades and units in the text.

Keywords : conversational solfege, length of instructional time, rhythm-reading, rhythm instruction

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