



Forming a Rhythm Band

Grades: PreK–K

Materials:

Cuisenaire Rods for the teacher
An empty can for each child

Settings:

A small group led by the teacher
A whole class led by the teacher

Learning Experience:

Give each child a can and one rod to put in it. Tell the children to cover the containers with their hands and to shake them to make sounds. Make sure the cans do not have sharp edges.

Ask all the children with the same colored rod to shake their containers. Then, ask children with another color to shake their containers. Children will notice that rods of different colors make different sounds. Encourage them to formulate other questions. Discuss their questions, form hypotheses, and try to verify them. To promote classroom discussion, ask the following questions:

1. Does the size of the can make a difference?
2. Does the material of the can make a difference?
3. Does it matter how hard you shake the can?

Songs may be composed by listing colors of rods to be shaken in succession. For example:

Orange, red, white, yellow / yellow, green, blue, black
Red, dark green, orange, purple/brown, white, green,
orange

Create correctly colored notes for the song, and post them for all to see. Then, point to each colored note and have the children with that color rod shake their containers. This activity is similar to the style of a bell choir, but with very different sounds.

If this activity seems too noisy for a classroom setting, it can be done outdoors. The children enjoy being in these musical performances, and they like writing the rod colors to be used. Familiar songs can be accompanied by all the children shaking their containers while singing the words. Some easily adapted songs include "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," "Hokey Pokey," and "Jingle Bells."

Underlying Mathematics Related to NCTM Standards:



Ordering of lengths
Recognition of rod sounds
Connections to music
Problem solving
Reasoning and proof
Communication and verbalization of findings