

2026 Day of Drumming Elementary Lesson Plan – Rhythm Path

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Overview: Rhythm Path’s “Day of Drumming” assembly program is for all students PK through 12th grade, but most often works with elementary schools. Most elementary campuses use their regular enrichment rotation schedule for the day. In keeping with the regular schedule then 1 whole grade can drum together in the gym, and almost any non-testing day will work well. Each student is given their own hand crafted West African djembe drum to play. Rhythms, song, improvisation, listening skills, musicality, and basic percussion techniques are taught by the facilitator.

Program Goals: At the end of a session students will have experienced and practiced the following:

- Introduction to the West African Djembe Drum; where it comes from, how it is made, meaning of the word djembe (peaceful gathering drum)
- Student Expectations; encouraged to listen, play within the group (not too fast or too loud), performance etiquette (attentive to teacher/performer, not being silly with friends, etc), be engaged and ready to share relevant knowledge or ask relevant questions, be respectful listeners and participants when a classmate is leading the group
- Learn the basic sounds and associated techniques of the djembe drum
- Play a steady beat/tempo together
- Play multiple patterns within the group
- Play echo patterns
- Improvise their own rhythms/sounds
- Musical dynamics, be able to play soft & loud, learn to play accents
- Sing/chant and play the drum at the same time
- HAVE FUN!

Basic Program Outline – *Not all activities will be taught or used depending on time of the session, age of students, attentive listening, and skill level.*

3min - **Introduction** of Mr. David (Howdy Mr. David!)

- First things First, no hand jewelry (including smart watches), be listening at all times, “Drumming Is EASY!”

5min - **Rumbling**, have students rumble (play fast) on their drum. Introduce dynamics

(Forte/Piano/Crescendo), teeter/totter facilitation, the wave, teach stop cut. With older students have individual solos.

6min - **All about the djembe.** Explain where the drum originally comes from & how it’s popularity spread globally (popular b/c all of the sounds it can make). Describe how it is made and the materials. Describe the symbols and pictures carved into the drums. Older students will learn how to hold the drum correctly.

8min - **Let’s PLAY.** Enough talking, let’s get to playing! Start with the low/bass sound. Demonstrate more specific techniques with older students. Play a steady beat together using the low sound. Pass out larger shaker and cowbell to adults/teachers to help younger students be able to hear the steady beat. Alternate the low sound between hands (right, left, right, left, etc).

- Stop Cut
 - Teach the higher sound or tone. Start playing a steady beat.
 - Once steady beat is established then add the lower sound by alternating hands (right hand plays low sound and left hand plays the higher sound, for example).
 - Change the rhythm to “We Will Rock You”, 1-2-3 (bass bass tone)
- Add a clap (bass bass tone clap)
- Add 8th notes (tone tone tone tone, bass - , clap -)
 - Play steady beat and tap your head, rub your head
 - Play 16th notes (faster) on the drum
 - Gradually slow down (make sure students are listening and paying attention)
 - All stop together by watching facilitator

5 to 10min - Keep Going! Depending on how the group is drumming (older ages more likely) then play a simple pattern and of the group keep drumming! Facilitate dynamics by sculpting the drum circle. Introduce more instruments & sounds. Encourage improvisation. Start to facilitate group consciousness.

10min - Badabaday Goon! If you can say it then you can play it! Teach badabaday goon through echo playing. BaDa is the higher sound and goon is the lower sound. Students say it first then play it. Encourage saying it and playing it at the same time. With older students sculpt 2 groups, each group plays opposite, but everyone is playing at the same time. With younger groups teach various other syllables and phrases (cheeseburger and fries) to teach “If you can say it, then you can play it.”

10min - Elephant Rhythm. Teach the cultural specific elephant rhythm. This rhythm has many names all over the world, but David’s friend, Abdoulaye, grew up calling it the “Elephant” rhythm in Senegal. Have students stand up and act like an elephant (stomp feet, swing arms, trumpet sound). Teach the sound on the djembe. Play it slow to sound like an elephant. Gradually speed up until they cannot go any faster. Ask what does it sound like now? A cheetah? Encourage imagination and explain how music evokes imagery. Is there an elephant walking in the gym?

10min - Echo Patterns/Talking Drum

- Have students echo the sounds & rhythms back. Demonstrate the various sounds of the djembe. Play the high and low sounds. Play with fingers, scratch the drum with fingernails, brush the drum with the palm, play on the side, play a glissando, play a slap & muted slap, demonstrate a conga roll (palm/fingertip technique)
- Explain how you can make around 20 unique sounds on a djembe. This is one of the reasons why the djembe drum is so popular all over the world.
- Demonstrate the Tama Drum (talking drum from Senegal). Ask a student permission to be used as an example of being called by the talking drum. For older students explain how the tama drum was used in the movie “Black Panther”.
- Give time for students to make up their own sounds/rhythms on their drum. Free play.

5min - Accent Tap. Works well with older students. Have students play a steady beat. Teach the difference between taps and louder notes. Teach difference between accent and tap. Play 1 accent followed by taps. Play 2 accents, then 3, then 5. Have students choose different number of their choice. Have them choose a very large number (100 for example) and let them experience how long that is to play in music. Finally, have students play accents on the drum to their left and right!

5min - Baye, or another song. Have students play a steady beat on their drum. Teach the song “Baye” (to celebrate together), and sing/shout and play the drum at the same time.

5min - Student Led Rumbling. Have teachers pick winners (students) who have been listening and participating correctly to lead the group in rumbling. Student leaders may do dynamics, dynamic sculpting, solos, the wave, etc.

2min - Outro/End

- Jeryjef (thank you)

- Nokobok (You’re Welcome), Wolof language

- Don’t forget anything! Look around your spot and make sure you have all of your jewelry, watches, coats, water bottles, name tags, etc.

- Remind teachers to have them wash their hands.

TEKS Incorporated into Rhythm Path Interactive Drumming Programs

**Not an exhaustive list. Students are not evaluated during a Rhythm Path Facilitated Event.*

Ideas/Concepts/Methods may be used, recreated, and reinforced after the event by classroom teachers.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills www.tea.texas.gov

MUSIC – Elementary

Kindergarten TEKS §117.103(a)(1))

Kindergarten TEKS §117.103(b)(1, 2, 4))

Grade 1 TEKS §117.106(a)(1))

Grade 1 TEKS §117.106(b)(1, 3, 6))

Grade 2 TEKS §117.109(a)(1))

Grade 2 TEKS §117.109(b)(1, 3, 4, 5, 6))

Grade 3 TEKS §117.112(a)(1, 2))

Grade 3 TEKS §117.112(b)(3, 4, 5, 6))

Grade 4 TEKS §117.115(a)(1, 2))

Grade 4 TEKS §117.115(b)(1, 3, 4, 5, 6))

Grade 5 TEKS §117.115(a)(1, 2))

Grade 5 TEKS §117.115(b)(1, 3, 4, 5, 6))

Social Studies – Elementary

Grade 1 TEKS §113.12(b)(1))

Grade 1 TEKS §113.12(c)(15(b)))

Grade 2 TEKS §113.13(c)(3))

A) identify and use information on maps and globes using basic map elements such as title, cardinal directions, and legend;

- this would be reinforced by the classroom teacher as students learn that the djembe drum comes from West Africa and as they learn where other instruments/songs/rhythm games originated.

Grade 2 TEKS §113.13(c)(12))

(A) identify the significance of various ethnic and/or cultural celebrations; and

(B) compare ethnic and/or cultural celebrations.

How we can celebrate with different instruments/songs/groups

Grade 2 TEKS §113.13(c)(13))

(A) describe how science and technology have affected communication, transportation, and recreation; and - **Students will learn how the technology of the djembe drum and other instruments have shaped communication and how technology has changed through history. Example: Historical and patriotic figure, George Washington, used drums to communicate.**