

## ABSTRACT

# TRANSCENDENT RHYTHM: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FLOW AND ORFF SCHULWERK AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING PRACTICES IN THE ELEMENTARY MUSIC CLASSROOM

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In the twenty years since Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's book *Flow* was published, researchers have studied whether the state of optimal experience he described has a relationship to learning and whether that relationship should inform teaching practices. Evidence suggests that flow experiences in children enhance learning and can supply students with motivational incentives to pursue learning for its own sake.

In this study fourth grade students from three public elementary schools in Southern California were given an opportunity to interact with *Orff barred instruments*, the family of idiophones developed for use in Orff Schulwerk. These experiences were evaluated to see if flow indicators, as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), were present. The experiences were further evaluated to determine whether the experience of flow tended to contain motivational components, cognitive components, or both.

The results of this study suggested that interactions with Orff barred instruments produced flow experience of short duration, and that the experience had both motivational and cognitive features. This study also showed that more sustained episodes of flow occurred in students who had an *autotelic* approach to learning, defined as a

tendency to undertake challenges for their own sake (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde & Whalen, 1993). This study concluded that the escalating but manageable levels of challenge associated with flow and with Orff Schulwerk were also effective in helping nine and ten-year-old children maintain their engagement in educational tasks.