

Using music, stories, and arts to keep your kids captivated and engaged!

Presented by Lucas Miller, the “singing zoologist”

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Rolling up your sleeves and learning with experiments and hands-on activities is a great way to learn but sometimes you simply have to present information and vocabulary to a group of students. How do you keep students' eyes from glazing over or, worse, *closing* while you present? Music, storytelling, puppetry, humor, and visual aids can breathe new life into your lessons and activities.

Kids and teachers truly go WILD for Lucas Miller's unique blend of science, artistry, and humor. Can YOU do the same? Of course you can! Here are some ideas to enliven your lesson plans with the arts:

1. **Play educational songs and music videos by musicians in your classroom.** Play them while your students are collecting data or do it in a more focused way and question them afterward to see what they learned. There's a list of science singers/bands at the end of this document.
2. **Perform the music yourself!** You don't need an instrument and you don't have to be a trained singer. You might find kids are MORE likely to sing with you if you sound a little “rough around the edges.” Kermit the frog and Ernie sang off pitch all the time but that just made them that much more lovable. Can't carry a tune to save your life? Then try RAPPING! Or storytelling or poetry recitation...
3. **Have the kids perform a song or make a skit to act out with a song.** Create a dance routine, act out the lyrics, make costumes. Getting kids involved makes the lessons sink in so much more.
4. **Have your students create their own science songs, stories, poems, or skits.** The easiest (and probably funnest) way to get started is to write scientific words to an existing song. Students can perform or even record their own versions using karaoke tracks found easily iTunes, in CD stores, and at the library. Nothing will solidify students' understanding of a topic like reinterpreting it in their own way. Nothing will get them smiling and laughing like performing it for their peers.

Science songwriters:

- Billy B, www.billybproductions.com
- Banana Slug String Band, www.bananaslugstringband.com
- Lucas Miller, www.lucasmiller.net, (800) 755-4415
- Bill Oliver, www.mrhabitat.net Texas' original eco-troubadour!
- David Stokes, www.dwstokes.com

Places to find educational music and storytelling:

- www.songsforteaching.com: a remarkable collection of songs which can be sorted and searched according to topic. Amazing!
- <http://www.acornnaturalists.com/store/Teaching-Science-through-Music-C42.aspx>: the nation's finest eco-musicians collected for your browsing pleasure. Acorn Naturalists has a carefully-selected collection of incredible tools and resources for science education--CHECK THEM OUT!!
- www.tejasstorytelling.com : a variety of events, ideas, resources, and mentoring are available for wannabe storytellers. Find a storytelling guild near you and get started in this ageless art form.
- *Keepers of the Earth/Animals*, etc. by M. Caduto and J. Bruchac; classic introduction to using stories to teach with activities that tie-in with science topics.