



RU Affirmations

Building Positive Self-Talk Through Rhythmic Body Percussion

Suggested Grades: 2-5

Author: Zachary Edwards

National Core Arts Standards

- #1 – Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- #2 – Perform on instrument, alone and with other, a varied repertoire of music.
- #3 — Refine and complete artistic work.
- #5 — Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.
- #6 — Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- #10 — Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- #11 — Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Objectives

- Perform body percussion affirmations with accurate rhythm and coordination
- Respond to literature through musical expression and movement
- Create personal affirmations using rhythmic speech patterns
- Connect positive self-talk concepts to musical performance and community building

Materials

- Book – *Rhythmische Übung* by Gunild Keetman, p. 9, #33
 - Book – *I Am Enough* by Grace Byers
 - Unpitched Percussion Instruments
-

Overview:

Students will explore positive self-talk through rhythmic body percussion using adapted etudes from Gunild Keetman's *Rhythmische Übung*. This lesson connects literature, personal reflection, and musical performance as students learn to set affirmative text to rhythm, perform in canon, and transfer their learning to instruments. The multi-day approach builds from simple text and rhythm coordination to complex ensemble performance, reinforcing both musical skills and positive self-concept.





Suggested Teaching Process:

Part 1: Introduction to Affirmations

1. Read *I Am Enough* by Grace Byers aloud to the class.
2. Discuss the concept of affirmations with students.
 - a. Ask: "What messages do we want to tell ourselves every day?"
 - b. Guide students to understand how positive self-talk builds confidence
3. Introduce the affirmation text adapted from RU, p. 9, #33:

I am limitless
I am worthy and courageous
I will value my voice and classmate's voices too.
4. Practice speaking the affirmation with natural speech rhythm.
 - **Teacher Note:** Pay attention to natural speech prosody when setting text to rhythm. The affirmation should feel comfortable and natural when spoken.

Part 2: Body Percussion

1. Combine the affirmation text with body percussion movements from RU, p. 9, #33.
2. Practice body percussion without speaking the words aloud.
 - a. Encourage students to "say the words in their inner voice"
 - **Teacher Note:** This prepares them for canon work in the next section

Part 3: Canon Performance

1. Review the affirmation with body percussion to ensure student independence.
2. Introduce canon performance using a step-by-step approach:
 - a. Have students perform independently without teacher support
 - b. Tell students: "I am going to do something different, but don't let it trick you. I want you to just keep on going!"
 - c. Begin the canon with teacher performing the second entrance
 - d. Stop and identify what happened (introduce the term "canon")
3. Practice two-part canon with clear role assignments.
 - a. Perform again with teacher taking second part (students now understand the concept)





- b. Trade parts: teacher starts, students perform second entrance
4. Divide class into two groups for two-part canon performance.
 - a. Place groups in circles on different sides of the room
 - b. Students perform in two-part canon while teacher moves around and assists as needed
 - c. Make sure everyone gets to try both parts
 - d. Challenge students by trying the canon in concentric circles or with the class all mixed up
 - e. Try the canon both with and without words
- **Teacher Note:** *The sequential approach to introducing canon helps students understand the concept gradually rather than being overwhelmed by the complexity.*

Part 4: Instrumental Transfer

1. Review body percussion affirmation to establish the foundation.
2. Transfer body percussion to unpitched percussion instruments.
 - a. Use student input to choose appropriate instruments for each body percussion sound
 - b. Practice the affirmation with instruments, maintaining the same rhythm
3. Perform instrumental version in canon.
 - a. Apply the same canon techniques learned in Part 3
 - b. Focus on maintaining steady tempo and clear entrances
- **Teacher Tip:** *Start with simple instrument assignments (clap = wood block, stomp = drum) before allowing students to explore more creative timbral choices.*

Extensions: Additional Possibilities

The affirmation concept can be extended in numerous ways to address additional learning objectives:

- **Daily Classroom Routine:** Use the affirmation as a regular class opening to build community and positive mindset
- **Melodic Development:** Add simple melodies to the affirmation text





- **Rhythm Building Bricks:** Use the affirmation as a foundation for teaching specific rhythm patterns
- **Dramatic Play:** Incorporate movement and staging to enhance the message
- **Student Composition:** Have students create their own affirmations using different RU etudes
- **Cross-Curricular Connections:** Connect to social-emotional learning curriculum or character education programs

References:

Byers, G. (2018). *I am enough*. Balzer + Bray.

Keetman, G. (1970). *Rhythmische Übung*. Schott Music.

Zachary Edwards:



Zachary B. Edwards is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in music education at the University of Houston. His current roles include graduate teaching assistant and instructor in music education at the University of Houston, as well as adjunct professor at San Jacinto College. Previously, he was as an elementary general music teacher for KIPP Texas Public Schools, where he also served as campus fine arts team leader, regional content lead for primary music, and state assessment writer. Zach has degrees in music education from Texas A&M University-Commerce and Tarleton State University, is fully certified in Kodály and Orff-Schulwerk, and has completed elementary general level one training in Music Learning Theory. Zach is past-treasurer for the Texas Gulf Coast Orff Association and is currently the state executive director for the National Association for Music Education-Texas.

