

Singing for Extra Credit

Concept: There are times in teaching when it is difficult to get students to understand a complex issue, idea, structure, or concept. Most methods of memorization do not always work for all students especially if interest or motivation to learn is low. I have seen how the following method of teaching the difficult areas of curriculum works every time.

The DNA Song

Teaching the structure of DNA to students can be difficult. DNA is not always of high interest to them. However, by mentioning that the DNA Song is coming soon students begin to take notice. On the day the Song arrives I explain the following extra credit assignment to my students.

Extra-Credit

1. I do not believe in extra-credit, however in this case I have deemed the credit worthwhile and of a valid educational value.
2. You are to go home and teach the following DNA Song to your parents or guardians (come see me later for alternative singers) for 15 points extra credit.
3. Your parents or guardians are to record themselves singing the song and it must be submitted to me within two weeks of today's date. There are several ways to record the song. Tape recorder, computer, video camera, in person, or call my classroom voicemail and sing to the telephone. There will be bonus extra credit points up to 5 for singing the song in another language or by changing the tune or adding music.

The DNA Song

(sung to the tune of Row, Row, Row your boat)

We love DNA
made of nucleotides.
Sugar, phosphate and a base
bonded down one side.

Adenine and Thymine
Make a lovely pair
Cytosine without Guanine
Would feel very bare.

I sing the song for them once or twice and then we all try singing it together. Once we have it down fairly well we travel to another classroom or two and sing it to them. I have found that students really know the structure well and their interest in DNA and genetics is increased. Many students "complain" that the song was stuck in their head all day and even others tell me years later that they still know the song. Parents sometimes "complain" also about the song being stuck in their head.